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# **British Military Women 1900–1949: Recruitment, Public Image and Propaganda**

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## List of Abbreviations

AA	Anti-Aircraft
ABCA	Army Bureau of Current Affairs
ARP	Air Raid Precautions
ATS	Auxiliary Territorial Service
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BRCS	British Red Cross Society
DGTA	Director General Territorial Army
ES	Emergency Service
FANY	First Aid Nursing Yeomanry
HAA	Heavy Anti- Aircraft (Ack-Ack)
IWM	Imperial War Museum
MoI	Ministry of Information
M-O	Mass-Observation
NA	National Archives
NAM	National Army Museum
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer
NSDWS	National Service Department Women's Section
OCA	Old Comrades' Association
OMS	Organisation for the Maintenance of Supply
QMAAC	Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps
RAF	Royal Air Force
TFA	Territorial Forces Association
VAD	Voluntary Aid Detachment
WAAC	Women's Army Auxiliary Corps
WAAF	Women's Auxiliary Air Force
WAC	Women's Army Corps
WATS	Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service
WEC	Women's Emergency Corps
WL	Women's Legion
WLOTS	Women's Legion Officers' Training Section
WRAF	Women's Royal Air Force
WRNS	Women's Royal Naval Service
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union
WVR	Women's Volunteer Reserve

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## Abstract

This thesis is sited where women and men who wish to define themselves and others primarily by their gender clash with those who do not. The contested ground is the British Army, 1900–1949, and the struggle for the ownership of the image and identity of military women. By focusing on profiles of military recruitment, public image and propaganda the thesis discloses the nature of that struggle, its leading personalities, its outcomes and its wider cultural implications.

The argument of the thesis is that while taking women into the army in two world wars fell far short of its potential to transform the military, along with prevailing gender norms, it is misguided to under-estimate its social impacts. It permanently modified the gender composition of the military, and the inclusion of female-only corps cleared a path for further developments and future integration. Further, the highly contentious social presence of military women in both wars prompted, and fiercely sharpened, public discourses about sex, class, moral standards, gender roles and relationships and national identity. Perhaps, however, the most significant outcome was that women who experienced military service asserted that they brought away from it a new, and empowering, definition of womanhood.

Evidence for the thesis is drawn substantially from unpublished papers at the National Army Museum, Imperial War Museum, National Archives, Mass-Observation Archive, publishers' archives and others along with a wide range of publications, many of which are primary sources. The thesis also draws evidence from the questionnaire-responses of over 200 former servicewomen and a file of 148 visual propaganda images.

The thesis gives historical perspective to the current situation where women remain barred from combat roles in the British Army. This is a highly politicised and emotive deployment issue, not least in the military itself. The findings in this thesis help our understanding of the on-going significance of the military in defining masculinity and femininity in British culture. My research widens the scope of future debate about women, war and social change in twentieth century Britain to include women who, against the odds, found military service an affirmative experience.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

One of the biggest changes war brought British women in the twentieth century was that instead of just tearfully waving goodbye to men in army khaki they found themselves wearing it and serving in and with the military at home and abroad. It was a big surprise for the British public and male troops too.

This thesis explores the social implications of the state's decision to recruit non-combatant women's army auxiliary corps for the two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century; initially to invite and eventually to compel British women into state military service. This thesis is about the state and its women, the power of propaganda, the importance of public image and morale, the effects of military service on female recruits and the ideological implications of women in army service in a culture where male combat role is the ultimate symbol of a social structure predicated on separate spheres of activities and occupations for the sexes.

The thesis sets each of the state's women's army auxiliary corps in its pre-war and post-war framework where public attitudes towards militant, militarised and military women are explored vis-à-vis popular cultural notions of femininity. The thesis shows how the state set about recruiting and marketing its women's army auxiliary corps, how it monitored and managed the public image and propaganda of the corps, determined operational limitations and finally succeeded in popularising the counter-cultural identity of its military women in 1941. The research and analysis discloses the significance of the military context to discourses about whether wars dramatically liberated women in the twentieth century. To date, the military has been the least valued tranche of evidence.

The thesis furthers its objective by running parallel profiles of recruitment, public image and propaganda concerning militarised and military women across the first half of the twentieth century. It approaches these profiles from the point of view of the state and its agencies and also from the perspective of the women soldiers recruited by the state and those in women's quasi-military organisations in the private sector. By these means the



thesis teases out intricacies of coincidences, vested interests in resisting change, general cultural anxieties about gender identity and gender roles, feminine social networks and infra-structures of power, forceful personalities and their interventions, cherished prejudices, government policies and national crises to clarify how the British model of military women was created between 1900 and 1949, the extent to which recruits identified with it and the public responses to it.

The thesis tracks, in a detailed chronology, the twists and turns of the corporate identity and image of British military women from the assertion of Cecily McDonell, in the *Army and Navy Illustrated* of March 1899 that 'in the battlefield woman is out of place, even the nurses are stationed at the base of operations while barrack life would be utterly impossible'<sup>1</sup> to 1949 when the formation of the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) ensured a permanent but ominously limited place for women as career-soldiers in the British Army.

Chapter 2 explores public attitudes between 1900 and 1920 towards militant, militarised and military women, drawing out the links between the Edwardian Suffragettes, the para-military women's organisations in the private sector and the state's Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) which was fully operational from 1917 to 1918 in the First World War. Chapter 3 shows how former leaders of WAAC and FANY kept their vision of women's national military service alive between 1919 and 1938 despite the government's dismissiveness and other substantial political and cultural obstacles. Chapter 4 analyses the social impacts of recruitment of the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) in 1938 in preparation for the Second World War. It particularly explores the significance of the selection of Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, who had commanded the WAAC in 1917, as ATS Director. Chapter 5 is a coverage of the years 1941 to 1943 and analyses the impact on recruitment of the replacing of Gwynne-Vaughan who was sixty with young, glamorous Jean Knox as ATS Director and at the same time introducing female conscription into the military for the first time in British history. Sexual politics dominated the period of Jean Knox's Directorship and she resigned in 1943. Chapter 6 explores issues of racial politics, deployment of ATS overseas and issues of demobilisation which were the major issues for Leslie Whateley, who replaced Jean Knox as Director in 1943 and was in office until 1946. Mary Tyrwhitt succeeded Leslie Whateley in 1946 and Chapter 6 closes with analysis of post-war political frustrations about the nature and future of the corps which Mary Tyrwhitt saw through to 1949 and

its re-designation as the Women's Royal Army Corps. In Chapter 7 the perspective shifts from the public sphere and the corporate entities of the state and its propaganda agencies to analysis of questionnaire-responses about recruitment, public image and propaganda obtained from over two hundred former members of the ATS and rich resonances are disclosed between the veterans' recollections and the themes and motifs identified in the course of the analysis in Chapters 4 to 6.

Although the thesis is structured to reflect the significance of the personal ideologies and influences of their women directors it is not a military history of the corps. Its focus is entirely on the nature of the relationship between recruitment strategies, public image, public opinion and state propaganda in order to better understand the nature of gender-roles and gender relationships in British culture and to evaluate the effects of state recruitment of women into the military on both the public and the recruits. In the process of this analysis the strength of the relationship between military service and citizenship, duty and patriotism asserts itself. Not least, this thesis applauds the development of a discrete and challenging literature and discourse about military women which is primarily transatlantic and transnational in character, has its own journal, *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women in the Military*, and its own website.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the reason for academic neglect of the military perspective in the British context is that female involvement with military service for or with the British Army was on a comparatively small scale vis-à-vis the female population in the years between 1900 and 1949. There were 40,000 women in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1918 and 8000 of them served in France where the most radical developments took place but the female population in Britain in 1914 was 23.7 million. There were under a quarter of a million women serving in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) at peak strength in 1943 but there were 8,777,000 housewives and 7,500,000 women in total in industry, armed services in general and civil defence at peak mobilisation.<sup>3</sup> However, the social and political impact of the women who wore army khaki was always disproportionate to the scale of their recruitment. Military women were given an unusually high public and media profile in both world wars because they were very visible and often a provoking and contentious physical presence in their distinctive uniform. They held arguably the most iconoclastic female identity in Western culture. Their image polarised with male-bonding traditional identities of women as wife-and-mother or civilian worker norms and tapped the deepest veins of

conservative public anxiety about the security of traditional gender boundaries.

Brigadier Shelford Bidwell writing in 1977 reflected from a military viewpoint that

at the heart of the question was not so much doubt about the ability or reliability of women but an unformulated but powerful fear of the consequences of their intrusion in strength into an entity so exclusively and aggressively male as an army in the field.<sup>4</sup>

That this was the case in both wars is abundantly evidenced in the course of this thesis. Bidwell's description of access for women as 'intrusion' mirrors an attitude which frequently guided policy, particularly with regard to key policy decisions which opted to keep women in the separate sphere of female-only corps rather than integrate them into existing, appropriate army regiments in both world wars and right up until 1990. The 'unformulated but powerful fear' referred to by Bidwell is clarified in the intensive analysis in this thesis of the propaganda struggle in which the state engaged in both world wars to successfully recruit for its women's army auxiliary corps and to create and sustain a public image which fell within conventional gender boundaries. No other female occupation presented the shock of the new in either world war as did women working alongside men in the British Army. No other female occupation raised such a social rumpus or caused political fur to fly in the way that female soldiering did.

A parliamentary committee of enquiry into *The Amenities and Welfare Conditions of the Three Women's Services* reported in 1942 that

the British cherish a deep rooted prejudice against uniforms; consequently a woman in uniform may rouse a special sense of hostility, conscious and subconscious among certain people who would never give two thoughts to her conduct as a private citizen. The woman in uniform becomes an easy target for gossip and careless talk.<sup>5</sup>

Violet Markham chaired the 1942 Committee and this finding echoes her very phrase as she recalled how with regard to the WAAC in France in 1918,

first misconceptions about the Corps were little by little dispelled ..but at home the scavengers in rumour's dustbin found women in uniform an easy target for gossip and lying words.<sup>6</sup>

This thesis evidences the persistence and force of this particular prejudice which insisted that women in uniform must be, per se, promiscuous, and was as strongly expressed in public opinion in the 1940s as it had been in 1918. Leisha Meyer prioritised this point in her study of the regulation of the sexuality and sexual behaviour of the women's army corps of the United States of America during the Second World War. As with the British case the sexual reputation of recruits was linked closely with recruitment and the title of Meyer's study, *Creating GI Jane*, suggests that a similar struggle for image-management was in place with both American and British governments. Meyer opens her study by quoting from Nona Brown, a journalist writing in 1948, that

of the problems that the WAC has, the greatest one is the problem of morals .... Of convincing mothers, fathers, brothers, Congressmen, Servicemen and junior officers that women really can be military without being camp followers or without being converted into rough, tough gals who can cuss out the chow as well as any dogface.<sup>7</sup>

This succinctly expresses the dilemma which also faced the professional image-makers of the British WAAC and ATS in their attempts to create, manage and popularise their women's army auxiliary corps and ensure recruitment targets were met. The British had the added difficulty that, in the case of the second world war, ATS recruits were really close to definition as combatants, especially those deployed on the Mixed (gender) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Batteries where they worked alongside the men and did everything short of pushing the button to fire the guns.

Meyer's study raises questions about sexual stereotyping of servicewomen, the definition of the military as an inviolably male institution, public fears about women's enhanced economic and sexual power in wartime and the cultural dangers to social structure in women's loss of traditional femininity. All these issues are also central to the analysis of the British experience and, in my thesis, the debates and discourses around them are sharpened because the British recruits were in all-female corps where their women Directors/Controllers determined the ethos, uniform and public image of their corps often in confrontation with their male superiors at the War Office and Army Council.

Nevertheless, in spite of all obstacles and prejudices the first half of the twentieth century undeniably brought increased opportunities for what was always a minority amongst British women, namely those who wished to serve in and with the British Army. 'Naturally', conservative opinion would say, the crucial combat role was never on offer nor is it in 2005. This role remains the ultimate definition of gender-differentiation in British culture. Women have become vicars in the Church of England ahead of becoming infantry commanders on the front line in the British Army. Nor, must it be said, has the Right to Fight at any point been part of British women's radical or feminist agenda. Iconic mass-marches and demonstrations have been themed around women's Right to Vote, the Right to Work and the Right to Choose (Abortion) but there has been no complementary mass campaign for women's Right to Fight. This thesis exposes the tenacity of British resistance to the notion of women as soldiers, let alone as combatants, and the implications of this attitude for gender politics.

That said, the hard-won heritage of the women's corps was recorded in a spate of post-war publications by influential women. In 1949 Leslie Whateley, who had been Director of the ATS from 1943–1946, published her autobiography and Colonel Julia M. Cowper published, for the War Office, the official history of the Auxiliary Territorial Service. In 1953 Violet Markham, whose involvement was crucial in exonerating both WAAC and ATS from rumours of immorality, published her memoirs and in 1955 Irene Ward MP published a history of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY), the upper-class volunteers who served as an independent corps in the First World War and as a Motor Transport Corps within the ATS in the Second World War.<sup>8</sup>

Reflecting on the over-all position of women in the military after two world wars Colonel Julia M. Cowper was able to write with some satisfaction in the 1957 *Armed Services Year Book* that

Today the position of women in the Fighting Services is taken so much for granted by the younger generation of servicemen that it is sometimes difficult to remember that their presence with troops except in military hospitals was unheard of only fifty years ago.<sup>9</sup>

Cowper's assertion is a tribute to two generations of women; to devotees of female khaki culture in exclusive, upper-class organisations one of which, the FANY, gained the first female foothold in the military before the First World War; to the women who

argued the case and lobbied between 1920 and 1938 for a state-financed peacetime women's army reserve corps; to the women who served and the women who led them in the state's women's army auxiliary corps in two world wars and who obtained recognition as military personnel under the Army Act of 1941 rather than the previous official designation as 'camp followers' with its degrading historical associations with prostitution.

Despite the congratulatory tenor of her comment Colonel Cowper was well aware of the gap between access and full equality; that the Army retained, even in 1957, two policies which, crucially, distinguished between service personnel on the basis of gender. Cowper explained these policies in terms of 'differences', and emphasised that

the great differences are that women cannot be called upon to bear arms and they may in peacetime leave the service at once on marriage. Most of them do so and the marriage rate is high with the inevitable result of constant change among the junior ranks of officers and women.<sup>10</sup>

Such institutionalised gender biases not only irritated Cowper's professional concerns about stability in the service and wasted training of personnel but reinforced traditional gender identities by preserving the warrior/combat role for men and promoting the prioritising of marriage over their military service for women. There was also implicit in Cowper's comment a motif characteristic of 1930s/40s gender politics; that senior female career-officers had sacrificed their normal woman's desire for husband, home and family to pursue their careers. This assumption travelled well and even in the mid 1970s an English respondent to a survey of military women's complaints and problems commented that 'the Army is not a career for *women*, it is a career for *spinsters*' (emphasis as in original).<sup>11</sup>

A major determinant in maintaining 'difference', not mentioned by Cowper, was the decision not to integrate the women recruited for the army in either world war into appropriate Army Regiments. This decision distanced the women in terms of administration and discipline and, more importantly, in the public mind from the 'real' male Army. The War Office, at the outset of female recruitment in the First World War, had refused the suggestion of integration made by General MacReady. With regards to the Second World War Violet Markham insisted, in correspondence with the commanding officer of a Mixed Heavy Anti-Aircraft battery, that

politically integration was not possible. As the investigation of the Markham Committee and subsequent close attention given by press and Members of Parliament showed the nation was determined that its Daughters – and remember the majority were very young – should be cared for by women in what was to them initially a strange and alarming environment.<sup>12</sup>

Markham added her personal view that ‘when women are forming part of the Fighting Services they are doing something quite abnormal and adjustments must in any case be difficult’ and that, in practical terms, ‘male officers would be more susceptible to a bit of fluff than any woman would be’.<sup>13</sup>

Gerard J. DeGroot takes issue with Markham’s rationale for female-only corps and suggests an alternative analysis; that it was not so much public concern nor male sexism as the ideological preference of the women leaders to maintain female-only corps because

being mainly conservative-minded, titled ladies chosen for their social standing in the counties where the ATS units were raised, they were not remotely interested in gender-equality. Wedded to Victorian notions of separate spheres they believed that while women might make excellent auxiliaries they could never be soldiers.<sup>14</sup>

Besides which, ‘absorption into the RA (Regular Army) would diminish their power’.<sup>15</sup> The issue of integration is fully discussed, with regard to both world wars, in Chapters 2 and 6 of this thesis.

By the time Cowper made her observations in the late 1950s about the advances made by women in the military context in half a century, an academic debate was already underway attempting to assess the impact of war on British women. With two world wars dominating the first half of the twentieth century the question of how or if war had affected the status of women was rich with possibilities. It was too important to ignore despite the uncomfortable possibility of the conclusion being reached that while only men were called on to bear arms women might have found that, in general terms, war put them and left them in a better social position and with more opportunities than would otherwise have been the case.

Inevitably academic opinion polarised in interpretation and the debate developed a substantial and contentious literature around the question with regard to each of the

world wars and their pre-and-post-war periods. By the 1980s four broad-brush positions were established. Either war had enhanced women's status in general or it had only made a temporary difference during actual war years or it had made things even worse for women in general by reinforcing traditional gender roles as war prioritised male military experience or, perhaps, women's experience was too diverse for generic sweeping statements to hold the key to the truth of the matter.<sup>16</sup>

Certainly the oddest thing about the debate between 1950 and 1980 was the dearth of British interest in the military context given the centrality of the military to war experience, the construction of maleness and the concept of full citizenship. Full citizenship is a contested concept and has developed a substantial literature that, characteristically, claims 'the vote' as the key emblem of citizenship and celebrates women's enfranchisement in 1918, accounting for this in different ways.

However, two citizenship studies do touch upon the military context as an agency in the enfranchisement process. Nicoletta Gullace's analysis is primarily concerned with 'the enfranchisement of women in 1918'.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, Gullace notes how 'military obligation and service to the state gained an ever more authoritative place in measures of civic worth' during the First World War,<sup>18</sup> suggesting that 'pro-war women, rather than their progressive sisters, were responsible for British feminists' most significant victory', that is, getting the vote.<sup>19</sup> This implies, in turn, that women in the WAAC in particular were instrumental in gaining women's civic rights. Yet servicewomen were denied any access to post-war military service. Gullace does not comment on this particular discrimination nor connect with it as a significant citizenship sex-equality issue.

Susan Grayzel considers issues of national service and national sacrifice in her study of citizenship in both French and British cultures in the First World War. Grayzel writes that 'war gave women more opportunities to identify themselves more fully with the nation which, in turn, gave women a new basis for claiming citizenship'.<sup>20</sup> Grayzel comments at some length on British women who went into khaki, noting that 'some public commentators began to assert that women's military service could form the basis for claims to citizenship on par with men'.<sup>21</sup> Throughout Grayzel's discourse, as with Gullace, 'citizenship on par with men' is defined as civic enfranchisement.



While recognising the full cultural significance of women's enfranchisement in 1918, I would suggest that an overlooked but equally significant, and still unresolved, emblem of citizenship rests in military service itself. My study deals with that dimension of citizenship. It concerns the iconic, traditionally male citizen-soldier image and what happened when it had to accommodate both sexes in two world wars.

Right from the outset of the century the links between military service and full citizenship were in play. Lady Londonderry reflected how, prior to 1914 and the outbreak of war with Germany,

one of the main arguments used by those who opposed women's suffrage was 'physical force'; the contention being that in the last resort only man could defend his country in war; and that fact alone was sufficient and just reason why he should be the possessor of a vote and women should be debarred.<sup>22</sup>

Londonderry recalled how the editor of a famous newspaper boasted, 'I will bet you five pounds that at the end of the war there will be no suffragettes. War will teach women the impossibility of their demands and the absurdity of their claims'.<sup>23</sup> Others were using a notion of the 'natural pacifism' of women as 'a basic argument for giving women the right to vote and participate in society as full citizens. Women as citizens with equal rights, it was argued, would lead to more humane political reality'.<sup>24</sup> Contending interpretations about the nature and place of women in the citizenship structure is characteristic of the tensions which dogged the definition of women-as-soldiers between 1917 and 1949. Racial, social and cultural issues also problematised recruitment. For example, at the outset of the Second World War the propaganda stereotypic recruit was white, young, heterosexual, responsible, innocent and chaste. Anything which deviated from this constructed norm was troublesome and had to be managed by public relations in order to avoid controversy or denied as far as policy was concerned. For example, black recruits to the ATS were translated into media 'exotic other' as discussed in thesis Chapter 6; respondents to my ATS questionnaire dismissed 'bad', meaning promiscuous girls, as just a 'few bad apples in the barrel' as discussed in Chapter 7 and in 1941 Abram Games's ATS recruitment poster ran into trouble for creating an image which some believed was too glamorous, too close to that of a good-time girl for cultural comfort. There was also a denial of homosexuality. Policy makers

ignored it though there was 'advice' for officers who might be made aware of such relationships. The official historian of the ATS noted that

the number of Lesbian cases reported in the ATS was small. It was first dealt with in a memorandum 'A Special Problem' which was prepared by a woman adviser in 1941. She set out the issues with great wisdom and balance, differentiating between the adolescent 'crush', normal friendships between women and true promiscuity. The memorandum was not issued generally but was kept for those who asked for help as it was felt there was a danger of creating a problem by drawing attention to it. As cases arose they were usually dealt with by posting and only a few very promiscuous Lesbians had to be discharged from the service.<sup>25</sup>

Moral disapproval of homosexuality is reflected in the use of the upper case in the text, the definition of normal in the course of the commentary and that it was grounds for dismissal. The kinds of tensions noted above might have suggested that the military sphere was a valuable context in which to explore what difference war made.

There were also enticing prompts from women writers to draw a link between women's military service and full citizenship. During the First World War Edith Barton and Marguerite Cody, in a propaganda publication to boost recruitment, enthused about the newly-formed Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and insisted that

It is not a transitory movement the effects of which will pass away in a few years. Its work and recognition by the Army and public opinion have for all time raised the status of woman and placed her side by side with man as fellow-worker, comrade and fellow-citizen.<sup>26</sup>

This assertion that comradeship and citizenship, by implication formerly male territory, had become androgynous because of women's military service was a bold claim. Margaret Goldsmith, writing in the Second World War was equally convinced that particularly the *conscription* of women into military service posed 'the great question (of) whether in times of peace women will now be willing to accept anything but absolute equality with men, economic as well as political'.<sup>27</sup>

In spite of such prompts all protagonists, of whatever persuasion, in the academic debate about the effects of war on the status of British women drew their evidence overwhelmingly from civilian contexts right up until the 1980s and in that civilian

context concentrated on 'the impact of social policy on women, women's role in employment and women's subjective responses to wartime opportunities'.<sup>28</sup>

However, in the 1980s a vigorous literature and discourse about military women developed independently from the debate about the effects of war on British women. New academic discourses about women soldiers were initiated and the early studies were nearly all transnational and collaborative in character. In April 1981 a group of feminist historians met in Amsterdam and published a sequence of essays titled *Loaded Questions* in which the character of modern military recruitment strategies for women were subjected to image-analysis. Ine Megens and Mary Wings's analysis revealed a stark contrast between the 'laughter and lipstick' approaches to women and the 'guns and guts' approach to men.<sup>29</sup> In 1982 Nancy Loring Goldman and Richard Stites produced a transnational survey of women soldiers and whether they were /should be combatants. Loring Goldman regretted that 'there is no major historical work on British women in two world wars' and urged that 'a good historical and analytical synthesis still needs to be done'.<sup>30</sup> The following year Cynthia Enloe published *Does Khaki Become You?* This was a neatly ambiguous title for her transnational study of the effects of militarisation on women's lives. This discourse also dealt with recruitment strategies and drew on some evidence from the British experience in both the world wars. Enloe argued that the arena of combat is central to the very construct of masculinity.<sup>31</sup> In 1984 Hugh Popham published the official corps biography of the FANY tracing its deployment between 1904 and 1984.<sup>32</sup> Also in 1984 major conferences were held at Yale and Harvard Universities 'to re-examine the effects of the two world wars on women's lives'. In a review of the conference at Harvard one academic contributor concluded that the debate over whether war liberates women 'must necessarily remain ... inconclusive'.<sup>33</sup> In 1986 Elizabeth Crosthwait published a study of the WAAC which certainly challenged Cody and Barton's contemporaneous view of it. Crosthwait formed the view that, because of their failure to engage in 'real soldiering', defined as combatant activities, the WAAC 'rather than representing any step forward in the struggle for women's rights tended to reproduce not challenge the sexual balance of power in British society'.<sup>34</sup> Ruth Roach Pierson commented in her 1986 study of Canadian women in the Second World War that 'I kept finding evidence of a preoccupation with the 'femininity' of the women in uniform' and she devoted a chapter of her book to what she termed 'Wartime Jitters over Femininity'. This Canadian preoccupation was shared by the British and Chapter 5 of my thesis deals with the

British government's public relations and propaganda efforts to resolve the British jitters in 1941.<sup>35</sup>

In spite of such lively publications as those discussed above the main contributors to the general debate remained locked onto civilian targets. For example, in 1986 Harold L Smith published research which argued, with regard to the Second World War, a strengthening of the view of 'how little the conflict permanently altered the position of women'; how the war had 'strengthened traditional sex roles' rather than encouraged new roles and how transformational theorists had 'distorted' the picture by neglecting 'the largest category of females – housewives'<sup>36</sup> and in 1987 Jean Bethke Elstain argued that as the military role for men increases their status in war the effect is to emphasise gender differences, to disadvantage women by polarising gender identities rather than eroding them.<sup>37</sup>

Academic discourse about military women received a considerable boost from the publication of a prestigious anthology of papers which had been given at Yale University's 1984 *Workshop on Women and War*. This influential collection of essays, titled *Behind the Lines*, included Jenny Gould's re-evaluation of the experience of the British WAAC in the First World War, Susan Gubar's exploration of misogyny as a theme in the Second World War and Sandra Gilbert's exposition of gendered themes in the literature of the First World War.<sup>38</sup> In the same year and, importantly, outside the framework of the discrete discourse about military women, Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield's survey of women's experiences in the two world wars included some discussion around the ATS, noting generational and class issues which were reflected in women's experience of it and commenting on issues of public image and uniform.<sup>39</sup>

Following that, two British academic theses directly explored the relevance of various aspects of women's military experience to the assessment of the impact of war on women's general status. In 1987 Diana Parkin explored the tensions between femininity, class and national identity, using the ATS as an exemplar.<sup>40</sup> The thesis which drew the case of the ATS closest into the wider debate is that of Dorothy Sheridan. In her 1988 thesis Sheridan directly posed the question of whether the experience of military service for the ATS recruits represented a challenge to gender norms or was in fact a 'containment', noting that 'the rhetoric of war clung to the notion

that woman's role was centrally wife and mother' and that this was 'the organising principle in calling for national unity'.<sup>41</sup>

Increased interest in military women in the late 1980s was fuelled by a general expansion of interest in women's history, gender studies and feminist critiques in the academic institutions of Europe and the United States of America. Women's lived experience became recognised as a legitimate component of academic research. In 1989 Penny Summerfield noted that 'in the recent development of women's history an important contributory factor has been the growing body of personal testimony especially that collected by the techniques of oral history'.<sup>42</sup> From 1990 onwards more and more social history discourses focused on the diversity of women's lived experience. Within the discourse about military women this is reflected in Ben Bousquet and Colin Douglas's analysis of racial politics and racial discrimination in the ATS.<sup>43</sup> Penny Summerfield and Nicole Crockett explored the sexual politics of the Second World War and highlighted the public anxieties that attached to the ATS.<sup>44</sup> In 1993 Summerfield called for an approach which 'avoids regarding "women" as a homogeneous category' and for further research on 'ethnic and class differences'.<sup>45</sup>

This call received an excellent response in the form of academic theses and popular publications which sought out new approaches and perspectives. Those researchers who selected the military context as their point of enquiry include Jane Rosenzweig who conducted a broad-ranging investigation into the construction of policy for women in the British Armed Forces in the Second World War<sup>46</sup> and Kirsty Parker who investigated the war-years involvement of women MPs, feminism and domestic policy in the Second World War.<sup>47</sup> In 1994 a new collection of essays addressed questions of images and realities with regard to women soldiers and featured Julie Wheelwright's study of media exploitation of 'the feminine' during the 1993 Gulf War.<sup>48</sup>

In 1995 the topic of military women received a boost of general, popular interest as Britain engaged in national celebrations to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of British victory in the Second World War. The celebrations produced a nostalgic and patriotic wave of popular interest in the war in all its aspects and presented opportunities to raise the visibility of women's wartime roles. The National Army Museum (NAM) and the Imperial War Museum (IWM) set up exhibitions about women and war. *The Right to Serve* opened at the NAM in November 1994 and celebrated fifty

years of women's army corps service, from WAAC to WRAC. The IWM held a Victory Festival from 17 March to 28 August 1995 and an exhibition *Don't Wait for It* which opened on 21 April 1995 'to bear witness to the full range and diversity of the roles undertaken by women in war'. The Public Record Office (PRO) on 1 May 1995 opened its exhibition *The Home Front*, which revisited rationing, evacuation, general propaganda and the work of the Home Guard. There were numerous popular publications, some arising from the major exhibitions, and academic interest gathered momentum too.<sup>49</sup>

In 1996 Lucy Noakes explored issues of national identity and used education-programmes devised for the ATS as an example of gender-differentiation policy in the British Army in the Second World War. Her findings echo those of Patricia Allatt who showed how the armed forces education programmes in Britain were intended primarily to create cross-class male solidarity and in the course of pursuing this objective reinforced notions of male intellectual superiority and women's general 'inferior status'.<sup>50</sup> Here I include my own 1996 thesis, *Selling the ATS*, which explored issues of image-management and recruitment in the ATS in the Second World War and disclosed the tenacity with which the British ATS image was 'feminised' in 1941.<sup>51</sup> In the same year Diana Shaw published a study of the First World War WAAC. Shaw titled her study 'The Forgotten Army of Women' and explained her intention to 'examine the overseas experience of the corps and its significance for the women's movement' because 'researchers on British women at war have tended to concentrate on such aspects as nursing and munitions'. Shaw also noted that 'the women who returned from France tended to have greater expectations' about post-war life. These expectations and the management of demobilisation are discussed in Chapter 3 of my thesis.<sup>52</sup> In 1997 Krisztina Robert published a study of gender, class and patriotism in what she described as the 'para-military units' of the First World War, analysing the 'class-based model of patriotic ladies versus financially pressed working girls' and exposing how 'women from very different classes could come to share a common ideology'. Robert also noted how the para-military Women's Volunteer Reserve, 1914 to 1917, inspired by Suffragette values of equality 'claimed citizenship on the same basis as men' and were willing to die for their country. Issues of class within gender form a persistent theme in my thesis, as does patriotism as a motivation for volunteers to the military in both world wars and the combat role is discussed in Chapter 8 and placed in its present-day context.<sup>53</sup> In 1998 Lynda Dennant analysed the experience of women at 'the front' in

the First World War where she, like Diana Shaw, noted that research 'has privileged the role of the voluntary nurse' and 'less academic attention has been paid to the formation of the women's army'.<sup>54</sup> Tessa Stone's 1998 thesis focused specifically on the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) in the Second World War, showing how the integration of women into a male military service 'has potential to challenge existing structures of gender'.<sup>55</sup>

In 2000 Harold L Smith updated his work on the Second World War, publishing a key set of documents and reaffirming his view that in the British context 'although women's participation in the war effort was essential to national survival the government attempted to maintain pre-war sex-differentiated policies'.<sup>56</sup> In the same year Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird edited an anthology of articles covering a very wide spectrum of cultures and time-periods and with a specific focus on women in combatant military roles.<sup>57</sup> In 2000 Penny Summerfield also updated her work on the Second World War with the reflection that in the 1970s and 1980s feminist critique allied itself with the view that the war had not produced a 'modern women' but Summerfield noted an 'uncomfortable gap' between the academic overview and what seemed to be suggested by women's individual accounts of their war years or war service. This assertion greatly encouraged my research into the ATS especially as Summerfield noted that of the twenty two servicewomen interviewed in her project in the early 1990s 'all but two of them.. took up enthusiastically the idea that their war service changed them'.<sup>58</sup>

In 2001 Deborah Montgomerie published the first academic analysis of New Zealand women's experience of the Second World War in which, very much reflecting British, Canadian and American military contexts,

women in uniform were portrayed as brainless glamour girls, in the military for a good time, or as man-hating battleaxes. These uncomplimentary images diminished the service of women volunteers. It also assured the majority of New Zealanders that women had no place in the 'real' military and that military tradition would continue to be the prototype of masculine national ideals.<sup>59</sup>

Sonya Rose, in her 2003 study, *National Identity and Citizenship in Britain 1939–1945*, called in question some issues about good-time girls which have a strong resonance

with the contention about Abram Games's 1941 ATS recruitment poster which was popularly described as 'the blonde bombshell'. Rose asserted that

this was a nation that could not incorporate within it the pleasure-seeking, fun-loving and sexually expressive women and girls. The women and girls who would not or could not put aside their 'foolish world' to rescue the nation were being constructed as anti-citizens.<sup>60</sup>

My thesis explores, in Chapter 5, how the state propagandists grappled with this cultural problem in their frantic efforts to find that magic bullet for recruitment; that image and persona for the woman-as-soldier which would not offend conservative opinion nor alarm families and at the same time would not disappoint the young potential recruits, hungry for glamour and adventure.

The most recent popular publications are from historian Carol Harris and war correspondent Kate Adie. Carol Harris themed her publication around British women in uniform in the Second World War and covered a wide range of organisations including the ATS.<sup>61</sup> Kate Adie was invited to publish in association with the IWM. Her book, *Corsets to Camouflage*, is lavishly illustrated and presents, as did the IWM exhibition it accompanied, a very wide historical sweep of military images of women from mediaeval Joan of Arc to the realities of female marines serving in the armed forces of the United States of America in the Gulf in 2003. The title of Adie's book has romantic linguistic flourish and is clearly meant to suggest that over time there has been a radical shift of attitude towards women in the British military but this is qualified in her conclusion that really

it is a dilemma. If you see the armed forces as just another job, one which has to adjust to social progress and alter its traditions to come into line with gender and diversity issues, you may need ...to change what the army's for. However if you accept that the military is different because of what they're asked to do (who else trains to bayonet people?) then you may have to face compromise on absolute conditions of (gender) equality.<sup>62</sup>

There is also something, however unintentionally, reactionary in these recent representations of military women which persist in placing emphasis on their clothing and the 'exotic other' notion of their activities. In a role-reversal context the issue becomes clearer. Male corsets have an equally valid historical provenance with female corsets but it would be very instructive to note the army's response to a major cultural



institution which published a broad historical survey of male military experience with the title 'Corsets to Combat Pants'.

The historiographical résumé above shows how the military context has gained ground in the debate about war and women's social status and frames the body of work in which this thesis finds its home and to which it adds its voice and evidence. All publications about the women's corps which are contemporaneous with them are discussed in situ in the thesis text as are works of general background/wider reference and all publications cited are listed in the bibliography.

However, of all the studies listed above none approach the subject of military women in Britain in terms of their recruitment, public image and state propaganda in two world wars and reviews their status and activities in pre-war and post-war periods. My thesis does this and provides, in effect, a profile of female khaki culture from 1900 to 1949, accounting for the peaks and troughs of its popularity, the effects of state interventions during wars, its position in relation to the cultural determinants of femininity in peacetime periods, its significance to the social and citizenship status of women and to the self-perception of the women recruited or conscripted to serve with or in the British Army.

My personal provenance for this thesis goes back to 1995 and a term paper written for a *State Propaganda* module led by Dr Nicholas Reeves as part of the MA programme in History offered at Thames Valley University. I chose to categorise and analyse the propaganda images of women found in the posters of the Second World War. The poster which took my attention most was Abram Games's 1941 recruitment poster 'Join the ATS'. On discovering that this poster was sited right in the centre of a six-month period during which the ATS recruited more women than it had in the previous three years I made a closer investigation of this for my MA thesis. During the course of data collection for the MA thesis I approached the WRAC Association and the British Legion Women's Section with a view to obtaining some first-hand views on recruitment and public image from women who had served in the ATS. Waller and Vaughan-Rees had already trawled via women's magazines for former ATS members' memoirs and this had resulted in a popular publication in 1989.<sup>63</sup> I wanted only specific information about recruitment and public image and I wanted it from women who had found military experience sufficiently rewarding to wish to keep up their connection with it

via military publications. My advertisement was duly placed in the membership publications of the WRAC Association and the British Legion Women's Section. The response was overwhelming and is described in detail in Chapter 7. The scope, scale and time-frame available for producing the MA thesis meant that I could do little more than acknowledge the value of the input from the former ATS members and draw one or two references and inferences from the questionnaires returned. However, the potential significance of the military context to the debate about women, war and social change in the twentieth century suggested itself very strongly to me while formulating the conclusions to the MA thesis.

Additionally, the holding of that unique data-base of questionnaires and the desire to place the very specific period I had reviewed for the MA thesis in its much broader context led me to engage with this doctoral thesis which takes an overview of the period 1900 to 1949 and which has supplemented the original questionnaire with a second version, more detailed but with a much more targeted distribution, as described in Chapter 7.

In the process of analysing propaganda artefacts and themes the thesis has necessarily drawn in numerous public and institutional discourses, many emotionally heightened and prioritised by the pressures of war, which involved women's military corps as exemplars or points of reference. These discourses include themes and motifs of sexual morality and double standards, class, national identity, principles of democracy, social equality and snobbery, generational issues and contested norms of femininity and national womanhood.

To give a specific example, military service for women in two world wars exposed both middle-class women and working-class women to a militarised environment and discipline previously the preserve of upper-class women as much as it introduced women in general into a previously all-male sector. This issue of class-within-gender is very much in evidence. The civilian class structure was replicated in the women's auxiliary corps as it was in the all-male regiments. It was reflected in the promotion structures and, though challenged in the Second World War, by and large the upper class were the 'top brass', the middle class were the administrators and working class were 'in the ranks'. Nevertheless, concepts of discipline, doing work of national importance, comradeship, overseas service raised the horizons particularly for working-

class girls for whom otherwise domestic service, factory work or marriage were the boundaries of their expectation and self-esteem . So that while the debate about women, war and social change has focused most obviously on gender a class-within-gender dimension emerges strongly from this investigation in such contexts as the activities of the Women's Volunteer Reserve (WVR) in 1915, the tensions between the upper-class FANY volunteers and the state's women's auxiliary corps in both world wars and in the politics of post-war elections in the 1920s.

A general theme which ran through the evidence is well reflected in a comment by Antonia Fraser in her book about warrior queens that 'because her sex is first and foremost what makes the Warrior remarkable, her sexuality must always be called in question'.<sup>64</sup> The exotic woman-warrior has always excited the imagination of Western culture from the Amazons and Valkyrie to the British folklore lyric of 'sweet Polly Oliver' and her 'sudden strange fancy' to 'list for a soldier' and follow her love. But women warriors in folklore and in comfortable retrospect are quite a different matter from the immediacies of a British family's own women putting on army khaki and serving with the BEF in France in 1917 or being conscripted to go on duty with army men at night on the Mixed Heavy Anti Aircraft Batteries in 1942. The cultural resistance to these circumstances and the state propaganda generated to defuse it and protect recruitment speaks volumes about the nature of British temperament and British gender relations where women were, and still frequently are, socially defined by their relationship to men as daughters, sisters, sweethearts, wives and mothers rather than as individual citizens in their own right. Analysis certainly corroborates what in the National Army Museum brochure for its 1994 exhibition is somewhat understatedly described as 'the difficulties women have sometimes had to overcome – conventions, family, prejudice and fashion – in order to serve their country'.<sup>65</sup>

Women soldiers in Britain often faced ridicule and rage, hostility and harassment. Scathing comment came from spontaneous public as well as orchestrated press, from women as well as men. The woman soldier was an unfamiliar and frequently unwelcome physical presence which roused public interest like no other and the virulence of critical response to it suggests its significance for class /gender/ political relations. For example, the social stigma of any woman in khaki is reflected in a First World War anecdote told by Lady Londonderry of how, wearing her khaki uniform,

'I was lunching one day at Lady –'s house and on ringing the bell the parlour maid regarded me with suspicion. I thought I must have come to the wrong door and said 'Is Lady So-and-So not home'. 'Yes' replied the maid 'If you will go down to the area and give me a message I will see if Lady – will see you! She is very busy and has company to lunch' I gave my name. I could see she was shocked and horrified. When I left after luncheon the maid asked to be excused adding 'I thought you was one of them 'orrible Army women'.<sup>66</sup>

Even a parlour maid felt free to condescend to a woman wearing an Army uniform.

Similar distaste is reflected in the Second World War recollection of a former ATS member that

I took Church Parade on one occasion in a little manufacturing town out of Glasgow and all the old 'wifies' along the street were shouting 'Look at them women sojers....why don't they stay at home and look after their weans'in broad Scots. We were embarrassed.<sup>67</sup>

These working-class women seemed to feel that women in khaki had broken ranks with women's proper place and felt socially affronted, maybe even threatened by their physical presence, hence the abuse and disapproval. In the Second World War particularly, when mass expansion became crucial in 1941, the image of the corps as 'a legion of Cinderellas' was so entrenched in popular imagination that a Wartime Social Survey reported that 'when girls register at Labour Exchanges their first stipulation is "Not the ATS!"'<sup>68</sup>

Given the levels of public suspicion, resistance, contempt, anxiety and hostility the task of creating a successful, culturally reassuring identity and image which would attract recruits to women's army auxiliary corps was a bedevilment for state propagandists trying to square a cultural circle on the issue of women in khaki in both world wars. Could the women in the auxiliary corps be presented as 'real' soldiers or not? What was their military status? They did not bear arms but they did the work that otherwise would be done by male soldiers trained for combat but deployed in non-combatant roles. Not all male regiments are combatant regiments. The dilemma is reflected most clearly in the question of uniform in both wars. How should women who are at least soldiers-in-some-sense be dressed? From dilemmas about breast-pockets in the First World War (would the pockets attract sexual attention?) to arguments about trousers (too assertive and gender-challenging?) in the Second World War the nature of the problem is knotty

and reflects particularly well in propaganda images. Make the women in khaki seem too traditionally feminine in a fluffy, kittenish, male-dependent way and you have one set of problems. The military aspect of their occupation becomes trivialised and, by association, the male army is somehow impugned. Eberhard Demm in his study of propaganda and caricature in the First World War commented how 'another source of fun for the German cartoonists was the use by the English and Russians of female volunteers'.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, make the image of the women recruits too sexy and glamorous and you have a problem implicit in the furore around Abram Games's 1941 ATS recruitment poster, namely that anxieties are raised about consensual promiscuity particularly given the boasted sexual prowess of male soldiers which, in double standard manner, is somehow a matter of national pride. Make the women recruits appear asexual or masculine-looking and you have the problem that they could be perceived as challenging the male privilege of real soldiering and also raise the transgressive spectre of lesbianism. Integrate the women into male army regiments and you are saying something major and potentially disruptive about gender identities which could undermine the central image of masculinity. Keep the women soldiers in female-only corps and you give a particularly high degree of control and command to the women leaders of the corps. This thesis shows how far the personal appearance, presentation and vision of each of the successive women directors of the women's auxiliary corps was a crucial factor in shaping the ethos, public image and recruitment fortunes of the corps she commanded.

The ultimate propaganda coup, discussed in Chapter 5, was the presentation in 1941 of the new ATS regime of young, good-looking Director Jean Knox as a 'modernising' move, replacing sixty-year-old Director Helen Gwynne-Vaughan's laughably old-fashioned model. Ironically, the incoming regime was conservative in terms of gender politics. It was Gwynne-Vaughan, who had commanded the WAAC in the First World War, and her generation with the direct legacy of the Edwardian suffragettes who were the radicals, keen on gender-equality, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of my thesis. In 1955 Colonel Julia M. Cowper, collecting data for her intended history of the women's services, wrote to Mrs Maunsell Thomas that

as you may imagine Dame Helen (Gwynne-Vaughan), who is a member of my committee is trying to make me believe that all the WAACs under her command were personally interested in gaining their rights under military law and their status as soldiers of the King.<sup>70</sup>

The 1941 decision to replace Gwynne-Vaughan with Knox as ATS Director was a pivotal decision. It determined the identity of British military women for the next fifty years. A consequent rhetoric of feminising and gender-differentiation reflected into recruitment propaganda in the remaining war years and beyond into the post-war period. The pre-eminence and tenacity of the Knox prescription is reflected in that women recruits to the British Army served in female-only corps right up until 1990.

A gut feeling that propaganda is important does not make it an easy category of evidence to use. The Advertising Services Guild, even after a very 'successful' propaganda campaign in October 1941, wrote: 'Nobody knows better than our own members who have been responsible for parts of the government propaganda how easy it is to criticise and how stubborn is the problem of correlation.'<sup>71</sup> Historian Susan Carruthers, herself a skilful propaganda analyst, wrote in 1990 that 'perhaps because of the difficulty of quantifying its results the field of propaganda has been relatively neglected by historians'.<sup>72</sup>

But it has not been neglected by governments. All twentieth century governments, whether totalitarian or liberal democracies, have tried to use propaganda. Post-war historians Balfour, Kenez, Brown and Messinger share a view that this was a consequence of British victory in the First World War, which apologist German propaganda ascribed to superior British deployment of propaganda.<sup>73</sup> A myth emerged about the power of propaganda to 'sway the masses', the key objective of all governments, especially in total war, when the questionable ethics of propaganda can be glossed as necessary for victory. Since propaganda is most concerned with mass motivation it is an avid user of all new mass-media, technologies and techniques, as is abundantly demonstrated throughout the thesis.

Propaganda as a phenomenon has fascinated and frustrated twentieth century psychologists, sociologists, political analysts and mass-communication experts. Academics squabble over even a definition of it. G.S. Messinger's 1992 study contains fourteen different interpretations of propaganda, including those from pioneers in the field, Jacques Ellul and Harold Lasswell.<sup>74</sup> American propaganda theorists, Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell propound that 'to study propaganda as history is to examine the practices of propagandists as events and the subsequent events as possible effects of propaganda'.<sup>75</sup> In his study of Nazi propaganda Ian Kershaw claims that '

assessment of the effects of propaganda can be attempted.... only by evaluating differentiated responses to it in the context of the specific aim of that propaganda'.<sup>76</sup> Margaret Higgonet proposes that 'in wartime the most explicit and deliberate efforts to redefine masculinity and femininity have appeared in propaganda, the principal tool of government seeking to mobilise people to unaccustomed roles'.<sup>77</sup> Ian McLaine detected a propaganda 'watershed' in Britain in 1941 which divided an earlier period of 'exhortation' and failure from post-1941 professionalism and success in propaganda and raising morale.<sup>78</sup> My thesis may prove a testing-ground for some of the concepts above and will also, hopefully, offer something new to the discourse.

State propaganda is the heartland of this thesis and the posters, postcards, films and photographs used to support recruitment and control public image are subjected to intensive image-analysis to draw out ideological influences and pragmatic intentions. Image-analysis is a method with the same intention as textual analysis, to probe beneath what is presented in order to reach a view about why particular detailing and style has been used and to speculate on the intended impact of the subject and its treatment. In my 1995 MA paper categorising poster images of women in the Second World War I found that deconstruction of the female images provided reinforcement for analysis of policies and legislation which the government put in place to persuade and eventually compel women to engage in various kinds of war work; that official images were quite specifically targeted at a particular class or type of women to make a particular propaganda appeal, whether for women to work on the land in which case the images were idyllic and the female role-models middle or upper class in appearance or for health propaganda about coughs and sneezes spreading diseases where a factory location and an image of working-class women wearing industrial overalls and tightly knotted headscarves was preferred. Image-analysis again proved valid and efficient for my more specific 1996 exploration of the government's handling of recruitment and public image for the ATS between 1941 and 1943 as the topic for my MA dissertation.

The method has been used to excellent effect by many women writers dealing with similar topics. For example, Ine Megens and Mary Wings included a range of images, not as illustration but as an integral part of their transnational analysis of recruitment in modern armies, evidencing the persistence of emphasis on gender-differences in military recruitment posters and literature.<sup>79</sup> Marcia Pointon used image-analysis for an incisive interpretation of the deployment of a female image as Liberty on the

Barricades.<sup>80</sup> A collection of 1987 essays was themed entirely around images of women in war and peace ranging from Boadicea to the women's nuclear protest group at Greenham Common in the 1980s.<sup>81</sup> Susan Gubar integrated visual evidence in support of her literary study of misogyny in the Second World War<sup>82</sup> and Sandra Gilbert used a range of posters and photographs to support her analysis of gender themes in the literature of the First World War.<sup>83</sup>

In image analysis it is important to minimise subjectivity by applying, as far as practicable, consistent criteria, appropriate for the medium, to the whole range of images under review. The visual images in my thesis are purposive in the manner of commercial advertisements so I looked to analysts in that field for guidelines. There is a substantial literature, much of which is concerned with the theoretical concepts underpinning advertising as an academic discipline in the field of communication and media-studies. My images exclusively concerned representations of women and I found some valuable insights in specialist literature. Trevor Millum, for example, in his study of female images found in magazine advertising, emphasises the significance of physical appearance to the concept of femininity.<sup>84</sup> Richard Allen's 1992 work, analysing representations of women, includes a small case-study of media coverage of modern military women and this focused well on gender-differentiated media approaches.<sup>85</sup> The feminist, collaborative work of Carol Adams and Ray Lauriekitis identifies techniques of trivialisation of female representation in media-coverage.<sup>86</sup> All these were useful references to have in mind when considering images for recruitment or media images of the WAAC and the ATS. Most useful of all was the set of prescriptions offered in the work of Gillian Dyer for general application when considering people-centred advertisements.<sup>87</sup>

For example, Dyer suggests that in advertisements featuring human subjects the principal signifiers are appearance, manner and activity. That in terms of appearance the primary agencies are age, gender, racial characteristics, hair, considered to be 'one of the most potent symbols in cultural communication',<sup>88</sup> body shape, size and good looks; that manner is most effectively communicated by facial expression, eye contact, where, for example, the averted gaze is deemed to be cold and iconic, body pose, position and scale in relation to other figures and choice of clothing; that activity can be conveyed by touch, for example the finger placed at the temple or cheek can be intended to signify high status and intellectual thoughtfulness and by choice of active or languid body



movement; that settings and 'props' need careful consideration as they are never culturally value-free; that photography has its particular protocols in which, for example, the close-up is used to suggest intimacy, soft focus is selected to give sentimental, sympathetic appeal or glamour and 'cropping' to just 'head' or 'head and upper body' is a feature of classic portraiture.

When considering artefacts as propaganda I have borne in mind the criteria determined by Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell in their work on propaganda and persuasion.

This involves

identification of ideology and purpose, context, identification of the propagandist, investigation of the structure of the propaganda organisation, selection of target audience, understanding the media utilisation techniques, analysis of special techniques to maximise effects, audience reaction, identification of counter-propaganda and an assessment and evaluation.<sup>89</sup>

In order to achieve maximum value from the images used for this thesis all events, government policies and publications and propaganda images are sequenced into as rigorous a chronology as practicable. Where evidence was undated every effort was made to date it by cross-referencing to related sources. On occasion it was significant to be able to pin a particular image or publication to its exact week of release. The general benefit of precise sequencing is the clarity with which the relationship between policy and propaganda is disclosed.

While evidence from recruits to the WAAC of the First World War had to be obtained from archival sources it was obviously possible to obtain primary testimony from former members of the ATS of the Second World War. Hence the methodological decision to engage with the design, distribution and analysis of questionnaires. While the evidence deduced from these questionnaire-responses has no statistical value it has undisputed validity as qualitative input and revealed some striking collective resonances with the analysis of recruitment and public image issues undertaken in Chapters 4 to 6. Detailed comment on my approach, rationale, method and use of the questionnaires is incorporated in Chapter 7 along with the data analysis of the questionnaire-responses.

Primary sources were sought out for the thesis data wherever possible and in this respect the most fortunate of coincidences meant that I was the first researcher to have

access to a batch of Helen Gwynne-Vaughan's papers, released for the first time at the NAM in January 2000. Data at the National Archives, the National Army Museum, the British Library Newspaper Library, the Imperial War Museum, the Mass-Observation Archive, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Written Archives, the Guide Association Archive and archives of publishing firms were constantly cross-referenced to build the underlying narrative of the thesis. A disappointment was that the file on ATS Advertising was missing from the Mass-Observation Archive. A major satisfaction was the overwhelming and enthusiastic responses of former members of the ATS to the questionnaires and the significance of their evidence in forming conclusions about the social significance of women's military service. All primary sources and an extensive range of supporting secondary sources used are listed in detail in the bibliography.

In the course of writing the thesis many aspects for further research suggested themselves. There are many gaps in the research about military women in terms of their experience, their impact during war years and on post-war status and gender identity in both social and sexual terms. I have included suggestions for what would be most engaging further studies in with my general and specific conclusions in Chapter 8 and hope that in the future I will be able to address some of them myself or will have encouraged others to do so by the presentation of this thesis.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Display-card information. NAM Exhibition, *The Right to Serve*, 1994.
- <sup>2</sup> The journal is only available in the USA. The website is *h minerva* via [www.Google.co.uk](http://www.Google.co.uk).
- <sup>3</sup> Figures for the WAAC are War Office estimates, quoted in Nancy Loring Goldman and Richard Stites, *Female Soldiers, Combatants or Non-Combatants; Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1982, pp. 26,34. Female population figure for 1914 is taken from War Cabinet Report quoted in *The Virago Book of Women and the Great War*, 1999, p. 3. Figures for the ATS are from Great Britain Statistical Office, 1951, quoted in Goldman and Stites, op. cit., p. 31. Figures for civilian female occupations in the Second World War quoted in Harold L. Smith, 'The Effect of War on the Status of Women' in Harold L. Smith (ed.) *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War*, Manchester University Press, 1986, p. 210.
- <sup>4</sup> Brigadier Shelford Bidwell, *The Women's Royal Army Corps*, Leo Cooper, London, 1977. Book jacket.
- <sup>5</sup> *Report of the Committee on Amenities and Welfare Conditions in the Three Women's Services*, Parliamentary papers 1941–42, Vol. 4, Cmd. 6384, London, 1942, pp.49-51, quoted in Harold L Smith, *Britain in the Second World War*, Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 62.
- <sup>6</sup> Violet Markham, *Return Passage*, Oxford University Press, 1953, p. 154.
- <sup>7</sup> Leisha Meyer, 'Creating G I Jane: The Regulation of Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour in the Women's Army Corps', *Feminist Studies*, Fall 1992, Vol. 18, Issue 3, p. 581.
- <sup>8</sup> See Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, Hutchinson, 1949. See also Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War: The Army. The Auxiliary Territorial Service*, War Office, 1949, Violet Markham, *Return Passage*, 1953, op. cit., and Irene Ward, *FANY Invicta*, Hutchinson, London, 1955.
- <sup>9</sup> *Brassey's Annual: The Armed Forces Year Book*, 1957, Rear-Admiral H.G. Thursfield (ed.), William Clowes and Sons Ltd., London, The Macmillan Company, p. 289.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

- <sup>11</sup> Cited in Nancy Loring Goldman and Richard Stites, *Female Soldiers*, 1982, op. cit., p. 39.
- <sup>12</sup> Brigadier Shelford Bidwell, *The Women's Royal Army Corps*, 1977, op. cit., p. 89
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 88.
- <sup>14</sup> Gerard J. DeGroot, 'I love the scent of cordite in your hair: Gender dynamics in Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries during the Second World War', *History* 82 1997, p. 85.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> For most recent résumés of which historians fall into which camps see, for the First World War, Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War 1*, I.B. Tauris, 1998, pp. 201-208. See, for the Second World War, Penny Summerfield, 'It did me good in lots of ways': British Women in Transition from War to Peace' in Claire Duchén and Irene Bandhauer-Schoffmann (eds), *When the War was Over; Women, War and Peace in Europe, 1940–1956*, Leicester University Press, 2000, p. 13.
- <sup>17</sup> Nicoletta F. Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 10.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 3.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 10.
- <sup>20</sup> Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War*, University of North Carolina Press, 1999, p. 190.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 196.
- <sup>22</sup> Lady Londonderry, *Retrospect*, Frederick Muller Ltd., 1938, p. 109.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Astrid Albrecht-Heide, 'The Peaceful Sex' in W. Chapkis (ed.) *Loaded Questions: Women in the Military*, Transnational Institute, Amsterdam, 1981, p. 83.
- <sup>25</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War*, 1949, op. cit., p. 227.
- <sup>26</sup> Edith Barton and Marguerite Cody, *Eve in Khaki: The Story of the Women's Army at Home and Abroad*, Nelson, London, 1918, p. 197.
- <sup>27</sup> Margaret Goldsmith, *Women at War*, London, 1943. Cited in Jane Rosenzweig, *The Construction of Policy for Women in the British Armed Forces 1938–1945*, M.Litt. thesis, Oxford University, 1993, p. 6, in the context that 'some contemporary

- observers predicted that conscription would lead to a radical change in the status of women’.
- <sup>28</sup> Sonya O. Rose, *National Identity and Citizenship*, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 24.
- <sup>29</sup> Ine Megens and Mary Wings ‘The Recruitment of Women’ in W. Chapkis (ed.) *Loaded Questions*, 1981, op. cit., pp. 41-46.
- <sup>30</sup> Nancy Loring Goldman and Richard Stites, *Female Soldiers*, 1982, op. cit., p. 291.
- <sup>31</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?*, Harper Collins, London, New York, 1983. See Chapter 5, ‘Some of the Best Soldiers wear Lipstick’ and pp. 122,131,159 for references to British contexts.
- <sup>32</sup> Hugh Popham, *FANY: The Story of the Women’s Transport Service, 1907–1984*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1984.
- <sup>33</sup> Quoted in Ruth Roach Pierson, ‘*They’re Still Women After All’: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood*’, McLelland and Stewart, 1986, p. 219.
- <sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Crossthwait, ‘The Girl behind the Man behind the Gun: The Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps, 1914–1918’ cited in Philippa Levine, ‘Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Women Should’: Women Police in World War 1’, *Journal of Modern History*, Vol 66, 1994, p. 73.
- <sup>35</sup> Ruth Roach Pierson, ‘*They’re Still Women After All*’, McLelland and Stewart, 1986, op. cit., p. 15.
- <sup>36</sup> Harold L. Smith, *War and Social Change*, 1986, op. cit., pp. 201, 221, 225.
- <sup>37</sup> J.Bethke Elshstain, *Women and War*, Brighton, Harvester, Wheatsheaf, 1987.
- <sup>38</sup> Jenny Gould, ‘Women’s Military Services in First World War Britain’, pp.114-126 in M. R. Higonnet et al (eds), *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, Yale University Press, 1987.
- <sup>39</sup> Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, *Out of the Cage: Women’s Experiences in the Two World Wars*, Pandora, 1987, pp. 152-153, 163-166, 172, 188, 198 and 202.
- <sup>40</sup> Diana Parkin, *Contested Sources of Identity: Nation, Class and Gender in Second World War Britain*, Doctoral thesis, London School of Economics, 1987.
- <sup>41</sup> Dorothy Sheridan, *Challenge and Containment in Women’s Lives in the Military during the Second World War*, MA thesis, Sussex University, 1988.
- <sup>42</sup> Penny Summerfield, ‘Women in Two World Wars’, *The Historian*, No. 23, Summer 1989, p. 3.

- <sup>43</sup> Ben Bousquet and Colin Douglas, *West Indian Women at War*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1991. See also Colin Douglas, 'March Through the Colour Bar: Discrimination over the recruitment of black West Indian Women into the ATS in World War 2' in *The Independent*, 25 October, 1993, p. 17. See also Delia Jarrett Macauley, 'Putting Black Women in the Frame: Una Marson and the West Indian Challenge to British Identity' in C. Gledhill and G. Swanson (eds) *Nationalising Femininity: Culture, Sexuality and Cinema in World War Two Britain*, Manchester University Press, 1996.
- <sup>44</sup> Penny Summerfield and Nicole Crockett, 'You weren't taught that with the Welding': Lessons in Sexuality in the Second World War' in *Women's History Review*, Volume 1, No. 3, 1992, p. 437.
- <sup>45</sup> Penny Summerfield, 'Approaches to women and social change in the Second World War', in B. Brivati and H. Jones (eds) *What Difference did the War Make?* Leicester, 1993, p. 77.
- <sup>46</sup> Jane Rosenzweig, *The Construction of Policy for Women in the British Armed Forces, 1938–1945*. M.Litt. thesis, 1993, op. cit.
- <sup>47</sup> Kirsty Parker, *Women MPs, Feminism and Domestic Policy in the Second World War*. Doctoral thesis, Oxford University, 1994, Abstract to thesis.
- <sup>48</sup> Elisabetta Addis et al (eds), *Women Soldiers: Images and Realities*, St. Martin's Press, The Macmillan Press, 1994.
- <sup>49</sup> Popular publications include Jenny Hartley (ed.) *Hearts Undefeated: Women's Writing of the Second World War*, Virago, paperback, 1995, Robert Opie, *The Wartime Scrapbook: From Blitz to Victory, 1939–1945*, New Cavendish Books, 1995, HMSO, *Persuading the People*, 1995, Barry Turner and Tony Rennell, *When Daddy Came Home: How Family Life Changed Forever in 1945*, Pimlico, 1995.
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## Chapter 2

### From Militant to Military, 1900–1918

This chapter contextualises national tensions about women's social and political status at the outbreak of war in 1914. It discloses the private initiatives taken by upper-class women prior to the war and at its commencement to secure some kind of unpaid military or quasi-military national service. The chapter evidences the incremental progress of women as professional soldiers recruited by the state between 1915 and 1918 from all three social classes. Close examination of recruitment, public image and propaganda concerning military women reveals both that a radical agenda emerged from the WAAC in France and that public discourses about women's status, which pre-war had been focused on militant suffragettes, found a very sharp focus in the uniquely new identity of the military woman.

When Britain went to war with Germany in 1914 there was no thought of women having any military role. Quite the reverse. A decade of what half a century later would be called struggle for women's liberation had hardened the attitudes of those who held traditional notions of femininity and, for some influential men, war presented an opportunity to 'bet you five pounds that at the end of the war there will be no suffragettes. War will teach women the impossibility of their demands and the absurdities of their claims'.<sup>1</sup> Ideological confrontation about 'woman's place' was by no means a straightforward battle of the sexes. It divided the nation, cross-class and cross-gender. Mrs Humphrey Ward set up the Women's Anti-Suffrage Society and Lady Bathurst, whose father owned the Tory-supportive *Morning Post*, advocated that 'when a suffragette has been convicted, first have her well birched (by women) then shave off her hair, and finally deport her to Australia or New Zealand'.<sup>2</sup> Home Office files record the arrest and imprisonment of 'William Ball of the Men's Society for Women's Rights' and refer to the 'Men's League for Women's Suffrage' as well as a speech made in support of women's suffrage by Cecil Chapman (metropolitan magistrate), the imprisonment of George Lansbury, described as an 'ex-MP' and the imprisonment of Sydney Drew, 'found guilty of publishing suffragette articles and enticing them to commit arson'.<sup>3</sup> Some prominent literary men, radicals and socialists themselves, notably H. G Wells and Bernard Shaw, were totally in support of women's

emancipation. Most Tory politicians in the all-male Parliament resisted change. So did most working-class men. Between 1903 and 1914 women who wanted gender equality and opposed male domination intensified their campaign to a crescendo by 1913 and the brink of the First World War.

An obvious place to look for change is in women's fashion – and it does not disappoint. In 1912 *Punch* magazine caricatured the way in which the mood of the nation's young women had changed between 1902 and 1912. The images shown in Figure 2.1 suggest that the nature of the change was from virginal and submissive to sexually-charged and brazen. The new woman wore a recognisable fashion uniform that appropriated motifs, fabrics and styles from the male wardrobe. The coat target-marketed to her in 1904 was called the 'Amazon' and the design was an adaptation of the Service Great Coat for Officers of All Arms designed by Burberry for the War Office. American Gibson-Girl postcards made the tailored blouse and skirt de rigueur and the tie a must-have accessory. The ensemble is shown as Figure 2.2. In 1908 the new woman liberated her body from the stranglehold of the Edwardian S-shaped corset. Mainstream commerce followed the conspicuous consumer. In 1909 Aquascutum, previously an exclusively male couturier, launched its first range of women's fashions with the controversial advertising slogan 'Coats for Women leading naturally to Votes for Women' and there is more than a hint of dominatrix in the image shown as Figure 2.3. The emancipated woman wore tailored tweeds and rode a bicycle.

Change was led by affluent and leisured women and, uncomfortable for left-wing feminists, was literally underpinned by female sweated labour in the fashion industry. But access to the new look was not exclusive. Middle-class women copied it by buying ready-made cheaper versions of it in the new department stores and working-class women with sewing machines at home bought do-it-yourself paper patterns to 'run up' in cheap fabrics. By 1913 the dominatrix had been joined by the vamp via Hollywood silent films. This new role-model with 'deep red lips... smouldered on-screen, flourishing a long cigarette holder', fuelling female imagination, especially that of cinema-mad working-class young women and girls with visions of opulence gained by the exercise of sexual allure. The sexy tango was the dance-of-the-moment and in 1913 its leading American exponent, Mrs Vernon Castle, committed the ultimate transgression against Edwardian convention; she cut her hair short.<sup>4</sup>

Most significantly, the challenge to conventional gender relations went far beyond fashion statements externalising women's desire for more social freedom. It had a political wing. Between 1903 and 1914 the female suffragists of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) campaigned for and demanded women's right to vote.

The *Daily Mail* christened the WSPU members 'suffragettes' and 'militant' was the word most often used to describe them. A leading male anti-suffragist, Sir Almroth Wright, professor of pathology, asserted that in his professional opinion 'the entire movement was based on militant hysteria'.<sup>5</sup> Millicent Fawcett, who was a leading suffragist but opposed to the violence of the WSPU, preferred to describe it otherwise, writing to Lady Cavendish that 'what is called 'militancy' is political unrest, caused by mishandling and misunderstanding by politicians'.<sup>6</sup> In more than a metaphorical sense the WSPU recruited an army of women and incorporated militarised motifs in its presentation. In 1908 the WSPU adopted the equivalent of military regimental colours choosing purple white and green, symbolising dignity, purity and hope, as the colours of their movement. Female suffragettes wore the colours any way they could to publicly identify themselves with the cause and to display, as military regiments do, pride in their collective identity. The WSPU motto 'Facta non Verba' (Deeds not Words) has the ring of a military regimental motto and, true to their expressed principle, the WSPU took to the streets, smashed windows including those of London Guildhall, vandalised art treasures, burned buildings including 'the Tea Pavillion at Kew Gardens', assaulted police, were imprisoned, force-fed in prison and captured maximum publicity for their actions with sensationalist and combative propaganda posters, postcards, leaflets and banners. Some women sacrificed more than their liberty and health and died for the cause.

An exhibition at the Women's Library, London Metropolitan University, in the Autumn of 2003 showed how successfully the Suffragettes exploited the graphic culture of the Edwardian period employing 'everything from traditional embroidery to the latest printing techniques' for their propaganda. One poster, reproduced in the exhibition brochure, featured a hammer and a revolver and a slogan suggesting that these would be 'handy things to have in the house' should the tax collector call. This was in support of a campaign for civil disobedience.<sup>7</sup>

The WSPU was led by the women of the Pankhurst family and, in one of the most readily-identifiable images of the twentieth century, Figure 2.4 shows Emmeline Pankhurst's arrest but the cause attracted and inspired women cross-class and Figure 2.5 shows a remarkably similar image of a Lancashire mill-worker being arrested for her pro-suffrage activities. The WSPU drew hostile and punitive responses, cross-class and cross-gender, from the forces of conservatism. A particularly vicious image is shown as Figure 2.6. Lady Londonderry, writing in 1938, reflected that 'it is almost impossible in this period to realise the bitterness of the controversy....many buildings were burnt; picture galleries were entered and treasures destroyed'.<sup>8</sup> It seemed as if The WSPU had 'declared war on the male-dominated community itself', especially as embodied in the government.<sup>9</sup>

In summary, the fashionable 'new woman' and the politicised suffragette had demonstrated women's potential sexual and political power. Their physical public presence and behaviour was interpreted by opponents as a threat not only to the 'natural', that is male-dominated domestic gender-balance of power but even to national security and Britain's international image as a 'strong' nation, especially with regard to macho Germany. The WSPU response to the latter accusation was the scathing postcard shown as Figure 2.7. It was with this backlog of violent ideological confrontation about British women and their appropriate social/political identity that the First World War began. War-making was the most male-exclusive activity in British culture. Would it, as the opponents of suffrage hoped, put women back in their 'proper' place? Or would women, having involved themselves in national politics, now demand a role in national defence and would the demand come from the same kind of women?

When the country went to war in 1914 the WSPU suspended its campaign as a patriotic gesture to national unity but its agenda had dominated national domestic politics and its activities had captured the national imagination. The Woman Question remained unresolved but in the war years linguistic echoes of 'suffragette' attached to the description of any woman asserting a political stance or attempting 'a man's job'. Journalists referred to female armament workers as 'munitionettes'. The *Daily Express* newspaper called feminist opponents of the war 'Peacettes' and 'Peace Cranquettes'. Even Miss Damer-Dawson's formidable Women's Police Volunteers, shown in action in Figure 2.8, were called 'copperettes' by the *Sussex News* in which the journalist claimed

the average Cockney resents their presence. The Suffragettes are to blame for this in large measure for in the public mind the 'copperettes' as the girls are ' called, have come to be associated, quite erroneously no doubt, with the women who used to break windows and shout 'Votes for Women' in Parliament Square.<sup>10</sup>

The implication was that the pre-war lawless behaviour of the WSPU had queered the pitch for respectable upper-class women seeking responsible war work and lost upper-class women the necessary respect and obedience of the lower classes.

The women's suffragist organisation that pre-war had sought a non-violent constitutional route to votes for women lobbied the government on the issue of women's participation in the war effort. In an article printed in *The War Illustrated*, 6 January 1917, Millicent Fawcett recalled how her National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) had 'memorialised the government' on 27 August 1914, 'urging the substitution of women for men in all suitable employments, particularly specifying armament work' and 'blaming (male dominated) trade unions "spirit of exclusionism" for delays in the implementation of this'.<sup>11</sup> The request for women's inclusion might as well have come from the combative WSPU for all the consideration the government gave it, despite the social standing and moral high ground held by Millicent Fawcett.

War presented the ideal propaganda environment for the promotion of male dominance in the national imagination and in 1914 the government immediately put in place the most visible, familiar and unassailable of all exclusive gender boundaries. Only men were eligible to fight for King and Country and to wear military khaki. When Arthur Leete's male-iconic poster of General Kitchener was published with its plain message *Your Country Needs You* male volunteers for the army 'flocked to the colours in their thousands'.<sup>12</sup> Their military role gave men pre-eminent status as citizens in wartime as their right to vote gave them pre-eminent status as citizens in peacetime. War was man's business.

Khaki became lionised. Amongst the civilian population generally there was an outbreak of what was popularly called 'khaki fever' and even the official response to that was gendered. It was said that young women became 'hysterical' at the mere sight of khaki. Angela Woollacott, from a twentieth century perspective, explains the women's reaction as arising from 'their own disqualification from direct participation in

the war effort'. The government action about 'hysterical girls' was to introduce special policing and 'even curfews were imposed on women in towns such as Grantham, where troops were stationed'. Woolcott points out that young women were not the only victims of khaki fever, citing a contemporaneous journalist, J.R. Raynes, who reported that 'the Bishop of London went into khaki and vicars went into khaki and seemed to imagine that puttees were episcopal gaiters' but male khaki clergy was not regarded as at all problematical or hysterical and they were neither policed nor subjected to curfew.<sup>13</sup>

The exclusion of women from even the most peripheral aspects of army activities was particularly disappointing for the women who belonged to the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY), a small, private-sector upper-class women's organisation which since 1907 had been trying to earn a niche for itself in the Ambulance Department of the British Army. This was in no sense a radical campaign for women's right to fight as a complementary military demand to that of the WSPU for women's civic right to vote. The members of the FANY simply had a penchant for female military culture, came from military families, were patriotic and hoped to be made a special case on the basis of their class and family connections.

The FANY's hopes had been built up in the pre-war years because the corps was founded by a man, a former army officer, Edward Charles Baker, its ethos was pro-Establishment and the social pedigree of its membership impeccable. It was a voluntary corps of young women who were financially self-sufficient and could provide their own horses and equipment. The corps' intention in 1907 was that on the battlefield they would wear their dashing military-style uniform of scarlet tunic and blue skirt, pick up the wounded, Valkyrie-style, and carry them to field hospitals. Figure 2.9 shows the FANY in 1909, in public mode, recruiting outside Buckingham Palace and Figure 2.10 shows the corps members in training. By the time war began in 1914 the FANY had modernised its uniform and was already in a khaki uniform of tunic and culotte-skirt worn over riding breeches. They had also taken to riding their horses astride rather than using a lady's side-saddle.

