

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**Making Sense of the Western Front: English Infantrymen's
Morale and Perception of Crisis during the Great War**

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A thesis submitted to the Department of International History
the London School of Economics for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, London, September 2018

Declaration

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I declare that my thesis consists of 99,978 words.

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Abstract

This thesis reappraises military morale during the First World War, looking at the relationship between morale and perceptions of crisis. It analyses the resilience of English infantrymen serving on the Western Front during three acute ‘crisis’ periods faced by the British Army in 1914, 1916, and 1917/1918. Through the examination of contemporary sources, it reveals how infantrymen’s long-term experiential perceptions of war and the Western Front functioned to promote resilience. Generally focussing on moments outside of combat, it argues that many combatants perceived the war itself as a prolonged chronic crisis.

Adaptations deflected experiences of chronic crisis and soldiers often failed to register acute crisis and did not distinguish these phases as ones of ‘crisis’ at the time. The dissertation draws on untapped archival material, mainly using sources written during or shortly after the events being studied. It investigates the interrelationship between soldiers’ social and physical environment, and their psychological environment. Deploying theory from anthropology, sociology and social psychology, it goes further than previous work in its interdisciplinary scope. The individual chapters reflect the themes that emerged most forcefully from the primary material. The first four describe the ways in which men overcame chronic crisis, while the final chapter analyses the emergence of acute crisis. ‘Attachment’ explores how men familiarised themselves with the physical environment of the Western Front, normalised it and found meaning in it. ‘Exhaustion’ analyses the experience of winter, showing how this subsumed other concerns and changed men’s perspective on war during other seasons of the year. ‘Obligation’ reinterprets the ways in which concepts of duty influenced soldiers’ actions and interpretation of the conflict. ‘Imagination’ develops a fresh perspective on the ways in which men’s perceptions and dreams of England became a coping mechanism and furnished a justification of their suffering. ‘Hope’ argues that visions of peace proved to be sustaining and were inextricably linked to ideas of victory. The thesis offers new insights into the psychology of the soldiers of 1914-18, and the conclusion suggests that human adaptability and the ability to construe events constructively, to have goals and see clear pathways to these goals, helped men to cope with the Great War.

Acknowledgements

This thesis was written in the relative isolation of my apartment, at an out-of-the-way table at the LSE, or in a corner of the British Library. Yet, drafting a PhD is a much more collaborative enterprise than I could have ever imagined. Many people – even if they are unaware of it – helped me to write this.

This dissertation would have never been completed were it not for the guidance, support, and patience of my supervisors. Heather Jones and David Stevenson have read and commented on every part of this thesis. Heather's intellectual rigour and skills as a historian were invaluable during the writing process. Without her searching questions and thorough reading of various early drafts of these chapters I would have struggled to iron out the conceptual issues. David's advice during the final three years of my doctoral studies have similarly focussed my thinking. His immense pool of knowledge and experience has helped to shape and improve my work. Both Heather and David have truly gone beyond the call of duty in helping me to complete this.

Other First World War scholars have also aided and influenced me. Richard Grayson supervised my undergraduate thesis, where the seeds of this dissertation originate. Without his words of encouragement and brilliant teaching I may have never considered pursuing a doctorate. Similarly, Adrian Gregory has generously offered his time and shared his passion for the Great War since I first met him to discuss where I should go to study history as an undergraduate. I still remember leaving his office more excited than any 16 year old should be by our discussions of Haig, generalship, and morale. It may have taken a decade, but this thesis grew, in part, out of that conversation.

I would have never even embarked upon this project were it not for the very generous scholarship awarded to me by the London School of Economics and Political Science. I am deeply grateful to the anonymous committee who decided, somewhat unexpectedly, that I was deserving of this. I must also extend my thanks to the Department of International History, which been my academic home for the last four years. First and foremost, the community that has grown up around our cohort of doctoral students has provided both an academic and emotional support network. The brilliance of my colleagues has helped my research, while their love of the pub has saved my sanity. In particular, I must thank Bastiaan Bouwman, Alexandre Dab, Anne Irfan, Tommaso Milani, Michael Rupp, Isaac Scarborough, Ian Stewart, Max Skjönsberg, and Eline Van Ommen. I have also enjoyed working as a co-convenor of the HY509 International History Seminar alongside Grace Carrington, Judith Jacob, and Will King. Among the academic staff I am particularly thankful to Robert Brier,

Paul Keenan, Piers Ludlow for making the PhD students feel a part of the academic community, and the advice they have offered freely to us.

While at LSE I have been lucky enough to work with the LSE100 team. I would like to thank each of my colleagues. LSE100's teaching team is a vibrant interdisciplinary community, which has helped me to incorporate other perspectives into my work. The collegial atmosphere has been another important social outlet. I would also like to thank all of my students – at least those who regularly attended class! They have helped me to become a better scholar, while teaching them has been one of the greatest joys of my doctoral studies.

The broader academic community has also played an important part in my thesis. I owe many thanks to the Centre International de Recherche de l'Historial de la Grande Guerre. I grew more as an academic during their weeklong summer school in 2016 than at any other time during my studies. I am also immensely grateful to the Historial's Steering Committee who awarded me a Gerda Henkel scholarship in 2017. I have also benefited immensely from comments and discussions at the conferences and seminars at which I have presented. Of particular significance was the feedback I received when presenting at the 'War, Society and Culture' seminar, hosted by the Institute of Historical Research, and the 'War Time' conference of the International Society for First World War Studies. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the staff at the archives I have visited whilst conducting my research.

Friends outside of the academy have helped to remind me that life continued outside of the PhD and kept things in perspective. I'm looking at you: Rosie Asquith, Patrick Atkins, Jim Benfield, TJ Brooke Bullard, Ruby Brown, Jianfei Bu, George Burke, Hattie Burles, Ed Burrell, Joe Butchers, Josh Byworth, Amy Cashmore, Olive Ceesay, Joe Clark, Tim Crombie, Dan Dale, Sophia Dutton, Tom Dwyer, Josh Feldman, Jacob Fisher, Laurie Gerhardt, Johnnie Grey, Anna Gross, Kate Gutjahr, Laurie Hart, Luke Hester, Gus Hewlett, Collin Kurre, Will Lawn, Ant Lehane, Eloi Jean Marin, Ken Mawhinney, Johnny Moore, Robbie O'Neill, Katie O'Shea, Will Parry, Ashling Pickett, Tabith Prizeman, Theo Prizeman, Kealey Rigden, Josh Shotton, Danny Swift, Helena Takala, Izzy Taylor, Liam Taylor-West, Caroline Treadwell, James Twomey, and Zach White. I am incredibly lucky to have such a large support network. It would be impossible to name each and every person who has provided me with an outlet over the last four years. On the off chance that they actually read this, I apologise in advance to those I have failed to mention, rest assured your friendship means the world to me.

None of this would have been possible without the encouragement and support (both financial and emotional) of my family – particularly my parents. My mum, Gillian, has always been more assured of my abilities than me and without her I would have lacked the confidence to undertake a PhD. My dad, Ken, has acted as an effective proof-reader of my work since I was an undergraduate and I have benefitted greatly from his dedication to both my work and me. I think, though, that his love of history has made this more of a pleasure

than a chore. I should also recognise the role of my stepmother, Cathy, who deserves an award for putting up with her husband's addiction to work. I'm sorry to have offered him the chance to do even more during his 'retirement.' My most heartfelt thanks are for Emily. Her patience, humour, and support have been more important than I could ever say. She has had to bear the stresses of my doctorate alongside me and it is mainly down to her that I did not suffer too badly from the loneliness that can sometimes accompany academia.

My final thanks are for the soldiers who suffered through four years of war and have provided me, one hundred years later, with the material to tell their tale. It sometimes felt perverse to be reading the inner-thoughts of combatants, or to be poring over their intimate letters to a parent, relative, friend, or lover that many were destined never to meet again. I feel that I built a bond with some of these men, and I hope that my analysis does justice to their sacrifices.

Ultimately, though, this thesis is dedicated to two people who have proven incredibly important and influential in my life: one is my sister, and the other is a great friend. While no longer with us, they have never ceased to be a source of comfort and encouragement. Their memory has helped me through the darker periods accompanying the researching and writing of this dissertation. Gone, but never forgotten – this is for them.

For

Kate Mayhew

(1978-2004)

Bo Treadwell

(1991-2014)

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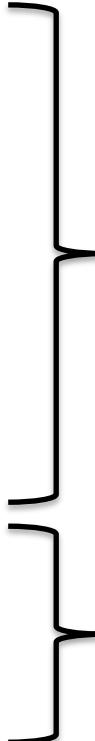
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Abbreviations

AOC	Author's Own Collection
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BHQ	Battalion Headquarters
Bn.	Battalion
BL	British Library Collections
Coy.	Company
CWGC	Commonwealth War Graves Commission (Archive)
GHQ	General Headquarters
GRU	Graves Registration Unit
GWA	Great War Archive
IWM	Imperial War Museum Collection
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives
LIDDLE	Liddle Collection
MR	Manchester Regiment Archives
NAM	National Army Museum Archive
NCO(s)	Non-Commissioned Officer(s)
NMA	National Meteorological Archive
OR(s)	Other Rank(s)
POW(s)	Prisoner(s) of War
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RFM	Royal Fusiliers Museum Archive
SOFO	Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum Archive
TGA	Tate Archive
TKM	The Keep Museum Archive, Dorchester
TNA	The National Archives
YMCA	The Young Men's Christian Association

Regimental Ranks in the Infantry

Pte.	Private	 <i>'Other Ranks'</i>
L/Cpl.	Lance Corporal	
Cpl.	Corporal	
Sgt.*	Sergeant	
CQMS.**	Company Quartermaster Sergeant	
CSM/ WOII	Company Sergeant Major/ Warrant Officer 2 nd Class (1915)	
RQMS	Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant	
RSM/WOI	Regimental Sergeant Major/ Warrant Officer 1 st Class (1915)	
2nd Lt.	Second Lieutenant	
Lt.	Lieutenant	
Capt.	Captain	<i>Commissioned Officers</i>
Maj.	Major	
Lt. Col.	Lieutenant Colonel	

	Unit of Command	Number of Men Under Command (Approx.)
Private	N/A	None
Corporal/Lance Corporal	Section	12
Sergeant	Platoon Second in Command	N/A
2nd Lieutenant/Lieutenant	Platoon	50
Captain	Company	200
Major	Battalion Second in Command	N/A
Lieutenant Colonel	Battalion Commanding Officer	1000

Table A.1: Units of Command by Rank. Taken from J. Boff, 'Military Structures and Ranks' (<https://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/military-structures-and-ranks>, accessed 20 June 2018)

Senior Officers

Col.	Colonel	Command: N/A – Staff Officer Rank
Brig. Gen.	Brigadier General	Command: Brigade [c. 3,500 men]
Maj. Gen.	Major General	Command: Division [c. 12,000 men]
Lt. Gen.	Lieutenant General	Command: Corps [c. 60,000 men]
Gen.	General	Command: Army [c. 300,000 men]
Not Abbreviated	Field Marshal	Command: Army Group [c. 2 million men]

Timeline

Key Battles of the BEF, 1914-1918

1914

25-26 August	Battle of Le Cateau*
6-12 September	First Battle of the Marne*
12-28 September	First Battle of the Aisne*
25 September – 22 November	Race to the Sea*
19 October – 22 November	First Battle of Ypres*

1915

10-13 March	Battle of Neuve Chapelle
22 April – 25 May	Second Battle of Ypres
15-27 May	Battle of Festubert
25-28 September	Battle of Loos

1916

1 July – 18 November	Battle of the Somme*
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1917

9-12 April	Battles of Arras and Vimy Ridge
7-14 June	Battle of Messines
31 July – 6 November	Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele)*
20 November	Battle of Cambrai*

1918

21 March – 18 July	German Spring Offensives*
15 July – 6 August	Second Battle of the Marne
8 August – 11 November	‘Hundred Days’ Offensive

* Indicating those battles that are referenced in this thesis or had a direct bearing on the events it describes.

Introduction

Bentley Bridgewater's Chelsea home was a world away from the chaos of the Great War. Yet the stories his father penned to him provided a window onto the conflict – albeit through frosted glass. Mr Bridgewater intended these tales primarily to maintain his paternal link with home, but they also allowed him to consider his place and role in the war effort. Bentley's father simultaneously downplayed the war and made sense of it through children's narratives and fantasy. Recurring characters – Bobby, Bill, Mr Bird, and 'the cat' – embarked on a number of 'journeys' across the Western Front. Able to find freedom and peace at will, they regularly escaped the trenches, freely traversing the frontlines and returning to England's safety. At the same time, though, each character was imbued with a deep sense of duty and returned to 'do their bit': engaging in raids, killing the enemy, taking German prisoners, and winning medals.¹ In Bentley's father's rationalisation of war many of the key themes of this thesis are revealed. His perception of his world was bounded and influenced by the environment in which he existed – namely by the Western Front and the military. However, he continued to embrace his role as a father. These structures gave meaning to his experience of the Great War and, indeed, normalised it to the extent that it filtered into the fiction he crafted for his son. As narrator, he was able to generate agency that did not exist in reality. While this is a unique example of a father coping with war, such attempts to interpret the conflict were widespread.

This thesis seeks, in part, to explore how men endured the chronic, perpetual, crisis of military service in 1914-18. Clearly one reason was because the infantrymen's lives and perceptions were framed and manipulated by their physical and social environments. Sometimes, both crept in subtly; sometimes they imposed themselves violently. The soldiers' changing military, physical, social, and moral setting was emphasised in their embarkation leaflets before they left England. Men were told they were going 'abroad as a soldier of the King to help our French comrades against the invasion of a common Enemy.' This experience 'will need your courage, your energy, your patience' and each man was reminded 'that the honour of the British Army depends on your individual conduct.'² Such ideas were internalised by the men. Consequently, some of them were able to simply conclude: 'We are in France now... and we are not out for a picnic.'³ It was the war and the war zone that

¹ NAM 1993-02-508: Letters sent to Bentley Bridgewater by his father in France, Letters 2 and 9 March and 2 May 1918.

² NAM 1998-12-111-2: Lt. Arthur Royce Bradbury, Printed Embarkation Leaflet.

³ IWM Con Shelf: W.J. Martin, Letter 31 December 1916.

constrained the soldier's outlook and influenced the boundaries of his rationalisation of service.

Soldiers' perspectives, morale, and resilience were constrained and influenced by the intersection of their social, physical, and psychological environments. Such a conceptualisation of morale is key to understanding how the infantrymen studied here rationalised their experiences, duties, and service. This analysis will demonstrate the ways in which this process worked and how good morale cultivated resilience. It will do so by focussing on English infantrymen's perception and understanding of crisis. By demonstrating the ways in which soldiers coped with crisis, it will underline infantrymen's ability to construe their experience constructively. High morale was often, therefore, an internalised process – one that was directed by perceptions and achieved through factors such as hope. Hope was a cognitive process, rather than an emotion, and subconsciously directed by soldiers' environments and interpretation of the war. Ultimately, this allowed the soldiers to develop clear goals, which focussed on their subjective 'home' and victorious peace. Their relationship with their environment inculcated a sense that the military, victory, and the Western Front provided their clearest pathway to achieving their goals. Such sense-making was intimately related to their social and physical context, which promoted resilience and conditioned perceptions of crisis and war more generally.

In focussing on men's experiences of the war's 'chronic' crises, and the environment's relationship with morale and resilience, this thesis makes an important contribution to the existing literature on the Great War and soldiers' morale. While such an approach is distinctive, numerous studies have explored morale and endurance in 1914-1918.⁴ Some scholars have been drawn to the British Army in particular.⁵ Why, they ask, did the

⁴ For a general introduction, A. Watson, 'Morale' in J. Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War Volume II: The State* (Cambridge, 2014). For the British Army, G. Sheffield, *Command and Morale: The British Army on the Western Front 1914-1918* (Barnsley, 2014). For the British and German Armies, A. Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies* (Cambridge, 2008). For the British Army in the Middle East, J. Kitchen, *The British Imperial Army in the Middle East: Morale and Identity in the Sinai and Palestine Campaigns* (London, 2014). For the British Army in Italy, G. Oram, 'Pious Perjury: Discipline and Morale in the British Force in Italy, 1917-1918', *War in History*, Vol. 9 No. 4 (2002). For Irish Regiments in the British Army, T. Bowman, *The Irish Regiments in the Great War: Discipline and Morale* (Manchester, 2004). For the Royal Navy, L. Rowe, *Morale and Discipline in the Royal Navy during the First World War* (Cambridge, 2018). For France, E. Saint-Fuscien, *À vos ordres? La relation d'autorité dans l'armée française de la Grande Guerre* (Paris, 2011) or L.V. Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War I* (Princeton, 1994). For Italy, V. Wilcox, *Morale and the Italian Army during the First World War* (Cambridge, 2016). For Russia, J.A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War and Mass Politics, 1905-1925* (DeKalb, 2002). For Austria-Hungary, M. Cornwall, 'Morale and Patriotism in the Austro-Hungarian Army, 1914-1918', in J. Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997) 173-192.

⁵ G. Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War* (Basingstoke, 2000); J.G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-1918* (Oxford, 1991).

BEF not see a collapse or mutiny on the scale of other armies during the conflict?⁶

Underlying this is the more fundamental question of exactly what allows men to endure war. While it never experienced major collapse, some suggest that the BEF did face a number of crises during which the army's morale appeared particularly fragile. The withdrawal that took place after the Battle of Mons in 1914 and the slow transformation of the war of movement after the Battle of the Aisne into one of static trench lines has been seen as one of these moments.⁷ The failure of the Battle of the Somme in 1916 to bring about the war's end – and the soldiers' responses to this – has also been highlighted as a time when morale was at a low ebb.⁸ Lastly, many scholars point to late 1917 and early 1918 as the period when the British Army came closest to internal combustion.⁹ The BEF's one wartime mutiny occurred in September 1917 at Etaples. While this was limited in scale, only a few months later the army in Belgium and France faced its 'major crisis'.¹⁰ On 21 March 1918 the BEF retreated rapidly in the face of the German Spring Offensive. Some have suggested that this setback was, in part, a product of a fragile spirit among the men of the Fifth Army. Yet, even at its most stretched, the army did not disintegrate and the threat was eventually overcome and reversed.¹¹ Using these three periods as a frame, this thesis probes the enduring chronic stalemate that underpinned them. This approach offers a new perspective on the war's major moments, and questions to what extent the soldiers themselves ever saw these as periods of crisis.

Crisis can be understood as both a chronic and an acute phenomenon – a distinction that will be explained further in coming pages. Of course those men involved in the combat on days such as 1 July 1916 or 21 March 1918 would have sensed a growing tactical crisis. Yet, outside combat, soldiers' failure – or unwillingness – to perceive these moments as acute crises was fundamental to their understanding of the conflict. The troops studied here were, for the most part, more concerned with *chronic* crises – such as those of exhaustion or comfort – in the short term. They also thought obsessively about the future and filtered their experiences through this lens. Yet, they were able to overcome these challenges deploying a plethora of coping mechanisms drawn from their physical and social environment, as well as

⁶ I.F.W. Beckett, T. Bowman and M. Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2017) 153-154.

⁷ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 141-144.

⁸ P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford, 1975, 2000) 14; A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War: An Illustrated History* (London, 1963, 1969) 140.

⁹ D. Englander, 'Discipline and Morale in the British Army, 1917-1918', in Horne, *State, Society and Mobilization*, 141.

¹⁰ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 152.

¹¹ For Etaples, D. Gill and G. Dallas, 'Mutiny at Etaples Base in 1917', *Past & Present*, No. 69 (Nov., 1975) 88-112. For the Spring Offensive, P. Hart, *1918: A Very British Victory* (London, [2008] 2009); D. Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall: Victory and Defeat in 1918* (London, 2014) 30-112; J. Boff, *Winning and Losing on the Western Front: The British Third Army and the Defeat of Germany in 1918* (Cambridge, 2012) 1-2.

their own psychological resources. The men often failed to perceive crises in the same way as subsequent historians or contemporary elites. This may, as John Horne has described elsewhere, be a product of the divergence of historical time from local or individual time horizons. Both are located in assumptions regarding the world and its processes.¹² The war, in short, became the ‘new normal’. Men’s psychological resilience was nurtured through various cognitive processes – such as habituation, projection, information aversion, or nostalgia – combined with attitudes and ideas embedded in the men’s cultural, institutional, social, and physical situation. Morale was nurtured by the soldiers’ symbiotic relationship with their environment. The environment, here analysed in its broadest sense, was composed of physical, social, and psychological spheres, which overlapped and influenced the troops in myriad ways. This played a central role in their resilience, and allowed men to adapt to and justify the conflict. Furthermore, these environmental dimensions encouraged the troops to develop a sense of agency, even in the face of a military that enforced discipline. It offered men the ability to carve out their own meaningful world, in which they maintained the semblance of control over their destinies, and construed the war as constructive. It will be argued that morale was a much more complex phenomena than a simple series of inputs and outputs. It was a process, as complex as it was multifaceted.

While Alexander Watson has already deepened the historical understanding of First World War morale, this doctorate seeks to build upon his comparative study of British and German soldiers.¹³ It is more focussed – looking specifically at English infantrymen. This facilitates a deeper insight into their psyches and morale. It broaches issues not covered in *Enduring the Great War* – for example, the weather, rituals of burial, the impact of smell, the role of dreams, and the nature of duty. It also investigates change over time by focussing on temporal case studies of crisis war phases, and it borrows and applies theory from further afield and in more detail. The scale of this interdisciplinary approach is novel, and aids the discussion and evaluation of a large swathe of contemporary source material. It develops new insights into infantrymen’s sense-making, rationality, and endurance by providing a forensic analysis of English infantrymen’s perceptions of crisis and war. Soldiers’ responses (or lack thereof) to crisis are used to understand how resilience functions or does not function, which in turn sheds light on how soldiers endured the war.

The thesis analyses morale by deploying both this new analytical frame and a novel methodology. There are two overlapping but distinct questions regarding morale: how do men survive war and how do they overcome combat? This dissertation concentrates on the former,

¹² J. Horne, ‘Inventing the “Front”: Cognition and Reality in the Great War’, Lecture at King’s College London, 1 November 2016. For discussions of the nature of historical time see R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. K. Tribe (New York, [1979] 2004).

¹³ For the findings and methodology, Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 232-235.

though it will undoubtedly throw light on the latter. The use of interdisciplinary theories allows it to focus not only on what kept men in the trenches, but also on what sustained them on arduous route marches, during trying working parties, or while plagued by crippling boredom in a dugout or billet. It draws on new national and local archival material. However, the fragmentary nature of many – if not most – veterans' collections mean that sources are often composed of incomplete narratives. To offset this and provide the clearest insight possible, the thesis engages with a broad collection of source materials and has sought the unifying concepts embedded in them.

The analysis is concerned with *how the soldiers perceived the war at the time* and allies itself strongly with Ross Wilson's ethno-history approach.¹⁴ As such, it will predominantly use material written or collected during the war itself – though some memoir material is used sparingly. This is, in part, why the thesis excludes combat. Combat is hard – if not impossible – to historicise. There were moments of shock, despondency, and acute crisis amid the chaos of battle. Yet these moments were relatively rare and are hard to trace with accuracy, as letters and diaries were often written in the days and weeks following the events. Elsewhere, the thesis seeks to give voice to the rank-and-file by utilising documents and objects that were more readily produced and used by them. The sample used is much larger and broader than in the majority of other studies. Over 250 servicemens' private collections (of varying sizes) were consulted. These will be referenced in detail upon first being used as evidence and will thereafter be referred to in short-form.¹⁵ 92 of these men were officers, rose from the ranks, or were military chaplains. The over-representation of commissioned men plagues any study of this sort. However, while their accommodation and conditions were better, officers deployed similar strategies to their men as they endured chronic crisis. Where differences existed, such as in their perceptions of duty or England, these are explored. The size of some soldiers' files means that some men – such as H.T. Madders, A.P. Burke, or Lt. J.H. Johnson – appear more frequently in the analysis.¹⁶ Furthermore, some famous characters, such as Charles Carrington, are used alongside little known soldiers. However, the analysis is restricted to personal material produced during the war. The individuals were all chosen at random from a variety of six regiments from across England: two from Northern England, and one each from the West Midlands, the South-East,

¹⁴ R.J. Wilson, *Landscapes of the Western Front: Materiality during the Great War* (London, 2012) and R.J. Wilson, 'Strange Hells: A New Approach to the Western Front', *Historical Research*, Vol. 81, No. 211 (2008). For the history of mentalities during the Great see especially S. Audoin-Rouzeau, and A. Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War*, C. Temerson (trans.) (New York, 2002) and S. Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War 1914-1918: National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France During the First World War*, McPhail, H., (trans.) (Oxford, 1992, 1995).

¹⁵ A full list of the soldiers is available in the bibliography and is listed alphabetically by archive.

¹⁶ See Appendix III.

the South-West, and London.¹⁷ This has facilitated the dissertation's analysis of soldiers' sense of local identity as well as accounting for regional and urban/rural variation. The source selection mirrors demographic patterns discussed in Appendix II.

Some scholars have questioned how much men were willing to divulge in letters.¹⁸ Others, however, believe that they were able to convey aspects of their lives – and their 'selves' – in surprising detail.¹⁹ While 'proximity to events does not mean the sentiments expressed in letters or diaries were transparent' – there is much they can teach.²⁰ As Michael Roper has argued: 'the real value of letters as psychological sources becomes fully evident once we accept that emotional states are not wholly conscious, and take into account what is hinted at, unspoken, or unspeakable.'²¹ Undoubtedly, censorship and self-censorship played a role, so to more completely unpick men's 'emotional states' this study uses a wide array of contemporary letters, postcards, diaries, soldiers' newspapers, poems, war souvenirs, and cartoons. Each of these sources has its own limitations – depending on medium or audience – but by seeking correlations general themes emerge and can be explored. The contemporary documents are supported, where necessary, by memoirs and supplemented by a plethora of institutional documents, including POW interviews, War Diaries, meteorological reports, and training manuals. These are triangulated to build as complete a picture of soldiers' mentalities as possible, and the thematic chapters that follow reflect the ideas that emerged from the historical record with the greatest salience. While this is naturally an interpretive task it has allowed the study to make informed generalisations.

By studying the words and thoughts of soldiers this thesis looks at how men made sense of Belgium and France and were in turn moulded by the war and service in these countries. The discussion focuses on the infantry because it was their experience that was, arguably, the most consistently demoralising. To concentrate on English soldiers is not to suggest their British or Imperial identities were unimportant. There were multiple levels in these soldiers' identities, but the analysis focuses on their sense of regional Englishness because the sources suggest that it played the most prominent role in their perception of the war. Soldiers overwhelmingly recognised themselves as English. One man, reflecting this, wrote in a trench journal wondering why anyone 'first called our country "Blighty"' since it

¹⁷ See Appendix II.

¹⁸ I.R. Bet-El, *Conscripts: Forgotten Men of the Great War* (Stroud, 2009) 135, 137.

¹⁹ M. Hanna, 'A Republic of Letters: The Epistolary Tradition in France During World War I', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 108 No. 5 (2003) 23-24 and K. Hunter, 'More than an Archive of War: Intimacy and Manliness in the Letters of a Great War Soldier to the Woman He Loved, 1915-1919', *Gender & History*, Vol. 25 No. 2 (August 2013) 339.

²⁰ M. Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester, 2009) 20-21.

²¹ Ibid. 21

was such a ‘horrid name.’²² England, he felt, did the job perfectly. The soldiers studied here have mainly been drawn from six regiments – and, where possible, their museums’ collections. The geographical spread aims to give as representative a picture as possible. This has informed the choice of material, which is based on regiment and periodisation – whether the sources relate to the three crisis moments under examination - and not on the size of the file or a preliminary review of its contents. This modus operandi reduces the risk of any selectivity or bias when utilising the soldiers’ files. It also focuses on the Western Front because, as the theatre for the largest and longest deployment of English soldiers, the source material originating there is of a greater breadth and depth. Furthermore, since this thesis seeks to understand how, among other things, the physical environment influenced soldiers’ morale, it was also important to limit its scope.

Given the number of men who fought in 1914-1918, it would be impossible to provide a comprehensive survey of their mentalities or morale. Nor would it be appropriate to project a single narrative onto the war experience. Nevertheless, as Vanda Wilcox has suggested, the historian can provide valuable ‘snapshots... of officers and men’ that help to build a broader picture.²³ This analysis offers just such a ‘snapshot’ based on the correlations and patterns found in its source material. As such, the findings here should be considered alongside other theories of morale. Historical analysis should reflect morale’s multi-dimensionality.

This thesis will provide a new methodological approach and conceptual framework, which will provide fresh and important insights into the psyche and morale of English infantrymen during 1914-1918. What follows will first outline the dissertation’s definition of morale before explaining the centrality of the environment to this analysis. It will then consider the exact components of the physical and social environments before discussing the psychological processes that underlay men’s reaction to the conflict. Next, it analyses the components of ‘crisis’ in the Great War. It will then explain more thoroughly the methodological rationale behind the focus on English infantrymen before, finally, outlining the thesis’s chapters and explaining its thematic structure.

There are a number of ‘key terms’ that emerge from historical discussions of morale. Most commonly, ‘consent and coercion’ describe how men either willingly fought and continued to

²² T.J. Kealy, ‘A Blight on “Blighty”,’ *The Sussex Patrol: Incorporating the Sussex Signal*, Vol. 1 Iss. 11 (Apr 1, 1917) 4.

²³ Wilcox, *Morale in the Italian Army*, 17.

accept the war or reacted to a variety of ‘sticks’.²⁴ Niall Ferguson sees morale as a product of both. Coercion through discipline and punishment worked alongside tactics to build consent, such as food, leave, rest, and religion.²⁵ Vanda Wilcox has nuanced this by underlining the prevalence of ‘compliance’ and arguing that this was ‘the most common response of men across Europe’.²⁶ The definitions and determinants of morale are interrelated and the diversity of the scholarly interpretations of morale rests, in part, on the different ways in which academics and military thinkers have classified it. Generally, though, ‘it is seen as the foundation of proper management, which aims at increasing the collective capacity of a defined group’, be it ‘immediate’ or ‘imagined’.²⁷

The Second World War focussed military attention on broader issues of combat motivation. The complexity of morale was evident in S.L.A. Marshall’s *Men Against Fire*. Marshall believed that ‘morale is the thinking of an army’.²⁸ This broad definition reveals morale’s layers. Samuel Stouffer oversaw an investigation into the adjustment of American soldiers to the military after 1941. This work helped to explain the various dimensions of morale, providing a framework for the study of the individual at war. Among its many insights were a number of ideas and conclusions that now lie at the core of this thesis. Firstly, the study warned against imposing a top-down understanding of morale.²⁹ It also outlined the unique problems of infantrymen’s morale. These resulted primarily from proximity to combat, exposure to fire, and deficiencies in basic training. Infantrymen often wanted to switch to other branches of the military, which were perceived as less dangerous. This was bred by their belief that they would remain under enemy fire until injury, death, or peace. The study also developed the concept of ‘relative deprivation,’ whereby soldiers rationalise their service by comparing their situation, comfort, and danger to other members of the armed forces – or civilians in the war zone.³⁰

More recently, Alexander Watson defined morale ‘as the readiness of a soldier or a group of soldiers to carry out the commands issued by military leadership’.³¹ Vanda Wilcox approached morale more systematically. Seeing it as the interaction between men and the military she borrowed Jonathan Fennell’s definition: ‘the willingness of an individual or

²⁴ A. Kramer, ‘Recent Historiography of the First World War – Part I’ and ‘Recent Historiography of the First World War – Part II’, *Journal of Modern European History*, Vol. 12 (2014) 5-27 and 155-174.

²⁵ N. Ferguson, *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I*, (London, 1998) Ch. 12.

²⁶ Wilcox, *Morale and the Italian Army*, 16.

²⁷ D. Ussishkin, *Morale: A Modern British History* (Oxford, 2017) 1.

²⁸ S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire. The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (New York, 1966) 158.

²⁹ S.A. Stouffer, E.A. Suchman, L.C. DeVinney, S.A. Star, and R.M. Williams Jr, *The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life: Volume 1* (New York, 1949) 84.

³⁰ Ibid. 120, 330.

³¹ Watson, ‘Morale’ in Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, 176.

group to prepare for and to engage in an action required by an authority or institution.³² It is important to remember that military morale sees competing emotions in play, both positive and negative appreciations of individual and institutional actions and policies, and that these change over time. Wilcox argued that studies of morale must ‘differentiate between troops’ sentiment before, during, and after combat.³³ Fennell’s study of British troops in the Second World War successfully synthesised the issues that can affect morale (see Figure 1). These include endogenous and exogenous factors that cannot be disentangled, and Fennell highlights how institution, social group, individual, and environment interact.³⁴ This study does not seek to unpick every issue related to the morale of English infantrymen, but its thematic structure and focus on three kinds of environments encompasses a variety of morale’s stimuli. In particular, it analyses how the individual perceives institutional factors such as duty or training, social factors such as leadership or home, and exogenous factors including the government’s war aims, the enemy, weather or the terrain.

Figure 1: This image – Factors Affecting Morale of Troops, Commanders and Army. Fennell, ‘In Search of the “X” Factor: Morale and the Study of Strategy’, 809 – has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.

This thesis defines morale as the process by which men, positively or negatively, rationalised their role as soldiers and constructive members of the military. It is interested in the mechanism that allowed men to make sense of and rationalise the war. Could soldiers rationalise their place in the army? Could they have exercised any such choice? Studies into military discipline might suggest otherwise.³⁵ The use of ‘rationality’ stems from a psychological approach to morale. By viewing morale through this lens, one in which it was about persevering through the hardships and rationalising one’s service, this thesis will develop insights into the relationship between men’s perceptions, sense-making, and military morale. Morale is influenced by a variety of issues dependent on circumstance and is the product of a plethora of reactions to various stimuli, situations, and environments. Morale, it will be argued, is influenced, maintained, and (potentially) destroyed at the intersection of the physical environment, the social environment, and the soldiers’ psychological environment. These factors will now be introduced in turn.

³² Wilcox, *Morale and the Italian Army*, 4; J. Fennell, *Combat and Morale in the North African Campaign* (Cambridge, 2011) 9.

³³ Wilcox, *Morale and the Italian Army*, 4.

³⁴ J. Fennell, ‘In Search of the “X” Factor: Morale and the Study of Strategy’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 37 Issue 6-7 (2014) 809.

³⁵ C. Jahr, *Gewöhnliche Soldaten: Deserter und Deserteure im deutschen und britischen Heer 1914–1918* (Göttingen, 1998).

Environmental history provides a relatively unexploited approach to morale. Environments are, in this analysis, hybrid and not solely natural or social.³⁶ The thesis pursues an ‘Annales-style... history... and includes humans and the environment within one narrative, a co-history made of multiple interrelations.’³⁷ In many historical ‘environmental studies’ grand narratives chart changes in the natural world.³⁸ Yet, others focus on the environment’s role in shaping identities and ideas.³⁹ Most famously Fernand Braudel placed the Mediterranean at the heart of his study of the reign of Philip II of Spain.⁴⁰ Individuals are influenced – consciously and unconsciously – by what surrounds them, and they often mentally reconstruct their surroundings by imbuing the environment with emotion and meaning. It can even be ‘nationalized.’⁴¹ Importantly for morale, Linda Nash has argued ‘that agency is something that emerges from humans’ relationship with the physical world.⁴² The spatial turn provides similar opportunities. Spatial analyses have revealed the ways in which social relations are constructed and undertaken at the local level, and demonstrate the ways in which a landscape can become the focus of cultural conflict. What is more, spaces can distort perceptions of time and patterns of life.⁴³ These ideas inform this analysis and help to explain the story of soldiers’ morale.

The environment clouded English infantrymen’s decision-making but also provided the tools for survival. The Third Army censor believed that studying soldiers’ morale involved ‘peering into vast depths where one “sees the wheels go round,”’ and here he found

³⁶ For the environmental turn see P. Sutter, ‘The World with Us: The State of American Environmental History’, *Journal of American History*, Vol. 100 Issue 1 (June 2013) 94-119. This has influenced a number of the more interdisciplinary scholars of the Great War. See P. Cornish and N.J. Saunders, *Bodies in Conflict: Corporeality, Materiality, and Transformation* (London, 2009); R. Osgood and M. Brown, *Digging up Plugstreet: The Archaeology of a Great War Battlefield* (Sparkford, 2009); J.A. Wearn, A. Philip Budden, S.C. Veniard and D. Richardson, ‘The Flora of the Somme Battlefield: A Botanical Perspective on a Post-Conflict Landscape’, *First World War Studies*, Vol. 8 No. 1 (2017) 63-77; R.P. Tucker, T. Keller, J.R. McNeill and M. Schmid (eds.), *Environmental Histories of the First World War* (Cambridge, 2018); S. Daly, M. Salvante and V. Wilcox (eds.), *Landscapes of the First World War* (Cham, 2018).

³⁷ F. Locher and G. Quenet, ‘Environmental History: The Origins, Stakes, and Perspectives of a New Site for Research’, (trans. W. Bishop), *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, No. 56-4 (2009/4) 11-12.

³⁸ P. Brimblecombe, *The Big Smoke: A History of Air Pollution in London Since Medieval Times* (Cambridge, 1987).

³⁹ R. Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, 1967, 1982) or H.M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1988).

⁴⁰ F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II Vol: I-II*, trans. S. Reynolds (London, [1949] 1972-73, 1995).

⁴¹ R. White, ‘The Nationalization of Nature’, *Journal of American History*, Vol. 86 No. 3 (December 1999) 976-989.

⁴² L. Nash, ‘Furthering the Environmental Turn’, *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 100 Issue 1 (June 2013) 132.

⁴³ A. Torre, ‘A “Spatial Turn” in History? Landscapes, Visions, Resources’, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, Vol. 63 No. 5 (2008) 1127-1144. Also P. Stock, ‘History and the Uses of Space’, in P. Stock (ed.), *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History* (Basingstoke, 2015) 7.

that the ‘intricacy of men’s minds’ was in synchronicity with ‘the complex machinery of war.’ He went on: ‘so far as the spirit of the men is concerned, there seems little that can clog or hitch the mechanism.’⁴⁴ This officer correctly hinted at the complexity of soldier’s mentalities and the interrelationship between men’s minds and the war’s machinations. Men’s lives and perceptions adapted to and began to mirror the patterns of the war – the systems of rotation, the ‘morning hate,’ and other dimensions of army life became predictable and routine. Battle was a punctuation mark in the normal procedure of life at war. The focus on the environment allows this study to broach themes not covered elsewhere. The Western Front and the BEF, as environments, came to occupy a central role in the soldiers’ perceptions.

Soldiers’ diaries are littered with references to carrying on ‘as normal’ – a normality that was constructed against the backdrop of the physical and social environment.⁴⁵ A process of cognitive habituation took place, which saw men adapt to their new world. They were able to find meaning in it and through minor acts such as naming trenches were able to mask their loss of agency and personalise the war experience. Of course, men were not socialised by the Western Front alone; they continued to be encumbered by their previous life experiences, although some were so young that the conflict may have been central to their development. Human beings are quick to adapt, and this new environment influenced and constrained the ways in which they were able to make sense of the war.

The Physical Environment

The physical and natural environment provided a very apparent limit on soldiers’ perspective. It not only constrained their vision in the trenches – and their ability to comprehend their situation – but also affected them in subtler ways.⁴⁶ It provided chances for escapism, and opportunities to justify or come to terms with their experiences. The Sinai and Palestine front is at the forefront of Edward Woodfin’s analysis of morale.⁴⁷ The flora, fauna, geography and climate of the Western Front were just as important for combatants in Western Europe.⁴⁸ Ross Wilson has asserted that ‘understanding the soldiers’ “sense of place” within the war

⁴⁴ IWM 84/46/1: Capt. M. Hardie, Report on III Army Morale, January 1917: p 1.

⁴⁵ Liddle/WW1/GS/0137: Pte. O.G. Billingham, Diary 1917-1918.

⁴⁶ See A. Becker, ‘Le front militaire et les occupations de la Grande Guerre comme <<laboratoires>> de destruction de la nature et de la culture’, in P. Bonin and T. Pozzo, *Nature ou Culture: Les colloques de l’institut universitaire de France* (Saint-Etienne, 2015) 193-204. For a similar analysis of the Italian Front see T. Keller, ‘The Mountains Roar: The Alps during the Great War’, *Environmental History*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2009).

⁴⁷ E. Woodfin, *Camp and Combat on the Sinai and Palestine Front* (London, 2012).

⁴⁸ J. Lewis-Stempel, *Where Poppies Blow: The British Soldier, Nature, The Great War* (London, 2016).

landscape' is essential and that 'this perception of "place" enabled troops to attribute meaning to the violent, unpredictable and alien scenes they witnessed and inhabited.'⁴⁹ Wilson probed men's relationship with the 'material landscape' and investigated issues of agency and action that emerged from the relationships between people, materials and landscape.⁵⁰

The Western Front's landscape could become soldiers' greatest enemy; 'trench life was a fight against the elements.'⁵¹ This thesis focuses specifically on winter as a theme that emerges in soldiers' sources. Ashworth argued the season provided a 'common enemy' against which the energies of both sides were directed.⁵² The weather impeded men's willingness to follow orders – disciplinary issues were most evident during the winter period.⁵³ Yet the literature on the relationship between winter and troop morale during the Great War remains limited. There are two notable exceptions. Dan Todman has argued that 'mud' is 'used to evoke a broader myth of the horror of the First World War.'⁵⁴ It is a feature of a common narrative by the men who fought in France and Belgium.⁵⁵ Similarly, Santanu Das has effectively demonstrated the suffering, both physical and psychological, engendered by the Western Front's 'slimescapes'.⁵⁶ The physical environment was capable of sapping men's strength as the strains of service ate at their physical and emotional resilience.

Tony Ashworth argued that 'soldiers strove with success for control over their environment and thereby radically changed the nature of their war experience.'⁵⁷ He distinguished between active and quiet sectors of the frontline. 'Cushy' sectors were 'tolerable, even comfortable' and provided a 'profound' contrast to the areas characterised by violence. Ashworth demonstrated the interplay between environment and truces.⁵⁸ Edgar Jones on the other hand has explored how the 'moral' environment of the front might have been preferable to that of rear zones. Strict military discipline was relaxed in the face of the reality of trench life.⁵⁹ Audoin-Rouzeau has contended that a 'brotherhood' emerged among French soldiers who had endured the frontlines. The death of comrades did not remove them

⁴⁹ Wilson, *Landscapes of the Western Front*, 1.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 7-8. See also D. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London, 1991); B. Latour, 'The Powers of Association', in J. Law (ed.), *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?* (London, 1987) 264-280; E. Hirsch and M.O. O'Hanlon (eds.), *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspective on Space and Place* (Oxford, 1995); C. Tilley, *A Phenmenology of Landscape: Paths, Places and Monuments* (Oxford, 1994).

⁵¹ A. Fletcher, *Life, Death and Growing Up on the Western Front* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013) 143. See also M.I. Gurfein and M. Janowitz, 'Trends in Wehrmacht Morale', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Spring, 1946) 83.

⁵² T. Ashworth, *Trench Warfare, 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System* (London, 1980, 2000) 26.

⁵³ Bowman, *Irish Regiments in the Great War*, 50-51.

⁵⁴ D. Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London, 2005) 20.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 9.

⁵⁶ S. Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge, 2005) 35-72.

⁵⁷ Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 14-15.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 176.

⁵⁹ E. Jones, 'The Psychology of Killing: The Combat Experience of British Soldiers during the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 41 No. 2 (2006) 229-231.

from this social group, and facilitated the formation of a ‘cult of the dead.’⁶⁰ Yet medical anthropologist W.H.R. Rivers contended that men had found it hard to adapt.⁶¹ This was perhaps because the Western Front was, in many places, a violent world where death was a persistent reminder of the individual’s mortality. Not only this: the destruction that they witnessed was at once disgusting, perverse, and unnerving.⁶² As Alexander Watson has argued, it was ‘the notion of uncontrollability, rather than discomfort or the objective danger of the trenches, which was the primary cause of stress.’⁶³

Yet, the physical environment also played a part in the emotional and mystical world of soldiers. Men generated agency by personalising their surroundings. Some historians have suggested that the British asserted ideas of ownership over their area of operations. Chris Ward characterised the British zones as ‘Befland’ and the soldiers as ‘Beflanders’ or even colonists.⁶⁴ The physical landscape could fuse with identity. The Anglicisation of the forward zones was a key aspect of the men’s psychological recalibration and facilitated a sense of ownership. Some areas became infamous. The men internalised an alternative map of northern France and Belgium, which was at once familiar, evocative, ‘enchanted and mythical.’⁶⁵ Ward argued that these names provided ‘a means by which immigrants asserted their presence’ and were ‘expressive of cultural identity.’⁶⁶ In highlighting the existence of ‘front-line gardening’ Alexander Watson has demonstrated the existence of such assertions of identity in microcosm.⁶⁷ Similarly, archaeological evidence – in the form of food, drink, alcohol, and personal comforts – reflected ‘small expressions of personality in the midst of the ranks.’⁶⁸ This thesis will explore how men became attached to the Western Front and, in turn, how this influenced their perceptions of the conflict.

The Social Environment

The soldiers’ immediate and imagined social environment also influenced their morale. It was society and the social group that engendered/framed their moral attitudes and, frequently, provided their emotional encouragement. The social environment was layered. At war, it revolved around the ‘regiment’ or the even more immediate military structure – company, platoon, or section. It also included soldiers’ imagined social group, which encompassed

⁶⁰ Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War*, 83-85.

⁶¹ Jones, ‘The Psychology of Killing’, 229-231.

⁶² Wilson, *Landscapes of the Western Front*, 80-86.

⁶³ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 34.

⁶⁴ C. Ward, *Living on the Western Front: Annals and Stories, 1914-1919* (London, 2013) 95-98, 204.

⁶⁵ P. Chasseaud, *Rats Alley: Trench Names of the Western Front, 1914-1918*, (Stroud, 2006) 47.

⁶⁶ Ward, *Living on the Western Front*, 92.

⁶⁷ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 24.

⁶⁸ Osgood and Brown, *Digging up Plugstreet*, 104.

family, friends, and colleagues in England. Many men continued to see themselves as part of their community back home, and sometimes held even more abstract notions linked to the wider nation. These social environments could provide comfort, solace, and resolve; but they could also coerce explicitly and implicitly. They are a central feature of many of the secondary studies on morale and resilience.

The social environment was at the core of one of the most regularly cited works on combat motivation. Morris Janowitz and Edward A. Shils argued that it was the cohesion of the 'primary group' that allowed German soldiers to endure the strain of combat and continue fighting towards the end of the Second World War.⁶⁹ 'Primary group theory' has influenced much of the literature on the subject – including Baynes's study of the Second Battalion Scottish Rifles at Neuve Chapelle.⁷⁰ Baynes and others have argued that the British regimental system was key to the BEF's resilience. It created an environment, through its history and power of assimilation, which was fundamental to overcoming the impact of heavy casualties.⁷¹

Samuel Stouffer and S.L.A. Marshall also explored the military social context.⁷² Marshall's emphasis was on training.⁷³ Successful systems of military indoctrination and instruction facilitate military efficiency. Mutinies and indiscipline, however, suggest that other forces are also at work. Indeed, more recent scholarship contends that the military was aware of a need to channel and control culture. The British Army organised political and social instruction during the latter stages of the war.⁷⁴ Indeed, all armies of the Great War were forced to begin harnessing and developing their soldiers' loyalties to hearth, home, and nation.⁷⁵ Yet the military could also manipulate men through creating specific social environments. Several scholars maintain 'that the policy of constant aggression mandated by the command structure prevailed in the end.'⁷⁶ Hew Strachan has demonstrated how training's impact upon morale is multifaceted and of fundamental importance.⁷⁷ Training could teach and empower men.

⁶⁹ E.A. Shils and M. Janowitz, 'Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 12 (1948) 280-315.

⁷⁰ J. Baynes, *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage, The Second Scottish Rifles at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle 1915* (London, 1987).

⁷¹ Bowman, *Irish Regiments in the Great War*, 10-31.

⁷² Stouffer, et. al., *The American Soldier* and Marshall, *Men Against Fire*.

⁷³ Marshall, *Men Against Fire*, 22.

⁷⁴ S.P. Mackenzie, 'Morale and the Cause: The Campaign to Shape the Outlook of Soldiers in the British Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918', *Canadian Journal of History/Annales Canadiennes d'Histoire*, XXV (August, 1990) 215-232.

⁷⁵ Watson, 'Morale', in Winter, *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, 195.

⁷⁶ Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience* and A. Watson, 'Culture and Combat in the Western World, 1900-1945', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (June, 2008) 530.

⁷⁷ H. Strachan, 'Training, Morale and Modern War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 41 No. 2, (2006). Also V. Wilcox, 'Training, Morale and Battlefield Performance in the Italian Army, 1914-

A greater focus on the soldier helps explain how individuals internalise and cope with the strains of war. John Keegan believed that ‘some exploration of the combatant’s emotions... is essential to the truthful writing of military history.’⁷⁸ In considering crowd psychology Keegan provided new insights. He focussed on junior leadership and small-unit cohesion, but his appreciation of the individual and emotional experience of soldiers was novel.⁷⁹ Conversely, Eric Leed emphasised soldiers’ alienation. Military coercion left them incapable of engaging with the events in which they were involved.⁸⁰ Denis Winter also argued men became passive combatants after only a few months, but suggested they were able to ‘find a satisfactory home within the army’.⁸¹ Benjamin Ziemann concluded that there was no space for complaint within the boundaries of military justice. It was this that subdued insurrection for so long.⁸² Christoph Jahr likewise emphasised the British Army’s aggressive disciplinary record, but also suggested that its increasingly civilian identity imbued the BEF with a flexibility that helped it endure.⁸³ Similarly, Tony Ashworth argued that a ‘live-and-let-live system’ rested on German and British soldiers’ perception of their General Staff as the enemy of the frontline soldier.⁸⁴ Ashworth provided evidence that men could think and act outside the confines of military discipline and official culture. However, coercion and military organisation remained dominant.⁸⁵ The military was a social environment that was capable of constraining individual action.

Isabel V. Hull has demonstrated the strength of the military’s social environment. While war is extraordinary, militaries remain institutions that are in many ways similar to others.⁸⁶ Military culture, which is ‘a particular variant of organizational culture,’ focuses ‘on patterns of cognition and practice that organizations.’ These are built ‘from the past’ and embedded ‘in methods of operation, routines, expectations, and basic assumptions.’ Hull has probed the German military’s ‘irrationality and dysfunction’ and its ‘unconscious’ or ‘hidden’ tenets.⁸⁷ Aimée Fox has revealed the ways in which the British Army’s ‘ethos focused on a

1917’, in J. Krause (ed.), *The Greater War: Other Combatants and Other Fronts, 1914-1918* (Basingstoke, 2014).

⁷⁸ J. Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (Harmondsworth, 1983) 17

⁷⁹ Ibid. 204-80.

⁸⁰ E.J. Leed, *No Man’s Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge, 1979, 1981).

⁸¹ D. Winter, *Death’s Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (London, 1978) 140.

⁸² B. Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany* (Oxford, 2011).

⁸³ Jahr, *Gewöhnliche Soldaten*.

⁸⁴ Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*.

⁸⁵ For a more explicit statement of this, M. Van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and US Army Performance: 1939-1945* (London, 1983). For a discussion of how the French Army actively adapted its disciplinary policy during the war, allowing it to become less severe, see Saint-Fuscien, *À vos ordres?*

⁸⁶ I.V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Cornell, 2005) 1-23 and 95-99.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 92.

preference for amateurism, a distaste for prescription, and an emphasis on the character of the individual.⁸⁸ It is necessary to probe the relationship between the individual soldier and the military institution as a social environment with a particular culture.

Other social environments played an important part in morale. Pre-war cultural attitudes continued to be of relevance. Peter Simkins argued ‘that the nature of British society in 1914-18 provided a bedrock of social cohesion which prevented the BEF from total collapse.’⁸⁹ Jay Winter was more specific in highlighting the nature of Britain’s ‘highly disciplined labour force’ and its contribution to the ‘BEF’s obedience and robustness.’⁹⁰ Gary Sheffield sees inter-rank relations as an extension of pre-war class relations. The paradigm of deference-paternalism between the upper-class (or upper-middle class) officers and working-class other ranks sustained men.⁹¹ Furthermore, it has been claimed that the reality of pre-war life, particularly for the urban working class, might have engendered resilience to hardship.⁹² Thus John Bourne asserted that the coping mechanisms developed in peace, of impassivity and solidarity, supported many working-class men in the trenches.⁹³ Peter Hodgkinson has recently adapted and repeated many of these arguments – his focus, though, is on the uniquely ‘Victorian’ attributes of manliness and stoicism.⁹⁴

A number of commentators have applied the ideas set out above more directly to the social environments found in war. J.G. Fuller demonstrated how the army continued to embrace dimensions of popular culture. Leisure activities behind the lines imbued the men with the ‘humour and sceptical stoicism’ to persevere through the adversity of the front-line experiences.⁹⁵ Helen McCartney saw the civil identity of the Liverpool Territorials as a crucial aspect of their endurance.⁹⁶ Leonard Smith has investigated the ways in which the traditions of democratic and republican France interacted and interrelated with discipline.⁹⁷ Similarly, Joshua Sanborn has discussed the importance of patriotism and collective identity in the Imperial Russian Army.⁹⁸ There is also evidence of soldiers’ coping mechanisms in the oral and literary culture of the army. Songs, trench journals, and theatre were a source of

⁸⁸ A. Fox, *Learning to Fight: Military Innovation and Change in the British Army, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 2018) 21.

⁸⁹ P. Simkins, ‘Everyman at War: Recent Interpretations of the Front Line Experience’, in B. Bond (ed.), *The First World War and British Military History* (Oxford, 1991) 301.

⁹⁰ J. Winter, *The Experience of World War I* (London, 1988, 2000) 159.

⁹¹ Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*, 72-3.

⁹² A. Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2008) 278.

⁹³ J. Bourne, ‘The British Working Man in Arms’, in H. Cecil and P. Liddle (eds.), *Facing Armageddon. The First World War Experienced* (London, 1996, 2003) 342-350.

⁹⁴ P. Hodgkinson, *Glum Heroes: Hardship, Fear and Death – Resilience and Coping in the British Army on the Western Front, 1914-1919* (Exeter, 2016) 93-105.

⁹⁵ Fuller, *Troop Morale*, 175-8.

⁹⁶ H. McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge, 2011).

⁹⁷ Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience*, 175-214.

⁹⁸ Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation*, 12.

courage and an outlet for sarcasm and veiled criticism with less danger of punishment than more explicit protest.⁹⁹ Craig Gibson has looked closely at relationships that developed outside the boundaries of the military. Tracing the interactions between British soldiers and French civilians, Gibson proposed that, despite tensions, these interactions reminded British troops of the home for which they were fighting.¹⁰⁰ Others have suggested that the sexual relationships between men and civilian women behind the lines may have also been key.¹⁰¹ All of these social environmental factors informed and manipulated soldiers' frames of reference and influenced their perceptions of the conflict in ways that need to be explored further.

The social environment was not only an immediate and tangible entity, but was also imagined. Michael Roper has underlined the deep and sustaining links between combatants and home – particularly those between the soldier and his mother.¹⁰² It was – as this thesis will also argue – the image of a subjective and personalised imagined social environment, that revolved around 'home,' which proved to be a great constant in the lives of men at war. Religion was also a pillar of some men's imagined social world. For some, it provided both solace and support. Madigan and Houlihan argue that soldiers' reactions to their military clergy were key and that they played an important role in maintaining fighting men's spirit.¹⁰³ Adrian Gregory proposed that silence reveals the existence of internalised religiosity.¹⁰⁴ Both religion and other cultural phenomena that accompanied these social environments played a role in men's rationalisation of war and service. This thesis will focus, in particular, on the ways in which the military social context and the imagined social environment at home influenced soldiers' sense of duty and helped them to cope with war.

The Psychological Environment

Unlike the other environments discussed here, the psychology of soldiers was not an exogenous variable. Yet, as men internalised and processed what they encountered, they re-

⁹⁹ E. Hanna, "Say it with Music": Combat, Courage and Identity in the Songs of the RFC/RAF, 1914-1918', *British Journal for Military History*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2018) 91-120.

¹⁰⁰ C. Gibson, *Behind the Front: British Soldiers and French Civilians 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 2014) and 'Sex and Soldiering in France and Flanders: The British Expeditionary Force along the Western Front, 1914-1919', *International History Review*, Vol. 23 (2001) 539-579.

¹⁰¹ B. Cherry, *They Didn't Want to Die Virgins: Sex and Morale in the British Army on the Western Front* (Wolverhampton, 2016); S. Grayzel, 'Mothers, Marraines, and Prostitutes: Morale and Morality in First World War France', *International History Review*, Vol. 19 (1997) 66-82; J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London, 1996) 155-156.

¹⁰² Roper, *The Secret Battle*, 13.

¹⁰³ E. Madigan, *Faith Under Fire: Anglican Army Chaplains and the Great War* (Basingstoke, 2011) and P.J. Houlihan, *Clergy in the Trenches: Catholic Military Chaplains of Germany and Austria Hungary* (Chicago, 2011).

¹⁰⁴ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 152-186.

projected an adulterated picture. Their frames of reference and instinctive cognitive impulses distorted and reoriented the world around them, often imbuing both their social and physical surroundings with meaning and significance. The English infantrymen's *Weltanschauung* – literally 'world perception,' the internal conditions that influence actors' very understanding of their surroundings – should be considered a third (albeit less tangible) dimension of the environment.¹⁰⁵ It may not have surrounded the men, but it informed the way they saw and interpreted their physical and social environments. V.G. Liulevicius described this as a 'mandscape... the mental landscape conjured up by looking out over an area: ways of organizing the perception of territory, its characteristic features and landmarks.'¹⁰⁶ The external world was inseparable from the soldiers' internal domain.¹⁰⁷

The psychological environment exists implicitly in Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker's work, which has driven forward a *histoire des mentalités* approach to 1914-1918.¹⁰⁸ As well as exploring cultural belief systems, they have underlined the changing nature of violence during these years and the psychological impact of the wounds and suffering engendered by the struggle's duration and intensity. They, in turn, discuss the processes of brutalisation engendered by the conflict.¹⁰⁹ Audoin-Rouzeau's *Men at War* mapped French soldiers' thinking, providing a complex picture of soldiers' feelings and motivations.¹¹⁰

The war was as much a psychological as a physical experience. Many years ago, Arthur Marwick argued that twentieth century conflict had forced individuals to undergo 'colossal psychological change.'¹¹¹ Soldiers' lives were constrained by environments that were primarily processed through and influenced by their own cognitive processes. This helped them, when faced by the conflict's revulsions and terrors, to come to terms with war. Alexander Watson has noted that psychology is underused in historical studies of morale. However, a number of scholars have begun to tackle the subject with the support of literature

¹⁰⁵ For *Weltanschauung* and soldiers see O. Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (Oxford, 1992) esp. 134 and 148.

¹⁰⁶ V.G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge, 2009) 151.

¹⁰⁷ For discussions of 'worldviews' see P.G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, 2008) For *Weltanschauung*, S. Freud, 'Lecture XXXV: A Philosophy of Life', *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. W.J.H. Sprott (New York, 1933) or H-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London, 1975).

¹⁰⁸ Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, 14-18, 18.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 25-27, 35. For the brutalization thesis see G.L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, 1990). For discussions of violence and destruction see R. Gerwath and J. Horne, 'Vectors of Violence: Paramilitarism in Europe after the Great War, 1917-1923', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 83, No. 3 (Sep. 2011); R. Gerwath, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917-1923* (London, 2016); A. Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford, 2007) 68.

¹¹⁰ Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War*, 36-184.

¹¹¹ A. Marwick, *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1974) 11-14.

from this discipline.¹¹² Watson's own monograph is an excellent example of the effective application of this multidisciplinary approach.¹¹³

There have been a number of other psychological approaches to the study of the war.¹¹⁴ Strikingly, the belief that endurance might be linked to a primeval instinct to fight and kill can be found in a number of historical investigations.¹¹⁵ This begs an important question: are humans programmed to accept and even enjoy war? Douglas Fry provides the most nuanced answer to this question. He accepts the innate human capacity for aggression, but points to the pervasiveness of peaceful social groups in prehistory as evidence that there is also a solid foundation for the pursuit of peace.¹¹⁶ The material researched in this thesis suggests that Fry's more nuanced message about human psychology holds true for these First World War soldiers. Their records reveal the varied attempts that were made to construe the conflict constructively rather than antagonistically. As Benjamin Ziemann reminds us, killing can only be understood as 'the product of a complex military organization' that 'provides the technology, personnel and institutional resources for the perpetration of violence.'¹¹⁷

Men were capable of attributing sense to war and this played a central role in their endurance. Referencing the work of Tim Edensor, Matt Leonard has argued that as humans 'we may be able to "see" that an environment is unfamiliar, but it is the processes conducted by the rest of the senses that enables us to navigate strange places without harm. We have the ability to temporarily renegotiate our sensorial arrangement with everyday life in order to protect ourselves, as we instinctively know whether we are in an "understood" environment or one that is alien to us.'¹¹⁸ Men were able to understand the world around them via conscious and unconscious mechanisms of normalisation, familiarisation, and personalisation. It could very quickly become routine: 'one remembers various incidents but the majority of days were very similar to each other.'¹¹⁹ Men made continuous attempts to re-calibrate their experience, often using their environment – physical and social – as their point of reference.

¹¹² Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 5. See also Hodgkinson, *Glum Heroes*, vi-xvii and S. Linden, *The Called it Shell Shock: Combat Stress in the First World War* (Exeter, 2016). For a broader analysis of command, N. Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* (London, 1976, 1994).

¹¹³ Watson uses E. Becker's discussion of fear and death, P.L. Bernstein's notions of risk, S.E. Taylor and J.D. Brown's theories of positivity, and S. Milgram's model of obedience.

¹¹⁴ Jones, 'The Psychology of Killing', 236; S. Wessely, 'Twentieth-Century Theories of Combat Motivation and Breakdown', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 41. No. 2 (Apr., 2006) 269-286.

¹¹⁵ J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare* (London, 1999) 13; Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, 357.

¹¹⁶ D.P. Fry, *The Human Potential for Peace: An Anthropological Challenge to Assumptions about War and Violence* (Oxford, 2005).

¹¹⁷ B. Ziemann, *Violence and the German Soldier in the Great War: Killing, Dying, Surviving*, trans. A. Evans (London, 2017) 5.

¹¹⁸ T. Edensor, 'Sensing the Ruin', *The Senses and Society*, Vol. 2 Issue 2 (2007) 217-232 referenced by M. Leonard, 'A Senseless War', *World War I Centenary: Continuations and Beginnings* <<http://ww1centenary.oucs.ox.ac.uk/body-and-mind/a-senseless-war/>>, accessed 19 June 2016>.

¹¹⁹ RFM.ARC.2012.264: Sgt. Osborn, Diary 23 and 25 September 1914; IWM 80/19/1: Cpl. R.G. Plint, Memoir of 1916: p 11.

As Alexander Watson has previously argued, ‘human faith, hope and optimism, no less than cultural traits, discipline, primary groups and patriotism, explain why and how men were willing and able to fight in the horrendous conditions of the Western Front.’¹²⁰ Soldiers’ ‘hope’ was intimately related to their morale. Ultimately, they wanted to survive and for peace to come. Utilising psychological literature, this study sees hope as a cognitive function, one that is influenced by emotions but is ultimately goal-orientated. Hope, in this instance, ‘is defined as goal-directed thinking in which people perceive that they can produce routes to desired goals (pathways thinking) and the requisite motivation to use those routes (agency thinking).’¹²¹ Positivity and optimism – and their antitheses – operate within the boundaries of hope. Hope can be affected by emotional reactions – such as anger, despondency, disappointment or confidence – to obstacles that arise in the pursuit of these objectives. The war very quickly became a ‘route march’, at the end of which was peace.¹²² Peace was a point of reference and a sustaining image. As William Anderson noted in his diary: ‘we hear odd bits of peace talk... our most fervent hopes are that these straws show which way the wind blows, and that very soon we may be retracing our steps towards our dear homeland, looking forward to happier times.’¹²³ Soldiers’ interpretation of the war as a long road to a victorious peace bred a resilience that made this hope sustaining.¹²⁴

This study focuses on psychological resilience as a dimension of military morale. This reflects a relatively recent scholarly focus and it refers, at least in the psychological literature, ‘to the process of coping with or overcoming exposure to adversity or stress.’¹²⁵ Modern militaries have developed programmes to inculcate psychological resilience in service members faced by the strains of deployment in the twenty-first century. Even these have an unknown effect, and one hundred years ago no such institutional procedures existed. Nonetheless, many of the ingredients of psychological resilience that have been outlined in

¹²⁰ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 107.

¹²¹ S.J. Lopez, C.R. Snyder and J.T. Pedrotti, ‘Hope: Many Definitions, Many Measures’, in S.J. Lopez and C.R. Snyder, *Positive Psychological Assessment: A Handbook of Models and Measures* (London, 2003) 94.

¹²² Capt. M. Hardie, ‘3rd Section Report on Complaints, Moral, Etc. (1916)’. See also NAM 2005-02-6: Capt. M. Asprey, Letter Mother 27 September 1914; IWM 06/5/2: Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother, 11 November 1916; IWM 77/33/1: Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 28 and 31 December 1916; NAM 7403-29-486-144: Sgt. H. Hopwood, Letter 12 October 1917; IWM 01/21/1: H.T. Madders, Diary 14 October 1918.

¹²³ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letters October through December 1916.

¹²⁴ IWM 96/24/1: Pte. W.M. Anderson, Diary 11 November 1916.

¹²⁵ A. Mayhew, ‘Hoping for Victorious Peace: Morale and the Future on the Western Front’, in A. Luptak, H. Smyth and L. Halewood (eds.), *War Time: First World War Perspectives on Temporality* (Abingdon, 2018).

¹²⁶ L.S. Meredith et al. ‘Promoting Psychological Resilience in the U.S. Military’, *Rand Health Quarterly*, Vol. 1 No. 2 (Summer 2011) (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4945176/>, accessed 9 August 2017). See also R. McGarry, S. Walklate, G. Mythen, ‘A Sociological Analysis of Military Resilience: Opening Up the Debate’, *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 41, Issue 2 (2015) 199-220.

modern studies can be found among the First World War Englishmen studied here (see Table 1). These were the product of the individual, the group, and the physical environment.

Individual-Level Factors	Unit-Level Factors	Community-Level Factors
Positive Coping (Managing Circumstances)	Command Climate (Pride, Support and Leadership)	Belongingness (Integration, Friendship etc.)
Spiritual Coping (Faith-Based Beliefs and Support)	Teamwork (Coordination and Flexibility)	Cohesion (Bonds with Community/Shared Values)
Positive Affect (Deploying Positive Emotions)	Cohesion (Combined Actions, Bonding and Commitment)	Connectedness (Quality and Number of Connections with People or Place)
Positive Thinking (Enthusiasm, Reframing, Hope)		Collective Efficacy (Perception of Group's Ability to Work Together)
Realism (Realistic Expectations and Perceived Agency)		
Behavioural Control (Self-Regulation, Self-Management, Self-Enchantment)		
Physical Fitness		
Altruism (Selfless Concern for Others' Welfare)		

Table 1: Factors Promoting Resilience, adapted from L.S. Meredith et al. 'Promoting Psychological Resilience in the U.S. Military', *Rand Health Quarterly*, Vol. 1 No. 2 (Summer 2011).

The environment was normalised, understood, and overcome through habituation and familiarisation. Habituation sees organisms cease or decrease their reaction to stimuli and helps explain how humans adapt to war. Reduced reactions could, for example, influence perceptions of shellfire. Scholars have also noted the return of normal reactions if the stimuli are held back or removed – this might explain men's more pronounced reactions to war after leave.¹²⁶ There is evidence that 'habituation training' can help to explain men's adjustment and readjustment to the frontlines. In some cases, however, stronger stimuli yield little habituation.¹²⁷ Habituation is both multi-dimensional and specific – thus men could normalise certain aspects of war, while still finding new or shocking experiences terrifying. This is a two-way process and dishabituation can occur when strong stimuli reduce reductive responses to other issues – this might explain periods when men sometimes entered an irreversible period of having the 'wind-up.'

Undoubtedly habituation varied in effectiveness between individuals – some men never managed to adjust and others began to unravel and sometimes broke down.¹²⁸ Shell

¹²⁶ IWM 08/66/1: 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter to his Wife 25 December 1916; RFM.ARC.2495.5: Sgt. S. Gill, Diary 30 October 1916; H.T. Madders, Diary 2 March 1918.

¹²⁷ C.H. Rankin et al., 'Habituation Revisited: An Updated and Revised Description of Behavioural Habituation', *Neurobiology of Learning and Memory*, Vol. 92 (2009) 136-137

¹²⁸ RFM.ARC.2012.958: E.T. Marler, Diary October – December 1916.

shock or war neurosis, now known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), demonstrated how fear, stress, and trauma could undermine endurance. Either a single disruptive event or prolonged exposure to things perceived as traumatic can undermine psychological defence mechanisms.¹²⁹ Approximately 36 per cent of British post-war pensions were awarded to men with war neurosis. However, it is estimated that there were '325,000 psychiatric casualties during the war, 143,000 of them cases of shell shock... [and that] this represents only 5.7 per cent of the army's military manpower.'¹³⁰ Some cases were undoubtedly dismissed or went unreported.¹³¹ Yet it would seem that most men did adjust to war, perhaps because long-term habituation meant that they could maintain a state of habituation for weeks at a time.¹³² This psychological mechanism lies at the core of human cognition and played a vital part in endurance.

The soldiers' psychological environment was informed by their 'frames of reference' and was constrained by 'bounded rationality.' These concepts help to explain how decisions are influenced by the environment, culture, and available information. Human rationality and choice is contingent on the opportunities that are perceived to be available. There is an important coalescence of perspective and supposition. A 'frame of reference' is 'the context, view-point, or set of presuppositions or of evaluative criteria within which a person's perception and thinking seem always to occur, and which constrains selectively the course and outcome of these activities.'¹³³ Decisions and perceptions are produced by subjective readings of situations. Importantly, psychologists have shown that frames of reference are 'malleable.'¹³⁴ Sönke Neitzel and Harold Welzer have offered their interpretation of German soldiers' frames of reference in 1939-45. 'The ability,' they argued, 'to interpret and decide presupposes orientation and knowledge of what one is dealing with and what consequences a decision can have. And a frame of reference is what provides orientation.' A member of a specific group is unable 'to interpret what he sees outside references not of his own choice or making.' These frames 'guarantee economy of action so that most of what happens can be sorted within a familiar matrix.' The authors outline other dimensions of frames of reference:

¹²⁹ For shell shock and PTSD see B. Shephard, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists, 1914-1994* (London, 2002); P. Leese, *Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War* (Basingstoke, 2002); E. Jones and S. Wessely, *Shell Shock to PTSD: Military Psychiatry from 1900 to the Gulf War* (Hove, 2005); E. Jones, 'War Neuroses', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, Vol. 67 No. 3 (2012) 345-373; F. Reid, *Broken Men: Shell Shock, Treatment and Recovery in Britain, 1914-1930* (London, 2011); J. Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London, 2005), ch. 7.

¹³⁰ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army*, 158.

¹³¹ Leese, *Traumatic Neurosis*, 9.

¹³² Rankin, 'Habituation Revisited', 136-137.

¹³³ 'Frame of Reference,' A. Bullock and O. Stallybrass (eds.), *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* (Bungay, 1977) 243.

¹³⁴ N.S. Newcombe, D.H. Uttal and M. Sauter, 'Spatial Development', P.D. Zelazo (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Development Psychology: Volume I Body and Mind* (Oxford, 2013) 576.

1. 'Those that 'comprise of socio-historical space that, in most respects, can be clearly delimited' – such as the duration of a dictatorial regime.
2. Those that 'consist of a concrete constellation of sociohistorical events' – such as a war.
3. Those that are 'the special characteristics, modes of perception, interpretative paradigms, and perceived responsibilities that an individual brings to a specific situation.'¹³⁵

Ideas of 'bounded' rationality nuance and help us understand the importance of frames of reference – as well as their fragility and fluidity. Rational action derives from the brain's ability to process information, which depends on one's environment and how long one has to process situational data.¹³⁶ Bounded rationality has been used, particularly in behavioural economics, to explain why actors so frequently fail to adhere to the 'rational agent model', upon which theories of rationality rely. Bounded rationality refutes the idea that actors make the best or even logical decisions, and seeks to explain why they do not always make choices that are solely in pursuit of their optimal benefit or satisfaction. Both systematic bias and context dependency help explain human decision-making – and underline the centrality of frames of reference and the environment. Bounded rationality posits that 'the central characteristic of agents is not that they reason poorly but that they often act intuitively and on the basis of imperfect information. And the behaviour of these agents is not guided by what they are able to compute, but by what they happen to see at a given moment.'¹³⁷ Even then, what a person sees is often highly subjective. Information aversion (or avoidance) and bias indicates that humans regularly choose to process information that supports or substantiates previously held views and beliefs.¹³⁸ Rationality is not predetermined – it is influenced by expectation, imagination, socialisation, and physical surroundings.

The physical and social environments studied here overlapped with, and were influenced or filtered by the troops' psychological environment. The interaction between these environments allowed men to adapt to war. It also constrained and influenced their rationalisation of the conflict and their place within it. Furthermore, it permitted the troops to develop a sense of agency, even in the face of a military that enforced authority and

¹³⁵ S. Neitzel and H. Welzer, *On Fighting, Killing and Dying: The Secret Second World War Tapes of German POWs* (New York, 2012) 8.

¹³⁶ G. Gigerenzer and D.G. Goldstein, 'Reasoning the Fast and Frugal War: Models of Bounded Rationality', in *Psychological Review*, Vol. 103, No. 4. (1996) 650-669.

¹³⁷ D. Kahneman, 'Maps of Bounded Rationality: Psychology for Behavioral Economics', *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 93 No. 5 (Dec., 2003) 1449-1475, esp. 1469.

¹³⁸ R. Golman, D. Hagmann, and G. Loewenstein, 'Information Avoidance', *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. 55 No. 1 (March, 2017) 96-135.

discipline. Men were able to perceive the war as personally significant, and to maintain the semblance of control over their destinies. How, though, did this relate to crisis?

The underlying theme of this thesis is English infantrymen's endurance. To understand why morale endured, this study unpicks soldiers' perceptions of crisis. It identifies two distinct but overlapping variants of crisis – acute and chronic – and focuses on the latter. At first sight, the conjunction of the words chronic and crisis might seem antithetical. This, however, builds upon extant literature that draws distinctions between acute and chronic crisis situations. The latter, in some social science analyses, refers to long-term, perpetual, crises. These lack immediate 'solutions' and are 'unlikely to abate in the short to medium term.'¹³⁹ 'Chronic crisis' is a useful conceptual tool since 'crisis is not [necessarily] a one-off or exogenous occurrence but rather a routine condition that poses a particular set of challenges to those living within it.'¹⁴⁰ 'A chronic crisis,' Olga Schevchenko suggests, 'may become the very essence of a community's identity.'¹⁴¹ Historian Reinhart Koselleck argues that when viewed 'as chronic, "crisis" can also indicate a state of greater or lesser permanence, as in a longer or shorter transition towards something better or worse or towards something altogether different.' In contrast, 'acute' crisis refers to a 'moment' that requires a 'decision.'¹⁴² In this thesis, 'chronic' refers to the continuous but bearable crises facing soldiers. These, they generally felt, were a feature of their new environments and had to be borne, or were situations beyond their capacity to change. In contrast, *acute* crises were immediate and potentially overwhelming. It will be argued that morale was sustained by men's ability to endure these chronic crises and to ignore or fail to register acute crises.

Five chronic crises are charted: the destruction and sameness of the war zone; the exhaustion caused by the physical environment; the pressures of military authority and service; separation from home; and the length of the war. 'Chronic' crises could sap morale. Yet, it was only at the point that crises demanded, encouraged, or required action – such as calls for a negotiated peace, collective disobedience, mutiny, or a self-inflicted wound – that

¹³⁹ J.D. Sachs, 'Resolving the Debt Crisis of Low-Income Countries', *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, Vol. 2002, No. 1 (2002) 257-286; G. Conway, 'Presidential Address: Geographical Crises of the Twenty-First Century,' *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 175, No. 3 (Sep., 2009) 221; M. O'Keefe, 'Chronic Crises in the Arc of Insecurity: A Case Study of Karamoja,' *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 31 No. 8 (2010) 1271.

¹⁴⁰ C.J. Gerry, 'Review: *Crisis and the Everyday in Postsocialist Moscow* by Shevchenko, Olga', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 89 No. 1 (2011) 184.

¹⁴¹ O. Shevchenko, *Crisis and the Everyday in Postsocialist Moscow* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2009) 3.

¹⁴² R. Koselleck (trans. W. Richter), 'Crisis,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 67 No. 2 (Apr. 2006) 358, 382.

they became ‘acute’ and morale faltered. This could be caused by the cumulative effect of the war’s chronic crises – as in cases where men found they had the ‘wind up’ – or in reaction to particularly shocking or disruptive events. In either case, men’s ability to endure was undermined. The first four chapters of this thesis chart the mechanisms by which men bore chronic crisis. The final chapter, ‘Hope,’ explores the ways in which a chronic crisis threatened to become acute in 1917.

The thesis shifts the perspective away from ‘acute’ military crises, which have been the focus of many studies. However, it uses such moments - as defined in the secondary literature as mutiny or major morale collapse – to frame the study of chronic crisis. Of course, for those men involved in battle on 1 July 1916 or 21 March 1918 the tactical emergency would have been acute and palpable. Yet, this thesis examines how men survived the chronic stalemate that was the subtext of the conflict, even at these moments. In doing so it sheds new light on key events. It will investigate the reactions of soldiers during the retreat following the Battle of Mons, as well as after Battle of the Aisne in October 1914, when the Western Front began evolving into static trench lines. It will also explore the 1916 months spanning the battle of the Somme and, finally, the period from the end of Passchendaele to the first few months of the German spring offensives. It is worth reiterating that these will be only ‘snapshots’ – but snapshots drawing on as wide an array of material as possible. This will also facilitate an analysis that can be contextualised in terms of an army that was evolving demographically: from a predominantly regular force to one composed of volunteers and then conscripts. It will argue that the soldiers in 1914 and 1916 ended those years confident, optimistic, and resilient. It will, however, trace an emerging sense of acute crisis among the infantrymen in 1917/18, which offers the clearest example of a trough in morale. By focussing on the chronic stalemate on the Western Front the chapters unpick exactly what ‘crisis moments’ were and whether they were perceived as such.

Crisis Moment One: Morale in 1914

The professional BEF’s morale is understudied but can be viewed as an extension of debates regarding its quality and effectiveness. Edmonds’s interwar description of the army as Britain’s ‘best trained, best organised, and best equipped... army that ever went forth to war’ laid the foundations for the myth of the pre-eminence of the ‘Old Contemptibles.’¹⁴³ This seemed to be confirmed by the Southborough Commission, which concluded that there had

¹⁴³ J. E. Edmonds, *History of the Great War based on Official Documents. Military Operations. France and Belgium 1914. Mons, The Retreat to the Seine, the Marne and the Aisne August-October 1914* (London, 1925) 10-11.

been little or no instance of psychological breakdown among regulars.¹⁴⁴ Such conclusions certainly informed Bayne's analysis of Neuve Chapelle and the importance of *esprit de corps*.¹⁴⁵ However, recent scholarship has looked to counter this analysis. Mons and Le Cateau are now seen in a more negative light.¹⁴⁶ Gary Sheffield's balanced judgement is that it was 'the right army for a different sort of war than the one it actually came to fight.'¹⁴⁷ Richard Grayson has demonstrated how large numbers of Reservists brought nominally regular units up to strength.¹⁴⁸ This left very little time to integrate these men and reacquaint them with military procedures, which undermined confidence.¹⁴⁹ Confidence is likely to have been degraded further by institutional issues. Griffith, Todman, and Sheffield have looked very critically on the quality of generalship, tactics, and procedures of command and control in 1914.¹⁵⁰ Both Todman and Gordon Corrigan have also emphasised Britain's serious deficiencies in manpower and materiel.¹⁵¹ All of these problems, given the visibility of a numerically and materially superior enemy, would have been clear to the soldiers of the BEF in 1914.

Alexander Watson has used institutional records to highlight the prevalence of self-inflicted wounds, the large number of men surrendering, and high incidence of psychological collapse.¹⁵² This led him to conclude that 1914 represented the BEF's major crisis in morale. This demoralisation stemmed from men's shock at the unexpected length and nature of the war, and from poor preliminary training. Further, it has been suggested that the army's resilience might have been undermined by the fact that its ranks, made up of regulars, were filled by 'society's most disadvantaged men.'¹⁵³ Yet, there has to date been no study of the extent to which these men understood this period of the war as a 'crisis' and how environmental factors helped to shape their perceptions.

Crisis Moment Two: Morale in 1916

¹⁴⁴ Jones, 'The Psychology of Killing', 231.

¹⁴⁵ Baynes, *Troop Morale*.

¹⁴⁶ A. Gilbert, *Challenge of Battle: The Real Story of the British Army in 1914* (Oxford, 2014) 63-153.

¹⁴⁷ G. Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War: Myths and Realities* (London, 2002) 117.

