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Crime and Policing

LOUISE A. JACKSON

Introduction

Seasoned London detective Frederick Porter Wensley recorded in his memoirs that he had been ‘much affected by the war . . . both personally and professionally’. He had experienced huge family tragedy with the deaths of two sons in the armed forces. His work routine had also been transformed: ‘As the war went on large numbers of the criminal classes were drawn into the fighting services, but on the other hand, there sprang up a variety of new offences peculiar to the time.’¹ The Defence of the Realm Act (DORA), rushed through Parliament in August 1914, ushered in a wide range of regulations and prohibitions, including restrictions on lighting and licensing as well as the movement of people, vastly increasing the powers of the state. Whilst the number of prosecutions in the courts for serious ‘crimes’ fell, the volume of work that police officers were required to do expanded seismically across the UK. In England, Wales and Scotland moral panics emerged about an epidemic of ‘juvenile delinquency’ and about the detrimental effects of ‘khaki fever’ on adolescent girls, seen as a threat to public order, health and morality. Rioting, occasioned by food shortages and xenophobia, placed additional strain on police officers, who also shouldered a wide range of civil defence duties. As police strength was diminished by recruitment, new ‘types’ of police officer appeared on the scene, including the first women in uniform. This chapter aims to assess the extent of this reconfiguration of police personnel, police duties and of those who constituted the ‘policed’ across the four nations of the UK. It begins by assessing the broad statistical trends that are captured in annual criminal justice statistics before moving on to look at the experience of policing that is illuminated in memoirs and diaries, newspaper columns and other forms of reporting.

By the late nineteenth century all areas of England, Wales and Scotland were covered by a patchwork of individual police forces or constabularies, administered by local police authorities on a city, borough/burgh or county

¹ F. P. Wensley, *Detective Days: The Record of Forty-Two Years’ Service in the Criminal Investigation Department* (London: Cassell, 1930), p. 207.

basis. Indeed, there were 250 separate police forces or constabularies in Great Britain when war broke out.² The legitimacy of this model was grounded in the liberal concept of civil policing by consent: through which local and central government acted as an interdependent system of checks and balances on each other.³ Under DORA, central government gained powers to unify areas that straddled the boundaries of existing police districts if there were military reasons by designating them as 'special police areas'. Yet it did so sparingly: most obviously through the creation of the Gretna Special Police Area on 1 June 1917, which consolidated the munitions factory under the control of the Ministry of Munitions, where previously it had been split between the county constabularies of Dumfries (Scotland) and Cumberland (England) since it straddled the border.⁴ The historical experience of policing in Ireland was very different, given that the origins of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) lay explicitly in a model of centralised paramilitary colonial policing.⁵ By 1870 the RIC acted as a single force covering all urban and county areas, with the exception of Dublin where the Dublin Metropolitan Police continued to operate.⁶ It has been argued that the RIC was significantly 'domesticated' during the course of the nineteenth century so that by 1900 it had a Catholic majority, was rarely armed, was undertaking mainly 'civil' duties and was responsive to 'the needs of small, relatively law-abiding, rural communities'.⁷ Certainly, the two decades that preceded the First World War can be seen as 'the more peaceful that the RIC had experienced'.⁸ Yet, as the historian John Brewer has suggested, the RIC continued to be 'caught in conflict' between the models of 'civil' and 'colonial' policing, 'the outcome of which depended upon the wider political events, local circumstances and popular protests that pertained at the time'.⁹ These differing systems of

² British Parliamentary Papers (BPP), *Annual Reports of His Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary (HMIC) for 1914*, Cd. 7849 (Scotland) and paper number 188 (England and Wales).

³ C. Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History* (London: Longman, 1996); N. Davidson, L. Jackson and D. Smale, 'Police Amalgamation and Reform in Scotland: The Long Twentieth Century', *Scottish Historical Review*, 95:1 (2016), pp. 88–111.

⁴ The National Archives, London (TNA), HO45/10959/328532, Police, Gretna Special Police Area.

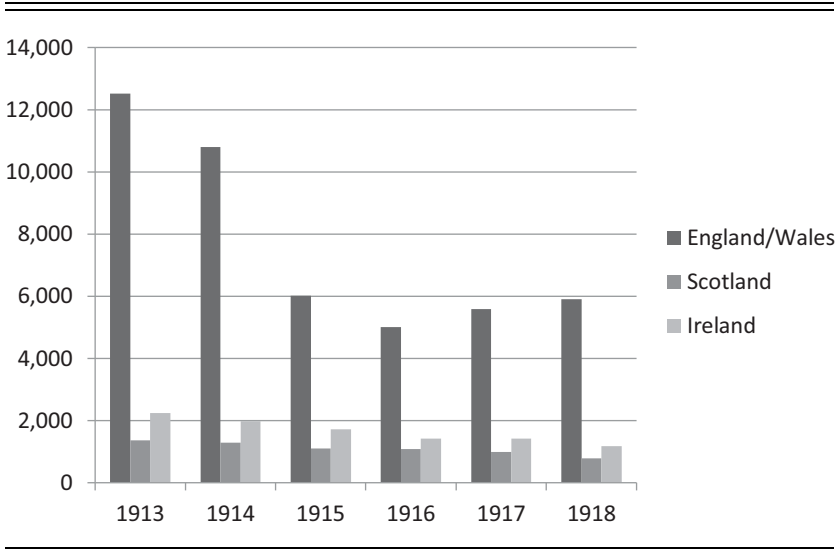
⁵ V. Conway, *Policing Twentieth-Century Ireland* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 14.

⁶ J. Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: A Short History and Genealogical Guide* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997); Donald J. O'Sullivan, *The Irish Constabularies, 1822–1922* (Dingle: Brandon, 1999).

⁷ W. J. Lowe and E. L. Malcolm, 'The Domestication of the Royal Irish Constabulary, 1836–1922', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 19 (1992), pp. 27–48, here p. 27.

⁸ Conway, *Policing*, p. 18.

⁹ J. D. Brewer, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: An Oral History* (Belfast: Queen's University, 1990), p. 12.

Table 27.1. *Number of persons for trial in superior courts, 1913–18.*

Source: BPP, Cmd. 2207, Statistical Abstract for the UK.

governance and the politics of rule are crucial to understanding the differing experience of policing during the war years in Britain and Ireland.

