

## Men in reserve: recovering the civilian man

During the Second World War, Peter Ciarella worked as an electrician for a shipbuilding firm on the Clyde. When asked during an oral history interview undertaken in 2013 if he felt that his job had made a contribution to the war effort, he replied: ‘I think if it wasn’t for me we wouldn’t have won the war! . . . I’m quite sure! Yes definitely [laughter].’<sup>1</sup> While Ciarella made these remarks in jest, it was certainly true that without men like him the war could not have been won. The British war effort needed not only soldiers to fire weapons but also civilians to make munitions, build ships, grow food and maintain a basic level of services on the home front. Indeed, in marked contrast to August 1914 when the popular belief held that the war would be over by Christmas, Britain embarked upon war with Germany in September 1939 with the recognition that the conflict was likely to be a protracted one. Survival required the mobilisation of all resources available, both material and human. Labour needed to be diverted from less essential industries to ones vital to the prosecution of the war. In the lead-up to the outbreak of the war, therefore, the British Government had begun to organise and prepare for military conscription and the parallel control of its manpower resources. As Corinna Peniston-Bird has explained, the fit young man was the target of conscription to the military services.<sup>2</sup> To be eligible for the armed forces, a man had to be aged between nineteen and forty-one – extended to between eighteen-and-a-half to fifty-one in December 1941 – physically fit, passing a rigorous medical examination, and not be employed in an occupation considered essential to the prosecution of the war. Skilled male workers in a wide range of jobs, whose expertise was required on the home front, were to be prevented from being absorbed into the services. In 1922, the Government began to

draw up plans for the best use of all available resources in the event of another lengthy war, having learnt from the First World War, in which unchecked conscription had led to a severe shortage of vital manpower. This was periodically revised. With another war seeming increasingly likely in 1938, following discussions between the armed forces, industry and the Ministry of Labour and National Service, the Government devised a Schedule of Reserved Occupations, which made provision for 'skilled workpeople who would be required in time of war for the maintenance of necessary production or essential service' to be exempt from enlistment in the armed forces.<sup>3</sup> This often meant that men who were in good health and aged within the call-up range were prevented from undertaking military service. Yet to a remarkable degree, as Penny Summerfield has noted, the figure of the civilian male worker remains largely absent from popular representations of Second World War Britain.<sup>4</sup> It is rarely acknowledged that in 1945, when membership of the services was at its highest, the proportion of men engaged in civilian employment (over 10 million) to those in the services (4.6 million), was approximately 2:1.<sup>5</sup> Statistically, then, far more men remained stationed on the home front – working either in heavy industries such as shipbuilding, coal mining, and iron and steel manufacture, or in 'white-collar' occupations such as the civil service and the medical profession – than were conscripted into the three armed forces.

This book seeks to rescue the reserved man from obscurity, by utilising oral histories, autobiographies, archival research and visual sources, and, crucially, to make working-class men, who are the focus of this study, visible as gendered subjects. It explores the invisibility of the reserved worker in both contemporary accounts and post-war representations in a context that witnessed the primacy of the 'soldier hero'. This term, which refers to an idealised yet largely imagined conceptualisation of British masculinity, is discussed by Graham Dawson in his groundbreaking cultural analysis of the imperial adventurers Henry Havelock and T. E. Lawrence. Dawson also examines the impact of narratives featuring these iconic soldier heroes on young boys like himself growing up in the post-1945 period.<sup>6</sup> The notion of the soldier hero makes evident that some forms of maleness are positioned hierarchically above other marginalised and subordinated masculinities. R. W. Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' is relevant here in that it suggests that in any given society, one form of masculinity is culturally exalted, albeit never numerically dominant, and occupies the hegemonic position.<sup>7</sup> During

the Second World War, the man in uniform was held in high esteem. To be a combatant was to be deemed manly. By contrast, the man who was not defending his country on the battlefield, at sea or in the air was largely invisible culturally, and, by implication, considered less of a man.

This polarisation of military and civilian masculinities, in which the young, fit, brawny, heroic serviceman was invariably constructed in opposition to the civilian male who was depicted, if at all, as less manly, old, unfit and 'soft', has led historians to conclude that civilian masculinity was challenged.<sup>8</sup> In her study of female war workers, Penny Summerfield identifies this polarity and notes that civilian masculinity was regarded as being 'in deficit' and that non-combatant men were 'in some way impaired, and by wartime standards emasculated'.<sup>9</sup> The uncertainty surrounding civilian masculinities was compounded by the influx of women into the labour market, including into areas that had been male-dominated prior to the war. By 1943, 6.8 million women were engaged in wartime work – an unprecedented level of female participation. Moreover, women workers were widely praised during the war in both film and print media and have been remembered subsequently as playing a crucial role.<sup>10</sup> Civilian men on the other hand have been all but erased from popular memory or, alternatively, dismissed as being not 'fit' to serve in the forces. Summerfield notes the prevalence of this belief among her female respondents interviewed in the 1990s. One woman, a secretary employed in a number of factories in Birmingham, asserted: 'There were no men because they'd all gone to the war, there were just boys', while another, working at the Vickers Armstrong factory in Blackpool noted: 'There was no men. The men were all away.' She then stated that those she worked alongside were either 'older men, over forty five' or 'hadn't passed the medical for the Forces'.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Janet Miller, one of our Scottish interviewees from the pilot project, and the only woman interviewed, had been a trainee teacher during the war. She recalled: 'There were no men. The men were all in the forces . . . College was man-less. There were a few I think who were maybe medically unfit . . . only two or three. But it was a time of man scarcity.' She repeated later in the interview that 'the men were all in the forces'.<sup>12</sup> The absence on the home front of young, fit, civilian men is often (mistakenly) asserted by oral respondents, as the repetition of 'there were no men' in these three accounts makes evident. Yet the mean age of members serving in the Local Defence Volunteers, later renamed the Home Guard, a voluntary organisation formed in 1940 at the height of the invasion scare, was just thirty-five, with many in their teens and twenties also joining.<sup>13</sup> It would

appear then that the wartime civilian man is remembered as too old, too young or physically unfit, and is often depicted culturally in this way.

Yet as John Tosh has asserted, adopting such an approach, in which cultural representation is emphasised at the expense of experience, often ignores the lived reality encountered by individuals.<sup>14</sup> This book prioritises that lived experience, while recognising there is no such thing as an ‘unmediated lived reality’, a ‘pristine subjectivity.’<sup>15</sup> It utilises newly recorded interviews with fifty-six men who were deployed in reserved occupations in England, Scotland and Wales during the war, and who largely self-identified as working-class during the war as a result of their occupation. They are supplemented by interviews archived by the Imperial War Museum, the British Library and the Trades Union Congress (TUC), as well as written accounts such as memoirs. Together, they enable us to question how young, fit miners; iron and steel workers; shipbuilding workers; and dockers, who had to respond to the threats to masculinities posed by the entry of women to previously male-dominated workplaces, navigated the wartime valorisation of the militarised body. Our sources reveal that wartime constructions of masculinity remained open to contestation. While capable of challenging civilian masculinities, the Second World War simultaneously reinforced them by bolstering the capacity to protect, and to provide by earning high wages, both of which were key markers of masculinity. This was especially the case for the young, working-class ‘hard men’ employed in heavy industry who form the basis of our sample. This classic construction of masculinity was deeply engrained in pre-war traditional heavy industry communities such as Glasgow and Clydeside, as Ronnie Johnston and Arthur McIvor have demonstrated.<sup>16</sup> ‘Hard men’ were characterised by their breadwinner status, toughness and resilience, with their manliness forged in physically demanding and often hazardous and unhealthy manual occupations where they faced up to danger as well as to exploitative employers. This earned them respect within their communities. Moreover, many factories, garages, yards and docks did not have to confront an influx of women and remained largely masculine spaces even during wartime. The testimonies we have collected among the country’s youngest wartime workers that do report the existence of female colleagues reveal that these ‘dilutees’ could enhance civilian men’s masculinities, rather than render them unstable. Some of our interviewees retrospectively attempted to negate the potential threats to masculinity by emphasising their workplace dominance over female dilutees. It should not then be assumed that all civilian men automatically felt emasculated by the soldier hero and the

female dilutee. The personal testimonies we collected among working-class men who were deployed in manual trades, which are discussed in more depth below, suggest that there were a multitude of ways in which non-combatant men could maintain their masculine status. This book uses subjective lived experience supported by a range of other documentary evidence to build up a picture that fundamentally complicates these notions, seeking to provide a much more nuanced interpretation of wartime masculine civilian status.

### **The soldier hero and the invisible male civilian**

Widely held understandings about wartime service reveal that there is a hierarchy of value attached to different forms of contributions, with combatants being most commonly situated at the top.<sup>17</sup> Martin Francis's engaging study, examining how Royal Air Force (RAF) air crew were represented in popular culture both during the war and since, notes that cultural memory focuses on the heroism and glamour associated with the 'fly boys'.<sup>18</sup> These chivalric knights of the air, who belonged to this relatively new branch of the forces, were generally young and middle-class, wore a striking blue uniform, mastered complex modern machinery, and could be seen engaging the enemy directly in dog-fights over the south-east English countryside during the Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940.<sup>19</sup> As pilot Richard Hillary wrote in his 1942 memoir, 'in a Spitfire we're back to war as it ought to be . . . Back to individual combat, to self-reliance, total responsibility for one's own fate. One either kills or is killed; and it's damned exciting.'<sup>20</sup> These men might be regarded as being at the pinnacle of this hierarchy, both during the war and since. They embodied manly heroism: 'the few' to whom 'so many' owed so much. The Prime Minister Winston Churchill saw them as modern-day equivalents to Knights of the Round Table and the Crusaders.<sup>21</sup>

J. B. Priestley's influential 1940 radio broadcast *Postscripts* – the most popular programme in British broadcasting history, with a third of adults listening in – often lauded the heroic figure of the airman. His broadcast on 28 July 1940 centred on an RAF pilot, while on 8 September 1940 he asserted: 'our airmen have already found a shining place for ever in the world's imagination, becoming one of those bands of young heroes, creating a saga, that men can never forget.'<sup>22</sup> These 'young heroes' are proclaimed to be 'strong' and 'mighty youth' in Humphrey Jennings's documentary *Words for Battle* (1941). Cadets in the RAF gather round a Spitfire as the words of John Milton's 1644 tract about press freedom,

*Areopagitica*, are read out by Laurence Olivier: ‘Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant Nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks: Methinks I see her as an Eagle muing her mighty youth . . .’ As with Churchill’s speech, there is a linkage here to England’s literary past into which the pilots are being interwoven. They become part of the cultural fabric and central to Britain’s understanding of self. The rhetoric used by Churchill, Priestley and Jennings was part of the creation of the myth of the heroic pilot as Britain was on the brink of defeat. This cultural exalting, of pilots in particular, but to a lesser degree of all servicemen, undoubtedly impacted upon young men who were keen to enlist. Durham teenager Ron Spedding, aged fifteen in 1939, recollected:

As very young men [we] had actually looked forward to the day when we could join the armed forces and do our bit for King and Country. We would often imagine and fancy ourselves in a military uniform parading behind a brass band and sporting medals received for courage and valour. We really did believe that the most important thing in life was to fight and destroy the enemy, win the war and earn a share in the final victory and the glory. As I said, we were young, impressionable and very naïve.

His final sentence suggests that this may have been a retrospective critique of the war that developed over the next forty years, rather than a wartime mindset. His ‘innocence and illusions’ were shattered when his close friend serving in the RAF was killed, a stark and sobering reminder to him that ‘war was not a glorious game, not a splendid adventure.’<sup>23</sup>

While RAF air crew were positioned at the top of the hierarchy of wartime service, with RAF ground crew and naval and army personnel situated just below, civilian workers were located far lower down. Yet the State did attempt to convince the civilian working population of their necessity. The short film *The Warning* (1939) declared:

War to-day involves not only the fighting services, as it did in the past, but the whole population. And the people must be organised for their own defence. This involves Service! Service for Security. The better we are prepared to meet a hostile attack the less likely it is that an attack will be made. But we must be prepared, and it is the duty of every one of us to consider what part he or she can best play.<sup>24</sup>

This appeal was made to both men and women. There are no early filmic examples where reserved men are singled out for praise. As Linsey Robb notes in her examination of cultural representations of civilian men, the

concept of reserved occupations was too diffuse and shifted frequently, thereby making it a poor choice of topic for film makers.<sup>25</sup> Men in white-collar professions are omitted entirely from all forms of media for much of the war: the pharmacist and the doctor, whose work was not directly linked to the war effort except in providing services that facilitated the work of others, were not considered noteworthy.<sup>26</sup> Even the industrial male worker is depicted far less frequently than the much lauded military man in wartime representations, and there was no noticeable shift as a consequence of the changing circumstances of the war. Indeed, civilian men barely featured in Priestley's vignettes of daily life and were, as Penny Summerfield asserts, 'a blank'.<sup>27</sup> They were also missing from many wartime propaganda posters, scrutiny of which reveals the high status enjoyed by men in the air force, army and navy, and, by contrast, the fragile positioning of the male civilian. While there were a few instances whereby individual industries were targeted in propaganda posters reflecting the changing war situation, there were no examples that would have entered the mainstream. The poster series entitled '*Back Them Up!*', which began in 1939 and continued through to 1945, attempted to emphasise the importance to the war effort of those on the home front, and yet the figure of the civilian worker, male or female, is entirely absent (see for example Figure 1.1).<sup>28</sup> This is a physical rather than a rhetorical absence, with the posters instructing workers to support the muscular servicemen who are depicted in the heat of battle.