¹⁴⁸ R. Grayson, *Belfast Boys: How Unionists and Nationalists Fought and Died Together in the First World War* (London, 2009) 26.

¹⁴⁹ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 145.

¹⁵⁰ Todman, *The Great War*, 79; G. Sheffield and D. Todman, 'Command and Control in the British Army on the Western Front', in G. Sheffield and D. Todman (eds.), *Command and Control on the Western Front: The British Army's Experience 1914-18* (Chalford, 2007) 1-11; P. Griffith, 'The Extent of Tactical Reform in the British Army', in P. Griffith (ed.), *British Fighting Methods in the Great War* (London, 1996) 5-6.

¹⁵¹ G. Corrigan, *Mud, Blood and Poppycock*, (London, 2004) 48; Todman, *The Great War*, 78.

¹⁵² Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 141-44.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 146-50.

The experience of the New Army volunteers has been covered extensively, as has the early Somme campaign. However the ways in which environmental factors influenced morale and soldiers' perceptions of 'crisis' has not. Traditionally the narrative of morale has closely followed that of tactical developments. There remains a need to investigate the validity of Paul Fussell's statement that 'a terrible gloom overcame everyone at the end of 1916.'¹⁵⁴ Certain issues have been explored. The difficulties of training large numbers of volunteers and the difficulties of supply logistics meant that units trained with inadequate arms and were directed by men with little experience.¹⁵⁵ Watson argued that the arrival of the Kitchener Armies on the Western Front correlated with increased rates of shell shock. Keegan's depiction of the men on 1 July as 'bands of uniformed innocents' paints a similar picture.¹⁵⁶ Yet Adrian Gregory and Catriona Pennell have revealed the realism of the majority of the Kitchener men – the highest rates of volunteering came in 1914 as news of the bloody battles filtered back to Britain. Even if they did not understand the experience of war they were able to comprehend that it caused large numbers of casualties.¹⁵⁷ Those who went into battle on 1 July 1916 may not have been overwhelmed by unmatched expectations. However, can statistical and literary evidence of death adequately prepare someone for the grim reality of slaughter and war?

It is also possible to view the training of the volunteers in a more positive light – it did encourage *esprit de corps*.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Tim Travers has found evidence of an increasingly fragile spirit towards the end of July.¹⁵⁹ While knowledge of the reality of war might partially habituate men, the horrors of mass death combined with tactical failures to dampen spirits. However, Gary Sheffield has argued that the men who survived the Somme campaign did so with increased confidence in their ability. By the end of 1916 British morale remained high.¹⁶⁰ It seems that morale was bolstered through successful tactical innovations, the evidence of Allied material superiority, and the sight of German prisoners.¹⁶¹ William Philpott has suggested that even if fatigue was setting in towards the end of September, Tommies' humour and an understanding of materiel superiority engendered resilience.

¹⁵⁴ Fussell, *The Great War*, 14; Taylor, *The First World War*, 140.

¹⁵⁵ Winter, *Death's Men*, 39; P. Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies* (Barnsley, 1988, 2007) 212-320.

¹⁵⁶ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 147; Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 226.

¹⁵⁷ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 44-5, 49; C. Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2012) esp. 144-146. Also P. Liddle, *The Soldier's War 1914-18* (London, 1988) 18-19.

¹⁵⁸ M. Samuels, *Command or Control? Command, Training and Tactics in the British and German Armies, 1888-1918* (London, 1995, 2003) 120; I.F.W. Beckett and K. Simpson (eds), *A Nation in Arms* (Barnsley, 1985, 2014) 235.

¹⁵⁹ T. Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front & the Emergence of Modern War* (Barnsley, 2009) 113.

¹⁶⁰ Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory*, 186.

¹⁶¹ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 150-53.

However, ‘even if allied soldiers believed they were winning, their wish for peace remained strong, and their reasons for fighting on were shifting.’¹⁶² The idea of a ‘shift’ in the nature of morale in this period needs to be studied further. How were the men who survived the Somme Campaign coming to terms with war, and how did environmental factors influence this process?

Crisis Moment Three: Morale in winter 1917 to spring 1918

The resilience of conscripts has been a matter of much debate. There is no comprehensive study specifically of the morale of these soldiers. There is a need to understand how morale evolved during these months. If it was low in winter 1917/18, how did it recover during the period of dramatic retreats in the following spring? Attempts to explain the collapse of the British front – in the Fifth Army sector in particular – were made in its direct aftermath. Yet even this episode has its contradictions. As Edmonds noted, ‘while there were instances of panic and disordered retreat’ he believed ‘the spirit of the troops remained strong.’¹⁶³ Yet Tim Travers, for one, disagrees,¹⁶⁴ and in fact Edmonds conceded that a lack of training had left the BEF unprepared for the warfare that confronted it upon the German breakthrough.¹⁶⁵ Historians have focussed on morale and spirit as crucial issues on 21 March 1918. Watson concluded that ‘the Third Ypres had left the BEF despondent and lacking manpower.’¹⁶⁶ Both Martin Middlebrook and John Keegan believed this contributed to a morale collapse in the Fifth Army. While accepting difficulties caused by fog, Middlebrook suggested that as many as nine tenths of the British units involved on 21 March withdrew without engaging the enemy strongly.¹⁶⁷ Keegan argued that while some battalions ‘gave their all,’ high casualty rates among commanding officers are suggestive of disorganisation and poor combat performance. He asserted that the British failure was the consequence of both morale and of physical issues such as exhaustion.¹⁶⁸

In contrast, Lyn Macdonald underlined the success of the German infiltration tactics and argued that units surrendered only when already overwhelmed.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, Peter Hart has put the fog, the inadequacy of British ‘defence-in-depth,’ and German tactics at the heart

¹⁶² W. Philpott, *Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme* (London, 2010) 403, 410-11.

¹⁶³ Edmonds in A. Green, *Writing the Great War: Sir James Edmonds and the Official Histories 1915-1948* (London, 2003) 147.

¹⁶⁴ Travers, *The Killing Ground*, 239.

¹⁶⁵ Green, *Writing the Great War*, 145-159.

¹⁶⁶ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 184. For the most up-to-date analysis of Third Ypres see N. Lloyd, *Passchendaele: A New History* (London, 2017).

¹⁶⁷ M. Middlebrook, *The Kaisers Battle* (Barnsley, 1978, 2009).

¹⁶⁸ J. Keegan, *The First World War* (London, 1998, 1999) 438. Also R. Holmes, *The Western Front* (London, 1999) 218.

¹⁶⁹ L. Macdonald, *To the Last Man: Spring 1918* (London, 1998).

of his analysis and emphasised the resilience of the troops.¹⁷⁰ Jonathan Boff similarly depicted surrendering during this period as rational and based on an assessment of the tactical situation. Statistics indicate that morale might have been more fragile during the 100 Days Campaign.¹⁷¹ Watson saw the failure at Cambrai as the direct result of Passchendaele but argued that morale was in a process of rehabilitation during the autumn of 1917 and that British soldiers retained a belief in ultimate victory.¹⁷² However, David Stevenson has reoriented the debate by claiming that, despite the respite after Passchendaele, morale had not been entirely restored by 21 March – ‘the real change came *after*.’¹⁷³ He believes the German offensives ‘galvanised the British.’¹⁷⁴ This echoes David Englander, who believed the spring battles might have *forestalled* a major mutiny.¹⁷⁵ If this is the case, then more explanation is needed of how this occurred and why an acute tactical and strategic crisis could forestall one of morale. To begin resolving this problem, this thesis focuses on English infantrymen’s mentalities and reaction to the war during these three case study moments.

The decision to focus on the members of one of the four ‘home nations’ allows for a detailed analysis of the role of national and local cultural identity in morale. Although Englishness and Britishness were closely intertwined in this period, it is legitimate to explore to what extent soldiers understood their war in terms of their specific ‘English’ nationhood. This allows the thesis to explore the regionalism that often lay at the core of soldiers’ sense of identity. The focus on English soldiers is also practical, since they formed the largest constituent group in the BEF. As such, this study’s findings will have broad relevance.

Catriona Pennell has, however, convincingly argued that there was also a strong sense of British identity, which emerged with great vibrancy from the Great War. The sense that Germany posed an existential threat created a community of ‘United Kingdomers.’¹⁷⁶ Britain and its place in the world was also something that occupied the thoughts of citizens in this era.¹⁷⁷ Jay Winter, for example, has shown that Imperial sentiment percolated through the classes, pointing to ‘sentiments about nation and empire’ being behind ‘mass enlistment in the [mining] industry.’¹⁷⁸ To paraphrase Adrian Gregory, a soldier may just be a soldier, yet, in

¹⁷⁰ Hart, 1918, 64-106.

¹⁷¹ Boff, *Winning and Losing*, 92-122.

¹⁷² Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 154-55.

¹⁷³ Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, 267-8.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ D. Englander, ‘Discipline and Morale’, 141.

¹⁷⁶ Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, ch. 2. See also A. Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (London, 1989) 309.

¹⁷⁷ I.F.W. Beckett, ‘The Nation in Arms, 1914-18’, in Beckett and Simpson, *A Nation in Arms*, 5.

¹⁷⁸ J.M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (Basingstoke, 2003) 35.

reality, his ‘life exists at the intersection of many other identities as well: regional, class, occupational, religious and ethnic.’¹⁷⁹ The focus on Englishmen and the English does not ignore the importance of Britain or the Empire, but it intentionally and appropriately draws Englishness to the fore. Winter has argued that the population’s sense of Britishness was still vague in the years before the war. He placed a sense of ‘Englishness’ at the heart of British national identity – on a day-to-day level it was the region, town, or village that plucked at the population’s heartstrings.¹⁸⁰ Arguably Britishness and Imperial pride were outward projections of identity, which were focussed on a conscious ‘othering’ of the enemy, different groups, and different ethnicities.¹⁸¹ Englishness was also outwardly projected, and drew on ‘othering,’ but it was built upon a foundation of more intimate, inward facing, relationships with home and locality. While Britain occupied a place in the composite identity of the English soldiers of the Great War, the sources reveal it was England that lay at the forefront of their minds and their internalised reasons for fighting. In the letters, diaries, journals, and papers analysed for this study soldiers rarely discussed the empire or Britain. English regimental magazines and the soldiers – both officers and men – often used ‘England’ as a proxy for Britain.¹⁸² The men studied here saw Englishness and England as the default mode of the state. The war may have strengthened these visions of England and reoriented people’s perceptions to contrast ‘an imagined German stereotype, and the British army’s entrenchment in France.’¹⁸³

Englishness was built upon regionalism. The British Army reflected this. Military authorities accepted that localism played a huge role in *esprit de corps* and in 1914 most infantry regiments continued to be affiliated with a city, county, or counties.¹⁸⁴ The six regiments this study focuses upon retained a strong imprint of their place of origin. The

¹⁷⁹ Originally discussing women in Britain see Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 291.

¹⁸⁰ P. Readman, *Storied Ground: Landscapes and the Shaping of English National Identity* (Cambridge, 2018); P. Readman, ‘The Place of the Past in English Culture c. 1890-1914’, *Past & Present* No. 186 (Feb. 2005) 147- 199; R. Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford, 2002) 225-228; J.M. Winter, ‘British National Identity and the First World War’, S. Green and C. Whiting (eds.), *The Boundaries of the State in Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1996); J.M. Winter, ‘Popular Culture in Wartime Britain’, in A. Roshwald and R. Stites (eds.), *European Culture in the Great War; The Arts, Entertainment and Propaganda, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 1999) 330.

¹⁸¹ This does not mean the bond is not strong. See E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1990) 91.

¹⁸² For unit journals see ‘From the *Daily Dispatch*’, *The Manchester Regiment Gazette*, Vol. 1 No. 7 (Nov. 1, 1914); ‘The Brand of Cain’, *The Gasper: The Unofficial Organ of the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st Royal Fusiliers*, No. 21 (Sep. 30, 1916). For soldiers see IWM P 229: Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, HET/1 – Letter to Mother 2 September 1914; IWM 69/25/1: Capt. G.B. Donaldson, Letters to his Mother 8, 9, 16, 28 June and 4, 9 and 10 July 1916; IWM 14/15/1: Capt. R.E.M. Young, Letter to Constance 9 December 1916; IWM 12/36/1: F. Hubard, Letter to Mr and Mrs Underhill 8 December 1917; IWM 13/8/1: A.L. Collis, Diary 3 January 1918; IWM 09/34/1: Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to his Father 26 April 1918.

¹⁸³ S. Malvern, ‘War Tourisms: “Englishness”, Art and the First World War’, *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 24 No. 1 (2001) 47.

¹⁸⁴ Ussishkin, *Morale*, 68-69.

Border Regiment was nominally recruited from sparsely populated Cumberland and Westmoreland; the Devonshire Regiment's depots lay across the predominantly rural county in the South West; the Manchester Regiment focused on the bustling conurbation of Southern Lancashire; the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry were recruited from the old cities and agricultural areas of the Home Counties; the Royal Fusiliers were originally based in London; and the Royal Warwickshire Regiment drew men from across the Midland county's cities and countryside. Following Haldane's reforms it was County Territorial Associations – rather than a national body – that ran the Territorial Army.¹⁸⁵ The volunteer 'Pals' units set up by Kitchener during the war – 38 per cent of all New Army formations – were incorporated into existing regiments and sprang up around the foci of community, factory, sports team, or class group.¹⁸⁶ Social divisions were important and often it was 'less about who you served with, but much more obviously about who you didn't serve with.'¹⁸⁷ While the increasing requirement for new drafts and conscription removed such choice, it did not entirely undermine most units' regional make-up.¹⁸⁸

Helen McCartney has correctly countered existing historical conclusions regarding the increasing 'nationalisation' of recruitment.¹⁸⁹ The demands of recruitment necessitated a more centralised approach and a 'strand-feed' system was devised after 1916. The United Kingdom was divided into six command districts, each of which took control of the logistical apparatus. The administrative structures of these districts allowed many units to retain local homogeneity and retain men of similar regional backgrounds. Regiments recruiting from larger cities were able to rely on their own pool of men; however, some of the smaller regiments had to incorporate drafts from other counties. After November 1917, when recruiting powers were 'passed from the Army Council to the Ministry of National Service' recruiting areas were 'redrawn, utilizing regional boundaries' and improving and generally creating 'more cohesive sets' of country recruiting pools. Mark Connelly's study of the East Kent Regiment found that 'a core of East Kent men... was retained throughout the war.' Even 'as conscripts began to flow in, the majority came from the south-east, which at least allowed a rough geographical unity to survive.'¹⁹⁰ The same was true of the six regiments studied here.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army*, 90-92.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 97.

¹⁸⁷ Gregory, *Last Great War*, 78.

¹⁸⁸ See Appendix II.

¹⁸⁹ McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, 62-66; Bet-El, *Conscripts*, 41.

¹⁹⁰ M. Connelly, *Steady the Buffs! A Regiment, A Region, and the Great War* (Oxford, 2006) 233.

¹⁹¹ See Appendix II.

It is imperative to understand how soldiers perceived and symbolised the world around them – in short, how they made sense of war. The chapters that follow tackle this issue thematically, drawing out the issues that arose with the greatest clarity from the primary material. They explore, in turn, men’s attachment to the physical environment; the influence of winter and exhaustion; the relationship between perceptions of duty and the military social environment; and the influence of the imagined social environment in England; and soldiers’ perceptions of victorious peace. The first four chapters focus on how men coped with chronic crisis, while the final chapter explores how chronic crisis – in this case the war’s length – could become acute. The influence of the men’s psychological environment is interwoven through each of these chapters: the first chapter offers a general discussion of the process of attachment throughout the war, while the following sections incorporate a comparison of the three ‘crisis moments’ and more general discussions and conclusions. Overall, it will be argued that if any moment can be viewed as an acute crisis for individuals’ morale, it was late 1917 and early 1918. Men, for a short time, feared the war was unwinnable. However, this was overcome. Throughout the war, the interrelationships between the physical, social, and psychological environments allowed soldiers to construe their experiences as in some way constructive and to endure the Great War.

The first thematic chapter, ‘Attachment,’ offers a broad exploration of the ways in which men familiarised themselves with the physical environment of the Western Front, normalised it, and found meaning in it. The second chapter, ‘Exhaustion’, provides an original analysis of the experience of winter, showing how this subsumed other big-picture and long-term concerns and changed men’s perspective on war during other seasons of the year. The next two chapters outline the interaction of social environments and soldiers’ frames of reference. The third, ‘Obligation,’ reinterprets how concepts of duty influenced soldiers’ actions and interpretation of the conflict, while the fourth, ‘Imagination,’ develops a fresh perspective on the ways in which men’s perceptions and dreams of England became a coping mechanism and furnished a justification for their suffering. The final thematic chapter, ‘Hope,’ counters the accepted wisdom that visions of peace sapped morale, and argues that these were sustaining and inextricably linked to ideas of victory. This chapter argues that the soldiers’ perception of ‘acute’ crisis focussed on victorious peace. ‘Crisis’ arose when victory seemed impossible. Yet, it will be argued that, for the most part, men’s belief in the possibility – or, indeed, necessity – of a victorious peace remained strong. The thesis offers new insights into the psychology of the soldiers of 1914-18, and the conclusion suggests that – in the case of the men studied here – human adaptability and the ability to construe events constructively, to have goals and see clear pathways to these goals, helped combatants to cope with the Great War. These environments – the social and physical – combined with soldiers’

psychological environments in a way that allowed them to actively deflect crisis for as long as victorious peace seemed certain.

Attachment

Familiarising and Normalising the Western Front

The alien, repetitive, and shocking sights and sounds in Belgium and France contributed to infantrymen's sense of chronic crisis. Nevertheless, men were able to familiarise, normalise, and become attached to the Western Front. A satirical article reflecting this was published in the soldiers' journal *The Dagger* in late 1918.¹ The author had just arrived home on leave. Yet, as he stepped onto the platform at Victoria, 'he suddenly lost his memory, or rather, that part of it which covered all his pre-war experience. He remembered only the life and surroundings of the line... Nothing could persuade him that London was not a part of the line.' He disembarked in a 'large town called London' (a name that he had heard on the lips of other soldiers in Arras). 'The trenches, strong points, dug-outs, wire and so on... are maintained and organised to a point of excellence' and 'discipline too becomes a reality here.'² There were outposts along the river. These had 'a breastwork of solid granite' and were a 'comfortable height to fire over' – the defenders, though, seemed 'idle.'³ The support line weaved its way down 'PICCADILLY TRENCH,' before turning onto 'FLEET SUPPORT.' 'OXFORD TRENCH and HOLBORN TRENCH' formed the reserve line. Tube stations provided 'admirably equipped... dug-outs,' while 'lorry-jumping is here officially recognised.' High quality food was found in 'CARLTON in HAYMARKET Communication Trench.' Water was 'plentiful' – there being a 'gigantic' water-point in 'TRAfalgar Square' and a smaller bronze one in 'PICCADILLY CIRCUS.' The largest of the salvage dumps was 'called BRITISH MUSEUM' where 'scrounging parties are detailed to clear areas literally thousands of miles away.' Pleasantly surprised, he noted that 'evidently the line here is very, very quiet' yet worried that 'this fact has... lulled the troops hereabouts into a false sense of security.' Consequently, he decided to 'patrol rather a nasty wood called BATTERSEA PARK.'⁴

In this instance, the Western Front had become so familiar that this officer's mental map of the frontlines was transposed onto London. This reflects a relationship that developed between many men and their physical environment. The analysis that follows describes how this came to be, and how it influenced soldiers' morale and sense-making. It focuses on three essential processes: familiarisation, habituation, and attachment. The immediate physical world dominated the soldiers' present. Their experience of it encouraged familiarisation with the world around them and this cultivated meaning, created attachment, deflected crisis, and

¹ Cinq Neuf, 'On the London Front,' *The Dagger*, (1 Nov. 1918) 26.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.* 27.

⁴ *Ibid.*

fostered endurance. The landscape became the canvas for both personal and collective memories. This did not leave men ignorant of Belgium and France's horrors, but it made them more bearable. A process of psychological habituation and normalisation allowed men to cope with the war long enough to develop an attachment to the place they inhabited. Men explored the war zone as tourists; traversed it by foot, road, and rail; instilled it with personal and collective memory; became habituated to its more menacing characteristics; and spent time considering what their physical environment *meant*.

The physical environment has formed an increasingly important part of studies of modern war.⁵ The landscape could be an actor. Tait Keller has shown how the landscape conferred heroic stature onto soldiers in the Alps during the Great War.⁶ British soldiers' also developed a relationship with the physical world.⁷ Eric Leed studied combatants' reactions to 1914-1918's violation of the natural and human worlds, but also suggested that trench warfare saw the earth become a form of home shared by all fighters. It provided a protective veil through which men interpreted the war.⁸ Santanu Das argued that intimacy emerged from men's physical contact with their comrades and their surroundings.⁹ This environment encompassed not only the frontlines but also the areas behind the battle zone. Craig Gibson has described the systems, processes, and patterns of soldiers' lives behind the lines. Men developed relationships with the physical world and the civilians who shared this space.¹⁰ Ross Wilson asserted that Tommy's sense of place within the landscapes of Belgium and France was a key aspect of his 'endurance' and helps to explain 'why soldiers [chose to] fight.' Soldiers imbued the Western Front with deep meaning. This helped them to adapt, accept, and find agency. Wilson concluded that 'it was through the association with the landscapes which had been created by war, and the weapons and equipment of the conflict, that individuals took on and largely accepted their role within the army.'¹¹

⁵ C. Pearson, *Mobilizing Nature: The Environmental History of War and Militarization in Modern France* (Manchester, 2012).

⁶ T. Keller, *Apostles of the Alps: Mountaineering and Nation Building in Germany and Austria* (Chapel Hill, 2016); Keller, 'The Mountains Roar', 253-274.

⁷ Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 14-15; Jones, 'The Psychology of Killing', 229-231. See also P.H. Hoffenberg, 'Landscape, Memory and the Australian War Experience, 1915-18', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 36 No. 1 (Jan., 2001) 111-131.

⁸ Leed, *No Man's Land*, esp. 37, 72, 105.

⁹ Das, *Touch and Intimacy*, esp. Ch. 2.

¹⁰ Gibson, *Behind the Front*, 53, 155. For other discussions of the area of British administration, A. Dowdall, 'Civilians in the Combat Zone: Allied and German Evacuation Policies at the Western Front, 1914-1918', *First World War Studies*, Vol. 6 No. 3 (2015) 239-255. For sexual relationships, Gibson, 'Sex and Soldiering', 539-579; C. Makepeace, 'Male Heterosexuality and Prostitution during the Great War: British Soldiers' Encounters with Maisons Tolérées', *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 9 No. 1 (2012) 65-83; Grayzel, 'Mothers, Marraines, and Prostitutes', 66-82; J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 155-156.

¹¹ Wilson, *Landscapes of the Western Front*, 218.

Men reconstructed the war zone both physically and within their own minds. Belgium and France were redeveloped as the forward zones were dug. The 10,500 trench names allocated to parts of the line helped men to create a familiar and evocative mental map of northern France and Belgium.¹² According to Chris Ward these names provided ‘a means by which immigrants asserted their presence.’¹³ This overstates reality, but it is certainly true that over the course of the conflict the towns and countryside were re-visualised by the BEF’s soldiers.¹⁴ Soldiers also asserted cultural identity in subtler ways, such as through ‘front-line gardening.’¹⁵ As explained previously, archaeological evidence – such as food, drink, alcohol and personal comforts – has revealed ‘small expressions of personality in the midst of the ranks.’¹⁶ Tommy’s material culture has also been used as evidence of his agency and character.¹⁷ However, it remains to be seen exactly how he perceived the war zone and what role this played in his ability to endure it.

This chapter will more thoroughly explore the interrelationship between Englishmen’s morale and the Western Front. By unpicking their perceptions of the war zone the analysis reveals the ways in which individual and collective familiarisation took place. Familiarisation fed more subtle psychological processes such as attachment.¹⁸ Recently, attachment theory has been applied to the relationship between individuals and places. Drawing on studies of people’s sense of place, it analyses the development of ‘emotional and functional connections between place and people.’¹⁹ The bond between an infantryman and his physical environment was central to his sense-making.

This chapter takes a broader perspective than those that follow. There is little in the archival material that allows for any easy differentiation of soldiers’ relationship with the physical war zone during the three periods being studied. Drawing on the concept of place attachment, the chapter charts its emergence and demonstrates how the majority of men overcame the chronic crises faced on the Western Front by normalising these and perceiving the landscape as meaningful. It begins by focussing on the process of familiarisation, following men’s journey across and along the Western Front. Belgium and France even crept into their use of language. Following this, the chapter shows how habituation helped men to

¹² Chasseaud, *Rats Alley*, 47.

¹³ Ward, *Living on the Western Front*, 92.

¹⁴ Gibson, *Behind the Front*, esp. 188-221.

¹⁵ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 24.

¹⁶ Osgood and Brown, *Digging up Plugstreet*, 104; N.J. Saunders, ‘Material Culture and Conflict’, in N.J. Saunders (ed.), *Material Culture, Memory and the First World War* (Abingdon, 2004) 5-25.

¹⁷ Cornish and Saunders, *Bodies in Conflict and Modern Conflict and the Senses: Killer Instincts?* (London, 2016); A. Becker, ‘Le front militaire et les occupations de la Grande Guerre’, 193-204.

¹⁸ J. Bowlby, ‘The Nature of the Child’s Tie to His Mother’, *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, Vol. 39 (1958) 350-373 and *Attachment and Loss. Vol. 1 Attachment* (New York, 1973).

¹⁹ H. Hashemnezhad, A.A. Heidari and P.M. Hoseini, “‘Sense of Place’ and ‘Place Attachment’: A Comparative Study”, *International Journal of Architecture and Urban Development*, Vol. 3 No. 1 (2013) 5.

cope with the frontline by focussing on its smells and sounds. Next, it explains how both personal and collective memories were embedded in the physical environment. Personal experiences produced an evocative mental map, while memorials and institutional memories created a further layer of collective meaning.

Most men successfully adjusted to the Western Front. Predictable rotations around Belgium and France allowed soldiers to familiarise the physical environment. This process recurred throughout the conflict. Men already in 1914, as well as in 1916 and 1917/18, felt that they were occupying a familiar world. Many believed that they occupied a landscape that was recognisable, to whose sights they were becoming accustomed. The troops chose to explore, repurpose, and sometimes reconceptualise the conflict zone. The organisational process of regular rotation nurtured an organic and bottom-up process of familiarisation. This helped men to come to terms with not only the frontlines but with the whole of the Western Front from port, through base and camp, to trenches. The first part of this discussion outlines the more gradual dimensions of familiarisation, before outlining the soldiers' conscious and subconscious strategies.

Familiarisation, Exposure, and Exploration

The British line was not an unchanging entity – it expanded and contracted over the course of the war. Each sector had its own ‘nuances and specificities, according to local conditions, [which were] different in every sector.’²⁰ Some parts of the line were renowned for being ‘quieter’ and less dangerous than others.²¹ In late 1914 it stretched only 24 miles from the North-East of Kemmel to East of Festubert, with French and Belgian troops occupying a few sections along this line. On the eve of the Battle of the Somme it was ‘continuous from north to south’ stretching between 80 and 90 miles from Boesinghe to Maricourt. By the end of 1916 it extended further south to Bouchavesnes. A year later, the British agreed to accept responsibility for more of the Allied frontage and on 20 March 1918 the BEF controlled 123 miles from the southwest corner of Houthulst Forest, through Barisis, to the St. Gobain Railway. Following the Spring Offensive the line contracted and expanded alongside patterns of retreat and advance.²² Local geography influenced the form and nature of the warfare. In

²⁰ S. Audoin-Rouzeau, ‘Combat and Tactics,’ in Winter, *Cambridge History of The First World War: Vol. II The State*, 161.

²¹ Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 15.

²² ‘Part XXII: The British Line in France,’ in HM Stationery Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire*, (London, 1922) 639.

Flanders, for example, the water table necessitated the building of breastworks above the ground, while, in the south, where the line extended through Picardy, men were forced to dig down into the soil itself. In 1917 and 1918 the introduction of 'defence in depth' meant that the continuous trenches of popular imagination were transformed into outposts strung along a more lightly held line.²³

The process of familiarisation began before men landed and grew stronger as time passed. It began on the boat across the Channel. For many, this was their first experience of international travel. Even regulars, who were accustomed to overseas service, saw the cross-Channel voyage as emblematic of their changing physical environment.²⁴ Men were aware they were entering another nation's sovereign territory as their ships were inspected, sometimes by a French torpedo boat. This offered troops the opportunity to cheer their allies.²⁵ For example, Charles Dwyer spent several days at sea. The French vessels he encountered were hailed excitedly. When lying offshore he and his comrades spent time staring with anticipation at the novel building frontages at the port in Saint Nazaire.²⁶ Other men had much less comfortable crossings and complained about the lack of refreshment or food.²⁷ Frederick William Child's crossing from Southampton to Le Havre was a prolonged affair. The rough seas were compounded by embarkation delays in England and a long wait before they were allowed to alight.²⁸ Waiting in the cramped hold of a transport ship, Child became very seasick. However, when walking on deck he used the opportunity to familiarise himself with France. He 'watched the ships go by + the hills + fires in the distance... The scenery was lovely.'²⁹

The large base depot towns along the coast where most men disembarked became remarkably 'English.' Even in 1914 the majority of people R.D. Sheffield encountered there were from England.³⁰ These were the main arteries by which the British entered Belgium and France and became intensely familiar. Men flowed through Boulogne, Calais, Le Havre and Rouen.³¹ In August 1914 the crowds of civilians welcoming the soldiers underlined the 'foreignness' of the country in which they were arriving.³² Yet these towns very quickly became semi-permanent centres of army logistics. Thousands of soldiers were based and

²³ Ibid. 162. See also Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 1-7.

²⁴ J. Lewis-Stempel, *Six Weeks: The Short and Gallant Life of the British Officer in the First World War* (London, 2010) 72-73.

²⁵ MR 1/17/34: Letter from Lt. Col. F.H. Dorling to his Wife 24 August 1914.

²⁶ IWM 08/131/1: C. Dwyer, Diary 3-5 September 1914.

²⁷ IWM 67/239/1: R.D. Sheffield, Letter to Father 9 November 1914.

²⁸ SOFO Box 16 Item 42: F.W. Child, Diary 18-20 November 1916.

²⁹ Ibid. Diary 19 November 1916.

³⁰ R.D. Sheffield, Letter to Father 9 November 1914.

³¹ A.L. Collis, Diary 3 and 19 January 1918.

³² IWM Con Shelf: Postcard Signed by "The Mademoiselle from Armentieres," Extract from local paper, perhaps the Bucks Advertiser, regarding the experience of Pte J.T. Greenwood, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, published 24 October 1914.

billetted here and such demographic upheaval changed them.³³ In 1914 one soldier had already come to consider Calais in the same breath as England and 'Hyde Park'.³⁴ So well-trodden were these paths that Lt. Frederic Anstruther had formulated a code through which he could inform his father in which of these ports he had arrived.³⁵ One post-war soldiers' travel guide noted that:

During the war Boulogne became practically an English city; that is to say, a very large proportion of its inhabitants were British. There were huge rest camps for troops going on leave and returning from leave, situated near the harbour; hospitals sprang up in every direction, and were perpetually full of wounded soldiers; thousands of officers and clerks were employed upon the duties connected with a huge base.³⁶

In late 1916 R.E.P. Stevens reported that upon arriving in France '[one] cannot realise we have arrived in another country everything seems so English.' While walking through Boulogne he found that he was 'only reminded the place was a French port by the names on the shops.' The surrounding countryside even looked like England.³⁷ Paris Plage was 'picturesque and brought to my mind a picture I once saw of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.'³⁸ It was here, too, that soldiers had their easiest access to newspapers from England.³⁹ By 1918, however, these hives of activity also reflected the war's international character. The sight of a large contingent of 'Chinese and Black men' in Le Havre, alongside the cafés, reminded H.T. Madders that he was no longer at home.⁴⁰

Despite their novelties, the towns could *become* familiar through repeated exposure and activity. Men spent long periods of time resting, training, or recuperating from injuries here. Others embraced the opportunity to satiate their more carnal desires in such places.⁴¹ A.L. Collis spent the first half of December 1916 in Le Havre; while C.T. O'Neill was camped there for most of January 1918 and found it a 'quaint and dirty' town.⁴² By this stage it was a sprawling network of British rest and depot camps, hospitals, prisons, POW camps, and administrative offices. Between these were gardens built and maintained by soldiers.

³³ IWM Misc 108 Item 1710: Pocket Diary 1914, August-September 1914; F.W. Child, Diary 19 November 1916.

³⁴ IWM Misc 30 Item 550: Diary of an Unidentified Soldier of the [2nd Battalion] Border Regiment, 25 December 1914.

³⁵ IWM Con Shelf: Lt. Frederic Anstruther, Letter to his Father 25 February 1915.

³⁶ Lt. Col. T.A. Lowe, *The Western Battlefields: A Guide to the British Line*, (London, 1920) 6.

³⁷ IWM 02/43/1: R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 2, 6 and 12 November 1916.

³⁸ Ibid. 13 November.

³⁹ IWM 98/28/1: Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter to Wife 14 December 1916.

⁴⁰ H.T. Madders, Diary 29 March 1918. See Wilson, *Landscapes of the Western Front*, 92; X. Guoqi, *Strangers on the Western Front: Chinese Workers in the Great War* (London, 2011).

⁴¹ IWM 75/25/1: Col. L.H.M. Westropp, Memoir [p 61].

⁴² A.L. Collis, Diary 18 December 1916 – 1 January 1917; SOFO Box 16 Item 30 3/4/J3/9: Lt. C.T. O'Neill, Diary 1-25 January 1918.

There were peculiarly English cultural pursuits. The well-studied sports and theatrical activities were common to nearly every part of the rear zone.⁴³ More uniquely, in 1917 and 1918 the depot commander of Le Havre held a vegetable competition and show in the city's Jardin St. Roche.⁴⁴

The training camps along the coast provided men with an introduction to the Western Front. At the Bull Ring, Etaples, men were confined to camps on the outskirts of the town.⁴⁵ In 1914 new drafts were billeted here as they completed the final stage of their training on arriving on the continent.⁴⁶ By 1916 it had grown exponentially; Lt. W.B. Medlicott saw 3000 men training on a single day.⁴⁷ Training diversified and the shooting ranges, mock trenches and battlefields, live-fire exercises, gas simulations, and lectures all sought to teach the men 'how to behave and what to avoid in France [and, presumably, Belgium].'⁴⁸ It might have offered a first taste of war, but this experience was one that fuelled common grievances. P.R. Hall recalled that the instructors were particularly hostile – the treatment of the men was, in his view, a 'disgrace to the army and to GHQ.'⁴⁹ R.E.P. Stevens felt that the training indicated 'they [High Command] don't know what to do with us.' He described Etaples as 'dirty and uncared for.'⁵⁰ It is, perhaps, unsurprising that Etaples was the locus of the BEF's worst mutiny of the war in 1917.⁵¹ In 1918 young men were still arriving at Etaples and similar camps for 'toughening up' courses and men reported that it was simply 'general fooling' and it 'nearly broke our hearts.'⁵²

Etaples was not, however, universally despised. 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey had a better experience. In November 1916 he was training alongside the RFC whose billets were much better than those provided for the infantry. The experience was improved by his happy carriage ride to training with a young French woman as co-passenger.⁵³ Furthermore, Etaples was not only one long drilling exercise. The camp catered for other pastimes: there were 'hospitals – stores – main roads constructed cobbled – goods station – recreation huts in large numbers, YMCA, Scottish churches, church army & huts by private people – canteens Cinema – concerts in YMCA & Other huts.'⁵⁴ Despite these diversions, some men found that

⁴³ Fuller, *Troop Morale*, 72-133.

⁴⁴ BL Tab.11748.aa.4.1-122: First World War, Misc. Leaflets, Programmes, Documents 90-113.

⁴⁵ IWM 06/90/1: E. Grindley, Memoir: [p 4]; LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0313: Pte. C. Clarke, Memoir [p 25].

⁴⁶ IWM P 472: Lt. Col. K.F.B. Tower, Memoir [p 5].

⁴⁷ IWM 87/56/1: Lt. W.B. Medlicott, Diary – Book 2 [p 7].

⁴⁸ IWM 86/30/1: L. Wilson, Memoir [p 18]. It is interesting to note that men and institutional documents quite frequently refer only to 'France' when discussing the Western Front.

⁴⁹ IWM 87/55/1: P.R. Hall, Memoir [p 30].

⁵⁰ R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 13-18 November 1916.

⁵¹ Pte. C. Clarke, Memoir: p 25.

⁵² LIDDLE/WW1/ADD/104: Pte. A.G. Old, Diary 2-6 April 1918; IWM 09/6/1: R.C.A. Frost, Memoir [p 1].

⁵³ IWM 08/94/1: 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 23 November 1916.

⁵⁴ RFM.ARC.3032: L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 4 January 1917.

all conversation was directed towards ‘events... “up the line”.’⁵⁵ Such camps and training were meant to be a tentative step towards the reality of the Western Front and kick-started the process of familiarisation and normalisation.⁵⁶

From these staging posts men moved up the line. The regular and predictable patterns of rotation meant that divisional or brigade camps were familiar waypoints. The nature of the conflict, particularly in earlier years, meant that any movement necessitated route marches. These offered a tiring but very intimate introduction to France and Belgium. Some men found marching long distances and the experience of ‘passing through so many villages and towns’ enjoyable. The sights – materiel, places, and people – that passed them by helped them to make sense of the war’s progress beyond their unit.⁵⁷ Despite this, journeys were often arduous. In late 1914 nearly all travel and manoeuvre was done on foot. This could prove problematic for morale. The 4/Royal Fusiliers’ war diary reported that a forced night march on 20 November was ‘freezing’ and that men’s discipline was ‘very bad.’⁵⁸ The battalion faced a similar problem on 30 November during a march to their billets in Westouren when many men fell out.⁵⁹ Between 24 August and 5 September the 2nd Ox and Bucks travelled 178 miles in 12 marches with only one day’s rest.⁶⁰ Such distances were not covered again until the end of the war. In 1916, however, units still spent between eleven and twelve days on the move between October and the end of the year.⁶¹ While trains and the increasing mechanisation of the BEF mitigated some of the strains of travel, marching remained a central feature of infantrymen’s experience. By late 1917 some units had become much more sedentary, perhaps as they recovered from the stresses of that year’s campaigning.⁶² Yet, amid the retreat after 21 March 1918, battalions spent over a week retreating on foot.⁶³

Leaving aside the German offensive, soldiers benefited from the BEF’s more sophisticated logistical apparatus later in the war. This offered a different vision of Belgium and France. Some men fondly remembered journeying on ‘enormous barges’ along canals

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Strachan, ‘Training, Morale and Modern War’, 216.

⁵⁷ C. Dwyer, Diary 4-11 October 1914; IWM PP/MCR/33: Maj. J.S. Knyvett, Diary 24 October 1914; MR 2/17/57: 2nd Lt. Frederick Thomas Kearsley Woodworth, Extract from F.T.K. Woodworth’s Diary 1914-1918 – 25 March 1918; Liddle/WW1/GS/0583: 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg, Diary 27 October 1918.

⁵⁸ WO 95/1431/1: War Diary 4/ Royal Fusiliers, 20 November 1914.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 30 November 1914.

⁶⁰ WO 95/1348: War Diary 2/ Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, Extract from the Diary of Lt. Col. H.R. Davies, Commanding 52nd Light Infantry.

⁶¹ October through December 1916 in War Diaries of WO 95/1655/1: 2/Border Regiment [16 days]; WO 95/1565/1: 1/Devonshire Regiment [13 days]; WO 95/1564/2: 2/Manchester Regiment [8 days]; 2/Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry [13 days]; 4/Royal Fusiliers [8 days]; WO 95/1484/1: 1/Royal Warwickshire Regiment [12 days].

⁶² WO 95/1712/2: 2/ Devonshire Regiment, War Diary October-December 1917.

⁶³ Ibid. War Diary March-April 1918.

that connected different towns and camps.⁶⁴ Others described the cramped conditions in the trains' 'cattle trucks.' Some felt they were particularly vulnerable to shellfire in these slow moving machines.⁶⁵ There was also a 'sinister suggestion of equivalence' in the painted legend, 'Hommes 40; Chevaux 8.'⁶⁶ W. Vernon, though, concluded that 'we don't have a very pleasant ride on the train but still it is better than marching with a full pack.'⁶⁷ Men focussed on the scenery that passed them by. Squatting on the floor of the cramped train carriages men would peer through 'the [carriage's] grill.'⁶⁸ Despite the discomfort, the slow pace of movement ensured that soldiers were able to observe the landscape – views of un-scarred countryside provided a vision of freedom and peace.⁶⁹

When they reached their destination and were 'at rest,' soldiers would walk to explore and unwind. The opportunity to wander upright in comparative safety was a welcome experience, particularly for men returning from the frontlines.⁷⁰ In 1914 the area surrounding Ypres retained traces of the peaceful world – houses, civilians, and evidence of life other than war remained. In October C. Dwyer visited a café barely a hundred metres behind the frontline.⁷¹ Similarly, Capt. Maurice Asprey purchased fresh meat, eggs, and sweets from the farms around his rest camp.⁷² Postcards collected and produced during this time show that towns still retained much of their original form.⁷³ The extension of the line in 1916 also offered men the opportunity to explore Picardy. It was comparatively unscarred by the war, which improved men's mood and morale. The 'neighbourhood of Amiens, prior to the great attack of July 1st [was] a very delightful country... [with] beautiful woods, full of shady trees; cold rivers, pleasant to bathe in; happy, smiling villages, inhabited by simple and hospitable villagers; and, last, but not least, the lovely city of Amiens, with its open-air cafes and tempting shop-windows brim full of life and interest.'⁷⁴ The Somme region also fell victim to the conflict and became 'dreary' and a 'joke.'⁷⁵ Yet, its orchards and valleys became familiar and the region continued to divert men's attention. In late 1917 and early 1918 it was possible

⁶⁴ IWM 12/31/1: H.E. Baker, Memoir Part 6: p 2.

⁶⁵ H.T. Madders, Diary 3 April 1918.

⁶⁶ C.S.W., *The Outpost*, Vol. III (1 July 1916) 118.

⁶⁷ IWM 03/30/1: W. Vernon, Letter marked 22 July 1918 – addressed to Miss L Vernon C/O Mrs Ball, High Offley, Newport, Salop.

⁶⁸ C.S.W., *The Outpost*, Vol. III (1 July 1916) 118.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Also IWM 06/54/1: A.E. Heywood, Diary 15 November 1917.

⁷⁰ C. Dwyer, Diary 27 September 1914; IWM PP/MCR/144: S. Judd, 30 December 1914; R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 21 November 1916; 2nd Lt. S. Frankenburg, Letter 19 December 1917; IWM 67/149/1-3: Capt. P. Ingleson, Letter to Miss Fulton 6 February 1918.

⁷¹ C. Dwyer, Diary 24 October 1914.

⁷² Capt. M. Asprey, Letters to Mother 25 and 30 November and 4 December 1914 and Letters to Father 29 November and 20 December 1914.

⁷³ LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0946: D.G. Le May, Postcard 132. La Grande Guerre 1914-15: 'Ruines de VERMELLES (Pas-de-Calais), -- Cette ville réoccupée par nos troupes après une lutte héroïque qui dura plusieurs semaines A.R. vis Paris 132.'

⁷⁴ Lowe, *The Western Battlefields*, 16.

⁷⁵ Liddle/WW1/GS/0273: Capt. C. Carrington, Incomplete Letters to Mother 1916 [No. 89-105].

to find local entertainment, even in a few locations close to the line.⁷⁶ A.E. Haywood spent many evenings drinking in the towns near his camp. On 11 November he ‘went into the village... and got pretty well oiled up on Vin Rouge and Benedictine and Vin Blanc with beer for a change.’⁷⁷ J. Grimston enjoyed Arras for its shopping and theatre.⁷⁸ However, poorer men complained about the cost of living and entertainment.⁷⁹

The relative comfort of rear zones encouraged a more constructive relationship with the physical environment. The *BEF Times* identified ‘Pop’ [Poperinghe] as ‘our holiday resort... horrible... as it was... It provided a break of sorts from the eternal mud and shells’ even though it had ‘somehow fallen into disrepute.’ Its proximity to Ypres left it vulnerable to shellfire. Nevertheless, it reflects how rear zones were prized for providing an escape to comparative security and comfort. Another man recalled how ‘Pop’ ‘stood for everything that meant civilization to the British Army. The road from Poperinghe to Ypres was known to every soldier: to march eastwards on this road meant work, trenches, mud – everything unpleasant; to march westwards meant rest, a “comfy” dinner in the town, and possibly an evening at the club.’⁸⁰ It was, perhaps, such a positive impression that led S.R. Hudson to collect spoons as mementos from Amiens, Boulogne-sur-Mer, Doullens and Arras.⁸¹

These places allowed soldiers to create more intimate memories as they personalised and diversified their routines. Men explored, seeing new things and meeting new people.⁸² Activities ranged from the mundane to intimate. While ‘cleaning equipment’ soldiers were ‘unofficially’ ‘frying eggs, drinking *café-au-lait* – the more fortunate ones, *café-au* something else, or teaching English to some ambitious demoselle [sic].’⁸³ It was such recreation that left Henry Lawson wishing that he was allowed to have a camera to ‘show [his mother that] we are happy and do have amusing times.’⁸⁴ These places and regions provided a tonic in the face of the frontlines destruction.⁸⁵ In this vein, F.L. Clark wrote to Lt. J.H. Johnson on 12 December 1916: ‘Plugstreet must seem even as the abode of the blessed to you’ after ‘the hell’s delight of the Somme.’⁸⁶

⁷⁶ Sgt. H. Hopwood, Letter to Mother & All 15 December 1917.

⁷⁷ A.E. Heywood, Diary 11 November 1917.

⁷⁸ IWM 67/246/1: J. Grimston, Diary 24 February 1918.

⁷⁹ LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0144: A&C Black and Company, Employees of A.C. Black Publishers, Letters 1917-1918 from E.G. Gilscott; Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter 14 December 1916.

⁸⁰ Lowe, *The Western Battlefields*, 11.

⁸¹ IWM 06/32/1: Maj. S.R. Hudson, Images of Memento Spoons from the Western Front.

⁸² K. Cowman, ‘Touring Behind the Lines: British Soldiers in French Towns and Cities during the Great War’, *Urban History*, Vol. 41 Issue 1 (Feb., 2014) 105-123.

⁸³ J.T.S., ‘*Chez la Coiffeuse*’, *The Outpost*, Vol. III Iss. 3 (Jun., 1, 1916) p 3.

⁸⁴ LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0933: H. Lawson, Letter to his Mother 16 September 1917.

⁸⁵ A.E. Heywood, Diary 14 November 1917; Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 29 December 1917.

⁸⁶ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Letter from F.L. Clark 12 December 1916.

Familiarising and Coping with the Frontlines

It was harder to familiarise the firing line. The destruction that met soldiers created a sense that the frontlines were a world bereft of life.⁸⁷ In late 1914 the cumulative effect of shellfire had already shattered the landscape. J.E. Mawer noted that ‘it is a sight to see the Villages we go through with most of the houses blown down by the shell[s].’⁸⁸ In later years prolonged exposure to shellfire had left many areas even more terribly scarred. Pte. F.G. Senyard sensed that he had left any trace of ‘civilisation’ behind him.⁸⁹ The dilapidated villages and inanimate trench lines made the journey to and from this domain a ‘horror.’⁹⁰ It was ‘unearthly.’⁹¹ Others reckoned that the ‘terrible sights’ of ‘trees like stumps and every inch of the hill sides churned up with shell fire’ resembled ‘hell.’⁹² Lt. W.B. Medlicott noted that artillery fire had ‘scattered all the belongings right and left – there is nothing more depressing. School books etc.... all in a sodden mush on the floor.’⁹³

The Somme became a ‘beastly’ vista.⁹⁴ An article in *The Snapper* claimed that the region had been reduced to ‘desolated villages’ in which ‘no trace remains to mark the site of the many peaceful homes... Save for a few shattered trees, and the countless wooden crosses.’ It resembled ‘a South African veldt.’⁹⁵ Much of the battlefield was reduced to little more than shapeless forms of rubble and mud.⁹⁶ 1917 and 1918 left men shocked by the ‘hideous’ panoramas produced by both Third Ypres and the Spring Offensives.⁹⁷ In February 1918 Lt. J.H. Johnson described the frontlines simply: ‘The debris, graves and loneliness of desolation.’⁹⁸ 2nd Lt D. Henrick Jones was left desperate to escape the ‘beastly country.’⁹⁹

The frontlines did have their own character. David Isaac Griffiths described his trenches around the Scarpe River as ‘a “prehistoric home”’.¹⁰⁰ The feeling that history had

⁸⁷ IWM 08/43/1: Capt. E. Lycette, Memoir [p 55]; NAM 1998-08-31: Pte. A. J. Symonds, Diary 26-29 July 1916.

⁸⁸ SOFO Box 16 Item 35 3/4/C/2: ‘Letters from Pte. Mawer,’ Letter to Wife Undated Just after Christmas 1914 [Doc.29].

⁸⁹ Pte. F.G. Senyard, Diary 14 and 17 December 1916; IWM Con Shelf: A.P. Burke, 26 November 1916.

⁹⁰ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 22 November 1916; R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 21 November 1916.

⁹¹ R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 25 December 1916; Liddle/WW1/GS/0266: Pte. E.A. Cannon, Diary 14 September 1916.

⁹² E.T. Marler, Diary 18 and 24 November and 8 December 1916.

⁹³ Lt. W.B. Medlicott, Diary – Book 2 [p 10].

⁹⁴ 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 2, 4 and 18 November 1916.

⁹⁵ ‘Our Christmas Greeting’, *The “Snapper”*, No. 12, Vol. XII (1916) 126.

⁹⁶ RFM Box 2014.9: Officers Photographs taken on the Front in France, Photograph D 309 – The roads of Flers.

⁹⁷ IWM 07/81/1: Rev. C.H. Bell, Letter to Herbert c. January 1918; IWM 76/27/3: Col. F. Hardman, Letter 3 April 1918; J. Grimston, Diary 24 April 1918.

⁹⁸ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 18 February 1918.

⁹⁹ 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter to wife 2 April 1918.

¹⁰⁰ Europeana 1914-1918 <<http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/contributions/20788#prettyPhoto>> accessed 15 November 2016> D.I. Griffiths, Letter to ‘Batchie’ 9 April 1917.

turned in on itself is striking. The landscape transformed as night fell and dawn rose.¹⁰¹ Paul Nash argued that at dusk ‘the monstrous lands take on a changing aspect.’ More than this, ‘the landscape is so distorted from its own gentle forms’ – through the combination of the ‘works of men’ and of light – that ‘nothing seems to bear the imprint of God’s hand.’ It might have been ‘a terrific creation of some malign fiend working a crooked will on the innocent countryside.’¹⁰² It could also be personified. The scarred slope that faced Siegfried Sassoon in *Attack* was ‘menacing’ and the sun was ‘glow’ring.¹⁰³ Lt. J.H. Johnson saw Arras as a ‘city of ruins’ and on a trip between there and Bapaume he reported that it was a ‘land of desolation – ruined and dead.’¹⁰⁴ Other men, too, encapsulated the land as ‘dead.’¹⁰⁵ During the night No Man’s Land could be a particularly fearful place. On 21 November 1916, for example, a lance corporal of the 9th Royal Fusiliers disappeared without a trace after being injured and left in a shell hole.¹⁰⁶ The regular scouting parties that left British lines meant that this was not an uncommon event.

Some men believed that the frontlines were haunted or, at the very least, sensed that they were surrounded by death. Charles Carrington, on 27 December 1916, recorded in his diary ‘ghosts – ghost stories.’¹⁰⁷ The lack of context makes it difficult to interpret this entry. For others, though, the landscape was supernatural. Its apparent emptiness added to its paranormal visage. Cecil White believed that the Somme had become a place of ‘phantom’ woods.¹⁰⁸ Although after Third Ypres G.A. Stevens found that he preferred the line around St Quentin to ‘beastly old Flanders which one hates now.’¹⁰⁹ In late 1918, J. Grimston noted in his diary that while it was ‘not so smashed as Arras,’ Cambrai remained ‘a city of the dead.’ ‘Not a soul [was] to be seen’ along the ‘rotten bumpy road’ leading into its ruins.¹¹⁰ Lt. J.H. Johnson was convinced that ‘many people’ would be drawn to the ‘waste land... long after Death passed over it.’ The experience of these visitors would be ‘worlds of difference’ compared to ‘those who saw it killed and just after.’¹¹¹

Figure 1.1: This image - The Destruction of 1914 - D.G. Le May, Postcard 132. La Grande Guerre 1914-15: ‘Ruines de VERMELLES(Pas-de-Calais), -- A.R. vis Paris 132’ – has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.

¹⁰¹ ‘Aftermath’ in S. Sassoon, *The War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon* (London, 1919) 91.

¹⁰² TGA 8313: P. Nash, Letter to Margaret 6 April 1917.

¹⁰³ Ibid. ‘Attack.’

¹⁰⁴ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 8 December 1917.

¹⁰⁵ Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter to Wife 17 December 1916.

¹⁰⁶ TNA WO 95/1857/2: War Diary 9/ Royal Fusiliers, 21 November 1916.

¹⁰⁷ Capt. C. Carrington, 27 December 1916.

¹⁰⁸ L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 26 January 1918.

¹⁰⁹ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 4 March 1918.

¹¹⁰ J. Grimston, Diary 14 October 1918.

¹¹¹ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 10 January 1918.

Figure 1.2: This image – The Destruction of 1916 - RFM Box 2014.9: Photograph D 309 – has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.

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Even these sights could be familiarised. Men still took the opportunity to explore the frontlines and No Man's Land once the enemy had withdrawn. J.M. Humphries enjoyed the 'novelty' of safely searching for souvenirs amid the detritus of the frontlines.¹¹² John Masefield found pathos in the empty Somme battlefields in 1917, but believed they signalled that the BEF was advancing to victory.¹¹³ The destruction was also normalised. Stylised reproduction images were used on dinner menus, conference programmes, and Christmas (or other) cards produced by units. These ranged from scarred frontline landscapes, including barbed wire and shattered tree stumps, to shell damaged townscapes.¹¹⁴ Men found beauty despite the destruction. Paul Nash believed that any artist would find their muse amid the devastation. He proclaimed 'those wonderful trenches at... dawn and sundown.' There was a strange magnificence to the 'wide landscape flat and scantily wooded,' 'pitted' with 'yawning' shell holes and littered with the 'refuge of war.'¹¹⁵ V.G. Bell was not a skilful artist but his sketches suggest he was struck by the resilience of nature, both flora and fauna. His pictures depicted 'hooded crows,' owls, or dogs that were peculiar to an incident or location.¹¹⁶ They reflect his attempt to make sense of the sights – he recorded nearly everything: landscapes, animals, military activities, the trenches, and his billets. The rubbish, the shell holes, the destruction, and the rats were all catalogued and internalised.¹¹⁷ To these men and others, the frontlines could still be 'beautiful.'¹¹⁸

The experience and knowledge of the frontlines could encourage a sense of authority, confidence, and power. This was encapsulated in the common 'crushing retort of the private soldier': 'Before You Come Up.' There were other elaborations of this phrase, including 'before your (regimental) number was dry,' 'before you was breeched,' 'before you nipped' or 'before your ballocks [sic] dropped.' These apparently reflected the same sentiment:

¹¹² NAM 1998-02-232: J.M. Humphries, Letter to "Mater" 13 September 1916.

¹¹³ J. Masefield, *The Old Frontline* (New York, 1918).

¹¹⁴ RFM.2013.9: Miscellaneous Documents, Card: 'Christmas Greetings from 17th Infantry Brigade, 'Xmas 16.'

¹¹⁵ P. Nash, Letter to Margaret 6 April 1917.

¹¹⁶ BL RP9518: V.G. Bell, Sketches: 'The Wastage of War,' Men in a Trench in the 'Duck's Bill' at Night 7/11/15, and 'Pumping a Flooded Traffic Trench.'

¹¹⁷ Ibid. Sketch Albums – Western Front 1915-16, Egypt & Palestine, 1917-20.

¹¹⁸ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 6 November 1916; R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 10 November 1916; 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg, Letter 21 December 1917; Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 25 December 1917; Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 16 January 1918.

I was in the front line before you arrived from the base, I know more than you are capable of knowing, I've suffered more than you, I've done more than you, I'm a better soldier than you and a better man. And I refuse to believe a word you say.¹¹⁹

To understand how and why men familiarised the war zone and found meaning in it, one must understand how they sensed and coped with its more insidious characteristics. Habituation helps the scholar to comprehend just how combatants endured the war's chronic crises. Vanda Wilcox has argued that 'a process of habituation, and a greater tolerance of the familiar, meant that passive acceptance often increased with exposure to life in the trenches.'¹²⁰ As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, habituation leads humans to experience reduced reactions to stimuli. It can militate against even the most bewildering of experiences. This includes both olfactory (smell) and auditory (sound) habituation, which can occur organically outside more conventional and purposeful forms of training.¹²¹ The following sections will explore men's ability to normalise and overcome the smells and sounds – particularly of the frontlines – that supported the processes of familiarisation outlined above.

The Trenches' Stenches

The trench lines were littered with rubbish, shell fragments, barbed wire and 'everywhere the dead. / Only the dead were always present – present / As a vile sickly smell of rottenness.'¹²² The smell of corpses was ubiquitous.¹²³ It was 'infecting the earth.'¹²⁴ The frequency with which 'stench' and 'trench' were rhymed went beyond literary technique.¹²⁵ Even if invisible, the dead's presence was evident in the air as a constant reminder of the war's toll. This put a huge strain on the men.¹²⁶ Other scents, such as the smell of a wound, could also be deeply

¹¹⁹ J. Brophy and E. Partridge, *The Long Trail: Soldiers' Songs and Slang 1914-18* (Aylesbury, 1965, 1969) 83.

¹²⁰ Wilcox, *Morale and the Italian Army*, 137.

¹²¹ For olfactory habituation, R. Pellegrino, C. Sinding, R.A. de Wijk and T. Hummel, 'Habituation and Adaptation to Odors in Humans', *Physiology & Behavior*, Vol. 177 (August 2017) 13-19 and I. Croy, W. Maboshe, and T. Hummel, 'Habituation Effects of Pleasant and Unpleasant Odors', *International Journal of Psychophysiology*, Vol. 88 Issue 1 (April 2013) 104-108. For auditory habituation, T. Rosburg and P. Sörös, 'The Response Decrease of Auditory Evoked Potentials by Repeated Stimulation – Is There Evidence for an Interplay between Habituation and Sensitization?' *Clinical Neurophysiology*, Vol. 127 Issue 1 (Jan. 2016) 397-408.

¹²² A.G. West, *The Diaries of a Dead Officer: Being the Posthumous Papers of A.G. West*, ed. C.J.M. West (London, 1918) 81-83.

¹²³ E. Spiers, 'The Scottish Soldier at War', in Cecil and Liddle, *Facing Armageddon*, 318.

¹²⁴ TKM Item 90/50/2: C.J. Richards, Diary 16 September 1916.

¹²⁵ G.H.P.S., 'The Yule Log', *The Fifth Glo'ster Gazette: A Chronicle, Serious and Humorous, of the Battalion while Serving with the British Expeditionary Force*, No. 17 (1 February 1917) 10; W.O.W., 'Pioneering Platitudes', *The Outpost*, Vol. VII No. 1 (1 June 1918) 3.

¹²⁶ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 20.

shocking.¹²⁷ The reek of their own unwashed bodies left soldiers ‘sad,’ while the stink of ‘rotten iron’ overwhelmed natural aromas.¹²⁸ For some men the smell of ‘shit’ was ‘the smell of Passchendaele, [and] of the [Ypres] Salient.’¹²⁹ The war had specific sensory facets, many of which were unique and reappeared in later memory processes. Pte. Bert Farns remembered how ‘smells are one of the big things.’ ‘I can often still smell gas today, and that manly dampness of men and mud at Ypres [sic].’¹³⁰ Sudden recall, even of smell, is indicative of traumatic memories’ place within post-traumatic stress – be it chronic or temporary.¹³¹ Yet smell could be recalled more positively: the whiff of ‘HP Sauce’ or ‘hot tea outside on a cold day’ also took Farns back to the frontlines.¹³² Smells infused and affected both memory and perceptions of war.

Awful smells combined to produce an aroma peculiar to the frontlines. 2nd Lt. Guy Chapman recorded: ‘there is a sickly stench. The mixed smell of exploded... gas, blood, putrefying corpses and broken bricks.’¹³³ The nauseous mixture of poison, human remains, and destroyed buildings were a potent reminder of the conflict’s carnage. Evidently the smell-scape reemphasised war’s capacity for carnage. The most omnipresent of all these scents was that of the dead. The smell of decomposing flesh lay heavy in the air. Former trenches or shell holes seemed to preserve the flavour of death.¹³⁴ The smell of corpses wafted across No Man’s Land, and the trenches and proximity only intensified the odour. Sanitary problems contributed to the near constant undertone of faecal matter.¹³⁵ The rain, too, offered its own particular aroma. For some the pong of other men was too much in the cramped conditions.¹³⁶

Disgusting odours were ubiquitous. Where possible, dead soldiers were removed for burial, though shellfire – or, indeed, trench work – would sometimes disinter the partially rotten remains of old comrades. H.T. Madders had to live with the smell of a number of ‘poor old transport horses.’ Despite having ‘rolled them’ into a hole they continued to attract ‘flies like bees’ and to ‘stink for days.’¹³⁷ Elsewhere it was ‘the nauseating smell of high explosive’

¹²⁷ A. Bamji, ‘Facial Surgery: The Patient’s Experience’, in Cecil and Liddle, *Facing Armageddon*, 494.

¹²⁸ S. Audoin Rouzeau, ‘The French Soldier in the Trenches’, Ibid. 224; Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 69.

¹²⁹ Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 331.

¹³⁰ Pte. Bert Farns in Osgood and Brown, *Digging Up Plugstreet*, 105.

¹³¹ M.P. Koss, A.J. Figueiredo, I. Bell, M. Tharan and S. Tromp, ‘Traumatic memory characteristics: A cross-validated mediational model of response to rape among employed women’, *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, Vol. 105 No. 3 (1996) 421-432.

¹³² Osgood and Brown, *Digging Up Plugstreet*, 105.

¹³³ LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0292: 2nd Lt. G. Chapman, Diary 16 November 1916.

¹³⁴ ‘The Mermaid’, *The Fifth Glo’ster Gazette: A Chronicle, Serious and Humorous, of the Battalion while Serving with the British Expeditionary Force*, No. 18 (1 April 1917) 19.

¹³⁵ A Commanding Officer, ‘Notes on a Recent Visit to the Trenches’, *The Red Feather*, Vol. 1 No. 3 (1 March 1915) 42.

¹³⁶ Capt. E. Lycette, Memoir [p 9].

¹³⁷ H.T. Madders, Diary 24 September 1918.

that struck men forcibly. It reminded those approaching the frontline of the dangers facing them. It left 'our hands... numb.'¹³⁸ Pte. E.A. Cannon practiced verse in his diary's back pages. These unsophisticated poems reflected his visceral reaction to the smells he encountered: 'The stench here t'was / simply vile,' so much so that he 'wondered if again I / should ever smile.'¹³⁹

Yet processes of habituation played a part in undermining the war's particular horrors. The fact that men did not constantly bemoan the smell-scape suggests they were able to ignore or accept it. A satirical sketch found in *The B.E.F. Times* was indicative of this. Upon entering a frontline dugout a senior officer exclaimed: 'Gawd! How this filthy place stinks.' He went on to ask 'what's this dreadful stench?' The frontline officer replied: 'Its no good worrying about that, its peculiar to the tunnel.'¹⁴⁰ This scene reveals soldiers' familiarity with particular scents and their ability to become accustomed to the unpleasant sensory features of the frontlines. For some men the smell was integral to their experience and held 'a grim fascination.'¹⁴¹

The Sounds of War

The soundscape of the Western Front could also be overcome, internalised, and normalised through habituation. Many men were confident that they could predict the fall of shells by evaluating the sound they made.¹⁴² Charles Quinnell remembered that this was one of the first lessons a soldier learnt: 'you could tell by sound if a shell was going over you or was meant for you... And if that shell was coming for [you,] you would lie right down, and believe you me, a man lying down takes a lot of hitting.'¹⁴³ Sound contributed to morale. This heightened awareness also helped men to infuse the physical environment with meaning. They were accustomed to the peculiar noises made by enemy ammunition. Machine guns sounded like typewriters, while gas could be identified by its tell-tale 'flutter, flutter, crump' This contrasted with the 'Whoo-Whoo-Whoo-WHOO-CRASH' of high velocity shells.¹⁴⁴ It is not clear to what extent such familiarity offered protection, but even placebos offered men a sense of agency and could breed a confidence that bolstered resilience.

Many men, though, were dismayed by the experience of artillery fire. One soldier wrote that 'modern warfare seems to me to be a series of stupendous efforts on the part of

¹³⁸ 'Memories on Revisiting and Old Sector', *The Outpost*, Vol. V, No. 5 (1 September 1917) 168.

¹³⁹ Pte. E.A. Cannon, Diary [Draft Poem from June 1918].

¹⁴⁰ 'More Mud Than Glory', *The B.E.F. Times*, Vol. 2 No. 1 (15 August 1917) 12.

¹⁴¹ Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 13 September 1918.

¹⁴² Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 106.

¹⁴³ IWM Sound 554: C. Quinnell, Interview Reel 10.

¹⁴⁴ J. Walker, *Words and the First World War: Language, Memory and Vocabulary* (London, 2017) 127.

each opponent to outclass the other in creating an appalling noise or a ghastly mess.¹⁴⁵ The sound of a bombardment could be very stressful. An article in the *Manchester Weekly Times* described an attack as ‘a confusion of lights of various colours... and a tornado of sound, in which machine guns and trench mortars played their part.’¹⁴⁶ This extract indicates how overwhelming the orchestra of battle could be. Even outside battle, the shock of an incoming barrage was terrifying. H.T. Madders was woken up ‘by the sound of his [Jerry’s] shell coming towards us, could only nestle closer to mother earth, it seemed as if he was going to blow us to smithereens, at last it dropped about 40 yds up the trench.’¹⁴⁷ His sudden awakening left him unable to gauge the shell’s direction, and panic bred a sense of helplessness. Shock also exposed men’s vulnerabilities. It could feel as if shells surrounded the men as both Allied and enemy batteries fired from their front and rear.¹⁴⁸ The ‘roar’ of their own shells passing overhead made ‘a far more terrifying noise... than the German shells bursting.’¹⁴⁹ Alongside the weather the noise was one of the enemies of sleep, and anybody within ear-shot of active frontline areas would often find their nights interrupted – if not ruined – by ‘deafening’ artillery fire. Tiredness left men even more depressed and anxious.¹⁵⁰

These sounds could, however, break the tedium of trench warfare. The sounds of war reminded men where they were.¹⁵¹ The strike of a bullet could drag daydreaming men violently into the present: ‘Smack that one buried itself in the back wall of the trench. I start instinctively with the guilty feeling that my man has fired and I have forgotten to signal the shock.’¹⁵² In fact, the impersonality of the Front meant that the familiar sound of the ‘occasional whizzbang which passes one’s ear of a night lends colour to the probability that such a person [as the enemy] exists.’¹⁵³ Even the quietest zones were interspersed with occasional gunfire. Men sometimes sat ‘at ease and think it fine’ among ‘a peaceful evening scene’ when a ‘Crump!’ signalled the ‘burst of a 5.9 / In your best fly-proof latrine.’¹⁵⁴ Sudden gunfire or explosions could prove a bigger shock than regular artillery fire and often provided an unwanted reminder of reality.

Some men became anxious during periods of silence. It seemed unnatural, and a number of men were suspicious of the lulls. It played upon their imagination, particularly at

¹⁴⁵ S.M., ‘High Explosives’, *The Outpost*, Vol. III No. 1 (1 March 1916) 20.

¹⁴⁶ IWM 01/37/1A: 2nd Lt. C.W. Gray, Extract from *The Manchester Weekly Times* (Saturday, October 28, 1916).

¹⁴⁷ H.T. Madders, Diary 31 August 1918.

¹⁴⁸ 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Sunday 12 November 1916.

¹⁴⁹ Capt. G.B. Donaldson, Letter to Mother 31 May 1916.

¹⁵⁰ C. Dwyer, Diary 8 November 1914; Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Biddy (his Wife) 17 November 1916.

¹⁵¹ A.G. West, *The Diary of a Dead Officer*, 79-81.

¹⁵² C.S.W., *The Outpost*, Vol. III (1 July 1916) 119.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ ‘A Perfect Nightmare’, *The Fifth Glo’ster Gazette: A Chronicle, Serious and Humorous, of the Battalion while Serving with the British Expeditionary Force*, No. 21 (1 November 1917), 5.

night. Christmas 1914 was eerie because of the conspicuous silence. L/Cpl. K.M. Gaunt reported that ‘not a sound could be heard anywhere.’¹⁵⁵ W. Tapp went even further and noted in his diary that he missed ‘the sound of the shots flying over it is like a clock which has stopped ticking.’¹⁵⁶ A.L. Collis felt a similar unease in March 1918. There was an uncommon ‘quietness’ in the frontlines and he and his unit were (justifiably) fearful that the stillness was an indicator of the upcoming German offensive.¹⁵⁷ Silence was perceived as a precursor to greater violence. It was less predictable.

Men used sound to measure their experience and events occurring beyond their sector or direct line of sight. For Maj. J.S. Knyvett 10 October 1914 was memorable for being ‘our first day within the sound of firing.’¹⁵⁸ The reverberations of distant artillery offered insights into events further along the line.¹⁵⁹ For more experienced soldiers this ‘rumble’ of the guns was a reminder of what awaited them as they moved up the line. The near-constant background noise was ominous. This was particularly true for those support troops moving up to bolster the British defences against the German offensives after 21 March 1918.¹⁶⁰ Men tended not to sing en-route to the trenches – it was against orders, but it was also dangerous. Yet, as the noise faded when they returned from a tour of duty men began to sing their bawdy marching songs anew, perhaps because the soundscape confirmed that they had escaped the killing zone.¹⁶¹

Camps had their own, more pleasant, soundscape. The ‘noisy rattling’ of guy ropes and tent flaps straining against the wind and, in later years, the mechanical noises of trucks and slow-moving trains with their sharp ‘warning blast[s]’ provided a backdrop. The shouted orders of NCOs and officers, the ‘rush’ of mess tins, and the ‘clamours of men’ all contributed to a more peaceful auditory experience.¹⁶² In these areas it was possible to hear the echoes of civilian life: music; football and rugby crowds; theatre, and laughter. These were an imperfect but comforting reminder of home.¹⁶³ Sometimes they induced feelings of nostalgia, but this was not necessarily a bad thing.¹⁶⁴ The noise of comrades enjoying themselves allowed A.P. Burke to let down his guard and view the world more in a positive

¹⁵⁵ IWM 75/78/1: L/Cpl. C.M. Gaunt, Letter 25 December 1914.

¹⁵⁶ IWM 66/156/1: Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 27 December 1914.

¹⁵⁷ A.L. Collis, Diary 1 March 1918.

¹⁵⁸ Maj. J.S. Knyvett, Diary 10 October 1914.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ ‘N.M., “Somewhere-”, *The Outpost*, Vol. VI, No. 6 (1 April 1918) 199.

¹⁶¹ Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, 25.

¹⁶² W.S.C., ‘Back to the Line’, *The Outpost*, (1 October 1916) Vol. IV 26.

¹⁶³ Pte. W.M. Anderson, Letter 15 November 1916; IWM 07/41/1: J.M. Nichols, Diary 17, 18 and 19 December 1916; R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 25 November 1916; J. Grimston, Diary 12 October 1918; H.T. Madders, Diary 2 and 5 January 1918; Col. F. Hardman, Letter to Parents 5 February 1918; Lt. J.H. Johnson, 1 January 1918. Also Fuller, *Troop Morale*, 85-87.

¹⁶⁴ L. Wilson, Memoir [p 45].

light. The ‘noise that’s going on in the different huts’ was like a ‘carnival night.’ It was ‘lovely’ and made the sight and sound of a distant German ‘straffing [sic]’ less oppressive.¹⁶⁵

Familiarity with the sounds of war furnished some combatants with a coping mechanism. They diminished the danger by reconceptualising weaponry. One soldier’s article in *The Wipers Times* was entitled ‘to Minnie’ and dedicated to the ‘P.B.I [poor bloody infantry].’ Referring colloquially to the German *Minenwerfer*, the author consciously personified the weapon. He heard its ‘voice with dread,’ calling it a ‘fickle jade’ and ‘traitorous minx.’ The mortar had a ‘raucous screech,’ which was particularly unpleasant – as were *her* ‘immodest manners’ when *she* ‘force[d] *her* ‘blatant presence’ and intruded ‘uninvited.’ The gendering of this weapon was taken further: ‘once most loved of all your sex,’ Minnie was ‘now hated with a loathing.’ The feminisation became an aggressive psychological tool. This was revealed in the final sentence: ‘when next my harassed soul you vex / You’ll get some back at any rate.’¹⁶⁶ Whether this resentment of women was a product of personal slight – or bitterness at men’s lot – is unclear. Weapons and military paraphernalia were often anthropomorphised and offered female form. The personification of enemy weaponry made retribution easier to conceive and may have been a reassertion of power.

Elsewhere, men gained confidence as they developed a deep familiarity with the sounds of particular activities and ordnance. Another soldier recorded the peculiarities of various ‘High Explosives.’ Mining, he continued, apparently ‘causes a satisfying amount of noise and debris.’ Upon detonation ‘the earth rocks and rumbles with the concussion’ causing ‘a huge lump of the hitherto inoffensive landscape’ to become ‘violently aggressive.’ The mine transformed the landscape into a weapon.¹⁶⁷ The experience of a mine’s detonation was relatively rare and too unpredictable to be normalised. The other tools in the German arsenal were more familiar. The men, it seems, learned to expect and prepare for the ‘concussion’ of a High Explosive shell, which felt like being ‘hit... over the head with something about as heavy as a cheese.’ Of course, the effect near the impact zone was much worse. The ‘light shell or whizz bang’ had ‘a loud noise to its credit’ but, again, men learned not to be overly fearful since ‘its destructive qualities’ were ‘small.’ The ‘shrapnel shell’ on the other hand had ‘a weird sound, a loud explosion, and a tremendous clatter of falling pieces of... shrapnel.’ They likened the German shrapnel shell to the sound of ‘a Ford’ whose owner had ‘“let her go all out.”’ The ‘hand bomb and the rifle grenade’ were about as effective as the ‘whizz-bang.’¹⁶⁸ Vanda Wilcox has argued that allusion to the sounds of conflict in the songs of Italian soldiers’ allowed for the ‘traumatic and alien soundscape of the war’ to be

¹⁶⁵ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 2 November 1916.

¹⁶⁶ ‘To Minnie (Dedicated to the P.B.I.)’, *The Wipers Times: A Facsimile Reprint of the Trench Magazine*, Vol. 1 No.1 (31 July 1916) 1.

¹⁶⁷ S.M., ‘High Explosives’, 20.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

‘rhetorically controlled.’¹⁶⁹ English soldiers’ songs such as *Hush! Here Comes a Whizz-Bang*, *The Bells of Hell*, or *We are the boys who Fear no Noise* played a similar role.¹⁷⁰ By downplaying the danger men were combatting their own fear.

By diminishing and controlling their reactions to the ‘alien’ smell and soundscapes of the Western Front, soldiers were able to overcome the chronic crises of service in the frontlines and the alien physical environment. Habituation and familiarisation were simultaneously conscious and unconscious processes and stemmed from soldiers’ familiarity with the world around them and a consideration of what it *meant*. Yet, re-conceptualisation was only possible if men were able to control their fear and revulsion.

Strategies for Familiarisation

Soldiers and the army developed other tools to see beyond what one man called ‘the great sameness’ of the frontlines. This also helped to combat the horror and confusion experienced in the forward zone.¹⁷¹ Settlements continued to have forms and names long after they were reduced to rubble.¹⁷² Maps – alongside signs recording the name of trenches and settlements – encouraged men to recognise ‘familiar’ aspects of much of ‘this side of the line’ and allowed them to *imagine* even the most shell-damaged parts of the Western Front as more orderly.¹⁷³ This imposed stability.¹⁷⁴

Soldiers’ renaming of the places that they encountered reinforced this process. In 1914, official communiqués insisted that, for security purposes, units avoided using local names.¹⁷⁵ This catalysed the renaming of the landscape. In September 1914 the *Illustrated London News* reproduced various hand-made signposts for *Somerset House*, *Hotel de Lockhart*, *Plugstreet Hall*. This reflected the soldier’s ‘love of home and his capacity for

¹⁶⁹ Wilcox, *Morale and the Italian Army*, 119.

¹⁷⁰ Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, 47-49.

¹⁷¹ NAM 1992-04-57-16-5: Lt. Col. J E Smart, Hand Sketched Maps ‘M4 18 Rifles’ and ‘M5 20 Rifles.’ Also, Wilson, *Landscapes of the Western Front*, 101.

¹⁷² For trench maps see TNA WO 153 and WO 207. Also Maj. S.R. Hudson, Map of area around Toilly [1916].

¹⁷³ NAM 2000-10-304: Notes on the Area of Ablainzeville, France, from General Staff, 5th Army; WO 223: Wt. W. 15534-9497. Spl. 4000. 2/17. F. & Q. (H.C.) Ltd. P. 17: Notes on the Area of the Ablainzeville, Achiet-le-Grand, Achiet-le-Petit, Bihucourt, Bucquoy, Gomiecourt and Logeast Wood: Prepared by General Staff, Fifth Army. Also, NAM 1980-01-4: Field Message Book (Army Form 153), 21 (Service) Bn Manchester Regiment, Situation Report 27 January 1918.

¹⁷⁴ Liddle/WW1/GS/0837: Capt. J. Isherwood, 1:20.000 map of Montbrehain, Edition 1.A; Maj. S.R. Hudson, Map of Tilloy; MR 2/17/67: Sgt. J. Palin, Maps [1/20,000 map of the Northern France; Also Hand Drawn Maps, including Mametz 1 July 1916]; IWM 12/15/1: Lt. Col. D.R. Turnbull, Letter to Sylvia 26 December 1916; SOFO Box 16 Item 29 3/4/J3/8: Lt. J.E.H. Neville, Diary 24 March 1918; 2nd Lt. F.T.K. Woodworth, Diary 26 March 1918.

¹⁷⁵ War Diary 1st Battalion the Devonshire Regiment: ‘Appendix K. 10: Instructions for the Inspector-General of Communications [A1770]’ [1914].

making himself comfortable in the most adverse circumstances.¹⁷⁶ This continued throughout the war. Many places became infamous – for example Devil’s Wood, Lousy Woods, or Wipers (or Ips). This was a bottom-up process and names had a vast array of origin stories. These included references to precise geographical features, linguistic efforts to control the hostile environment, humour, and irony. Some were nostalgic references to home, while many others were the product of personal, regimental, or group associations. Other designations commemorated lost comrades.¹⁷⁷ The naming of trenches and Anglicisation of the Belgian and French countryside also fulfilled secondary cultural and psychological functions. Peter Chassaud has argued it allowed men to document ‘precise locations’ among the morass and played a role in ‘evoking events, memories and associations. All this is a kind of referencing. The name becomes the key to open the data-bank, the password to enter the archive.’¹⁷⁸ He has drawn the parallel between this and émigrés’ utilisation of familiar names when settling in new countries, concluding: ‘the process undoubtedly staked a claim, but also established continuity with the past, and a sense of familiarity and security.’¹⁷⁹

Men also familiarised themselves with Belgium and France as soldier-cum-tourists. War was as an opportunity for travel and discovery. The existence of English-French dictionaries in soldiers’ collections and the publication of stand-alone translation texts suggest men desired to engage with their new physical environment and its population.¹⁸⁰ The sights and sounds were things of interest, while the destruction was something to be experienced, if only for its exceptionality. Maj. G.H. Greenwell wrote home: ‘Should I ever have seen Arras and Ypres, Albert and Péronne under such interesting conditions if there had been no war?’¹⁸¹ Some men wanted to visit specific historic locations. Lt. D. Henrick Jones hoped to see Rouen’s ‘cathedral and other famous places.’¹⁸² After cameras were forbidden in 1914 a few intrepid men continued to photograph the frontlines – charting their experience and focussing on the destruction.¹⁸³ In lieu of cameras, postcards played an important part in recording soldiers’ travels in Belgium and France.¹⁸⁴ They charted the sights they encountered.¹⁸⁵ H.O.

¹⁷⁶ Chasseaud, *Rats Alley*, 23. See also IWM 05/8/1: Sgt. W. Summers, Diary of 1916: p 12.

¹⁷⁷ Chasseaud, *Rats Alley*, 26, 47-56.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 24-25.

¹⁸⁰ NAM 1998-10-306, *The Soldier’s Word + Phrase Book French and German: Compiled by a Committee of Well-Known Teachers from Actual Experience of Soldiers’ Needs* (London: George G. Harrop + Company [Undated]).

¹⁸¹ IWM 66/117/1: Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Letter 17 November 1917.

¹⁸² 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter to Wife 14 October 1914.