Crime and Wartime: Patterns of Offending

During the war years there was a noticeable decline in the number of people tried for criminal offences across the UK in the higher courts, which dealt with serious cases of violence and property crime (see Table 27.1). This drop was most marked in England and Wales, where prosecutions in 1916 had sunk to 40 per cent of what they had been in 1913. In Ireland and Scotland the decline was more gradual, with the lowest figures emerging in 1918, when prosecutions were just over a half (57 per cent and 53 per cent respectively) of what they had been in 1913.¹⁰ It is a moot point as to whether criminal justice statistics are a direct reflection of levels of actual offending behaviour or whether they are a measure of the efficiency, legitimacy and priorities of

¹⁰ Data for convictions (although not discussed here) demonstrate very similar trends to those for prosecutions across the UK. Data for Ireland do not include persons tried, executed and interned under martial law in the wake of the Easter rising.

policing and legal process.¹¹ Indeed, they are probably best seen as the outcome of the relationship between behaviours and the processes of intervention. A refocusing of police time on security and emergency duties may have played a part in reducing prosecutions; so, too, the tightening of licensing regulations (including pub opening hours) may have curbed actual drunkenness, which had long been seen as a cause of crime.¹²

The key factor in this seeming reduction in wartime crime, which was widely identified at the time, was the voluntary recruitment (and conscription from 1916) of young men into the armed forces, removing from the civilian population the demographic group who, historically, had been most likely to offend. When the 1916 judicial statistics for Scotland were published the following year they were accompanied by stark comments on decreases in family violence: the fall in ‘assaults by husbands’ and ‘in cruel and unnatural treatment of children’ by male offenders were seen as a direct consequence of ‘the absence of so many men on active service’.¹³ Similarly for England and Wales it was noted that prosecutions for sexual offences had fallen by a third between 1913 and 1917, whilst those for crimes of violence had fallen by 55 per cent in line with the ‘absence overseas of a large part of the adult male population’.¹⁴ Conversely, however, there was a very noticeable increase in prosecutions for bigamy by the end of the war (the annual average nearly quadrupled, from 128 persons prosecuted per year in 1910–14 to 494 in 1915–19). Whilst these hint at the insecurity and volatility of emotional attachments forged in wartime, it seems most likely that the rise in prosecutions was a result of the introduction of separation allowances and widows’ pensions for servicemen’s wives and the assiduity with which claimants were scrutinised.¹⁵ Cases that may never previously have come to light were uncovered as a result of bureaucratic surveillance. Most were prosecuted at the end of the war, with a peak of 917 persons tried in 1919, three quarters of whom were men.¹⁶

As Clive Emsley has argued, mass recruitment and conscription did not mean there was a simple shift of crime ‘from the jurisdiction of the civilian criminal justice system into the military’ to be dealt with through the court

¹¹ R. M. Morris, “Lies, damned lies and criminal statistics”: Reinterpreting the Criminal Statistics in England and Wales’, *Crime, History and Societies*, 5 (2001), pp. 111–27.

¹² Emsley, *English Police*, p. 123.

¹³ Judicial Statistics of Scotland for the year 1915 (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1917).

¹⁴ BPP, Cmd. 1424, Judicial Statistics for England and Wales 1919 (published 1921), p. 5.

¹⁵ S. Pedersen, ‘Gender, Welfare and Citizenship in Britain during the Great War’, *American Historical Review*, 95.4 (1990), pp. 983–1006; J. Lomas, “Delicate duties”: Issues of Class and Respectability in Government Policy towards the Wives and Widows of British Soldiers in the Era of the Great War’, *Women’s History Review*, 9:1 (2000), pp. 123–47. See also BPP, Paper number 173, *Annual Report of HMIC, England and Wales*, 1917.

¹⁶ BPP, Cmd. 1424, *Judicial Statistics for England and Wales*, 1919.

martial.¹⁷ Rather, the boundaries between military and civil courts were 'permeable'; indeed, 'service personnel who committed criminal behaviour in homes, streets, pubs' and other public spaces still came within the orbit of civilian police and courts.¹⁸ New offences such as absence without leave – which was by far and away the largest category in the court martial – were created by the military context, although the civilian police were often roped in to trace soldiers' whereabouts.¹⁹ Indeed, the behaviour of adult males continued to be the focus of both civil and military court proceedings across the war years and, in many regards, patterns of criminal justice prosecution continued as previously. Just over 90 per cent of all those dealt with in the criminal courts were male prior to the war; this dropped to around 75–80 per cent during wartime. Nevertheless, there was a significant *numerical* drop – of over a half – in the number of males appearing before the higher courts across the UK, whilst the number of females remained remarkably static.²⁰

If the metrics for 'serious' crime went down overall because of its association with masculinity, upward trends were manifest in relation to children and young persons. The First World War saw a resurgence of 'moral panic' regarding juvenile crime, as newspapers noted a widespread increase in the problem of the "bad boy" in urban areas in the early months of 1916.²¹ For example, Huddersfield magistrates were reported as stating that 'there was an astonishing increase of crime by boys' and that 'crime among children was going up by leaps and bounds'.²² Concerns about the 'alarming' increase in 'juvenile delinquency' dated back to the end of the Napoleonic Wars and were nothing new.²³ Yet, as David Smith has shown, in the specific context of the First World War it was linked to 'anxieties about national and racial decline'.²⁴ The 1908 Children Act had set up the separate entity of the juvenile court to

¹⁷ C. Emsley, *Soldier, Sailor, Beggarman, Thief: Crime and the British Armed Services since 1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 14 and 58.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

²⁰ In Scotland and Ireland (although not England and Wales) there was a very slight numerical rise in the prosecution of females in the higher courts during the war years.