The FANY had achieved a measure of success in insinuating corps members into the military environment. Before the war the corps had been informally adopted by the Brigade of Guards who assisted at and partially subsidised the FANY training camps at

Pirbright. Although all these carefully nurtured military links seem to have been of an unofficial nature the FANY leaders, Lilian Franklin and Grace Ashley-Smith, felt they had gained army approval and recognition and that

it was worth all the labour and the slogging, and the self-denial and discouragement – all the ups and downs, all the sneers and laughter – to be there at last – part of the army – yes, and with the best of it.<sup>14</sup>

Especially at the end of the 1914 summer camp, after a sympathetic interview with Sir Arthur Sloggett, Chief Commissioner of the British Red Cross, Ashley-Smith felt confident that her band of thirty or forty members would be offered a 'khaki role'. They were not.

Other upper-class women did not wait for the government to invite or disappoint them. They set up quasi-military organisations for themselves and they were quick off the mark. On 5 August 1914 (only the second day of hostilities) the Hon. Evalina Haverfield and Decima Moore set up the Women's Emergency Corps (WEC). Evalina Haverfield had been an active suffragette and by September 1914 she abandoned the rather dull but worthy WEC to set up the Women's Volunteer Reserve (WVR) which had a more glamorous, militarised ethos and much higher public profile. The WEC continued to function, as May Sinclair reminded the public in an article in the *Daily Chronicle*, 2 September, 1915, announcing that 'the Corps still has an interpreting depot and a Belgian clothing store'.<sup>15</sup> The WEC had a chapel in Carton Street, received clothes sent from all over the Empire and redistributed them to war victims. The remit was too tame for Haverfield's temperament.

The WVR under Evalina Haverfield and her new recruit, Miss Adair-Roberts, aimed at no less than to create a 'trained and efficient body of women whose services could be offered to the country at any time'. It was organised very much along military lines. Miss Adair-Roberts was designated a 'Senior Captain ...with a Company of her own which she ran from her home in Hampstead'. The WVR was London-based but recruited on a national basis and 'in a few months the reserve numbered many hundreds of trained women'. It was socially exclusive, voluntary, autonomous and expensive. The WVR appropriated khaki for their uniform colour and members wore 'khaki coat, skirt and felt hat, with shoes and puttees, cost £2. 10s'. Domestic servants earned five shillings a week at this date. The WVR recorded its numbers in military style so that the



'strength return' for 31 May, 1915, showed ' "A" Company consisted of eighty two members, three officers, eleven NCOs, fifty nine Trained Ranks and nine recruits. The Company drilled weekly and route-marched every three weeks.'<sup>16</sup>

In an illustration of the complexity of the matrix of gender/class politics, Figure 2.11 shows a publicity image of members of the WVR in a training exercise, in an exclusively female context, simultaneously signifying gender-politics radicals and class-politics conventionalists. We see the WVR, autonomous women, empowered in their khaki uniform. Yet they are also signifiers of their contemporaneous, male-dominated class power structure and ideology. The WVR are members of the upper class, exercising conventional authoritative power over the poor represented here at their most extreme, by the frail, old, charity-dependent workhouse women. It is unlikely that the destitute women were consulted about their feelings on role-playing in the WVR training exercise or being identifiable as workhouse inmates in a promotional photograph.

The WVR did not, in any case, achieve a favourable public image. In December, 1914, the Marchioness of Londonderry became the WVR's 'Colonel-in-Chief' though it was 'a title she disliked owing to its military connections'. She also 'disapproved what she considered to be their excessive militarism'.<sup>17</sup> Lady Londonderry became the public apologist for the WVR, addressing public meetings in an attempt to dispel popular anxieties about some kind of Amazon Army emerging. In London, in December 1914, at a 'large meeting held at the Mansion House under the presidency of the Lord Mayor' she was concerned that the influential audience 'should not go away with the idea that we had in mind the creation of a force of warlike Amazons capable of fighting side-by-side with our men in the fighting line'.<sup>18</sup> Her rhetoric failed to influence either WVR practices or public attitude and privately, in her memoirs, she recalled having to deal with a WVR 'Section of She-Men who wished to be armed to the teeth'.<sup>19</sup>

News of the WVR and a vision of its ethos had also travelled abroad and Lady Londonderry recalled that 'some of the letters I received were delightful'. From France a 'mistress of gymnastics' commended herself for membership, commenting 'I fire on target in all positions'.<sup>20</sup> The members of the WVR continued to parade in khaki and wore the uniform even when carrying out mundane tasks such as 'staffing YMCA canteens at railway stations and elsewhere, ambulance work, Red Cross work or

knitting woollies and socks for Lady French's Fund'. The WVR raised money through sales at bazaars, concerts, carol-singing, and even 'playing barrel organs around the streets in sweeping snow' to buy a YMCA hut for British soldiers in France.<sup>21</sup>

In summary, three aspects of the WVR's public profile particularly invited official and public hostility. Firstly, there was the discourse the WVR roused about gender. 'Letters appeared in the papers in insulting terms about "women masquerading as men", "aping them" was a favourite expression – all sorts of abuse.'<sup>22</sup> Secondly, Evalina Haverfield had been a Suffragette. In 1914, Emmeline Pankhurst chose to publish her autobiography at the date when, in the interests of patriotism, the Suffragettes set aside their campaigning for Votes for Women. Pankhurst's prose has a triumphalist tone as it ridicules leading members of the all-male government (who were still in office at the time of its publication). Pankhurst recalls how Suffragettes 'attended every meeting addressed by Mr. Churchill. We heckled him unmercifully; we spoiled his best points by flinging back such obvious retorts that the crowd roared with laughter .... We questioned Mr. Asquith in Sheffield, Mr. Lloyd George in Altrincham, Cheshire; the Prime Minister again at Glasgow'.<sup>23</sup>

The government was not likely to look favourably on any new women's organisation led by a former Suffragette. Although the WSPU had ceased campaigning, feminist organisations remained a source of political concern throughout the war and by 1918 were regarded as so potentially subversive that they were under surveillance by the new security service, MI5.<sup>24</sup> Pre-war conservative public opinion had demonised suffragettes. In their absence it readily turned its attention to the 'masculinised' women of the WVR led by a former suffragette. Lastly, and most significantly, the WVR was organised along military lines, seeking proficiency in military discipline 'on the barrack square' and 'inviting military instructors to teach them drill'.<sup>25</sup> The WVR used titles, jargon, command-structure, training activities and khaki uniform derived directly from the British Army and the public did not like it. A woman wrote (anonymously) to the editor of *The Morning Post* in July, 1915, asking if, indeed, there was not 'some regulation forbidding that the King's uniform be worn in such a manner as to bring it into contempt?'.<sup>26</sup>

Legislation on this issue was not forthcoming. What was forthcoming was an invitation from the army to Lady Londonderry. The army wanted to employ women but only as

cooks. WVR members were clearly the wrong class from which to secure such services and Lady Londonderry had in any case by this time given up on ideas of softening the WVR image or reality and decided to set up a rival organisation convinced that there were 'hundreds of women who were willing and anxious to help but most of them, as well as the work they were required to do, were unsuited to the quasi-military character of the WVR'.<sup>27</sup> So, paradoxically, Haverfield's militarised WVR went its own way in the civilian sector and Lady Londonderry invited Lilian Barker, who was employed at that time by the London County Council Women's Institute, to recruit a women's Cookery Section for the army. The new women's organisation, unlike the WVR or the FANY, obtained formal army recognition and its image and status were carefully managed. In order to mass-recruit, which was the objective, Lady Londonderry had already determined that the recruiting image must be conventionally womanly. The status of the new organisation was problematic. Technically the recruits would be 'camp followers', for centuries regarded as part of the army's civilian baggage train and often including female prostitutes. The new organisation had to be distanced from such associations. In order to successfully recruit the public image would have to be unimpeachably, above all else, respectable. Lady Londonderry's overall leadership went a long way to securing this, and to emphasise it the organisation was given an official corps title. It was called the Women's Legion (WL). Lady Londonderry designed the khaki uniform for the WL but ensured that it was sufficiently distanced from militaristic not to offend the feminine sensibilities of potential female recruits, nor offend male troops' dignity nor rouse media and public hostility about 'women in khaki'. The WL had the advantage of recruiting through the national network of Labour Exchanges and the recruits were in the paid employment of the army.

The realities of life and uniform in the WL were less sensitive and refined than these preparations suggested but by 3 August, 1915, the first group of WL female army cooks was dispatched to Dartford, even if 'Miss Barker had to seize the last two by the scruff of the neck and push them into the train'.<sup>28</sup> Decorum had decidedly 'gone west'. The recruits had been

celebrating (with alcohol?) the fact that women cooks were actually to be included in a War Office Department. They placed their hats on a rakish angle and kissed their hands to all and sundry. As the train steamed out of the station Miss Barker leaned out of the carriage window and said to me (Lady Londonderry) 'Just wait until I get them into camp!!'<sup>29</sup>

Until army uniforms became available recruits were issued with 'unattractive, brown overalls' but then chits were issued and recruits collected their official khaki uniforms from Selfridges store in London. The uniform consisted of 'khaki coat, skirt, blouse and tie, round felt hat, badge (designed by Lady Londonderry) showing the Figure of Victory, 2 pairs of stockings, a pair of gaberdine knickers with patch pocket, 2 khaki overalls and a pair of strong shoes'. Working-class and lower-middle-class women were the target recruitment group and they and their families must have found the uniform and the remit acceptable because, by winter, Lilian Barker found herself 'in charge of a concern that grew so fast that she could hardly keep pace with it'. By December, 1915, Lilian Barker, having set up all the infrastructure of the WL and having been proved a tough and efficient organiser, was transferred (on a paid basis) to organise at the Woolwich Arsenal. Mrs Burleigh Leach, 'wife of the Deputy Director of Personal (sic) Services at the War Office', took over the unpaid leadership role as titular Head of the Cookery Section though it is unlikely that at her social level she had ever so much as boiled an egg. This did not matter. What mattered was the image of a conventionally feminine, upper-class lady at the helm. It is an irony that while civilian WVR members in their unofficial khaki were regarded as offensively militaristic WL members, in their official khaki, were 'soon familiarly known as the 'Ladies with the Frying Pan'. This was because the Figure of Victory in the cap badge designed by Lady Londonderry held a laurel wreath in her hands which, 'in the distance could easily be mistaken for a frying pan' or so the male troops joked.

Such was the inauspicious nature of women's first direct service in army khaki. However, it was successful. By 1916 there were 'two thousand WL cooks in over a hundred camps' and Lady Londonderry was asked to expand the service to form a Motor Transport Section of the WL. She complied, and for this new role an appeal had to be made to middle and upper-middle-class women who possessed the necessary driving skills. This auxiliary work in France took the drivers near to combat zones and maybe because this gave added cachet to the role 'the Motor Transport Section of the Women's Legion (about a thousand drivers) was notorious for its independent-minded and self-sufficient women members'.<sup>30</sup> Also by 1916 the government back-pedalled in its attitude towards the FANY whose corps members had spent the period between 1914 and 1916 in the service of the Belgian Government where they had been accorded 'soldier' status which they must have found very conducive. However they 'never lost sight of their ambition to work with their own army' and in January 1916, as the 'Calais

Convoy', the FANY returned as a private, volunteer corps to drive motorised ambulances for the British Army.<sup>31</sup> Figure 2.12 shows members of the corps in France, wearing the expensive fur coats that were part of their self-designated uniform.

Increased participation of women in cooking and driving for the military is a reflection of how government and civilian attitudes were increasingly influenced by the realities of the scale of male recruitment necessary for total war. The momentum of women's participation in civilian war work is well documented in a large body of academic research and a Virago Press chronological anthology of Great War sources illustrates well how, willy-nilly, the British public became accustomed, and receptive, to the propaganda, rhetoric, policies and practicalities of what became known as 'dilution'.<sup>32</sup> The general principle of this unflattering metaphor was the replacement of skilled men by semi-skilled or unskilled men or women in civilian industrial and commercial contexts in order to release men to fight on the front lines of battlefields in France. For example, in 1914 there were 156 female clerks at the War Office. By the end of 1916 there were 8,000.<sup>33</sup>

This strategy was reinforced with some very manipulative and misleading visual images that disguised the dirty, and sometimes deadly, nature of the work involved. It was crucial to government's needs to put over the message that women doing mannish work, temporarily and for patriotic reasons was permissible, indeed exemplary, and entailed no loss of feminine charm or delicacy. So War Office photographer Horace Nicholls made it his 'concern' to showcase what looked attractively novel and motivating. For example, smiling young women with winsomely coal-smudged faces were photographed shifting heavy bags of coke.<sup>34</sup> Figure 2.13 shows an image of a woman tram conductor giving a ticket to a soldier conveying the message that without her the country would have one soldier fewer. Below this image is a propaganda photograph of Manchester Railway Depot with women engine-cleaners posed in a manner which suggests that engine-cleaning is just some kind of collectivised housework. Figure 2.14 shows a smiling, young munitions worker but Gail Braybon's research suggests that there was role-model subterfuge on the part of the government and that in reality most women working in munitions were middle aged.<sup>35</sup>

The press supplied complementary, fulsome rhetoric. For example, one publication reassured women that 'whoever you are – be you the carrier of letters, the driver of a

cart, the turner of the soil, the puncher of tickets – remember that you are a women and that you are helping to write the greatest page in the history of womanhood'.<sup>36</sup> The *Daily Telegraph* 'confessed' that 'two years ago the boldest would never have predicted the adaptability to the most diverse kind of work that women have shown'.<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, and in spite of every policy and propaganda effort, 'towards the end of 1916 the Director General of National Service had reached the end of the manpower resources of the country'.<sup>38</sup> This stark and frightening circumstance prompted the government to extend the principle of dilution beyond the civilian and into the military context. Women would be called on to replace male soldiers and be directly deployed into any roles, other than combat, that the army was willing to offer. This was no media hype or propaganda pat on the back for women many of whom were in reality doing much the type of work that they had done before the war in factories, shops and offices. This was culturally a huge decision with far-reaching implications for gender relations. Not least, how would non-combatant male troops respond to women soldiers introduced to do their jobs so that the men could be sent up the line to combat? Would women volunteer for a role that might push their own men-folk into almost certain death on the First World War front line? How might such a decision unbalance the conventional motivation of male troops, namely, to keep their women safe at home and for that vision to sustain their combat role? However, the immediate government concern was logistic not ideological and the Adjutant General's Department consulted the GHQ, British Armies in France and Flanders to find out if the Field Marshall Commanding-in-Chief would 'accept women in any capacity on the lines of communication or at bases'.<sup>39</sup>

General Lawson visited France. Mrs Leach (WL) visited France. Lawson, in his report to the Army Council, 16 January 1917, recommended employing women as ambulance drivers, clerks, storewomen, telegraphists, postal employees, orderlies, cooks and domestic servants. The Adjutant General, Sir Neville Macready, convened a meeting of all War Office branches with experience of employing women. Mrs Leach (WL) was also invited and expressed her view that members of the WL would welcome closer integration with the army. A report from Miss Rachel Crowdy, Commandant of Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADS) already in France, also recommended integration as the guiding principle. The VADS were volunteer, upper-class military nurses. Adjutant General Macready responded with a very radical proposal the advantage of which was its administrative simplicity. Women would be recruited directly into the

army on the integration principle. Women would replace men in non-combatant roles on a straightforward, one-for-one basis. The women so recruited would receive equal pay and rank with the men replaced and be subject to the same military rules, regulations and discipline. This extended to the commissioning of officers and promotion of NCOs. Equivalent ranks and grades should be clearly displayed so that proper respect be shown to officers whether they were male or female.

The finance branches of the War Office 'raised a storm of protest' and compromise could not be reached. The upshot was that those who held the purse-strings won the argument and by February the integration principle had been thrown out in favour of a complex and confusing 'auxiliary' route for women into the employ of the army. There would be a separate, female-only corps for the newly-recruited women.

Lord Derby, Secretary of State, held a meeting on 6 February 1917. He invited women who were crucial to the success of the new enterprise. Mrs Chalmers Watson, leader-designate of the proposed new corps for women was present. So was Mrs Tennant, newly appointed as Head of Women's Section, National Services and her deputy, Miss Violet Markham. They became responsible for the first phase of recruitment. Lord Derby was vague. All he could be certain of was that the women's corps 'would be uniformed and accommodated in War Office buildings rather than billeted'.

Such was the urgency of the exercise that 'within a day or two' Mrs Chalmers Watson was persuaded to accept leadership of a new women's service. The corps was to be called the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and Mrs Chalmers Watson's title would be 'Chief Controller' which did not sound in the least military. By 13 February Mrs Gwynne-Vaughan had been appointed as Chief Controller (Overseas). On 20 February a press release announced the formation of the WAAC. On 25 February, Mrs Gwynne-Vaughan left for France with Mrs Chalmers Watson and Colonel Leigh Wood.

This gave the cue to Captain Adair-Roberts of the WVR to resign her post and send a letter to her Company explaining that 'we can give a greater aggregate of our work to our country by being disbanded' and encouraging WVR members to join the new WAAC. Many did so, notably Blanche Ireland, who took charge of drill and training for Gwynne-Vaughan in France. Adair-Roberts was asked to join the WAAC but she refused. This unwillingness to serve as anything but leader is a characteristic of women

leading the paramilitaries and in the course of this thesis intense rivalry between them is frequently noted as a motif which seriously disadvantaged the development of women's military corps. Adair-Roberts was proud of her own accomplishments with the WVR and, in retrospect she wrote,

I don't think anyone realises or remembers that before the WAAC was started Lady Londonderry and Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan consulted me as to uniform, discipline, drill etc. etc. etc. for the proposed new Women's Army and that, in the earliest days after the WAAC came into being it was seven of the women I had myself trained who gave instruction and drilled the recruits. Later, when the first batch went to France it was my girls who got the responsible positions.<sup>40</sup>

The appointments of Gwynne-Vaughan and Chalmers Watson were made on a patronage basis by the men in charge of the war and offered to professional, socially well-connected, middle-aged women. A key comment on Gwynne-Vaughan's appointment is that 'she possessed one enormous asset ....she was indubitably a lady'. A set of aristocratic relations did the trick with the men sponsoring the corps. Mrs Gwynne-Vaughan, in the parlance of the military milieu, was 'all right'. Helen Gwynne-Vaughan (nee Fraser) was the widow of Professor David Gwynne-Vaughan and had since 1910 been a lecturer in Botany at Birkbeck College, London. She came from a military family and her father had served in the Scots Guards. She was thirty-eight years old when appointed WAAC Chief Controller in France and she had no children. Mary Chalmers Watson was forty-four years old at the time of her appointment. She was the sister of Brigadier General Auckland Campbell Geddes, who, in 1916, was Director of Recruiting at the War Office. She was a medical practitioner; the first woman to obtain a medical degree from Edinburgh University. There is an interesting evidence of professional women's networking in these appointments. Dr. Elisabeth Garrett-Anderson was a mutual friend of Gwynne-Vaughan and Chalmers Watson. Before the war she had set up a Women's Suffrage Society at Birkbeck College with Gwynne-Vaughan and recommended her to Chalmers Watson for the WAAC post in France, knowing that Chalmers Watson, who had young children, would not take on overseas service.<sup>41</sup>

The official setting-up arrangements for the WAAC involved a frustrating and hasty process, confrontational, crisis-driven and finance-led. The legal and logistical issues of



deployment had not been thought through as 'would-be recruits flocked to the Labour Exchange'.

The analysis turns here to focus in detail on issues of WAAC recruitment, propaganda and public image. The initial phase of recruitment was organised by the National Service Department, Publicity (hereafter NSDP) in liaison with Mrs Curnock, Press Representative in the National Service Department, Women's Section (NSDWS). Budgets and meticulous financial accounts were kept and these are recorded in the National Archives (NA) File NATS/1320: *Publicity Matters* which contains a detailed Report of the System for Press Advertising. The recruiting process was via Labour Exchanges to local WAAC Selection Boards or by direct application to the NSDWS. The first WAAC recruits arrived in Boulogne by the end of March 1917.

The national structure for recruiting was clear. Britain was divided into eight sectors, each directed by a District Commissioner. That logistics and policies were less clear is evidenced in correspondence between the harassed Miss Woodgate, District Commissioner for Yorkshire and East Midlands and her Head Office. She had neither the staff nor facilities to cope with the number of enquiries. Woodgate urged Head Office

that no further appeal is to be made at present for domestic workers.....these people write continually to know whether their services are required and it will naturally create a very bad impression if further appeals appear in the press before the original ones have been disposed of.<sup>42</sup>

Her frustration is reflected as the letter progresses. What should be done with applicants outside age-limits? What is to be done about a leaflet giving clerical workers information about uniform that does not agree with that given to candidates by Mrs Andrews?

Woodgate's hand-written, flustered letter contrasts sharply with the typed, cool, rather patronising response from Head Office suggesting that,

it might perhaps save you a good deal of work if in sending out forms you attached a printed slip saying that correspondence could not be entered into....I do not understand the discrepancy between information given in the leaflet and that given to the candidate by Mrs Andrews as the £4 grant is mentioned quite

definitely in the Army Council Instruction...I shall have the matter looked into.<sup>43</sup>

The whole exchange is redolent of the scramble-start of 'learning on the job', improvising bureaucratic processes and documentation to deal with the urgency of the recruitment needs. It is likely that Woodgate's circumstances were characteristic of those of the other regional recruiting Commissioners.

Between February and July 1917, the recruiters did everything possible to raise the public profile of the WAAC and popularise it. Recruiting advertising strategies were diverse and tenacious in approach and deployment of media. Three press agencies were used. Advertising space was bought in local newspapers to rouse interest ahead of any local recruitment effort. All the national newspapers were used for general campaigns. Advertisements for the WAAC appeared in religious publications and women's magazines. Space was hired to display posters in railway stations, on buses, in cinemas, pubs, shops, workplaces, on public hoarding-boards and in the London Underground. Documentary films were commissioned about the WAAC; 'real-life' testimonials from serving WAACs and male soldiers were used as publicity material. Special recruiting events and exhibitions were organised. Prioritised propaganda themes, as examples below show, were patriotism per se, regional pride, backing the lads, reassuring parents about recruits' welfare, the glamour of service and uniform, the social life in the WAAC, opportunity to travel and escape from domestic service.

London, with its massive population concentration, was particularly targeted. On 11 May 1917 a press release announced a London recruitment campaign which would involve 'eight department stores...giving up space to a generous display of photographs, uniforms and terms and conditions of service...'.<sup>44</sup> In a cooperative gesture the enrolment tables were staffed by non-military women's voluntary organisations, such as the WEC.

On 14 May a press release reported the huge success of the exercise under the headline 'Propaganda Week in the West End'. There had been an embarrassment but even that was reported, with good humour, that

Selfridges attracted great crowds throughout the weekend, people waiting in long queues to have a good view. The wax figure which wore the Women's

Army Auxiliary Corps clerk's uniform could not bear the honour all day under the blazing sun and gradually melted away, to the amusement of the crowd.<sup>45</sup>

On 19 May the success was followed up by the opening, at the invitation of the Lord Mayor, of a WAAC recruiting depot at the Mansion House. Under a sub-heading 'The Amazon Army' is an assurance that

The city girl who enlists in the WAAC may consider herself a soldier in all but combatant sense. She will wear the neat uniform of the WAAC, khaki frock coat, great coat, brown boots and becoming felt hat.<sup>46</sup>

There is even a suggestion of competition between London and the provinces as to 'which city can turn out the smartest girls for the Amazon Army'. The sub-text suggests a beauty competition rather than military recruitment.

It is difficult to over-estimate the significance of uniform as a key recruitment hook. The offer of khaki uniform, though it undoubtedly offended those who aligned themselves with a conventionalist viewpoint, nevertheless denoted work of national importance as opposed to the uniform that, already worn by many potential working-class recruits, denoted domestic triviality and inconsequentiality.

However, a clear distinction, with strong class sub-text, was drawn between the uniform designed for ordinary members of the WAAC and that designed for its officers. Figure 2.15 shows the designs for the ordinary members' uniform. The style brings domestic service clothing to mind but the frock-coat was khaki and there was an army-style khaki great-coat and that was clearly something for recruits to get excited about; it was a Women's Army uniform and key image in recruitment posters such as that shown as Figure 2.16.

The officers' uniform, shown as Figure 2.17, is much more expensive-looking and exciting, authoritative in style, its jacket modelled on the male military tunic. The uniform skirts were 'considered most daringly short as they were twelve inches off the ground' and Figure 2.17 shows an assertive officer stepping out smartly into action.<sup>47</sup> The innovative, militarised peaked cap featured in the design was only worn by WAAC officers serving with Gwynne-Vaughan in France and is indicative of her ethos. More conventionally feminine round felt hats were worn at home and the officers' greatcoat

had the luxurious addition of a large fur collar, a civilian symbol of female affluence and fashion.

Concern to keep distinction between officers and members, and by implication between the classes, even ran to the use of raincoat belts. WAACs of all ranks were permitted to buy 'civilian pattern drab waterproofs' because they were not issued with raincoats but only officers were allowed to wear them with belts. Gwynne-Vaughan recalled a WAAC ordinary member who refused to go out with an un-belted raincoat and 'when asked why she blushed engagingly and said "oh, ma'am it would be so bad for the reputation of the corps"'.<sup>48</sup> She clearly meant that she might be thought pregnant. Gwynne-Vaughan looped the belt through the side-slots and across the back and tied it there, satisfying the regulations and also the sensitivities of the recruit.

The uniform was, of course, satirised. For example, Figure 2.18 invited a laugh by showing 'Our Amazon Corps Standing Easy' and suggesting that, put women in whatever seriously symbolic clothing you may, their predominating concern will always be how they look in it and how they can make it look sexier.

Be that as it may, it was clearly believed by the WAAC recruiters that women and girls in uniform had caught the public imagination. A press release of 30 May 1917 announced that eight major London cinemas would be screening a film showing 'girls in training for service in France ...with pictures of well set-up and well-uniformed girls'.<sup>49</sup>

The provinces were targeted with press releases that contained basically the same flattering message but tailored to each region. For example, Lancashire was targeted through Blackpool local papers, appealing to local pride, assuring readers that

the Lancashire lads have been amongst the most gallant in the country. The time has now come when Lancashire lasses are asked to back the lads....sisters and sweethearts are asked to join the WAAC to serve in France.<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, the Midlands was targeted, with the same propaganda theme, through the Birmingham press, as the WAAC advertised for

more girl clerks for France.... The patriotism of this district has rung true ever since the war was declared and the sisters of the boys who have gone overseas are not likely to lag behind.<sup>51</sup>

In the West Country, advertisements for the WAAC reminded readers how

the soldiers of Devon and Cornwall, Somerset and Dorset have proved themselves to be among the most gallant in the country .. it now lies with the girls and women of the South West to show how great can be their patriotism....<sup>52</sup>

The recruiters also targeted potential recruits by occupation group. For example, there was a desperate shortage of clerks among the applicants. The NSDWS conducted research into clerks' reluctance to join up and, in a 'like might attract like' strategy, the researcher suggested

taking an empty shop for one, two or even three weeks....we might have one or two women clerks in uniform with bunches of ribbon in their hats acting as recruiting sergeants. Town Halls have been suggested but women are a little afraid of going up steps to a Town Hall.<sup>53</sup>

This last comment is indicative of the perceived lack of social confidence of the women being sought. The recruiters also targeted laundresses, cooks and telephonists by occupation-specific approaches.

The recruiters were also aware of the need to recruit on a class-specific basis. For example, a press advertisement placed in the Sunday papers on 6 May, 1917, had notified that there were

150 women wanted at once as scrubbers and washers-up to serve with the British Army in France. Age 20–40. Wages £20 per annum. Uniform allowance £4, With board and lodging and all expenses found.

On 10 May E. H. Hobbs, (NSPD) wrote to Mrs Curnock, (NSDWS) suggesting prioritising the use of *The Sunday Pictorial* and the *Sunday Herald* 'in view of the tremendous and universal circulation of these two papers, a very large percentage of whose readers are to be found among the class to whom the advert is addressed'.<sup>54</sup>

By June 1917 the recruiters were in a position to campaign in the press using 'real life' testimonials from serving WAACs and male soldiers. A few examples will serve to give the flavour of these publications. One testimonial presented a tempting picture of leisure shared with men

Yesterday we had a cricket match. Men vs. WAACs. The men won in spite of playing left handed. Our Administrator is charming.<sup>55</sup>

Another press release featured a 'Ballad composed in Honour of the Splendid English Girls of the British Officers' Clubs, Abbeville' expressing such sentiments as

Bless their neat little figures and bright, cheery faces  
Their modest demeanour and manifold graces.<sup>56</sup>

Figure 2.19 shows the 'splendid English girls' at Abbeville and, indeed, 'modest demeanour' is a dominant feature. However, flattery and praise from serving officers was judged to be a good recruiting ploy though the use of 'splendid English girls' rather than 'splendid British girls' might not have gone down too well with the three other indigenous nations of the British Isles.

A batch of testimonials, under the heading, 'WAAC Life in France', claimed that

the girls have sent back such attractive accounts of work and life in France that no parent or guardian need have any doubt....about the wise, though not dictatorial supervision organised by the cultured and experienced women in charge.

One of these accounts described a garden party, hosted by soldiers, where 'no one would have known there was a war on if our hosts had not been in service khaki'. Another described 'our luxurious huts...it is impossible to describe how luxurious they are'. A third complimented the uniform, emphasising 'how cool our frocks are in spite of the texture... the frocks are loosely made and short in the skirt...the one who designed the frock was a genius, and certainly a woman'. A fourth declared 'what we appreciate so much is the cheery welcome the Boys have given us. They are frankly glad to have us'.<sup>57</sup>

These officially published images and comments contrast sharply with the jokes which former WAAC Marjorie Hay recalled were doing the rounds with servicemen when she was in France. Hay recalled men asking 'What is the difference between a WAAC and a VAD?' and the answer given was 'The VAD (nurse) comes out here to try and save a man's life. The WAAC only comes out to push him up the line to be killed'. WAACs were accused of 'only coming out after men' and one man complained, 'What's the point of us chaps fighting to keep the wimmin (sic) and kids safe at home when they won't stay in the 'omes what we're fighting to keep em in'.<sup>58</sup> According to Hay, as far as letters home were concerned 'in the WAAC camp if our letters were more candid than kind the envelope was usually returned to the sender with her revolutionary remarks neatly packed inside, torn into small fragments' and if there was further offence the offender would be 'On the Mat'.<sup>59</sup> As for being admired and respected by men, Hay recollected that 'even the Chinese coolie male labour force had an insolent way of leering at us and would sometimes call out impudently as we went by, "Wak-Wak, no gooda-la"'.<sup>60</sup>

By the end of June the recruiters were targeting holiday resorts, holding public meetings on the sands, setting up information bureaux and publicity offices, providing posters for boarding houses, pillar boxes, organising shop window displays and slide-packs for cinemas.<sup>61</sup> By July working-class women were being targeted very bluntly and, in a high-risk recruitment strategy, were even accused of being unpatriotic compared with white-collar workers.<sup>62</sup>

In recruitment terms, things seemed to be going well by September 1917 as the WL cooks, housemaids and waitresses in Britain were transferred to the WAAC and the NSDP/NSDWS, having established the WAAC as a successful brand image, handed over recruitment to the Ministry of Labour. Recruitment flourished and 'throughout the Third Battle of Ypres, the following winter (1917) and the German counter-attack of March 1918, the strength of the WAAC in France grew steadily'.<sup>63</sup> The women were primarily employed as domestic workers, clerks and signallers but new duties, such as tending war graves, began to be allocated to the WAAC and it was in France that future developments in women's military service found their first expression.

While February to September 1917, had been very successful in recruitment terms there were problems about WAAC status and the ethos of the corps had developed into a

contested issue between the War Office and Chief Controller in France, Helen Gwynne-Vaughan. The problem about status was that WAACs, serving as women soldiers in France, were not covered by The Geneva Convention as nurses were. The only ready-made category into which they could be put and protected under The Army Act was 'camp followers', a term long associated in the military mind with prostitution. For the sake of administrative convenience, it became the official designation of the WAAC but only after 'interminable discussions'. Ultimately it was a civilian decision; there was 'a note in the Adjutant General's handwriting that the Secretary of State (May 8) had ruled that the WAAC should be "civilian"'.<sup>64</sup>

In terms of hierarchy the WAAC, in common with the male army, replicated civilian class structure. Those from the upper class became the 'top brass', middle-class women filled supervisory roles, working-class women were the rank and file members/privates. However, the WAAC was not allowed to replicate male military titles. Mrs Chalmers Watson and Mrs Gwynne-Vaughan were designated Chief Controllers. Those in supervisory roles were Administrators/Assistant Administrators. Below them were the ordinary Members, recruited and classified by occupation.<sup>65</sup> Chalmers Watson, London-based, reported to Gwynne-Vaughan in France on War Office views in which male sensitivities and possessiveness about military insignia and practices are much in evidence, as

Major Corsellis.. wouldn't even allow a reference to them (WAACs) standing to attention...General Childe was quite heated about saluting...(as for badges) oak leaves, Crowns and Crosses are all taboo. It is too childish.<sup>66</sup>

Gwynne-Vaughan had designed her own insignia which 'from a distance resembled the crossed sword and baton of a Brigadier-General'<sup>67</sup> and got into hot water when she referred to some WAACs as 'NCOs'. This issue was considered so important that the Adjutant General was dispatched to France to tell her personally that 'grave exception was taken to the word officer as applied to women, that saluting could not be made compulsory, that there could be badges of some sort but unlikely to be a statement of equivalent (to male) rank'.<sup>68</sup> In May, 1917, Chalmers Watson warned Gwynne-Vaughan that as far as the War office was concerned, 'two points absolutely final – no gold braid, no saluting' and that she had been admonished, '“Can you keep your lady in France in order? I hear she is very....” – eyes raised'.<sup>69</sup>



Whatever the War Office felt, the notion was implicit in the title of the corps that it was a Women's Army, albeit auxiliary. Even War Office designation of feminine floral emblems for the WAAC did not prevent an official press release from wrongly describing the 'roses and fleur-de-lys' badges as being used 'to distinguish officers and non-commissioned officers'.<sup>70</sup> The War Office had no intention of fostering a WAAC image to rival that of Sergeant Flora Sands, shown in Figure 2.20 in a celebration of heroic military action, but France was too far from London for day-to-day War Office monitoring and the WAACs began to improvise procedure and build a military ambience into their everyday activities. Their Chief Controller shared their preferences. For example, on arrival in France Gwynne-Vaughan had immediately abandoned the approved WAAC khaki female-style cap with khaki veil at the back for a peaked, masculine cap.<sup>71</sup> Her ex-WAAC friend and biographer recalled the 'glamour' which 'military identity' held for Gwynne-Vaughan.<sup>72</sup> Figure 2.21 shows Chief Controller Gwynne-Vaughan wearing her peaked cap, gaze averted, in iconic mode, with womanly wedding ring prominently displayed yet clearly quite at home in her tailored, military jacket, shirt and tie. This is the 'lady in France' who raised eyebrows at the War Office and 'in France waitresses and housemaids were called orderlies whatever the regulations said and saluting was customary although it was forbidden at home'.<sup>73</sup> The WAAC attracted recruits such as Blanche Ireland, who had been a 'lieutenant' in the pre-war WVR and she was appointed as an Administrator in charge of training women in military discipline and drill.<sup>74</sup> A marching-song proclaimed, with defiant humour,

We are the Women's A- a- a-rmy  
 The W A A C  
 We cannot shoot, we cannot fight  
 What earthly use are we?  
 But when we get to Ber-er-lin  
 The Kayser he-ee wi-ll sa-ay  
 'Hoch, hoch, Great Scott,  
 What a jolly fine lot  
 Are the W A A C'<sup>75</sup>

With classic irony, Gwynne-Vaughan asked Colonel Leigh-Hunt, Assistant Adjutant General, if his wife would like to join the WAAC. His reply was scathing and in the negative, adding for good measure, 'My wife, Mrs Gwynne-Vaughan, is a truly feminine woman'.<sup>76</sup> Figure 2.22 shows portraits of 'Worthy Women Honoured by Grateful Men'. They are VAD members (nurses) photographed in civilian, debutante-style poses. This is undoubtedly what Colonel Leigh-Hunt had in mind as 'truly

feminine'. Juxtaposed with Gwynne-Vaughan's portrait the contrast of image is marked.

Throughout the late Summer and Autumn months of 1917 the Ministry of Labour conducted excellent public relations exercises for the WAAC in France, including a Royal Visit,<sup>77</sup> and organised visits of British and French women journalists with the outcome that 'resulting publicity in Great Britain and France was excellent'.<sup>78</sup> In November 1917 G.H. Roberts, Minister of Labour, launched a high-profile recruiting campaign in Trafalgar Square. This is shown in Figure 2.23. The Ministry of Labour kept the newspapers 'flooded with information' and there are emotive, quasi-religious descriptions of 'the light falling from the high windows...on the fair haired, khaki-clad English girls' as they work in the Records Office, based in the Archbishop's Palace in Rouen.<sup>79</sup> Despite this, there was some hostile press, concentrating on perceived masculinising and militaristic traits in the WAAC. One journalist, in December 1917, even described the corps as 'Tommy-WAACs'. There were also satirical postcards; one showed German officers in retreat before the WAAC and another showed German officers lying on the ground in terror, proclaiming 'Goot gracious me! Here kom der WAAC!' Molly Izzard recalled a *Punch* cartoon which showed a Scottish (clearly a 'dig' at Gwynne-Vaughan) male officer gathering up his kilt and curtseying to a WAAC officer.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, in the same month, 'thousands of townsfolk' and 'soldiers from the Rest Camp' at Dover cheered as WAAC recruits passed.<sup>81</sup> In January 1918 'parties of war workers' were sent to France at regular intervals, lavishly entertained in public relations exercises. Gwynne-Vaughan was 'ordered to go as often as possible to the chateaux,' dine with the guests and give after-dinner speeches.<sup>82</sup>

The experiment in female soldiering appeared to be successful but from November 1917 rumours began to spread about the sexual misconduct of members of the WAAC with male soldiers. It was a nightmare for the leaders of the corps. An impeccable moral image was crucial to home-front confidence and support for the WAAC. Recruitment would be severely damaged if the allegations were not disproved. Worse than any hostile press was the implication and some evidence that the accusations originated within the armed services, even from within the WAAC itself. For example, a statement was sent to WAAC Headquarters by a WAAC Unit Administrator to advise that

Forewoman Harris, during the course of conversation informed me that 200 women of the WAACs had returned to England from Boulogne alone in a state of pregnancy and that she had herself taken one to the boat a few days previously who was in this condition.<sup>83</sup>

and a serving member of the WAAC told her friend how

I went up one day and found the (male) Sergeant with a girl on either knee and we all had tea and another Sergeant came in and a girl sat on his knee. No superior of any kind, and no girl made responsible. Isn't it asking for trouble?<sup>84</sup>

No wonder there were saucy male jokes circulating at home asking, 'Would you rather have a slap in the eye or a WAAC on the knee?'<sup>85</sup>

Correspondence between the Chief Controllers shows that Chalmers Watson had tracked down some of the sources of the allegations and was willing to speculate on others. On 10 November 197 she wrote urgently to Gwynne-Vaughan that

all this horrible mess has not been stirred up without stories of all sorts. France and the Southern Command are our worst storm centres. Stories of drum majoring of women ...rough, harsh, unsympathetic treatment .....scathing treatment of Administrators by Chief Controller in France ....I fear we won't get this question down without a scape-goat being made of some of us.<sup>86</sup>

Chalmers Watson wrote to Gwynne-Vaughan again on 10 December, a three-page document that advised, amongst other things, that

I think we must tackle the growing mass of lies regarding behaviour in France. The statistical results are simply extraordinarily good but in spite of this the mass of calumny goes on rising. I have 3 separate cases. I hope to be able to fix one of them sufficiently for a law case.... The statements are

1. 90 women from Rouen sent back for misconduct – asserter a woman government official
2. Maternity home – round which the asserter –a soldier – said he had done sentry go
3. A maternity home, 800 beds, every encouragement to procreate, £50 bonus to each woman and adoption by the State – asserter – a VAD Commandant who is quite purposed to have her name published. From Scotland a very nice lady writes that her girls (servants) won't join because they hear that no WAAC who has been in France will have no (sic) character left and no one will care to employ them ....a decent old Colonel asserts that not hundreds

but thousands he knows for a fact have been sent home for ...then he rolled his eyes.

There follows an astute list of possible sources of discontent, including mistresses at home who do not want to lose servants, jealous VADS, German propaganda and men at home jealous of girls getting other male acquaintances.<sup>87</sup>

On 24 January 1918 the *Daily Sketch* reported on the 'wild and varying stories about the relations between the rank and file of the WAAC and the Regular Army'<sup>88</sup> and it is noteworthy that the finger of suspicion only pointed at the working-class rank and file. In February 1918, at the height of press publicity on the matter, Chalmers Watson resigned from the WAAC. Although her resignation was officially attributed to family and contractual reasons it could readily be interpreted as signalling her failure and, by association, the failure of the professional WAAC. *The Times* headline on 20 February 1918 was 'Changes in the WAAC'. Other newspapers reported that 'the whole scheme had been unworkable and the women were not a success'.<sup>89</sup> The WAAC's highest-ranking officers were called 'Chief Controllers' and they were perceived as having failed to control and police the morals of the lower ranks. The British middle class has historically assumed moral policing of the poor, especially poor girls, who were believed to be 'naturally' pleasure-seeking and sexually promiscuous if left to their own devices, and predators of the sons of better-off families. *The Times* stressed the homely WL Cookery-Section background of Chalmers Watson's successor, Mrs Burleigh Leach, whose opinion was that the 'schoolmistress type of Administrator was not always a desirable one for dealing with women drawn from many different districts and classes'.<sup>90</sup> Florence Leach had only ever been titular head of the WL Cookery Section. Cowper described her rather dismissively as 'a social butterfly'<sup>91</sup> but Marjorie Hay, who had served in the WAAC, was inclined to agree with Florence Leach and recalled 'I think a good many WAAC officers had been schoolmistresses before they joined up' and that 'the Area Controller was sort of like Napoleon ....her eyes poking straight through you and out the other side'.<sup>92</sup>

Photographs of Mrs Chalmers Watson and Mrs Burleigh Leach appeared in a 1918 recruitment propaganda publication, *Eve in Khaki*. Mrs Chalmers Watson's photograph, shown in Figure 2.24, is used for the Frontispiece and the title emphasises that she was the 'First Chief Controller of the WAAC', almost as if she were a figure from history

although the WAAC had barely been operational for a year. Mrs Burleigh Leach's 'camera portrait', shown in Figure 2.25, appears at the close of 16 pages of enthusiastic invitation to potential WAAC recruits and the title emphasises that she is the 'Present Chief Controller of the WAAC'. The contrast of image between the two women is marked. Mrs Chalmers Watson is presented in her working environment as a married, professional soldier-woman with text-books on her desk, military insignia on her shoulder and a wedding ring prominently displayed in the foreground. Her gaze is direct, her mouth down-turned, her hair-style old-fashioned for 1918. The impression given is of a rather stern, impersonal practitioner. Mrs Burleigh Leach is presented, without context, as an immaculately groomed socialite, relaxed and smiling. Her gaze is averted, in iconic mode, and her felt hat brim forms a halo around her head. The tailored WAAC greatcoat is softened by the addition of the large fur collar, an envied fashion accessory at this date. Her hair curls softly, a la mode, onto her cheekbone. The propaganda suggestion is that, by association with its new leader, the WAAC has been transformed, modernised, and feminised. Tension between academic, professional women and socialite, home-based women will be examined further in the context of the ideology of the inter-war years in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Mrs Burleigh Leach's first and embarrassing task was to swear an affidavit in which she declared that no member of the corps had ever been requisitioned or sent to France for any immoral purpose whatsoever.<sup>93</sup> The upshot of all the unrest was that the Ministry of Labour instigated an official Parliamentary Inquiry in March 1918 into the morals of the WAAC in France and, astutely, appointed a team of highly-esteemed women to form the official Commission. On 5 March 1918 *The Times* announced 'WAAC Inquiry in France'. The Commission appointees were Miss Violet Markham, who had been Assistant Director of the NSDWS, Miss Carlin (Dock and General Workers' Union, Wales), Miss Varley (Workers' Union), Miss Ritson (Women's Friendly Society of Scotland) and Mrs Deane Streatfield.<sup>94</sup> Just three days later

on March 8<sup>th</sup> Helen Gwynne-Vaughan and the Commission returned to Abbeville in a much improved frame of mind ...one administrator had the impression that when the Commission reached Rouen they were far more interested in Joan of Arc than the WAAC.<sup>95</sup>

That may have been the case but new policies were quickly introduced in an attempt to modify the appearance and behaviour of WAAC 'other ranks'. Breast pockets, thought

to emphasise the bustline, were removed from uniform, saluting was approved and the rule forbidding fraternisation between male officers and men of other ranks was extended to include male officers and women of other ranks.<sup>96</sup> This was very unpopular.

The Commission's tour of WAAC camps in France resulted in a report that completely exonerated the corps. The report was published immediately but was buried under the home publicity accorded to a big German offensive. What is noteworthy is that, in the process of exoneration, the corps' title (WAAC) disappeared. In what was a consummately shrewd piece of image-management Queen Mary became the Commandant-in-Chief of the WAAC. The 'Women's Army Auxiliary Corps' became the 'Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps' (QMAAC). The new recruiting poster, shown as Figure 2.26, shows how a drab uniform can be enhanced by golden tones and the attractive image of a pink-cheeked, smiling young woman, beckoning to others to join her. Cowper noted how

publicity at home had taken a new turn after Her Majesty had assumed the appointment of Commandant-in-Chief. Journalists flocked to France to see the Corps and all War Diaries record their visits. Photographs of the women appeared in newspapers under such headings as 'Slanders on WAAC's Triumphantly Disproved', 'WAACs at the Western Front', 'Work of the WAACs in France' and even 'WAACs work in Playtime' under a photograph of men and women supposedly playing hockey although correctly dressed in hats and caps. The caption explained how this exercise contributed to the recovery of wounded soldiers. Extracts from the report of the Commission of Enquiry were still being printed in the middle of April and the whispering campaign was stemmed, but it was not altogether stopped.<sup>97</sup>

Figures 2.27a and 2.27b show newly-exonerated QMAAC members, on duty in France, May 1918, enjoying the beach, bathing and company of Allied Forces male soldiers.

In June nine WAAC personnel were killed in an enemy air raid on Abbeville. It was a defining moment. They were the first British military women ever to die on active service and they were buried with full military honours. Male soldiers lined the route to the cemetery, standing to attention and saluting as the coffins passed. A journalist wrote 'this incident, they feel, has confirmed their right to khaki and makes them one in sympathy and in sacrifice with the fighting forces'.<sup>98</sup> Gwynne-Vaughan was transferred from the WAAC in 1918 to lead the Women's Royal Air Force following the resignation of Violet Douglas-Pennant. In November 1918 the war ended.

This chapter has mapped the route, from 1900 to 1918, by which the public actions of women in minority cultures raised the social profile of their gender in politically militant and military contexts. It has assessed the cultural input of individual women, women's organisations, conservatism and the British class system. It has exposed pressures for social change, revealing deep tensions between attempts to preserve traditional norms of femininity and attempts to establish new definitions of it and shown the strength of the radical position by 1914. It has also shown how it took a wartime catastrophe to place women in the King's uniform. Soldiering was the uniquely new, shock role for women in the war, its significance evidenced in that it was conceded only as a measure of truly last resort in 1917. Nevertheless, and because of the exigencies of war, British women wore army khaki ahead of having the right to vote for, or against, the government that recruited them – a circumstance which would have seemed most unlikely in 1913.

The WAAC experience can be presented as a glass more than half full which is the position taken in most autobiographies and memoirs and by official corps biographers. It can also be presented as a glass more than half empty by those who take the view that the way the WAAC personnel were kept away from 'real' (combat) soldiering meant a reinforcement of traditional gender-relations rather than a pioneering break-through.<sup>99</sup> My study of recruitment, public image and state propaganda across the female paramilitaries and the WAAC in this chapter suggests that within either of these interpretations there is room to recognise the social significance of how much the idea of being military women caught the imagination of thousands of recruits, cross-class, by the end of the war. The image and identity of the military woman caught the public imagination too, fuelling both anxieties and admiration. Perhaps most importantly, recent research suggests that it also caught the imagination of male troops and that

in their assertion of combatant masculinity their response to women was to condemn the behaviour of some women during the war – just as they condemned the behaviour of some men – but to praise the women auxiliaries whom they regarded as representing the best British women, just as combatants represented the best British men.<sup>100</sup>

Most of all, this chapter has shown how the WAAC experience was a steep learning curve alike for the home-front public, the government, army men and all the women who had, for the first time in British history, served in a war-zone, with the British

Army, as soldiers. By 1918 military women had become a recognised, though ambivalent and contentious, presence in national life and consciousness. War had certainly not put women 'in their place' in the manner hoped for by opponents of the pre-war suffragettes. But what would happen to British military women when the war was over?



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> View expressed to Lady Londonderry by male newspaper editor in 1914, in Lady Londonderry, *Retrospect*, Frederick Muller and Sons Ltd., London, 1938, p. 108.
- <sup>2</sup> J. B. Priestley, *The Edwardians*, Sphere Books Ltd., 1970, p. 221.
- <sup>3</sup> NA, Source Sheet 16, 'Suffragettes', distributed at the NA Conference, *Dare to be Free: An examination of the legacy of the campaign for the Woman's Vote*, November 2003. File References HO 144: Registered Papers, Supplementary and HO 45: Home Office Registered Papers.
- <sup>4</sup> Fashion details taken from Elizabeth Ewing, *History of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fashion*, Batsford Ltd., London, 1974, pp. 22, 43, 44, 54, 75 and 78.
- <sup>5</sup> Lady Londonderry, *Retrospect*, 1938, op. cit., p. 105.
- <sup>6</sup> Patrick Rooke, *Women's Rights*, Wayland Documentary History Series, Wayland Publishers, London, 1977, p. 102. See also Laura E Nym Mayhall, *The Militant Suffrage Movement: Citizenship and Resistance*, Oxford University Press, 2003 and Martin Pugh, *The March of the Women*, Oxford University Press, 2000.
- <sup>7</sup> NA, Source Sheet 16, 'Suffragettes', op. cit. File References HO 144: Registered papers: Supplementary and MEPO 2: Office of the Commissioner. Correspondence and papers. MEPO 2/1448 records the 'arrest of two hundred suffragettes for assaults on police' (1911 – 1912). Quotation taken from brochure of Exhibition, *Art for Votes' Sake*, at the Women's Library, London Metropolitan University, 2 October to 20 December, 2003.
- <sup>8</sup> Lady Londonderry, *Retrospect*, 1938, op. cit., p. 108.
- <sup>9</sup> J. B. Priestley, *The Edwardians*, 1970, op. cit., p. 218.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Virago Book of Women and the Great War*, Joyce Marlowe (ed.), Virago, 1999, pp. 91,103.
- <sup>11</sup> *The War Illustrated*, 6 January, 1917, Vol. 5, p. 483.
- <sup>12</sup> Colonel Julia M Cowper, 'Women in the Fighting Services' in *Brassey's Annual, The Armed Forces Year Book*, Rear-Admiral H.G. Thursfield (ed.), William Clowes and Sons Ltd., London, The Macmillan Company, 1957, p. 289.
- <sup>13</sup> Angela Woollacott, 'Khaki Fever and its Control' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 29, No. 2, April, 1994, pp. 325-347. See also Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarisation of Women's Lives*, Pluto Press, 1983.
- <sup>14</sup> Hugh Popham, *FANY; The Story of the Women's Transport Service, 1907–1984*, Secker and Warburg, 1984, p. 12.

- <sup>15</sup> *The Virago Book of Women and the Great War*, 1999, op. cit., p. 92.
- <sup>16</sup> Details from 'Uniformed Volunteer: Captain Roberts' in *The First World War: A Great Conflict recalled in previously unpublished letters, diaries and memoirs*, Malcolm Brown (ed.), Sidgwick and Jackson, London, in association with the IWM, 1993, p. 191.
- <sup>17</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-575. Papers of Col Julia M. Cowper. Draft of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, pp. 3-4.
- <sup>18</sup> Lady Londonderry, *Retrospect*, 1938, op. cit., p. 112.
- <sup>19</sup> Jenny Gould, 'Women's Military Services in First World War Britain' in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the two World Wars*, M. Higonnet et al (eds), Yale University Press, 1987, p. 118.
- <sup>20</sup> Lady Londonderry, *Retrospect*, 1938, op. cit., p. 113.
- <sup>21</sup> 'Uniformed Volunteer: Captain Roberts', op. cit., p. 191.
- <sup>22</sup> Lady Londonderry, *Retrospect*, 1938, op. cit., p. 112.
- <sup>23</sup> Patrick Rooke, *Women's Rights*, Wayland Documentary History Series, Wayland, 1972, p. 102.
- <sup>24</sup> *M15: The First Ten Years, 1909 – 1919*, Introduction by Christopher Andrew, NA Publication, London, 1997. See also June Purvis and Sandra Stanley Holton (eds), *Votes for Women*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1998, for analysis of the militant and constitutional wings of the suffrage movement. Dierdre Beddoe, in *Discovering Women's History*, Pandora, 1983, suggests that the suffrage movement, normally associated with London, did have substantial regional support.
- <sup>25</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-575. Draft of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit., p. 3.
- <sup>26</sup> Jenny Gould, 'Women's Military Services in the First World War', 1987, op. cit., p. 122.
- <sup>27</sup> Lady Londonderry, *Retrospect*, 1938, op. cit., p. 115.
- <sup>28</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-575. Draft of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit. Narrative details about the WL are drawn from pp. 5 – 13 unless otherwise stated.
- <sup>29</sup> Lady Londonderry, *Retrospect*, 1938, op. cit., p. 120.
- <sup>30</sup> Nancy Loring Goldman and Richard Stites, *Female Soldiers, Combatants or Non Combatants: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1982, p. 25.

- <sup>31</sup> Irene Ward, *FANY Invicta*, Hutchinson, London, 1955, pp. 39, 48, 56.
- <sup>32</sup> *The Virago Book of Women and the Great War*, 1999, op. cit.
- <sup>33</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-575. Draft of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit., p. 15.
- <sup>34</sup> Details from IWM, Study Slide Pack, *Women in Wartime*. 1987. Purchased in 1995. The slide showing women coke-heavers is referenced as IWM//Q30859.
- <sup>35</sup> Gail Braybon, 'Women and the War' in S. Constantine et al., (eds), *The First World War in British History*, Edward Arnold, 1995, p. 149.
- <sup>36</sup> *The Virago Book of Women and the Great War*, 1999, op. cit., p. 159.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.
- <sup>38</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, 'Women in the Fighting Services', 1957, op. cit., p. 290.
- <sup>39</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-575. Draft of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit. Narrative details about the setting-up arrangements for the WAAC are drawn from pp. 16-29.
- <sup>40</sup> 'Uniformed Volunteer Captain Roberts', 1993, op. cit., p. 191.
- <sup>41</sup> Details from Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in Her Time: A Life of Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, 1879-1967*, Macmillan, St Martin's Press, 1969, pp. 129, 131, 132.
- <sup>42</sup> NA NATS 1/1286. The information is presented chronologically but the pages are not numbered. This is a letter dated 5 May, 1917, from Miss Woodgate to Miss Clapham.
- <sup>43</sup> NA NATS 1/1286. Letter dated 7 May, 1917, from Miss Clapham to Miss Woodgate.
- <sup>44</sup> NA NATS 1/1286. Press Release dated 11 May, 1917.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* Press Release dated 14 May, 1917.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* Press release dated 19 May 1917.
- <sup>47</sup> Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, Hutchinson and Co, 1942, p. 116.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119.
- <sup>49</sup> NA NATS 1/1286. Press Release dated 30 May, 1917.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* Press advertisement dated 25 June, 1917, for Blackpool newspapers.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* Press advertisement dated 27 June, 1917, for Birmingham newspapers.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* Press advertisement dated 26 June, 1917, for South West District newspapers.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* Correspondence dated 16.5.1917. From Mrs. Curnock, Press Representative NSDWS, to Miss Clapham, Chief Officer, NSDWS.

- <sup>54</sup> NA NATS 1/1320. Correspondence dated 10 May, 1917. From W.E. Hobbs, NSDP, to Mrs. Curnock, Press Representative, NSDWS.
- <sup>55</sup> NA NATS 1/1286. Appeal for clerks. Press Release dated June, 1917.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid. Press Release dated 18 June 1917; Ballad in praise of WAACs.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid. Press releases dated 20 June 1917. Letters sent from serving WAACs to Miss Stephenson, WAAC Administrator.
- <sup>58</sup> Marjorie Hay, *On Waactive Service*, publication undated, National Army Museum Archive (archivist suggests early 1920s as publication date), Accession No. 41174, pp.147, 96.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 79.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 178.
- <sup>61</sup> Holiday resorts targeted. June 1917 Report, NA NATS 1/1286.
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid. Press release with specific class targeting, 10 July, 1917.
- <sup>63</sup> Col. Julia M. Cowper, 'Women in the Fighting Services', 1957, op. cit., p. 290.
- <sup>64</sup> Col. Julia M. Cowper, Six draft chapters of *The History of the Women's Services* op. cit., p. 36.
- <sup>65</sup> For detailed account of WAAC organisation See Helen Gwynne-Vaughan's autobiography, *Service With the Army*, 1942. See also Diana Shaw, 'The Forgotten Army of Women: The Overseas Service of Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps with the British Forces, 1917 –1921', in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, Leo Cooper, 1996 pp. 365 –379.
- <sup>66</sup> Papers of Helen Gwynne-Vaughan. National Army Museum, Archive Reference 9401-253-9-1. Letter dated 29 April 1917 from Chalmers Watson to Gwynne-Vaughan.
- <sup>67</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-575. Draft of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit., p. 56.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 35.
- <sup>69</sup> Papers of Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, op. cit. Archive Reference: 9401-253-11-1. Letter dated 3 May 1917 from Chalmers Watson to Gwynne-Vaughan.
- <sup>70</sup> NA NATS 1/1286. Press Release dated 13 July, 1917.
- <sup>71</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in Her Time; A Life of Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, 1879–1965*, op. cit., p. 135.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 130.
- <sup>73</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, 'Women in the Fighting Services', 1957, op. cit., p. 290.

- <sup>74</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-575. Draft of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit., p. 28.
- <sup>75</sup> Marjorie Hay, *On Waactive Service*, op. cit., p. 127.
- <sup>76</sup> Molly Izzard, op. cit., p. 136.
- <sup>77</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-575. Draft of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit., p. 47.
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- <sup>80</sup> George Patulo used the term 'Tommy WAACs' in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Cited in Nancy Loring Goldman and Richard Sites, *Female Soldiers*, 1982, op. cit., p. 43. The postcards are in The National Army Museum, Dept. of Fine and Decorative Art. Postcard Accession Number 9311-1-241 has the caption *For gootness sake go back, here kom der WAAC*. Artist: Lawrence Colburne, published J Salmon, Sevenoaks, 1917. It shows three terrified German officers. Postcard Accession Number 9311-1-242, printed in 1918, has the caption *Goot gracious me! Here kom der WAAC* and shows five terrified German officers. The *Punch* cartoon is cited in Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in Her Time*, 1969, op. cit., p. 58.
- <sup>81</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-575. Draft of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit., p. 65.
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- <sup>83</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-17. Papers of Helen Gwynne-Vaughan. Statement forwarded by M. M. Stevenson to WAAC Headquarters at Devonshire House.
- <sup>84</sup> Diana Shaw, 'The Forgotten Army of Women', 1996, op. cit., p. 372.
- <sup>85</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in Her Time*, 1967, op. cit., p. 171.
- <sup>86</sup> NAM Archive. Reference: 9401-253-18-2. Letter dated 10 November 1917 from Chalmers Watson to Gwynne-Vaughan.
- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* Archive Reference 9401-253-20-1. Letter dated 10.12. 1917, from Chalmers Watson to Gwynne-Vaughan.
- <sup>88</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in Her Time*, 1969, op. cit., p. 169.
- <sup>89</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-575. Draft of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit., p. 72.
- <sup>90</sup> *The Times*, February 13, 1918, p. 3, Headline: 'Training Officers for the WAAC'.
- <sup>91</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-575. Draft of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit., p. 8.

- <sup>92</sup> Marjorie Hay, *On Waactive Service*, op. cit., pp. 16, 46.
- <sup>93</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in Her Time*, 1969, op. cit., p. 170.
- <sup>94</sup> *The Times*, March 5, 1918, p. 6. Headline: 'WAAC Inquiry in France'.
- <sup>95</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-575. Draft of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit., p. 75.
- <sup>96</sup> Nancy Loring Goldman and Richard Stites, *Female Soldiers*, 1982, op. cit., p. 27. For an excellent presentation of WAAC activities in France and interactions of the WAAC with other women's services see Lynda Dennant, *Women at the Front during the First World War: The Politics of Class, Gender and Empire*. PhD thesis, Warwick University, 1998. See also F. Tennyson Jesse, *The Sword of Deborah: First Hand Impressions of the British Women's Army in France*, London, Heinemann, 1918. See also J. M. Cowper, *A Short History of the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps*, War Office, London, 1967. The Imperial War Museum (IWM) Department of Documents, holds an archive on Women at Work which covers this period. See also D. Condell and J. Liddiard, *Working for Victory? Images of Women in the First World War*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, published in association with the IWM, 1987. The NA has recently made available on microfilm the service records of thousands of WAAC members. Reference: NA WO 398. See also Arthur Marwick, *Women at War, 1914-1918*, Fontana Original, in association with the IWM, 1977, Chapter 4, 'Women in Uniform, Autumn 1916 to November 1918', pp.85-105. See also Records of WRAC and Predecessors, 1919-1992, at the National Army Museum, London.
- <sup>97</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *A Short History of Queen Mary's Auxiliary Army Corps*, War Office, 1967, p. 51.
- <sup>98</sup> Diana Shaw, 'The Forgotten Army of Women', 1996, op. cit., pp. 369, 370.
- <sup>99</sup> Feminist historians Elizabeth Crosthwait and Nancy Loring Goldman privilege combatant status as indicating 'real' soldiering.
- <sup>100</sup> S.M. Cullen, *Gender and the Great War: British Combatants, masculinity and perceptions of women, 1918-1939*. Oxford University. D. Phil., 1998. Abstract in EI Index to Theses, Volume 49, Part 5.

## Chapter 3

### **The Route to Raising the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), 1919–1938**

Whether the First World War liberated women in any meaningful or lasting way remains an open question.<sup>1</sup> The inter-war years, 1919 to 1939, have been rigorously combed through for evidence one way or another in such fields as education, leisure, health and home, consumerism, sex and marriage, politics and employment.<sup>2</sup> The military context, important because it provided the only truly new female identity in the war, has not to date been exploited for its evidence of how, despite the government giving up on military women in the inter-war years, military-minded women did not give up on their ambitions for a women's army corps.

This chapter presents the elusive but compelling profile of the activities of military-minded women against a social and political background exponentially moving in a direction that eventually pushed the identity and image of military women into the deepest shadows of countercultural definition by 1938.

This chapter also reveals how continuity of service in military mode throughout the inter-war years was the prerogative of the private-sector FANY; how Gwynne-Vaughan was left stranded as the government demobilised nearly 40,000 women from the WAAC/QMAAC and 30,000 from the WRAF; how 'apart from one unit of QMAAC which continued to serve in France until 1921, the women's services were disbanded before the end of 1919' and 'nothing remained of their short existence but memories, yet they were remarkable'.<sup>3</sup> This chapter also shows how Gwynne-Vaughan, immediately the war ended, provided a focus for past military experience by setting up Old Comrades' Associations, found a new, authoritative niche for herself in public life, looked to the future of women's military service by assiduous cultivation of the Girl Guides movement and eventually succeeded in winning leadership of the state's Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) in 1938 as the country prepared for a second time in the century to go to war with Germany.

Arising from hatred and fear of Bolshevism a new kind of female militarism made its appearance in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s. The Fascist Party in Britain recruited to its cause both former suffragettes and women with military experience.<sup>4</sup> This chapter discloses how the public presence of female fascists, shown in action in Figure 3.1, complicated Gwynne-Vaughan's attempt to set up a patriotic, private-sector women's service with a military ethos in 1936. The chapter closes with a critique of the setting-up arrangements for the state's ATS in 1938.

The first issue for analysis has to be examination of the patterns of demobilisation from the WAAC/QMAAC in 1919. What happened to the girls and women, sentimentalised in 1918 military recruitment literature as 'our soldier maidens' with 'khaki hats on curly locks/ and khaki hose on dainty feet',<sup>5</sup> when they found that their war service in army khaki had not changed cultural or political attitudes sufficiently to offer those of them who wished it a chance to remain in khaki in peacetime?

While recruitment was still necessary in the spring and summer of 1918, reassuring promises were made to the WAAC from official sources, flattering the recruits and holding out the prospect of a bright new post-war world. For those servicewomen who wanted it, it was suggested, continuation of service with the army was a foregone conclusion. The crucial Aunt Sally question was posed in recruitment literature: 'The cautious and far-seeing will say, "Yes, well and good, this is very fine but what is to happen to all these young women when the war is over? After they have given the best years of their life to their country, are they to be thrown aside without training to fit them for anything else?"'. The response, attributed to a high-ranking male officer who had been 'assisting the WAAC since its inception', stated unequivocally that

we do not know what sort of army it will be necessary for Great Britain to maintain after the war but it is certain some fighting force will be necessary and attached to it, I am confident, there will in future always be women.

An ensuing eulogy then concluded with the 'belief' that

the Women's Army ... is not a transitory movement, the effects of which will pass away in a few years. Its work and recognition by the Army and public opinion have for all time raised the status of woman and placed her side by side with man as fellow worker, comrade and fellow citizen.<sup>6</sup>



What an innovative concept that closing comment held. Values previously considered male and military in connotation, namely comradeship and citizenship, were conceded cross-gender without reserve.

The propaganda must have seemed to have substance in July 1918 when representatives of QMAAC posed, pleased and proud, self-consciously smiling for the Press, as shown in Figure 3.2, at the King's Garden Party in Buckingham Palace. However, disappointment and disillusion were ahead and with the Armistice in November 1918 the demobilisation of all women's military services began. Government's paper promises were not kept. In common with women being demobilised from every kind of paid civilian war work the leaders, officers and rank and file of the WAAC, within a year, found themselves back in civilian life. The Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act of 1919 was a metaphor for the government's gender politics as it set about the social reconstruction of post-war Britain in the early 1920s.

For many in the population this was a welcome approach. An ex-WAAC, in her 1930 autobiography, described the ingrained conservatism 'in our own dear little island (where) there still dwell country folks who when it (the 1914–1918 war) was all over, their outlook on life remained exactly as it had been in pre-war years'.<sup>7</sup> Her reminiscences also point to the tensions which emerged between volunteers who had been in military service and civilians who had stayed at home. She recalled how, during the Victory celebrations in London's Shaftsbury Avenue, she, still wearing her khaki uniform had wondered 'what proportion of that half-intoxicated crowd had helped the war in any capacity? Wedged in the swaying mob ....were women in uniform but the bulk of the mass was not in uniform'.<sup>8</sup> A sense of alienation and some bitterness flavours both that comment and her observation that 'almost immediately after the Armistice the chief topic of conversation in London was the fortunes of the 'lucky ones' – the ship-owners, food contractors, manufacturers of khaki and those who catered for the Government. Those contracts!'<sup>9</sup>

The anonymous author of the comments above disclosed that she was the daughter of a country vicar and she described her pre-war circumstances. That she had joined up at nineteen with no previous occupation because her mother had 'considered it unladylike for a girl situated as I was to do anything. At least anything useful. My job was to marry'.<sup>10</sup> It seemed that the war had only provided her with a temporary alternative.

Class predictably emerged as the dominant agency of destination for demobilised servicewomen. Exceptionally, professional women were advantaged by the Sex Disqualification Removals Act. For middle-class girls, such as the former WAAC quoted above, the war

had been an exciting interlude..... and to these girls a return to family dependence and the familiar round of social activity designed to end in marriage was a scaling down of existence which left them unhappy and unconvinced.<sup>11</sup>

Many women who had an income of some sort felt they ought not to take jobs away from women who needed the money. Many middle-class girls and women who had been active, independent and engaged in work of national importance felt obliged to return to their family homes where they looked after parents and had little to do but arrange flowers, drive the car or do voluntary work for some worthy local organisation.

Further down the social scale demobilisation helped to lend a new look to the business centres of towns and cities as many ex-WAACs took skills they had learned in the army into the civilian workplaces. For example, the 'offices and stores and administrative departments of London and the big cities assumed their (modern) look of thronging female activity' from this date.<sup>12</sup>

There was a middle-class perception that war service changed the social attitudes and expectations of those who had been recruited to the WAAC from the working class. For example, many ex-WAACs who had been domestic servants before the war returned to that work, 'not so many as before but still enough for a modest middle class income to count on a parlour maid, cook and part-time gardener'.<sup>13</sup> The 'domestic servant problem' was an obsessive social theme and *Punch* magazine wittily attributed

the unrest amongst the domestic service class to the fact that females were employed in the war as waitresses in Clubs...after the brilliant table talk to which they were in the habit of listening, often to the neglect of their duties in these Clubs, especially the military clubs, they are naturally dissatisfied with the low level of conversation in the dining room.<sup>14</sup>

However, it was not a joking matter for the thousands of former servicewomen seeking employment. Servant-girls who had been servicewomen were perceived as inappropriately less deferential than before their war service; they had 'got above

themselves', become uppity, and, in response, 'in domestic work there was a proliferation of advertisements which stated "No WAAC need apply"'.<sup>15</sup>

Some ex-WAACs showed entrepreneurial spirit. For example, in December 1919 the Old Comrades' Association, set up by Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, considered a request from 'Miss Thomas, of the WAAC Enterprise Association'. Miss Thomas wanted funds to set up commercial activities in those areas of work in which ex-WAACs had expertise. Miss Thomas's suggestions included 'a teashop, a laundry, a cake shop, typewriting office and information bureau' plus hostel accommodation for ex-WAAC workers. The range of skills suggested by her list seems unadventurous and there is also a sense of pathos, as well as injustice, in the recognition that women who had served their country were homeless and in need of charitable support.<sup>16</sup> Emigration was a more attractive prospect for many spirited, disillusioned former WAACs and 'the Old Comrades' Association Gazettes were full of letters from women who had already emigrated or were about to do so, emphasising their new found freedom'.<sup>17</sup>

The rich, upper-class women who had led the WAAC returned to their pre-war private lives of privilege, professional occupation or social engagements, leisure pursuits, debutante 'season' in town, country-house weekends of sport and political/social gossip. It was, however, their social network and influence that was crucial to continuation of their ambition for women to have a permanent role with the military. The strength of belief in the value of their war experience is evidenced from all ranks in the abundance of women's personal papers, memoirs, memorabilia, depositions and photographs held in private archives as well as at the National Army Museum and the Imperial War Museum.<sup>18</sup> That said, few women had the resources or access to War Office or Army Council necessary to promote the idea of a state women's military organisation let alone bring it into being. However, if women's military participation was not to be purely the stuff of nostalgia, something practical had to be done and only upper-class women were in a position to take any kind of action.

Britain in 1919 was extremely unpromising as a political environment in which to promote any idea of a peacetime Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. Female solidarity and power bases seemed shaken. The first General Election at which women aged thirty or over were able to vote took place in December 1918 but the results were a public humiliation for all but one of the seventeen women candidates who tried to win seats in

parliament. Only the Sinn Féiner, Constance Markiewicz, was elected and she did not take her seat because she was in prison at the time. Famous names went tumbling. The pre-war militant WSPU Suffragettes formed a Women's Party and fielded Christabel Pankhurst. Her former rival Suffragette leader, Emmeline Pethwick-Lawrence, was also a candidate. So was Charlotte Despard of the Women's Freedom League. All failed to win seats as was the case with the four Labour Party women candidates. The WSPU disbanded after its catastrophic failure in this showpiece election.