¹⁸³ LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0758: Capt. E.L. Higgins, Photographs of Shelled Farmhouse, Barbed Wire Defences, Men Digging Trenches, Ruined Villages, and Dug-Outs.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* Postcards: Doullens – Vue sur l’Authie; No. 1-3 Guerre 1914-15-16. Doullens (Somme); Guerre 1914-16. Doullens (Somme); No. 81. La Grande Guerre 1914-15 – Albain St Nazaire (P.-de-C.) [‘What Remains of the Town-Hall after the battle.’].

¹⁸⁵ LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0699: J.L. Hampson, Postcards of ‘Grande Boucherie Tournaisienne – Spécialité de Moutons’ and ‘Bailleul (Nord) – Rue de Cassel – Cassel Street.’

Hendry wrote on one such card: ‘This is another building close by the church dear, I think it has been a school.’¹⁸⁶ He sought to share what he saw. Yet, ‘I could not get any decent cards love, this is a poor village, I wanted to get some ruins.’¹⁸⁷ Sydney Gill sent his wife a postcard including a painting of what he described as a ‘typical country road + village, such as can be seen all over France.’¹⁸⁸ Men were sometimes allowed to go on leave outside the zone of military operations. W. Vernon described how ‘we went through Paris, when we went up there I saw the big Tower called Eiffel Tower. It is a fine country all round there. I didn’t think there was such nice scenery in France.’¹⁸⁹ Paris was a favoured destination; it provided an escape. Sgt. Henry Selly visited the Musée du Luxembourg and collected postcards of the sculptures he saw there.¹⁹⁰ Such endeavours offered adventure, distraction, and the revelation that France was not only war and destruction.

Soldiers’ familiarity with and exposure to the Western Front also worked its way into their *lingua franca*.¹⁹¹ This revealed itself in a number of ways. Firstly, there were a number of French ‘borrow words’ that were appropriated. ‘Alleyman,’ ‘Boche’ and ‘Pomme Fritz’ were synonyms for the Germans borrowed from French.¹⁹² Other words indicate the nature of the relationships between soldiers and civilians. The majority of the terms suggest very basic interactions: verbs, nouns, and adjectives that facilitated understanding. ‘Alley’ was used in place of ‘run away,’ ‘avec’ indicated that the soldier desired spirits with his beverage, while ‘bon,’ ‘pas bon’ or ‘no bon’ were all used to indicate quality. Many of the phrases were bastardisations of the original form: *comme ça* was Anglicised to ‘comsah,’ *fâché* became ‘fashy’ (anger), *pain* transformed into ‘Japan’ (bread), *manger* was converted to ‘Mongey’ (food), while ‘bongo boosh,’ meaning a ‘tasty morsel,’ bore only passing resemblance to *bonne bouche*.¹⁹³ The very popular term ‘Napoo’ – meaning ‘finished; empty; gone; non-existent’ – was itself ‘corrupted from the French *Il n’y en a plus*.’¹⁹⁴ Flemish also crept into daily usage where ‘bund’ described the region’s many banks and dams.¹⁹⁵ Officers used some terms exclusively – such as ‘embusqué,’ for shirker. Men of all ranks embraced *Franglais* in some form. This indicates a deep connection with Belgium and France bred over the course of their deployment. Famously, even the towns were personified. For example, ‘Bert’ was

¹⁸⁶ LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0746: H.O. Hendry, Postcard ‘Mazingarbe (P.-de-C) – Ecole Communale de Garcons.’

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Sgt. S. Gill, YMCA Postcard.

¹⁸⁹ W. Vernon, Letter to Miss. L. Vernon 22 July 1918.

¹⁹⁰ NAM 2000-09-153-51: Sgt. Henry Selley, Various Postcards of Venus from the Musée du Luxembourg [9-13]. Also Sgt. H. Hopwood, Letter to Mother & All 1 July 1918.

¹⁹¹ Lt. C.T. O’Neill, Diary 15 February 1918; A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 26 October 1916.

¹⁹² Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, 64, 74.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.* 75, 98, 111 and 122.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 123. See also RFM.ARC.2012.146.1: Albert Victor Arthur, Diary 20 September 1917.

¹⁹⁵ Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, 78.

Albert's *nom de guerre*.¹⁹⁶ Euphemisms humanised and diminished the dreadfulness. Death was known colloquially as 'hanging on the old barbed wire'.¹⁹⁷ Heavy guns were known as 'big boys' or 'Billy Wells' – a famous boxer of the period – while high-calibre shells were referred to as 'Black Marias' or, after 1916, as 'Coal Boxes'.¹⁹⁸ Trench Mortars were simply 'footballs'.¹⁹⁹ Shelling was referred to as 'hate' or more comically as 'bonk' or 'bonking'.²⁰⁰ Reality crept in only to the mundane: an empty bottle of beer became a 'dead soldier'.²⁰¹

Men's repeated exposure to the Western Front fuelled familiarisation. Men paid attention to Belgian and French towns and landscapes; they reinterpreted the physical environment and the war. Far from being passive observers they were able to see and understand the Western Front as more than just the canvas for their suffering. It became a place of meaning and personal significance. As Yi-Fu Tuan has argued, perceptions of the landscape are "fleeting unless one's eyes are kept to it for some other reason, either the recall of historical events that hallowed the scene or the recall of its underlying reality in geology and structure."²⁰² Tellingly, one soldier recorded his 'memories on revisiting an old sector.' Each part of the landscape could be viewed with a specific and familiar eye. The 'communication trench had been traversed until its every feature was imprinted on the memory,' while 'every part of the landscape' and 'almost every hole was intensely familiar'.²⁰³ This offered some structure to the world.

Men's familiarity with the Western Front allowed them to subjectively reconstruct the physical environment.²⁰⁴ This chapter now explains how the familiar landscapes of Belgium and France were imbued with meaning and emotion and came to resonate personally with soldiers. The battlefields, frontlines, and rear areas evoked memories – both personal and collective. These filtered men's perceptions of war and helped them to justify their suffering. Memories formed around specific experiences and moments, fusing with the physical landscape to become a patchwork of different sites of memory. Pierre Nora describes a '*lieu*

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 71. See also NAM 1999-09-74: Pte. Sidney Platt and Pte. Vincent Platt, Notes on the Pronunciation of Loos, Hulloch, Ypres, Rheims, Béthune, Chocques, and Lille.

¹⁹⁷ Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, 78.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. 71-72.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 101.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. 75 and 107.

²⁰¹ Ibid. 90.

²⁰² Y. Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1974) 93-4.

²⁰³ 'Memories on Revisiting an Old Sector', *The Outpost*, Vol. V. No. 5 (1 September 1917) 169.

²⁰⁴ Masefield, *The Old Frontline*.

de mémoire' as 'any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature which... has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community.'²⁰⁵ These sites of memory were reference points and the landscape itself became part of the individual's, their army's, and their country's historical narrative.

The histories these sights conjured did not have to be positive; obviously even unhappy events were also meaningful. Different parts of the line were characterised by some commonly held impressions. An article in the *BEF Times* charted these depictions – from 'Wipers' to 'Vilecholle.'²⁰⁶ The Ypres Salient became an unpleasant but poignant location. It was hard to 'cultivate a love for the salient' but it embodied 'Kultur and its effect.'²⁰⁷ Emmanuelle Danchin has revealed the ways in which images of 'war ruins' came to symbolise the desecration of France and the enemy's barbarity.²⁰⁸ The defilement of Belgium and France also persuaded English soldiers of Germany's bellicosity. Albert's church steeple and Ypres' cloth hall were particularly popular symbols, while smaller towns such as Arras, Bailleul, or Doullens were also significant.²⁰⁹ The use of the landscape and ruins to confirm the enemy's barbarity can be found elsewhere.²¹⁰ S. Smith had postcards showing the damaged basilica of Albert after a German bombardment. The old building was a ruin and its famous 'Leaning Virgin' hung precariously.²¹¹ That this was a religious site made it an even more striking indication of Germanic brutality. In such ways, the physical environment came to symbolise the justice of the Allies' cause and the soldiers' sacrifices.

The memories of happier times compounded this tendency. The *BEF Times*' author remembered Neuve Eglise and Hill 63 during a quieter period of the war.²¹² They were thought of fondly for their 'comparative peace and comfort.' Yet, the German successes in spring 1918 meant that 'the Hun inhabits, for the moment, all our old haunts.' Such a reverse

²⁰⁵ P. Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. Vol. 1: Conflicts and Divisions*, trans. A. Goldhammer (New York, 1996) xvii.

²⁰⁶ F.J.R., 'For Future Historians of the War', *The B.E.F. Times: A Facsimile Reprint of the Trench Magazine*, (15 August 1917 [believed misprint of 1918]) p xi.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ E. Danchin, *Le temps des ruines 1914-1921* (Rennes, 2015) and 'Destruction du patrimoine et figure du soldat allemande dans les cartes postales de la Grande Guerre,' *Amnis*, Vol. 10 (2011) (<http://journals.openedition.org/amnis/1371>, accessed 8 February 2018).

²⁰⁹ Capt. M. Asprey: Postcards of Albert 'avant et après' the German Bombardments; H.T. Madders, Postcard Collection to Arthur; IWM 77/83/1: S.A. Newman, Postcards of Arras; J.L. Hampson, Postcards of 'Grande Boucherie Tournaisienne – Spécialité de Moutons' and 'Bailleul (Nord) – Rue de Cassel – Cassel Street'; Capt E.L. Higgins, Postcards of Doullens ['Vue sur l'Authie', 'No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 Guerre 1914-1915-1916' and 'Guerre 1914-1916'].

²¹⁰ S.A. Newman, Postcards of Arras; H.T. Madders, Postcard Collection to Arthur; H.O. Hendry, Postcard: La Grande Guerre 1914-15. Aspect de FESTUBERT (P.-de-C.), après le combats héroïques et victorieux qu'y soutinrent les alliés.'

²¹¹ MR 3/17/145: Pte S. Smith, Postcards 3 (Albert) Somme and Guerre 1914-1916 No. 80 Albert (Somme).

²¹² *Ibid.*

left the soldier bitter and seeking vengeance.²¹³ Other regions were less warmly recalled. The Somme, for example, had been ‘anything but an enjoyable experience, and we were all heartily glad when our turn came to go out to “rest”.’ He actively ‘cut out’ memories of Passchendaele. Importantly, though, more cheerful memories of football matches and dinner parties in Neuve Eglise left him motivated to ensure the Germans did not retain control of this area.²¹⁴

Memories of particular social and leisure activities transformed some men’s impression of certain towns or districts. One man recalled Loos for the camaraderie of a particularly ‘enjoyable Xmas day.’ A church service under ‘the “Tower Bridge”’ had been proceeded by a rendition of “God save the King” ‘within 300 yards of the Hun Lines and a dinner ‘in the old brewery cellars.’²¹⁵ For another man Amiens was ‘one of the most comfortable sectors that we have ever struck,’ with functioning canteens and dances. ‘The whole back area soon rivalled London’s night clubs’ with the ‘exception [of]... the rustle of petticoats.’²¹⁶ The city’s buildings escaped relatively unscathed and provided some men with a sight of their ‘first houses and civilians’ since arriving near the frontlines.²¹⁷ There were bustling shops and markets and men could also attend the theatre or the cinema.²¹⁸ Amiens’ heritage also provided a great distraction.²¹⁹ G.A. Stevens found ‘nothing can hide the beauty’ of the city.²²⁰ Those men that had disposable income could withdraw money, have lunch at the Savoy, or invest in luxuries otherwise absent from their lives – including Martini cocktails, lobster, fresh chicken, or any ‘extras’ needed to supplement lavish dinners put on by officers.²²¹

For many men, the relationships they built with locals – often when billeted in their homes or farms – were particularly important.²²² For J.L. Hampson these constructive relationships became fused with the physical environment. His diaries were filled with the names and postal addresses of people he met: British and Allied soldiers as well as civilians.²²³ Sgt. Harry Hopwood remembered the kindnesses of civilians he encountered.²²⁴ It

²¹³ F.J.R., ‘For Future Historians of the War’, xv.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* xv.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* xxii-xxiii.

²¹⁷ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 9 January 1918.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ Pte. A.J. Symonds, Diary 15 August 1916. Symonds also enjoyed visiting Couin.

²²⁰ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 6 November 1916. See also Michelin’s Illustrated Guides to the Battle-Fields (1914-1918), *Amiens: Before and During the War* (Michelin & Cie, 1919).

²²¹ 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 14 and 16 November 1916.

²²² J.L. Hampson, Photograph Postcard of ‘Mlle Elisa Audenaert’; MR 2/17/53: Patrick Joseph Kennedy, Postcards from Marie Souise [Young Woman’s Photograph]; F.J.R., ‘For Future Historians of the War’, xv.

²²³ J.L. Hampson, Names and Addresses in ‘Telephone Days,’ ‘At Home Days,’ and ‘Memorandum’ in Diary ‘1917 in Belgium and France’ and Blank Pages of Letts Pocket Diary 1918.

²²⁴ Sgt. H. Hopwood, Letter to Mother & All 26 December 1917.

was such connections that led one man to recall ‘we never knew how much they meant until we lost them. “Pop” became a skeleton of its former self, from which the inhabitants were forced to flee; Bailleul is now a heap of ruins; Béthune is unrecognizable; Doullens and Amiens are sadly changed.²²⁵ This deeper relationship with the physical environment filled some men with a determination to defend Belgium and France. Others were convinced that they must ensure that such devastation could ‘never happen again.²²⁶

Comradeship with fellow soldiers was also transposed onto the physical world. Capt. W.S. Ferrie, Pte. William Harrop and Pte. H.S. Innes all kept a large number of photographic postcards of themselves and their comrades frozen in location. They became a tool for the recollection of friendships and personal memories.²²⁷ W.S. Ferrie included biographical details in the group photographs he sent home: his captain was simply ‘good,’ while another man was ‘a Cambridge Mathematical Scholar and is a very poor sergeant.’²²⁸ J.L. Hampson had his close companions sign the backs of their photographs.²²⁹ Such biographical detail can be found elsewhere. Pte. A. Joy kept an autograph book containing notes from family members and soldiers he encountered during the war. These were often personal words of encouragement, cartoons, or bawdy poems.²³⁰ Guy Chapman recorded each of his men’s military identification number; rank; name; height/size; religion; the outcome of his service (wounded, hospital, promotions); and previous occupation.²³¹ Some men in the lower ranks followed a similar practice. C.H. Insom, an NCO in the Royal Fusiliers, kept a list of his comrades and details of their characters and lives.²³² These cards and autographs were the physical manifestation of Major S.O.B. Richardson’s description of the ‘bond’ between men who served in the frontlines.²³³

The significance of these connections and memories can be found in Western Front pilgrimage texts written by and for old soldiers.²³⁴ The roads held a centrality in H. Williamson’s post-war journey across France and Flanders. He believed that the highway

²²⁵ Lowe, *The Western Battlefields*, 11-12.

²²⁶ Lt. W.B. Medlicott, Diary – Book 2: 3 October 1916 [p 11]; Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 27 January 1918.

²²⁷ LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0833: Pte. H.S. Innes, Photographic Postcards of Sergeants and of Group of Soldiers in Camp.

²²⁸ IWM 03/19/1: Capt W.S. Ferrie, Photographic Postcards, File 6.

²²⁹ J.L. Hampson, Photograph Postcards [1: Joe Diamond, R.S.M., L/Cpl Anderson, Sgt Ferrar, American . and J.L. Hampson, 2: Joe Diamond and J.L. Hampson] Box 2.

²³⁰ NAM 1992-09-139: Pte. A. Joy, Autograph Book: G.L. Gowing; W.L. Shipton; A.L. Wood; W.J. Hunt; T.H. Potter; G.A. Richardson; Pte. W.H. Gibbs; Pte G. Williams; G.L. Gowing; J. Baker; L/Cpl. James Hall; Pte John J. Miller; Pte. Moon.

²³¹ 2nd Lt. Guy Chapman, Diary 1/1: List of men under his command [1916].

²³² IWM 08/101/1: C.H. Isom, List of soldiers in his unit [1918].

²³³ IWM 99/13/1: Maj. S.O.B. Richardson, Letter to Mother and Sister 1916 [No. 4].

²³⁴ J.O Coop, *A Short Guide to the Battlefields* (Liverpool, 1920); *A Pilgrim’s Guide to the Ypres Salient*, (London, 1920); *The Illustrated Michelin Guide to the Battlefields: Ypres and The Battles of Ypres*, (Clermont-Ferrand, 1919). Although some of these were produced for a wider audience than veterans.

‘from Poperinghe to Ypres’ must have been remembered by hundreds of thousands of men. Its straightness, the houses and scarred elms along its borders, the feel of the paved road, the grassy edges, the surrounding cropland, unmarked graves, and the traffic were common features of this and other pathways.²³⁵ Lt. Col. T.A. Lowe’s 1920 guide for veterans was written to enable men to rediscover places personal to them. He hoped the old soldier ‘will find himself able to roam at will over the ground and visit the spots which for various reasons may be sacred to him.’ These might have been the location of ‘working parties and reliefs’ or ‘the scene of some patrol incident... or the attack on a wood or village.’²³⁶ Men developed a personal mental map – one that supplanted and incorporated destruction.

The commemoration of the dead played a role in providing the practical framework for familiarisation and memory. Mental maps were influenced by the visibility of the wide network of graves and monuments charting the war’s ebb and flow. While death has been discussed widely elsewhere, this section will explore how the extensive network of graves became an important feature of the physical environment.²³⁷ They provided both physical and conceptual reference points and were the product of both institutional and unit endeavours. The visibility of graves and memorials ensured that even the newest arrivals were aware of the comrades who had given their lives before their arrival on the Western Front. This forced the individual to acknowledge their place at the heart of a community of soldiers – both dead and alive. This awareness of the collective memories (and sacrifice) embedded in the physical environment also offered soldiers a justification for continued suffering.

Infantrymen had to face and (at least in the frontlines) were unable to ignore the dead.²³⁸ V.G. Bell sketched a soldier sitting on a fire-step staring at a cross reading: ‘Pte. A. Jones XII Middlesex. TP E JT. RIP.’²³⁹ He explained the scene: ‘in a British first line trench. One of many who have died at their posts, now buried below the actual fire-step.’²⁴⁰ This was supplemented by personal loss. On the night of 9/10 July 1916 the 11th Battalion Border Regiment occupied trenches that were plagued by death. In this instance, the medical officer produced a report after men failed to complete a bombing mission. The officers were unable to collect more than 20 men. Many chose to report sick. The medical officer informed a court

²³⁵ H. Williamson, *The Wet Flanders Plain*, (Norwich, 1929, 1987) 46-48.

²³⁶ Lowe, *The Western Battlefields*, 1.

²³⁷ Wilson, *Landscapes of the Western Front*, esp. 35-36 and 128-170.

²³⁸ C. Dwyer, Diary 22 September, 12-13 and 30 October 1914; Maj. J.S. Knyvett, Diary 19 October 1914 [p 19]; Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 21 April 1918; H.T. Madders, Diary 24 and 28 August 1918.

²³⁹ V.G. Bell, ‘A British Front Line Trench 3/3/16.’

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

of enquiry that the men had been ‘digging out the dead in the trenches and carrying them down as well as living in the atmosphere of decomposed bodies.’ The impact of heavy casualties on 1 July, physical exhaustion, sorting through deceased comrades’ kits, incessant shellfire, and exposure in an open trench undermined their resilience. Kirkwood concluded that ‘few, if any, are not suffering from some degree of shell shock.’²⁴¹ Chronic crisis had become acute.

Some soldiers were willing to acknowledge the existence of German dead and even revelled in their presence as evidence of success.²⁴² Yet men’s descriptions of British dead tended be fragmentary.²⁴³ One letter simply reported ‘of course we came across one or two poor Tommies but the boys have buried them.’²⁴⁴ In other letters the shock of losing friends was evident but the true horrors were left undescribed.²⁴⁵ However, there was no lack of detail in the letters of Reginald Neville. He was remarkably honest with his father, who was a veteran of the Boer War. He described ‘one poor devil... coughing and spitting his very soul out,’ and how a sergeant had his ‘leg blown off’ after a shell left it ‘shattered above the ankle.’²⁴⁶ In another graphic account, he narrated an episode in which a shell killed several members of his unit. ‘As soon as it got dark we collected some bits of men, put them in a sandbag, carried out the recognisable bodies over the top and dumped them in a shell hole.’²⁴⁷ ‘Bits’ were frequently all that remained. Archaeological evidence demonstrates what artillery can do to the human body: multiple fractures, lost limbs, gaping wounds, and fractured skulls were common.²⁴⁸ At other times, particularly during periods where the lines became more flexible, the dead were left behind as the armies advanced or retreated.²⁴⁹ In these circumstances, bodies littered the battlefields. During warmer weather they were infested with flies, while rigor mortis meant that their limbs were often outstretched at odd and unnatural angles.²⁵⁰

²⁴¹ RAMC 446/18: ‘Extracts from the proceedings of a court of enquiry re failure on the part of the 11th Border Regiment, 97th Infantry Brigade, to carry out an attack.’

²⁴² Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter to Mother 3 October 1914; Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 26 November 1914; A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 25-27 November 1916; F. Hubard, Letter to Mr and Mrs Underhill 8 December 1917.

²⁴³ C. Dwyer, Diary 14 and 19 September and 16 October 1914; Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 26 November 1914; F. Hubard, Letter to Mr and Mrs Underhill, 8 December 1917; IWM PP/MCR/45: Lt Col. Arthur Stockdale Cope, Diary 26 March 1918 [p 13].

²⁴⁴ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 7 July and 25-27 November 1916.

²⁴⁵ H.T. Madders, Diary 24 August 1918.

²⁴⁶ SOFO Box 16 3/4/N/2: Lt. Reginald N. Neville, Letters to Father 13 July and 19 September 1917.

²⁴⁷ Ibid. Letter to Father 11 December 1917.

²⁴⁸ Wilson, *Landscapes of the Western Front*, 36-37; P.Y. Desfossés, A. Jacques and G. Prilaux, ‘Arras “Actiparc” les oubliés du “Point du Jour”’, *Sucellus*, Vol. 54 (2003) 90; P. Bura, ‘Étude anthropologique de la sépulture multiple’, *Sucellus*, Vol. 54 (2003) 93.

²⁴⁹ Reverend E.N. Mellish, Letter in St Paul’s, Deptford, Parish Church Magazine 18 April 1918.

²⁵⁰ H.T. Madders, Diary 28 and 29 August 1918; Patrick Joseph Kennedy, German Postcards [Nos. 126, 138, 164, 282, 283, 284, 294 and 440]; IWM Q 102968 – Q 102972: Photographs of Maj. Frederick Hardman, Photographic Postcards of Various Dead British Soldiers.

Men looked to cope with this. Alongside the practicalities of disinfectant and cleaning the trenches, they deployed psychological mechanisms. Alexander Watson suggests soldiers used coping strategies to understate and diminish the impact of death. Men learned to normalise death and, as explored earlier, to mock the enemy's instruments of destruction. Elsewhere positive illusions (such as confidence that they could trace a shell trajectory) and a religious belief in the after-life also played important roles.²⁵¹ Each individual had his own way of coming to terms with death. Capt. A.J. Lord actively ignored the bodies. He told his father that 'the dead, no matter in what shape or form, no longer cause the slightest concern,' although he found the groans of the wounded haunting.²⁵² The interment of comrades and friends was horrific.²⁵³ Yet, for some it offered the opportunity for one last display of intimacy, and burial could become a cathartic ceremony. Soldiers spent time, when it was possible, burying their dead and marking the locations with crosses, shell fragments, or rifle butts.²⁵⁴ Significantly, memorial rites emphasised resurrection and life after death.²⁵⁵ Where time allowed, soldiers attempted to include a burial service, and even the most hastily organised interment was completed 'reverently.'²⁵⁶ Where there was more time, burials became an important part of soldiers' daily routine. Some men attended other units' services – particularly if there was music – possibly because the religious ceremony offered comfort and moral support.²⁵⁷

Heavy casualties created a network of cemeteries and isolated white crosses.²⁵⁸ These were invested with meaning and poignancy. In this way the horror, while undiminished, became evidence of the survivor's cause: to fight on in memory of the dead.²⁵⁹ The very act of commemoration could provide some solace. Charles Dwyer felt some agency as he helped to produce crosses for his dead comrades' graves.²⁶⁰ These markers charted and mapped the fighting.²⁶¹ Following the armistice, one soldier retraced his steps across the battlefields of 1918. 'The sight that touches me up most is the number of little crosses, denoting the graves of our lads who were killed in the advance.'²⁶² Graves were impossible to avoid. From very

²⁵¹ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 88-102.

²⁵² Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to his Father 28 August 1918.

²⁵³ IWM 67/238/1: F. Worrall, Memoir: p 4.

²⁵⁴ C. Dwyer, Diary 21 September, 16 and 22 October 1914; IWM 80/22/1: Canon Ernest Courtenay Crosse, Diary 4 July 1916.

²⁵⁵ MR 3/17/91: Memorial Service Programme.

²⁵⁶ 2nd Lt. Frederick Thomas Kearsley Woodworth, Diary 29 March 1918 'Thorpe's Death.'

²⁵⁷ SOFO Box 23A Box 2E: Rev. K.C. Jackson, Diary 27 and 28 August 1916; SOFO Box 23A Item 1 7/1/A/3: Capt. J.H. Early, Daily Routine 12 December 1916 – 4.00pm Burials; Sgt. S. Gill, Diary 10 October 1916.

²⁵⁸ CWGC/1/1/10/C/WG 1406.2: Memorial Crosses and Unit Memorials – Lists: Plotted Map of N.E. France & Part of Belgium.

²⁵⁹ Maj. J.S. Knyvett, Diary 17 February 1918.

²⁶⁰ C. Dwyer, Diary 21 September 1914.

²⁶¹ Capt. G.B. Donaldson, Letter to Mother 29 June 1916.

²⁶² A.E. Heywood, Diary 14 November 1918.

early on the landscape became littered with temporary crosses or bottles containing the details of the casualty. In 1914 death was also something shared intimately with the civilians who were exposed to the same danger and frequently died in the same shell blasts as combatants.²⁶³ They were sometimes part of the fabric of memory and could recount how men died. One French civilian recounted – to a member of the Graves Registration Unit (GRU) – how a soldier was shot through the brain as he picked an apple from a tree, while another kneeled on their doorstep and returned fire until overwhelmed by the enemy.²⁶⁴ As the war continued fewer civilians inhabited the war zone and this became much less common.

Military burials could even be a personal affair for those not directly involved in the individual death. On a cold December day in 1914 one GRU officer struggled to erect a cross over the grave of a soldier who had been buried ‘in some out of the way turnip field.’ Some passing soldiers noticed his efforts and ‘obtained leave to fall out and help.’ After burying the body ‘without a word they all sprang as one man to attention and solemnly saluted the grave of their dead comrade-in-arms. It was a most impressive and touching sight.’²⁶⁵ This spontaneous reaction reflects the connection many felt with those killed in service. It also mirrors the Edwardian culture of reverence and respect for the dead, where burial and funeral practices were both cathartic and embedded in values of respectability.²⁶⁶ New Army soldiers also displayed such intimacy. Within three days of 1 July 1916, survivors of the 8th and 9th Devons buried 13 officers and 148 men of their battalion in two trenches in the old front line at Mansel Copse. They filled these in, levelled the ground, and enclosed them with barbed wire. The use of barbed wire subverted its martial purpose. They were also ‘anxious that grass seed should be sown this year and specially Devonshire plants.’²⁶⁷ The battlefield itself was partially wiped from the landscape by the pastoral – and regional – ideal revealed in the use of Devonshire plants. The urgency with which this was completed exposed a real desire to recognise their comrades’ sacrifice.

The beautification of the physical environment paralleled attempts to re-nationalise it. These measures for honouring the dead could boost morale. The flora of South-West England were a proud regimental symbol and reminder of home, both a pledge to the dead and a comfort to the living. This was particularly important for men inhabiting parts of the line

²⁶³ Dowdall, ‘Civilians in the Combat Zone’, 240, 243.

²⁶⁴ CWGC/1/1/MU 3 Catalogue No. 3 Box 2029: Early Letters about Graves: Report to The Hon. Arthur Stanley C.V.O., M.P. 10 May 1915

²⁶⁵ CWGC/1/1/MU 1 Catalogue 1 Box 2029: Narrative Letters and Reports, Report from R.A.L. Broadley 6 December 1914.

²⁶⁶ J. Walvin, ‘Dust to Dust: Celebrations of death in Victorian England’, *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, Vol. 9 No. 3 (Fall 1982) 353-371. Also J-M. Strange, “‘She Cried a Very Little’: Death, Grief and Mourning in Working-Class Culture, c. 1880-1914”, *Social History*, Vol. 27 Issue 2 (2002) 143-161 and *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914* (Cambridge, 2005) 1-26.

²⁶⁷ CWGC/1/1/WG 549.1: Acquisition of Land –France – DGRE Files: 21-15. 3 D.G.R.& E ‘Somme’ Report 1 August 1916.

otherwise bereft of life. The presence of so many graves on the battlefield is evidenced in the numbers that were damaged by shrapnel and shellfire.²⁶⁸ Amid the ‘sameness,’ cemeteries sometimes became oases for reflection and comfort. A Horticultural Department report mused on the ‘value’ of sowing annuals. The plants helped ‘to brighten places often very barren and desolate.’ While annuals need to be replanted each spring they are bright and vibrant, tend to bloom all season long, are cheaper, and require less attention. The authorities believed that ‘they cheer our men.’²⁶⁹ Soldiers were ‘constant visitors to our cemeteries’ and ‘frequently pass... when on the march.’ The beautification was collaborative and offered ‘relief and interest’ for the men in the forward areas who would ‘adorn’ graves with ‘plants and shrubs found in derelict gardens.’²⁷⁰ The maintenance of cemeteries and graves became a ‘point of pride.’²⁷¹ Not only sites of memory, they were also testimony to the Edwardian love of gardening and became a means of resistance against war’s destruction.²⁷²

Men’s connection with the dead was also maintained through institutional memory. Their sacrifice became a factor in survivors’ continued endurance. Histories of the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission show that protecting and preserving British graves required a degree of homogeneity. The desire for ‘uniformity regardless of rank, race or creed’ also drove this. The location, size, and structure of cemeteries were informed by common standards.²⁷³ However, large-scale grave concentration took place after the cessation of hostilities. During the war various memorials to deaths and exploits emerged as forms of personal or unit-directed memorialisation.²⁷⁴ The Directorate of Graves Registration and Directories was, in some cases, willing to establish memorials at the request of battalions.²⁷⁵ Many of these memorials were located in areas that held personal meaning for a particular unit. There were approximately 95 ‘battle exploit’ memorials by the end of the war, while the

²⁶⁸ CWGC/1/1/10/C/WG 1406: Memorial Crosses and Unit Memorials – General File, Temporary Memorials 25B and ‘List of Temporary Memorials’ esp. 20th Battalion Royal Fusiliers at Ceguel British Cemetery. Also, Acquisition of Land –France – DGRE Files, L1.15.3 ‘Very Valuable Report’ O.C. G.R. Units: Somme 6.5.17.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ CWGC/1/1/1/SDC 72: A.W. Hill’s Reports on Horticulture, Report 1: Reports on Thirty Seven Cemeteries Visited Between March 15th and 31st 1916.

²⁷¹ A.W. Hill’s Reports on Horticulture, The Care of British Graves in France and the Work of the Horticultural Department: Report by Lieutenant A.W. Hill on his visit to France March 18th-April 8th, 1917.

²⁷² D. Ottewill, *The Edwardian Garden* (New Haven, Conn, 1989). Also J. Kay, ““No Time for Recreations till the Vote is Won”? Suffrage Activists and Leisure in Edwardian Britain’, *Women’s History Review*, Vol. 16 No. 4 (2007) 540-542.

²⁷³ J. Summers, *Remembered: The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (London, 2007) 14-17; P. Longworth, *The Unending Vigil: The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (Barnsley, 1967, 2003) 86.

²⁷⁴ CWGC/1/1/10/C/WG 1406: Memorial Crosses and Unit Memorials – General File.

²⁷⁵ CWGC/1/1/10/C/WG 1406.1 PT.1: Memorial Crosses and Unit Memorials – Divisions; Brigades; Regiments; Etc. – General File, 4/C32/330/V Letter 4 March 1932 to Adjutant, The Rifle Brigade.

number of unit and personal memorials was incalculable.²⁷⁶ At Dantzig Alley a five-foot cross was dedicated to the officers and men of the 20th Manchester Regiment and placed next to that of 57 British soldiers of an unidentified unit.²⁷⁷ In some cases memorials were crafted from the local stone and were maintained by the local populace.²⁷⁸ Such a memorial in Verneuil Chateau was cut from local lime-stone and inscribed in French: ‘R.I.P. Campagne 1914.15.16.17 Le 57e Rmt. d’Infie Francais aux Camarades Anglais tombés au champ d’honneur dans le Secteur de Verneuil.’ Here a French unit created a monument to shared loss and ‘honour.’²⁷⁹ Institutional collective grieving could venerate events of previous years. The 2nd Ox and Bucks, a regular battalion, had several memorials across the British zone of operations, and the unit’s memory of loss and heroism was passed on. In October 1917 the battalion attended the erection of a memorial to men who had died near the Langemarck-Gheluveld line. The service, led by the battalion’s old commanding officer, was dedicated to the ‘memory of 5 officers and 70 NCOs and Men, 52nd Light Infantry, killed in action 21-23 Oct 1914 some of whom are buried near this spot.’²⁸⁰ Static war meant that such monuments formed part of the battlefield. Men passing them would have been aware that they were traversing or – after March 1918 – relinquishing hallowed ground. Perhaps this explains why one report claimed that ‘the loss of ground... acted as a powerful tonic on the moral [sic] of the army.’²⁸¹

Such memorialisation nurtured a sense of ownership. Unlike the quasi-settler identity outlined by Chris Ward, this was built upon the knowledge that comrades had shed blood in defence of the line.²⁸² Many men – at least in the immediate aftermath of the war – did view the battlefields as meaningful sites of memory. The British public felt that Ypres had become a ‘sacred monument’ for exactly this reason.²⁸³ A number of historians have traced how Ypres became one of the Western Front’s ‘sacred sites.’²⁸⁴ Some argue it was the cumulative effect

²⁷⁶ Ibid. AB/NH. Unit Battle Exploit Memorials 13 July 1926.

²⁷⁷ Ibid. Temporary Unit Memorials [1406] No. 5 Area IWGC Albert 23.7.24.

²⁷⁸ Narrative Letters and Reports, Report from R.A.L. Broadley 6 December 1914; The Mobile Unit & The Graves Registration Commission to The Hon: Arthur Stanley, C.V.O. M.P. 13 April 1915 and Early Letters about Graves, Report to The Hon. Arthur Stanley C.V.O., M.P. 10 May 1915.

²⁷⁹ Memorial Crosses and Unit Memorials – Lists, Temporary Memorials 25A.

²⁸⁰ War Diary 2nd Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, 11 October 1917. See also Memorial Crosses and Unit Memorials – General File, Lists of Temporary Memorials, Temporary Memorials 22a.

²⁸¹ WO/256/33: Report on BEF Morale 12 July 1918: p 1.

²⁸² Ward, *Living on the Western Front*, 92-97.

²⁸³ CWGC/1/1/9/B/WG 360 PT.1: Ypres – General File: Draft [1] of Letter from H.M. Ambassador in Brussels to the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs [Report of Anglo-Belgian Conference at Ypres 14 July 1919]. See also M. Connelly, ‘The Ypres League and the Commemoration of the Ypres Salient, 1914-1940’, *War in History*, Vol 16 No. 1 (2009) 51-76.

²⁸⁴ J.M. Winter, *Sites of Memory Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1995, 2003) 52-53; S. Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940* (Cambridge, 2007) 29-30 and

of commemorative ceremonies that drove the reconceptualisation. However, Mark Connelly suggests that a ‘consensus around the meaning of Ypres was constructed’ producing an ‘imagined landscape’ that ‘linked veterans, the bereaved, and the town’s native inhabitants.’²⁸⁵ Delphine Lauwers has shown that the process began during the conflict.²⁸⁶ The city became the symbolic focus of the British war effort in Belgium and northern France. It was a tomb, and soldiers’ remains were still being regularly found in 1919.²⁸⁷

For soldiers, the graves and battle-scarred landscape were physical reminders of a debt owed to the fallen. One journal mused upon this, concluding that survivors ‘lived to mourn’ and that the fallen would ‘never fade from our memories, but that their sacrifice will be as an incentive to others.’²⁸⁸ Such sentiment was found on the monuments. Dedications included phrases lifted from the bible such as ‘BETTER [usually worded greater] LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS – THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS,’ descriptions of ‘GALLANT DEFENCE,’ or simple pleas to remember the dead. These created a bond between the deceased and those soldiers surveying the monuments.²⁸⁹

It was not only the dead of this war that resonated with the men. National history nurtured collective connections with the landscape. Key moments in English, British, and regimental history had taken place in northern France and Belgium. Calais had been England’s last possession on the continent, while Agincourt, Crécy, and Waterloo were celebrated sites of historical significance. J.W. Fortescue – the British Army’s historian – produced *The British Soldier’s Guide to Northern France and Flanders*. This short pamphlet, at one penny, was affordable. In it Fortescue explained that ‘the Low Countries and Northern France are the oldest and most familiar of the British Army’s campaigning grounds... This little pamphlet is an attempt to enable Regiments to form some idea of the time and circumstances of their former visits to this area.’²⁹⁰ He drew connections between the present campaign and those of William III through to Wellington. He outlined the role of each

175-176. For ‘sacred places’ in the ANZAC context see K.S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Melbourne, 1998, 2008).

²⁸⁵Connelly, ‘The Ypres League’, 53.

²⁸⁶ D. Lauwers, ‘Le Saillant d’Ypres entre reconstruction et construction d’un lieu de mémoire: un long processus de négociations mémorielles de 1914 à nos jours,’ unpublished Ph.D. thesis, European University Institute (2014). Also Connelly, ‘The Ypres League’, 54-55.

²⁸⁷ Ypres – General File, Extract from *Illustrated Sunday Herald* 15 February 1920 – Julius. M. Price (the well known War Correspondent & Artist), ‘Picnics at Ypres: The Desecration of Britain’s Holy Ground’; Cutting from the *Daily Chronicle* of 15th January, 1920; 17.3.28.3 ‘A Memorial in Ypres’ Letter to the Editor of *The Times* from R.C. Padre.

²⁸⁸ Uncle Bob, ‘Letter’, *The Outpost*, Vol. IV No. 2 (1 December 1916) 55.

²⁸⁹ Memorial Crosses and Unit Memorials – Lists, Temporary Memorial Sketches of Unit Memorials, esp. Wieille Chapelle New C.C. – Stone Memorial to King Edward’s Horse and Memorial to 6th Seaforth Highlanders in Mont du Hem Cemetery. Also List of Temporary Memorials in Cemeteries No. 1 Area P.R. 1723/AS.

²⁹⁰ J.W. Fortescue, *The British Soldier’s Guide to Northern France and Flanders*, (London: *The Times*, Undated) 1

regiment's forebears and described the battles and events that had occurred in the British zone of operations.²⁹¹ His key message was that this nominally foreign land played an important part in their national and institutional story. The Great War represented continuity. However, the pamphlet concluded: 'in every case France was the enemy, and the general front of the British was towards the West and South. Now, with that most gallant nation for our friend, we face in the opposite direction.'²⁹² It is hard to measure the impact of this use of the past, though scholarship suggests that history held broad appeal – across all classes in England – during this period.²⁹³ Some soldiers, such as H.T. Madders, did find themselves dwelling on Napoleon when in a location of historical significance.²⁹⁴ Others were confident that the battles of 1914-1918 would take their rightful place in the historical record.²⁹⁵ The physical environment fused with the nation's story and its collective memory.

Ross Wilson astutely observed that 'whereas the battlefields were the scenes of destruction and death, ruined buildings and scenes of brutality, the ways in which soldiers responded to these conditions acted to alter and shift the meanings of the landscape.'²⁹⁶ These shifting meanings provided 'a different context in which to consider their lives at the front.'²⁹⁷ This chapter has provided new insights into how English infantrymen developed an attachment to their physical environment. It has charted men's journey across the Western Front and shown how soldiers – through exposure and exploration – familiarised, normalised, and overcame the physical environment. It was possible for soldiers to habituate themselves to the Western Front's most horrific sights, sounds, and scents. This nurtured meaning and created a deep bond between soldiers and the landscape.

D.W. Meinig has argued that landscapes are 'defined by our vision and interpreted by our minds,' which means that they are 'composed not of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads.'²⁹⁸ Men interpreted but rarely felt ownership of the physical environment. Their connection was built upon a more nuanced attachment to Belgium and

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ P. Readman, 'The Place of the Past', 147-199.

²⁹⁴ H.T. Madders, Diary 1 November 1918.

²⁹⁵ SOFO Box 16 Item 36: W.J. Cheshire, Diary 14 September 1914; Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 2 November 1916; SOFO Box 16 Item 12 3/4/PL/3: Capt. L.W.E.O. Fullbrook-Leggatt, Regimental Orders Saturday 8 December 1917 [describing action on 30 November].

²⁹⁶ Wilson, *Landscapes of the Western Front*, 162.

²⁹⁷ Ibid. 143

²⁹⁸ D.W. Meinig (ed.), *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (Oxford, 1979) 3, 33-34. Referenced and discussed in P. Readman, "'The Cliffs are not Cliffs": The Cliffs of Dover and National Identities in Britain, c.1750-c.1950', *History: The Journal of the Historical Association*, Vol. 99 No. 335 (April 2014) esp. 244-245.

France. The Western Front was significant, familiar, and meaningful; but it never threatened to become home, and men remained keen to escape. ‘Place attachment’ – a concept borrowed from environmental psychology and sociology – helps to explain this. It does not necessitate a preferential perception of a particular landscape, but rests on a person’s experiential relationship with the world around them. Psychologists Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford describe the process as ‘the bonding that occurs between individuals and their meaningful environments,’ which can be both physical and social. ‘Attachment is an effective, proximity-maintaining bond that can be expressed without an underlying purpose of control.’²⁹⁹ This is person-specific and can take place on individual and collective levels. Personal connections are built upon memories, connections, and feelings of growth; shared attachment stems from symbolic cultural meanings or shared historical experiences, values, and symbols. It is possible to trace both forms of place attachment in the analysis above. Personal memories of places, people, and events, the collective memorialisation of dead comrades, and the nurturing of both institutional and historical memory helped to cultivate men’s connection with the Western Front.

Scannell and Gifford have outlined the psychological processes that feed place attachment. Firstly, it can be driven by affect. Some point to topophilia – a very positive perception of an environment.³⁰⁰ Others suggest that it might simply reflect emotional investment, or even pride. Further analyses demonstrated the ways in which significance can even be born of fear, hatred, or ambivalence. It is generally the more positive or sustaining emotions that are important. In the case of English infantrymen, these were often formed around their relationship with others and moments of happiness and enjoyment. The positivity bred by displays of human kindness, feelings of comradeship, or moments of relaxation or discovery became embedded in their attachment to the physical world. Next, cognition was hugely influential. Here ‘memories, beliefs, meaning and knowledge’ fused to create a bond to a particular place.³⁰¹ Familiarity is one of the central pillars of cognitive place attachment. The Western Front became an intensely familiar environment where exposure and exploration bred a deeper connection to the war zone. This produced memories, which allowed men to *acquire* beliefs embedded in their experience of Belgium and France, to *seek* meaning in the world around them, and to *develop* knowledge particular to the war zone. These were linked to actors’ perception of their selves – soldiers’ sense of duty, their role as combatants, and their membership of a community were all interpreted within this physical frame, which in turn made it consequential. Lastly, attachment can be demonstrated through behaviour.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ L. Scannell and R. Gifford, ‘Defining Place Attachment: A Tripartite Organizing Framework’, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 30 (2010) 1-2, 4.

³⁰⁰ Y. Tuan, *Topophilia*.

³⁰¹ Scannell and Gifford, ‘Defining Place Attachment’, 3.

³⁰² *Ibid.* 4.

Men's re-naming of the frontlines can be seen as an example of this; as can their willing incorporation of French language into their discourses; their purchasing of images charting the sights they encountered; and the desire of so many veterans (and civilians) to return to Belgium and France on pilgrimages after the war. Strikingly, both religious pilgrimage and reconstruction – both physical and conceptual – are well-studied indicators of place attachment.³⁰³

Place attachment also serves psychological functions. J. Bowlby believes that place attachment (social and physical) does not arise to satiate physiological requirements but instead provides actors with the perception of security and wellbeing. It is a defence mechanism.³⁰⁴ Anything that gave meaning and structure to the conflict was invaluable to soldiers' morale. Yet, place attachment provided more than a security blanket. It also became the stage for their goal pursuit, which will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis. The Western Front was their physical road to peace and the bond between person and physical space is sometimes produced by either the expectation or success of goal pursuit.³⁰⁵ 'This can,' Scannell and Gifford have argued, 'lead to place dependence, a type of attachment in which individuals value a place for the specific activities that it supports or facilitates.'³⁰⁶ Lastly, place attachment also nurtures a sense of continuity: memories project a narrative onto the physical environment. It can become part of personal history and shared cultural events.³⁰⁷ Men came to see the Western Front as an important part of their lives, and it nurtured a connection with their unseen and unknown comrades, both dead and alive.

Men perceived the physical world as simultaneously physical and metaphysical and their near-constant reinterpretation of the Western Front played a role in combating chronic crisis and deflecting acute crisis. Soldiers' ability to layer memories upon their immediate visions of the physical environment ensured that they could see beyond the destruction. Men's multi-dimensional attachment offered them a sense of security and provided some perception of order and familiarity in a world that was so frequently confusing. Yet, as the

³⁰³ For reconstruction, W. Michelson, *Man and his Urban Environment: A Sociological Approach, with Revisions* (Reading, MA, 1976). For pilgrimage, S.M. Low, 'Symbolic Ties that Bind' in I. Altman and S.M. Low (eds.), *Place Attachment*, (New York, 1992) and S. Mazumdar and S. Mazumdar, 'Religion and Place Attachment: A Study of Sacred Place', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 24 (2004) 385-397.

³⁰⁴ Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, esp. 70, 204, 373. Also S. Chatterjee, 'Children's Friendship with Place: A Conceptual Inquiry', *Children, Youth and Environments*, Vol. 15 (2005) 1-26.

³⁰⁵ Scannell and Gifford, 'Defining Place Attachment', 6; G.T. Kyle, A.J. Mowen and M. Tarrant, 'Linking Place Preferences with Place Meaning: An Examination of the Relationship between Place Motivation and Place Attachment', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 24 (2004) 439-454.

³⁰⁶ Scannell and Gifford, 'Defining Place Attachment', 6

³⁰⁷ C.L. Twigger-Ross and D.L. Uzzell, 'Place and Identity Processes', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 16 (1996) 205-220 and S.M. Low, 'Cross-Cultural Place Attachment: A Preliminary Typology,' in Y. Yoshitake, R.B. Bechtel, T. Takahashi and M. Asai (Eds.), *Current Issues in Environment-Behavior Research* (Tokyo, 1990).

next chapter will show, the Western Front could still sap their energy and resilience, and it was in this respect that it is possible to trace differences in experiences and perceptions in 1914, 1916, and 1917/18.

Exhaustion

Winter, Morale, and the Physical Environment

Men became attached to the landscape, but their relationship with the weather was rarely so positive. The physical environment became a foil for another of the war's chronic crises: exhaustion. Canon H.R. Bate recalled that during the 1914 campaign 'the chief trials were the winter and the weather.'¹ Sgt. Thomas Eldridge confessed that 'the only thing Dad [that I] don't like [about the war]... is thinking of being in the trenches in the winter.'² English soldiers' were preoccupied with the difficulties of life at war. The methodological approach to this study means that the majority of the source material comes from autumn and winter. This chapter focuses on how these months' weather and routines came to dominate men's lives and threatened to become overwhelming and distracting. The war's progression became a secondary issue as daily problems of warmth, food, or sleep became the soldiers' most pressing concerns. By asking how winter – and the physical environment – left men exhausted it becomes easier to understand how men dealt with periods of psychological stress. The chapter will provide evidence of the flexible nature of soldiers' frames of reference. Winter came to encompass the whole period between autumn and spring, while war in winter was perceived as a different thing, and induced different reactions, from war in spring and summer.

The relationship between winter and morale has largely been overlooked. It is often mentioned, but only in passing. These months are sometimes described as 'quiet periods' since fewer men were wounded or killed.³ Perhaps because fighting ebbed, winter is neglected. However, there is a consensus that 'trench life was a fight against the elements,' one in which the weather emerged as an enemy capable of encouraging local truces and damaging discipline.⁴ Mud was used as a symbol in soldiers' memories and narratives.⁵ Additionally, the cold, rain, and snow recur in combatants' descriptions of winter at war.⁶ The darkness was also a theme in some soldiers' writings. Other issues recur during these periods:

¹ IWM P430: Canon H.R. Bate, Memoir: p 3.

² NAM 7804-65: Sgt Thomas Eldridge, Undated Letter to Children.

³ Maj. T.J. Mitchell and G.M. Smith, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: Medical Services, Casualties and Medical Statistics of the Great War* (London, 1931) 46.

⁴ Fletcher, *Life, Death and Growing Up*, 143; Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 26; Bowman, *Irish Regiments in the Great War*, 50-51.

⁵ Das, *Touch and Intimacy*, ch. 1. Also F. Uekötter, 'Memories in Mud: The Environmental Legacy of the Great War' in Tucker et al., *Environmental Histories*, 278-295.

⁶ G. Corrigan, *Mud, Blood and Poppycock: Britain and the First World War* (London, 2003, 2004) 299; Todman, *The Great War*, 2, 9.

tiredness, the inadequacy of quarters, the paucity of food, and the incessant working parties.⁷ All of these had the capacity to sap strength and morale, and left men exhausted. This made the soldiers 'timid or apathetic,' more likely to 'shirk' their duties, and less resilient in the face of combat and violence.⁸ Ross Wilson has argued that fatigue left men frustrated and angry.⁹ Indeed, it seems that shell shock was often the product of exhaustion.¹⁰

The experience of winter impacts military strategy and soldiers' emotions. The important but complicated relationship between actors and the seasons can be found elsewhere in history.¹¹ In studies of the Napoleonic Wars 'General Winter' personifies the winter period. The elements, rather than human combatants, destroyed Napoleon's Army when it invaded Russia in 1812. Primo Levi provided a vivid account of how winter could impact upon human perception. Levi was incarcerated at Auschwitz between 1944 and 1945. His memoir is indicative of the complex torment engendered by the coming of winter. 'We fought with all our strength to prevent the arrival of winter. We clung to the warm hours... but it was all in vain.'¹² This came from the understanding that winter meant either death or suffering 'minute by minute, all day, every day.'¹³ Levi felt that conventional language could not do the awfulness full justice. However, Levi confided that 'it was the very discomfort... that kept us aloft in the void of bottomless despair.'¹⁴ Winter and the chronic crises associated with the season were capable of diverting soldiers' attention away from broader long-term issues.

By exploring the way in which infantrymen perceived winter's various characteristics this chapter charts their physical and emotional exhaustion. This, it argues, influenced their perception of the season, the conflict, and their morale. Soldiers believed winter was a much harder and harsher part of their war experience. They suffered the combined effects of repeated hardships: exposure, over-exertion, and high levels of stress.¹⁵ Individuals, in these circumstances, experienced physical and psychological 'burnout.'¹⁶ This produced sub-optimal physical performance and decreased cognitive performance – evidenced in

⁷ For billets see Gibson, *Behind the Front*, 109-146. For working parties see Fuller, *Troop Morale*, 62, 92-93. For food see R. Duffett, *The Stomach for Fighting: Food and the Soldiers of the Great War* (Manchester, 2012) ch. 6.

⁸ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 38-39 and 200-215;

⁹ Wilson, *Landscapes of the Western Front*, 91, 115 and 144.

¹⁰ Leese, *Shell Shock*, 25-26, 39 and 91.

¹¹ O. Beattie and J. Geiger, *Frozen in Time: The Fate of the Franklin Expedition* (London, 1987, 2004); M. Zuckoff, *Frozen in Time: An Epic Story of Survival and a Modern Quest for Lost Heroes of World War II* (London, 2013).

¹² P. Levi, *If this is a Man. The Truce*, S. Woolf (trans.) (London, 1987) 129.

¹³ Ibid. 130.

¹⁴ Ibid. 23.

¹⁵ T.A. Wright and R. Cropanzano, 'Emotional Exhaustion as Predictor of Job Performance and Voluntary Turnover', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 83 No. 3 (Jun. 1998) 486-493.

¹⁶ D. Zohar, 'Predicting Burnout with a Hassle-Based Measure of Role Demands', *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, Vol. 18 No. 2 (1997) 101-115.

sluggishness, lethargy, and distractedness.¹⁷ The chronic crises of war were made worse in winter, but the misery was so all-encompassing that it became something that was perversely sustaining. It became a focus for their discontent, and it worked to change their perceptions of the war once the winter retreated.

This chapter will argue that the emotional relationship that men formed with winter was one that went beyond simply that of discomfort. Winter came to embody the worst aspect of the war. So overwhelming were these emotional and physical experiences that they came to subsume the ‘bigger issues’ of the war’s progress and of peace. The temporal delineation of this thesis means that when discussing 1914 and 1916 the chapter focuses mainly on early winter and the men’s nervous anticipation of the colder weather. In contrast, the analysis of 1917/1918 charts the experience of winter from beginning to end and shows the persistence of ‘winter’ during spring. It will explore the nature of the season, how men experienced it, its psychological impact on the English infantrymen who endured its extremities, and how this interrelated with morale. It will also assess the ways in which men coped, and reflect upon winter’s ability to distort men’s frames of reference and perception of the conflict.

Winter in Belgium and Northern France was severe.¹⁸ The trenches, tents, and billets of the Western Front provided even less protection than England’s worst urban slums and dilapidated rural dwellings. English infantrymen sincerely believed that winter *at war* was incomparable with a winter *at home*. It became an example of their detachment from their previous lives and an example of the terrible extremities of their existence. Some soldiers’ memoirs argued that a specific winter had been the worst, but it is likely this was the product of the season’s intensity rather than reflective of the truth.¹⁹ It left them exhausted and elicited similar reactions among the men that fought in 1914 and 1916. It would seem, however, that the combined effects of winter weather and the perceived ineffectiveness of military campaigning left soldiers more susceptible to the weather in 1917/18. The physical environment held a centrality in these months. This section discusses the key themes that emerged in soldiers’ narratives. It will demonstrate the ways in which a plethora of concerns

¹⁷ L.S. Aaronson, C.S. Teel, V. Cassmeyer, G.B. Neuberger, L. Pallikkathanyil, J. Pierce, A.N. Press, P.D. Williams and A. Wingate, ‘Defining and Measuring Fatigue’, *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, Vol. 31 Issue 1 (March 1999) 45-50; S.M. Marcora, W. Staiano and V. Manning, ‘Mental Fatigue Impairs Physical Performance in Humans’, *Journal of Applied Physiology*, Vol. 106 No. 3 (Jan. 2009) 857-864.

¹⁸ See Appendix I.

¹⁹ Both Capt. Charles Carrington and Captain C.E.R. Sherrington suggest that the winter of 1916 was particularly bad. See Capt. C. Carrington, Interview Transcript 1979 and IWM P 128: Capt. C.E.R. Sherrington, Memoir CES 1/2-III.

made the experience of winter a chronic crisis and contributed to their exhaustion.

The Cold

The cold recurred in men's accounts. It became a key aspect of their existence. A word frequency analysis of sources used in this project shows that 'cold' is used in letters and diaries as often as once in every one hundred words.²⁰ It even became a key feature in Haig's diary – despite the comparative luxury of GHQ.²¹ In 1914, the nights were cold even during the otherwise warm weeks before and after the retreat from Mons. This made the regular night marches more trying.²² C. Dwyer first recorded a 'very cold' night's sleep on 19 September and thereafter they became a regular feature in his diary.²³ For John Edwin Mawer September's weather was variable. The worst part about the cold nights was that they contrasted so starkly with the 'very hot' days.²⁴ It left W.J. Cheshire and his friends 'all shivers.'²⁵ Another man described how between 17 and 20 September his unit 'endured the most perished [cold]' during the night. By late November it had become 'bitter' and he was struggling to keep warm in the trenches.²⁶ On 3 October H.E. Trevor confessed to his mother that the 'worst' part of the war was the 'cold' of the early mornings.²⁷ One Border Regiment soldier found the cold overbearing. By December his daily notations became less detailed and sometimes simply stated: 'very cold.'²⁸ The diary of S. Judd began to focus exclusively on the temperature.²⁹ Once the weather turned it left men in varying states of dejection. L/Cpl. K.M. Gaunt found the weather simply 'indescribable,' while T.A. Silver remembered that the freezing temperatures had left him and others physically and psychologically 'weary.'³⁰ Others were more stoical. When there were activities to divert their attention the cold was less problematic. K.M. Gaunt still described Christmas as a 'magnificent day.'³¹ These men reflected upon the cold as an unpleasant but necessary discomfort.

²⁰ This analysis was run using NVivo, which is a computerised quantitative analysis programme. This percentage refers to the regularity of a word's usage in the soldiers' documents – letters, diaries and memoirs – that were used in this study. In this instance, 'cold' was used with a frequency of 1.3 words out of every 100 used. This only included words of more than three letters in length.

²¹ WO 256/25-28: Field Marshal D. Haig's Diary, November-December 1916; December 1917; January-February 1918; March 1918.

²² Sgt. Osborn, Diary 24 August 1914.

²³ C. Dwyer, Diary 19 September 1914.

²⁴ Pte. J.E. Mawer, [Doc. 14] Letter 23 September 1914 and [Doc. 16] Letter 2 October 1914; Maj. J.S. Knyvett, Journal 22 October 1914; S. Judd, Diary 6 October 1914.

²⁵ W.J. Cheshire, Diary 14 September 1914.

²⁶ J.E. Mawer, [Doc. 24] Letter to Wife Undated [c. 17 November 1914].

²⁷ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter to Mother 3 October 1914.

²⁸ Pocket Diary 1914, 1-31 December.

²⁹ S. Judd, Diary November-December 1914.

³⁰ L/Cpl. K.M. Gaunt, Letter 9 January 1915 and IWM 74/108/1: T.A. Silver, Memoir 1914.

³¹ L/Cpl. K.M. Gaunt, Letter to 25 December 1914.

In 1916 the infantrymen continued to write obsessively about the temperature.³² In Lt. Guy Chapman's narrative of the final days of the Somme Campaign the cold became as important as the fighting.³³ For some, it was 'too cold.'³⁴ More men were willing to admit that it dampened their spirit and made them sick.³⁵ Sgt. G. Skelton remembered that the tail end of the campaign was plagued by 'constant' cold weather.³⁶ A.P. Burke derided his brother for complaining about the cold in Manchester. It could never compare to what he endured in France. He continued to complain 'its cold and miserable' in another letter a few weeks later.³⁷ In late October G.A. Stevens told his parents that the 'desperate cold' meant that he and his men were having a 'rotten time.' November was similarly 'horrible.'³⁸ The weather in the trenches had left W.J. Lidsey's company 'positively beaten.'³⁹ Frederick Child felt the weather had turned for the worse in early December. The freezing winds and fogs in particular began affecting his sleep and made route marches very difficult.⁴⁰ Pte. F.G. Senyard found that the frost and ice were no longer thawing.⁴¹ R.E.P. Stevens' reported that the weather had turned 'colder than ever,' leaving him 'miserable' and 'feeling like an icicle.'⁴² More worryingly – from the military's perspective – the cold left some men feeling embittered towards the 'authorities.' Capt. R.E.M. Young scrounged firewood and found his superiors' orders 'unreasonable' given the weather.⁴³ Pte. William Anderson told his wife that the cold was even impeding some of his comrades' ability to imagine their lives after the war. The cold and not the violence convinced him that 'war is absolutely the maddest thing the World knows.'⁴⁴ The reaction of the men in 1916 seems to have been more negative than that of the soldiers in 1914. These soldiers, perhaps because they were volunteers, were more susceptible to the effects of the cold and/or were more willing to admit its impact upon their experience and psyches. However, resilience typifies the responses of these men.⁴⁵

³² IWM 87/26/1: Lt. Col. A.V. Spencer, Diary 15 November 1916; A.L. Collis, Diary 19-25 December 1916; J.M. Nichols, 19 December 1916.

³³ 2nd Lt. G. Chapman, Diary 13 and 15 November 1916.

³⁴ E.T. Marler, Diary 22 October 1916.

³⁵ Sgt. S. Gill, Diary [Book 7] 6 October 1916.

³⁶ IWM 06/46/1: Sgt. G. Skelton, Memoir (pp 62-63).

³⁷ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 21 November and 15 December 1916 and Letter to Tot 26 November 1916.

³⁸ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Father 20 October 1916 and to his Mother 17 and 29 November 1916; Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Diary 10 November 1916.

³⁹ 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 21 November 1916.

⁴⁰ F.W. Child, Diary 30 November and 2, and 18-20 December 1916; Lt. W.B. Medlicott, Diary 20 October 1916. Also for cold troubling sleep see IWM 78/36/1: Lt. L.W.C. Ireland, Letter to 'My Dear B' 16 December 1916. For fog, IWM 66/96/1: Reverend M.A. Bere, Diary 28 November 1916; E.T. Marler, Diary 22 October 1916.

⁴¹ Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter to Wife 28 December 1916.

⁴² R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 21, 27, 28 and 29 November 1916.

⁴³ Capt. R.E.M. Young, Letter to Constance 9 December 1916.

⁴⁴ Pte. W.M. Anderson, Letters to Wife 1 and 6 December 1916.

⁴⁵ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 15 December 1916; Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother and Father 28 October 1916; 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 8 November 1916.

Furthermore, others took solace in the knowledge that winter could not last forever, and embraced any change in weather.⁴⁶

The winter of 1917/1918 saw the cold sap both men's physical and psychological strength to an extent that the temperatures alone cannot explain. The 'hard extreme cold' was felt particularly strongly.⁴⁷ Men believed that winter had come much earlier in 1917. Reverend E.N. Mellish, an Army chaplain, noted that it was already getting cold in October. The trenches were a 'painful experience.'⁴⁸ The 'bitter' temperatures left men such as 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg feeling 'miserable.' He claimed to 'suffer' from cold fingers and wrists and was upset nobody could warm them.⁴⁹ Lt. J.H. Johnson reported that the 'awful' cold weather continued over Christmas and New Year. The 'freezing' weather continued throughout December with 'no signs of change.' In January it was 'colder than ever and [there was a] bitter wind.'⁵⁰ C.T. O'Neill and Pte. C.E. Wild arrived in France for the first time in January 1918. These conscripts were struck most forcefully by the low temperatures – 'the conditions [are] awful to one from home.'⁵¹ Veterans were also affected by the cold weather. Capt. A.J. Lord complained it was 'too cold to fight.'⁵² As in previous years, it also made sleep very difficult.⁵³ In early March, the unremitting 'icy cold' prompted Col. Hardman to report that his unit was 'getting a taste of some real winter weather.'⁵⁴ The 'cold' was a constant amid the retreat after 21 March, and many men fixated on it.⁵⁵ Pte. C.E. Wild – who was engaged regularly by the enemy – dedicated more of his diary to the temperature than the fighting.⁵⁶ Capt. Arthur Agius's men viewed the cold as just as important a feature of the withdrawal as loss of equipment and fear of a German victory.⁵⁷ Lt. Col. Arthur Stockdale believed the cold had played as important a role as the enemy in producing a general depression among his men. The cold made sleep nearly impossible during the brief moments of rest.⁵⁸ G.A. Stevens noted that the daytime weather was 'wonderful' during the retreat but the cold nights continued to be very 'trying.'⁵⁹ This period saw the cold become a more distressing part of men's lives.

⁴⁶ Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Letter 10 November 1916.

⁴⁷ H.T. Madders, Diary 9, 14, 16, 19, 22 and 31 January 1918; P.R. Hall, Memoir: p. 19.

⁴⁸ Reverend E.N. Mellish, Letter in October 1917 edition of St Paul's, Deptford, Parish Church Magazine.

⁴⁹ 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg, Letters 21 and 30 December 1917.

⁵⁰ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 23 December 1917 and 6 January 1918.

⁵¹ C.T. O'Neill, Diary 6, 9-15, 26-27 January 1918, 16, 20-21, 25-26 February 1918, 1-4, 8, 11 and 25 March 1918; MR 4/17/388/1: Pte. C.E. Wild, Diary 12-13, 16-18 and 25 February 1918.

⁵² Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Dad 29 December 1917.

⁵³ Ibid. Letter to Dad 30 December 1917; Lt. Col. A. Stockdale Cope, Diary 26 March 1918.

⁵⁴ Col. F. Hardman, Letter 1 March 1918.

⁵⁵ Lt. J.E.H. Neville, Diary 22 March 1918.

⁵⁶ Pte. C.E. Wild, Diary 22 March – 11 April 1918.

⁵⁷ IWM 99/70/1-3: Capt. A.J.J.P. Agius, Extract from a Letter received from France 28 March 1918.

⁵⁸ Lt. Col. A. Stockdale Cope, Diary 26 and 29 March 1918.

⁵⁹ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother Easter Monday 1918.

The Rain

Rain was inescapable during winter. Men's clothes became sodden as they sometimes worked submerged up to their thighs in poorly drained trenches. They were more vulnerable to the cold when wet. Not only was this depressing; it was frequently the cause of ill health. Severe flooding undermined the structural integrity of defences, adding to men's physical labour and discomfort and exacerbating their exhaustion. Another word-frequency analysis of soldiers' documents that refer to winter reveals that reflections on rain had a weighted percentage of 0.78 per cent. When combined with soldiers' mentioning wet (0.47 per cent) and water (0.42 per cent), it suggests that 1.67 out of every 100 words written by soldiers related to the rain. It was a dominant feature of wintertime.⁶⁰

The rain quickly became an issue of both engineering and psychological significance as trenches were dug in 1914. It made any movement very trying.⁶¹ H.E. Trevor reported the wet weather as early as 22 September. He told his mother that it was worst at night.⁶² Nevertheless he was struck by the remarkable resilience of his men and noted that sickness was uncommon. By 13 November he had changed his opinion of the weather, writing sarcastically that 'the conditions are very far from luxurious.' It was 'foul' since 'it rains most days and nights.'⁶³ Prolonged exposure to the elements made it harder for men to cope. K.F.B. Tower remembered how being 'soaking wet' left his unit 'thoroughly miserable.'⁶⁴ Pte. W. Tapp found the trenches 'knee deep and in some places waist deep in water.' It was a 'rotten bad' time.⁶⁵ Unrelenting wet-weather lay at the heart of men's unhappiness. S. Judd's diary noted that heavy rain lasted 'nearly all day' on nineteen occasions between 11 November and 31 December and consecutively between 11 to 17 November.⁶⁶ As a result, he became irritable and depressed. In such circumstances it is unsurprising that one soldier, describing combat, explained that 'we were going down like raindrops.'⁶⁷ In other cases weather was superimposed onto violence.⁶⁸ Charles Dwyer's diary explained that some men were made unwell by the 'soakings.'⁶⁹ The rain and flooding negatively affected men's

⁶⁰ 'Rain' also reflects the usage of 'rains,' 'rained' and 'raining.' 'Wet' also includes 'wetting.'

⁶¹ Sgt. Osborn, Diary 26-27 August and 12 September 1914.

⁶² Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Postcard to Evelyn Parker 22 September 1914 and Letter to his Mother 3 October 1914

⁶³ Ibid. Letter 13 November 1914.

⁶⁴ Lt Col. K.F.B. Tower, Memoir: p 5.

⁶⁵ W. Tapp, Diary 8 December 1914 (pp 7-8).

⁶⁶ S. Judd, Diary 11 November to 31 December 1914.

⁶⁷ Diary of an Unidentified Soldier in the 2nd Bn. Border Regiment, 18 December 1914.

⁶⁸ Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 27 December 1914; NAM 1992-04-159, Anon account of Battle of Mons: p 20, pp 28-29.

⁶⁹ C. Dwyer, Diary 1 October and 6 November 1914; IWM Con Shelf: Postcard Signed by "The Mademoiselle from Armentieres," Extract from local paper... regarding the experience of Pte J.T. Greenwood, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, published 24 October 1914.

physical and psychological wellbeing. Yet, in many instances, men were unwilling to admit that they had suffered more than ‘a bit.’⁷⁰

The rain dominated soldiers’ lives in late 1916. Trenches’ drainage had improved little. Cpl. R.G. Plint recalled how heavy rain left ‘water [that] was lapping the step of the dug-out.’⁷¹ The rain left frontlines and reserve areas treacherous and difficult to navigate. W.J. Lidsey described how the road to the trenches, pockmarked by shell holes, was submerged under six inches of water.⁷² A.P. Burke, in a rest area by 26 November, bemoaned that his camp was a ‘pond’ and that his blankets were ‘wet through.’ Outside the water went ‘over the shoe tops everywhere you go.’ It was the ‘most miserable village we have ever struck in France’ and the experience made it ‘a job to put ones troubles in his old kit bag as we have done a thousand times before – by gad this game is getting washed out.’⁷³ Men were soaked to the skin on route marches. One officer noted that he ‘could feel water running down the inside of my leggings and filling my boots... I had not a dry rag on me.’⁷⁴ Again, the seeming ceaselessness was particularly wearisome.⁷⁵ Even when it was not raining, swathes of the front remained flooded.⁷⁶ The rain kept R.E.P. Stevens in his tent during the evenings and left him wearing a groundsheet ‘for shelter’ when forced outside. Even this could not prevent his drenching. After six days his syntax and handwriting reflected how he felt: ‘generally tired’⁷⁷ Rain could make time stand still as normal routines were suspended. Sgt. S. Gill’s diary on 8 November simply read: ‘Rain – Rain – RAIN... Rain... Back to Billet – nothing doing.’⁷⁸ Worse still, it could also prove physically punishing. On 20 November Gill was caught in a violent rain and hailstorm, which was ‘terrible’ and ‘seemed to cut lumps out of our faces.’⁷⁹ When R.E.P. Stevens first moved up the line, the pounding rain left his unit’s ‘hopes dashed to despair’ and compounded the destruction.⁸⁰ After another month of wet and ‘miserable’ weather he was downcast and pessimistic. On Christmas Day he wrote ‘everything is wet with the recent rains and how I shall settle I cannot say.’ He used the rain as a metaphor for shells as the weather was transposed with (and supplanted) the violence.⁸¹

⁷⁰ NAM 1997-02-11: Reminiscences of unknown Guardsman 13 August to 3 November 1914, Diary 8-13 September 1914.

⁷¹ Cpl. R.G. Plint, Memoir : p 12.

⁷² W.J. Lidsey, Diary 2 November 1916.

⁷³ A.P. Burke, Letter 26 November 1916.

⁷⁴ Col. F. Hardman, Letter 29 October 1916. Also Lt. Col. A.V. Spencer, Diary 14 November 1916.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 15 December 1916; Col. F. Hardman, Letter 29 October 1916; E.T. Marler, Diary 4 October 1916.

⁷⁶ E.T. Marler, Diary 23 October 1916.

⁷⁷ R.E.P. Stevens, 11 November 1916.

⁷⁸ Sgt. S. Gill, Diary 8-9, 18 and 25 November and 5 December 1916.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 11 November.

⁸⁰ R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 6, 9, 11, 18, 20, 21 November 1916.

⁸¹ Ibid. 25 and 26 December 1916.

2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey seems to have sensed this: ‘we were not worried by shell fire, but the mud and rain was very trying.’⁸²

Figure 2.1: This image – IWM ART 4824: G.K. Rose, *A Front Line Post* (1916) – has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.

In 1917/18 the rain became even more depressing and exhausting. The Passchendaele campaign was plagued by heavy rainfall.⁸³ In 1917 men believed it had impeded and undermined operations. P.R. Hall asserted that the ‘torrents of rain’ had caused the failure of Third Ypres.⁸⁴ Soldiers were forced to endure days, weeks, and then months of rain.⁸⁵ C.T. O’Neill’s early experiences on the Western Front were dominated by rain. It frequently rained all day and night.⁸⁶ Days of ‘little rain’ were so rare that they became noteworthy.⁸⁷ H.T. Madders’s diary entries became short and resentful. 16 January saw him ‘wet through and cold’ and three days later it was ‘still awful weather, raining and thawing miserably.’⁸⁸ Lt. J.H. Johnson described the trenches as ‘awful’ – the dugouts were collapsing after heavy rain and an intense thaw.⁸⁹ Even out of the trenches men were unable to escape the wet weather. Maj. J.S. Knyvett’s billets were ‘badly flooded.’ Moreover ‘some of the roads in the area... [were] as much as 1 ½ feet under water for continuous lengths of 200 yards or more.’⁹⁰ Even basic movement was difficult. The ‘rotten’ wet weather saturated J. Grimston’s experiences. He came to see rain as an insurmountable obstacle that undermined the BEF’s military efficiency and chances of victory. Other soldiers also began to view heavy rain as an insurmountable military impediment.⁹¹ After 21 March the rain continued to be of huge significance. On 27 April, Grimston felt fortunate it had not rained – despite his camp being shelled.⁹² Pte. C.E. Wild was as concerned with the heavy rain as he was with the German offensive. On 7 April the rain played as prominent a role in his diary as the ‘heavy casualties’ his unit suffered.⁹³ J.E.H. Neville even began to use the rain as a metaphor for unfounded rumours or unpleasant news.⁹⁴ The rain was a central dimension of the general depression that emerged in 1917/18.

⁸² 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 7 November 1916.

⁸³ See Appendix I.

⁸⁴ P.R. Hall, Memoir: p 19.

⁸⁵ Albert Victor Arthur, Diary 4-9 October 1917; S.B. Smith, 8-10 and 21 October 1917.

⁸⁶ C.T. O’Neill, Diary 11, 15-17 and 20-23 January and 7-8, 13 and 24 February and 3-5, 19 and 29-30 March 1918.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 11 February 1918.

⁸⁸ H.T. Madders, Diary 16, 19 and 27 January 1918.

⁸⁹ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 15 January 1918.

⁹⁰ Maj. J.S. Knyvett, Journal 17 January 1918.

⁹¹ IWM 83/12/1: Lt. Col. J.D. Wyatt, Diary 3 February 1918; J. Grimston, Diary 4 and 19 March 1918.

⁹² J. Grimston, Diary 19 and 30 March, 8 and 27 April 1918.

⁹³ Pte. C.E. Wild, Diary 27 March and 7 April 1918.

⁹⁴ Lt. J.E.H. Neville, Diary 27 March 1918.

The rain had the capacity to sap men's morale to a greater extent than the cold. The rain and flooding were very difficult to avoid or escape. Men found it nearly impossible to remain dry. Rain exhausted and depressed the infantrymen and became even more disheartening when it undermined military efficiency. Bruce Bairnsfather summed up the general impact of rain on infantrymen in his cartoon 'The Communication Trench.' A dejected soldier, standing in pouring rain, up to the ankles in floodwater, looked on with a cigarette – surely sodden and unlit – pondering a problem: whether it is better to brave 'the top and risk it' or subject himself to 'another mile of this' (see Figure 2.2). The danger was, in certain circumstances, preferable to living with incessant rain and flooding.

Figure 2.2: This image – B. Bairnsfather, 'The Communication Trench' – has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.

Mud

Widely called 'shit,' mud was a psychologically and emotionally corrosive constant during winter. References to mud represent 0.63 per cent of the soldiers' words during this season. It became an important feature of the desolate landscape and the war's horror. The clinging sludge, often several feet deep, made movement, supply, and life in general immensely tiring. Lt. General E.L.M. Burns, a Canadian veteran of both World Wars, remembered that of all the weather encountered in Belgium and France, it was mud that inflicted the most 'misery and hardship on the soldier.'⁹⁵ In a similar way to the cold and rain, but in a more all-encompassing manner, the mud forced its way to the forefront of soldiers' daily lives.

In 1914 the transition to trench warfare meant that mud became a pressing issue in a region prone to heavy rain and flooding. The photograph below (see Figure 2.3) is illustrative of this. Taken on 19 November outside Ypres, it shows the state of many trenches. Apart from the lack of duckboards, making walking difficult, the mud extended up each side of the trench, making it impossible to escape the mire. It was difficult to find any comfort in the line. Yet, the soldiers complained very little. In October, when the Border Regiment took over trenches occupied by the Scots Guards, they were 'up to our knees in mud and water.'⁹⁶ S. Judd was also 'knee deep in water and mud.'⁹⁷ J. Shaddick's diary demonstrates how mud could dominate soldiers' daily routine. It was a central feature of his Christmas day, which was 'miserable... on the whole.' His 'glorious feed for dinner' consisted of a biscuit, a single piece of cheese, and 'plenty of mud.'⁹⁸ It got everywhere. When Pte. A.E. Hutchinson was

⁹⁵ Lt. Gen. E.L.M. Burns in C.E. Wood, *Mud: A Military History* (Washington, D.C., 2006, 2007) 77.

⁹⁶ Diary of an Unidentified Soldier in the 2nd Bn. Border Regiment, 18 November 1914.

⁹⁷ S. Judd, Diary 12 November 1914.

⁹⁸ IWM 09/60/1: J. Shaddick, Memoir: p 11.

captured on 21 December he had been ‘well caked up in mud, blood and water.’⁹⁹ The mud prompted Pte. W. Tapp to feel some affinity with the Germans during the Christmas Truce. He found that ‘a lot can talk English they all say it is a pity to fire while were [sic] all up to our knees in mud.’¹⁰⁰ He was, however, happy to note that their trenches were in a worse state than his own. C.E. Wood argued that men’s inability to remain clean in such circumstances was depressing and frustrating. Soldiers are trained to uphold cleanliness and in the late Edwardian period dirt, synonymous with contagion and disease, was symbolic of the underprivileged lives of the working classes.¹⁰¹ Filth was accompanied by stigma, as well as discomfort, and in later years it began to have a toxic effect upon self-perception and morale.¹⁰²

Figure 2.3: This image – IWM Q 57380: Early British Trenches. Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards, digging out mud from a trench near Reu Petillon, 19 November 1914 – has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.

By late 1916 mud had become one of the English infantrymen’s main antagonists. It had become ‘simply awful.’¹⁰³ Ernest Marler described the Western Front as a ‘puddle of mud.’ The ‘rivers of mud’ – which encrusted his clothes, equipment, and food – relegated him to a species of subhuman. He pitied the horses, which could be seen stuck fast in muddy fields.¹⁰⁴ Some injured men had to be tied to posts so that they did not drown.¹⁰⁵ The mud’s power to demoralise the men extended beyond the firing line. In early November 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey’s ‘filthy’ camp was ‘knee-deep in mud.’ As he fumbled his way to the trenches he fell up to his armpits in a shell hole full of muck.¹⁰⁶ ‘Liquid’ mud ‘plastered [him] head to foot’ and he felt everything had become ‘beastly.’¹⁰⁷ The mud – alongside the cold – left him feeling ‘beaten.’¹⁰⁸ Frederick William Child also found ‘the roads were deep with mud.’¹⁰⁹ Battalion memoranda explained how fatigued men were becoming while traversing the mud-caked

⁹⁹ NAM 1982-12-70: Pte. A.E. Hutchinson, Journal: ‘The True Story of My First Day of Captivity in the Hands of the Huns.’

¹⁰⁰ Pte. W Tapp, Diary 24/25 December 1914.

¹⁰¹ V. Kelly, *Soap and Water: Cleanliness, Dirt and the Working Classes in Victorian and Edwardian Britain*, (London, 2010).

¹⁰² C.E. Wood, *Mud*, 79.

¹⁰³ F. Hubard, Letter to Mr and Mrs Underhill, 25 October 1916; Sgt. S. Gill, 8 October and 18 and 28 November 1916; Lt. Col. A.V. Spencer, Diary 14 November 1916; Lt. Col. D.R. Turnbull, Letter to Sylvia 11 December 1916.

¹⁰⁴ E.T. Marler, Diary 4 and 25-26 October; 2, 9, 14 and 17-19 November; and 8-12 and 15-16 December 1916.

¹⁰⁵ Reverend M.A. Bere, Diary 19 November 1916.

¹⁰⁶ 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 1-2 November 1916.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 2, 4, and 6-7 November 1916.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 21 November 1916.