This was not the only series to make the civilian worker invisible: '*The Attack Begins in the Factory*', launched during the North African campaign in 1943, used the same device of portraying servicemen engaging in combat, machinery, a defeated enemy and a devastated German city.<sup>29</sup> The captions immediately beneath the colourful action illustrations are in a very small font and are easily overlooked: 'The new Airborne Army is now in action in Europe – equipped by British factories'; 'The big raids on Germany continue. British war plants share with the R.A.F. credit for these giant operations.' While the attack might have begun in the factory with the manufacture of weapons and machinery, it was rugged servicemen who played the active role in the offensive and who were visible in the poster. These poster series, which were designed for use in factories to remind civilian workers of their importance and were initiated to raise their morale and productivity, surely back-fired. Indeed, none of our interviewees referred to these images unbidden and few could recall any propaganda aimed at them, even when presented with examples.

*Men in reserve*



*British guns blast a way through Axis defences in North Africa*

**BACK THEM UP!**

PRINTED FOR H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE BY FOSH & CROSS LTD, LONDON. 31-3409

Figure 1.1 John Nunney, *Back Them Up!*, TNA, INF 13/123/41 (1943)



*Men in reserve: recovering the civilian man*



*The new Airborne Army is now in action in Europe—equipped by British factories.*

# **THE ATTACK BEGINS IN THE FACTORY**

**Figure 1.2** Leslie Oliphant, *The Attack Begins in the Factory*, TNA, INF 13/123/14 (1943)

Wartime films also underscored the supportive silent role of civilian men. The highly acclaimed *In Which We Serve* (1942), written, directed, composed and starring Noel Coward, is one such example. ‘This is the story of a ship,’ we are told, and the opening scenes set before the outbreak of the war feature shipbuilders riveting and welding as they construct the vessel *HMS Torrin*. This section lasts for only ninety seconds and there is no dialogue – just the natural sounds of industry, accompanied by rousing music. The film then moves on to focus on the Royal Navy personnel, their domestic lives and the Battle of Crete in 1941, in which the ship receives a direct hit and sinks. The civilian men who were so crucial to the ‘story’ do not feature on screen again. Even wartime films set on the home front, including *Went the Day Well?* (1942), *The Gentle Sex* (1943), *Millions Like Us* (1943), *A Canterbury Tale* (1944) and *The Way to the Stars* (1945), erase the young civilian man of conscription age from the screen, focusing instead on male military personnel, women and older men. Similarly, BBC radio, newsreel companies and newspapers generally ignored the man engaged on the home front in a civilian occupation.<sup>30</sup>

More general representations of the home-front male, such as the man digging for victory in his allotment or propping up the bar talking carelessly and costing lives, were frequently depicted as middle-aged or elderly, and rather comically as either puny or rotund.<sup>31</sup> Some representations were less humorous and had a darker edge. Noel Coward’s 1944 poetic tribute to RAF Bomber Command, ‘Lie in the Dark and Listen,’ led to objections by those in reserved occupations for its somewhat acerbic depiction of civilian men by a man generally perceived to have himself ‘dodged’ military service.<sup>32</sup> Inspired by the sound of Lancaster bombers flying overhead on their way to unleash a night-time raid on Cologne, Coward’s first two verses speak of the ‘English saplings with English roots . . . Riding the icy, moonlight sky.’ The third verse turns to the ‘little citizens’ safe below in their ‘warm civilian beds’:

Lie in the dark and listen.  
City magnates and steel contractors  
Factory workers and politicians  
Soft hysterical little actors,  
Ballet dancers, reserved musicians  
Safe in your warm civilian beds,  
Count your profits and count your sheep  
Life is passing above your heads,  
Just turn over and try to sleep.

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Lie in the dark and let them go  
There's one debt you'll forever owe,  
Lie in the dark and listen.<sup>33</sup>

The poem perhaps points to some self-loathing as Coward, one of the 'soft hysterical little actors' mentioned, invokes two reviled home-front stereotypes, the profiteer and the pansy, and in a recording he disparagingly rolled the 'r' of 'reserved musicians'.<sup>34</sup> It was unproblematically used in 2006 at the dedication service of a Bomber Command memorial ledger-stone at Lincoln Cathedral, thereby suggesting an enduring level of consensus around his depiction of these shirkers. It provides a useful insight into some of the prevalent attitudes towards male civilian workers who spent the war working on the home front in Britain rather than serving in uniform.

Many historians point to the primacy of military masculine identity, embodied by the soldier hero, within popular discourse during the First and Second World Wars.<sup>35</sup> In the First World War, the volunteer soldier was the epitome of manliness, proving his masculinity by his willingness to sacrifice himself in the defence of his family, friends, community and country.<sup>36</sup> The inter-war period, which witnessed an avalanche of published combatant memoirs, plays and poetry collections chronicling the horrors of trench warfare, cemented the soldier's manly heroism.<sup>37</sup> Tales from the trenches have been a staple of post-1960s school curricula and university modules, television schedules and academic research, ensuring that the combatant is at the forefront of the popular memory of the First World War. In contrast, civilian men have been almost entirely forgotten. The First World War home front in popular memory is figured as a feminised space devoid of men who had all rushed to the colours and large swathes of whom were subsequently slaughtered at the Somme and Passchendaele. As such, all men who were not in the military were excluded to varying degrees from popular notions of ideal manliness and risked being seen as 'non-men'. Conscientious objectors occupied a particularly marginal position, as both Lois Bibbings and Nicoletta Gullace have illustrated.<sup>38</sup> They were regarded as feminised or emasculated 'un-men' in juxtaposition to the exemplary figure of the volunteer soldier, and in some representations were depicted as sexual inverters.<sup>39</sup> Rendered both invisible and unmanly by their failure to 'prove' their masculinity through volunteering and rejecting conscription, civilian men were relegated to a subordinate status, suspected of shirking. No wonder, then, that there was a dearth of male civilian autobiographies produced in the inter-war period; their war stories were simply not regarded, either by themselves or by publishers, as sufficiently marketable. Yet Laura Ugolini's

richly detailed study analysing middle-aged, middle-class Englishmen's narratives suggests that there was no shortage of non-published civilian men's contemporary writing.<sup>40</sup>

There is a notable continuity between the First and Second World Wars linking manliness, understood here as 'a set of practices and qualities related to a gendered identity',<sup>41</sup> with military service and, conversely, unmanliness with civilian status. Sonya Rose, for example, argues that the 'successful enactment' of hegemonic masculinity in the Second World War 'depended on being visibly a member of the fighting forces'.<sup>42</sup> Military uniform was, as we shall see in Chapter 3, a visual symbol of elevated status. In spite of the wartime rhetoric of a 'people's war' in which everyone had a role to play, the categorisation of individuals as either civilians or combatants remained paramount.<sup>43</sup> As Graham Dawson notes, the 'civilian–military distinction' has taken the form of 'especially acute' 'separate spheres'.<sup>44</sup> Civilian men were often grouped with others who were prevented from fighting: women, the elderly and children. The experience of warfare was firmly incorporated into notions of maleness in the immediate post-war period and since.<sup>45</sup> Masculinity was tested to its extreme during the war, and combatants returned home with a sense that their sacrifices merited a better society. National Service until 1961 also continued to incubate military discipline, 'making a man of you'. Consequently, those who had worked on the home front are often marginalised. As Penny Summerfield has questioned, if active service distinguished between men and women, and if manliness and heroism were embodied by the soldier hero, what becomes of the man who remained a civilian?<sup>46</sup> The consensus among historians such as Summerfield, Peniston-Bird, Bibbings and Gullace appears to be that civilian men were emasculated by women's wartime roles, in particular their newly acquired skills, increased affluence, greater mobility and heightened sense of self-worth, and were compared unfavourably to the uniformed soldier. Civilian men were perceived as isolated individuals, prioritising self-preservation over collective survival, as we shall see in Chapter 2.<sup>47</sup> Caught in a no-man's land between female war workers and male combatants, it is argued, men on the home front experienced a reduced sense of importance. Consequently, as Peniston-Bird states, during the war, 'men did not have a choice whether to conform or reject hegemonic masculinity: they positioned themselves in relation to it'.<sup>48</sup> However, as this book will show, the construction of working-class masculinities within the wartime workplace remains open to contestation. While their manliness might have been challenged by being prevented

from enlisting, remaining on the home front enabled married men to continue to protect their families at a time of considerable danger, as well as to obtain secure employment and high earnings, facilitating their provider role. Single men, too, enjoyed large wage packets as a result of hard graft in work that often aligned them with the war effort. Thus, rather than one coherent grand narrative of emasculated reserved workers, there are plural histories and multiple, shifting and competing constructions, which this book seeks to unpick.

### Reclaiming the ‘worker hero’

The Second World War inevitably brought wide-ranging changes to working practices: unemployment was virtually abolished, the labour force swelled in size, the number of hours worked rose, real wages increased, factory welfare and medical facilities improved, occupational health-and-safety standards declined, and strikes were made unlawful, as we discuss in Chapters 4 and 5. War demands also saw a marked shift towards mass production methods, with more onus placed on unskilled and semi-skilled work. Our book thus complements the recent work of Geoff Field, and others, who have examined wartime labour relations, by refocusing on the narratives, subjectivities and lived experience of male workers recounted in oral history interviews.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps the most marked wartime labour change, however, was the influx of women – especially older and married women – into war production to replace men conscripted into the forces, and the subsequent ‘dilution’ of the established labour force.<sup>50</sup> In a rapidly changing work environment other important transformations both diminished and threatened civilian masculinities. Men felt a curtailment of their independence as they were subjected to wartime controls and direction. Moreover, for those working in factories, assembly-line mass production techniques and new labour management methods could disrupt traditional work patterns, threaten cherished skills, and fragment male managerial and supervisory roles, eroding for example the power of the foreman, a central figure in the pre-war and wartime workplace. The war saw the concentration of industrial production into larger units and the application of mechanisation, more efficient science and technology, and ways of organising work to maximise production of war-related goods. This was perhaps especially evident in the new munitions and aircraft assembly, and component plants. These modern sectors of the economy accelerated by the war diverged considerably from its older, traditional sectors, such as coalmining and shipbuilding.