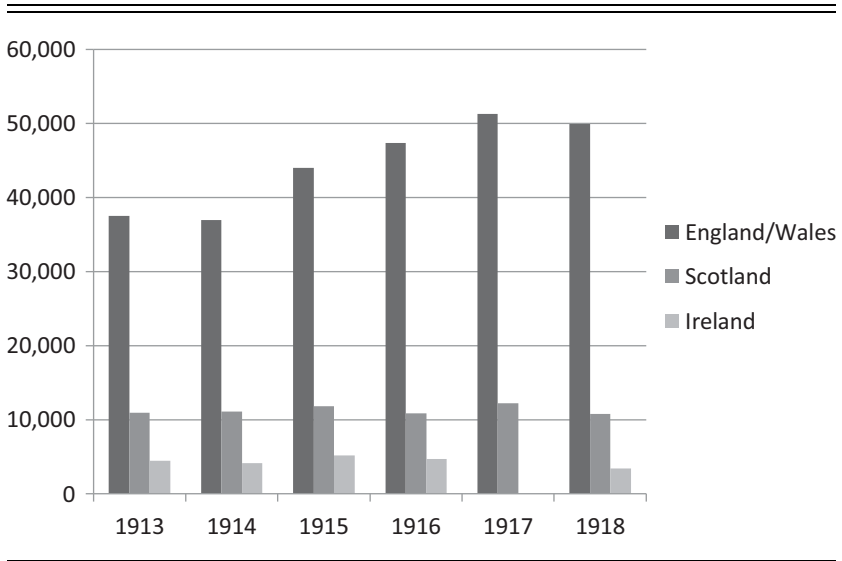
²¹ For an influential definition of 'moral panic', see S. Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 9. I use it here to refer to the way in which a problem is labelled, constructed and amplified through the process of media reporting, leading to dominant ascriptions of causation and solution. This is not to suggest the absence of any underlying social issue; clearly the effects of the dislocations of war were experienced in a myriad of complex ways by children and adolescents.

²² *Manchester Courier*, 25 January 1916, p. 6.

²³ H. Shore, *Artful Dodgers: Youth and Crime in Early Nineteenth-Century London* (London: Boydell, 1999); G. Pearson, *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1983).

²⁴ D. Smith, 'Juvenile Delinquency in Britain in the First World War', *Criminal Justice History*, 11 (1990), pp. 119–56, here p. 119.

Table 27.2. *Juvenile courts: number of children and young persons proceeded against.*



Sources: Judicial Statistics for England and Wales, 1919, Cmd. 1424; Judicial Statistics for Scotland for 1915, 1916 and 1917 (Edinburgh: HMSO); Judicial Statistics, Ireland, 1913–1918, Cd. 7536, Cd. 8077, Cd. 8633, Cd. 9066, Cmd. 43 (note: 1917 data for Ireland was not published).

hear cases involving those aged 8–16 before magistrates. It was, thus, a relatively recent institution when war started. Indeed, the institution of the juvenile court can itself be said to have *created* juvenile crime, in that it demarcated the need for an official process to deal with behaviours that were in many cases comparatively trivial and which might previously have been handled through more informal disciplinary or restitutive methods.²⁵ The publication of annual statistics for juvenile justice (as for other judicial statistics) was delayed during wartime but, as Table 27.2 shows, the juvenile courts were used with assiduity in England and Wales to deal with delinquent behaviour leading to significant increases in 1915, 1916 and 1917, when the number of cases (over 51,000) was 36 per cent higher than the pre-war figure. Around 40 per cent of these were for theft and other minor property offences, and 17 per cent for malicious damage to property. There were also increases

²⁵ B. Weinberger, 'Policing Juveniles: Delinquency in Late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century Manchester', *Criminal Justice History*, 14 (1993), pp. 43–4.

across the war years in proceedings for 'stealing growing fruit' – for which 3,308 juveniles were brought before the court in 1917 in England and Wales – as well as for contravention of police regulations (which included obstructions to streets and public spaces by playing football or other games). Although the wartime data for the juvenile courts was not disaggregated by gender, the preoccupation with the 'bad boy' problem and the published data for 1919 (in which only 4 per cent of persons proceeded with were girls) strongly suggests that the juvenile courts were mainly processing working-class boys.

As Smith has shown, criminal justice practitioners, social workers and educationalists argued that offending behaviour by boys had increased as a direct result of the circumstances of war. Blame was placed on absent fathers – assumed to be responsible for the disciplining of sons – as well as working mothers. Thus 'the war had produced conditions that had caused a serious breakdown in family life'.²⁶ The black-out was seen to create opportunities for theft and burglary and, in relation to the school-age population, very significant curtailment to schooling left children free to roam the streets for longer. Schools were commandeered for military purposes, and those still in use had to accommodate larger classes and introduce a shift system with children attending for morning or afternoon only.²⁷ Others referred to 'war excitement' and the stimulation of 'the picture house' in provoking 'a too combative and mischievous spirit in boys, which is reflected in their conduct and games'.²⁸ In May 1916 the Home Secretary, Herbert Samuel, called for a range of solutions, including better oversight of 'rational recreation' given that many boys' clubs had lost male staff to the war effort and boys were 'running wild' as a result.²⁹ In December 1916 a national Juvenile Organisation Committee (JOC) was formed to coordinate clubs and brigades for boys and girls, and local branches were subsequently formed at the local level. Indeed, the decline of juvenile crime by 1918 was often attributed to this. As Weinberger has argued, the setting up of the JOC simply gave an 'official seal of approval' to the scouting and lads' club movements which had developed on a charitable basis during the Victorian and Edwardian periods and were now a formal 'branch of public policy' as part of a wider crime prevention strategy.³⁰

What is striking about the moral panic over juvenile crime and the First World War is the concerted effort to provide responses and solutions before the problem was fully charted or analysed. The continued rise in statistics for juvenile offending in England and Wales was at least in part a result of the publicity given

²⁶ Smith, 'Juvenile Delinquency', p. 120.

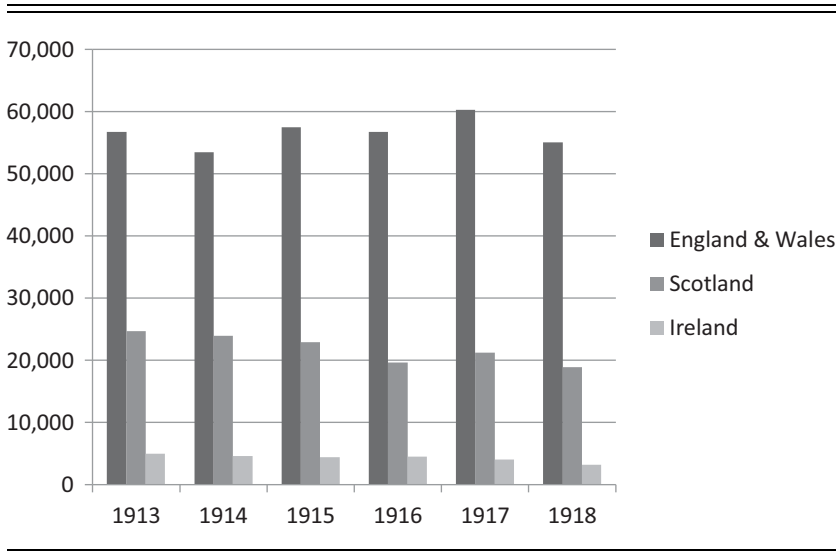
²⁷ E. Abbott, 'Juvenile Delinquency during the First World War: Notes on the British Experience, 1914–18', *Social Service Review*, 17.2 (1943), pp. 192–212, here p. 200.