¹⁰⁹ F.W. Child, Diary 8 December 1916.

lines.¹¹⁰ A.P. Burke believed mud was ‘everywhere,’ while Canon E.C. Crosse described the Western Front as ‘all’ mud.¹¹¹ It was so all-encompassing that G.H. Greenwell wrote ‘we think mud, Dream mud and eat mud.’ The mud also plagued military operations, informing his comparative statement: ‘last winter I thought was bad, but this winter in the Battle Area is quite unimaginable.’¹¹² A few days later G.A. Stevens reported home that ‘many of the men were up to the knees in mud and I had cases of officers and men being stuck for “hours” in the mud.’¹¹³ Stevens styled those returning from the line as ‘unwashed,’ ‘unshaven,’ ‘eyes swollen’ and ‘features drawn.’¹¹⁴ Lt. Ireland confided that the mud and wet weather ‘were a frightful hindrance to everything.’¹¹⁵ R.E.P. Stevens’ diary became more obsessed with the mud as the campaign ended. It began to subsume the landscape and took on the geological features of the ‘chalky’ bedrock and became a prominent feature of the ‘desolate outlook.’ It was so appalling that ‘one could go mad.’¹¹⁶

Again, in 1917/18, mud was an exhausting impediment to normal action.¹¹⁷ Many men came to see it as *the enemy*.¹¹⁸ H.E. Baker highlighted how mud arrived earlier than in previous years. Baker recalled his first conversations with the ‘few men’ remaining in 9th Battalion Devonshire Regiment: ‘after the terrible Ypres 3 battle’ they were little interested in discussing the Germans. However, they ‘had a lot to say about the appalling conditions under which they had to fight.’ They described how ‘many more deaths’ had been caused by men drowning in the mud than by enemy action.¹¹⁹ Official records offer little evidence of the frequency of such events. There are few descriptions of such deaths in diaries written at the time – though the fear of drowning is ever-present.¹²⁰ It does indicate the extent to which mud had come to be perceived as a dangerous foe. This helps explain Maj. Gen. V.G. Toft’s conclusion that Passchendaele had been ‘a muddy and bloody shambles.’¹²¹ Richard Grayson has pointed toward similar sentiment among Belfast’s soldiers.¹²² The mud led many men, even veterans of previous campaigns such as Maj. G.H. Greenwell, to conclude that it had

¹¹⁰ Capt. J.H. Early, Report to Battalion HQ 7:30am 25 November 1916.

¹¹¹ A.P. Burke, Letter to Tot 26 November 1916; Canon Ernest Courtenay Crosse, Diary 5 September 1916; J.M. Nichols, Diary 22-23 December 1916.

¹¹² Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Letter 4 November 1916.

¹¹³ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 29 November 1916.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Lt. L.W.C. Ireland, Letter 21 December 1916.

¹¹⁶ R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 26 and 28 December 1916.

¹¹⁷ Albert Victor Arthur, Diary 7 October 1917.

¹¹⁸ S.B. Smith, Letters 21 and 29 October 1917.

¹¹⁹ H.E. Baker, Memoir: Part 6, p 4.

¹²⁰ Discussions of drowning tend to rely on post-war memoirs. J. Curran, “‘Bonjoor Paree!’ The First AIF in Paris, 1916-1918,” *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 23 (1999) 20; Das, *Touch and Intimacy*, 36. Others claim that these descriptions ‘are mostly fiction,’ see Corrigan, *Mud, Blood, and Poppycock*, 354-55.

¹²¹ IWM 67/7/1: Maj. Gen. V.G. Tofts, Memoir: p 11.

¹²² Grayson, *Belfast Boys*, 119-130.

been the ‘worst experience of modern warfare that I have yet struck.’¹²³ P.R. Hall reported how the ‘clinging mud’ sent men mad with ‘battle fatigue.’¹²⁴ Over New Year 1917/1918 mud continued to erode soldiers’ resilience. 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg became distressed that he was unable to clean the filth off himself.¹²⁵ H.T. Madders was regularly ‘plastered with mud’ and the rear zones were ‘all mud.’¹²⁶ It proved physically exhausting and immensely depressing. Lt. J.H. Johnson found the chore of ‘keeping the post clear... heart breaking and spirit crushing: like he who had to fill a bucket with holes in it.’¹²⁷ During the battles of March and April mud continued to play an important role. The 1/7th Manchesters were sent to support the British line on 22 March but 2nd Lt. Frederick Woodworth’s progress was hampered when the transport buses became ‘stuck in the mud.’¹²⁸ Pte. C.E. Wild’s battalion had to retire and support other units with their machine guns. His diary, though, was most concerned with the ‘mud and water.’¹²⁹ Capt. P. Ingleson had to dig both his platoon sergeant and dinner out of the glutinous muck.¹³⁰ H.T. Madders was regularly up to his knees or thighs when fighting. In these instances the battle became almost a footnote to the weather.¹³¹

Snow and Frost

Snow and frost were also referenced regularly in soldiers’ writing. Snow occurred with a frequency 0.46 (nearly 1 in every 200 words), while 0.30 per cent of the words in their letters and diaries referred to frost.¹³² However, while harsh and unpleasant, they were easier for soldiers to bear than the cold, rain, and mud. Neither was a constant feature of the Western Front. Snow and frost occurred occasionally and sometimes alleviated the overbearing mud by solidifying the quagmire. They were sometimes seen as beautiful or ethereal, covering the scars of war, and brightening evenings as moonlight reflected off the carpeted landscape. Nonetheless, they still affected men and contributed to winter’s chronic crisis.

In 1914 snow and frost were secondary to the more undesirable features of winter in the battle zone. During October W.J. Cheshire recorded a number of nights of ‘white frost.’¹³³ Pte. W. Tapp noted, on 22 November, that during his last seven days in the line they had ‘all

¹²³ Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Letter 29 August 1917.

¹²⁴ P.R. Hall, Memoir: p 19.

¹²⁵ 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg, Letters 15 and 16 January 1918.

¹²⁶ H.T. Madders, Diary 15 and 18 January 1918.

¹²⁷ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 15 January 1918.

¹²⁸ 2nd Lt. F.T.K. Woodworth, Diary 22 March 1918.

¹²⁹ Pte. C.E. Wild, Diary 23 March – 7 April 1918.

¹³⁰ Capt. P. Ingleson, Letter to Gwen c. April 1918.

¹³¹ H.T. Madders, Diary 6-7 April 1918.

¹³² Snow also includes ‘snowed,’ ‘snowing’ and ‘snows.’ Frost incorporates ‘frosts.’

¹³³ W.J. Cheshire, Diary 8 and 12 October 1914.

kinds of weather' including 'snow and sharp frosts.'¹³⁴ S. Judd logged the first snow on 19 November. It fell 'fast' and was accompanied by a 'thick frost.' He documented the snowfall in a more neutral tone than the rain, suggesting his reaction to snow was less negative. However, he was relieved when it cleared. Despite his unit suffering five casualties the thaw was most important part of his day.¹³⁵ While snow was less unpopular than rainfall, neither was welcomed. In December, as the fighting abated, the snow became part of the matrix of overbearing winter weather. Judd's diary suggests he had retreated into himself and on 21 December he only wrote 'Little snow and rain – cold.'¹³⁶ However, the snow and frost were not perceived as a central feature of the winter's chronic crisis.

In 1916 some soldiers felt that the snow and frost contributed more negatively to winter weather. A.P. Burke told his sister on 21 November that the snow and frost had become an impediment to marching, contributing to his exhaustion, and were central features of the 'bleak moors' he traversed. A letter to his brother described the snow as a hostile aspect of the cold weather.¹³⁷ 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey felt the 'sharp' frosts painfully, and they made him feel a part of the frozen landscape. Frosts sometimes lasted all day and were ghastly when accompanied by 'pea soup fog.'¹³⁸ Even in Rouen Pte. Percy Thompson found the snow was not 'any too pleasant.'¹³⁹ Yet other activities continued despite the frosts and light snow and offered men a diversion. J.M. Nichols reported the snow in a very matter-of-fact manner when training during December 1916. It was less bothersome than being forced to 'always have to wear [a] Gas Helmet.'¹⁴⁰ Reverend M.A. Bere told his family that the end of the 1916 campaign was marked by a 'raging blizzard' on 18 November.¹⁴¹ Some actually found that it rendered the otherwise devastated country 'picturesque.'¹⁴² The first frosts also provided a welcome relief from the morass created by the wet weather. R.E.P. Stevens was happily surprised when he awoke 'to see everything crisp and white with frost which had not been felt or noticed in the darkness.' However, later in the day his diary highlights how the thaw contributed to men's depression. He became immensely downhearted as the sticking mud

¹³⁴ W. Tapp, Diary 22 November 1914. Also Sgt. Osborn, Diary 1 October 1914.

¹³⁵ S. Judd, Diary 18 and 23 November 1914.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* 21 December 1914.

¹³⁷ A.P. Burke, Letters to Tot and Reg 21 November 1916.

¹³⁸ 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 16-18 and 29 November 1916; E.T. Marler, Diary 21 October and 17 November 1916.

¹³⁹ SOFO Box 29 Item 4 10/6/J/1: Pte. Percy Thompson, Letter to Adelaide [undated] from Rouen c. September/October 1916.

¹⁴⁰ J.M. Nichols, Diary 19 December 1916.

¹⁴¹ Reverend M.A. Bere, Letter to Family 18 November 1916.

¹⁴² L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 30 January 1917.

returned.¹⁴³ W.J. Lidsey explained how the frost's thaw exacerbated the impact of rain; the combined effects produced 'one beastly quagmire.'¹⁴⁴

Passchendaele seems to have amplified soldiers' negative reactions to the snow, frost, and ice. P.R. Hall remembered the 'periods of heavy snow' as a part of 'that terrible winter.'¹⁴⁵ The snow had become a central antagonist rather than a secondary actor or relief. John Nash's final painting of his experience as a serving soldier in the Artists Rifles, depicting an attack at Welsh Ridge, is evidence of this transition (see Figure 2.4). 'Over the Top' foregrounded the snow, which played more prominent a role than the shell bursts in the distance. The smoke from the cordite could easily be mistaken for the dark cloud that plagued France and Flanders in winter. The snow dominated the landscape. One man, killed by enemy fire, has collapsed facedown and the lack of a visible wound gives the impression of a soldier overcome by the whiteness. This painting was produced at the same time as the acute military crisis at Cambrai. Nash intended the painting to convey war's futility, but strikingly it is the snow that dominated the image, not the reverses during the Germans' successful counter-attack.¹⁴⁶

Figure 2.4: This image – A Soldier-Artist's Perspective. IWM ART 1656: J. Nash, *Over the Top - 1st Artists Rifles at Marcoing 30 December 1917* – has been removed as the copyright is owned by another institution.

Capt. A.J. Lord described the frozen snow unenthusiastically and with increasing despair in December 1917, having been forced to 'drink snow-water.' The 'ground [was] frozen to a depth of several inches' and was raked by a 'bitter wind.'¹⁴⁷ January was particularly cold. 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg believed the frost and snow were 'the heaviest... we have had as yet.'¹⁴⁸ Lt. J.H. Johnson saw a direct correlation between the hard frosts and illness among his men.¹⁴⁹ This was also true behind the lines. Reverend M.A. Bere described the snow as 'savage' and the frost froze his chamber pot. He looked forward to rain melting the snow, though he accepted this was a sentiment that was unlikely to be shared by soldiers in the trenches: 'in spite of the pain I think they prefer the cold dry frost.'¹⁵⁰ The snow plagued H.T. Madders's life in mid-January 1918. On 16 January there had been 'about a 1ft of snow,'

¹⁴³ R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 21 November 1916.

¹⁴⁴ 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 18 November 1916; Lt. L.W.C. Ireland, Letter 21 December 1916; Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter 28 December 1916.

¹⁴⁵ P.R. Hall, Memoir (p 19).

¹⁴⁶ P. Gough, *A Terrible Beauty: British Artists in the First World War* (Bristol, 2010) 21; J.P. Stout, *Coming Out of War: Poetry, Grieving, and the Culture of the World Wars* (Tuscaloosa, 2005, 2016) 35.

¹⁴⁷ Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 29 December 1917.

¹⁴⁸ 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg, Letter 8 January 1918.

¹⁴⁹ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 16 January 1918.

¹⁵⁰ Reverend M.A. Bere, Letters 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9 January 1918.

which left him ‘wet through and cold.’¹⁵¹ Snow formed an important part of the unhappy world that J. Grimston described in his diary in early March.¹⁵² Frosts accompanied the battles in March and made the experience even more gruelling. Yet, they did not pose the same problems as the rain and mud.¹⁵³ Unusually, low temperatures meant that snow still lay in some sectors as late as 19 April.¹⁵⁴

Exhaustion and Supplies

Men could frequently see no further than their state of exhaustion. Brophy and Partridge recalled ‘one basic fact about the War on the Western Front is that it was fought by men who were almost always tired, because they got little and disturbed sleep in the line, and because they were, day in and day out, weighed down by appalling physical burdens.’¹⁵⁵ ‘Sleep’ and ‘rest’ form relatively small percentages of soldiers’ overall word usage – perhaps because they were a rarity – yet a feeling of exhaustion was implicit in their descriptions of winter.¹⁵⁶ This gave rise to a frequently adopted ironic reference to time out of the line as ‘*so called* rest.’ F.M. Richardson argued that good health, good food, rest and amenities, and clean, dry clothing all boosted men’s spirits.¹⁵⁷ Jonathan Fennell has similarly demonstrated the importance of welfare provision.¹⁵⁸ Winter impeded movement, interrupted sleep, eroded trenches, and undermined billets. Given the long hours of darkness – when most work took place on the Western Front – this was also the busiest time of year. Furthermore Rachel Duffet has previously argued that soldiers’ provisions were inferior in both quality and quantity to the claims of the *Official History* – winter compounded this.¹⁵⁹

The winter months were a busy time for infantrymen (see Table 2.1).¹⁶⁰ 1914 saw much more fighting than in subsequent years. A further 25 per cent of their time was spent holding the frontlines, where soldiers were at the mercy of the elements. In 1916 and 1917/18 the men remained in trenches and exposed to the elements between 34 and 43 per cent of the

¹⁵¹ H.T. Madders, 16 January 1918.

¹⁵² J. Grimston, Diary 2 March 1918.

¹⁵³ Lt. J.E.H. Neville, Diary 22-24 March 1918.

¹⁵⁴ J. Grimston, Diary 19 April 1918.

¹⁵⁵ Brophy and Partidge, *The Long Trail*, 129.

¹⁵⁶ An NVivo word frequency analysis shows that sleep (inclusive of sleeping) occurs with a weighted percentage of 0.29 per cent and rest (as well as rested and resting) at 0.26 per cent.

¹⁵⁷ F.M. Richardson, *Fighting Spirit: A Study of Psychological Factors in War* (New York 1978) 171.

¹⁵⁸ Fennell, *Combat and Morale*, 10.

¹⁵⁹ Duffet, *The Stomach for Fighting*. Duffet’s analysis suffers from a lack of Army Service Corps sources. Yet these have still proven impossible to locate. Therefore, like her study, this one rests on the personal records of soldiers as evidence of soldiers’ provisions.

¹⁶⁰ Professor Richard Grayson provided this raw data. Having compiled and analysed this he has allowed me to repurpose it here, for which I thank him. See R. Grayson, ‘A Life in the Trenches? The Use of *Operation War Diary* and Crowdsourcing Methods to Provide an Understanding of the British Army’s Day-to-Day Life on the Western Front’, *British Journal for Military History*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (2016). See also <<https://www.operationwardiary.org/>>.

time. They were, though, much less likely to be engaged in combat. They had to cope with the boredom of service in the trench lines and face the stresses of the winter weather without distraction. Elsewhere, units spent less time in ‘movement’, and it would seem the pressures of long route marches lessened. Units spent marginally less time ‘resting’ when in the rear zones. Training increased in volume and soldiers’ routines became more diverse. Domestic activities – sport and leisure, parades, or church activities – became increasingly common. However, more tiring ‘residue activities’ doubled in frequency after 1914. Men were employed in laborious and dangerous working parties, depressing burials, and backbreaking construction work.

	Fighting	Frontlines (No-Fighting)	Movement	Training	Resting	Reserve	Support	Domestic	Residue
Oct. – Dec. 1914	31%	25%	20%	2%	5%	1%	0%	5%	9%
Oct. – Dec. 1916	11%	23%	13%	17%	4%	1%	1%	8%	21%
Oct. – Dec. 1917	15%	20%	13%	18%	3%	1%	1%	9%	19%
Jan. – March 1918	11%	31%	7%	16%	2%	1%	2%	8%	22%
1914-1918	20%	27%	13%	10%	5%	2%	1%	7%	16%

Table 2.1: Percentage Of Days Spent in Various Daily Activities, 1914, 1916, 1917 and 1918 in 1st through 6th Divisions, BEF.

In 1914 the logistical organisation of the British Army was still in flux and the strains of static war and the necessities of supplying troops for winter were met with only variable success. William Robertson, Quartermaster-General of the BEF, reported on 1 September 1914 that even if food was available, its distribution remained imperfect. This problem was heightened as the ground behind the lines became more difficult to traverse.¹⁶¹ Robertson reported that the ‘roads about here are now very bad indeed’ and cast doubt on horse-drawn machines’ effectiveness.¹⁶² The gap between supply and demand left men hungry and inadequately protected from the winter weather. In late November the BEF were only just ordering fur coats, coat liners, warm long coats and Macintoshes. Many of these products would not reach France until the first week of December – long after the weather had turned.¹⁶³ The poorly equipped men faced relentless work just to maintain the trench lines. J. Shaddick recalled:

¹⁶¹ LHCMA Robertson 7/1/1: Letter from General William Robertson to Major Clive Wigram, 1 September 1914.

¹⁶² LHCMA Robertson 2/2/2: Letter from Robertson to Sir John Cowans, 12 November 1914.

¹⁶³ LHCMA Robertson 2/2/6: Copy of Telegram ‘Position as Regards Supply Warm Clothing’ Q/CR/1300, 19 November 1914; LHCMA Robertson 2/2/9: Letter from Robertson to Cowans, 20 November 1914.

What a miserable time we had on the whole... When we were out [of the trenches] we had to go up nightimes [sic] digging reserve trenches or else carrying up stores for those in the trenches and when in the trenches we had to work hard building up the trenches with sandbags.¹⁶⁴

Even if trench service did not involve working it certainly did not equate to rest. S. Judd, for example, got no sleep on 11 December. Heavy rain and flooding forced him to stand up throughout the night.¹⁶⁵ On 24 November the supplies in S. Judd's unit were so low that even water was scarce and he was forced to break ice ponds and boil the water found there.¹⁶⁶ Life at the front became very trying. As well as water, food and warm clothing were frequently hard to come by. This helps to explain the Home Front's rush to knit clothes for the soldiers. The balaclavas, socks, and other garments were not only symbolic of civilians' dedication but reflected the soldiers' real and urgent demand for supplies.¹⁶⁷

By 1916 the BEF's logistical apparatus had expanded hugely. Nevertheless, 'it was not unusual for all manner of supplies to fail to reach the men at the front.'¹⁶⁸ Men continued to complain about the lack of adequate provision of food and clothing. Reverend E.N. Mellish informed his congregation in England that 'the officers and men [in his battalion] have been very hard worked, and the weather has made these last months harder still.'¹⁶⁹ War Diaries highlighted how men were regularly detailed for 'carrying parties.' If not on detail men would often be subject to strenuous retraining – the winter lull being used to integrate new drafts, restructure units, and introduce new tactics.¹⁷⁰ It was draining just finding the trenches. W.J. Lidsey explained how each man had to follow the soldier in front of him very closely. This necessitated a level of concentration that left his men 'absolutely tired out,' some nearly passing out with exhaustion.¹⁷¹ Keeping warm was also difficult. Lighting a fire, when permissible, gave limited relief as the sodden earth did all it could to combat the warmth provided. In the line, men were still constantly battling with the collapsing defences and needed to engage in continual maintenance.¹⁷² All this work often proved fruitless. The unrelenting battle against the elements was tiring and could be deeply frustrating.

¹⁶⁴ J. Shaddick, Memoir: p 14.

¹⁶⁵ S. Judd, Diary 11 December 1914.

¹⁶⁶ W. Tapp, Diary 1914: p 3.

¹⁶⁷ R. van Emden and S. Humphries, *All Quiet on the Home Front: An Oral History of Life in Britain during the First World War* (Barnsley, 2003, 2017) 17.

¹⁶⁸ Duffet, *Stomach for Fighting*, 160.

¹⁶⁹ Reverend E.N. Mellish, Letter in March 1917 *St Paul's, Deptford, Parish Magazine*.

¹⁷⁰ War Diary 2/Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry; War Diary 9/ Royal Fusiliers; WO 95/2403/1: War Diary 11/ Border Regiment.

¹⁷¹ W.J. Lidsey, Diary 2 and 21 November 1916; R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 14 December 1916.

¹⁷² R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 27 December 1916. It possible that this was done using water pumps. However, these involved strenuous effort and were laborious.

One 1916 censorship report reported the ‘unexpected’ absence of grousing about food and kit in soldiers’ letters home.¹⁷³ Many men, however, were still willing to complain about their food and clothing. Pte. F.G. Senyard described his ‘drab’ ration of stewed mutton (no salt), no bread or biscuits, and a piece of cheese.¹⁷⁴ On 17 December he informed his wife that his unit had ‘no blankets until today.’¹⁷⁵ R.E.P. Stevens’s section were forced to sleep ‘in our overcoats.’¹⁷⁶ Men’s surprise at the welcome provision of food and cigarettes at Christmas seems telling. Would such a gesture have elicited this response had the system adequately supplied its men? Outside of festivities men were more likely to record their ‘poor dinner.’¹⁷⁷ Men also reported an inadequate armament supply.¹⁷⁸ Winter left them more reliant on these insufficient supplies. Capt. R.E.M. Young was bitter that winter had removed his sources of alternative food and fuel. They were now forced to rely on ‘Government rations.’¹⁷⁹ This disparaging comment reflects a more general disenchantment with army provisions.

In 1917/1918 the situation became more complex. The winter weather, the troops’ exhaustion, and the paucity of provisions intersected with the aftershocks of Passchendaele, Cambrai, and the German Spring Offensives. Supplies remained inadequate. Reverend E.N. Mellish beseeched his old congregation to send items, including socks, to the men of his battalion in Belgium and France.¹⁸⁰ In mid-December, Lt. J.H. Johnson complained that there was a ‘scarcity of bread and rather poor rations,’ leaving him with only ‘2 biscuits and half a slice of bread to dig on.’¹⁸¹ Such grievances continued well into the New Year.¹⁸² Limited water supplies left some men melting snow.¹⁸³ On 30 December 1917 A.J. Lord bemoaned the situation of the ‘poor Tommy’ explaining to his father that rum was their only sleeping aid. It provided a ‘few hours, sound, saving’ slumber before the ‘cold and wet’ made rest impossible.¹⁸⁴ H. Milner remembered how even a tablespoonful was stored religiously in soldiers’ mugs and ‘sipped as we worked... I think it really was a lifesaver under those conditions: it used to warm us.’¹⁸⁵ Col. F. Hardman claimed ‘rest is unknown in France.’ His unit’s daily routine consisted of ‘rising before the lark each morning, groaning all day under loads of barbed wire... marching miles and miles and even the major is not undisturbed.’

¹⁷³ Capt. M. Hardie, 3rd Section Report on Complaints, Moral, Etc (1916).

¹⁷⁴ Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter to Wife 14 December 1916.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. Letter to Wife 17 December 1916.

¹⁷⁶ R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 21 November 1916.

¹⁷⁷ J.M. Nichols, Diary 24 December 1916.

¹⁷⁸ Capt. E. Lycette, Memoir: p 56.

¹⁷⁹ Capt. R.E.M. Young, Letter to Constance 9 December 1916.

¹⁸⁰ Rev. E.N. Mellish, Letter in *St Paul’s Deptford Parish Church Magazine*, October 1917.

¹⁸¹ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 14 December 1917.

¹⁸² Pte. O. Billingham, Diary 8 February 1918.

¹⁸³ A.J. Lord, Letter to his Father 29 December 1917.

¹⁸⁴ Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter 30 December 1917.

¹⁸⁵ IWM 13/09/1: H. Milner, Memoir: p 18.

‘Rest’ simply meant ‘rest from the line,’ but actually the frontlines offered a “‘rest’ from ‘fatigue’.”¹⁸⁶

The problem of exhaustion came to a head during the *Kaiserschlacht*. After 21 March men were forced to survive on little or no sleep while enduring the strains of battle and withdrawal. Many men lost their kit and were left with little to protect them from the elements.¹⁸⁷ The combined pressure of the weather and combat caused incredible strain. By Easter the 4th Battalion Royal Fusiliers had ‘been in the trenches for weeks on end.’ During this time men struggled with the weather, the Germans, and their own defences. Barbed wire needed constant improvement – usually during the hours of darkness – which further interrupted men’s limited sleep.¹⁸⁸ The need to stand-to each morning in a waterlogged trench led A.J. Lord to conclude that ‘I’ve had enough of “Dawn” to last me a lifetime.’¹⁸⁹ In early 1918 men’s lack of sleep transformed their world into a sort of waking nightmare. The retreat also created logistical chaos. Lt. Col Arthur Stockdale Cope’s men were not alone in being left hungry as battle precluded any supplies reaching them. Cope’s unit had little more than their weapons and ammunition. Even coats were a rarity. When food and water did arrive they were in ‘very short rations’ and had to be shared.¹⁹⁰ On 21 and 22 March Private O. Billingham wrote erratically in his diary ‘NO FOOD ALL DAY. NO FOOD ALL DAY.’¹⁹¹ The Spring Offensives left men scared and even more tired, uncomfortable, and hungry. However, despite the strains of battle, many men focussed on these chronic problems rather than the acute military crisis that was unfolding in front of their eyes. Men were aware that they were retiring but were not aware of how far the military crisis had spread. Battle featured less frequently in their diaries than their most immediate concerns: their next meal, their lack of sleep, and their unit’s exposure to the elements.

Billets and Sleep

Poor food, provisions, and overwork exacerbated men’s exhaustion. Yet among working-class infantrymen these were common currency in civilian life.¹⁹² More aggrieving was the pitiable state of billets. Complaints about sleeping quarters became a muted protest. Even the poorest urban families in the United Kingdom could maintain a modicum of comfort in bad

¹⁸⁶ Col. Hardman, Letter to Parents 1 March 1918.

¹⁸⁷ Capt. A.J.J.P. Agius, Extracts from a Letter Received from France 28 March 1918; Lt. Col. A. Stockdale Cope, Diary 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29 March 1918.

¹⁸⁸ Reverend E.N. Mellish, Writing in Easter 1918.

¹⁸⁹ Capt. A.J. Lord, Letters to Father 1 and 21 April 1918.

¹⁹⁰ Lt. Col. A. Stockdale Cope, Diary 25 and 26 March 1918.

¹⁹¹ Pte. O. Billingham, Diary 21 and 22 March 1918.

¹⁹² P. Thompson, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* (London, 1975, 1992) 11-12; Also, B.S. Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (London, 1901) 167-68.

weather.¹⁹³ Yet this all but disappeared on the Western Front. Bad weather exposed the inadequacy of the men's quarters and made sleep difficult even when truly 'at rest.' This induced bitterness among the infantrymen. The inability of the military to provide adequate billets meant that what rest men had was often insufficient or uncomfortable, and this contributed to their exhaustion.

In 1914 the nature of the front lines meant that men often slept in a waterlogged ditch. C. Dwyer noted that the lack of adequate protection forced men to dig holes in the side of the trench 'to put our heads in.' Even his commanding officer had to settle for a newly dug hole in the garden of a cottage.¹⁹⁴ On 3 October H.E. Trevor informed his wife that 'the cold and damp at nights is the worst and sleeping under ground near a river doesn't make matters better.'¹⁹⁵ The billets behind the lines were 'far from luxurious.'¹⁹⁶ C.S Baines explained withdrawal from the line 'meant going back to no pleasant billets, or even dug-outs or shelters, or even trenches, but just a ditch beside a road.'¹⁹⁷ Officers could usually expect better accommodation. J.S. Knyvett, for example, slept in a farm while his men were in dugouts in a field covered by straw.¹⁹⁸ In later war years one senior battalion officer told his father how 'rest [using the word paradoxically] consists in living in dusty barns and disreputable houses.'¹⁹⁹ A.P. Burke was forced to stay in a 'different billet every night.' On 21 November his unit were forced to 'kip down in an old pig sty with a well ventilated roof over you.' The symbolism of the pigsty prompted Burke to note sarcastically that this was the perfect reward for their hard work.²⁰⁰ The use of 'pig sty' suggests a troublingly low sense of self-worth. Many men complained that camps were 'filthy' as well as 'small and miserable.'²⁰¹ Conflict intruded upon the way men slept as they were often forced to sleep *in* sandbags for warmth.²⁰² Soldiers had no impetus to clear out the mud or fix any structural issues since their stay was usually temporary. Nissen Huts had been introduced by 1916. Yet the widespread phenomenon of 'scrounging,' which saw men steal valuables such as firewood, meant that they often lacked windows, or 'the lining [of the hut] is only too frequently missing because of the selfishness of other troops who have used it as fuel.'²⁰³

¹⁹³ M. Pember Reeves, M., *Round About a Pound a Week* (London, 1913, 2008) 42.

¹⁹⁴ C. Dwyer, Diary 19 October 1914; Also L/Cpl. K.M. Gaunt, Letter 9 January 1915; S. Judd, Diary 12 and 16 November and 1, 9 and 28 December 1914; W. Tapp, Diary 1914: pp 7-8.

¹⁹⁵ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter to his Mother 3 October 1914 and Postcard to Evelyn Parker 22 September 1914.

¹⁹⁶ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter to Mother 3 October 1914 and 13 November 1914.

¹⁹⁷ IWM P 146: Lt. Col. C.S. Baines, Memoir of the First Battle of Ypres, 31 October 1914: p 12

¹⁹⁸ Maj. J.S. Knyvett, Journal 23 October 1914.

¹⁹⁹ Col. F. Hardman, Letter to Father 1 March 1918.

²⁰⁰ A.P. Burke, Letter to Tot 21 November 1916.

²⁰¹ 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 1 November 1916.

²⁰² Lt. W.B. Medlicott, Diary 26 October 1916: p 18.

²⁰³ Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 29 December 1917.

There was a hierarchy of discomfort in troops' descriptions from trenches to tents and finally to billets.²⁰⁴ In the front lines it was almost impossible to escape the winter weather. Officers inhabited 'deep' and 'draughty' dugouts and the rank-and-file were forced into small 'cubby' or 'funkholes'.²⁰⁵ Canvas offered some protection from the rain and snow, but the tented camps were often erected on arable land that was prone to flooding and were incapable of protecting men from the cold.²⁰⁶ Even the more permanent structures gave plenty of cause for complaint. These buildings generally had uncomfortable duckboard or corrugated iron floors, broken walls and leaky roofs.²⁰⁷ Often the only satisfaction to be gained from these cramped and 'miserable dirty little huts' was their *comparative* comfort. Such sleeping quarters left J.M. Nichols confident that he had just experienced the 'worst day we have had'.²⁰⁸

Sickness

The winter months also posed serious health risks to soldiers as fatigue and exposure sapped their strength. There were higher sickness rates than at other times of the year. Frostbite, trench foot, influenza, rheumatic fever, and respiratory diseases were particularly prominent.²⁰⁹ Most famously trench foot was an ailment that was directly linked to the season. Prolonged service in flooded trenches alongside the long and arduous marches left men with hot and swollen feet that were then left to fester in cold mud. Ill-fitting boots compounded this, as did the weather's repeated oscillations between frosts, thaws, and rain.²¹⁰ Alexander Watson argued that sickness was also caused by 'chronic and acute nerve exhaustion'.²¹¹ Sickness added to the matrix of short-term concerns that coalesced to form the chronic crisis of life during winter.

The medical services became more adept at preventing and treating soldiers' illness as the war progressed. Frostbite, for example, affected 6,447 men (or 33.90 per 1000) between August and December in 1914.²¹² Trench foot rates followed a similar pattern. Both were less widespread in 1916 and 1917/18, but the weather continued to impact men's health. Admissions and evacuations were significantly higher between November and January – the

²⁰⁴ A.P. Burke Letters November 1916; W.J. Lidsey, Diary November 1916.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. 30 December 1917; Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 21 December.

²⁰⁶ Capt. C.E.R. Sherrington, CES 1/2 – III: Memoir 1916; Lt. L.W.C. Ireland, Letter 16 December 1916; IWM 74/54/1: Cpl. H. Harris, Memoir Late 1916.

²⁰⁷ Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter 26 December 1916; R.E.P Stevens, Diary 21 November.

²⁰⁸ J.M. Nichols, Diary 21 December 1916.

²⁰⁹ Mitchell and Smith, *Medical Services*, 135.

²¹⁰ Ibid. 90.

²¹¹ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 40.

²¹² Mitchell and Smith, *Medical Services*, 88.

coldest months of the year. In 1918, this peaked again during the early stages of the Spring Offensive. Pneumonia and respiratory problems were also very common.²¹³

	Frostbite and Trench Foot Admissions	Frostbite and Trench Foot Evacuations
1 - 28 Oct. 1916	854	691
29 Oct. - 25 Nov. 1916	4012	3206
26 Nov. - 30 Dec. 1916	9370	8806

Table 2.2: Frostbite and Trench Foot Admissions/Evacuations in 1916. From Mitchell and Smith, *Medical Services*, 89.

	Frostbite and Trench Foot Admissions	Frostbite and Trench Foot Evacuations
6 - 27 Oct. 1917	2982	2765
28 Oct. - 24 Nov. 1917	3029	2961
25 Nov. - 29 Dec. 1917	2982	2697
30 Dec. 1917 - 26 Jan. 1918	5151	4186
27 Jan. - 23 Feb. 1918	520	556
24 Feb. - 30 Mar. 1918	225	202
31 Mar. - 27 Apr. 1918	1044	732

Table 2.3: Frostbite and Trench Foot Admissions/Evacuations in 1917/18. From Mitchell and Smith, *Medical Services*, 89.

G.A. Stevens was surprised that ‘there has been really very little sickness’ in his battalion in 1914. Of 730 casualties he doubted ‘if 30 of those are sickness.’²¹⁴ By the end of the month the weather had turned and on 23 October one soldier ‘was suffering from all the pains and ills the human flesh is heir to.’²¹⁵ The ‘cold and damp’ left Charles Dwyer with a severe pain in his foot. On 14 November he was sent to a dressing station and found that ‘the place is full of wounded and sick.’²¹⁶ Pte. E.A. Cannon was forced to ‘return to [the] first line sick’ in late September 1916. E.T. Marler was complaining in mid-October that he was ‘feeling very ill, bad head, pain in stomach.’²¹⁷ This continued to trouble him throughout November.²¹⁸ In February 1918 exposure caused pain in the ankles of both C.T. O’Neill and Pte. C.E. Wild.²¹⁹ Another man reported that a tour of the trenches had left ‘about 400 men’ ill with ‘dysentery, influenza, pneumonia and trench feet,’ which meant they were unable to take up their position

²¹³ Ibid. 99-100.

²¹⁴ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 3 October 1914.

²¹⁵ Reminiscences of Unknown Guardsman 13 August to 3 November 1914, Diary 23 October 1914.

²¹⁶ C. Dwyer, Diary 1-3 October; 14 November 1914.

²¹⁷ Pte. E.A. Cannon, Diary 26 September 1916; E.T. Marler, Diary 18 October 1916.

²¹⁸ E.T. Marler, Diary 3 and 10-11 November 1916.

²¹⁹ Lt. C.T. O’Neill, Diary 15 February 1918.

in the line.²²⁰ Others, such as C.T. O'Neill, suffered silently. He endured a constant headache for several days in February.²²¹

There was, however, opportunity in illness. A fortunate few, such as Charles Dwyer, were evacuated to England.²²² More frequently, illness offered a temporary break from normal military routines. Sick parades allowed men to be assigned light duties ('medicine and duty' or 'excused duty'). An understanding junior officer sometimes turned a blind eye to feigned cases of illness. In 1916, for example, A.P. Burke used his mild sickness to escape more difficult fatigues, which felt like a small victory.²²³ There was always the danger that a Medical Officer would see through this and report the man for punishment.²²⁴ No matter how valid some men's complaints, any suspicion could lead to poor reports and black marks against the soldier's character.²²⁵ Pte. C.E. Wild sometimes received 'M & D' but at others got 'punishment for going sick.' The outcome did not always mirror his physical state and in March he received a punishment despite having a foot that needed lancing. This only made his foot worse and left him restricted to billets.²²⁶ Pte. P.N. Wright felt lucky to have a 'sympathetic' medical officer.²²⁷

Combat and Raiding

This all influenced the way that men interpreted war during the coldest part of the year. Some military activities could make winter an even worse experience. Raiding was particularly resented during these months.²²⁸ Unsuccessful raids were, of course, especially unwelcome. In early October 1916 A.P. Burke's unit had witnessed a shambolic raid in which British artillery fire had fallen short. This had flattened the front lines and induced the unit to his left to run away. He complained that the Germans were now more active than ever before. Nevertheless, he assured his brother that they were ready to repulse the enemy if need be.²²⁹ Other soldiers also anxiously anticipated the enemy's response to raids – combat was even more unwelcome given the condition of the trenches.²³⁰ 2nd W.J. Lidsey's battalion was involved in some heavy fighting at the beginning of November 1916 in which they successfully captured several prisoners. Lidsey was relieved that they would now not be

²²⁰ Ibid. Late October and 4 November 1917.

²²¹ Ibid. Diary 21 February 1918.

²²² C. Dwyer, Diary 21 November 1914.

²²³ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 29 December 1916.

²²⁴ Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, 180.

²²⁵ Capt. J. Early, Report for Sgt. Major Wootton 2 January 1917.

²²⁶ Pte. C.E. Wild, Diary 25 September 1917 and 18 March 1918.

²²⁷ RFM.ARC 2013.8.2: Pte. P.N. Wright, Diary 2-4 October 1917.

²²⁸ Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 91-92, 98, 179.

²²⁹ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 12-15 October 1916.

²³⁰ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 15 and 25 December 1916.

called upon until spring.²³¹ Even when a German attack was repulsed the success was framed as an unwanted, violent, and dangerous diversion.²³² Some men, however, found that a successful raid could provide them with some brief escape from winter routines or even generate some sense of agency. Capt. Charles Carrington was ordered to lead a raid and reported that ‘we had a wonderful night operation last night, far more interesting than a real battle.’ They ‘raided an enemy post with as much realism and far more success than I have ever achieved at the front.’²³³ Admittedly, this was in October 1918 when victory was in sight. For most men the violence simply worsened the already trying winter conditions.

Winter weather and activity exhausted men and sapped their morale. Myriad problems plagued the daily lives of soldiers and contributed to their sense of chronic crisis. Soldiers dwelt on the problems of winter obsessively, which left many less concerned with the broader picture. The matrix of short-term problems subsumed wider concerns. The propensity of men to use words such as ‘awful’ and ‘miserable’ suggests winter did play a negative role in morale. Psychological research highlights how ‘bad’ emotions form quickly and are more powerful than ‘good.’²³⁴ What follows will explore the ways in which the season and exhaustion simultaneously contributed to low moods and worked to benefit men’s broader spirit and morale. The experience and survival of this chronic crisis changed men’s perspective on the war and shifted their impressions of campaigning in summer months.

Winter and Depression

The chronic crisis of winter was sometimes made worse by men’s psychological environment. Modern psychiatry has highlighted the existence of seasonal depression. The extremes of experience on the Western Front might have made soldiers more susceptible to this. The very short days, heavily overcast skies, night work, and periods when rain restricted men to billets limited their exposure to light. The body uses light sources to manage its functions.²³⁵ A deficiency in Vitamin D – which is very common – impacts levels of

²³¹ 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 6 November 1916.

²³² Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 8 February 1918.

²³³ Capt. C. Carrington, Letter 2 October 1918.

²³⁴ R.F. Baumeister, E. Bratslavsky, C. Finkenauer and D. Kathleen, ‘Bad is Stronger than Good,’ *Review of General Psychology*, Vol. 5 Issue 4 (Dec., 2001) 323-370.

²³⁵ ‘Seasonal Affective Disorder – Causes’ (<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Seasonal-affective-disorder/Pages/Causes.aspx>, accessed 14 August 2015).

melatonin (energy) and serotonin (mood, appetite and sleep).²³⁶ Lack of exposure to light can cause, among other things, irritability, feelings of despair and guilt, visions of worthlessness, low self-esteem, indecisiveness, stress and anxiety.²³⁷ Medical studies have also found links between malnutrition and depression, and the paucity of supplies probably compounded this problem.²³⁸ Exhaustion and chronic fatigue can also induce similar symptoms to depression.²³⁹ Such psychological stress could impede men's *ability* to fight and remain disciplined. Depression and pessimism are unhappy bedfellows.²⁴⁰ Charles Carrington is an illustrative case of the impact winter had emotional wellbeing. Exhausted, he noted that he was 'very fed up,' 'still fed up,' and even began to contemplate the existence of ghosts – the only paranormal reference in his papers.²⁴¹

Apart from some descriptions that their time in the line was 'miserable', the Englishmen studied here in 1914 seem to have borne the strain stoically.²⁴² In 1916 and 1917/18 exhaustion and depression became more prominent. A.P. Burke exhibited many signs of emotional collapse in a letter to his brother on 15 December 1916. 'It's a bugger,' he confessed, and the weather made his life one of 'hellish hardships'.²⁴³ Other soldiers also found themselves at the season's mercy. G.A. Stevens's letters to his parents contained less detail and became more negative as November 1916 dragged on. The weather was the focus of his discontent and despondency.²⁴⁴ Lt. J.H. Johnson exhibited very low levels of self-esteem. The weather prompted him to write of his 'mental numbness' and he confessed that he was 'bored, irritated and annoyed by people and things.' On 21 November he had 'no interest – no keenness.' The next day he simply recorded 'Thoughts! Thoughts! Thoughts!' He was not the only member of his unit under great strain. A lance corporal succumbed to the accumulative effect of chronic crises, which induced acute crisis and drove him to shoot his thumb off on 12 December.²⁴⁵ On 11 December Johnson asked, 'where is the Bairnsfather touch?'²⁴⁶ It had become harder to paint hardships lightly.

²³⁶ T.A. Wehr and N.E. Rosenthal, 'Seasonality and Affective Illness', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol 146 Issue 7 (July, 1989) 829-39.

²³⁷ 'Symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder' (<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder/Pages/Symptoms.aspx>), accessed 14 August 2015).

²³⁸ C. S. Moliner, K. Norman, K-H. Wagner, W. Hartig, H. Lochs and M. Pirlich, 'Malnutrition and Depression in the Institutionalised Elderly', *British Journal of Nutrition*, Vol. 102 Issue 11 (December, 2009) 1663-1667.

²³⁹ A.L. Komaroff and D. Buchwald, 'Symptoms and Signs of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome', *Reviews of Infectious Diseases*, Vol. 13, Issue Supplement 1 (Jan., 1991) 8-11.

²⁴⁰ A.K. MacLeod and E. Salaminiou, 'Reduced Positive Future-Thinking in Depression: Cognitive and Affective Factors', *Cognition and Emotion*, Vol. 15 Issue 1 (2001) 99-107.

²⁴¹ Capt. C. Carrington, Diary 27 December 1916, 18 and 19 January 1917.

²⁴² J. Shaddick, Memoir: p 14.

²⁴³ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 15 December 1916.

²⁴⁴ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letters November 1916.

²⁴⁵ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 14, 15, 21 and 22 November and 12 December 1916.

²⁴⁶ Ibid. Diary 11 December.

This trend continued in 1917/1918. The weather had made life much harder during the battles of 1917. Men's belief that it had undermined the Passchendaele offensive made it all the more depressing. Charles Carrington slowly unravelled psychologically. In October 1917 he became 'thoroughly ashamed of myself' and wrote 'I decide that I have come to the end of my tether.' In the New Year he concluded that 'our nerves are all on edge' and was eventually posted to England.²⁴⁷ Sydney Frankenburg was saddened as he was exposed to his men's trauma and exhaustion when censoring their letters.²⁴⁸ As G.A. Stevens prepared for his fourth winter at war he confessed to his mother that he was 'getting awfully fed up.'²⁴⁹ Snow fell during January 1918. H.T. Madders was training and reported that a man shot himself and that his friends had all 'got the wind up.' They had not yet served in the frontline, but Madders too felt 'bilious.'²⁵⁰

Depression dampened motivation and some men became increasingly introverted. It became their own feelings, thoughts, and problems that emerged as their primary consideration. Psychologists suggest that depressed persons are more likely to be introvert and neurotic.²⁵¹ Significantly, other studies have found a direct relationship between the physical feeling of 'coldness' and impressions of social exclusion.²⁵² Ernest Marler is the clearest example of this. In his first weeks in France he had described recreational activities, other soldiers, and French civilians very positively. Yet, winter was met with extreme dejection and he rejected social interaction.²⁵³ Research also indicates that depression among workers is a reliable indicator of deteriorating work performance.²⁵⁴ This is, perhaps, reflected in Bowman's claim that poor discipline became more pronounced during winter.²⁵⁵ In individual cases the effects of winter were capable of pushing men into acute crisis. Yet, for many others, the experience actually engendered greater resilience.

Coping

Men developed – or unconsciously mobilised – techniques through which they coped with the chronic crisis they faced during winter. They grasped any evidence of the weather improving

²⁴⁷ Ibid. Diary 8 and 9 October and 30 December 1917.

²⁴⁸ 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg, Letter 10 December 1917.

²⁴⁹ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 10 December 1917.

²⁵⁰ H.T. Madders, Diary 25 and 27 January 1918.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Chen-Bo Zhong and G.L Leonardelli, 'Cold and Lonely: Does Social Exclusion Literally Feel Cold?', *Psychological Science*, Vol. 19 (Sep., 2008) 838-842.

²⁵³ E.T. Marler, Diary October-November 1916.

²⁵⁴ R. Kessler, L.A. White, H. Birnbaum, Y. Qiu, Y. Kidolezi, D Mallett and R. Swindle, 'Comparative and Interactive Effects of Depression Relative to Other Health Problems on Work Performance in the Workforce of a Large Employer', *Journal of Occupation and Environmental Medicine*, Vol. 50 Issue 7 (July 2008) 809-816.

²⁵⁵ Bowman, *Irish Regiments in the Great War*, 50-51.

and this could improve their mood.²⁵⁶ Sunny days during November 1916 left 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey more positive. He became more resilient to German bombardments and derided the effectiveness of their artillery fire.²⁵⁷ The ‘fair’ weather 2nd Lt. Henrick Jones encountered in December 1916 left him hopeful that the winter would not be too severe.²⁵⁸ In the aftermath of the German Offensive, L/Cpl. E. Lindsell wrote that the better weather ‘made all the difference and its [sic] quite a treat to be without the incessant supply of mud.’²⁵⁹ Between January and March men recorded any increase in the temperature. A ‘very warm day’ often allowed them to enjoy themselves.²⁶⁰ Many men viewed days where the temperature never strayed below freezing as comparatively temperate. G.A. Stevens told his parents, on 2 October 1917, that ‘we have been having a spell of real beautiful weather of late which makes such a difference to general comfort.’²⁶¹ Similarly, on 19 January 1918, C.T. O’Neill reported that he was ‘feeling much better in spirits, mainly owing to change in weather for better.’ He felt that summer was finally returning after a spell of ‘brilliant’ weather on 11 and 12 March.²⁶² Pte. O. Billingham described the weather as ‘beautiful’ during this period.²⁶³ The briefest improvement in weather could have rejuvenating effects.

Other men diminished their own discomfort by imagining the Germans’ suffering. In 1914 H.E. Trevor comforted himself on ‘cold and damp nights’ with thoughts ‘that the Deutsche were much more miserable than us.’²⁶⁴ S. Judd came away from the Christmas truces bolstered by his confidence that the enemy were starving; their desire to exchange goods for bully beef was all the evidence he needed.²⁶⁵ G.A. Stevens admitted that ‘the condition[s] for the men were awful but I hope Fritz was worse and I think he was.’²⁶⁶ Sydney Frankenburg turned to fantasy, imagining the pilots of the German planes that flew overhead freezing, as they ‘ought to be.’²⁶⁷ The ability to focus on the enemy’s discomfort allowed soldiers to downplay their own trials and momentarily transport themselves to the locality of their enemy – providing a vision of somebody else’s misery. This mirrors modern work that

²⁵⁶ S. Judd, Diary 24-25 November; 26 and 29 December 1914; Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to his Mother 2 October 1917 and Easter Monday 1918.

²⁵⁷ 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 8 and 14 November 1916.

²⁵⁸ 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter to Wife 25 December 1916.

²⁵⁹ A & C Black and Company, Letter from L/Cpl. E. Lindsell June 1918.

²⁶⁰ H.T. Madders, Diary 22 and 27 January 1918; Reverend M.A. Bere, Diary 8 January 1918; 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg, Letter 26 January.

²⁶¹ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 2 October 1917.

²⁶² C.T. O’Neill, Diary 19 January 1918.

²⁶³ Ibid. 11-12 March 1918; Pte. O. Billingham, Diary 10 March 1918.

²⁶⁴ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter to his Mother 3 October 1914.

²⁶⁵ S. Judd, Diary 27 December 1914.

²⁶⁶ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter 29 November 1916.

²⁶⁷ 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg, Letter 10 December 1917.

has built on Freud's concept of psychological projection – a cognitive defensive mechanism in which humans project negative emotions and traits onto others.²⁶⁸

Glimpses of the enemy facilitated this. During winter these were rare as armies retreated into their trenches. In 1914, however, the armies remained more active than in the years to follow. Reconnaissance patrols continued and battalions extended their saps. German flares and attacks continued throughout the final month of the year.²⁶⁹ While the informal Christmas truces might have been 'friendly' they facilitated a stronger image of the enemy.²⁷⁰ Bruce Bairnsfather remembered that 'after months of vindictive sniping and shelling, this little episode came as an invigorating tonic, and a welcome relief to the daily monotony of antagonism. It did not lessen our ardour or determination; but just put a little human punctuation mark in our lives of cold and humid hate.'²⁷¹ In December 1916 and winter 1917/18 many unit diaries almost stopped referring to the Germans.²⁷² The lack of military activity may have led infantrymen to dwell more obsessively upon the weather. After 21 March 1918 the rain and the mud were still capable of 'adding to one's depression.' However, for some men, the weather's impact lessened as military action offered a distraction.²⁷³ While combat was more dangerous it provided an outlet that contrasted starkly with the impotence and powerlessness men felt during winter.

Activity that broke the normal winter routines also bolstered men's morale. It was during the festive season that men felt their distance from their loved ones most forcefully.²⁷⁴ Those men in the frontlines were unlucky. Rather than enjoying a Christmas feast 'we poor devils will most likely be starved to death, in the trenches keeping our eyes on Fritz to defend the old country.'²⁷⁵ Yet, for many, the period around Christmas was a moment of joy. It allowed them to consolidate their more hopeful thoughts and several soldiers used the next year's festivities as their marker for peace.²⁷⁶ It offered the opportunity for a semblance of

²⁶⁸ R.F. Baumeister, K. Dale and K. L. Sommer, 'Freudian Defense Mechanisms and Empirical findings in Modern Social Psychology: Reaction formation, Projection, Displacement, Undoing, Isolation, Sublimation, and Denial', *Journal of Personality*, Vol. 66 Issue 6 (December 1998) 1090.

²⁶⁹ War Diaries of 1/Devonshire Regiment and 1/Royal Warwickshire Regiment October-December 1916. Also, Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 22 November 1914.

²⁷⁰ J. Shaddick, Memoir: p 11; S. Judd, Diary 27 December 1914; T.A. Silver, Memoir 1914.

²⁷¹ B. Bairnsfather, *Bullets and Billets*, (Project Gutenberg EBook, 2004)

(<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11232/11232-h/11232-h.htm>, accessed 24 August 2015).

²⁷² War Diary 11th Battalion Border Regiment, December; War Diary 2nd Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, December; War Diary 9th Battalion Royal Fusiliers, December.

²⁷³ Lt. Col. A. Stockdale Cope, Diary 29 March 1918; Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to his Mother Easter Monday 1918.

²⁷⁴ A.L. Collis, Diary 25 December 1916; E.T. Marler, Diary 25 December 1916.

²⁷⁵ A.P. Burke, Letter to Tot 26 October 1916.

²⁷⁶ Pte. W.M. Anderson, Letter to Wife 17 October 1916. This will be explored in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

normality as soldiers requested presents from home.²⁷⁷ A simple Christmas pudding meant John Edwin Mawer had ‘a very decent time’ in 1914.²⁷⁸ For those in the trenches the unofficial truces were welcomed because it felt strange to fight on a holiday.²⁷⁹ In 1916 2nd Lt. Henrick Jones consoled both himself and his wife when he wrote ‘you must enjoy yourself. Forget all the lonely feelings and we’ll be with each other all the time.’²⁸⁰ Christmas dinner allowed officers to display their paternalism. For the rank and file it generally offered a pleasant break from usual rations and routines. For many working-class soldiers it may have been the most luxurious meal they had ever had.²⁸¹ The great detail with which many men described their dinners reveals their satisfaction.²⁸² Celebrations were also accompanied by concerts and sports.²⁸³ Men relaxed and drank to excess. They forgot the war temporarily – they even stopped describing the weather.²⁸⁴ 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg found that a real sense of community emerged during this period. His men sang carols for their officers, who invited them into their mess for a drink, while the Sergeant’s Mess hosted officers later in the day. It helped them overcome some recent losses in the company.²⁸⁵ Christmas briefly disrupted the pain of winter but offered just enough to tide men over until the weather turned.

Individuals’ sense of acute crisis emerged in situations when victory was perceived to be unlikely or impossible. At these moments chronic crises fused with the soldiers’ fear that they would never return home. The III Army Censor noted a correlation between peace talk in letters and the soldiers’ realisation that they were approaching another winter in the trenches.²⁸⁶ In 1917/18 war’s perceived endlessness coalesced with the anticipation of winter. In August 1917 the censor contended that the ‘minds of men are adversely affected far more by their continued absence from home and by the dread of winter than by the prospect of actual conflict with the enemy.’ He reported that ‘winter privations and... lack of leave outnumber references to the horror of fighting in the ratio of 5 to 1.’²⁸⁷ The experience of

²⁷⁷ Lt. Col. D.R. Turnbull, Letter to Mother and Father 15 December 1916; NAM 1990-12-95: Arthur Neilson, Letter to his Daughter 3 December [No Year]; Pte Percy Thompson, Letter to Adelaide [undated] from Rouen.

²⁷⁸ J.E. Mawer, Letter to Wife [Doc. 29 c. Christmas 1914].

²⁷⁹ L/Cpl. K.M. Gaunt, Letter (2) 25 December 1914.

²⁸⁰ 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter to Wife 25 December 1916.

²⁸¹ Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter to Wife 26 December 1916.

²⁸² A&C Black Publishers, Letter from E.P. Gilscott 28 December 1917; IWM 67/264/1: A. Beevers, Diary 1 January 1917.

²⁸³ J. Grimston, Diary 25-26 December 1916.

²⁸⁴ 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 25 December 1916.

²⁸⁵ 2nd Lt. S. Frankenburg, Letter 27 December 1916.

²⁸⁶ Capt. M. Hardie, ‘Report on III Army Morale/Peace Sentiment August to September 1917’.

²⁸⁷ Ibid. ‘Report on III Army Morale, August 1917.’

winter was horrific, while its arrival symbolised the failure to bring about victory. Autumn was subsumed into one longer winter season. The first signs of the weather worsening signalled another year of war. Once winter arrived, however, it became the focus of soldiers' discontent. The immediate problems of winter left men so exhausted that they could think of little else, which eventually drew their attention away from the war's length. What is more, a number of English infantrymen's hatred of winter made a fighting conclusion more palatable.

Winter was particularly demoralising when it worked to combat effective military campaigning, particularly during Passchendaele.²⁸⁸ Many soldiers remembered that they 'were beaten by the weather of that terrible winter.'²⁸⁹ Maj. G.H. Greenwell believed it was 'the worst experience of modern warfare I have yet struck.'²⁹⁰ As the weather undermined their offensive capabilities pessimism became epidemic. It was impossible to find any agency in the battle against Mother Nature. J. Grimston wrote cheerlessly on 19 March 1918: 'Rain. Is it because British intend another advance. It seems to usually rain whenever an advance is about to be attempted and consequently hamper our movements.'²⁹¹ After 21 March the fog played an important role in masking the German advances.²⁹² Soldiers felt that it had reduced their visibility and allowed the Germans to penetrate their lines, rendering their defence impossible. One battalion commander explained that 'the natural production of mist coincided with the launching of a great attack in which many men + munitions of war were mist, also many Huns were mist: The greatest chaos was produced in the mist.'²⁹³ Tactical crisis threatened to become an acute crisis for morale as some soldiers began to think that there was 'nothing' that could stop the German advance.²⁹⁴ Yet, by allocating blame for military setbacks on the weather, men retained confidence in their martial abilities.

Soldiers' experience of winter influenced their perception of time and encouraged them to imagine the future. Later chapters will show just how fundamental this was to their morale. Men's moods were transformed by visions of spring, which became intimately connected with visions of peace. A poem published in *The B.E.F. Times* lamented 'Gone is the Summer, and... the flies, / Gone the green hedges that gladdened our eyes.' Instead the soldiers were faced by a 'landscape... reeking with rain.' 'Gone,' it concluded, 'is all comfort

²⁸⁸ Lloyd, *Passchendaele*, esp. ch. 14.

²⁸⁹ P.R. Hall, Memoir: p 19.

²⁹⁰ Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Letter 26 August 1917.

²⁹¹ J. Grimston, Diary 19 March 1918.

²⁹² P. Hart, 1918, ch. 3. See also A.L. Collis, Diary 21 March 1918; Lt. J.E.H. Neville, Diary 21-22 March 1918; NAM 2006-04-25: Papers and maps sent to Sir John Fortescue by Lt Gen Sir Ivor Maxse in April and July 1918; papers are chiefly relating to XVIII Corps and the Battle of St Quentin between 21 and 30 March 1918, Letter to Fortescue from Maxse 28 April 1918.

²⁹³ Lt. Col. J.E. Smart, Field Message Book, Army Book 153.

²⁹⁴ Pte. O.G. Billingham, Diary 25 March 1918; Lt. Col. A. Stockdale Cope, Diary 25, 27 and 29 March 1918. AH.T. Madders, Diary 19 April and 29 May 1918.

– ‘tis Winter again.’²⁹⁵ This left men ‘longing for the bright, warm spring day’ where ‘the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, [and] the time of singing birds is come.’²⁹⁶ Men were sustained by these visions. As winter arrived in late 1916 William Anderson consoled himself that one day spring would return, at which stage ‘the sun will shine again.’ He felt that ‘this helps a lot.’²⁹⁷ It is no coincidence that peace and spring became synonymous, since Easter was associated with resurrection. For other men, however, they were simply desperate for the relief of warmer weather. When the first day of spring arrived Pte. A. Conn and his comrades were elated. He happily recalled: ‘the long winter months are over. Its [sic] good to sit on the fire step in the sun.’²⁹⁸

Winter also affected the way that men framed violence. Soldiers were unwilling to endure another winter at war. War on the Western Front followed patterns that loosely resembled traditional ‘campaigning seasons’ and battle raged from spring through summer but ebbed in the winter months. That men were able to describe the period of least violence as the ‘darkest’ part of their war experience is telling. Those who arrived during spring and summer months felt unable to imagine winter at war; the experience of the season became the mark of a true veteran.²⁹⁹ Those infantrymen who survived one winter were desperate for the war to end before the weather turned. Donald Hankey confessed ‘personally I would far rather have another whack at the Hun than slide uncomfortably into a winter in the trenches. I think most people feel the same.’³⁰⁰ Winter was an even more unpleasant part of their military service. Men faced two intersecting conflicts: war against winter, and war against the Germans. Men began anticipating winter even in the early summer. Capt. Geoffrey Donaldson wrote to his mother on 16 June 1916 stating that ‘I need hardly say everyone here dreads the idea of another winter campaign.’³⁰¹ G.H. Greenwell’s letters contained a similar sense of foreboding. The ‘terrible thought that winter is nearly upon us’ was distressing. ‘Only one more month of rapidly fading summer and then the horrors of long black nights and wet days... I only wish something decisive would happen.’³⁰² Winter was so terrible that it allowed men to paint military campaigning in a more positive light. There was, it seems, a hierarchy of chronic crises. In 1916 and 1917/18 men’s fear of another winter in France and Flanders became a dominant feature in letters. By October 1917 the apparent failure of

²⁹⁵ To the P.B.I.: An Appreciation’, *The B.E.F. Times*, No. 1, Vol. 1 (December 1916) 5.

²⁹⁶ Reverend E.N. Mellish, Writing in March 1917 of Winter 1916; R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 14, 22 and 27 November and 3 December 1916.

²⁹⁷ Pte. W.M. Anderson, Letter to Wife 6 December 1916.

²⁹⁸ LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0347: Pte. A. Conn, Memoir: p 41.

²⁹⁹ Capt. J. Early, Diary 3 May 1915.

³⁰⁰ D. Hankey, Letter to his Sister 18 September 1916 in D. Hankey, *A Student in Arms* (London, 1920) 349.

³⁰¹ Capt. G.B. Donaldson, Letter to his Mother 16 June 1916.

³⁰² Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Letters 1 September and 4 November 1916.

Passchendaele and the terrible weather that accompanied this campaign helps to explain the openness to a compromise peace traced by the III Army Censor.³⁰³ Despite the increased chance of violent death during the spring and summer, the reality of the war meant that men were rarely in action, and good weather was viewed in positive terms. Furthermore, the ability to operate with military efficiency meant a quicker end to the war. A conclusive battle became as much about avoiding the coming winter as defeating the Germans.

Winter's chronic crisis had a corrosive effect on infantrymen's emotional wellbeing. It became an enemy in its own right. Its physical and psychological impact could deplete men's motivation, deprive them of positivity, and contribute to their depression. The poorer classes had feared the cold and winter all their lives, yet nothing prepared even them for winter at war.³⁰⁴ For the wealthier soldiers and officers, the experience was a stark lesson. Winter became a wider metaphor for the most horrid face of war. Men were immobile and impotent. This immobility became a more prominent issue as the conflict dragged on, as it came to symbolise lost opportunities for peace. Indeed, in 1917 the physical environment had played a key role in undermining British operations.

Men wrote obsessively about the difficulties of life during winter. Complaints about the weather reveal how the season became a focus for discontent. Soldiers' exhaustion was caused by a plethora of accompanying factors. The numerous 'small' problems coalesced and clouded the 'bigger' picture. The temperature, the rain, the mud, the snow, the hard work, their lack of supplies, their inadequate billets, and their sickness all contributed to exhaustion and the chronic crisis of winter. They were desperate to avoid another winter in Belgium and France and many came to see battle and campaigning as an opportunity to overcome winter as well as the enemy.

Surviving winter elevated men above the despair of campaigning. It altered the way they perceived the war. Men met the end of winter with joy. They reconstructed events around the new season and it immediately affected their outlook and spirit. Men were once more invested with the new hope that spring brought and were equipped with new impetus to bring the war to a conclusion before winter reared its head once more. Victorious battle was, in sum, preferable to a quiet but terrible winter. None the less, morale and men's sense-

³⁰³ Capt. M. Hardie, 3rd Section Report on Complaints, Moral etc. (1916) and Report on III Army Morale/Peace Sentiment, August to October 1917.

³⁰⁴ For discussions of winter, the cold and the poor see Pember Reeves, *Round About a Pound a Week*, 41.

making rested on far more than the seasons. The following chapter will analyse the cultural subtext of men's endurance and service: their duty and sense of obligation.

Obligation

Soldiers' Perceptions of Duty and Role Fulfilment

Military service was, for many men, unpleasant, unnerving, and unwelcome. Yet, their sense of obligation and duty compelled them to endure. A.P. Burke reluctantly returned from leave in October 1916, horrified to find that winter had returned to Belgium and France. He felt compelled to write an impassioned letter home. 'I knew I was doing my duty,' he exclaimed, '& considering I myself realize what that duty means, & at what risk we chaps out here do it.'¹ While he failed to expand upon what duty meant, Burke revealed its power as an implicit set of normative assumptions often drawn from the soldiers' social environment. Many of these were defined by military culture. This chapter focuses on how perceptions of duty combatted chronic crisis and interacted with morale. The army referred to 'duty' in the context of any number of things. The narrow commonplace uses of the word give way to broader, deeper, and more complex meanings, involving codes of attitude and behaviour. As Yuval Noah Harari has highlighted, human culture is formed from a set of 'artificial instincts... [and] has its typical beliefs, norms and values, but these are in constant flux.' Cultures can 'transform' in response to environment, neighbouring cultures, and internal dynamics.² This chapter will trace the changes and continuities in Englishmen's perceptions of duty and obligation by analysing the linkages between the military social environment, crisis, duty, and morale.

Soldiers very rarely articulated their personal definitions of duty. It existed as a set of often unspoken rules directing men's actions and perceptions. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, in 1911, defined duty as an action 'which is regarded as morally incumbent,' and existed 'apart from personal likes and dislikes or any external compulsion.' It argued that 'such action must be viewed in relation to a principle, which may be abstract in the highest sense,' for example conscience, 'or based on local and personal relations.'³ To understand duty it is necessary to develop insights into the moral impulses that drove English infantrymen. It was a product of diverse and abstract cultural and institutional foundations lying on bedrock of assumptions and ideas. While revealing the cultural systems that influenced morale is difficult, it can be very fruitful. Ute Frevert has explored the history of emotions in the military by tracing ideas such as honour, shame, and the impact of conscription on citizenship

¹ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 12-15 October 1916.

² Y.N. Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Human Kind*, trans. Y.N. Harari, J. Purcell and H. Watzman (London, 2011, 2014) 163.

³ 'Duty', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 8 (London, 1911) 737.

in Germany.⁴ Importantly she revealed the shifting *meaning* of these terms, discussing how these constructs operated within a military that became a ‘social event’ in its own right.⁵

Duty has been understudied in the pre-existing Anglophone historiography. There have been attempts to analyse the implicit moral universe of late-Edwardian and Home Front society in Britain. However, much of this has focused on the high ideals and public school ethos of the upper classes.⁶ There is some disagreement on the extent to which this code diffused through the social classes. Catriona Pennell suggests these ideals were, to some extent, universal. Pennell concluded that ideas such as ‘national honour, rule of law, justice, the rights of small nations, fair play, and anti-bullying’ became explicit in public rhetoric and culture. Calling this a ‘new moral order,’ she argued that ‘civilians were expected to do their duty and to make significant sacrifices.’ This included embracing appropriate attitudes: stoicism, selflessness, endurance and equality. It is suggested that these were a uniform set of attitudes, which were meant ‘to make the soldiers’ sacrifice abroad worthwhile.’⁷

However, historians of Edwardian society have highlighted the chasms between the classes – in terms of lifestyle and perceptions – which surely influenced their outlooks.⁸ Adrian Gregory has described a variety of issues that may have influenced Britons’ sense of duty: from the idea of the war as ‘crusading,’ in which conflict became ‘a moral duty,’ through to wartime ‘reciprocal obligation and duty’ being a key feature of active citizenship. He suggests that some sense of duty pervaded the cultural universe of Britain in 1914-1918. Nonetheless, Britons began to believe that the strains involved in doing one’s duty should be borne more equally. Duty was relational and embedded in the social environment.⁹ Similarly, in the German case, Wilhelm Deist has argued there was a ‘transformation of values and behaviour which ran counter to the hierarchical system’ of the German military in 1914-1918.¹⁰

Duty in the British Army during 1914-1918 remains relatively unresearched. Sheffield’s discussions of officer-man relations highlighted how civilian attitudes provided a strong basis for officer-man harmony. These relations encompassed the duties of paternalism and deference, placing both the commissioned and non-commissioned men within the same psychological sphere.¹¹ Alexander Watson and Patrick Porter have asserted that the ideology

⁴ See U. Frevert, *Emotions in History – Lost and Found* (New York, 2011) and U. Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society*, trans. A. Boreham and D. Brückenhause (Oxford, 2004).

⁵ Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks*, 6.

⁶ P. Parker, *The Old Lie: The Great War and the Public School Ethos* (London, 1987).

⁷ Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, 57-91.

⁸ Thompson, *The Edwardians*.

⁹ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 37, 71, 112-151. See also 187-212.

¹⁰ W. Deist, ‘The Military Collapse of the German Empire: The Reality of the Stab-in-the-Back Myth’, (Feuchtwanger E.J., transl.) *War in History*, Vol. 3 No. 2 (1992) 191.

¹¹ Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*, 61-177.

of sacrifice was a cross-class phenomenon that remained significant throughout the war in the British and German Armies.¹² In contrast, Edward Madigan has highlighted how the ‘conflict prompted a re-imagining of courage’ by British combatants.¹³ Actually, the uniform encapsulation of soldiers’ ideals should be questioned. Frederic Manning, a middle-class Australian who served in the ranks of the British Army, offered an insight into the different mental universes of officers and other ranks:

Only a very great man can talk on equal terms with those in the lower ranks of life... [Mr Rhys, a subaltern,] would unpack a mind rich in a curious lumber of chivalrous commonplaces, and give an air in a curious unreality to values which for him, and for them all in varying measure, had the strength, if not altogether the substance, of fact. They [the rank-and-file] did not really pause to weight the truth or falsity of his opinions, which were simply without meaning for them. They only reflected that gentlefolk lived in circumstances very different from their own, and could afford strange luxuries... When he spoke to them of patriotism, sacrifice, and duty, he merely clouded their vision.¹⁴

All soldiers existed in the same institutional social environment with its own ethos, which also exerted its own unique pressures.¹⁵ Yet, ‘high-ideals,’ such as patriotism, were ‘luxuries’ to the working-class men in the ranks.¹⁶ The ways in which cultural variations within seemingly coherent groups lead to different actions and outlooks have been a focus of anthropological studies for decades.¹⁷ ORs and officers generally came from different social environments and interpreted their obligations differently.

This chapter charts how the differences in the men’s immediate social environment influenced their interpretation of the war. It explains how officers and other ranks perceived duty differently. It will assess how the military social environment influenced action and benefited morale by outlining a number of the uniform institutionally defined duties that existed: the duties of remaining obedient and cheerful. It will then explain why nearly all men believed in the necessity of defending home. Lastly, it will discuss how men’s army record became proof of character and influenced their actions.

¹² A. Watson and P. Porter, ‘Bereaved and Aggrieved: Combat Motivation and the Ideology of Sacrifice in the First World War’, *Institute of Historical Research*, Vol. 83, No. 219 (February 2010) 146-164.

¹³ E. Madigan, “‘Sticking to a Hateful Task’: Resilience, Humour, and British Understandings of Combatant Courage, 1914-1918”, *War in History*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2013) 76-98

¹⁴ F. Manning, *Her Privates We*, (London, 1999) 149 [originally published as *The Middle Parts of Fortune* (1929)].

¹⁵ Fox, *Learning to Fight*, esp. 11-14 and 19-24.

¹⁶ H. Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914’, *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 12 Iss. 1 (Oct., 1981) 25-26.

¹⁷ F. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Differences* (Long Grove, 1969, 1998).

While men's pre-war social environment influenced their perception of duty, the military exerted enormous pressure on recruits. It sought to imbue men with the British Army's 'characteristic spirit.'¹⁸ Among the plethora of duties that were undertaken in the military there was a common thread that bound them together. *Infantry Training (1905)* accepted that 'the mental' faculties of recruits should be developed, but focussed on the practical aspects of instruction.¹⁹ Duty became, at least institutionally, a psychological bond. In this context, it is no surprise that morale dropped its 'e' in many British military publications of the era. Morale was not simply seen as men's willingness to follow orders, but also as a network of interlocking characteristics.²⁰ In 1913 the Royal United Services Institution granted R.H. Beadon a prize for an essay on the development of 'moral qualities' in officers and men. He claimed moral education through training was key to victory.²¹ The 'moral' tone of military training and education is evident in training manuals. *Infantry Training (1914)* was steeped in terms such as 'honour,' 'self-restraint,' 'courage' and the 'disgrace' of surrender.²²

The military's role in the development of morals and morale continued during the war. Training courses offered practical advice. They might include sessions on marching discipline, which included advice on posture, how best to disperse after the halt had been ordered, and the rationing of one's water.²³ Yet, trench warfare had not dampened the military's conviction that the 'moral factor' was preeminent. Trainers and training literature also advised men not to become annoyed by orders and to learn to sing when on route marches. These moral qualities also adapted to the new military environment. Moral education aimed to allow the British 'to lead' so that the Germans would 'follow.' Aggression – as well as courage, honour, or self-restraint – would translate into the constant 'harrying' of the opponent and their subjugation. 'This is,' one lecturer argued, 'simply a question of human nature, and constitutes the moral factor.'²⁴ The embarkation leaflets similarly emphasised duty's other more practical dimensions: 'It will be your duty not only to set an example of discipline and perfect steadiness under fire but also to maintain the most friendly relations with those whom you are helping in this struggle.' The maintenance of personal

¹⁸ Fox, *Learning to Fight*, 50.

¹⁹ War Office, *Infantry Training* (London, 1905).

²⁰ Ussishkin, *Morale*, 17-20.

²¹ R.H. Beadon, 'Second Military Prize Essay, 1913', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution*, Vol. 59 (1913) 130-131.

²² War Office, *Infantry Training (4 – Company Organisation)* (1914) 2.

²³ NAM 2005-09-57-10: Training literature 1916-1917, Notebook [1] March Discipline: p 14.

²⁴ NAM 2005-09-57-10-5: Confidential: Trench Warfare, Lecture No. 1 Y.P.C. – 5,000 – 22/3/16. Also Lt. Col. J.E. Smart, [-8] Army Book 152: Correspondence Book. (Field Service) *Right Sub-Section Right Brigade Sector: Policy of Defence*.

health was also insisted upon.²⁵ This practical sense of duty remained intertwined with grander ideas of honour and nobility.²⁶

In 1914 J.F.C. Fuller viewed training as the education of the soul and the mind. The soldier's key attributes were those of 'self-restraint, of self-sacrifice, of self-respect, of will, of courage, and of faith; of loyalty and devotion; of ability and endurance.'²⁷ Other publications emphasised the importance of moulding the soldiers' minds.²⁸ In 1920 Fuller characterised a soldier's morale as a 'mystical impulse which impels him to do certain things so that his race may continue and prosper.'²⁹ The conflation of race and morale can be found elsewhere and suggests the military considered that morale could be nationalised and was peculiar to certain groups.³⁰ Duty, asserted Fuller, 'link[s] each man to his work' and to 'shirk a duty is dishonourable' while to neglect one was 'cowardly.' A 'duty cheerfully performed is a duty well performed' and 'a duty grudgingly performed is a duty scarcely accomplished.' This impulse was key to the 'spirit of self sacrifice for a [national and moral] cause which he instinctively feels is a just one.'³¹ Fuller's article was published in the Royal United Services Institution's journal, the literary voice of the officer corps. It seems that theorists and the institution saw doing one's duty as an action steeped in moral attitudes and (upper class) assumptions. Such high-ideas reflect the private school 'ethos.'³² As Fuller argued, 'the first requirement of a sound army is a sound nation and a patriotic one, without which there can be no soundness at all.'³³ The ideal moral characteristics of soldiers were those of the nation: 'bluff, forthright, and morally serious.'³⁴

²⁵ Lt. A.R. Bradbury, Printed Embarkation Leaflet.

²⁶ NAM 1998-12-111-14: Postcard: 'The King's Message to his Army, Buckingham Palace. Signed George R.I.; NAM 1986-01-86: Three documents including Haig's 'Special Orders of the Day' (1918), Special Order of the Day by Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig K.T. G.C.B. G.C.V.O. K.C.I.E. Commander-in-Chief, British Armies in France. Gen. HQ September 7th, 1918. Press A-9/18. 8601-86-2.

²⁷ J.F.C. Fuller, *Training Soldiers for War* (London, 1914) 1-4.

²⁸ Lt. Gen. Sir G. M. Harper, *Notes on Infantry Tactics & Training* (London, 1919) 9.

²⁹ J.F.C. Fuller, 'Moral, Instruction, and Leadership', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution*, Vol. 65 (1920) 656.

³⁰ 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, 'Message: From Lieut.-General Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston... To All officers, N.C.O.'s and Men of VIII Army Corps', HQ VIII Corps 4 July 1916; NAM 1987-07-26: Papers of Lt. Gen. Sir Gerald Ellison, 8704-35-256: Special Order of the Day by Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig K.T. G.C.B., G.C.V.O., K.C.I.E Commander-in-Chief, British Armies in France. D. Haig C-in-C, British Armies in France. GHQ August 4th 1918.

³¹ Ibid. 666.

³² T. Halstead, 'The First World War and Public School Ethos: The Case of Uppingham School', *War & Society*, Vol. 34. No 3 (2015) 209-229 and Parker, *The Old Lie*, 163-256.

³³ Fuller, *Training Soldiers for War*, 19-20.

³⁴ Fox, *Learning to Fight*, 23.

The officer corps was the guarantor of these ideals. It was expected to represent the best qualities of both Army and society. In 1914 the officer corps ‘was still overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and upper class.’³⁵ Men born into Britain’s elites were brought up to believe in the ideals of self-sacrifice, social leadership, and paternalism. Education in one of Britain’s recognised public schools developed officers’ ‘social and moral qualities’ as an ‘officer and a gentleman.’ Sandhurst was, in many ways, a finishing school.³⁶ The amalgamation of class and rank was evident in *The King’s Regulations*: if a man ‘finds himself unable to meet his [financial] engagements’ he may not ‘be permitted to continue to hold His Majesty’s Commission.’³⁷ While the social composition of the officer corps diversified in 1914-1918, each of the 229,316 men commissioned became a ‘gentleman,’ however temporarily.³⁸

Officers’ moral and legal contract did not change in tone during the war. The military believed that there was a certain immeasurability to the duty of commissioned officers. The King’s Commission was given to all Regular, Territorial or New Armies officers, and its wording remained the same. The officer’s gazette was a personal agreement between the King and his ‘trusty and well beloved’ subject. The monarch, after ‘greeting’ the officer, informed him that he had ‘especial trust and confidence’ in his ‘loyalty, courage and good conduct.’³⁹ The script went on:

‘You are therefore carefully and diligently to discharge your Duty as such... and you are at all times to exercise and well discipline in Arms both the inferior Officers and Men serving under you and use your best endeavours to keep them in good Order and Discipline. And we do hereby command them to Obey you.... and you to observe and follow such Orders and Directions as from time to time you shall receive from Us or any superior Officer.’⁴⁰

The document reflects the resilience of *noblesse oblige*. Since the document was nominally prepared at the Court of St James, the weight of history and expectation was clear to those brought up to believe in the ‘natural’ social order and the primacy of the royal family.

The varied and innumerable practical aspects of officers’ duty were laid down in the *King’s Regulations*. Paragraphs 99 through 108 explained the extent of a commanding officer’s duties. The officer had responsibility for the health of *all* troops under his direct command; the upkeep of *all* weapons in his unit; its accounts, organisation, and discipline;

³⁵ Fox, *Learning to Fight*, 27.

³⁶ K. Simpson, ‘The Officer’, in Beckett and Simpson, *A Nation in Arms*, 64-66.

³⁷ *The King’s Regulations and Orders for the Army*, (London, 1912), Paragraph 447.

³⁸ Simpson, ‘The Officer’, 64.

³⁹ SOfO Box 29 Item 17: Frederick Symonds, Form T.1.A. King’s Commission [2/Lt. Ralph Frederick Symonds 22 December 1914]; Maj. S.R. Hudson, King’s Commission.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

any judicial decision making; its efficiency; and ensuring his subordinates understood and undertook *all of their duties*.⁴¹ Paragraphs 111 to 114 outlined the role of regimental officers. They were expected to acquaint themselves with the ‘abilities and acquirements’ of their subordinates. Notably ‘an N.C.O. is not to be subjected to the risk of loss by having public money placed in his hands.’ The officer, in short, should ‘be perfectly acquainted with its [the unit’s] interior management, economy, and discipline.’⁴² He was also responsible for the psychological welfare of his men: ‘an officer of any rank will adopt towards his subordinates such methods of command and treatment as will not only ensure respect for authority, but also foster the feelings of self-respect and personal honour essential to military efficiency.’⁴³

This approach fed into wartime publications, which described officers ‘management’ (both moral and practical) of their men. It ranged from the ‘supreme’ management of the commanding officer, to the more focussed duties of the subaltern.⁴⁴ Officers were expected to set an example. Through their ‘language and bearing as a gentleman’ they offered a model of obedience, punctuality, punctiliousness, and respect.⁴⁵ They were never ‘off-duty’ when it came to their moral responsibilities. One corps commander advised a graduating class of officer cadets that ‘your chief duties [sic] is to be always thinking... You must always be thinking.’

You are responsible for the successful leading of your men in battle; you are responsible for their safety as far as such can be ensured in gaining success in battle; you are responsible for their health, for their comfort, for their good behaviour and discipline. Finally, and not least, you are responsible for maintaining the honour of England, for doing all you can to ensure the security of England, and of our women and our children after us.⁴⁶

The army celebrated men exhibiting this idealised conception of duty.⁴⁷ One censorship officer internalised this. He claimed the ‘story of the British infantry... will be the new Bible.’ He lauded their perseverance, despite the absence of glory, concluding that they were ‘just playing cricket for duty’s sake, keeping fit to do their bit at the wicket, and bowl an over or two.’⁴⁸

⁴¹ *The King’s Regulations*, Paragraphs 99-108.

⁴² Ibid. Paragraphs 111-104.

⁴³ Ibid. Paragraph 435.

⁴⁴ Capt. B.R.N. Hood, *Duties for All Ranks* (London, c.1916).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ NAM 2005-09-57-12-26: Address by a Corps Commander to Young Officers on Leaving the Officers’ School, Division Y.P.C. – 5,00 – 4/4/1916.

⁴⁷ MR 2/17/61: L/Cpl. Thomas Betteley, Commendation for Distinguished Conduct Medal: No. 40388; MR 2/17/67: Sgt. J. Palin, Certificate from General John Rawlinson, commander 4th Army, for his Military Medal 6 March 1919.

⁴⁸ Capt. M. Hardie, Anon. Letter 17 November 1915.