Reserved workers were prevented from leaving an employer by the Essential Work Order of March 1941 and could be directed to war-related work as and how the State dictated. 'Excess' profits were, at least in theory, restricted, and income taxes were introduced to help pay for the war. Lock-outs and strikes were also declared illegal from 1940 under Order 1305 in a further attempt to impose discipline and maximise production for the war effort. These controls and reorganisations of work could be perceived as degrading, especially for craftsmen who put great store on their autonomy at work.<sup>51</sup>

While civilian male workers might have felt diminished by the exalting of combatants and undermined by restrictions on their worker identities, war concurrently also facilitated the rebuilding of traditional working-class masculinity. Indeed, twenty-eight of our fifty-six interviewees (50 per cent), who were aged between eighteen and twenty-eight when the war ended, did *not* attempt to join the services. While some believed that there was no point in trying to enlist, others undoubtedly felt comfortable in their war work. This may have been even more pronounced among middle-aged and older, married civilian war workers, who are outside our interview cohort, and who were less susceptible to the lure of martial uniform, as witnessed also in the First World War.<sup>52</sup> Among the ways in which non-combatant men maintained their masculine status were full employment and high wages. Historically, the 'essence' of masculinity has been variously located with reference to notions of the man as provider. In late-nineteenth-century Europe, a socialist iconography had emerged that idealised the figure of the masculine worker, who, in George Mosse's phrase, 'radiated manly strength'.<sup>53</sup> In working-class communities dominated by heavy industries, the prevailing inter-war discourse stressed the tough, brutal struggle in the workplace to win coal, forge iron and make ships by men desensitised to danger and risk. A culture of masculinity was created in the workplace, and this was especially entrenched in areas like Tyneside, Merseyside, south Wales and Clydeside, where the dominance of heavy manual labour in industries like shipbuilding, iron and steel, and coalmining could provide an important site for the incubation, reinforcement and reproduction of macho values and attitudes. Place is key here, with regional identities shaping the way men configured their masculinities. There was in existence, for example, a particularly heroic civilian Glaswegian male identity, which drew on the tradition of the shipyards, and the conflict between male workers and particularly authoritarian, anti-trade-union employers. Writing about Clydeside, Ronnie Johnston and Arthur McIvor highlight how manual labour was

widely regarded as ‘the pinnacle of masculine endeavour.’<sup>54</sup> This is a point reinforced by the work of Alan Campbell, who notes that Scottish mining communities in the 1930s were often ‘suffused with a discourse of manliness’, with male youths encouraged by older miners to avoid displaying emotion and to play fighting games.<sup>55</sup> Work and the economic and social status that went along with it were, in these areas, central to the formation of masculinity in the inter-war period. However, the Depression had eroded masculinity because of mass unemployment and the inability of large numbers of men in these blighted communities to act effectively as ‘breadwinners’. At the peak of unemployment in 1932, over 3.2 million were out of work. In some places – for example Jarrow in the north-east – unemployment reached as high as 80 per cent.<sup>56</sup> Victor Pritchett’s study of wartime shipbuilders referred to them as:

scarred by the slump. They saw famous yards close. They saw places where they had spent years of their life put up to auction. A man’s sense of right and wrong, the resources of his character, are bound up with his work and the place he lives in and, like the rest of us, the shipyard worker feels he was torn up and that his roots are raw.<sup>57</sup>

The Depression rendered work, as Joanna Bourke argues, ‘a fragile basis for masculinity.’<sup>58</sup> However, paid work remained the key arbiter of working-class masculinity in the inter-war period. Susan Kingsley-Kent argues that despite its scarcity, ‘work conferred a status on working-class men that no other attribute could replace. Certain jobs created a higher manly standing than others, at least for some men, even at the height of unemployment, when most men took any job they could find.’<sup>59</sup> It is our contention that war ended this long period of high unemployment and, therefore, enhanced the capacity of men in the heavy industries to fulfil the manly provider role, bringing job security and relatively high earnings. This argument supports the work of Jessica Meyer and Martin Francis, who study wartime masculinities that foreground the importance of men’s domestic identities – their roles as good sons and husbands who provide and protect, even amongst fighting men.<sup>60</sup> Being a ‘big earner’ was also historically a badge of masculine status in working-class communities, and this capacity was enhanced in wartime with full employment and the opportunities for overtime working at inflated wage rates. For example, average weekly working hours for men aged over twenty-one increased from 47.7 hours in October 1938 to 52.9 hours in July 1943, and consequently average weekly earnings for men over twenty-one employed in the manufacturing industry increased from £3 9s

in October 1938 to £6 4s in July 1944, while men employed in metals, engineering and shipbuilding whose average weekly earnings were £3 15s in October 1938 saw them peak at £7 1s in January 1944.<sup>61</sup> There were exceptional examples of men working 80- or 90-hour weeks, and individual sheet-metal workers deployed on fuselage assembly taking home between £20 and £25 a week.<sup>62</sup> With pro-active wartime policies by Ernest Bevin, the Minister of Labour, to control inflation and raise the wages of the worst-off, such as labourers, large sections of the working class were clearly better off financially and more secure. As we shall see in Chapter 4, many of our interviewees constructed accounts that drew upon the associations among pay, manual labour, hard graft, getting your hands dirty, 'working the tools' and manliness.<sup>63</sup> The dual meanings of the term 'composure', as discussed by Graham Dawson, are evident here: interviewees *composed* accounts of their wartime selves that allowed them to feel comfortable with their role, offering them *composure*.<sup>64</sup> Such narratives, we argue, demonstrated their self-narrated contributions to the war effort and cast civilian men as worker heroes on a par with soldier heroes. This underscored what we term 'patriotic masculinity'.<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, in significantly raising the level of risk and danger on the job, from wartime work intensification, longer hours, deteriorations in occupational health-and-safety standards and bombing raids, the 'hard man' mode of masculinity was bolstered.<sup>66</sup> Exhausting wartime work regimes and higher risks were challenged by some, including Bevin, who pressed for normalisation of working hours after the production spurt following the drama of Dunkirk in 1940 had passed. Nonetheless, high work intensity was largely accepted by workers as their contribution to the war. It is our contention that this bodily sacrifice in the workplace, which to some extent paralleled the risks faced by those in the armed services, helped civilian working-class men to rescue their battered masculinity, a consequence of the Depression, and represent themselves as performing patriotic masculinity by making a pivotal contribution to the war effort. Furthermore, the war deepened the capacities of workers to stand up to management, as workplace collective organisation was re-energised and shop stewards again saturated the industrial workplace. Thus, it can be argued that masculinity survived intact within many traditional working-class communities dominated by the heavy industries.

While our study focuses on working-class masculinities, what of the men who did not derive their masculine status from undertaking dirty, heavy labour? Those who worked in professions such as dentistry and medicine during the war may have operated within the framework of



‘respectable’ or ‘tempered’ masculinity, an inward-looking, domestic sense of manhood, which according to Sonya Rose and Alison Light emerged in the inter-war period.<sup>67</sup> Light argues that ideas of the nation became ‘feminised’ in the 1920s, with a movement away from officially masculine public rhetorics of militarism and imperialism towards a ‘more inward-looking’ sense of nationhood, focusing on the domestic and private spheres and encapsulated in the popular image of ‘the suburban husband pottering in his herbaceous borders.’ Thus, Light maintains, ‘whilst the First World War belonged to Tommy Atkins, the true heroics of the Second were to be found in the actions of “ordinary people” on the “Home Front”’.<sup>68</sup> Civilian men emerged as valued figures within their own communities and embraced some of the opportunities afforded by remaining on the home front. Research by Sally Sokoloff, for example, shows how male workers in the Midlands were able to adopt a protective or supervisory role over the wives of absent servicemen, providing a ‘continuity of male authority.’<sup>69</sup> Civilian men, whether working in heavy industry or the professions, should not, then, be assumed to have felt emasculated.

Furthermore, in contrast to the widely held notion that civilian male workers were largely invisible in wartime culture, scrutiny of a range of media reveals glimpses of the reserved man. While not as prevalent as his references to aviators, J. B. Priestley does in fact make some allusions to reserved men in *Postscripts*. In his broadcast of 8 September 1940, he militarises their civilian identities, stating: ‘We see now, when the enemy bombers come roaring at us at all hours, and it’s our nerve versus his; that we’re not really civilians any longer but a mixed lot of soldiers – machine-minding soldiers, milkmen and postmen soldiers.’<sup>70</sup> On other occasions he acknowledged ‘ploughman and parson, shepherd and clerk’, who formed the Local Defence Volunteers (renamed the Home Guard in July 1940), and he described his own visits to war factories that ‘vibrated with power’, making reference to electric welders and shot-blasters who had ‘turned tame’ the giants of machinery they worked with.<sup>71</sup> A discourse from the early months of the war increasingly emphasised the masculine nature taken on by the men who remained at home. Images of men working in the bowels of the earth were regularly employed, as in Pritchett’s evocation of a wartime shipyard: ‘You look down into the body of the ship, through the smoke haze to the riveters’ fires and watch the men step about there like little demons in the galleries of Dante’s hell.’<sup>72</sup> A primeval motif is evident here with ‘demons’ grafting in the abyss and, as we shall see, other commentators also described shipyard workers as ‘demons’,

while artist Graham Sutherland saw tin miners as ‘a different kind of species.’<sup>73</sup> Some wartime propaganda, such as John Baxter’s feature film *The Shipbuilders* (1943), emphasised the key role played by civilian men and idealised the heroic aspects of this toil in wartime, while author and journalist Beverley Nichols, who toured the Clydeside shipyards in 1941, depicted the average worker as ‘a man of fiery independence’ and ‘rock-hard patriotism’, who was ‘get[ting] on with the job.’<sup>74</sup>

This image of primeval power was also apparent in the paintings of ex-serviceman Stanley Spencer, who was one of the most celebrated artists commissioned by the War Artists’ Advisory Committee. It was reformed in November 1939 to document Britain’s war, and 6,000 pieces of art were produced by over 400 artists, some of which featured civilian men at work. Spencer was sent to the Kingston shipyard in Port Glasgow, one of the yards owned by Sir James Lithgow, which collectively built eighty-four merchant ships, the largest number constructed by any firm in the Second World War. Spencer visited in May 1940, staying for several weeks, and made a number of return visits to sketch and absorb the atmosphere of the shipyards. He had the unique method of swiftly sketching life drawings on a roll of toilet paper. He worked up his innumerable sketches into drawings and then finally painted huge murals using oil. He planned to paint thirteen large commemorative canvases that together would form a three-tiered, 70-foot panoramic frieze, but by the time the committee was disbanded in 1946 only nine had been completed.<sup>75</sup> Each painting was named after the men who undertook a single activity, illustrating the specific divisions of labour in a shipyard – *Caulkers, Burners, Welders, Riveters, The Template, Bending the Keel Plate, Riggers, Plumbers* and *The Furnaces* – and were collectively known as *Shipbuilding on the Clyde*.<sup>76</sup> Rather than painting spectacular events such as ceremonies to launch new ships, Spencer chose to focus on the everyday work tasks and tools of employees as they collectively constructed tramp steamers for the Merchant Navy, which were vital to the war effort in maintaining food supplies. This focus on the ordinary was very much in keeping with the ‘people’s war’, as illustrated in the work of realist documentary film maker Humphrey Jennings, among others. Spencer was struck by the men’s skill, workmanship, industry and sense of homeliness, and was drawn to the communal activity. He included himself in *Welders* as the second figure on the left, illustrating his admiration for the men. Strikingly, despite sketching women workers at the shipyard,<sup>77</sup> all but one of Spencer’s final panels featured just male labourers. He also omitted foremen and employers, although in *Riggers*, three men wearing bowler hats are seen

on the extreme right. This was, then, a study of the men, a celebration of the craft and physically tough nature of the work and an acknowledgement of communality, cooperation, collective endeavour and camaraderie. The canvases got increasingly more claustrophobic, peopled with more and more workers: *Caulkers* (1940), the first painting, features four young men, while *Plumbers* (1945) features fifty-three. While their group identity is underscored by their wearing of very similar clothing – baggy brown trousers and jackets, rust-coloured shirts, and cloth caps – Spencer paints these men as individuals, absorbed in their own personal task. Colour and lighting are used to dramatic effect to interrogate the interplay between man and machine. The *Edinburgh Evening News* commented that *Riveters* provided ‘a vivid impression of life in a Clyde shipbuilding yard. The hundreds of workers . . . are seen working like very demons. There are no slackers on the Clyde’ (see Figure 1.3).<sup>78</sup> Again, the word ‘demons’ is used to describe the graft of shipyard workers. As we shall see in Chapter 2, the term ‘slacker’ was in use within a month of the First World War commencing and had connotations of civilian men unpatriotically evading their military service; the reference to it here in the Second World War suggests that there was no such perception that these men were failing to fulfil their duty.<sup>79</sup>

Spencer was not alone in being commissioned to portray civilian men in their daily working lives: Henry Moore, who declined the invitation to be an official war artist, accepted a commission to paint coalminers from Wheldale Colliery in Castleford, Yorkshire, a pit previously managed by his father; William Roberts depicted burly munitions workers

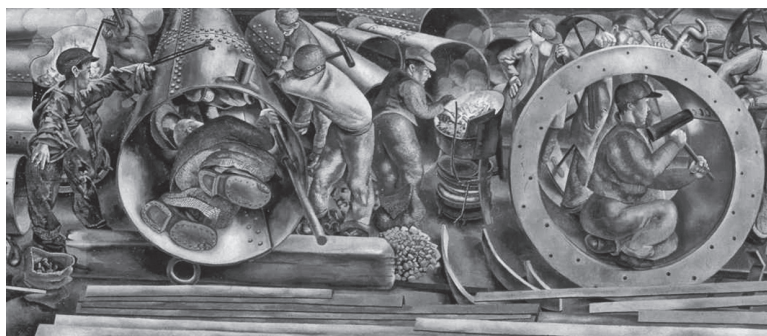


Figure 1.3 Stanley Spencer, *Riveters* (detail), oil on canvas, IWM, ART LD 1375 (1941)

at Woolwich Arsenal, agricultural labourers and civil defence members; and Graham Sutherland sketched steel workers in south Wales and tin miners in Cornwall. Of this commission, Sutherland wrote:

the deeper significance of these men only gradually became clear to me. It was as if they were a different kind of species – enobled [*sic*] underground, and with an added stature which above the ground they lacked, and my feeling was that in spite of the hardness of the work in their nether world, this place held for them – subconsciously perhaps – an element of daily enthrallment.<sup>80</sup>

Two of Stanley Spencer's paintings of workers at the Lithgows Shipyard in Port Glasgow commissioned by the War Artists' Advisory Committee were exhibited at the National Gallery in May 1941. Both Sutherland and Spencer featured in *Out of Chaos* (1944), Jill Craigie's documentary about wartime art, but given its failure to secure distribution – a result of its perceived lack of commercial appeal – few people would have been familiar with these depictions of masculine civilian men at work.