²⁸ Comments of Spurley Hey, Director of Education in Manchester, quoted in Abbott, 'Juvenile Delinquency', p. 207.

²⁹ Quoted in Abbott, 'Juvenile Delinquency', p. 194.

³⁰ Weinberger, 'Policing Juveniles', p. 47.

Table 27.3. *Courts of summary justice: number of persons dealt with for indictable offences, 1913–18.*



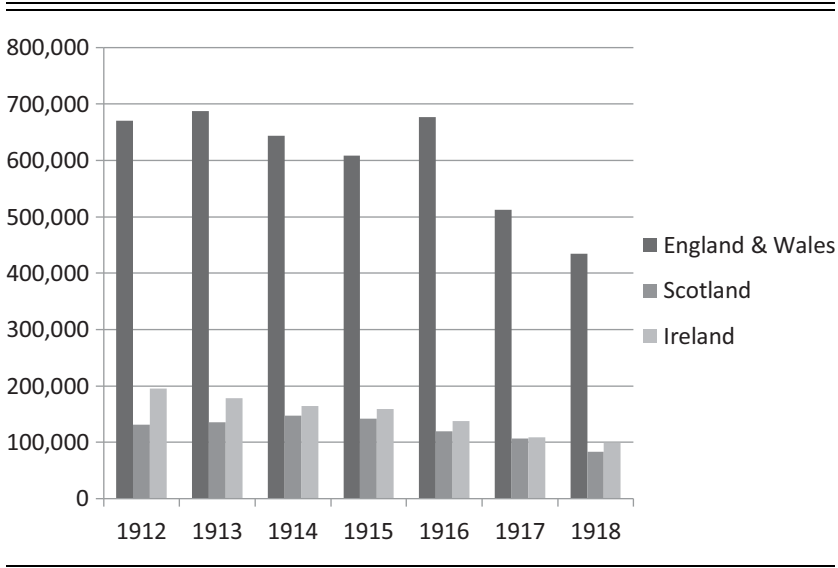
Source: Cmd. 2207.

to the 'bad boy' problem, which led to a further cycle of reporting. In Scotland, whilst the urban areas of Dundee and Glasgow manifested similar concerns and shared all the causal factors identified by those concerned about juvenile crime, it was only when statistics were published in 1917 that it became apparent that any increase north of the border was a myth: 'in view of statements often made to the contrary it is interesting to note that the number of persons convicted under 14 years of age is very slightly higher than in 1914 and is considerably less than 1915'.³¹ In Ireland figures rose slightly by 1915 to give an increase in juvenile crime of 15 per cent compared to the 1913 figure. Yet these had dropped drastically below the 1913 figure by 1918 when, for obvious reasons, police officers in Ireland had other concerns than apple-scrumping.

When it came to the business of the lower courts generally – summary proceedings that were heard before magistrates rather than judges and juries – the picture was more subtle although some decline in numbers was apparent, most obviously in Scotland and Ireland. Magistrates continued to be extremely busy in England and Wales during the war years, and in 1917 they handled more indictable offences (those that might also be tried by higher courts under certain circumstances) than before the war [Table 27.3]. However, a further

³¹ *Judicial statistics for Scotland for 1916* (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1917).

Table 27.4. *Courts of summary justice: number of persons apprehended or summoned for non-indictable offences, 1912–18.*



Source: Cmd. 2207.

probing of the judicial statistics shows that the 1917 expansion was mostly due to an increase in the volume of simple larceny cases which were in all likelihood offences attributed to children (and thus included in the juvenile court data too). In fact, the vast majority of magistrates' time was spent on non-indictable offences (minor matters that could only be dealt with through summary justice). These increased in England and Wales in 1916 when magistrates dealt with over 677,000 cases, overtaking pre-war levels [see Table 27.4]. This business overwhelmingly consisted of road traffic and motoring offences, drunkenness and breaches of the licensing laws, the infringement of byelaws and police acts relating to public nuisance, food adulteration and public health, and cases of vagrancy and street-betting. Such infringements continued during wartime, as previously. Most significantly, however, magistrates dealt with breaches of DORA, aliens' restrictions and other wartime emergency regulations [see Table 27.5]. In 1916 breaches of emergency regulations constituted 20 percent of all non-indictable offences handled by magistrates in England and Wales. This activity was, of course, a direct reflection of the work of the police, to which this chapter now turns.

Table 27.5. *Courts of summary justice, England and Wales: persons proceeded against under Defence of the Realm Acts and other emergency regulations, 1914–18.*

	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
Defence of the Realm Acts	83	33,071	121,563	50,506	46,426
Aliens Restriction Acts	3,226	7,551	14,279	13,606	12,107
National Registration Acts		50	879	1,192	459

Source: Cmd. 1424.

The Experience of Policing

Wartime emergency regulations added very significantly to the workload of police officers whose job it was to implement them at a local level. His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for England and Wales noted at the end of 1915 that:

The volume of work done in carrying out the Aliens Registration Act alone is enormous. One city force has made over 100,000 registrations under that Act, and has to maintain an office staff of 20 men and women to keep pace with the work, whilst outside inquiries into cases of suspicion coming within the scope of this Act, of the Defence of the Realm Regulations, and the Official Secrets Act occupy the greater part of the time of both uniform and plain-clothes police.³²

As Norman Morrison, a police officer who was stationed in Oban on Scotland's west coast in 1916, put it, 'we were daily and hourly paying tribute at the shrine of DORA'.³³ Tasks of observation alone increased the scope and scale of policing incrementally: all 'vulnerable points' (railway stations, viaducts, harbours, light-houses) were to be watched. Nevertheless, the particular needs of wartime policing depended on local contexts as well as the phasing of the war. Whilst the many orders and regulations relating to DORA were distributed ubiquitously to police stations across the UK, police officers on the ground had to work out which aspects were most applicable in practice and develop their own local interpretation of its requirements.