Officers' Perception of Duty

In November 1914 the *Manchester Regiment Gazette* could still report their pride in the 'noble and glorious way' the Second Battalion had 'upheld and added to [their]... great traditions' and 'laid down their lives for King and Country.'⁴⁹ Yet officers, faced with the reality of the war, seemed to be more sceptical. C.S. Baines, for example, looked back on the first months of conflict and related that 'to tell the truth, I had not found much pleasure in life... and by the end of October I was really in need of a change of air.'⁵⁰ Yet these same men reflected on how some sense of duty continued to motivate them. They remained focussed on paternalism, 'self-sacrifice' and the greater good. The officer's responsibilities were so wide-reaching that they left some men anxious.⁵¹ Others were conscious that moral 'right' and personal comfort were not concurrent, and continued to voice the belief that 'we can't stop until we have whacked the beggars [the Germans].'⁵² The welfare of their men was of paramount concern. Given that supplies often left the ranks wanting for much, some wrote home asking for their families to send supplies to make their wards more comfortable.⁵³ The officers' duty of care could translate into a deeper affinity with their men. H.E. Trevor reflects the power of the relationships that could develop between a company commander and his unit. As their protector, the loss of his officers and NCOs upset him, and he felt that he 'ought to have been killed.'⁵⁴ Elsewhere, J.S. Knyvett personally recorded the name of every man killed in a skirmish or battle.⁵⁵ This desire to do the best by those under his command is likely to have been, in part, a product of training. However, the regularity with which he referred to their 'wonderful manner' and resilience suggest that his duty towards the men was also driven by an emotional connection.⁵⁶

In 1916 high ideals were quickly eroded by men's experience on the Somme. On 2 July 1916 G.H. Greenwell still felt 'awfully glad that I have survived to see and take part in this show,' describing it as a 'tremendous experience.' By 6 July the frontline had become a 'beastly place' and in November it was only the men in his immediate group that sustained him.⁵⁷ Maj. S.O.B. Richardson told his mother that 'when one sees war in its own setting and

⁴⁹ *The Manchester Regiment Gazette* (November, 1914) 412

⁵⁰ Lt. Col. C.S Baines, Memoir of the First Battle of Ypres, 31 October 1914: pp 3-4.

⁵¹ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter to Mother 4 October 1914.

⁵² *Ibid.* Letter from Capt. L.F. Ashburner to Mrs Parker 14 October 1914.

⁵³ IWM Con Shelf: Lt. F.B. Anstruther, Letter to Mother 22 November 1914.

⁵⁴ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter to Evelyn Parker 26 September 1914. See also Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*, esp. 79-103.

⁵⁵ Major J.S. Knyvett, Diary 19 October 1914.

⁵⁶ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter to Mother 3 October 1914 and to Evelyn 6 October 1914.

⁵⁷ Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Letters 2 and 6 January and 4 November 1916.

as it really is there are many sad things which one did not expect to see.⁵⁸ It is clear that innumerable duties did not prevent officers from feeling the strains of war; many became depressed and 'windy.' Donald Hankey found war 'too monotonous and irritating for words.'⁵⁹ Even junior officers, who missed the year's bloody battles were struck by the weather and boredom. Reginald Neville wrote to his father that 'we are so cheerful as we sit now, but God knows if we can keep it up.'⁶⁰ Yet these same men were still motivated to continue. Neville's belief that Germany needed to be defeated and his passion for his regiment assured him that 'I have got to go through it.'⁶¹ Richardson was motivated by his perceived duty to those around him, feeling that it was 'wrong' to be in the comparative comfort of the reserve line while others fought and died.⁶² Lt. J.H. Johnson, on 18 November 1916, asked himself a rhetorical question: 'Am I always a victim of doing things for the sake of others' opinions and not what I really think?' His daily notations make it clear he found it difficult to come to terms with war. They provide an interesting insight into officers' paradoxical perceptions of duty. Johnson battled with knowledge that he was expected to fulfil a certain role, even considering a future in 'the non-combatant army.' Yet the belief that he must continue for the benefit of others also contributed to his perseverance. Johnson continued, outwardly, to go through the motions.⁶³

In 1917/18 officers were even more aware of war's dangers, and entered the New Year anticipating a German offensive. Conscientious officers, such as Col. Hardman, returned from leave 'not quite' themselves and unable to get 'used to it again.' He confessed to his parents that he had 'not been so nervy since the end of my Gallipoli Campaign.'⁶⁴ Yet, employing his stoicism, it was simply a case of 'getting over' the 'screams of desolation and blasted earth.' Again, his men's suffering drove him to overcome his own problems.⁶⁵ Henry Lawson told his mother that his 'wealthy' company commander would spend generously on his men, giving them money, vegetables, and cigarettes as prizes for inter-company competitions.⁶⁶ However, other long-serving junior officers were finding that the realities of war had eroded their belief in the sacrificial nature of their undertaking. Lawson had complained, in a letter to his mother in October 1917, that some officers on his training course had been discussing safe jobs and 'Blighty' wounds – it was 'bad moral.'⁶⁷ Sydney

⁵⁸ Maj. S.O.B. Richardson, Letter to Mother (No. 1) Late 1916.

⁵⁹ Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 272; D. Hankey, Letter to Hilda 6 October 1916 in *A Student in Arms*, 354-355.

⁶⁰ Lt. Reginald N. Neville, Letters to father 12, 16 and 24 December 1916.

⁶¹ Ibid. Letter to father 21 December 1916 and letter to sister 24 December 1916.

⁶² Maj. S.O.B. Richardson, Letter to Mother (No. 2) Late 1916.

⁶³ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 18 November and 24 November 1916.

⁶⁴ Col. Hardman, Letter to parents 22 January, 4 and 8 February 1918.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 4 and 8 February 1918.

⁶⁶ H. Lawson, Letter to his Mother 19 and 27 February 1918.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Letter to Mother 16 September 1917.

Frankenburg had twice refused 'easy jobs,' feeling 'that I owed something to people at home also to myself.' By January 1918, though, he wanted to 'stay with the battalion' but was now willing to 'take the chance' on six months' training in England.⁶⁸ For others, the desire for recognition and doing 'one's damnedest in utter danger and misery' remained significant.⁶⁹ Violence reminded men of their role as officers. Following a 'terrific' bombardment on 2 March, which turned out to be a 'hoax,' Henry Lawson was much impressed by the 'patriotic and inspiring speeches' an officer had given on the way to the line.⁷⁰ The German offensives re-focussed many officers' perception of duty.⁷¹ Lord himself found that there was 'nothing very wonderful' about the fighting, but consoled himself that 'it must be infinitely easier to die during tense moments of interest, excitement and duty well worth doing.'⁷² Lt. J.E.H. Neville's awareness of acute military crisis similarly refocused his perception of duty. The sacrifices and chronic crises described within his narrative, while neither heroic nor honourable, were seen as absolutely necessary. It became pure 'grit' that 'pull[ed] you through.'⁷³ Military crisis did not, in these cases, translate into acute morale crisis among individual soldiers. In fact, it may have bolstered men's sense of duty. G.A. Stevens 'thought it my duty to get back after seeing the news in the papers and though I have had a rotten time am very glad I did come back.'⁷⁴ One officer of the Machine Gun Corps who joined the 2nd Ox and Bucks on 23 March 'was in a pitiful state... his hands bleeding, his jacket ripped from shoulder to wrist by shrapnel and puttees and breeches torn by wire... he'd been blown up 3 times... [However,] he refused to move.' He 'swore that now he had struck the 52nd he would not... [retire] until he was killed.' This man was simply described as 'still game' and 'plucky.'⁷⁵ Officers' duty to others remained paramount and many others perceived of their duty as staying until death in the face of the enemy offensive.

Maj. G.H. Greenwell was not alone in concluding that 'I shall never look on warfare either as fine or sporting again. It reduces men to shivering beasts.'⁷⁶ Yet in coming to terms with the war some men returned to more romanticised definitions of duty. The classical ideals became interspersed with an idea of their duty to the dead. Lt. J.H. Johnson discovered that a

⁶⁸ 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg, Letter to Charis Burnet 16 January 1918.

⁶⁹ Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 8 January 1918.

⁷⁰ H. Lawson, Letter to Mother 3 March 1918.

⁷¹ Lt. Col. Arthur Stockdale Cope, Diary 21 March. A relevant thesis is that of C. Smith, *Awarded for Valour: A History of the Victoria Cross and the Evolution of British Heroism* (Basingstoke, 2008) 110-64. Smith argues that VCs were increasingly awarded to men for the basic act of killing, rather than the ideas of chivalry and self-sacrifice. Arguably this might reflect a change in the attitude of the soldiers rather than their generals.

⁷² Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 24 April 1918.

⁷³ Lt. J.E.H. Neville, Diary 21-26 March 1918. See also, Col. Hardman, Letter to parents 18 May and 14 June 1918.

⁷⁴ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother Easter Sunday 1918.

⁷⁵ Lt. J.E.H. Neville, Diary 23 March 1918.

⁷⁶ Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Diary 17 August 1916.

friend of his, ‘Greg,’ had died of his wounds and he battled a sense of ‘selfishness’ at being alive. He spent ‘the rest of the day with Greg,’ and pondering ‘The ancients.’⁷⁷ This may have been in irony or self-validation. The ability to draw linkages between his present and antiquity is, however, suggestive of a man who saw his experience in a wider historical context and perhaps indicates how ‘big words’ of honour and obligation could be used retrospectively to legitimise their experiences and sacrifice.⁷⁸ Lt. Col. Hardman, reflecting on the death of a soldier who had been awarded a Victoria Cross, mused ‘the poor fellow is dead but he has won honour for his battalion.’⁷⁹ Honour, it seems, could also become currency for officers. It was also invoked self-referentially in Charles Carrington’s letters and diaries, written when he was training men in England. The space (both temporal and geographical) afforded his reinterpretation of events in the more traditional light of the honorific duty. Despite months of mental turmoil at the front, he spent the majority of 1918 asserting his desire to be back in the thick of the fighting.⁸⁰ J.H. Johnson was immediately regretful when he left the front in February 1918, claiming he loved ‘the glory of it’ and would have ‘stayed and see[n] it through.’ Yet days previously the pressures of service and sleep deprivation left him with ‘no self-confidence,’ and tellingly, once the manpower pressures forced his return to France in April 1918, he noted his ‘horror of return to war.’⁸¹ The use of ‘traditional vocabulary’ has been analysed elsewhere – by Joanna Bourke and Jay Winter – as a coping mechanism used by those who experienced grief after the war.⁸² It would seem that officers, while conscious of the frailty of high-diction, would resort to such language to make sense of trauma at the time.

Duty – as well as the strength of soldierly bonds – did continue to motivate many officers to continue fighting. For some, ideas of honour and self-sacrifice continued to find traction as they sought meaning amid the horror. Duty manifested itself in officers’ honourable devotion to their men and unit. The tone of the war poets – Sassoon, Graves, Owen and others – reflects this. On his return to the Western Front in 1918, Siegfried Sassoon wrote ‘I am only here *to look after* some men.’ Correspondingly, Wilfred Owen stated ‘I came out in order to help these boys – directly by leading them as well as an officer can.’⁸³ Their hatred of war was overcome by their sense of duty to their men. This in part reflected

⁷⁷ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 11 January 1918.

⁷⁸ S. Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (London, 1999) 57.

⁷⁹ Col. Hardman, Letter to parents 15 February 1918.

⁸⁰ Capt. C. Carrington, Letters to Mother 8 April and 7 July 1918.

⁸¹ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 16 and 21 February and 26 April 1918 and Letter from F.L. Clark 30 November 1917.

⁸² Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 19; Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 2.

⁸³ S. Sassoon and W. Owen in S. Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War in English Culture* (London, 1992) 186.

the paternalism that has been highlighted elsewhere, but more fundamentally was the product of men fulfilling an expected role.⁸⁴

Institutional documents indicate how differently the military defined the duties of the rank and file. Each man's attestation form was a contract of service: bureaucratic, clinical, legalistic, and temporary. Territorial Reserve Attestations even advised men that they were liable to return 'all arms, clothing and appointments issued to you' when their service ended. Men took an oath of allegiance to the King. They swore 'by Almighty God' that they would 'be faithful and bear true Allegiance' to their monarch and his successors and that they would 'as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend' the Royal Family in 'Person, Crown, and Dignity against all enemies.' Even this had its limits, the oath including the caveat 'according to the conditions of my service.'⁸⁵ Soldiers did not receive commissions. It was only senior NCOs whose role was formalised in such a manner. Warrant Officers received their 'warrant' as a document, yet it was strikingly different from an officer's commission. The Secretary of State for War appointed them with the 'authority' of the King and dictated the duration of their time in this rank. (The suggestion that their duty was finite was absent from the officers' commissions.) The Warrant Officer was advised that he should 'carefully and diligently... discharge... [his] Duty' by 'performing all manner of things' laid out in 'the Established Regulations of the Service.' In particular they were to 'follow such Orders and Directions' as they might receive from any superior officer 'according to the Rules and Discipline of War.'⁸⁶ Once men were promoted, their duties became more numerous, but there was still a secular and finite tone.⁸⁷ It lacked the gold braid of ideals such as honour and could have certainly been interpreted very differently from officers' moral contract with military, state, and King.

Other Ranks' Perception of Duty

The men of 1914 came from two very different worlds – regulars and reservists sometimes had contrasting perceptions of duty and war. The regulars were embedded in the military social environment and many were driven by a desire to do a good job. All of this was helpful in rationalising the conflicts' horrors and novelties. In the diaries and letters of 1914, many regular soldiers described the war with a clinical eye. Diaries such as that of a soldier in the

⁸⁴ Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*, 79–102.

⁸⁵ TNA WO 363 and 364: Attestation Forms in Soldiers' Service Records.

⁸⁶ SOFO Box 29 Item 16: C.S.M. A. Hearn, Warrant; MR 3/17/129: Harry Merrick, Warrant.

⁸⁷ NAM 2004-05-27: L/Cpl. W. Burton, Notebook: 'Discipline' and 'Lecture: Duties in Barracks given by Reg. Sgt. Major Wombwell Aug 1st 1916.'

2nd Border Regiment recorded the violence and death in neutral terms. His battalion was heavily engaged – by 11 November only 284 of the 1,300 of those who disembarked remained uninjured. While individual deaths left him saddened, the remainder of his daily notations referred to the nuts-and-bolts of military life and the battles in which they had been involved.⁸⁸ On 11 December he concluded that a skirmish had been ‘the best fight we had all the time we were in the trenches.’ Only when faced by overwhelming German firepower on 18 December did his professionalism falter.⁸⁹ Other men were sustained by the knowledge that their business was ‘killing’ and were proactive in searching for opportunities to practice their trade.⁹⁰ Sgt. Osborn’s diary reflected this. After encountering Germans on a patrol he wrote: ‘shot one in doorway. One against wall, one in open, one against a door. Killed three and wounded one.’⁹¹ The knowledge that he was duty-bound to kill the enemy made his interactions with German soldiers during the Christmas truce all the more surreal.⁹²

Other men were obsessed with the nature of the work – they regularly reflected on the BEF’s quality and the army’s successes.⁹³ Some men spent time critically examining the quality of their enemy. One man was unconvinced by the German infantry – particularly their rifle fire. He spoke highly of their artillery, which was ‘very good.’⁹⁴ Others went as far as to call the experience ‘educational’ and reflected that ‘it seems to have come quite naturally to us to sit in a small hole in the ground while German shells are bursting all around.’⁹⁵ In this professional atmosphere men felt immense pride if senior officers’ praised their ‘good name’ or told them they had ‘made’ new honour for the Regiment. ‘Honour’ was not some unseen and immeasurable moral impulse, but reflected how the war became an opportunity to prove the quality of oneself and one’s regiment against a well-armed foe. Here, again, honour became currency – and a synonym for success. An *esprit de corps* based on professional identity was influential.⁹⁶

Some men were unable to come to terms with war.⁹⁷ H.E. Trevor wrote to his sister explaining that he ‘had a bone to pick with [a soldier in his unit]... if he turns up again.’ He had put up a white handkerchief in one of the front trenches at Le Cateau, leading to another man’s death as he attempted to remove it. Trevor reported that ‘Blanchard is said to have

⁸⁸ Diary of an Unidentified Soldier in the Border Regiment, 22 and 28 October and 11 and 19 November 1914; S. Judd, Diary October-December 1914; C. Dwyer, Diary September-December 1914.

⁸⁹ Diary of an Unidentified Soldier in the Border Regiment, 11 and 18 December 1914.

⁹⁰ Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 24 and 26 November 1914.

⁹¹ Sgt. Osborn, Diary 14 September 1914.

⁹² L/Cpl. K.M. Gaunt, Letter 25 December 1914.

⁹³ Pocket Diary 1914, October-November 1914.

⁹⁴ Postcard Signed by ‘The Mademoiselle from Armentieres’, Extract from local paper.

⁹⁵ R.D. Sheffield, Letters to Father 9 November and 4 December 1914.

⁹⁶ Diary of an Unidentified Soldier in the Border Regiment, 23 November and 25 December 1914; C. Dwyer, Diary 18 September and 24 October 1914.

⁹⁷ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 142.

gone mad' and had been incapacitated by the other men.⁹⁸ In this instance, it would seem that indiscipline was limited to those overwhelmed by battle and was not contagious. Yet men were also liable to panic. On 20 October sergeants of the 2nd Gordon Highlanders shouted to retire, spurring a mass exodus among neighbouring units.⁹⁹ J.S. Knvett's diary described how soldiers new to the firing line were liable to catch 'the infection' – in this case it led to erratic rifle fire.¹⁰⁰

Many of these were momentary lapses in self-control. Sgt. Osborn believed that men's timidity was the product of shock rather than cowardice.¹⁰¹ When W.J. Cheshire broke ranks it was the product of initiative amid retreat. Cheshire described how during the retirement on 2 September 1914 'a good lot of men fall out, I included myself, proper fed up with it.' They retired at their own pace – something they did not see as problematic. It was accepted in such circumstances. That evening they attached themselves to the Lincolns and set off early the next day 'to find our Regt.' They continued tracking their battalion until, on 5 September, hearing the '5th Brigade are in action... we hurry up.' The following day the British began 'pushing forward for the first time everybody is more happier [sic].'¹⁰² Others followed a similar path and despite fatigue or pain eventually re-joined their units 'in dribs and drabs.'¹⁰³ Their sense of duty seems to have been infused with pragmatism and a desire to do a good job.¹⁰⁴

Some newer recruits and others drawn from the Special Reserve were less resilient and cared little about their duty. T.A. Silver had joined the military in June 1914 and was sent to France after only four months' training. He remembered December bitterly and focussed on the weather and his poor treatment at the hands of authority. He was relieved when he returned to England with frostbite.¹⁰⁵ Like many working-class men, Silver had joined the army due to his lack of prospects. The war came as a shock and he had failed to inculcate the resilience of many regulars. Regulars berated the reservists for indiscipline. The forty soldiers who fell out of Sgt. Osborn's unit on a hard march in mid-August were 'chiefly reservists, who are getting out of hand.'¹⁰⁶ Pte. Mawer's letters echoed his distress and constantly reiterated his desire to be back home.¹⁰⁷ It is, perhaps, unsurprising that these men would have

⁹⁸ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter to Evelyn 6 October 1914.

⁹⁹ Diary of an Unidentified Soldier in the 2nd Bn. Border Regiment, 20 October 1914.

¹⁰⁰ Maj. J.S. Knvett, Diary 10 October 1914.

¹⁰¹ Sgt. Osborn, Diary 4 November 1914.

¹⁰² W.J. Cheshire, Diary 2 to 6 September 1914.

¹⁰³ C. Dwyer, Diary 4 October 1914.

¹⁰⁴ This reflects J. Baynes' findings in his study of the 2nd Scottish Rifles at Neuve Chappelle. See *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage*.

¹⁰⁵ T.A. Silver, Diary 1914.

¹⁰⁶ Sgt. Osborn, Diary 14 August 1914.

¹⁰⁷ Pte. J.E. Mawer, Doc.25 Letter to Wife 30 November 1914.

been less embedded in the military social environment and their perception of duty led some of them to act and respond differently from the regulars.

By 1916 it had become clearer that there were limits to some soldiers' willingness to endure war. This even found some outlet in the trench journals. An article in the *Nation*, discussing soldiers' publications, highlighted how 'there is always pathos in the face of death, no matter how stoical a cheerfulness may be assumed.'¹⁰⁸ Some trench newspapers commented on the British soldiers' changing attitudes. One asked the question: 'what is the matter with the British Army? Why are so many people hunting for soft jobs? In the earlier days... everyone was content with the prospect of playing the part of soldier strictly.'¹⁰⁹ In this atmosphere slang such as to 'come the old soldier,' meaning a man who dodged duties, became popular.¹¹⁰ The reality of war left men pausing to 'wonder wherein lies [sic] the sense or even sanity in War at all.' Pte. William Anderson confided to his wife that 'I suppose its [sic] part of the human burden.'¹¹¹ For a number of men their rationalisation of duty rested on it simply being a more dangerous job. R.E.P. Stevens reflected that it only 'means a little more work for some of us in our calling' when he 'heard [the incorrect] news that Greece has declared war on England.'¹¹² For others, this did not help. A friend of Charles Crump wrote that 'we are and have been terribly busy. You can guess that it is a complete and shocking change for ME to WORK (after some of the jobs I have had).'¹¹³ Coming from the civilian workplace men were more willing to 'grouse' about issues and jobs they perceived as pointless or unfair.¹¹⁴ This sometimes revealed itself subtly. William Child's tone changed markedly after fatigue duty on 5 December. France became 'dirty' in the aftermath of hard work.¹¹⁵ More explicitly R.E.P Stevens wrote bitterly in his diary: 'More foolish night operations. Not learned a scrap from any one of them yet – they are just an appetiser for the officers before their dinner I think.'¹¹⁶

There is little to suggest the high ideals of honour and courage held much traction. Songs reflect a more sombre attitude towards soldiering. The lamenting tunes 'I don't want to die,' 'I want to go home' and 'I don't want to be a soldier' reveal how many men dreamt of escape. Men desperately wanted to survive; the ideal of 'self-sacrifice' had little currency. John Brophy and Eric Partridge, who served in the ranks, claimed that the content of the songs was meant to 'ridicule all heroics.' This was not evidence of low morale but emerged

¹⁰⁸ 'The Trench Journal', *Nation*, Issue 10, Vol. 20 (9 December 1916).

¹⁰⁹ R. Birrell (ed.), *The Outpost*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (December, 1916).

¹¹⁰ Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, 86.

¹¹¹ Pte. William M. Anderson, Letter to his wife 28 October 1916.

¹¹² R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 4 December 1916.

¹¹³ IWM 06/56/1: C.P. Crump, Letter 11 September 1916.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ F.W. Child, Diary 5 December 1916.

¹¹⁶ R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 7 December 1916.

from the culture of the ranks and was part of their coping apparatus.¹¹⁷ Many of their letters bemoaned ‘the gloom and darkness of things.’¹¹⁸ Yet this did not undermine their desire to do right by their comrades, which lay at the forefront of some men’s minds. F.S. Castle is a telling example. At forty he was older than most of his unit. His officers had suggested that he make use of his medical experience and work with the battalion Medical Officer. He advised his niece, however, that he ‘would far sooner be [a] combatant’ and that ‘he would do ‘anything rather than be out of it and leave the boys.’¹¹⁹

There were clearly limits to endurance. Individuals could experience acute morale crisis as psychological trauma made them more willing to take their fates into their own hands, which explains why some men resorted to self-inflicted wounds.¹²⁰ A particularly awful time in October had left a company clerk and eight men in the 20th Manchesters suffering from severe ‘wind up’ and ‘Shell Shock.’¹²¹ Elsewhere, men were willing to use even a slight wound as a physical passport away from the trenches. One report explained that it had ‘become customary’ for soldiers to remove their equipment instantaneously, the implicit suggestion being that their duty was done.¹²² One more frequently finds descriptions of endurance. A soldier in a battalion commanded by G.A. Stevens went to hospital with a severe case of boils on 28 October 1916. The doctor advised Stevens that ‘he could have got to hospital any day the last week but stuck it out.’¹²³ The idea of ‘sticking it out’ is evident in much of the record of 1916.¹²⁴ A.P. Burke consoled himself that ‘things must be borne.’ After a fierce skirmish in October he was still writing to his brother that he would ‘endeavour to carry on until its [sic] all over.’¹²⁵ William Anderson told his wife that he and others were willing ‘to forfeit most’ and emphasised the need for patience.¹²⁶

Scepticism and the desire to escape had become more prominent by 1917/1918. The idea that war was a ‘job’ faded with compulsion. M. Hardie reported in August 1917 that ‘the old active enthusiasm [of the soldiers] is to some extent being replaced by passive acceptance.’¹²⁷ These attitudes feed into Adrian Gregory’s concept of ‘economies of sacrifice’ and ‘worker’s conditional sacrifice.’¹²⁸ Men from a number of New Army battalions – who had returned home to work in industry – attended a meeting of the ‘Home Counties and

¹¹⁷ Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, 17.

¹¹⁸ Pte. W. Anderson, Letters to his wife 1, 6, 11, 16 and 27 December 1916.

¹¹⁹ IWM 13/9/1: F.S. Castle, Letter to Niece 23 September 1916.

¹²⁰ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 12 December 1916 [‘L/Cpl shoots his thumb off’].

¹²¹ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 12-15 October 1916.

¹²² WO 95/648: Headquarters II. Corps. Routine Orders: 17 October, 1916 - 281. General Routine Order 1358 para. 2 (A).

¹²³ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 28 October 1916.

¹²⁴ W.J. Martin, Letter 7 December 1916.

¹²⁵ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 13 June and 12-15 October 1916.

¹²⁶ Pte. W. Anderson, Letters to Wife 14 October and 3 December 1916.

¹²⁷ Capt. M. Hardie, ‘Report on III Army Morale, August 1917’.

¹²⁸ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 112-151, 152-186.

Training Reserve Branch of the Soldiers' and Workmen's Council.' Article Four of their resolutions asserted 'that wounded men now returned from the battle fronts be not sent out again until after an independent examination by a doctor' and that they protect men who 'are now being sent out for the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th time.' There was a general sense that they had 'done their bit.'¹²⁹ Men on the frontlines fostered a similar perspective on duty.¹³⁰ Pte. George Winnard arrived in France after a long period recovering from enteric fever in England. He encountered an old comrade who was now quartermaster: 'he said that I was finished going to the trenches' and would become 'store man.'¹³¹ The assumption that experienced soldiers deserved safer and more comfortable jobs was reasonably common.¹³²

During the stresses of the Ludendorff offensives some men became increasingly willing to embrace any semi-legitimate route away from battle and France. After being injured on 23 March 1918 Pte. W.A. Hoyle recalled how two men and four stretcher-bearers accompanied a single injured comrade (who was carrying himself on crutches) to a first-aid post.¹³³ When Hoyle 'stopped a Blighty one' on 26 March he made no effort to continue fighting. After bandaging his wound, he got the 'wind up,' removed his equipment and left the line. He had been a very active participant in the fighting until he was injured.¹³⁴ It is hard to disentangle this from more basic survival instincts. Lt. Col. Arthur Stockdale Cope was disgusted when another battalion abandoned rifles and stores before retreating. However, they were demoralised and did not surrender.¹³⁵ Other men's diaries indicate that there was little choice but to retire given the breakdown of command and control. Units relied on verbal orders and often responded to the local situation.¹³⁶ This desire for self-preservation was not seen as inconsistent with duty. Men saw no irony in continuing to fight while acknowledging the luck of a lightly wounded comrade.¹³⁷ Lt. Neville remembered seeing many 'wounded men crawling to safety' during the first days of the German Offensive. One 'man whose ankle was smashed... [was] dragging his mutilated leg behind him' but managed a 'smile.' Neville believed this showed courage; yet perhaps it was relief.

Some officers recalled seeing 'men being taken prisoner' who had 'made no effort to avoid' this.¹³⁸ R.C.A. Frost recounted how his unit (reduced to a wounded second lieutenant

¹²⁹ WO 32/5455: Report from the meeting of the 'Home Counties and Training Reserve Branch of the Soldiers' and Workmen's Council, 18 July 1917' in 'Formation of Soldiers and Workmen Councils 1917'

¹³⁰ Letters sent to Bentley Bridgewater by his father in France, Letter 9 March 1918.

¹³¹ IWM 98/28/1: Pte. G.G. Winnard, Memoir: pp 87-88.

¹³² NAM 1980-01-4: Field Message Book (Army Form 153), 21 (Service) Bn Manchester Regiment, Message 220 To Adjutant from O.C. B Coy 27/1/1918; Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter to wife 16 June 1918.

¹³³ IWM 76/119/1: H. Russell, Diary Pte. W.A Hoyle, Diary 23 March 1918.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* Diary 26 March 1918.

¹³⁵ Lt. Col. Arthur Stockdale Cope, Diary 24 March 1918.

¹³⁶ 2nd Lt. F.T.K. Woodworth, Diary 26 March 1918; Lt. J.E.H. Neville, Diary 23 March 1918.

¹³⁷ C.H. Isom, Diary 26 April 1918.

¹³⁸ Lt. Col. A. Stockdale Cope, Diary 26 March 1918.

and 15 men) had been surrounded with no hope of escape. A corporal had wanted to ‘fight it out... but we told him in no uncertain terms that he would be shot unless he surrendered.’ It is not clear whether by Germans or Englishmen.¹³⁹ Others made it clear that surrender was their only choice.¹⁴⁰ Many more accounts record the relatively ordered nature of the withdrawal.¹⁴¹ 2nd Lt. F.T.K. Woodworth’s ‘men [were] fed up, we were losing men fast and weren’t even striking back.’¹⁴² Once they had the opportunity to fight back his unit’s mood improved. On 28 March he recorded: ‘Exciting, he [the enemy] turned and ran for cover. We raised a cheer, such as it was.’¹⁴³ Some men would seek other more acceptable routes away from the danger. Illnesses, including toothache and influenza, were seen as good (and legitimate) avenues away from France.¹⁴⁴ The sense that duty was finite remained. Pte. S.A. Clarke wrote in his diary on 26 March that ‘it’s about time [we were relieved] as we have had six days of retiring and fighting a rear guard.’ On 14 April ‘measles broke out so we had to stay in isolation. A good job too as we had done enough.’¹⁴⁵ In May, M.F. Gower wrote home about a ‘fine young’ sergeant that had been killed. He noted bitterly that ‘wounded stripes don’t always count for duty done.’¹⁴⁶

Some men retained some sense of purpose in doing their duty. F. Hubard wrote to family friends proudly recounting how his division, unlike many of those at Cambrai, ‘did not lose a yard of ground it took.’ They ‘received congratulations from almost all the commanders including Sir Douglas Haig.’ He went on: ‘of course we suffered both in officers N.C.Os and men – that is inevitable.’¹⁴⁷ A.E. Heywood’s diary underlined the ‘tremendous odds’ under which they been forced back in March 1918.¹⁴⁸ Others also continued to fight despite their wounds, and the bonds created by small military units meant that many men were willing to protect their comrades. They celebrated examples of heroism. A Lewis gunner in C Company, 19th Royal Fusiliers, had his leg ‘shattered’ by enemy fire on 25 March but continued to fire ‘his gun for half an hour... to hold the enemy back.’¹⁴⁹ There are also some very matter-of-fact accounts of fighting. Fred Golden wrote: ‘Raid. 7 of us got detached. Rough time, nuff said.’ A month later he ‘did a raid, out with L.G. Got two prisoners. Decent

¹³⁹ R.C.A. Frost, *Memoir*: p 2.

¹⁴⁰ Pte. O. Billingham, Diary 25 March 1918.

¹⁴¹ Lt. C.T. O’Neill, Diary 24-30 March 1918.

¹⁴² 2nd Lt. F.T.K. Woodworth, Diary 26 March 1918.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* 28 March 1918.

¹⁴⁴ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 11 February 1918 [‘trial of man involved in wounding affair’]; H.T. Madders, Diary 22 September 1918; Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter to wife 10 July 1918.

¹⁴⁵ SOFO Box 16 Item 28 3/4/J3/3: Pte. S.A. Clarke, Diary 26 March and 14 April 1918.

¹⁴⁶ IWM 88/25/2: M.F. Gower, Letter to Delia 12 May 1918.

¹⁴⁷ F. Hubard, Letter to Mr and Mrs Underhill 8 December 1917.

¹⁴⁸ A.E. Heywood, Diary 24 March 1918.

¹⁴⁹ Lt. Col. A. Stockdale Cope, Diary 25 March 1918.

time.¹⁵⁰ Amid the retreat in March and April 1918 some officers were impressed as their 'men moved marvellously quickly... in spite of their... suffering.'¹⁵¹

'High-diction' rarely filtered into the other ranks' perceptions of duty. Their perception of duty was more practical. Perhaps this made them less liable to the effects of disenchantment since little sense of acute crisis emerges from the materiel studied here. There is, though, a sense in which a conceptualisation of honour, which was peculiar to the rank and file, continued to motivate them. In 1914 this honour was focussed on the professional identity of their unit. This had diminished in later years. Men framed their experience as temporary and rarely talked about total sacrifice. Their part was finite and much more personal. This will be expanded upon in the following sections. However, perceptions of duty remained embedded in the military social environment and it was only through their interaction with the army that they felt able to escape war. The bonds formed by the close social association within units continued to influence the rank and file. If they did seek escape routes, it was through physical passports that were evidence of service – such as injury or capture. These were also embodied in the medals awarded to combatants and the chevrons and wound stripes sewn onto their uniforms, which exemplified sacrifice.¹⁵²

'Obedience is the primary duty of a soldier.' Explicit reminders were found in the Soldiers' Small Book, and other pocket publications.¹⁵³ Overriding all was the soldiers' knowledge that they must follow orders. 'Obedience and respect' were 'the whole foundation of discipline.'¹⁵⁴ The army believed 'men must be made to understand why implicit obedience is demanded of them, and how disaster must *always* follow indiscipline.'¹⁵⁵ Training manuals advised officers how they could develop 'the ingrained habit of obedience which controls and directs the fighting spirit.'¹⁵⁶ J.F.C. Fuller argued this impulse for obedience produced the BEF's resilience in the campaign of 1914. 'Once the word to attack was given' the 'army shook itself together.'¹⁵⁷ This was a product of the men's 'self-control [having been] reduced

¹⁵⁰ RFM.ARC.3017: Fred Golden, Diary 14, 26 May and 8 June 1918. Also C.H. Isom, Diary 24 and 25 March 1918; Pte. C.E. Wild, Diary 25-27 March 1918.

¹⁵¹ Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 1 April 1918; Capt. A.J.J.P. Agius, Extracts from a Letter from a Pardre with the 21st Division Gunners, dated 30 March 1918.

¹⁵² C.S.M. Harry Merrick, Collection and Service Record: One Red Chevron, Three Blue Chevron, and One Wound Stripe.

¹⁵³ MR 3/17/96: Sgt. Maj. Herbert Chase, Soldier's 'Small Book'; MR 3/17/88: Michael Gleeson, Leather Pocket Book; MR 3/17/100: Pte. Thomas Mannion, Army Pay Book.

¹⁵⁴ Hood, *Duties for All Ranks*, 20.

¹⁵⁵ Beadon, 'Second Military Prize Essay, 1913', 144.

¹⁵⁶ WO 40/1712: *Platoon Training (1918)* 20; *Infantry Training*, (London, 1905); Harper, *Notes on Infantry Training*, 22.

¹⁵⁷ Fuller, 'Moral, Instruction, and Leadership,' 660.

to habit.' Fuller was reflecting upon the potency of what is called 'habituation' in modern psychological studies and has been outlined as one of the outputs of military training.¹⁵⁸

Men infrequently articulated the issue of obedience. Yet, it was salient in military life. Men's daily routines were directed by various orders, while obedience underwrote military doctrine.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, training – which reinforced the need for obedience – occupied between ten and twenty-one per cent of units' time.¹⁶⁰ There were constant reminders of men's duty to obey. Many officers assumed its existence so long as men toed the line. Occasionally, however, it is possible to find explicit references to this idea. It remained prominent in the memories of some veterans. W.G. Bentley asserted that 'discipline and implicit obedience were instilled in all soldiers.'¹⁶¹ Officers, such as C.S. Baines, remembered that even in the heat of battle 'it never entered my head that it was possible to retire without orders.'¹⁶² Arthur Guy Osborn wrote in 1914 that 'an Army Order is an Order, and has to be obeyed.'¹⁶³ Echoing this, A.W. Andrews noted in 1917 that 'orders are orders and must be obeyed.'¹⁶⁴ Similar assertions can also be found in a number of trench journals.¹⁶⁵ The obedience of soldiers is a theme in Frederic Manning's semi-autobiographical novel, which charts the latter stages of the Somme campaign. The rank and file in his narrative were 'glad to have their action determined for them.' Orders were 'commonplace, mechanical, as though at some moment of ordinary routine' – even if those orders obliged them to attack enemy lines.¹⁶⁶ In their relationship with authority men exercised 'the mechanical obedience required' which was 'deliberate' and became 'so much a habit' that it even 'distracted their thoughts.'¹⁶⁷ Brophy and Partridge recalled that soldiers quickly 'grew used' to army rules and 'obeyed without thinking.'¹⁶⁸ 'O'Grady,' a game similar to 'Simon Says,' was popular among soldiers at rest precisely because it played on the fact they were 'conditioned to an

¹⁵⁸ Strachan, 'Training, Morale and Modern War', 211-227; Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, 2, 220.

¹⁵⁹ W.J. Cheshire, Diary 16 September and 1 October 1914; Pte. P.N. Wright, Notes/Diary 4 November 1916.

¹⁶⁰ Maj. G.H. Greenwell, 26 October 1917, Notes from a Platoon Officers and NCOs Conference; Grayson, 'A Life in the Trenches?', 17.

¹⁶¹ LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0125: W.G. Bentley, Memoir: The History of my 1914-1916 in the 19th Batt. Royal Fusiliers: p 21.

¹⁶² Lt. Col. C.S. Baines, Memoir of the First Battle of Ypres, 31 October 1914: p 9.

¹⁶³ IWM 90/17/1: Capt. A.G. Osborn, Diary 6 January 1915.

¹⁶⁴ IWM 07/56/1: A.W. Andrews, Diary 1917: pp 112-113.

¹⁶⁵ 'Good Authority', *The Growler: The Organ of the 16th Service Bat. Northumberland Fusiliers, Alnwick*, Iss. 2 (Feb 1, 1915) 7; 'The Beauty of Obedience: A Story for Young and New Recruits', *The F.S.R: A Monthly Magazine* (Oct. 1, 1915) 4; Col. L.R.C. Boyle M.V.O., 'Discipline', *The Billet Doux*, No. 4 (17 December 1915) 10-13; 'The Perfect Soldier', *The Sussex Patrol*, No. 11 Vol. 1 (April 1917) 1; 'Day of National Prayer: Appointed by the King', *The Snapper: The Monthly Journal of the East Yorkshire Regiment*, Vol. XII, No. 11 (November 1917) 1.

¹⁶⁶ Manning, *Her Privates We*, 3, 7.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 66, 148, 205.

¹⁶⁸ Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, 126.

instantaneous and mindless response to drill orders bawled out with authority, to stop and think first was not so easy.¹⁶⁹ In 1918 orders were essential in legitimising action during the chaos of retreat. J.E.H. Neville's short entries during the period 21-27 March refer to the orders his platoon received sixteen times – always in relation to the path of action chosen. Records insist that an unwillingness to retreat without direction was a key differentiator between good and poor battlefield performance during these months.¹⁷⁰

Training and discipline were correlates in contemporary literature.¹⁷¹ The relationship between training, habituation, rationality, and obedience were traced in Karl Weick's analysis of 'cosmology episodes.' He argued that 'people try to make things rationally accountable to themselves and others' and demonstrated how dominant organisational structures can – through training – influence the ways in which people perceive events and crises. They sometimes fail to recognise novelty. Yet organisations, such as the fire crew in his study of the Mann Gulch Disaster, 'are susceptible to sudden losses of meaning' via 'fundamental surprises.' Describing this as 'a cosmology episode,' Weick suggested that it occurs 'when people suddenly and deeply feel that the universe is no longer a rational, orderly system.' However, effective and focussed training – as well as previous experience – can transform the 'contextual rationality' creating a unit with similar reactions and trains of thought. Obedience and training can distort frames of reference – creating default settings and reactions.¹⁷² Infantrymen were habituated to absolute obedience.

Obedience was sometimes 'the least unattractive course' due to harsh penalties and the social stigma of unconformity.¹⁷³ Obedience, though, is also a human trait and can be the product of particular social environments.¹⁷⁴ Stanley Milgram famously investigated obedience and the 'agentic state.' People see themselves as an 'instrument for carrying out another person's wishes' and are no longer 'responsible for their actions.'¹⁷⁵ During his trials he found that humans frequently display unquestioning obedience.¹⁷⁶ More recent studies have found even higher frequencies of absolute obedience.¹⁷⁷ The presence of authority

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Lt. J.E.H. Neville, Diary 21-27 March 1918; Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to father 1 April 1918.

¹⁷¹ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 72.

¹⁷² K.A. Weick, 'The Collapse of Sensemaking in Organizations: The Mann Gulch Disaster', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Dec., 1993) 628-652.

¹⁷³ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 59.

¹⁷⁴ Winter, *The Experience of World War I*, 159; Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*, 72-3.

¹⁷⁵ S. Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (London, 1974) xii.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ See P.B. Smith, M.H. Bond and Ç. Kağıtçıbaşı, *Understanding Social Psychology Across Cultures*, (London, 2006); W. Kilham and L. Mann, 'Level of Destructive Obedience as Function of Transmitter and Executant Roles in the Milgram Obedience Paradigm', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 29 (1974) 696-702.

figures and group pressure strongly influences obedience and can induce actors to follow orders even if they run counter to the individuals' interests.¹⁷⁸

Incidences of major indiscipline and disobedience occurred rarely. The importance of the 'mutiny' that occurred at Etaples in 1917 lies in its uniqueness. More accurately it was a strike against oppressive trainers and military police.¹⁷⁹ The other examples of disobedience that exist tended to occur amid the stresses of battle. Poorly trained troops were overwhelmed and command structures broke down when units experienced high casualties. This was seen as the crux of the British collapse at Cambrai in December 1917.¹⁸⁰ Private records highlighted similar issues. Lt. Col. Arthur Stockdale Cope recorded in his diary on 29 May 1918 that he had seen the British line crumple in the face of a German attack. He wrote that 'we tried to stop them... but it was useless. They were nearly all boys of 18, and were quite done up.'¹⁸¹ They experienced a 'sudden loss of meaning' in the face of battle danger.

'Minor offences' occurred more regularly. Absence from parade, drinking, grousing, malingering, insolence, and scrounging were common.¹⁸² These were not recorded with any great frequency in the written record. Clearly soldiers did not want to implicate themselves in misdemeanours, yet they were prevalent. Soldiers actively celebrated scroungers.¹⁸³ This rebelliousness coexisted with a relatively harsh disciplinary system and allowed soldiers to carve out the semblance of agency. Emmanuel Saint-Fusicen believes that authority in the French Army was relational.¹⁸⁴ Englishmen's perception of obedience also seems to have orientated around their relationship with their comrades, their officers, their unit, and the British Army. Disciplinary issues were rarely related to soldiers' willingness to endure and were most prevalent in rest periods.

The military also expected a soldier to be cheerful and congratulated them for this.¹⁸⁵ This duty lay at the centre of British Army social doctrine and informed officers' perceptions of

¹⁷⁸ B.J. Bushman, 'Perceived Symbols of Authority and their Influence on Compliance', *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 14 (1984) 773-789; A.P. Brief, J.M. Dukerich and L.I. Doran, 'Resolving Ethical Dilemmas in Management: Experimental Investigations of Values, Accountability, and Choice', *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 21 (1991) 380-396.

¹⁷⁹ 'Perhaps the presence of both Scottish and Anzac... soldiers gave the mutiny a cohesiveness which a riot could not have otherwise attained.' Gill and Dallas, 'Mutiny at Etaples Base', 99.

¹⁸⁰ IWM PP/MCR/C42: Gen. Sir Ivor Maxse, File 40: 'Lectures on the Lessons of the Battle of Cambrai, November 1917, and notes on the Court of Enquiry into the German Counter-Attack at Cambrai on 30 November 1917.'

¹⁸¹ Lt. Col. Arthur Stockdale Cope, Diary 29 May 1918.

¹⁸² Manning, *Her Privates We*, 142-150; Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, 142-143.

¹⁸³ Gibson, *Behind the Front*, 193.

¹⁸⁴ Saint-Fusicen, *À vos ordres?* 17-19.

¹⁸⁵ WO 231/404: 'Memorandum of Army Training, 1909.'

their soldiers. Lord Moran believed humour was ‘a working philosophy that carried us through the day.’¹⁸⁶ Fuller saw it as a ‘moral virtue,’ alongside patriotism and *esprit de corps*; he believed it was ‘the oil of life.’¹⁸⁷ Comedy played an important part in civilian life and infused cross-class culture. The war did not diminish this. Cheeriness was expected of the infantry throughout the conflict. Laughter and humour is and was a natural reaction to trauma, and can be found among the civilians and militaries of other belligerents in 1914-1918.¹⁸⁸ However, uniquely, the necessity of remaining ‘cheery’ was projected in a top-down manner in the British Army. ‘Dumb insolence’ or ‘allowing a derisive... disbelieving... amused... or uninterested expression to appear on one’s face’ was a military misdemeanour. Cheeriness was an indicator of high morale and of willing obedience.¹⁸⁹

The desire for men to conform to the smiling image of a Tommy was evident in military publications. Training’s primary goal was to ‘help the soldier bear fatigue, privation, and danger cheerfully.’¹⁹⁰ Since it was also advised in other manuals, it seems that the characteristic would have been underlined during the men’s instruction. This social expectation was promoted even before enlistment. A 3rd Battalion City of London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers) recruitment leaflet called on men ‘to cheerfully don the King’s uniform, and play a manly part by doing a man’s work.’¹⁹¹ Soldiers’ were made aware of how *they should* act. The rank and file were expected to approach their service with a smile. A 1918 training manual advised officers or senior NCOs that they should gain their men’s ‘confidence’ and ‘respect’ by exhibiting their own ‘obstinate good humour in the face of difficulties.’¹⁹²

British officers were told that their soldiers’ outward emotional state reflected on the quality of their command. The following of orders ‘with energy and with cheerfulness’ and men who were ‘smart, alert... [and] cheerful’ in appearance were reflective of good discipline.¹⁹³ Furthermore, ‘the company or the battalion is the best looking-glass of its officers,’ in which ‘you see the image of the officers – you see yourselves.’¹⁹⁴ ‘Slack-looking, miserable, dirty, slow, and almost sulky’ men meant that ‘you can tell at once that these are

¹⁸⁶ Moran, *Anatomy of Courage*, 142.

¹⁸⁷ Fuller, ‘Moral, Instruction, and Leadership,’ 666.

¹⁸⁸ V. Holman and D. Kelly, ‘Introduction. War in the Twentieth Century: The Function of Humour in Cultural Representation’, *Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 31 Issue 23 (2001), 247–63; J. Le Naour, ‘Laughter and Tears in the Great War: The Need for Laughter/The Guilt of Humour’, *Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 31 Issue 123 (2001) 265-275; M. Kessel, ‘Talking War, Debating Unity: Order, Conflict, and Exclusion in “German Humour” in the First World War’, in M. Kessel and P. Merziger (eds.), *The Politics of Humour: Laughter, Inclusion, and Exclusion in the Twentieth Century* (London, 2012) 82-107; J. Kazecki, *Laughter in the Trenches: Humour and Front Experience in German First World War Narratives* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 2012).

¹⁸⁹ Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, 95.

¹⁹⁰ General Staff, War Office, *Infantry Training (4 – Company Organisation)*, (1914) 2.

¹⁹¹ LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0232: A.E. Burdfield, Recruitment Leaflet.

¹⁹² *Platoon Training, 1918*, 1.

¹⁹³ MR 3/13/2/35: *Duties of an Officer’ 42nd (East Lancashire) Division* (Aldershot, 1918) 4.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 6.

bad officers.¹⁹⁵ Officers insisted upon the cheery attitude of their men. It is telling that, even during the Ludendorff Offensives, divisional leaders thanked soldiers for ‘their cheerful endurance’ before mentioning their ‘gallant spirit’.¹⁹⁶

It is possible officers forced men to conform to this ideal or misrepresented their men’s attitude in a conscious effort to prove their leadership qualities. Men such as Lt. J.H. Johnson spent time highlighting their men’s cheeriness.¹⁹⁷ Sometimes this attitude filtered into their relationships with those at home. 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones wrote to his wife on 21 March 1918 insisting that she remained ‘brave, and cheerful like you always are.’ He consoled her that, despite the German offensive, ‘we shall keep smiling and pluckily carry on always.’¹⁹⁸ Men’s apparently positive attitude could improve officers’ moods. G.H. Greenwell noted the presence of ‘four young fellows’ whose ‘quite cheery’ attitude was used to belie any of his parents’ fears for his wellbeing.¹⁹⁹ The respect and compassion that regimental officers felt for their men is revealing. G.A. Stevens wrote animatedly about his men’s amazing ‘cheery’ endurance. He called them ‘splendid’ and concluded that their ‘spirit is beyond belief.’²⁰⁰ Charles Carrington went further: ‘I shall never think of the “Lower Classes” again in the way I used to after seeing them just as obscenely noisy and cheerful in a seven days bombardment as in a football match.’²⁰¹ Humour was an important part of Edwardian society and culture and this, in part, infused soldiers’ activities and outlooks on the Western Front.²⁰² It was also nurtured and internalised by the military.²⁰³

Censors reported this attitude in soldiers’ letters home, suggesting that it was pervasive.²⁰⁴ III Army Censor, M. Hardie, wrote that ‘with unfailing good humour he [Tommy] makes the best of conditions.’²⁰⁵ His only report to find no evidence of this was that of October 1917. Acute crisis emerged as men failed to embrace this obligation. The survey

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Papers and maps sent to Sir John Fortescue by Lt Gen Sir Ivor Maxse, XVIII Corps No. G.a.155/4: 20th Division [1-3] and XVIII Corps No. G.a. 155/1: 30th Division [-1-4].

¹⁹⁷ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 26 April 1918; Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Letter 4 November 1916; 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg, Letter 12 December 1917 and 30 January 1918.

¹⁹⁸ 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter to his Wife 21 March 1918.

¹⁹⁹ Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Letter to his Father 4 November 1916

²⁰⁰ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother and Father 28 October 1916 and Letter to Mother 13 October 1917.

²⁰¹ Capt. Ch. Carrington, Letter 25 October 1916 (83).

²⁰² R. Alexander, ‘British Comedy and Humour: Social and Cultural Background’, *AAA: Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1984) 63-83; K. Waddington, ““We Don’t Want Any German Sausages Here!” Food, Fear, and the German Nation in Victorian and Edwardian Britain,’ *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 52, Issue 4 (2013) 1017-1042.

²⁰³ Ussishkin, *Morale*, 3-4, 43.

²⁰⁴ Capt. M. Hardie, 3rd Section Report on Complaints, Moral, Etc. (1916). Also CAB 24/26/52: Note on the Morale of British Troops in France as disclosed by the Censorship, 13 September 1917; CAB 24/36/44: W.R. Robertson, British Armies in France as Gathered from Censorship. Extract from C.I.G.S. 18 December 1917.

²⁰⁵ Capt. M. Hardie, Report on III Army Morale, January 1917.

also highlighted negativity and low morale.²⁰⁶ In other circumstances, it seems likely humour was utilised to allay the fears of soldiers' loved ones, comrades, and superiors. Some correspondents at home commented on their relatives' amazing cheerfulness.²⁰⁷ Whether or not this was an attempt to hide their true feelings, it seems that humour was a dimension of British military masculinity. Some historians argue that emotions were prescribed by stoicism, which focussed on particular notions of character and force of will.²⁰⁸ It seems as though cheeriness played a role in stoic responses to war.²⁰⁹ Humour was a defining element of the peculiarly British attitudes that helped civilians bear the Blitz during the next war.²¹⁰ Between 1914 and 1918 stoic humour was a default setting.

Cheeriness was a reciprocal and relational process. It relaxed soldiers and alleviated negativity. The social experience of 'cheeriness' strengthened the primary group. There is a positive relationship between success in crisis intervention and the quality of social support received.²¹¹ Men reflected positively on how, despite the many hardships, 'still everybody keeps cheery.'²¹² Others' capacity for humour was of enormous social and psychological benefit.²¹³ While the military social environment expected men to be cheery, humour is also an unconscious activity and alleviates anxiety.²¹⁴ It was a recurring theme in R.E.P. Stevens's diary, where he referred to his comrades' sayings in a positive tone. His officer would actively try to nurture his men's 'cheer.'²¹⁵ He described his comrades' language as a 'splendid comic opera.' He later advised that 'if it were not for the quipps [sic] and jokes of the boys I think one would go mad.'²¹⁶ Capt. A.J. Lord found it difficult to maintain this under fire but argued that 'one is quite cheery again when circumstances alter or when the shelling ceases.'²¹⁷ There is evidence that individuals will share others' emotions if they are

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* Report on III Army Morale/Peace Sentiment, August to October 1917.

²⁰⁷ IWM PP/MCR/169: Lt. F.A. Brettell, Letter from Peg 6 November 1916.

²⁰⁸ J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (Abingdon, 1989, 2000) 201; W. Westerman, *Gentleman: Australian Battalion Commanders in the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 2017) 168.

²⁰⁹ For stoicism see H. Ellis, 'Stoicism in Victorian Culture,' in J. Sellars (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of the Stoic Tradition* (Abingdon, 2016) 325-6.

²¹⁰ E. Jones, R. Woolven, B. Durodié, and S. Wessely, 'Civilian Morale During the Second World War: Responses to Air Raids Re-Examined', *Social History of Medicine*, Vol. 17, Issue 3 (2004) 463-479; C. Peniston-Bird and P. Summerfield, "'Hey, You're Dead": The Multiple Uses of Humour in Representations of British National Defence in the Second World War', *Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 31 No. 3-4 (2001) 413-435.

²¹¹ D. Porritt, 'Social Support in Crisis: Quantity or Quality', *Social Science & Medicine. Part A: Medical Psychological and Medical Sociology*, Vol. 13 (1979) 715-721.

²¹² F. Hubard, Letter to Mr and Mrs Underhill 25 October 1916.

²¹³ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 100.

²¹⁴ For humour and anxiety see J. Bellert, 'Humour: A Therapeutic Approach in Oncology Nursing', *Cancer Nursing*, Vol. 12 Issue 2 (April, 1989) and N.A. Yovetich, J. Alexander Dale and M.A. Hudak, 'Benefits of Humor in Reduction of Threat-Induced Anxiety', *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 66 (1990) 51-58.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* Diary 21 November.

²¹⁶ R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 5 and 26 December 1916.

²¹⁷ Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to his Father 13 September 1918.

exposed to them. The ‘social role [of empathy] is to serve as the origin of the motivation for cooperative and prosocial behaviour, as well as help for effective social communication.’²¹⁸

Soldiers were conscious that cheeriness was a mask they should wear. Charles Carrington reminisced fondly about this obligatory characteristic of the British soldier: ‘there are no pessimists and cynics out there... In the worst times there is such a cheery feeling about things and one laughs at hardships that would seem unbearable here.’²¹⁹ It has been argued that stressful events arouse a pattern of mobilization-minimization. This is a ‘physiological, cognitive and behaviour response.’ The strength of this reaction varies from individual to individual. The mobilisation of these responses works to minimise or even to erase the influence and impact of negative events.²²⁰ Humour is likely to have played a part in these soldiers’ mobilisation-minimization process. Research indicates it can be a very effective coping mechanism.²²¹ Undoubtedly it faltered on occasions yet it helped to sustain men.

The duty of cheerfulness also provided soldiers with the opportunity for veiled criticism. This is most evident in soldiers’ songs. Many of these reflect a cynicism that would have been impossible to display were it not framed by cheerfulness. This might mirror the cultural shift, first described by Paul Fussell, towards irony.²²² Instead of purely reflecting scepticism, irony played a simultaneously constructive and subversive role. It was a tool that allowed men to vent their feelings. Songs such as ‘We’re Here Because,’ ‘Behind the Line,’ ‘What did you join the Army for?’ and ‘They were only playing Leap-Frog’ were all sung ‘with gusto,’ on the march and elsewhere. The latter was a vocal criticism of staff-officers’ ineptitude. ‘We haven’t seen the Sergeant’ goes even further, speaking bitterly of an inept NCO.²²³ Theatre programmes that remain from recreational periods in the rear areas also show that satire was abundant. Character lists included officers. In pieces such as *The Crumps* – produced by the 26th (Bankers) Battalion, Royal Fusiliers – rank-and-file actors played caricatures of their superiors and mocked officer stereotypes. The greatest focus for ridicule was the General Staff. Rankers occupied the same stage as Lt. D’Arcy and Capt. A. H. Reid, who joined the denigration of the staff (General Commanding and his aide-de-camp,

²¹⁸ F. de Vignemont and T. Singer, ‘The Empathic Brain: How, When and Why?’ *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, Vol. 10 Issue 10 (October, 2006) 435-441.

²¹⁹ Capt. C. Carrington, Letter 7 July 1918 (no. 141).

²²⁰ S.E. Taylor, ‘Asymmetrical Effects of Positive and Negative Events: The Mobilization-Minimization Hypothesis,’ *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 110 Issue 1 (July, 1991) 67-85.

²²¹ L.D. Henman, ‘Humor as a Coping Mechanism: Lessons from POWs’, *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, Vol. 14, Issue 1 (2008) 83-94; Madigan, ‘Sticking to a Hateful Task’, 76-98.

²²² Fusell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, esp. 7-18.

²²³ Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, 32, 35, 39, 40.

Lt. Albert Hall) in this dark-comedic portrayal of the war.²²⁴ Men responded very positively to concerts' 'cheer' and many kept hold of various concert party programmes, suggesting they remembered such events fondly.²²⁵

Cheeriness, like obedience, was a default military culture expected and embraced by the British Army. They were enforced in a top-down manner. Yet cheeriness remained a mechanism for coping with war and authority.²²⁶ This facilitated the development of good relationships among soldiers, but also it provided a stress-relief mechanism. Albert Hirschman's discussion of cognitive dissonance in the workplace highlights how one way in which employees cope with unmatched expectations is 'voicing' their discontent.²²⁷ The army was not an organisation that lent itself to free speech, but humour gave men some opportunity to relieve and voice discontent. It was an important outlet.

The military social environment's influence extended beyond the war. Men's attitude and performance had a bearing on their futures. The military kept tabs on men's 'character' and this held sway in the soldiers' civilian post-war lives. What constituted 'good character' was defined by the military: 'Resolution, Self-Confidence, [and] Self-Sacrifice.'²²⁸ The influence of respectability in Victorian and Edwardian Britain has been explored elsewhere.²²⁹ The strength of such ideas should not be underestimated. Officers and men generally acted within the boundaries of militaristic respectability.²³⁰ Soldiers were concerned with maintaining their social and, ultimately, economic standing. A man's name was everything. While the conception of what service entailed – total or partial sacrifice – varied, men rarely acted in a manner that would see them stigmatised. This went beyond desertion, disobedience, and shirking being 'dishonourable' and punishable. Men were aware that misconduct could leave a permanent stain on their character, which was seen as their currency for the post-war lives.

²²⁴ Cpl. R.G. Plint, 'Concert Party Programme'; *The Dear Old Regiment* (1 December 1917); Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter 16 June 1918.

²²⁵ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 8 December 1917.

²²⁶ For military cultures see Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 2, 325.

²²⁷ A. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, (Cambridge, MA, 1970) 1-21.

²²⁸ NAM 2005-09-57-12-26: Address by a Corps Commander to Young Officers on Leaving the Officers' School, Division Y.P.C. – 5,00 – 4/4/1916.

²²⁹ F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1988); C.W. Masters, *The Respectability of Late Victorian Workers: A Case Study of York, 1867-1914* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2010); T.R.C. Gibson-Bryson, *The Moral Mapping of Victorian and Edwardian London: Charles Booth, Christian Charity, and the Poor-but-Respectable* (Montreal, 2016).

²³⁰ For discussions of 'respectability' in occupied France see J. Connolly, 'Notable Protests: Respectable Resistance in Occupied Northern France, 1914-1918' *Historical Research*, Vol. 88, No. 243 (2015).

The next chapters of this thesis will demonstrate that home, the future, and peace were prominent in soldiers' outlook. Future employment and livelihood were important considerations. Soldiers' attitude and aptitude was recorded and fed back to them.²³¹ Capt. James Early forwarded the reports he received from army schools to his soldiers. L/Cpl. Burford was 'excellent,' 'conscientious' and a 'thoroughly good instructor' and L/Cpl. Collier had been 'very good' at III Corps Stokes Mortar School. Sgt. Maj. Wootton did 'some very good work' and was a 'good N.C.O,' however he 'unfortunately missed a lot of the course through illness.' Using language that unconsciously fused race and class, he was described as 'a good type' and had 'taken good notes.'²³² 2nd Lt. F.T.K. Woodworth's company commander described his performance between 26 and 28 March 1918 in a report. He had exhibited 'great personal bravery and by his cheerfulness, and steadiness, set a fine example to his men.'²³³ These records mattered and ex-servicemen could (and might have had to) provide character references to prospective employers. These accompanied their demobilisation certificate. They outlined the soldier's service and the reasons for his discharge. Alongside this was Army Form Z.18, a 'Certificate of Employment During the War,' which included information about men's regimental employment, their previous trade or calling, courses they undertook, any qualifications they gained and, finally, 'special remarks' outlining their skills. Extra details could include specific 'good work' undertaken or 'useful and adaptable' contributions. It might explain that the soldier was 'very dependable in every way,' a 'good soldier' or explain he had 'an exemplary... character.'²³⁴

The certificates advised that 'The National Association for Employment of Ex-Soldiers exists for helping men of good character to obtain employment.' They were 'based on continuous records of the holder's conduct and employment throughout his military career.' A.J. Allen 'served with the B.E.F. in France [and] proved himself an efficient soldier and carried out his duties to the satisfaction of his superiors. He is honest and reliable.'²³⁵ Michael Gleeson, a regular soldier who served throughout the war, was a 'steady and trustworthy Warrant Officer of very good character.'²³⁶ He also had two letters of recommendation, from senior officers, that 'recommend him in any capacity' and underlined his reliability, 'whole-hearted devotion to duty' and strong work ethic.²³⁷ James Jayes's was

²³¹ 'The Law and its Limbs', *The Gasper: The Unofficial Organ of the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st Royal Fusiliers*, Vol. 21 (Sep 30, 1916) 1.

²³² Capt. J.H. Early, Reports for L/Cpl. Burford, L/Cpl Collier, Pte. Skinner and Sgt. Major Wootton.

²³³ 2nd Lt. F.T.K. Woodworth, Note to Adjutant C 127 from Capt. H.H. Nidd O/C B. Coy., 28 March 1918.

²³⁴ SOFO Box 23 Item 10 7/2/PL/4: Pte. Alfred Allen, Certificate of Employment; NAM 1990-01-58: Herbert Victor Aust, Character Certificate [Army Form B. 2067].

²³⁵ Ibid. 'Character Reference.'

²³⁶ Michael Gleeson, 'Character Reference.'

²³⁷ SOFO Box 23 Item 7 7/2/PL/2: Pte. William Morris 201594, 'Letter of Recommendation from Lt. Colonel Ledward and Major W. Payne.'

simpler: ‘A sober honest and trustworthy man. He was wounded in action in 1916, and again in 1917, losing 4 fingers of his left hand.’²³⁸ There was a contact address if an employer wished to delve deeper into their candidate’s military past. Men were concerned with maintaining their ‘good record.’²³⁹ Promotion was also performance-related, and this sometimes offered a honourable route out of the trenches.²⁴⁰ Capt. Fullbrook Leggatt left the Army with an endorsement that highlighted his ‘aptitude for staff duties’ and ‘marked successes’ commanding a company.²⁴¹ Men also received War Badges, which were awarded for ‘Service Rendered.’²⁴² These provided physical evidence of duty completed.

Many men never made it home. This did not diminish the power of good character. Much emphasis was placed on ‘character’ in the letters from dead men’s officers and comrades. Officers’ letters looked to justify their sacrifices as a ‘noble and brave act.’²⁴³ Those from men’s ‘chums’ had a different perspective. They simply asserted their friendship with the deceased; outlined how they died; and gave assurances that the man’s death was quick, painless, or peaceful. They go on to underline that he had done his duty for King and Country and list the man’s qualities.²⁴⁴ Pte. J.H. Easton assured Mr and Mrs Thompson their son had been a ‘good straightforward and honest comrade.’²⁴⁵ F.S. Castle’s relatives were consoled that ‘we who knew him felt the strength and beauty of his character.’²⁴⁶ Letters also explained that the dead man had a ‘very nice grave’ and had been buried ‘quite decent.’²⁴⁷ The quality of burial and coffin were noted in a number of diaries.²⁴⁸ In England the working classes spent a large portion of household earnings on burial insurance to avoid the shame of a parish burial. Some soldiers’ desire to die with good character and respectability mirrored this trend.²⁴⁹

Soldiers felt it was their duty to protect their homeland and they enlisted in their greatest numbers at times where Britain faced its greatest external threat.²⁵⁰ The military’s training

²³⁸ MR 3/17/128: Pte J. Jayes, Army Form B. 2079 – Discharge Certificate and Character Reference.

²³⁹ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 28 January 1918.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 18 December 1916.

²⁴¹ Capt. L.E.W.O. Fullbrook-Leggatt, ‘Army Book 439’.

²⁴² Sgt. Maj. Herbert Chase, Army Memo No. B 337460 – War Badge.

²⁴³ IWM 72/100/2: Mrs L.K. Briggs, Letter from Captain Walker 25 October 1917.

²⁴⁴ Pte. S. Smith, Letter to Mrs Smith.

²⁴⁵ SOFO Box 29 Item 4 10/6/J/1: Papers of Pte. Percy Thompson, Letter Pte. J.H. Easton to Mr and Mrs Thompson.

²⁴⁶ F.S. Castle, Letter from Private B Coy. 26/Royal Fusiliers to Family.

²⁴⁷ Pte. S. Smith, Letter from Pte. E. Loose to Mrs Smith.

²⁴⁸ Pte. C.E. Wild Diary 3 May 1918.

²⁴⁹ Pember Reeves, *Round About a Pound a Week*, 59-60.

²⁵⁰ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 32-33; Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, 92-117.

manuals highlighted the need to ‘foster’ patriotism through ideal ‘mental, moral and physical qualities.’²⁵¹ One censor, writing for *The Spectator* in 1917, underlined the importance of the defensive mind-set. War comprised ‘monotony,’ ‘toil’ and immeasurable ‘horrors.’ Yet Tommy retained a sense of moral duty. Seeing ‘prosperous towns in ruins, old men and maidens lying cold in their own homes, the countryside devastated’ the soldier had ‘imagination enough to transplant the surroundings of Arras or Ypres to Kent and Cornwall...’ It is borne upon him that he is fighting in very truth to guard his own home from the same destruction.’ The war became ‘a personal matter.’ While this was pro-conscription propaganda it does seem to have referenced the soldiers’ very real sense of duty to home, which will be explored further in the following chapter. It also drew on an internalised stereotype of the German state also described later. Duty was born of the knowledge that ‘he is fighting to save his own cottage from ruin, as surely as if he were standing at its threshold.’²⁵²

Such themes emerge from the historical record with particular vibrancy in 1914 and 1918. In 1914 the unexpected destructiveness of the modern weaponry left many men awe-struck. During the retreat from Mons Sgt. Osborn saw civilians wounded at the hands of the enemy and settlements that had been ‘looted by the Germans.’ It was ‘very pitiful to see inhabitants leaving their homes.’²⁵³ He was struck by the destruction of many villages where ‘not a single house [was] standing.’ The dead dogs, rabbits, and cattle horrified W. Tapp. They lay around shelled buildings, which entombed children’s toys, family photos and clothes. It left him ‘glad the enemy are not doing this in England.’²⁵⁴ This image stayed with him and upon meeting German soldiers on 25 and 26 December he could not bring himself ‘to shake hands with them, as I know I shouldn’t if they were in our country, I have not forgotten Belgium.’²⁵⁵ Pte. J.T. Greenwood’s narrative was published in a local newspaper: ‘it would make an Englishman weep if he saw this country the destruction they have created in the villages. You cannot describe it.’²⁵⁶

Even before mobile warfare returned in March 1918, men encountered civilians in the battle zone. It ignited a sympathy produced by both interaction and imagination. F. Hubard, recalled the joy of civilians they liberated from German authority. He wrote that ‘it is one of the most moving and saddest sights I have ever seen’: calling them ‘prisoners,’ he was particularly moved by the ‘young girls and women.’²⁵⁷ This became more pronounced after

²⁵¹ *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations*, (London, 1913) 65.

²⁵² ‘On Censoring Letters,’ *The Spectator* (14 July 1917) 33; Also Gibson, *Behind the Front*, 283.

²⁵³ Sgt. Osborn, Diary 22, 24 and 27 August and 16 September 1914.

²⁵⁴ Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 1914: p 5.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p 10.

²⁵⁶ Postcard Signed by ‘The Mademoiselle from Armentieres’, Extract from local paper.

²⁵⁷ F. Hubard, Letter to Mr and Mrs Underhill 8 December 1917.

the German offensive. One soldier contrasted the ‘wonderful’ experiences of his time in France with the ‘pathetic’ sight of ‘the civilians cleared out.’²⁵⁸ A.J. Lord found the ‘waste appalling’ and was saddened by the ‘civilians scurrying away’ and the destruction of ‘neat’ cottage gardens, possessions, buildings, and livestock.²⁵⁹ W. Vernon also described the retreat in a letter home. ‘You should have seen us,’ he wrote, ‘the roads packed... and wounded walking for miles and miles.’ Yet ‘the worst of all was the civilians... they had run for their lives... it was heart-breaking to see them.’²⁶⁰ Many men saw the faces of their loved-ones in those of refugees. P.R. Hall perhaps spoke for everyone. He remembered how he pleaded with the men around him to stand firm, stating ‘we could never forgive ourselves if we ran [and] the Germans got to the coast and our homes and families in England.’²⁶¹

The military social environment moulded and informed perceptions of duty. The experience of war, however, undermined the validity of military high-diction. Despite this, a sense of obligation remained a key dimension of morale and remained strong throughout the war and helped men to endure chronic crisis. Officers and men encapsulated their duty in different ways. Officers’ understood the ‘role’ that accompanied their commission and felt morally bound to their men and the military. High ideals provided sustenance but rarely the compulsion to act. Their men, on the other hand, had a more varied experience. Regular soldiers of 1914 were professionals and many looked to act as such. Duty and honour were performance-related. However, the reservists, volunteers, and conscripts who followed in their footsteps had a much more personalised perspective. In 1916, many men were bound by a sense of war’s unpleasant necessity. By 1917/18 many felt that they had a part to play but that this had its limits once they had ‘done their bit.’ However, the military provided the means and structure by which men did their duty and its default cultures influenced the men and limited alternative courses of action. Importantly, all men were aware of their role as England’s protectors when German militancy reared its head.

It would be wrong to underestimate the importance of the military’s influence on men’s sense of duty. Modern sociological studies have highlighted how the experience of ‘paradoxical’ situations that ‘deframe’ or remove the meaning of previously held frames of reference force humans to think about issues in new ways. This process enables individuals

²⁵⁸ Cpt. A. J.J.P. Agius, Extracts from a letter received from France 28 March 1918 AJA 6.

²⁵⁹ Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to his father 12 April 1918. Also C. Gibson, *Behind the Front*, 5, 51, 361-2.

²⁶⁰ W. Vernon, Letter to Miss L. Vernon 22 July 1918.

²⁶¹ P.R. Hall, Memoir: p 25.

‘to pursue new ways of understanding the environment.’²⁶² The British military influenced its ‘staff’ in a similar way during 1914-1918. It was the army that became the frame through which appropriate action was defined and this provided a strong interpretive framework that deflected crisis. Moreover, the ‘default cultures’ and duties of obedience and cheerfulness played an important part in resilience and overcoming chronic crisis. The British military insisted upon certain ‘default’ settings for soldiers. The emphasis that was placed on obedience – by no means unique to the BEF – forced soldiers to habitually follow orders. When men did not conform it was mainly in private. Barring extreme cases of psychological shock or the breakdown of command, they followed their superiors’ directions. Importantly, humour and the military’s insistence on cheerfulness provided men with an important outlet, a coping mechanism, and nurtured social ties.

A common thread that influenced men’s perception of duty was ‘good character.’ ‘Good character’ was defined and assessed by the military. The awareness that their military record would hold currency in their futures altered men’s perception of their service. It motivated them to conform. Sociologist Erving Goffman helps to explain this: ‘when an individual appears in the presence of others, there will be usually some reason for him to mobilise his interests to activity so that it will convey an impression to others which it is in his interest to convey.’²⁶³ Presenting themselves as the army wished was of benefit to the combatants’ futures. Goffman described human encounters as theatrical performances – with a front stage, where one performs, and a backstage where it is unnecessary to worry about others. An integral part of his theatre metaphor is the role of ‘props,’ ‘costumes’ and audiences.²⁶⁴ While the officer corps changed demographically, the military structures and the army’s interpretation of duty ensured that their audience’s outlook remained the same. They were aware of how they were meant to interpret duty. The army offered little opportunity to be backstage; men were constantly among their peers, if not their superiors. As the demographic make-up of the rank-and-file changed, so did the audience and their interpretation of duty. Importantly, though, the army remained a more or less unchanging stage – at least with regards to its ethos – for the duration of 1914-1918.²⁶⁵ It provided a constant reminder of what constituted respectable action. The military social environment played an important role in helping men make sense of war. Yet the next chapter will explore how thoughts of England and home also influenced men’s perspective.

²⁶² A. Westenholz, ‘Paradoxical Thinking and Change in the Frames of Reference’, *Organization Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (January 1993) 37-58

²⁶³ E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London, 1959, 1990) 15-16.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 13-27.

²⁶⁵ Fox, *Learning to Fight*, 20-21.

Imagination

Soldiers' Perceptions of England and Dreams of Home

Infantrymen's dislocation from home and their pre-war lives was another of war's chronic crises. Yet, their dreams of England simultaneously informed their perception of duty and provided a coping mechanism. During April 1918, H.T. Madders found himself trudging through No Man's Land, re-supplying isolated dugouts, and visiting 'BHQ.' He dragged himself through thick mud that clung to his skin and clothes. The experience left him deeply unhappy. Yet, in an attempt to escape, he concentrated on 'thoughts of Sunday night at home.... Oh to be in Blighty now that Aprils [sic] there.'¹ Madders mobilised these images to deflect the pressures of his present. In his case (and others), visions of home also provided some moral sustenance. It was the subjective nation – one focussed on place and people, rather than state and society – that resonated with Madders. By investigating soldiers' perceptions and visions of England, this chapter shows how images, visions, and memories of a localised and specific home furnished soldiers with a justification of their suffering and helped them to cope.²

Both British and German soldiers were driven by their patriotic recognition of 'a duty to defend their home communities in time of national emergency.'³ Capt. M. Hardie traced 'a splendid unity of purpose' and a 'glowing sense of patriotism' in the soldiers' letters during the war.⁴ Yet, there was no single vision of 'home.' Oscar Browning wrote in 1893 that 'every Englishman is a citizen in several different ways. He is a citizen of the town of the country district to which he belongs; he is a citizen of England... he is a citizen of the United Kingdom, and he is also a citizen of the great British Empire.'⁵ Such sentiment is reflected in David Silbey's work. Working class recruits, he argues, felt the pull of patriotism. This grew out of loyalty to a mixture of the family, community, locality, socio-economic group, and country.⁶ Some historians distinguish between the sustaining links with the family and the

¹ H.T. Madders, Diary 8 April 1918.

² M. Roper, 'Nostalgia as an Emotional Experience in the Great War', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 54, Issue 2 (June, 2011) esp. 440.

³ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 50, 62. This was not unique to British soldiers. For the French case see J. Nicot, *Les poilus ont la parole. Lettres du front, 1917-1918* (Paris, 1998, 2003). For the German case see G. Krumeich, 'Le soldat allemand sur la Somme,' in J-J. Becker and S. Audoin-Rouzeau (eds.), *Les sociétés européennes et la guerre de 1914-1918* (Nanterre, 1990) 367-373.

⁴ Capt. M. Hardie, III Army Censorship Report 23 November 1916.

⁵ Oscar Browning cited in G.R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War, 1886-1918* (Oxford, 2004) 41.

⁶ D. Silbey, *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War, 1914-1916* (London, 2005).

bitterness engendered by shirkers, journalists, and politicians.⁷ Alexander Watson has argued soldiers' sense of purpose was primarily drawn from their family and loved ones.⁸

The infantrymen were conscious of their place within the British nation and Empire, but drew their primary identity from a very specific vision of England. While by no means the only dimension of their national identity, it was their primary point of reference. When describing 'home' soldiers used 'England' rather than 'Britain'.⁹ One man even referred to the BEF as the 'English Army'.¹⁰ English infantrymen felt a deep connection to their Scottish, Welsh, and Irish comrades – but also saw these men as members of distinct, albeit overlapping, groups. Differences in accent, culture, and even dress reinforced this. R.D. Sheffield distinguished between the 'English' soldiers in his unit and the 'Welsh' infantrymen in a neighbouring corps.¹¹ Scottish units were also characterised by their national identity.¹² Lt. Col. J.D. Wyatt was shocked when Scottish troops were posted to an English infantry depot in February 1918.¹³ Yet 'England' and Englishness were themselves diverse and subjective constructs embodied by anything: a single person, a community, a house, a street, or a local or national landscape.

This chapter contributes to wider historiographical discussions of the relationship between combatants and the home front. 'The donning of a uniform is assumed to initiate men into a gnostic society, from which women and children are resolutely excised.' Yet, as Joanna Bourke has argued, 'that is not what happens'.¹⁴ It was previously assumed that the war created a gulf in understanding between soldiers and civilians. Both military censorship and self-censorship were important filters that made the war experience difficult for soldiers to convey or those at home to understand.¹⁵ However, others have shown how men were able to describe their lives, sometimes in surprising detail.¹⁶ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Marie-Monique Huss, and Martha Hanna show that soldiers' relationships with their families and broader communities remained strong.¹⁷ It is now agreed that the relationships between

⁷ D. Englander, 'Soldiering and Identity: Reflections on the Great War', *War in History*, Vol. 1, Issue 3 (November 1994) 313-315. For the French case, Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War*, 92-154.

⁸ Watson, 'Morale', 190-191.

⁹ T. Edwards, 'Soldiers Bat', *The Londoner: The Journal of 1/25th Battalion, The London Regiment* Vol. 1 Iss. 4 (Feb 1, 1917) 69.

¹⁰ Diary of an Unidentified Soldier in the Border Regiment, 25 December 1914.

¹¹ R.D. Sheffield, Letter to Father 9 November 1914.

¹² Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 27 December 1914; J. Grimston, Diary 26 December 1916; H. Russell, Diary of Pte. W.A. Hoyle 24 March 1918 [pp 17-18].

¹³ Lt. Col. J.D. Wyatt, Diary 11 February 1918.

¹⁴ J. Bourke, 'Gender Roles in Killing Zones', in J. Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War Volume 3: Civil Society* (Cambridge, 2014) 153.

¹⁵ Bet-El, *Conscripts*, 135, 137.

¹⁶ M. Hanna, 'A Republic of Letters', 23-24. See also Hunter, 'More than an Archive of War', 339.

¹⁷ Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War*, 128-154; M. Huss, *Histoires de famille, 1914/1918: cartes postales et cultures de guerre* (Paris, 2000); M. Hanna, *Your Death Would Be Mine: Paul and Marie Pireaud in the Great War* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

soldiers and the home front were more complex than had previously been assumed. They were maintained and nurtured.¹⁸

Michael Roper argues that the sustenance provided by the family was an essential ingredient in British soldiers' resilience. It informed the 'moral' connotations of fighting.¹⁹ The significance of the family is perhaps unsurprising given the increasing power of domesticity in pre-war Britain.²⁰ The connection between men and home (via letters and physical parcels) crossed class (and national) divisions.²¹ Jessica Meyer argued that contact with home influenced soldiers' morale and provided 'a crucial link to the identities they had left behind upon enlistment'.²² Correspondence allowed men to continue to fulfil a domestic role. Helen McCartney believes this 'interchange of information' also facilitated an acknowledgement of sacrifice, developed mutual understanding and 'fostered a common perspective'.²³ A man's imagined England was influenced by both his age and background. Younger unmarried men had a 'particular strong' sense of home focussing on parents, siblings, and domestic scenes. Married men thought about their wives – and children if they had them – and focussed on 'practical matters' as much as 'moral sentiments'.²⁴

According to some historians, an imagined space nurtured closer links between soldiers, families, and communities.²⁵ This chapter focuses on the influence, power and importance of imagination. Scholars are reluctant to place too much emphasis on the role of ideology in troop motivation, but some explanations of morale rest on soldiers' allegiance to and protection of a particular 'way of life'.²⁶ This chapter argues that the English soldiers' 'way of life' was interpreted through the lens of an idealised England, encompassing both the physical and social environment. This was nurtured and shaped through a mixture of fantasy and memory. Their visions of home were coping mechanisms and frequently ignored political developments. Men's visions of the *patria* were prosaic but provided sustaining visions of England's un-desecrated landscapes and 'home.'