Far more people would have seen the various poster campaigns that featured civilian male workers. Many such posters endeavoured to emphasise the importance to the war effort of men on the home front, putting into visual form Churchill's August 1940 message that 'The front line runs through the factories. The workmen are soldiers with different weapons but the same courage.'<sup>81</sup> Churchill also used the phrase 'front-line civilian', which Helen Jones terms 'positive labelling'.<sup>82</sup> The need for workers to exert their maximum effort was crucial in the summer of 1940 when the Battle of Britain was still ongoing and the threat of invasion was high. Bream's *Remember – They're Relying on You*,<sup>83</sup> for example, showed a helmeted industrial worker holding an electric drill powering a squadron of fighter planes flying in formation above a shot-down German plane. An Admiralty poster, *Give 'em Both Barrels* (Figure 1.4), featured a brawny factory worker and a very young naval rating, and *Put It There!* (Figure 1.5) depicted a male shipyard worker and a Royal Navy sailor shaking hands, their muscularity enabling them to crush the menace of the seas: a German U-boat adorned with the face of a shark. Both posters make visual links between soldiering and working, emphasising parity of service. Similarly, Harold Pym's *Combined Operations Includes You* depicts a soldier firing a gun and a male factory worker working a lathe (Figure 1.6).<sup>84</sup> They have exactly the same posture, facial expression and muscular physique, but whereas the soldier is surrounded by male comrades, the factory worker toils alongside female dilutees as well as men.

*Men in reserve: recovering the civilian man*



Figure 1.4 Anon., *Give 'Em Both Barrels* (undated), IWM, PST 14082

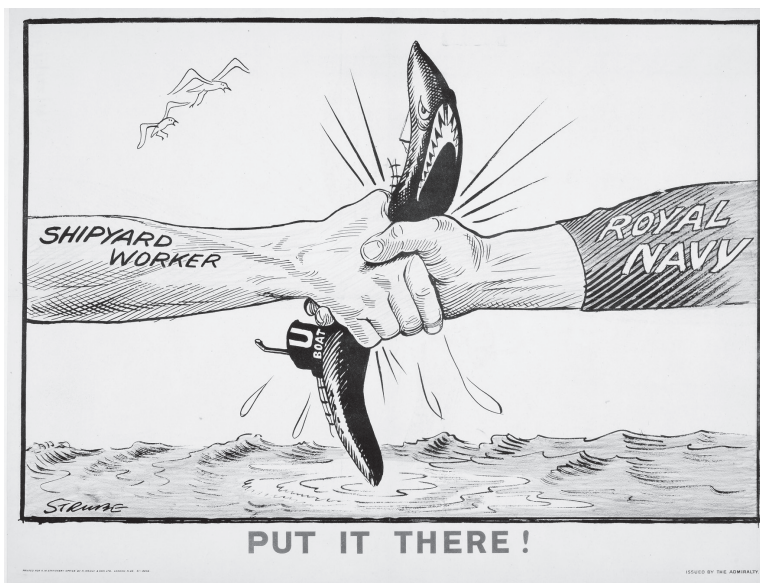
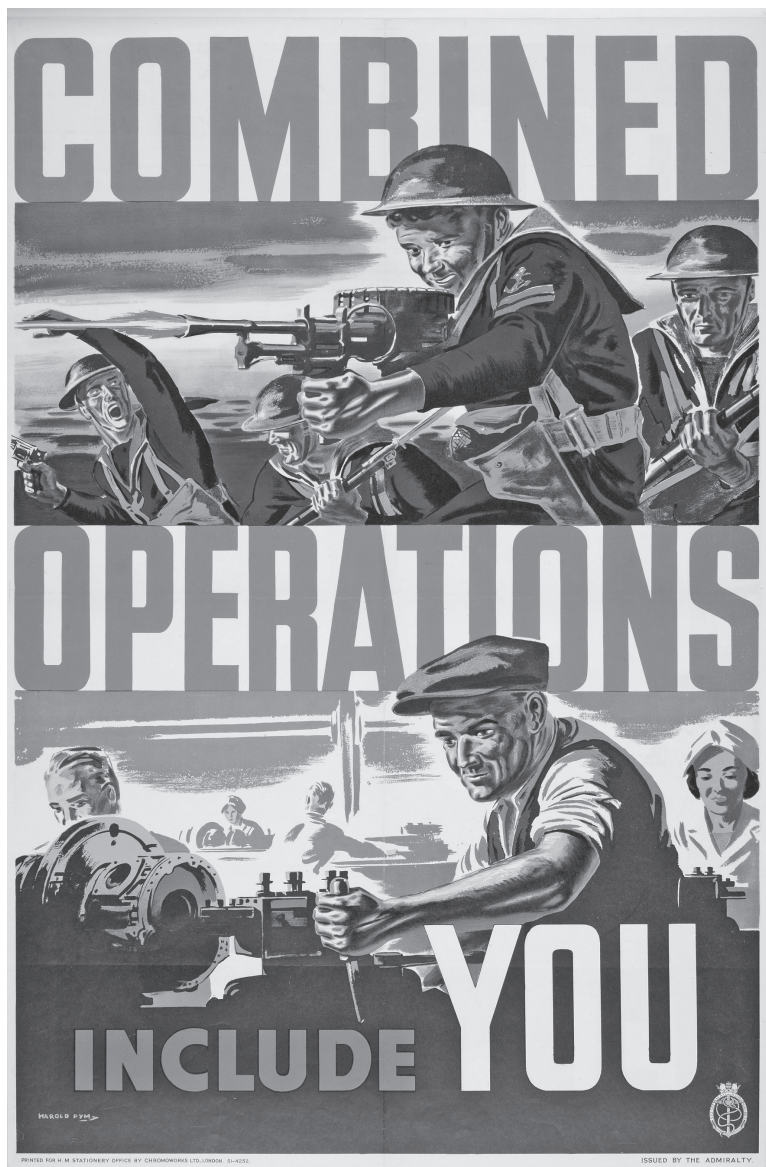


Figure 1.5 Sidney Strube, *Put It There!*, The Admiralty (undated), TNA, INF 3/1338

Civilian men's masculinities may have been augmented by the visual representations of soldiers in these posters.<sup>85</sup> Unlike the *'Back Them Up!'* and *'The Attack Begins in the Factory'* series discussed above, these posters not only feature the civilian male but also state equivalence. Yet they reinforce the same message: the factory is central to military victory but the industrial worker, positioned below his military counterpart, is not as important. Moreover, the women in the background may render the civilian man's masculinity unstable, their presence a continual reminder that women were employed to undertake similar work.

These sources predominantly came from the State, which had a vested interest in maintaining the morale of civilian men. While a discourse emphasising the important contribution of male workers was in evidence to a limited degree and had the potential to alter the public's perception of male civilian workers, posters – which were destined for factory walls rather than bus shelters and billboards – and war art were little seen by the general public. Nevertheless, some civilian men did recognise that the State was linking their work in the docks, yards and factories on the home front with the service of men in the military. L. E. Latchford, a

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**Figure 1.6** Harold Pym, *Combined Operations Include You* (undated), TNA, INF 13/122/21

Customs and Excise worker at the Swansea docks, for example, noted in his diary ‘The governmentant [*sic*] is drawing a parallel between men in the services and men working on the “home front”’<sup>86</sup>

Posters endeavouring to get civilian men to undertake civil defence duties after their working day also consciously played upon ideals of masculinity. The rather ethereal, waif-like office worker – undoubtedly middle-class, as he is depicted carrying his umbrella, briefcase and newspaper – could become whole again by joining the Auxiliary Fire Service and by donning a uniform and wielding a hose (see, for example, Figure 1.7). ‘*ARP: Here’s a Man’s Job!*’ depicts a strapping young man raising his bare arm and cheering (Figure 1.8), while ‘*WANTED: Men for First Aid Parties. A Real Man’s Job!*’ (Figure 1.9) needed no visual image. These posters assert that civilian masculinity was just as ‘real’ as that of service personnel. That they had to label civil defence ‘a real man’s job’ explicitly, however, suggests that there was a very strong popular notion to the contrary. As Lucy Noakes recognises, particular effort had to be made in recruitment propaganda to demonstrate that civil defence was a ‘real man’s job’ given that men served alongside women.<sup>87</sup> These posters were responding to a public consensus that civil defence ought to be undertaken by women and older men.

Feature films and documentary films also include the figure of the reserved man, albeit infrequently, and he was rarely referred to as such. The most notable example is Humphrey Jennings’s feature-length classic *Fires Were Started* (1943), which focused on the dogged commitment of London’s auxiliary fire brigades. The fire services were especially lionised, but so too were the Merchant Navy, depicted as heroes bravely facing the dangers of marine warfare in such films as *San Demetrio, London* (1943) and *Western Approaches* (1944). These two civilian occupations most directly confronted the dangers of warfare, and consequently were widely lauded and given a prominent place in British culture.<sup>88</sup> Other examples of films featuring civilian men at work include John Baxter’s *The Shipbuilders* (1943), based on a novel by George Blake and starring Clive Brook, which is set in a Clydeside shipyard prior to the outbreak of war. *The Demi-Paradise* (1943), a pro-Russian film that sought to persuade the British public to admire their Soviet allies, depicted British shipyard workers as hard-working, grafting around the clock in their blitzed shipyard to complete on schedule an ice-breaker. A more ambiguous representation is *The Foreman Goes to France* (1942), which features an industrial worker. However, by focusing on the fantastical rescue of industrial equipment from France as the Germans invaded rather than



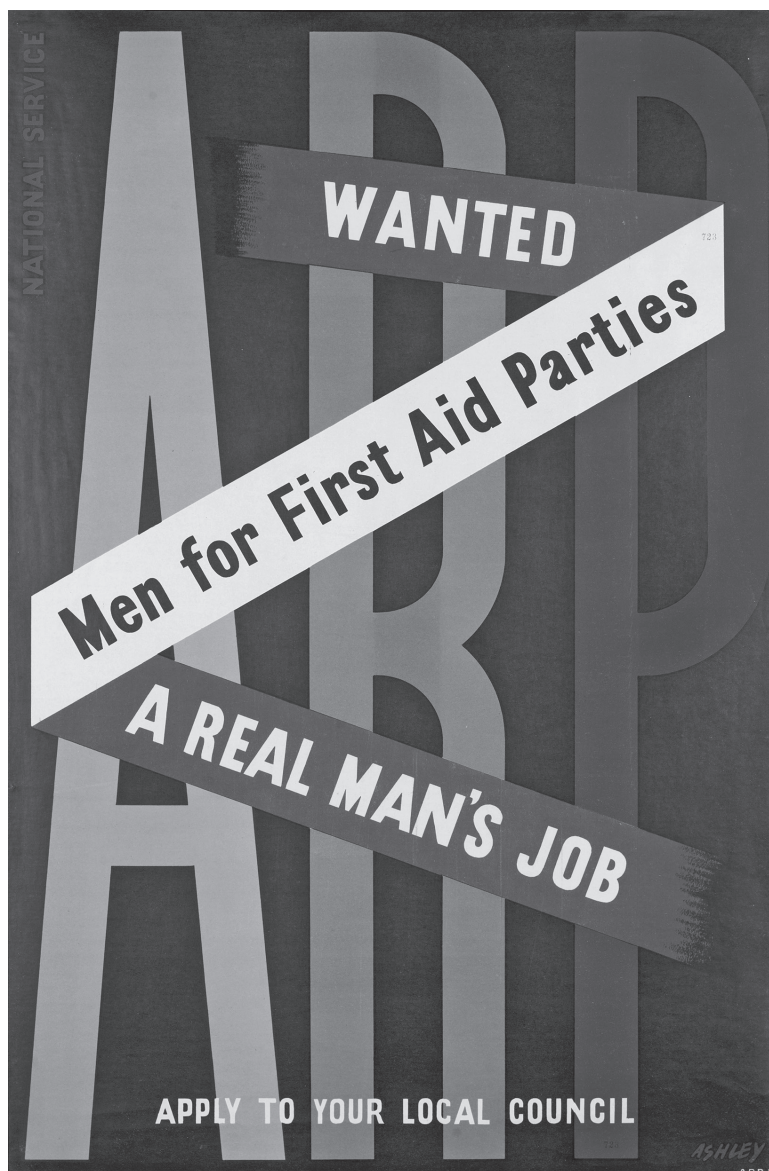
*Men in reserve: recovering the civilian man*



Figure 1.7 Anon., *Join ARP – Enrol at Any Fire Station* (undated), IWM, PST 13879



Figure 1.8 Bowmar, *ARP: Here's a Man's Job!* (undated), IWM, PST 0147



**Figure 1.9** Ashley Havinden, *Wanted: Men for First Aid Parties. A Real Man's Job* (undated), IWM, PST 13899

on essential munitions production, the film does little to suggest the necessity of the ordinary civilian worker.