The daily journal of PC John Polson of Inverness-shire Constabulary, stationed at Dornoch on Scotland's east coast when war broke out, reveals the importance placed on coastal surveillance given initial fear of attack from the sea (pre-dating awareness of the possibility of aerial bombardment). On

³² BPP, Paper number 35, *Annual report of HMIC for England and Wales*, 1915, p. 5.

³³ N. Morrison, *My Story* (Inverness: Highland News, 1937), p. 70.

9 October 1914 he recorded that he had 'informed personally those having lights in windows facing seawards on the coastline, to extinguish [them] as far as possible'. On 16 October he was up all night watching and patrolling after receiving reports of 'suspicious lights on sea'. Other duties mentioned in his journal in the first year of war include putting up the vast number of bill posters relating to DORA and army recruitment that were sent to police stations for public display; arranging billets with local 'landladies' for soldiers quartered in the town; arresting and escorting deserters; and advising 'aliens' resident in the area (such as the 'French chef and French maid at Dunrobin Castle') that they needed to register at Dornoch police station.³⁴ In southeast Scotland, police officers worked closely with other emergency services in the wake of the Zeppelin air-raids of 1915–16, collecting information about casualties and the extent of damage as well as co-ordinating the response. As David Smale has shown, the Zeppelin raids on Edinburgh and the east coast in April 1916 led to an intensification of prosecutions under the lighting regulations in the Scottish borders (usurping the informal warnings used in the earlier days of the war). Indeed, statistics for vastly increased DORA prosecutions in England and Wales evidence the fact that this clamp-down was a national operation.³⁵

Yet for police officers in some rural locations – especially in Ireland – the fact of wartime did not intrude excessively on the routines of everyday life. RIC Constable Jeremiah Mee was stationed at Geevagh on the Sligo/Roscommon border during the first eight months of the war. He recorded that 'the outbreak of war . . . did not alarm the Irish people. The continent then seemed to be very far away . . . [and] the pressing question in the people's minds was what would happen to the Home Rule Bill'. There was a significant dissipation of the political tensions that had been brewing, since it was agreed that Home Rule would not be implemented until the war's end. DORA applied equally to Ireland, but Mee described it from the police perspective as 'a cumbersome act' that was difficult to 'digest', the vocabulary used often requiring a dictionary to decipher, and the constant amendments making it difficult for officers to keep up with what was required. Much of it remained irrelevant for him since there were no 'aliens' or strategic targets such as railway stations or viaducts in Geevagh. As a result, 'a special file was opened for the Defence of the Realm circulars which came by the bundle and which ceased to have any meaning for us'; they were simply tidied away.³⁶

³⁴ Highland Archives, Inverness, R91/B/5/5/18 Daily Journal, Dornoch, 1912–16.

³⁵ D. Smale, 'The First World War and Policing in the Scottish Borders' part I, *History Scotland*, 18.1 (January/February 2018) pp. 32–9, here p. 39; see also part II, 18.2 (Mar/April 2018), *History Scotland*, pp. 36–42.

³⁶ J. A. Gaughan (ed.) *The Memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee* (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1975), pp. 38 and 40.

The Easter Rising of 1916 was to rupture this apparent calm in Ireland, leading to a week of violence, mostly in Dublin, in which 482 people were killed (318 civilians, 116 military personnel and 16 policemen).³⁷ During this time members of the Dublin Metropolitan Police were confined to barracks, although a small number were on plain-clothes observations to gather intelligence, and the rising was dealt with by the military; 3,343 arrests were made across Ireland, with 1,811 interned under military (rather than criminal) law.³⁸ The most serious incident of the rising outside Dublin involved the siege of the RIC barracks at Ashbourne, Meath, (in which eight officers were killed), but for the most part the RIC was not specifically targeted at this point.³⁹ Yet Jeremiah Mee was aware of a sudden shift in mood in response to the execution of the fifteen Easter Rising rebels following court martial trials behind closed doors. He commented on the growth of a 'distinct coolness' towards RIC officers who had previously become accustomed to being treated with respect.⁴⁰ Mee reported that the authorities instructed RIC officers to refrain from prosecuting petty cases to avoid publicity as Sinn Fein developed tactics of 'passive resistance' in court (refusing to remove hats, and treating the courts with contempt).⁴¹ Still, rare personal testimonies of RIC policemen suggest that the mundane administrative duties of everyday rural policing continued. William Dunne, who was sent to County Kerry in the southwest of the island when he joined in 1917 (and was interviewed by historian John Brewer in 1987–88), found that 'there was no serious crime, a case would be, well, no lights on bicycles', whilst 'in town we looked, more or less, for drunks and disorderly behaviour' (which had long constituted a significant proportion of cases brought before Irish magistrates).⁴² Dunne intimated that the police were still on the whole accepted by the local population, many of whom had relatives in the constabulary: 'We got on fairly well, good folk, good friendly air.' He was initially stationed in the Lakes of Killarney, where duties related to protecting wild deer from poachers, advising summer tourists and directing what little traffic there was: 'We carried no arms at that time'.⁴³ This was to change very significantly in 1919 when the RIC became direct targets in the War of Independence as representatives of the British state.

Thus, in Ireland it was the context of Home Rule that shaped the experience of policing as much as the war against Germany. Those officers who were most affected by duties directly associated with the First World War were those

³⁷ BPP, Cd. 9066, *Judicial Statistics, Ireland, 1916*, p. 62.

³⁸ O'Sullivan, *Irish Constabularies*, p. 60.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Gaughan (ed.) *Memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee*, p. 49.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴² Quoted in Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp. 58 and 66.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

based in coastal areas. As elsewhere in the UK, coastal police were issued with a circular instructing them to be prepared for a German landing by making plans to move inhabitants two miles inland and to destroy crops with fire.⁴⁴ The sinking of the *Lusitania* off the coast of County Corie on 7 May 1915 by a German torpedo kept local RIC officers extremely busy, as they dealt with the dead and the needs of survivors and families.⁴⁵ Moreover the context of war with Germany was turned into an opportunity by Sinn Fein; coastal watches were maintained in 1915–16 (leading to the arrest of Roger Casement) because it was known from intelligence gathering that the Germans might be sending men and arms to support the nationalist cause.⁴⁶