¹⁸ J. Bourke, 'Gender Roles in Killing Zones', 153; Englander, 'Soldiering and Identity', 316-317; McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, 7-8, 89-118; J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 152; Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*, 72, 151.

¹⁹ Roper, *Secret Battle*, 51, 169.

²⁰ J. Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (Bath, 1999).

²¹ Roper, *Secret Battle*, 10; Hunter, 'More than an Archive of War', 339-354. For France see C. Vidal-Naquet, *Couples dans la Grande Guerre: Le Tragique et l'ordinaire du lien conjugal* (Lyon, 2014).

²² Meyer, *Men of War*, 45.

²³ McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, 117.

²⁴ Roper, 'Nostalgia as an Emotional Experience', 433-434, 438.

²⁵ P. Brouland and G. Doizy, *La Grande Guerre des cartes postales* (Paris, 2013). See also C. Makepeace, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire: The Familial Ties of British Prisoners of War held in Europe during the Second World War', *Historical Research*, Vol. 86, No. 231 (February 2013) 159-177.

²⁶ A. Watson, 'Fighting for Another Fatherland: The Polish Minority in the German Army, 1914-1918', *English Historical Review*, Vol. 125 No. 522 (Oct. 2011) 1137.

Imagination is a central and probably unique facet of human cognition and plays an as yet understudied role in culture and history – aside, that is, from Samuel Hynes' seminal work on the memory of the war.²⁷ Philosophers have mused upon the nature of imagination. It 'applies to things or people that are not now, or are not yet, or are not any more, or to a state of the world as it never could have been.'²⁸ While it 'conjures up fictions,' these are images that 'we could believe' real 'in a world that otherwise resembles our own.'²⁹ Imagination is still only partially understood. Psychologists have found that imaginative thoughts take a variety of forms.³⁰ They can encompass visions of how past events might have turned out differently or take the form of daydreams and fantasies.³¹ Imagination may be fed by philosophical and literary musing, but is just as often the product of lived, embodied, or 're-created experiences.'³² It is both an 'image-based schematic' through which we order and make sense of experiences *and* 'a faculty for fantasy and creativity.'³³ Importantly, psychologists argue that imagination is a rational and controllable mechanism that 'can help people make discoveries and deal with novelty.'³⁴

The idea of an 'imagined' physical and social environment repurposes Benedict Anderson's concept of the 'imagined community.'³⁵ Despite their inability to 'see' their previous social networks and homeland, soldiers were able to maintain their link with England through their imagination. Formal and informal written networks fed this – letters, postcards, and newspapers all provided a window onto England.³⁶ Unlike Anderson, this chapter will not make any substantive argument regarding nationhood, but demonstrate how this imagined environment (including both social and socio-physical spaces) influenced infantrymen and helped them endure. The chapter first demonstrates the primacy of family and community in men's perceptions of England. The final sections outline the imagined physical forms that England took and how imagination worked as a coping mechanism.

²⁷ Hynes, *A War Imagined*.

²⁸ D. Bromwich, *Moral Imagination* (Princeton and Woodstock, 2014) 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ R.M.J. Byrne, *The Rational Imagination: How People Create Alternatives to Reality* (Cambridge, MA, 2005) 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² A.S. Brüggen, 'Imagination and Experience,' *Open MIND*, (Frankfurt, 2014).

³³ M. Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago, 1987, 1990) xiv, xx and xxviii-xxix.

³⁴ Byrne, *The Rational Imagination*, 3, 214-15.

³⁵ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, (London, 1986, 2006).

³⁶ *Ibid.* 6-7.

English regiments retained some regional homogeneity, while the men who populated their ranks were predominantly young and from urban backgrounds.³⁷ What, though, did England mean to them? In Britain (and elsewhere) many people supported the war in the confidence of the justice of their cause, which was underwritten by a belief that they were defending hearth and home.³⁸ The resilience of English infantrymen suggests that this justification was strong and sustaining. Yet, as the years passed, a sense that 'two' Englands existed developed among some men. One embraced the home and close community, while the other encompassed England as a wider socio-political entity. The first stemmed from the close contact maintained with family and friends, the other from impressions or even rumours gleaned from newspapers and stories related via mail.³⁹ Both were constructs, formed and moulded by each soldier's pre-conceptions and perceptions of the war and the Home Front. What follows will demonstrate how the socio-political England held little purchase – soldiers were more concerned with their close community. Of course, one might think that this could reflect the military censorship limiting soldiers' ability to comment on politics. Yet, this analysis will demonstrate that the broader point holds true. A latent crisis would have become acute only if an irreparable rift had developed between English infantrymen and the Home Front. Yet, soldiers' focus on the family and close social networks meant that their link with home remained positive.

In 1914 many regular soldiers rarely mentioned England. The Army was their primary social environment. One man felt that 'it did not come strange to me to be... away from home as I have soldiered in several countries... like all Tommies we soon made ourselves at home.'⁴⁰ When thoughts were directed toward the homeland, they tended to focus on home comforts. Some soldiers believed that civilians were unable to comprehend the war. H.E. Trevor rarely discussed anything but France, but sometimes he derided the Home Front. He was particularly unimpressed by German atrocity stories, which he found 'much exaggerated.' He described the 'terrible' impact upon the locals and argued 'I shall be much happier if it [the campaign] were in England so that people could realize what it was and take necessary action for the future.'⁴¹ In another letter, he asserted that 'it is rubbish to say the Germans are done for.'⁴² Other references to England were related directly back to his war experience: the accuracy of a war correspondent in *The Times*, and somebody at home having

³⁷ See Appendix II.

³⁸ A. Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 44-45, 49; Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, Ch. 4.

³⁹ Esp. M. Hanna, 'The Couple', in J. Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War. Vol. III: Civil Society* (Cambridge, 2014), 6-28; M. Pignot, 'Children', in *Ibid.*, 29-45; J. Winter, 'Families', in *Ibid.*, 46-68.

⁴⁰ NAM 1992-04-159: Anonymous Account of the Battle of Mons: pp 2-3.

⁴¹ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter to Mother 2 September 1914.

⁴² *Ibid.* Letter to Mother 3 October 1914.

seen a soldier from his regiment.⁴³ The idea that England was failing to comprehend the seriousness of the conflict was evident in the letters of Pte. Mawer. On hearing that 'the Germans are giving you people in England the same as they have us out here,' he simply noted 'I should think that will make fellows join the Army.'⁴⁴ Other soldiers responded to the news of the German bombardments along the English coast and compared these dismissively with their experiences in Belgium and France.⁴⁵ For many men in 1914, events on the Home Front seemed to be of little significance.

During the first two months of the war the exigencies of the conflict limited men's ability to maintain regular contact with England. C. Dwyer's diary, which he kept between September and November 1914, does not make any reference to England except in the addresses of dead comrades. The only moment in which the world outside the Western Front was mentioned came when he encountered battalions with whom he had served in India. His only 'conversation all about home' occurred when he was reunited with his brother for the second time in ten years. The absence of 'home' in his daily record might have been a product of thirteen years' service, which saw the military become the focus of his life.⁴⁶ Home comforts certainly played on the minds of other men. Capt. Maurice Asprey made regular requests to his parents for items from home, such as toothbrushes, cigarettes, or clothing. His mother proved to be his source of Home Front gossip and passed on requests for anything he needed to his father.⁴⁷ Pte. W. Tapp's wife provided him with comforts and often sent food and other luxuries.⁴⁸ Other men wanted more news from home. The East Yorkshire Regiment's monthly journal called for more 'newspapers and periodicals.' Yet, the majority of men simply wanted things to smoke, eat, or make their lives a little more comfortable.⁴⁹

Other men remained concerned for their families' welfare and they devoted most of their thoughts to them.⁵⁰ Christmas and New Year proved to be moments at which some soldiers' thoughts of home were conjured with greatest intensity.⁵¹ Some men's desire to return to their peaceful lives was strong – but they remained resilient and certain of their

⁴³ Ibid. Letter to Evelyn 6 October 1914.

⁴⁴ Pte. J.E. Mawer, Undated Letter to Wife 1914 [Doc. 27].

⁴⁵ Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 22 November 1914 [p. 10]; Sgt. Osborn, Diary 22 September 1914.

⁴⁶ C. Dwyer, Diary 1914 [27 September and 28 October 1914].

⁴⁷ Capt. M. Asprey, Letter to Mother and/or Father 17 and 22 October; 15, 19, 25 and 29 November; 19 and 22 December 1914.

⁴⁸ Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 26 November 1914.

⁴⁹ *The Snapper: The Monthly Journal of the East Yorkshire Regt. (The Duke of York's Own)* IX.10 (Oct 1, 1914), 160.

⁵⁰ 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg, Letter to Charles Burnett November 1914 and Letter 27 November 1914; Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 26 November and 22 December [pp 6-10]; Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter from Capt. L.F. Ashburner to Mrs Parker 14 October 1914.

⁵¹ Diary of Unidentified Border Regiment Soldier, 31 December 1914; AOC: Fred Dyke, Postcard to Bertie.

duty.⁵² H.E. Trevor found the idea of returning to England was dishonorable.⁵³ W. Tapp was certain that his place was in France. His only reference to England came when he encountered a German during the Christmas Truce who missed his pre-war job in Manchester.⁵⁴ John Mawer's homesickness fed his depression. He wrote obsessively of events in Oxford and immersed himself in any news from home. He enquired about the government money his wife was receiving, his young boy's ability to walk, and constantly requested the latest issue of *The Oxford Times*. When the letters to his wife received no response he became increasingly anxious and irritable.⁵⁵ Tellingly Mawer was a reservist in the Ox and Bucks and had only recently been recalled to the colours. England, for these men, was primarily a social and familial entity and could be a source of both sustenance and irritation.

The men of 1916 retained a much stronger interest in the world that they had only recently left behind. While the higher levels of literacy found in the New Armies might have contributed to greater detail in their written record, it is clear (and unsurprising) that the links between volunteers, conscripts, and home seem to have been stronger than those of the men in 1914. William Anderson claimed that he spoke for many: “God Bless Dear Old Blighty” and I think that it is most peoples [sic] sentiment too.⁵⁶ He wrote that ‘we are all interested in anything concerning home and getting there for good.’⁵⁷ There was more interest in events outside the family unit. Pte. J.W. Martin enquired about labour shortages and interested himself in newspaper columns.⁵⁸ R.E.P. Stevens, too, recorded events on the Home Front in his diary.⁵⁹ Elsewhere the beginning of Lloyd George’s premiership was met with interest and excitement. Some saw it as a sign of the war effort being moved into a higher gear.⁶⁰ The rumours of ‘peace talks’ that proliferated towards the end of 1916 were of particular significance.⁶¹ This was likely the consequence of various news stories percolating through the trenches. It also signalled that men were looking to make sense of war and hoping to return to their ‘dear homeland.’⁶² Where bitterness existed it was directed towards those who seemed to undermine the war effort. *The Gasper*, a Royal Fusiliers journal, complained about the munitions workers, claiming their wages were not merited. It called on politicians to ‘get on with the war’ but preserved its harshest commentary for ‘conscientious objectors’ and the

⁵² Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter from Capt. A.F. Ashburner to Mrs Parker 14 October 1914; Sgt. Osborn, Diary 28 August 1914.

⁵³ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter to Mother 3 October 1914.

⁵⁴ Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 25 December 1914 [p 11].

⁵⁵ Pte. J.E. Mawer, Letters 23 September, 1 and 19 October and Undated 1914 [Doc.15].

⁵⁶ Pte. W. Anderson, Letter to Wife 12 October 1916.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 20 November 1916.

⁵⁸ Pte. W.J. Martin, Letters to Wife 7 and Undated [No. 5] December 1916.

⁵⁹ R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 4 December 1916.

⁶⁰ Capt. R.E.M. Young, Letter to Constance 9 December 1916.

⁶¹ Pte. W. Anderson, Letters 11 and 20 November, 3 and 27 December 1916; Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter 14 December 1916.

⁶² Pte. W. Anderson, Letter to Wife 11 November 1916.

'shirkers and blighters who discredit the fighters.'⁶³ The journal differentiated between the conscript, 'the fetched slacker,' and the undrafted: 'the mass of layabouts.'⁶⁴ Capt. R.E.M. Young was sceptical about the efforts being made by civilians and was contemptuous of their contribution.⁶⁵ Some others believed that those left at home could not comprehend the experience, the suffering, or the emotions experienced on service – the contrasts were 'impregnable.'⁶⁶ Remarkably such complaints were relatively rare. If one searches trench journals for references to conscientious objectors, 'conchies,' or shirkers, they are limited (particularly in comparison with those in French Army trench journals).⁶⁷

In 1916 many men were obsessed with their families and friends. They craved details about their lives and sought to nurture these relationships at a distance.⁶⁸ C. White could not stop his thoughts from drifting back to friends in Manchester, and he wanted to be reunited with them.⁶⁹ For some, the contact with their family and friends was essential to their emotional survival.⁷⁰ The post became one of the most important notations in their diaries.⁷¹ F.S. Castle described the 'joys' of 'real home letters.'⁷² The failure or delay of post induced anxiety, which was only alleviated when a letter finally arrived.⁷³ For many of those serving in 1916, the war proved to be their most prolonged separation from parents and family. Pte. William Anderson informed his wife that 'most chaps think more of home than ever before,

⁶³ 'Letter from "One of the First Half Million," "Between and Betwixt" and "Get on with the War," *The Gasper: The Unofficial Organ of the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st Royal Fusiliers*, No. 21 (30 September 1916) 2-4.

⁶⁴ 'The Brand of Cain,' *Ibid.* 6.

⁶⁵ Capt. R.E.M. Young, Letter to Constance 9 December 1916.

⁶⁶ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 22 June 1916 and Letter to Tot 26 October 1916; E.T. Marler, Diary 8 December 1916; Maj. S.O.B. Richardson, Letter Late 1916 [No. 2].

⁶⁷ From a search of the ProQuest database of Trench Journals and Unit Magazines (British Library) including only 'Infantry' and 'Mixed' units serving in 'France,' 'Belgium,' and on the 'Western Front.' In publications released during the course of the whole war 'Conchie' is found only three times, 'Conscientious Objector' appears in 111 instances, while references to a 'Shirker' or 'Shirkers' occurred in only 39 places. 'Striker' or 'Strikers' are referenced only 36 times. 'Politician' or 'Politicians' are discussed more frequently – 228 results appearing. Yet, the vast majority of these (179) come from one publication – *The Broad Arrow*, which was a longer running journal that did not really represent the opinion of the average soldier, being a 'high-brow' and elite army and navy publication that was eventually incorporated into *The Army and Navy Gazette*. This, as a point of contrast, compares to 6,024 references to 'Home' and 2,741 to 'England' in the same data set. For the very different French case see S. Audoin-Rouzeau's discussion of the prevalence of discussions of the 'hated' Home Front in French soldiers' newspapers, *Men at War*, esp. 92, 111, 119.

⁶⁸ 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter to Wife 14 October 1916; Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letters to Wife 5 and 29 December 1916.

⁶⁹ C. White, Diary 3 January 1917.

⁷⁰ Roper, *Secret Battle*, 51. Also 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter to Wife 25-26 December 1916.

⁷¹ J.M. Nichols, Diary 18, 22, 23, 25, 26 December 1916; Pte. W. Anderson, Diary 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 28 October and 2, 13, 16 November and 6, 14, 16 December 1916; R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 5 November and 1, 5, 6, 7, 28 December 1916; L/Cpl. C. White, 3, 11, 16, 17 January and 12 February 1917; Lt. L.W.B. Medlicott, Diary 12 October 1916.

⁷² F.S. Castle, Letter to Niece 29 September 1916.

⁷³ J.M. Nichols, Diary 22-26 December 1916; Pte. W. Anderson, Letter 28 October 1916.

but I don't think I was guilty of lack of appreciation before joining up.⁷⁴ He believed that distance and separation had re-enforced men's appreciation of England. 'One of the chaps said that we didn't know what fine wives we had before the war, but I told him I did.'⁷⁵ He lived 'in the one big hope that you and Tools [his daughter] are keeping well and comfortable and in no want of anything.'⁷⁶ Other men sought to remain a part of the community and ended their letters with an emotional request that their recipient remember them 'to all at home.'⁷⁷ Many found the 'kindnesses' that they received in letters and parcels greatly restorative.⁷⁸

The contact and the care demonstrated in parcels and messages sent from England gave meaning to men's experience by supplying them with a sense of purpose.⁷⁹ F.S. Castle informed his niece that he was 'deeply grateful' for his family's well wishes. They made 'one feel one ought to do so much to be worthy of it all.' He implored his niece to continue writing as it provided him with a 'joy that is as fresh with the last letter as with the first.'⁸⁰ Men searched Belgium and France for reminders of home. Pte. W.J. Martin, for example, enjoyed the familiar sight of London buses.⁸¹ Officers, middle class ORs, and men from rural areas were able to find comfort in the landscapes that looked similar to those in England.⁸² Capt. G.B. Donaldson's memory of home was aroused when smelling a small red rose, while the 'thick woods' around Reginald Neville's billet reminded him of Camberley.⁸³ Religious men found that attending church services offered some comfort and kindled fond memories of home.⁸⁴ In some rare cases some men's yearning for home could sap their morale.⁸⁵ Ernest T. Marler was desperate to escape the Western Front. His diary regularly included depressed notations such as 'how I want to be home,' 'what a joy to be at home,' 'how the comfort of home has been in my thoughts,' or 'how I long to gaze on the autumnal tints at home.'⁸⁶ While Marler's despair was rare, others still wanted 'to go home for good.'⁸⁷ Sgt. S. Gill

⁷⁴ Pte. W. Anderson, Letter to Wife 14 November 1916.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 16 December 1916.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 28 October 1916.

⁷⁷ 2nd Lt. Henrick Jones, Letter to Wife 25-26 November 1916.

⁷⁸ F. Hubard, Letter to Mr and Mrs Underhill 25 October 1916; Employees of A&C Black Publishers, Letter from E.P. Gilscott 11 February 1917 [describing leave in late 1916].

⁷⁹ A.P. Burke, Letter 12-15 October 1916; Pte. William Anderson, Letter 2 November 1916; F.S. Castle, Letter to Ethel 29 September 1916; L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 16 January 1917; IWM 07/40/1: N. Tattersall, Letter to Parents [also signed by brothers] 30 June 1916; S.B. Smith, [Undated] Letter October 1916.

⁸⁰ F.S. Castle, Letter to Ethel 29 September 1916.

⁸¹ W.J. Martin, Letter 25 December 1916.

⁸² R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 2 and 13 November 1916.

⁸³ Capt. G.B. Donaldson, Letter to Mother 28 June 1916; Lt. Reginald N. Neville, Letter to Sister 16 December 1916.

⁸⁴ R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 12 November 1916; NAM 2003-10-8: Pte. Maurice Henry Polack, Letter to his Sister.

⁸⁵ R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 19 November and 1 December 1916; Pte. W.J. Martin, Letter 31 December 1916;

⁸⁶ E.T. Marler, Diary 21-22 and 29 October and 6 November 1916.

⁸⁷ F.W. Child, Diary 29 November 1916.

found that his moods fluctuated as letters informed him about the ‘woes’ of his family.⁸⁸ Pte. William Anderson also pitied his comrades, some of whom received very little mail.⁸⁹ It seems that most men, though, were of the same opinion as C.P. Crump who stoically noted: ‘hope to be home soon’ but ‘Cheer Oh!’⁹⁰

In late 1917 and early 1918 there was still rather limited engagement with the wider Home Front – even in trench journals.⁹¹ While this may have been the product of censorship, it seems suggestive that references are rare even in men’s private diaries. Yet, where it did occur there was a greater sense of an emerging acute crisis. The gap in understanding had widened, soured, and was more than a little hostile. One regimental chaplain wrote to his old parish describing the feelings of the soldiers in Belgium and France. They found it ‘hard to hear that people at home are grumbling’ while they fought on.⁹² Reginald Neville thought civilians misunderstood the motivations and the ideology of the soldier.⁹³ Another man berated those ‘writing rot’ from their ‘comfortable house... where all war means... is interesting reading in the daily papers.’ They had neither the authority nor the right to speak of the war.⁹⁴ Others developed a particularly fierce bitterness towards politicians and society’s elites. C.T. O’Neill’s diary described how his Brigadier had ‘spoken strongly about politicians and young single men at home.’⁹⁵ Lt. J.H. Johnson reported on 30 January 1918 that he was ‘reading newspapers with the usual... result on account of food questions and the selfishness.’⁹⁶ Reginald Neville’s anger was not reserved for journalists. He wondered about the efficacy of Britain’s war effort while ‘blackguards’ – such as Arthur Henderson, Ramsay MacDonald, and Winston Churchill – were allowed to continue influencing events. He questioned why they were ‘tolerated’ or allowed to have ‘anything to do with the government’ and believed Churchill had ‘played with sufficient men’s lives.’⁹⁷ The government was also blamed for poor pay and the inept direction of the war. Lt. J.H. Johnson was particularly resentful of ‘profiteering,’ ‘exemptions’ and ‘conchies.’⁹⁸ C.W. Gray retained a collection of articles condemning Lord Lansdowne’s letter, which had called for a negotiated peace, for the ‘joy’ it gave to pacifists.⁹⁹ The emerging sense of crisis stemmed from a belief that the war effort was being undermined by the Home Front.

⁸⁸ Sgt. S. Gill, Diary 23 November 1916.

⁸⁹ Pte. William Anderson, Letter 16 December 1916.

⁹⁰ C.P. Crump, Letter 11 September 1916. Also Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter 29 December 1916.

⁹¹ See footnote 88.

⁹² Reverend E.N. Mellish, *St Paul’s, Deptford, Parish Church Magazine*, Easter 1918.

⁹³ Lt. Reginald N. Neville, Letter to Sister 2 August 1917.

⁹⁴ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens: Letter to Mother 27 January 1918.

⁹⁵ Lt. C.T. O’Neill, Diary 8 February 1918.

⁹⁶ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 30 January 1918.

⁹⁷ Lt. Reginald N. Neville, Letter to Father 23 August 1917.

⁹⁸ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 28 December 1917. Also Capt. C. Carrington, Letter 22 June 1918.

⁹⁹ 2nd Lt. C.W. Gray, ‘Politics and the Lansdowne Affair’ [Unknown Origin].

Many of the 'rank and file' looked to Britain for signs of peace but an increasing – though apparently still limited – number of them felt that the Home Front failed to understand their plight.¹⁰⁰ Those working in industry or safe jobs were particularly embittering.¹⁰¹ Disquiet was sometimes simply caused by civilians' lack of comprehension of the war experience.¹⁰² It is unclear what proportion of the men were industrial workers with labour or trade union sympathies. There are no messages of support for strikers found in the documents studied here. F. Hubard found industrial workers' greater pay and lesser risks hard to bear. He described a strike in Coventry as 'absolutely wicked.' These workers who ran 'NO risks... jeopardize[d] the success of this war.'¹⁰³ On 8 April he hoped that 'the lesson' of the previous few weeks fighting 'will not go unheeded' and that the government would 'rope in every young man they possibly can.' He concluded that 'the whole of our manhood should have been enlisted at the standoff.'¹⁰⁴ One officer became so disenchanted he began to wonder whether some 'at home are not worth fighting for.'¹⁰⁵ Reverend M.A. Bere, a chaplain with the forces, was left with the impression that 'I don't think we deserve to' win the war.¹⁰⁶ It seems that the Home Front had become something that was capable of sapping soldiers' positivity. It is no coincidence that the period in which the greatest acute crisis of morale occurred was also the one in which it is possible to trace the greatest levels of discontent with the wider Home Front. Yet, discussions of the socio-political England remained limited and, consequently, so did men's bitterness. Their focus remained with their family and community.

It was this more limited but personal 'home' that remained their primary reference point.¹⁰⁷ Men constantly thought of home.¹⁰⁸ Pte. W.G. Clayton's diary was primarily a record of the letters from home.¹⁰⁹ Pte. C.E. Wild became depressed when he received no mail for two weeks in February and March 1918 – his mood almost instantly improved when he received a copy of the *Manchester Evening News*, in which he read of his friend's

¹⁰⁰ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 6 January 1918.

¹⁰¹ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens: Letter to Mother 27 January 1918; Capt. A. J. Lord, Letter to his Father, 26 April 1918; Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 1 January 1918; Reverend E.N. Mellish, *St Paul's, Deptford, Parish Church Magazine*, January 1918; 'Editorial', *The B.E.F. Times*, No. 4, Vol. 1 (1917) 1.

¹⁰² Reverend E.N. Mellish, *St Paul's, Deptford, Parish Church Magazine*, Easter 1918; Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 6 January 1918.

¹⁰³ F. Hubard, Letter to Mr and Mrs Underhill 8 December 1917.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Letter to Mr and Mrs Underhill 8 April 1918; Col. Hardman, Letter 3 April 1918.

¹⁰⁵ Col. Hardman, Letter to Frank 12 July 1918.

¹⁰⁶ Reverend M.A. Bere, Diary 7 December 1917 [p 134].

¹⁰⁷ F. Hubard, Letters to Mr and Mrs Underhill 8 December 1917 and 8 April 1918; 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg, Letter to Charis Burnett 16 January 1918; Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter 16 June and 12 September 1918; Pte. John Peat, Letter 11 October 1917.

¹⁰⁸ Reverend E.N. Mellish, *St Paul's, Deptford, Parish Church Magazine*, July 1918; 2nd Lt. Sydny Frankenburg, Diary 7 February 1918.

¹⁰⁹ MR 3/17/142: Pte. W.G. Clayton, Diary 1917.

marriage.¹¹⁰ The importance of the family was revealed in soldiers' anxiety at the prospect of food shortages at home, which was so worrying a development that the government investigated its impact.¹¹¹ H.T. Madders was constantly thinking about his parents, Ledbury, the fireside, and 'Olive.' Every aspect of 'good old sweet home' occupied his thoughts.¹¹² These became particularly poignant as he overcame the stresses of the German onslaught after 21 March 1918. Pte. F.G. Senyard found that the news from home contained in letters was 'extra welcome' during this period. Thoughts of his family helped to dilute war's horrors. The 'separation from home and all your people' was the 'worst part' of his service.¹¹³ Some men's thoughts of home had the power to undermine their military fortitude. J. Grimston was desperate to get home, and jealously recorded moments at which his friends – through injury or leave – were given the opportunity to return to 'Blighty.'¹¹⁴ More generally, in 1917/18 references to 'Blighty' were increasingly used in the context of wounds and escape.¹¹⁵ For the most part, though, family and community remained a sustaining influence.¹¹⁶

Throughout the war, thoughts of home occupied soldiers' minds on the Western Front. The wider political and national unit was an increasingly alien and embittering entity. It, however, proved to be of relatively limited importance to the soldiers. It seems to have been something that they were unable, unwilling, or too uninterested to discuss. Censorship might explain its absence in soldiers' letters and diaries. However, its relatively limited traction even in the soldiers' newspapers suggests that it did hold less purchase. The correspondence men received was generally supportive and sustaining. The limited number of systematic examinations of the post sent to the Western Front found 'little, if any trace' of defeatism or corrosive pessimism.¹¹⁷ More coherent and meaningful images of England revolved around home: the locality, friends, and family. These had the power to engage, motivate, and restore soldiers' morale. Acute crisis was, in part, averted because men fought for their imagined personal and familiar social environment. What follows will discuss what

¹¹⁰ Pte. C.E. Wild, Diary 10 and 14 March 1918.

¹¹¹ TNA MAF 60/243: 'The Effect of Food Queues at Home on the Men at the Front'; Employees of A.C. Black Publishers, Letter from E.P. Gilscott 20 May 1917. See also 'A B.E.F. Alphabet', *The Wipers Times: A Facsimile Reprint of the Trench Magazines*, Vol. 1 Iss. 4 (Mar 5, 1917).

¹¹² H.T. Madders, Diary April through July 1918.

¹¹³ Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter 22 May 1918.

¹¹⁴ J. Grimston, Diary 24 March 1918.

¹¹⁵ Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Letter 29 August 1918; Pte. William Adams, Diary 22 June 1918; Reverend M.A. Bere, Letter 24 October 1917. Also 'Personal: First Battalion Notes', *The Londoner: The Journal of 1/25th, The London Regiment*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2 (Sep 1, 1917) 49 and 'The Burning Question', *The B.E.F. Times: A Facsimile Reprint of the Trench Magazine*, VOL. 2 Iss. 3 (Nov. 1 1917) 4.

¹¹⁶ A&C Black and Company, Letter from E.P. Gilscott 8 August 1917; Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter to Wife 16 June 1918; 2nd Lt. S. Frankenburg, Letter 7 February 1918.

¹¹⁷ TNA DEFE 1/131: War Office, *Report on Postal Censorship During the Great War (1914-1919)* 196.

form this more subjective home took; explain why it remained so immediate and positive; and explore the strength of men's emotional ties to a local and specific idea of England.

If soldiers spared relatively few thoughts for politics and wider society what did this mean for their images of England and home? Michael Roper has convincingly argued that 'most veterans probably imagined it... [as] a short-hand for loved ones, bricks and mortar, a garden or a neighbourhood, perhaps a local landscape.'¹¹⁸ Apparently class influenced the way that Edwardians viewed England and Englishness. Paul Thompson has argued that upper- and middle-class Englishness was 'romantic' and 'rural'.¹¹⁹ Others have suggested that the working classes focussed on their pride in being at the heart of Empire and on martial, linguistic and racial superiority.¹²⁰ It is most likely, however, that a nuanced and diverse Englishness existed. These divisions were not so straightforward, and dimensions crossed class boundaries. Soldiers' discourses suggest that the England they imagined was most frequently localised and idealised. While most of these men lived in towns, they continued to draw on romanticised natural and rural landscapes.¹²¹ Unsurprisingly, this tendency grew out of wider contemporary discourses that celebrated the rural world. These were found in both political and popular culture.¹²² These were visions of a territory in which it was almost always spring or summer, and were deployed to combat sights that met troops in Belgium and France. Some men continued to think about the built urban landscapes of industrial England. These town or streetscapes were clean and sanitised, providing a vision of a civilised homeland. There was not one England. 'The locations,' Paul Readman has argued, 'of English identity were more various, more congenial to a range of ideological positions, and thus more effective as a vehicle of nationalist discourse, in all its complexity.'¹²³

Readman's work has demonstrated that regional and local identities did not diminish a more overarching sense of Englishness – or indeed Britishness – but that a diversity of associations bolstered and supported national identity.¹²⁴ Lloyd Kramer has noted that 'nations and nationalism claim a homeland' and it makes sense that this was personalised. Visions of home influenced ideas of England and increased their poignancy.¹²⁵ The postcards

¹¹⁸ Roper, *Secret Battle*, 13.

¹¹⁹ Thompson, *The Edwardians*, 180-184.

¹²⁰ Ibid. For 'rural' Englishness see C. Dakers, *Forever England: The Countryside at War, 1914-1918* (London, 2015).

¹²¹ See Appendix II.

¹²² P. Readman, *Land and Nation: Patriotism, National Identity, and the Politics of Land, 1880-1914* (Woodbridge, 2008) 1-12.

¹²³ Readman, *Storied Ground*, 16.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 88, 300-310.

¹²⁵ L. Kramer, *Nationalism in Europe and America: Politics, Cultures, and Identities since 1775* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2011) 57.

kept by soldiers portray the various Englands that co-existed; they reflect a deeply personal and intensely positive image. Most of these portrayed the immediate home or an archetypal vision of Blighty. Sometimes England was a person, such as their 'best girl,' more frequently it was a place or scene such as their 'little grey home of the west,' 'the village lane,' or cities such as 'Birmingham, Leeds, or Manchester.'¹²⁶

Soldiers' journals deployed visions of England peculiar to the regiment's home county. The south of England was a muse for the publications of London-based regiments. *The Gasper* (Royal Fusiliers) described England as 'a wonderful place.' 'How green the fields are and the trees [sic]. Everything is so clean and beautiful, so superlatively better than any other land you have ever seen.'¹²⁷ The vision of picturesque landscapes was cathartic. Imagining a train journey, the author described how the 'hills and valleys, streams and pools, fields and forests, flash by in one beautiful moving picture, and we are more than content. The dear, drowsy old towns we pass speak of nothing but peace, and the weight of war seems to shift from our shoulders for a while.'¹²⁸ An early issue of *The Bankers' Draft* (26th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers) fused the historical and pastoral in its vision of 'Merrie England.' Home was composed of lakes; primroses; birdsong; blooming hedges; children at play; wheat fields; 'willow-shaded streams'; lilacs; tall grasses; and poppies. Men fought for this peaceful vision of 'the finest land on earth.'¹²⁹ In the journal of the 'The Buffs' it was Kent's renown as England's 'garden' that tugged at the heart. The hops, the corn, and the orchards contributed to the county's 'richness,' while its maids added to its attractiveness.¹³⁰ One review of a soldier poet's work in the *The Fifth Glo'ster Gazette* described Tommy's 'inarticulate longing for some little village garden in Gloucestershire or somewhere.' Here it was the Cotswolds and Malvern Hills against the backdrop of the 'Severn plain' that made the poet 'hear the heart within me cry.'¹³¹ The review concluded that the soldier 'longs for the wide prospects and spacious parks and mist-veiled heights' of his 'native island.'¹³²

The Sussex Patrol upheld England's coastal landscape as a muse. It was the 'coasts' that guarded the gates of 'Old England... in all her bloody wars.' There are 'many, many watchers' along her 'shores.' Their 'constant vigil' kept those at home 'safe.' Here the

¹²⁶ AOC: Anonymous Postcard Collection 'Little Grey Home in the West [2]', 'I Want to See the Dear Old Home Again [3]', 'Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty [2].'

¹²⁷ Strozzi, 'Hullo England!', *The Gasper: The Unofficial Organ of the B.E.F.*, No. 20 (Jul. 24 1916), 1.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ T.F.T. 'Oh for June in Merrie England!', *The Bankers' Draft: Magazine of the 26th Battn. (Bankers') Royal Fusiliers*, Vol. 1 Iss. 2 (Jul 1, 1916), 3. See also 'The Broken Mill', *The Dagger or "London in the Line"*, Iss. 1 (Nov 1, 1918), 23.

¹³⁰ Margaret A. Elmslie, 'Men of Kent', *War Dragon: Regimental Magazine of "The Buffs" (East Kent Regiment)* Issue 4 (Sep 1, 1916), 4.

¹³¹ Review: F.W. Harvey, *A Gloucestershire Lad at Home and Abroad*, by Bishop Frodsham *The Fifth Glo'ster Gazette: A Chronicle, Serious and Humorous, of the Battalion while Serving with the British Expeditionary Force*, Iss. 16 (Dec 1, 1916), 13-14.

¹³² *Ibid.*

landscape and the soldiers' role as protector of England were fused.¹³³ For others the West Country held sentimental appeal. In one journal the ferns, foxgloves, and butterflies at Sheeps Tor on Dartmoor resonated most. The author longed to feel the 'soft springiness of the heather, to smell the bracken, and now and again to stretch out a hand to pick a whortleberry.' It was a soothing image: 'the clouds drift over them [the moors], for I have turned my back on the sea and before me now are miles and miles of hills, apparently in utter solitude.'¹³⁴ The search for solitude is repeated in many of these imaginings of home – perhaps because it was so hard to find on military service. For other units England was encompassed by references to sights and sounds peculiar to other counties – be it Cheshire or Yorkshire.¹³⁵

Many soldiers embraced similar rural and pastoral idylls.¹³⁶ This is unsurprising given the centrality of the rural in contemporary popular and political discourses – even men from urban areas used familiar frames and imagery.¹³⁷ What is more, the Edwardian penchant for day trips – to the country and seaside – also influenced their vision of the country.¹³⁸ Sgt. Harry Hopwood, for example, received a postcard from a friend who had been visiting Whitsand Bay, Cornwall. Hopwood 'remember[ed] going there from Penzance once with Sherring and having a bathe there.'¹³⁹ 92 per cent of the country remained rural – 'pastoral England was very visible still.'¹⁴⁰ The world beyond the townscape retained significance, and many people 'lived a life bounded by small-town horizons.'¹⁴¹ The historian Paul Thompson has described how Edwardians were still able to maintain the semblance of a rural life, the distance between cobbled streets and rural pasture often being the matter of a hedgerow.¹⁴² The countryside was a common theme among many poets. The work of A.E. Housman depicts the rural landscape as paradise, while Edward Thomas's pre-war poetry was embedded in Hampshire's rolling hills.¹⁴³ These themes continued to permeate his wartime

¹³³ E.M. 'Old England's Shores', *The Sussex Patrol* Vol. 1 Issue 7 (Dec. 1 1916), 7.

¹³⁴ 'A Breath of the Homeland', *The F.S.R.: A Monthly Magazine*, (Oct 1, 1915), 11. Also 'The Broken Mill', *The Dagger or "London in the Line"* Issue 1 (Nov 1, 1918), 23.

¹³⁵ 'Signaller's Alphabet', *The Cherrybuff: The Magazine of a Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment* (Sep 1, 1917), 17-18; The Editor, 'Editorial', "Pelican Pie": *The Official Organ of a West Riding Division* Iss. 1 (Dec 1, 1917), 20; R.W. Service, 'Going Home', *The Fifth Glo'ster Gazette: A Chronicle, Serious and Humorous, of the battalion while Serving with the British Expeditionary Force*, Issue 17 (Feb 1, 1917), 10.

¹³⁶ Lewis-Stempel, *Where the Poppies Blow*, ch. 1.

¹³⁷ Readman, *Land and Nation in England*.

¹³⁸ P. Johnson, 'Conspicuous Consumption and Working-Class Culture in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 38 (Dec., 1988) 27-42; J. Hannavy, *The English Seaside in Victorian and Edwardian Times* (London, 2011).

¹³⁹ Sgt. Harry Hopwood, Letter to Mother 3 November 1917.

¹⁴⁰ P.J. Waller, *Town, City and Nation: England 1850-1914* (Oxford, 1983, 1991), 6-8; Thompson, *The Edwardians*, 17.

¹⁴¹ Waller, *Town, City and Nation*, 8.

¹⁴² Thompson, *The Edwardians*, 29.

¹⁴³ S.A.E. Housman, *A Shropshire Lad* (London, 1896, 1908); E. Eastaway [pseudonym of E. Thomas], *Six Poems* (Flansham, 1916).

works in which the natural landscape became a foil for war's destruction.¹⁴⁴ The countryside was part of a cultural trend where authors *sought* beauty in the natural environment. Nature and the soul were intertwined in literature of the period.

Many officers were fascinated by the countryside.¹⁴⁵ Capt. G.B. Donaldson saw England as a place of 'cottage gardens' and 'lanes and woodlands, or... misty mountains and moors.'¹⁴⁶ This composite image embraced England's various natural national landscapes: the south country, the borderlands, and the Lakelands.¹⁴⁷ Donaldson saw England as a collage of its multifarious physical environments. Charles Carrington, in contrast, had a strong attachment to an archetypal rural homeland – perhaps nurtured during his childhood in New Zealand. He believed 'the South of England is the only place in the world for a white man to live in.'¹⁴⁸ Since Carrington came from a 'White Dominion' it is perhaps unsurprising that he fused race with ideas of respectability, civility and the landscape. Yet even some men of the urban working class held rural England high esteem. Pte. John Peat, from Manchester, kept a selection of postcards showing England's southlands – including one of Stonehenge.¹⁴⁹ Pte. C.L. Tully's diary contained images and descriptions of flora and fauna from home.¹⁵⁰ England, in such visions, was pure and unadulterated by the modern world. This was something to be preserved and protected.¹⁵¹

Nevertheless, in some cases the rural landscapes held little appeal. Henry Lawson, a subaltern in early 1918, had two farmers and a gardener in his platoon. The others were all 'town bred men' and were 'not at all interested in the countryside.'¹⁵² Some working-class soldiers from large towns and cities were, it seems, less concerned with the natural environment, which may have played into their ability to adapt to industrial war. Adrian Gregory has argued that theirs was a world of 'ill health, insecurity, grinding poverty and resigned hopelessness.' He has gone further and suggested that 'no view of the horrors of the First World War can be complete without a sense of the horrors of the pre-war peace.'¹⁵³ Conceivably the Western Front – in terms of aesthetics and comfort, rather than danger – was not such a shock for some of the men. Similarly, the rural poor – who were often appallingly paid farm labourers – lived in dwellings that might have been less cramped than those found

¹⁴⁴ E. Thomas, *Last Poems* (London, 1918).

¹⁴⁵ Dakers, *Forever England*, 1-19.

¹⁴⁶ Capt. G.B. Donaldson, Letters to Mother 28 June and 9 July 1916.

¹⁴⁷ Readman, *Storied Ground*.

¹⁴⁸ Capt. C. Carrington, Letter to Mother 8 May 1918.

¹⁴⁹ MR 3/17/126: Pte. John Peat, Postcards of Stockton Church, Codford, Stonehenge, and Witley.

¹⁵⁰ Liddle/WW1/GS/1634: Pte. C.L. Tully, Diary.

¹⁵¹ This reflects attitudes found in the pre-war preservationist movement. See J.K. Walton, 'The National Trust Centenary: Official and Unofficial Histories', *The Local Historian*, Vol. 26 (1996) 80-88 and P.C. Gould, *Early Green Politics: Back to Nature, Back to Land, and Socialism in Britain 1880-1914* (Brighton, 1988).

¹⁵² H. Lawson, Letter to his Mother 7 March 1918.

¹⁵³ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 278.

in the poorest parts of towns and cities, but were often equally dilapidated. Their lives were dominated by uncertainty and destitution.¹⁵⁴ While one might expect those men that came from such deprived backgrounds to have viewed 'home' unenthusiastically, even men from small, cramped and unhealthy homes yearned for these places and sanitised their visions of England. This is, perhaps, why so many focussed on the rooms of their house or the surrounding streets when imagining home.¹⁵⁵ R.E.P. Stevens's England incorporated the dining room fireside, via 'the parish of Godly [and] every street' to the 'interiors of houses I was want [sic] to visit all at once.'¹⁵⁶

Soldiers' interactions with men of a similar background conjured feelings of familiarity and clarified images of home. The tones of a local accent sometimes engaged men's memory and sentimentality, and fed their thoughts of home. L/Cpl. C. White, a Mancunian serving in the Royal Fusiliers, believed it was 'quite a treat to hear a North Country man', and the 'badge of Manchester' was something 'pleasant to see nowadays.' According to the CWGC records, only 25 of the 731 Royal Fusiliers who died in late 1916 were from Manchester. As such, both the sight and sound of Mancunians were a welcome 'reminder of home.'¹⁵⁷ Accents could also indicate difference; a number of men felt that hearing a 'Scotch' accent was significant and noteworthy.¹⁵⁸ Home was also embodied in the social environment; friends and family were the human face of England. The presence of men from a common background provided soldiers with solace in the midst of an often confusing and frequently frightening world.¹⁵⁹ While many adapted to their new socio-cultural surroundings, they still sought out friends and family.¹⁶⁰ This provided an opportunity to discuss shared 'chums' and acquaintances, reminisce over old haunts, and consolidate their image of the England they had left behind.¹⁶¹ Perceived norms and common group membership have been seen to increase social attraction – a key ingredient in a group's cohesion.¹⁶² Additionally, friends offered the chance to circumvent the Army's postal system and censorship and maintain more open correspondence with England by smuggling letters.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Pte. W. Anderson, Letter to Wife 14 November 1916.

¹⁵⁶ R.E.P Stevens, Diary 6 December 1916.

¹⁵⁷ L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 4 January 1917.

¹⁵⁸ Pte. W. Tapp, 27 December 1914; F.W. Child, Diary 21 November 1916; Lt. C.T. O'Neill, Diary 15 February 1918.

¹⁵⁹ Pte. J.E. Mawer, Letter 23 September 1914; Lt. Reginald N. Neville, Letter to Sister 24 December 1916; Sgt. Harry Hopwood, Letter to Mother 13 January 1918.

¹⁶⁰ SOFO Box 16 Item 31 3/4/J3/7: Pte. C. George, Diary 10 July and 13, 14, 16, 17, 28 October 1917; Lt. Reginald N. Neville, Letter to Father 17 December 1917; H.T. Madders, Diary 1 June 1918; Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 11 October 1918; Pte. William Anderson, Letter 1 December 1916; Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter 26 December 1916; E.T. Marler, Diary 16 November 1916.

¹⁶¹ Liddle/WW1/GS/0042: Pte. R. Argent, Letter from A.V. Peal to Mrs Argent.

¹⁶² M.A. Hogg, 'Group Cohesiveness: A Critical Review and Some New Directions', *European Review of Social Psychology*, Vol. 4 (1993), 85-111.

The government was aware that 'the constant stream' of troops going back and forth from leave risked this.¹⁶³ A.P. Burke, for one, used his connections within the 20th Manchesters to send letters home.¹⁶⁴ Officers also sought out friends from school and university. Tellingly some men, on arriving in Belgium and France, wrote depressively of camps and units in which they were unable to find familiar faces.¹⁶⁵

Many men used local and national newspapers as a window onto England – the stories and reports providing the fuel for the fire of their imagination.¹⁶⁶ In the case of F.S. Castle, J. Grimston and C. White, descriptive letters from home played this role and improved their moods.¹⁶⁷ For J.E. Mawer, England was Oxford. This encompassed both its physical environment (the colleges and streets, as well as his own house) and the social environment (family, friends, and community).¹⁶⁸ For some men England was even more focused. A marital bedroom embodied home for 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones.¹⁶⁹ Capt. G.B. Donaldson's vision of England drew on his university days in Cambridge. While on the Western Front he recalled Queens' College and 'the red brick houses' that rose 'straight from the river'.¹⁷⁰ Lt. J.H. Johnson engrossed himself in *The Loom of Youth* by Alec Waugh. The novel, which recreated and dwelt upon Waugh's school days at Sherborne in Dorset, provided a vivid description of public school and the coastal landscape of the southwest. By escaping into literature, this young subaltern may well have been remembering his own childhood.¹⁷¹ When picturing 'dear old home' H.T. Madders thought of the wooded Malvern Hills and the small villages and towns – such as 'Putley and dear old quiet Ledbury' – that populated them.¹⁷² He was particularly enamoured by the 'Worcester and Hereford roads' that meandered through this landscape.¹⁷³ For A.P. Burke England was primarily Manchester: its industrial landscape of factories and its network of streets.¹⁷⁴

However, the diffusion of regional identity within these units might have broadened some soldiers' perspectives on 'home' and, perhaps, nurtured their sense of compatriotism. Linda Colley has argued that the conflict against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France had

¹⁶³ *Report on Postal Censorship During the Great War*, 196.

¹⁶⁴ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 12-15 October 1916.

¹⁶⁵ H. Lawson, Letter to Mother 12 September 1917; Lt. C.T. O'Neill, Diary 14 January 1918.

¹⁶⁶ 2nd Lt. S. Frankenburg, Letter to Charis Burnett Early November 1914; SOFO Box 23 Item 99: Sgt. J. Early, Journal 29 October 1915; Lt. Col. D.R. Turnbull, Letter to Mother and Father 15 December 1916; J.M. Nichols, Diary 25, 26 and 31 December 1916; Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 31 December 1916.

¹⁶⁷ F.S. Castle, Letter to Niece Ethel 29 September 1916; J. Grimston, Diary 12 November 1916; L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 17 January 1917.

¹⁶⁸ J.E. Mawer, Doc. 14 Letter 23 September 1914, Doc. 15 Letter Unknown Date 1914; Dco. 20 Letter to his Wife w/c 19 October; Doc. 27 Letter to Wife Undated [Mid-December 1914].

¹⁶⁹ 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter to Wife 25-26 December 1916.

¹⁷⁰ Capt. G.B. Donaldson, Letter to Mother 16 June 1916.

¹⁷¹ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 18 December 1917.

¹⁷² H.T. Madders, Diary 1, 3 and 9 April 1918.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* Diary 31 March 1918

¹⁷⁴ A.P. Burke, Letters to Reg 21 November and 29 December 1916.

seen just such a broadening of British soldiers' horizons. As they were deployed across the country and interacted with men of different backgrounds they developed a deeper-rooted sense of Britishness. She saw the emergence of multiple relevant 'solar systems' that spread from the region to the nation more generally.¹⁷⁵ Michael Roper has argued that discussions of home helped to offer a 'common topic' of conversation and helped to renew 'connections with lives they had left' and helped to solidify new relationships as men 'started to know more about one another'.¹⁷⁶ In September 1916, one Gloucestershire Regiment unit journal questioned: 'How long have we been Londoners?'¹⁷⁷ Men were forced to interact and integrate with people from parts of England – and sometimes Britain – that they did not know and had rarely thought about. A.T. Hollingsworth was a regular soldier from Wood Green, London but served as a senior non-commissioned officer in the 2nd, 3rd, and 7th Battalions Border Regiment, which were veritable melting pots of men from across England.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, Tom Elbridge was a sergeant in the Ox and Bucks – his upbringing in Fulham would have been vastly different from that of his comrades.¹⁷⁹ Pte. Herbert Victor Aust served in two New Army battalions of the Devonshire Regiment, before transferring into a territorial and then a regular battalion of the Royal Fusiliers.¹⁸⁰ Some men were struck by such interactions. Lt. J.H. Johnson had been brought up in Brighton and Hove, but served in the Border Regiment. He was fascinated by the Cumberland and Westmoreland accent and recorded its quirks in his diary. Towards the end of the war he felt moved to note the 'pleasure of seeing Border men again'.¹⁸¹ C. Dwyer, who served in the Devonshire Regiment, but was from London, adopted the county as a surrogate home and noted the hometown or village of each of his dead Devonshire comrades.¹⁸²

Paul Readman has argued that such visions of 'land and landscape... represented a desire to come to terms with the rapid pace of social and economic change by maintaining a sense of continuity with the English past, so preserving a durable sense of national belonging'.¹⁸³ Archetypal visions of England emerged in popular culture before the war, but it was not only stereotypes that were deployed in visions of the homeland. Soldiers also drew on their own experiences of home and used romanticised and positive memories to furnish their

¹⁷⁵ L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, 2012), 242-325; L. Colley, 'Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain 1750-1830', *Past & Present*, No. 113 (1986), 116- 117.

¹⁷⁶ Roper, 'Nostalgia as an Emotional Experience,' 439.

¹⁷⁷ 'Things We Want to Know,' *The Fifth Glo'ster Gazette: A Chronicle, Serious and Humorous, of the Battalion while Serving with the British Expeditionary Force*, Issue 14 (Sep 1, 1916), 7.

¹⁷⁸ NAM 1990-06-389: C.S.M. Arthur Thomas Hollingsworth, Soldier's Pay Book.

¹⁷⁹ Sgt. Thomas Eldridge, Undated Letter to Children.

¹⁸⁰ Herbert Victor Aust, Certificate of Employment During the War [Army Form Z. 18] and Certificate of Discharge [Army Form B. 2079].

¹⁸¹ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 26 November 1916 and 11 October 1918.

¹⁸² C. Dwyer, Diary 1914 [particularly 6 November 1914].

¹⁸³ Readman, *Land and Nation*, 2-3.

fantasies of England. 'Home' was a meaningful and secure foundation for soldiers' understanding and perception of the wider nation. What follows will expand upon how men used their imagination as a coping tool.

England was only hours away, and its proximity played upon the minds of soldiers. Despite this, it *felt* very distant. The rarity of leave meant home could not have seemed further away from their present. Nevertheless, Michael Roper has argued that 'fantasies' of home were 'often expressed in the present or future tense, which suggests their significance in providing comfort.'¹⁸⁴ These images of England, which might have been fed on the rare and limited periods of leave, were primarily the product of imagination. They fused memory and fantasy and blurred conscious and unconscious thoughts to form very vivid daydreams of home. The popular wartime song *Keep the Home Fires Burning* consoled civilians that 'Though your lads are far away / They dream of home.' The soldiers' tunes played on similar themes. *The Long, Long Trail* described their achingly slow path back to 'the land of my dreams.'¹⁸⁵ These songs focused on strong and sustaining images of an England that encompassed locality, friends, and family and offered psychological escape. These were highly optimistic constructs and allowed men to dwell on what they were fighting for.¹⁸⁶

The soldiers wrote home outlining how imagination allowed them to feel close to those in England.¹⁸⁷ The post that men received conjured memories.¹⁸⁸ L/Cpl. C. White recorded in his diary how his 'thoughts are continually with them [his family] and all my desires for peace so that we may all return to our homes.' White logged how the men continued to 'spend our days with those we love.'¹⁸⁹ He highlighted the benefits of these visions: 'I thought of what I used to be doing at this hour in past days and for a time the gloom and squalor of the filthy trench disappeared.'¹⁹⁰ C.T. O'Neill confessed that he did 'a lot of daydreaming.'¹⁹¹ Pte. William Anderson described to his wife how 'I often picture our house in my mind, and many a time I fancy my spirit (if this is not too fanciful) wanders through the rooms. In my mind I can see you two during the evenings by the fire and I wonder when you go to bed and then fancy you two lying down. You awake as usual. Its [sic]

¹⁸⁴ Roper, 'Nostalgia as an Emotional Experience,' 440.

¹⁸⁵ Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, 37.

¹⁸⁶ For a similar discussion of 'imaginative realms' and loved ones see Roper, *Secret Battle*, 68-72, and Makepeace, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire', 159-177.

¹⁸⁷ Lt. F.A. Brettell, Letter from Peggy 8 May 1916.

¹⁸⁸ Sgt. Harry Hopwood, Letter to Mother 3 November 1917.

¹⁸⁹ L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 12 February 1917.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Diary 19 February 1917.

¹⁹¹ Lt. C.T. O'Neill, Diary 17 February and 18 March 1918.

funny at times what you get thinking about.¹⁹² 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones' visions of his fiancée revealed the intimacy and desires of two lovers. He wrote that 'I love to dream about what we're going to do and all sorts of things. If you were only here or I were only there with you. I'd tell you things. Oh! Such things. I "pink" you'd have to hide your face on my shoulder during the telling; but I'd keep on kissing you all the same.'¹⁹³ Later, after a brief period of leave, he comforted his now wife that 'I can see that dear little room at the top of 29, and the most wonderful girl in the world snuggling down in the white bed.'¹⁹⁴ His dreams took him to a future in which his pent-up sexual desire might be released.¹⁹⁵ A.P. Burke, while sat in a dugout during a heavy bombardment in 1916, could 'see' his whole family and 'although I was having a rotten time it was more than comforting to think you would all be so happy at home.'¹⁹⁶ For Capt. L.F. Ashburner it was memories of fishing that he found most heartening.¹⁹⁷ There is a sense that there was an organic and widespread form of hallucinatory meditation. Moments such as these provided brief but important glimpses of happiness.

Image 4.1: This image – 'Dreams' of England in Postcards: 'Le Rêve.' SOfO Box 16 Item 61: 'A Selection of 15 Patriotic Cards 1914-1918 Vintage' – has been removed as the copyright is owned by another institution.

Postcards depicted scenes that sought to reproduce the ideas in the soldiers' letters and diaries. The image above, which comes from a French postcard marketed to British soldiers, depicted a man daydreaming of his 'girl' at home. Her bright clothes were in stark contrast to the dark background against which the soldier stood. This provides an illustration of the importance of imagination to men at war. The French historians Brouland and Doizy have argued that postcards such as this are an example of an imaginary universe that helped to maintain relationships despite the war.¹⁹⁸ A great number of cards reflected the importance of internalised images of the Home Front. Wives, sweethearts, and mothers were particularly poignant symbols.¹⁹⁹ Cards frequently depicted men sitting, sleeping, or writing in re-created trench scenes with the floating image of a woman appearing as an apparition – always in a

¹⁹² Pte. W. Anderson, Letter to Wife 14 November 1916.

¹⁹³ 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter to Fiancée 16 October 1916.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. Letter to Wife 25-26 December 1916.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. Letter to Wife 14 October 1916. Also N. Christie and M. Gauvreau, *Bodies, Love, and Faith in the First World War* (Cham, 2018) 191-250

¹⁹⁶ A.P. Burke, Letter to Tot 29 December 1916.

¹⁹⁷ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter from Capt. L.F. Ashburner to Mrs Parker. 14 October 1914.

¹⁹⁸ Brouland and Doizy, *La Grande Guerre*, 10-12; 38-46.

¹⁹⁹ For broad discussions of postcards see T. Holt and V. Holt, *Till the Boys Come Home* (Barnsley, 1977, 2014) and P. Doyle, *British Postcards of the First World War* (London, 2011). French historians have done more to locate postcards within the cultural history of the Great War. See Huss, *Carte postale et culture de guerre*; Vidal-Naquet, *Couples dans la Grande Guerre*; J. Le Naour, *La Grande Guerre à travers la Carte Postale Ancienne* (Paris, 2013).

traditionally feminine setting, such as the kitchen or parlour.²⁰⁰ In others, small cottages and fathers might also appear as a vision. Such images, while secularised, played on much older religious imagery of angels appearing in visions or dreams.

Image 4.2: This image – ‘Dreams’ of England in Postcards: ‘Dreams of Home.’
MR2/17/65: Papers of John Douglas Powell – has been removed as the copyright is owned by another institution.

These visions emerged at moments of reflection, rest, and sleep. Soldiers’ newspapers picked up on the importance of ‘dreams of home.’ The *Cambridgeshire Territorial Gazette* described how a Captain Shore dragged himself ‘mud-caked, hungry and tired’ into an ‘inviting armchair’ behind the lines. He ‘gazed into the glowing fire and was on the point of conjuring up visions of “leave” and London’ when there was a knock at the door.²⁰¹ Similar themes emerged elsewhere. The *B.E.F. Times* published one poem entitled ‘Brazier Pictures.’ It began: ‘In my brazier as I gaze / Pictures come and pictures go, / Dimly seen across the haze - / Christmases we used to know.’ The soldier in question’s imagination was ‘burning clear,’ allowing ‘visions of better days’ and eradicating ‘discomforts that are near.’²⁰² Other contributors described how dawn’s light brought visions of their ‘dearest’ in her ‘silver shrouded dress’ or how ‘the evening mists’ became a ‘portrait.’²⁰³ Another poet was ‘thinking, thinking, thinking’ of ‘green fields,’ ‘peace,’ and drinking in his club.²⁰⁴ Postcards, again playing on this theme, included printed descriptions such as ‘night and a pause for a much needed rest. Bringing sweet memories of all that’s loved best.’²⁰⁵ One, which was a reproduction of a soldier’s cartoon, depicted a soldier sitting in candlelight, writing a letter that conjured an image of the recipient in his mind’s eye.²⁰⁶ These cards included such themes because they struck a chord with consumers. Individuals had their own personal visions. H.T. Madders’s thoughts were of his parents, firesides, church, hometown, ‘roast beef’ on Sundays, ‘the tea-pot,’ and country roads.²⁰⁷ Visions of home could be the product of action, environment, or purposeful reflection and provided an important outlet and escape.

It was often the brief moments of inaction when men were allowed to sit and think, that ‘their mind went back to home once more.’²⁰⁸ Sleep and dreams were important. Freud,

²⁰⁰ SOfO Box 16 Item 61: Collection of 15 Patriotic Cards 1914-1918 Vintage, Postcard: ‘La Reve’; H.O. Hendry, Postcard: ‘I’m Thinking of You [No. 504]’.

²⁰¹ *Cambridgeshire Territorial Gazette*, No. 4 (October 1916), 88.

²⁰² ‘Brazier Pictures’, *The B.E.F. Times*, No. 2, Vol. 1 (1916), 3.

²⁰³ ‘The Sybarite’s Soliloquy’, *Ibid.* 8; ‘To My Marraine’, *The B.E.F. Times* (No. 3, Vol. 1), 2.

²⁰⁴ ‘Disturbing Influences’, *Ibid.* 3.

²⁰⁵ MR/2/17/65: John Douglas Powell, Postcard: ‘Dreams of Home [No. 8]’.

²⁰⁶ Pte. John Peat, Postcard: ‘Sketches of Tommy’s Life. Out on Rest – No. 9’.

²⁰⁷ H.T. Madders, Diary 28 and 31 March and 3, 6, 7 and 8 April 1918.

²⁰⁸ A.P. Burke, Letter to Tot 26 October 1916.

in his analysis of dreams, argued that they were driven by wish fulfilment.²⁰⁹ It is unsurprising that soldiers continued to escape home when they fell asleep.²¹⁰ Light was also significant. Images often emerged when standing to at dawn and dusk. Shadows and firelight set soldiers' imaginations and psyches wandering back to the safety and warmth of home.²¹¹ Others found themselves transported when watching football, feeling that it was 'Saturday somewhere in England'.²¹² L/Cpl C. White spoke for many when he wrote 'letter writing is one of the greatest pleasures I have now.' Composing letters to family and 'dear friends' allowed him to form 'pictures [of] those to whom one is writing' and briefly 'it seems as though me [sic] is privileged to be in conversation with them'.²¹³ Furthermore the letters men received often contained the details that provided important information, which fed and added colour to visions. John Mawer's wife spent time recording how their neighbour had 'painted outside the house & the conservatory inside it does look a treat'.²¹⁴

Objects received in their post also fuelled imaginations. Postcards and parcels included stimulants for men's images of home. Many soldiers received photographs of their children, wives, girlfriends, and parents.²¹⁵ These were cherished as a tool through which they could enter their imaginary worlds.²¹⁶ J.H. Humphries obtained new reading material such as *Love and Mr Lewisham* by H.G. Wells; spending money; Christmas and birthday presents; food; and small gifts such as cigarette cases.²¹⁷ Capt. Maurice Asprey was sent waterproofs, extra clothing, a toothbrush, newspapers, razors, money, and tins of cigarettes by his parents.²¹⁸ Harry Hopwood's local Conservative Club mailed him a parcel, which included a Christmas card, tobacco, a pipe, and cigarettes.²¹⁹ Other men received clippings of hair.²²⁰ Pte. A. Joy kept a signature notebook, which was on his person for the duration of his service. This included supportive messages from numerous acquaintances and friends.²²¹ Physical objects facilitated more vivid images of home. Some postcards were scented with perfume,

²⁰⁹ S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. A.A. Brill (New York, 1913), 103-12.

²¹⁰ L/Cpl. C White, Diary 28 January 1917.

²¹¹ R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 6 December 1916.

²¹² Pte. W.M. Anderson, Letter 15 November 1916.

²¹³ L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 7 January 1917.

²¹⁴ J. Mawer, Letter from Wife 8 October 1914; Lt. F.A. Brettell, Letter from Peg 27 December 1917.

²¹⁵ S.B. Smith, Letter 29 October 1917.

²¹⁶ Pte. S. Smith, Postcards: Photograph of Wife and Children and Photograph of Children [Ethel and Stephen Smith]; J. Mawer, Undated Letter [c. November 1914] to Wife [Doc. 24].

²¹⁷ J.M. Humphries, Letter to 'Mater' Wednesday 13 September 1916, [-5] Letter to 'Mater' Undated [c. December 1916]; Letter to 'Mater' 13 October 1917.

²¹⁸ Capt. M. Asprey, Letter to Mother and/or Father 17 and 22 October; 15, 19, 25 and 29 November; 19 and 22 December 1914.

²¹⁹ Sgt. H. Hopwood, Letter 29 December 1914.

²²⁰ J.L. Hampson, Clipping of Hair and Postcard: Photograph of Young Woman.

²²¹ Pte. A. Joy, Autograph Book [9209-139-6] Notes from Mother, Maggie, Mrs Stagg, Emily and Reginald Birch.

allowing men to temporarily share a sensory space with their relatives or lovers.²²² Family members also enclosed small flowers in envelopes (and soldiers also sent these home).

Reginald Neville was pleased to receive some lavender from his father, with whom he also played chess via their correspondence.²²³

At another time Neville found that a piece of gramophone music stirred memories of a previous Christmas.²²⁴ Christmas engaged another soldier's memories and imagination as he recalled the holiday spirit and crowds of shoppers on the peaceful streets of his hometown.²²⁵ Pte. W. Tapp recalled the 'Xmas night... four years ago when I stood under the Misteltoe [sic] with the girl I married later.'²²⁶ Far more personal milestones and anniversaries were also of significance – for example, the death of a parent.²²⁷ Others turned to faith. Lt. W.B. Medlicott felt that through prayer he shared an experience with and felt closer to those he had left behind.²²⁸ Clémentine Vidal-Naquet and Michael Roper have both demonstrated the ways that forms of address allowed soldiers and civilians to keep their relationships alive despite the physical distance between them.²²⁹ Handwriting provided physical and familiar evidence of their loved-ones.

This imaginary space nurtured positivity. There are few references to negative emotions, and jealousy of love rivals rarely penetrated these daydreams. Modern psychological studies have found that nostalgia and similar psychological processes are deployed as subconscious defence mechanisms that distort memory and focus on positive ideas.²³⁰ Roper argues that 'nostalgia was a dominant emotion' that stemmed from soldiers 'confessing their wish to be home again.' It 'typically involves idealization, the imagining of a purer, simpler time and place.'²³¹ These visions and dreams became a cocoon. The printed messages on postcards show how positivity might have been nurtured at a distance. In endorsing these messages, men made it clear that they missed their loved ones, and civilians acknowledged their sacrifice. Many cards consoled the soldiers as well as focussing on their happiness.²³² Correspondence insisted that the souls of the soldier and civilian remained

²²² P. Tomczyszyn, 'A Material Link Between War and Peace: First World War Silk Postcards', in N.J. Saunders (ed.), *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War* (Oxford, 2004). This is also explored in Vidal-Naquet, *Couples dans la Grande Guerre*.

²²³ Lt. Reginald N. Neville, Letters to Father 4 August and 4 October 1917. Vera Brittain also received violets from Roland Leighton, which he picked in Plug Street wood and sent home to her. See V. Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (London, 1933, 2004) 122. Also AP. Burke, Letter to 'Tot' 1 June 1916.

²²⁴ Ibid. Letter to Sister 26 June 1917.

²²⁵ R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 23 December 1916.

²²⁶ Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 24/25 December 1914 [p 11].

²²⁷ E.T. Marler, Diary 27 and 31 October 1916.

²²⁸ Lt. W.B. Medlicott, Letter 6 November 1916.

²²⁹ Vidal-Naquet, *Couples dans la Grande Guerre*, and Roper, *Secret Battle*, 93-101.

²³⁰ C. Routledge, *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource* (Abingdon, 2016).

²³¹ Roper, 'Nostalgia as an Emotional Experience', 436-437.

²³² MR3/17/137: Pte. Norman Walker, Christmas Postcards 'Happy Christmas' with Floral Design and 'To Bring You Happiness.'; SOFO Box 16 Item 7 3/4/C/3: Sgt. Sam Moulder, Letter to 'Tory, Ada and

entwined. Others insisted that men's thoughts of home were the brightest of the 'many sweetesses [sic] that make our life worth living.'²³³ Men's pleas, in letters, that they were 'remembered' to family members, friends, or acquaintances, suggest they encouraged civilians to think of them regularly.²³⁴ Letters and cards received by men looked to alleviate anxieties. Lt. L.W.C. Ireland was sent one such message, which read: 'I guess you remember me without a photo to see... of course I am always with you in thoughts you see I love you better than anyone'²³⁵ Correspondence focussed on the soldiers' role as England's and the family's protectors, while relatives were careful to assure soldiers that they were aware of their sacrifices. Some worshipped the combatant as a hero.²³⁶ Harry Bridge's cards included printed messages that underlined his role as his family's defender. His niece sent him a postcard that read 'God be with you 'till we meet again' and comforted him that she 'daily pray[ed] that God will keep my hero in His care' and 'bring him safely back again.'²³⁷ Another, sent by his sister, insisted that 'I'm thinking of You, dear, all the time.'²³⁸ Those from his mother promised that she was 'longing for Our Dear Absent Soldier.'²³⁹ Correspondence with England upheld men's role as the family's protector and reminded them that their sacrifices were acknowledged and appreciated.

The experience of war induced a desire to place oneself subconsciously in a safe civilian world. Imagination became an important coping mechanism.²⁴⁰ Theorists have argued that visualising one's partner works to benefit relational satisfaction.²⁴¹ Men's imagined home left them feeling *more* in love or *more* grateful towards those they left behind.²⁴² This, as seen in the previous chapter, translated into their interpretation of duty. Modern studies have underlined three key mechanisms in the maintenance of long-distance relationships: shared

all'; Pte. E. Mawer, Letter 23 September 1914 [Doc. 14]; SOFO Box 29 Item 1 (8) 10/7/C/1: [Anon.] 35 Postcards, Postcard to Ms A. Young 28 February 1917; MR3/17/124: Pte. Edgar Cleasby, *Daily Mail* Official Postcard – 'An Attack: Awaiting the Signal' [20 June 1918], 'A Wiring Party Going to the Trenches' [13 October 1918], 'Church Service Before Battle' ['France Oct.] and Postcard – 'Les Sites de France: *La rivière de l'Hôtel Dieu*' [29 July 1918]; Pte. S. Smith, Postcard – 'I wonder if you miss me sometimes' [To Son – undated].

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ R.E.P. Stevens, Letter 9 November 1914; John Edwin Mawer, Undated Letter c. September 1914 [Doc. 15]; Pte. Percy Thompson, Letter to his Sister (Adelaide) 29 September 1916; IWM Misc. 210 Item 3079: [Anon. Officer] 'Secret Code Used to Bypass the Censors,' 'Remember me to Betty' and 'Remember me to Fred'; AOC: Miss. H. Smith, Postcard from Anonymous Soldier.

²³⁵ Lt. L.W.C. Ireland, Letter from Beryl 6 December 1916; Lt. F.A. Brettell, Letter from Peg 25 October 1916.

²³⁶ J.D. Powell, Postcard 'A Message to My Hero.'

²³⁷ MR3/17/139: H. Bridge, Postcard from Niece.

²³⁸ *Ibid.* Postcard from Sister.

²³⁹ *Ibid.* Postcard from Mother.

²⁴⁰ Roper, 'Nostalgia as an Emotional Experience', 445-456.

²⁴¹ P. Holt and G. Stone, 'Needs, Coping Strategies and Coping Outcomes Associated with Long-Distance Relationships', *Journal of College Student Development*, Vol. 29 (1988) 136-141.

²⁴² B. Aylor, 'Maintaining Long-Distance Relationships', in D.J. Canary and M. Dainton (eds.), *Maintaining Relationships Through Communication: Relational, Contextual and Cultural Variations* (New York, 2003, 2014), 130-132.

tasks, positivity and assurances.²⁴³ Evidence of the final two mechanisms is found in the analysis above. Families, however, also ‘shared’ tasks: the Nevilles through their games of chess, or the greater numbers who looked to develop personal codes so that details of the soldiers’ life could be divulged in greater detail.²⁴⁴ The process of imagining home seems to have placed some agency in their hands. Visions of home saw the distance fade away and provided emotional sustenance.²⁴⁵ They also created an idealised and peaceful world – the England soldiers fought for.

Recruitment leaflets and posters called on men to ‘play a manly part by doing a man’s work in defence of all an Englishman holds dear – his King, Home, and Country.’²⁴⁶ Such rhetoric struck a chord with soldiers during the Great War. Yet those producing these leaflets were ignorant of the absolute primacy of ‘home.’ While some soldiers made it clear they were proud to have enlisted for ‘King and Country,’ their monarch was rarely mentioned once they were in France and Belgium. While the royal family were important figureheads, discussion of the monarchy was limited to institutional documents, the rare moments in which a man’s unit paraded in front of the King, or when he caught brief glimpses of the Prince of Wales.²⁴⁷ Politics and society were secondary concerns and it was more subjective visions of home that were paramount. Soldiers’ allegiance to home was nurtured and supported by their imagination. This allowed them to consider and fantasise about a physical environment of idealised landscapes, townscapes, and physical spaces. It also allowed them to imagine that they remained a part of a social environment including family, friends, and community. It further allowed them to forget their present and escape into a safer, more secure, and idealised homeland. These images lay at the forefront of men’s imagined England, and it was defending this subjective ‘home’ that drove them to endure the war.

This chapter has confirmed that soldiers’ perceptions of the wider home front tended to revolve around their family, friends, or community.²⁴⁸ The collections used here might lead

²⁴³ M. Dainton and B. Aylor, ‘Patterns of Communication Use in the Maintenance of Long-Distance Relationships’, *Communication Research Reports*, Vol. 19 Issue 2 (2002), 118-129.

²⁴⁴ Lt. Reginald N. Neville, 26 June 1917; Lt. FB. Anstruther, Letter to Father 25 February 1915; R.C.A. Frost, Letter from Mother 3 January 1918 and Letter from Father; [Anon. Officer] ‘Secret Code Used to Bypass the Censors’.

²⁴⁵ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 83.

²⁴⁶ A.E. Burdfield, 7/ Royal Fusiliers Recruitment Leaflet.

²⁴⁷ Liddle/WW1/GS/0505: Cpl. V. Edwards, Diary 1 August 1914; Capt. A.G. Osborn, Diary 10 October 1914; L/Cpl. K.M. Gaunt, Diary 25 December 1914; H.T. Madders, Diary 3 April 1918. See also H. Jones, ‘The Nature of Kingship in First World War Britain’, in M. Glencross, J. Rowbotham, and M.D. Kandiah (eds.), *The Windsor Dynasty 1910 to the Present: Long to Reign Over Us?* (London, 2016) 195-216.

²⁴⁸ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 190-91; Roper, *Secret Battle*, 13.

the historian ‘to overstate the significance of home.’ Yet the frequency with which the themes explored here emerged in the array of different sources suggests that the parochial home played an important role in morale.²⁴⁹ This was facilitated and encouraged by the close emotional connection that existed between combatants and civilians.²⁵⁰ This may have been an even deeper and more fundamental connection than previously assumed. The link was maintained via post and memory. While men spared relatively few thoughts for the political England, those concerned with wider society became increasingly concerned and embittered by the upheaval, strikes, and food shortages. Other soldiers sensed a chasm of understanding that distinguished them from civilians. However, for most men it was their connection and devotion to their imagined social unit and their idealised vision of the physical England that was their greatest constant. It provided a positive fantasy-driven cocoon and diverted their attention away from wider events. They were able to nurture and cultivate relationships that re-emphasised their role as protector, and their imaginative capacity allowed them to transport themselves back to an England that focussed on home, locality, and archetypes. As Michael Roper has suggested, these visions ‘played a significant role as a coping mechanism, providing a sense of familiarity and release to men in disorientating, sometimes frightful and lonely situations.’²⁵¹ Amid the destruction, their images, dreams, and visions allowed them to engage with a form of organic meditation and escape their present. It also influenced their perception of the war and their experiences in Belgium and France. When confronted with the devastation soldiers could not help but transpose it onto Britain and they fought, in some measure, to avoid this. Acute crisis was averted, in part, because of the strength and resilience of these intimate connections with home. These ‘mind-pictures’ never faltered, and encouraged hopeful perceptions of the future, which are central to the next chapter.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Roper, ‘Nostalgia as an Emotional Experience’, 449.

²⁵⁰ McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, 7-8.

²⁵¹ Roper, ‘Nostalgia as an Emotional Experience’, 449.

²⁵² *Ibid.* 437.

Hope

Acute Crisis, Victorious Peace, and Perceptions of the Future

As the war threatened to become endless, and chances of victory faded, chronic crisis could become acute. Nevertheless, men's images of home also helped them to envisage a future. An author in *The Londoner* revealed the power of such visions:

Peace had been declared, and I found myself walking down
Piccadilly in a soft grey suit, and a nice clean linen collar which, by
the way, was rubbing several blisters on my neck. Think what it is to
be free and unrestrained by discipline. I know it requires a lot of
imagination, but just shut your eyes and imagine for all you are
worth.¹

Visualisations of peace were internalised by the men and they were sustained by a supreme confidence in them becoming reality. 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones advised his wife in late 1916 that 'everybody seems to think it can't last long now. Oh! I do hope so, dearest, don't you?'² Even as F. Hubard yearned for war's end in April 1918, he and his comrades refused to 'take a gloom [sic] view of it,' believing that 'the Germans... will receive a pretty severe blow before long.'³ For many men their survival and victorious peace became synonymous. This chapter will explore how men perceived the future and peace; it will also explain the ways in which morale was sustained by men's hopes for peace and how victory became their pathway to this future. It argues that acute crisis emerged as soldiers lost faith in the likelihood of victorious peace.⁴

Crisis occurs at a moment in which an individual or institution's mission or goal is threatened by failure. Yet, a problem that often plagues modern military strategy is the failure to consolidate political intentions and aims into 'clear military objectives.'⁵ However, the BEF leadership seems to have had a pretty clear vision of its ultimate goal. Once deployed the army was focused on military victory.⁶ While 'victory' might take a variety of forms and overall strategic visions changed as the war developed, ultimately the army's primary

¹ W.H.B. 'Appertaining to Instincts', *The Londoner: The Journal 1/25th Battalion, The London Regiment*, Vol. 2, Iss. 5 (May 1 1918) 121.

² 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter to Wife 25 December 1916.

³ F. Hubard, Letter to Mr and Mrs Underhill 8 April 1918.

⁴ Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Letter 2 July 1916; Patrick Joseph Kennedy, Green Envelope to his Mother on 29/30 April 1917.

⁵ K. Larsdotter, 'Culture and Military Intervention', in J. Angstrom and I. Duyvesteyn (eds.) *Understanding Victory and Defeat in Contemporary War* (Abingdon, 2007) 220.

⁶ TNA WO 256/27: Diary of Field Marshal Haig, 17 February 1918: 'I only had one object in view... to beat the Germans.'

function was to defeat the German armies in the field.⁷ This would preserve the freedom of Belgium and save France.⁸ The reaction of units to military developments suggest that they saw this mission in terms of improvements in fighting efficiency with a view to military victory.⁹ Scholars have also argued that ‘civil populations and combatant states expected and hoped for eventual victory.’¹⁰ On the other hand, soldiers’ ‘first concern was to survive.’¹¹ Battle threatened survival. Ernest Courtenay Crosse recalled one Corps Commander’s bitter observation that ‘the men are much too keen on saving their own skins. They need to be taught that they are out here to do their job. Whether they survive or not is a matter of complete indifference.’¹² This may have been hyperbolic but reveals the divergent outlooks of men and their institution. This chapter will, however, argue that men’s hope for survival and hopes for victorious peace were interlinked.

The relationship between combatants and visions of peace has been described by a number of scholars. They, however, mainly focus on how it became a negative ingredient in morale. Paul Fussell argued that by late 1916 ‘the likelihood that peace would ever come was often in serious doubt.’¹³ Helen McCartney has described how the shock of battle could induce a temporary desire for ‘an almost unconditional peace.’¹⁴ Others have drawn connections between actors’ thirst for peace and patterns of war weariness. Jean-Jacques Becker discussed how 1917 saw an increase in French citizens’ ‘desire for peace.’ Significant minorities began to support a compromise peace and some even called for peace ‘at any price.’¹⁵ Civilians and soldiers were willing to consider peace by other means if they believed victorious peace was unlikely. This was certainly the case with Russian soldiers in 1917. However, John Horne has revealed the ways in which French soldiers’ concepts and hopes for peace provided visions of a future and past that allowed men to cope with the reality of their present.¹⁶ This was also true of English infantrymen. Peace was a ‘subjective (and constructed) future space, in which the war has ended, and their worldly desires have been realised.’¹⁷

⁷ D. French, *British Strategy and War Aims 1914-1916* (London, 1986) and J. Black, *The Great War and the Making of the Modern World* (London, 2011) 243.

⁸ Diary of Field Marshal Haig, 1 January 1918.

⁹ TNA WO 95/2339/1: ‘Address by CO to the officers, NCOs and men of the 19th Battalion Manchester Regiment’, War Diary 16/Manchester Regiment.

¹⁰ A.R. Seipp, *The Ordeal of Peace: Demobilization and the Urban Experience in Britain and Germany, 1917-1921* (Farnham, 2009) 3.

¹¹ Fuller, *Troop Morale*, 63.

¹² Canon Ernest Courtenay Crosse, Introduction to files written by relative: p 2.

¹³ Fussell, *The Great War*, 71.

¹⁴ McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, 214.

¹⁵ J.J. Becker, *The Great War and the French People* (London, 1986) 217-235.

¹⁶ J. Horne, ‘Entre expérience et mémoire. Les soldats français de la Grande Guerre,’ *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales*, 60 (2005) 903-919.

¹⁷ Mayhew, ‘Hoping for Victorious Peace,’ 196.

Discussion of how soldiers' hope interacted with their morale appears briefly in some existing historiography. Soldiers' obsession with peace became intertwined with men's hope and could become a beneficial dimension of morale.¹⁸ Alexander Watson has discussed various dimensions of soldiers' hope: the end of trench warfare; home; divine assistance; a 'Blighty' wound; and survival.¹⁹ He has also suggested that many men's 'disillusion with official war aims... prompted... [them] to hope for peace.'²⁰ German soldiers reported that they found 'general hope' was an effective coping strategy.²¹ Other scholars argue that the 'emphasis of morale' enables an individual 'to live and work hopefully and effectively.'²² Such studies tend to reference hope without assessing its impact or defining it. Where the term is used it is often in passing. Jonathan Boff discussed German soldiers' hope for improved rations and an early peace in late 1918.²³ Ben Shephard has suggested that on 1 July 1916 British soldiers were 'buoyed up with hope and excitement, the men went calmly and uncomplainingly to their deaths.'²⁴ In contrast, Vanda Wilcox cited Agostino Gemelli, an Italian military psychologist, who argued that successful soldiers actually benefited from losing hope, as it allowed them to adapt to war.²⁵ Hope's lack of definition makes it difficult to understand its nuances and functions. Some social psychologists assert that hope is an abstract emotional process at the extreme end of positivity. Barbara Fredrickson sees hope as an antidote to fear. She claims that 'hope is not your typical form of positivity. Most positive emotions arise when we feel safe and satiated. Hope is the exception. It comes to play when our circumstances are dire... Hope literally opens us up. It removes the blinders of fear and despair.'²⁶ This allies itself with Watson's hypothesis that 'positive illusions' and 'optimistic reasoning' were key psychological coping mechanisms.²⁷ Inflated and unrealistic appreciations of survival chances facilitated endurance. Equally, intense hopefulness for peace motivated men to suffer war.