The old unifying single-issue campaign for the vote no longer provided a common aim for women and new forces were fragmenting gender loyalties. Party politics prioritised loyalty to class not gender. For example, Lady Astor, in a by-election in 1919 took up the safe Conservative seat previously held by her husband. Thus an American who had become a British aristocrat by marriage had the honour of being the first woman to take her seat in the British House of Commons. Mrs Yearn, a Labour Movement activist, writing in 1930 recalled how on

taking up the Guardian one morning in 1919 I found Lady Beaverbrook was talked of as candidate for Ashton-under-Lyne. And I asked myself, are we as a great Co-operative body of women going to stand by and see these things done when we have such splendid women in our Movement, who have done more noble work in the social reforms for their country than ever these Ladies will attempt to do....If we are not alive and alert we shall see the House of Commons filled with these peeresses.<sup>19</sup>

Left-wing working-class politics became organised through the trade unions and the Labour Party and left-wing women activists' antipathy towards 'ladies' and the culture of patronage and nepotism they represented intensified as politics polarised through the inter-war decades.<sup>20</sup> Women also became active at the political extremes. Rose Cohen, a young Polish refugee, was instrumental in setting up the first British Communist Party in the early 1920s. 'Britain's first inter-war fascist movement was launched by a woman in 1923, Miss Rotha Lintorn-Orman, and during the 1930s, 25 per cent of Sir Oswald Moseley's supporters were women'.<sup>21</sup> Lintorn-Orman had served in the First World War as an ambulance driver with the Scottish Women's Hospital Corps in Serbia. She came from a military family. Her grandfather was a Field Marshall and her father was Major Charles Orman of the Essex Regiment. In 1917, invalided home with malaria, she joined the British Red Cross and enjoyed the prestigious title, 'Commandant of the Motor School at Devonshire House'.<sup>22</sup>

The fascists attracted well-known former suffragettes such as Mary Richardson, who had slashed the *Rokeby Venus*, Norah Elam who had endured 'three terms of imprisonment' and Mary Allen who had been a member of the WSPU and had served in Mrs Damer-Dawson's Women's Police Volunteers.<sup>23</sup> Mary Allen and Linton-Orman 'shared a horror of Communism' and 'an infatuation with women in uniform'.<sup>24</sup> Linton-Orman praised the women's services during the war because 'in these services the women enjoyed a prestigious uniform, military discipline and an official hierarchy corresponding to the male service'.<sup>25</sup>

The period 1920 to 1926 was very frustrating for Gwynne-Vaughan and Lady Londonderry who wanted the restitution of a state-financed women's military service in which only they seemed interested. It was less frustrating for Lilian Franklin, as leader of the private-sector FANY. The following analysis reveals how rivalry between these equally headstrong women for the leadership and ownership of any new government-recognised women's military corps did not in the least assist their shared objectives.

Demobilisation of the WAAC and WRAF lost Gwynne-Vaughan her official spokesperson role on women's military service issues. As a remedy for that she created a new quasi-military, authoritative position for herself. In addition to returning to her academic life as a botanist at Birkbeck College Gwynne-Vaughan, with her sister, Marjorie Pratt-Barlow, set up Old Comrades' Associations for ex-WRAF and ex-WAAC officers and other ranks. The WAAC Old Comrades' Association (WAAC OCA) was up and running by December 1919. Gwynne-Vaughan was forty years old at this date and the first woman ever to have received the insignia of a Military Commander of the Order of the British Empire. A charismatic photograph, taken in 1919, shows, in Figure 3.3, how comfortably the accolade accords with the image of her in military uniform. She has adopted a relaxed and confident pose, with arms nonchalantly crossed and mouth firmly set.

Gwynne-Vaughan was, naturally, the Chairman of her WAAC OCA. Its Council Minutes fill four large volumes at the National Army Museum Archive. They evidence the energy, and organisational skills, as well as the frustrations, of women who had been active and used to command in public life buckling down to the tedious detail of private fund-raising, setting up a national network of WAAC OCA branches, finding premises for a Club, organising Corps Dinners, lobbying, dealing with issues of publicity and

internal communication, keeping ex-WAACs in contact and WAAC ethos at least alive in the unsympathetic post war public domain.<sup>26</sup> The minute-keeping is meticulous, military in style and precision. The WAAC OCA Council was an elite, self-appointed group and never at any point questioned its right or authority to set up and lead such an organisation. It was a real success for Gwynne-Vaughan when The British Legion, at its inaugural meeting in 1920, affiliated the WAAC OCA with full membership. This gave ex-servicewomen the same veteran status as male ex-soldiers and Gwynne-Vaughan, as Chairman of the WAAC OCA, again became an indispensable figure at all high-powered committees and meetings called by the War Office/Army Council to discuss women's services in/with the army.

Status generated adulation. Photographs of her, in uniform, were published in the WAAC OCA magazine under such headings as 'Our President' and 'Our Leader'. She wrote articles for the British Legion Journal, 'claimed to be read by over 100,000 women. Other publications followed suit, always in relation to women's services'.<sup>27</sup> This was, in effect, a personality cult, and Gwynne-Vaughan seemed to relish it. 'Her prestige with ex-servicewomen was enormous, some hundreds of them would turn out on a rainy night in Edinburgh to hear her address a meeting'.<sup>28</sup>

Lilian Franklin led the FANY into the 1920s. The FANY could not be demobilised by the government because it was an independently-financed Volunteer Reserve. It continued to recruit exclusively from the upper class. The corps simply re-established itself at its pre-war London base, continued wearing its khaki, set up a Staff Committee of ten members under Franklin's command and 'drew on a reserve of goodwill' from the great and the good, taking on duties in public events such as the Royal Tournament. Franklin was known, with affection, by the FANY members as 'Boss'.<sup>29</sup> Figure 3.4 shows 'The Boss' at the outset of her leadership of the FANY, looking every bit as relaxed in her military uniform as Gwynne-Vaughan. The FANY was a very well-connected and serious power rival to the more inclusive base that Gwynne-Vaughan was building through her OCAs.

Lady Londonderry took the opportunity at the end of the war to re-establish the identity of the WL, the organisation which she had set up in 1915 but which had been absorbed by the WAAC during the later years of the war. The post-war WL included a 'household section', the WL Motor Transport Section (WLMTS) and the oddly-titled

'Flying Section' led by Lady Loch, whose members wanted to work as mechanics with the RAF.<sup>30</sup> The WL household section busied itself in the early 1920s with the 'domestic servant problem' and was, in Lady Londonderry's opinion, 'invaluable in bridging the difficulties of those transitional days. Hours of work, wages, and conditions of service were discussed. It was a rallying point to which ex-servicewomen turned after they had returned to domestic service'.<sup>31</sup> Lady Londonderry was also Chairman of a National Servicewomen's Association 'whose task it was to try and grapple with demobilisation and emigration'.<sup>32</sup> Figure 3.5 shows Lady Londonderry in officer's uniform and in their photographs she, Franklin and Gwynne-Vaughan exude the same air of upper-class assumed superiority and command, reflected in their facial expressions and the body language of their poses. They also shared an appetite for leadership, competition and prestige.

In 1920 there was a brief glimpse of hope that the War Office/Army Council might be interested in setting up a Women's Reserve for military service. Women who had led government-financed women's services during the war were invited to two days of talks on 12 and 13 October, 1920. It looked hopeful.

The FANY, as a Volunteer Corps, was excluded from these formal discussions. The Women's Reserve Committee was impressive, chaired by Major General B. Burnett-Hitchcock, Director General of Mobilisation and Recruitment. A high-profile male military presence included Colonel G.W. Howard, Director of Organisation, along with representatives of the Territorial Forces Association (TFA). The War Office was represented, ominously, by R. J. E. C. Paterson of the Finance Department whose task it was to produce the final report and any recommendations to the Army Council. The organisations represented by women were WAAC/QMAAC (by Dame Florence Leach), WL (by Miss C. Ellis, CBE), WRNS (by Dame Katherine Furse), Land Army (by Dame Meriel Talbot and Miss Gladys Pott, MBE) and Women's Forage Corps (by Mrs F.E. Stewart CBE). Gwynne-Vaughan represented the Air Ministry.<sup>33</sup> The issues raised in these two days are so significant that they warrant detailed exposition.

The Committee's terms of reference set out a duty to 'explore the question of a formation of a Women's Reserve and to formulate a scheme for the consideration of the Army Council'.<sup>34</sup> The Committee first addressed the ideological question of the extent to which a military organisation was even desirable in war, at home or at overseas

bases. Throughout the proposed structure women were referred to as 'ladies'. There was a suggestion for a 'Ladies' Advisory Committee'. Leaders were to be called 'Lady Commandant' and 'Lady County Commandant'. 'The Queen's Reserve' was the title suggested to the Committee as appropriate for the proposed corps.

The issues in contention, primarily between the War Office and Gwynne-Vaughan, soon emerged. They were matters of finance, status and gender-equality. Gwynne-Vaughan asserted, for instance, that the title 'Lady Commander' would be very unpopular and expressed a preference for the titles used in WAAC, suggesting that 'unpopular titles will add to the difficulties of recruiting'.<sup>35</sup> She, and Leach, were also pressing for the full enlistment of female recruits into the Army asserting that mere enrolment had been a flaw in the arrangements for WAAC. Gwynne-Vaughan insisted that 'the feeling among the women who have served is, in my experience, similarly conditioned'.<sup>36</sup>

She reiterated her point in her written comments on the proceedings of the first day's meeting, arguing that 'the women were not aware that they were under military law only as camp followers (in the WAAC)', adding that

they were proud of the fact that they were serving under military law and I do not think that unless you give them the opportunity of enlisting you will be successful in obtaining recruits.<sup>37</sup>

Conveying an assumption that her leadership of any new corps was implicit in the scheme she concluded with 'I could not take the responsibility of recommending the employment of women with the Army unless they were under military discipline'.<sup>38</sup>

In the opening remarks of the second day's business (13 October) the Chairman put the matter plainly to Gwynne-Vaughan, commenting, 'In fact, you are out for status.' Gwynne-Vaughan replied, equally bluntly, 'I am'.<sup>39</sup> What Gwynne-Vaughan wanted was in fact in the gift of the Army Council. Appendix C of The Report of the Women's Reserve Committee was a 'Note on the Legal Situation' and conceded that although

when the Reserve Forces Act 1882 and the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act 1907 were passed it was probably not contemplated that women would be enlisted under those Acts but there appears to be no reason why they should not be enlisted if The Army Council sees fit to accept them.



The Committee then considered logistics, proposing a maximum 100,000 women reservists. Recruitment bases suggested included

Universities, Girls' Colleges, large schools.. and the Girl Guides organisation who should be looked on rather in the nature of a Cadet Corps for the Women's Legion.<sup>40</sup>

However, by the close of the Committee's deliberations the issue of finance dominated any ideological or logistical considerations. Paterson (War Office) defined his position unequivocally and expressed concern that

if a Reserve of the character proposed is set up in peace it will certainly cost a lot of money. It may begin on modest lines but it certainly will not stay there. We shall not find commissioned or enlisted women attending annual camps without demand for pay and allowances like TF officers and men.<sup>41</sup>

Paterson concluded that 'it is most undesirable to employ women as a military organisation of any kind for service at home and I doubt very much whether it is necessary even at an overseas base'. Paterson drew out 'the experience of the late war' where women's organisation was a very expensive one 'both from the point of view of feeding, accommodation etc.' but also because 'a separate and duplicating superintending organisation was thought necessary'. He drew comparisons unfavourable to WAAC/QMAAC by citing the efficiency of the War Office, an agency which had employed its female staff 'infinitely cheaper ... it (the female staff) housed and fed itself and not a single extra post was created for administration and supervision'. From a new scheme for a Women's Reserve, Paterson was convinced, 'we shall not get value for our money'.<sup>42</sup>

This was the written recommendation he forwarded to the Army Council and it can readily be imagined with what sense of insult and chagrin his comment was read by Gwynne-Vaughan and the other women representatives. On the basis of Paterson's recommendations the Army Council shelved the question of a Women's Reserve and was

reported in the Press as "definitely having abandoned all idea, for the present at any rate, of creating a large force composed of the United Women's Corps employed in the late war." When this was published Pat Washington's editorial comment in the *FANY Gazette* of August 1921 rejoiced that "that unwieldy

giantess is evidently not to come into being. She has received her death blow and a very good thing too".<sup>43</sup>

Washington's triumphalism is easily explained. For some months before the War Office / Army Council convened The Women's Reserve Committee the FANY had been working behind the scenes for some kind of formal affiliation either with the Royal Army Mechanical Corps (RAMC) or the new Territorial Army and had failed. The FANY representatives, (A.H. Gamwell and Pat Washington), had held an unsuccessful meeting with Major General Hitchcock just before he chaired the Women's Reserve Committee. Washington was clearly delighted when Gwynne-Vaughan had no better luck in the formal forum than FANY representatives through their 'informal' channels of influence.<sup>44</sup>

However, the FANY leadership was tenacious and, excluded from the formal discussions of the Women's Reserve Committee, the FANY carried on 'on its own resources as in pre-war days until a niche in the Army could be found where its value would be appreciated'.<sup>45</sup> It was not long in finding it. FANY's heroine was Pat Waddell who

took herself down to Pirbright (the Army base at Aldershot) and tackled – in her own words – the ripest looking Sergeant–Major with a chestful of medals she could find. ....and she wheedled out of him all the gear they needed for the 1921 Summer Camp.<sup>46</sup>

Pat Waddell, writing as Pat Beauchamp in 1940, described her *fait accompli*, confiding that

there is a wonderful thing in the Army called precedent. Precedent is a powerful fairy who with a wave of the wand makes all things possible ...this was no time for buff slips....Where was it exactly we got our equipment from? We're coming again you know and we'll require tents, beds, army blankets; everything, in fact....now let's find the Colonel and **tell** him exactly what we'll need.<sup>47</sup>

The FANY camps of 1921 to 1923 were 'pretty tough, armed with the bare necessities' but 'the RAMC allowed the corps a sergeant to take drill and the RASC School of Motoring gave classes' and when, in 1922, The Guards took over the FANY Squad Drill parades 'became increasingly smarter, more impressive'.<sup>48</sup> One way and another

the FANY obtained a unique, informally financed and privileged working relationship alongside the Regular Army.

The Army Council decision in 1920 to shelve the idea of a Women's Reserve Service meant that Gwynne-Vaughan lost her opportunity to get back to work with the military. However, while Franklin and the elite FANY went off to their corps camps in the early years of the 1920s Gwynne-Vaughan directed her energies to cultivating the Girl Guides as cadets-in-waiting. She became a member of the National Executive of the Girl Guides in 1920 at the personal invitation of Lady Baden-Powell.<sup>49</sup> By this route Gwynne-Vaughan became role model and mentor to a whole new generation of girls and young women. Guide Association Archives evidence Gwynne-Vaughan's dominant influence on the movement's ethos, policies and ideology.

There was a national network of Guide Companies. It was officially recognised, having received its Government Charter in 1915. Its members were uniformed and in gender-terms it was ground-breaking. Girl Guides' roots ran back to 1907 when unofficial Girl Scout groups copied the activities of Sir Robert Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts whose aspirational heroes were 'frontiersmen and explorers, the rovers of the sea, the airmen of the clouds'.<sup>50</sup>

Recruitment to the Girl Guides was inclusive and the nature of the movement created a homogeneous culture for its members. They wore a distinctive uniform, took part as a corps in civic parades, developed a sense of collective identity strongly grounded in British Heritage, national ideals and traditions. The sense of belonging, badges awarded for set achievements, the adventure of camping out, the camaraderie and camp-fire songs created amongst its members a very strong loyalty to the Girl Guides and its values.

The Scout and Guide movements were clearly pro-active, pro-establishment and manipulative counterbalances to a street-corner culture where working-class young people might fall under the influence of left-wing ideas, considered by their opponents as Bolshevism, picked up from trade unionists, strikers or Labour Party activists. Gwynne-Vaughan understood the crucial inter-relationship between attractive activities and ideological influence. Her Guide Manifesto stated that 'if Guiding ceased to be a game it would grow old and its value as a preparation for life would end'.<sup>51</sup>

Molly Izzard, in retrospect, denigrated the Guides for their

jolly togetherness, the practiced skills, nature studies. They were middle class devices largely led by ex-officers, conceived in a treat-giving spirit, making no intellectual demands. The last thing a Guide is expected to do is think. Their promise is to Obey.<sup>52</sup>

A Guide Association official responded, defensively,

It is a pity that Mrs Izzard has not troubled to check on the main aim of Scouting and Guiding.... I prefer to remember Dame Helen's assessment of the Movement: we are not training girls to be Guides we are training them to train themselves.<sup>53</sup>

There is clearly a residual and defensive sensitivity about the concept of 'blind obedience' with its totalitarian overtones.

Gwynne-Vaughan, as was to be expected, soon became Chairman of the Executive Committee and Head of Education.<sup>54</sup> The 1922 Girl Guides Annual Report contained a list of affiliated organisations (See Appendix 1) which evidenced its strong Christian links. The Girl Guides was a popular organisation and proved to be a powerful influence on the character and aspirations of its members as well as a rich source of recruits for Gwynne-Vaughan's ATS in 1938.

In 1923 there was an informal attempt to take a step towards a Women's Reserve. Lilian Franklin (FANY), Katherine Furse (former Chairman of the Joint Women's VAD Committee) and Gwynne-Vaughan met. Their discussion explored the possibility of turning the FANY into an Officers' Training Corps that would be able to supply all/any women's military services that the Government might eventually set up. However, it seemed a very distant prospect and a daunting proposition in terms of finance and organisation. In any case the FANY at this point was not recruiting well and nothing could be progressed. FANY was in the doldrums by 1925 when for the Summer camp only 27 members turned up and even the FANY Gazette admitted 'the numbers were so small it hardly seemed worth going on'.<sup>55</sup> However, the General Strike of 1926 raised its profile.

The General Strike divided the nation's sympathies roughly along class and political lines. The FANY regarded it as an opportunity to publicly demonstrate its loyalty to government and to its class. FANY members were, by 1926, a trained Motor-Transport corps and it was primarily as drivers that they provided services helping to break the strike. In March 1926, FANY restructured, with Franklin as Commanding Officer and a Regimental Board of five members to act as an Advisory Council. This Board included an Honorary Colonel-in-Chief and four members drawn from the FANY's Patrons' List. General Sir Evan Carter became FANY Hon. Colonel in Chief and the FANY officially changed its title to Ambulance Car Corps but, in house, members still preferred and used the old title. The restructuring made the corps more impressive to external agencies and caught the attention of the War Office. Franklin was called to the War Office on 1 May 1926 and she seized the 'special relationship' opportunity to offer 'the services of the corps for transport duties in national emergency at home or abroad on a permanent basis.'<sup>56</sup> In 1927 FANY got official recognition in Army Order 94 in the Army List of April 14, 1927. The editors of the FANY Gazette were in no doubt that this was because 'the excellent work that was done during the Strike influenced the decision of the Army Council to afford us recognition' but the carefully worded Army Order also ensured that the FANY could be asked to operate 'either as a unit or, in the event of a Women's Reserve being organised, as individual members of that Reserve'.<sup>57</sup> This would prove to be a problematic prescription for the FANY, so jealous of its collective identity. Predictably, after official recognition recruitment picked up and by 1928

the training of FANY officers and NCOs in mechanics and driving was directly matched to RASC practice.... promotion, too, was properly organised; troopers wishing to become lance-corporals had to pass exams in first aid, map reading, mechanics, drill and gas (precautions) and produce a meal for the whole Company.<sup>58</sup>

In the closing years of the 1920s the FANY led by Lilian Franklin seemed well placed to dominate any future developments in the creation of a women's national military service. However, Lady Londonderry's WLMTS was also still in the picture. WLMTS had assisted the Government in strike-breaking activities in the Rail Strike of 1920 and in the General Strike of 1926 and the WLMTS also received official recognition from the Army Council in 1927, at the same time and on the same terms as the FANY.

The elite sub-cultures of the FANY and the WLMTS were tiny dots on the landscape of mainstream popular female culture in the 1920s. Yet that mainstream culture at least reflected the values and ethos which underpinned them and their cultural adherents such as the Girl Guides. In women's fashions and public behaviour motifs of emancipation, gender-equality and gender-challenge were dominant though overtly masculinised women were as unpopular as they had been in the pre-war years. For example, as shown in Figure 3.6, Man-Woman is satirised but her complaint is that her fashionable companion has adopted her 'short back and sides' haircut, given it a gimmicky new name – the 'shingle-trim' and pushed up the price of a haircut. Figure 3.7 shows the upper-middle-class 'independent young ussy' of the 1920s. She is shown striding along in militarised manner in her fashionable knee-length boots. Her cane is tucked under her arm. She wears her handkerchief, male-style, in her jacket top pocket. She wears a male-style cravat and smokes a cigarette in the street. Her close-fitting hat is pulled down over her hair, in the manner of a WAAC cap. Her critics are, significantly, not only from a previous generation but from the working class; old, fat, working-class women who are also satirised by their description of themselves, in their youth, as 'the fluffy, clinging sort'.

However, in 1929 the 'fluffy clinging sort' found an overwhelming champion. The first talking pictures came into Britain in 1929 and swept away, as if by magic, the female cultural dominance of short hair, short skirts, flat chests and boyish looking women and, in doing so, swept away much of the influence and values derived from the British upper classes. Hollywood shook British female class-relations to the core as upper-class women saw their authority and power as aspirational role-models exponentially supplanted by American film stars through the 1930s. These new role models were endorsed most enthusiastically by British working-class women and factory girls, who wore rough clothing all day, but made sure they had a 'glamour dress.....usually a simplified version of that worn by a favourite film star for going to the dance hall at night'.<sup>59</sup> The new icons shown in Figures 3.8, 3.9 and 3.10 were the sentimentalised mother with her child, the apparently submissive female sexual partner and the adoring wife who relied on marriage for her status and material benefits. Hollywood offered a heady mix of glamour, escapism and romance and it caught like wild fire. Against this new mainstream female popular culture in the 1930s women like Franklin and her companions in the FANY looked anachronistic, sexless or, worse, of questionable sexuality, freakish, dull, boring and increasingly countercultural. They wished to be

exclusive. They were being excluded. Values diametrically opposed to popular female culture drove the women who dreamed of service with the army 'on the same basis as the men – with the same advantages and the same disadvantages – in any future war'.<sup>60</sup>

Mary Baxter-Ellis took over from Franklin in 1932 as the leader of the FANY. Commandant Baxter-Ellis is shown in Figure 3.11 and it must be said that apart from her wearing a skirt this photograph creates a markedly masculinised image of the kind increasingly unpopular at this date. The explicit masculinising principle is reflected in the uniform details, in the sharply tailored jacket, the wearing of shirt and tie, the military ribbons above the breast pockets, the military leather belt and an assertive stance for the camera. Baxter-Ellis is accompanied by her second-in-command, Marjorie Kingston-Walker. They were known in the corps as 'Dick' and 'Tony' respectively, which reinforces the impression of a masculinised culture and, to their devotees, they 'made a wonderful pair'.<sup>61</sup> In this Figure they form almost a mirror image one of the other. They are obviously comfortable together as they pose and smile at the camera. The upper-class accessory staff-car is parked at the edge of the grass.

In terms of morale, the FANY received a first-rate public image boost in 1933 when HRH Princess Alice accepted the office of President. Princess Alice is shown in Figure 3.12, immaculate, remote and suitably regal in her uniform. It certainly

reassured anxious mothers whose daughters wanted to join the FANYs "If dear Princess Alice is President they must be respectable" ....and this in turn helped recruitment.<sup>62</sup>

An inspecting General expressed his view that he had 'always looked on the FANYs as the women's equivalent of the Brigade of Guards and as Regular Army'<sup>63</sup> and indeed the women in FANY uniform featured in Figures 3.13a and 3.13b could, at a casual glance, be mistaken for male military officers. In Figure 3.13a Princess Alice, elegant in civilian clothes, is 'on the arm' of Gamwell who is in role as a male escort would be and Figure 3.13b shows Gamwell at her desk flanked by her crop-haired subordinate officers. Figure 3.13c is indicative of the social circle from which the FANY as an organisation drew support and to which all its members belonged.

Others were also active. In 1933 the fascist Mary Allen already led a quasi-military women's organisation called the 'Women's Auxiliary Service', confusingly close in

title to the former WAAC and in November 1933 she formed the Women's Reserve, appropriating the title that was intended by the government for any new national women's service. In 1934 Allen visited Germany and met with Hitler and Goering.<sup>64</sup>

In the political context of 1934 Lady Londonderry was very well placed to exercise influence. Her husband was Secretary of State for Air in Prime Minister Baldwin's administration and an advocate of rearmament. Believing the timing to be opportune Lady Londonderry used her position as President of the WL to suggest that all organisations of women other than nurses should be placed under her control in a New Women's Legion. She likely used her husband's influence to secure the setting up of a government committee with the unwieldy title of 'The Women's Reserve Sub-Committee of the Manpower Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence'. It took this bureaucratic machinery two years to deliberate the matter and when it did report in May 1936 it dashed all Lady Londonderry's proposals concluding that 'the formation of a reserve of women in peace was neither desirable nor necessary'.<sup>65</sup> In any case, the FANY certainly had no need of Lady Londonderry's patronage and resisted the thought of 'sinking their identity' in any New Women's Legion.<sup>66</sup>

Months before the committee formally reported, Lady Londonderry had taken private action. On 5 February 1936 the WL Executive Committee set up a special committee to consider establishing an independent WL Officers' Training Section (WLOTS). WLOTS would be a direct competitor to FANY with the aim of supplying officers for any women's corps set up by the Army Council. To rub salt in the challenge to the FANY Lady Londonderry secured the services of Gwynne-Vaughan, the FANY's First World War WAAC rival in khaki. Gwynne-Vaughan became Chairman of the WLOTS and set about recruiting and organising for it. In 1936 Gwynne-Vaughan had social influence, drive, experience and was free from distractions of family life, having neither husband nor children. She still held her academic post at Birkbeck College, was the very active President of the WRAF/WAAC OCAs and long-serving Chairman of the Girl Guides Executive.<sup>67</sup> Figure 3.14 shows her with Lady Baden-Powell when Gwynne-Vaughan was Chairman of the First World Conference of Girl Guides in 1930. In Figure 3.15 Gwynne-Vaughan is shown on tiptoe to achieve a handshake as she is informally presented to the King and Queen in 1935. The King clearly recognises her and smiles approvingly. Her companion is Admiral Jellicoe.



By March 1936 Gwynne-Vaughan had secured the use of Lady Marjorie Dalrymple's School House at the Dalrymple Estate, Abbot's Hill, Hemel Hempstead with its tennis courts, swimming pool and gymnasium. This was the venue for the first WLOTS Summer Camp. Gwynne-Vaughan was sensitive to the public relations aspect of her new venture. She was also very clear about her recruitment preferences. Gwynne-Vaughan wrote to Dalrymple that

for the present at any rate, it is important to do the thing as quietly as possible, and keep out of the papers.....a great point I think is to begin with those who by training and inheritance should have the making of good officers. It is easy to expand should the need arise.<sup>68</sup>

The closing statement proved misguided in due course but, in 1936, in the existing social framework it might well have seemed logical and appropriate.

The method of recruitment for the WLOTS was, literally, by word of mouth and invitation, the ultimate paradigm of exclusivity. Belinda Boyle 'looked through her address book and wrote to people she thought might be interested'.<sup>69</sup> The 'other ranks' base of any future women's corps seemed not to interest any agency, official or otherwise. Attention from the private organisations was focused solely on the glamour-and-command role of officers and it was assumed that this was the natural prerogative of the upper class. This assumption was challenged in due course.

Gwynne-Vaughan's personal papers evidence a flurry of activity in the spring and early summer months of 1936 and reveal how tenaciously and selectively she confided, lobbied and recruited for the WLOTS. For example, Lady Latham wrote and recommended 'the 1<sup>st</sup> Sea Lord's (sic) daughters, Amanda and Katherine Chatfield.....Muriel Watson, Admiral Watson's daughter' and Gwynne-Vaughan replied just four days later that, 'we have got the Chatfields, they are good friends of Belinda Boyle and she collected them'.<sup>70</sup> Gwynne-Vaughan's two keenest supporters were Belinda Boyle, daughter of Lord and Lady Trenchard, and Jane Trefusis-Forbes, a young woman friend of the Trenchards.

By April 1936 WLOTS seems to have a new title. Katherine van Baerle wrote to Gwynne-Vaughan and asked for 'particulars of your Emergency Service' (ES).<sup>71</sup> Yet in August Gwynne-Vaughan wrote to Lady Bowhill that 'the parent organisation, known

as the (new) Women's Legion had come to an end...Lady Trenchard, Lady Anderson and I, however, agreed to carry on with the Officer Training part as a small, independent Committee which at present has no formal name'.<sup>72</sup> On 25 September, Lady Brooke-Popham offered to join WLOTS. Gwynne-Vaughan replied, the next day, that 'of course we want your help... the association is called Emergency Service – a conveniently vague name'.<sup>73</sup>

There was a desire to keep WLOTS/ES in low profile. For example, 'there was no uniform and publicity was discouraged. Friends quietly enlisted friends.'<sup>74</sup> Sometimes very old friends. For example, at the first WLOTS/ES Summer Camp in August 1936 the Commandant was Mrs Graham Ogilvie who had served in the WAAC with Gwynne-Vaughan in France. Training was based on role-play as the cadets

took it in turns to do the work of cooks and orderlies, to act as NCOs in charge of a party, or perform the duties of orderly officer, sergeant, of Company Commander or Drill Instructor....did a lot of drill and physical training, attended lectures and learned to instruct.<sup>75</sup>

On 5 October 1936 'Emergency Service' became the official title of the organisation, communicated by Gwynne-Vaughan to Sir Herbert J. Creedy, Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the War Office.<sup>76</sup>

Belinda Boyle, asked in 1956 to provide comment for Colonel Julia Cowper's intended publication, *History of the Women's Services*, wrote that ES had been

dull as ditchwater and need not trouble you. It was a worthy do and gave us quite a lot of useful background knowledge and a lot of quite unwarranted confidence which you must have noticed (probably with loathing!) in us later... most of us loved the instructing but the drilling of our squads alongside the King's Road was a little public. I nearly always had the squads of Commandants and the worst included Dame Helen and my Mum!<sup>77</sup>

The King's Road, Chelsea, London ran alongside the Duke of York's Headquarters with its large parade ground. What seemed to Boyle to be dull in retrospect nevertheless met with great enthusiasm from its supporters at the time.

In 1937 ES continued its policy of recruitment by recommendation. The ripple effect continued with recommendations indicating what was regarded as the 'right type'. For

example, Lady Jackson wrote, delightedly, to Gwynne-Vaughan, 'I hope I have got a recruit. Miss Wynne-Finch – her father has just finished commanding a battalion of the Coldstream and she is a capital girl with many friends'.<sup>78</sup> Equally enthusiastic about having located a bevy of potential recruits Lady Dorothy Bowhill wrote to Gwynne-Vaughan that

Mrs Russell is giving a sherry party to the Lend-a-Hand Club which is an Amateur Pantomime Caste (sic) organised by Miss Vansittart and consists entirely of young girls who have nothing to do, and are just the type we want for Emergency Service. Mrs Russell wondered whether you could possibly come and say a few words to them ...<sup>79</sup>

Gwynne-Vaughan was right to be concerned about the public image of ES. It would be counter-productive in the political climate of 1937 to be construed as militaristic or alarmist. There was a danger of it. When Lady Ruth Balfour wrote to Gwynne-Vaughan in March 1937 about comments she had heard after an ES lecture Gwynne-Vaughan replied

Thank you for sending me the letter about the warlike tendencies of the Emergency Service. It is a help to know that impression was produced... one can try to avoid it.<sup>80</sup>

Gwynne-Vaughan also realised that lack of good, controlled publicity could leave ES open to misinterpretation.<sup>81</sup> Worryingly, ES attracted a recruit whose personal reputation could do ES great damage. Unity Mitford, Lord Redesdale's pro-Nazi daughter joined up for ES. In the summer of 1935 Unity Mitford had 'attended the Summer Festival at Hesselberg and on June 23 in front of an audience of approximately 200,000 she made a short speech in which she expressed her solidarity with the German people and pledged her support to Julius Streicher'.<sup>82</sup>

On 16 October 1937 Gwynne-Vaughan put out a press release in *The Times* (See Appendix 2). The description of ES is very candid, giving detailed and transparent factual information about its location, purpose and activities. Gwynne-Vaughan did not want any leaked intelligence about her organisation nor any public doubts about its aims and loyalties or the political inclinations of its members.

Perhaps a degree of sensitivity was centred in Gwynne-Vaughan's own past association with the Organization for the Maintenance of Supply (OMS), an active strike-breaking

organisation which, during 1926 was charged with being ‘the most definite step towards organised fascism yet made in this country’.<sup>83</sup> OMS described itself as ‘non-party’ in character but had accepted ‘the collaboration of the newly constituted British Loyalists, the dissidents from the British Fascists’ Council. Had it not been for the women on the British Fascist Grand Council who refused to merge ‘the BF and the OMS would have merged entirely’. The fascist women resisted merger because of the OMS rule that ‘in no circumstances will women be employed in places where there is danger of rough handling’. The female fascists ‘were not averse to rough work of street fascism and were trained to engage in violent confrontation, both defensive and offensive’.<sup>84</sup> In 1927 Gwynne-Vaughan was the only woman to sit on the OMS Council ‘in the company of generals, admirals, a retired ambassador and a Knight of the Garter’.<sup>85</sup>

There may well have also been sensitivity about Lady Londonderry because ‘open admirers of Nazi Germany included Lord Londonderry...a leading figure in the Anglo-German Fellowship’.<sup>86</sup> The Londonderrys were also associated in the public perception with Nancy Astor’s ‘Cliveden Set’ and Nancy Astor’s ‘all too frequent outbursts against Jews – so easily interpreted as an indication of anti-Semitism’.<sup>87</sup> ‘Charlie’ Londonderry was ‘widely lampooned as The Londonderry Herr’.<sup>88</sup>

Unity Mitford’s pro-Hitler sympathies were common knowledge and Lady Trenchard was in no doubt as to the right course of action for ES. Trenchard wrote to Gwynne-Vaughan, on 31 October, 1937

We must get rid of Unity Mitford ....she is so well known to be so extreme that it would do Emergency Service harm and prevent others from joining ...she is really clever and quite capable of making trouble ...but if she does walk out saying we have thrown her out it really will only do Emergency Service good.<sup>89</sup>

Trenchard enclosed a draft letter of dismissal for Mitford but Gwynne-Vaughan’s response to Trenchard suggested a more discreet route.

Lady Helen Nutting rang me up on Saturday and suggested asking Lord Redesdale to tell her to withdraw. I do not want to send her any letter from us to find its way into the press and I gather she has a strong liking for publicity.<sup>90</sup>

Gwynne-Vaughan had made an accurate assessment. Figure 3.16 shows Unity Mitford, some months later, fortunately no longer in ES but in a posed portrait for Lord

Rothermere's London *Evening Standard* and with Herman Goering's description of her as 'The Perfect Aryan Woman' used for a caption. The accompanying text describes her as 'Lord Redesdale's Nordic-looking daughter' and 'the most ardent English admirer' of 'Herr Hitler'.<sup>91</sup> Lord Rothermere financially supported Sir Oswald Moseley's fascist party from its inception and had, in his *Daily Sketch* newspaper offered £1 prizes to the public for the best postcards on the topic 'Why I like the Blackshirts'.<sup>92</sup>

With ES in the public domain powerful friends began to lobby for its official recognition. Lady Jackson lobbied Hore-Belisha at a luncheon in December, 1937 and afterwards wrote to Gwynne-Vaughan to report success and added, half-seriously, that there might be a public-image price to pay for his patronage. Jackson asked Gwynne-Vaughan

Have you heard the Army joke that all those who Hore-Belisha selects for jobs are now known as 'Belisha's Babies'? I hope no one will think themselves funny at our expense in that way.<sup>93</sup>

It cannot be imagined that the term 'Belisha's Babies' would recommend itself to Gwynne-Vaughan as a description of her or her ES members. However, in February 1938 ES was officially recognised by the Army Council and on the same terms as the FANY. Gwynne-Vaughan had caught up with Baxter-Ellis and the FANY in terms of status.

In April 1938 General Barker (for the Army Council) called in for interview the three women who led recognised organisations of women.<sup>94</sup> First he interviewed Baxter-Ellis, Commandant of the FANY, retitled since April 1937 as Women's Transport Service (WTS FANY), and offered her the leadership of a new, national Women's Reserve Service. Unfortunately, he also told her that 'it would mean you giving up the FANYs'.<sup>95</sup>

While Baxter-Ellis considered this offer and its implications Barker interviewed Gwynne-Vaughan on 8 April 1938 and asked for her views on a Women's Reserve Service. Gwynne-Vaughan advocated, predictably, that any such service should be voluntary, attached to the Regular Army and with uniform provided. On 13 April Barker discussed with Lady Londonderry a revival of a full scale WL and asked her to recruit 'six hundred drivers, three times as many clerks and six times as many domestic

workers'.<sup>96</sup> At last, consideration was afforded to the recruitment of 'other ranks' and support staff but in a manner which suggested it would be a routine task presenting no problems.

The whole plan collapsed when Baxter-Ellis turned down the leadership role. It seems that it was General Barker's fault. He had misinterpreted the intention which was to bring in the WTS FANY en bloc as officers for the proposed corps and had presented it to Baxter-Ellis as an offer to her as an individual and she rejected it. The misconception was not cleared up. Neither was Gwynne-Vaughan offered the vacant leadership post. Clearly the military authorities had not liked her ideas about women in the army any more in 1938 than they had liked them in 1917 and had no desire to re-run the tensions and issues which had arisen when she had been in charge of the WAAC in France.

A new plan was devised. The Territorial Army was called on to organise and recruit the Women's Reserve Service which would therefore, logically, be called the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) also successfully avoiding any reference to 'Women', 'Army' or 'Corps' in the title. The Territorial Army's first response was to set up an Advisory Council and invite Baxter-Ellis, Gwynne-Vaughan and Lady Londonderry to serve on it. Thus the women had lost the initiative in the exercise and were reduced at the outset to an advisory role. The Advisory Council met on 6 May and 23 June 1938. Meanwhile, in her capacity as Chairman of ES, Gwynne-Vaughan secured an interview with Sir Henry McGrath, Judge Advocate General of the Forces on 12 May 1938.<sup>97</sup> At this meeting Gwynne-Vaughan lobbied forcefully on the thorny old issue of women's enlistment rather than informal enrolment into the army. Her arguments were challenging and well rehearsed in terms of law, logic and precedent but the best she could get from MacGeagh was a promise 'to bear all points put forward.....if asked to discuss the matter with the Army Council or its representatives...'.<sup>98</sup> Such a response, in the context of negotiation, is invariably meaningless.

By September 1938 the whole country was in a state of tension because of the Munich crisis and, under pressure and fear of war about to begin with Germany, the plans for the ATS were rushed through. On 8 September the ATS received Royal Assent, was promulgated in Army Order 199, 1938 signed by Leslie Hore-Belisha and 'the next three weeks were a nightmare.'<sup>99</sup>

The Territorial Army needed urgently to send out letters to its branches authorising recruitment to the ATS of up to 20,000 women volunteers. The letter of authorisation had to be approved by the WTS FANY, ES and WL. The WTS FANY refused to sign up to the letter until preservation of their corps identity within the ATS was agreed. The situation was fraught. The WTS FANY was, at one point threatened with exclusion from the scheme if they did not sign. Sir John Brown, Deputy Director General of the Territorial Army, was at his wits' end. The upshot was that, with the intervention of Sir Evan Gibb, the WTS FANY Honorary Colonel-in-Chief, the WTS FANY got its own way and went into the ATS as a separate Section with Baxter-Ellis as its Inspector. The consequence of this decision was to divide loyalties in the ATS.

Recruits were likely being lost to the ATS because of the delays in publishing that the ATS was available. The Secretary of State bit the bullet on 27 September and broadcast on radio, at the most popular listening time, after the nine o'clock News, that the ATS was open for recruitment. There was chaos. At the time of the broadcast very few Territorial Army Branches knew anything about the scheme but

The BBC announcer had barely stopped speaking before the telephones in the drill halls started to ring with women volunteering to join .... They were besieged.<sup>100</sup>

There was an organisational vacuum. Neither reception nor registration processes were in place and when, on 30 September 1938, Chamberlain returned from Munich with apparent good news the urgency about the ATS somewhat subsided. However, the County Commandants for the ATS needed to be appointed and very many Territorial Army branches turned to Gwynne-Vaughan, a name they knew. Gwynne-Vaughan was 'continually rung up for nominations for County Commandants'.<sup>101</sup> These appointments were the prerequisites for any progress in recruiting since the system was in place that women appointed to one rank appointed the women for the rank immediately below them. This system attracted severe public criticism as nepotistic in a matter of months. Meanwhile Gwynne-Vaughan's very extensive network of social connections stood her in good stead. In ES alone, 'by September 1938, 400 women had received training along the lines of an Officers' Training Corps'.<sup>102</sup> It was inevitable that Gwynne-Vaughan was the Territorial Army's nominee to serve at their Headquarters (Branch TA5) to deal with ATS affairs, reporting directly to the Director General Territorial Army. The War Office had no option but to approve the arrangement. Gwynne-

Vaughan had seized the day and thus controlled the future image, organisation and ideology of the whole ATS. Her 'wilderness years' were over. In view of the adverse publicity and political controversy the ATS attracted while under her direction it is likely that those who, under pressure, let her in, would have just stopped short of swallowing fire to have kept her out.

In summary, this chapter has traced the route from WAAC demobilisation in 1918 to the raising of the ATS in September 1938. It has identified leading personalities and significant events along with cultural and political influences for change in the social milieu. It has analysed key organisations in terms of recruitment patterns, propaganda and public image along with government committees in terms of policies and outcomes. It has established that discourse about the principle and practice of women's military service remained the prerogative of an elite minority of women and men throughout the period; that Gwynne-Vaughan, Baxter-Ellis and Lady Londonderry made no attempt to build a popular women's campaign in support of their objectives though Gwynne-Vaughan did recognise the potential of the Girl Guides, ensured her formative role in that movement and used the OCAs/British Legion bases to maintain the interest and enthusiasm of ex-service women; that Gwynne-Vaughan, Baxter-Ellis and Lady Londonderry chose to run their operations covertly, concentrated solely on Officer Training and dialogue with powerful figures and government agencies to further their ambitions for an official Women's Peacetime Reserve; that the competitiveness between Gwynne-Vaughan, Baxter-Ellis and Lady Londonderry was detrimental to their shared objective but that the government was primarily responsible for the organisational chaos in setting up the ATS in 1938; that the gender-equality ethos which drove the elite military-minded women became increasingly out of touch with the male-dependent dominant ideology of the civilian female population in the 1930s.



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War 1*, I.B. Tauris, Paperback edition, 2000, Chapter 10, 'The History of the History of Women and the War', pp. 201-208. This historiographical essay assesses approaches since the celebratory work of David Mitchell (1957) and Arthur Marwick (1977) through to the deconstructionist analysis of Susan Kingsley-Kent (1993).
- <sup>2</sup> See Dierdre Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty: Women between the Wars, 1918–1939*, Pandora, 1989. The bibliography directs to the work of leading women's historians including Penny Summerfield, Jane Lewis, Cynthia White, Penny Tinkler and Carol Dyhouse. See also the papers of the Institute of Contemporary British History (ICBH) Summer Conference, 10–12 July 2000 (which I attended). The Conference title was *Aspects of Gender in Contemporary Britain* and a number of excellent research papers found focus in the inter-wars decades on topics such as *Gender and the public voice of the consumer* (Matthew Hilton), *Conservatism and Gender in Britain 1918 to the Present* (David Jarvis), *Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England 1928–1950* (Catriona Beaumont), *The Home and the Homeland: Gender and the British Extreme Right* (Martin Durham), *Defining Womanhood: Rhetoric and imagery in pro and anti-smoking material, 1900–1940* (Rosemary Elliott). See also Noreen Branson and Margot Heinemann, *Britain in the Nineteen Thirties*, Panther, 1973, in the series *History of British Society*, E.J. Hobsbawm (ed.), Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971. It takes a populist approach and in the introduction the authors describe its focus as 'the everyday lives and attitudes of British people in the thirties'.
- <sup>3</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, 'Women in the Fighting Services' in *Brassey's Annual, The Armed Forces Year Book*, Rear-Admiral H.G. Thurston (ed.) William Clowes and Sons Ltd., London, The Macmillan Company, 1957 p. 291.
- <sup>4</sup> See Julie V. Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism: Women in Britain's Fascist Movement*, I. B. Tauris, 2000. Gottlieb discloses how sections of the women's movement had direct links with the British Union of Fascists.
- <sup>5</sup> Prefacing poem in Marguerite Cody and Edith Barton, *Eve in Khaki: The Story of the Women's Army at Home and Abroad*, London, Nelson, 1918.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

- <sup>7</sup> Anon., *WAAC: The Woman's Story of the War*, T. Werner Laurie, London, 1930, p. 246. Copy at NAM Reading Room. Accession number 22956.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- <sup>11</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in Her Time: A Life of Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, 1879 – 1967*, Macmillan, St. Martin's Press, 1969, p. 254.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, as are details in paragraph above.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.
- <sup>14</sup> *Punch* magazine, June 20, 1923. Vol. CLXIV, January-June 1923, p. 578.
- <sup>15</sup> Diana Shaw, 'The Forgotten Army of Women: The Overseas Service of Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps with the British Forces, 1917 – 1921' in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, Leo Cooper, 1996, p. 375.
- <sup>16</sup> NAM Archive. File: WRAC and its Predecessors 1918–1992, Ref. 9710-145-1, Old Comrades' Association Council Minutes, 15 December, 1919, p. 4.
- <sup>17</sup> Diana Shaw, 'The Forgotten Army of Women', 1996, op. cit., p. 375.
- <sup>18</sup> NAM Archive. File: WRAC and its Predecessors, 1918–1992, holds a wealth of memorabilia, photographs and depositions. See also IWM *Women's Work* Collection. The private Liddle Collection was a primary source for Diana Shaw's work.
- <sup>19</sup> Margaret Llewelyn Davies (ed.), *Life as We Have Known It by Co-operative Working Women*, Hogarth Press, 1931, reprinted by Virago Press, 1977, pp. 105–106. See June Hannam, 'Women and Politics' in June Purvis (ed.), *Women's History: Britain 1850–1945*, UCL Press, London, 1995, pp. 217-245.
- <sup>20</sup> It was Labour MP Ellen Wilkinson who eventually challenged the whole appointment/promotion system of Gwynne-Vaughan's ATS in 1939, arguing in the tabloid press for the introduction of the meritocratic principle (full comment in Chapter 4 of this thesis).
- <sup>21</sup> Julie. V. Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism*, 2000, op. cit., p. 1.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

- 26 NAM Archive. File: WRAC and its Predecessors, 1918–1992, Ref. 9710-145, Vols. 1 to 4: Old Comrades Association Minutes 1919 to 1941.
- 27 Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in her Time*, 1969, op. cit., p. 244.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 246.
- 29 Hugh Popham, *FANY: The Story of the Women's Transport Service 1907–1984*, London, Leo Cooper, 1984, pp. 48-49. Copy at NAM Reading Room. Class: FANY. Accession number 34548.
- 30 NAM Archive. Reference 9401-253-128-1. The 'Flying Section' survived into the late 1930s. Correspondence to Gwynne-Vaughan from Mrs. Harnett, dated 24 August 1937, complained that Lady Loch was lobbying the government for recognition of it, in competition with Gwynne-Vaughan's Emergency Service, as the last remaining unit of the Women's Legion.
- 31 Lady Londonderry, *Retrospect*, Frederick Muller and Sons Ltd., London, 1938, p. 140.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 138.
- 33 There are transcripts of the meetings of 12 and 13 October, 1920 and a copy of the report of the Committee plus Committee members' comments in NAM Archive, Papers of Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, Ref. 9401-253-62 to 90, Women's Reserve Committee, 1920.
- 34 *Ibid.*, Ref. 9401-253-72.
- 35 *Ibid.*, Ref. 9401-253-73-6.
- 36 *Ibid.*, Ref. 9401-253-73-1.
- 37 *Ibid.*, Ref. 9401-253-77-4.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 *Ibid.*, Ref. 9401-253-76 (transcript).
- 40 *Ibid.*, Ref. 9401-253-81.
- 41 *Ibid.*, Ref. 9401-253-72.
- 42 *Ibid.* All Paterson's comments in this paragraph are drawn from 9401-253-73-3.
- 43 Irene Ward, *FANY Invicta*, 1955, p. 71.
- 44 *Ibid.*
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 Hugh Popham, *F.A.N.Y.*, 1984, op. cit., p. 49.
- 47 Pat Beauchamp, *Fanny went to War*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1940, p. 230.
- 48 Irene Ward, *FANY Invicta*, Hutchinson, 1955, op. cit., p. 85.

- <sup>49</sup> The Guide Association Archive. Minutes of the National Executive Committee for 4 February, 1920.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid. Annual Reports 1921–1924. Accession number 2196, p. 13.
- <sup>51</sup> Gwynne-Vaughan's Guide Manifesto quoted in a memorial tribute to her in a collected edition of *The Guider*, the magazine of the Girl Guides, October, 1967, p. 343.
- <sup>52</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in her Time*, 1969, op. cit., p. 256.
- <sup>53</sup> The card-index entry for Helen Gwynne-Vaughan at the Guide Association Archive.
- <sup>54</sup> For example, correspondence from Miss Rosa Ward (Vice President of the Girl Guides Association in 1967) published in *The Guider*, October, 1967, p. 343, recalled Gwynne-Vaughan as an impressive speaker taking as her text for one lecture, 'Trust in God and keep your powder dry'.
- <sup>55</sup> Hugh Popham, *FANY*, 1984, op. cit., p. 50. Popham attributes this temporary decline in enthusiasm to 'post-war reactions, discrepancy between old and new, active and inactive members' and it 'sapped support'.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 53. See also Irene Ward's *FANY Invicta*, 1955, op. cit., pp. 70-103 which offer a richly detailed account of FANY between the wars.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid. There was a special edition of the *FANY Gazette* on Saturday, 1 May, 1926 and Irene Ward, *FANY Invicta*, 1955, op. cit., p. 92, recorded that 'even the strikers seemed to have accepted the FANY....almost the only comment heard was 'they've called up the WAAC' which was not much appreciated'. This comment is indicative of the general attitude of the FANY to the rival corps.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 54.
- <sup>59</sup> Mila Contini, *Fashion from Ancient Egypt to the Present Day*, James Laver (ed.), Paul Hamlyn, London, 1965, p. 295.
- <sup>60</sup> NAM Archive. File. Reference 9710-145-1 WRAC and its Predecessors 1918 – 1992, Old Comrades Association Council Minutes for 20<sup>th</sup> January 1920. Dierdre Beddoe, in *Back to Home and Duty: Women between the Wars, 1918–1939*, Pandora, 1989, p. 139, makes the point that in the field of specialist magazines for women the mass readership gained by *Good Housekeeping* (launched 1922), *Woman and Home* (1926) *My Home* and *Modern Home* (1928) was extremely significant in promoting domesticity. In the 1930s *Woman's Friend* and *Woman's Companion* catered for the working class specifically but by far the greater

influence came from *Woman's Own* (1932) and *Woman* (1937). While catering for the tastes and income of the middle-class housewife these magazines were aspirational as far as working-class girls were concerned. The magazines set the standards in a regular format of readers' letters, romantic fiction, home crafts, fashion-and-beauty-hints and 'agony aunt' column. By 1940 *Woman* had a circulation of two million and a likely actual readership, through borrowing from friends, of double that figure.

<sup>61</sup> Irene Ward, *FANY Invicta*, 1955, op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>62</sup> Hugh Popham, *FANY*, 1984, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>64</sup> Julie V. Gottlieb, *Female Fascists*, 2000, op. cit., p. 279.

<sup>65</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Auxiliary Territorial Service*, 1949, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> NAM Archive. Reference 9401-247-574. Papers of Colonel Julia Cowper, Six Chapters of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, forwarded from the papers of Helen Gwynne-Vaughan to Cowper by Lt Col Millington, 3 November 1961, p. 164.

<sup>67</sup> Rose Kerr, *The Story of the Girl Guides*, The Girl Guides Association, 1932, p. 243, gives a flavour of the way in which the Guides had flourished since 1920. Kerr writes that 'girls who were hooted and jeered at when they first appeared in the street in uniform are now firmly established in public favour....the Guides are praised from nearly every pulpit in the country and are pressed to play a part in nearly every civic function'. Kerr gives the membership strength as 600,000 Guides in Great Britain and 50,000 adult Guiders of a 'fine type of character'.

<sup>68</sup> NAM Archive. Papers of Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, Ref. 9401-253-152. Correspondence with Lady Marjorie Dalrymple. The narrative details concerning the progress of the WLOTS/Emergency Service are drawn from Izzard, 1969, op. cit., pp. 242-277, the papers of Gwynne-Vaughan at the NAM Archive Ref. 9401-253-151 to 401 and the papers of Colonel Julia Cowper at the NAM Archive Ref. 9401-247-274 to 581.

<sup>69</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in Her Time*, 1969, op. cit., p. 265.

<sup>70</sup> NAM Archive Reference 9401-253. Papers of Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan. Letter from Lady Latham, 18 March 1936, Ref. 9401-253-176 and reply from Gwynne-Vaughan, 23 March 1936, Ref. 9401-253-178.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter from Katherine van Baerle, 21 April, 1936, Ref. 9401-253-171.

- 72 Ibid., Letter to Lady Bowhill, 10 August, 1936. Ref. 9401-253-170.
- 73 Ibid., Letter to Lady Brooke-Popham, 25 September, 1936. Ref. 9401-253-174.
- 74 NAM Archive. Reference 9401-247-574. Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper. Six Chapters of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit., p. 166.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 NAM Archive. Papers of Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan. Letter to Sir Herbert J. Creedy, Permanent Under-Secretary of State, War Office, 5 October, 1936. Ref. 9401-253-118.
- 77 NAM Archive. Reference 9401-247-264. Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper. Letter from Belinda Trenchard, 11 April, 1956.
- 78 NAM Archive. Reference 9401-253-215. Papers of Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan. Letter from Lady Jackson, 14 January 1937.
- 79 Ibid. Letter from Lady Dorothy Bowhill, 16 March 1937. Ref. 9401-253-224.
- 80 Ibid. Letter to Lady Ruth Balfour, March 1937. Ref. 9401-253-191.
- 81 Ibid. Letter to Miss Browning, 10 July 1937. Gwynne-Vaughan writes, 'We have steered clear of publicity but it means we cannot make the thing known'. Ref. 9401-253-227.
- 82 Julie V. Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascists*, 2000, op. cit., p. 323.
- 83 Ibid., p. 23.
- 84 Ibid., pp. 22-23.
- 85 Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in Her Time*, 1969, op. cit., p. 231.
- 86 Noreen Branson and Margot Heinemann, *Britain in the Nineteen Thirties*, Panther, 1973, p. 335.
- 87 Norman Rose, *The Cliveden Set*, Jonathan Cape, 2000 p. 182.
- 88 Ibid., p. 116.
- 89 NAM Archive. Reference 9401-253-242-1. Papers of Helen Gwynne-Vaughan. Letter from Lady Trenchard, 31 October, 1937.
- 90 Ibid. Letter to Lady Trenchard, 1 November, 1937. Ref. 9401-253-243.
- 91 Ibid. Newspaper cutting from London *Evening Standard*, Monday, March 14, 1938. Ref. 9401-253-247.
- 92 Noreen Branson and Margot Heinemann, *Britain in the Nineteen Thirties*, 1973, op. cit., p. 307.
- 93 NAM Archive. Reference 9401-253-274. Letter from Lady Jackson, 31 December, 1937.

- <sup>94</sup> Narrative details in the setting up of the ATS are drawn from NAM Archive Reference 9401-247-574. Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper, Six Chapters of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit., pp. 170-171 unless otherwise stated.
- <sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 170.
- <sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 171.
- <sup>97</sup> NAM Archive. Reference 9401-253-146-1. Papers of Helen Gwynne-Vaughan. Mrs. Harnett's notes. Mrs. Harnett was the Secretary of ES and accompanied Gwynne-Vaughan to the meeting.
- <sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 2.
- <sup>99</sup> NAM Archive Reference 9401-247-574. Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper. Six Chapters of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit., p. 174.
- <sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 176.
- <sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 178.
- <sup>102</sup> Colonel Julia M Cowper, *The Auxiliary Territorial Service*, The War Office, 1949, p. 3.

## Chapter 4

### Gwynne-Vaughan's ATS in Peace and War, 1938–1941

This chapter defines ATS military status in 1938 and introduces formative aspects of its internal politics, notes the significance of the new uniform and provides detailed coverage of the ATS recruitment profile in the first three months of its operation between September and December 1938. Issues of finance and ideology are addressed along with an analysis of press responses to the ATS between January and May 1939 by which time ATS appointment procedures had become a politicised issue. Helen Gwynne-Vaughan was formally appointed ATS Director in July 1939 and press images of the first ATS camps held between July and September are explored. War Office refusal to re-designate ATS status and attach it to the Regular Army after declaration of war with Germany is discussed along with subsequent ATS failure to meet new recruitment targets or to successfully manage its public image between September 1939 and July 1940. The impact of a damning government report about the ATS in October 1940 is assessed and the disastrous trail to recruitment crisis by May 1941 is charted. This chapter closes with the dismissal of Helen Gwynne-Vaughan and her replacement with War Office young favourite, Jean Knox.

Faced with what was believed to be imminent war with Germany in the Autumn of 1938 the War Office was certainly quicker off the mark to set up a women's auxiliary army service than it had been in 1914. However, although the ATS was open for recruitment in September 1938 it was not accorded a high military priority and correspondence from the Treasury suggests that the ATS was regarded as an expensive piece of political window dressing. Reviewing the Treasury stance in December 1938, E.B.B. Speed (Treasury) wrote to Sir Frederick Bovenschen (War Office) that

when we first heard of the proposal (for the ATS) we did not put it very high from a military point of view but we appreciated that there might be a political advantage in the formation of a women's corps.

Speed dismissively suggested that the women's war contribution would be very limited, remarking that



I do not think it could be argued this organisation represents a vital link in our defence preparations ...no doubt it is better to have women available who have driven service lorries and who have cooked with Army utensils and who have filled up Army forms before the War.<sup>1</sup>

At this stage Speed failed to anticipate either the rapid and very extensive expansion of occupations within the Army which the ATS would undertake or the significance of the ATS contribution to the war effort ahead.

Consequently, in terms of military status, recruitment, organisational structure and training the ATS had a lower status in the military pecking-order in 1938 than the FANY and the WAAC had held in the First World War. The gender-equality model of recruiting women directly into the Regular Army, proposed by Adjutant General Sir Neville Macready in 1917 (discussed in Chapter 2) was not even revisited as a possibility in 1938. Neither was the ATS directly affiliated to the Regular Army, as the WAAC had been in the First World War. The ATS scheme, which received Royal Assent on 9 September 1938, was 'to recruit 20,000 women (18 to 50 years old) into Companies, each to be commanded by a woman officer and affiliated to the Territorial Army Unit in peacetime'.<sup>2</sup> The Territorial Army Associations were composed of male civilian volunteer reservists, part-timers, weekend soldiers. This meant that ATS training 'consisted principally in weekly drill nights and summer camps. On mobilisation all ranks would be called up for full time service'.<sup>3</sup> In a further dilution of female autonomy vis-à-vis 1917 Gwynne-Vaughan, in 1938, held only a grace-and-favour nominee status post at the Territorial Army Associations' Headquarters and reported to Sir Walter Kirke, the Director General of the Territorial Army.

While Gwynne-Vaughan was thus occupied Lady Londonderry published her memoirs in October 1938.<sup>4</sup> The rhetorical epilogue of her autobiography offers a 'State of the Nation' address and has a particular relevance as indicative of the values of the leaders/members of both FANY and WL/ES, which officially merged to form the ATS at this point, since all personnel were drawn from the same genteel culture. The social model perceived by Lady Londonderry was that of tension in a patrician/plebian divided nation in which the patricians are suffering a temporary setback in their influence due to subversion by decadent, debasing influences including America and its film stars who have usurped British ladies as role models for young British women. Communism, atheism and effeminacy of British young men were also identified as debasing the

British national character. In spite of this, Londonderry asserted, the patrician group, 'what shall we call it – the Upper Class', in a vision drawing on Arthurian legend, would rise again in crisis (War) to save Britain through its dedication and innate leadership experience and amongst these saviours would be 'Women Territorials as well as men.... airwomen as well as airmen'. The epilogue conveys a snobbery about the current peerage which 'includes those who before the War (First World War) would not have formed part of what the Press is pleased to term Society'. There is regret that 'there seems to be a grossness and a cheap commonness not met with before'.

Although ES had rejected Unity Mitford because of her undiluted Nazi sympathies there is a class-purity motif in Lady Londonderry's Epilogue which has an uncomfortable resonance with the racial-purity motif of Mitford's portrayal in *The London Evening Standard* as 'The Perfect Aryan Woman' just a few months before the publication of the Londonderry memoirs.<sup>5</sup> The general texture of the values in this Epilogue sets the background for the tensions which developed in ATS internal politics when working-class women volunteering, and later conscripted, as recruits to ATS 'other ranks' frequently and wholeheartedly belonged to what Lady Londonderry and the officer class experienced and viewed as a new, undesirable, Americanised, brash culture.

In sharp contrast with her all-embracing vision of an Upper Class in solidarity neither Gwynne-Vaughan (WAAC) nor Lilian Franklin (FANY) nor Baxter-Ellis (FANY) were given a single mention in Londonderry's memoir chapters dealing with 'Women and the War 1912–18' and 'Post-War Women, 1918–19'. All glowing tributes were reserved for her own WL personnel, Lilian Barker (Cooking Section), Miss C Ellis (Motor Driving Section) and fellow socialite Mrs Burleigh Leach (WAAC).<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, the divisive rivalries between the organisations intensified as Lady Londonderry published her memoirs in October 1938. Within the ATS a power struggle was already in evidence in the upper echelons of the service. Initially the WTS/FANY, WLMTS and ES had carved the ATS up into areas of discrete responsibility. The WTS/FANY concerned itself exclusively with motor-driving companies. The WLMTS did the same, but provided its services to the RAF. The WLMTS parent organisation, the WL, was revitalised to recruit clerical and administrative staff. ES took responsibility for all ATS Officer Training.

From the point of view of the WTS/FANY the whole arrangement was unsatisfactory. Their official corps biographer described it as a 'Shotgun Wedding', took pains to emphasise the military pre-eminence of the WTS/FANY which, in 1938, was a 'well-trained cadre of 400-500' and that 'Generals talked to them like normal regimental officers, teaching them their job in casual conversation'.<sup>7</sup> Clashes of will with Gwynne-Vaughan began immediately. In October 1938 Gwynne-Vaughan at first requested and then insisted that WTS/FANY officers must attend her School of Instruction in order to be accredited as officers in the ATS.

At least there was harmony on the issue of ATS clothing and the agreed uniform is very significant in that it was the most visible expression of the ethos shared by all the participant organisations. The ATS Advisory Committee had set up a special Uniform Committee<sup>8</sup> in the summer months of 1938 and according to Gwynne-Vaughan's recollections

the officers' uniform ...based on that of military officers was quickly and unanimously agreed. With regard to other ranks, the Women's Transport Service (FANY) and the Women's Legion having already in use for their members a uniform on officer's lines carried the day.<sup>9</sup>

This represented a democratising influence in that there was no resurrection of the dreary 1917 WAAC frock-coat for women in the ranks but no thought was given to the exciting opportunity for completely modernising the uniform design though two routes might have suggested themselves for consideration to a more image-conscious committee looking to recruit volunteers. Either to opt for trousers to complete the otherwise male-based uniform (a gender-equality model) or to feminise the uniform in line with contemporary gender-differentiated preferences and have opted for a civilian-style female suit jacket worn with a blouse instead of shirt and tie.

In the event the uniform for the new service was that reproduced in Figure 4.1 and the image of the officer (far left) virtually replicated that of the WAAC in 1917. The WTS/FANY uniform 'unchanged 1919 to 1936', is shown in Figure 4.2, and has a similar profile. It was a decidedly dated and frumpish look to offer in 1938 and was also an ambivalent mix of traditionally male and female clothing. This feature is reflected in the description of the uniform by the ATS official biographer. Cowper pointed out that

the 1938 ATS uniform was democratic, which distinguished it from the WAAC uniforms of 1917, in that

the pattern of the uniform was the same for all ranks, based on the male officer's service dress jacket, plain gored skirt and soft peaked cap. Shoes were brown and stockings khaki.<sup>10</sup>

Cowper's comment reads a little oddly because of the mix of male and female clothing in the actual uniform design. When worn by recruits the uniform sent out gender signals of masculinised women, an unpopular image that quickly lent itself to media satire.

In an advance on the coy silence of 1917 on the question, Gwynne-Vaughan urged the inclusion of Army-issue underwear to ATS recruits. She presented her argument in correspondence with W.H. Curtis (War Office Representative on the ATS Advisory Council).<sup>11</sup> She explained that she had consulted on this matter with ex-service women of all ranks and put forward her experience of the WAAC where 'some, under their uniform were in rags, some had almost nothing'. Curtis had obviously suggested recruits would resist wearing Army-issue knickers and Gwynne-Vaughan responded, diplomatically,

I agree with you that a proportion of other ranks will not want to wear issue undergarments. But if they like to provide crepe de chine 'undies' of their own and wash them (as they doubtless would) in their off-duty time I see no objection and it would save the public purse.

but insisted that 'it is important, even from the point of view of health and consequent efficiency alone, that the essential garments should be assured to everyone'. Showing a more imaginative grasp of what was ahead than the Treasury seemed capable of forming she concluded on a realistic note, defensive of other ranks recruits,

Remember, the personnel of such a service, especially after expansion in the war is not limited to the more or less refined. You get all sorts, just as you do among soldiers – and very good sorts they are.

Gwynne-Vaughan won the argument and the now-legendary khaki 'passion-killer' knickers became part of the ATS kit.

The 1938 ATS issue service dress is shown in Figure 4.3, helpfully modelled and photographed in colour for a 1995 publication. The skirt is better observed in the 1939 photograph, used as the backdrop to Figure 4.3, where the 2<sup>nd</sup> Middlesex platoon are shown waiting for a train. The recruits are unhampered by kit, except for their issue raincoats. The black and white photograph loses the effect of the all-important khaki colour as the uniform's primary identifier, but the skirt's poor cut is evident. It is a shapeless and unfashionably long garment. The shirt, tie and cap are all masculinised motifs but the detail which most overtly challenges female clothing tradition in favour of male military tradition was the direct preference of Gwynne-Vaughan. She had insisted that the jacket, modelled on the male officer's tunic, should also fasten to the right (male) side. She had her rationale for this. It was in order 'to accommodate the military precedent that wore decorations or awards on the uppermost side of the tunic'.<sup>12</sup> This privileging of military minutiae is consistent with her aspiration 'to prove that women can do anything they're asked in the Army', backed up by her tough credo of 'no comforts, no concessions, no alternative standards' for the ATS just because they were women.<sup>13</sup> What Gwynne-Vaughan was establishing, and the uniform was an outward signifier of it, was a model of the Soldier Woman. There were, however, some 'concessions to femininity..... the issue suspender belt was pink and the fabric used in the uniform was a fine saxony serge rather than the coarse serge of the male service dress'.<sup>14</sup> The ATS had a decorative cap badge, shown in Figure 4.4, but this by accident rather than design. 'ATS' is an attractive, pronounceable acronym but Army officials had forgotten that the letters also formed the logo of the Army Technical School. So, in order to avoid confusion of logos the 'T' was raised to stand proud of the 'A' and 'S' on the ATS badge. Gwynne-Vaughan commented wryly on how it had been 'a little startling to find references in official documents to "the boys of the ATS"'.<sup>15</sup>

Soon after the ATS was formed The Princess Royal was designated its Controller Commandant. The involvement of the Royal Family's women had proved one of the most effective public relations strategies in the past, both for the WAAC in 1918 and for the FANY in the inter-war years. Figure 4.5 shows the Princess Royal wearing her ATS uniform. She presented an immaculate image, a national rallying point for recruitment, a focus for female patriotism. She inspired girls like Elizabeth, who joined up in 1938, became a Senior Commandant in the ATS and described herself as a 'life-long Royalist'.<sup>16</sup>

Some glimpses of the impact of the 1938 design uniform can be got from the depositions of early-days volunteers. Three depositions will serve as illustrative. The first shows the surprise at the old-fashioned nature of the uniform and its masculine referencing.<sup>17</sup>

Molly Gale volunteered for the ATS in September 1938, 'having been previously employed at Albion Motors'. She recalls her enrolment at a meeting held in Central Halls, Glasgow, on 2 February 1939,

Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan and staff attended. She was wearing her World War 1 uniform. We were not impressed.....however, as no decision had been taken regarding the uniform it was hoped it would be improved. When it was issued there were three sizes, small, medium and large. The skirts were too long.

Gale was wrong about the uniform design still being open to review at this date and it is instructive that Gale, seeing Gwynne-Vaughan wearing it, believed Gwynne-Vaughan was actually wearing her old 1917-18 WAAC uniform. Also, while Gwynne-Vaughan clearly understood the military significance of the ATS jacket fastening to the male side the point was incomprehensible to Gale who remarked that

Military tailors had made the uniforms with the result that the jacket buttons were on the wrong side.<sup>18</sup>

The second example shows how recruits got around the regulations to modify and feminise the army issue clothing. E.M. Hazell recalled being kitted out with the uniform (1938 design) and groaned,

oh – those uniforms – skirts too long (for us) and baggy, thick stockings (khaki), itchy underwear and clodhopper shoes. We were ATS without HATS. This was all rather disappointing, the hat was the cherry on the cake so to speak.

Her group

soon visited a tailor in the town to have our skirts shortened and fitted as much as we dare, plus buying our own fine lisle stockings in preference to army issue and only wearing army undies when absolutely necessary or for kit inspection.

However, despite the shortcomings, unfashionable elements and disappointments with the uniform Hazell concluded, 'I can honestly say "Yes, I was proud to wear the king's khaki"'.<sup>19</sup>

The third response is a very blunt criticism indeed from Dorothy Calvert, who is shown in Figure 4.6 wearing the 1938 design uniform where the rough cut and texture of the jacket is self-evident. Calvert, prior to volunteering, had worked as a silk weaver in a Great Yarmouth factory. The introduction to her memoirs (published in 1978) describes her motive for volunteering as 'jumping in at the deep end with the other women who hoped in some small way we would bring peace back to the world'. Calvert had hoped to get into the WRNS but had been directed to the ATS where, as far as the uniform was concerned she felt that she looked

like a pregnant pelican. The skirt I was given very nearly touched the floor; talk about duck's disease. I felt my bum was on the floor.<sup>20</sup>

If this was the characteristic response of working-class girls then ATS recruitment would certainly be an uphill struggle.

British women had not been invited, on a national basis, to wear official khaki uniform since 1917. The crucial questions were: Would satisfaction in patriotic duty, the prospect of breaking through a gender barrier into a male, military environment, the counter-cultural novelty of wearing a military style uniform, earning money, the promise of a life outside domesticity, the prospect of a female camaraderie within a khaki corporate culture be enough to tempt volunteers, over-ride any apprehensions about social or family disapproval and outweigh any perceived flaws of comfort or fashion in the image? Would 20,000 women come forward to wear this uniform voluntarily and sign up for the ATS in peacetime? And if they did, what would the ATS recruitment profile look like and what would the ATS impact be on the general British public and, in particular, on the social expectations and image of British women?

There was, of course, a sub-cultural minority of women eager for the venture and, in the early months of operation, Gwynne-Vaughan was able to report that 'new members flowed in'.<sup>21</sup> Many of these recruits to junior and senior officer posts were, predictably, drawn from the ranks of Gwynne-Vaughan's ES and from the Girl Guides. Gwynne-

Vaughan, Chairman of the Girl Guides since 1928, had always been impressed by the 'splendid system of training (in the Girl Guides)' and recognised that 'the qualities inculcated would also be of value in war'.<sup>22</sup> Gwynne-Vaughan did not hesitate to act on the basis of her convictions. For example, when the Surrey Territorial Association needed a County Commander Gwynne-Vaughan recalled that

Mrs Chitty whom I knew, not only as an Emergency Service Cadet but as an able Guide Commissioner was in the room. She lived in Surrey. I sent her along with the happiest results.<sup>23</sup>

When considering the general principles of recruitment and defining the qualities of good officer-material Gwynne-Vaughan enthusiastically pointed to the Girl Guides as exemplars of good practice. She asserted that

one can often recognise the presence of Girl Guides in a platoon by the ingenious gadgets they produce. The glow of achievement is added to the increased comfort or convenience.<sup>24</sup>

In 1938 the Girl Guide Movement enjoyed great public prestige and the publicity advantage of Royal patronage. Figure 4.7 shows both the princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret Rose, in their Guider/Brownie uniforms with Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary. Gwynne-Vaughan is shown in the background with the Earl of Athlone. Royal role models were an obvious recruitment asset for the Guides and Gwynne-Vaughan's prominent role with the Guides was, in turn, a crucial recruitment asset for the ATS.