While feature films sometimes included civilian figures in central roles, the contributions made by men on the home front were a staple of documentary films that projected an image of the 'people's war'. *Transfer of Skill* (1940), directed by Geoffrey Bell, provides factual commentary over silent footage of craftsmen aged between thirty and fifty. It shows how their skills were applied to war-related work: a pre-war jeweller is shown making precision instruments; a watchmaker produces shell fuses; and a luxury boat builder, fisherman, fishing-rod maker and model-railway worker are all depicted in their new roles. 'These are the men behind the front line. On the skill of their hands we depend to fashion our machines of war.' Pat Jackson's 1942 short *Builders* is set on a real building site on which an ordnance factory was being constructed, with three workers, Charlie, Bob and George, introduced to the audience. It incorporates shots of men on the building site and in the pub, playing cards and drinking beer. The objective of the film was to boost the low morale of builders by showing that their work was vital in building the factories that would supply the armed forces with weaponry. The voiceover proclaims: 'Every brick you lay . . . every minute of your working day brings the downfall of Hitler a little nearer.'<sup>89</sup> *Summer on the Farm* (1943), directed by Ralph Keene, depicted the hard manual labour and crucial contributions made by male agricultural workers aged in their twenties, thirties and forties, who were assisted with 'extra labour' provided by local women, schools, Land Clubs and the Women's Land Army. It targeted urban industrial workers to alert them to the importance of rural workers at a time when Britain was aiming to be self-sufficient: 'Without the farmers and farmworkers, the industrial millions would neither eat nor work.' A more uncertain representation is seen in the documentary film *They Keep the Wheels Turning* (1942), about female dilutees working in a garage repair shop alongside male colleagues. The voiceover both praises and undermines the male worker by noting 'his is a civilian job but it's like a service job – he can be proud of it'. The most positive representations of civilian men can be found in Humphrey Jennings's body of work: his documentaries consistently addressed the home-front male. The voiceover in *Heart of Britain* (1941) made poetic references to the civilian war effort, mentioning 'the valleys of power and the rivers of industry'. *Listen to Britain* (1942) featured shots of miners, train drivers, factory workers producing tanks and aeroplanes,

and tractor drivers, and the prelude referred to 'the clank of machinery and shunting trains'. Jennings's 1946 documentary *A Diary for Timothy* focuses on a coalminer, a farmer, an engine driver and a convalescing fighter pilot. That three of the four featured characters are civilians underscores the important contribution that reserved men made to the war effort. Moreover, their masculinities are bolstered by the incapacity of the combatant. Actor Michael Redgrave, reading a commentary written by the novelist E. M. Forster, stated:

You see this was total war. Everyone was in it. It was everywhere. Not only on the battlefields but in the valleys where Goronwy, the coal miner, carries his own weapons to his own battlefield in scenery which isn't exactly pretty. If you looked across the countryside of England, that is beautiful, you can see Alan, the farmer, he has spent the last five years of war reclaiming the land and making it fertile. He has been fighting against the forces of nature all his life. And now with a mortal enemy on us he has to fight harder than ever. In London Bill the engine driver looks out of his cab at his battlefield. No longer taking holiday makers to the sea but taking the miner's coal, the farmer's crops, the fighting men's ammunitions to where they have to go. Goronwy, Alan and Bill are all fighting in their ways.

As with J. B. Priestley, Forster employs militaristic language to envelop these men in an all-embracing, inclusive vision of Britain at war. These documentaries were shown to members of the public in schools, village halls, factory canteens and churches, brought by mobile projection vans that toured the country. While audience figures are non-existent, contemporary evidence suggests that up to 4 million viewed these short films and that they were generally well received.<sup>90</sup>

The civilian man was not, we would argue, entirely invisible from wartime culture: he can be found in films, paintings, posters and radio broadcasts. Contrary to the widely held view that civilian manhood was challenged, these representations could be heroic and manly. In this book we will argue that reserved men were not automatically emasculated by their service on the home front. As we shall see through the analysis of newly recorded interviews, archived oral testimonies and written sources, civilian workers were fully able to compose manly identities for themselves. Secure employment and high wages augmented their sense of working-class masculinity, and the composure of narratives of hard graft was one way in which interviewees demonstrated a form of patriotic masculinity. The fact that these men were often in skilled trades, regarded by many as the aristocracy of labour, working in large groups in sometimes quite closed communities with a particularly masculine identity

before the war like the shipyards of Clydeside, helped shore up civilian masculinity.

### **Invisibility in academia and in the archives**

Despite these glimpses of the civilian man in wartime popular culture, it could still be argued that he has been erased both from post-war cultural representations and from popular memory, as we explore in Chapter 7. He has also been rendered almost entirely invisible in academic study.<sup>91</sup> While the fields of masculinity studies<sup>92</sup> and workplace cultures<sup>93</sup> are burgeoning, and although some historians of the First and Second World Wars have addressed wartime masculinities,<sup>94</sup> before 2016 there were no published books that deal exclusively with the question of reserved occupation status in Britain during the Second World War.

Moreover, no systematic nationwide collecting of interviews with male civilian workers on the home front in either war has ever been undertaken. In 2005, Ronnie Johnston and Arthur McIvor flagged up the need for ‘a systematic oral history of the “reserved occupations”’,<sup>95</sup> while historians examining the experience of war in Wales note that ‘another aspect of the conflict that would repay exploration in a Welsh context concerns the reserved occupations.’<sup>96</sup> Recognising the omission, Arthur and Juliette made an application in 2008 to the AHRC for a Collaborative Doctoral Award focusing on ‘Glasgow’s war’ to remedy this. Alison Chand consequently undertook fifty interviews with male Clydeside reserved workers that were used in her doctoral thesis (now a book), examining the ‘lived’ and ‘imagined’ identities of her interviewees.<sup>97</sup> ‘Bevin Boys’ – young men who upon receiving their call-up papers were randomly selected by ballot to work in the pits despite having no mining experience – and Home Guards – who served, initially voluntarily, in a civil defence capacity – have been the subject of a number of publications, but these tend to be populist, non-scholarly accounts appealing to the general reader.<sup>98</sup> The exception is Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird’s analysis of the Home Guard, which makes a significant contribution to our understanding of wartime masculinities.<sup>99</sup> Our study of men with reserved status, some of whom joined the Home Guard, complements and builds upon their research.

The relative cultural invisibility of the male civilian worker is also apparent in oral archives. Within national sound collections, no systematic recording had been carried out with those who were civilian workers for the duration of the war until 2005. We have unearthed and drawn upon

in our analysis archival material held at the Imperial War Museum,<sup>100</sup> the National Library of Wales,<sup>101</sup> the British Library,<sup>102</sup> Glasgow Museums<sup>103</sup> and the TUC.<sup>104</sup> While existing collections did not necessarily address the questions we would like to have asked, these interviews did yield some wonderful and insightful material into civilian workers' lives. Some collections did indicate a clear bias in recruitment. The Imperial War Museum interviews showed an evident partiality towards men who held reserved status in the Second World War for a limited period and ultimately enlisted and served in the armed forces, while the TUC interviews understandably tended to represent a disproportionate number of union activists, and the main interest of these interviews was, predictably, trade unionism and industrial relations.<sup>105</sup>

While reserved workers rarely feature in sound archives, they can be found in written archives, such as the Ministry of Labour files, the University of Warwick's Modern Records Centre<sup>106</sup> and local trades councils. A useful overview of material held in local archives across the United Kingdom is the 'Recollections of World War Two' website but, strikingly, it does not contain the category 'Reserved Occupations'.<sup>107</sup> One website that does have such a section is the BBC's 'People's War' archive,<sup>108</sup> an interactive online project that ran from June 2003 to January 2006 seeking reminiscences of those who experienced the Second World War in order to construct a digital archive for future generations. Of the 47,000 written documents received in response to the BBC's call, 199 'stories' were about reserved status. These can be found under the title of 'Reserved Occupations' in the 'Working Life' section. Many of those listed as 'reserved occupations', however, were in fact not: incorrectly filed under this heading were a large number of Bevin Boys. Rather than being prevented from going into the forces because of their skilled employment, these young men were directed into the mines, having been balloted upon receiving their call-up papers. The scale of the response by those who had been employed in jobs listed on the Schedule of Reserved Occupations – just 0.5 per cent of the total number of stories submitted – suggests that they did not feel their stories were worth sharing. This indicated starkly the pressing need for our study to recover such experiences before they were lost forever. Themes discussed by these online contributors mirror those highlighted in our interview cohort. Tom Tommins, for example, who worked at Fairey Aviation in Stockport, stated: 'I could not help feeling that there was something going on which was far more exciting than factory work.'<sup>109</sup> The reserved men who made contributions to the 'People's War' archive were as reluctant to discuss work-based issues as some of our interviewees, preferring

to recount tales of food shortages and civil defence work. Nevertheless, it was the enthusiasm of the few who wanted to record their memories in the 'People's War' archive, indicating the lingering significance of the Second World War in their lives, that we were keen to tap into in conducting our nation-wide, oral-history-based project.

Despite the lack of both scholarly and museum-curatorial attention on the reserved occupations, there is a wealth of source material with which to work. Contemporary records exist in the form of documentary and feature films, radio broadcasts, paintings, posters, newspaper articles, parliamentary records, Home Intelligence reports, and the diaries and reports collated by Mass Observation. This organisation was established in 1937 by anthropologist Tom Harrisson, journalist Charles Madge and documentary film maker Humphrey Jennings. They were committed to the creation of an anthropology of the British people, a 'science of ourselves', and their first project entitled 'Worktown' looked at the lives of ordinary people in Bolton.<sup>110</sup> Over twenty books were published by Mass Observation based on a wealth of material amassed about daily life in Britain from 1937 to 1948, when Mass Observation closed.<sup>111</sup> During the war, 500 people regularly kept diaries that they submitted monthly, and there were also 'directives' sent to volunteer observers asking them to respond to specific questions and special surveys. File reports were compiled, including analyses of excerpts of overheard speech and elicited responses. The information collated by Mass Observation provides rich source material about the home front. While recognising the methodological issues that arise in utilising an unrepresentative source that privileged the voices of middle-class respondents, many historians have used the archive in their research,<sup>112</sup> and some of the diaries have been published.<sup>113</sup> Over fifty diaries of men who were employed in reserved occupations such as teaching and civil service are held, ranging in length from one entry for one year to extensive entries covering five years. A nineteen-year-old surveyor's pupil from Trowbridge in Wiltshire, for example, kept a diary from August 1939 until December 1944. At one point he wrote about his registration at the Labour Exchange, noting that some men were 'scared stiff', stuttering and mislabelling their jobs (Figure 1.10).

Mass Observation also enables the researcher to access the thoughts of older men during wartime, something that cannot be captured in new oral interviews. In 1942, a forty-nine-year-old male teacher from Woking in Surrey, who kept a diary for nineteen months, recorded his thoughts on miners, another group of reserved occupation workers, who had been accused of 'slackness' (Figure 1.11).