¹⁸ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Postcard to Evelyn Parker 22 September 1914; Pte. W.M. Anderson, Letters to Wife 9, 17, 18 and October 1916; Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letters to Wife 5, 17, 26 December 1916, 18 September, 28 June and 10 July 1918.

¹⁹ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 40, 56, 95-97, 103-107.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 75.

²¹ *Ibid.* 92 and 162.

²² R.A. Brottemarkle, 'Development of Military Morale in a Democracy', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 216, (July, 1941) 79.

²³ J. Boff, 'The Morale Maze: The German Army in Late 1918,' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 37 No. 6-7 (2014), 11; Watson, 'Morale', in Winter, *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, 187.

²⁴ Shephard, *A War of Nerves*, 41.

²⁵ V. Wilcox, "'Weeping Tears of Blood': Exploring Italian Soldiers' Emotions in the First World War", *Modern Italy*, Vol. 17, Issue 2 (2012) 174; Wilcox, *Morale in the Italian Army during the First World War*, 135.

²⁶ B.L. Frederickson, 'Why Choose Hope?' *Psychology Today* (23 March 2009). (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/positivity/200903/why-choose-hope>, accessed 19 May 2016)

²⁷ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 146.

However, as discussed in the introduction, psychologists tend to see hope as a cognitive function – an objective and goal-orientated schematic. It is different from optimism and positivity.²⁸ Within such studies ‘hope is defined as goal-directed thinking in which people perceive that they can produce routes to desired goals (pathways thinking) and the requisite motivation to use those routes (agency thinking).’²⁹ The time horizon for these goals can vary and barriers can block the path to their attainment. Optimism and positivity – and their antitheses – are functions by which one rationalises a present situation and relates it to expectations for future goals.³⁰ An optimistic explanatory style facilitates ‘higher levels of motivation, achievement, and physical well-being and lower levels of depressive symptoms.’³¹ Men’s hopes for peace provided their ultimate goal and the belief that they were on the best route to this destination proved to be a central feature of men’s morale. In this case, victory offered the most acceptable mechanism by which peace would be achieved. When confidence in this ‘route’ faltered soldiers began to sense acute crisis.

This chapter will chart soldiers’ hopes for victorious peace and how these forestalled acute crisis. It will trace soldiers’ hope for victorious peace, which was extremely strong. However, in 1917/18 – after Passchendaele, Cambrai, news of the Russian Revolution, and the rout of the Italians at Caporetto – pessimism spread and eroded confidence in victorious peace. Otherwise, men allied themselves to the military ‘pathway,’ which seemed to be the only realistic route to their idealised futures. The chapter then explores how hope fostered higher levels of resilience and what aspects of the soldiers’ environments encouraged, restored, and supported their hope for peace. Lastly, it evaluates the inter-relationship between the men’s psychological environment, their hopefulness, and their morale.

Peace became the central hope and goal of most men who fought in France and Belgium.³² This general desire for peace helps to explain the apparent solidarity of soldiers in the pursuit of, as some vocalised, ‘a common object.’³³ The term ‘après la guerre’ became ‘a magical phrase used by soldiers... longing for survival and for the return of peace.’³⁴ For much of the

²⁸ Lopez, Snyder and Pedrotti, ‘Hope: Many Definitions, Many Measures’, in Lopez and Snyder, *Positive Psychological Assessment*, 91-107.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 94.

³⁰ C.S. Carver and M. Scheier, ‘Optimism’, *Ibid.*, 75.

³¹ K. Reivich and J. Gillham, ‘Learned Optimism: The Measurement of Explanatory Style’, *Ibid.*, 57.

³² Capt. M. Asprey, Letter Mother 27 September 1914; Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother, 11 November 1916; Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 28 and 31 December 1916; Sgt. H. Hopwood, Letter 12 October 1917; H.T. Madders, Diary 14 October 1918.

³³ Maj. S.O.B. Richardson, Letter [No. 4] Late 1916.

³⁴ Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, 66.

war they remained confident that victory was likely. Yet when this confidence faltered acute crisis emerged. The war's horrors and soldiers' sacrifice no longer seemed justified.

Figure 5.1: This image – B. Bairnsfather, 'That Sword,' *The Best of Fragments from France*, T. Holt and V. Holt (eds.) (Barnsley, 1978, 2014) 16 – has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.

In 1914 the war's reality left many men yearning for peace. They were, though, determined to see the war through to victory and remained confident that this was imminent. Herbert Trevor, a subaltern, was left overwhelmed and disenchanted by the retreat from Mons and Battle of Le Cateau. On 22 September he expressed solidarity with the German prisoners he met – 'everyone would like peace.'³⁵ The strategic withdrawal's strains were compounded by the unfulfilled expectations of professional soldiers. War was neither romantic nor honourable. One officer bitterly recounted how he had sharpened his sword and symbolically dyed his white handkerchief red before his first battle.³⁶ Bruce Bairnsfather's cartoon – 'That Sword' – reflected his experience as an officer in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. The sword was only useful as a makeshift fork on which to toast bread. Capt. L.F. Ashburner confessed that 'none of us like it.'³⁷ The *Manchester Regimental Gazette* pondered whether it should feel 'pride... or sorrow at the large number of our comrades who have so heroically laid down their lives.'³⁸ The shock of losing so many friends and comrades was the conflict's most demoralising dimension.³⁹ Nonetheless, as one unidentified officer's diary reflects, the war was quickly normalised and his war experience simply became a series of notations that life was 'as usual.'⁴⁰

There was some disagreement on peace's proximity, but it remained intertwined with discussions of victory. Capt. Maurice Asprey noted: 'Hope the war will stop for the winter or end by then.'⁴¹ In another letter he told his father that 'some people out here seem to have a pretty hopeless outlook they seem to think that when we have squashed German we shall have trouble with Russia.'⁴² Men in Asprey's unit were having frank discussions that assumed their eventual victory. It was a case of *when* the Germans would capitulate, not *if*. Other men were less certain. H.E. Trevor admonished his mother for over-optimism: 'it's rubbish to say

³⁵ HET/1 Brig. General H.E. Trevor, Postcards to Evelyn Parker 2, 20 and 22 September 1914.

³⁶ Maj. J.S. Knyvett, Diary 6 October 1914.

³⁷ HET/5 Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Captain L.F. Ashburner to Mrs Parker, Letter 14 October 1914 and Letter to Mother 3 October 1914.

³⁸ *The Manchester Regiment Gazette*, Vol. 1 No. 7 (Nov 1, 1914): p 409.

³⁹ Brig. General H.E. Trevor, Letter to Evelyn Parker 26 September 1914; Maj. J.S. Knyvett, Diary 19 October 1914.

⁴⁰ Pocket Diary 1914, October-December 1914.

⁴¹ Capt. Maurice Asprey, Letter to Mother 27 September and 5 November 1914.

⁴² Ibid. Letter to Father 17 October 1914.

the Germans are done for. They fight devilish well and losses are nothing to them. What disheartens them much more is no food, wine or coffee or both.⁴³ He felt, though, that ‘the news seems better all round.’⁴⁴ Other officers clutched at any news that signalled the war’s conclusion was approaching. One officer’s diary was a record of this rumour mill. In August 1914 much of the news was simply ‘not v. good.’⁴⁵ By 27 August he noted: ‘News seems rather better, but v little.’ In September there were a number of references to British victories. The officer heard that ‘our people seem to be going ahead like anything’ and later recorded a ‘strong report that 8000 Germans have been taken.’⁴⁶ By October the news – like the frontlines – had become ‘stationary.’⁴⁷ Nonetheless, on 26 November, this man was still excited to hear news of a ‘Russian victory. Said to be 2 Army Corps surrendered.’⁴⁸ A number of soldiers sensed that victory was just over the horizon.

Rank and file soldiers similarly yearned for peace. Some men deflected this by focussing on the mundane and more controllable aspects of their lives. Combat left Sgt. C. Dwyer feeling ‘queer’ – while a lack of sleep and the ubiquitous destruction created the impression that ‘nobody could live’ under the German artillery barrages.⁴⁹ Another man sought to make sense of the scenes he witnessed: men ‘were going down like rain drops... it was like being in a Blacksmith shop watching him swing a hammer on a red hot shoe and the sparks flying all round you... were bullets... As... we lieyed [sic] there it was a pitiful sight to see and hear our Comrades dyeing [sic].’⁵⁰ He believed his unit suffered 148 casualties that day. However, even men who admitted that they were ‘fed up’ failed to register these events as an acute crisis. Like their officers, men downplayed German military ascendancy through rumour and optimistic speculation. Sgt. Sam Moulder described the inaccuracy of German weapons and dwelt upon rumours of small victories elsewhere along the front. He recorded the tale of a French soldier shooting down a German plane with his rifle.⁵¹ Some soldiers normalised the combat they had experienced.⁵² It became so commonplace that W.J. Cheshire thought it noteworthy on 11 September 1914 that ‘we have had no battle today.’⁵³ John Edwin

⁴³ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter to Mother 3 October 1914.

⁴⁴ Capt. M. Asprey, Letter to Mother 28 December 1914.

⁴⁵ Pocket Diary 1914, 27 August 1914.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 12 and 19 September 1914.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 25 October 1914.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 26 November 1914.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 8 November 1914

⁵⁰ Diary of an Unidentified Soldier in the 2 Bn. Border Regiment, 18 December 1914.

⁵¹ Sgt. Sam Moulder, Letter to ‘May and All’ 9 October 1914 and Letter to ‘Tory, Ada and All’ 9 October 1914.

⁵² W.J. Cheshire, 2-5 September 1914; C. Dwyer, Diary 2 November 1914.

⁵³ Ibid. Diary 11 September 1914.

Mawer's most pressing concern was the paucity of his pay and his tobacco supply. He simply hoped 'to get back safe.'⁵⁴

However, Alexander Watson suggests that soldiers 'failed to overcome the shock of battle.' Rates of desertion and surrender were higher in 1914 than at any other time in the war.⁵⁵ Jonathan Boff has questioned the correlation between surrender rates and fighting efficiency.⁵⁶ These were periods of mobile warfare. Post-war interviews conducted by the British authorities with men taken prisoner suggest that it was frequently a context-dependent act and was often the only option left. Many soldiers were injured or were unable to escape the enemy. Others – perhaps with the benefit of hindsight – voiced disappointment. Capt. R.T. Miller's ankle was wounded by machine gun fire as he advanced in close support of the Suffolk Regiment at Le Cateau – leaving him unable to escape capture.⁵⁷ Capt. J.H.W. Knight-Bruce was captured after being shot through the lungs during an assault. His company commander, whose knee had been shattered, was taken at the same time. Knight-Bruce concluded bitterly: 'I think I may point out that the ruin of my career as a soldier is due entirely to... [the] lack of ambulances.'⁵⁸ Other men were seized when their hospitals were overrun.⁵⁹ Hand-to-hand fighting gave men even less opportunity to escape. Pte. W.H. Meredith was shot through the shoulder at point-blank range and taken straight back to a German Field Hospital.⁶⁰ Even uninjured men were often apprehended when exhausted and in an exposed position. Pte. James Robinson and 26 other men were mopped up one morning after taking cover in No-Man's Land during the night.⁶¹

Many men were willing to endure the terrible conditions and danger of battle because they believed that a victorious peace was imminent in 1914. Optimistic hearsay fuelled this belief. One soldier's diary explained that the 'culling' of 60,000 Germans on 23 October had shortened the odds of victory to '4 to 1.'⁶² The running odds indicate that there was an open (and often positive) debate about the likelihood of victory. Rather than signalling crisis, the Battle of the Aisne prompted W.J. Cheshire's section 'to think the war will soon end.'⁶³ The men R.D. Sheffield relieved in the line on 9 November were convinced that 'this will be the

⁵⁴ Pte. J.E. Mawer, Letters to Wife 23 September, 2 October, 19 October and 30 November 1914. For food, tobacco, and latent desires to return home see also W.J. Cheshire, Diary 11-13, 15, and 26-27 September and 2-4 October 1914.

⁵⁵ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 141-146.

⁵⁶ Boff, 'The Morale Maze', 869-871.

⁵⁷ WO 161/95/93: POW Interviews, Capt. R.T. Miller: p 498. See also WO 161/98/495: POW Interviews, 9647 Pte Albert George Hart: p 317.

⁵⁸ WO 161/95/42: POW Interviews, Capt. J.H.W. Knight-Bruce: p 1.

⁵⁹ WO 161/96/12: POW Interviews, Capt. Philip Godsall: p 591.

⁶⁰ WO 161/98/503: POW Interviews, 8493 Pte. W.H. Meredith: p 341.

⁶¹ WO 161/99/87: POW Interviews, 1163 Pte. James Robinson: p 1795.

⁶² Reminiscences of Unknown Guardsman, Diary 13 August to 3 November 1914 esp. 23 October 1914.

⁶³ Ibid. Diary 28 September 1914.

last battle and if we win that the war will end before Christmas.⁶⁴ Sgt. Osborn's diary chronicled small victories, each representing a small step towards peace.⁶⁵ Similar confidence was evident in some men's interactions with the enemy during the Christmas Truce.⁶⁶ The first question one man in the Border Regiment directed to his erstwhile foe was: 'when are you going to give in you are beat.'⁶⁷ The truce along W. Tapp's stretch of the line lasted for several days. Tapp was pleased that his officers 'took advantage' of the 'lull' to improve the position and lay new barbed wire.⁶⁸ He felt an affinity with the Scottish regiments who were uninterested in any temporary armistice and considered the Germans 'ballad girls.'⁶⁹ Tapp himself found that 'I carnt [sic] understand the friendship [sic] between our fellows and Germans. It may be they are short of ammunition, if so, it is a clever trick of theirs... they are Saxons though, and different to the Prussians and I think a little persuasion [sic] and they would all surrender.' The best chance of victory lay in 'them advancing or us.'⁷⁰ He concluded: 'I think they know that they are beaten.'⁷¹ S. Judd reacted with scorn when the Germans he encountered voiced their belief in imminent victory.⁷²

The Somme Offensive failed to bring about the 'glorious victory' many of the troops had been promised in July.⁷³ On 7 July A.P. Burke told his brother that: 'we celebrated the glorious victory, but there was many a face missed... keep smiling it will soon be over now.'⁷⁴ On 1 July the men of 8th and 9th Battalions Devonshire Regiment had celebrated 'the welcome sight of Boche prisoners passing by looking mad with terror.'⁷⁵ Yet, over the next few days, 'the trenches had all been completely effaced.' Some men began to 'panic,' others became 'dejected.' Combat pushed a couple of soldiers into acute crisis and they inflicted wounds upon themselves, while many more got the 'wind up.'⁷⁶ Charles Carrington was 'getting very jumpy' towards the end of July. He told his mother that 'my martial instincts are now more than satisfied. I think what has done for them is the smell of chalk dust impregnated with that of fortnight old corpses, gas-shells and high explosive fumes'⁷⁷ Ernest

⁶⁴ R.D. Sheffield, Letter to Father 9 November 1914.

⁶⁵ Sgt. Osborn, 1 and 10 September 1914.

⁶⁶ L/Cpl. K.M. Gaunt, Letter 25 December 1914; Sgt. H. Hopwood, Letter 29 December 1914; Diary of an Unidentified 2nd Bn. Border Regiment Soldier, 25 December 1914.

⁶⁷ Diary of an Unidentified 2nd Bn. Border Regiment Soldier, 25 December 1914.

⁶⁸ Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 24-29 December 1914.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 27 December 1914.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid. 24/25 December 1914.

⁷² S. Judd, Diary 27 December 1914.

⁷³ 2nd Lt. D Henrick Jones, 'Message: From Lieut.-General Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston... To All officers, N.C.O.'s and Men of VIII Army Corps', HQ VIII Corps 4 July 1916.

⁷⁴ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 7 July 1916.

⁷⁵ Canon Ernest Courtenay Crosse, Diary 1 July 1916.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Diary 2, 12, 14 and 16 July 1916.

⁷⁷ Capt. C. Carrington, Letter to Mother 30 July 1916.

Marler, who had not even fought during the battles of 1916, hankered for ‘peace’ nonetheless and mused: ‘roll on when its [sic] over.’⁷⁸

Yet, outside combat, very few men sensed that they had entered a ‘crisis’ moment. While the Battle of the Somme had not ended the war, soldiers perceived it as a great step towards peace.⁷⁹ One censor reported that there was a ‘general acceptance of the idea that the War will not be over for another year.’⁸⁰ The censor pointed to the immeasurable benefits of the development of an effective programme of ‘relaxation and sport of every kind, cinemas, follies, concerts, football, boxing.’⁸¹ These offered a semblance of normality and opportunities to relax. The historian Fuller sees the activities organised behind the lines as key to morale. He argued that this provided men with the opportunity to ‘humanise’ and ‘adjust’ to war.⁸²

While forestalling acute crisis, such adjustments did not quench men’s thirst for peace. They were still invested in the world *after* war. *The B.E.F. Times* played on such feelings. On 1 December 1916 a poem claimed soldiers were ‘always the same with your “apres la guerre”’.⁸³ Lt. J.H. Johnson scrawled ‘will 1917 see peace?’ passionately in his diary on the last day of 1916.⁸⁴ G.A. Stevens wrote rhetorically: ‘I wonder what peace will be like when it comes along. I think one will have developed some strange habits. War is certainly a most ghastly, hideous, repulsive thing and the more one sees of it the more one hates it and its utterly remorseless cruelties.’⁸⁵ Pte. William Anderson was not alone when he asserted that ‘we will still forfeit most.’⁸⁶ He felt that the war was the Allies’ to win. Rumour played its part in nurturing such positive illusions. N.R. Russell told his mother that he had ‘heard a rumour about Austria telling Germany she wants to give up. I hope it is true. Germany will then get the whole energy of the Allies devoted to her.’⁸⁷ For some, their obsession with peace had – like their visions of home – become a coping mechanism. The vision of peace was, for Cecil White, ‘the only thing worth carrying on for.’⁸⁸

⁷⁸ E.T. Marler, Diary 5 and 10 November 1916 and 1 January 1917.

⁷⁹ Masefiled, *The Old Front Line*, 10, 17.

⁸⁰ M. Hardie, ‘3rd Section Report on Complaints, Moral, Etc. (1916)’ 6.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture*, 175.

⁸³ NAM 1959-03-34: Trench Newspapers, [5903-34 (1)] *The BEF Times*, No. 2 Vol. 1 (Monday 25 December 1916).

⁸⁴ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 31 December 1916.

⁸⁵ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 11 November 1916.

⁸⁶ Pte. W.M. Anderson, Letter to Wife 14 October 1916. See also M. Hardie, ‘3rd Section Report on Complaints, Moral, Etc. (1916)’ 6 and ‘Report on III Army Morale, January 1917’ 6.

⁸⁷ IWM 01/21/1: N.R. Russell, Letter to Mother 24 July 1916.

⁸⁸ L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 3, 8 and 16 January 1917.

Men's sense of acute crisis was deflected, in part, by their continued belief in the proximity of victorious peace.⁸⁹ Pte. C.P. Crump received a letter from an officer, Donald Huntson, which finished: 'P.S. The war will end at Xmas so hope to be home soon. Cheery OH!'⁹⁰ Another letter, though tinged with desperation, retained a confidence that 'it must end soon.'⁹¹ Men sensed the end of the war, and 'peace talk' was in constant circulation. Pte. F.G. Senyard informed his wife that 'the old dutch at the estaminet tonight said "Ze Kaiser allemagne make plenty peace want" so I supposes [sic] as far as I can see there is a chance of peace yet.'⁹² The III Army Censor reported that the discussion of peace proposals in newspapers had caught the attention of the men.⁹³ Such stories encouraged William Anderson to be optimistic that the war might still end by Christmas. On 17 October he told his wife: 'I haven't lost the idea that this business may well be over by Christmas.' Such ideas stemmed from 'an official war lecturer, Mr Lovell, in an address last Sat evening, [where he] made the very optimistic premise that it might take a week, or a month, or so, no one could prophecy [sic] but the finish might surprise most folk.'⁹⁴ However, only a few days later Anderson admitted that 'mentioning the War is almost taboo and it's no use trying to discuss it, one way or the other, since we only know what we hear, and that's mostly rumour and we don't hear much.'⁹⁵ Many soldiers' hope for peace had been internalised. Nevertheless, among the men studied here there was a certainty that victorious peace *would* eventually transpire.⁹⁶ Reginald Neville was overjoyed at news that the French had taken 9000 prisoners and 81 guns at Verdun. Such a defeat, he argued, must have 'a great moral effect' on the enemy. The Germans, he concluded, would sue for peace by March.⁹⁷ A poem drafted by Pte. Percy Dalton described the Battle of the Somme and contained optimistic forecasting: 'We pushed them back @ Every step / + put them to Disorder. / And we'll try our very Best if Poss to / Push them o'er the Border. / But while we try our very Best, to gain our / Great Ambition.'⁹⁸ One author in the *BEF Times* was more balanced, but no less resilient, consoling himself and

⁸⁹ Capt. R.E.M. Young, Letter to Constance 9 December 1916; 'Tom', *The Gasper: The Unofficial Organ of the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st Royal Fusiliers*, No. 21 (Sep 30, 1916) 5; Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Biddy 17 November 1916.

⁹⁰ C.P. Crump, Letter 11 September 1916.

⁹¹ Ibid. Letter 16 September 1916.

⁹² Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter to Wife 14 December 1916.

⁹³ Capt. M. Hardie, 'Report on III Army Morale, January 1917' 1.

⁹⁴ Pte. W.M. Anderson, Letter to Wife 17 October 1916.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 24 October 1916.

⁹⁶ Lt. F.A. Brettell, Letter from Peg 30 November 1916;

⁹⁷ Lt. Reginald N. Neville, Letter to Father 17 December 1916.

⁹⁸ NAM 2010-10-6: Pte. Percy Edward Dalton, [-1] Poem Undated Poem c. War Years [c. late 1916].

his readers that ‘better days will come.’⁹⁹ Men were still willing to endure the war, confident that victory and peace were on the horizon.¹⁰⁰

1917 proved to be a turning point. Men became increasingly pessimistic about the chance of victorious peace. In August 1917 the III Army censor, Capt. M. Hardie, reported that ‘for the first time there is a frequent suggestion that the war cannot be won by military effort, but must end by political compromise.’¹⁰¹ In October 1917 such an opinion was even more widely held. The year had been plagued by terrible weather, which was compounded by the lack of success during Third Ypres, pacifist sentiments broadcast from the home front, and rumours of proposed peace settlements.¹⁰² Hardie traced an emerging consensus that military victory was unattainable and suggested that soldiers were now more willing to discuss peace as a political process.¹⁰³ He believed that military victory would combat this attitude and would reinforce confidence in ‘the immense value of successful advances.’¹⁰⁴ Yet, the military operations of late 1917 were anything but successful. Lt. J.H. Johnson reacted to the experience of Passchendaele’s ‘mechanical, impersonal slaughter’ by investing himself in the period ‘after the war.’¹⁰⁵ Such a future was becoming precarious. Johnson wondered whether ‘the crisis and danger become greater if we are “winning the war”?’,¹⁰⁶ The events at Cambrai, far from bolstering men’s hope for victorious peace, made it seem even less likely. Germany’s successes in other theatres, the French mutinies, the Russian Revolution, and the Italian collapse at Caporetto also contributed to an increasingly bleak strategic picture.¹⁰⁷ Russia’s defeat was particularly worrying: ‘We have heard so many tales from Hunland about what he’s going to do to us now that he has fixed Russia.’¹⁰⁸ Some men found that they were no longer capable of portraying the war in a positive light. Even the British soldier’s duty-bound cheerfulness began to falter. On 11 December Johnson asked himself: ‘where is the Bairnsfather touch?’¹⁰⁹

⁹⁹ NAM 1959-03-34 (1): ‘Brazier Pictures’, *The BEF Times*, No. 2 Vol. 1 (Monday 25 December 1916).

¹⁰⁰ A&C Black and Company, Letter from Lance-Corporal E. Lindsell 6 December 1916.

¹⁰¹ Capt. M. Hardie, ‘Report on III Army Morale, August 1917’ 1.

¹⁰² Ibid, ‘Report on III Army Morale/Peace Sentiment, August-October 1917’ 1.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 2.

¹⁰⁴ Capt. M. Hardie, ‘Report on III Army Morale, August-October 1917’ 2.

¹⁰⁵ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 30 December 1917 and 6 January 1918.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Diary 14 December 1917. See also 2nd Lt. C.W. Gray, Clipping: ‘Politics and Politicians: Lansdowne and After’, *The Manchester Weekly Times*, (15 December 1917) and Excerpt from Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice’s, 5th Marquess of Lansdowne’s open letter published in *The Telegraph*, 29 November 1917.

¹⁰⁷ D. Stevenson, *1917: War, Peace, and Revolution* (Oxford, 2017) vi-vii.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Editorial’ *The B.E.F. Times*, No. 5 Vol. 2 (Tuesday, January 22nd, 1918) 1-2

¹⁰⁹ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 11 December 1917.

Figure 5.2: This image – B. Bairnsfather, ‘A.D. Nineteen Fifty,’ *The Best of Fragments from France*, T. Holt and V. Holt (eds.) (Barnsley, 1978, 2014) – has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.

Many men became more pessimistic about both their chances of survival and the BEF’s ability to force a victorious military conclusion. The perceived failure of Passchendaele to make any meaningful gains laid the seeds for men’s despondency. While soldiers rarely mentioned the wider war, it seems impossible that events on the Eastern Front were not also playing on their minds. S.B. Smith told his wife that ‘them that get through this war will be very lucky as it is getting worse every day.’¹¹⁰ Christmas and New Year 1917-18 witnessed his dwindling belief that ‘thay [sic],’ the High Command, were capable of ending the war.¹¹¹ C.T. O’Neill found himself dwelling on this problem, ‘the more one thinks, the more firmly is one convinced that the war cannot end by fighting alone which in this war is nothing less than whole murder.’¹¹² Such ideas fed into unit publications. The Royal Warwickshire Regiment’s magazine described a metaphorical football game, in which the opposition were the ‘enemy’ and both sides were ‘unable to pass the halfway line.’ The Warwickshires had ‘nobly upheld their record of this war, [but] a draw was the verdict.’¹¹³ The editors also printed a satirical Battalion Order dated March 1919. Gone was the confidence that the next campaign would bring peace.¹¹⁴ It was in this atmosphere that Bairnsfather produced his cartoon ‘A.D. Nineteen Fifty’ that showed two grey bearded veterans occupying a trench under an unrelenting artillery barrage (see Figure 5.2 above). 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg’s previous devotion to duty was beginning to wane. He became desperate and began to place meaning in seemingly insignificant events. Time slowed down and the war had become a ‘rotten’ experience.¹¹⁵ On 9 January 1918 he narrated the death of two bluebottles in tragic terms, seeing it as a metaphor for his friends who had been ‘smashed up’ during the war.¹¹⁶ Arthur Gregor Old’s diary began to exhibit a degree of disillusionment with military service.¹¹⁷ While in Pte. F.G. Senyard’s unit ‘peace’ became a synonym for anything unbelievable.¹¹⁸ Such a perspective led other soldiers to respond with bitterness and derision when faced by optimistic rumours of victory promoted by non-combatants.¹¹⁹ S.B. Smith was unwilling to

¹¹⁰ IWM 07/02/1: S.B. Smith, Letter to his Wife 21 October 1917.

¹¹¹ Ibid. Letter 29 October 1917; Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter 29 December 1917.

¹¹² Lt. C.T. O’Neill, Diary 16 February 1918.

¹¹³ ‘The Dear Old Regiment at Play: From Horton to Hartley --- A tale of travel’, *The Dear Old Regiment*, (December 1, 1917) 3.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 11.

¹¹⁵ 2nd Lt. Sydney Frankenburg,

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Letter 11 January 1918.

¹¹⁷ Pte. A.G. Old, Diary 1918.

¹¹⁸ Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter to Wife 18 September 1917.

¹¹⁹ Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Diary 18 November 1917.

wait until victory and voiced his deep-seated desire that ‘this war will soon come to an end.’¹²⁰

This was a worrying trend. Haig admitted that 1917 had left the Army at a ‘low ebb.’¹²¹ Such concerns prompted, among other initiatives, Smuts’s enquiry into the events at Cambrai and the introduction of centrally organised training under Brigadier Bonham-Carter. David Englander has argued that 1918 also saw the BEF’s institutional perspective shift from one that placed greatest emphasis on the ‘domination’ of soldiers to a system that embraced the need for their ‘motivation.’¹²² Pamphlets and lectures were produced to inform the soldiers about current affairs, the British ‘cause,’ and what men could expect from peace. The desire to explain events such as the Russian Revolution and how the government were developing a better post-war Britain was telling. ‘The aim,’ historian Simon MacKenzie claimed, ‘was clearly to suggest there was something worth fighting for.’¹²³

However, other censorship reports suggest that many other men apparently remained confident and resilient. Only 0.61% of 4552 ‘green’ envelope letters examined in September 1917 ‘contained any expression of complaint or war weariness.’¹²⁴ A further report to the War Cabinet in December concluded ‘war weariness there is, and an almost universal longing for peace but there is a strong current of feeling that only one kind of peace is possible and that the time is not yet come.’¹²⁵ J.M. Humphries told his mother (albeit scornfully) that ‘everyone out here thinks the war will end this year.’¹²⁶ Elsewhere resilience remained stoical. P.R. Hall, for example, recounted how New Year found him and his comrades ‘fed up with the... helplessness of any future we could visualise.’¹²⁷ However, ‘despite all this one could sense a sort of grim determination to carry on in spite of all.’¹²⁸ Since he wrote retrospectively, this might be the easy conclusion of a man who knew that the BEF fought on victoriously. Nevertheless, writing at the time, military chaplain Reverend E.N. Mellish suggested that similar attitudes were prevalent in the 4th Battalion Royal Fusiliers.¹²⁹ G.A. Stevens told his mother: ‘I am getting awfully fed up with this jolly old war it is a horrible strain and the more

¹²⁰ S.B. Smith, Letter 8-10 October 1917.

¹²¹ ‘Dispatch from Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig K.T., G.C.B., G.C.V.O., Commander-in-Chief, British Armies in France: Covering the period from 8th December to 30th April 1918’ (HMSO: London, 1918).

¹²² Englander, ‘Discipline and Morale in the British Army 1917-1918,’ 127.

¹²³ MacKenzie, ‘Morale and the Cause’, 228

¹²⁴ CAB 24/26/52: Note on the Morale of British Troops in France as disclosed by censorship, 13 September 1917.

¹²⁵ CAB 24/36/44: W.R. Robertson, British Armies in France as Gathered from Censorship. Extract from C.I.G.S. 18 December 1917.

¹²⁶ J.M. Humphries, [-7] Letter to ‘Mater’ 13 October 1917.

¹²⁷ P.R. Hall, Memoir: p 19.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ IWM PP/MCR/269: Reverend E.N. Mellish, Letter in January edition of St Paul’s, Deptford, Parish Church Magazine.

one gets potted at the more one hates it but I suppose it has to be gone through somehow.¹³⁰ In February some men had become more optimistic about the Allies' chances. The knowledge that more Americans were arriving in Belgium and France and more positive news from England was important. R.C.A. Frost's mother told him that 'nearly everyone here thinks the war will end soon but I believe they will keep it on just to let America have a go now she has got all the guns and things... its got to be wait, wait, wait and all will be well.'¹³¹ Younger conscripts also brought youthful exuberance and a more optimistic perception of the risks involved in military service. Charles Carrington, who had trained these men, noted that the drafts he encountered 'were all conscripts of 18 and refreshingly keen and excited after the blasé manner of the trained soldier.'¹³² A. Thomas similarly remembered them as 'eager young soldier comrades fresh to the game.'¹³³ A spirit of adventure infused their expectations of military service.¹³⁴

Rumours of the imminent German offensive also changed men's perception of the military situation. It signalled a change in the pattern of the war. Some saw it as an opportunity for the British to deal a severe blow to the enemy.¹³⁵ Pte. Hoyle recalled that despite the German shelling on 21 March 'we were all in good spirits, and when a shell came particularly close, some one would shout "Where did that one go to Herbert" or some other popular catch word.'¹³⁶ Other men, though, were less eager to meet the enemy's onslaught. Lt. J.H. Johnson attempted to assuage his wife's concern. His efforts were undermined by the shakiness of his hand and an uneven and incoherent syntax that was so unlike his previous letters.¹³⁷ Reverend E.N. Mellish, who witnessed the retreat first hand, described the month after 21 March as a 'colossal struggle.'¹³⁸ Some soldiers remembered that morale was nearly at 'breaking point.'¹³⁹ However, men in the rear zones or at rest failed to register the significance of events. C.T. O'Neill could hear the immense barrage but his battalion continued training and had a 'topping time' at talks, a football match, and a dinner with some 'Yanks' on 21 and 22 March.¹⁴⁰ Even when he saw 'visible signs' of the offensive and was forced to retire he believed this was 'very ordered' and concluded the British soldiers were 'marvellous.'¹⁴¹ Even those occupying parts of the line as yet unaffected by the German

¹³⁰ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 10 December 1917. No punctuation in the original.

¹³¹ R.C.A. Frost, Letter from Mother 6 February 1917.

¹³² Capt. C. Carrington, Letter to Mother 22 June 1918.

¹³³ IWM P 147: A. Thomas, Memoir: pp 142-169.

¹³⁴ Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 22 February 1918.

¹³⁵ Sgt. Harry Hopwood, Letter to Mother & All 3 March 1918; A.L. Collis, Diary 1 and 19 March 1918.

¹³⁶ H. Russell, Diary of W.A. Hoyle 21 March 1918.

¹³⁷ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Letter to his Wife 21 March 1918.

¹³⁸ Reverend E.N. Mellish, *St Paul's, Deptford, Parish Church Magazine*, 18 April 1918.

¹³⁹ Pte. C. Clarke, Memoir: p 31.

¹⁴⁰ Lt. C.T. O'Neill, Diary 21-22 March 1918.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. Diary 23-27 March 1918; H.T. Madders, Diary 21-23 March 1918.

offensive had little sense of the unfolding military crisis. One man felt able to write that: ‘war is composed of boredom and fright. One in and the other out of the trenches and one’s only thought is one’s next meal.’¹⁴²

Whether or not men were aware of strategic crisis, the offensives re-emphasised soldiers’ perception of Germany as an aggressor and invader. For the first time since 1914 defeat became a real possibility. The Army itself emphasised and reemphasised that the *Kaiserschlacht* was an unprecedented crisis.¹⁴³ The General Staff was unequivocal. Defeating these offensives would require a supreme effort and would inevitably last for months.¹⁴⁴ It was, however, made clear that this ‘crisis’ held immense opportunity, if only the troops were able to see it through.¹⁴⁵ Most men responded to the call to arms and whether through desire, necessity, or compulsion, fought to the best of their ability. If men surrendered it was often the only option remaining to them. In many instances the men were taken after they were injured or surrounded.¹⁴⁶ Sir Ivor Maxse felt that the sheer number of enemy had overwhelmed the British.¹⁴⁷ Alexander Watson revealed that soldiers interviewed by the German military after their capture during these months actually exhibited a confidence in Haig, Foch, and their own ‘military prowess.’ The German authorities reported that soldiers believed the British would grind out a victory in the end.¹⁴⁸ These battles demonstrated that a negotiated peace was impossible. There is no evidence that men were willing to consider ‘peace at any price,’ and defeat was something they were unwilling to contemplate.¹⁴⁹

For those in the line, the thick fog on the first days of the battle, the intense bombardment, their physical exhaustion, and disrupted communications seem to have offered little opportunity to consider the strategic implications of the German attack. Their present was immersive and seems to have impeded their ability to conceive of the offensive as a

¹⁴² Capt. P. Ingleson, Letter to Gwen c. April 1918.

¹⁴³ J. Grimston, Diary 14 and 22 March 1918.

¹⁴⁴ NAM 2006-04-25: Papers and maps sent to Sir John Fortescue by Lt Gen Sir Ivor Maxse in April and July 1918; papers are chiefly relating to XVIII Corps and the Battle of St Quentin between 21 and 30 March 1918, XVIII Corps No. G.a.155/4: 20th Division [1-3] and XVIII Corps No. G.a. 155/1: 30th Division [-1-4].

¹⁴⁵ NAM 1986-01-86, Special Order of the Day by Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig K.T. G.C.B. G.C.V.O. K.C.I.E. Commander-in-Chief, British Armies in France. Gen. HQ, Thursday, April 11th, 1918. Press A-4/18, 8601-86-1.

¹⁴⁶ WO 161/100/400: POW Interviews, 245402 Sgt. Henry Ward; WO 161/100/2336: POW Interviews, 75880 Pte. Edward Kierstenson; WO 161/100/1665-1666: POW Interviews, Ptes. 17025 W. Thomas and 12713 F. Spencer; WO 161/100/1667-68: POW Interviews, Cpl. 20151 Ernest Jones 18/Field Ambulance R.A.M.C. and Pte. 20414 Frederick Leighton R.A.M.C; WO 161/100/1752: POW Interviews, Pte. R. Durrand; WO 161/100/1758: POW Interviews, Sgt. 10099 W.W. Whitney.

¹⁴⁷ Papers and maps sent to Sir John Fortescue by Lt Gen Sir Ivor Maxse, Letter to Fortescue from Maxse 28 April 1918 [-1-1].

¹⁴⁸ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 182.

¹⁴⁹ Capt. M. Hardie, ‘Report on III Army Morale, August 1917’, 3.

general crisis.¹⁵⁰ One officer described the experience of 21 March as ‘ignorance and blindness.’¹⁵¹ A.E. Heywood felt that simply making it out alive ‘against great odds’ was a success.¹⁵² Lt. Col. A.H. Cope was aware of the ‘stresses and strains’ experienced by his men but viewed the experience with a tactical eye. The effectiveness of German infiltration signalled a change in the tide of the war. Open warfare also offered the British the opportunity to counter-attack.¹⁵³ There were ‘depressing’ moments when it was ‘ laughable’ to make any attempts to hold the ground. Yet, Cope’s optimism led him to marvel the ‘beauty’ of as yet unscarred villages and countryside.¹⁵⁴ On 29 March he felt nothing could stop the Germans, but such negativity was short-lived and emerged only after several days of fighting and sleep deprivation. It quickly dissipated once he had been relieved.¹⁵⁵

Other men saw the German attacks as a turning point: the conflict had entered a new phase. G.A. Stevens put the German successes down to luck and found the fighting ‘intensely interesting.’¹⁵⁶ It offered opportunities absent amid the mud of Passchendaele. Stevens was convinced that ‘our turn is coming and that we shall fairly “slip it across him”’.¹⁵⁷ He proclaimed that ‘these are wonderful times we are living in just now [,] every moment fraught with immense possibilities, but every day we can hold the Boche up now is lessening his chances of victory.’¹⁵⁸ He celebrated the enemy’s heavy losses and was certain that the BEF would strike back once ready. German tactics convinced him that the era of trench-warfare had passed and he found mobile warfare ‘far pleasanter’ since the artillery played a more limited role.¹⁵⁹ Other men also found the open warfare a welcome change. It offered more varied routines, which were preferable to tours of the trenches.¹⁶⁰ Capt. A.J.J.P. Agius sensed that the German losses meant ‘better times are ahead.’¹⁶¹ It was not only officers who saw the offensive in such terms. F. Hubard argued that ‘everybody of importance out here does not take a gloomy view of it. In fact they seem to think that the Germans are overreaching themselves and will receive a pretty severe blow before long.’¹⁶² Even some new arrivals were bolstered by such a belief. H.T. Madders had been dispatched to France with other

¹⁵⁰ A.L. Collis, Diary 21 March 1918; Lt. J.E.H. Neville, Diary 21 March 1918; Pte. A.G. Old, Diary 29 March – 25 April 1918.

¹⁵¹ Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 1 April 1918; Lt. J.E.H. Neville, Diary 23 March 1918.

¹⁵² A.E. Heywood, Diary 24 March 1918.

¹⁵³ NAM 1987-11-44: Arthur Hawtayne, 26 May to 28 May 1918; Lt Col. A. Stockdale Cope, Diary 22 March.

¹⁵⁴ Arthur Hawtayne, 28 and 29 May 1918.

¹⁵⁵ Lt. Col. A.S. Cope, Diary 29 March 1918.

¹⁵⁶ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to his Mother Easter Sunday 1918.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* Letters to his Mother Easter Monday and 7 May 1918.

¹⁶⁰ Lt. C.T. O’Neill, Diary 29 March 1918; Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 21 April 1918.

¹⁶¹ Capt. A.J.J.P. Agius, ‘Copy’; extract from a letter dated 29 March 1918.

¹⁶² F. Hubard, Letter to Mr and Mrs Underhill 8 April 1918.

reinforcements but sent his diary home with a note stating he would be ‘back in England for hop picking [in September].’¹⁶³

Capt. M. Hardie, III Army Censor, correctly surmised that soldiers ‘want to be shown a way out’ of endless war.¹⁶⁴ For much of the conflict they remained confident that German defeat was the best and most likely ‘way out.’¹⁶⁵ In 1914 and 1916 many men were fortified by a belief that the campaigns of that year had achieved something. They remained confident that victorious peace was a certainty. This made their sacrifices worthwhile and their present suffering easier to bear. The cycles of the war became part of a longer, more lumbering, process that led to victory and peace. In 1917, men’s confidence in the military pathway to peace faltered. A sense of acute crisis emerged as victory was perceived as increasingly unlikely. Nevertheless, many men remained resilient and others found that their perspective shifted after 21 March 1918. This strategic crisis actually allowed men to readjust as the new patterns of the war offered reasons to be optimistic. The next section will explore exactly how hope for and visions of peace benefited morale.

Hope provided men with the meaning they needed to continue to persevere through the war’s chronic crises by furnishing them with a vision of peace. Peace was an abstraction and a construct – fed, in part, by the memories, dreams, and fantasies of home explored previously.¹⁶⁶ It would be impossible to provide any “average” vision of peace. It is, however, possible to trace similar patterns in the ways that soldiers perceived the future and continuities in their attitudes. Hopes for victorious peace helped to mitigate the trauma of war by expanding men’s mental horizons. Peace provided an alternative world and a different reality – a new environment – where the war had ended and all anxieties had faded. Importantly, it was personalised and became something that each individual could fight for. Yet, it was also a unifying goal.

Peace plans offered men the opportunity to develop personal life goals. To repeat L/Cpl. C. White, it was ‘the only event that is worth carrying on for.’¹⁶⁷ Visions of peace usually involved the desire to be reunited with loved ones or simply being at ‘home.’¹⁶⁸ 2nd Lt.

¹⁶³ H.T. Madders, Note: Diary 27 March 1918.

¹⁶⁴ Capt. M. Hardie, ‘Report on III Army Morale, August-October 1917’

¹⁶⁵ Col. F. Hardman, Letter to Parents February to March 1918; Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor HET/5, Letter from Ashburner to Mrs Parker, Letter 14 October 1914.

¹⁶⁶ Reverend E.N. Mellish, Letter in *St Paul’s, Deptford, Parish Church Magazine*, July 1918.

¹⁶⁷ L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 16 January 1917.

¹⁶⁸ Pte. J.E. Mawer, Doc. 25 Letter to Wife 30 November 1914 and Doc.29 Letter to Wife Undated [c. Christmas 1914]; Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 22 December 1914; Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter to Wife 5 December 1916; C.P. Crump, Letter 11 September 1916; H.T. Madders, Diary 5 April 1918; IWM P

D. Henrick Jones' hopes revolved around being with his new wife.¹⁶⁹ Capt. P. Ingleson's visions of life with his girlfriend were 'inspiring' and he simply hoped to be 'worthy' of her.¹⁷⁰ Charles Carrington anticipated that peace would bring cheer to his mother, who had already lost a son, and that it would see his family 'flourishing'.¹⁷¹ A.P. Burke wished only to return home and talk to his family members.¹⁷² Others fantasised about meeting friends, not too badly maimed, who had gone missing or with whom they had lost contact.¹⁷³ Less affectionately, 2nd Lt. Lidsey looked forward to being repaid by his friends who owed him money.¹⁷⁴ F. Hubard, in contrast, hoped that he might *repay* the kindnesses shown to his family by friends.¹⁷⁵ S.B. Smith, who came from farming stock, looked forward to helping his wife bring in the barley.¹⁷⁶ Other visions involved 'education, occupation, embracing an England not devastated by war, simply sitting at home, sleep, good meals, pastimes, a "land fit for heroes" or grandiose ideas regarding the betterment of society.'¹⁷⁷

The ability to construct peace around these very personal goals may very well have instilled a depth of meaning that was sustaining. Capt. Hardman's vision of the 'dawn of peace' contrasted with the horror, despondency and suffering. It reminded him that 'I have something to live for beyond this world of carnage [and] bloodshed.'¹⁷⁸ Pte. William Anderson told his wife how hopes for the future occupied his mind: 'men as a rule are more apt to look forward and my thoughts, while largely of how you are faring at the moment, are looking ahead full of hope to lighter days.'¹⁷⁹ Anderson confessed that 'the boys' talked of little else than what they would do after the war. He wanted to 'live a useful upright life' in which his wife and child would have 'no want of anything'.¹⁸⁰

As far as research can demonstrate, humans are 'the only meaning seeking species'.¹⁸¹ Men personalised war and developed goals for their lives after it. Maj. S.O.B.

450: 2nd Lt. H.M. Hughes, Letter to his Mother 3 January 1916; L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 6 and 27 February 1917; Arthur Neilson, Letter to his Daughter 3 December [No Year] [-4-1]; Pte. Percy Thompson, Letter to Adelaide [undated] from Rouen.

¹⁶⁹ 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letters to Wife 14 October 1916 and 4 April 1918.

¹⁷⁰ Capt. P. Ingleson, Letter to Miss Fulton 2 January 1918.

¹⁷¹ Capt. Charles Carrington, Letter to Mother 19 October 1916 and 7 May 1918.

¹⁷² A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 22 June 1916.

¹⁷³ IWM 91/23/1: Capt. C.C. May, Letter from a member of his platoon (21090) to his wife, undated but clearly written in the weeks after 1 July 1916.

¹⁷⁴ 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 16 November 1916 [p 96].

¹⁷⁵ F. Hubard, Letter to Mr and Mrs Underhill 25 October 1916.

¹⁷⁶ Pte. S.B. Smith, Letter to Wife 8-10 October 1917.

¹⁷⁷ Mayhew, 'Hoping for Victorious Peace', 201. For a similar discussion of 'home' and hopes for the future see Fletcher, *Life, Death and Growing Up*, 3.

¹⁷⁸ Col. F. Hardman, Letter to Parents 3 April 1918.

¹⁷⁹ Pte. W.M. Anderson, Letter to Wife 11 December 1916.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* Letter to Wife 28 October 1916 and 10 December 1916.

¹⁸¹ R.A. Emmons, 'Personal Goals, Life Meaning and Virtue: Wellsprings of a Positive Life', in C.L.M. Keyes and J. Haidt (eds.), *Flourishing: Positive Psychology and the Life Well Lived*, (Washington DC, 2003) 105.

Richardson envisioned a future free of war. The ‘chief justification [of the present conflict] lies in the fact that it will render future wars well nigh impossible.’¹⁸² Lt. Brettell and his sweetheart saw peace as an opportunity to profit from his war experiences. They were effusive. She responded to a letter by writing ‘it simply seems to me that après la guerre everything will be glorious and perfect, and whatever happens now one must be content to exist till then. Here’s to the end of the existence!’ They discussed selling his paintings, which depicted the difficulties of life in the army, and making ‘pots of money.’¹⁸³ C.T. O’Neill also hoped to ‘make the best of things’ once the war finished.¹⁸⁴ Pte. F.G. Senyard believed it would be ‘glorious.’¹⁸⁵ 2nd Lt. Henrick Jones’ continued to court his childhood sweetheart, and their marriage in late 1916 left him proclaiming: ‘what a wonderful future I’ve got to live for now.’¹⁸⁶ Fathers also continued to parent with a view to slotting seamlessly back into family life.¹⁸⁷ The process of having a goal imbued with meaning allows people to ‘construe their lives as meaningful or worthwhile.’¹⁸⁸ Hopes for peace encouraged men to see purpose in their war experience, and this went some way to mitigating – and justifying – its horrors.

Religion fuelled some men’s hope and optimistic reasoning.¹⁸⁹ Adrian Gregory has proposed that a widespread, albeit internalised, religiosity existed in Britain during this period.¹⁹⁰ While optional, Sunday church service remained a notable part of a battalion’s weekly schedule – even during periods of intense warfare. Clergy were also a common sight in the front lines and at aid stations.¹⁹¹ James Cooper’s strong Anglican upbringing prompted him to keep a service sheet when he embarked for the Western Front. It read, ‘GOD is our Hope and Strength: a very present help in trouble.... Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved: and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea.’¹⁹² H.T. Madders copied a similar passage into the final page of his diary.¹⁹³ Other men’s families looked to nurture their faith at a distance.¹⁹⁴ Some postcards played on the theme of God and the future.

¹⁸² IWM 99/13/1: Maj. S.O.B. Richardson, Letter to Mother and Sister Late 1916 [No. 4].

¹⁸³ Lt. F.A. Brettell, Letter from Peggy 30 November 1916 and 29 December 1917.

¹⁸⁴ Lt. C.T. O’Neill, Diary 26 January 1918.

¹⁸⁵ Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter to Wife 18 September 1917.

¹⁸⁶ 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter to Wife 25 December 1916.

¹⁸⁷ Arthur Neilson, Letter to Daughter [-1-1], Letter to Daughter 30 November [No Year] [2-1], Letter to Daughter June 1st [No Year] [-3-1] and Letter to Daughter Dec 3rd [No Year] [-4-1]; Pte. J.E. Mawer, Undated Letter to Wife c. November 1914 [Doc.24]; Pte S. Smith, Photograph Postcards of his Wife and Children; Letters sent to Bentley Bridgewater by his Father in France, Letters 2 and 9 March and 2 May 1918; AOC: John [No Surname], Embroidered Postcard to Daughter.

¹⁸⁸ Emmons, ‘Personal Goals’, 105.

¹⁸⁹ Ziemann, *Violence and the German Soldier*, 36.

¹⁹⁰ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 152-186.

¹⁹¹ Madigan, *Faith under Fire*, 139-48.

¹⁹² MR 3/17/91: James Henry Cooper, Memorial Service Programme, St Mark’s Parish Church, Dukinfield (4 August 1915).

¹⁹³ H.T. Madders, ‘Believe in God’ Note at End of 1917/18 Diary.

¹⁹⁴ Pte. A. Joy, Autograph Book [9209-139-6] – Notes from Mother; R.C.A. Frost, Letter from Mother 3 January 1918.

Pte. H. Oldfield received two such cards at the end of 1917. The first, 'The Divine Comforter,' showed Jesus holding the arm of an injured British soldier. It included a quotation from the Book of 'Isaias [sic]': 'Fear not, for I am with thee; / turn not aside, for I am thy God.'¹⁹⁵ E. Grantham kept another entitled 'faith' in his wallet. This card exhorted its reader to have faith that a 'brighter' future would come.¹⁹⁶ Such ideas sustained men and encouraged resilience. Other men's faith was more personal. 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones prayed to 'God every day' as he sought assurances about the future.¹⁹⁷ Prayer combated anxieties. During a bombardment in 1914 one man 'could hear the men Praying to God to look after there [sic] wife [sic] and children should an think [sic; anything] happen to them.'¹⁹⁸ God's benevolence was key to their survival and to victory.¹⁹⁹ Some men put their ultimate faith in God to 'save us.'²⁰⁰ Scholars point to the relationship between Christian 'utopia' and 'hope' – 'hope driving the utopian impulse, utopianism inspiring hope.'²⁰¹

Believing that forces outside one's comprehension controlled the world could lead men to toe the line. Some men retained an unwavering faith in a brighter future, and prayer itself offered them the semblance of agency.²⁰² William Anderson assumed that 'that there's a strong vein of religion down in most chaps, and it only wants tapping the right way.'²⁰³ Anderson entreated the 'Dove of Peace' to "descend and make the World a brighter and happier place."²⁰⁴ A.J. Lord looked to the same Christian symbol.²⁰⁵ Soldiers' trench art saw bullets, shell casings, or the remnants of zeppelins fashioned into crosses or other objects imbued with religious symbolism.²⁰⁶ Reflecting upon such things Reverend C.H. Bell argued that 'men certainly are a little more inclined to religion here than at home.'²⁰⁷ This may have been the assumption of a cleric reluctant to accept the secularism of the ranks. Some men failed to understand their compatriots' faith in God.²⁰⁸ In fact, the majority of the soldiers

¹⁹⁵ MR3/17/110: Pte H. Oldfield, Postcards 'The Divine Comforter' and 'The White Comforter'; H. Bridge, Postcard from Niece.

¹⁹⁶ GWA (<http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/items/show/5896>, accessed 6 October 2016): Postcard Kept Throughout the War by Sapper E. Grantham.

¹⁹⁷ 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter to Wife 25/26 December 1916.

¹⁹⁸ Diary of an Unidentified Soldier in the 2nd Bn. Border Regiment, 18 December 1914; Pte. H. Oldfield, Letter from HSS Clarke 10 CCS BEF to Mrs Oldfield on 20 November 1917.

¹⁹⁹ H.T. Madders, Diary 20 April 1918; A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 7 July 1916.

²⁰⁰ Pte. S.B. Smith, Letter c. September 1916 and Letter 10 October 1916; H.T. Madders, Diary 7 April and 20 May 1918.

²⁰¹ D. Webb, "Christian Hope and the Politics of Utopia," *Utopian Studies*, 19, No. 1 (2008) 113.

²⁰² Pte. H. Oldfield, Letter from HSS Clarke 10 CCS BEF to Mrs Oldfield on 20 November 1917; L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 17 January 1917; W. Anderson, Letter to Wife 21 December 1916; E.T. Marler, Diary 22-23 October 1916; L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 18-19 February 1917.

²⁰³ Pte. W.M. Anderson, Letter to Wife 5 November 1916.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* Letter 21 December 1916.

²⁰⁵ Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter 8 January 1918.

²⁰⁶ See IWM EPH 10150: "Ring" or IWM EPH 1915: "Bullet Crucifix". The latter was produced on the Italian Front but it is very likely that similar things were crafted in France and Belgium.

²⁰⁷ Rev. C.H. Bell, Letter to Herbert 21 January 1918.

²⁰⁸ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 21 November 1916.

studied here rarely mentioned God or church services and when they did it simply formed a part of common parlance: 'thank God,' 'God help Fritz,' 'By God,' or 'God knows.'²⁰⁹ Nonetheless, for many, even a vague religiosity encouraged them to confidently invest themselves in their visions of peace and to draw nourishment from them.

Soldiers sought evidence that they were treading a route that led to victorious peace. The hope of those with little religion was supported by more practical considerations. Men were receptive to and regularly emphasised progress. The pursuit of a goal provided some soldiers with the perception of forward momentum. Static warfare was part of an attritional tit-for-tat. A.P. Burke told his brother that his battalion had captured more than a thousand Germans early in the Somme battles.²¹⁰ W.J. Lidsey proudly reported that the battalion his unit relieved had captured 700 enemies, while suffering only 'very slight' casualties.²¹¹ Fred Gelden had a 'decent time' having captured two prisoners during a raid.²¹² Other men used war trophies and 'souvenirs' as evidence of success and military prowess.²¹³ There was even a black market in such objects.²¹⁴ C. Dwyer acquired a German sign from his billet to keep as a memento.²¹⁵ Sgt. S. Gill had an 18-inch German shell casing and trench knife he took from enemy trenches.²¹⁶ Other men took postcards off the bodies of fallen enemy troops.²¹⁷ This helps to explain one of Haig's 'lessons' of the Somme campaign, where the 'morale effect' of aerial superiority had been 'out of all proportion' to its material impact.²¹⁸ Soldiers desperately wanted evidence of the war's positive development and so long as there was some way to paint the war encouragingly it seems that men were willing to do so.

Sometimes there were no visible signs of success. Perceptions of victorious peace were more often fed by rumours.²¹⁹ One soldiers' newspaper poked fun at the proliferation of these.²²⁰ In October 1914 H.E. Trevor heard that 'Von Kluck's army is surrendering.'²²¹ The next month S. Judd recorded an inflated report of the Battle of the Falkland Islands, in which

²⁰⁹ Pocket Diary 1914, 10 October 1914; Reminiscences of unknown Guardsman 13 August to 3 November 1914, 23 October 1914; Capt. C.C. May, Diary 1916: pp xix-xxi; F. Hubard, Letter to Mr and Mrs Underhill 8 December 1917; Lt. J.E.H. Neville, Diary 23 March 1918; Liddle/WW1/GS/0137: Pte. O.G. Billingham, Diary 25 March 1918.

²¹⁰ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 7 July 1916.

²¹¹ 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 3 and 6 November 1916.

²¹² Fred Gelden, Diary 8 June 1918.

²¹³ Advert: DO NOT READ THIS!!! Unless You Have a Girl at Home', *The B.E.F. Times*, No. 5, Vol. 2. (1917).

²¹⁴ RFM.ARC.2495: Sgt. S. Gill, Diary [Book 7] 6 October 1916.

²¹⁵ C. Dwyer, Diary 11 September 1914.

²¹⁶ Sgt. S. Gill, Book 8 [RFM.ARC 2495.5] Diary 8-9 December 1916.

²¹⁷ Pte. John Peat, German Postcards; Capt. E.L. Higgins, Postcards [Germans in Front of Train, Germans Next to Cross and German Officers in Bombed Church].

²¹⁸ WO 256/14: Diary of Field Marshal Haig, 1 December 1916.

²¹⁹ Capt. G.B. Donaldson, Letter to his Mother 8 June 1916; A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 12 November 1916; Pte. W.M. Anderson, Letter to his Wife 24 October 1916.

²²⁰ 'If All the Rumours Came True', *The Bankers' Draft*, No. 1 and 2 Vol. 1. (June and July 1916).

²²¹ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter to Evelyn 6 October 1914.

23 German and 6 British cruisers had apparently been sunk.²²² However, even the most implausible gossip encouraged discussion about news that might signal the coming of peace. In 1916 William Anderson wrote home that 'if some of the rumours that are floating around have anything solid about them, I may God willing, be with you both soon. I trust that this is so.'²²³ F.G. Senyday actually requested that his wife send him the rumours that had been circulating at home.²²⁴ Soldiers continued to lap up gossip until the Armistice.²²⁵ H.T. Madders' diary on 11 November 1918 read: 'the runner has gone to Coy orders and rumours are about, is it peace? It can't be, we've had some before; we hang on and duck as just before 11 o'clock old Jerry lets go his big stuff and makes the most of it; Then uncanny silence.'²²⁶ Rumours are used as a form of 'collective explanation.' These allow people to make sense of events that might be unexplainable, and give cohesion to events that are incoherent.²²⁷ In this instance, they fed men's hope for victorious peace.²²⁸

Finally, perceptions of the enemy reinforced the necessity of victorious peace. English soldiers believed Germany was expansionist, and they accepted that peace must be fought for.²²⁹ German military strategy reminded men of the threat facing England.²³⁰ In 1914 the soldiers were conscious of Belgium's plight and witnessed civilian casualties and refugees during the retreat from Mons.²³¹ C. Dwyer believed that the German Army had acted 'disgracefully.'²³² In 1916 they were aware of the German attempts to bleed France white at Verdun.²³³ Finally, in 1918, soldiers were conscious of an imminent German offensive as early as February. 21 March confirmed their fears for home as they again witnessed a German advance, its dangers, and the resultant dislocation of the local populace.²³⁴ They were again

²²² S. Judd, Diary 19 December 1914.

²²³ Pte. W.M. Anderson, Letter to Wife 9 November 1916; Liddle/WW1/GS/1444: Pte. C.W. Sharp, Letter to Ethel 16 September 1916.

²²⁴ Pte. F.G. Senyday, Letter to Wife 18 September 1917.

²²⁵ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 7 November 1918; J. Grimston, Diary 10 November 1918; H.T. Madders, Diary 11 November 1918.

²²⁶ H.T. Madders, Diary 11 November 1918.

²²⁷ P. Bordia and N. DiFonzo, 'Problem Solving in Social Interactions on the Internet: Rumor As Social Cognition,' *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 67 No. 1 (March 2004) 33–49.

²²⁸ For the operation of rumour see G. Seal, *The Soldiers' Press: Trench Journals in the First World War*, (Basingstoke, 2013) 82-89.

²²⁹ W. Vernon, Letter to Miss L. Vernon 22 July 1918.

²³⁰ Gibson, *Behind the Front*, 383-384.

²³¹ J.S. Knyvett, Diary 22 October 1914; Sgt. Osborn, Diary 22, 24 and 27 August and 16 September 1914; Pte. W. Tapp, Diary 1914 (p 5); Postcard Signed by 'The Mademoiselle from Armentieres', Extract from local paper, perhaps the *Bucks Advertiser*, regarding the experience of Pte J.T. Greenwood, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, published 24 October 1914.

²³² C. Dwyer, Diary 10 September 1914.

²³³ 'If All the Rumours Came True', *The Banker's Draft*, No. 2, Vol 1 (July, 1916).

²³⁴ Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 27 January 1918; H. Milner, Memoir: p 32; Cpt. Arthur J.J.P. Agius, Extracts from a letter received from France 28 March 1918; Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to his Father 12 April 1918; W. Vernon, Letter to Miss L. Vernon 22 July 1918.

able to picture the Germans as ‘the invader.’²³⁵ In such circumstances war did not seem futile and victory seemed necessary.

The German state was portrayed as a destructive enemy incapable of compromise. S.A. Newman and a number of other infantrymen collected sets of postcards charting the destruction on the Western Front. These images portrayed the ‘Hun’s passion for destruction’ and the ‘devastation by the vampires.’²³⁶ Some men regurgitated such characterisations. Sgt. S. Gill wrote angrily ‘damn those Prussians. Sodom and Jeremiah to the... demonical ghoulish vampires.’²³⁷ A.P Burke considered Germany and Germans to be an ‘old Devil.’²³⁸ Others were repulsed by stories of German mistreatment of Allied soldiers.²³⁹ C. Dwyer was particularly aggrieved when a number of Northumberland Fusiliers had apparently been shot dead after they had surrendered.²⁴⁰ A couple of men obtained a number of German-made postcards from enemy corpses. One particular series included celebratory images of British dead. These reminded the men of the kind of foe they were fighting.²⁴¹ It was possible to see the Germans as the ‘authors’ of the war’s evil and this, in many cases, engendered an ‘intense determination to exact full retribution.’²⁴² It made any peace without Germany’s defeat seem futile.

Figure 5.3: This image – MR2/17/53: Papers of Joseph Patrick Kennedy: A German Postcard Showing Dead British Soldiers – German Postcard No. 294 – has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.

Such stereotypes focussed on the German state and its military hierarchy. There is very little to suggest that the men fostered hatred for the enemy soldiers as individuals.²⁴³ Some men did find that a loathing for the enemy was bred by the death of comrades.²⁴⁴ A.P. Burke confessed

²³⁵ Col. F. Hardman, Letter to Parents 4 April 1918.

²³⁶ S.A. Newman, Postcards of Arras; H.T. Madders, Postcard Collection for Arthur; Pte S. Smith, Postcards 3 (Albert) Somme and Guerre 1914-1916 No. 80 Albert (Somme).

²³⁷ Sgt. S. Gill, Diary 20 December 1916.

²³⁸ Ibid. Letter to Reg 12-15 October 1916.

²³⁹ Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 3 and 6 September 1918.

²⁴⁰ C. Dwyer, Diary 21 September 1914.

²⁴¹ Patrick Joseph Kennedy, German Postcards [Nos. 126, 138, 164, 282, 283, 284, 294 and 440]; Photographs of Maj. F. Hardman, Photographic Postcards of Various Dead British Soldiers; GWA (<http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/items/show/6050>, accessed 5 October 2016): German Postcard and Photograph Souvenired by George Powell.

²⁴² Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 11 November 1916; ‘Editorial’, *The B.E.F. Times*, No. 3 Vol. 1 (1917) 1-2; ‘Editorial’, *The B.E.F. Times*, No. 5 Vol. 2 (1918) 1-2.

²⁴³ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor, Letter to Mother 2 September and 3 October 1914; Diary of an Unidentified Soldier in the Border Regiment, 11 December 1914; Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother 2 November 1916; Pte. C. Clarke, Memoir: p 14; Reverend M.A. Bere, Letter to Wife 17 September 1917; Lt. Col. A. Stockdale Cope, Diary 28 March 1918; J. Grimston, Diary 29 March 1918; Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to his Father 21 April and 25 August 1918.

²⁴⁴ Pte. A E Hutchinson, Journal: ‘The True Story of My First Day of Captivity in the Hands of the Huns.’ [812-70]; Pte. W. Tapp, 24 and 26 November 1914; Sgt. Osborn, Diary 22-23 and 25 August 1918.

to his brother, in a letter on 6 July 1916, that his unit had ‘begrudged’ an order to take prisoners.²⁴⁵ Most men reserved their odium for Germany’s leaders – the propagators of ‘kultur,’ which was infecting the world.²⁴⁶ Bruce Bairnsfather’s illustration, ‘The Tactless Teuton,’ reflects such sentiment. A stick-thin German private of the ‘Orphans’ Battalion’ was overseen by an overweight and moustachioed man of his own Army’s ‘Gravediggers’ Corps’ – a caricature typical of many others. Bairnsfather presented a state-run slaughter orchestrated by a devilish ‘Hun.’²⁴⁷ This ‘powerful ideological’ motivation was repeated by soldiers in their depictions of the enemy.²⁴⁸ Many men used ‘Hun’ or ‘Teuton’ as a catchall term for the German troops.²⁴⁹ This allowed them to dehumanise the enemy and hinted at their timeless and expansionist militarism.²⁵⁰ German soldiers did not normally incite hatred but the ‘Hun’ certainly could: ‘[I] heard all about the raid, it’s a bad business and shows what a callous lot the Huns are.... They are only creating rage in the hearts of the chaps out here.’²⁵¹ Lt. Reginald Neville explained to his sister that:

We want to exterminate, not so much the Germans as individuals for they are harmless enough, but their methods and principles; and worst of it is that there is only one way to do this and that is to kill the individuals. If only we could get hold of these abstract principles, turn them into concrete and then blow them off the face of the earth, our end would be attained.²⁵²

Germany became a historicised warmonger that needed to be met with military might. A meaningful peace could only be produced by victory.

Optimism was also a central feature of men’s hope for victorious peace. Alexander Watson has argued that ‘psychological coping strategies were only coloured, not shaped by social influences.’²⁵³ Psychological processes supported men’s hope for victorious peace. ‘Human faith, hope and optimism,’ argued Watson, ‘no less than cultural traits, discipline, primary

²⁴⁵ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 6 July 1916. For hatred of the enemy and prisoner killing see Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, esp. 357-58.

²⁴⁶ IWM Misc 15 Item 335: Pte. A.W. Lloyd, The U.P.S. Song Book Song: ‘Marching Through Ashstead.’

²⁴⁷ Bairnsfather, *Best of Fragments from France*, 10.

²⁴⁸ Gibson, *Behind the Front*, 12.

²⁴⁹ Capt. G.B. Donaldson, Letter to Mother 2 July 1916; N.R. Russell, Letter to Mother 15 July 1916; 2nd Lt. W.J. Lidsey, Diary 2, 10, and 13-14 November 1916; Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Father 12 February 1918.

²⁵⁰ E. Jones, ‘The Psychology of Killing,’ 244; M. Kestnbaum, ‘The Sociology of War and the Military’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 35 (April, 2009) 242-243.

²⁵¹ A&C Black Publishers, Letter from E. Lindsell 23 June 1917.

²⁵² Lt. Reginald N. Neville, Letter to Sister 2 August 1917.

²⁵³ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 8.

groups and patriotism, explain why and how men were willing and able to fight in the horrendous conditions of the Western Front.²⁵⁴ Soldiers needed to invest themselves in a brighter future.²⁵⁵ The power of human imagination provided soldiers with visions of their lives after war and helped them to endure the horrors of 1914-1918.²⁵⁶ This optimistic future space expanded men's mental horizons and offered men the perception of forward momentum. The power of these visions was most evident when men became unable to see this future.²⁵⁷ Images of peace produced an alternative world, which transported infantrymen away from their present, at least until they were forced to 'wake up.'²⁵⁸

Historians and contemporaries argue that *unjustified* optimism and self-deception were key to morale – particularly when overcoming the fear of death.²⁵⁹ Optimism was a precondition of men's hopefulness and helps to explain the resilience of the peace/victory dynamic. *The Somme Times* toyed with this widespread over-optimism, apparently mocking positive outlooks:

- 1- Do you suffer from cheerfulness?
- 2- Do you wake up in a morning feeling that all is going well for the Allies?
- 3- Do you sometimes think that the war will end within the next twelve months?
- 4- Do you believe good news in preference to bad?
- 5- Do you consider our leaders are competent to conduct the war to a successful issue?

If "yes" the reader was consoled that 'we can cure you of this dread disease.'²⁶⁰ All it took was a visit to the front lines. Optimism was incumbent on the men fighting in Belgium and France and was key to their emotional survival.²⁶¹ Five months later the same publication berated pessimism. The pessimist was a 'strange 'elfish creature.'²⁶² Pte. Albert Joy's signature book reflects such attitudes. Family, friends, and comrades included messages. J.

²⁵⁴ Ibid. 107.

²⁵⁵ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 18 August 1916; Pte. P.N. Wright, [Retrospective Diary] 10 November 1916.

²⁵⁶ For a discussion of predictions of war ending as a coping strategy see Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 100 and S. Halifax, "'Over by Christmas': British Popular Opinion and the Short War in 1914", *First World War Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (October, 2010) 106.

²⁵⁷ Lt. J.E.H. Neville Diary 23 March 1918.

²⁵⁸ 2nd Lt. S. Frankenburg, Letter 1 December 1917.

²⁵⁹ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 92-93, 105-106, 234; Ziemann, *Front und Heimat*, 174 and Ferguson, *Pity of War*, 365.

²⁶⁰ NAM 1959-03-34 (4): 'Are You a Victim of Optimism?', *The Somme Times: with which are incorporated The Wipers Times, The "New Church" Times & The Kemmel Times*, No. 1 Vol. 1 (Monday 31 July 1916).

²⁶¹ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 92-107.

²⁶² 'Editorial', *The BEF Times*, No. 2 Vol. 1 (Monday 25 December 1916).

Baker, another soldier in the Royal Fusiliers, advised Bert to ‘despond if you must. But never despair for remember that from our greatest failures arise our most Brilliant success.’²⁶³ Lt. Johnson believed that soldiers had a unique perspective that straddled optimism and pessimism, while perfectly aligning with neither. The war was a paradox. It engendered ‘endurance, inventions, simplicity’ and produced ‘the one idea out here by us’: victorious peace would eventually transpire.²⁶⁴ Men were aware of optimism’s irony but remained resolutely forward-looking. Their perceptions of the future were integral to this and to morale. Ultimately, it took a lot to convert the soldier into an arch-pessimist, unwilling to connect peace to victory.

Peace allowed men to plan and consolidate all that was good in their lives, and encouraged visions of this idealised future. The use of the future tense diminished their present misfortunes and assumed their survival. Pte. William Anderson sent his sketches of the frontlines as ‘a memory of very anxious times.’²⁶⁵ When imagining their families’ futures soldiers saw themselves as the providers of both financial and emotional support. Such certainty was expressed in nearly all of their letters and diaries. A & C Black Publishers’ correspondence provides further evidence of men being focussed on peace. Their employees wrote regularly to discuss their jobs, to thank their employers for providing for their families, enquiring about the business, and discussing their return after the war.²⁶⁶ In hoping for peace soldiers envisaged themselves beyond the confines of their dangerous military service: the ability to imagine future episodes is an important feature of human cognition.²⁶⁷ Cristina Atance and Daniela O’Neill describe this process as ‘episodic future thinking’ and suggest it has a positive bearing on human experience and behaviour.²⁶⁸ Importantly, *writing* about these goals improves subjective wellbeing. Writing about ‘one’s best possible self’ has similar benefits to writing about trauma, and can increase wellness. The benefits are more powerfully felt when these future goals are used in contrast to shocking events.²⁶⁹ The very process of hoping, thinking, and imagining a future situation, and vocalising these visions, provided men with a psychological tool that protected them.

²⁶³ Pte. A. Joy, Signature and Message by J. Baker in Signature Book.

²⁶⁴ Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 30 December 1917 and 1 January 1918. Also Capt. C. Carrington, Letter to Mother 2 October 1918.

²⁶⁵ Pte. W.M. Anderson, Letter to Wife 16 November 1916.

²⁶⁶ A&C Black and Company, Letters of E.P. Gilscott and L/Cpl. E. Lindsell.

²⁶⁷ K.K. Szpunar, J.M. Watson and K.B. McDermott, ‘Neural Substrates of Envisioning the Future’, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, Vol. 104, No. 2 (July, 2006) 642-647

²⁶⁸ C.M. Atance and D.K. O’Neill, ‘Episodic Future Thinking’, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, Vol. 5 No. 12 (December, 2001) 533-539.

²⁶⁹ L.A. King, ‘The Health Benefits of Writing about Life Goals’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 27 No. 7 (July, 2001) 798-807.

Similarly, soldiers' collections reveal the ways in which their frames of reference had been moulded by the social environment. Hew Strachan sees the negation of the self as a key ingredient of training.²⁷⁰ 'Choice architecture,' a term coined by behavioural economists Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, helps to explain how consumers' decision making is influenced by the information available to them and how this can be manipulated.²⁷¹ The soldiers' use of language reveals the ways in which their perceptions were constrained by their military membership. It has been argued that 'speakers [look] to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness within a group' by using 'slang.'²⁷² There is a sense – within letters and diaries – that a number of 'voices' were operating. Foucault's discussion of authorship helps to explain this; he argued that 'the author function operates so as to effect the dispersion of these... simultaneous selves.'²⁷³ These men pined for peace and embraced their future in the civilian world. Yet their lexicon revealed their militarisation – they immersed their syntax in indirect and often unintentional indications that they were at war, which represented the 'present' tense for them. As the first chapter of this thesis has shown, the use of French became commonplace. Other slang, such as 'straffe' or 'straffing,' 'wind-up,' 'A1,' 'grousing' and 'napoo' quickly entered the vocabulary of every soldier and was used pervasively.²⁷⁴ It even influenced interaction with loved ones, as wives and sweethearts sometimes adopted militaristic phrases.²⁷⁵ In these subtle ways the war and the military experience embedded itself in soldiers' psyches. The language of a number of the infantrymen partly explains why many were unable to contemplate peace through anything but battle and victory. The war came to dominate their lives and the army was the vehicle for action that framed their reasoning. As a result some envisaged that peace would be won in a 'great battle' and the vast majority saw peace as a synonym for victory.²⁷⁶

Could their hope for peace create recurring cycles of disappointment as goals remained unachieved and engendered disillusionment?²⁷⁷ Every year men pondered the proximity of peace. Historians of the Home Front have argued that false hopes of the war

²⁷⁰ H. Strachan, 'Training, Morale and Modern War', 216.

²⁷¹ R.H. Thaler and C.R. Sunstein, *Nudging: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (London, 2009) esp. 3-6, 10-13.

²⁷² C.C. Eble, *Slang & Sociability: In-Group Language Among College Students* (Chapel Hill, 1996).

²⁷³ M. Foucault, 'What is an Author?' in M. Foucault, *Aesthetics, Methods and Epistemology*, (Ed. J.D. Faubion and Trans. R. Hurley etc.) (New York, 1998) 216.

²⁷⁴ A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 12-15 October 1916; Pte. William Anderson, Letter to Wife 13 November 1916; 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter 25-26 December 1916; Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter to Wife 26 December 1916 and 16 June 1918; Albert Victor Arthur, Diary 24-30 September 1917; Pte. John Peat, Letter 11 October 1917; Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 8 February 1918; H.T. Madders, Diary 17 March 1918; C.H. Isom, Diary 2 May 1918.

²⁷⁵ Mrs L.K. Briggs, 41st Division Xmas Card 1916; Lt. F.A. Brettell, Letters from Peggy esp. 8 May 1916.

²⁷⁶ Col. F. Hardman, Letter 3 April 1918; Lt. J.H. Johnson, Diary 28 December 1917; Pocket Diary 1914, 7 September 1914.

²⁷⁷ Pte. F.G. Senyard, Letter to Wife 18 September 1917; L/Cpl. C. White, 31 January 1917.

ending before Christmas quickly disappeared in 1914.²⁷⁸ Soldiers in France and Belgium, however, continued to foster such ideas. L.F. Ashburner ruminated in October 1914, 'I wonder if we shall be home by Xmas?'.²⁷⁹ Such queries were repeated throughout the war.²⁸⁰ Pte. William Anderson revealed in October 1916, that 'I haven't lost the idea that this business may well be over by Christmas. Maybe my faith or hope is on the strong side.'²⁸¹ Only in 1917/18 did such forecasting falter. Christmas and New Year provided focal points for soldiers' aspirations for peace.²⁸² The festive holidays were *the* time for family and friends and it is unsurprising that December became the focus of peace hopes, reflecting men's desire to avoid another winter in the trenches.²⁸³ This also suggests that men viewed peace as a by-product of military campaigning. They hoped there would be victory by Christmas, the month after major campaigning usually ended. In 1914 R.D. Sheffield found that the men 'all seem to say that they think this will be the last battle and if we win that the war will end before Christmas'.²⁸⁴ In 1916 G.H. Greenwell asserted that 'everything sooner or later has an end' and trusted that a successful campaign would force a German collapse and end the war by Christmas.²⁸⁵ However, such hopes, except in 1918, were never realised.²⁸⁶

Research suggests that even false hope can still be of psychological benefit.²⁸⁷ Hope is 'a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived *sense of success*: (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals).'²⁸⁸ It 'is influenced by a dispositional sense of abilities to produce pathways and agency across situations'.²⁸⁹ Motivation might be influenced by the perceived success (or failure) in the spheres of agency and pathway, rather than attainment. It is the *feeling* of pursuing a legitimate course towards one's goal that matters most. It would seem that high-hoppers have a

²⁷⁸ Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, 223.

²⁷⁹ Brig. Gen. H.E. Trevor HET/5: Capt. Ashburner to Mrs Parker, Letter 14 October 1914; R.D. Sheffield, Letter to Father 9 November 1914; Pte. J.E. Mawer, Doc. 25 Letter to Wife 30 November 1914.

²⁸⁰ R.D. Sheffield, Letter to Father 9 November 1914; Pte. F.G. Senyard, Diary 14 December 1916; E.T. Marler, Diary 25 December 1916; Capt. C. Carrington, Letter [no. 87] to Mother 29 December 1916; L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 3 January 1917; Reverend E.N. Mellish, Letter in the *St Paul's, Deptford, Parish Church Magazine*, January 1918.

²⁸¹ Pte. W.M. Anderson, Letter to Wife 17 October 1916; C.F. Crump, Letter 11 September 1916; E. T. Marler, Diary 25 December 1916.

²⁸² This may have been the product of religiosity. There were, however, few references to Easter and peace.

²⁸³ Capt. M. Hardie, 'Report on III Army Morale, August-October 1917'.

²⁸⁴ Lt. R.D. Sheffield, Letter to Father 9 November 1914.

²⁸⁵ Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Letters 30 August and 4 November 1916.

²⁸⁶ For the negative impact see E. Greenhalgh, "Parade Ground Soldiers": French Army Assessments of the British on the Somme in 1916', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (April, 1999) 302.

²⁸⁷ Snyder et al., "'False' Hope', 1003-1022.

²⁸⁸ C.R. Snyder, L. Irving and J.R. Anderson, 'Hope and Health: Measuring the Will and Ways', C.R. Snyder and D.R. Forsyth (eds.), *Handbook of Social and Clinical Psychology: The Health Perspective*, (Elmsford, 1991) 287.

²⁸⁹ Snyder et al., "'False' Hope', 1007.

slight propensity to interpret events with a ‘positive self-referential bias.’²⁹⁰ It was often enough for men to be ‘under the impression that they are winning,’ so they allied themselves with *feelings of success*.²⁹¹ *Esprit de corps* may have also cultivated high levels of hope, research suggesting that ‘interpersonal relationships’ are of huge benefit to the processes of resilient hoping.²⁹² Such relationships existed. Charles Carrington saw the ‘friendships’ that he had developed as a key feature of his war experience. He feared the severance of such bonds.²⁹³ So long as men felt that the war was progressing productively, it was through this that they measured success and remained resiliently hopeful despite the persistent failure of victorious peace to materialise.

Enduring war is helped if soldiers conceive of it as productive, worthwhile, or just. Soldiers’ widespread hope for peace allowed them to invest themselves in a personalised future devoid of war. Their better future lives justified their suffering, whilst also allowing them to escape their presents. These visions were personalised, and imbued their war experience with greater meaning. Soldiers were obsessed by the proximity of peace and English infantrymen met each campaign with a sense that it might be the final victorious push. Victory was the mechanism through which peace would be achieved.