The heavy influence of the Girl Guides on the recruitment profile of the ATS did not go unrecognised by the public. Eileen Bigland recalled a train journey on which the ATS was mentioned and 'someone said that the Girl Guides were carrying the joke a bit too far'. Another passenger suggested that

camp life would be a blessing if it removed some of the paint and lipstick with which young women smear their faces.....and our Dad took on so, not about the war you know, but about this camping idea. Our Betty's always been one for chills and sleeping in a tent would do her no good.<sup>25</sup>



The demotic style employed in the narrative suggests the speaker's underclass social origins and a degree of apprehension in that quarter about the new service taking away its daughters and doing them damage.

At the opposite end of the social spectrum there were many recruits like

Flavia, wearing her plum-coloured M.B.E. ribbon; the tall, fair, serene Commander left her country home and her background of horses, dogs and social work in the village to join the ATS when war was imminent.<sup>26</sup>

In this early phase of recruitment, Brigadier Shelford Bidwell judged that

many officers had been appointed and promoted for the sole reason that they were available and willing to serve and for their social standing. There were no confidential reports or gradings and, like the male Territorial Army, senior officers were reluctant to apply the ruthless standards of the Regular Army to friends whom they knew socially in civilian life.<sup>27</sup>

This feature of recruitment would prove to be one of the factors most damaging to the ATS both in terms of public perception and organisational structure as events described later in this chapter will evidence.

An insight into attempts to personalise recruitment can be gained from Gwynne-Vaughan's personal papers where, in October 1938, her correspondence includes 147 enquiries made directly to her as a result of misinformation given in *The Times* on 10 October.<sup>28</sup> Given the nature of the publication it is unsurprising that most of the enquiries came from upper middle-class or aristocratic women, all wanting to be immediately commissioned as officers. A few examples will serve to give the flavour of the attempts to 'pull social rank' to obtain officer roles. Some present themselves by reference to their husbands. One applicant mentions 'my husband, Major Lane'; Mrs Horner wants 'officer status'. Her husband is 'an officer in the RAF'. Colleen Martin urges her education, she was 'educated at the Abbey School ..so possibly you would consider me for an officer'. Others apply by way of advocates. Sir Donald Banks writes on behalf of 'Miss Doreen Bruce-Gardner, daughter of Sir Charles Bruce-Gardner'. Gwendoline Peel remarks, 'I believe you know my mother, Lady Emmott.'. A particularly interesting offer came from a professional woman, Doris Davison, who had 'done work for the Regent's Park Open Air Theatre' and suggests she could take charge

of voice-management training for the ATS officers, to 'show them how to avoid contracting a harsh Sergeant-Major voice which I am sure is undesirable in any woman'.

To Gwynne-Vaughan's credit, she took a formal line with all these direct applicants and referred them back to their local Territorial Associations for enrolment and selection, though a certain warmth of address is evident in her responses to applications from old comrades from the WAAC/WRAF. For example an applicant whose letter begins 'You were my old Commandant in the WRAF' earns 'My dear Swann' in response. Similar tone occurs in correspondence with ex-QMAAC applicants Helen Rimmington, Gladys Bradley, Mrs Cobb, Dorothy Wilde-Mascall and Miss Montefiore. There is a sense that women who had participated previously in 1917–1919 believed that their time had come to be of national significance again. This mood pervaded much of Gwynne-Vaughan's correspondence at this date although she, and many of her First World War comrades, were technically outside the upper age limit of fifty years of age which had been set for the ATS recruits. A sense of nostalgia for the non-domestic comradeship of 1917–1919 in the army and an enduring patriotism motivated them to wish to serve again.

In terms of the early ATS recruitment profile, my ATS Survey (1996) offers a range of reasons why women who were too young to have experienced the First World War were deciding to volunteer and what was inspiring them.<sup>29</sup> The responses to the Survey questions also give some insight into the temperament and self-image of the young recruits.

For example, Mrs P joined up in September 1938, because 'my husband was in the TA and I liked the activities he was involved in'. Mrs P remained in the ATS after the end of the Second World War, served continuously in the ATS until 1949 and after that in the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) until 1956.<sup>30</sup> Mrs E joined up in 1938 as a 'Private' and moved up to the rank of Junior Commander by 1940. She recalled that it was 'the Munich crisis in 1938 shortly after I left school' which motivated her.<sup>31</sup> This may have been a motive shared with many others since the Munich crisis was

the first crisis to be covered by newsreels....massive coverage of Chamberlain's three visits to Hitler .... the now famous newsreel of Chamberlain's return from

Munich is both the climax of the media campaign and the historical evidence of its result.<sup>32</sup>

Mrs E wrote,

I had no idea what to expect (of the ATS). It was still peacetime and I did not think I would even be mobilised. To start with we (ATS) were not highly regarded but this changed during the war.

Mrs L, who joined up on 24 November 1938 recalled that, as far as advertisement was concerned,

the only coverage I remember was in the local evening paper in Derby. I lived in a small village and wanted to get out and see something of other places and people and I was also uniform crazy. Everything was what I expected and gave me a lot more interest in life.<sup>33</sup>

Ms G tried to join the ATS in September 1938 and recalled the circumstances precisely, that

following the Munich crisis people began to realise that war might come. It was announced that the ATS had been created towards this end. I tried to join up at the age of 16 when I saw a photograph of the FANYs in the paper. However, the recruiting sergeant showed me the door.<sup>34</sup>

ATS recruits had to be a minimum of 18 years of age. It seems odd that Ms G identified the uniformed women in her local newspaper as members of the FANY rather than the ATS. Perhaps that was how the local journalist presented them since the merger of FANY and ES to form the ATS had only just been agreed. Ms G joined the ATS as soon as she was allowed in, having

a love of all things military plus patriotic feelings and a desire to help my country....I thought this would be quite fun. As I had joined up in peacetime it was simply good to be in this great adventure with my friends.

In summary, between September and December 1938 ATS recruitment was coasting along and, in Gwynne-Vaughan's opinion, building well with WTS/FANY and women

from her own ES and Girl Guides at its heart as officers and the ATS attracting, beyond these organisations, women who joined for a variety of personal motivations and from a range of social backgrounds.

The acid test of how well ATS recruitment was progressing was that by December 1938 Sir Walter Kirke (DGTA and Chair of ATS Advisory Committee) was obliged to request more money from the Treasury, advising the Coordinating Committee of the Army Council that 'we have been criticised on all sides for the meagre financial assistance we are giving this service'.<sup>35</sup> The request for more money served to effect a review of the ATS which, in the event, went further than finance and questioned its ideological base. Kirke's sixteen-point bid for increased finance for the ATS was richly detailed and patiently explained the burgeoning costs falling on the Territorial Army budget in its attempts to accommodate the ATS within its allowance. He made reference to high costs of recruiting, postage, telephones, medical examinations, furniture, clerical assistance, accommodation for offices and stores, hiring of lecture rooms, ATS County Commandants' offices and travelling expenses, School of Instruction costs, unit training costs, and ATS Advisory Council costs. He left no accountant's heading unexplored. Kirke concluded his bid with a plea, offered in man-to-man mode to his Army colleagues that, 'I hope you will submit to Treasury at an early date to forestall still larger demands from the ladies'. Apart from the inherent sexism of that remark the document gives insight into the scale of ATS recruitment in December 1938, mentioning that across the country ATS unit strengths 'are ranging from 25 to approximately 2500 in London. The West Riding administers 1300'.

The Treasury response to the request for more money for the ATS was both misogynistic and icy. E.B.B Speed (Treasury) made clear to Sir Frederick Bovenschen (War Office) that it was unacceptable, that

the combined effect of these proposals is to increase the annual cost of the organisation by more than 50% and that if we had known at the time (September 1938) that the organisation itself was likely to cost £150,000 a year with consequentials elsewhere bringing the total bill up to something like a quarter of a million pounds a year, we should have had even more hesitation than we felt at the time in agreeing to it.. You must confine the running costs of this organisation within an annual figure of £120,000...and negotiation with an advisory council of women in regard to this military matter should now be abandoned in favour of direct administration by The Army Council.<sup>36</sup>

When Kirke heard the Treasury reply, via the War Office, his response to Bovenschen was full of pique and anger. He pointed out that

the existing cost of the ATS is approximately £88,000. The proposed £120,000, I imagine, is merely an arbitrary figure produced by the Treasury. Incidentally, I might add that if the organisation became a toy for well-to-do women we might not be up against our existing difficulties but the whole object is to have a workmanlike organisation which runs efficiently and will be of assistance on mobilization.<sup>37</sup>

Kirke, whether consciously or not, struck a key political note here about the future direction and strategy of ATS organisation and recruitment. If the ATS was to be low cost then, ideologically, it would have to be exclusivist.

Bovenschen clearly favoured an inclusivist model, in keeping with what, in the event of war, would have to be a cornerstone of British home propaganda; that Britain was a socially inclusive democracy facing up to the totalitarian tyranny of Hitler. The politicians, Bovenschen (War Office) and Speed (Treasury) reached an accommodation by January 1939. Bovenschen adapted Kirke's line and urged Speed that there must be

no question of this organisation (ATS) becoming a toy for well-to-do women and it is precisely for this reason that it is necessary to make proper provision for the personnel who compose the various Territorial Association units. The ATS does in fact comprise members of all classes and we have to fix emoluments and conditions of service accordingly.<sup>38</sup>

The draft version of the letter above is even more explicit, concluding,

The ATS does in fact comprise members of all classes and therefore we have to fix emoluments and conditions of service on the basis of the poorest members.<sup>39</sup>

Bovenschen conceded that the ATS budget could be contained within the Treasury's grudging £120,000 and a brief note (by return) from Speed confirmed what was virtually a trade off of some more money for the ATS in order to secure an inclusivist image and direction for ATS recruitment and development.<sup>40</sup>

However, the inter-departmental tensions and ideological/fiscal deliberations of the Civil Service remained academic as far as the general public was concerned. There was

no central, managing authority looking after the ATS public image or public relations through which policy could be expressed as propaganda in a cohesive, national pattern. There was no central agency to build a successful corporate image for the ATS in the way that the National Service Department Women's Section had for the WAAC in 1917. The ATS public image was fragmented, localised in the hands of individual ATS units and local newspapers as they put out such information, images and advertising as seemed to them good for local recruitment.

By way of examples of this Figures 4.8 and 4.9 are drawn from coverage of recruitment efforts in Lancashire, which proved a rich source of ATS recruits.

Figure 4.8, published in November 1938, presents a populist, welcoming ATS image, using the novelty value of the ATS khaki uniform as its journalistic 'hook'. The headline is colloquially phrased, 'Preston Women Jump To It at Sergeant's Command'. A jolly-looking, young officer is shown, sharing a smiling moment with a new recruit who is being measured for her all-important uniform though why they were using an inch-tape when the uniform only came in three sizes is a matter of pure public relations preference. It is clearly a posed press-image but a more guarded image maker would have avoided the way in which the skirt-length, shiny stockings and clumpy shoes work together to make legs appear as shapeless sausages. The caps are worn pulled well down at back and sides in the manner of 1917 WAACs. However, the text which accompanies the image describes the episode as 'a brief, feminine interlude' and refers to an address given at the event by the Chief Commandant of West Lancashire ATS (Northern Area), Miss Julia M. Cowper.

Figure 4.9, published in January, 1939, presents, in contrast, an authoritative corporate image of the ATS, represented by its 'top brass'. Under a deferential and formal headline, 'Commandant of Women Volunteers', Chief Commandant Cowper is shown at her office desk. The service cap is discarded and allows her personality to reveal itself in the scrupulously neat hair and clear forehead. The image is of a benign, mature, responsible woman, wearing her authority in the manner of one accustomed to command. There is, however, a degree of contrived spontaneity in the portrait with Cowper posed to look as if she has just paused for an instant in her busy work to turn and engage the camera. The relaxation in the shoulders and the crossed legs suggest a sophisticated female civilian attitude rather than a militaristic de-feminised persona. It is

a very reassuring and, importantly, lady-like image to present to the mothers of young girls who may have been pestering parents at home to allow them to join the ATS. Julia Cowper was the daughter of Colonel I.M. Cowper and the text which accompanies Figure 4.9 makes a point of emphasising the lady-like credentials of her fellow officers including 'Miss J. Meadon, daughter of Sir Percy Meadon' and 'Miss Margaret Edge, the daughter of Sir William and Lady Edge'. The officers are also, with one exception, unmarried women. It is very much stressed that all recruits in all ranks will wear a uniform of the same 'design to the one worn by Miss Cowper in the photograph'. This was obviously regarded as a high selling-point for the ATS since the purpose of the publicity was to launch Commander Cowper's call for 200 ATS volunteers.<sup>41</sup>

The press photographs in Figures 4.8 and 4.9 are referred to in correspondence. On 4 February, 1939, Cowper wrote, with great satisfaction, to advise Gwynne-Vaughan about 'Lancashire's first enrolment...complete with press photographs and a searchlight demonstration'.<sup>42</sup>

If there was a genuine determination in the War Office to avoid an elitist image crystallising around the ATS the desire and the action came too late. On 14 February 1939, the *Telegraph and Morning Post* published its list of 'Women Leaders of the Auxiliary Territorials'. The list replicated, on a national level, the social profile of the officer-class reported in the local Lancashire press discussed above. The national listing reads like an extract from 'Who's Who' for 1939. The majority of the twenty three Chief Commandants were titled ladies, the list being headed up by The Princess Royal and Lady Violet Astor. Fifteen of the fifty-two Senior Commandants were titled ladies.<sup>43</sup>

This published list of the ATS upper echelons was in uneasy tension with Bovenschen's 20 January 1939 assertion that there must be no question of the ATS being a toy for rich women and out of key with Kirke's belated report to the decidedly well-heeled ATS Advisory Committee on 9 March, 1939, on 'the repercussions which arose from the original suggestion that the ATS should be raised on a no-cost basis'. Kirke was at pains to point out that 'it was undesirable to do this and thus confine the ATS to the better-off and more leisured class of women'<sup>44</sup> but over six hundred officers had already been appointed and named in the *Telegraph and Morning Post* which left little or no room for manoeuvre. The ATS had been boxed into the elitist corner. Gwynne-Vaughan had

written to Dorothy Rose on 20 February, 1939, that 'I know they have already filled up most of the vacancies for officers in the companies'.<sup>45</sup> The Treasury decision to pay recruits might well attract less well-off women to join the ATS but there was no possibility for them, however able, to be promoted to officer grades. It was a classic case of promotion blocking and it was a *fait accompli*.

Examples of ordinary, 'less well-off' young women are shown, in Figure 4.10, on the Town Hall steps of Preston in March 1939 during a designated National Service Week. The recruiting officer is said to be giving them information about the service. It is doubtful whether the information would have included the unwelcome news that promotion prospects for those joining at this date were virtually zero.

The class composition of the ATS officer grades did not impact in the middle-class press as a political issue. On 10 May, 1939, the middle-class readership of the *Daily Express* was being regaled with a jolly episode under the headline 'Women Terriers Learn to Cook for The Army' and the text revealed that 'Brompton Barracks had a shock today when half the 44<sup>th</sup> Company (Kent) WATS marched in'.<sup>46</sup> The ATS was at this point often referred to in the Press, inaccurately, as the 'WATS' (Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service). The middle-class readers of the *Daily Mail* on the same day had the headline 'Girls Start Life in Barracks' and a lighthearted (condescending) account of how the 'girls' were 'learning Tommy's job in the barracks'.<sup>47</sup>

In the sharpest contrast the populist press tabloid, the *Daily Mirror*, with its working-class readership ran, on 10 May, 1939, a headline written by Ellen Wilkinson, Labour MP for Jarrow. The headline, 'The newly formed Women's Auxiliary Territorial Army is a Snob Show', pulled no punches on the class issue. Neither did the rest of Wilkinson's comment that she would raise questions in the House of Commons and that, from her political viewpoint 'if the domestic servant or the typist proves to be the more efficient organiser, titled people ought to be prepared to serve under them'.<sup>48</sup> Here was expressed the greatest indicator of change in social mood between 1917 and 1939 with regard to the women's auxiliary services. Never, amidst all the criticisms of the morals and administration of the WAAC in 1917–1918 had there been an attack on the notion of the 'natural' officer-qualities of titled people nor on the assumption that working-class women were 'natural' underlings to the upper class.



Nobody was better qualified or able to make such an attack than Ellen Wilkinson. She was at home in confrontational class politics. Wilkinson had not hesitated to take issue with the Bishop of Durham in 1936 as to the legitimacy of Marching as political protest. She had risen to political prominence from a working-class family. She had been a Communist and was known familiarly in the House of Commons as 'Red Ellen'. She had led the legendary Jarrow Crusade of the unemployed from Jarrow to London in the winter of 1936 and had presented the Jarrow petition to Parliament. Neither was Wilkinson the sole female MP to articulate a class position in Parliament in May 1939. Agnes Hardie was, like Wilkinson, a Labour MP and on 4 May, a few days before Wilkinson's publication in the *Daily Mirror* about the ATS, Hardie had asserted in the House of Commons that

working class women do not want conscription.....people from the slums of Glasgow and Liverpool and from other places are to be asked to fight for this land of which they do not own a square foot.<sup>49</sup>

Class attacks certainly touched a class nerve because on 25 May the ATS was the focus of a confrontational debate in *News Review* run under the headline 'What good is the Women's Army?'<sup>50</sup> This was exactly the kind of publicity deplored and discouraged by Gwynne-Vaughan. The ATS image was hung out to dry, ripped to shreds by Wilkinson and defended, unfortunately, not by the Army Council or the War Office but by its well-meaning socialite supporters/members whose flustered and politically unguarded comments more or less made Wilkinson's case for her.

Wilkinson, with a flair for tabloid journalism, appealed to populist instincts, explaining confidently,

You know how it goes, the next rank below is Senior Commandant. To that post Lady So and So appoints her friend the Hon. So and So. So it goes on right through the whole organisation ...it brings the whole idea of a women's service into disrepute.<sup>51</sup>

Lady Violet Astor, ATS Commander, London, defended her class, asserting that

It has been said that the "plums" of the service have been reserved for "the idle rich" and their friends.....it is true that in the service there are many women who cannot lay claim to professional qualifications and who happily are free from the necessity of earning a living ... but these women of the so-called leisured classes

work long hours daily in the ATS offices giving their time and energy to their duties ...many of them far beyond what regulations demand.<sup>52</sup>

Lady Astor was clearly baiting Wilkinson with her sarcastic reference to 'professional qualifications' and ducked the nepotism issue with a diversionary bluster, authoritative and piqued, about the effort and personal worth of the ladies appointed. The Astor support-group included the Duchess of Atholl who, self-importantly asserted that 'the WATS is an excellent movement and wherever I speak I advocate it'.<sup>53</sup> It is noteworthy that the Duchess refers to the WATS as a 'movement' – like the Girl Guides – rather than as a military service. An early ATS volunteer, Miss Margaret Davies, shared the defence, very naively volunteering that 'We want to do all we can to help. And we get an awful lot of fun out of it'.<sup>54</sup>

Oppositional visual images were offered for public scrutiny. Figure 4.10 shows, above Wilkinson's caption 'The WATS is slack, inefficient and badly organised' a group of WATS recruits marching, zealous but out of step with one another, without proper uniform, figures of fun, frumps and freaks of women, an organisation that is a joke. In contrast, above Lady Pares's caption, 'The WATS is splendid ... the work it does is most useful', WATS members are presented as confidently relaxed women, off-duty but still fully uniformed, in assertive stances, all smartly turned-out and smiling. A group to which any patriotic young woman would be proud to belong. Figure 4.11 is illustrative of the power of a highly selective single image to create an impression of a corporate identity for a whole organisation. The ATS had become a political cause celebre.

Gwynne Vaughan revisited, in her 1941 autobiography, what she termed 'the titled lady outcry' in 1939 and persisted in dismissing it as 'a spate of uninformed criticism'. Gwynne-Vaughan's preference was for a bureaucratic rather than an ideological explanation, asserting that the confusion arose because ATS officer selection was left to 'well intentioned but often inexperienced local enterprise'.<sup>55</sup>

Be that as it may, fair play between the classes was to form a significant discourse in the propaganda and policies of the war years, emerging fiercely in such contexts as food rationing and evacuation. Angus Calder noted 'much public criticism of unfair distribution' prompting government policy on 'points rationing' of food early in the Second World War 'so that the well-to-do could no longer corner all the tinned

salmon'.<sup>56</sup> Rationing had not taken place until the closing months of the First World War. Vera Brittain described working-class people's sense of smarting injustice in the early years of the Second World War about the rich evacuating their children 'preferentially', that is, abroad to safety.<sup>57</sup> Such discourses, indicative of changing attitudes to class privileges, are prefigured in the debate about the nature of ATS appointment and promotion procedures in the pre-war months of 1939.

The question of class bias in the appointment of ATS officers remained unresolved but the question of providing the service with an official leader became urgent. In the late Spring of 1939 the War Office /Army Council considered the appointment of what was referred to as a 'Head Woman' for the ATS and it was

recognised that the appointment would have infinite repercussions not only on the efficiency of the ATS but from a political point of view.<sup>58</sup>

Cowper suggests that 'embarrassed male staff officers' not au fait with 'the relative merits of belt and brassiere as opposed to corsets' were 'keen to hand over such matters to the ladies'<sup>59</sup> but there were less light hearted concerns which included the inevitability of the first ATS leader receiving substantial attention from the media. Gwynne-Vaughan, as one would expect, canvassed tenaciously to secure the post and succeeded. Her biographer quotes a sequence of persuasive correspondence from Gwynne-Vaughan to influential people<sup>60</sup> and in Gwynne-Vaughan's personal papers key correspondence is preserved. Gwynne-Vaughan's influential friends lobbied on her behalf. For example, Elizabeth Dacre wrote to Miss Justina Collins (ATS Advisory Council member) that 'We do need a woman within the War Office and that woman should be Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan'.<sup>61</sup> Dacre then wrote to Gwynne-Vaughan to confirm that 'I have done all in my power to get you into the War Office.'<sup>62</sup> Gwynne-Vaughan's longstanding and loyal friend, Lady Betty Jackson, wrote to Gwynne-Vaughan, confidentially, on 28 June 1939, leaking official business, that

I saw the Secretary of State and think in a few days the appointment will be announced. The lines are good, a Directorate under the DGTA – corresponding rank Major-General, a Chief Commandant as No. 2 and, thank goodness, our own clerks. However it is not completely buttoned up yet.<sup>63</sup>

There was press speculation about the appointment. Gwynne-Vaughan was front runner. The *Sunday Chronicle* headline predicted 'Woman, 60, as Army Bigshot' and advised that 'the likeliest candidate is Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan' describing her as 'tall and dark; Dame Helen has great energy yet she remains one of the most feminine of women'.<sup>64</sup> The use of the word 'yet' suggests a value-scale which opposed 'energy' to 'femininity'. An official photograph taken of Gwynne-Vaughan at that time, shown in Figure 4.12, would not readily lend itself to the caption 'most feminine of women'; the over-riding impression is of the determined jaw, jutting forward, the short-cropped, grey hair and the air of tough militarism.

On 3 July, 1939, Gwynne-Vaughan was appointed as Director, ATS, reporting to the DGTA, General Sir Douglas Brownrigg. Christian Fraser-Tytler was appointed as Deputy Director, ATS. This appointment was made informally (though officially) by Brownrigg who had

met her (Fraser-Tytler) on a previous visit to the North. She had an estate in Invernesshire.....she had been talked into the appointment at a coming-out ball. She had been running an ATS Company in Inverness and now found it convenient to be in London.<sup>65</sup>

The class-indicators in the account of this appointment are self-evident and both appointments, those of Gwynne-Vaughan and Fraser-Tytler, were made on exactly the same networking nepotism, casual and personalised, which Ellen Wilkinson had challenged in her May 1939 press exposition of the ATS procedures.

An official portrait of Fraser-Tytler, shown in Figure 4.13, presents her in iconic mode, gaze averted, in a stereotypical 'intellectual' pose, forefinger laid along the cheekbone of a long and rather 'horsey' face. She has assumed a defensive body position with left arm forming a barrier between her and the viewer. The over-all effect is rather forced and the facial expression languid. It was unlikely that press photographs or newsreel coverage of Gwynne-Vaughan or Fraser-Tytler would inspire the glamour-youth-and-beauty-worshipping young women of Britain to join the ATS en masse. However, since the ATS had already recruited very well in terms of its 20,000 target-figure that did not seem to be an issue at this point.

Gwynne-Vaughan's formal appointment as ATS Director was welcomed least by the large contingent of FANY/ATS Motor Driver Companies who up until that time had remained

a self-governing entity under jurisdiction of its own Headquarters...kept their own uniform and conventions within the ATS but such a position of independence was to become less and less tenable under the lash of its (ATS) Director's thrusting personality.<sup>66</sup>

It provides a complementary insight to have Gwynne-Vaughan's temperament so described from her old rivals' viewpoint and, indeed, almost the first action Gwynne-Vaughan took as ATS Director was to try and close down the FANY Headquarters but as it was privately owned she was unable to do it.

In July 1939 the War Office issued a statement that 'the strength of the service (ATS) is now 912 officers and 16,547 members'<sup>67</sup> as Gwynne-Vaughan and Fraser-Tytler officially took over the running of War Office Branch TA5 from the Territorial Army. The summer months were full of activity and, for the first time, the ATS went to camp with the Territorial Units to which they were affiliated. Gwynne-Vaughan was convinced that

for new, and particularly townswomen recruits these were new and instructive experiences...exciting adventures. Comradeship quickly developed amongst those who shared them.<sup>68</sup>

She was, however, galled about the decision that

the pay of the ATS should be two thirds that of the corresponding (male) officer or soldier. On broad lines a man and a woman in the Army were not of equal value to the State.<sup>69</sup>

Unfortunately for the ATS, Gwynne-Vaughan's views about the training value of camps was not reflected in national press coverage. The *Daily Mail*, trivialising the exercise, commented on how

girls of the ATS had a fine time this summer, playing at soldiers. They paraded before Generals and Royalty, helped the sergeant cook in the barracks kitchen and went home at night to comfortable beds in their own camp

enclosures...kitchen staff consists of 12 pretty girls who wear gay cotton overalls over their uniforms.<sup>70</sup>

The provincial press also featured ATS recruits at work in the cookhouse. The images make the recruits look more like domestic servants than soldiers. In the example shown as Figure 4.14 the only ATS who look as if they are 'playing at soldiers' are the two officers in the upper photograph, somewhat self-consciously looking on while an obedient row of other ranks members, with all eyes down submissively, receive instruction from a male chef. In the photograph at the bottom of the page the recruits are wearing civilian clothes and learning to clean rifles very much as if it is an extension of a domestic servant's housework.

In September 1939 Britain declared war on Germany and Gwynne-Vaughan noted that

the Establishment of the ATS at that time was 20,000 in all ranks. The strength must have been between 18,000 and 19,000, including about 900 officers, or one to every 20 women.<sup>71</sup>

It seems an excessive ratio of officers to other ranks members but the main question was what would happen to the ATS now that war had come ?

The Territorial Army ceased to exist once war had been declared and its male personnel were assimilated into the Regular Army. General Brownrigg (DGTA) was appointed Adjutant General of the British Expeditionary Force and, with other Personnel branches, the ATS passed over to the Department of the Adjutant General. Gwynne-Vaughan applied, at once, for the full integration of the ATS into the Regular Army under the Army Act. The application was brushed aside, comment being made that 'to do so would make fools of the men and render the Army ridiculous'.<sup>72</sup> Gwynne-Vaughan noted, with regret, that 'as in 1917, the die was cast, the women were to be camp followers yet again'.<sup>73</sup> However, in spite of long delays in clarifying her role and confirming her leadership Gwynne-Vaughan had, to all intents and purposes, met the peacetime task set for her. She had recruited, to within a thousand, the target figure set for the ATS in September 1938, and done it before war had actually begun.

The remainder of this chapter explores the period September 1939 to June 1941, identifying and analysing events and images crucial to the understanding of how a

service attracting accusations of snobbery in 1939 could earn the epithet 'a légion of Cinderellas' by 1941 and find itself in a recruitment crisis.<sup>74</sup>

On 7 September 1939 the whole nature of ATS recruitment changed dramatically as the government raised the ATS recruitment target to 40,000 women.<sup>75</sup> In February 1941 the target was raised again, to 60,000.<sup>76</sup> The ATS failed miserably to keep pace with voluntary recruitment demanded on such a scale and speed. The ATS strength in June 1941 was only 42,000 and, by that date, the government requirement had soared ahead to 200,000.<sup>77</sup> It became depressingly clear by the Spring of 1941 that the ATS with its ethos and image dominated by Gwynne-Vaughan could not deliver the desperately needed expansion of the ATS. Recruitment was dangerously low, indeed stagnated between September 1940 and March 1941, adding barely 1,500 recruits to the ATS strength.<sup>78</sup>

The analysis which follows will show how the ATS was unable to successfully manage its corporate public image; how it failed to produce recruitment advertising which would make it competitive in respect of other voluntary organisations and military auxiliary services; how it failed to recognise and exploit the cultural preferences of its target-market for recruits and how, finally, in 1941 the War Office took radical action to deal with the situation.

But none of this could have been foreseen in September 1939. The ATS Directorate was engrossed with the logistics of deploying the 20,000 recruits they already had and, although this is a modest number, the minutiae of rapid mobilisation made it a formidable task.<sup>79</sup> The last thing that was on their minds was their public image. Indeed,

no provision was made at first for the the public relations of the ATS to be watched. There was no special department of the Directorate of Public Relations for the service and, in fact, it was not generally accepted that the Directorate had any responsibility for it.<sup>80</sup>

Thus the ATS was worse off than in the First World War when the WAAC had the professional recruitment services of the government's National Service Department. The ATS was left to struggle to attract recruits in a situation where competition for volunteers had immediately sharpened at the outbreak of war. There was no conscription of women at this stage but newsreel from August 1939 shows Post Office

vans, converted into recruiting stations, already out to capture male conscripts' wives, sisters and girlfriends. Voluntary organisations more traditionally feminine and conventionally acceptable than the khaki-wearing ATS were setting out their recruitment pitches. For instance, the newsreel picks out a van with a side-panel poster which reads, 'Women Volunteers, Nursing Auxiliaries, Ambulance Drivers....Are you one of these?'<sup>81</sup> The Air Raid Precautions (ARP) service was also featured, women volunteers being shown in heroic role-play in a rescue scene, caring for victims of a simulated factory fire. Additionally, all the services advertised had the advantage of being home-based whereas joining the ATS involved leaving home, an action unpopular with the parents, boyfriends and husbands of young women. Popular press reported that

mothers wept at parting from daughters, many of whom had never been away from home before .....fathers and sweethearts grumbled. Said one father, a soldier, "what I have to say about this business cannot be quoted".<sup>82</sup>

The nursing service still carried the cachet it had earned in previous wars and it ran a successful propaganda recruiting strategy. A Mass-Observation File Report later observed that 'the propaganda put out to recruit nurses has generally tended to use a fair amount of glamour and a considerable amount of youth' with the consequence that 'girls rated by our investigators as having medium or poor appearance and sex appeal were as keen on nursing as those rated high in this respect'.<sup>83</sup>

The ATS also had to compete with the two other women's military auxiliary services. The Royal Navy, with its traditional position as The Senior Service, its navy blue uniform and its selectivity made the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) the service of first choice for women from all classes, though middle and upper-middle-class volunteers with male family connections in the Royal Navy were much more likely to be the successful applicants. The recruits were called 'Wrens', forming a cultural, familiar association with the dainty, pretty bird which had featured for many years on national coinage. The Royal Air Force was the new and glamorous service and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) had the advantage of that reflected glamour in attracting volunteers, especially from the middle class. The uniform colour was a popular blue-grey. For working-class girls the WAAF was aspirational deployment.

Both the WRNS and the WAAF titles showed their direct connection with their service of which their recruits could be proud and the uniform colours of these services were



popular in civilian fashion terms but the ATS had been refused military status under the Army Act. 'ATS' as title had no point of reference after the disbanding of the Territorial Army. Its uniform was identified in a review of ATS recruitment fatigue between 1939 to 1941 as being

unpopular, ugly, drab, depressing, monotonous....khaki is said to be unflattering to the female complexion...the stockings "disgusting" the skirts "awful to girls' figures".<sup>84</sup>

It seemed that the ATS was very much 'third choice' of women considering the three military services available and this is likely to have been exacerbated by the Army's traditional reputation as having rough, underclass Tommies dominating the male ranks and a policy which forbade social contact between women auxiliaries in the ranks and male officers.

On 9 September 1939 the influential *Woman's Own* made a small promotional gesture for the ATS. This was unprompted by government or ATS agencies. Indeed, it was the editresses of the women's magazines who took independent initiatives, right up to July 1940, when they complained to government that they were not being sufficiently briefed or involved in the propaganda effort.<sup>85</sup> The text in the 9 September 1939 *Woman's Own* suggested to potential recruits that

The Woman's Army is a very human institution. The use of powder is allowed and even a touch of natural lipstick. Heavy make-up and brightly varnished nails are frowned on and so is hair that hangs down below the tunic collar. Smoking is allowed in off-duty hours but not in uniform. Not an easy life perhaps but a healthy, friendly one.<sup>86</sup>

The magazine focused on the issues that its experience led it to know were of primary interest to its women readers and by referring to the ATS as the 'Woman's Army' was usefully associating it with the popular magazine in the minds of its purchasers.

Unfortunately, and presumably unwittingly, the *Woman's Own* article drew attention to those very features of ATS regulations which were later recognised as having been disincentives to recruitment, particularly 'the hairstyle regulations.... the ban on bright lipstick....the ban on going out with men officers'.<sup>87</sup>

The *Woman's Own* presented an decidedly unglamorous picture of the ATS and the popular magazine *Illustrated*, on sale the same day, shows clearly in its pages what were the cultural preferences of the ATS target-market recruits. Pages 24-27, with a headline, 'British Glamour Girls in Paris', form a photo-shoot of how good-looking British 'girls' had made it to the big-time as 'The Greasley Glamour Girls', shown in Figure 4.15 in performance. This is the kind of role model working-class young women found persuasive. The centre-page pull-out souvenir supplement, shown in Figure 4.16 in gorgeous technicolour, is a Hollywood studio 'still' from the block-buster, escapist, romantic film, *The Thief of Baghdad*. The cartoon strip shown in Figure 4.17 is a stereotype of the scrubber who achieves her dream of stardom and, in Figure 4.18, a two-page photo-essay explores, step by step, the technical complications of producing the perfect camera kiss. The ATS needed to attract a further 20,000 recruits in September 1939 and needed to attract them from the ranks of young women of this mind-set, accustomed to being commercially fed on, and hungry for, glamour, escape, romance and the trappings of affluence.

The message of the *Woman's Own* went unheeded and on 13 September, 1939 the *Daily Mail* headline was, 'Rush to Join the WRNS'. This was also despite the fact that the ATS had just had the publicity kudos of the Queen accepting the role of ATS Commander in Chief. This had delighted Gwynne-Vaughan who recalled 'all ranks standing a little taller' when told that the Queen had referred to ATS members as 'your splendid women'.<sup>88</sup> A Mass-Observation Report on Newsreel Content, published January 1940, confirmed that 'while the popularity of politicians declined after the declaration of war, that of the Royal Family was enhanced'.<sup>89</sup> This may have been the case but on this occasion even the Queen's involvement seemed not to have inspired a Rush to Join the ATS.

Disastrously, between September and December 1939 the officers of the ATS attracted adverse press attention. There was much media interest in junior officers, especially those who were socialites. Senior officers, particularly if they were older women, were satirised as physically past their prime, bulky in stature and masculinised. The perception of officer-class snob culture was enhanced by the contrast between press images of officers and those of ATS in other ranks. For instance, two images were presented in the 30 September 1939 *Daily Mail*.

Firstly, the front-page story and photograph was reserved for the ATS sergeant daughter of Lady Hersey-Baird, taking three days' leave for her wedding. The photograph, shown in Figure 4.19, shows the young officer who is of FANY/ATS social background. This is confirmed by her ATS job which is that of 'chauffeuse to a General'. Sergeant Hersey-Baird presents a dutiful image, an earnest-looking young woman, but she is wearing her ATS cap tilted away from the military horizontal angle in a jaunty, individualistic gesture which softens (and thus, in the ideology of the period, feminises) the militarism of the shirt and tie. Socialite weddings then, as now, attracted huge crowds of onlookers, particularly women from lower classes, eager to see the wedding dress and the finery of the guests and the novelty of Hersey-Baird, bride-to-be, wearing Army uniform both asserted the patriotism of the upper class and made an eye-catching image for the front page.

The second image, in stark contrast, captures the literally steamy side of the ATS and is placed in a less important inside-page suggesting the lower significance attached to it in news interest terms. In Figure 4.20, under the heading 'Lunch is Served', the press photograph makes it very plain that cooking dinner 'just like home' for Tommy is far from a glamorous experience. The middle-class female readership of the *Daily Mail* would recognise at once the type of women in this photograph as those they employed as domestic servants and would certainly be deterred from volunteering for the ATS, other than as officers, given this glimpse of the work of other ranks members.

Unfortunately, Gwynne-Vaughan herself provided inspiration for press cartoon images of masculinised, old fashioned, older-woman senior officers. She went on inspection tours 'with her bulky cap pulled forward uncompromisingly, the voluminous skirt suspended by braces (making her) a figure of old fashioned grotesqueness'.<sup>90</sup> In a photograph included in her biography, shown as Figure 4.21, Gwynne-Vaughan is shown actually wearing her First World War gaiters. Juxtaposed with the photograph are Osbert Lancaster cartoons, the focus of which is the masculinising effect which military culture has on women. The cartoon titled 'Shall we join the gentlemen?' has a double-entendre insinuation of sex-change in its title and a bulky, crop-haired Army woman heads the dinner table of tough-looking women from the other two military services. In the companion cartoon, titled 'I hear that you were speaking lightly of a man's name in the Mess tonight', the basis of the joke is classic reversal of role. It is traditionally the gentleman who defends the lady's honour but in this cartoon it is the

blimpish, fat, bullying senior female officer who is squaring up physically and aggressively to her subordinate.

A variation of this theme contrasts the values and appearance of junior and senior ATS officers. In the cartoon titled 'No, for the third time this isn't Toots!', shown in Figure 4.22, the exceedingly fat and hard-faced senior officer has caught out a junior officer who has been using the office telephone for romantic, private telephone calls. The attempt is to extract humour from both the impossibility of anyone thinking of the senior officer in such intimate sex-appeal terms as 'Toots' and her own repulsion at even having to articulate the Americanised and vulgar heterosexual familiarity.

The *Daily Mirror* took up the Masculinised Army Women theme for the amusement of its working-class readership on 15 November 1939, using its extremely popular 'Jane' cartoon strip to develop a story line of an angry, square-built, masculinised, older-woman senior officer immediately re-posting a glamorous young Junior officer 'caught sitting on the lap of a male officer'. The obvious implication is that the older woman is motivated by sexual jealousy and there is an ambiguity as to whether this jealousy is on a heterosexual or lesbian basis.<sup>91</sup>

While a range of diverse images such as discussed above were in the public domain Gwynne-Vaughan was invited on 17 November 1939 to make a radio appeal for ATS recruits. She was given the prime-time BBC audience-ratings slot after the nine o'clock evening news. In her brief address Gwynne-Vaughan laid out the ATS expectations of recruits and what they could expect in return.<sup>92</sup> She opened with the news that 'We are going to double the Auxiliary Territorial Service so we want 20,000 women'. Gwynne-Vaughan appealed for 'clerks of all kinds, shorthand writers, typists, pay clerks, teleprinter operators, cooks and cooks' assistants; we want capable drivers...orderlies to serve dinner and go messages...storekeepers, telephonists, computers and photographers'. This offers a first-hand insight into the range of ATS work at this stage. Gwynne-Vaughan, in a manner characteristic of her and her promotion of the Soldier Woman model, also advised potential recruits that 'It will sometimes be hard work and you will sometimes have to rough it'. In return she promised recruits to the ATS 'comradeship and interest and best of all I can offer you a chance to serve your country'. The offer was sugared a little with social inducements that 'strictly between ourselves it will be fun' and reference to the occasional 'impromptu dance' organised

by male colleagues. The practical benefits, aimed at working-class girls, were emphasised in the comment, 'don't forget that uniform, rations, lodgings, medical attendance and all that daily life needs are provided free' and an assurance was given that 'discipline in the Army today is not of the Prussian type'. The Territorial Associations having been disbanded female recruits were directed to apply at 'any military recruiting office'.

The next day, 18 November, the *Daily Mirror* published an interview with Gwynne-Vaughan. She refrained from commenting on the 'Jane' cartoon and was more concerned to reiterate the points made in her radio broadcast but took the opportunity to try to deal with the perceived snob culture of ATS officers, urging the newspaper

to kill the rumour that the ATS is officered by young society girls ..... We do have some society girls in the ATS including some recent debutantes but they are mostly in the ranks. I saw one of them recently in the cookhouse of a camp cooking meals for 500 soldiers. The ATS is nobody's preserve and is completely democratic. And please, don't call us ladies, we are proud to be women.<sup>93</sup>

Gwynne-Vaughan's assertion that society girls were 'mostly in the ranks' was certainly an exaggeration but there were some and their fellow recruits sometimes found the circumstance an entertaining one. For instance, Shirley Aston recalled sharing a Nissen hut with The Hon. Rosemary Scott-Ellis, a debutante in the ranks, and recounted, with wry humour, that

Rosemary's sister was a Countess and when she came to visit Rosemary in the Nissen hut she was very upset by the bleak conditions and went out and ordered furniture, much to our amusement. I think the Sergeant nipped that in the bud.<sup>94</sup>

Gwynne-Vaughan's protestations about ATS democracy failed to stem the discourse about the FANY/ATS type of socialite dominating the officer class and enjoying preferential status, selfishly taking all the 'cushy' jobs, especially the driving and top level administrative jobs and leaving all the tedious, dirty, mundane, demeaning work to whatever recruits came in from the lower classes.

For instance, in December 1939 the *Sketch* ran a full page satirical article which purported to be an ATS Officer's Diary. The text, illustrated with cartoons, is reproduced as Figure 4.23. It presents the FANY/ATS type as self-indulgent, self-

important, shallow, posturing and snobbish. The text summarises a snob's view at the end of an exhausting day spent 'inadvertently taking the salute ... dancing The Lambeth Walk and shouting 'Oi' merrily, determined to be cheerful' and dealing with a 'Crop-haired Orderly' and an 'impoverished genteel Private' at a dance. After these exertions for King and Country our heroine is seen, collapsed elegantly onto a chair, wearing her Army underwear and soaking her poor, aching feet in a bucket. What a jolly day. Women's Army? Good for a laugh, eh what?<sup>95</sup>

Commercial firms reinforced the image as they chose the FANY/ATS officer stereotype to advertise luxury products. Shown in Figure 4.24 'The Sparkling Young Thing' in the ATS is used in an advertisement for Wolsey stockings. The public school register of her comment is self-evident as she asserts that 'Without Wolsey I think I'd go BATS' and offers Wolsey her 'hearty CONGRATS' on their product. A Churchman's cigarette advertisement, shown in Figure 4.25, features a beefy male officer at 'work' with his blonde ATS secretary. All the visual details, the angle at which they are leaning together, elbow to elbow, the rapport of their facial expressions, combine to reinforce an impression of a flirtatious, over-familiar relationship, and the implication of shared social background over-riding the code of behaviour prescribed between the sexes and ranks in military regulations.

Gwynne-Vaughan, in spite of her radio and press emphasis on democracy in the ATS could not shake off the growing discourse of almost a class apartheid existing between ATS officers and other ranks and she did nothing at all to deal with the growing discourse of the masculining effect of military culture on women. In fact, and unfortunately, she seemed to find this rather amusing, recalling in her autobiography how in December 1939, hurrying to catch a train, she had shared a taxi with two civilian young women and that

under my British warm (greatcoat) skirts were not visible and I think that they (the young women) were rather intrigued by their military and presumably masculine escort. Anyway they got their ride for nothing and I was able to catch my train.<sup>96</sup>

The aristocratic young women who headed her ATS London office tried to persuade her to present a softer, more conventional female image but she was 'very difficult' and 'couldn't see the necessity of it all'.<sup>97</sup>

Tough older women officers did undoubtedly fuel satire. For example, Bettina Rose recalled the Soldier Woman model in the figure of

a Sergeant Major – a fearsome Scot; both she and her husband had been in the Army in the First World War. She had Eaton(sic) crop hair. One morning a dead rat was found under the table. Barren kicked it right down the Mess and said in a thick accent ‘What’s a rat or two?’ Barren by name and Barren by nature the girls used to say.<sup>98</sup>

The officer class provided excellent material for the satirical pencil of ATS recruit Sally Waterhouse-Brown. Her drawings, shown in Figure 4.26, feature a range of ATS officers, from the blimpish and bulky to the wimpish little officer with the vacuous expression and the officer, positively hugging herself with prim satisfaction, who is ‘Irish and too too...’

In summary, lacking both a persuasive marketing strategy and a cohesive corporate image / public relations policy the ATS attracted barely four thousand new recruits between September and December 1939 (see Appendix 3). Even women with the lowest social horizons were not being attracted to the ATS and the new target establishment of 40,000 became a daunting proposition.

In the Spring of 1940 ATS units were deployed to France as drivers and to service bilingual telephone communications. Those working in the Paris exchange ‘went on putting through calls up to the last possible moment’ and only left as ‘the Germans were marching in on the other side of Paris’. Gwynne-Vaughan wrote, ‘I believe they were actually the last allied troops to leave.’<sup>99</sup>

However, the seriousness and danger of such deployments did not prevent 1940 cinema newsreels using the ‘ATS girls’ for a laugh. The cinema was the primary mass medium and while Mass-Observation reported that

not on one occasion since the war has any soldier been laughed at ...the Woman’s Army has, however, created some amusement due in part to the facetious remarks in the commentary ....bad marching has produced titters.<sup>100</sup>

The Ministry of Information’s newsreels provide ample illustration of what Mass-Observation described as ‘facetious’ commentary. For example, *War Pictorial News*

No. 54 visited an ATS camp.<sup>101</sup> Cameras lingered in close-up on bare, shapely legs in the changing rooms. Music more suitable for comic film accompanied sequences of attempts to drill and march in skirts poorly designed for the appropriate marching stride. The male narrator's voice-over advised (giggling) 'Now then girls, wait for it, wait for it'. In an Army Film Unit newsreel item, *Troop Ship*,<sup>102</sup> Tommies and ATS are presented in a pastiche of Hollywood musicals with a main chorus of 'Toodle-oo- We'll be Seeing You.' The male voice-over took the form of a letter home from Tommy in which we learn 'there's a party of ATS on board ...plenty of competition with five hundred men on board'. Clearly the image being preferred is not that of the ATS as military equals and colleagues but as potential candidates for sexual encounters. The class referencing is explicit in the comment 'the girl I mentioned was a telephone girl in a factory'. There is a sequence which shows 'the girls' hanging out their 'washing' (euphemism for underwear) and in the evening at the dance the voice-over comment is 'the girls wore nice dresses (presumably as opposed to their 'not nice' uniforms) and I must say it was nice to see the girls in civvies again'.

In the late Spring of 1940 ATS recruits went for training on the 'mixed batteries', the anti-aircraft gunsites where they would work alongside men. This was the most sensitive issue in terms of sexual politics not only because it involved working directly with male soldiers but also because deployment on the gun-sites was the closest of any female wartime deployments to what might be termed 'front line' engagements with the enemy.<sup>103</sup> It was an innovative role, glamourised and problematic both as an image and as a reality.

The women were not allowed to fire the guns but were deployed to range finding which required their physical presence on the site of actual engagement. An ATS official image, shown in Figure 4.27, abandons all concerns of ladylike behaviour or traditionally feminine attributes. It is dramatic and dynamic, hard hat and shouted information being the order of the day. This image is very much in tension with an Amami shampoo advertisement, running concurrently, which featured an ATS recruit in uniform admonishing all girls in uniform that 'It's still your duty to be lovely' and, presumably, to use Amami shampoo.<sup>104</sup>

The essential contradiction implicit in the juxtaposition of the gun-site image and the exhortation of the shampoo advertisement captures the problematic gap between the



demands of the military machine and dominant concepts of appropriate femininity which was also implicit in the newsreels discussed above.

The ATS failed to engage with this deeply significant dichotomy of female identity and its recruitment suffered in consequence. In January 1940 the ATS first recruitment poster stuck obstinately and uncompromisingly to the Soldier Woman image. The poster is a bleak artefact, titled baldly, 'Auxiliary Territorial Service'. The text is laid out like a domestic service work contract. It starkly stipulates 'Objects: Terms of Service: Training: Free Uniform.' The graphic accompanying the text is of a girl with every indicator of sex-appeal obliterated, hair scraped back out of sight under the Army cap. She is blowing a bugle, Girl-Guide style.

Posters are powerful propaganda vehicles, making immediate visual impact and, with modern methods of mass production, ideal for mass dissemination, and while the ATS was promoting its patriotic call to duty through its spartan posters there were much more attractive rivals for women's loyalties. The cover pages of women's magazines are, in a real sense, also ideological posters celebrating the shared social and gender interpretations of the publication and its readers and throughout 1940 the influential women's magazine *Woman* chose 'seasonal' themes, presenting pretty, kittenish, male-dependent girls as role models.<sup>105</sup> These included *The Blushing Bride* (May 18), *The Beach Beauty* (August 10), *The Windswept Romantic* (October 12), *the Stay-at-Home Girl Knitting* (October 19), *the Soldier's Sweetheart*, reading a letter (November 16), *The Beloved*, receiving a Christmas gift from a handsome male officer (December 21). These cover pages presented decorative girls whose appearance is their main concern, who cuddle fluffy dogs, wear bright lipstick, heavy make-up, pretty earrings and hair ribbon. They preen in mirrors and are spoiled and petted by men. The women's magazine images were (and remain) driven by the consumerist motivation of their commercial sponsors. Hedonism and the culture of shopping and self-adornment are in high profile in their pages.

The role models of women suggested in ATS posters in 1940 presented a polarised ideology of seriousness and dutiful hard work and a dubious definition of 'adventure'. The ATS posters progressively foregrounded the virtues of financial independence and self-advancement. They also, unfortunately, shared the tendency to a preaching tone in common with many Ministry of Information posters from this date.<sup>106</sup> 'Women of

Britain', an ATS 1940 poster, invites in the manner of the First World War that 'If you have nimble fingers and quick brains there is a place for you in the anti-aircraft defence of your country'. It lacks warmth and sounds patronising. In the ATS poster, 'Join the ATS. Fill his Place in Jobs Like These' a gender-ideology which seemingly undervalues women is implicit in the image. In a graphic where the relative scale of the figures seems indicative of their perceived social and economic significance, several small-scale figures of women are shown stepping into a large-scale cut-out silhouette of a man, to 'do his job' as a cook, driver, orderly or store-keeper. The ATS poster, 'Every member of the ATS learns a job that will help her earn a living in the post war world', is entirely composed of text and requires very close reading of the massed print. It looks like a page from a business directory.<sup>107</sup> The emphasis is on female independence, at odds with the prevailing culture of womanly male-dependence and husband-hunting as the primary route to economic security.

These posters were meant to attract primarily working-class girls and Wartime Social Survey indicated that, in terms of themes, the posters were appropriate, citing 'Reasons for joining the ATS: Patriotism (49%), for more interesting job (16.2)'.<sup>108</sup> Unfortunately for ATS recruitment the presentation seems to have let them down. When compared with the popular women's magazines' inviting scenarios for stay-at-home girls, life in the ATS looked unduly harsh, the clothes ugly, the recruits sacrificing sex-appeal, luxuries, glamour, physical comfort and individual expression in order to serve their country. It was too much to expect and in May 1940 ATS strength remained below 30,000.

From May 1940 and through the summer months there were a number of initiatives designed to make the ATS image more attractive. These tended to focus on themes of the modernity and adventure that the ATS could offer. Beverley Pick, an official war artist, was commissioned to produce some ATS recruitment posters. Pick concentrated on high-status images drawn from science and technology in such posters as 'Radiolocation' and 'ATS: The Eyes of the Guns' which showed women at work on the gun-sites. A girl is shown as a motorcycle dispatch rider in the poster titled 'ATS Carry the Messages.' Pick's images are dynamic and have a dash of derring-do. The most dramatic image, shown in Figure 4.28, places a woman in a heroic context driving an Army jeep against a night sky background of battle. In June 1940 the ATS adopted the slogan 'Adventure through Service' in an effort to jazz up its image.

Unfortunately, Pick's effort to revitalise the ATS image was very much outweighed by initiatives which emphasised domesticity and gave the public an impression that the ATS was a low status service. For example, *The Times* ran an ATS advertisement headed 'Keeping House for the Army' in which women were unflatteringly invited 'to do the jobs of which women are capable (presumably cooking and cleaning) and thus release men for combatant service'.<sup>109</sup> The Princess Royal broadcast an ATS appeal, emphasising that 'the principal need is for cooks (4000), drivers (3000) clerks (2000) and orderlies (1000)'.<sup>110</sup> A group of very distinguished well-meaning upper-class ladies set up a 'National Spare-a-Trinket' scheme to 'provide comforts for the ATS' which cast the ATS in an 'orphan Annie' image.<sup>111</sup> Major J.H. Beith (Public Relations Directorate at the War Office) made a radio appeal in August 1940, unhelpfully asserting that

most of the duties of the ATS could be performed by any girl with a stout heart and a willing pair of hands, though it may involve long hours and hard work.<sup>112</sup>

This is hardly the language of enticement to adventure in the ATS. It does nothing to tap into the ego of the potential recruit and reinforces the perception of a low-status service.

A Special Recruiting Exhibition was held at Selfridges London department store at the end of August 1940. In the review, published in *The Times*, the ATS activities promoted are, once again, the mundane ones. J.B. Priestly, famous author, publicly endorsed the ATS's 'magnificent work' in 'cooking, clerical and driving roles'. Lady Trenchard stressed that 'women would only be expected to serve as long as the war lasted' and that 'they needed cooks and typists most of all'. *The Times* reporter gallantly tried to give the ATS a compliment by suggesting 'how the old uniform of the WAAC in the last war was on view and looked clumsy and dowdy beside the smart kit of the ATS'. The Exhibition, the reporter continued, 'drew large crowds all day' and (returning to the 'domestic ATS' theme) particularly to 'the rich apple flans, appetising meat rolls and succulent vegetables' all prepared by an ATS cook 'in spite of her never having done any previous cooking'.<sup>113</sup> It is an irony that in the Spitfire Summer, when even comic-strip female character Pansy Potter was featured rounding up Nazis parachutist with her machine gun, the recruitment attempts for the ATS were featuring compliments on the ATS members' apple flans.<sup>114</sup>

In short, the image of the ATS remained 'obstinately dowdy and unadventurous'. A satirical verse from *The New Statesman* assured girls that

You would not become an adventuress  
In the ranks of adventurous ATS  
Where brave girls cook for the Sergeants' Mess  
And the batwoman busily bats.<sup>115</sup>

All efforts of any kind meant to enhance ATS recruitment were completely obliterated by the publication in August 1940 of an adverse and blistering government report, not about the image but about the actualities of conditions in the ATS.<sup>116</sup> The *Daily Mail*,<sup>117</sup> expressed outrage and was confident that

Britain's women's army...now faces demand for a purge on their higher officers, whose head is deep voiced, 60 years old Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan.

There is a clear inference of masculinised in the phrase 'deep voiced' and the question of Gwynne-Vaughan's age is given prominence in the criticism. The ATS, the *Daily Mail* advises its readers is a service where 'lack of medical care has caused a tremendous amount of illness ...diet is bad...women who registered as cooks are working as scullery maids (so much for advertised promises of advancement)...rigid discipline is practised'.

The government report which provided the data for this attack was a sixteen-point, richly detailed indictment. The Committee which presented it had 'heard evidence from Gwynne-Vaughan and other witnesses' and 'visited various centres' in its research. The calibre and efficiency of ATS officers was particularly criticised and this, of course, was Gwynne-Vaughan's specific area of responsibility. The report concluded, very bluntly, that 'the best return for expenditure had not been in the past and is not now being achieved in the case of the ATS'.

Predictably, following the widespread publicity and discussion of this very damaging report, ATS recruitment almost ground to a standstill between September and December 1940. Only three hundred recruits were added to ATS strength coinciding, most uncomfortably for the government, with a Manpower Commission estimate of 800,000 women needed in munitions and 400,000 for engineering by, at latest, August 1941.<sup>118</sup>

How could the ATS hope to compete in the face of such a shortfall in civilian posts and with its public reputation in shreds?

By February 1941 questions about the ATS were being raised in the House of Commons. Captain Margesson (War Office) was being taunted by questions such as that from Sir Charles Headlam who asked,

Is my right honourable friend aware that a large majority of officers of the ATS would prefer to be under the command of a Major General rather than a woman veteran of the last war?... (Is) the Secretary of State aware that many ladies now serving in the ATS were past their prime?<sup>119</sup>

Despite Lady Astor's acid riposte that there were 'octogenarians here (in the House of Commons) and they do very well' the writing was clearly on the wall for Gwynne-Vaughan. In March 1941 Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour and National Service, set up a Women's Consultative Committee 'to advise him on questions relating to the recruitment and registration of women'. The true significance of the scale of war work in which the government would have to involve women was clear to all by this date. Of the twenty meetings of the Women's Consultative Committee between March and December 1941, ATS business features high on the agenda of thirteen. At its meeting on 4 April 1941 the Committee was advised that the ATS recruitment target had been raised to 135,000. The ATS strength that month was 38,000.<sup>120</sup> By the date of the Committee's next meeting, 30 April 1941, the government had introduced compulsory registration of women for war work and on 25 April 1941 had instituted a Defence Regulation to incorporate the ATS into the armed services of the Crown. This followed an announcement in the House of Commons on 10 April by the Secretary of State that the

ATS had proved so valuable the government had decided to increase its numbers and enlarge its range of duties....it was intended to include in the Armed Forces with full military status.<sup>121</sup>

The meeting of the Women's Consultative Committee on 30 April 1941 was a crucial one for the ATS and the minutes reveal a whole range of class and publicity issues which were addressed.<sup>122</sup> Sir Edward Grigg (War Office) conceded that 'the ATS had been bad in the past', that 'women were more attracted to the WAAF which had the advantage in the matter of uniform and glamour'. Mrs Eliot commented that 'there was

a good deal of feeling against the ATS, particularly amongst mothers of young girls, due to the inadequacy of welfare arrangements'. Miss Sutherland commented that

there was the idea that it was impossible to get a commission in the ATS unless one had social connections. It was frequently said that the officers were less sympathetic and that the gap between officers and other ranks was more marked than in other women's services.

Grigg responded that 'the impression that the ATS was officered by county ladies dated from previous days'. He then referred to 'the recently appointed Inspector for the ATS, Mrs Knox, paying particular attention to the question'. Mrs Eliot expressed the view that 'only a really big, concerted recruitment campaign based on expert advice would stimulate recruitment'.

This notion was explored further. To the minutes of the Women's Consultative Committee, 28 May, 1941 there is attached a 'confidential memorandum' which recognised that 'the women's press has enormous publicity value which has been insufficiently exploited' and recommended 'a regular conference of the women journalists who, for this purpose (ATS recruitment) are more important than men'. This policy statement was to be deeply influential to ATS recruitment fortunes as will be evidenced in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Gwynne-Vaughan was summoned to attend the Women's Consultative Committee meeting of June 18, 1941. It was virtually her trial by her own gender and peer group.<sup>123</sup> Gwynne-Vaughan defended her record with vigour and frankness in the face of pointedly personal and political questions from Eliot who first of all wondered, provokingly, whether 'there were senior officers who had been appointed pre-war who were not up to present standard?' Gwynne-Vaughan replied that no one was retained 'on whom an adverse report was received'. Eliot then wondered if there was 'too much stress on academic qualifications?' Gwynne-Vaughan replied that 'of twenty women interviewed at the last cadet board, two had only elementary education'. Hancock and Summerskill then took up sharp questions about organisation. Finally there came the class-direct question. Eliot asked what steps were being taken 'to ensure that officers on the cadet board should include persons who would appreciate the kind of working-class girl who might make a suitable officer?' Gwynne-Vaughan replied that she had 'always

tried to include....someone who had experience of Guides or Club work which brought them into contact with working girls’.

The tensions of the meeting can be gathered from the few exchanges quoted above and what became increasingly clear was that Gwynne-Vaughan’s patrician stance and aristocratic background was felt to be at odds with obtaining the mass response to ATS recruitment which was so urgently needed.

In fact, Margesson at the War office had already seen the candidate he believed had the popular appeal necessary to reverse the ATS recruitment fortunes. The favoured successor to Gwynne-Vaughan was the thirty-three years old, newly appointed ATS Inspector, Jean Knox. Gwynne-Vaughan was duly dismissed along with many of her contemporaries.<sup>124</sup> Publicly Gwynne-Vaughan was gracious, praising the ‘brilliant young officer’ who was to succeed her<sup>125</sup> but post-war correspondence suggests that, even after fifteen years had passed, she felt bitter about Jean Knox and Gwynne-Vaughan’s personal papers contain the hundreds of letters of condolence she received at her dismissal.<sup>126</sup> It is understandable that, having been instrumental in keeping alive the notion of a women’s military service for so long and against such odds, Gwynne-Vaughan should have felt cheated at being dismissed just at the moment when the ATS was accorded full military status. She wrote, with wry resignation that

At last our women had ceased to be camp followers. And I had held the King’s Commission. I had spent a month in my promised land.<sup>127</sup>

Two months later, in October 1941, Wartime Social Survey would describe the ATS Gwynne-Vaughan left behind her in her promised land as

the drab and unglamorous Service, the legion of Cinderellas.... Even the uniform seems to have helped the idea, men contemptuously calling them “female Tommies” and “scum of the earth”. When girls register at Labour Exchanges, their first stipulation is “Not the ATS”.<sup>128</sup>

Figures 4.29 and 4.30 show Helen Gwynne-Vaughan and Jean Knox, one at the end of her command, the other about to begin hers. The contrast could hardly be more pronounced and in terms of ATS image and recruitment Jean Knox seemed to have inherited a bouquet of barbed wire.

In summary, this chapter has shown the nature of the relationship between the physical attributes, attitude, image and vision of Gwynne-Vaughan and the corporate identity, public image and recruitment profile of the ATS between September 1938 and June 1941. It has shown how Gwynne-Vaughan's personal vision, unchanged since 1917, of a Soldier Woman operating on a gender-equality basis within the British Regular Army foundered in the context of female mass participation necessary for the 'total war' experience of 1939-45; that Gwynne-Vaughan's vision was shared only by a very small minority of women which, as a recruitment base, was soon exhausted; that a spartan Soldier Woman image could not compete as an aspirational icon with the glamorous, sexy, alternative role models offered in popular culture; that without a professional hand directing its press coverage and public image the ATS corporate image fragmented in 1939 and was mangled between two powerful forces. On the one hand, the political determination of left-wing activists to secure greater class-equality earned ATS officers the label 'snob'. On the other hand conservative cultural forces (including some hostile national press) supported traditional gender definitions of femininity which presented ATS recruits as domestic servants in other ranks, senior officers as mannish (impliedly lesbian) and junior officers as frivolous young socialites, many of whom were just 'playing at being soldiers' in the ATS; that the adverse official report on the ATS, published in Autumn 1940, sealed the ATS recruitment fate along with that of Gwynne-Vaughan; that by April 1941 the ATS was in a recruitment crisis and it was decided that only a radical change of leader, policies, style and public presentation might achieve the crucial popularising necessary for the ATS to meet its vital recruitment targets.



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> NA WO 32/4594,13815,7A. Correspondence between E.B.B. Speed (Treasury) and Sir Frederick Bovenschen (War Office), 14 December, 1938.
- <sup>2</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War. The Army. The Auxiliary Territorial Service*, War Office, 1949, p. 2.
- <sup>3</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, 'Women in the Fighting Services' in *Brassey's Annual, The Armed Forces Year Book*, Rear-Admiral H.G. Thursfield (ed.) William Clowes and Sons Ltd., The Macmillan Company, London, 1957, p. 292.
- <sup>4</sup> The Marchioness of Londonderry, *Retrospect*, Frederick Muller, London, 1938. All quotations in the paragraph are drawn from pp. 251-256.
- <sup>5</sup> The *London Evening Standard*, Monday, March 14, 1939. NAM Ref. 9401-253-247.
- <sup>6</sup> The Marchioness of Londonderry, *Retrospect*, 1938, op. cit., pp. 118-120.
- <sup>7</sup> Hugh Popham, *FANY The Story of the Women's Transport Service, 1907-1984*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1986, p. 62.
- <sup>8</sup> NA WO 32/4705. File No. 54/General/8240. Uniform and Badge.
- <sup>9</sup> Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, Hutchinson, 1942, p. 88.
- <sup>10</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-574. Six Chapters of Cowper's *History of the Women's Services* forwarded from the papers of Helen Gwynne-Vaughan to Cowper by Lt Col Millington, 3 November, 1961, p. 184.
- <sup>11</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-820. Letter from Gwynne-Vaughan to W.H. Curtis, War Office representative on the ATS Advisory Council, 7 January, 1939. Also quoted in Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, 1942, op. cit., p. 102.
- <sup>12</sup> Martin Brayley and Richard Ingram, 'Auxiliary Territorial Service Uniforms' in *Militaria* magazine, No. 22, December 1995, Collector's Press, London, pp. 16-21.
- <sup>13</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in her Time: A Life of Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, 1899-1967*, Macmillan, St. Martin's Press, 1969, p. 300.
- <sup>14</sup> Martin Brayley and Richard Ingram, 'Auxiliary Territorial Service Uniforms' in *Militaria*, 1995, op. cit., p. 19.
- <sup>15</sup> Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, 1942, op. cit., p. 87.
- <sup>16</sup> Sandra Jackson, ATS Survey, 1996. Questionnaire respondent No. 75.
- <sup>17</sup> Regimental Sergeant Major Hedges noted the public response to the appearance of women in khaki, recalling that 'those early days in uniform were at times quite

- hilarious ... people were not used to seeing 'lady soldiers' and on local route marches we often had an escort of small boys.' Cited in Eric Taylor, *Women who Went to War, 1938-1941*, Robert Hale, London, 1988, pp. 28, 29.
- 18 IWM ATS File. Misc. 156. Deposition of M.D.Gale In this collection the depositions are all hand written and were donated by J. Waller and M. Vaughan-Rees, authors of *Women in Uniform, 1939-45*, Papermac, 1986.
- 19 Ibid. Deposition of E.M. Hazell.
- 20 Dorothy Calvert, *Bull, Battledress, Lanyard and Lipstick*, New Horizon, 1978. Introductory page and p. 6.
- 21 Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, 1942, op. cit., p. 93.
- 22 Ibid., p.76.
- 23 Ibid., p. 94.
- 24 Ibid., p. 148.
- 25 Eileen Bigland, *Britain's Other Army: The Story of the ATS*, Nicholson and Watson, London, 1946, p.10.
- 26 Margaret Sherman, *No Time for Tears: In the ATS*, Harrap, London, 1944, p. 137.
- 27 Brigadier Shelford Bidwell, *The Women's Royal Army Corps*, Leo Cooper, London, 1977, p. 56.
- 28 NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-659 to 806. ATS Enquiries, 1938-1939.
- 29 Sandra Jackson, ATS Survey, 1996.op. cit.
- 30 Ibid. Questionnaire respondent No. 78.
- 31 Ibid. Questionnaire respondent No. 141.
- 32 R. Brown and C. Daniels, *Documents and Debates in Twentieth Century Britain*, Macmillan, 1982, p. 82.
- 33 Sandra Jackson, ATS Survey, 1996, op. cit. Questionnaire respondent No. 144.
- 34 Ibid. Questionnaire respondent No. 207.
- 35 NA WO 32/4594/13815/ Document 4A: CCAC 106, Memorandum from Sir Walter Kirke (DGTA) to the Army Council. 6 December , 1938.
- 36 Ibid. Document 7A. Letter from E.B.B. Speed (Treasury) to Sir Frederick Bovenschen (War Office),14 December, 1938.
- 37 Ibid. Document 35A, Letter from Sir Walter Kirke (DGTA) to Sir Frederick Bovenschen (War Office), 20 December, 1938.
- 38 Ibid. Document 16A. Letter from Sir Frederick Bovenschen (War Office) to E.B. B. Speed (Treasury), January 19, 1939.

- 39 Ibid. Draft version of above.
- 40 Ibid. Letter from E.B.B. Speed (Treasury) to Sir Frederick Bovenschen (War Office), January 20, 1939.
- 41 NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-597. Quotations in this paragraph are drawn from text accompanying the *Preston Guardian* photograph dated 'January 1939'.
- 42 NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-834. Letter from Julia M. Cowper to Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, 4 February, 1939.
- 43 NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-596. Press cutting from the *Telegraph and Morning Post*, 14 February, 1939.
- 44 NA WO 32/4594/13815. Draft minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ATS Advisory Council, Auxiliary Territorial Service, 9 March, 1939. The voluntary organisations were still represented separately at this stage. The ATS was represented by Lady Betty Trafford, Lady Violet Astor Lady Lawson-Tancred, Mrs W.M Graham, (OBE), Miss M.C. Ross, (OBE), Miss Justina Collins and Mrs Barton. WTS/FANY was represented by Miss M. Baxter-Ellis and Lady Hailsham. MTS/WL was represented by Mrs Munro-Ferguson and Dr. Letitia Fairfield. Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan who was, in fact, the organiser of the ATS at this point, only represented Emergency Service, along with Lady Trenchard.
- 45 NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-839. Gwynne-Vaughan's letter in reply to that of Dorothy Rose (838) which raised the problem of having staffed officer roles so early.
- 46 NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-596 WRAC Press Cuttings. The *Daily Express*, 10 May 1939.
- 47 Ibid. The *Daily Mail*, 10 May 1939.
- 48 Ibid. The *Daily Mirror*, 10 May, 1939.
- 49 Cited in Kirsty Parker, PhD thesis, *Women MPs: Feminism and Domestic Policy in The Second World War*, Oxford University, 1994, p. 72.
- 50 NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-596 *News Review* (no further identification) 25 May 1939.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, 1942, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

- <sup>56</sup> Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939–1945*, Pimlico, 1969, p. 276.
- <sup>57</sup> Vera Brittain, 'And So Farewell' in Jenny Hartley (ed.) *Hearts Undefeated: Women's Writing of the Second World War*, Virago Press, 1995, pp. 69-73.
- <sup>58</sup> Col. Julia Cowper, *The Second World War*, 1949, op. cit., pp. 5-6.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>60</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine*, 1969, op. cit., pp. 285-289.
- <sup>61</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-868. Letter from Elizabeth Dacre to Miss Justina Collins, ATS Advisory Council member. 30 April, 1939.
- <sup>62</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-870 Letter from Elizabeth Dacre to Gwynne-Vaughan, 30 April, 1939.
- <sup>63</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-915. Letter from Lady Betty Jackson to Gwynne-Vaughan, 28 June, 1939.
- <sup>64</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-914. Press cutting (undated) *Sunday Chronicle*, p. 7.
- <sup>65</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine*, 1969, op. cit., p. 291.
- <sup>66</sup> Hugh Popham, *FANY*, 1986, op. cit., p. 64.
- <sup>67</sup> Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, 1942, op. cit., p. 107.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 110.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 111.
- <sup>70</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-596. Press Cuttings. *The Daily Mail*, hand-dated 'September 1939'.
- <sup>71</sup> Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, 1942, op. cit., p. 112.
- <sup>72</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine*, 1969, op. cit., p.294. The comment is attributed to Sir Robert Gordon-Finlayson (War Office).
- <sup>73</sup> Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, 1942, op. cit., p. 114.
- <sup>74</sup> Wartime Social Survey, ATS, October 1941, p. 47. ATS recruitment figures are presented in Appendix 3 of this thesis.
- <sup>75</sup> Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, 1942, op. cit., p. 114.
- <sup>76</sup> *The Times*, 1 February, 1941, p. 2.
- <sup>77</sup> NA INF 1/321. Memorandum from Ernest Bevin. Extract from War Cabinet paper No. W.P.(G) (41) 63.
- <sup>78</sup> The recruitment slump was in large measure the consequence of the devastating government report about the ATS published in August 1940 and discussed in detail later in this chapter.