## Men in reserve: recovering the civilian man

July 12 Had to register today. As I am reserved, they had to go through numerous schedules etc. and kept me ½ hour. There were very few others there - about 4. Some of the chaps seemed scared stiff. One of them, when asked if he was married or single, stammered & spluttered, taking quite a time to get out "single" - in fact the clerk had to say it for him, first! Still, I don't think the majority were as bad as that. A chap to whom I was talking some time ago, said he was going to register as a certain job - which was the correct ministry of labour title for his position - but got mixed up & registered as something else, which was not reserved (he was in a reserved occupation). He would have been called in the usual way if he hadn't had a friend working at the local employment exchange. His friend apparently altered the forms and made them as though he had registered in his proper job!

Figure 1.10 Mass Observation Diarist 5118, 12 July 1941

**WAR** Miners - at least in S.Wales - are getting restive  
**EFFORT** at accusations that they are not pulling their weight.  
The cure for slackness, if it exists, and for absenteeism is neither appeals nor abuse. The President of the Yorkshire miners said this week: "The men who deny their duty, whether it be for one hour, one day or one week, are enticed to be placed in the same category as quislings".  
That sort of talk is useless. So are threats of prosecution. War effort is a question of spirit. The spokesman of the Master Builders Federation (F.C.Heath) aptly said this week in a similar connection: "There is a great deal of difference between trying to win the war for the general good and trying to win it for private profit."  
The plain truth is that this is still far from being a "people's war" in the sense that it is in Russia. And the workers know it.

Figure 1.11 Mass Observation Diarist 5065, 5 September 1942

In contrast to these diarists, who were employed in middle-class occupations, working-class men, the focus of our study, were much less likely to contribute to Mass Observation. More germane to this research were the file reports collated by Mass Observation on topics such as 'Absenteeism and Industrial Morale' and 'Sport in Wartime', and the publications *People in Production* and *War Factory*.<sup>114</sup>

With this diverse source material available, from contemporary written records and visual sources to archived interviews, we embarked upon a study to rescue the reserved worker from obscurity. Central to the

reconstruction of the experiences of civilian male workers was the collection of oral histories with working-class men who worked in reserved occupations during the war.

### **The interview sample**

We sought to conduct interviews with men across Britain in order to investigate how reserved men articulate their wartime experiences and their participation in the nation at war, and, in particular, how they retrospectively position themselves in relation to the hegemonic discourse of military masculinity dominant in the wartime period. Advertisements were placed in *Saga Magazine* and *The Teacher*, as well as in local newspapers in Manchester, Newcastle, Coventry, Liverpool, Cardiff and Swansea, and generated an encouraging response. Interviews were conducted with fifty-one male reserved workers in 2013 and 2014. This built upon the pilot oral history study we conducted in 2008 with six male (and one female) reserved workers in Falkirk and Glasgow. As one later withdrew from the project, our interview sample consists of fifty-six men who were employed in reserved occupations during the war. Details can be found in Appendix 1.

Our interviewees were aged between eighty-six and ninety-six when they were interviewed. The youngest had been just twelve when the war started, and only eighteen when it ended; the oldest had been twenty-two in September 1939 and twenty-eight in May 1945. Seventeen of the men, the youngest of the sample, had undertaken apprenticeships in reserved trades. The number of men still alive who seventy years ago were engaged in reserved occupations is small, and thus the sample was inevitably skewed towards the lower age group. Sadly, one of our respondents died the morning he was to be interviewed. The low age of our cohort during the war meant that all but seven interviewees were single during the war and none had children. The fact that their memories of war were rooted in their youthfulness undoubtedly shaped their accounts and perhaps explains the apparent enthusiasm of so many for wanting to join the services, something we examine in Chapter 3. Older, married men who had fathered children understandably might have been more reluctant to leave their families, as they had been in the First World War.<sup>115</sup>

In addition to marital status, the youthful wartime age of our interviewees also impacted disproportionately upon occupational and class representativeness. We were keen to capture the memories of men who had been employed during the war in middle-class,

white-collar professions, but many of these roles were reserved at a higher age: accountants and actuaries, for example, were reserved at thirty; pathologists, physicists and university professors at twenty-five. If any were still alive they would have been aged over ninety-five. None came forward. Interviews were conducted with several draughtsmen; a bank worker; a town planner; and two laboratory workers and a researcher at Porton Down, the site in Wiltshire that experimented with chemical weapons – some of whom self-identified as middle-class. The vast majority of men who responded to our advertisements, however, had been based in manual industrial trades, building ships, aeroplanes and trains. Jobs in this sector tended to be reserved at eighteen later in the war and thus men available for interview in 2013 were much more likely to have been employed in industrial roles. Moreover, the vast majority of occupations listed on the Schedule were related to industry, with engineering the single largest field employing men throughout the war. Inevitably, engineering workers featured heavily in our sample, with fourteen having been employed in the industry. We also interviewed workers in factories, shipyards and railways; a miner; a cobbler; a farrier; and a mechanic. The class profile of our interviewees was thus overwhelmingly working-class, although some identified as middle-class in their later years. Many of those who took up our invitation to construct their memories responded to an advertisement placed in *Saga Magazine*, of which the readership is predominantly middle-class. While many of our interviewees had been born into working-class families and had undertaken industrial occupations during the war, they had been upwardly mobile. In contrast, men with a limited degree of social mobility, who were employed in industrial trades from the age of fourteen until they reached retirement age, were much less likely to have lived until their late eighties.<sup>116</sup> Thus our sample was disproportionately drawn from the upwardly mobile working classes, the majority of whom had been employed in heavy industry.

We were keen that our nation-wide project achieve a geographical spread, and advertisements were sent to newspapers in major population centres such as Newcastle and Coventry, where there would have been a large number of wartime reserved workers. A call for interviewees was also placed in the *South Wales Echo*, which distributes to both Swansea and Cardiff, to try and elicit a response from Wales, but it only generated three replies, two of whom had moved to Wales after the war. Of the fifty-six interviewees in our sample, two were based in Wales during the war, twenty in Scotland and thirty-four in England (including eleven

from the south east, nine from the Midlands, six from the north-east, five from the north-west, two from the south-west and one from the south). Although there were over 100,000 men in Northern Ireland in reserved occupations, there was no conscription and the Essential Work Order of 1941, to be discussed in Chapter 2, did not apply there.<sup>117</sup>

Thus, while we endeavoured to be comprehensive in our sample, it is not fully representative, either by class, age, geography or occupation. Our interviewees were generally young, single and childless in wartime, and upwardly mobile working-class men who worked in industrial trades. Moreover, some aspects of interviewees' accounts were hard to draw out: details such as dates and wages were often vague. This was in part due to the fact that most of our reserved men were employed in the same industry after the war and found it difficult to locate in time certain experiences. Nevertheless, the cohort still permits valid conclusions to be drawn about the everyday lived experience and hitherto-overlooked memories of young, working-class British men who were employed in a range of reserved occupations.

The largely working-class octogenarian and nonagenarian respondents of our nation-wide project were composing their narratives in 2013 and 2014 for Dr Linsey Robb, a self-identified lower-middle-class Scotswoman aged twenty-six. Our interviewees frequently commented on her rather strong Scottish accent, often leading to a discussion of the then impending independence referendum. Greenock shipbuilder John Allan told her that she 'kent the score hen', implying that she was aware of the hardships of working-class life, an assumption that was presumably based on the way she spoke.<sup>118</sup> Interviewees were also aware of her university position, deferring to her education and knowledge. Ewart Rayner, for example, referred to her as 'Dr Linsey' throughout the interview and in correspondence, while Frank Blincow declared 'I wasn't brilliant enough to go to university, unlike yourself'.<sup>119</sup> In making such assertions the interview cohort made evident their perceptions of Linsey. As Juliette Pattinson notes, an intersubjective process occurs in the oral history interview in which the subjectivities of the narrator and the listener interact and influence the life story that is composed.<sup>120</sup> Researcher Hilary Young, a Scotswoman in her early twenties, who conducted interviews with three Glaswegian men in their seventies about their experiences as husbands and fathers, similarly found that these men composed narratives about themselves specifically for a young, female interviewer. She noted the way that notions of feminism and the 'new man' impacted upon the accounts produced.<sup>121</sup> Some men in our cohort undoubtedly

responded to Linsey's presence, showing that they had assimilated current gender norms and were positioning themselves as 'new men.' They composed accounts that attempted to bridge the divide between their elderly male selves and their young female interviewer. Charles Hill, for example, who had been a lathe turner during the war, stated:

**Charles Hill:** There were quite a few workers drafted in. Quite a lot of, quite a lot of women came in, and they were surprisingly good at the job as well.

**Interviewer:** Mmm. Were they . . . ?

**Charles Hill:** If that sounds a bit, ahh [laughter].

**Interviewer:** No, no, it's fine.

**Charles Hill:** I didn't intend, didn't intend it as such. There were, some, some of the women on, on turning lathes, same as I was doing and they, they really were very good at the job, which, I don't know why it should be a surprise. I, I, I've always thought of it, providing it doesn't need a lot of muscle, I doubt if there's anything a man can do that a woman can't do, at least as well as, if not better. I've always been a bit of a women's libber [laughter].<sup>122</sup>

Hill attempted to negotiate the values that he perceived the young female interviewer brought to the encounter. Assuming that she was a feminist, he constructed an account that emphasised the proficiency of the female workers and ended with him positioning himself as a lifelong 'women's libber'.<sup>123</sup> If an older male interviewer, such as Arthur, for example, had conducted the interview, it is unlikely that he would have made such a statement. It was specifically Linsey's age and gender that stimulated such a response. This example, and the two interviews conducted by Arthur that were notable for their dominant interviewee narratives of 'hard man' masculinity,<sup>124</sup> illustrate the intersubjective nature of the oral history encounter, as well as the fluidity of memory produced in the interview scenario. This dialogic mutability was especially apparent for those who had not been interviewed before and who had yet to settle upon a fixed account that gave them a sense of equanimity or composure.<sup>125</sup>

For nearly all the men, the interview was indeed the first time that they had been asked to reflect publicly upon their wartime experiences: only two, Eddie Menday and Willie Dewar, had been interviewed before. The interviews seemed to provide a sense of validation for participants whose wartime contribution has been marginalised in popular memory. Wartime engineer Eddie Menday, who had been interviewed previously by the TUC, stated 'I'm so delighted that you're doing this, because those people [in reserved occupations] seem to be forgotten.'<sup>126</sup> Overall, our interviewees appear to have found the process of reminiscence and reflection on their wartime work a

rewarding and enjoyable experience.<sup>127</sup> Interviews, which generally lasted an hour or two, were mostly conducted in the men's homes, sometimes with a family member present. Key themes addressed in the interview schedule included work practices, attitudes towards and amongst workmates, the impact of dilution, exposure to risk, domestic lives, civil defence duties, post-war employment and commemorative activity. The transcripts were uploaded onto Nvivo, a data analysis package, along with other oral interview material derived from the Imperial War Museum, the British Library and the TUC, and coded. The personal testimonies we collected revealed that the changing nature of war commemoration has had little influence on the ways that men now perceive and recall their wartime roles and identities. Despite an increasing memorialisation process that focuses on the contribution of those on the home front, discussed in Chapter 7, reserved men seemed neither comfortable nor confident that their stories fitted into the wider dominant narrative.<sup>128</sup> John Hiscutt, for example, greeted Linsey at his front door by declaring his surprise that anyone was interested in his war experiences as he had such an 'ordinary war', a theme that was returned to in the course of the interview. Our interviewees, who were nearing the end of their lives, were asked to look back on their wartime experiences on the home front. Retrospective oral histories present the opportunity to conduct a dialogue at the cultural interface between past and present. Interviewees composed accounts that incorporated both wartime feelings and more recent ones. Some of their responses were undoubtedly retrospective, shaped by the lack of post-war acknowledgement of their wartime service. While they may have felt comfortable with their sense of masculinity, this did not translate into being comfortable with their place in the wider war narrative. It was not just our interviewees who felt this way. This can also be seen in interviews conducted by others. Merchant seaman Stan Arnold, whose transcript is archived at the National Library of Wales, asserted:

[T]hat was our job and you didn't regard it as being of vital importance to save the nation. We all had to do our best, some getting more limelight than others, but there we are, we all, Keats was it who said, also stand and wait . . . While I have five war medals, I feel I didn't really deserve them. I was at the various areas where medals were awarded and they came my way automatically. But not the hard work that so many of them had to fight in, blood and sweat and tears.<sup>129</sup>

Arnold's ambiguity about both his wartime role of standing and waiting and what he perceived to be an undeserved post-war recognition is clearly evident. Strikingly, he adopts Churchillian rhetoric here. Moreover, as we

discuss in Chapter 3, many interviewees still keenly felt that they had somehow missed out when they were exempted from the armed services. Why did these men still feel this way nearly seventy years after the war had ended, and what does this tell us about their reserved status? By restoring the civilian male worker to the wider historical picture, a fuller, more rounded account of wartime masculine identities is revealed that illuminates the complexities surrounding the silences.