Emsley has argued that the First World War led to an increase in 'political surveillance by the police to a level unknown since the struggle against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France' in Great Britain.⁴⁷ On 'red Clydeside' police officers were involved in the surveillance of pacifist and communist activists, including revolutionary socialist John Maclean (who was arrested and imprisoned in 1915 under DORA regulations) for undermining the war effort by inciting strikes amongst the workforce and undermining recruitment.⁴⁸ Moreover, Regulation 9A of DORA allowed the Home Secretary to ban any public meeting that might make undue demands upon the police, effectively resulting in the curbing of civil liberties to reduce the need for policing. The clause was initially directed at pacifists and anti-conscriptionists. Yet in practice it was mainly invoked because of fear of disorder associated with the counter-mobilisation of 'patriotic protesters' who demonstrated *against* such meetings.⁴⁹

Indeed, as David Englander has cogently argued, 'the principal threat to public order came not from the demands of the revolutionary labour movement but from the unorganised elements of the population – from foreign-hating, flag-waving loyalists, from women, from juveniles and the unskilled, from discharged and demobilised soldiers and from anxious and unsatisfied consumers'.⁵⁰ Riot and disorder resulting from xenophobia and food scarcity created probably the most significant challenge for policing in Britain. The weeks following the sinking of the *Lusitania* saw the eruption of spontaneous

⁴⁴ Gaughan (ed.), *Memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee*, p. 62.

⁴⁵ O'Sullivan, *Irish Constabularies*, p. 240.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

⁴⁷ Emsley, *English Police*, p. 121.

⁴⁸ National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh (NRS), HH16/132, Criminal case file, John Maclean 1917–18.

⁴⁹ See for example NRS, HH31/19/3, First World War, Defence of the Realm regulations, 1917.

⁵⁰ D. Englander, 'Police and Public Order in Britain 1914–1918', in C. Emsley and B. Weinberger (eds.) *Policing Western Europe, 1850–1940: Politics, {professionalization and Public Order}* (Westport, CT: Meckler, 1991), p. 127.

anti-German rioting, particularly in London, Merseyside, Tyneside and Manchester, described by Englander as 'some of the most widespread and sustained acts of violence ever witnessed in Britain'.⁵¹ Many of those arrested were young unskilled males, but women were also reported to be significant participants. The concomitant high price of food meant that looting from shops was common, many of those involved reportedly not thinking they were committing an offence.⁵² The police barely coped, and they struggled in particular to deal with disorderly servicemen. During the last of the *Lusitania* riots, in Rhyl, North Wales, local police officers were besieged in their station in an attempt to protect a German piano tuner from 'a crowd of jeering, drunken soldiers'.⁵³ Indeed, it was the outbreak of rioting that led ministers to conclude that internment of all 'enemy aliens' was necessary, in large part for their own protection. Nevertheless, it did not end there and in June 1917 the police in Leeds and London had to deal with anti-Semitic riots directed against Jewish communities.

In most parts of the UK, the police were under very significant pressure during the First World War because they lost officers to the armed forces first through voluntary recruitment and, later, when they were not included on the list of reserved occupations (as was to happen initially in the Second World War) with the move to conscription. London's Metropolitan Police had lost a quarter of its officers to the military by the end of the first year of the war, and provincial police forces in England and Wales a fifth.⁵⁴ In Scotland a third of the permanent establishment had joined the military by the end of 1916.⁵⁵ In November 1915 it was finally agreed that no further officers might be withdrawn from the Met, and that borough and county police officers could be exempted if their Chief Constables declared that their work was essential for the war effort.⁵⁶ Police leave was cancelled, retirements and resignations refused, and the weekly day of leave dispensed with. Police pensioners were re-employed as part of a 'Police Reserve' and there was a very significant expansion of the Special Constabulary, volunteers who worked part-time hours and who, in the years immediately before the war, had been recruited to assist with industrial unrest. In England and Wales around 122,000 Special Constables were enrolled at the end of 1915, whilst in Scotland the equivalent

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 107; *Manchester Guardian*, 14 May 1915, quoted in *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Manchester Guardian*, 24 May 1915, quoted in Englander, 'Police and Public Order', p. 124.

⁵⁴ Emsley, *English Police*, p. 121.

⁵⁵ BPP, Cd. 8504. *Annual Report of HMIC for Scotland for 1916.*

⁵⁶ Englander, 'Police and Public Order', p. 95. These were dealt with by military tribunals to which a chief constable had to submit an 'appeal'.

number was nearly 16,000.⁵⁷ Whilst these figures were around four times the number of regulars, it was estimated that in some cases it might take six to ten Special Constables to cover the work of one regular officer. Indeed, most specials performed a four-hour tour of duty when available and fitted their hours around their civilian occupations.

Yet wartime conditions continued to have negative effects on police morale, leading to the rise of unionisation and, in August 1918, to a police strike in London which was a 'protest against the loss of status', including insufficient protection against conscription, severe over-work for those who remained, and the fall in the value of the police pay packet given wartime inflation.⁵⁸ The London police strike led to a promise of a pay rise and a war bonus (as well as pensions for widows) but the discontent festered further, leading to the police strike of August 1919 and ultimately the creation of the Police Federation.⁵⁹ In Ireland, demoralisation had set in before the Great War started as a result of the home rule situation. Low pay and overwork had led to a police strike in Belfast in 1914, recruitment was already collapsing and officers were resigning at this point given the uncertain future for the RIC whose members were trusted by neither nationalist nor unionist activists.⁶⁰ As in other parts of the UK retirements were not permitted after 1915, and resignations were only accepted from those joining the military, which was the only route out. It is hardly surprising therefore that in Ireland, too, a representative body was formed in 1918 to fight for better conditions.⁶¹ Thus, across the UK the Great War did little to bolster the confidence of serving police officers and one of its consequences was the demoralisation that waited resolution when war ended.

Women, Sexuality and Policing

The most significant development within policing during the First World War across the UK was the deployment of women, justified initially in terms of the exigencies of war, for work that was seen as gender specific: problems associated with women, children and adolescent girls. Over 6,000 women were involved in work that might be termed 'policing' (most in a voluntary capacity) under the auspices of two rather different women's organisations: on the one hand, the National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland (NUWW) and, on the other, the Women Police Volunteers (WPV),

⁵⁷ BPP, Paper number 25, *Annual Report of HMIC for England and Wales for 1915*; Cd. 9012, *Annual Report of HMIC for Scotland for 1917*.

⁵⁸ Englander, 'Police and Public Order', p. 118; Emsley, *English Police*, p. 131.

⁵⁹ Emsley, *English Police*, p. 134.

⁶⁰ Brewer, *Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 6.