- <sup>79</sup> Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, 1942, op. cit., pp. 113-116. Her priorities were medical provision, adequate training and obtaining full military status for the ATS.
- <sup>80</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War*, 1949, op. cit., p. 236.
- <sup>81</sup> Victory Video from British Pathe, *Home Front Memories: The Blitz Years*, released 1995.
- <sup>82</sup> The *Daily Mirror*, 4 January, 1940, p. 4.
- <sup>83</sup> Mass-Observation File Report 952, November 1941, p. 22. For full details about the history and work of Mass-Observation see Dorothy Sheridan, *The Mass-Observation Archive: A Resource for Women's Studies*, 1992, available from the Mass-Observation Archive at The Library, University of Sussex. In her introductory leaflet Sheridan notes (p. 2) how in the Second World War 'Mass-Observation was commissioned by the Ministry of Information to monitor the nation's morale and many of the studies at this time were concerned with the effects of propaganda, attitudes towards wartime leaders and to government policy and the effectiveness of recruitment and information campaigns' and also that 'Mass-Observation devoted considerable resources to the study of women and, in particular, the mobilisation of women'. It is therefore a particularly relevant source for use in this thesis and in Chapter 5 there is fuller discussion of its role and impact on ATS recruitment in 1941.
- <sup>84</sup> Wartime Social Survey, *ATS*, October 1941, p. 45.
- <sup>85</sup> NA INF 1/149. Minutes of Home Planning Committee, Ministry of Information, 12 July, 1940, Item 809: Guidance for Women's papers.
- <sup>86</sup> Quoted in J. Waller and M. Vaughan-Rees, *The Role of Women's Magazines, 1939-1945*, Macdonald Optima, 1987, p. 62.
- <sup>87</sup> Wartime Social Survey, *ATS*, October 1941, p. 33.
- <sup>88</sup> Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, 1942, op. cit., p. 117.
- <sup>89</sup> J. Richards and D. Sheridan (eds) *Mass-Observation at the Movies*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987, p. 385.
- <sup>90</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine*, 1969, op. cit., p. 303.
- <sup>91</sup> The *Daily Mirror*, 15 November, 1939, p. 7.
- <sup>92</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, Reading. *ATS Scripts Catalogue*. An Appeal for ATS recruits broadcast by Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, Friday, 17 November, 1939.

- <sup>93</sup> The *Daily Mirror*; 18 November 1939, p. 2.
- <sup>94</sup> IWM, Department of Documents, ATS Catalogue. Misc. 156. These depositions are filed in alphabetical order of subscriber's family name. Deposition of Shirley Aston.
- <sup>95</sup> Mass-Observation Archive at Sussex University. Topic Collection: Women. Ref. Box 2/B. 'Regiment of Women: The Diary of an ATS Volunteer', published in the *Sketch*, 6 December, 1939.
- <sup>96</sup> Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, 1942, op. cit., p. 122.
- <sup>97</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine*, 1969, op. cit., p. 303.
- <sup>98</sup> IWM, Department of Documents, ATS Catalogue. Misc. 156. Deposition of Bettina Rose.
- <sup>99</sup> Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, 1942, op. cit., p. 125.
- <sup>100</sup> J. Richards and D. Sheridan, *Mass Observation at the Movies*, 1987, op. cit., p. 383.
- <sup>101</sup> IWM, Film Archive. *War Pictorial News, No. 54*, Ministry of Information Newsreel.
- <sup>102</sup> Ibid. *Troop Ship*, Army Film Unit Newsreel.
- <sup>103</sup> This issue is engagingly discussed in Raynes Minns, *Bombers and Mash: The Domestic Front, 1939-45*, Virago, 1980, p. 48.
- <sup>104</sup> The *Daily Mirror*, 3 November, 1939, p. 18. For exposition of the essential contradiction between 'the demands of the military machine' and 'dominant concepts of appropriate femininity' see Dorothy Sheridan, *ATS Women, 1939-45, Challenge and Containment in Women's Lives in the Military during the Second World War*. Unpublished MA thesis, Sussex University, 1983.
- <sup>105</sup> British Library Newspaper Library, Colindale, London. *Woman* magazines from 1940.
- <sup>106</sup> See Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, Allen and Unwin, 1977, pp. 30-33 which include comment from The Times that the Ministry of Information's initial poster was 'insipid and patronising'. See also Marion Yass, *This is Your War*, HMSO, 1983, for critical appraisal of early posters from the MoI. See also Diana Cooper, 'Preparing for Invasion' in J Hartley (ed.) *Hearts Undefeated: Women's Writing of the Second World War*, 1994, op. cit., pp. 65-66, which includes ironic comment on posters such as 'Be Like Dad, Keep Mum (very funny, we thought)'.  
<sup>107</sup> All the ATS examples cited in this discussion about posters were on display at the NAM *Right to Serve* Exhibition in 1994 and were drawn from NAM Department of

- Fine and Decorative Arts, Ref. 9311-1-98 to 132. The poster, *Auxiliary Territorial Service*, which shows the girl with the bugle, was 'believed to be the first ATS poster' hand-written on the reverse side. It is not possible to obtain photocopies of posters or photographs from this source other than those which are published as postcards.
- <sup>108</sup> Wartime Social Survey, *ATS*, October 1941, p. 26.
- <sup>109</sup> *The Times*, 16 May, 1940, p. 4. The adoption of the slogan 'Adventure through Service' in June 1940 is cited in Molly Izzard, *A Heroine*. op. cit., p. 327.
- <sup>110</sup> *The Times*, 29 June, 1940, p. 18.
- <sup>111</sup> *The Times*, 22 June, 1940, p. 9. The Committee included Lady Eden, Lady Ironside, Mrs Brian Thursby-Pelham and Lady Tudor.
- <sup>112</sup> *The Times*, 24 August, 1940, p. 2.
- <sup>113</sup> *The Times* 27 August, 1940, p. 26.
- <sup>114</sup> *Dandy and Beano – The First Fifty Years*, D.C. Thompson and Co. Ltd., London, 1987. (pages are un-numbered) The Pansy Potter cartoon strip of 'the strong man's daughter' showed Pansy rounding up the Nazis in its September 1940 edition.
- <sup>115</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine*, op. cit., p. 327.
- <sup>116</sup> NA WO 32/11030. Document 16A. The 12<sup>th</sup> Report of the Sub Committee of the Select Committee on National Expenditure: Report on the Auxiliary Territorial Service.
- <sup>117</sup> *The Daily Mail* 31 August, 1940, p. 7, in *World War II As It Happened: the War Despatches from the pages of the Daily Mail*, Marshall Cavendish, 1977.
- <sup>118</sup> Harold Smith, 'The Womanpower Problem in Britain' in *Historical Journal*, number xxvii, 1984, p. 932.
- <sup>119</sup> *The Times*, 28 February, 1940 p. 9.
- <sup>120</sup> NA LAB 8/380. Minutes of the Women's Consultative Committee, 4 April, 1941. The Committee members were Miss D. Elliott JP, Mrs, W. Eliot, Miss F. Hancock, Miss Lloyd-George, MP, The Countess of Limerick, Miss M. Maxse CBE, Dr. S. Summerskill MP, Miss M. Sutherland JP, Miss I. Ward CBE, MP, and, representing the Ministry of Labour and National Service, Mr. R. Lloyd-Roberts, Miss C. Haslett, CBE, Mr. H.H. Wiles, Miss D.R. Heinemann (Secretary), Mr. R. Assheton MP (Chairman).
- <sup>121</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-574. Six chapters of Colonel Julia M. Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*, op. cit., p. 241.

- <sup>122</sup> NA LAB 8/380. Minutes of Women's Consultative Committee, 30 April, 1941.
- <sup>123</sup> NA LAB 8/380. Minutes of Women's Consultative Committee, 18 June 1941.
- <sup>124</sup> Baxter-Ellis had been demoted from her post some months earlier to make way for Mrs Jean Knox to be appointed ATS Inspector.
- <sup>125</sup> *The Times*, 12 July, 1941, p. 2.
- <sup>126</sup> In 1956, Jean Knox, by then Lady Swathling, refused to supply memoirs for Colonel Julia M. Cowper's intended History of the ATS. Cowper asked Dame Regina Evans for advice and Evans replied that she had 'spoken to the Dame (Helen Gwynne-Vaughan) and she and I feel – ignore the lady'. NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-271-1. Letter from Dame Regina Evans to Colonel Julia M. Cowper, dated 6/8/1956.
- <sup>127</sup> Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, 1942, op. cit., p. 137.
- <sup>128</sup> Wartime Social Survey, *ATS*, 1941, p. 47.



## Chapter 5

### Jean Knox and 'Our Grand Girls in Khaki', 1941-1943

This chapter evidences how the government finally woke up in 1941 to the value of the ATS and to the full strategic significance of its recruitment crisis; how, alongside appointing new, young leaders for the service, the government employed professional agencies to bring their persuasive expertise to bear on the situation and how a particular ATS recruitment poster, designed by Abram Games, became a cause celebre. The analysis revisits the parliamentary debates of November and December 1941 that culminated in the government decision to conscript women into the armed services. The chapter concludes with analysis of the period between Christmas 1941 and September 1943 in terms of the propaganda initiatives that promoted a popular public image for the ATS while the service built up to its peak strength of over 200,000 women.

The flexibility of male troop deployment was inextricably linked with successful ATS recruitment and in June 1941 ATS strength was unacceptably low at 42,800 and seemed to have stagnated. This alarmed the government sufficiently to secure some image-management for the ATS. Consequently two ATS officers were directly deployed to PR2, a government department in the Directorate of Public Relations and

from the time that the DPR (Director of Public Relations) assumed full control in June 1941 no interviews with the Press were permitted without his approval; all campaigns for recruiting were undertaken by the Directorate and the service was asked to produce stories for the Press.<sup>1</sup>

Here was the signal that the ATS was at last considered important enough for its inclusion in the mainstream of central administration where ATS publicity was, for the first time, subject to official monitoring and vetting to secure a wholly desirable and consistent presentation to the public.

The government determined to fully exploit and take ownership of the opportunity to present a modernised and transformed ATS to potential volunteer recruits. The ATS, since April 1941, could boast enhanced military status with recognition under the Army

Act and in July 1941 enjoyed the added advantage of having, in the person of Jean Knox, a glamorous and youthful new leader. The government proceeded to capitalise on these new assets with determination and alacrity, willing to spend whatever money was necessary whether for modernised uniforms or fees for professional market research and recruitment publicity.

The following analysis traces these efforts from the first flush of campaigning enthusiasm in July 1941 through to the conclusion reached by government in December 1941 that, despite every promotional effort, it was necessary to introduce conscription of women, a policy of last resort and new to British war experience. The ATS recruitment campaign run between July and December 1941 deserves very close analysis of its propaganda strategies and advertising themes because those conducting it, having diagnosed the nature and extent of ATS's unpopularity, achieved a radical transformation of the ATS corporate image from that of a tough, old-fashioned, residual WAAC to a feminised, modernised, popularised ATS. In the process it revealed class tensions in a public discourse about exactly what kinds of public images and advertising approaches were appropriate for the ATS, the service with the highest proportion of working-class recruits. Unfortunately it also served as a focus for general public anxieties about female mobility and sexual morality to the detriment of the public image of the ATS itself at a crucial point of transition from voluntary to conscripted recruitment in December 1941.

On 2 July 1941, the War Cabinet set out an emergency strategy for ATS recruitment. Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour and National Service, summarised the new policy in a memorandum that also indicated the scale and national significance of the ATS recruitment shortfall.<sup>2</sup> It included the blunt statement that the male strength of the Army 'is dependent upon their obtaining the large number of women they require for the ATS'. The inter-dependence of Army and ATS was finally recognised. The Secretary of State's estimates, quoted in the memorandum, were that the total recruitment target for the ATS was '220,000 women .....of whom not less than 100,000 will be wanted by the end of 1941' and monthly targets 'should be raised to 12,000 a month by mid-July, 15,000 by 1st September and still further later in the year'. New 'steps to stimulate and encourage recruitment to the ATS had been agreed in 'discussion' with the War Office. New policies removed ATS/War Office autonomy in respect of two crucial aspects of ATS recruitment.

Firstly, in terms of direct ATS recruitment, 'while not stopping direct enrolment of volunteers who go to Military recruitment centres', pro-active recruitment was shifted to the Labour Exchanges. The Ministry of Labour and National Service would, in future, recruit directly to the service with the ATS having only rights of consultation about any recruit the service felt unsuitable. Thus the ATS lost autonomy in respect of the entrance standards of its recruits. Labour Exchanges would be instructed 'to bring ATS urgently to the notice' of women and those who did volunteer for the ATS would not be prevented from doing so on reserved occupation grounds 'except in very special circumstances'. Secondly, in terms of publicity and advertising, responsibility was handed jointly to the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Labour. All War Office publicity was to be 'part of this co-ordinated scheme' so that 'there may be no overlapping or competition'.

Given the more successful recruitment position of the WRNS and the WAAF at this point, a policy of positive discrimination in favour of the ATS involved setting up the inevitable new committee to co-ordinate recruitment across all three women's services. That this was a device to exert pressure on the WRNS and the WAAF to co-operate in the prioritisation of ATS becomes transparent on examination of the minutes of the Recruitment for Women's Services Publicity Co-ordination Sub-Committee of the Standing Conference of Public Relations Officers.<sup>3</sup> The minutes of its inaugural meeting, on 22 August 1941, evidence the extent of inter-service rivalries amongst the women's services and indicate how far official hopes for an ATS recruitment surge were pinned on faith in professional handling of press advertisements.

The Committee was presented with three options in an effort to offer at least a semblance of consultation with the representatives of the services although the bureaucrats outnumbered them on the committee by eight to five.

The first notion was an idea received from the Standing Interdepartmental Committee on Women for Services and Industry. It involved a joint-services publicity scheme and was supported by the Ministry of Information on the grounds that 'each of the Services require the same type of woman for the same type of work'. This logic found no favour at all with Miss Goodenough (WRNS representative) who insisted that the WRNS 'policy of selectivity required a steady flow of women of the better educated type' and

that, in fact, the WRNS had a preference for individuated advertising for their service 'in selected newspapers such as *The Times* and the *Telegraph*'.

The Committee then turned its attention to option two. This is confusingly described in the minutes as 'Co-ordinated Effort versus Combined Effort'. What it meant was that all parties would agree on publicity policy but not all services would feature in the ensuing publicity. C.P. Robertson (Deputy Director, Public Relations, Air Ministry) boasted that the 'WAAF was in the happy position of having a deferred list of 12,000' and that 'frankly, the problem before the Committee seemed to him to be: How could ATS best be popularised? WAAF basked in the reflected glory of the RAF and this gave them undoubted advantage'. In the face of the service representatives seeming most interested in promoting the interests of their respective services Cyril Radcliffe (Deputy Director, Ministry of Information) introduced option three which bluntly conveyed the War Cabinet's preference.

Radcliffe made it clear that 'the situation seemed to call for a self-denying ordinance from the other services' and proposed 'Co-ordination by means of agreed ATS priority in Press Advertising'. Colonel Walter Elliott (Publicity Director, War Office) supported this idea, insisting that 'advertising must be the dominant factor in the effort'. W.G.F. Vaughan (Ministry of Information) estimated that 'to meet ATS demands half a million pounds would have to be spent on newspaper advertising'. The principle of ATS prioritisation was accepted but the discussion that followed was an acrimonious wrangle about the time-period for which the other services would relinquish advertising priority to the ATS. It was suggested that a month was 'too short a period to test any agency'. Elliott pressed the urgency of the ATS case, citing statistics which evidenced a declining profile of ATS recruitment 'in successive weeks...2200, 2300, 1900, 1900, 1600' so that the War Office was 'at present obliged to call up men from the harvest to do work which women could undertake if they could be got'.

The outcome was that, despite grumbles and caveats from the representatives of the Air Ministry and the WRNS, the WAAF would withdraw from advertising for six weeks and local drives (a strong WRNS recruitment strategy) should only be organised for the ATS. This gave the ATS a clear run of recruitment publicity in the early Autumn of 1941 when, significantly, the new-style ATS was launched and promoted by its new Director, Jean Knox.

Jean Knox remains an enigmatic figure, difficult to glimpse other than in her public mode. There is neither autobiography, biography nor accessible personal papers to round out explanation of her persona, influence, attitudes or achievement. Knox seemed to have nurtured a sense of mystique by her reluctance to engage in confidences or disclosures about her private life both during her years of office and in the after-years. For example, even the tenacious Gwynne-Vaughan could only speculate about Knox's background. In a letter written to the Princess Royal (ATS Controller Commandant) soon after Knox's appointment, Gwynne-Vaughan reported that

She (Knox) has been married twice and, I believe, divorced her first husband whose child her only daughter was ...but she was never very communicative about her own affairs and, as I gathered there were some unhappy things in the background, I never liked to ask very much.<sup>4</sup>

The rather dismissive tone of this confidential letter must be read with the gloss that Knox had just ousted Gwynne-Vaughan from her cherished position as ATS Director. In 1956 Knox, by then Lady Swaythling, having re-married for the third time, declined to provide memoirs for Colonel Julia M. Cowper's intended publication of a *History of the Women's Services*. Knox wrote,

I must say at once that I cannot help you as I would naturally wish to do – for it would mean duplication. When I consider the time right I intend to publish my own account of that period.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, she never did publish and as recently as 1993 researcher Jane Rosenzweig noted that,

Jean Knox, now Lady Swaythling, is the only one of the women directors who is still alive. When contacted for an interview in March 1993, she declined to speak about her experiences.<sup>6</sup>

However, at the time of her appointment as ATS Director, in July 1941, Knox received high-profile publicity. The London *Evening Standard*, 8 July 1941, offered the first officially released photograph of Knox. The headline, 'Major-General Knox leads ATS by Her Charm; A Wife and Mother' encapsulates the propaganda built around Jean Knox. Her equivalent male Army rank was used in the headline but balanced by equal promotion of her womanliness and charm.<sup>7</sup> From the outset Knox was presented as the symbol of a new, modernised ATS. The drive to revitalise the ATS centred on her. The

ATS as a corporate entity needed to jettison its dowdy image. In the public persona created for Knox the ATS contrived to square a conceptual circle; to present the service as one which combined military recognition and serious efficiency with a newly feminised and youthful ethos. In the press photograph, shown as Figure 5.1, Major-General Knox is posed taking a telephone call, left-handed to ensure the prominent display of her wedding ring. Her expression is alert, smiling and businesslike. The gaze is averted, in iconic mode. The text which accompanies the photograph opens with a well-briefed reference to new ATS policy, that

The appointment of 33-years-old Mrs Jean Knox smart, good-looking wife of an RAF Squadron Leader, to succeed Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan as Chief Controller of the ATS is part of that Service's new policy of "youth takes the helm".

A journalistic meal is made of the fact that 'Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan is 62' and that 'no officer who is over 55 can now stay in the ATS'. A new, democratising spirit in the ATS is emphasised in the comment that 'the younger women who are now taking over the ATS have had the opportunity of rising from junior ranks'. There is a well-tailored sound-bite from Knox about her fourteen year old daughter. Knox disclosed that 'Julie is at boarding school waiting until she is old enough to join the ATS with Mummy'. A manipulative contrast is drawn between the former Director, academic practitioner Gwynne-Vaughan, and Mrs Knox who 'had no pre-war jobs except that of wife and mother'. The implication is that, with Knox as a role model, a wife and mother without prior professional qualifications might rise to a top job in the new ATS. Using a traditional journalists' ploy of 'an anonymous source close to the subject' the news reporter closes with a confidence shared with the reader,

'She (Knox) is a born administrator' a friend told me. 'She gets her way by charm and persuasiveness rather than by abrupt commands. She is what the French call "tres bien soignee"; she looks immensely chic, even in uniform. She expresses the new spirit of the 1941 ATS'.

Knox's appointment had inevitable repercussions on ATS internal politics. On the one hand it was a unifying factor. Former members of the FANY, operating as a discrete motor transport unit within the ATS, very much welcomed her as Gwynne-Vaughan's successor. They had felt a sense of 'vendetta against the FANY' while Gwynne-

Vaughan was in charge and it had been 'an unhappy period for the Corps in general' as far as they were concerned so that

the replacement of Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan in July 1941 by Jean Knox marked a rapid improvement in the management and morale of the ATS and its relations with the FANY. As able as her predecessor, and far less inflexible, she was only thirty and as trim and svelte as Dame Helen was dowdy.<sup>8</sup>

These remarks must be qualified by recognition that twenty-five years of rivalry and power struggle were in the background between Gwynne-Vaughan and the FANY. Nevertheless, an opportunity to bring the two factions into harmony was to be welcomed.

On the other hand, Gwynne-Vaughan was not without her loyal base of supporters. War Office staff wrote to sympathise on her dismissal, Maurice Bovenschen remarking, in a letter dated 2 July 1941, that 'I am very much distressed at the bad news...you will have shoals of letters'.<sup>9</sup> He was right. In Gwynne-Vaughan's personal papers there are six files containing hundreds of letters expressing emotions of regret, disappointment, dismay and anger at her dismissal.<sup>10</sup> One of the most significant letters was from Leslie Whateley who had just been appointed as Knox's Deputy Director. On 9 July 1941 Whateley wrote to Gwynne-Vaughan that

I just can't imagine the ATS with anyone else at the head. Personally I think this age limit business is just bosh, though I suppose I ought to keep my thoughts to myself. I need hardly say that my officers and I will give our loyal service to the new Director – it has always been so easy in the past because loyalty has been mingled with affection and it does make a difference, doesn't it? I have not had the honour of serving with you in two campaigns without knowing the standard you set and require, and I can assure you that no other standard will ever replace that, whoever our Director may be.<sup>11</sup>

Whateley had joined the ATS in 1938 and been trained by Gwynne-Vaughan at the Chelsea Barracks. Knox badly needed to overcome this residual wave of nostalgic affection for the old order, particularly amongst serving ATS officers, and succeed in winning support for the new ethos. All officers over 55 years of age were dismissed from the service but even this did not ensure a clear run of popularity for Knox and, as is evidenced later in the chapter, tensions surfaced because many officers felt

undervalued vis-à-vis other ranks in the new inclusivist environment created by Jean Knox to secure rapid expansion of the service.

On 22 July 1941 Knox was interviewed for *The Times* under the headline 'New Director of ATS in Office: Smarter Uniform for the Service'.<sup>12</sup> This is a further indicator of propaganda priorities, given that two issues were discussed and one of them was the significant policy issue of the potential conscription of women. Even *The Times* interview was dominated by enthusiastic discussion of the immediate and expensive changes Knox had made to the uniform, her own design neatening, smartening and shortening the skirts by two inches. The question of conscription of women was just touched on. Knox simply, and ambivalently, gave her personal support to the notion qualified by her hope that it would not become necessary.

Knox attended public recruitment events around the country, always supported by prestigious people. For example, on 17 August 1941 when she visited Newcastle the Princess Royal accompanied her. So did David Margesson, the Secretary of State for War who, against Gwynne-Vaughan's confidential advice, had personally appointed Knox. The Newcastle ceremony was a march-past of all three women's services. After the ceremony Margesson 'addressed a large crowd' and appealed for women to join the services, especially the ATS.<sup>13</sup> Knox did not speak. Her job at this stage was to provide a visual embodiment of the new corporate ATS identity as a service attractive to good-looking, young, ambitious women.

In summary, the new recruitment propaganda strategy drew heavily on the appeal of Knox's good looks. An official portrait of her, shown as Figure 5.2, emphasises youth, elegance and patriotism, metaphorically letting in a breath of fresh air by presenting her against a landscape of British sea coast and open sky as if protecting it from all comers. There is an informality about the abundance of dark hair, a Hollywood look about the face with its large eyes, well defined eyebrows and lip-line and she does, indeed, look 'chic even in uniform'.<sup>14</sup> A rare and uncensored image of Knox, shown as Figure 5.3, also presents her, even though with a hint of satire, as a very fashionable figure, perched elegantly, thin as a pin, on the arm of a sofa during a visit to an ATS base.

The appointment of Leslie Whateley as Knox's Deputy Director created a propaganda 'dream team' for the government. As with Knox's appointment there were



democratising elements to celebrate in the appointment of Whateley. *The Times* on 19 September 1941 reported that Whateley's son, Raymond, aged nearly eighteen, was 'about to join the Army, in the ranks' and that

Mrs Whateley is a grand daughter of the late Field Marshall, Sir Evelyn Wood. Her husband is a Squadron Leader in the RAF. She joined the ATS in 1938 and was appointed a junior officer after completing the officers' training course at Chelsea Barracks.<sup>15</sup>

In other words, her son has not used family connections to obtain a commission and her own promotion route is exemplary.

Whateley's official portrait, shown as Figure 5.4, also promotes a feminised image of the ATS. Whateley is at her desk but the decorative, feminine touch of a jug of lilacs beside her on the table gives more the impression of a domestic sitting-room than a military office. She is relaxed and enjoying a cigarette. Whateley was just a few years older than Knox and the portrait depicts a mature, modern woman. Her wedding ring is prominent and her expression reassuring. This is the 'sensible mother' image to complement Knox's glamorous appeal. Whateley's manner and personality might well serve to build confidence in other mothers whose teenage 'girls' the ATS needed to attract.

The propaganda image of a new, populist spirit in the ATS celebrated that both Knox and Whateley had come up through the ranks, had been in the ATS from the start, were married women with children and were on the underside of forty years of age. The natural division of labour between them was expressed, circumspectly, in the observation that

the new Deputy Director will relieve Chief Controller Knox of much administrative work, thus enabling the Director to travel and maintain personal touch with all ranks.<sup>16</sup>

Figure 5.5 shows Knox on such a visit. In the official photograph she is shown as very much one of the team on a relaxed occasion with ATS officers, all smoking and engaged in conversation, sitting together round a table. Now that the ATS had Knox as the ideal shop window for publicity purposes and Whateley as its business manager

hopes ran high that the personality and glamour of the new Director would persuade the womanhood of the United Kingdom to volunteer as rapidly as possible for the ATS.<sup>17</sup>

Even Molly Izzard, Gwynne-Vaughan's friend and biographer, commented that, on Knox's appointment, 'the ATS could now congratulate themselves on having the youngest and best looking Director of all the women's services'.<sup>18</sup>

Between July and September 1941, boosted by the new leadership, up-beat themes dominated ATS recruitment advertisements. Some August advertisements used the technique of asking rhetorical questions such as in 'Am I clever enough for the ATS?' shown in Figure 5.6 where the image sets out to countermand any previous public impression of the ATS other ranks as the home for 'dull girls' with little education and low intelligence. A fresh-faced and charming young woman with a pretty, soft hairstyle and lovely teeth smiles out of the advertisement at young women readers who might believe themselves to be the same sort. In the text of the advertisement the answer to the question posed is, 'Yes, of course, why shouldn't you be' and an assurance given that in the ATS 'most of the work is thrilling'.

The same techniques are employed in the advertisement shown as Figure 5.7 which asks 'Do the ATS really need me?' and shows a role-model young woman, well groomed, bright eyed and smiling directly at the viewer. The text of the advertisement again supplies the positive answer, 'Yes they do! Face it and think about it!' Light-handed but powerful boosts to ATS morale and self esteem frequently appeared in the women's press as in Figure 5.8, for example, where in 'Hat Trick' glamorous 'Pre-war/ Pearl/ Was jilted/ For a/ Khaki girl'.

In September 1941 the ATS was officially supported by an advertisement put out by the Ministry of Labour and National Service. This is an impressive text, shown as Figure 5.9, bearing the Royal Coat of Arms and headed authoritatively, 'A Message from the Government to **PARENTS** of all girls who are not yet employed on full-time **WAR WORK**'. The message is blunt. 'Your daughter is being asked to volunteer immediately for the Auxiliary Territorial Service'.

The question-and-answer techniques continued in use in September advertisements. A variant version neatly incorporates a 'before-and-after' technique familiar from

commercial adverts for such things as toothpaste. For example, Figure 5.10 offers an image of a sophisticated civilian woman partnering a mirror image below it in which she is transposed into ATS uniform. In the process of this visual fantasy the potential recruit asks herself 'I wonder if they'd let me do my own job in the ATS?' This question is followed by a breathless compendium of enthusiastic enquiries and concludes that 'it all sounds too good to be true'. The text then assumes the authoritative, calm tone of official propaganda announcing that 'Another new draft joined us today' and is accompanied by an attractive image of the transformed civilian, now an 'ATS girl', looking back over her shoulder to smile at the viewer in a pose more familiar to glamour-photography than military recruitment.

A really astute variation on the question-and-answer format occurs in the advertisement shown in Figure 5.11, which turns the pressure on mothers to release their daughters and in this case it is the daughter herself who is assigned the key role of persuader. The visual image is of a patient and well brought up young woman. She is gently answering all her mother's anxious questions and objections to the ATS in a way that totally supports the main proposition of the advertisement 'But this is a woman's war, mother'. Other successful themes were 'I know I ought', 'Shall I be Happy?' and 'If Only more Women would Help'.<sup>19</sup> The outcome of all efforts from July to September 1941 was that ATS recruitment moved ahead from 42,800 to 65,000, attracting more recruits in roughly two months than Gwynne-Vaughan had secured in the two years 1939-1941 but it was still not nearly enough to meet the War Cabinet's requirements.

To assist the new Director further in her recruitment task in the autumn of 1941 the government formed liaisons with a range of professional agencies. The following section assesses the contribution and effect of interventions from the women's press, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Wartime Social Survey, Mass-Observation and commercial advertising firms.

The government's first Press Conference with the women's press had taken place on 22 July, 1941.<sup>20</sup> If any agency knew how to generate mass female participation it was the women's popular magazines. Their millions of readers herd-stamped as frequently as the magazines signalled The New, whether in the form of a new make-up, hairstyle or colour-combination for fashion wear. More importantly, through their letter pages, short stories and advice columns they guided opinion about acceptable social behaviour for

women and built consensual concepts of femininity. Most importantly, the magazines had a nation-wide, habitual readership virtually matching the ATS target-market for volunteers in terms of class and age group.

In 1987 Jane Waller and Michael Vaughan-Rees published a popular study of the role women's magazines had played between 1939 and 1945, noting that the magazines' 'principal source of revenue (during these years) came from the constant stream of adverts placed by the Ministries and the various branches of the Services'.<sup>21</sup> In particular Waller and Vaughan-Rees were impressed with *Woman's Own* and wrote that they had 'developed a respect for what we considered to be the magazine with the strongest editorial team .....ready to deal with matters of great import in a serious and even radical way'.<sup>22</sup>

On 5 September 1941 Knox was interviewed for *Woman's Own* and the interview text shows the influence of the techniques of persuasion normally used for boosting retail sales applied for political propaganda purposes as *Woman's Own* set about rehabilitating khaki uniform as fashion-wear and establishing Knox as a 'pop idol' of contemporary femininity.<sup>23</sup>

The assessment of Mrs Knox and the new ATS came to the readers from the Editor, the authority source they credited most highly. In the Editor's report Mrs Knox is complimented on her vision for women's enhanced role in a post war world but her military title of Major-General is set aside and she is referred to as 'Mrs Knox' throughout the interview. The Editor has a light touch and leads with a remark that embeds a notion of volunteering in a rhetorical question meant to echo in the minds of the readers as she confides,

by the way, Mrs Knox looks so delightful and feminine in her ATS uniform that I found myself wondering how much we'd all be improved by wearing one like it. I felt almost dowdy in a flowered summer frock. When I reminded Mrs Knox that some girls said you couldn't be feminine in the army she was most emphatic in assuring me that this is not the case. She said it is the feminine qualities that one wanted – the special gifts which a woman can bring. When I left her I felt our army was indeed in good and gentle hands.<sup>24</sup>

Here we have the *Woman's Own* Editor, arbiter of taste for millions of women, making out that her high-fashion frock felt 'almost dowdy' in comparison with the new ATS

uniform. 'Dowdy' was the most undesirable adjective in the fashionable woman's lexicon. The ideology of an exclusively feminine sphere of influence and interest, to which the magazine and its readership subscribed, is prominent throughout in attitudes ascribed to Knox. Finally, Knox is personally given the blessing of *Woman's Own* in a recognition that the Army is 'in good and gentle hands' with its new Director.

This landmark interview buried the public image of Gwynne-Vaughan and her ethos of the Soldier Woman and replaced it with that of Jean Knox, the very much Woman Soldier. The ATS now had a Director with an image which propaganda cartoons could contrast successfully with Gertrud Scholtz-Klink who was Germany's elderly, mannish women's leader. Scholtz-Klink is presented, in Figure 5.12, as a figure of fun for feminine women to reject. She is lampooned as *The Fuehrer in Skirts*.

Alongside the powerful print mass-medium of magazines the government also enlisted the assistance of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to boost ATS recruitment. Asa Briggs (1970) and more recently Joy Leman (1996) and Sian Nicholas (1996) have made extensive analysis of the use of the radio ('wireless' as it was popularly known) as a propaganda instrument in the Second World War.<sup>25</sup> Nicolas commented on how

The BBC was such an ubiquitous presence in ordinary life in wartime Britain that its role has been taken for granted. The idea of propaganda on The Home Front was a contentious one but domestic propaganda was essential.<sup>26</sup>

Files only made available since May 2000 at the BBC's Written Archives Centre contain correspondence which specifically highlights the extent to which the government, through the MoI, pressed home the promotion of the ATS.<sup>27</sup> Analysis of five particular pieces of correspondence between Knox's appointment in July and her BBC radio broadcast on 16 November 1941 evidence how the BBC/MoI/ ATS kick-started broadcast propaganda for the ATS. It also reveals the nature of the relationship between the agencies involved and the identification of the attitudes of British servicemen as a key adverse influence on recruitment of women to the armed services.

The general initiative originated with Robert MacDermot, BBC Programme Organiser (Home), who wrote to the BBC Director of Programme Planning on 17 July 1941 advising that 'various friends of mine in the three main (women's) Services have told me that they are still regarded by their male counterparts as the feeblest sort of joke'.

MacDermot had an idea to remedy this. The memorandum is headed 'Suggestions for a Programme for Women in the Forces: WAR, WOMEN AND SONG'.<sup>28</sup> By August 1941 MacDermot had set up communication with the MoI's Mrs Diana Thomas, who had special duties for publicity for Women's Uniformed Services, and had appointed Miss Janet Quigley to produce a BBC programme for the Women's Services. By September 1941 Quigley was in contact with Junior Commandant Neill, Publicity Officer for the ATS, based in the Director of Publicity's office at the War Office. Quigley suggested that 'we should like to invite Mrs Knox for the second programme on October 13<sup>th</sup>. Would you speak to her about it in the first place? Any other suggestions for recruitment talks would be welcome'. Quigley also asked for the names of ATS members to take part in a broadcast inter-services Quiz Programme.<sup>29</sup>

By 26 September MacDermot advised the BBC Assistant Director Programme Planning that *Women At War* was finally selected as the title for the servicewomen's programme 'of which the initials are those of the three women's services in their correct order of seniority'; that Archie Campbell had been appointed Principal producer with Janet Quigley looking after Talks; that John Dickinson-Carr had been commissioned to 'write a half-hour story about three smart girls who joined the ATS'. MacDermot then outlined the format thought suitable for the new *Women At War* programme. The contents reflect the new desire to fit in with rather than challenge prevailing female cultural preferences and included a weekly talk entitled *Beauty in Battledress* with topics such as 'care of the hands after menial tasks in the services'. The services of an 'agony aunt' would be available on air 'though this will not be quite as "cheap" as the advice to the love-lorn columns in many of the popular daily papers. No correspondence will be directly solicited of course'. There would be an inter-services Quiz competition, managed by the popular Roy Rich; there would be a guest Star from one of HM Forces – a star of stage or film; Carroll Gibbons and his Band would provide 'good arrangements of popular tunes of the past' because 'dance band numbers of the moment can be heard frequently on radio elsewhere'; there would be a specially written signature tune called *Good Night, Ladies*; tickets would be available to all women's services to provide a 'live audience' for the programme and a principal officer from one of the services would introduce each programme with a short, two-minute speech, beginning with the Director, WRNS.<sup>30</sup>

On 8 October 1941 a BBC Internal Circulating Memorandum from A P. Ryan (Head of Talks) headed 'Subject: ATS' reported on liaison between the BBC, MoI and the ATS and advised that

The SOS to the BBC to help the ATS recruiting is now violent. Recruits are coming in at the rate of about 2000 a week. The Cabinet, I gather, have laid down that it must be 5-7000 a week. After talking to those concerned I put down, at random, for your consideration the following suggestions.<sup>31</sup>

The suggestions, with noteworthy gender references, included outside broadcasts from gunsites 'manned'(sic) by the ATS and the notion of featuring ATS in 'the blue-eyed boy of our programmes, *In Town Tonight*'. One suggestion in particular is worth detailed attention as a propaganda device. The view was presented that since 'men, fathers, husbands and sweethearts are, in the official view, one of the main obstacles to recruitment' a 'Court of Service Appeal' could be set up in the form of a Mock Trial with film star Leslie Howard as Judge and

some well known woman star as Counsel for the Prosecution and several men, married, engaged, father of daughter of military age etc. The men would be questioned on their reasons for not wanting their women to go into the services and Leslie Howard would sum up.<sup>32</sup>

It was believed that plaudits for the ATS conferred by Leslie Howard, star of 1939 box office block-buster film *Gone with the Wind*, would carry very substantial weight with public opinion.

A further suggestion in the memo included broadcasting a weekly variety programme, *ATS on Parade*, in which half an hour each week would be spent exploring one branch of the service at a time, gunner-girls one week, convoy drivers the next, giving a thorough survey of their work, plus a dance band to put some sugar round the pill. Ryan advised, 'Get as many serving ATS as possible onto the programmes' and added, 'I told Mrs Neill (ATS) this was really up to her'. Ryan was gratified that 'no-one on the official side has complained or been anything but friendly to the BBC. They simply say their orders are now to turn on all possible heat and broadcasting is obviously one of their best channels'.<sup>33</sup>

The MoI was clearly interested in the Mock Trial idea because Diana Thomas sent Ryan a list of questions that could be put to the men on trial. The questions reflect the perceived prejudices and anxieties of service men and fathers. For example, the men were to be asked 'Do you hate women wearing khaki? Do you think it's fair to stand in a woman's way? Wouldn't you like your wife to be a friend? Your family trusts you to behave well. Isn't it very uncomplimentary both to your daughter and your upbringing of her not to trust her equally in return? Are you at all jealous? Are you afraid your fiancée might get her commission before you get yours?'<sup>34</sup>

On 10 October 1941, Quigley wrote to Ryan commenting that

the ATS are funny people! I went to see Mrs Neill on September 17 to place any periods for which I am responsible at her disposal. She expressed eagerness and delight (but) nothing has been forthcoming from them other than the big broadcasting campaign should be inaugurated by a Sunday post script by Mrs Knox, not as a direct recruitment talk but as indirect publicity through the personality of Mrs Knox.<sup>35</sup>

In the same memo Quigley advised that

while waiting we have put on one *Calling All Women* by a shop girl who had joined the ATS on her own initiative and was going into uniform the following day. She did a most appealing broadcast, possibly extremely good indirect recruitment. She sounded all the things that the ATS are not supposed to be – feminine, charming, intelligent.

Quigley clearly had views about the traits that she would need to promote to popularise the ATS image and suggested that grass-roots appeal was a potential propaganda winner regretting that

for the future Mrs Knox's broadcast is all that is planned because we really must get suggestions from the ATS themselves. We are giving them priority wherever possible in the *Women at War* programme. This coming Monday is the ATS programme. It is through the girls who are already with the ATS that I am sure the most effective recruitment is going to be done.<sup>36</sup>

Quigley also reported that

the point about serious obstacles to recruitment for the ATS coming in from men is one which we have given a good deal of thought as you know. In the



discussion between Mrs Thomas (MoI) and the Asst. Publicity officer ATS some weeks ago the ATS shied off the issue rather badly when it came to passing the script.<sup>37</sup>

This was the script for the proposed Mock Trial from which the ATS would of course emerge with flying colours. Possibly the ATS was concerned that giving voice to such anxieties might reinforce them rather than dispel them. Publicity is recognised as a two-edged sword and no propaganda strategy is without its risks. In any event, Quigley concluded, noting government publicity policy, that

I have found the publicity people of the WRNS and the WAAF, although at present sitting back in favour of the ATS, are infinitely more businesslike and more productive of suggestions.<sup>38</sup>

It seemed that, in terms of self-promotion in modern contexts the ATS itself faced a steep learning curve.

Views about publicity expressed at the BBC by Ryan and Quigley and at the MoI by Diana Thomas were substantiated by *Wartime Social Survey No.5: ATS* which certainly left no doubt, despite successful change of leadership image, as to the extent of general damage-repair necessary if the required level of expansion to the service was to be attained. The fieldwork for the survey was carried out in October 1941 and it was published the same month. The Survey was a 'study for the Ministry of Labour and the Service (ATS) of the public attitudes to the ATS'.<sup>39</sup> Its data-base is impressive, sampling 1031 girls and women considered suitable entrants to the ATS, 546 members of the public, 611 members of ATS at 22 camps and views collected from 19 Labour Exchanges (8 in London). The Survey sections each have a summary and a sample range of raw data.

Pages 7 to 21 of the Survey analysed responses from the 1031 potential recruits and revealed that the ATS, attracting only 10%, was the least popular of all war work options. The summary warned of 'the influence of gossip of friends and relatives and the discouragement of the man in the Forces'. Predictably, the ATS came top of the poll for objections to women's services and comments quoted from raw data include, 'I would not like living conditions', 'Friends and relatives would not like me to be in this Service', 'the type of person I'd have to live with', 'the uniform is bad', and 'the

Service has a bad name'. Useful guidelines for publicity emerged. When interviewees were asked 'What newspapers do you read?' *News of the World* was most popular national newspaper (18%), 27% of interviewees read evening papers and 45% read local papers. When asked favourite times for listening to radio it emerged that 'the evening is the favourite time for listening with 9.00 to 9.30 the peak common to all ages'. Posters produced interviewees' best unaided remembrance of relevant advertising (60%), newspapers scored 59%, film 41.8%, radio 25.7%, magazines 5.8%, other media 3.2%.

Pages 22 to 26 of the Survey focused on 'Opinions of Friends and Relatives'. The summary disclosed that 20% in this category would advise girls against joining the ATS. Specific objections to the ATS are listed in a table of descending response-scores; 'ought not to use cosmetics so much' (scored 41), 'insufficient supervision of girls and more provision should be made for girls' leisure' (scored 21), 'not enough variety of work and chance of using capacities' (scored 21), 'the services, particularly the ATS have a brutalising effect on women' (scored 19), 'bad selection of girls, mixed selection of girls, girls should be graded as it is not nice for well brought up girls to mix with those who drink and swear' (scored 16) 'we don't want women to become masculine' (scored 5) and 'bad attitude of servicemen to ATS' (scored 4).

Pages 26 to 45 were devoted to information obtained from women already in the ATS. A preamble warned that 'the reasons given by volunteers are not necessarily the reasons which would prompt other women to join and therefore publicity based on those reasons would not necessarily be successful'. The table of reasons for joining revealed 'patriotic reasons' (49%), 'for more interesting job' (16.2%), 'husband joined up' (15.2%), 'attractions of army life' (4.6%), 'advertisements' (4%), 'unhappy at home' (1.9%), 'ATS uniform' (1.5%) and 'sought companionship' (1.4%). In this section the ATS was advised, via a cascade of solicited complaints from its members that 'the uniform and matters allied to it constitute the main source of displeasure'. Comments quoted from raw data included 'the uniform is too hot to dance in with comfort'. There were dozens of other grumbles about favouritism, regulation hair styles, promotion procedures, cattiness in the ranks, 'publicity and broken promises', low pay, attitude of civilians, ban on going out with men officers or women officer friends, ban on bright lipstick, not enough privacy, poor quality clothing, bad cooking, food, shirking by other members and 'domestic night' compulsory mending. The summary of this section advised that

there is no doubt that the ATS have had actual experience of an unpleasant character in their contacts with the public. We have cases of girls in the ATS being pushed off the pavement while walking in the street, of unseemly remarks being passed in their hearing or shouted at them and of the distainful brushing of the sleeve on the part of women who have accidentally touched a member of ATS in the street.

Response-scores quoted from the raw data revealed a view amongst ATS members that the public had a bad opinion of the ATS and 'seem to look down on us' (scored 142), 'people despise us, hate us, treat us like dirt' (scored 50), 'misdeeds in uniform are noticed out of all proportion' (scored 49). These views were balanced by the 103 ATS members who thought the public 'think well of us; think the ATS plucky'. The best news for the ATS was that '93% of personnel most decidedly want to stay in service'.

The most disturbing insights in the Survey are contained in pages 45 to 48 and drew on information from the Labour Exchanges. The summary of this section has three major observations, prioritised as

- A. Dislike of the ATS uniform for colour, cut, accessories; dislike of putting women into uniform, dislike of discarding female characteristics.
- B. Objections to leaving home, this because of girls' natural timidity and the parents' scruples (religious, moral or possessive) against exposing young girls to temptation of late hours and unaccustomed contacts. This is often reinforced by financial reasons.
- C. Revulsion caused by bad reputation of the ATS amongst women's services; this reputation is sometimes well founded and sometimes merely soldiers' gossip with its roots in male possessiveness, professional jealousy, or else a backwash of ancient gossip against the WAACs of the last war.

Many comments reported from the raw data show the strength of feeling on these matters and included, 'Oh! I could not join the ATS. People would think I was one of 'those' (prostitutes)', 'the nicer type of girls will not look at the ATS', 'I said to a Doctor I would join the ATS. He said "Don't you dare!" He had seen an ATS camp. Spent their time in the bar with the men', and 'a mother said her daughter had resigned from the ATS. She said there was a terrible lot of immorality. Told at York they have a maternity home for ATS babies'.

The daunting conclusion reached was that

the ATS appears to have been from the beginning a drab and unglamorous Service, the legion of Cinderellas, domestic workers from whom one expected, and got, a low degree of morality. Even the uniform seems to have helped this idea, men contemptuously calling them “female Tommies” and “scum of the earth”. When girls register at their Labour Exchanges and allow themselves to be indicated for the Services, their first stipulation is “Not the ATS”.

This Survey had identified crucial issues of social snobbery, the conservative nature of public attitudes towards acceptable roles and public behaviour for women, double standards which allowed much greater social and sexual freedom to young men, current cultural perceptions of femininity and the power of informal communication and spiteful gossip on social reputation, all of which were adversely impacting on ATS recruitment. It also highlighted problems that were within the control of the ATS, primarily issues about its uniform and welfare provision. As evidenced earlier in this chapter the effort to re-brand the ATS as feminine, democratic and modern was already underway. The rise in recruitment figures suggested that the propaganda themes and approaches were working. The question was: Would the professional re-branding of the ATS be enough and, more importantly, could it be accomplished fast enough to meet Cabinet targets for ATS volunteers?

The Mass-Observation Archive confirms intensive professional collaboration and pressure in the efforts to turn around the image and recruitment fortunes of the ATS in October 1941. The commercial advertising firm, John Tait and Partners, had won the government contract to run the ATS advertising campaign and the ATS account was in the hands of Mary Gowing, one of the firm’s Directors. Gowing wanted a state of the art public-opinion-sampling agency to assist her. On 9 October 1941 she wrote to Tom Harrison who, with Charles Madge, directed Mass-Observation, an independent, research-based organisation. Harrison and Madge are regarded as pioneers of modern social science and since 1937 had been applying methods of academic anthropological research to British culture. They had already published *Britain by Mass Observation* in 1939 and *War Begins at Home* in 1940. Their methods included direct and indirect data gathering. This involved sending out ‘Directives’, sets of written questions to volunteer panels of respondents and, additionally, deploying anonymous reporters who placed themselves in pubs, workplaces, at public events, and wrote up their impressions of public responses and overheard comments for analysis by Mass-Observation. In other words, snooping.

Gowing wanted Harrison to run an investigation into public attitudes to the ATS for Tait and Partners. She wrote to him, and explained that

the investigation you do for me will be merely to satisfy me that my instinctive feeling about mental and emotional attitudes of the majority of women to war is approximately right, or to modify and correct my point of view or perhaps alter my impression of the relative importance of various points of resistance which I believe to be in operation.<sup>40</sup>

Gowing had no ethical problem with snooping in a good cause. In fact she favoured the type of interview where the interviewee was unaware of the context. She gave Harrison the benefit of her experience of this technique and its effectiveness, telling him how

Yesterday, I watched some girls being questioned about the photograph of a man's head and they turned the head down saying that the man did not appeal to them. Later, the advertisement was left lying around casually and the expression on the girls' faces when they looked at it showed what they really felt. There was no question about it. This particular picture had an appeal to women and through complete accident a good advertisement was saved for the ATS.<sup>41</sup>

Unfortunately *Mass-Observation File Report 976, ATS Advertising*, though listed, is missing from the Archive. However, *Change*, the Journal of the Advertising Services Guild used its October 1941 issue, *Change No. 2*, to address issues of Home Propaganda.<sup>42</sup> The Preface to the publication set out the crucial question and constraints familiar to all students of propaganda:

How far have these campaigns succeeded in their task of guiding the units of the population speedily, clearly, confidently? The ASG has no illusions about the difficulty, the improbability of arriving at a full answer to such a question. Nobody knows better than our own members who have been responsible for parts of the Government propaganda how easy it is to criticise and how stubborn is the problem of correlation.

Included in *Change No 2* was Mass-Observation's critique of the ATS advertising campaigns run between April and October 1941. It was complimentary and reported that the campaign to recruit for the ATS had been running 'with especial energy since July' and that

it is clear that careful attempts to pre-analyse girls' resistances to ATS recruiting have been made and the advertisements systematically set out to give clear,

intelligent and reassuring answers to questions that worry recruits. Some girls reading this who had thought of joining the ATS but decided against it felt that the way in which advertisements “answered the very things I had been worrying about” was “magical”.<sup>43</sup>

In Mass-Observation’s view ‘this approach, with effective illustrations also – especially of male soldiers with captions like “If Only More Women Would Help” was well timed’. The example that Mass-Observation singled out for special praise is shown as Figure 5.13 and is a highly emotive image of a male soldier making a direct appeal to the nation’s women to join the ATS.

Mary Gowing wrote again to Harrison, on 14 October 1941, on behalf of John Tait and Partners

to confirm that we would like you to proceed at once with the ATS investigation and that we wish it to be conducted in class groups, in the Greater London area, using both the questionnaire method and the method of interviewing an unsuspecting person.<sup>44</sup>

A fee of £100 is suggested. Gowing wanted Mass-Observation to provide her with specific market-research data on potential ATS recruits to confirm or refute the effectiveness of the current ATS advertising themes and to identify new ones likely to succeed. She listed

a summary of the information I need and I have broken it down under headings..... I am hoping to get from you as full a picture as possible of the personality and outlook of the girls you are investigating together with some guidance as to their resistance to the ATS and some help in assessing where that resistance may most easily be broken down. The whole object of advertising being, of course, to break down resistance.

The enquiries Gowing commissioned Harrison to pursue ranged tenaciously over such issues as personality traits of potential ATS recruits, (‘Are they woolly-headed, frivolous, feminine or feminist?’), their home conditions, bases of resistance (‘Husband? Boyfriend? Pay?’) and weak points in resistance most of all,

in other words what aspect or aspects of the advertised advantages of the ATS might “pull her in”. Patriotism? Could she believe she could defeat Hitler by joining? Adventurous work? Confidential work? New and interesting work?

Domestic work?...Does the appeal for 200,000 ATS make her feel that there is something wrong with the service that needs girls so urgently?

Gowing wanted results quickly and Harrison, before the end of the month, produced *Mass-Observation File Report 936* though with due academic caution it is titled, 'Summary Interim Report on the ATS; women's attitudes to conscription, propaganda, war work, women's services'.<sup>45</sup>

The report recorded Harrison's analysis that, of the female fieldwork sample

about a third had a mainly unfavourable attitude to the ATS and just under a half were mainly favourable but this favourableness was very generalised and vague. Very few women can think of anything special about the ATS even when they were in favour of it.

This was not so gloomy as the picture painted by Wartime Social Survey but warned, though in cautious terms, that 'on the other hand women were able to think of plenty of reasons why they don't like joining the ATS'. The points of resistance were prioritised as being fear of not getting the kind of work wanted and being stuck with it, dislike of uniform, poor pay, concern about dependents, objections of parents/husbands/boyfriends, loss of freedom, dislike of drill, dislike of working for women, reluctance to be tied down for the duration of the war and worries about demobilisation and post-war careers. Harrison stressed that

There is no doubt that men in the army are exerting strong pressure on their womenfolk to stay out of the ATS. Detailed reports have come in on this and are now being analysed. They show, in particular, an overwhelmingly strong line in the Army that the ATS are immoral and low grade.

As far as advertising was concerned 'just over half the women remember some specific piece of ATS advertising which they can recall and name. Most women said that advertising did not make them feel that they ought to join up'.

*Mass-Observation File Report 952*, made available in November 1941, is the completed version of *File Report 936* and it fully analysed additional reports received about the attitudes of soldiers towards the ATS. The summary is qualified by the caveat that 'things soldiers say about and think about ATS are by no means necessarily true' but the

'clear cut attitude' of soldiers is that ATS are 'common'. The report advises recruiters that

there would seem to be much room for improvement of the attitude of the soldier to the ATS within ATS propaganda.... This, if successful, might greatly facilitate recruiting. For there are now millions of soldiers....this therefore becomes extremely important to ATS recruiting'<sup>46</sup>

The raw data on which these observations were based is contained in *Mass-Observation File Report 955* and expressed in barrack-room terms. Soldiers watching ATS walk by had commented 'Not bad, eh? Nice bit of stuff, mate...look at her fucking arse... nothing but a league of amateur prostitutes...bloody whores the lot of them...what, the ATS? They're a lot of bastards, mate'.<sup>47</sup>

In the light of these findings the advertisement that Mass-Observation had publicly singled out for especial praise, the male soldier appealing for recruits, was particularly apposite with its ordinary soldier, the salt of the earth type, smiling and commending the ATS in glowing terms of admiration and appreciation. It provided a public and powerful over-ride to adverse influences at domestic level and gave an emotive and authoritative general message to women that male soldiers really thought very highly of women in the ATS and wished there were more of them.

Between October and December 1941 there was substantial overlap between the issues addressed in ATS advertisements and the points of resistance / weak points in resistance reported in market research findings. In Figure 5.14, for instance, 'It's time I got a new Hat', the new forage cap is promoted to counter the unpopularity of the old-style ATS uniform identified in both *Wartime Social Survey No. 5* ('complaints about the uniform are per se universal' p. 33) and *Mass-Observation File Report 936* ('dislike of uniform' was second on the list of women's objections to the ATS, p. 12). The advertisement 'Here work 50 girls who shouldn't' shows a civilian office with a whole bank of inset questions right on target to deal with anxieties exposed in *Mass-observation File Report 936* (p. 11) about pay, promotion, what kind of job, dependents, sickness if in the ATS. The need to deal with the obstructive attitude 'Why should I make a personal effort?' (identified in *Mass-Observation File Report 952* p. 30) is addressed in the advertisement 'German Women, Russian Women and You', shown as Figure 5.15, in which British women are urged to compete in effort with the women of allies and



enemies alike and the text stresses that 'Until you and every women like you is prepared to play her part, bravely and resolutely, Britain cannot say she is ready'. In Figure 5.16 the advertisement shows a well-dressed civilian woman with a petulant expression and what looks like an official rubber stamp superimposed on her image declaring her 'Out of Fashion'. This deals, in a powerful gesture, with the 'need to combat inertia and apathy' identified in *Mass-Observation File Report 952*, p. 30. The text of the advertisement demands of such women 'Are you leading a selfish life, thinking selfish thoughts, spreading complacency and thoughtlessness?' She is then admonished with 'Your place is in the Army!'. The advertisement 'In the Great Tradition', shown as Figure 5.17, addresses 'the need to feed optimistic self-estimates' identified in *Mass-Observation File Report 952* p. 47 and appeals to patriotism which had been identified as the motive of 49% of those women who had already volunteered (*Wartime Social Survey No 5*, p. 30). In the advertisement text the young female corporal with kit bag, tin hat and earnest expression is assured that she has 'qualities which Hitler cannot subdue. The shining qualities that will lead us to Victory'. She is urged to live up to 'the men who did not question that they should help their country' and is called to 'Adventure through Service'. Many other recruitment advertisements have themes which interlace with market-researched evidence. These include, 'I know I ought', 'But surely we will win in the end?', 'Why You must Join the ATS', 'Her Greatest Hour', 'Your Conscience', 'What's Holding You Back?' and 'I want to help my country, too'.

While the women's press, the BBC, Wartime Social Survey, Tait and Partners and Mass-Observation were applying their professional expertise to the problem of popularising the ATS a young poster designer at the War Office created an image for the ATS which put the service centre-stage in a highly contentious public discourse about Mass Propaganda. Abram Games, writing in 1986, recalled the cycle of events surrounding the publication of his recruiting poster with the caption 'Join the ATS'. He described his rationale for the poster and its public impact. From his point of view

the ATS was known as the dowdy service and women preferred the smarter uniforms of the Women's Naval Service and Air Force. I sought to redress the balance by using the new stylish fore-and-aft cap on my model. The Parliament and press controversy raged for nearly a month as Germany bombed Britain day and night. The public loved the poster and nick-named it The Blonde Bombshell. It also became known as the ATS Glamour Girl poster, but finally, the Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin, yielded to staid criticism and ordered the poster withdrawn.<sup>48</sup>

The Blonde Bombshell is shown as Figure 5.18. Though inspiration was drawn from a real-life ATS member the resultant image is an abstract and sophisticated combination of military and glamorous elements. Just exactly, theoretically, the combination which ATS had been promoting through the personal presentation of Jean Knox. However, Games's image was not a muted blend of those elements. Games produced a corporate logo for the ATS in which ATS 'girls' had blonde hair, vivid red lips, head-in-the-air confidence and in which there is no hint of khaki. Instead, patriotic red, white and blue is used to depict the letters ATS. Uniform is barely suggested by the delineation apart from the use of the new, American-style service cap, attractively in high profile. The poster appeared nation-wide on 80,000 billboards by October.<sup>49</sup> In Figure 5.19 the artist is shown in his wartime studio sitting rather defensively in front of his controversial poster.

The image caused immediate furore in press and Parliament as professional interest-groups and prominent public figures took sides in an ideological struggle for control of the tone and content of Home Propaganda. On the one hand were the populists, championed by Mass-Observation and the professional advertising press. They challenged what Mass-Observation described as 'the respectable approach' advocated by *The Times* and its conservative supporters.<sup>50</sup>

The Games poster was clearly seen as a populist artefact. Figure 5.20 shows the poster in use during its brief display period with recruits going up the steps of a public building 'past the Glamour Girl poster'. Also in Figure 5.20 is a cutting from the *News Chronicle* (dated 7.11.41) which discloses the class politics implicit in the Home Propaganda discourse. Mass-Observation lashed *The Times* for 'shutting its eyes' to the facts about working-class women and their liking for cosmetics. *The Times* had, on 12 September 1941, criticised the ATS campaign for selling the ATS like a patent medicine and had 'particularly singled out the adverts which favoured the use of cosmetics in the ATS in the copy'.<sup>51</sup> Games's 'Join the ATS' poster served as a focal point not only for a discourse about the general approach to mass propaganda but for specific class-biased objections to the cultural preferences of working-class women being elevated to iconic status, as they had been by Games's ATS poster. The ATS had a public image as the service with by far the highest proportion of working-class 'girls'<sup>52</sup> and the 'respectable' faction was unwilling to let Games's 'Glamour Girl' dominate public presentation of the ATS.

The Parliamentary champion of the 'respectable' approach to recruitment advertising was Conservative MP, Thelma Cazalet. On 23 October 1941 the London *Evening Standard* reported, under the caption 'Too Glamorous ATS poster' that 'In the Commons today Mrs Cazalet asked Mr Bevin if he would have a recent ATS recruiting poster No. 51-1065 withdrawn as it was "unsuitable"'.<sup>53</sup> Exactly in what way it was 'unsuitable' was not argued. On 24 October Mrs Cazalet was further quoted in the London *Evening Standard*, declaring 'the poster is more like a beauty product'.<sup>54</sup>

The advertising profession closed ranks around Games. It was interested in effective recruitment advertising not class ideology at this point in the ATS campaign. *Advertisers' Weekly*, on 30 October 1941, commented exasperatedly, 'I don't know how far Maginot-minded horror at blonde hair and lipstick were allowed to govern sales policy'<sup>55</sup> and in the *Advertisers' Weekly* of 7 November 1941 there is a reference to 'a woman MP who should mind her own business'.<sup>56</sup> However, the outcome of Cazalet's intervention was victory for the 'respectable' faction and the provision of a replacement poster. Figure 5.21 shows the winner and the loser side by side. The 'Glamour Girl' was 'out'. 'Private Mary' was 'in'. The political triumph was celebrated in the conservative press. 'Private Mary' was a real-life ATS member and the *Daily Express* described her as 'brunette, pretty and unsophisticated'. Mary's naïve (or faux-naïve) comment about her public profile was 'Oh dear! It's going to be ghastly seeing my face everywhere'.<sup>57</sup> The implication of using a photograph for the replacement poster was that Games's graphic image was a male artist's inappropriate, and rather tawdry, flight of fancy whereas the real 'ATS girls' were like 'Private Mary'. In the poster Mary wears the old-style ATS cap, symbol of the return to 'good taste'. Games described the replacement poster as 'a conventional photograph of a girl in the former uniform marching along patriotically with arms swinging in best Army fashion'.<sup>58</sup> Politically, Thelma Cazalet got her way about the poster but culturally, in terms of other ranks of the ATS, Games had got it right for recruitment purposes.

Tricia Cusack has suggested that, in a wider context than class politics, the ATS 'Glamour Girl' poster focused moral and sexual anxieties about 'the consequences of women's sexual freedom ....away from home ... in particular the sexual mores of the service women were suspect..... in particular there was more sexual freedom but more moralising based on the domestic ideal'.<sup>59</sup> The kind of 'away from home' behaviour feared by moralists is captured in Figure 5.22, from an ATS member's 1943

unpublished drawing of a 'girls' night out' in Edinburgh. ATS members 'Georgie' Blewitt and 'Sal WB' are shown as the last to leave the pub and are sitting, drinks in hand, on stools perched up on the bar while the male cleaner waits to close up for the night. Games's poster might well have provided a focus for the sexual fears of absentee fathers, husbands and boyfriends, particularly since, by November 1941, 'seventy per cent of the total intake' of (ATS) recruits were working with men on the mixed anti-aircraft batteries' and 'the provision of women for the mixed batteries took priority over all else'.<sup>60</sup>

The propaganda triumph of 'respectability' is reflected in Jean Knox's first BBC broadcast on 16 November 1941, at peak listening-time, just after the nine o'clock evening news. The text appealed to traditional values of the spirit of service and patriotism. It linked the sacrifices made by soldiers for their country and mothers for their children with those of the 'thousands of young women who are facing the hardships – and there are hardships – in the service of the ATS'. Mrs Knox showed that she understood the complex demands of duty to both home and country which women particularly faced. She cited the case of a woman with 'husband in the Air Force abroad – daughter of fourteen. Is she to leave the child at the most difficult time of her adolescence?' This was, of course, Knox's own circumstance and she had, in well-publicised manner, prioritised national duty. She was therefore morally well placed to urge other women to do the same. There is no mention of new shorter skirts or sexy off-duty caps or good times to be had in the ATS. The sentiments were wholly to the taste of the 'respectable' faction of recruitment advertising,<sup>61</sup> as was the new ATS Booklet, described by *The Times*, on November 25 1941, in glowing terms as 'so excellent as to deserve a flood of recruits. It is attractively prepared, with plenty of illustrations'. Even more significantly, 'its message by-passes the "glamour girl" and the "good time" approach and is an invitation to young women to join in this total war as valuable military units'.<sup>62</sup>

Paradoxically, it was the most valuable of these military units, the anti-aircraft batteries, which generated widespread moral panic. By the end of November 1941 public debate about the ATS reached the highest political levels. ATS recruitment issues were debated in the House of Lords where Viscount Trenchard expressed deep concern about the anti-aircraft bases where ATS

are trained together with the men, they mess together and they take recreation together. Is this wise? When they finish training they go to work on anti-aircraft guns in small bodies scattered about the country with men who have been retained for this work because it is not very active work. Many are anxious about the wellbeing of the ATS under these conditions.<sup>63</sup>

There is a subtext about sexual opportunity and a coded moral alarm in his comment.

On 2 December 1941 ATS recruitment was discussed in the House of Commons where Eleanor Rathbone commented acidly on the

Vogue kind of appeal... this perpetual harping on smart uniforms and saluting and military titles repels the best kind of girl. It seems to her cheap and tawdry. As one of them remarked "It is as if what the Army wants is chorus girls not Soldiers". Another thing that has done a great deal of harm is the whispering campaign that is going on about immorality.<sup>64</sup>

It was also clear by December that the propaganda shift of emphasis to Woman Soldier for the ATS would not in itself be sufficient to achieve the target recruitment figure. The voluntary recruitment figure for December reached 85,000. This was an amazingly good result but still 15,000 short of the target set in the Bevin memo of July 1941 when the campaign had begun. The press anticipated a momentous shift of government policy away from the voluntary principle altogether with regard to female recruits. *The Times* leading article on December 5 1941 suggested that 'of all the uniformed services the ATS is clearly intended to be the chief beneficiary from conscription'.<sup>65</sup> Popular doggerel expressed the sentiment less diplomatically. For example,

You have failed to volunteer  
So at last have met your fate.  
There has been a splendid cheer  
From the Commons holding debate.

Queen Weed in the garden of service girls  
You may sigh the whole war through  
For gloss of ermine and glamour of pearls  
Or even a uniform blue.  
De-rouge the nails, bind up the curls  
And into the ATS with you.<sup>66</sup>

On December 10 1941 the National Service Bill was debated in the House of Commons. The issue was whether or not to conscript women and in this high-profile debate references to the ATS were devastating. It was ironic that having successfully and with

such effort shaken off the frump image the ATS now faced a public-image nightmare of being cast as a pack of sluts. One MP, Henderson Stewart, was reported in *The Times* as having asserted, 'There is no doubt that the ATS has a thoroughly bad reputation...the whole service has a bad name. The War Office must take notice of the stories being circulated'. When pressed he had confessed that 'his own experience in the Army had not been in line with the stories that were going about. But there was a general impression that the ATS was not the sort of Service that a nice girl went into'. The Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin, had commented that 'it was most regrettable that there should be all this talk about the ATS and that it should be assumed that because women were drafted somewhere immorality was bound to exist'. Bevin had then cited a letter which had advised that 'at a certain camp there were a large number of cases of venereal disease and several women were pregnant. The War Office had ordered an independent enquiry and it was found that there was not a single case of venereal disease and only one woman pregnant and she had been married for five years. (laughter)'.<sup>67</sup> But it was not a laughing matter. All the good work done to soften and feminise the ATS image between July and December, and which might well have eased the path of conscription, was in danger of being sidelined by this vehement and unwelcome public stigma of immorality just at the point when female conscription became operational.

Additionally, at what could hardly have been a worse moment, the press exposed the reality of deep tensions between Knox and her ATS officers. For example, *The London Evening Standard* 17 December 1941, published a photograph of Jean Knox, shown as Figure 5.23, and reported that 'Mrs Knox insulted the ATS' at an Edinburgh public meeting, telling officers to 'shut up' and that subsequently an MP had called for her to be disciplined.<sup>68</sup> Private correspondence reveals that tensions had been there ever since Knox's appointment. In a letter dated 11.9.41 ATS officer Julia Cowper confided to Gwynne-Vaughan that

I've never yet heard the Director speak when she hasn't poured coals of fire on the heads of her audience and told them how incredibly inefficient they are. Jean is so frightening. Jean will sack an officer one day, before she's had time to investigate the case, in order to show she has moral courage ... and she will not brook opposition or disagreement.<sup>69</sup>

These views are corroborated by an incident described by ATS officer Kina Manton. At a War Office conference on ATS identity Manton had expressed the view that ATS members were primarily loyal to their units because 'the ATS was too vast for them to visualise'. Manton recalled how

the result startled me – Jean Knox called me a lot of things, sacked me out of hand, burst into tears and rushed from the room.... Half an hour later it was all over and she came up, said she was glad I had answered as I had and I was not sacked and not to worry.<sup>70</sup>

Knox needed all the support she could raise from her officers as the ATS faced up to a damaging 'whispering campaign', obsessively focused on the mixed anti-aircraft batteries. Kina Manton, herself an officer in a mixed anti-aircraft battery, recalled how

"Trouble" was expected ..... the culminating point came when I was accused of being a 'Madam' of one, and by implication of four brothels. This charming indictment was worded so technically that I had to have it translated by a doctor.....the wearing of trousers by certain categories of ATS on gunsites started a battle which was waged furiously to start with and sporadically throughout the war....(there was) a crop of charges from MPs and officers of Scottish Command affronted to see ATS walking the streets of Edinburgh in trousers, boots and leather jerkins (but) any attempt to be really operationally integrated brought the wrath of the ATS Directorate upon us at once.<sup>71</sup>

These incidents show the strength of Knox's determination to preserve the ATS as a sphere for women, separated from male military influence or command.

The remainder of this chapter maps the key events and propaganda initiatives designed to fortify the public reputation of the ATS as it climbed to peak-recruitment by September 1943. On the public relations front the effort began at once. The Prime Minister's daughter, Mary Churchill, joined the ATS on 19 December 1941 and was enlisted in 132 (m) HAA Regiment (a mixed anti-aircraft site).<sup>72</sup> This was a real coup and Figure 5.24 shows ATS member Churchill in her uniform. *War Pictorial News* showed millions of cinema goers footage of The Queen, visiting the ATS with The Princess Royal, and the narrative did not miss that 'second from the left is the Prime Minister's daughter, Mary Churchill, posted at an AA Battery. This visit to the gun pits evidence of the Queen's deep interest in the ATS'.<sup>73</sup> The women's magazines were supportive. The popular magazine, *Illustrated*, portrayed homely, harmless fun in Christmas scenes from the gun sites, shown in Figure 5.25, where the intention is

clearly to reassure ATS members' families, particularly their husbands and boyfriends, that the moral proprieties were being observed. The realities which the propaganda images were countering are evident in Figure 5.26, an unpublished contemporaneous drawing by an ATS member. A flirtatious off-duty moment is captured and the accompanying text affirms that 'lots of teasing and making dates' went on at the gun sites.

The *Woman's Own* selected an ATS recruit, shown in Figure 5.27, as 'cover girl' for its New Year issue with the caption 'Salute to 1942'. *Everywoman* featured an impeccably smart ATS 'girl' for its cover page in the February 1942 edition, shown as Figure 5.28, in which the young woman is surrounded by a halo of light. A collage of promotional artefacts surrounds this image; even Dolly joins the Forces in ATS khaki. In Arthur Wauters's morale-boosting publication *Eve in Overalls* (February 1942) the first tribute is to 'Eve in Khaki' accompanied by a very dramatic image, shown as Figure 5.29, of ATS 'operating search lights and gun-sights'. In *Woman's Own* (6 February 1942) under the caption 'Rubbish talked about ATS morals' Father Orde, padre to ATS Northern Command, testified that 'ATS girls on the gun positions have improved the general standard .... it improves the men's standard of conduct'. This was supported by ATS Chief Commandant M.K. Wagstaff's comment that 'immorality is a far less serious problem in the ATS than in civilian life'. Editorial comment admonished readers to 'make a note of these sensible words in case you hear scandal tongues wagging again about our grand girls in khaki'.<sup>74</sup> ATS morale was also boosted in reality by requests from the governments of Norway and America for advice about setting up their women's army corps.<sup>75</sup>

In February 1942 Mass-Observation produced a further report on the ATS's public image. File Report 1083 gloomily reaffirmed views expressed in earlier reports and added, ominously, that 'the predominant opinion amongst soldiers that ATS are an immoral lot has spilt over into civilian life to a sufficient extent to make it an important deterrent especially amongst B class (middle-class) women'.<sup>76</sup> These findings coincided unhappily with the arrival in Britain of the first contingents of American allied troops who had a reputation for womanising.