### **Structure of the book**

The book begins with an examination of the policy of reservation in the two world wars. Despite attempts to retain men with essential skills on the home front during the First World War, too many skilled men were able to enlist into the forces. Lessons were learnt from these mistakes and a more comprehensive Schedule of Reserved Occupations was devised in the inter-war period. Despite being State-mandated, the policy of reservation garnered much criticism in the press and in Parliament, with men derided as 'scrimjacks' and 'scrimshanks'. This had the potential to emasculate reserved men.

Chapter 3 examines reactions to reserved status. For many (particularly) young men who remained in civilian occupations the slight to their masculinities was keenly felt, even after the passage of several decades. Indeed, half of our interviewees sought to evade their reserved status and tried, sometimes in increasingly desperate ways, to enlist in the military. When this was denied many poignantly expressed their understandings of their wartime lives as 'ordinary' and 'dead', with one interviewee even describing himself as a 'naebody' thereby seemingly confirming the emasculation theory. However, half of our interviewees made no attempt to enlist, suggesting they were comfortable with their reserved status and contesting the perception that civilian masculinities were challenged.

Chapter 4 investigates the lived experience of reserved workers in employment. While wartime popular culture may have challenged civilian men's subjectivities through the celebration of martial masculinity and patriotic femininity, compelling many young men to try to enlist, the intensification of work during the war provided the capacity in industrial areas to rebuild traditional working-class breadwinner masculinity, which had been fundamentally corroded during the mass unemployment of the 1930s. Full employment, relative job security, high earnings and empowerment in relation to management served to bolster reserved

men's manliness and enabled interviewees to compose narratives representing themselves as making a pivotal contribution to the war effort through their performances of patriotic masculinity. This strongly challenges the emasculation thesis.

Chapter 5 focuses on the bodies of reserved men, examining the impact of war upon health, fitness and well-being. Workers' bodies were subject to unprecedented scrutiny and intense levels of stress and danger during wartime. They were reconstructed after 'going to seed' in the 1930s and 'put on the line' to maximise war production. Reserved workers in heavy industries faced a sustained assault on their bodies, and in a context of heightened risk and danger of bodily damage, masculinities were validated in a way not dissimilar to the risks taken directly by those in the armed forces. The emasculation thesis is challenged here also.

Chapter 6 explores reserved men's lives outside work, examining how war impacted on their social, domestic and romantic lives. While the war was a time of upheaval and uncertainty, for many of our interviewees their lives remained remarkably constant in many ways. Sport, both spectating and playing, as well as cinema featured prominently in interviewees' accounts. Moreover, the war brought adventure for some in the form of bombing raids and civil defence duties. Interviewees were, however, reluctant to admit to having leisure time in their narratives, which instead emphasised hard graft. This appears to confirm the emasculation thesis in that they felt compelled to downplay their leisure activities lest that be seen as an admission of shirking, a term that had been in circulation during the First World War and was resurrected in the Second. Yet unbidden revelations showed that, for the majority, they were able to enjoy their wartime youth, engaging in activities, such as sports, pub-going and courting, that underscored their manliness.

Chapter 7 examines two aspects crucial to the construction of post-war official memories of reserved workers: public memorialisation and cultural representation. It discusses several memorials to civilian workers, including the Merchant Navy and the fire service, and analyses a range of literary, filmic and televisual depictions, including *A Family at War* (1970–2) and *Goodnight Sweetheart* (1993–9), in order to illustrate how reserved workers have been largely forgotten despite their crucial wartime contributions. The emasculation thesis appears to be confirmed by their omission in cultural memory.

Thus on the one hand, the masculinities of reserved men were challenged, with civilian men feeling like 'naebodies,' their war service considered unworthy of commemoration, lumped together with the elderly



and the medically unfit, overshadowed by the perception of shirking, omitted from cultural representations during the war and subsequently erased from popular memory, which celebrates the combatant and the female dilutee. Yet the war could also be empowering for civilian men, facilitating a recuperation of breadwinner masculinity through the abolition of unemployment, provision of secure work and opportunities to earn high wages that enabled them to support their families. War work also enabled reserved men to perform masculinity through exposure to heightened risk and danger, married men to fulfil the provider role, and older men to reclaim a masculinity predicated on physical labour that had been diminished before the war. Reserved men also gained stature in wartime through the association of their work with the war effort. They were performing patriotic masculinity. Nevertheless, even those grafters who earned high wages recognised they were at a distance from the celebrated soldier heroes. Their masculine status in the context of war was always less. Yet they were not emasculated ‘non-men’ and nor were they lacking masculinity. A new language is required, one that does not flatten the contradictions and that takes into account the complexities of the ambiguous position of working-class civilian men. By restoring the recollections and representations of reserved men to the historical record, this book breaks new ground, prompting a gendered re-evaluation of life on the home front during the ‘people’s war’ in order to illuminate the complexities surrounding what it meant to be a civilian man in the Second World War, and questioning the extent to which these were second-class, subordinate ‘men in reserve’.

## Notes

- 1 Peter Ciarella, interviewed by Linsey Robb, 17 May 2013 (SOHC 050/52).
- 2 Corinna Peniston-Bird, ‘Classifying the Body in the Second World War: British Men in and out of Uniform’, *Body & Society*, 9 (2003), 31–48.
- 3 Schedule of Reserved Occupations 1938–39 (Provisional: Revision May, 1939), Cmd. 6015 (London: HMSO, 1939).
- 4 Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 119–20.
- 5 Peter Howlett, *Fighting with Figures: A Statistical Digest of the Second World War* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 8. The ratio is 3:1 if the 7 million women employed in industry and the half a million in the female auxiliary services are included: a total of 16,416,000 civilian workers to 5,090,000 forces personnel.

- 6 Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994).
- 7 R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 77.
- 8 Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird, 'The Home Guard in Britain in the Second World War: Uncertain Masculinities?', in Paul R. Higate (ed.), *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird, *Contesting Home Defence: Men, Women and the Home Guard in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 15; Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain, 1939–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- 9 Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, pp. 149, 123.
- 10 See for example the wartime feature films *Millions Like Us* (1943) and *The Gentle Sex* (1943); documentary films *Jane Brown Changes Her Job* (1942) and *Night Shift* (1942); and the pamphlet by Arthur Wauters, *Eve in Overalls* ([New York]: [British Information Services], 1943), as well as the post-war publication by Vera Lynn with Robin Cross and Jenny de Gex, *Unsung Heroines: The Women who Won the War* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1990).
- 11 Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, p. 121.
- 12 Janet Miller, interviewed by Wendy Ugolini, 11 December 2008 (SOHC 050/05).
- 13 S. P. MacKenzie, *The Home Guard: A Military and Political History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 38; Summerfield and Peniston-Bird, *Contesting Home Defence*, p. 30.
- 14 John Tosh, 'The History of Masculinity: An Outdated Concept?', in John H. Arnold and Sean Brady (eds.), *What Is Masculinity? Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2011), p. 23.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 16 Ronnie Johnston and Arthur McIvor, 'Dangerous Work, Hard Men and Broken Bodies: Masculinity in the Clydeside Heavy Industries, c. 1930–1970s', *Labour History Review*, 69:2 (2004), 135–52.
- 17 Peniston-Bird, 'Classifying the Body in the Second World War', pp. 36, 39.
- 18 Martin Francis, *The Flyer: British Culture and the Royal Air Force, 1939–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008).
- 19 Garry Campion, *The Good Fight: Battle of Britain Propaganda and the Few* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
- 20 Richard Hillary, *The Last Enemy* (London: Macmillan, 1942), p. 85.
- 21 Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939–1945* (London: Cape, 1969), p. 138.
- 22 J. B. Priestley, *Postscripts* (London: William Heinemann, 1940), p. 69.
- 23 Ron Spedding, *Shildon Wagon Works: A Working Man's Life* (Durham: Durham County Library, 1988), p. 43.

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- 24 The National Archives (TNA), INF 5/59, ARP ('The Warning').
- 25 Linsey Robb: *Men at Work: The Working Man in British Culture, 1939–1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
- 26 One exception is the 1941 film *Cottage to Let*, which includes the figure of an inventor.
- 27 Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, p. 120.
- 28 See also TNA, INF 3/1622, Ron Jobson, *War in the Air* (1942); TNA, INF 3/1571, Marc Stone, *War on Land* (1943).
- 29 See also Imperial War Museum (IWM), PST 14360, Gilbert Rumbold, *The Attack Begins in the Factory* (1943); PST 14359, Roy Nockolds, *The Attack Begins in the Factory* (1943).
- 30 Linsey Robb, "'His Own Weapons to His Own Battlefield': The Civilian Working Man in British Culture 1939–1945", in Wendy Ugolini and Juliette Pattinson (eds.), *Fighting for Britain?: Negotiating Identities in Britain during the Second World War* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015).
- 31 Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, p. 120.
- 32 Sheridan Morley, *Noel Coward* (London: Haus Publishing, 2005), p. 90.
- 33 Noel Coward, 'Lie in the Dark and Listen', [http://www.207squadron.rafinfo.org.uk/bomberommandlinccat\\_h\\_270806.htm](http://www.207squadron.rafinfo.org.uk/bomberommandlinccat_h_270806.htm) (accessed 30 June 2014).
- 34 Noel Coward, *Noel Coward on the Air: Rare and Unknown Broadcasts, 1944–1948*, audio CD (1999).
- 35 Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*; Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagermann and John Tosh (eds.), *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).
- 36 Conscript soldiers, who were directed into the forces by law after January 1916, have, however, been excluded from 'the prevailing imagery of both masculinity and soldiering'. Ilana R. Bet-el, *Conscripts: The Lost Legions of the Great War* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton, 1999).
- 37 The emasculating effect of trench warfare did not demolish the figure of the soldier hero as the masculine ideal. Nevertheless, the position of male veterans was 'not an easy one', according to Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 97. There were multiple identities created for servicemen after the First World War, including for the wounded and disabled. See Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Richard Carr, *Veteran MPs and Conservative Politics in the Aftermath of the Great War: The Memory of All That* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).
- 38 Lois Bibbings, *Telling Tales about Men: Conceptions of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service during the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 95–6; Nicoletta Gullace, 'White Feathers and

- Wounded Men', *Journal of British Studies*, 36:2 (1997), 178–206; Nicoletta Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
- 39 Bibbings, *Telling Tales about Men*, pp. 103, 111. While most of Bibbings's tales about conscientious objectors' masculinity are negative, she notes that there were positive accounts that regarded them as honorable men possessing moral courage and discipline (p. 165). There were also personal narratives that resembled those of soldiers. Moreover, when contrasted with the reluctant conscript and the deserter, the conscientious objector could be configured as more heroic than some combatants.
- 40 Laura Ugolini, *Civvies: Middle-Class Men on the English Home Front, 1914–18* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 4.
- 41 Arnold and Brady (eds.), *What Is Masculinity?*, p. 10.
- 42 Rose, *Which Peoples War?*, p. 153.
- 43 Peniston-Bird, 'Classifying the Body in the Second World War', p. 34.
- 44 Graham Dawson, 'History-Writing on World War II', in Geoff Hurd (ed.), *National Fictions: World War Two in British Films and Television* (London: BFI, 1984).
- 45 Pat Ayers, 'Work, Culture and Gender: The Making of Masculinities in Post-War Liverpool', *Labour History Review*, 69:2 (2004), 153–67 (p. 156).
- 46 Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, p. 119.
- 47 Brad Beaven and John Griffiths, 'The Blitz, Civilian Morale and the City: Mass-Observation and Working-Class Culture in Britain, 1940–41', *Urban History*, 26:1 (1999), 71–88 (p. 75).
- 48 Peniston-Bird, 'Classifying the Body in the Second World War', p. 45.
- 49 Geoffrey Field, *Blood, Sweat and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1939–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- 50 Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (London: Croom Helm, 1984); Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*.
- 51 Stephen Meyer, 'Work, Play and Power: Masculine Culture on the Automotive Shop Floor, 1930–1960', in Roger Horowitz (ed.), *Boys and Their Toys? Masculinity, Technology and Class in America* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 17.
- 52 Ugolini, *Civvies*; Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- 53 George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 123.
- 54 Johnston and McIvor, 'Dangerous Work, Hard Men and Broken Bodies', p. 140.
- 55 Alan Campbell, *The Scottish Miners*, Vol. I: *Industry, Work and Community* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 238.