⁶¹ C. Ryder, *The RUC: A Force under Fire* (London: Methuen, 1989), p. 28.

which restyled itself the Women Police Service (WPS) in 1915. The NUWW was an umbrella association for women involved in voluntary, philanthropic and social work; its activities were organised through a network of local branches in cities and small towns across the UK, which set up local groups of women to act as voluntary 'patrols', undertaking preventive work. Women 'patrols' were aged twenty-seven to fifty, recruited for their skills of 'tact and diplomacy' and were required to contribute at least two hours a week to patrol streets, parks, railways station and other public spaces. Neither uniformed nor sworn in, they dressed in dark coats and were equipped only with an armband, a badge, and card signed by the local chief constable. In contrast, the WPV/WPS was a centrist, separatist private organisation (despite its name) that had strong links back to the militant suffragette movement (through the involvement of individuals such as Mary Allen), although its leadership included the social purity activist Margaret Damer Dawson. Its aim was the creation of an autonomous body of women police officers under the command of the WPS leadership rather than local chief constables and police authorities. Munitions factories, including those at Woolwich (London), Pembrey (South Wales), and Gretna (Scottish border) were important locations in which large numbers of women trained by the WPV/WPS were employed to undertake wartime policing roles under contracts awarded by the Ministry of Munitions. They escorted female munitions workers to and from lodgings, searched them upon arrival at the factory (including for matches and cigarettes), and supervised meal breaks. Irrespective of the organisation they joined, it was mostly middle-class women who were drawn to policing roles, whether paid or voluntary, their social backgrounds differing from those of male officers who were mainly drawn from respectable working-class backgrounds (in agricultural or industrial manual labour).⁶²

The need for women in policing was framed in relation to another moral panic in the early days of the war – concerning 'khaki fever'.⁶³ The expression was an evocative reference to the 'excitement' of young working-class women

⁶² L. Bland, 'In the Name of Protection: The Policing of Women in the First World War', in J. Brophy and C. Smart (eds.) *Women in Law* (London: Routledge, 1985); J. Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1988); A. Woodeson, 'The First Women Police: A Force for Equality or Infringement,' *Women's History Review*, 2 (1993), pp. 217–32; P. Levine, 'Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should', *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), pp. 34–78; L. A. Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

⁶³ V. Cree, "'Khaki fever" during the First World War: A Historical Case Study of Social Work's Approach towards Young Women, Sex and Moral Danger', *British Journal of Social Work*, 46.7 (2015), pp. 1839–54; A. Woollacott 'Khaki Fever and Its Control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Home Front in the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29.2 (1994), pp. 325–47.

and girls who were attracted to soldiers in uniform, which was seen as a public order problem in garrison towns and other areas where troops were billeted or in transit. As the Chief Constable of Moray (on the northeast coast of Scotland) bluntly put it, as he welcomed the idea of 'women patrols' in December 1914:

Young girls are constantly molesting the soldiers and at the request of the military officers here I have repeatedly had constables patrolling near the drill hall [in Elgin] during the evenings with the view of trying to send these young girls to their homes. Of course these girls could not be called prostitutes but they are very loose women and I am sorry to say that their mothers are in a great way responsible when they allow girls aged between 15 and 18 years to wander about at night and molest people.⁶⁴

Reports written by Mabel Cowlin, the leader of the NUWW patrols in Liverpool, convey the perceptions of the (mainly) middle-class women who were patrolling in the vicinity of the barracks at Seaforth and Knowsley Park, where the Liverpool Pals were trained:

We spoke to several very rough & noisy girls who followed soldiers on their way home . . . if the girls persist in their overtures night after night, the men, though they may be willing to resist them at first, will be certain to respond after time & the resulting effect on the character and tone of the camp will be very bad & difficult to cope with.⁶⁵

The work of the patrols was seen by its critics as overtly moralistic and Cowlin commented on the 'difficulties of getting volunteers' because 'people in the villages around . . . very much question the need of guarding girls whom they have known so long'.⁶⁶ Local patrol groups set up clubs for girls in the evenings to act as a diversion, mirroring the lads' clubs promoted by the JOCs to solve the 'bad boy' problem, and offering 'rational recreation' including the learning of craft skills, singing, country dancing and music appreciation.

Concerns about 'khaki fever' did not travel across the Irish sea, although the patrol model did. In February 1915 a patrol committee was set up in Dublin, adapting the NUWW model to suit Irish needs. Co-presidents of the Irish Women Patrols, Anna Haslam and Mary Hayden (Protestant and Catholic appointments respectively), reported in 1917 that Dublin had 'always contained a large body of troops . . . and Dublin girls did not lose their heads over the soldiers in the same way as it is said English girls did'.⁶⁷ Their guiding aim

⁶⁴ NRS, HH31/16 /4 First World War: Women Patrols.

⁶⁵ Metropolitan Police Archive, Women Police Patrols 1914–18, Liverpool, Miss Cowlin, handwritten, Patrol Report, 7 February 1915.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Imperial War Museum (IWM), Women and Work collection, EMP 42.5/63, Annual Report of the Irish Women Patrols for 1917, p. 7.

was 'to improve the moral and social conditions of the streets and to safeguard young people of both sexes', and their work has been interpreted as a significant rejection of the sexual double standard – in which women (and not men) were held responsible for sexual impropriety – that was enforced by some of the women involved in policing in England.⁶⁸ The Irish Patrols prided themselves on working closely with Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP), to whom they reported both men and women who engaged in inappropriate sexual behaviour in public space. Such was their success as far as the authorities were concerned that two of the Dublin Patrols were placed on the government pay roll as 'Policewomen' attached to the DMP. The Chief Commissioner was allegedly 'impressed with the tact and judgment they had displayed in dealing with cases which required considerable delicacy in handling'.⁶⁹

It was in December 1915 that Edith Smith had become the first woman in the UK to be sworn in as a paid and attested police constable with full powers of arrest as part of Grantham Police Force in Lincolnshire (following an experiment the previous year in which members of the WPV, including Mary Allen, had been invited by the military authorities to patrol in the vicinity of the nearby Belton Park camp). The Grantham work was concerned with the sexual regulation of women, including the curtailment of freedom of movement (through the introduction of a curfew using DORA powers), and it proved controversial at the time (leading to splits within the WPV).⁷⁰ Young women who engaged in 'unseemly conduct' were placed on a blacklist and barred from Grantham's theatres and cinemas. Smith reported that as a result of her first year of work, forty women had been convicted of prostitution-related offences and that 'fallen women' had left because 'the policewoman was such a nuisance'. She also provided information for 'husbands placing their wives under observation during their absence', acting as a spy for servicemen worried about adultery (and contributing to the surveillance activities related to separation allowances).⁷¹

Sexuality was considered 'dangerous' in wartime because of concerns about the prevalence of venereal disease amongst the troops (which threatened the war effort), increases in illegitimate births, and the spread of the 'social disease' of prostitution, all of which were seen as signs of national degeneracy. Accounts of atrocities committed against Belgian women, including rape, were used to mobilise the war effort against a brutal other, and the war was depicted

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3; S. Pašeta, "'Waging War on the Streets": The Irish Women Patrol, 1914–22', *Irish Historical Studies*, 34 (2014), pp. 250–71; Jackson, *Women Police*, p. 172.