The government stepped in and took formal action to deal with the 'whispering campaign' about ATS immorality. A Committee of Enquiry was set up. It was chaired



by Miss Violet Markham who had been Secretary of the Committee that had investigated WAAC morals back in 1918. Her 1942 remit was 'to look into the welfare of all three women's services and to make recommendations'. This avoided singling out the ATS for public approbation.<sup>77</sup> Also in February 1942 the Directorate of Public Relations set up a new Branch, PR5, to deal exclusively with ATS publicity.<sup>78</sup> New inclusivist initiatives in the same month included the formation of a Special Recruiting Platoon, selected to include more than ninety percent of its personnel from 'orderlies grade'. They gave public drill displays and afterwards members of the public were encouraged to speak to them informally about service life. The ATS ensured that 'fresh faces' and up to date information were the hallmarks of this platoon. There was also a Mobile Exhibition Platoon and press, public and influential women's groups such as the YWCA, National Council of Women and the WVS were invited to visit training centres. A witty visual comment on such a visit is shown in Figure 5.30, an unpublished war years drawing by Joan Carter, an ATS member.

ATS strength rose to over 111,000 by March 1942 and, with the Markham Enquiry underway, it was crucial to find really reassuring images for public consumption. Sending the clearest of signals the *Woman's Own* gave the ATS the cover page of its Easter Friday issue for 1942. The ATS members are in church, in the front pew, presented indeed as all things bright and beautiful in Figure 5.31. By June ATS strength stood at 140,000 and there were radio broadcast appeals for drivers, now subject to rigorous selection tests. In August a short, promotional film, using the services of many popular film stars exploited the popularity of cinema to widen ATS recruitment appeals.<sup>79</sup> By August 1942 there was an ATS Public Relations Officer in each ATS Command. This officer was responsible for liaison with local ATS groups and the collation or selection of good publicity material for press releases.

When the Markham Report published its findings in September 1942 ATS strength stood at 162,000 and a campaign was underway aimed specifically at recruitment of soldiers' wives because Mass-Observation had identified that 'the chief potential services group was that of married women living alone, 62% of whom had thought of joining'.<sup>80</sup> The eagerly-awaited Markham Report judgement was that there was 'no justification for the vague but sweeping charges of immorality...the general impression made by the auxiliaries ...was excellent'.<sup>81</sup> The *Woman's Own* celebrated with a

September ATS cover page of a sweet and smiling ATS cook (Figure 5.32) and a triumphalist caption, 'At Your Service – with the best that can be got'.

Celebrity recruits and testimonials were good for morale and in its 18 September 1942 edition *Woman's Own* published the ATS Diary of 'brilliant young author' Pamela Frankau in which she described new recruits. 'Here they come. They jump one by one, landing on their high heels. Bill says "I wouldn't be back in civvy street, would you, Frankie?"' and the camaraderie amongst ATS members is implied in the use of the nick-names.<sup>82</sup> In October Violet Markham reported personally to the national moral watchdog group, The National Council of Women, reassuring them that the stories which had 'naturally caused distress...were not only false but fantastic'.<sup>83</sup> In October ATS morale received a further boost with a visit from Mrs Roosevelt, much-admired wife of the American President.<sup>84</sup>

Promotional visits were two-way transatlantic exchanges and in the autumn of 1942 Jean Knox visited Canada where newspapers were quick to pick up and preoccupied that she, the 'first female Major-General in the British Army, outranked her husband'. Yet 'as if looking for qualities to counter-balance her high military rank news stories invariably described Knox as "the petite and pretty general" or "petite and completely feminine" and 'speaking of the women of the British Auxiliary Territorial Service and the Canadian Women's Army Corps she herself remarked: "They're not an Army of Amazons doing men's work – they're still women". In her view, "All women should share with men the experience of this war – but I should be violently displeased if in doing so, women lost their femininity"'.<sup>85</sup> This observation is characteristic of Knox and the ethos she worked so assiduously to promote for the ATS at home and abroad.

At home a very bold and dramatic image rounded off the period of defence of the ATS's moral image from February to October 1942. On 7 November 1942 *Woman* magazine put on its cover page an ATS 'girl' having a cigarette lit in a dark street by a genial man in uniform. This depiction, shown as Figure 5.33, has an in-built risk factor as a public image. The naturalistic style of Figure 5.33, gives it an arguably stronger sub-text of sexual availability than Abram Games's aloof 'Glamour Girl' which had caused such concern in October 1941. The lighting of a cigarette had become a wartime cliché for sexual engagement and dark streets had a resonance with prostitution but the implication of the image used in Figure 5.33 is that, exonerated by official report and

lionised by popular press, the ATS in any context had been placed beyond challenge from scandal-mongering tongues.

October 1942 was a watershed because 'as voluntary recruitment came to an end the necessity for wide publicity campaigns drew to a close'; the Special Platoons were disbanded and when the ATS ran a team of loud speaker vans it was too successful and 'was eventually stopped by the Ministry of Labour and National Service'.<sup>86</sup> The emphasis swung to 'public education' about the ATS rather than recruitment for it. Lecturers were sent to talk to schoolgirls but only better-educated recruits were needed for new, skilled work.<sup>87</sup> The task was seen as generally building and consolidating respect for the image and achievements of the ATS. The lectures were 'no way part of the recruiting organisation and were careful to make it clear that their primary object was to spread knowledge about the service rather than obtain recruits'.<sup>88</sup> The reason for this was that the factories had moved centre stage as national priority for women's labour. This is reflected in the women's press where images of ATS and WAAF were replaced with 'positive accounts of factory life and women's achievement in the workplace'.<sup>89</sup> The propaganda bandwagon had moved on to another sector but even with the brakes on ATS strength moved up to 180,700 by Christmas 1942. The BBC gave the ATS the prestigious Christmas Eve 1942 *Points of View* broadcast. In a ten-minute simulated interview Pamela Frankau (Junior Commandant in the ATS) completely reassured a worried working-class father and in spite of her protest to him that 'I'm not trying to sell you the ATS' did a very good job of persuading him on a range of issues from church-going to job opportunities for his daughter in the new ATS.<sup>90</sup>

By January 1943 the ATS image was sufficiently strong for *Woman* magazine to depict an ATS 'girl' in uniform and full make-up parting from a serviceman in what is obviously a romantic relationship. Lovers parting at a railway station is one of the most powerful wartime images. This image, shown in Figure 5.34, sets a new norm where those parting are both in uniform rather than the male serviceman going off to defend his civilian sweetheart or wife and children while they remain at home.

The railway station is also the opening set for the propaganda artefact that finally consolidated public regard for the ATS. The feature film, *The Gentle Sex*, was released in March 1943. It was directed by Leslie Howard who also provided the sympathetic

and persuasive narration. All newsreels at this period also privilege the male narrator, male media-controllers presumably believing that the male voice carried more authority with a cinema audience. The opening credit of *The Gentle Sex* shows the film title embroidered on a Victorian sampler. On the one hand this could be read as suggesting the continuance of traditional femininity in the ATS but could also be construed, in the context of the film, as satirical. Inclusivist in spirit, the film followed the fortunes of seven ATS recruits from widely contrasting backgrounds, each assimilating ATS principles of service and duty, acquiring a new realism about life, war and self while in the ATS. Pride in ATS corporate identity is marked in a highly emotive episode in which the ATS newly-formed Corps Band, resplendent in tartan, leads the women in a formal march-past. The premiere of *The Gentle Sex* was held at the Odeon Cinema, Leicester Square, London. ATS Deputy Director Leslie Whateley recalled that the demand for seats was so high she 'had to sit on the dress-circle stairs' and that, in spite of some frustrations for the military advisers during the film making 'when the film was shown it was a very fine and authentic picture of the service'.<sup>91</sup> Mass-Observation recorded *The Gentle Sex* 'among the top seven British box office hits' of 1943. Surprisingly, it equalled *Mrs Miniver* for popularity profile and was beaten only by films with male military themes. These were *In Which We Serve*, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* and *Desert Victory*.<sup>92</sup>

The inclusivist theme was also celebrated by Irene Holdsworth's 'story', published in April 1943. Titled 'Yes Ma'am' its most insistent message was 'BE A GOOD MIXER'(sic) and, targeted at middle-class recruits, above all 'Don't be a Snob'.<sup>93</sup> The difficulty of putting this into practice is described by middle-class recruit Hilary Wayne who complained how putting people together from different life-experience and background meant that 'nearly any subject is taboo.....travel, country houses, books music, good food, opera ..even to speak of them seems swanky'. Wayne also noted how the ATS itself, despite its inclusivist public rhetoric, class-consciously classified its recruits into either 'S' (Specialised) or 'G' (General) where 'G' included cooks, orderlies and messengers and would 'absorb the socially lower entrants'.<sup>94</sup>

By July 1943 the ATS image was popularised sufficiently for commercial advertising to home in on it, as shown in Figure 5.35, an advertisement for a smokers' toothpaste. In its 24 July 1943 edition *Woman* magazine presented a cover page of an ATS member who had actually outranked her male serviceman partner, reflecting Jean Knox's own

circumstances. This image, shown as Figure 5.36, shows the rather bemused male partner recognising the fact. The image sends a very powerful message of a new norm in which rank-superiority over men is possible in the military – and, clearly, with no loss of feminine appeal.

By September 1943 ATS strength had increased in a controlled flow to 212,500 and the fifth anniversary of its founding was celebrated with a Birthday Parade in London. The scene was captured emotively in *War Pictorial News, No. 134*, with Rex Keating narrating how

Five years ago a few rather diffident girls got into uniform ...this was the beginning of the ATS. Five years later the ATS is no longer a target for wisecracks. It is now an indispensable force.

The newsreel shows the ATS marching to Buckingham Palace to be received by their Commandant-in-Chief, The Queen. The narrator pays tribute to ‘these women who come from the Orkney islands, the West Country, Midlands, Northern England ...these British women’ as they attended a special service at Westminster Abbey.<sup>95</sup>

The fifth anniversary celebrations were marred by the absence of Jean Knox who retired that month on grounds of ill-health. Leslie Whateley’s autobiography emphasises how tirelessly Knox had travelled in Britain and overseas promoting the ATS throughout 1942 and 1943<sup>96</sup> though correspondence of those in privileged circles suggests that there may have been other personal reasons.<sup>97</sup> If the innuendo of sexual scandal raised in this correspondence had the slightest foundation in fact then the public image impact of disclosure would have been devastating for the ATS. In the event there was no such disclosure and Knox retired. In the listing of ATS Advertisements Posters at the NA there is a rather bleak entry: ‘12. Jean Knox (not used)’. There is not even a proof copy of the intended poster. If it had been used Jean Knox would have been the only woman public figure featured on a wartime morale poster.<sup>98</sup> She was Britain’s first woman Major-General and had presided over ‘one of the most outstanding feats of organisation in the history of the British Army’<sup>99</sup> – the raising of the ATS to peak strength by September, 1943.

In summary, this chapter has disclosed in detail a transformation of the ATS image from Soldier Woman to Woman Soldier and located it to a very specific change of leadership

and propaganda strategy from July to December 1941. The analysis has demonstrated the significance of image management and market research in supporting the popularising of the ATS between July and December 1941 and identified a range of class and gender issues embedded in discourses on Home Propaganda and social morality for which the ATS became the focal point by December 1941. The analysis also explored a period immediately following the radical introduction of female conscription in December 1941, when it was obviously crucial to protect the ATS from an image of sexual immorality which it had attracted. A period of intensive image-protection and damage limitation initiatives was identified between February and September 1942 to secure public approval for the ATS. The chapter closed with analysis of a period of image consolidation, September 1942 to September 1943, noting the generation of some new social norms amongst the propaganda artefacts and the effective use of popular feature film and newsreel to win public respect and admiration for Jean Knox's ATS.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War, The Army, The Auxiliary Territorial Service*, War Office, 1949, p. 236. All statistics of ATS recruitment strength given in this chapter are drawn from Eric Taylor, *Women who went to War, 1938–1946*, Robert Hale, London, 1988, p. 234 corroborated by Table 1.2 in N. Loring Goldman, *Female Soldiers: Combatants or Non-Combatants?*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1982, p. 31.
- <sup>2</sup> NA INF 1/321. Extract from War Cabinet Paper No. W.P. (b) (41) 63. 'Provision of Manpower for the Army. Memorandum by Minister of Labour and National Service. 2 July 1941'.
- <sup>3</sup> NA INF 1/321. Ref. HP/850/1. Minutes of *Recruitment for Women's Services Publicity. Co-ordination Sub-Committee of the Standing Conference of Public Relations Officers, 22 August 1941*, from which all quotations in this and successive three paragraphs are drawn.
- <sup>4</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-1887. Letter dated 2 September 1941 from Helen Gwynne-Vaughan to the Princess Royal. This file was made available in January, 2000.
- <sup>5</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-269. Letter dated 29 July 1956 from Jean Knox (by this date Lady Swaythling) to Colonel Julia M. Cowper.
- <sup>6</sup> Jane Rosenzweig, *The Construction of Policy for Women in the Armed Forces, 1938–1945*, M.Litt. thesis, Oxford University, 1993, p. 68, footnote 86.
- <sup>7</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-1832. Press cutting. London *Evening Standard*, 8 July 1941. Articles similar in tone and content appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, 9 July 1941 and *The Times*, 22 July 1941.
- <sup>8</sup> Hugh Popham, *The FANY: The Story of the Women's Transport Service, 1907–1984*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1984, pp. 66-69.
- <sup>9</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-1463. Letter from Maurice Bovenschen (War Office) to Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, 2 July 1941.
- <sup>10</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-1448 to 1769 headed 'On leaving the ATS'. Letters to Helen Gwynne-Vaughan.
- <sup>11</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-1487. Letter from Leslie Whateley to Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, 9 July 1941.
- <sup>12</sup> *The Times*, 22 July 1941 p. 2 (d).

- <sup>13</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-1753-1. Press Cuttings Collection of Helen Gwynne-Vaughan.
- <sup>14</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-1832. Press cutting from London *Evening Standard*, 8 July, 1941.
- <sup>15</sup> *The Times* 19 September 1941, p. 7 (c).
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> NAM 9401-247-577. Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *Draft History*, op. cit., p. 248.
- <sup>18</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in her Time: A Life of Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, 1879–1967*, Macmillan, St Martin's Press, 1969, p. 340.
- <sup>19</sup> Themes referred to in the closing sentence of this paragraph were identified from Mass-Observation Archive, Topic Collection 32, *Women in Wartime 1939–1945*. Box 2. ATS. Files B and C.
- <sup>20</sup> NA LAB 8/30. Minutes of *Women's Consultative Committee*, 30 July 1941.
- <sup>21</sup> J. Waller and M. Vaughan-Rees, *The Role of Women's Magazines, 1939–1945*, MacDonald Optima, 1987, Introduction.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> *Woman's Own*, 5 September 1941, Editorial, p. 3.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid. See also J Stevenson, *British Society 1914–1945: Social History of Britain*, Harmondsworth, 1984, p. 178 for strong argument that through the inter-war years women's magazines had become powerful influences on women's tastes, fashions and ideas about what was feminine and that their romantic fiction promoted a pro-natalist ideology.
- <sup>25</sup> See Asa Briggs, 'The War of Words: The History of Broadcasting' in *The United Kingdom. Volume III*, OUP, 1970. See also Joy Leman 'Pulling our weight in the call-up of women' in C. Gledhill and G. Swanson, *Nationalising Femininity*, Manchester University Press, 1996, pp. 109-118. See also Sian Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, Manchester University Press, 1996.
- <sup>26</sup> Sian Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, op. cit., Introduction.
- <sup>27</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre at Caversham Park, Reading. File No. R34/389. 'Policy. Forces. Broadcasts to the Forces: Women 1941–1942'.
- <sup>28</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre at Caversham Park, Reading. File R34/389. Memorandum from Robert MacDermot to BBC Director, Programme Planning, 17 July 1941.



- 29 BBC Written Archives Centre at Caversham Park, Reading. File R19/1459/1. Letter from Janet Quigley to Commandant P.A. Neill, Publicity Officer, ATS at War Office.
- 30 BBC Written Archives Centre at Caversham Park, Reading. File R 34/389. Memorandum from Robert MacDermot to BBC Assistant Director, Programme Planning, 26 September, 1941.
- 31 BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham Park, Reading. File R19/1460. Internal Circulating Memorandum from A.P. Ryan (Head of Talks).
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham Park, Reading. File R19/1459/1. Memorandum from Mrs Diana Thomas, General Publicity Division , MoI, to A.P. Ryan, BBC, 9 October, 1941.
- 35 BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham Park, Reading. File R19/1460. Memorandum from Janet Quigley to A.P. Ryan, 10 October 1941.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Wartime Social Survey. *No. 5. The ATS. October 1941*. Viewed on microfiche at the IWM. Specific page references to details quoted are included in the text for ease of access.
- 40 Mass-Observation Archive. Topic Collection 32, *Women in Wartime 1939–1945*. Box 2. File A. ATS Survey. Letter from Mary Gowing to Tom Harrison, 9 October 1941.
- 41 For a personal record of ‘snooping’ for the MoI see Phyllis Pearsall, *Women at War. Drawn and overheard by Phyllis Pearsall*, Ashgate Editions, 1990.
- 42 The publication itself gives no indication of month of publishing. I have dated it by press references to it in Abram Games’s Press Cuttings Book, Abram Games File, Graphics Department, IWM, and by checking the date of the last draft of the report with Joy Eldridge, Assistant Archivist at the Mass-Observation Archive.
- 43 *Change No. 2*, p. 13.
- 44 Mass-Observation Archive. Topic Collection 32, *Women in Wartime, 1939–1945*. Box 2 File A. ATS Survey. Letter from Mary Gowing to Tom Harrison, 14 October 1941.

- <sup>45</sup> Mass-Observation File Report 936: *Summary Interim Report on the ATS. Women's attitudes to conscription, propaganda, war-work, women's services*. Viewed on microfiche at IWM, London.
- <sup>46</sup> Mass-Observation File Report 952, November 1941, p. 53. The report had sampled by class and pages 55/56 reveal how class antagonisms were reflected into the ATS as B class (middle class) reported that 'the boys who are in the Army say the morals of them (the ATS) are shocking' and B class ATS members 'regale anti working-class stories about girls who refuse to bath, 90% lousiness...'.
- <sup>47</sup> Mass-Observation File Report 955 pp. 3, 4. This Report is available only at the Mass-Observation Archive.
- <sup>48</sup> Abram Games, 'Art for the Cause of Victory: My World War II Posters' in *P.S. The Quarterly Journal of The Poster Society*, Summer 1986.
- <sup>49</sup> Figure quoted in the *Daily Express*, dated '24.10.41', in Abram Games's Press Cuttings Book, Graphics Department, IWM.
- <sup>50</sup> *News Chronicle*, dated '7.11.41' in Abram Games's Press Cuttings Book, Graphics Department, IWM.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>52</sup> Mass-Observation File Report 952 (p. 36) recorded that 'more than 10 times as many D class have thought of joining ATS than WRNS. The least educated and least skilled type of girl is the ATS fan'. See also Diana Parkin, *Contested Sources of Identity: Nation, Class and Gender in Second World War Britain*, PhD thesis, London School of Economics, 1988, pp. 131-134.
- <sup>53</sup> Abram Games' Press Cuttings Book, op. cit.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>58</sup> Abram Games, 'Art for the Cause of Victory', op. cit., p. 14.
- <sup>59</sup> Tricia Cusack 'Posters for the People's War' in Exhibition Catalogue for *A. Games: 60 Years of Design*, March 1990, at Howard Gardens Gallery, Faculty of Art and Design, South Glamorgan Institute of Art and Design, pp. 21-29.
- <sup>60</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine*, op. cit., p. 337. See also IWM, Department of Documents, ATS Catalogue, for unpublished manuscript accounts of experience on the 'mixed batteries'. For example Miss G. Morgan 'a young ATS private in 573 heavy anti-

- \* aircraft battery' comments on 'attitudes of women', Mrs I. Burchell, 'Mixed Heavy AA Battery, Sheffield' and Muriel Barker's cheeky 'Freddy Pile's Popsies'. ('Freddie Pile' was General Sir Frederick Pile, who first requested the ATS presence on the gun sites and was their champion.)
- <sup>61</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre at Caversham Park, Reading. ATS Scripts. *Duplicate of Tonight's Postscript. Broadcast by Chief Controller Jean Knox, Director, ATS. Friday, 16 November 1941, 9.15 p.m. Home Service.* The script is stamped 'Passed for Policy'.
- <sup>62</sup> *The Times*, 25 November 1941, p. 2 (c).
- <sup>63</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-2005-1. Papers of Helen Gwynne-Vaughan.
- <sup>64</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-2006. Papers of Helen Gwynne-Vaughan.
- <sup>65</sup> *The Times*, 5 December 1941, p. 5 (b).
- <sup>66</sup> Cited in Molly Izzard, *A Heroine*, op. cit., p. 328.
- <sup>67</sup> *The Times*, 11 December 1941, p. 8 (c). For detailed coverage of issues surrounding this decision see Harold L. Smith, 'Womanpower in the Second World War' in *Historical Journal* xxvii, pp. 933-934.
- <sup>68</sup> Text accompanying newspaper article reproduced as Figure 5.23.
- <sup>69</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-1894-1. Letter from Julia Cowper to Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, dated 11.9.41.
- <sup>70</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-279-1. Letter from Kina Manton to Julia Cowper, 25 April 1956. Marked 'for your eyes only'.
- <sup>71</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-280-4. Letter from Kina Manton to Julia Cowper, April, 1956.
- <sup>72</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-575 Col. Julia Cowper, Six draft chapters of *The History of the Women's Services*, p. 250.
- <sup>73</sup> *War Pictorial News No. 119*. Item 2. Viewed at Film Archive, IWM.
- <sup>74</sup> *Woman's Own*, 6 February, 1942, p. 5.
- <sup>75</sup> Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, Hutchinson, 1949, p. 33.
- <sup>76</sup> Mass-Observation File Report 1083, February 1942. Viewed on microfiche at IWM.
- <sup>77</sup> Brigadier Shelford Bidwell, *The Women's Royal Army Corps*. Leo Cooper, London, p. 69.

- 78 The records of PR5 are at the NA. Ref. INF2/85. All internally-generated ATS initiatives noted in the remainder of this chapter are drawn from Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War*, op. cit., pp. 236-238 unless otherwise stated.
- 79 The film, titled 'We Serve' is cited in Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, op. cit., p. 53.
- 80 Mass-Observation File Report 1083, February 1942, p. 6.
- 81 *The Times*, 3 September 1942, p. 5 (c), under the caption 'Charges of Immorality Unjustified'.
- 82 *Woman's Own*, 18 September 1942, p. 8.
- 83 'Report of Oct. 16<sup>th</sup>, 1942, Morning Session' in *Women in Council Newsletter, November 1942*. Photocopy kindly supplied from the National Council of Women Archive by Dr Daphne Glick.
- 84 Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, op. cit., pp. 60-61.
- 85 Ruth Roach Pierson, *They're Still Women After All: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood*, McLelland and Stewart, 1986, p. 162.
- 86 Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War*, op. cit., p. 238. See also correspondence NAM 9401-247-167-168. Letter from Cynthia Stocker, 22 January 1955, offers Cowper an account of her 1943 interview at the War Office. Cowper (collecting memorabilia for potential publication) replied (29 January 1955) 'The Ministry of Labour was beginning to get rather annoyed with us (ATS) at about the time you elected to join and it would be interesting to know if you had any difficulty in other words whether the attitude at the top was reflected at all in the interview'.
- 87 See Molly Izzard, *A Heroine*, op. cit., p. 337, 'The numbers of authorised employments had increased from 43 to 116.....and extended overseas'. Overseas service was voluntary at this stage.
- 88 Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War*, op. cit., p. 238.
- 89 J. Waller and M. Vaughan-Rees, *Women in Uniform*, op. cit., p. 62. The popular feature film, *Millions Like Us*, (released Nov. 1943) has a demure 'factory girl' heroine with a flirtatious sister in the ATS.
- 90 BBC Written Archives Centre at Caversham Park. Script for *Points of View*, 24 December 1942, stamped 'Passed for Policy'.
- 91 Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, op. cit., p. 73. What frustrated the military advisers was that 'the minute their backs were turned ..the cast exchanged their

ATS regulation shoes for high heeled court ones and let their hair half way down their backs'. For critiques of *The Gentle Sex* see C.J. Lejeune in J. Hartley (ed.) *Hearts Undefeated: Women's Writing of The Second World War*, Virago Press, 1994, p. 255. See also Clive Coultass, *Images for Battle: British Film and The Second World War, 1939–1945*, Associated University Press, 1989, pp. 123-124. See also Andrew Higson, 'Five Films' in Geoff Hurd (ed.), *National Fictions: World War Two British Films and Television*, bfi books, 1984, pp. 22-23. See also C. Gledhill and G. Swanson, 'Gender and Sexuality in Second World War Films – A Feminist Approach' in Geoff Hurd (ed.) *National Fictions*, op. cit., pp. 56-58. For an overview of Second World War film propaganda see Nicholas Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda, Myth or Reality?* Cassell, 1999, Chapter 4, pp. 136-194

- <sup>92</sup> J. Richards and D. Sheridan, (eds) *Mass-Observation at the Movies*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987, pp. 220-221. Data on audience responses to *The Gentle Sex* included : '72. Housewife, aged 37, Huddersfield, 'it was the report of comradeship between the girls that appealed to me'' (p. 80) and '30. Stenographer and Press Agent, aged 36, Women's Services' (p. 267).
- <sup>93</sup> Irene Holdsworth, *Yes, Ma'am*, Hutchinson, April 1943. Month of release confirmed by Hutchinson Library, London.
- <sup>94</sup> Hilary Wayne, 'Class in the ATS' in Jenny Hartley, *Hearts Undefeated: Women's Writing of the Second World War*, Virago, 1994, pp. 123-125.
- <sup>95</sup> *War Pictorial News*, No. 134. Viewed at Film Archive, IWM.
- <sup>96</sup> Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, op. cit., p. 61 described Knox's return from Canada, 29 October 1942 when 'her tour had been as all such tours are, very strenuous'; p. 72 referred to February/ March 1943 when Knox was away on inspection tours and 'as soon as she returned she had to go on a month's sick leave': p. 77 referred to Knox 'being taken ill while on inspection in London' in July 1943.
- <sup>97</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-1. Correspondence from Dame Regina Evans to Colonel. Julia M. Cowper, dated 6/8/1956. Jean Knox had remarried in 1945 to become Lady Swaythling, Lord Swaything's marriage having been dissolved by divorce in 1942. Jean Swaythling, in 1956, refused to assist Cowper by providing material for Cowper's intended publication about the ATS. Cowper sent Dame Regina Evans a copy of Jean Swaythling's letter and Regina Evans's reply contains

the following comment: 'Your reply from Lady Swaythling justifies my estimate of her. I suppose she thinks that like the Duchess of Windsor she can write "my story" and show how "love" lost her her job'.

<sup>98</sup> NA INF 2/85. Listing of ATS Advertising Posters.

<sup>99</sup> Brigadier Shelford Bidwell, *The Women's Royal Army Corps*, 1977, op. cit., p. 73.

## Chapter 6

### Seeing it Through, 1943–1949

This chapter covers the Directorship of Leslie Whateley (October 1943 – March 1946) and that part of Mary Tyrwhitt's Directorship (March 1946 – February 1949) which saw the ATS through to re-designation as the WRAC. Tyrwhitt continued as Director of the WRAC until December 1950. The analysis in this chapter builds around major recruitment campaigns, policy and public image issues and the propaganda and public discourses they generated. In the period from October 1943 to February 1949 the decline in total strength of the ATS was very dramatic, falling from 212,500 members to just 11,500. (See appendices 3, 4 and 5 from which all further statistics referred to in this chapter are drawn). This collapse in strength was largely accounted for by the demobilisation process and government's reluctance firstly to establish the principle of post war continuity for the ATS and then to find the finance and enact the necessary legislation to implement that principle.

In October 1943 Jean Knox was a hard act to follow in terms of public image. As Figure 6.1 exemplifies she was, at least for press release purposes, as smilingly charming when she left the ATS as she had been when she assumed the Director's role in 1941. However, her successor was Leslie Whateley who for two years had been Knox's Deputy Director and Figure 6.2, an official photograph of Whateley, suggests that an image of a young, married-woman commander so successfully exploited in Knox to popularise the ATS, would continue to be promoted using Whateley. The set pose of her photograph gives prominence to her wedding ring. Immaculate feminine grooming is communicated by highlighting hair and lips. Military insignia is burnished to a glamorous sheen which might be supplied by jewellery in a civilian female society portrait. Whateley smiles but her gaze is authoritative and direct. The combination of feminine and military elements is achieved for the corporate image. Whateley was clearly comfortable with it as a self-image and selected it for inclusion in her autobiography.

Whateley's handling of two internal policy matters, on which she took action as soon as she became Director, gives the tenor of her management style. The most immediate

issue was the question of a Deputy Director and for this important post Whateley selected Senior Commandant Mary Baxter-Ellis, pre-war leader of the FANY. Whateley had sensed 'much unspoken hostility' in the broader ranks of the ATS towards former FANY members who, despite being members of the ATS since 1941, tended to be regarded as a 'corps within the corps' and wore a 'distinctive arm-flash which denoted their origin'.<sup>1</sup> This was in tension with the 'don't be a snob', inclusivist propaganda of recruitment literature<sup>2</sup> particularly as the former FANY members were homogeneously from the upper class. It was hoped that Baxter-Ellis's appointment would signal to all its members that the ATS was a seamless structure and that there should be no divided loyalties. It was a good idea in principle.

Unfortunately, from Whateley's point of view, Baxter-Ellis found it 'difficult to adjust to being second-in-command' and that, consequently, 'outspoken conversation' was the hallmark of their communication until Baxter-Ellis's demobilisation in 1945.<sup>3</sup> In January 1944 Whateley appointed Betty Jackson as an additional Deputy Director and relieved Baxter-Ellis of responsibility for all policy and welfare issues. Whateley also addressed what she felt to be a morale question as far as ATS officers were concerned.

The ATS which Whateley inherited was at peak strength and Whateley believed that post-Knox, whose every effort had been used to drive mass participation and recruitment of servicewomen, there was a need to rebalance top-down encouragement so that ATS officers felt valued and supported. Whateley sent an official letter in December 1943 to each ATS officer at home or abroad assuring her that 'at this moment my thoughts and those of my staff are directed to seek the best ways and means to lighten your burdens and give you fresh hope and energy to carry on'.<sup>4</sup> Tension between officers and other ranks had been the subject of adverse comment in 1941 when the officers were perceived as being hand-picked on a preferential class basis under Gwynne-Vaughan's command. Conversely Knox (as evidenced in Chapter 5) had roused the antagonism of many officers with her seemingly preferential valuing of women in the ranks. Whateley was striving for consensus in her first policy decisions, one in personnel appointment the other in general morale, with the aim of securing a unified corporate identity in which all members felt valued and reducing the chances of energies being dissipated in internal power struggles or residual discontents in the crucial impending preparations for the Allied liberation-invasion of the European mainland.



Soon after Whateley's appointment the ATS / War Office had to confront a recruitment public relations issue which they would sooner have avoided. The public image of the ATS and the heartland of national identity were equally tested as black ATS recruits arrived in Britain for duty on 30 and 31 October 1943. The BBC programme, 'Calling the West Indies', reported the arrival of the recruits, recounting how they had been feted at the highest echelons of British Establishment and filmed by the Colonial Film Unit.<sup>5</sup> These recruits were certainly privileged in a manner not extended to the general run of applicants. They attracted an 'exotic other' aura. Their social engagements were reported in *The Times*<sup>6</sup> and they featured on the covers of popular magazines as shown in Figure 6.3. Figures 6.4 and 6.5 are group photographs of their reception by The Princess Royal at the Colonial Office and figures 6.6, 6.7 and 6.8 are studio portraits which show black colonial women looking pleased and proud to be, for the first time, wearing the uniform of the ATS.

In the context of such an enthusiastic public relations effort one could be forgiven for assuming that their recruitment was a source of great gratification to the War Office but this was not the case at all. The Colonial Office was pre-eminent in the public relations exercise and this was a reflection of its victory over Secretary of State for War, Sir James Grigg, on the question of black recruits. There had been a two-year wrangle involving much acrimony and suggestions of institutional racism at the War Office. The controversy began with the acceptance by the ATS of an application from Miss L. Curtis, a Bermudan, in October 1941. The application was for service in Britain. Only after her acceptance did it become clear that Miss Curtis was black and the War Office did not contact her further. Miss Curtis had to finance her own travel to Britain where she believed her place in the ATS was secure provided she passed the medical examination. By February 1943 she was ready and advised that she was coming to Britain to take up her promised place. The War Office refused to accept her. The Colonial Office warned that 'her rejection would be a clear case of colour prejudice' in response to which the War Office insisted 'we cannot agree to accept coloured women for service in this country'. This position was bluntly stated without recourse to any kind of rationale.<sup>7</sup>

British public consciousness and discourse about racial segregation on the basis of skin colour and the notion of 'colour bar' had been heightened since the arrival in Britain of black troops with the American Army in 1942. It was Sir James Grigg, Secretary of

State for War, who had proposed to the Cabinet that British troops should adopt the attitude of the American Army towards black soldiers (i.e. segregation). The Cabinet, while refusing to support his decision, did come up with a fudged policy about 'respect' for the American Army point of view, decreed that white and 'coloured' American troops should not be invited together to social functions and that 'white British women should avoid black soldiers'.<sup>8</sup> These policies, particularly because also imposed on black British subjects, caused 'numerous incidences of racial violence'. The women in the British ATS, directly under War Office control, had been ordered 'not to speak with black GIs unless another white person was present'.<sup>9</sup>

In March 1943 it was Sir James Grigg who directed the War Office response to the Curtis case and his determination to exclude her, should it have reached the public domain, could easily have become a divisive political issue in Britain. The context was complicated further in May 1943 when the ATS was instructed to organise a publicity campaign and interview applicants in the Caribbean for the specific purpose of providing a draft of white recruits to serve in Washington, USA. Local political response in the Caribbean was predictably heated with themes of colour bar and unfair exclusion as ATS Senior Commander, Doreen Venn, attempted to fill her Washington quota.<sup>10</sup> In a compromise brokered with the Colonial Office Grigg reluctantly agreed a trade-off. To balance the all-white Washington cohort he would allow just thirty black recruits to serve with the ATS in Britain. Grigg grumbled and wriggled, advising the Colonial Office that 'I don't at all like your West Indian ATS idea' and added the sulky caveat that 'shipping shortages make the process a bit uncertain but you will have to allow for that'.<sup>11</sup> By July 1943 the first batch of twenty four white recruits had been selected for Washington and Grigg's token gesture solved the 'problem' of Curtis. She was one of the thirty black recruits who arrived at Guildford in October 1943 to begin ATS training.

There were some ironies and social sensitivities attached to the deployment of the black West Indian recruits. In the ranks the British ATS membership was overwhelmingly white and working class. The new black recruits were middle class. In the West Indies the ATS had an elitist ethos and Senior Commander Venn had been instructed to recruit only the best qualified. The recruits were, consequently, well educated and included trained teachers, nurses, administrators and secretaries. In class terms the new recruits also contrasted with the negative cultural stereotype of black women born in Britain and

of whom about twenty were serving with the ATS. The response of white, working-class women in the ranks towards a black officer was quite uncharted territory and the education and class of the new black recruits suggested that they were potentially officer material. If they remained in the ranks they might feel as if they were experiencing a colour bar and if this 'went public', especially through the media to the West Indies, it would sour the carefully constructed propaganda of British imperial unity, democracy and common cause. Whateley recalled how 'we went to considerable lengths to send them to units where several could work together and also to keep them in the south'.<sup>12</sup> This suggests an awareness that a lone black recruit in an all white unit might be as vulnerable to cultural isolation and racial prejudice as to the cold, northern British weather.

In summary, the arrival of black Caribbean recruits for the ATS in Britain in October 1943 was the outcome of distasteful expediency but this would never have been guessed from the public relations handling of the situation. It was transformed into valuable propaganda. In the general context of the war it celebrated British race relations as liberal, inclusivist and diametrically opposed to the racist policies of Nazi Germany. It also gave substance to specific rhetoric which the BBC had been generating since 1940 about the inclusive race relations of the British Empire. Particularly since 1941 the West Indies had been targeted and the BBC had appointed a black Jamaican journalist, Una Marson, to provide cultural liaison for that initiative.<sup>13</sup> Although there were only thirty black colonial women recruits brought to serve in Britain it was enough to allow a passing propaganda spotlight on the ATS as exemplar of British liberal race relations. The principle was not, however, sufficiently compelling to secure its extension to either of the two other women's services in the British Armed Forces.

On 16 December 1943 Whateley gave a press conference. The ATS was at peak popularity and Whateley gave an impressive public account of the significance of the ATS to the war effort as she reported that 'nearly a third of the 200,000 women are tradeswomen ... in eighty trades, 14 of which are group A trades... calling for the highest qualifications'.<sup>14</sup> There were 30,000 clerks, 9,000 technical storewomen in ordnance depots, 3,000 teleprinter operators, 4,000 switchboard operators, 4,000 cooks, 30,000 orderlies and 15,000 drivers, not forgetting the 'fine work being done by women in helping to man the anti-aircraft guns and searchlights' Opportunity was also taken to emphasise the compatibility and friendliness of British ATS members serving

voluntarily in the Middle East and 'working happily side by side with Arab and Jewish girls and in close contact with the contingent of the Polish Women's Service that has been formed there'.<sup>15</sup> This claim is contested in post-war correspondence in which a section of a letter to Colonel Julia Cowper about war service is headed 'Middle East' and confides,

Here the main difficulty is unprintable. For your ear alone it was preventing M. Chitty and P. Waggere dropping real international bricks and causing riots – the (sic) were both violently anti-Jewish and 40% of our troops were Jews. When I got back from the M E Knox told me to write the history of our doings and I refused – I still do – anything but war diary stuff is too dangerous and in all seriousness I refuse to take responsibility for a crop of suicides in the Levant by giving anything away.<sup>16</sup>

An insight into the way in which ATS service was impacting on its home-based recruits, some with six years' involvement by 1944, is offered in an official leaflet titled *A Woman's Place*. This leaflet, with an instruction 'is not to be communicated to press', was prepared by the Army's internal agency, the Army Bureau of Current Affairs (ABCA).<sup>17</sup> The leaflet, put out on 29 January 1944, was issued to the education staff who led discussion groups with servicewomen. ABCA advised that feedback to date had identified that, with regard to envisioned post war life, members of the ATS divided into two groups; those 'longing for a more private life' and those who felt 'a new sense of power'. The leaflet contains sequences of questions intended to tease these themes out further in future discussion sessions. The way in which these questions are framed reveals anxieties particularly about this 'new sense of power' and some questions reveal much about the innate values and preferences of the question-setters. For example, will this give her 'a fresh appetite for an interesting post war profession? Can she reconcile this ambition with her responsibility to marry if possible and have children? If it came to choosing one or the other, which do you think it will be – or should be – and why?' The bias is obvious in the terminology. A career is only an 'ambition' but marriage-and-children is a 'responsibility'. Elsewhere in the text 'upper-class feminists' who 'glamourise the whole discussion' are attacked for raising working-class women's horizons of expectation with slogans such as 'a woman has a right to a career' while, ABCA asserts, the 'career' available for a working-class woman is normally 'dreary work such as filling bottles in factories'. The final question posed is the leading one. 'What reasonable ground may there be, for instance, for the fear so many married soldiers express that they will come back to find women entrenched in their jobs?' The

gender-bias is obvious in the phrase ‘their jobs’ and also in the assumption that all ‘married soldiers’ are male. There are even anxieties about those women who said they ‘long for a more private life’. These misgivings are expressed in a bank of questions. ‘Does it mean the ATS want the privacy of *home* after the war? If they do return home, will they be satisfied? How much is this an expression of nostalgia?’

By January 1944 the scent of victory for the Allies in the war was in the air and post-war reconstruction was an increasingly significant debate in which the willingness, or otherwise, of women to return to domestic life or domestic service was a major factor. Pre-war census showed that over two million women had been in domestic service. That the ATS was considered as an army of potential post-war domestic servants is discussed later in this chapter in the context of a special report conducted by Violet Markham for the Ministry of Labour and National Service.

In line with the conservative preferences suggested in the musings of ABCA about women’s place in the social infrastructure the War Office initiated a policy which encouraged women in the ATS to engage with ‘the white wedding’, the central nostalgic icon of conservative femininity. The Director of Army Welfare found time, in January 1944, to set up a scheme by which ATS members could borrow white wedding dresses from the War Office. Amidst all the pressures of preparation for the imminent liberation-invasion of Europe time was found to accumulate a stock of wedding dresses and accessories for loan to ATS members. Commercial and cultural vested interests are reflected as women’s magazines, aristocratic women and large department stores feature on the list of those who contributed dresses to the War Office appeal.<sup>18</sup> A prime mover of the initiative was romantic novelist, Barbara Cartland, who

thought of the ATS brides in their ugly, ill-fitting khaki uniforms. Of course they wanted to look lovely and glamorous on what is the most thrilling day of woman’s life .... It is difficult to feel soft, gentle and clinging in woollen stockings, clumping shoes and a collar and tie.<sup>19</sup>

Cartland expressed here a radical ideology in which femininity has a very narrow definition from which women in military dress are excluded per se. Violet Markham expressed the same viewpoint in correspondence with the commanding officer of a mixed HAA unit (Anti-Aircraft Command, Heavy Ack-Ack) reminding him that ‘when

women are forming part of the fighting services they are doing something quite abnormal'.<sup>20</sup>

In a further concession to the female norm favoured by Cartland and Markham ATS members were supplied with the military equivalent of a handbag. The uniform sling bag was made of khaki canvas, piped with brown leather and zip fastened. It was not a young woman's dream of high fashion but it gave some semblance of civilian privacy for make-up and personal possessions and was allowed to be used at all times 'except on parade' which suggests that the handbag was still regarded as inappropriate for the ATS formal military image. Paradoxically, while officials were permitting the 'softening' influence of white wedding dresses and handbags the women in the all-female 93<sup>rd</sup> Searchlight Company were 'clamouring to be allowed a machine gun' because German pilots had taken to diving down and machine gunning into the beams. Whatever the logic of their argument the official response was that 'as it would have affected their non-combatant status there could be no question of their being given one'.<sup>21</sup> Issues such as these of wedding dresses, handbags and machine guns illustrate the tensions inherent in defining a paradigm for female military personnel and also the operation of double standards. There was no question of loan of morning suits for male soldiers' weddings perhaps because for the men, particularly those in the ranks or promoted to petty officer level, their uniform gave them status frequently far beyond their former civilian work and there was certainly no occasion on which male soldiers were placed in a position where they could be attacked by the enemy and denied the means of defending themselves. In summary there is some evidence of manipulation from within the echelons of the War Office to encourage, channel and reinforce ATS members' sympathies towards a return to pre-war civilian values and behaviour.

Consequently it must have been disconcerting when servicewomen's expression of a 'new sense of power', identified in ABCA's confidential leaflet *A Woman's Place* in January 1944, was corroborated independently and comprehensively in *The Journey Home*, a report published in early March 1944 by Mass-Observation.<sup>22</sup> In this study servicewomen emerged as counter-cultural, changed radically by their war years in the armed services. For example, 'less than a quarter of women factory workers wanted to continue in the same work after the war the longing for change directed into fairly practical channels – marriage, a different kind of job, a good rest'. In contrast, the

attitude 'exceedingly common amongst Service girls was the longing for adventure, for "getting away from it all" on a grand scale' as was the case with

a group of about thirty ATS girls questioned on their plans for living after the war. Eighteen of them wanted to go abroad at all costs even if it meant remaining in the Army for some years. Only three had decided where they wanted to go – two mentioned Germany and one Egypt. For the majority "abroad" was enough. The reasons given were thus vague "to get a change," "to broaden my mind" were typical answers'.

Mass-Observation suggested reasons for the aspirational gap between women in factory work and those in the armed services. The age profile was much younger in the armed services. 'Many had come in straight from school and had no ready-made life to which to return'. There was an over-all higher parental income. The 'routines, uniforms and uniformity built up the urge to step out to new independence, individuality'. Mass-Observation concluded that 'all these factors combine to make the Service girl readier than her counterpart in the factory to take a leap into the unknown'; that 'the Service girl's life has been completely changed by the war, more so than any other section of the community' and that 'under service conditions women away from their homes are being forced to think for themselves. Women in uniform have become much more independent-minded'. For example, a 22 year old ATS member was quite capable of weighing up her own options objectively and confided

I often wonder what they're going to do with us all. Lots of us are like me, not trained for anything. I'd like to get out and not be at anybody's beck and call and wear my own clothes again. Yet at the same time I feel nervous about what will happen. If it's just to go on the dole I'd sooner stay in the Army and go abroad.

A professional assessment of ATS members' intentions was offered by a woman War Office Selection Board official who volunteered that

from what I learned in the ATS it seems likely that a considerable number of girls will not be in any hurry to be demobilised but would like the opportunity of serving abroad with the armies of occupation.

The general tone of the Mass-Observation report was radical and it was not well-received. In some reviews there were even suggestions that it was subversive.<sup>23</sup>

Importantly, the public was presented with Mass-Observation's impression of counter-cultural ATS servicewomen just as it was realised that there was a recruitment crisis due to a stop-start recruitment policy that the War Office had adopted since July 1943. Fifty-nine recruiting offices had been closed and in January 1944 conscripts had lost the option of joining the armed forces. Voluntary recruitment was resumed but with a very narrow age-band of 17 to 19, the only exception being specialist recruits up to 35 years old. Women in crucial civilian occupations (textiles, midwifery, Land Army) were barred altogether.<sup>24</sup> Then, suddenly, there was a recognition of the scale of work the ATS would have to take on in preparation for D-Day and the way in which ATS were required more and more overseas.

Consequently in March 1944 publicity and policy initiatives were set in place designed to encourage recruitment. For example, ATS Director Whateley's public profile and that of the ATS benefited from the excellent publicity generated for a National Savings Campaign with the theme, *Salute the Soldier*. Whateley addressed a public meeting at Tottenham Town Hall on 28 March and a large rally in Trafalgar Square on 29 March. This campaign rolled on for several months with parades through major towns and cities and 253 ATS were involved in the arrangements.<sup>25</sup> Also on 29 March the ATS organised an Arts and Crafts Exhibition in Birmingham. This was an ideal opportunity to present the ATS in conventional feminine mode, to 'show those public critics who still thought women in khaki must become masculine in outlook or ways how inaccurate were their criticisms'<sup>26</sup> and that servicewomen, in best female traditional manner, used their spare time to embroider cushion-covers and make lampshades.

Unfortunately, press and parliament were much more interested in pursuing a new welfare policy that the War Office suddenly decided to introduce in March/April 1944. The policy prohibited ATS members from smoking in almost all public places. It was likely thought that this measure would reassure parents that their 17 year-old daughters were not going to get 'into bad ways' if they joined the ATS but the cigarette culture was central to the camaraderie of wartime military life. There were a few places in which, under the policy, ATS would still be allowed to smoke. *The Times*, choosing April Fool's Day, celebrated not the policy but the exceptions and on 1 April 1944 was sure that 'the gallant ladies of the ATS would find it sweet in the tea rooms, sweet when they have stormed the railway buffet and in the train corridor possibly sweetest', and predicted increased appetite when 'after compulsory abstinence by Auxiliary Jekyll the



liberated Miss Hyde will come out roaring for her prey'.<sup>27</sup> On 4 April 1944 questions were raised in The House of Commons and the issue 'caused quite a furore'.<sup>28</sup> There were accusations that the ATS had been scapegoated. The other women's armed services were not subject to such a ban. Emmanuel Shinwell (Seaham, Lab.) asked impatiently, 'Why should there be any discrimination between men and women in the forces as regards smoking? Why not get on with the war?'<sup>29</sup> but to get on with the war the ATS needed to get in its cohorts of very young recruits and their well-intentioned public relations idea to adjust the ATS public image in favour of the ladylike and abstinent had just backfired badly and laid the ATS open to ridicule.

By May 1944 the Ministry of Labour and National Service was focused on 'the problem of post-war domestic servants'.<sup>30</sup> Violet Markham and Florence Hancock wrote a report for the Ministry and made recommendations that after the war was over an organisation should be set up to train and provide domestic servants. The Ministry thought that the heads of the women's services might be able to explain 'why domestic service had become so very unpopular' and hoped they might be able to make suggestions as to how to popularise it as a future career for the women (in the ranks) after demobilisation. On 1 May 1944 Whateley attended a meeting at the Ministry but could not assist beyond reflecting 'there was no doubt that we had imbued women with the right spirit and attitude towards cooking and cleaning' but Whateley predicted that the beneficiaries of that would likely be the husbands and families of the demobilised ATS.

While the Government fretted about servicewomen's aversion to civilian domestic service Margaret Sherman published a celebratory book about women in the military. It was designed to boost the ATS's public image, morale and, hopefully, its recruitment. In May 1944 Sherman's promotional *No Time for Tears* created a mood of optimism for the ATS. The closing image creates a mood of almost poignant optimism. In a photograph titled 'The Future is Ours', shown as Figure 6.9, court photographer Cecil Beaton has captured a great sense of pride, dignity and tradition for the ATS. In the background of the photograph and dominating the scene is a splendid church building, historic bastion of stability, patriarchal authority, respectability and continuity, qualities which by association the visual image transfers to the ATS platoon marching smartly into the future of the foreground led by their young officer.

Sherman, it was made plain, presented an account in which ‘every incident is real and not the imaginings of a fiction writer’ the author having enlisted in the ATS and come up through the ranks to obtain her commission.<sup>31</sup> This, it was claimed, was the real ATS. The book is populist in approach and title, colloquial in style, easy to read, full of anecdotes and amusing pen-portraits of ATS personnel who are referred to as ‘girls’ throughout the book, as in the chapter titled ‘The Girls behind the Tanks’.

Sherman created an excellent propaganda balance. She promoted the female military environment as one of inclusivist camaraderie, pride in exciting work and opportunities but where, nevertheless, all the tenets of traditional female culture were in place. The black and white official photographs in the book reinforce this depiction. For example, driving was the most popular of all ATS jobs so Figure 6.10 shows a convoy of jeeps being driven by ATS while, in contrast, Figure 6.11 draws attention to romantic possibilities, showing a comfortable, modern canteen ‘for ATS and their boyfriends’. For the first time in ATS promotional literature a black ATS servicewoman is featured. Lance Corporal Williams is shown at her heavy work with tyres in an official photograph shown as Figure 6.12. Her work challenges gender stereotype and it is a pity that the description of her is marred for modern taste by some racial stereotyping. Williams is introduced as ‘a dusky lass from British Guiana’ and ‘“we’re skilled workers on the tyres” Williams will tell you, flashing her white teeth, “and what’s more we teach some of the men their job”’.<sup>32</sup> To balance this ‘man’s job’ image the work of orderlies is described in a chapter titled ‘Housewives in Khaki’.

*No Time for Tears* scanned comprehensively and attractively over ATS work and in the closing chapter Sherman employed the shrewd technique of setting up adverse propositions in order to knock them down in the manner of ‘Aunt Sallies’. The reader is advised of a sequence of defamatory generalisations about the ATS. These were clearly public criticisms to which the ATS was sensitive and included views that ‘the ATS do nothing but stroll around the streets with painted faces’, ‘Shouldn’t like my daughter to be in the ATS. It’s awful drudgery’, ‘I’ve heard barrack room talk is worse than among men’, ‘Why put women in uniform? and fancy making them drill’.<sup>33</sup> All these generalisations are firmly and rebutted and replaced with a depiction of the characteristic motive and temperament of the ATS summarised, in the closing sentence, ‘we want to be sure those street lights will shine again ...and it will be fun to wear a pretty frock’.<sup>34</sup>

June 6, 1944, was D-Day and this was a great boost to national morale. A big publicity campaign was launched for the ATS to exploit this 'feel-good' factor. Military recruiters visited Universities, enlivening their talks with 'a demonstration of some sort or a film. They showed maybe a field service telephone and operator, an A.A.(Anti-Aircraft) auxiliary, a despatch rider and motor cycle, a driver and lorry or a provost NCO'.<sup>35</sup> Photographs and uniforms were also displayed to catch interest and make the event user-friendly. The promotional materials astutely presented glamorous and popular aspects of ATS work though what was needed in reality were cooks, orderlies, drivers and pay clerks. As a female prompt for a national recruitment campaign nothing could have been better than the ATS image used for the cover page of *Woman* on week ending 1 July 1944. This very contrived image is shown as Figure 6.13 and depicts an ATS heavy vehicle driver. Beneath the ATS cap is a conventionally pretty young face with flawless complexion and beautifully applied make-up. A short, intensive press campaign followed on 23 July 1944 with advertisements in the Sunday papers, the big London dailies and the provincial titles. The BBC helped with announcements. Applications increased by nearly a thousand in the first week and the campaign lasted until the end of August.

Posters with the captions 'Your chance has come' and 'Volunteer' were used specifically to target recruits from 17 to 19 years old.<sup>36</sup> Samples of these posters are shown as Figure 6.14. Potential recruits were encouraged to write off for new leaflets, *It's Your Chance Now* and *She Joined the ATS*, the titles of which suggested 'true-life stories' of the kind popular in young women's magazines. The propaganda emphasis was on youth and realism and photographs rather than graphics were used for the posters. The prevailing images are of athletic young women running, laughing, directing events and wearing trousers rather than skirts but with no loss of feminine appeal.

Abram Games contributed a corporate logo. His poster is shown as Figure 6.15. The keynotes are patriotism and prestige. The red, white and blue of the national flag is used for disks which contain the acronym 'ATS'. Games's stylised graphic metamorphoses the figure of an ATS servicewoman into a symbolic and heroic bronze mask, iconic, impersonalised and authoritative. An alternative corporate logo is presented by the poster (unattributed) shown as Figure 6.16. 'Prestige Poster' is hand-written above it in its archive file. This is a sentimentalised, individuated portrait of a blue-eyed, blonde ATS servicewoman, set against the background of a dark blue cameo. It is a highly

decorative image. The colours are muted, the textures of the military uniform are softened and luxurious, the complexion of the woman is delicate and flawless. The gaze is iconic and the keynotes are serenity, passivity and traditional physical beauty.

The cultural complexity of finding an appropriate image to represent women who are soldiers finds expression in the contrasting interpretations of the two posters discussed above. Both are valid. It becomes a question of emphasis. In terms of ABCA's findings from January 1944, Games emphasised the 'new sense of power' and the 'Prestige Poster' emphasised the 'longing for more private life'. Games's interpretation involves a transfer of virtues traditionally regarded as 'male' to the women soldier. The 'Prestige Poster' rejects these in favour of qualities traditionally regarded as 'female'. Thus, although the posters have a general similarity in subject matter and composition they offer contesting propaganda about what it means to be 'a woman and a soldier' or 'a soldier and a woman' depending on which identity is given propaganda precedence.

War Office hand-written tabulated results for the July–August 1944 recruitment drive reveal that in the five weeks prior to the campaign the average rate of enrolment was 274 per week. The campaign weeks show a rising profile through August to 505 enrolments per week. The target figure for the recruitment drive had been 4,500 enrolments. The campaign achieved 3,108 (69% of target). Hand-drawn graphs showing the number of enquiries converted into applications and thence to enrolments also refer to a 'support trailer on display, posters and a window-display in Oxford Street, London'. One of the graphs shows the 'weight of advertising' in 'column inches', heaviest in weeks 3 and 5 of the campaign.<sup>37</sup>

It seems, however, to have been a case of too little, too late. There were simply not enough ATS servicewomen to deploy where they were needed. For example, in August while the recruitment campaign was in progress, the Prime Minister wrote a memo to Sir James Grigg at the War Office complaining that American General Clark had requested 2,500 ATS personnel and that only 250 had been sent. The memo taunted that 'the Americans are making far more use of women than we are'.<sup>38</sup> Grigg responded, tetchily, 'It has been impossible to maintain ATS strength owing to a material rise in wastage and to the failure of volunteers to come forward. By 30 June the shortfall was 3,560 and the wastage continues to considerably exceed intake'.<sup>39</sup> However, it was the War Office's own stop-start recruitment policies that were substantially to blame for the

total strength of the ATS falling from 207,500 in December 1943 to 198,200 by September 1944.

The ATS took its share of D-Day glory in Peggy Scott's book, *They Made Invasion Possible* which was published on 21 September 1944.<sup>40</sup> Scott extolled the contribution of women in civilian and military contexts but a prioritisation is suggested by the Frontispiece, shown as Figure 6.17, for which an image of women in the Armed Forces was selected. Scott certainly promoted ATS prestige over Chapters IV to VI and built it an excellent public image. In terms of social class status the ATS was presented as a home and employment good enough for the likes of Winston Churchill's daughter and Brigid, daughter of General Anderson. Both young women were serving in HAA units in the ATS.<sup>41</sup> Scott hammered home the crucial role the ATS had played in the success of D-Day, emphasising their deployment with the Americans, which gave glamour, and their expertise. After all, 'it was ATS signals operators who gave the world the news that D-Day had arrived' and there were five hundred ATS working at General Eisenhower's Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF).<sup>42</sup> It was ATS convoy drivers, 'all mechanics', who prepared vehicles for shipment to Normandy, ATS storewomen who dealt with essential military equipment (sorting 63,000 items at one big depot), ATS who prepared beach-landing packs for vehicle repairs and packed the guns for combat.<sup>43</sup>

Scott also presented the human face of the ATS in a way which would appeal to female readers of mass media who liked to read about social celebrities and real life experiences. For example, Scott shared with her readers her chats with Knox and Whateley, female military leaders who were in the public eye.<sup>44</sup> She introduced the women mechanics, the tyre builders, convoy drivers and 'girls on the guns', making them real with anecdotes about their sense of humour, friendliness and fun as well as their skills and courage. Scott made them familiar, personalised them, built an image of the kind of 'girls' that 'girl' readers might even feel it was worth joining the ATS to have as real-life friends.<sup>45</sup>

Neither was the opportunity lost to promote the multi-national nature of the ATS and the liberal nature of British race relations. Scott introduced recruits from Nigeria, Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Czechoslovakia and paid particular attention to 'a girl from British Guiana'. This sounds very much like Lance Corporal Williams who had

featured in Margaret Sherman's *No Time for Tears* the previous May. Scott described how 'it made the British Empire very real to see her with her chocolate coloured skin and black, curly hair marching English girls along'.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, the ATS's perceived challenge to conventions of gender was addressed. Sergeant Theresa Wallach, a mechanic, features in the photograph shown as Figure 6.18. This is very much an image of a woman doing a 'man's job'. Scott was clearly conscious of Wallach 'looking like a man' and sought to correct this impression by commenting that 'she is one of the women whom a shingled head suits'. Wallach is ideologically compliant and is quoted as confiding 'I am ambitious to progress and do what few women are doing but shall not consider that I have taken over. I am a feminine link in the chain'.<sup>47</sup> By such means any residual sense of gender challenge was neutralised and conservative anxieties about loss of femininity in the ATS were assuaged.

In summary, *They Made Invasion Possible* deftly pieced together a public image of the ATS as an inclusive, co-operative, respected, skilled and happy institution, led by experienced and sophisticated women and that neither they nor their servicewomen were de-feminised or de-humanised by their military experience.

Unfortunately, nothing seemed capable of bringing in the recruits at the rate required in the Autumn of 1944. By 18 October Grigg (War Office) was again in correspondence with the Prime Minister and confessing that

the situation has become even more serious and we have reached the point where we are unable to meet demands from overseas; the fault is not so much with the girls themselves as with their parents who put pressure on them to stay in this country. Bevin does not recollect that any pledge on the subject of overseas service was given when conscription for women was introduced in 1941 but thinks the matter is one for the Cabinet.<sup>48</sup>

The implication was that the ATS needed authority for compulsory posting overseas and through the Autumn the War Cabinet considered its options, mindful of the extreme youth of the newest ATS volunteers, the sensitivities of their families, the possibility of adverse publicity on the issue and, most likely, a difficult debate on it in the House of Commons. ATS total strength fell to 196,400 by December 1944 and, under pressure as a downward spiral in ATS recruitment was evident, Grigg presented to the House of

Commons his proposal for compulsory overseas deployment of the ATS on 21 December, just before the Christmas recess.<sup>49</sup> Grigg's proposal was hedged about with caveats. Compulsion would only apply to unmarried women over the age of twenty-one and medically fit for overseas service. Guarantees were given about the quality of facilities overseas and generous leave from duties. Working with men on Mixed Batteries of Anti-Aircraft Artillery would remain strictly voluntary and the majority of overseas postings would be 'to larger Headquarters and installations in the rearward areas'. Promised a debate as soon as possible in the New Year the members went away to think about it. As with most innovations in ATS image or policy the issue was destined to raise wider issues and cause public controversy.

On 19 January 1945 Violet Markham gave her public support to the War Office. She wrote to *The Times*<sup>50</sup> and pointed out that 'compulsion in the national interest is a principle which all classes and both sexes have accepted cheerfully in this country'. She questioned 'why this exhibition of nervous flurry about the ATS which that fine service will certainly resent?' Mass-Observation had shown, the previous March, that the ATS servicewomen were keen to go abroad and Grigg believed that it was from parents that opposition came. The promised debate in the House of Commons took place on 24 January 1945 and, predictably, ranged over embedded issues.<sup>51</sup> Edith Summerskill raised the question of pay. ATS were to be compulsorily posted at two thirds the pay rate of a male soldier. Summerskill argued for parity. Aneurin Bevan touched a class nerve suggesting 'further investigation into the proposal to send ATS drawn almost entirely from the working class' (HON. MEMBERS: "Oh"). Eleanor Rathbone and Mrs Adamson clashed about parental rights. Rathbone suggested 'the parents are making a fuss about it' to which Adamson responded 'The honourable lady is not a mother and does not appreciate the position'. Lady Astor retorted 'the House can't listen to a few timorous parents' and in rebuke of Bevan added 'do not let class prejudice creep into everything'.

The most unfortunate contribution to the debate came from Colonel Thornton-Kelmsley who said that he was

anxious that the army of occupation of Germany itself should contain a large ATS component to provide natural and healthy companionship of young men and young women in the Services – we will insist on a 'no fraternisation' policy

with the Germans, keep the men in barracks, generous leave at home and a large ATS element in the Army.<sup>52</sup>

Thornton-Kelmsley was an Army man and the implication was that the ATS were being deployed to keep the men out of German brothels by providing sexual services for them.

*The Times* headline on 25 January 1945 was 'ATS Overseas Compulsory Posting to Proceed' but it pressed the point that 'Promised Safeguards were in place to allay fears of moral dangers' and gave assurances that 'girls would only be sent abroad when senior officers had satisfied themselves that conditions were suitable' and that 'no-one would be sent compulsorily to the Far East'.<sup>53</sup> This only seemed to fan the flames that Thornton-Kelmsley's remarks had lit and the result was a deluge of letters to the War Office and 'the most indignant letters came from mothers, one telling Grigg "You are the person who should be sent abroad and the only fit place for you is the North Pole and not even under canvas"',<sup>54</sup>

Measures were taken over the following months to restore public and parental confidence in ATS governance. In February the BBC Home Service broadcast three 45-minute promotional features on the ATS in action in Europe.<sup>55</sup> In March Princess Elizabeth, heir to the throne, joined the ATS. As she was well under twenty-one years of age there was no question of her being deployed overseas. The Princess is shown in Figure 6.19 with her companions at the elite No. 1 Motor Transport Training Centre in Camberley. Official photographs boosted ATS morale as Princess Elizabeth posed in pristine overalls in front of her army transport vehicle as shown in Figure 6.20. The public relations message was clear. The ATS was fit for a Princess. In April the batch of angry letters received at the War Office and ATS Directorate about ATS compulsory deployment overseas was sent on to Violet Markham who assumed her familiar role as trouble-shooter and agreed to conduct an investigation into ATS overseas operations. In May Violet Markham and Mary Stocks visited 'ATS units in Versailles, Paris, Brussels, Germany and Holland' on behalf of the Government and reported 'no grounds of any kind for stories detrimental to character and morale of the ATS' but that ATS members had complained to her about press coverage at home, especially from the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror*.<sup>56</sup>



The ATS recruitment theme for May 1945 was 'It's Your Chance Now' as shown in Figure 6.21 and it concentrated its appeal on the exciting and adventurous jobs available for young recruits as drivers, signallers, motor-cyclists. The ATS was presented as a great opportunity to break out of occupational gender restraints while retaining public approval. Thus, while the image in Figure 6.21 challenges gender norms the camera angle and lighting forces the viewer to literally look up to the young ATS woman in her heavy-duty unisex clothing. May 8 1945 was the high watermark of national morale as the Nazis surrendered and Britain celebrated VE Day. It was 'the 93<sup>rd</sup> (all-female Searchlight Company) of the ATS who floodlit St Paul's and other public buildings'.<sup>57</sup> Newsreels showed scenes of wild jubilation outside Buckingham Palace and when the Royal Family appeared on the balcony the Princess Elizabeth was wearing a subaltern's uniform of the ATS. The war in Europe was over and the issues facing Whateley and the War Office were those concerned with demobilisation, continuance of ATS presence with the Allied armies overseas for the time being and the question of a permanent post-war place for the ATS with the British Army.

A former ATS member recalled how on 14 May 1945 'ATS Daily Orders included "application for release from ATS of married girls". I should say ...95% of those girls want to take advantage of early demobilisation.....even those merely planning to get married are planning to get out'.<sup>58</sup> The process of demobilisation began as early as 18 June when numbers of applications 'for premature release began to flood in from parents' which suggests that the public relations efforts of the previous months were only a qualified success and that parents remained unconvinced about the ATS as a career for their daughters. As the ATS strength fell in June to 190,800 and was moving in a stubborn downward pattern the Army gave the ATS a little limelight by organising an impressive exhibition in newly-liberated Paris. The exhibition was opened by the popular war-hero Field-Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery ('Monty') and was primarily staffed by the ATS. It was 'such an outstanding success that the exhibition remained open until October'.<sup>59</sup>

The ATS desperately needed a stimulus to its recruitment. In June 1945 there were large theatres of overseas ATS operations in NW Europe (9,150), the Middle East (3,952) and Central Mediterranean (2,708) with small units in the USA (289), East Africa (438) and Caribbean (320).<sup>60</sup> It was crucial to the War Office to maintain these ATS overseas duties and 'that summer women were withdrawn from almost all mixed battery HA

Units but it was not enough to fill the gaps overseas and the whole Service seemed to be crumbling away'.<sup>61</sup> Some working-class women in the ATS might have been encouraged to leave the ATS and return to civilian life because of the landslide victory of the Labour Party in the General Election of 5 July 1945. A Labour victory suggested there would be a more equitable social structure to which to return and improved quality of life for the civilian working class. By August 1945 the ATS was subjected to damaging competition from the commercial civilian sector as more and more firms vied to get their share of trained and disciplined ATS now that demobilisation was an option for ATS auxiliaries. Whateley recalled, for instance, 'an interview with the progressive manageress of a laundry'.<sup>62</sup> This reflects the persisting class perception that ATS auxiliaries were natural sources of labour for the domestic kinds of civilian service-industries.

Whateley also noted that amongst the ATS members 'it was surprising how few had any clear cut scheme for their future in civilian life'.<sup>63</sup> This reality is in tension with the Post Office promotional material for its Savings Campaign. The Post Office poster, shown as Figure 6.22, shows very confident women from the Armed Forces. The caption advises that 'They are Planning their Future. Are You?' Three very confident young women are presented in an aspirational image. They are relaxing in comfortable surroundings, looking smart and not at all 'housewifely' despite the homely setting of a sitting room with easy chairs, a fireplace and window-drapes. The ATS 'girl' is occupying the position traditionally the preserve of the man of the house, leaning against the mantelpiece. The representatives of the other two Services are physically looking up to her as if to a leader figure although the ATS had the highest proportion of working-class members. It is tempting to interpret this as a passing nod to the sea-change in class politics evidenced by the General Election results.

In spite of the professional image created by the poster discussed above, when ATS members took advantage of release education schemes run by the War office 'it appeared that Domestic Science was the subject most in demand in the ATS and this subject was included in the Education Centres wherever there were auxiliaries, at home or abroad'.<sup>64</sup> The Chislehurst Centre was typical, offering cookery, laundry, housekeeping, make-do-and-mend and work in a children's nursery. There was a general sense of dissatisfaction in the ATS. The women 'left in' were overworked and for those who wanted to leave the 'demob' process was 'too slow'.

The demobilisation procedure in the ATS was cumbersome, complex and bureaucratic. Out first were those married and those over 50 years old. This was Class A. Those demobbed 'out of turn' on national grounds (skills required by the Ministry of Labour) were Class B. The War Office controlled discharge on compassionate grounds. This was Class C. The auxiliary received 56 days release leave, a plain clothes allowance of £12.10s., a 14 day ration card and was allowed to buy a fortnight's sweet ration and eight weeks cigarette ration at pre-budget prices from the NAAFI. Immediately at home she needed to visit local Food Offices and National Registration Offices for a Ration Book, 90 clothing coupons and an identity card. Her National Health Contribution Card and Unemployment Book was obtained from the Military Dispersal Unit.<sup>65</sup> With hindsight the arrangements seem insufficiently appreciative of what in many cases was many years of national service. However rose-tinted the notion may have been the reality of demobilisation meant the loss at once of home, friends, job, 'all found' and return to 'civvy street' with its individuated struggle for livelihood.

Unhelpfully, both to their own need to retain staff and to the women thinking about staying in the ATS, the Government was indecisive about the primary question, Would the ATS continue as a permanent Service post-war or not? Whateley wrote, post-hoc, that she knew there would be an ATS of some sort 'but its size and constitution was unknown' and that consequentially 'during the next few months we lost many valuable members who were afraid that if they did not take their demob when due they might find themselves out of a job if they signed on for extension periods'.<sup>66</sup>

Despite Government refusal to announce that a career in the ATS was a long term secure option the War Office was still trawling for new volunteers in August 1945 and the recruitment slogan was 'There's a grand job waiting'. A new recruiting leaflet, shown as Figure 6.23a, laid out the ATS stall under the title 'You are needed now to look after all this in the ATS'. The leaflet was illustrated with a range of posed but attractive photographs indicating the range of social and career choices on offer in the ATS. Figure 6.23b shows sample pages in which the company of men on and off duty is a well-promoted theme. The results of the August recruitment drive were not encouraging. Recruitment figures for week ending 28 September 1945 show 442 applications, converted to only 200 enrolments. The week ending 12 October shows 440 applications, converted to only 268 enrolments.<sup>67</sup> The ATS seemed to have no future and Leslie Whateley became unwell in the Autumn of 1945 placing the leadership in

doubt. She was persuaded to stay on until the following Spring but seemed to be presiding over the depressing dissolution of the ATS as the recruitment figures fell from bad to worse and the overall strength went into free fall over the winter months.

The remainder of this chapter maps the final change of ATS leadership as Mary Tyrwhitt took over from Leslie Whateley and addressed the ATS post-war issues of designation, scale, recruitment themes and the presentation of a public image appropriate to peacetime.

In a predictable exit as soon as the ATS began the demobilisation process 'many of the FANY/ATS members chose to return to their old allegiance', draining the ATS of much-needed experienced officers. Amongst those who left was Mary Baxter-Ellis, ATS Deputy Director, who resumed her pre-war role as leader of the FANY with Marjorie Kingston-Walker as her Second-in-Command. The FANY returned to its pre-war disposition and status as an independent, elite organisation of volunteers though, like the ATS, it faced an uncertain future.<sup>68</sup>

When Tyrwhitt took command of the ATS in March 1946 it was in a situation of near-chaos as officers and auxiliaries from the ranks were leaving the Service in hundreds daily. Tyrwhitt's appointment broke the six-year pattern of leadership by married mothers set by first Knox and then by Whateley. Tyrwhitt was an unmarried career officer. She was the daughter of Sir Reginald Tyrwhitt, Admiral of the Fleet, and had joined the ATS in 1938. She had an impressive Service record. Early in 1940 she had been promoted to Company Commander at Chatham. She had progressed to Command of the ATS's NCOs' School and the Junior Officers' School, was Group Commander for Kent District and then Assistant Director for West of Scotland. In January 1945 she had been redeployed to the War Office as Deputy Director ATS and so had the benefit of a year's experience as Second-in-Command to Whateley before taking over from her. However, as a disappointing consequence of the greatly reduced strength of the ATS, Tyrwhitt was promoted only to the military grade of Senior Controller, a rank below that held by Whateley as Director.<sup>69</sup> There is neither an autobiography nor biography relating to Tyrwhitt and she did not leave personal papers for archive research. The official photograph of her as ATS Director, held at the National Army Museum Archive,<sup>70</sup> shows an attractive, slim, good humoured woman in her early middle-age with a direct and appraising but not unfriendly gaze. Tyrwhitt's was the right

appointment to encourage young women who were career-minded to consider the work on offer from the military.