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- 56 Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890–1960* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 20.
- 57 Victor Sawdon Pritchett, *Build the Ships: The Official Story of the Shipyards in Wartime* (London: HMSO, 1946), p. 11.
- 58 Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures*, p. 10.
- 59 Susan Kingsley-Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain 1640–1990* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 302.
- 60 Meyer, *Men of War*; Francis, *The Flyer*.
- 61 Howlett, *Fighting with Figures*, pp. 236–7.
- 62 Mass Observation (MO) File Report 1157, ‘What Workers Really Earn’, March 1942.
- 63 Michael Roper, *Masculinity and the British Organisation Man since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994 [1989]), p. 117.
- 64 Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, p. 22; Penny Summerfield, ‘Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews’, *Cultural and Social History*, 1 (2004) 65–93 (p. 69).
- 65 This concept is inspired by Philomena Goodman’s notion of ‘patriotic femininity’, *Women, Sexuality and War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp. 4, 16, 101–26.
- 66 McIvor and Johnston, ‘Dangerous Work, Hard Men and Broken Bodies’.
- 67 Sonya O. Rose, ‘Temperate Heroes: Concepts of Masculinity in Second World War Britain’, in Dudink, Hagemann and Tosh, *Masculinities in Politics and War*, p. 178; Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 8–10.
- 68 *Ibid.*
- 69 Sally Sokoloff, ‘“How Are They at Home?”: Community, State and Servicemen’s Wives in England, 1939–45’, *Women’s History Review*, 8:1 (1999), 27–51 (p. 42).
- 70 Priestley, *Postscripts*, p. 68.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 9, broadcast 16 June 1940; p. 49, broadcast 11 August 1940.
- 72 Pritchett, *Build the Ships*, p. 34.
- 73 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 8 October 1941; Alan Ross, *Colours of War: War Art, 1939–45* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983), pp. 44–5.
- 74 *Sunday Chronicle*, 26 January 1941, cited in Rose, *Which People’s War?*, p. 183.
- 75 Fiona MacCarthy, *Stanley Spencer: An English Vision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
- 76 Stanley Spencer, *Caulkers*, depicting four young men caulking a ship’s deck, August 1940; *Burners*, depicting fifteen young men wearing goggles, 26 August 1940; *Welders*, depicting thirty young men with helmet visors, 11 February 1941; *Riveters*, featuring twenty-four figures, five of whom are women, December 1941; *The Template*, featuring twenty-two figures, including a woman and a baby, May 1942; *Bending the Keel Plate*, depicting thirty-nine people, October 1943; *Riggers*, June 1944; *Plumbers*, featuring

- fifty-three people, March 1945; and *The Furnaces*, featuring eleven young men shielding their eyes from the furnaces, 15 February 1946. Keith Bell, *Stanley Spencer: A Complete Catalogue of the Paintings* (London: Phaidon Press, 1992); 'Stanley Spencer: The Colours of the Clyde', BBC2, 14 March 2014.
- 77 See for example pencil-on-paper sketches of welder Kathleen Chalmers, IWM, ART LD 6008 38; welder Susan Boner, ART LD 6008 18; Catthie McGolwon, ART LD 6008 60; six rough sketches of women finishers in the carpenter's workshop, ART LD 6008 103 and 6008 79; and eleven rough figure studies of women welders in different poses, ART LD 6008 113.
- 78 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 8 October 1941.
- 79 The term did, however, have wider currency during the Second World War. Mass Observation, *People in Production: An Enquiry into British War Production* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1942), pp. 249, 366.
- 80 Ross, *Colours of War*, pp. 44–5.
- 81 *HC Deb.*, 20 August 1940, Vol. 364, 1132–274 (1160).
- 82 Helen Jones, *British Civilians in the Front Line: Air Raids, Productivity and Wartime Culture, 1939–1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 197.
- 83 TNA, INF 3/123, Bream, *Remember – They're Relying on You*.
- 84 IWM, PST 14077, Harold Pym, *Combined Operations Include You*.
- 85 It is very difficult to ascertain the impact and reception of specific Government posters. Mass Observation provides some evidence of responses to particular ones. For example, the poorly received *Your Courage, Your Cheerfulness, Your Resolution Will Bring Us Victory* put 'in a nutshell the isolation of Whitehall'; MO, Topic Collection no. 42, 'Posters 1939–1947', p. 3.
- 86 National Library of Wales, MS 21773 D. L. E. Latchford, diary.
- 87 Lucy Noakes, "'Serve to Save": Gender, Citizenship and Civil Defence in Britain 1937–41', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 47:4 (2012), 734–53.
- 88 Robb, *Men at Work*.
- 89 David Lusted, "'Builders" and "The Demi-Paradise"', in Hurd (ed.), *National Fictions*, pp. 27–30.
- 90 James Chapman, 'The British Documentary Movement in the Second World War', in *Land of Promise: The British Documentary Movement, 1930–1950* (London: BFI, 2008), p. 28.
- 91 For the First World War, see Ugolini, *Civvies*.
- 92 Sarah Chambers, Maud Bracke, Tracey Deutsch, Rosemary Elliot, Mary Jo Maynes and Stuart Airlie (eds.), 'Men at Home: Domesticities, Authority, Emotions and Work', *Gender and History, special issue*, 27:3 (2015); Arnold and Brady, *What Is Masculinity?*; Lynn Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (London: Virago, 1997); Connell, *Masculinities*; M. Mac an Ghail and C. Haywood, *Men and Masculinities: Theory, Research and Social Practice* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2003); Stephen M. Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities: Key Themes and New Directions*

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- (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002); Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (eds.), *The Masculinities Reader* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001).
- 93 Arthur McIvor, *Working Lives: Work in Britain since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Alessandro Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Tim Strangleman, 'Writing Workers: Re-Reading Workplace Autobiography', *Scottish Labour History*, 46 (2011), 26–37; John Kirk and Christine Wall, *Work and Identity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); McIvor and Johnston, 'Dangerous Work, Hard Men and Broken Bodies.'
- 94 Francis, *The Flyer*; Meyer, *Men of War*; Summerfield and Peniston-Bird, *Contesting Home Defence*; Rose, *Which People's War?*; Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons*; Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*; Ugolini, *Civvies*.
- 95 Ronnie Johnston and Arthur McIvor, 'The War and the Body at Work: Occupational Health and Safety in Scottish Industry, 1939–1945', *Journal of Historical Studies*, 24:2 (2005), 113–36 (p. 113).
- 96 Matthew Cragoe and Chris Williams, *Wales and War: Society, Politics and Religion in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 9.
- 97 Alison Chand, *Masculinities on Clydeside: Men in Reserved Occupations During the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); Alison Chand, 'The Second World War in Glasgow and Clydeside: Men in Reserved Occupations 1939–1945' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Strathclyde, 2012); Alison Chand, 'Conflicting Masculinities? Men in Reserved Occupations in Clydeside 1939–45', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 34.2 (2014), 218–36.
- 98 Tom Hickman, *Called Up, Sent Down: The Bevin Boys' War* (Stroud: The History Press, 2008); Leslie W. M. Bills, *Fettered Freedom: Life and Times of a Bevin Boy* (Billericay: Cavenham Marine, 2005); Reg Taylor, *Bevin Boy: A Reluctant Miner* (London: Athena, 2004); Warwick Taylor, *The Forgotten Conscript: A History of the Bevin Boy* (Edinburgh: Pentland Press, 1995); David Day, *The Bevin Boy* (Oxford: ISIS, 1995); Gill Holloway, *A Bevin Boy Remembers: The Drawings of T. Holloway* (Condicote: Henge, 1993); Derek Agnew, *Bevin Boy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1947); Stephen M. Cullen, *In Search of the Real Dad's Army: The Home Guard and the Defence of the United Kingdom, 1940–1944* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2011); David Caroll, *Dad's Army: The Home Guard 1940–1944* (Stroud: Sutton, 2002); Norman Longmate, *The Real Dad's Army* (London: Arrow Books, 1974); John Brophy, *Britain's Home Guard: A Character Study* (London: Harrap, 1945); Charles Graves, *The Home Guard of Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1943).
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- 103 <http://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/> (accessed 30 June 2014).
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- 111 Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson, *Britain by Mass-Observation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939); Tom Harrisson, *War Begins at Home, by Mass Observation* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1940); Mass Observation, *People in Production*; Tom Harrisson, *War Factory: A Report by Mass-Observation* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1943). Mass Observation was revived in the 1980s, and between 1993 and 2002 produced a series of occasional papers, <http://www.massobs.org.uk/occasional-papers> (accessed 7 June 2016).
- 112 Penny Summerfield, ‘Mass-Observation: Social Research or Social Movement?’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 20 (1985), 439–52; Nick Hubble, *Mass Observation and Everyday Life: Culture, History, Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); James Hinton, *The Mass Observers: A History 1937–1949* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Penny Summerfield, ‘The Generation of Memory: Gender and the Popular Memory of the Second World War in Britain’, in Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson (eds.), *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
- 113 Richard Broad and Suzie Fleming (eds.), *Nella Last’s War: A Mother’s Diary* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1981); Simon Garfield, *Our Hidden Lives: The Everyday Diaries of a Forgotten Britain 1945–1948* (London: Ebury Press, 2004); Simon Garfield, *We Are at War: The Remarkable Diaries of Five Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times* (London: Ebury Press, 2005).
- 114 MO, File Report 1631, ‘Absenteeism and Industrial Morale’, March 1943; MO, File Report 6, ‘Sport in Wartime’, October 1939; Mass



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- Observation, *People in Production*; Tom Harrisson, *War Factory* (London: Gollancz, 1943).
- 115 Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p. 94.
- 116 In Glasgow, for example, male life expectancy in working-class districts in 2011 averaged 72–4 years, while in especially deprived areas, such as Shettleston and Springburn, it was as low as 67–9 years; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-29645276> (accessed 29 October 2014).
- 117 Roger Broad, *Conscription in Britain, 1939–1963: The Militarization of a Generation* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 211.
- 118 John Allan, interviewed by Linsey Robb, 7 November 2011 (SOHC 050/09).
- 119 Ewart Rayner, interviewed by Linsey Robb, 22 March 2013 (SOHC 050/18); Frank Blincow, interviewed by Linsey Robb, 30 May 2013 (SOHC 050/56).
- 120 Juliette Pattinson, ‘“The Thing that Made Me Hesitate . . .”: Re-examining Gendered Intersubjectivities in Interviews with British Secret War Veterans’, *Women’s History Review*, 20:2 (2011), 245–63.
- 121 Hilary Young, ‘Hard Man, New Man: Re/Composing Masculinities in Glasgow, c. 1950–2000’, *Oral History*, 35:1 (2007), 71–81.
- 122 Charles Hill (pseudonym), interviewed by Linsey Robb, 16 April 2013 (SOHC 050/37).
- 123 Not all interviewees responded to the female interviewer in this way; some denigrated the wartime contributions of women, as we see in Chapter 4.
- 124 Willie Dewar, interviewed by Arthur McIvor, 9 December 2008 (SOHC 050/04); Harry McGregor, interviewed by Arthur McIvor, 13 July 2009 (SOHC 050/05).
- 125 Pattinson, ‘The Thing that Made Me Hesitate’, p. 258; Summerfield, ‘Culture and Composure’, p. 69.
- 126 Eddie Menday, interviewed by Linsey Robb, 15 May 2013 (SOHC 050/50).
- 127 The exceptions were one interviewee who withdrew from the study having read his transcript, and a further two who heavily edited their transcripts. The literal translation of the spoken word in writing has the potential to discompose the interviewee. Raphael Samuel, ‘The Perils of the Transcript’, in Rob Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).
- 128 See ‘Home Front Volunteers Honoured’, BBC News, 3 March 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/665102.stm> (accessed 29 October 2014).
- 129 Stan Arnold, National Library of Wales, Wales at War transcriptions, ex 2458/1. It was John Milton, not Keats, who in his poem ‘On His Blindness’ wrote ‘They also serve who only stand and wait’, meaning that everyone has a role to play.