⁶⁹ Imperial War Museum (IWM), Women and Work collection, EMP 42.5/63, Annual Report of the Irish Women Patrols for 1917.

⁷⁰ Bland, 'In the Name of Protection'; Woodeson, 'The First Women Police'; Levine, 'Walking the Streets'.

⁷¹ IWM, EMP 43.7, Policewomen's work in Grantham, First Annual Report, January 1917.

in gendered terms as the chivalric male defence of innocent women and children.⁷² In this context, both motherhood and women's moral continence (including loyalty to husbands) were equated with duty and resilience on the home front, whilst 'immoral' women were seen as vectors of pollution within official discourse.⁷³ Medical precepts blurred into moral ones and became even more explicitly gendered through the introduction of Defence of the Realm Regulation 40D in March 1918, which made it an offence for any woman suffering from venereal disease to have sex with a member of the armed forces or to invite a member of the armed forces to do so. Although prosecutions under 40D were relatively small in number, the regulation is widely acknowledged to have been symbolically important, and it was very visibly opposed by feminist organisations (most crucially the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene) as well as religious bodies.⁷⁴ Liberal MP Hastings Lees-Smith declared in the House of Commons that the measure would never have passed through Parliament if it had been subject to the usual scrutiny required for legislation and that the government had made 'unfair use' of its emergency powers.⁷⁵ Indeed the controversy surrounding 40D is the clearest example of concerted opposition to DORA and to the curtailment of civil liberties that it entailed. Whilst the NUWW does not seem to have been directly involved in the implementation of 40D, the gendering of sexual blame was nonetheless apparent in relation to their demonisation of 'unruly girls'.⁷⁶ Concerns about the exploitation and victimisation of vulnerable adolescents were alluded to but were rarely explicitly articulated within the 'khaki fever' discourse. Indeed, Mabel Cowlin of the Liverpool patrols argued that effort was needed 'to protect some of the girls from themselves', effectively blaming them for any misfortune they befell; this was not far removed from the insistence of Moray's Chief Constable that girls and their mothers were to blame for the molestation of servicemen.

⁷² N. Gullace, 'Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law during the First World War', *American Historical Review*, 3.1 (1997), pp. 714–47.

⁷³ S. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999) and S. Grayzel, 'The Enemy Within: The Problem of British Women's Sexuality during the First World War', in N. Dombrowski (ed.) *Women and War in the 20th Century* (New York: Routledge, 1999); for very similar concerns in the Second World War, see S. O. Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁷⁴ See, for example Grayzel, 'Enemy Within'; Grayzel, *Women's Identities*; Levine. 'Walking the Streets'; L. Lammasniemi (2017) 'Regulation 40D: Punishing Promiscuity on the Home Front during the First World War', *Women's History Review*, 27.4 (2017), pp. 584–96.

⁷⁵ Hansard, House of Commons Debates, vol. 107, 19 June 1918, Col. 449, Mr Lees-Smith.

⁷⁶ See, for example, London School of Economics, Women's Library, 3AMS/B/05/02, correspondence between NUWW Liverpool Patrol Leader Mabel Cowlin and Alison Neilans of the Association of Moral and Social Hygiene, October 1918.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the early wartime work of the first paid women police officers also involved important child protection work. Scotland's first paid female police officer, Emily Miller, was appointed by Glasgow City Police in September 1915 (although without powers of arrest), specifically to work in plain-clothes to take statements from female victims of sexual assault and child sexual abuse and to support victims when they were required to give testimony in the courtroom.⁷⁷ Her background was in rescue and philanthropic work for the Glasgow Vigilance Association, which was also a backer of the city's Patrol movement and affiliated to the NUWW. There were clear tensions in women's early policing work – which have been extensively debated by historians – between the protection of women (in the courts and on the streets), and the control of their movements and behaviours.⁷⁸ Indeed the viewpoints of those involved in policing initiatives are best seen as ranging between feminist and moralist positions and sometimes combining them discordantly together. The war presented opportunities for women to expand their roles into non-traditional occupations and activities but, in so doing, ideas about gender difference were re-inscribed and restated.⁷⁹

Conclusion

While prosecutions for serious 'crimes' fell, police work expanded massively as emergency legislation vastly increased the powers of the state. From the perspective of male police officers this led to demoralisation, although the important wartime role that they played finally received recognition when pay and conditions were improved in subsequent years. In the early 1900s, policing had mainly dealt with the urban poor. Now new populations, particularly the middle classes (who saw themselves as 'law-abiding'), came under police scrutiny through the enforcement of the black-out and lighting regulations. So, too, did those classed as 'aliens', though in actuality they were more likely to require police protection from angry mobs than commit offences themselves. Moral panics regarding juvenile delinquency and the effects of 'khaki fever' on teenage girls led to the entry of women into policing roles for the first time. The employment of women to undertake police work with women and children was the most radical long-term legacy of the war for the police

⁷⁷ *Scotsman*, 10 September 1915, p. 6.

⁷⁸ Bland, 'In the Name of Protection'; Woodeson, 'The First Women Police'; Levine, 'Walking the Streets'; Woollacott, 'Khaki Fever'.

⁷⁹ M. R. Higonnet and P. L.-R. Higonnet, 'The Double Helix', in (eds.) M. R. Higonnet et al. *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 31–50.

service, whilst it also highlights the significance of gender in constituting the home front experience.⁸⁰ If the enemy other was depicted in terms of a brutal criminality that entailed the rape and murder of civilian populations on the continent, the defence of female purity and continence became a major focal point of regulatory measures in Britain itself.

⁸⁰ S. Grayzel and T. M. Proctor ed. *Gender & the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).