There seemed to be some hope on the horizon in the month of Tyrwhitt's appointment. When J.J. Lawson (Secretary of State for War) presented the Army Estimates to the House of Commons he gave the first formal indication that a corps of women was to be included in the peacetime organisation of the Army but 'it was not yet certain whether it would be on a regular, territorial or any other basis'.<sup>71</sup> This hope was more than outweighed by the stark terms in which the scale and speed of demobilisation was summarised by Lawson. He reported that since June 1945 1,445,000 men and 124,000 women had been released from the Army. By the end of June 1946 the figures would have risen to 2,033,000 men and 168,000 women. This was something close to 80% of the women and he anticipated that 'by December 1946 94% of the women who had been in the ATS would have been released'.<sup>72</sup>

In May 1946 Lawson attended the opening performance of a military pageant at the Albert Hall, London. The pageant title was 'Drums' and Princess Elizabeth took the salute. The ATS participated, in a keynote feminine mode, in this public presentation and a journalist from *The Times* reported that

the prettiest contribution to the programme is the physical training display by girls of the ATS Anti-Aircraft Command in white tunics. Its Grecian grace and playfulness are in perfect contrast to the strenuously male exhibition by brawny young men from the Army School of Physical Training.<sup>73</sup>

'Grace and playfulness' had not been the qualities necessary for the wartime activities of the women working with the men of Anti-Aircraft Command but here the 'girls' are presented in contrast with the 'strenuously male exhibition' of the 'brawny young men' (not 'boys') of the Army School of Physical Training.

Meanwhile, the 8 June 1946 the Victory Parade provided an ideal opportunity for the ATS to demonstrate that, though completely feminine, they were also well up to military standards and values of discipline and drill. Figure 6.24 shows the ATS contingent of the Parade and 'the perfection of the inverted V', symbol of Victory, which the corps devised and executed.<sup>74</sup>

Throughout 1946 the Public Relations Department of the War Office co-operated to generate a corporate image that celebrated the ATS as an all-female corps, run by women for women; under Army Regulations yet maintaining a distinctive identity which was able to fully engage with traditional female norms of home and beauty while offering work some of which broke conventional gender barriers. In short, a propaganda that insisted on the compatibility of being a woman and being in the ATS. To support this view, two promotional books were published in 1946.<sup>75</sup> The female authors came from differing perspectives. Eileen Bigland was a journalist and Collett Wadge was a former ATS Senior Commander. Both drew exclusively on Crown photographs and British Official Photos and both publications, in common with the press report discussed above, emphasised the feminine qualities of the ATS.

For instance, the title of Bigland's book is *Britain's Other Army*, which reaffirmed how the ATS was distanced from the male Regular Army rather than integrated in it. Sixteen photographs are scattered through this large-print, 193-page book. Though some images are dominated by military motifs as shown in Figure 6.25, where the women are engaged in handling large-scale weapons of war and wearing tin hats, it is still very obvious that they are women. The same is the case with the image of Kine-Theodolite operators, shown in Figure 6.26, dealing with complicated-looking, scientific equipment traditionally thought of as a male domain. Figure 6.27 with its caption of 'Never put your bread dough' is a gentle, homely scene in which cookery caps are set at idiosyncratic angles in the female-familiar environment of a kitchen. Readers are prompted to recognise that the despatch riders in Figure 6.28 are nice, ordinary 'girls' as they smile in a wholesome way directly at the camera. This is what makes the visual impact. Arguably, the military gear, the goggles, huge gloves, and their sitting astride their motor-cycles serves to throw the feminine element of the image into higher profile than when it was presented in the bread-making context.

The text of Collett Wadge's book, *Women in Uniform*, is less colloquial in style than Bigland's and more expansive. *Women in Uniform* is a historical survey of women's military corps and Chapter IV is devoted to the ATS. The main text is concerned with conveying formal aspects of ATS operations. Wadge offers an up-to-date account of the uniform and the dozens of attractive career choices on offer. The necessary information having been dispensed, the other half of Chapter IV's sixty pages forms a corps photograph album with a decidedly womanly, 'laughter and lipstick' emphasis.<sup>76</sup> Leslie

Whateley, as Director, is the first image presented and she is shown, in Figure 6.29, against a background of sitting room fireplace with photographs of RAF husband and young soldier son on the mantelpiece. The wedding ring is prominent. She is surrounded by flowers. The message is clearly that the ATS does not make a man of you. Each of the ensuing photographs is accompanied by a little caption in intimate, conversational style and though some images are designed to appeal to women looking for 'gender-busting' occupations, such as shown in Figures 6.30 and 6.31, there are ever-present Hollywood smiles, even some 'pin-up' poses and undisguised, curvaceous figures beneath the overalls. Figure 6.32 makes gathering firewood look like fun and potential recruits are assured that a Nissen hut with a good fire going can be a very cheery place. The ATS is presented as a homely place, providing an 'extended family' for its recruits who are shown in Figure 6.33 enjoying cups of tea, family photographs and the company of supportive friends.

Ernest Ibbotson's 1946 official painting of 'Officer and NCO', shown as Figure 6.34, offers a less 'cosy' image. The painting identifies details of uniform and the dress code that differentiated the ranks. The formal cap, leather gloves and leather belt plus the insignia, give authority to the blonde Commissioned Officer even though she is depicted as standing 'at ease'. The dark-haired NCO stands very much 'at attention'. She wears the popular forage cap, her jacket has a cloth belt and her hands are bare. There are no friendly, sociable smiles in this formal image and no eye contact between the ranks as orders are communicated.

In summary, whatever the realities of a disciplined female military life the ATS marketed itself in 1946 as a home from home for women. It particularly targeted young women looking for independence, 'all found', a ready-made social life, the possibility of promotion to officer rank and travel abroad. It offered choice of training in a wide range of occupations including some, such as carpenter and joiner, electrician, motorcyclist, welder, vehicle mechanic, which in peacetime civilian life would be regarded as 'men's jobs'. Having learned the lesson of 1941 the ATS was very careful not to overstep the mark in the use of heterosexual sex-appeal in its promotional material. The desired image was that of 'nice', unspoiled 'girls' who just happened to be attractive and in military service.

In November 1946 the Secretary of State for War made a public statement about 'the interim plan' for the remaining cadre of the ATS. Women would continue to be recruited

on an emergency engagement on the same wartime pattern and at the same time, serving or recently demobilised women of all ranks were invited to make 'extended service arrangements' to serve a varying number of years (three, four or five for officers and two, three or four for servicewomen) and so keep the service in being while the plans were being hammered out.<sup>77</sup>

'Hammering out' suggested a long and arduous process. Despite the influential support of General Sir Roland Adamson and reassuring statements from the Government the ATS statistics for December 1946 tell their own story. There were only 36,911 servicewomen and 1,567 officers left.

While military plans were being 'hammered out' so were new fashion norms. In January 1947 fashion designer Christian Dior introduced his New Look for women. Dior is shown in Figure 6.35 with an example of the style which, the accompanying text asserts, 'swept the Western (fashion) world' and was 'part of a mood of nostalgia of women for what seemed the more settled world of the past', for life as it had been before the war. The New Look certainly flew in the face of the militarised, 'economy', square-shouldered, short-skirted utilitarian clothing of the war years. The New Look was luxurious with long, extravagant, swirling skirts and jackets pulled in tightly at the waist. It followed body contours closely and was full of sex appeal. It indicated female fashion preference for soft and decorative women and a desire to forget wartime images. Consequently, women still wearing wartime khaki, even if smiling sweetly, suddenly looked drab and old-fashioned by comparison, members of a minority culture with apparently ever-decreasing appeal. It was bad news for ATS recruitment.

In February/March of 1947 the Army tried nostalgia of a different kind as a recruitment theme. Figure 6.36 shows the recruitment poster headed 'The Army needs the WOMEN who made this badge famous'.<sup>78</sup> The appeal was to regimental pride and loyalty, recollection of camaraderie and a job well done. It drew emotionally on the sight of the 'old badge' to encourage former ATS members of all ranks to return, hoped that their experience of civilian life since demobilisation had failed to meet their expectations. The image was reproduced as an advertisement in the popular press, the *Daily Express*, *Sunday Express*, *Illustrated*, the *People* and *Empire News*. It was not enough. The



downward recruitment spiral, bred of uncertainty and Government's protracted legislation, 'inevitable from the moment public expenditure was involved', gathered pace.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, there was the suggestion that the 'old question' of whether women should be kept in a separate corps or integrated with male Army regiments was 'hotly debated now that they were to be admitted to the Regular Army and that this alone made progress slow'.<sup>80</sup> By June 1947 the total strength stood at 28,191 servicewomen and 1,283 officers. By December 1947 this had tumbled to 17,320 servicewomen and 1,058 officers.

It was not until February 1948 that the Secretary of State, Emmanuel Shinwell, was in a position to formally apply to the Crown for authorisation to recruit a women's corps in peacetime for both British Regular Army and Territorial Army. The proposed title for the corps was the Women's Army Corps and the Army Council recommended that, in recognition of the war service of the ATS, 'Royal' should be included in the title and that the Queen should be appointed Commander-in-Chief. The full title, Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) was approved. 'Auxiliary Territorial Service' was clearly an inappropriate title for a Regular Army corps and, in any case, as a former ATS member commented, it would be difficult to accommodate 'Royal' in it and 'nobody wanted to be called RATS'.<sup>81</sup> Restoration of identity as a Women's Army Corps, and a Royal one at that, was an ambivalent gift. Denied during war years it perhaps suggests not so much a feminist achievement of the ambition of Gwynne-Vaughan and her 1917 WAAC as a government conviction that the title, and indeed the corps itself, no longer carried that male-challenging ethos. However, it took a further year for the necessary legislation to work its way through Parliament to formally establish the WRAC.

This meant that there was an ambiguity of identity for the corps for the remainder of 1948. The women's corps was described by press and in recruitment literature variously as WRAC, ATS and ATS/WRAC. This sent out an unhelpfully confusing identity message. The poster shown in Figure 6.37 proclaims 'They can't get on without US'. Every effort is made to emphasise that this is the NEW Territorial Service yet the old acronym 'ATS' is prominent and 'WRAC' is absent. Abram Games's aloof and pallid wartime-poster blonde gave way to Dugdale's new servicewoman image, warmly brunette, smiling, immaculately groomed, glowing with health. A halo of light surrounds the head and the uniform is tinted to look more brown than khaki. The shirt

and tie are given a silky texture. The background is of men and military reference to which the new women's Territorial Service is claimed to be 'A Vital Branch'.

The main recruiting slogan for 1948 was 'Two Sides of an Exciting Life' and themes combined images of gun sites with amateur theatricals, telephone exchanges with table tennis games, home-based observation-posts with exotic overseas locations.<sup>82</sup> These recruitment campaigns set out to present the ATS as offering the best of both worlds, civilian and military, in an excellent combination of career and social life. The advertisements were placed in women's weekly magazines and monthly publications, in national and provincial press. Two examples will give the flavour of the offer. In February 1948 the advertisement, shown as Figure 6.38, juxtaposes motor-maintenance with a tennis party. The characteristic text draws on themes of good job-training, male companionship, a chance to visit 'romantic places', independence, friendships and the 'all found' benefits of the corps. The age range for applicants was retained at 17 to 35 years of age so the corps was presented in a youthful context and environment as energetic, ambitious and enthusiastic. In March 1948, with replicated design and with the same press circulation the advertisement, shown as Figure 6.39, juxtaposes Ack-Ack Batteries with a popular 'dance-hall' scene.

Women in civilian life were unconvinced, however attractively the life-style was packaged up for publicity purposes, and the statistics for June 1948 showed a fall in strength to 13,403 servicewomen as officer ranks fell below a thousand for the first time, to 956. December 1948 showed a further, and dramatic, decline in strength to 10,781 servicewomen and 823 officers.

On 1 February 1949, after three years of frustrating delay since assurances were first given about continuity and during which the corps struggled for survival while seemingly locked into a pattern of attrition and neglect, Parliament passed the Bill which established the WRAC. Mary Tyrwhitt was the last Director of the ATS and had seen the corps through the difficult transition to re-designation as the WRAC and into military history. A line was drawn under the ATS in 1949 as Leslie Whateley published her autobiography and the War Office published Colonel Julia Cowper's official history of ATS wartime achievements.

Though the WRAC was small in scale, (11,500 in total in 1949 compared with 212,500 ATS at peak strength in 1943) its formation ensured the continuity of a female military corporate culture and presence in the British Regular Army into the second half of the twentieth century. Mary Tyrwhitt was succeeded in 1950 by Frances Coulshed.

In summary, this chapter has traced and accounted for the depressing downward spiral in the fortunes of the ATS after Knox resigned in 1943. It has analysed ATS involvement in racial politics, examined contemporaneous internal and external assessments of its impact on its recruits and analysed the themes of its recruitment campaigns in the closing years of the war along with the ideological images selected for its official promotional literature. It has shown how its policy changes, both routine and radical impacted disproportionately into the public domain and how demobilisation, combined with delay in Government action about post-war continuity for the ATS resulted in a massive reduction in ATS capacity. It has analysed military recruitment strategies and promotional literature designed in the post-war period when fashion dictated cultural preference for decorative rather than military women. The chapter closed with the government creating a permanent but limited place for female military recruits. In 1949 policy dictated that the WRAC, like its predecessors, would be the non-combatant 'separate female sphere' of Britain's Regular Army.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, Hutchinson, 1949, p. 95.
- <sup>2</sup> Irene Holdsworth, *Yes Ma'am*, Hutchinson, 1943, p. 80. The section is headed 'Hints to Recruits', pp. 75-80.
- <sup>3</sup> Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, 1949, op. cit., p. 96.
- <sup>4</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-579, p. 395. Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper.
- <sup>5</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham Park, Reading. ATS Scripts for 30/31 October and 13/14 November 1943, 'Calling the West Indies'.
- <sup>6</sup> *The Times*, 21 October, 1943, p. 2 (e) and 12 November, p. 2 (d), 'West Indies Contingents arrive in London'. Also 29 October 1943, p. 7 (b), 'Colonial Office Tea Party'. See Juliet Gardiner, *Picture Post Women*, Collins and Brown, 1993, pp. 108-109 for *Picture Post* (1943) comment and populist photographs of West Indian recruits.
- <sup>7</sup> Correspondence cited in Ben Bousquet and Colin Douglas, *West Indian Women at War*, Lawrence and Wishart Ltd., London, 1991, p. 98. See also Colin Douglas, 'March through the Colour Bar' in *The Independent*, 25 October, 1993.
- <sup>8</sup> Harold Smith, *Britain in The Second World War; A Social History*, M.U.P., 2000, p. 12, from which details in the rest of the paragraph are drawn. See also NA INF 1/327b, 'History of American Forces Liaison Division' which details policy for reception of American servicemen into Britain in 1942.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12. Footnote citing David Reynolds' 'The Churchill Government and the black American troops in Britain during World War II'.
- <sup>10</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War, The Army, The Auxiliary Territorial Service*, War Office, 1949, p. 107.
- <sup>11</sup> Ben Bousquet and Colin Douglas, *West Indian Women at War*, 1991, op. cit., pp. 102, 103.
- <sup>12</sup> Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, 1949, op. cit., p.81.
- <sup>13</sup> See Delia Jarret-Macaulay, 'Putting black women in the frame: Una Marson and the West Indian Challenge to British National Identity' in C. Gledhill and G. Swanson (eds) *Nationalising Femininity*, M.U.P., 1996, pp. 119-126. Positive images of Empire were important for wartime morale. See also Philip Woods, 'From Shaw to Shantaram: the Film Advisory Board and the Making of British

- Propaganda Films in India 1940 to 1943', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2001, pp. 293-309
- <sup>14</sup> Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, 1949, op. cit., p. 94. Further details in this paragraph are drawn from pp. 94, 95.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-264-1. Correspondence dated April 11, 1956, from Belinda (Trenchard) to Colonel Julia M. Cowper.
- <sup>17</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9802-99-156-157, p. 5. Papers of Marjorie Last that contain a copy of the original leaflet written by W.E. Williams, January, 1944.
- <sup>18</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-579, p. 378. Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper, op. cit.
- <sup>19</sup> Barbara Cartland, 'Wedding Dresses for Service Brides' in J. Hartley (ed.) *Hearts Undefeated: Women's Writing of the Second World War*, Virago, 1994, pp. 114-116.
- <sup>20</sup> Shelford Bidwell, *The Women's Royal Army Corps*, Leo Cooper, London, 1977, p. 88.
- <sup>21</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-579, pp. 379, 380. Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper, op. cit.
- <sup>22</sup> Mass-Observation, *The Journey Home*. Dated by reference to Mass-Observation Archive. File Report number 2013, 2 February 1944 to Panel of Volunteer Observers refers to publication 'very shortly'. Quotations in this and following paragraph are from *The Journey Home*, pp. 59 and 61.
- <sup>23</sup> Mass-Observation File Report number 2102, 19 May 1944, refers to 'trouble' with the public reception of *The Journey Home*. Details of File Reports were provided by Mass-Observation Archive.
- <sup>24</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War*, 1949, op. cit., p. 97.
- <sup>25</sup> Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, 1949, op. cit., pp. 109, 111, 115, 122, 130, 131, 133. See also Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War*, 1949, op. cit., p. 238.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 112.
- <sup>27</sup> *The Times*, Leading Article, 1 April 1944, p. 5 (d).
- <sup>28</sup> Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, 1949, op. cit., p. 114. See also NA ZHC 2/905, 906 for Parliamentary proceedings.
- <sup>29</sup> *The Times*, 5 April 1944, p. 8 (a).

- <sup>30</sup> Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, op. cit. p. 119 from which all quotations in this paragraph are drawn.
- <sup>31</sup> Margaret Sherman, *No Time for Tears*, Hutchinson, May 1944. Foreword by Dame Regina Evans. The book was dated to month by Hutchinson Library, London.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 89.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 165.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 168.
- <sup>35</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War*, 1949, op. cit., p. 238 from which details in the rest of this paragraph are drawn.
- <sup>36</sup> NA INF 2/85. ATS Advertising.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid. Hand-drawn graphs and tabulated material attributed to 'PR5', the Department at the War Office responsible for ATS publicity and public relations.
- <sup>38</sup> NA PREM 3 506/4. Letter dated 18. 8.1944 from Prime Minister to Sir James Grigg, Secretary of State for War.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid. Letter dated 25.8.1944 from Sir James Grigg to Prime Minister.
- <sup>40</sup> Peggy Scott, *They Made Invasion Possible*, Hutchinson, September 1944. Dated to month by Hutchinson Library, London.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 30, 31.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 37.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 38.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 50, 51.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 39, 42, 44, 49.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 43.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 38, 39.
- <sup>48</sup> NA PREM 3 506/4. Letter dated 18.10.1944 from Sir James Grigg to Prime Minister.
- <sup>49</sup> NA PREM 3 506/4, pp. 23-26.
- <sup>50</sup> *The Times*, 19 January, 1945, p. 5. Letter from Violet Markham.
- <sup>51</sup> NA ZHC 2/915, Vol. 407. Details in this paragraph are drawn from Columns 855, 856, 869, 902.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid., Column 862.
- <sup>53</sup> *The Times*, 25 January 1945, p. 8 (b).
- <sup>54</sup> Jane Rosenzweig, *The Construction of Policy for Women in the British Armed Forces, 1938-1945*, M. Litt. thesis, Oxford University, 1993, pp. 122-124.

- <sup>55</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War*, 1939, op. cit., p. 239.
- <sup>56</sup> Jane Rosenzweig, *The Construction of Policy*, 1993, op. cit., pp. 122-124.
- <sup>57</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-579. Details of VE Day in manuscript of Chapter XX, p. 429. Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper.
- <sup>58</sup> Dorothy Sheridan, *Wartime Women*, Heinemann, 1990, p. 235.
- <sup>59</sup> Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War*, 1949, op. cit., p. 239.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 278.
- <sup>61</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-579, p. 443. Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper, op. cit.
- <sup>62</sup> Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, 1949, op. cit., p. 180. The more attractive peacetime jobs went to demobilised officers. See Juliet Gardiner, *Picture Post Women*, 1993, op. cit., pp. 56-57 for *Picture Post* (1945) photo-shoot of a demobilised officer, a doctor's daughter, in fast-track, well-paid training at Selfridge's London department store.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 192.
- <sup>64</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-579, p. 440. Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper.
- <sup>65</sup> Details concerning demobilisation are drawn from Colonel Julia M. Cowper, *The Second World War*, 1949, op. cit., pp. 117-119.
- <sup>66</sup> Leslie Whateley, *As Thoughts Survive*, 1949 op. cit. p. 192.
- <sup>67</sup> NA INF 2/85.
- <sup>68</sup> Hugh Popham, *FANY, The Story of the Women's Transport Service, 1907-1984*, Secker and Warburg, 1984, pp. 114, 115, 118.
- <sup>69</sup> Biographical details of Mary Tyrwhitt in *The Times*, 14 March, 1946, p. 2 (6).
- <sup>70</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9407-345. Unfortunately this photograph is not available for photocopying.
- <sup>71</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-579, p. 452. Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper, op. cit.
- <sup>72</sup> *The Times*, 5 March 1946, p. 8 (d).
- <sup>73</sup> *The Times*, 9 May 1946, p. 7 (d).
- <sup>74</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-579, p. 2. Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper, op. cit.
- <sup>75</sup> The promotional books were Eileen Bigland's *Britain's Other Army*, Nicholson and Watson, 1946 and D. Collett Wadge's *Women in Uniform*, Samson, Low and Marston, 1946. It has not been possible to date them to month as the publishers are no longer in business and the original publications are dated only to year.

- <sup>76</sup> This is a propaganda approach noted by Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You: The Militarisation of Women's Lives*, Harper Collins, London, New York, 1983. Chapter 5 is titled, 'Some of the Best Soldiers Wear Lipstick'. See also W. Chapkis (ed.) *Loaded Questions: Women in the Military*, Transnational Institute, Amsterdam, 1981, p. 44.
- <sup>77</sup> Shelford Bidwell, *The Women's Royal Army Corps*, 1977, op. cit., pp. 135, 136.
- <sup>78</sup> NA INF 2/86. ATS Advertising.
- <sup>79</sup> Shelford Bidwell, *The Women's Royal Army Corps*, 1977, op. cit., p. 136.
- <sup>80</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-579, p. 2. Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper, op. cit.
- <sup>81</sup> Dorothy Brewer Kerr, *The Girls Behind the Guns*, Robert Hale, London, 1981, p. 181.
- <sup>82</sup> NA INF 2/86. ATS Advertising.



## Chapter 7

### Grass Roots Perspectives

#### ATS Questionnaires issued by Sandra Jackson in 1996 and 2002

The case study at the core of this thesis is of the British ATS, the largest and longest-running women's corps in the British Army in the first half of the twentieth century. Chapter 7 offers analysis and commentary on the responses of ex-ATS members to two questionnaires that I designed and distributed in 1996 and 2002 respectively. My aim was to discover the way in which recruitment strategies and public image management controlled by the ATS / War Office would be recollected and evaluated by those who were the target of the recruitment strategies and the intended beneficiaries of the image management and also what the ex-ATS members' perceptions were of the effect on their lives of their military service and their exposure to military corporate culture.

The 1996 questionnaire was designed and distributed with the help of the Women's Royal Army Corps Association and the British Legion Women's Section. Both these organisations gave me access to their members via their membership publications and circulars. Within this constraint the respondents were self-selected. In January 1996 I advertised for any ex-ATS willing to share their memories for academic research and posted a questionnaire to each respondent. The response was most gratifying. Of the 302 numbered questionnaires distributed 201 had been returned by the beginning of March, including fifty which I collected personally at a meeting of the London Branch WRAC Association. The responses went far beyond the matters of the questionnaire and returns included unsolicited depositions, letters, photographs, memorabilia, anecdotes, offers of further information, references and contacts. The very limited scope and scale of the MA thesis on which I was working at that date precluded my using more than a few quotations as illustrative references from what was a very substantial and unique data base. It was my possession of this information that, in part, prompted me to continue my research beyond the MA thesis.

The shortcoming of the 1996 questionnaire as far as my doctoral thesis was concerned was that information was restricted to comment on the war years. So in 2002, again with the full support of the WRAC Association, I designed a second questionnaire, more

differentiated in character between volunteers and conscripts, containing enquiries about the personal pre-war circumstances and post-war destinations of respondents as well as seeking respondents' evaluations of the impact of military culture on them as ATS recruits. In total, 32 questionnaires were issued. Four copies were sent to the largest WRAC Association Branch in each of the eight regions into which Britain had been traditionally divided for recruitment purposes by the Army.

I anticipated that, since the enthusiasm for volunteering personal detail had been evidenced so strongly by the 1996 questionnaire, my 2002 questionnaire would provide a rich and varied range of individuated responses as well as have a particular relevance for issues of women, war and social change. I designed both questionnaires with deliberately open-ended questions and no restrictions on word-count for responses. Many respondents enclosed additional depositions and memorabilia with the questionnaire-response. In this way I was privileged to hear narratives and comments in the respondents' own words and obtained, through their voices, qualitative material which had authority and rich detail. The chapter has no statistical validity and tabulations simply helped me to manage the raw data.

A sample 1996 questionnaire is attached as Appendix 6. It presented five basic and very direct questions about recruitment, public image and what was recollected as the 'best thing' about the ATS. A sample 2002 questionnaire is attached as Appendix 7.

## **1996 Questionnaire**

### **Respondent Profile.**

The general pattern of response reflected the pattern of general recruitment to the ATS with the bulk of respondents having joined up / been conscripted during the years of maximum recruitment effort, 1941–1943. The respondent profile of those who gave their ranks also roughly corresponded to the distribution of ranks within the ATS. The rank descriptions below are given in the servicewomen's own terms. Privates formed the largest group (69). There were 27 corporals, 20 lance-corporals, 24 staff sergeants, 6 subalterns (lieutenants), 6 Junior Commanders, 5 warrant officers, 4 drivers, 3 Company Sergeant-Majors, 2 gunners, 1 Company Commander, 1 Senior Commander, 1 Acting Captain, 1 Troop-Sergeant and 1 NCO.

81 respondents stayed in the ATS until 1946. 13 stayed until the late 1940s, 7 were still in the ATS (by then the WRAC) through the 1950s, and the longest serving respondent (No. 203) served from 1940 to 1963. Of those who stayed in the ATS beyond 1946 those who had been staff sergeants in the war years formed the largest group of 9 respondents. Only 3 respondents who had been privates stayed beyond 1946 along with 2 corporals, 2 warrant officers, 1 Company Sergeant Major, 1 subaltern, 1 driver, 1 'NCO' and 1 Junior Commander. It must also be recognised that the bases from which all respondents were drawn are those where women retaining an affirmative view of their service and enthusiasm for the ethos and comradeship of their military experience are most likely to be found. Beyond that I exercised no control over who responded.

### **Approach to data analysis and data presentation**

The raw data was systematically collated for each question and responses categorised. A sample sheet of collated responses is attached as Appendix 8. Each respondent was assigned a personal identity number.

The tabulated responses presented below indicate the scale of like-minded response to each of the five questions posed in the questionnaire. Where a category of response is defined in a particular respondent's words her personal identity number is given. For each question I have followed presentation of the tabulated responses with a commentary which identifies the resonances which the responses have with themes and motifs analysed in earlier chapters of this thesis.

The first question respondents were asked to address was **'Please comment on any poster, radio broadcast, film, exhibition, press coverage, events or personalities which you think influenced women to join (or reject) the ATS'**.

There were 175 responses to this invitation and the results are as tabulated below.

**Table 7.1**

Response	Total
Nothing recalled	36
Posters	27
Radio broadcasts	17
Influence of men in family	16
Newspapers	16
Uniform	10
Feature films	9
Public recruiting	8
Cinema newsreels	7
Princess Elizabeth	7
Patriotism	7
Bombing	2
Class	2
Mary Churchill	2
Winston Churchill	2
Dunkirk	2
<u>One response each for the following:</u>	
Comradeship, better than factory, Lord Haw-Haw, external factors made no difference, call-up	

**Commentary**

When Mass-Observation produced Interim Report 936 in October 1941 the situation was that amongst potential recruits sampled 'just over half could remember some specific piece of ATS advertising which they can recall and name. Most women said advertising did not make them think that they ought to join up'.<sup>1</sup> Although they formed the largest single group, fewer than a quarter of respondents to my questionnaire failed to identify some source of successful recruitment advertising. The bulk of respondents were recruited between 1941–1943 which suggested that the big recruitment drives in those years did make an impression though after December 1941 conscription removed choice for many women.

The highest ranking for influence was given to posters which suggested that the contribution of Beverley Pick and Abram Games to voluntary recruitment was significant as was the decision in 1941 to involve the BBC which scored the second place for influence (issues discussed in thesis Chapter 5). In third place came 'the influence of men in the family'. This has a strong resonance with Mass-Observation File Report 955<sup>2</sup> which suggested the urgent need to address that specific source of opinion-forming. It also suggested good judgement in Mary Gowing's use of the 'man's head' and the male soldier in her 1941 recruitment images (issues discussed in thesis Chapter 5) and reflected the October 1941 Wartime Social Survey which reported that

fathers recalling the WAACs of the First World War were a major stumbling block to ATS recruitment.<sup>3</sup> In joint third place came 'newspapers' which suggested that ATS efforts to get good press relations and the professionalism introduced in 1941 (issues discussed in Chapter 5) was effective. 'Uniform' occupied the fourth slot and indicated the beneficial influence on recruitment of Jean Knox's sexier, 'shorter skirts' and jackets with waist-defining belts (discussed in Chapter 5). 'Feature films' came in fifth place and suggested that ATS involvement in the making of *The Gentle Sex* in 1943 was worth the effort (discussed in Chapter 5). ATS initiatives in the field of public recruiting such as the creation of a Special Platoon for the purpose (noted in Chapter 5) and the 'Salute the Soldier' Campaign (noted in Chapter 6) were reflected in 'public recruiting' ranking at sixth slot by the questionnaire respondents. 'Princess Elizabeth', 'cinema newsreels' and 'patriotism' shared the seventh slot. This reflected the wisdom of the strategic recruitment of Princess Elizabeth (discussed in Chapter 6), securing royal visits to ATS camps and organising newsreel coverage for public events such as the ATS 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade in 1943 (discussed in Chapter 5). It is an anomaly that 'patriotism' was placed so far down the list of general recruitment influences since the Wartime Social Survey (ATS) of October 1941 had suggested that with regard to the ATS 'patriotism' was given by 49% of potential recruits as the reason they might join up. Below the seventh slot the responses recorded were from just one or two respondents but were valuable as indicative of a range of peripheral influences including bombing, class, the Churchills, Dunkirk, comradeship, 'better than factory' work, Lord Haw-Haw and call-up.

Question 2 of the 1996 questionnaire asked the respondents, very directly, '**What, as far as you can recall, prompted you to join the ATS?**' This question generated 200 responses in which 237 reasons were given. Patriotism, in this personal context, came into line with the findings of the Wartime Social Survey (ATS) October 1941 The responses from Question 2 are as tabulated below.

**Table 7.2**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Total</b>
Patriotism	36
Conscription	26
To avoid factory/munitions work	19
Coming from an 'army family'	19
Seeking adventure	15
Imminent 'call-up'	13
To 'get away' in general from home or job	12
Travel	11
Couldn't get into WAAF/WRENS	11
Wanted the job training on offer	9
Attracted by local recruitment	8
Father had served in the Army	8
Family members already in Armed Services	8
Peer-group influence	7
Local press articles and adverts	4
The bombing of Britain	4
To get away from domestic service	4
The uniform	3
Dunkirk	3
Female friends already in the ATS	3
Feminist rationale	2
Radio broadcasts/Royal messages	2
Posters of girls in uniform	2
Class	2
<u>One response each for the following:</u>	
The Munich situation, patriotic cinema newsreels, to help change poor image of the ATS, already working in the Royal Army Pay Corps, Mary Churchill as role model, enemy portrayal by press/radio, thought would be posted near home	

**Commentary**

The bulk of respondents to this questionnaire were recruited 1941–1943 and this was reflected in the ranking of conscription, cited by 26 respondents, as second to patriotism. The percentage balance between those two imperatives suggested that the Government made a correct assumption in December 1941 that patriotism would not be enough and were right to risk even high-profile political damage introducing compulsion to achieve crucial ATS recruitment targets (issues discussed in thesis Chapter 5). If we aggregate actual 'conscription' with realisation of 'imminent call up', cited by 13 respondents as their reason for joining, then this category numerically outweighed 'patriotism'.

For the majority of respondents the ATS seemed to open horizons of opportunity. A general dislike of factory/munitions deployment is reflected in the avoidance of it being cited by 19 respondents as their reason for joining up. This can be allied with the desire to 'get away from domestic service', directly cited by four respondents. This was a display of preference which gave anxieties to the Ministry of Labour where the ATS

was viewed as the natural source of post war domestic servants (issue discussed in thesis Chapter 6). A general desire to 'get away from home' and from dead-end jobs was cited by 12 respondents as their incentive for joining up. ATS posters in 1940/1941 prioritised the slogan *Adventure through Service* and this struck a chord with 15 respondents who had joined up in the hope of 'adventure'. If we link this 'escapist' group with the 11 respondents who were enthused by the glamour of 'travel' and the 9 who joined for 'the training' offered by the ATS and the 2 who were prompted by posters of 'girls in uniform' then the opportunists/escapists formed by far the largest composite category of 72 respondents. This certainly illuminated the debate about Abram Games's poster and the issues about 'glamour' and aspirational images in ATS recruitment material in 1941 (discussed in thesis Chapter 5). In the context of these responses the media which clamoured 'Give ATS Glamour, Mr Bevin!' was urging a sure-fire recruitment strategy.

If we aggregate 'coming from army family' (19 respondents) with 'Father had served in Army (8 respondents) and 'family members already in Armed Services' (8 respondents) the influence of Armed Services connection of some sort with the family showed its significance. This supported the view urged in Mass-Observation Report 955 (1941) that the opinions about the ATS held by those within the service, particularly the male servicemen, were a crucial determinant of ATS recruitment (issues discussed in thesis Chapter 5).

The ATS as second or even third choice of service destination was expressed by 11 of the respondents and reflected how hard Jean Knox and her professional advisers had to work to popularise the ATS against the social cachet of the WRENS and the RAF-associated glamour of the WAAF (discussed in thesis Chapter 5). The value of local recruitment as a strategy in achieving this was reflected by the 8 respondents who cited it as influential, the 4 respondents who cited 'local press, recruitment articles and advertising' and the 2 who cited radio broadcasts and royal messages and the 1 who felt that Mary Churchill had provided a successful role model. There was also recognition of peer-group influence by 7 respondents, allied with the 3 respondents who cited 'having female friends in the ATS' as the deciding factor for them. A small aggregate category of 8 respondents cited events, Munich, Dunkirk, Blitz-bombing, as their reasons for joining.

Amongst the sprinkling of highly individuated reasons offered there was direct expression of feminist rationale from 2 respondents who each wanted to prove herself 'as good as the men'. There was a respondent who had joined the ATS because she was 'working class', another because she was already employed in the Army Pay Corps and wanted to keep her job, another because of enemy portrayal by the media, another who (erroneously) believed she would be posted near her home if she joined the ATS and another with a mission to 'change the poor image of the ATS'.

Question 3 of my 1996 Questionnaire tested whether the ATS had projected any stereotypic/mythical image of itself as a corporate identity into the public domain and whether respondents, volunteers or conscripts, would express their view of it. The respondents were asked '**What were your expectations on joining? Were they proved accurate?**' The outcomes are tabulated below with an asterisk indication of where expectations proved inaccurate. There were 217 responses to this question.

**Table 7.3**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Total</b>
No expectations at all	49
To be happy in a job helping the war effort	23
Excitement/adventure/travel	15
Something better than civilian life/something new	14 (2*. Respondents 2, 180)
New friendships	13
To be a driver	12 (5*. Respondents 69, 73, 96, 175, 205)
Working with lots of different people	9
To serve overseas	8 (5*. Respondents 119, 157, 167, 259, 290)
Discipline and strict rules	8
Hard work	6
To enjoy myself	6
To learn new skills/trades	6
Feelings of apprehension at the prospect	5
To do the same job as in civilian life	4 (2*. Respondents 15, 135)
To work up through the ranks	3 (1*. Respondent no. 187)
Terror of the unknown	2
Meals not on ration	2
Clothes not on coupons	2



**Table 7.3 (contd)**

One response each for the following:

'To be homesick' (Respondent 10), bad food (Respondent 81)\*, 'to be "on par" with everyone else' (Respondent 120), escape working 'for the selfish gentry' (Respondent 133), 'the worst' (Respondent 137)\*, 'better than the horrible factory' (Respondent 142), based on sister's WAAF experience but 'Army turned out tougher' (Respondent 147), 'small pay' (Respondent 148), to be 'usefully employed and organised' (Respondent 155), 'expectations were vague' (Respondent 164), 'I did not expect glamour though the propaganda made it appear so' (Respondent 170) 'continuation of school life' (Respondent 191), 'the adverts had misled' (Respondent 205), pre-war volunteer who thought 'there would be no war' (Respondent 206), to be 'independent' (Respondent 200), 'that the war would be over in 12 months' (Respondent 171), 'to be a dispatch rider' (Respondent 212), 'not very high' (Respondent 214b)\*, 'meeting other people of different classes' (Respondent 223), 'to win the war' (Respondent 278), 'to make the Army my career' (Respondent 299)

**Commentary**

In response to Question 3 the most revealing cultural comment came from Respondent 165. The question had been framed around 'expectations' and she advised me that 'this is rather a modern way of thinking. We really had no expectations'. Her view was borne out in that the largest category of respondents recorded that they felt they had had no expectations at all. Respondent 168 explained that, in this context of expectations 'there was no such word as feminism then' and when the spirit of it is encountered in the responses it is expressed in such terms as 'doing a job that only men were doing (previously)' (Respondent 189) or 'doing a man's job' (Respondent 210) or simply 'to be independent' (Respondent 200).

The general sense of duty and patriotism which featured high in response to Question 2 emerged here as second highest category of response, expressed in the expectation of being happy in a job helping to win the war. However, if those respondents expecting excitement/adventure/travel (15), those seeking something better than they had in civilian life (14), those expecting 'to enjoy' themselves (6), those expecting to 'learn new trades/skills'(6), those who looked forward to 'meals not on ration' (1) and 'clothes not on coupons'(1) and escape from 'working for the selfish gentry'(1) are aggregated then, as in Question 2, the escapists/opportunists numerically outweighed those who prioritised expectations allied to duty and patriotism.

A substantial number of respondents (13) prioritised expectations of making new friends. Respondents' social expectations of the ATS were expressed also in such terms as 'working with lots of different people' (9) and 'meeting people of different

classes' (1). However, social aspirations were outweighed by the job-related and organisational expectations/hopes of the twelve respondents who wanted to be drivers, the eight respondents who expected to be posted overseas, the eight respondents who expected 'discipline and strict rules', the six respondents who expected 'to work hard', the three respondents who expected to 'work up through the ranks', the respondent who wanted to be a dispatch rider, the one who wanted to make the Army her career, the one who 'did not expect glamour though the propaganda made it appear so' and the one who expected 'small pay'. The major disappointment was amongst the group who had clearly been enthused by ATS images of drivers and found that this job was not available for them.

In terms of expectations of the general environment of the ATS five respondents recorded their expectations as those of general 'apprehension'. There was expression of 'terror of the unknown' from 2 respondents. 'The worst' was the expectation of Respondent 137. Respondent 191 expected a 'continuation of school life', Respondent 10 expected to 'be homesick' and though Respondent 10 had the advantage of learning about service life from her sister who was in the WAAF she still found 'the Army turned out tougher'. Respondent 205 felt the 'adverts had misled' about the quality of life in the ATS but Respondent 142 still found it 'better than the horrible factory'. Respondent 120 had a notion of the ATS as egalitarian where she would be 'on par with everybody else'.

Overall a picture emerged of an ATS of which some images were percolating through to the public and to their potential recruits. A picture of a service which provided a home for quiet, dutiful 'girls' as well as for ambitious and adventurous ones, where discipline and hard work were required, which was tougher and had fewer of the glamorous jobs/opportunities than might be suggested by their promotional material, which, for instance, frequently featured good-looking, confident women driving convoy trucks and Army jeeps.

A picture also emerged of the disposition of the respondents and of the modest nature of their expectations; their eagerness to experience something new and to make new friends united in a common and valued cause; their relief at leaving factory and domestic service behind for something 'different' and 'exciting'; their bravery in the face of what for most of them was uncharted territory and separation from family for the

first time in their lives; their pride at serving their country and their enjoyment of what for many was their first taste of independence and their first indication of their true potential and worth.

Question 4 of my 1996 Questionnaire invited respondents to comment directly on public opinion about the ATS. Respondents were asked ‘**What is your estimate of public opinion about the ATS during the war years? Could you suggest on what basis these opinions were being formed?**’ This question drew 132 responses of which 75 suggested the public had a good opinion of the ATS, 46 suggested the public took a poor view of the service and 11 suggested that public opinion was fragmented on the issue. The tabulated outcomes are given below.

**Table 7.4: Respondents who believed the public had a favourable opinion of the ATS**

Response	Total
The public thought ‘they (ATS) did a good job’ (Respondent 14)	22
‘Public opinion very good... (ATS) treated very well’(Respondent 8)	20
‘Quite good...good generally’ (Respondent 62)	12
Public opinion was ‘one of pride’ (Respondent 86)	6
There was a ‘sympathetic public’ (Respondent 99)	5
Public opinion ‘wonderful, thought ATS ‘good girls’’(Respondent 9)	4
Public had ‘great respect’ for ATS (Respondent 22)	3
<u>One response each for the following:</u>	
General public ‘looked up to ATS’ (Respondent 17), public had ‘admiration, they wished to join us’ (Respondent 160), public sympathy for ‘poorly paid ATS’ (Respondent 56)	

**Table 7.5: Suggestions as to the bases on which these favourable opinions were being formed**

Response	Total
‘We were on gun sites guarding docks and airfields’(Respondent 8)	12
‘We were ‘protecting them (the public) from the enemy’ (Respondent 19)	2
From ‘those with whom we worked, officers and men’ (Respondent 22)	2
‘Princess Elizabeth being in the Service’ (Respondent 34)	2
<u>One response each for the following:</u>	
‘News of work done by various corps’ (Respondent 68), ‘if you behaved yourself you had more respect than in civvy street’(Respondent 99), ‘by listening to other people’(Respondent 122), ‘media coverage’ (Respondent 142), conscription ‘raised the tone in the public eye’ (Respondent 179), ATS ‘facing same dangers alongside soldiers’(Respondent 207), ‘families having a daughter in the Service’ (Respondent 214), ‘meeting the girls concerned’(Respondent 255)	

## Commentary

Respondents suggested that the strongest influence for forming good public opinion was demonstration that the ATS was doing a good job. Emotive terms were used to describe how public opinion was one of ‘pride’, ‘admiration’ and ‘great respect’; how the ATS were the ‘good girls’: how the ATS was ‘looked up to’: how others ‘wanted to join them’; how the public ‘treated them very well’ and sympathised with their poor pay rates.

Respondent 221 noted that ‘the powers that be brought in a bit of glamour by bringing Jean Knox in as Head of the ATS but’ she commented ‘it didn’t affect us.’ The emphasis which these respondents placed on practicalities rather than image-making was reiterated in the top category for influence being that the ATS were ‘on the gun sites, guarding docks and airfields’, that they were protecting the public from the enemy, that the men with whom they worked spoke well of them and that actually meeting the girls concerned was a good-opinion former. There were, however, some respondents who recognised that good media coverage, Royal participation, family involvement and good personal standards of behaviour were all capable of generating favourable public opinion for the ATS.

**Table 7.6: Respondents who believed the public had an unfavourable opinion of the ATS**

Response	Total
Public ‘had little confidence (in ATS) but as time went by they were proved wrong’ (Respondent 94)	9
ATS ‘came after WRENS and WAAFS’(Respondent 53) and had ‘less glamour’ (Respondent 213)	7
Public thought ‘we were in the ATS to have a good time’ Respondent 78)	7
Public thought we were ‘groundsheets for the troops’/ (Respondent 118) ‘officers’(Respondent 15) 7	7
‘The public seemed to think we were all flirts’ (Respondent 71)	5
‘The ATS had a bad name’/ (Respondent 125) ‘sluts’/ (Respondent 182) ‘were no good’ /(Respondent 142b)	4
‘Thought we were fast hussies but changed their minds as the war progressed’ (Respondent 180)	2
ATS had ‘miraculously changed from nice girls to semi-prostitutes’ (Respondent 52)	2
‘A few thought we were mad to volunteer (for the ATS)’(Respondent 189)	2
<u>One response each for the following:</u>	
‘We were not taken seriously’ (Respondent 246), ‘in London – where we were refused to be served in shops or cafes on occasion’ (Respondent 299), ‘Rank and File of the Army were always looked down on. I can’t think why.’(Respondent 300)	

**Table 7.7: Suggestions as to the bases on which these unfavourable opinions were being formed**

Response	Total
'The behaviour of the few if bad' (Respondent 18)	7
'Khaki was not flattering and ATS was sometimes despised because of this' (Respondent 137)	3
'So many opportunities for the sexes to mix-especially at dances (Respondent 205)	2
'Civilians, probably envious' (Respondent 182)	2
'Ignorance' (Respondent 181)	2
'Rumour had it that there were problems' (Respondent 73)	2
<u>One response each for the following:</u>	
'Older generation felt nurses uniform was the only one suitable for a woman' (Respondent 180), 'ATS were 'first women to work alongside men' (Respondent 182), 'at camp dances local girls resented us' (Respondent 220), 'more of them (ATS) than in the other services' (Respondent 243), 'bigots who called us camp-followers' (Respondent 290), 'my brothers were horrified when I joined up and they were in the Army' (Respondent 142), 'scandal hit the headlines' (Respondent 145), 'servicemen's wives resented us in mixed units' (Respondent 145), class distinctions pre-war' (Respondent 148), 'bad press for the few who were letting the side down', (Respondent 171), 'unfounded press accusations of immorality'(Respondent 172), 'parents' (Respondent 2), 'fathers, soldiers in WWI had qualms about daughters in ATS' (Respondent 5), 'mothers from military towns had qualms about daughters in ATS' (Respondent 5), 'mixed ack-ack battery postings' (Respondent 37), reputation 'sometimes destroyed by mainly males' (Respondent 44), 'small part of population did not agree with women as part of armed forces – it would create immorality, (Respondent 60)	

### Commentary

Though numerically much smaller than the group of 75 respondents who believed the ATS had gained favourable public opinion, the group of 46 respondents who believed the ATS had an unfavourable public opinion provided a very rich response and gave evidence of sensitivities to cultural and organisational issues which had also been identified by those responsible for ATS recruitment and publicity.

Some comment was couched in terms of self-justification such as the majority assertion that the public had 'little confidence' in the ATS at first but 'as time went by they were proved wrong'. Respondents cited suspected sexual immorality as the strongest factor in forming bad public opinion but, again, felt that the public 'changed their minds as the war progressed'. The perpetual problem of ATS being perceived as socially inferior surfaced in comments such as 'ATS came after WRENS and WAAFS ...had less glamour'. This kind of comment reflected the debate of the Inter-Services Publicity committee in 1941 which resulted in ATS publicity being given a clear field for a few weeks to try and resolve its recruitment crisis (discussed in thesis Chapter 5). There was a resentful tone in the recollection of the respondents who recalled being socially

snubbed and were sure that the 'rank and file of the Army were looked down on' to the extent that one respondent noted how 'some thought we were mad to volunteer (for the ATS)'.

Respondents identified 36 potential sources of poor public opinion as opposed to the 26 offered as possible sources of good public opinion. Respondents' comments showed that they were aware of the damage being done to ATS reputation by press 'rumour' and 'scandal' about sexual immorality. Much of the comment was defensive in tone, the press accusations were 'unfounded'; civilians 'probably envious' or 'ignorant'; at camp dances 'local girls resented us'; servicemen's wives 'resented us in mixed units'; that 'bigots' called us 'camp-followers'; that there was probably misinterpretation of the 'so many opportunities for the sexes to mix – especially at camp dances' and misinterpretation of activities at 'mixed ack-ack batteries'. These respondents took quite a sanguine view of suspected sexual laxity in spite of the fact that it was the issue which the ATS / War Office and Parliament felt it necessary to deal with via a full scale Parliamentary Enquiry (discussed in thesis Chapter 5).

Respondent 2 cited parents, particularly fathers who had served as soldiers in the First World War as likely to be those with 'qualms about their daughters joining the ATS'. She also suggested that mothers who lived in garrison towns would also have 'qualms about their daughters joining the ATS'. Wartime Social Survey, *ATS*, 1941, had clearly identified fathers who served in the First World War as potential deterrents to ATS recruitment and much of the Government's recruitment literature and advertisement for the ATS was consequently designed to reassure parents (discussed in thesis Chapter 5). Respondent 142 commented how her 'brothers were horrified' when she joined the ATS though 'they were soldiers themselves'. This reflected the findings of Mass-Observation Report 955 that soldiers frequently expressed their contempt for the ATS and expressed it in barrack-room terms. Respondent 44 was of the opinion that ATS reputation was 'sometimes ruined, mostly by males'.

Some respondents recognised that women in Army uniform would be a culture-shock to 'some of the older generation' and that a 'small part of the population' disapproved of women in the armed services per se. Three respondents identified the 'unflattering' khaki colour of the uniform as provoking civilians to 'despise' the women in the ATS though Respondent 148 attributed this attitude more to 'class distinctions pre-war'.

Questions about the colour, style and design of the uniform had been issues of contention since the ATS was set up in 1938 and the impacts of decisions made concerning uniform were discussed in thesis Chapters 3, 4 and 5 in the context of market research carried out on behalf of the ATS and also with regard to the particular ethos of successive ATS Directors. Issues of class in ATS internal politics and in relation to its public image feature strongly in the discourses in thesis Chapters 3,4, 5, and 6.

Respondent 243 felt that there was likely to be more adverse comment about the women in the ATS simply 'because there were more of them' than there were in the WRENS or WAAF. There certainly were very knotty organisational and welfare problems consequent on the rapid and significant expansion of the ATS in 1941 and these are discussed in thesis Chapter 5. Respondent 151 made the related point that in a very large organisation it is easier to find the 'few bad apples', the 'few who let the side down' and that then, in terms of public opinion, the tail will wag the dog.

In summary, the respondents who believed the ATS were not well regarded by the British public at the outset of the war believed that opinion changed as the war progressed and were able to identify a wide range of sources which fed adverse public opinion about their service. Particularly Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis illustrate that many of these adverse sources were also recognised by the ATS/War Office. This thesis, in Chapter 3, 4, 5 and 6, charts many of the appropriate (and sometimes inappropriate) corporate policy and publicity actions taken in an attempt to counter public anxieties about the ATS.

**Table 7.8: Respondents who believed that public opinion was fragmented**

Response	Total
'Opinions varied greatly' (Respondent 146)	2
<u>One response each for the following:</u>	
'Public opinion during the war years was mixed' (Respondent 27), 'depended on the way in which we presented ourselves' (Respondent 30), 'no adverse signs' (Respondent 65), 'I wasn't aware of public opinion, adverse or otherwise' (Respondent 74), 'ATS never received the public acclaim they deserved' (Respondent 75), 'opinions varied' (Respondent 78), 'in Belgium/Holland (we were called) 'brown bunnies', in Germany (we were called 'grey rats' (Respondent 115), 'mixed opinions' (Respondent 201), 'at the beginning of the war we were a novelty' (Respondent 217)	

**Table 7.9 Suggestions as to the bases of fragmented public opinion**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Total</b>
‘Public confused about what the ATS did’ (Respondent 10)	4
<u>One response each for the following:</u>	
‘Whether good or bad depended on what people really knew’ (Respondent 167), ‘prevailing values’ (Respondent 167), ‘facts’ (Respondent 184), ‘opinions varied with the news’ (Respondent 218), ‘depended on age and sex’ (Respondent 220), ‘some shocked that their daughters were being conscripted’ (Respondent 225)	

### **Commentary**

Of the 11 respondents who believed public opinion was fragmented four respondents suggested that the reason for this was that the public was ‘confused about what the ATS did’. The identity of the ATS certainly might have been clearer had the Service been titled ‘The Women’s Army Corps’ but, as discussed in thesis Chapter 4, the much more vague title ‘Auxiliary Territorial Service’ was finally selected by the War Office. A few months later the Territorial Army ceased to exist at the outbreak of war in September 1939 but the title ‘ATS’ remained, confusingly, in place.

This group of respondents recognised the cultural influence of ‘prevailing values’ on those of the public who, for instance, found it hard to accept the military/feminine image of the ATS. ‘Prevailing values’ in conflict with the ATS image is a recurring motif analysed in thesis Chapters 3 to 6.

‘Age and sex’ were offered as further determinants of mixed reception for the ATS, as was the influence of media and ‘facts’ that the public felt they knew. There was a suggestion that conscription might have soured the opinion of parents whose daughters were called up and a tone of disillusionment in the comment from Respondent 75 that ‘the ATS never achieved the public acclaim they deserved’.

Question 5 of my 1996 Questionnaire asked respondents **‘What remains most clearly in your mind as ‘the best thing’ about the ATS?’** I had thought to find out which aspects of the organisation the ATS / War Office had managed to popularise in the course of the many campaigns to raise the profile and prestige of the ATS during the war. There were 259 responses to Question 5 and the outcomes are tabulated below.



**Table 7.10**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Total</b>
'Comradeship and 'lifelong friends' (Respondent 5)	140
'Pride in service for the country' (Respondent 44)	18
'Social life' (Respondent 11)	12
'Giving me a career' (Respondent 15)	11
'Growing up' (Respondent 71)	10
'The assorted company' (Respondent 32)	7
'Discipline (Respondent 8)/ 'Self discipline' (Respondent 148)	7
'Fun and laughter no matter how hard things were' (Respondent 35)	7
'The romances' (Respondent 53)/ 'meeting my husband' (Respondent 57)	6
'Travel' (Respondent 170)/ 'especially abroad' (Respondent 205)	6
'Made girls stand on their own feet' (Respondent 14)	4
'Freedom (Respondent 2)	4
'A common purpose to defeat Hitler' (Respondent 27)	2
'Driving round the country' (Respondent 39)	2
'Clothes provided' (Respondent 54/ 'all found' (Respondent 187)	2
'Meeting interesting people' (Respondent 8)	2
'Bred tolerance' (Respondent 190)	2
'Taught leadership and responsibility' (Respondent 143)	2
'Enjoyed my job on radar' (Respondent 149)	2
<u>One response each for the following:</u>	
'Multi-national context' (Respondent 22), 'being there' (Respondent 30), 'a kind of courage not normally felt' (Respondent 67), 'my searchlight site at Windsor' (Respondent 77), 'working for what we believed in – Freedom' (Respondent 86), 'being able to take a hot bath. We only had a tin bath in front of the fire at home' (Respondent 92), 'putting up my first stripe, local, acting, unpaid Lance-Corporal but oh, such power' (Respondent 180), 'it altered my life for better things' (Respondent 222), 'the caring attitude to us from the powers that be' (Respondent 219), 'being engaged in vital work' (Respondent 299), 'the determination to show what we could do' (Respondent 123), 'proud to wear the uniform' (Respondent 150), 'kindness of civilians' (Respondent 263)	

**Commentary**

By far the most striking feature of the response was the dramatic scale of the cohesion around 'Comradeship and 'life-long friendship' (148 responses prioritised this feature). This factor was privileged even ahead of 'pride in serving country' which took second slot in the table. 'Social life', 'career' and 'growing up' attracted responses in double figures.

Some respondents expressed abstract sentiments about 'working for what we believed in – Freedom', ' the determination to show what we could do' and 'the common purpose – to defeat Hitler' which imbued them with 'a kind of courage not normally felt'.

Others enthused about the day-to-day experience of life in the ATS, the pleasures of 'assorted company'; the 'fun and laughter no matter how hard things were'; 'travel –

especially abroad'; 'driving round the country', 'being there'; 'the multi-national context'; 'meeting interesting people' and especially 'the romances' many of which ended in marriages.

There were compliments for the ATS as an organisation which 'bred tolerance', 'taught leadership and responsibility', made girls 'stand on their own feet', gave them freedom from 'family' (Respondent 2) and delivered them from 'the drudgery of domestic service' (Respondent 118). Respondents felt that the ATS had taught them 'discipline' and 'self-discipline', that the 'powers that be' had looked after their welfare, that they were 'proud to wear the uniform' in a service which Respondent 222 felt had 'altered my life for better things', a sentiment echoed by Respondent 92 for whom a hot bath had been an unfamiliar luxury in her civilian life.

Respondents recalled their enjoyment of their jobs in driving and radar; the thrill of being engaged in 'vital work' and having merit recognised with promotion even if it was the 'local, unpaid, acting Lance-Corporal' grade described by Respondent 180 who added a telling 'but oh the power!'

What emerged from the responses to this question was a picture of women who 'joined up' or were 'called up' recalling that they engaged with a whole range of experiences, emotional and physical which led them to be more self-sufficient, to develop the social confidence to 'mix' (cross-class and with the opposite sex); women who enjoyed the taste of freedom that the ATS offered, the financial independence and, most of all, companionship outside the domestic sphere. The fact that former ATS members prioritised these values, sixty years after the events, was a strong indication that these were the values they took back with them into their post-war workplaces and marriages.

In general summary, the responses from my 1996 questionnaire as a whole confirmed in a very convincing way the significance of much of the market research made on behalf of the ATS during the war and also opened up a view of corporate policies and politics from the unique perspective of those whom the ATS recruited or conscripted.

## **ATS Questionnaire issued 2002**

The questionnaire which I issued in 2002 was targeted in the sense that, as with the 1996 questionnaire, it trawled women who had chosen to retain a connection with the ATS/WRAC to the present day through the WRAC Association. Within that prescription the questionnaires were distributed for me by the WRAC Association to the largest branch in each of the 8 geographical regions into which the ATS had divided Britain for recruitment purposes. Four questionnaires were sent to each of these branches and respondents were self-selected. Of the 32 questionnaires distributed 27 were returned by the requested date. One respondent (No. 19) had been a Leading Wren, somehow attached to a WRAC Branch, so I had to discount her response, leaving 26 responses for analysis.

### **Respondent Profile**

17 of the respondents were volunteers, 8 were conscripts and 1 respondent gave indeterminate information. In terms of highest rank each woman held in the ATS there were 6 privates, 6 corporals, 2 acting sergeants, 4 sergeants, 2 captains, and 1 in each grade as lance-corporal, subaltern, warrant officer Class 2, Junior Commandant. Respondent No. 3 did not give her grade.

13 of the respondents had joined up in 1942, 5 in 1943, 4 in 1940, 2 in 1941 and 1 in 1938. Respondents Nos. 2 and 5 remained in service until 1947, Respondent No. 12 until 1949 and Respondent No. 17 until 1973. All other respondents were demobilised by the end of 1946.

### **Structure of Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was divided into 5 response areas. All respondents were asked to address Area 1 which sought to obtain a snapshot of the respondents' pre-war circumstances, aspirations and leisure along with their thoughts on the possibility of war and what they thought war might involve for them. Area 2 of the questionnaire was aimed at those who volunteered for the ATS, Area 3 at those who were conscripted after December 1941. Those who returned to civilian life at the end of the war were asked to address Area 4 and those who chose to remain in the ATS as a career were asked to address Area 5.

## Approach to data analysis and data presentation

The responses to each question were collated and like-minded responses noted. A sample sheet of collated responses is attached as Appendix 9. Where a question generated responses which fell into appreciable categories the responses were tabulated. Where the responses to questions of greater complication were too diverse and detailed to make tabulation useful the full range of responses was written-up solely in narrative format.

### Area 1 (All Respondents)

Respondents were asked to think back to 1938/9 before the war and asked ‘Were you still at school or had you started work / further education?’ The responses are tabulated below.

**Table 7.11**

Response	Respondent Nos	Total
Started work (not specified)	2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22, 24, 25	13
Still at school	3, 9, 26	3
Working as secretary	5, 10 11	3
<u>One response each for the following:</u> 'Methodist College, Belfast' (Respondent 1), 'Junior Secretary' (Respondent 14), 'working in a shop, at night school 3 nights a week' (Respondent 16), 'college, then secretarial college' 1939/1940 (Respondent 17), 'started work in 1935 at 14 yrs old in laundry, 12 hrs a day' (Respondent 21), 'trained dressmaker then domestic work' (Respondent 23), 'one of family of ten.....we had no chance of further education' (Respondent 27)		

### Commentary

The picture emerged of a group of young women all but 4 of whom were at work by the time the war began in 1939. Respondents chose to specify their ‘white collar’ jobs which suggested that secretarial work, office work was aspirational if not elite.

There was also a desire to register pre-war social and educational disadvantage for girls from poor families, reflected in the comments of Respondents 16, 21, 23 and 27. These underprivileged ‘girls’ were the target for the 1941 expansionist, inclusivist ATS recruitment drives, for Abram Games’s 1941 aspirational poster and for ATS promises of training, opportunities for travel and a new, better life.

The second question in Area 1 was ‘How did you spend your spare time?’ The responses are tabulated below.

**Table 7.12**

Response	Respondent Nos	Total
Church activities	2, 12, 5, 8, 11, 17, 25, 26	8
Dancing	6, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16, 20, 21	8
Walking/rambling	1, 16, 18, 19, 22, 25, 26, 27	8
Cinema	2, 9, 10, 16, 18, 22, 24, 25	8
Cycling	2, 7, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17	7
Reading	17, 20, 23, 24, 25	5
Sewing/Dressmaking/embroidery	2, 20, 22, 23, 24	5
Swimming	1, 2, 12, 17, 22	5
Tennis	2, 3, 9, 17, 26	5
Girl Guides	3, 8, 21, 26	4
Youth Club	2, 14, 18, 26	4
Hockey	9, 10, 17, 26	4
Sports/athletics/cricket/netball	12, 14, 16, 21	4
Helping out at home	7, 12, 27	3
Amateur dramatics/operatics	6, 14	2
VAD/ARP activities	4, 16	2
<u>One response for each of the following:</u>		
Writing letters (Respondent 7), painting/craft work (Respondent 6), enjoying life (Respondent 8), cookery (Respondent 2), homework (Respondent 1), radio (Respondent 1)		

### Commentary

Communal/community-based activities, centred around Church, local cinema, Girl Guides, local dances, youth clubs, VAD/ARP training, amateur drama/opera groups attracted 36 responses, the highest aggregate category. Outdoor and sports activities attracted 33 responses. Domestic-based leisure activities, reading, dressmaking, embroidery, helping out at home, writing letters, painting, craft work, radio, attracted 18 responses. These outcomes revealed sociable young women who liked keeping fit and active and who found domestic-based leisure least to their liking. They were also keen ‘joiners’ of organisations, a trait which the ATS exploited with its 1941 direct poster slogan ‘Join the ATS’. The challenging aspects of ATS life, as for instance reflected in Beverly Pick’s 1941 posters showing women despatch riders, searchlight operators, jeep drivers would certainly have excited the imagination of these ‘girls’ whose choice of leisure and occupation had hitherto been rather mundane, closely supervised and circumscribed by family life.

The third question in Area 1 was ‘What were your ambitions for your adult life?’ Respondent 1 wanted ‘marriage and children if I fell REALLY in love’. Marriage was

also the destination of choice for Respondent 6 who wanted 'promotion at work then marriage', Respondent 7 hoped 'to get a good job – maybe marry'. Respondent 9 would be 'a draughtswoman. Later marry of course'. Respondent 10 was bound for 'Secretarial College then marry, children, housewife. I don't think we were very ambitious career-wise and there were so few appointments before the war'. Respondent 20's ambition was 'to marry my boyfriend'. Respondent 24 hoped 'to progress in my career and I suppose get married'. Respondent 26 wanted 'to go to University then settle down, marry and have children'. Six respondents focused on work. Respondent 3 wanted 'to be a Domestic Economy teacher' and Respondent 4 wanted 'to go to University and be a teacher'. Respondent 8 'really wanted to be a vet'. Respondent 12 wanted 'nursing, missionary work'. Respondent 18 also wanted to be 'a teacher or a nurse'. Respondent 13 hoped 'to join P and O Cruise Line as a freelance secretary', Respondent 17 hoped for a 'short course at Secretarial College'. and Respondent 14 was 'ambitious to rise further in my work life'. Respondent 27 'wanted to go to College but my father said No. I had to go to a factory to bring in money'. Respondent 21 recalled her 'father on dole for almost 10 years, getting work was our ambition'. Respondent 11 just wanted 'to do a job of work' and Respondent 22 'wasn't asked. Father wrote to JDs (a local employer) and that was that'. Respondent 23 'wanted to get away from home links' and Respondent 25 telegraphed 'War imminent. Ambitions side-lined'. Respondent 5 wanted 'to buy a cottage, write short stories and travel. Three respondents (2, 5, and 16) had 'no idea' at all about their future life.

### **Commentary**

Marriage per se or marriage after a period at work and/or further education featured in the ambitions of 8 respondents and is the most general pattern suggested. There were six expressions of aspiration for work in 'socially responsible / vocational' occupations as teacher, nurse, vet, missionary, draughtswoman. Respondents 10, 13 and 17 fancied secretarial training. The general pattern of ambition was modest though Respondent 5 wanted to 'travel' and daydreamed of an independent life. Respondent 10 suggested that the pre-war economy partly accounted for lack of female ambition and this evaluation was echoed by Respondents 2, 15 and 16 who had 'no idea' what they would become. Respondents 21, 22 and 27 recalled how their fathers' circumstances influenced their life-choices and Respondent 23 actively sought to 'break home links'.

All the aspirations suggested here were in accord with recruitment offers analysed in thesis Chapters 4 and 5. The ATS recruitment literature offered training/education, tapped into sentiments of self-sacrifice and responsibility, held out possibilities of travel and an independent life. Above all, the 1941 appointment of Jean Knox as ATS Director with Leslie Whateley as her Deputy (discussed in thesis Chapter 5) was an astute reassurance to 'girls' for whom marriage was high on their list of hopes that glamour, an aspirational career, marriage and children were compatible objectives in the ATS.

The fourth question in Area 1 was 'Did you think you would have to leave home to fulfil your ambitions?' The responses are tabulated below.

**Table 7.13**

Response	Respondent Nos	Total
No	4, 6, 10, 16, 20, 21, 24	7
Yes	3, 11, 15, 18,	4
<b>Caveats</b>		
It never occurred to me	2, 17, 22	3
Not necessarily but I did long to see the world	1, 14	2
<u>One response each for the following:</u>		
'Not necessarily except to travel now and again' (Respondent 5), 'no, and I didn't want to' (Respondent 7), 'everything was so uncertain' (Respondent 8), 'not at that time' (Respondent 9), 'my family travelled around a great deal anyway' (Respondent 12), 'yes, if family opposition could be overcome' (Respondent 13), 'yes, but could not see how' (Respondent 23), 'probably' (Respondent 25), 'no, There was no chance of that' (Respondent 27)		

### **Commentary**

A view emerged from the majority (Respondents 4, 6, 10, 16, 20, 21, 24) that they did not think they would leave home to pursue an ambition and it had 'never occurred' to Respondents 2, 3 and 22 that they might do so. There was expression of frustration with their family situation from Respondents 13, 23 and 27 and a tone of wistful regret in the comments from Respondents 1, 14, 5, 9 and 12. A minority group of five (Respondents 3, 11, 15, 18, 26) were set to leave home and Respondent 25 thought it 'probable'. This pattern gave a background to the efforts the ATS had to make to convince parents to part with their daughters; to convince parents of the probity of the ATS and at the same time to generate recruitment literature which offered a route by which many young women could live their dream of independent life. (These issues are discussed in thesis Chapter 5 especially with reference to the value of the Markham report.)

Question 5 asked ‘ **Did you believe there would be a war? What did your family and friends feel about the possibility of war? What was influencing your thinking on the possibility of war?** The overwhelming majority of respondents (Respondents 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 25) believed there would be a war. Two respondents (Respondents 6 and 24) thought ‘maybe’ there would be war. Respondent 23 thought, fatalistically, that ‘if it comes it comes’ while Respondent 26 ‘hoped and prayed that it would not happen’. Only six respondents (Respondents 2, 7, 13, 17, 22, 27) did not believe there would be war and Respondent 17 added ‘I didn’t give it a thought’.

The feeling that war was imminent was almost universally shared by the friends and families of these respondents. With only two exceptions (Respondents 9 and 25) respondents recalled their families actually preparing for war; ‘So many people I knew were joining up’ (Respondent 2), ‘My brother had gone to Canada to train for air crew’ (Respondent 4). The keywords were ‘worried’, ‘unhappy’ and ‘apprehensive’; ‘Mother worried about Dad in the Merchant Navy’ (Respondent 1), ‘Parents very worried. Had lived through First World War’ (Respondent 7), ‘Family worried. Brother was a reservist’ (Respondent 21), ‘Very frightened. Mother and Father had lived through First World War’ (Respondent 27). Families were anxious about daughters; ‘Parents very unhappy at the thought of me joining the forces’ (Respondent 6), ‘Parents afraid for daughters but tried not to show it’ (Respondent 20).

Factors registered as influencing the respondents included new experiences such as ‘Gas masks issued. Boy Scouts and Girl Guides encouraged to join ARP’ (Respondent 8), ‘Jewish refugees attending my school’ (Respondent 3) or ‘all the plans were made for evacuation’ (Respondent 9). Male influence is a marked feature, particularly that of ‘My Dad’ (Respondents 15, 17, 18). Boyfriends’ circumstances were influential; ‘Boyfriend in the Coldstream Guards’ (Respondent 2), ‘Boyfriend had joined the Air Force’ (Respondent 20). Respondent 12 had two brothers in the forces and ‘the boys were a big influence.’ Respondent 26 was influenced by ‘two older brothers and my Father who served in the 1914/18 War’. The influence of media coverage was reflected in ‘reading/radio’ (Respondent 1), ‘newsreels’ (Respondent 16) and ‘hearing more and more of Hitler’s large armies’ (Respondent 5) and ‘the situation in Europe’ (Respondent 10). Only Respondents 7 and 21 recorded confusion on the issue.



## Commentary

I asked this question to test the degree to which families were anticipating appeals for service recruits before war was actually declared. These recollections suggested that ATS Director Gwynne-Vaughan's 1939 radio broadcast appeal for recruits was made to families in readiness for war. The broadcast and subsequent 1940 recruitment posters were unvarnished appeals to patriotism (discussed in thesis Chapter 4). By 1941, however, the ATS recruiters had learned the necessity of direct Government pressure on parents and the value of posters in which soldiers appealed for recruits for the ATS (discussed in thesis Chapter 5).

Question 6 of Area 1 asked **'Did you think you would be asked to volunteer? How did you feel about that? Did you imagine yourself in any particular role?'** Eleven respondents thought they would not be asked to volunteer (Respondents 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16, 26, 27) and one viewed it in gender terms. She 'had no idea that a girl/woman would be asked to volunteer for war service' (Respondent 9). Eight respondents (1, 2, 10, 13, 15, 18, 21, 24) thought they would be asked to volunteer and one was 'determined to volunteer' (Respondent 2).

Whatever their speculations they all ended up in the ATS. The earliest volunteer was Respondent 24 who joined in 1938 'because I thought it patriotic to volunteer'. Four respondents volunteered in 1940, Respondent 17 travelled from Eire to Northern Ireland to do so. Respondent 5 believed that 'many young women would respond if asked', Respondent 10 'was so anxious to join up I wasn't going to wait' and Respondent 11 had 'walked past Mansion House (London) where an ATS was saying 'We want you' – so I signed on the dotted line'. Respondent 9, who joined up in 1941, recalled how 'magazine adverts fired our imagination to join any service'. Nine of the respondents joined in 1942 of whom four (Respondents 6, 7, 20 and 27) were conscripts. Three of these (Respondents 6, 7 and 27) had been in 'reserved occupations' until call up and Respondent 20 had been prevented by her parents from previously joining 'the WAAFS'. Of the five 1943 volunteers Respondent 18 had volunteered because 'we knew that the age group would eventually be conscripted', Respondent 22 had volunteered 'as soon as I was old enough'. Respondent 25 volunteered on release from her 'reserved occupation as a Civil Servant'. Respondent 26 also volunteered on release from her 'reserved occupation in the Ministry of Pensions' and Respondent 8 confided, 'I came from a military family so I knew I would join one of the Women's Services'. Of

the three respondents who joined up in 1943 one (Respondent 1) was prompted by 'family example', one (Respondent 2) volunteered when released from reserved occupation and one (Respondent 14) was conscripted but 'pleased to enlist'.