As the architect of the soldiers’ trauma, the war also offered them the best opportunity to return to their peaceful lives. It was hard for men to conceive of peace as anything other than a product of war. Enduring the boredom and danger of the conflict made sense. Such an outlook was supported by a variety of factors. Visions of peace gave meaning to their presents and futures and were hard to relinquish. An internal faith – religious or otherwise – allowed soldiers to continue to believe in the likelihood of victory. The generally positive and sustaining contact with home described in the previous chapter also helped to support and preserve hope. Men grasped any sign of success and met a change in the pattern of the war with renewed confidence. Rumours fed ideas that peace might be just over the horizon. Importantly, many men believed that the German state needed to be defeated before a lasting peace would emerge. Yet, in autumn/winter 1917, confidence in victorious peace dwindled. This offers the only example of an acute crisis in morale among English

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ S. Judd, Diary 27 December 1914; A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 7 July 1916; Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, Letter to Mother Easter Monday 1918; Capt. C. Carrington, Letter to Mother 28 March 1918 (no. 134).

²⁹² Snyder (et al.), ‘“False” Hope’, 1016. Training manuals provide evidence that *esprit de corps* was seen as a key ingredient to ‘moral’ success. See *Platoon Training (1918)*, 20. Soldiers referred directly or indirectly to it in their recollections, Liddle/WW1/GS/0451: L.M.E. Dent, Interview Transcript 1978.

²⁹³ Capt. C. Carrington, Letter to Mother 7 July 1918 and 13 October 1918.

infantrymen in Belgium and France. However, the German offensives in March 1918 convinced men that the Germans would not accept a negotiated settlement, that defeat was a real possibility, and provided evidence that the conflict had entered a new phase and offered new opportunities.

Underlying and encouraging the hopefulness was their psychological environment. The sense of forward momentum and purposefulness that their visions of peace provided was invaluable. The resilience of their hope also rested on optimistic reasoning that was widespread among the troops studied here. The peaceful world they envisioned was positive and assumed their survival. The soldiers' social environment also constrained their sense-making and ensured their perspective was informed by the war and military. Military victory was often the only route to peace they could conceive of. Their outlook also deflected the impact of unfounded hope and rumour. A key factor in why acute crisis was generally avoided was most English infantrymen's continued belief in the necessity and possibility of victorious peace.

Conclusion

This thesis has added to our understanding of ‘the subjective interpretive models of soldiers’ by tracing the reactions of English infantrymen as they sought to make sense of their war experiences.¹ It goes further than previous accounts of morale or the mentality of soldiers by using a broad array of documents in an attempt to build a conceptual map charting how soldiers conceived of and internalised the conflict. Exploring this conceptual framework helps to explain how the social and physical environments overlapped with men’s psychological environment, which was projected back onto the world around them. The subtext of this analysis is the interrelationship of crisis and morale. Combatants’ frequently failed to register military crisis in the ways that historians (or their generals) might have expected. Their lives were plagued by constant chronic individual crises, yet most men overcame these. Chapter I described the ways in which men became attached to the Western Front – despite the destruction and violence that met them there. Chapter II highlighted the problem of winter exhaustion, but argued that this was generally met with resilience and may have even changed soldiers’ perspective on the war during spring and summer. Military service could be a chronic crisis, but Chapter III demonstrated how men’s deep sense of obligation was in itself sustaining. Men’s dislocation from home, the focus of Chapter IV, was evident in their nostalgic visions of England – yet soldiers’ deployed their imagination and memories of people and landscapes as coping mechanisms, and justification of their suffering. Chapter V argued that infantrymen’s perception of acute crisis – that which was potentially fatal to morale – emerged most forcefully when their confidence in victorious peace began to falter. Loss of hope was the critical psychological mechanism in this process.

However, throughout the war, despite all of the chronic crises accompanying service, English infantrymen had a central goal, which was peace. For most of the conflict, they thought that the only viable pathway to peace was military victory. It was only when victorious peace appeared impossible that morale began to unravel. Morale was otherwise buttressed by soldiers’ personal and collective attachment to and investment in the Western Front, their strong and sustaining images of England, and their powerful sense of obligation. Eric Leed was wrong to suggest that the war stripped away combatants’ pre-war identities or that they could only relocate themselves in the context of the shared experience at the front.² In fact men drew heavily on their previous individual identities. In the regular army these identities were inherently militaristic, but among the servicemen of the New Armies their

¹ Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany*, 11.

² Leed, *No Man’s Land*, 210-213; Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience*, 245.

civilian selves played an important role. The military social environment did, however, constrain their sense-making, as did the physical frame of Belgium and France. Ultimately psychological survival rested on the power and resilience of the human mind.

Soldiers' perception of crisis – an important feature of their morale – lies at the heart of this thesis. Humans can experience both *chronic* crises, which are continuous but bearable, and *acute* crises, which are immediate and potentially overwhelming. Chronic crisis could become acute, while particular events – such as palpable military reverses – could engender acute crisis. Most studies concentrate on 'acute' crises, but by focussing on the chronic crises of military service it becomes apparent that soldiers' frequently overcame acute tactical 'crisis.' Outside combat, morale rested on soldiers' ability to overcome and adapt to the war's chronic crises. The coping strategies they deployed as well as a remarkable immunity from acute crises on the political and strategic level were central features of English infantrymen's morale. They were able to mould themselves to their environment. Ross Wilson and Alexander Watson have shown how important processes of familiarisation, normalisation, and habituation were to morale.³ This thesis has restated the fundamental significance of these and other psychological processes. Soldiers certainly felt the pressures of service deeply: the destruction in the war zone, the bleakness of winter, the omnipresence of death, the discomfort of daily life and their separation from home. However, they adapted - and it would seem that a vast array of immediate 'chronic' crises might even have clouded their perspective on the wider war. The war's perpetual and on-going struggles created a chronic crisis that plagued day-to-day life and absorbed soldiers' time and energies leaving them little space to think about the wider war, but it was only 'acute' crises that actually threatened morale.

Military service and its chronic crises were normalised and could become routine. This was a both a conscious and unconscious process, which was evident in soldiers' use of language, imagery, and dark humour. Many men chose to focus on the positive aspects of their existence. Their visions of home and hopes for victorious peace reflected this. These visions, more than anything else, equipped them to endure war by supplying a picture of the brighter future for which they fought. They allowed them to remain confident and optimistic that victory was the likely and necessary route to preserving and securing these visions. It was only once these hopes began to falter that 'acute' crisis emerged.

³ Wilson, *Landscapes of the Western Front*, 102, 105; Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 57, 87.

Chronic crises were made bearable and acute crisis was averted by soldiers' complex perception of time. John Horne has argued that:

...contemporaries were acutely aware that they were living through a moment of epochal change. By the measure of historical time, no event since the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars had, for Europeans at least, assumed such epic proportions and seemed so certain to change the destinies of countries, empires, and regimes.⁴ What was true of countries was also true of individuals.

Horne deploys the concept of 'subjective [or personal] time,' which contrasts with understandings of 'standard time.' 'Personal time was elastic, stretching from an eternal present of waiting to the compressed instant of an air raid or attack. Its grammar included a past tense of sharpened memories and a future so uncertain that for tens of millions of soldiers and their families it dissolved into multiple uses of the conditional tense.'⁵ The present was overbearing – it was a part of the matrix of chronic crises. This was evidenced in the distortion of soldiers' sense of the seasons. Autumn held little relevance for an infantryman whose temporal reference points were the weather and patterns of military campaigning. It became a part of the long winter, while spring was seen as the first sign of summer, a new campaign and perhaps peace. The present was made more bearable by the same processes of familiarisation and normalisation that deflected crisis. It could even become meaningful with reference backwards and forwards in time.

English soldiers merged past and future as they made sense of their world. Their presents could only be survived insofar as they were perceived as fleeting. It was only in 1917, when their presents threatened to become 'eternal,' that 'acute' crisis emerged. A sense of forward momentum was essential to morale, as was the infantryman's preoccupation with the future. The soldiers also employed a certain future tense that assumed their survival. The opportunities offered in the future justified their present suffering. Soldiers, however, looked to the past when imagining this future space. Men wanted to return to life as it was before the war, albeit with greater opportunities. Sanitised memories of England also presented men with their clearest vision of the country they were fighting to protect. The war became a bridge between their pasts and futures.

Men's perceptions of crisis, time, and the war were all influenced by their frames of reference. These were built around their social and physical environments, both immediate and imagined. The social and physical environment provided a frame that influenced their sense-making. The natural environment was both a physical and a metaphysical space. It was

⁴ J. Horne, 'Foreword', in Halewood, Luptak and Smyth, *War Time*, vii.

⁵ Ibid.

the source of many of the ‘chronic’ crises but the landscape also became a canvas onto which they projected their emotions, and from which they could draw sustenance. Men became attached to the Western Front: it was normalised, and nurtured interrelationships between meaning, memory, and landscape. This helped them overcome the conflict’s other-worldliness. The chronic crises of winter and the physical environment distorted men’s perception of campaigning, as the weather and winter became a greater foe than the Germans. Men’s imagined social and physical environment provided both a coping mechanism and a justification for fighting.

Soldiers’ psychological environment provided the filter through which they interpreted their experiences as meaningful or necessary. The world around them was internalised and re-projected as something comprehensible. It allowed men to seek meaning in their surroundings, which is an important feature of psychological resilience. Other innate coping mechanisms allowed the psychological environment to deflect crisis. English infantrymen exhibited many of the ingredients of resilience described in modern studies (see p 20). They utilised many so-called ‘individual-level factors.’ In particular, there is evidence of positive coping (managing circumstances); spiritual coping (faith-based beliefs and support); positive affect (deploying positive emotions); positive thinking (enthusiasm, reframing, hope); realism (particularly perceived agency), and behavioural control (self-regulation, self-management, self-enchantment). Other themes also emerge to varying degrees. Unit-level factors included a positive command climate (pride, support, and leadership), teamwork (coordination and flexibility), and cohesion (combined actions, bonding, and commitment). Community-level factors ranged from a sense of belonging (integration and friendship) through cohesion (bonds with community/shared values) to connectedness (high-quality connections with people or places). Such mechanisms were supported by soldiers’ focus on the future, positive reasoning, psychological projection, and their imagination.

These findings conform to ‘the tradition of the *Annales* School’ which ‘stressed the *longue durée* (long run) or resilience and social cohesion beneath the *événements* (particular events) of cultural fragmentation that so traumatised the elites.’⁶ It adds to the understanding of ‘war culture(s),’ first proposed by Annette Becker and Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau.⁷ This concept designates a ‘broad-based system through which belligerent populations made sense of the war and persuaded themselves to continue fighting it.’⁸ It rested on actors’ consent:

⁶ Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience*, 255-56. Also L. Hunt, ‘French History in the Last Twenty Years: The Rise and fall of the *Annales* Paradigm,’ *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 21 (1986) 209-24.

⁷ Audoin-Rouzeau, and Becker, 14-18, 102-3, 147, 166.

⁸ J.M. Winter and A. Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2005) 159.

they internalised their country's cause and embraced the demonization of the enemy. It has become interlaced with 'brutalisation' theory.⁹ Sense-making was multifaceted. However, it is important to note that any glorification of violence is absent from these soldiers' accounts. While it might have been omitted from letters, it is also rare in other documents (such as diaries and soldiers' newspapers). Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius has shown how German soldiers on the Eastern Front exhibited a hatred of their Slavic enemy. Concepts of 'races and spaces' were embedded in the 'ethnic' programme of the Ober Ost.¹⁰ However, on the Western Front R.L. Nelson has found that 'hatred of the enemy is almost completely absent from [German] soldier newspapers.' 'Soldiers' consent,' he concluded, 'can be achieved through the perception of a legitimate cause... Hatred of the enemy is not necessary and should be dropped from the "war culture" argument.'¹¹ English soldiers despised the Wilhelmine state and believed its defeat was a necessary ingredient of any lasting peace, which made victory an absolute necessity. They did not, though, hate the enemy as individuals. Nevertheless, the majority of these men 'accepted the orders and "mission" they were given, believed that what they were doing was right and deeply hoped and believed that they should and would win.'¹² Individual concerns coalesced with national strategy.

In some cases, however, chronic crises could become acute and morale did falter. When depressed, French soldiers' referred to having *le cafard*, or the blues.¹³ The men of the BEF adopted a pre-existing soldiers' phrase for a similar emotional state. When feeling particularly fearful and pessimistic they had the 'wind up'.¹⁴ At such times soldiers became more anxious and nervous and were more vulnerable to acute crisis. Nonetheless, they helped each other through such moments, which they insisted were transitory.¹⁵ Yet, shell shock and breakdown did occur and understanding the impact of both acute and chronic crises helps to explain these instances. One man referenced throughout this thesis, Ernest Marler, completely failed to adapt, and for him the war's chronic crises became acute and overwhelming. Yet he

⁹ This clearly draws on the work of George Mosse in *Fallen Soldiers*. Space precludes a discussion of the historiographical controversy surrounding this issue. The concept of 'war culture' has, however, been rebuffed by the Collectif de Recherche International et de Débat sur la Guerre de 1914–1918. Their perspective and ideas can be explored at <http://www.crid1418.org> (accessed 1 June 2018) or at F. Buton, A. Loez, N. Mariot and P. Olivera, '1914-1918: Understanding the Controversy,' *Books and Ideas* (11 June 2009) (<http://www.booksandideas.net/1914-1918-Understanding-the.html>, accessed 1 June 2018). See also J. Connolly, *The Experience of Occupation in the Nord, 1914-1918* (Manchester, 2018) 3-8.

¹⁰ Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 114, 219-20.

¹¹ R.L. Nelson, *German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War* (Cambridge, 2010) 242.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ C. Rearick, *The French in Love and War: Popular Culture in the Era of the World Wars* (Yale, 1997) 15; Hanna, 'A Republic of Letters,' 1350-52.

¹⁴ 'On Getting the "Wind Up"', *The Outpost*, Vol. IV Iss. 5 (Mar 1 1917) 158; 'Wind Up', *The Cyclometer*, Vol. 1 Iss. 1 (Nov 1, 1917) 9.

¹⁵ Capt. G.B. Donaldson, Letter to Mother 6 June 1916; A.P. Burke, Letter to Reg 12-15 October 1916; Capt. A.J. Lord, Letter to Father 8 February 1918; Pte. O.G. Billingham, Diary 8 March 1918.

was the exception that proved the rule. Perhaps his age made it harder to cope. At 37, he was significantly older than most men in the Royal Fusiliers, and less willing or able to adapt.¹⁶

Born in Norfolk to a publican, Marler became a butler in the household of a family of stockbrokers living on Hanover Square, London. Accustomed to authority and cleanliness, he arrived in a mud-caked France as a lowly private. He struggled to adapt to the physical environment, and the military social environment offered little solace. His diary entries revealed his torment:

- 4/10/16: 'Drizzling rain more or less all day. Barlin [Pas-de-Calais] a horribly dirty place... A puddle of mud.'
- 6/10/16: 'Morning parcel from home, torch, canvas shoes, apples etc.... Headquarters staff billets. Stables; Barns; Fowl houses and hold buildings, some absolutely unfit for human beings to occupy.'
- 24/10/16: '... No work all day its gets on one's nerves, when one thinks of the work one might be doing at home...'
- 29/10/16: 'Cold, wet and windy. The same routine... How wretched I feel... How the comfort of home has been in my thoughts. The life out here is hell no comfort of cleanliness, fire, food or anything else, one simply exists. Hard biscuits and cheese for dinner, having to work on a Sunday is galling. May God soon send peace.'
- 3/11/16: 'Weather fine. Awful puddle under foot. The food seems like poison to me. Continual pain in stomach all the week... Vile smell from farmyard, bad enough to cause fever... How I wish it would all end, long for the comfort of home, the life is hell. A horrible goat here, which stinks the whole place.'
- 14/11/16: 'Afternoon went and saw where they were burying the dead. Long trenches about 200 yds, 4 ft deep, poor fellows simply sewn in a blanket... How awful. That there should be such a terrible thing as war.'
- 13/12/16: 'Wicked billet no fire – no comfort. If one washes their clothes no means of drying. Billet a rotten loft, dark, stinks. Enormous amount of waste in the army. New under clothes, thrown away. Food, ammunition etc.'
- 1/1/17: 'New Years [sic] Day. May God send peace in 1917.'

His complaints would have resonated with those of his compatriots: the weather, billets, food, death, and the remoteness of peace. Yet, the chronic crises he faced combined to create a visceral sense of acute crisis. Marler's comments regarding 'the work one might be doing at home' suggest that he failed to register military service as an obligation. The physical environment was a distressing contrast to the 'comfort of home.' He found it impossible to normalise his service or to habituate himself to war. Feeling little sense of forward momentum, it was perhaps the apparent permanency of his present suffering that weighed on his mind. Key survival mechanisms had little power in this case.

¹⁶ See Appendix II.

The analysis presented in this thesis sheds light on episodes of larger-scale insubordination, ‘collective disobedience,’ or mutiny. There were moments when soldiers were ‘liable to react to what they perceived as unfair treatment by their military superiors by going on strike’ or voicing their discontent.¹⁷ The majority of these ‘sporadic’ events took place in Territorial units on the Home Front between 1914 and 1915. Some reports suggested that complaints arose when ‘regular army discipline’ was applied in Territorial structures.¹⁸ This hints at the importance of the physical and social environment, which influenced soldiers’ frames of reference. However, the enquiry into ‘discontent’ in the 1/4 Norfolk Regiment shows that concerns arose over the ability of the commanding officer. Men believed in their cause and their obligation, but wanted to be led competently into battle.¹⁹

More troubling were the events at Etaples during September 1917. The date of *the* major British ‘mutiny’ during the Great War corresponds with the emerging crisis period outlined in earlier chapters.²⁰ Yet the few historians who have studied these events thoroughly suggest they stemmed from local complaints rather than deeper, more substantive, problems of loss of hope or war weariness. Poor food, inadequate conditions and facilities, boredom, brutal training, inappropriate disciplinary systems, disrespectful NCOs and officers, and no sense of *esprit de corps* were all contributing factors.²¹ There was ‘little... evidence of mutineers expressing resentment of regimental officers’ or of calls for peace at any price. In fact, Australian soldiers seem to have been the most active participants in this ‘strike’ and English infantrymen’s involvement was relatively limited. The chronic problems of life at war became too much to bear and the military authorities were compounding, not alleviating, their discomfort.

The ‘demobilisation disturbances,’ which took place after the Armistice, followed a similar trajectory. These ‘were transitory.’²² Gill and Dallas have argued that the cessation of hostilities meant men were ‘more inclined than ever to contrast their lot with that of the men employed in England.’²³ In some circumstances their demands were more specific. Soldiers in Le Havre called for shorter working hours, more holidays and an increased bread ration. In

¹⁷ Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*, 151.

¹⁸ Ibid. 151-52.

¹⁹ TNA WO 32/18563: ‘Discontent among Battalion [1/4th Norfolk Regiment] owing to Colonel Harvey’s unsympathetic consideration for officers and men under his command.’ Similar complaints were found elsewhere, WO 32/1858: ‘Report on Officers of 201st Brigade and 202nd Brigade.’

²⁰ The ‘Singapore Mutiny’ was the largest of the conflict but involved 400 men of the British Indian Army. See I.F.W. Beckett, ‘The Singapore Mutiny of February 1915,’ *Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research*, Vol. 62 (1984) 132-53.

²¹ Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*, 152; Gill and Dallas, ‘Mutiny at Etaples Base in 1917,’ 88-112.

²² G. Sheffield, *A Short History of the First World War* (London, 2014) 178-79.

²³ G. Dallas and D. Gill, *The Unknown Army: Mutinies in the British in World War I* (London, 1985) 89-90.

Dannes servicemen struck against ‘the substitution of time work for task work.’²⁴ The ‘Calais Area Soldiers and Sailors Association’ protested against the unjust incarceration of New Zealander, Pte. Pantling.²⁵ In Dunkirk servicemen requested a definite date for the end of their service. Some voiced concerns that those ‘lucky’ men who had already returned home would get better jobs and pay. Sheffield concludes that ‘the breakdown of discipline in the army after the Armistice owed much to a widespread feeling among the troops that they had enlisted to do a job, the task was completed – Germany was defeated – and their part of the contract was fulfilled.’²⁶

Men’s perceptions of their obligations were – in many instances – finite, and revolved around the war, victory, and good character. This is evident in the fears expressed during these ‘disturbances.’ The centrality of men’s hope for a victorious peace explains why these episodes occurred *after* the end of hostilities. The war had been won and the justification for the men’s suffering disappeared with victory. Their contract with the British military was now complete. However, these events took place outside this study’s temporal boundaries and, tellingly, did not involve the infantry. The key actors were the Army Service Corps and Royal Engineers: a different social environment whose inhabitants were more likely to have a background in industry and trade unionism. Revealingly it was the 105th *Infantry* Brigade, 35th Division (Fifth Army) that were ordered to ‘assist in quelling’ the riots taking place in Calais.²⁷

The war itself framed men’s experiences and filtered their understanding of their service. The strength of English infantrymen’s confidence in the peace-victory dynamic is perhaps the most striking feature of this analysis. The differences from other armies’ hope nexus helps to shed light on this finding; in particular the differences between these Englishmen, the *poilus* of the French Army and the men of the Imperial German Army – the soldiers who shared the same physical environment. English infantrymen were not exposed to acute military or political crises of comparable magnitude to those afflicting soldiers in other armies and their less politically developed sense of citizenship and citizen rights appear to have left the men studied here either less willing (or able) to voice concerns and discontent.

The lack of major upheaval on the Home Front, the nature of static warfare in Belgium and France, and soldiers’ inability (or unwillingness) to perceive tactical defeat help

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid. 90-98.

²⁶ Sheffield, *A Short History*, 178-79.

²⁷ Dallas and Gill, *Unknown Army*, 99.

to explain the resilience of the peace/victory nexus. Away from the Western Front military conditions and very different socio-political systems created a different dynamic in soldiers' morale. While direct comparisons are complicated – and other factors were undoubtedly influential – it appears that the militaries of the sprawling Central European and Eastern European empires also reflect the importance of hopes for victorious peace. The 1917 revolutions in Russia and widespread rioting, demonstrations, looting, and eventually uprisings in Austria-Hungary left some soldiers questioning what they were fighting for. Once visions of victorious peace collapsed amid social and political upheaval, a belief in peace *without* victory became more powerful. In contrast, Italian soldiers were able to normalise and habituate dimensions of the war and they also drew their greatest strength from the region and locale. Vanda Wilcox, however, argues that 'compliance' best describes their attitude to war and individual conceptualisations of duty and discipline.²⁸ At Caporetto Italian soldiers' hopes for a victorious peace were dismantled by the enemy's operational success. In contrast, many English infantrymen blamed the weather for 1917's failures and saw opportunity in the reverses of March 1918.

Military defeat and men's relationship with the state can also throw light on this equation. The stalemate on the Western Front made small incremental gains more significant and only palpable reverses were really sensed by the soldiers. English infantrymen's morale was at its lowest in late 1917 after the painful and limited advance along the Passchendaele front and the disaster at Cambrai. Their unsuccessful year in Belgium and France was made worse by events elsewhere – particularly Russia's revolution and military collapse. Yet, while acute crisis threatened to emerge, the army did not disintegrate and a wholesale acute crisis failed to materialise. In contrast, the German Army collapsed in autumn 1918 as soldiers' hopes for victorious peace were left in tatters by increasingly desperate conditions in Germany, Allied material superiority, and *the failure of the spring offensives*. German soldiers 'lost all hope that further fighting would serve their main aim, to secure peace and go home.'²⁹ A belief in and commitment to victory were paramount. They made military service justifiable and worthwhile. The end of the war saw 'a mass refusal to fight' among 'individuals who, in the final months of the war, all acted on their own initiative to seek their way back to the safety of home.'³⁰ Ziemann believes two factors undermined German soldiers' endurance: 'first, their living conditions deteriorated substantially during the war. Second... open advocacy of annexationist views repudiated the myth of a defensive war.'³¹

²⁸ Wilcox, *Morale in the Italian Army*, 186, 195.

²⁹ B. Ulrich and B. Ziemann (eds.), *German Soldiers in the Great War: Letters and Eyewitness Accounts*, trans. C. Brocks (Barnsley, 2010)

³⁰ Ziemann, *Violence and the German Soldier*, 136.

³¹ Ziemann, *War Experiences*, 271; Nelson, *German Soldier Newspapers*, 5, 10, 240.

Declining allegiance to the monarchical system compounded this.³² Alexander Watson believes this mass refusal was an ‘ordered surrender’ but concurs that it was produced by ‘exhaustion and disillusionment’.³³ The chronic crises of war became an acute crisis as the likelihood of a victorious peace evaporated. Despite the strain of 1917 the English infantrymen remained confident of their chances and much better provided for. What is more, the entry of the United States offered renewed hope despite the disaster on the Eastern Front. The German collapse also owed much to soldiers’ relationship with the state. Conscription and citizenship were interwoven. Like their enemies, many Germans’ ‘sacrifices’ and ‘entitlements’ were interpreted through their allegiance to their nation and its sovereignty.³⁴ Yet political reform was the topic of lively debate among the soldiers of Imperial Germany in a way that it never was for the English infantrymen studied here. Even as they sensed the war’s stagnation, English soldiers’ were unable to voice support for an alternative course. The Germans, however, concentrated ‘on the perceived injustice both at the front and on the home front,’ which ‘paved the way’ for military and social revolution.³⁵

While the French Army did not experience a collapse comparable in scale, it certainly experienced a period of acute crisis. The relationship between peace and victory became very fragile during the Nivelle Offensive.³⁶ A sequence of futile attacks in this sector left units uncertain that *this* battle could bring about peace. Unlike the English infantrymen of 1917 the *poilus* were willing to voice their apprehensions. According to L.V. Smith the French mutinies in 1917 emerged from the relationship between service and republican citizenship.³⁷ The power relationship between citizen soldiers and their commanders was built upon ‘the official French ideology of popular sovereignty.’ Soldiers were obeying ‘a source of authority originating, ultimately, in themselves and their compatriots.’³⁸ Smith argues that ‘for French soldiers, the issue revolved around whether and under what circumstances they considered the levels of offensive violence expected of them relevant to the goal they shared with their commanders of winning the war.’³⁹ Authority for the ‘pathway’ to victorious peace was, therefore, partially invested in the men. The interface between soldiering and political identity might also explain the more negative relationship between *poilus* and the ‘hated home

³² Ibid. Also S. Stephenson, *The Final Battle: Soldiers of the Western Front in the German Revolution of 1918* (Cambridge, 2009).

³³ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 215-231.

³⁴ Ulrich and Ziemann, *German Soldiers*, 11. Also R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA., 1992, 1994) 14, 104.

³⁵ Ulrich and Ziemann, *German Soldiers*, 11.

³⁶ L.V. Smith, ‘War and “Politics”: The French Army Mutinies of 1917’, *War in History*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2 (1995) 180-201.

³⁷ Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience*, 10.

³⁸ Ibid. 8, 16.

³⁹ Ibid. 17.

front.⁴⁰ An engagement with the political sphere might well have made French soldiers more critical of the war's orchestration and sceptical of its progress. Nonetheless, French soldiers retained a love for their country and a belief in their cause throughout the war.⁴¹ 'The mutineers,' unlike the Germans in late 1918, 'did not reject military service outright. Rather, their mutiny was a way to renegotiate their terms of service, which they understood as a duty of every male citizen.'⁴² All the same, mutiny – whatever the motivation – risked catastrophe.

The British Army did all it could to remain apolitical.⁴³ Unlike the French and German militaries, which played key roles in nation and citizenship, the army had generally existed on the periphery of British political life and until the war national conscription had never been imposed. In fact, there was a long-held suspicion of large standing armies.⁴⁴ The men of 1914-18 entered a military social environment that did not remodel itself to mirror the national war effort. Some 'soldiers and workmen's councils' on the Home Front in 1917 complained about this: '...the Army Acts and the King's Regulations were drawn up to deal with a completely different army from that which we have now. In the old voluntary force the men composing it voluntarily renounced most of their rights as citizens.'⁴⁵ Another group parroted such ideas:

We have no vote, no status, and only the right of an individual appeal, no matter what the injustice. We plead as beggars for what our comrades can demand as citizens. We ask to be citizens with the privileges as well as the responsibilities.⁴⁶

There were even parliamentary debates regarding the permissibility of MPs commenting on policy or politics while in uniform.⁴⁷ Such concerns were not voiced when on the Western Front. Mass military service and conscription were novelties in Britain, which was not a full democracy in 1914. Many of the English infantrymen studied here would have never voted in national elections.⁴⁸ These were *subject* soldiers.⁴⁹ Helen McCartney accepts this, but argues that there was still 'consultation and bargaining' drawing on 'the conventions of pre-war

⁴⁰ Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War*, 92, 111, 119.

⁴¹ Ziemann, *Violence and the German Soldier*, 152.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ This did not necessarily stop senior figures interfering in politics. See H. Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford, 1997).

⁴⁴ J.W.M. Hichberger, *Images of the Army: The Military in British Art, 1815-1914* (Manchester, 1988) 38, 124; G. Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society* (Abingdon, 1977, 2007) 10.

⁴⁵ WO 32/5455: 'Copies of Two Reports sent to Sir Reginald H. Brade at WO, 'Soldiers Representatives.'

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* Report from the Meeting of the 'Home Counties and Training Reserve Branch of the Soldiers' and Workmen's Council, 18 July 1917.

⁴⁷ WO 32/18555: 'Admissibility of MP's on Military Duties in Expressing Political Views in Press,' A.G.3. 8/6/15 and HoC Debate 29 June 1915.

⁴⁸ See Appendix II.

⁴⁹ Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience*, 10, 248.

society.⁵⁰ This may well be true, but it took place within units and did not offer the same opportunity to question the legitimacy of orders *en masse*. As well as failing to perceive events as irreversible setbacks, English infantrymen were, in the main, unable or unwilling to question the higher conduct of the war. For many, once in khaki, citizenship, sovereignty, and suffrage mattered less than home, subsistence, and respectability. Actions that seem incongruous to the modern observer were, in part, driven by the strength of these social and cultural – rather than political – impulses. Tommy’s default recourse to humour shows just how powerful these could be. Arguably, this more parochial sense of national identity was more resilient to challenges.⁵¹

In lieu of a strong sense of citizenship, it was the English infantryman’s everyday national identity that mattered most to his morale. This revolved around ‘home,’ encompassing family, friends, community, and locality. This vision of home provided both a justification for fighting and a coping mechanism. As one trench journal proclaimed: ‘for the soldier abroad there is only one name for England, Home and Beauty, and that is “Blighty.”’⁵² England was imagined as a particular or composite social or physical environment: people(s), place(s), or landscape(s). This focus on England did not diminish the importance of Britain or her Empire. However, both were filtered through men’s distinct sense of Englishness, which was their primary identity. Soldiers’ everyday national identity drew on personal experience and personal memory, which made their relationship with the nation, the rest of the United Kingdom, and the colonies even more powerful. Men had enlisted in their greatest numbers in 1914 when the BEF was threatened by defeat on the Continent, stoking a widespread fear of invasion.⁵³ Men joined the army to protect their homes – and it was this subjective England that they fought for in the trenches of Belgium and France.

L.V. Smith’s last thoughts on the French military speak just as well to this discussion of English infantrymen:

I find the axiom of a human spirit broken or maimed by World War I highly problematic outside intellectual or artistic circles. My conclusions certainly suggest that the human capacity to

⁵⁰ McCartney, *Citizen Soldier*, 122.

⁵¹ Nelson, *German Soldier Newspapers*, 241; Ziemann, *Violence and the German Soldier*, 38.

⁵² T. Edwards, ‘Soldiers Bat’, *The Londoner: The Journal of 1/25th Battalion, The London Regiment* Vol. 1 Iss. 4 (Feb 1, 1917) 69.

⁵³ C. Messenger, *Call to Arms: The British Army 1914-1918*, (London, 2005) 96; Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army*, 9-12; Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 32, 75.

adapt and endure is stronger than an impulse towards spiritual entropy in the face of calamity.⁵⁴

To make sense of the Western Front soldiers fell back upon many of their innate and often unconscious coping mechanisms. Their psychological environment provided a projection of the world that acted as a shield. This allowed many of them to adjust to, use, and overcome their social and physical environments. Ultimately their visions of the future and desire to protect England convinced them of the justice of their cause. For all its horror, the conflict would not last indefinitely and was perceived as a constructive enterprise. Of course such findings are mere windows into a vast universe. However, this thesis demonstrates that to understand endurance and morale we must delve deeper into the minds of historical actors. It is only then that the true power of the human spirit and its inherent adaptability will be revealed. It is abundantly clear that – even in the twilight of the centenary – there is much more to be learnt as historians continue to mine the complex psychologies of the soldiers of the Great War.

⁵⁴ Smith, *Mutiny and Obedience*, 247.

Appendix I

Winter at War: Temperature and Climate on the Western Front

Winters in Belgium and Northern France were plagued by ‘constant’ cold weather.¹ In Arras, for example, two-thirds of the days in January saw temperatures of freezing or below. Additionally, ‘the outstanding feature of rainfall in France and Belgium... is the frequency of its occurrence.’ Winter’s low temperatures and the region’s atmospheric tendency towards cloudy weather compounded this. Snow fell frequently, though it rarely lay at ‘considerable depths’ since the temperature fluctuated around zero, causing regular thaws that often led to flooding.² The low plains and ‘shallow’ and ‘open’ valleys meant that a high-water table could easily lead to flooding.³ There was also a suspicion that the unprecedentedly ‘heavy cannonading’ and ‘tremendous expenditure of ammunition’ during the Great War may have ‘caused clouds’ and ‘forced the clouds to send down rain.’⁴

	October	November	December	January	February	March	April
Arras	9.4°C	5°C	2.2°C	3.9°C	2.8°C	5°C	8.9°C
Dunkirk	11.1°C	6.7°C	4.4°C	3.9°C	4.4°C	5.6°C	8.3°C
Rouen	10.6°C	6.1°C	3.3°C	2.8°C	3.9°C	5.5°C	9.4°C

Table I.1: Pre-War Average Monthly Temperatures (°C) converted from Martin, ‘Notes on the Climate of France,’ 9.

Between October and December there was a noticeable drop in temperature, which was then slow to recover, remaining below the average annual temperature of 10 degrees even through April. Between November and March many days saw the temperature fall below zero. On average, October saw three freezing days. However, during December and January there were as many as eighteen in Arras. What is more, between October and April half of the nights were accompanied by heavy frosts. In fact, in December, January, and February the temperature might sometimes remain freezing throughout the daylight hours. The winter months were comparatively severe.⁵ Not only this, but when temperatures increased the thaw often ensured flooding.

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Weather Bureau: C.F. Martin, ‘Notes on the Climate of France and Belgium, by Preston C. Day (October, 1917)’, *Climatological Data: Oklahoma, Volumes 23-28*, (National Oceanic and Atmospheric, Environmental Data and Information Service, National Climatic Center (USA), 1914-1919) 7.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. 8-9.

⁴ A. McAdie, ‘Has the War Affected the Weather?’, *The Atlantic* (1916)

(<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/08/has-the-war-affected-the-weather/373427/>, accessed 24 August 2017).

⁵ Martin, ‘Notes on the Climate of France and Belgium,’ 9.

Variations in rainfall were less remarkable:

	October	November	December	January	February	March	April
Albert	62.99	59.94	57.91	50.80	41.91	48.01	39.12
Dunkirk	81.03	82.04	66.04	54.86	39.12	42.93	41.91
Rouen	70.10	68.07	65.02	55.19	42.93	52.07	44.96

Table I.2: Pre-War Average Monthly Precipitation (mm) converted from Martin, 'Notes on the Climate of France,' 9.

Albert's mean monthly rainfall was 54.36mm, Dunkirk's 59.69mm and Rouen's 58.67mm. October through December usually saw higher levels of rainfall – particularly in the coastal areas and around Rouen. Even when it was not raining it was often cloudy. During these months Rouen was between 63 and 67 per cent overcast day-to-day. As such, there was always the threat of rain. Snow compounded this, and between November and April was 'fairly frequent.' Again, its thawing would have contributed to a sense that these months were the wettest of the year.⁶

	October	November	December
Week 1	11.6°C	9.6 °C	8.1 °C
Week 2	9.2°C	8.3 °C	7.1 °C
Week 3	10.8 °C	3.8 °C	5.6 °C
Week 4	10.8 °C	2.5 °C	1.6 °C

Table I.3: Average Weekly Temperatures in Dunkirk October-December 1914, taken from *Bulletin International du Bureau Météorologique de France LVe Année 1914 2e Semestre*, National Meteorological Archive (NMA) 82 (43)⁷

	October	November	December
Week 1	11.4 °C	10.3 °C	8.6 °C
Week 2	9.1 °C	7.2 °C	9.1 °C
Week 3	10.3 °C	2.7 °C	6.1 °C
Week 4	11.6 °C	1.8 °C	1.5 °C

Table I.4: Average Weekly Temperatures in Paris October-December 1914, taken from *Bulletin International du Bureau Météorologique de France LVe Année 1914 2e Semestre*, NMA 82 (43)

	October	November	December
Week 1	13.3 °C	9.6 °C	5.3 °C
Week 2	13.6 °C	9.3 °C	4.2 °C
Week 3	14.3 °C	8.2 °C	4.2 °C
Week 4	11.9 °C	6.2 °C	3.3 °C
Week 5	N/A	N/A	3.9 °C

Table I.5: Temperatures in the British Battle Zone (°C) October-December 1916, taken from 'Estimated Earth Temperatures at One Foot in British Army Area 1915-1918, Meteorological Section Royal Engineers First Army, GHQ 12 December 1918', World War I – Analysis of Weather in Battlefield Area Compiled by R.G.K. Lampfert, NMA

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ In 1914 there are no surviving British records so the French data for Dunkirk and Paris are used here to give a general insight into the weather in areas close to the British zone of operations. The early winter months of 1916 seem to have been comparatively warm. The Meteorological Section of the Royal Engineers began recording the average temperature along the BEF's sector the year before, and their data are recorded below.

	October	November	December	January	February	March	April
Week 1	15.1 °C	8.6 °C	8.2 °C	1.4 °C	4.6 °C	5.6 °C	6.6 °C
Week 2	13.9 °C	7.8 °C	5.4 °C	1.1 °C	5.8 °C	4.2 °C	7.1 °C
Week 3	10.8 °C	8.6 °C	4.9 °C	2.5 °C	7.1 °C	5.4 °C	7.7 °C
Week 4	9.3 °C	7.3 °C	2.5 °C	5.7 °C	3.9 °C	6.0 °C	6.8 °C
Week 5	N/A	N/A	1.1 °C	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table I.6: Temperatures in the British Battle Zone (°C) October-April 1917/18, taken from ‘Estimated Earth Temperatures at One Foot in British Army Area 1915-1918’

The temperatures in 1914 were not particularly harsh in comparison to pre-war averages. On only six days, in either Dunkirk or Paris, did the average temperature fall below freezing. However, the middle of November was unusually cold and the temperature was certainly falling rapidly towards the end of December. October was very dry, but the final month of the year was very wet. Dunkirk was deluged by over 132 mm of rain – nearly double the monthly average. The temperatures in 1916 were not dramatically different. December began a little colder but remained a few degrees warmer in the weeks before New Year. In November, though, there was approximately 75 mm of rain across the British sector and in December this rose to 103 mm. These months were wetter than normal and certainly saw significantly more rainfall than the troops would have experienced in the months preceding winter.⁸ In 1917/1918 the temperatures were slightly colder than in 1916. The end of December saw temperatures fall further than they had in 1916 and, importantly, remain relatively low even in April. The winter months of 1917 were actually relatively dry. While there was 71.1 mm of rain in November, only 41 mm fell in December.

It does not seem that there were any dramatic changes in the temperature during these periods, which suggests no obvious ‘crisis’ with regards to the weather alone, though the beginning of 1917 was very cold. Average temperatures should not obscure the fact that freezing winds and fog – both of which beset the region in winter – could make it feel significantly colder than it was. Furthermore, it should be remembered that 1917 was the wettest year of the war, which fed despondency. During the height of the Third Ypres campaign the rain was incessant. In July 158.2 mm fell, and a further 162.3 mm fell in August.⁹

⁸ NMA 100 16: ‘Rainfall for Nights and Days, 1916’ (British Zone) Meteorological Office, London Form 3361, World War I Rainfall Investigation by E. Gold / Gradient Wind Over Flanders.

⁹ NMA 100 16: ‘Values of Rainfall for 1917, GHQ’ Meteorological Office, London Form 3361’, World War I Rainfall Investigation by E. Gold / Gradient Wind Over Flanders.

Furthermore, statistics should not hide the more visceral lived experience of the soldiers. The concluding notes of an American meteorological report, ‘from the standpoint of bodily comfort,’ offers an insight into the experience of winter on the Western Front:

The winter weather is rather rigorous and unpleasant, due to the persistence of comparatively low temperatures, much cloudiness and frequent rain and snow. The winds blow mostly from the west or southwest and are frequently damp and chilly, the relative humidity being rather high. The winter nights are long and the days correspondingly short. In the extreme northern portion of France, near the present battle line, the sun sets during the latter half of December a few minutes before 4 p.m., and rises about 8 a.m., making the nights, sunset to sunrise, about 16 hours long.¹⁰

¹⁰ Martin, ‘Notes on the Climate of France,’ 8.

Appendix II

The Demographics of Six English Regiments in the British Army

This thesis focussed on six English regiments on the Western Front between October and December 1914; October and December 1916; and October 1917 and January 1918.¹ The demographics outlined in this appendix focus on the regional background of soldiers, whether they came from urban or small-town backgrounds, and their average age at death. This offers a strong foundation for the qualitative analysis within this thesis. The continued strength of regionalism within these regiments, the men's backgrounds, and their soldiers' youthfulness helps to explain why soldiers' vision of England was so parochial.

	Cumberland	Westmoreland	Northern England	London	Rest of England	Great Britain	Ireland
October-December 1914 ²	10.71%	0.00%	32.86%	27.86%	24.29%	4.28%	0.00%
October-December 1916 ³	32.04%	9.09%	29.44%	3.46%	21.21%	4.33%	0.43%
Oct. 1917 –Jan. 1918 ⁴	26.67%	7.54%	40.29%	5.51%	12.75%	6.66%	0.58%

Table II.1: Home Addresses of Border Regiment Soldiers, 1914-1918

	Devonshire	West Country	London	Rest of England	Great Britain	Ireland
October-December 1914 ⁵	63.64%	9.09%	11.52%	9.69%	5.45%	0.61%
October-December 1916 ⁶	56.10%	17.07%	6.10%	17.07%	3.66%	0.00%
Oct. 1917 –Jan. 1918 ⁷	41.80%	17.55%	7.40%	30.02%	2.54%	0.69%

¹ The statistics that follow have been converted from the Commonwealth War Grave Commission's (CWGC) list of dead <<http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead.aspx>> and have been filtered by unit and dates (1 October – 31 December 1914, 1 October – 31 December 1916 and 1 October 1917 – 31 January 1918). This excludes units serving outside the Western Front, but includes men who died in the United Kingdom but were members of battalions that were serving in Belgium and France. They only reflect those casualties whose home or family address was included in the CWGC records. It should also be remembered that many men who no longer lived in a county or region might have been recent migrants away from it. These statistics are based on their address in 1914. **In these tables Great Britain means the rest of Great Britain and refers only to Scotland and Wales.**

² Taken from an available sample of 140 Border Regiment Soldiers.

³ Taken from an available sample of 231 Border Regiment Soldiers.

⁴ Taken from an available sample of 345 Border Regiment Soldiers.

⁵ Taken from an available sample of 165 Devonshire Regiment Soldiers.

⁶ Taken from an available sample of 82 Devonshire Regiment Soldiers.

⁷ Taken from an available sample of 433 Devonshire Regiment Soldiers.

Table II.2: Home Addresses of Devonshire Regiment Soldiers, 1914-1918

	Manchester	Lancashire	Northern England	London	Rest of England	Great Britain	Ireland
October-December 1914 ⁸	36.84%	20.40%	9.21%	10.53%	11.18%	7.89%	3.95%
October-December 1916 ⁹	42.76%	29.33%	9.89%	2.12%	12.72%	2.47%	0.71%
Oct. 1917- Jan. 1918 ¹⁰	42.66%	24.09%	17.74%	1.29%	9.75%	4.00%	0.47%

Table II.3: Home Addresses of Manchester Regiment Soldiers, 1914-1918

	Oxfordshire	Buckingham-shire	South East	London	Rest of England	Great Britain	Ireland
October-December 1914 ¹¹	28.73%	19.54%	25.29%	3.45%	20.69%	2.30%	0.00%
October-December 1916 ¹²	20.71%	17.14%	14.29%	7.14%	36.43%	4.29%	0.00%
Oct. 1917 – Jan. 1918 ¹³	21.90%	13.33%	11.43%	7.62%	41.91%	3.81%	0.00%

Table II.4: Home Addresses of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry Soldiers, 1914-1918

	Inner London	Outer London	Rest of England	Great Britain	Ireland
October-December 1914 ¹⁴	64.74%	9.62%	21.15%	1.93%	2.56%
October-December 1916 ¹⁵	26.83%	8.21%	59.10%	3.28%	1.23%
Oct. 1917 – Jan. 1918 ¹⁶	27.95%	7.99%	59.20%	3.99%	0.87%

Table II.5: Home Addresses of Royal Fusiliers Soldiers, 1914-1918

	Birmingham	Warwickshire	West Midlands	London	Rest of England	Great Britain	Ireland
October – December 1914 ¹⁷	43.48%	24.64%	3.86%	5.80%	18.84%	1.93%	1.45%
October - December 1916 ¹⁸	33.83%	16.73%	9.67%	2.60%	32.71%	2.97%	1.49%
Oct. 1917 – Jan. 1918 ¹⁹	28.18%	16.82%	6.82%	5.91%	38.33%	2.88%	1.06%

Table II.6: Home Addresses of Royal Warwickshire Regiment Soldiers, 1914-1918⁸ Taken from an available sample of 152 Manchester Regiment Soldiers.⁹ Taken from an available sample of 283 Manchester Regiment Soldiers.¹⁰ Taken from an available sample of 851 Manchester Regiment Soldiers.¹¹ Taken from an available sample of 87 Ox and Bucks Light Infantry Soldiers.¹² Taken from an available sample of 140 Ox and Bucks Light Infantry Soldiers.¹³ Taken from an available sample of 105 Ox and Bucks Light Infantry Soldiers.¹⁴ Taken from an available sample of 156 Royal Fusiliers Soldiers.¹⁵ Taken from an available sample of 731 Royal Fusiliers Soldiers.¹⁶ Taken from an available sample of 576 Royal Fusiliers Soldiers.¹⁷ Taken from an available sample of 207 Royal Warwickshire Regiment Soldiers.¹⁸ Taken from an available sample of 269 Royal Warwickshire Regiment Soldiers.¹⁹ Taken from an available sample of 660 Royal Warwickshire Regiment Soldiers.

English battalions contained predominantly English soldiers, and regionalism remained strong throughout the war.²⁰ The statistics demonstrate the remarkable degree of homogeneity within regiments, even towards the end of the war. Given that the counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland were relatively sparsely populated and very rural, it is perhaps no surprise that the Border Regiment of 1914 contained more Londoners than it did locals. However, nearly one third of the men in the Second Battalion were Northerners. Subsequently voluntarism and conscription facilitated a dramatic increase in the number of local men who filled the ranks of the regiment. Over the same period the number of Northerners remained high and the proportion of soldiers from outside the North of England continued to decline. Even in early 1918 as many as two in three soldiers were from the North.

Devon similarly lacked any of the sprawling conurbations that characterised the rapidly industrialised areas elsewhere in the country. Yet, in 1914 the Devonshire Regiment maintained a strong contingent of local men. Over six in ten were local to the regimental sphere of influence. Another nine percent were from the West Country and, again, there were large numbers of Londoners. Even in late 1917 and early 1918 nearly half of Devonshire Regiment soldiers were from Devon, with another eighteen per cent from the surrounding area.

The Manchester Regiment recruited from a vibrant and still expanding industrial city. In 1914 nearly forty per cent of the regulars were from the Greater Manchester area and another twenty per cent came from Lancashire. The surge of voluntarism after 1914 swelled the Mancunian component by another five percentage points and Lancashire's representation by nearly a third. What is more, the four 'City' battalions fused regional and socio-economic identity as they formed around professions and skills. Conscription – and the arrival of Territorials – ensured that the units of the Manchester Regiment in Belgium and France retained a large core of men from Manchester and Lancashire, and saw a dramatic increase in soldiers from the North more generally. Over the same period the number of men from other parts of England and the British Isles steadily decreased.

The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, however, suffered from both counties' relatively low populations; both lacked large cities. The situation elsewhere in the South-East was similar. As such, there were a limited number of units raised under the Regiment's flag. The Ox and Bucks saw some decline in the number of men drawn from their immediate recruitment areas between 1914 and 1918. There was simultaneously an increase

²⁰ For the provincial structure of the British Army see T. Bowman and M. Connelly, *The Edwardian Army: Recruiting, Training, and Deploying the British Army, 1902-1914* (Oxford, 2012). For the resilience of regionalism in English regiments during the war see Connelly, *Steady the Buffs!* 233 or McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, 62-66.

in men from London and other parts of England. The regiment's identity certainly became more diffuse. Unlike the other units here, even soldiers from the regional zone declined in number; but despite this, over forty-five per cent of men in late 1917 and early 1918 were still from the South-East and came from proximate parts of the country.

In stark contrast to the Ox and Bucks, the Royal Fusiliers, who were based in London, were the British Army's largest regiment. At first glance, the statistics for the Royal Fusiliers would seem to show a more dramatic collapse in regional identity. In 1914 Inner and Outer London's huge recruiting pool provided nearly 75% of the Royal Fusiliers' men. Contrastingly, by late 1916 over 60% were from areas outside the city. Yet the data hides the fact that the Royal Fusiliers became a regiment that housed more than just regionally affiliated battalions. The Royal Fusiliers became the conduit for the army's only purely social and socio-economic units. For example, the 10th Royal Fusiliers were informally known as the 'Stockbrokers' Battalion,' the 18th through 21st were 'Public Schools' units, while the 26th became the 'Bankers' Battalion.' Only the 22nd (Kensington) and 32nd (East Ham) battalions could trace their formation to London's voluntary effort. Considering all of this, the number of Londoners remained relatively stable between 1916 and 1917/18, which suggests that many of the units would have retained a strong core of men from the London area.

The Royal Warwickshire Regiment recruited men from the heavily industrialised and urbanised areas around Birmingham, as well as the much more rural parts of Warwickshire. The Royal Warwickshire's proportion of locals declined as the war progressed and the number of men from across England had nearly doubled by 1917/1918. Yet, while no longer the overwhelming majority, men from Warwickshire and the West Midlands still accounted for over fifty per cent of the regiment's complement in late 1917 and early 1918. Birmingham continued to supply over one-quarter of their fighting strength and this proportion would undoubtedly have been much higher in the City and 'Pals' units (the 14th, 15th and 16th Battalions).

Even in 1917/18 the number of men from the regiments' county and region of origin was not less than 35% of the total complement, in any of the cases studied here, and in some units was as high as 66%. The regional emphasis of the British Army was also found in the Imperial German Army, which recruited and organised its armies regionally. Yet the British Army's most unique feature was its urban demographic.²¹ In 1914, approximately 80 per cent of Britain lived in towns or cities of over 10,000.²² The figures below highlight how in 1914 there were actually an over-representation of urban recruits. The origin of a unit's soldiers was often linked to the population patterns of the region or county to which it was linked. The

²¹ J. Winter, 'Families', in J. Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War. Vol. III: Civil Society*, (Cambridge, 2014).

²² Waller, *Town, City and Nation*, 2-6.

one exception to this was the Border Regiment, which, as seen earlier, was forced to recruit the majority of its men from outside the North-West. Unsurprisingly, though, there was a clear tendency for many regiments to recruit their men from larger towns and cities. Only in the Ox and Bucks and Devonshire Regiments were there very large numbers of men from rural areas or from small market towns with greater access to the countryside. By late 1916, four of the six regiments had seen an increase in the number of men from smaller settlements and the countryside. In fact, soldiers from more rural backgrounds – while still a minority – were over-represented in all but the Manchester Regiment. As a unit based in a large city, it saw little change. The Ox and Bucks did see an increase in men from more sizeable urban areas. This trend continued over the next year. Among the other units, the backgrounds of their soldiers remained relatively stable. Demographically speaking the BEF was composed primarily of men from England's middling through to very large urban areas.

	Settlement < 10,000 Inhabitants ²³	Settlement > 10,000 Inhabitants
The Border Regiment	9.22%	90.78%
The Devonshire Regiment	29.52%	70.48%
The Manchester Regiment	15.38%	84.62%
The Ox and Bucks Light Infantry	45.98%	54.02%
The Royal Fusiliers	11.54%	88.46%
The Royal Warwickshire Regiment	13.58%	86.42%

Table II.7: Size of Settlement: Homes of Soldiers who died between October and December 1914

	Settlement < 10,000 Inhabitants	Settlement > 10,000 Inhabitants
The Border Regiment	36.22%	63.68%
The Devonshire Regiment	41.96%	58.04%
The Manchester Regiment	16.78%	83.22%
The Ox and Bucks Light Infantry	38.79%	61.21%
The Royal Fusiliers	24.46%	75.54%
The Royal Warwickshire Regiment	28.00%	72.00%

Table II.8: Size of Settlement: Homes of Soldiers who died between October and December 1916

²³ Numbers were, again, taken from the CWGC records using the same dates as tables 1-6. The settlements' population data has been taken from the 1911 Census (available at <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/>, accessed 29 July 2016).

	Settlement < 10,000 Inhabitants	Settlement > 10,000 Inhabitants
The Border Regiment	30.86%	69.14%
The Devonshire Regiment	43.60%	56.40%
The Manchester Regiment	12.14%	87.86%
The Ox and Bucks Light Infantry	25.22%	74.78%
The Royal Fusiliers	28.41%	71.59%
The Royal Warwickshire Regiment	23.10%	76.90%

Table II.9: Size of Settlement: Homes of Soldiers who died between October 1917 and January 1918

As the war progressed, groups of soldiers bearing the brunt of the fighting became much younger.²⁴ Age has sometimes been related to morale. Alexander Watson has discussed how the German military derived two important benefits from their organisation of units on the basis of age. Firstly, ‘it raised the physical standard of combat divisions... The second benefit was psychological.’ Older troops were unable to bear the strains of frontline service and were more liable to grumble.²⁵ While the British did not officially follow a similar policy, the reality of war and enlistment saw similar patterns emerge in the BEF. Helen McCartney has argued this was an important part of authority structures within the military – men were more willing to follow their social and generational superiors. Thus, the fact that in 1914 only 34 per cent of the Liverpool Scottish’s officers were under 24 was seen as an important part of their efficiency.²⁶ Jay Winter’s work suggests that it was the younger men that bore the brunt of the frontline’s danger. 80 percent of Britain’s war-dead were under the age of 30, and 40 percent were younger than 24.²⁷ The data below, which reflect the age of men who died and are buried in a CWGC site on the Western Front, demonstrate the way in which the age demographics of various regiments changed over the course of the war.

	Border Regiment	Devonshire Regiment	Manchester Regiment	Ox and Bucks LI	Royal Fusiliers	Warwickshire Regiment
1914: Mean Age	26.97	26.79	28.82	25.67	26.84	28.14
1916: Mean Age	26.16	26.9	27.58	26.17	26.27	25.39
1917/18: Mean Age	25.76	26.13	24.05	25.06	26.71	25.85

Table II.10: Mean Age of Soldiers from Six Regiments, 1914-1918²⁸

²⁴ F.J. Hodges, *Men of 18 in 1918* (Ilfracombe, 1988). Also Ziemann, *Violence and the German Soldier*, 22.

²⁵ Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, 158-60; Ziemann, *Violence and the German Soldier*, 22.

²⁶ McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, 139.

²⁷ Winter, *The Great War and the British People*, 267.

²⁸ As above, this was taken from the same data set source on the CWGC list of dead.

	Border Regiment	Devonshire Regiment	Manchester Regiment	Ox and Bucks LI	Royal Fusiliers	Warwickshire Regiment
1914: Modal Age(s)	28	22	30	19 + 31	30	23
1916: Modal Age(s)	21	21 + 27	21	24	21	20
1917/18: Modal Age(s)	24	19	20	20 + 21	19	20

Table II.11: Modal Age(s) of Soldiers from Six Regiments, 1914-1918

	Border Regiment	Devonshire Regiment	Manchester Regiment	Ox and Bucks LI	Royal Fusiliers	Warwickshire Regiment
1914: Median Age	27	26	28	26	27	29
1916: Median Age	25	26	24	25	25	24
1917/18: Median Age	25	25	24	23	25	24

Table II.12: Median Age of the Soldiers from Six Regiments, 1914-1918

Most revealing are the soldiers' modal ages. By the end of the war, many units' most significant demographic group was composed of men of only nineteen or twenty years old. Plausibly, then, it was the youngest combatants bearing the brunt of combat in 1917/18. It may also be surmised that the BEF was increasingly an army of single men. Before 1914 the mean age of marriage had been steadily rising in the United Kingdom.²⁹ Depending on class and environment, men tended to not get married before the age of 25 and many waited until they were 27 or older.³⁰ This might explain why men of 25 were considered to have entered 'old age' in some units.³¹ Donald Hankey considered a soldier over the age of 23 to be an 'old man.'³² While this does not discount the existence of sweethearts and love interests, it does suggest that the English infantrymen of the Great War were less likely to have wives or children – or the anxieties and duties that were incumbent on those who were heads of the household. What is more, under the 1884 Representation of the People Act, only 60 per cent of men over the age of twenty-one were eligible to vote, whilst those under twenty-one, whatever their socio-economic background, would have never had the opportunity to vote. Many of the men, then, would have had little or no history of engaging with mainstream politics or voting in national elections.

²⁹ J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914* (London, 1993, 1994).

³⁰ E. Garrett, A. Reid, K. Schürer and S. Szczerter, *Changing Family Size in England and Wales: Place, Class and Demography, 1891-1911* (Cambridge, 2001, 2004), 230-232.

³¹ Lyricus, 'What Lloyd George Told Me! John Dull in Blighty', *The Lead Swinger: The Bivouac Journal of the 1/3 West Riding Field Ambulance* (Feb 3, 1918), 393.

³² Hankey, *Student in Arms*, 106.

Appendix III

Soldiers' Biographies

Pte. William M. Anderson, 25th, 3rd, 11th, and 18th Bns. Manchester Regiment

When he enlisted Anderson was married to Agnes, who lived at 62 Dover Street, Crumpsall, Manchester. From a lower working-class family, Anderson was probably born in 1889 in Bolton. His father was a mechanical draughtsman.

Arthur Patrick Burke, 20th (Pals) Bn. Manchester Regiment

One of five siblings, Arthur was born in January 1893 in Salford, Lancashire. He died aged 24 on 9 October 1917. Burke had been a clerk before the war, while his father had been an upper working-class beer retailer before his death in 1907. However, the family seem to have risen in status, and Burke was relatively well off at the time of his death. He left £718 1s 0d in his will.

Capt. Charles Carrington, 1/5th Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Carrington is perhaps the most famous soldier referenced regularly in this study. Charles was born in West Bromwich, Warwickshire, but his family moved to New Zealand in 1902 where his father became dean of Christchurch Cathedral. Carrington was educated at Christ's School. He was preparing for his university entrance exams in England when war was declared. He was staying with his family and enlisted in the local regiment (9th (Service) Bn.) despite being under age. After being commissioned into the Yorks and Lancaster Regiment he was transferred to the 1/5th Bn., Warwickshire Regiment, with whom he served on the Western Front. After the war, he attended Oxford, where he read History. He eventually became a Professor of History at Cambridge, though he served as an RAF Staff Officer during the Second World War. His memoir, *A Subaltern's War*, was published in 1929 under the pseudonym Charles Edmunds.

Sgt. Charles Dwyer, 1st Bn. Devonshire Regiment

Charles William Dwyer was born in Bethnal Green, London, to a working-class family. His father had been a brass finisher and Charles was one of six surviving children. Charles had entered a five-year cabinet makers apprenticeship in 1896, at the age of 14. In September 1901 he joined the Devonshire Regiment as a Private – aged 19 years and 5 months. Having been promoted to sergeant in 1908, by 1914 he was an experienced NCO. Arriving in South Africa in July 1902, he missed the Boer War. In 1904 he moved to Shahjahanpur, India with the 1st Battalion and then, in October 1905, to Rangoon, Burma. During this time he qualified

as a marksman. In 1908 he moved back to India where he qualified as a pioneer. He returned to England in January 1909 as Regimental Pioneer Sergeant. In 1914 he formed part of the Jersey garrison force.

Lt. J.H. Johnson, 8th Bn. Border Regiment

It is difficult to trace Lt. Johnson. There is no indication that he was married, and his writing style and references suggest that he had a very good education and came from a relatively affluent background. The notes in his diary indicate that he hailed from Brighton/Hove.

Pte. Samuel Judd, 1st Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regiment

It is very hard to trace Judd. He was probably from Cubbington, Warwickshire. It seems that he was born in 1887, and was the eldest of eight children. From a rural working-class family, he had been a hedge-cutter in 1911.

Henry Brailsford Lawson, 2/10th and 1/10th Bn. Manchester Regiment

Born in 19 February 1898 to Sophie Woodford and Henry Peter Lawson, a stockbroker. Lawson came from a very affluent upper middle-class family. In 1911 he lived in Northamptonshire with his grandfather, a clergyman in the Established Church, his aunt and uncle, one brother, and three servants. Henry was commissioned as a subaltern in the Manchester Regiment and served on the Western Front throughout 1917 and 1918. He was single at the time, but survived the war and married later in life. He was eventually knighted and became Legal Advisor and Chief General Manager at Lloyds Bank. He published his memoir of the war – *Vignettes of the Western Front: Reflections of an Infantry Subaltern in France and Belgium, 1917-18* – in 1979.

2nd Lt. William John (Jack) Lidsey, 1/4th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire LI

Born in 1895, William was killed in action during 1917. His family resided at Hardwick House, Banbury, Oxfordshire. One of three brothers – his eldest sibling was a farmer. While not a member of the aristocracy, his writing style insists he was from the educated upper-middle or upper classes. He was certainly wealthy and left £2869 5s 1d in his will.

Capt. Arthur Josiah Lord, 4th Bn. Royal Fusiliers

Lord was born on 1 February 1884 in Walsden, Lancashire, but his family had moved to Hereford by the time he was five years old. He was the third of Alfred Lord's five children, though one died in childhood. Alfred was from relatively humble origins and had originally been a warehouseman. He later became a musician and was a bass singer in Chichester Cathedral Choir, York Minster, and then Hereford Cathedral. Arthur attended Hereford

Cathedral School and later joined the Post Office as a sorting clerk and telegraphist. There he gained his executive qualifications for his civil service examination. At the outbreak of war he was living in London working for the Post Office Investigations Branch. He originally joined the East Anglian Regiment, but moved to the Royal Fusiliers after he was commissioned. He married Florence Margery Howard in Surrey on 2 December 1916.

Hubert Thomas Madders, 2/1st Bn. Royal Fusiliers

Born 25 January 1899 in Ledbury, Herefordshire, Hubert died in the same place on 11 November 1985. His father had been a grocer's assistant and had him quite late in life. He was single during his service, but married Irene Preece in 1927. Madders had tried to join a territorial battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment in 1915. He was rejected as too young.

Lt. James Edmund Henderson Neville, 2nd Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire LI

Neville served as a subaltern in the Ox and Bucks on the Western Front between October 1916 and April 1918, and again between July and September 1918. He won the Military Cross. The son of Reginald James Neville MP, he was born on 5 July 1897. His family, though they had been in India for many years, came from Soley, Norfolk. They were wealthy and James was educated at Eton and then Sandhurst. His father was made a baron after the war. Neville was single during the conflict, though married later in life. He joined the army again in 1931, the same year that he published *The War Letters of a Light Infantryman*.

Pte. Frederick George Senyard, 1/4th Bn. City of London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers)

Senyard was born in Highgate, London, in approximately 1890/91. He later moved south of the river and was living around Peckham and Camberwell before the war. From an urban upper working-class background his father, Frederick Angelo Senyard, had been a joiner. Frederick was one of ten children, eight of whom survived childhood. His two older sisters were employed as a sewing machinist and school teacher. He was working as a cashier for an insurance company when he married Mary Catherine Kelly – who had been a boarder in his parents' house - in August 1912. During the war she lived in Nunhead – at the time a very working-class district of London.

Pte. Samson Bevan Smith, 10th Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Bevan was born on 28 January 1879 and was much older than many of the other men in his unit. From Cherington, Warwickshire, he was from the rural lower working class. He had been employed as a farm labourer, coachman, groom, and gardener before the war. He married Harriet Ann Smith (nee Pratt) before the war and – perhaps because of his age and background – was made battalion groom once he reached France.

Brig. Gen. G.A. Stevens, 2nd Bn. Royal Fusiliers

Stevens began the war as a company officer but had been promoted to lieutenant colonel and was commanding the 2nd Bn., Royal Fusiliers, by 1916. From a military family, Stevens was born in Gibraltar on 23 October 1875 to a Colonel of the Royal Artillery. He was educated at Eastman's Royal Naval Academy and entered the ranks of the Royal Scots Greys in 1894. In November 1898 he gained a commission in the 3rd Battalion Royal Fusiliers. He served on attachment to the West African Regiment on two occasions, the second lasting from 1905 until 1911. After briefly serving with 1st Bn., Royal Fusiliers, he became adjutant of the 8th Territorial Bn. Durham Light Infantry. It is unclear whether he was married, though the letters studied here were all sent to his parents.

L/Cpl. Richard Edward Pawson Stevens, 16th Bn. Manchester Regiment

Born 4 July 1886 to a family living on Hanover Square, London. He died on 5 July 1917 in Flanders. His family moved to Lancashire in 1890 and were living at 127 Mottram Road, Hyde, Cheshire at the start of the war. Unmarried, he had 7 siblings – though one had died. A member of the lower middle class, he had begun a career as a shipping clerk in 1911. He was a lance corporal at time of death.

Pte. William Tapp, 1st Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regiment

A reservist, William was probably born in Aston, Warwickshire, in 1886. His parents died early in his life and he was left as the eldest of three siblings. When not with the colours he was a grocer. He married in 1911 but had no children at the time he was on active service. It appears as if he served on the Western Front before being sent home, perhaps due to injury. He died in 1923.

L/Cpl. Cecil White, 5th Bn. Royal Fusiliers

White was born in Spalding, Lincolnshire, in approximately 1889. He was 22 at the time of the 1911 census. One of four siblings (one of whom died) he was brought up at 12 Chapel Street, Hyde Road, West Gorton, Manchester. In 1911 he had been a student training as a teacher. His father (Thomas) had been an upper working-class 'Coach Body Maker' (worker) in the Motor Car Industry. It is unclear whether he was in a romantic relationship while in khaki. According to his diary, he received letters from 'M' who might be have been his mother (Mary Ann) or a girlfriend.

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Summers, Sgt. W.,	IWM 05/8/1
Tapp, Pte. W.,	IWM 66/156/1
Tattersall, N., [OR]	IWM 07/40/1
Thomas, A., [OR]	IWM P 147
Tofts, Maj. Gen. V.G., [Regimental Officer at the Time]	IWM 67/7/1
Tower, Lt. Col. K.F.B.,	IWM P 472
Trevor, Brig. Gen. H.E. [Regimental Officer at the Time]	IWM P 229
Turnbull, Lt. Col. D.R.,	IWM 12/15/1
Vernon, W., [OR]	IWM 03/30/1
Westropp, Col. L.H.M.,	IWM 75/25/1
Wilson, L., [OR]	IWM 86/30/1
Worrall, F., [OR]	IWM 67/238/1
Winnard, Pte. G.G.,	IWM 98/28/1
Wyatt, Lt. Col. J.D.,	IWM 83/12/1
Young, Capt. R.E.M.,	IWM 14/15/1

[Anon. OR] Postcard Signed by “The Mademoiselle from Armentieres.”	IWM Con Shelf
[Anon. Officer] ‘Secret Code Used to Bypass the Censors.’	IWM Misc 210 Item 3079
Diary of an Unidentified [OR] Soldier of the 2 nd Bn. Border Regiment	IWM Misc 30 Item 550
Pocket Diary 1914 [OR]	IWM Misc 108 Item 1710

Images

J. Nash, <i>Over the Top</i> - 1st Artists Rifles at Marcoing 30 December 1917	IWM ART 1656
G.K. Rose, <i>A Front Line Post</i> (1916)	IWM ART 4824
Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards, digging out mud from a trench near Reu Petillon, 19 November 1914	IWM Q 57380
Photographs of Maj. Frederick Hardman	IWM Q 102968 – Q 102972:

Objects

“Ring”	IWM EPH 10150
“Bullet Crucifix”	IWM EPH 1915

Sound

Quinnell, C., [OR]	IWM Sound 554
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Keep Museum, Dorchester

Blunt, Pte. J.	TKM Item 98/99/2/1
Brockwood, H.C. [OR]	TKM Item 95/160/24-26
Bull, T.C. [OR]	TKM Item 03/446/1-3
Fellows-Prynne, Capt. A.I.	TKM Item 00/230/6-12
Peyps, Col. C. (Misc. Letter)	TKM Item 97/117/14/1
Peyps, Col. C. (Letters to Parents)	TKM Item 97/413/1
Richards, C.J. [Officer]	TKM Item 90/50/2
Shears, Pte. G.L.,	TKM Item 98/85/24

Walker’s University Expert Manuscript Book – “Refresher” Bombing Course. Nov. 6 th 1916.	TKM Item 230/5/2000
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Liddle Collection, University of Leeds

Argent, Pte. R.	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0042
Ashmole, Capt. B.	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1847
Bailey, Capt. H.R.,	LIDDLE/WW1/ADD/069
Bates, S.H. [OR]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0099
Bentley, W.G. [OR]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0125
Billingham, Pte. O.G.	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0137
A&C Black and Company [ORs]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0144

Broad, R.D. [OR]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1847
Brooks, 2 nd Lt. H.J.	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0204
Bryan, J.L. [Officer]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0218
Bryson, Capt. G.L.U.	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0222
Burdfield, A.E. [OR]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0232
Burrows, M.K., [Officer]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0246
Cannon, Pte. E.A.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0266
Carrington, Capt. C.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0273
Chapman, 2 nd Lt. G.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0292
Clark, Pte. C.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0313
Conn, Pte. A.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0347
Crook, 2 nd Lt. W.G.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0398
Cumberlege, 2 nd Lt. G.F.J.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0505
Dent, L.M.E., [Officer]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0451
Edwards, Cpl. V.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0505
Field, A.J., [Officer]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0553
Frankenburg, 2 nd Lt. Sydney	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0583
Fraser, Sgt. A.T.,	LIDDLE/WW/GS/02585
Fulton, A., [Officer]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0596
Gresham, T.B., [OR / Officer]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0662
Greenslade, C., [Officer]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0663
Greenwell, G.H., [Officer]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0664
McIver Grierson, K., [OR / Officer]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0670
Hampson, J.L., [OR]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0699
Harris, Cpl. D.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0715
Harrop, Pte. W.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0716
Harvey, Pte. R.A.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0723
Hay, D.F., [OR]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0728
Hendry, H.O., [OR]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0746
Heywood, 2 nd Lt. H.C.L.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0752
Heywood, Sgt. J.A.,	LIDDLE/WW1/ADD/015
Higgins, Capt. E.L.,	LIDLLE/WW1/GS/0758
Hobbs, Pte. H.H.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0774
Hold, Pte. J.C.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0781
Horan, 2 nd Lt. P.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0797
Houghton, Capt. J.R.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0805
Hunter-Blair, 2 nd Lt. Sir J.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0820
Hunter, 2 nd Lt. L.W.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0822
Innes, Pte. H.S.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0833
Isherwood, Capt. J.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0837
Lawson, H. [Officer]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0933
Leatherland, Pte. C.E.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0939
Lewisohn, Pte. J.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0952
MacDonald, W.S., [Officer]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1008
McDonald, 2 nd Lt. J.R.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1005
Middleditch, 2 nd Lt. A.W.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1096
Le May, D.G., [OR / Officer]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0946
Old, Pte. A.G.,	LIDDLE/WW1/ADD/104

Sharp, Pte. C.W.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1444
Slater, Pte. J.E.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1484
Tully, Pte. C.L.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1634
Walley, Reverend S.C., [CoE Battalion Chaplain]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1680
Wilson, H., [OR]	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1763
Woodworth, 2 nd Lt. F.T.K.,	LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1785

Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London

Robertson 2/2/1-111

Robertson 7/1/1

Manchester Regiment Archive, Ashton-Under-Lyne

Adams, Pte. W.,	MR 3/17/118
Bedford, Pte. F.H.	MR 3/17/98/1
Betteley, L/Cpl. Thomas	MR 2/17/61
Bridge, Pte. H.,	MR 3/17/139
Chase, Sgt. Maj. Herbert	MR 3/17/96
Clayton, Pte. W.G.,	MR 3/17/142
Cleasby, Pte. Edgar	MR 3/17/124
Cooper, James Henry [OR]	MR 3/17/91
Doherty, Sgt. W.R.,	MR 3/17/107
Dorling, Lt. Col. F.H.,	MR 1/17/34
Gleeson, RSM Michael	MR 3/17/88
Irwin, Pte. G.,	MR 3/17/115
James, Sgt. C.,	MR 3/17/90
Jayes, Pte. J.,	MR 3/17/128
Kennedy, Patrick Joseph [OR]	MR 2/17/53
Mannion, Pte. Thomas	MR 3/17/100
Merrick, CSM Harry	MR 3/17/129
Mutters, Sgt. Maj. C.W.,	MR 3/17/112
Oldfield, Pte. H.,	MR 3/17/110
Palin, Sgt. J.,	MR 2/17/67
Peat, Pte. John	MR 3/17/126
Powell, Pte. John Douglas	MR 2/17/65
Smith, Pte. S.,	MR 3/17/145
Walker, Pte. Norman	MR 3/17/137
Wild, Pte. C.E.,	MR 4/17/388/1
Woodworth, 2 nd Lt. Frederick Thomas Kearsley	MR 2/17/57

Duties of an Officer, 42nd (East Lancashire) Division

MR 3/13/2/35

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W.R. Robertson, British Armies in France as Gathered from Censorship. Extract from C.I.G.S. 18 December 1917	CAB 24/36/44

<i>Report on Postal Censorship During the Great War (1914-1919)</i>	DEFE 1/131
‘The Effect of Food Queues at Home on the Men at the Front’	MAF 60/243
Report on Officers of 201 st Brigade and 202 nd Brigade	WO 32/1858
Report from the meeting of the ‘Home Counties and Training Reserve Branch of the Soldiers’ and Workmen’s Council, 18 July 1917’	WO 32/5455
Admissibility of MP’s on Military Duties in Expressing Political Views in Press, Response to War Office letter No. 9/ Herts Regiment/44 (AG3) 23 May 1915.’	WO 32/18555
Discontent among Battalion [1/4 th Norfolk Regiment] owing to Colonel Harvey’s unsympathetic consideration for officers and men under his command.	WO 32/18563
Headquarters II Corps Routine Orders	WO 95/648
War Diary 2 nd Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry	WO 95/1348
War Diary 4 th Battalion Royal Fusiliers	WO 95/1431
War Diary 1 st Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment	WO 95/1484
War Diary 2 nd Battalion Manchester Regiment	WO 95/1564
War Diary 1 st Battalion Devonshire Regiment	WO 95/1565
War Diary 2 nd Battalion Border Regiment	WO 95/1655
War Diary 2 nd Battalion Devonshire Regiment	WO 95/1712
War Diary 9 th Battalion Royal Fusiliers	WO 95/1857
War Diary 11 th Battalion Border Regiment	WO 95/2403
War Diary 16 th Battalion Manchester Regiment	WO 95/2339
Trench Maps	WO 153
POW Interviews, Capt. J.H.W. Knight-Bruce	WO 161/95/42
POW Interviews, Capt. R.T. Miller	WO 161/95/93
POW Interviews, Capt. Philip Godsal	WO 161/96/12
POW Interviews, 9647 Pte. Albert George Hart	WO 161/98/495
POW Interviews, 8493 Pte. W.H. Meredith	WO 161/98/503
POW Interviews, 1163 Pte. James Robinson	WO 161/99/87
POW Interviews, 245402 Sgt. Henry Ward	WO 161/100/400
POW Interviews, Pte. 17025 W. Thomas	WO 161/100/1665
POW Interviews Pte. 12713 F. Spencer	WO 161/100/1666
POW Interviews, Cpl. 20151 Ernest Jones	WO 161/100/1667
POW Interviews, Pte. 20414 Frederick Leighton	WO 161/100/1668
POW Interviews, Pte. R. Durrand	WO 161/100/1752
POW Interviews, Sgt. 10099 W.W. Whitney	WO 161/100/1758
POW Interviews, 75880 Pte. Edward Kierstenson	WO 161/100/2336
Trench Maps	WO 207
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Aust, Herbert Victor [OR]	NAM 1990-01-58
Bradbury, Lt. Arthur Royce	NAM 1998-12-111-2
Burton, L/Cpl. W.,	NAM 2004-05-27
Dalton, Pte. Percy Edward	NAM 2010-10-6
Eldridge, Sgt. Thomas	NAM 1978-04-65
Ellison, Lt. Gen. Sir Gerald	NAM 1987-07-26
Fitzgerald, 2 nd Lt. R.A.,	NAM 1979-07-136
Hawtayne, Arthur [Officer]	NAM 1987-11-44
Hollingsworth, C.S.M. Arthur Thomas	NAM 1990-06-389
Hopwood, Sgt. H.,	NAM 7403-29-486-144
Humphries, J.M., [OR / Officer]	NAM 1998-02-232
Hutchinson, Pte. A.E.,	NAM 1982-12-70
Joy, Pte. A.	NAM 1992-09-139
Mahany, F.G.E. [OR]	NAM 2001-06-113
Neilson, Arthur [OR]	NAM 1990-12-95
Platt, Pte. Sidney and Platt, Pte. Vincent	NAM 1999-09-74
Polack, Pte. Maurice Henry	NAM 2003-10-8
Smart, Lt. Col. J.E.,	NAM 1992-04-57-16-5
Selley, Sgt. Henry	NAM 2000-09-153-51
Symonds, Pte. A. J.,	NAM 1998-08-31
Toft, Pte. H.	NAM 1960-11-40
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2nd Lieut. R.A. FITZGERALD to his Father	
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(Service) Bn Manchester Regiment	
Three documents including Haig's 'Special Orders of the Day'	NAM 1986-01-86
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Letters sent to Bentley Bridgewater by his father in France	NAM 1993-02-508
Reminiscences of unknown Guardsman 13 August to	NAM 1997-02-11
3 November 1914	
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<i>Compiled by a Committee of Well-Known Teachers</i>	
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Buckingham Palace. Signed George R.I.'	
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Lt Gen Sir Ivor Maxse	

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NMA 100 16

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Arthur, Albert Victor [OR]

RFM.ARC.2012.146.1

Gelden, Fred [OR]

RFM.ARC.3017

Gill, Sgt. S.,

RFM.ARC.2495.5

Marler, E.T., [OR]

RFM.ARC.2012.958

Osborn, Sgt.

RFM.ARC.2012.264

White, L/Cpl. C.,

RFM.ARC.3032

Wright, Pte. P.N.,

RFM.ARC.2013.8.2

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RFM.ARC.2013.9

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Allen, Pte. Alfred

SOFO Box 23 Item 10

Cheshire, Pte. W.J.,

SOFO Box 16 Item 36

Child, F.W., [OR]

SOFO Box 16 Item 42

Clarke, Pte. S.A.,

SOFO Box 16 Item 28

Early, Capt. J.H.,

SOFO Box 23A Item 1

Early, Sgt. J.,

SOFO Box 23 Item 99

Fullbrook-Leggatt, Capt. L.W.E.O.,

SOFO Box 16 Item 12

George, Pte. C.,

SOFO Box 16 Item 31

Hearn, C.S.M. A.,

SOFO Box 29 Item 19

Jackson, Revered K.C., [CoE Battalion Chaplain]

SOFO Box 23A Box 2E

Mawer, Pte. J.E.,

SOFO Box 16 Item 35

Morris, Pte. William

SOFO Box 23 Item 7

Moulder, Sgt. Sam

SOFO Box 16 Item 7

Neville, Lt. J.E.H.,

SOFO Box 16 Item 29

Neville, Lt. Reginald N.,

SOFO Box 16 Item 3

O'Neill, Lt. C.T.,

SOFO Box 16 Item 30

Symonds, Frederick [OR]

SOFO Box 29 Item 17

Thompson, Pte. Percy

SOFO Box 29 Item 4

[Anon.] 35 Postcards

SOFO Box 29 Item 1

Collection of 15 Patriotic Cards 1914-1918 Vintage

SOFO Box 16 Item 61

Tate Archive, London

Nash, P., [Officer]

TGA 8313

Wellcome Library, London

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RAMC 446/18

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[No Surname], John

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