The respondents had imagined a lively list of roles for themselves. The earliest recruit, Respondent 24 (1938), told how 'roles had hardly been established and at 20 I was ready to see what was on offer'. Of those who were recruited in 1940 it was the ambition of Respondent 5 'to reach Staff Sergeant as my father had done' and Respondent 10 'was prepared to do anything required of me'. The 1941 recruit, Respondent 9 'felt service life would be exciting – even quite daring'. Of those recruited in 1942 Respondent 6 was 'willing to serve in any capacity', Respondent 7 gave an enthusiastic 'Yes. I would have chosen the Army' and Respondent 13 confided 'First I fancied being a spitfire pilot then a driver' and Respondent 15 saw the ATS as 'a chance to travel'. Of the 1943 recruits Respondent 2 saw herself as 'a driver. However I was half an inch too short!' Respondent 1 thought 'my languages might lead me to heroism' (as a spy perhaps?) and Respondent 14 had initially 'favoured the WRENS as a writer (secretary)'.

### **Commentary**

The pattern of responses to Question 6 in Area 1 suggested an evolution of recruitment motifs through the war; the patriotism of the early phase, the excitement and novelty of ATS's public 'pavement' recruiting, then the use of sophisticated media advertising, the pressure of imminent conscription in 1941 and, increasingly, release from reserved occupations in 1942/1943. This pattern reflected that which emerged from analysis of propaganda artefacts and recruitment strategies in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis. In particular, the ATS 1940/41 recruitment slogan 'Adventure through Service' shone through the enthusiasm of responses to Question 6 in which the respondents wrote of their imagined 'derring-do' life in the ATS and the degree to which they were ready to do anything and go anywhere, to make their fathers proud and serve their country.

### **Area 2 ( for Volunteers only)**

I hoped that responses to Area 2 would give an insight into a variety of prompts to volunteering, the reactions of friends, family and general public to 'girls in khaki' and the respondents' first impressions of exposure to military culture. The responses of those who had volunteered before the introduction of conscription in December 1941

were grouped separately from those who had volunteered from 1942 onwards. This was so that it might be possible to detect changes in attitudes / service life on a year-on-year basis. In order to clarify this process each respondent's date of recruitment is initially given in brackets after her given personal identity number. Thereafter the respondents are grouped into cohorts according to year of recruitment. Seven respondents had volunteered before the introduction of conscription and ten from 1942 onwards. The richly individuated narratives of the responses are contained in the following summaries.

Question 1 asked **'What date did you decide to join the ATS? Can you recall why you joined at that particular point?'** Of those who volunteered before the introduction of conscription Respondent 24 (1938) was prompted by 'patriotism'. Respondent 5 (Feb 1940) wanted 'to join up with my friend who was having second thoughts about it' and remembered 'my firm stopped me leaving until Feb 1940'. Respondent 10 (Feb 1940) was an enthusiast who 'applied to join the Army as soon as we were told how to do so' and whose 'first interview was in London in November 1939'. Respondent 11 (June 1940) was prompted by her soldier brother's return from Dunkirk though 'he wasn't very polite when he heard what I'd done'. Respondent 17 (Oct. 1940), moved by Churchill's 'Blood sweat and tears' speech travelled from Dublin to Belfast to enlist. She tried the Royal Navy Office first but they were 'not taking girls from Eire'. They pointed her 'in the direction of the Army and RAF recruiting offices and she 'came to the Army first'. Respondents 9 and 12 both joined in November 1941. Respondent 9 had met 'parental opposition' at first but also had a 'boyfriend in RAF bomber command who had been sent overseas in August 1941. I joined up'. Respondent 12 (1942) was caught in the Blitz in London en route for America from 'the Bible College we belonged to'. Her 'eldest brother was in the Army and the second waiting to get into the RAF'.

Of those who volunteered after the introduction of conscription Respondent 8 (1942) joined 'because I had lost my boyfriend who was an RAF fighter pilot' Respondent 18 (Summer 1942) recalled her 'sense of patriotism, a desire to help the war effort'. Respondent 22 (May 1942) was equally enthusiastic, confiding 'I was 17. I joined as soon as I could. My brother was in the Regular Navy. I thought about joining the Wrens but they only had three categories of jobs and I wanted to do something more challenging'. Respondent 23 (1942) had, in 1941 'seriously decided to volunteer for

munitions work' but 'this caused trouble at home'. When she said she was going to join up 'someone made a mistake and laughed'. That made her mind up. Respondent 25 (July 1942) along with her work department had been 'evacuated to Blackpool and that was enough to encourage me to enlist'. Respondent 15 (1942) 'lived in a village' and joined 'to give me a chance to travel'. The pressure of ensuing conscription prompted Respondent 26 (June 1942). She was 'around about the age for conscription ... I was in that bracket so I volunteered 3/6/42'. Respondent 1 (25 August 1943) had 'one sister in the WAAF uniform, eldest sister in the WRNS – the youngest of three girls (me) had to have a different uniform. The WAAF had been posted back to Ireland, the WRNS was home-based. I wanted to travel'. Respondent 16 (January 1943) 'went to register for work of National importance'. She was aware that if she had not volunteered for the ATS she could have 'been sent to the Land Army, Steel Works, munitions etc.' Respondent 2 (1943) wrote that she 'volunteered' but gave no further details.

### **Commentary**

The responses to Question 1 tied in closely with the general sequence of influences noted in earlier chapters of the thesis and also in the 1996 Questionnaire; the patriotism, the early and widespread enthusiasm, the peer pressure, the impact of events such as the Blitz and Dunkirk, the views of the family's men. The responses of those who volunteered after the introduction of conscription evidenced the persistence of patriotism, the desire to serve, the influence of boyfriends, brothers and sisters in uniform; the perception that the ATS offered travel, a good range of training, (better than the Wrens); the view that the ATS was better than munitions / Land Army / industrial work or being evacuated to work 'up North' and recognition of the pressure of imminent conscription.

Question 2 asked '**What did your family and friends think about you joining the ATS?**' Of those who volunteered before the introduction of conscription Respondent 24 (1938) recalled that her 'Uncle thought it was an excellent idea, would give me independence I needed'. Of the 1940 intake Respondent 5 had friends who 'thought I would hate the life. My Father was proud of me but my mother was very concerned. She cried the day I left home. My father came with me so that I could get safely to Victoria Station'. Respondent 11 thought that 'friends understood, especially boys, as they knew they would be called'. Respondent 10 had a family 'very worried but they didn't try to stop me'. Respondent 17 recorded that her 'mother was happy that I agreed

to serve only for the duration of the War!! and not for 4 years and that women were not combatant'. In the 1941 cohort Respondent 9 remembered her father being 'angry, appalled, and I think fearful, (his memory of WW1 was still fresh in his mind. I did not want to hurt my parents but as an only child needed to get away from their kind, gentle protection. Finally my father understood, my mother cried and I took the plunge'. The mother of Respondent 12 'refused to sign anything' but came around to the idea because 'she would rather know where I was and keep in touch than me just run away'.

Of those who volunteered in 1942 after the introduction of conscription Respondent 8 believed that friends and family 'were very proud'. Respondent 15 recalled that 'most thought I was mad'. The mother of Respondent 22 'went along with the idea' but her father was against it and 'as I was under 18 didn't sign his consent until the last moment'. 'After the first shock' the family of Respondent 23 'decided that I would never pass the medical (Silly idea)'. The family of Respondent 25 'had no problems' with the notion and friends and family of Respondent 26 were 'all pleased to know I was able and willing to serve the country in time of need. One brother was serving with the RAF and my older brother in the Royal Corps of Signals'. The mother of Respondent 18 was 'not best pleased as I was the eldest of 5 children'. Of the 1943 intake Respondent 1 remembered four comments, 'How can Trudy bear those stockings?', 'Aren't the girls in the ATS a bit – er – COMMON', 'I hope your education won't be wasted' and 'I envy you, Trudy, my mother would have a fit – my Dad wouldn't let me join'. All were surprised that Respondent 16 'did it suddenly'. In the case of Respondent 2 her 'friends were supportive, especially my boyfriend. My mother was furious. My father was secretly delighted. He fought in the First World War, was mentioned in despatches (a keen soldier) and probably proud for me and I admired him very much'.

### **Commentary**

Four respondents, 24 (1938), 11 (1940), 25 (1942) and 23 (1942) recalled unreserved support from friends/family. Of these Respondent 24 (1938) described herself as 'middle class' and achieved Junior Commander rank. She was one of Gwynne-Vaughan's pre-war recruits. (Labour MP Ellen Wilkinson labelled Gwynne-Vaughan's ATS 'a snob show'. Class issues discussed in thesis Chapter 4). Respondent 26 had the support of a military family.

However, the majority of responses to Question 2 strongly reinforced the wisdom of ATS propaganda targeted at reassuring the parents/guardians of the potential recruits. These responses showed how protective/possessive parental attitude was and how their own experiences of war influenced fathers' attitudes. (These issues, posters such as 'But it's a Women's War, Mother!' and related Wartime Social Survey findings in 1941 are discussed in thesis Chapter 5.) Civilian perception that the ATS had awful stockings and were 'er – a bit COMMON' (recorded by Respondent 1 as late as 1943) suggested the scale of the task of modernising the ATS which Jean Knox undertook in 1941 (analysed in thesis Chapter 5) and the necessity of the struggle in which she and Leslie Whateley engaged to deal with successive waves of rumours of ATS immorality.

Question 3 asked **'How did you feel about wearing the uniform in public? What was public response like?'** Of those who volunteered before the introduction of conscription Respondent 24 (1938) recalled 'You only wore it to Drill Nights once a week and were pleased if noticed'. Of the contingent recruited in 1940 Respondent 5 'felt quite proud to wear the uniform. Most members of the public would stare or point at first but women in uniform soon became a common sight'. Respondent 10 felt 'very proud. I'm sure people respected our decision to join the services'. Respondent 11 was confident that 'It did not worry me to wear the uniform. By this time both my brothers were in uniform'. Respondent 17 who came from Eire sounded a little disappointed that 'Eire being neutral members of HM Forces ...wore civilian clothes when travelling home on leave'. Of those who joined up in 1941 Respondent 9 'loved it and felt very proud Everyone I encountered when I came home on leave made me feel even prouder and not one word of opposition to "women in the Services" was ever uttered in my presence'. Respondent 12 was 'the proudest person alive!! I'm sure I didn't give a thought to other people's opinions'.

The group of respondents who volunteered after the introduction of conscription frequently used the emerging keyword 'proud'. Of the 1942 contingent Respondent 8 commented, 'Of course I was proud so were all my family and friends and incidentally I am still proud to wear the ATS badge on my blazer'. Respondent 15 was 'very proud. In the village cureoss (sic)'. Respondent 22 was 'proud' and could not 'recall any adverse comment being made although the ATS didn't have a very good name at that time. I think it was just rumours'. Respondent 23 'was very proud to wear my uniform and always felt that the public approved'. Respondent 25 felt there were 'no problems on

that score. We were certainly respected'. Respondent 26 'felt very proud and comments from friends and family and even casual passers-by made one feel that we were helping to serve our country and proud of it'. Respondent 18 found it 'strange at first, then quite proud. Response was "Go for it!"'. Of the 1943 volunteers Respondent 1 'Felt great! Slim, 5' 2", 7st. 2 lbs., I looked terrific – the material was still of fine quality. I felt really 'at home' with the style, neatness, feel of the outfit. (The Americans who entered the war via Northern Ireland in 1942 said I was "cute")'. Respondent 2 felt 'absolutely marvellous! Friends at home were interested in what I had to do. People in civilian life (as I had been) had no idea what Army life was like'. Respondent 16 felt 'Great. Admired'.

### **Commentary**

The pattern of responses to Question 3 strongly echoed the predictable pattern of storming, forming, norming for any new organisation. The analysis in this thesis (Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6) reinforces the vision of the ATS transforming over time from being the object of public ridicule and anxiety to winning accolades as 'our grand girls in khaki'. The fiercely defensive and nostalgic responses to Question 3 also indicated the depth of long-term attachment that the ATS was capable of generating in its recruits. For each of the respondents their uniformed ATS persona seemed a crucial facet of their identity, preserved and treasured in reflection.

Question 4 asked '**Can you recall details of any efforts in your locality, for example through local newspapers or cinema to recruit women for the ATS around the time you volunteered?** Of those who volunteered before the introduction of conscription Respondent 24 (1938) replied bluntly 'No'. Of the 1940 volunteers Respondent 5 reported 'Not particularly at the beginning but soon afterwards there were posters, recruitment marches etc.' Respondent 10 replied 'No. I cannot recall any recruitment campaigns but they would have come later after I had gone'. Respondent 11 could 'not recall any efforts to recruit. Perhaps my memory is at fault.'. And Respondent 17 confirmed that 'there was no effort in any part of Eire to encourage men no less women to join HM Forces'. Of the 1941 contingent Respondent 9 wrote 'I can't remember reading anything in the local newspapers or cinemas but extensive adverts in women's magazines – all impressing me very much'. Respondent 12 recalled 'there were posters around'.

Of those who volunteered in 1942, after the introduction of conscription, Respondent 8 recalled 'billboards showing ATS girls in uniform', Respondent 15 recalled 'newspaper adverts', Respondents 18, 22 and 23 offered a simple 'No' when presented with this question. Respondent 25 wrote 'I don't remember any frantic efforts at the time' and Respondent 26 recalled 'there was some publicity and posters but it was never overdone'. Of the contingent who volunteered in 1943 Respondent 1 wrote, 'I remember a film (fictional) about a group of girls being trained from rookies to drivers in the ATS. "The Gentle Sex" I think was the title. Newspapers carried straightforward ads.' Respondent 2 remembered 'posters in libraries, employment exchanges and public offices, cinema (every performance!), large billboards and hoardings contained recruitment posters'.

### **Commentary**

This pattern of responses was very much in line with the pattern which emerged from exploration of ATS recruitment strategies and propaganda in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis where the analysis revealed ever-intensifying use of mass media to prompt mass participation as the Government urgently sought to push ATS strength from 42,000 in July 1941 to 212,500 by September 1943.

Question 5 asked '**What were your first impressions of the other volunteers you met in the ATS? Was life in the ATS as you had imagined it? Did you regret volunteering?**' Of those who volunteered before the introduction of conscription Respondent 24 (1938) wrote, 'The nucleus of our platoon, 19<sup>th</sup> County of London, attached to Artist's Rifles, were similar middle class girls to myself. We were all subsequently commissioned. No, I did not regret volunteering'. Of the 1940 volunteers Respondent 5 remembered that 'we all got on very well at the Training Centre. ATS life in the early days was more or less as I thought it might be except for the sleeping arrangements when I was not happy about the companions in my hut – Yes there were lesbians and this was new to me. I never regretted volunteering not even in hard times'. Respondent 10 enthused, 'I think we were all filled with a "spirit of adventure" as much as "wanting to do our bit"'. Mostly I think we had led sheltered lives so this was a totally different world which took a lot of getting used to. I never regretted the six years I spent in the ATS'. Respondent 11 judged that 'I think we all accepted one another. I enjoyed life in the ATS and did not regret volunteering'. Respondent 17 felt 'very strange at first, bathing as many times a day as you liked in HOT WATER. (description of



ablution hut), the huts were heated by a stove, fuel very scarce we sat around wearing our greatcoats. We made the most of it. At night you could hear some girl crying. It was the older members i.e. those in their middle and late twenties who left. Maybe we teenagers put them off. No, I didn't regret volunteering'. Of the 1941 volunteers Respondent 9 was 'sent "up North" and felt that people were a bit alien to the type I knew. I was horrified to see girls wearing "kerchiefs" on their heads and was told they had "dirty heads"!!! However, as in any establishment one's own level is soon found and we palled up with like-minded girls. No, I didn't ever regret volunteering'. Respondent 12 remembered 'being very young and lacking in worldly experience I watched my Ps and Qs. However we were all in the same boat so mucked in together. My life in a religious sect had been very severe so discipline was no problem and there was no question of home sickness. In fact I found new freedoms.....Not a single regret'.

Of those who volunteered after the introduction of conscription in the 1942 intake Respondent 8 was emphatic. 'No! I didn't regret volunteering. We really didn't know what to expect. As a matter of fact I served in the Royal Artillery on a mixed Anti-Aircraft Battery. We were trained to operate instruments which relayed information to the men (gunners) to fire the anti-aircraft guns'. Respondent 15 recalled 'a jolly crowd of girls. I never regretted my years in the ATS'. Respondent 18 was 'homesick at first – then soon made friends – being used to a big family was an advantage and I had no regrets at all. I loved my work'. Respondent 22 was unsure 'whether our "intake" were all volunteers, there may have been some conscripts amongst them, we certainly didn't go round and ask them! No, I didn't regret joining'. Respondent 22 reflected 'First impressions? Very mixed. No, I have never regretted volunteering. I always did and still do think it was the best thing I ever did'. Respondent 25 felt that 'Living in a billet in Blackpool prepared me for meeting a mixed bag of personalities. No I didn't regret volunteering – much more exciting than Blackpool'. For Respondent 26 'Life in the ATS was good. Not all the time, as we all have bad days and awful happenings but we were together, made good friends (many still in touch). We learned to live together and give and take'. Of the 1943 cohort Respondent 16 found it 'OK. After two days we were in uniform and all very much alike. Did not know what to expect took it all as it came. Never regretted volunteering. Where but in the Army would I have had the opportunity to become a despatch rider – with such a challenge'. Respondent 2 found the experience 'shattering, nearly discharged as it was thought I could not settle. I had a sheltered upbringing, sharing a barrack room with 20+ others was like being in hospital.

The first time I had seen anyone drunk (bunk below me). I was just 18. Life was very organised, great pressure to “keep up”, kit well polished, you could slice bread with the crease in your skirt! No, I did not regret joining the ATS. I thrived on it’. Respondent 1 recollected ‘a mixed bunch. Some townies like me, some country types. And yes mum some were common. But we were all enthusiastic and became a good group. I’ll never forget Winnie, a lumpish lass who couldn’t synchronise her RIGHT arm with her LEFT leg for “By the left quick march!” I loved the life, loved the drill (I was good at it ). Je n’ai pas de regrets’.

### **Commentary**

From these responses a picture emerged of the extremely youthful nature of recruits in the ranks of the ATS, the ‘girls’ of the propaganda artefacts explored throughout this thesis. The responses form a narrative mixture of bravado, irony and vulnerability characteristic of teenagers and recalled with gusto. The inclusive nature of the ATS was also demonstrated in these responses which though limited in number have nuances of a rich cross-section of class background and life-experiences prior to volunteering. The capacity of military life to culturally shock/challenge/transform its recruits was well recorded here in spite of which not a single volunteer expressed regrets about joining the ATS.

### **Area 3 (for Conscripts only)**

I was very keen to explore the views of those who did not volunteer, to find out their reasons for not doing so and to obtain their views about their reception in the ATS and their experience of military service. Eight respondents had been conscripted. For responses to Question 1 each respondent’s date of conscription is given in brackets after the respondent’s personal identity number. Thereafter the responses are given in cohorts according to year of conscription.

Question 1 asked ‘ **Which year were you called up? How did you feel about that?**’ Respondent 4 (1942) wrote that she ‘was glad’ and Respondent 6 (1942) had been ‘anxious to serve’. In contrast Respondent 7 (1942) ‘hated leaving home but I was drafted into the ATS’. Respondent 13 was ‘in the 1<sup>st</sup> batch of conscripts – 20 year olds – called up in Feb. 1942. I felt GREAT’. Respondent 20 also recalled the month of her conscription. It was ‘3.6.42. It was a little daunting but I was excited. I had never been away without my parents’. Respondent 21 (1942) gave the year without further

comment. Respondent 27 (1942) recalled the day she received her orders, that she was 'to leave for Glen Parva Barracks, Leics., on New Year's Day '42 for initial training in the ATS'. Respondent 14 (1943) was called up in 'May 1943. I was exempt from volunteering in my civilian job but as soon as I was de-reserved I was called up. I was pleased about this as my parents were against my volunteering and in this way I had no choice'.

### **Commentary**

Only Respondent 7 (1942) recalled resentment and 'hated leaving home'. The others expressed varying degrees of enthusiasm and excitement. The responses also showed how quickly the Government moved to conscript after December 1941, when Parliament agreed the terms for female conscription and how, in 1943, removal of women from 'reserved occupations' increased the available source of female military recruits. The strength of parental influence, commented on in a previous section of this chapter, also emerged here in the comment of Respondent 14 (1943) who was glad that with conscription she 'had no choice' and her parents' opposition to her joining up was no longer of any consequence.

Question 2 asked '**Did you have any choice about which service you joined?**' The responses of the 1942 cohort of conscripts were as follows. Respondents 4, 6 and 7 replied just with 'No'. Respondent 13 wrote, with a degree of irony 'Yes – after I was told I was in the Army. I didn't think I liked the uniform colour – didn't suit me – so I trotted off to try the WRENS and WAAF but they could only offer me cookhouse duties, So I went back to the Army – and changed my make-up!' Respondent 20 simply recorded 'No' and Respondent 21 recalled that 'Most conscripts seemed to go into the Army to take the place of the men who were going overseas'. Respondent 27 wrote 'No. At that time the raids on Bath had started'. 1943 conscript, Respondent 14 had 'wanted to join the WRNS but was directed into the ATS as a telephonist/plotter with a mixed Anti-Aircraft battery'.

### **Commentary**

None of the respondents had a choice of service. This was no surprise since the recruitment crisis in the ATS was the primary reason for the introduction of conscription (issues discussed in thesis Chapter 5). For Respondent 13 (1942) khaki was still a colour not in favour, despite the new uniform design of 1941 and for Respondent

14 (1943) the WRNS would have been her service of choice. The efforts made to popularise the ATS against the competition of other Women's Services is discussed fully in thesis Chapter 5.

Question 3 asked **'Were you made welcome by women already in the ATS? Can you give some examples of your reception?'** Responses from the 1942 intake of conscripts were as follows. Respondent 4 wrote 'Yes. I was part of a new intake at Padgate near Warrington'. Respondent 6 (1942) qualified her response as 'wouldn't say 'welcome'. Businesslike'. Respondent 7 felt that she was welcomed 'on the whole but 'rookies' are often a butt for those already there but it didn't last long. The war was well on so you just got stuck in!' With a deal of humour Respondent 13 (remembered details and that 'it was all rather hilarious being toggged up with only half the uniform and that didn't fit! When my groundsheet was nicked I was told on pay parade well, nick somebody else's you're in the Army now!' Respondent 20 was part of a group who were 'all conscripts. We were all in the same boat and just made the best of it. The basic training (16 weeks) was very hard. We had the same training as the men. Route marches, falling into ditches, gas training, marches, etc.'. Respondent 21 found it 'rather a frightening experience, not knowing what was in store for you. Examples are medicals, inoculations, being kitted out with the uniform, officers checking in the barrack room before you slept to see that you had your vest off – should say we grew up overnight'. This contrasts with the experience of Respondent 27 who recalled being 'very welcome. I felt at home at once. Coming from a very poor home I soon settled in. Some of the girls had come from far better homes but we soon became as one and I liked it'. A 1943 conscript, Respondent 14, wrote 'Yes. There were eight of us doing the same job in the unit and we stayed as a team through service in England, Belgium and Germany until the unit was disbanded'.

### **Commentary**

The culture shock of military service was evident as respondents recalled major adjustments to military life, culture, values, training and discipline. Respondent 20 (1942) reminded her reader that 'We had the same training as the men'. The decision to promote an inclusivist ethos in the ATS was valuably reflected in the comment of Respondent 27 (1942) who knew that 'some of the girls had come from far better homes but we soon became as one and I liked it'. (Issues discussed in thesis Chapters 4 and 5.)

Militating against this ethos, however, was the broad implication from these respondents that conscripts tended to be kept together in units.

Question 4 asked '**Was being in the ATS better or worse than you had expected? If so in what respects?**' The responses of the 1942 intake of conscripts were as follows. For Respondent 4 the experience was 'better. There was great camaraderie that exists to this day'. Respondent 6 'didn't know what to expect'. For Respondent 7 it was 'better as far as I was concerned. You just had to get on with your job and work hard'. Respondent 13 recalled that she 'really hadn't any idea about it. Some postings were good, some not so good. However, contrary to today, girls only left home to get married. This was a great opportunity to flee the nest. I loved my time in the ATS – the freedom – the company and a very different life with loads of friends and yet being part of the war effort'. For Respondent 20 'the basic training was worse but after I passed my Royal Signals course which was very hard, I was elated and proud'. In the opinion of Respondent 21 'the ATS was good for friendships, also for travel, seeing different towns; not many of us had been far from home before call up – it broadened our outlook'. For Respondent 27 the ATS was 'much better (than expected) we were all very proud and ready to 'have a go' at the enemy'. 1943 conscript, Respondent 14, wrote 'I had no idea what to expect but I did enjoy the work, life and company'.

### **Commentary**

Emerging from these responses were themes of comradeship, pride in service and expanding social and emotional horizons for these young women who, it was suggested by Respondent 13 (1942), would have otherwise 'only left home to get married'. These responses strongly echoed those made to my 1996 questionnaire.

Question 5 asked '**What picture did you have of the ATS before you joined it? Where did those ideas come from?**' Responses from 1942 conscripts were as follows. Respondent 4 had 'the Jane picture of the Army. The Cinderella of the Services'. Respondent 6 'didn't think about it', and Respondent 7 'didn't have any idea of what I had to face'. The same view was recalled by Respondent 13 who 'didn't have any idea' and Respondent 20 who 'did not have any idea at all'. Respondent 21 recalled 'talking to my brother on his last leave he said if I had to go just to be careful – that it was not an easy task'. Respondent 27 wrote that her prior picture of the ATS was 'not very good. I fancied being a Wren but no luck there, they needed girls for the ATS. I have never

regretted not getting into the Wrens and felt so proud especially when we did “Salute the Soldier” parades’. 1943 conscript, Respondent 14,’ had no idea what to expect. No one I knew had joined the ATS’.

### **Commentary**

Respondent 4 (1942) picked up on a persistent ‘Cinderella’ image recorded in Wartime Social Survey, October 1941 (discussed in thesis Chapter 4). The majority of respondents had not noticed the pro-ATS publicity blitz of Autumn 1941 (discussed in thesis Chapter 5). Respondent 21 (1942) valued her soldier-brother’s advice and Respondent 14 (1943) suggested the importance of peer group gossip. These sources of influence had been identified in the Autumn of 1941 in Mass Observation reports and subsequently used in recruitment literature and posters as discussed in thesis Chapter 5.

Question 6 asked ‘**Did your view of the ATS change in any way during your years of service?**’ Responses from 1942 conscripts were as follows. For Respondent 4 the answer was a definite ‘Yes. I was very proud of being in the ATS’. Respondent 6 ‘didn’t think about it’. Respondent 7 ‘didn’t have any idea of the ATS before call up, it was all new to me. I found drilling hard and living in a Nissen hut horrid’. Respondent 13 wrote ‘No. It was GREAT, made lots of friends and did lots of different things. A 24 hr pass and off to London, get free tickets for a show, stay in the SA Hostel for the night – such things one would not have the opportunity to do living at home’. Respondent 20 ‘served overseas for which I volunteered. During my time in the ATS and especially after serving overseas I gained confidence and was proud to have served in the ATS’. Respondent 21 recalled ‘No. We made the best of what we got’ but for Respondent 27 the answer was ‘Definitely. We worked very hard, pressing our uniforms which I thought always looked drab at first’. For 1943 conscript, Respondent 14, the answer was ‘No. I had many interesting and worthwhile appointments worldwide after my A.A. service where I found my civilian secretarial skills of use’.

### **Commentary**

From these responses it was clear that those respondents those who entered the ATS with a negative/unformed view about it evaluated that the experience had led to a supportive view of the service and those who had been enthusiastic to begin with had not been disappointed.

#### **Area 4 (For ATS who returned to civilian life)**

Question 1 asked **‘What did it feel like to be demobbed? How did it feel to be back in civilian life? What did you want to do with your post war life? What was happening in your life by 1950?’** Of the twenty-four respondents who answered this question twenty-two had been demobilised by 1946. Respondent 2 was demobbed in 1947. Respondent 5 ‘stayed on by gentleman’s agreement’, waiting for a place at Teachers’ Emergency Training College’ and was released in 1947. Respondent 23 was demobilised in 1945 but ‘missed my ATS life and companions so much that I rejoined in 1947’ and she stayed in the ATS until leaving to marry in 1949.

Feelings about demobilisation were expressed in poignant terms by 5 respondents. Respondent 2 was ‘devastated and could not settle’, Respondent 5 was ‘very sad to be leaving the life I loved’. Respondent 15 recalled ‘I missed my friends a lot’ and for Respondent 16 ‘it was awful. Very unsettled – nearly went back’. Respondent 27 was ‘very unhappy and lonely’. Four respondents commented on the traumatic nature of demobilisation. Respondent 4 wrote that ‘It took some getting used to’, Respondent 7 found that ‘being demobbed had a strange feeling as the Army rules your life in all ways’. Respondent 10 found it ‘marvellous to begin with but then a sort of boredom crept in’ and Respondent 21 found it ‘strange to be in a bedroom with only my sister’. Two respondents, however, were delighted to be released. For Respondent 20 ‘it was wonderful to be at home with my family again and to wear civilian clothes’ and Respondent 22 described it as ‘Great!! Although it took me quite a while to get used to being cooped up in an office again’. Respondent 21 revelled in being ‘able to sleep without syrens (sic) and air raids – such a relief’ and though Respondent 18 was ‘sad to leave friends behind’ she ‘looked forward to being at home’.

Eight respondents returned to their pre war jobs. Respondent 1 as ‘boss lady CEAO (Central Engineers’ Accounts Office)’. Respondent 6 ‘went back to former job’, Respondent 7 ‘had a job to go back to’ and Respondent 8 ‘went back to my previous job as a shop assistant’. Respondent 25 ‘returned to the Civil Service’ and Respondent 26 after a ‘short holiday’ was ‘back to the desk at the MOP (Ministry of Pensions)’. Respondent 27 ‘went back to my old job’. Others had to find jobs. Respondent 11 ‘found an office job within a week of demob’, Respondent 20 ‘got a very good job’ and Respondent 2 recalled that there were ‘plenty of opportunities for employment at all

levels'. Respondent 10 wanted to go abroad but 'turned down' some opportunities and missed her chance.

Twenty-two of the twenty-four respondents were married by 1950 and eleven were married with children. Respondent 1 found that marriage meant 'income was therefore halved'. She married a bank official and though he was only earning £285 a year she had to give up her £250 a year job because 'the Bank Directors forbade working wives'. (So much for notions of service-women having earned equality with men during the war.) Respondent 9 had been the beneficiary of the 'loaned wedding dress scheme (discussed in thesis chapter 6) and remembered how 'those dresses made us feel really GLAMOROUS!' For Respondent 16, however, marriage by 1950 meant 'caring for my widowed father and my husband. Also grandmother in a nearby house'.

There are also hints of post war domestic austerity. Respondent 13 recalled 'by 1950 the housing shortage was bad. Respondent 24 noted 'it was a different world with all the challenges of post war shortages, not a lot of money'. She lived with her husband's family in South Wales. Respondent 13 was married and pregnant, waiting for her husband to be demobbed and 'living with my parents'. There is a degree of resignation and disappointment registered in the narratives. For Respondent 22 'it was much as pre war life except the firm used to have departmental 'socials' and dances'. Respondent 10 who had wanted to work abroad had 'married a farmer and become domesticated'. Even Respondent 23 who 'felt a better and more independent person as a result of her military service' had 'by 1950 married to home life and had my first child'.

### **Commentary**

These responses showed an overwhelming percentage of former service-women picking up the threads of their pre-war traditional female roles. The 'new sense of power' which market researchers had identified in ATS members in 1944 was not the expressed priority of these respondents. The major factors in their life-choices were the return of their sweethearts and Government's determined and speedy demobilisation programme with its attendant loss of occupation, income and status (issues discussed in thesis Chapter 6). The result was that the overwhelming majority of these respondents, despite having served in mixed battery Ack-Ack units, learned new skills and worn Army khaki for at least three years, had taken the conventional female walk down the marriage aisle to domestic responsibilities by 1950.



Question 2 asked ‘**Did you feel the ATS had changed your attitudes to life? If so, could you recall in what ways you felt you had changed?**’ There were only two responses of ‘Not really’ (Respondents 6 and 1) and though Respondent 1 wrote ‘No change’ she qualified it with ‘I was just more able to solve life’s problems for myself. I had a satisfyingly positive idea of my abilities (backed by promotion to Sgt, references from (male) officers in the RE. I could take charge, instruct others and retain their friendship’.

The rest of the respondents felt the ATS had affected them in a number of ways. Respondent 2 felt she ‘grew up quickly on joining the ATS I was selected for an OCTU and obtained a commission. I was responsible for a Company of girls my own age – then 20, 21. I lived the life of an officer, had my own batwoman. I realised that caring for other people was something I was good at. I should never have had the opportunity in civilian life’. Respondent 12 also felt she ‘grew up very quickly. I learnt the true meaning of comradeship and the value of friends. I learned to be a more rounded person and appreciate other people’s feelings’. Respondent 20 confided, ‘Yes I grew up. I realised how cruel people can be and saw what had been done in countries that had been overrun by the Nazis. I knew I would never be the same. I was very innocent of life when at twenty years I was called up’. Respondent 24 wrote, ‘Naturally I had grown up, met a cross-section of men and women, imbued service traditions, discipline was no problem after a boarding school education’.

Increased confidence was expressed in a variety of ways. Respondent 3 was an ‘only child’ who believed ‘the company was good for me’. Respondent 4 ‘had become more responsible and could mix with anybody’. Respondent 5 remembered ‘I had definitely lost all my shyness. Was quite happy to mix with all sorts of people. Was sympathetic to others less fortunate than myself but took a poor view of those who expected State help and wouldn’t “get up and go”’. Respondent 16 ‘felt more confident and able to tackle any job’ and Respondent 21 was ‘a more confident person and more able to accept discipline’. Respondent 23 was ‘much more confident. I would not be so easily afraid of doing the wrong way of things. I would speak my mind more to cope with problems in general, and there were many!’ Respondent 25 ‘had more responsibility in the ATS and so had more confidence meeting people was so much easier’. The most enthusiastic endorsement came from Respondent 10 who wrote, ‘Yes. Like so many others I felt emancipated! It was wonderful what the war and service life did for women.

We had so much more confidence as we realised what an important part we played during those long six years. At least we could work for equality of the sexes and the career opportunities that came with it’.

Broad-mindedness and independence were keywords for Respondent 13 who wrote, ‘Yes – it made me more independent and able to cope with whatever was to happen and boy – did it! ‘Respondent 18 ‘was far more broadminded and independent’. Respondent 22 was ‘much more broadminded and logical about things and made friends more easily’. For Respondents 9 and 7 the ATS was a transformational experience. For Respondent 9 ‘attitudes to life had completely changed. I was able to mix with those socially above and below me... from an only child of elderly parents my life was less constrained after the ATS and I became more open minded on many aspects of life’. Respondent 7 wrote, ‘Yes. I think I was a different person really. Prior to call up my life had been somewhat quiet and ordinary. On return I had a broader outlook and started travelling abroad and mixing with people far more easily’ Respondent 15 felt that ‘after the war I felt more settled in life I did miss the friends I had made’. Respondents 8 and 26 felt ATS inculcated community spirit and moral values. Respondent 8 felt that ‘any ex-service person had a feeling of wanting to be involved with the community’. We probably missed the comradeship’. Respondent 26 felt that ‘the ATS prepared me for the life I have led since – I helped as a Guide Captain, served on committees, licensed as a Lay Person in the Church....Keep-Fit, Group Meetings – I have a full diary’. Respondent 27 felt that compared with values she held ‘at the present time I find younger people have no morals, no respect, no manners’.

### **Commentary**

Maturity, increased social confidence, broad-mindedness and independence are powerful qualities with which these respondents felt they returned to civilian life. Perhaps the ‘new sense of power’ is reflected after all in these assessments of personal development through ATS service. If so, this supports the notion that former service women took new, more assertive values with them into their post-war work and marriages and that, consequently, while indeed returning to pre-war traditional roles they transformed them. This view is supported where ‘surveys in the 1950s showed the ideal of companionate marriage was more popular with women than men ...it became a new marital objective to which the war does appear to have made a significant contribution’.<sup>4</sup>

Question 3 asked **‘Did you keep in contact with former ATS friends? For how long? Do you still keep photographs and reminders of your ATS service? What are your feelings now about those years in the ATS?’** This question produced a wave of nostalgic, spirited and moving responses. Respondent 1 wrote, ‘photos and my UNIFORM still with me. My ATS years a golden memory’. Respondent 2, Hon. Secretary of a WRAC/ATS Association Branch, described how she is ‘in constant touch with our members, some now in their 90s. I treasure my photographs and it is a big part of my life. I feel sure that the experience of belonging to such a vast organisation of women moulded my life. I came out a better person and if it had not been for the likelihood of marriage would have stayed in’. Respondent 3 had ‘lots of photographs and been in the WRAC Association for over 40 years’. Respondent 4 replied, ‘Yes. Still do. Yearly reunion at York and monthly meetings (WRAC Assn.)’ Respondent 5 also replied ‘Yes and still do, but there are only two left now. However I am on the committee of the local WRAC/ATS Assn. We are all elderly ATS but we meet monthly, have two or three holidays away and love reminiscing. The feelings we share about those days are the camaraderie first and foremost, the laughs and the hard times just occasionally. I’ve kept some photographs to put in the family album and my Certificate of Good Service awarded to me by the GOC in C of Northern Command is hanging in a prominent place in my home’. Respondent 6 answered, ‘Yes. Some longer than others. Some still. Yes, in spite of a very eventful time I would not have wanted to miss the experience’. Respondent 8 still keeps ‘in touch with one although we live in different parts of the country and are both the same age (79)’. For Respondent 9 ‘the words I am writing and you are now reading cannot adequately describe my feelings about those years in the ATS. War is an abomination, our lives on mobile Ack-Ack Gun Sites were physically hard, getting very wet even more cold obeying orders without question BUT I wouldn’t have missed it for the world. Friends? 4 of us who worked side by side remained close for 50 years. (family details follow)’. Respondent 10 gave an emphatic ‘Yes indeed. My feelings about those years? I’d do it all again. Join up tomorrow (in the Guards preferably) IF THEY’D LET ME’. Respondent 12 is one of ‘a group of us who meet up at the Field of remembrance. One of the group has a farm and she holds reunions there. My Army photos are very precious to me and I now have another album of our reunions. My feelings are that I wouldn’t have missed a day of my service, hard times included. I am pleased and proud to have been a member of the ATS’. Respondent 13 still keeps ‘in touch and we frequently visit. Yes. I was proud to be in the ATS and now that I am widowed I would like those days all over again, we were

looked after and everything was organised for us. Great days!' Respondent 16 was 'still in contact with 3 remaining ATS in different parts of the country. Yes! I keep photos, badges, medals etc. They were great – a wonderful adventure (taking the rough with the smooth). I wonder sometimes how I rode a motor cycle with only a glimmer of a headlamp and no road signals in the blackout'. Respondent 21 had kept in touch with friends, 'some for 56 years. My photographs are my treasures. I would not have missed my service. I would not have wanted to work on munitions. The comradeship is wonderful. I am in The ATS Assn, and go to York every year to the reunion'. Respondent 24 is 'still in touch with my last team (details). Also we have a reunion at York every year for the ATS who served on Ack-Ack and after 50 years we have at last been recognised by the Royal Regiment of Artillery. Yes I have got photographs and have been in touch with a gentleman from Kenilworth who has found a gunsite. They are trying to get it registered as an historical site! I served on this site. Respondent 25 wrote 'My photographs are still with me. Those years in the Army have convinced me that people were so much men then (sic)'. Respondent 26 was pleased that 'our group has recently been recognised for our war work and have been given the Freedom of Bletchley Park. The years I spent in the ATS altho' difficult time was enjoyed and helped me to realise what a great country we have and worth fighting for'. Respondent 27 remained 'in contact with 5 of my Army comrades (details). My feelings about life in the Army – it is great. I loved the discipline and I think of those brave men and women who lost their lives. The comradeship in the Army is second to none'.

Of those who had not managed to keep in touch Respondent 6 was 'sorry to say I have no contact with former friends. I regret this but we were all split up and went different ways and I lost them. I have a few photos – but no addresses. The memories of those years will always be with me. I have few regrets. I "grew up" during the war but quite honestly I would not want to face war again'. Respondent 11 found that 'being away from the mainland makes it difficult. I can't travel anyway but keep in touch with other ex servicewomen through the WRAC Assn'. Respondent 15 'kept in touch for a long time. But they have since passed away. But I have so many photos to look at. I do many times'. Respondent 18 wrote, '1) Yes but not for long. 2) Yes 3) Pride for the work I did and good memories'. Respondent 20 'lost contact and yes I do have quite a few photos and reminders I was happy to have served and will never forget those 4 years'. Respondent 23 recalled 'it was difficult to keep in touch with everyone. We each went

our own way some to other countries. (some specific detail and reference to meeting 'annually at York'). War is a horrid thing' (lengthy pro-peace statement).

### **Commentary**

The pleasure derived from reunions and recognition of their war work was very strongly expressed by these respondents alongside the desire to communicate their sense that their ATS service had been significant as much in their individual lives as it had been for their country.

### **Area 5. Respondents who stayed in the ATS for a career**

Only two respondents (14 and 17) stayed on long-term. Respondent 14 served from 1943 to 1966. Her responses are given below.

Question 1 asked '**What made you decide to make a career in the ATS? Did you consider military service an unusual choice of work for a woman in 1945?**' 'My AA Unit had been disbanded in 1946 and I had the opportunity of staying on and taking a commission. Mid-1946 I went to OCTU, joined my first unit as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. It never occurred to me that I was doing anything unusual'

Question 2 asked '**What did friends and family feel about you staying in the ATS? Did any of your friends stay in the service with you?**' 'Friends and family were very surprised. My father was most upset but mother not too unhappy, although being the only girl they both felt I should return home. My ATS friends were demobbed by 1946!'

Question 3 asked '**Did you stay in the ATS beyond 1949 to serve in the WRAC? After the war did you notice any changes in public attitudes towards women in military service?**' 'Yes. I served until 1966. No. I can't say I ever felt we were not accepted as part of the Army'.

Question 4 asked '**When did you leave the ATS/WRAC? What did you do in civilian life? What are your enduring feelings about women and military service?**' 'I retired as a Major on marriage in December 1966 after 23 years of service. I then worked for another 23 years as Admin. Secretary of the Friends of King's College Hospital – a very active charity running 3 sales outlets and about 120 volunteers most of

them female. I feel I was readily accepted for this appointment because of my military experience. Times and appointments have changed beyond recognition and modern servicewomen lead a very different life to that of my days. I would however always encourage girls to enlist – it is a good career’.

Respondent 17 left the ATS in 1945. However, she joined the WRAC in 1950 and enclosed a detailed deposition about her army career. She served in the WRAC into the 1970s.

### **Commentary**

The overwhelming percentage of respondents left the ATS for civilian life. This reflects the run down from ATS peak strength of 212,500 in 1943 to just 11,500 when the WRAC was finally set in place in 1949.

### **Afterword**

It was a privilege for me to share the memories of so many former ATS members in the course of the two questionnaires presented in this chapter and rewarding to have disclosed a rich resonance between their recollections and motifs/themes of ATS recruitment strategies, public image and propaganda analysed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of this thesis. The most significant conclusion is that the women overwhelmingly insisted that their military experience had changed their lives in diverse ways and that the thing they valued most of all was the companionship they discovered outside the confines of home and family.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Mass-Observation, Interim File Report 936, 1941.
- <sup>2</sup> Mass-Observation File Report 955, 1941.
- <sup>3</sup> Wartime Social Survey, *ATS*, October 1941.
- <sup>4</sup> Penny Summerfield, 'Approaches to women, war and social change' in B. Brivati and H. Jones (eds) *What Difference Did the War Make?*, Leicester University Press, 1995, p. 77.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusions

Taking women into the army in 1917 had the potential to transform the military and its image along with prevailing gender norms and the citizenship status of women. It did not achieve this in the clear-cut manner of women getting the vote, perhaps because the women's rights movement did not champion women's equal rights in the military as it had in the civic context, perhaps because the WAAC experiment was run so late in the war and was consequently short-lived, could be easily dismissed as an emergency measure, a flash in the cultural pan.

The whole issue also lost momentum in the inter-war years when neither government nor military wanted a peacetime women's army corps of any description and only a tiny minority of upper-class women could afford to maintain their military interests through membership of exclusive, private organisations. Only Helen Gwynne-Vaughan and Lady Londonderry held on to their vision of a permanent state engagement for women in the military and only with the imminence of the Second World War did the opportunity for the kind of transformation which had presented itself in 1917 reoccur.

There is a kind of *déjà vu* about the opening phase of the Second World War in the military context as Helen Gwynne-Vaughan prepared to re-run the WAAC and import her pre-war trained upper-class young women, along with the upper-class young women of the FANY, as officers en bloc. Transformation was not achieved during the Second World War with the ATS either. Again, there was no championing of women's equal rights in the military; a non-combatant role and military recognition was as far as even Helen Gwynne-Vaughan's vision extended. That said, her First World War, male-emulating, male-challenging ethos remained in place and dominated the image of her women's corps. As in the First World War, this was opposed by the government with all the policy and propaganda means at its disposal. It was also, crucially, rejected by working-class young women in the mass-recruitment crisis of 1941. Helen Gwynne-Vaughan was dismissed and replaced by young and glamorous Jean Knox who publicly embodied and crusaded for traditional feminine values in the women's corps while the government's propagandists pumped out a non-stop rhetoric of feminisation and



modernisation in the ATS. This thesis indicates the powerful propaganda impact of leadership image and vision.

At first glance the propaganda imagery supporting ATS recruitment seems flawed, disconcertingly haphazard and ambivalent. A glamorous blonde was the poster icon of choice one day and by the next was replaced by dull but worthy Private Mary. A highly sentimentalised pastel portrait adorned one poster challenged by a dispassionate, female-warrior mask on another in the same recruitment drive in 1944.

Yet on closer examination what seemed a flaw was a strength in terms of mass recruitment because what was eclectic was also inclusive. This propaganda imagery found room for the 'girls' behind the guns as well as the 'girls' who made good apple flans, for young black women in overalls as well as tough-looking old white aristocrats in immaculate uniform. In fact, it made room for women from all classes and many nationalities in the family of the women's army corps.

Running irresistibly through the whole propaganda profile between 1900 and 1949 there is a sense of an ever-strengthening pulse of female aspiration and empowerment. It drives through from the self-conscious, smiling WAACs in 1917, shines through the tenacity of the champions of the women's corps in the inter-war years, survives the ridicule of 1938-41, moves beyond the contrived mass-popularisation of 1941-43 and into the post-war years. In 1947 the military female recruitment slogan was 'They Can't Get On Without Us'. By then even the military recognised that the slogan was also the truth.

I do not claim that taking women into the army in 1917 instantly transformed the military or prevailing gender-norms but it set a powerful precedent. The military never recovered its male monopoly of wartime service and with the retention of the ATS in 1945 lost its male monopoly of peacetime service as well.

Taking women into the army in both world wars also raised public debate, in a way which no other female wartime occupation rivalled, on women's role and women's place in the national cultural and social infrastructure. It exposed more thoroughly than any other female wartime occupation, because of its extremely counter-cultural nature, the social and cultural constructs which determined gender norms and gender roles and

tested to the maximum the capacity of state propaganda and policy to manipulate them in wartime.

It also brought to the women who served in the military in both wars a greatly enhanced sense of their potential and capabilities as independent, individual pro-active citizens in the public domain. Taking women into the army with its working environment of drill and discipline, uniform and communal barrack life, reflecting male experience which was not replicated in any other female war work context, empowered military women and, as this research has indicated, they perceived that themselves. Neither government nor military was on a mission to liberate women in either world war but unintended agendas are sometimes the most powerful and it seems to be true in this case.

In the historiography of women, war and change in twentieth century Britain the military context has been sidelined in favour of both civilian war work, where far greater numbers of women were deployed by the state than it ever recruited for military service, and the domestic context with its millions of housewives. But there are compelling reasons, some suggested above, why this ought not to be so, not least because the social, political and cultural impact of military women always exceeded the scale of recruitment but also because the permanent presence and power of the military makes the state's selection of personnel for it and the gender-distribution of roles and ranks within it a feminist issue. The gender-composition of the army, it has been claimed, has a critical bearing on public perception and assessment of women's status in the national infrastructure and politics of power and citizenship in any culture. Indeed, in March 1981, the American National Organisation of Women presented to the USA Supreme Court a challenge to one-sex (male) conscription on the grounds that it 'perpetuated women's second-class citizenship'.<sup>1</sup>

The issues raised above find loud echoes in the period under review in this thesis. Why would military men so childishly refuse to share insignia and protocols with the WAAC in 1917 if gold braid and saluting did not represent something sacrosanct to the male psyche and to 'masculinity' – whatever that emotive construct might mean? Why else would an all-male hierarchy prefer an all-male army between 1919 and 1938, given the recognised efficiency of the WAAC, if not simply to restore the status quo, psychologically as well as physically? Why withhold military status from serving women's corps members until 1941 despite their obvious and valuable physical

presence since 1939? Why make these women suffer the insult of being called ‘camp followers’ unless to differentiate them from full status, male soldier-citizens? Why permanently preserve combat as a male role – not that many women would want it – unless it has the force of a gender-elitist gesture?

British female citizens in both wars were always designated ‘auxiliary’ this or that or ‘dilutees’ if in factory work and referred to in almost all popular contexts as ‘girls’. What point was there apart from gender politics, in such terminology? In what sense were women ‘auxiliary’? They were doing the whole job. In what sense were they ‘camp followers’ more than the men they worked alongside? Why, in wider public debate, despite the dominant rhetoric of national unity, was there so much obvious misogyny, so much male satirical newsreel commentary on military women, so much male-cartoonist ridicule of women trying to break the barricade on military service? It suggests a general male view that such women were intruders and usurpers; that the military was ‘natural’ male territory and that the very particularised kudos which it gave in wartime was a male legacy solely meant for the male sex.

Further to consider is the question of whether in Britain gender should any longer determine the nature of a citizen’s liability for full military duties when in a number of modern democracies, most notably the USA, this is not the case and all in the military are equally liable for combat training and deployment with combat units. This study has contributed to our understanding of why the British position on these issues remains culturally and politically opposed to any suggestion of British women as combatants in its military, siting the pivotal moment in the creation of the identity of the British military women at the appointment of Jean Knox in 1941 and the public rejection of any notion of a rough, tough women’s army corps, male-emulating and male-challenging in ethos, with the eventual potential for direct fighting alongside the men on the front line.

The state, in two world wars, had gone on a long learning curve to achieve this. It had learned to employ new media, modern marketing techniques and user-friendly propaganda to manage and manipulate public image and public opinion to a favourable, or at least tolerant, stance towards military women and also to enhance recruitment for its women’s corps in both world wars. This study has shown that the state recognised both the need to make gender norms flexible and to ensure that definitions of traditional femininity could be stretched to include rather than oppose women in khaki uniform

when necessary and also that the state recognised that perhaps its most powerful ally in this crucial exercise was the propaganda image and its accompanying rhetoric.

A British government at war and in a tight corner about female military recruitment or public image inevitably reached for its propaganda. Methodological niceties about the difficulties of quantifying propaganda or the inability to disaggregate its influence from general influences or the impossibility of attributing causality to it faded beside the fact that, more often the not, it seemed to work. Recruitment, rock-bottom before a propaganda campaign, catapulted upwards after it. Public image, in shreds before a propaganda drive, was transformed, enhanced after it.

In the process of analysing these campaigns and initiatives the propaganda theories of Jowett and O'Donnell and of Margaret Higonnet began to have a resonance. Firstly, about Jowett and O'Donnell I have a caveat. I found it valuable to consider events prior to propaganda initiatives, to consider them as potential propaganda triggers, an element which Jowett and O'Donnell ignore. However, their general proposal of 'regarding the practices of propagandists as events and the subsequent events as possible effects of propaganda' found an echo in the precisely-dated sequences of propaganda, recruitment and public image profiles which drove the analysis throughout my thesis.<sup>2</sup> These sequences, in turn, did indeed prove instrumental in presenting propaganda as an evidenced and official contributor to many significant recruitment and public image outcomes. Secondly, the eloquence with which particularly the visual images spoke of tricky configurations of femininity in order to sustain female military recruitment or public approval for uniformed, mobile women, bore out completely Higonnet's general claim that 'in wartime the most explicit and deliberate efforts to redefine masculinity and femininity have appeared in propaganda, the principal tool of government seeking to mobilise people to unaccustomed roles'.<sup>3</sup> In the case of my topic, the 'unaccustomed role' was the most unaccustomed of all roles in both world wars, that of the military women.

The propaganda generated throughout the period under review was, unsurprisingly, dominated by the values and language-registers of the middle and upper-middle classes, assumedly 'aspirational' when applied to 'other ranks' recruitment. Even in 1941, when patrician Gwynne-Vaughan was replaced as ATS Director by determinedly populist

Jean Knox, the slogan remained 'But this is a Woman's War, Mother' (Fig. 5.11). It did not shift ground to 'Blimey, this is a Women's War, Mum'.

Ian McLaine's notional propaganda watershed in 1941 is supported, in one sense, by Brigadier Shelford Bidwell who wrote that in the ATS 'in 1941 the mood changed ...the time had come to say goodbye to muddle and dauntless amateurism'.<sup>4</sup> But when new, professional publicists attempted to infuse working-class values into ATS recruitment propaganda they were soon scuppered. Abram Games's *Blonde Bombshell* (Fig. 5.18) challenged, through its image, for recognition of and negotiation with factory girls' preferences for Hollywood-style glamour. A powerful upper-middle-class alliance of interests secured the poster's removal within a few days and its replacement with a role-model more to their liking. Months later, a still-piqued Tom Harrison wrote: 'The Blonde Bombshell was far and away the most "successful" piece of ATS propaganda... the brunette martinet who replaced her emphasised the subsidiariness and mass-uniformity, two things which were already putting women off from joining the ATS.'<sup>5</sup> This may have been true but the populists had been politically put in their place and the values and tone of ATS recruitment propaganda remained middle-class for the rest of the war.

Jean Knox aside, the two propaganda stars of the thesis are the *Blonde Bombshell* and *The Gentle Sex*. These are the representations of the ATS which post-war generations are most likely to recognise. Games's poster is now a popular art postcard, sold at military museums and art galleries. Games is recognised as a major graphic artist. *The Gentle Sex* has also travelled well. For generations of post-war cinema-goers and, latterly, television viewers, its skilfully constructed and appealing vision has defined the ATS. Film historian Nicholas Reeves suggests that, in general, film propaganda arrives too late and, in any case, works best when 'in accord with well-established attitudes'.<sup>6</sup> Both these prescriptions fit *The Gentle Sex*. The recruitment targets had been met before it was released and the Markham report, assisted by the women's press, had already rehabilitated the reputation of the ATS after the immorality scandals of 1941. Film historian Antonia Lant offers a feminist reading of the film, suggesting that it 'above all wishes to speak to men' and interpreting the closing lines as a 'reclamation of a position of mastery for men'.<sup>7</sup> The text in question is

There they are, the women. Our sweethearts, sisters, mothers and daughters. Let's give in at last and admit we're really proud of you. You strange, wonderful, incalculable creatures. The world you're helping to shape will be a better world because you're helping to shape it. Pray silence, gentlemen. I give you a toast. *The Gentle Sex*.<sup>8</sup>

From the perspective of a 1990s woman, and particularly when the script, as above, is looked at as a text, Lant has a point. But in its context, in 1943, there is no evidence that women found these sentiments offensive, especially when delivered by adored Leslie Howard (on-screen Scarlet Pimpernel and Ashley Wilkes of *Gone With the Wind*). The film was a runner-up box office top film of its year and, as Lant herself observes, the majority of film-goers were women.<sup>9</sup>

There is a double irony in the tale of military propaganda. Firstly, the ATS undoubtedly 'softened up' its public image by collaborating with the women's press. But, conversely, in promoting the ATS the women's press generated female images new to its portfolio. These new female identities included women in national role rather than domestic or romantic (Figs. 5.17, 5.27, 5.28), authoritative, independent women (Figs. 5.5, 5.15), women assuming equal status (Figs. 5.34, 5.35) and even women who outranked their male partners (Fig. 5.36). This last example, of course, was Jean Knox's own circumstance. She was a Major General. Her husband was a Squadron Leader. The second irony is that, whatever version of femininity the government chose to serve up for recruitment purposes, lived experience of military service, particularly the prolonged experience in the ATS, made its own modifications. By 1944, Mass-Observation claimed that servicewomen had 'changed more' than any other category of mobile women.<sup>10</sup> This evaluation is fully justified, and the nature of the change clearly revealed, in the testimony of over 200 former ATS members whose questionnaire-responses are analysed in Chapter 7 of the thesis.

My investigations have explicitly revealed the state, in both world wars, immersed in the problem of keeping the army women's image within the boundaries of prevailing cultural toleration; generating reassuring, apologist and pragmatic policies and propaganda, always in a 'catch 22' of having at the same time to meet the aspirations of its potential recruits for excitement, glamour and adventure, and to reassure the military and the public that there was no threat to either the dignity of male troops or to conventional notions of womanhood; trying in both wars to square the circle, to

camouflage in so many ways the tension which was, and to a degree still is, inherent in British culture between even the words 'soldier' and 'woman' and, as the pattern of state intervention suggests, if it had not been for the nature and scale of twentieth century warfare there would probably have been no state intervention to break the male monopoly of its military at all.

This study has reviewed a culture in transition where women and men, under the pressure of war, were in the process of having to come to terms with expedients even about the most cherished 'givens' of class, behaviour and gender, the most emphatically male of which was embodied in the military. It also exposed the painful complexity of the process and that it was by no means a straightforward confrontation between the sexes. Some studies have construed women's 'liberation' to mean something like 'Did women become ersatz men?' and that only if this was the case were women deemed to have been liberated by their military experience. In this they replicate the ideological position of the upper-class female pioneers and First World War champions of women's military service, reflected in such comments as

Showing a General around my large camp in Etaples the General was somewhat surprised at the barrack-like appearance of the Recreation hut and remarked to the DDMS "Cannot the BRCS (British Red Cross Society) do something in the way of comforts for these women?" "No, sir. I am sorry that is not possible as these women are counted as combatants." I feel very proud to think that each of my women replaced a fighting man.<sup>11</sup>

Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, who led the WAAC in 1917, perpetuated this ethic into the ATS which she directed between 1938 and 1941.

Gail Braybon, in her 1995 study of women in the First World War took this same ideological stance and concluded that 'in reality, nothing could be more conventional than the role women were required to play in the army. There was never any suggestion of women handling weapons or fighting. They were, after all, what men were fighting for'.<sup>12</sup> Yet this is to miss that, given the previous gender-inviolability of the army, a government-recruited, uniformed, barrack-living WAAC was in itself practically a revolutionary concept. The Assistant Adjutant General, Colonel Leigh-Hunt was certainly in no doubt as to its iconoclasm. He refused to let his wife wear khaki, commenting acidly to the WAAC leader, 'My wife, Mrs Gwynne-Vaughan, is a truly feminine woman'.<sup>13</sup> It is to miss the enormous efforts of propaganda that it took to

present the WAAC in an even acceptable light, including a major Parliamentary Enquiry and the intervention of Queen Mary. The significance of the WAAC lay not in what they did but where, and in what mode, they did it.

Similarly, Gerard J. DeGroot, for his 1997 study of war and women's liberation made an astute bee-line for what he described as 'the most significant assault upon strictly defined gender roles' in the Second World War, when, in 1941, General Sir Frederick Pile, Commander of Britain's Anti-Aircraft (AA) defences deployed women from the ATS to the AA batteries. DeGroot's conclusion was that the 'mixed battery experience provides more evidence that war does not liberate women' and that

because women still got pregnant, still used too much toilet paper and still found pleasure in being pretty they could never be more than ersatz soldiers. And though their proximity to the killing process was significant, they could never compete on equal terms with men.<sup>14</sup>

But I would suggest that what Gerard DeGroot is evidencing is not, as he concludes, that their differences made women 'ersatz soldiers' but that it failed to make them 'ersatz men' and that is the basis on which he determined that the women's experience had not 'liberated' them. This is to miss that only a tiny minority, including upper-class female officers in the ATS, was still defining female empowerment in this way in the Second World War and that women, especially the mass of working-class young women, resoundingly rejected it in 1941 by refusing to volunteer for an ATS which espoused a tough ethic and a masculinised public image. Scarlett O'Hara, heroine of the 1940 block-buster movie, *Gone With the Wind*, was their new role model, exerting power through her physical beauty while *at the same time* displaying grit in wartime harsh circumstances and even killing in defence of home and family. There was a class challenge to the values of the old-style women's military officers as well as a gender challenge for ownership of qualities traditionally gendered as male. Abram Games's 1941 poster, *Join the ATS* with its glamorous image (American-style forage cap, red lipstick and all) championing these new, energised values raised fierce public clashes between political and cultural elitists on the one hand and populists on the other in the same way that Labour MP Ellen Wilkinson's direct political challenge to female class-nepotism in the question of promotions and officer appointments in the ATS had back in 1939. Women were liberated in a new sense of their own determining, pointing to a possibility, in Cynthia Enloe's phrase, that indeed 'some of the best soldiers wear



lipstick'.<sup>15</sup> And if the non-combatant role made women 'ersatz' soldiers should not that hold good also for male soldiers who were in the same category?

It was a hard irony for Helen Gwynne-Vaughan that her dismissal in 1941 coincided with the ATS achieving formal military status under the Army Act at last but that her 'promised land', for which she worked so hard and for so long, was a prize which fell to Jean Knox, whose vision of military women was so very different from her own and to an ATS in which the culture was dominated by the values of working-class women, eventually 200,000 strong in the ATS 'other ranks'.<sup>16</sup>

My findings from the testimony of the women who served in and with the military in the Second World War coincide with those of Tom Harrison, who in a Mass-Observation report of 1944 concluded that 'the Service girl's life has been completely changed by the war, more so than any other section of the community'<sup>17</sup> and Penny Summerfield, writing in 2000, who concluded that, of twenty two servicewomen she interviewed 'all but two of them took up enthusiastically the idea that their war service had changed them'.<sup>18</sup> Tessa Stone, in her study of WAAF recruits also concluded that 'consideration of the more subjective effects of women's wartime participation provides a positive illustration of lasting gain. The overwhelming experience in the case of these WAAF, as suggested implicitly throughout this study was one of personal fulfilment'.<sup>19</sup>

My research indicated the emergence of a confident and new interpretation of womanhood, neither the fragile, delicate model of Victorian mythology nor the rough, tough model of a masculinised mythology; nor the 'shall we join the gentlemen', refined, male-emulation model of the upper-class pioneers of the women's corps nor the pack of working-class sluts model of public nightmare. While only two respondents to my questionnaires put out to former ATS members displayed overtly feminist sentiments there is a very powerful affirmation of personal development in ways which they attribute specifically to their military service. Even allowing for the glosses of hindsight there is unmistakable pride and satisfaction when recruits wrote of how they acquired what would be traditionally regarded, if gendered, as 'male' qualities of leadership, assertiveness, self-discipline, self-sufficiency and social confidence. But these qualities were not acquired as trade-offs for becoming, by any means, 'ersatz men'. Perhaps the most liberating thing women learned was that such qualities are, in fact, gender-free, along with courage, endurance and resolve. It is worth noting that the

overwhelming consensus amongst respondents was that ‘the best thing about the ATS’ was the camaraderie, the comradeship. This is not to suggest that, because ‘male bonding’ is a much-emphasised aspect of male military experience, service women had internalised ‘male values’. It was simply the consequence of women being offered the opportunity to function as part of a team, doing work of nationally-recognised importance, and valuing, above all, the female friendships which they formed in common cause and outside the domestic context. This was what emerged as a new norm. That it was legitimate and normal for women to take work and live in ways previously reserved for men and not to be fazed by it.

The post-Second World War debate about women, war and social change is primarily concerned with whether new norms were set up and whether they impacted into post war life. My research indicates that this was indeed the case with our military women. The government’s propaganda, they insisted, was largely lost on them as was the state’s and the public’s obsession with allegations of their immorality. It was abundantly clear that many women who joined up positively revelled in what for many was a first taste of financial independence and life-choices made without reference to parents or boyfriends. For many working-class women military experience dramatically raised their horizons of both standard of living and social relationships. The fact that so many former ATS members, fifty years after the events, so decidedly prioritise how they constructed new perceptions and affirmative re-evaluations of their skills, abilities, personal worth and citizenship potential, strongly suggests that the values they expressed were the values and vision of womanhood which they took back with them into civilian life, to their workplaces, their marriages and perhaps even to their attitudes towards the ambitions of their daughters, who would be young women in the ‘women’s liberation’ generation of the 1960s.

My research was specifically focused on state propaganda for the recruitment and public image promotion and protection of its women’s army auxiliary corps and the range of responses it generated from the media, the public and recruits. Studies of civilian women’s perspectives, particularly of women who were housewives or factory workers, and their subjective evaluations of the impact on them of the presence and image of women in khaki might say more about hints in responses to my questionnaires that civilian women were jealous of women in uniform who worked in ‘a man’s world’. Closer examination of servicemen’s perspectives, crucially sampled by Mass-

Observation in 1941 for propaganda purposes, would provide the complementary gender-perspective on issues such as mixed-gender units and conscription of women into the army. Studies which explored recruits' class status prior to recruitment vis-à-vis their final rank in the ATS would give substance to issues of class prejudice which came through so strongly in this research, both in public discourses and echoed in the responses to my questionnaires. Studies that evaluated the diversity of women's military experience and the impact of it on women from differing social class, ethnic backgrounds, ages, geographical regions would all finesse this research, which indicated the significance of this topic area to questions of national identity, as would comparative studies of the experience of the ATS recruits with those of the WAAF and WRNS along with transnational studies of those services in which women are combatants.

Most obviously there remains investigation into the second half of the twentieth century where, once more, the propaganda and public image concerning military women might prove a valid way of estimating shifts (or resistance to change) in the social perceptions about what is appropriate for the state to require of its women citizens. The WRAC was set up as a female-only corps in 1949, still subscribing institutionally to the concept of 'separate spheres' for men and women. It took until 1990 for a change in policy to disband it and recruit women directly to army regiments. This delay begs explanation as does the nature of military duties assigned to military women in conflicts in Ireland, Suez, Cyprus, the Falklands, Afghanistan, the Gulf and Iraq.

Historical research excites most when it reverberates into the present. The last and toughest gender-barrier in the army remains in place. Women are still excluded from combat in 2005. On May 13, 2002, *The Times* reported that the Minister of Defence had been convinced that 'the Army is not ready to have women serving in a combat, bayonet-carrying role'.<sup>20</sup> For two years prior to this decision the army tested women for combat roles in a study of 'Combat Effectiveness and Gender'. In a motif familiar to my research it was suggested that the question was only being raised because 'the Army was finding it difficult to recruit'.<sup>21</sup> In further motifs, very familiar to my research, the press and infantry officers expressed their opinions. The 17,000 women in the British army as the twenty-first century dawned were left in no doubt as to male comrades' perceptions of them and the vulnerability of their public image. 'It's ludicrous' said one serving infantry officer 'can you imagine women fighting in a trench with their bare

hands?’ Others spoke of how men’s judgement would be impaired by instinctive urges to go to the aid of female comrades. ‘It would tear the Army apart’.<sup>22</sup> The field trials were dismissed by one infantry officer as ‘Camping with fireworks. It’s got sod all to do with fighting’. Another infantry officer joked, ‘All our lads are big guys. There’s no point in having a 5ft. 2in. woman in a 5ft. 3in. swamp’. A senior officer, former commander of an elite infantry corps, said ‘It would be immensely de-stabilising, possibly demoralising and my wife would go completely mad’.<sup>23</sup> *The Sun* newspaper would certainly have provoked her to do this. On 9 February 2001, right in the middle of the trials *The Sun* headline was ‘Today sexy Lance Corporal Roberta Winterton becomes the first serving soldier to pose on page 3 TOPLESS’. Having fielded this trivialising image of army women *The Sun* followed it up with headlines ripe in sexual innuendo. ‘BUSTED. Top Army brass put topless Corporal on Charge’ (10 February). ‘STRIPPED. Army demotes page 3 soldier Roberta after topless pose’ (16 February).

The technology of modern war grows ever more abstract but the gut role of the infantry remains in place. Perhaps the ‘old problem’ of male recruitment crisis will yet put women on the front line. For the moment, the media and public still seem only stirred by ‘sexationalised’ aspects of women’s military service. There is a resounding silence on the question from women’s rights and equal rights pressure groups and also from women MPs, despite the fact that there are more of them than at any other time and that deployment of women soldiers on the front line is now a familiar feature in many modern armies. The government privileges the professional advice of its male Chiefs of Staff and that advice supports the status quo.

My research, new in approach, temporal scope and diversity of methods has indicated the significance of the military to what dominant British culture is comfortable with in its construction of masculinity, femininity and citizenship. It also widens future debate about women, war and social change in twentieth century Britain to include women who found military service an affirmative, liberating experience.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki become You? The Militarisation of Women's Lives*, Harper Collins, London, New York, 1983, p. 237.
- <sup>2</sup> Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, Sage, 1992, p. 1.
- <sup>3</sup> Margaret R. Higonnet et al. (eds) *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, Yale University Press, 1987, p. 5.
- <sup>4</sup> Shelford Bidwell, *The Women's Royal Army Corps*, Leo Cooper, 1977, p. 53. Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, Allen and Unwin, 1977, p.10.
- <sup>5</sup> Tom Harrisson. Quoted in James Chapman, *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda, 1939-1945*, I.B. Tauris, 1998, p. 209.
- <sup>6</sup> Nicholas Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda. Myth or Reality?*, Cassell, 1999, pp. 181, 194.
- <sup>7</sup> Antonia Lant, *Blackout: Reinventing Women for Wartime British Cinema*, Princeton University Press, 1991, p. 90.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 92.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 93.
- <sup>10</sup> Mass-Observation Report, *The Journey Home*, 1944, pp. 51, 61. Discussed in thesis Chapter 6.
- <sup>11</sup> NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-230-1. Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper. Correspondence concerning the collection of material for Cowper's *History of the Women's Services*.
- <sup>12</sup> Gail Braybon, 'Women and The War' in *The First World War in British History*, S. Constantine et al (eds), Edward Arnold, 1995, p. 164.
- <sup>13</sup> Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in Her Time: A Life of Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, 1879-1967*, Macmillan, St. Martin's Press, 1969, p. 300.
- <sup>14</sup> Gerard J. DeGroot, 'I love the scent of cordite in your hair', *History* 82, 1997, p. 92.
- <sup>15</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?* op. cit., Chapter 5 title.
- <sup>16</sup> Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, *Service with the Army*, Hutchinson, 1942, p. 137 wrote, 'at last our women had ceased to be camp-followers. And I had held the King's Commission. I had spent a month in my promised land'.
- <sup>17</sup> Mass-Observation Report, *The Journey Home*, 1944, pp. 59-61.

- <sup>18</sup> Penny Summerfield, ‘ “It did me good in lots of ways”: British Women in Transition from War to Peace’ in Claire Duchen and Irene Banhauer-Schoffmann (eds) *When the War was Over: Women, War and Peace in Europe, 1945-1956*, Leicester University Press, 2000, p. 18.
- <sup>19</sup> Tessa Stone, *The Integration of Women into a Military Service: The Women’s Auxiliary Air Force in the Second World War*, PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 1998, p. 270.
- <sup>20</sup> *The Times*, 13 May, 2002, Section 8, News.
- <sup>21</sup> *The Observer*, 28 May, 2000, Front Page.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> *The Observer*, 24 December, 2000, Front Page.

## APPENDIX 1

### Societies affiliated with the Girl Guides, 1922 Source: Annual Reports, the Guide Association Archive

Organisation," or in the Pamphlet on Kindred Societies, which is published by the Girl Guides' Headquarters.

The following is a list of the Societies who have affiliated with the Girl Guides :—

Actors' Church Union.  
Association of Wrens.  
British Red Cross Society.  
Catholic Women's League.  
Central Council for Infant and Child Welfare.  
Central Committee for the Care of Cripples.  
Children's Union.  
Christian Alliance of Women and Girls.  
Church of England Temperance Society.  
Duty and Discipline Movement.  
English Folk Dance Society.  
Girls' Diocesan Association.  
Girls' Fellowship.  
Girls' Friendly Society.  
Green Cross.  
Independent Order of Rechabites.  
Invalid Children's Aid Association.  
M.A.B.Y.S. for the Care of Young Girls.  
Ministering Children's League.  
Mothers' Union.  
National Baby Week Council.  
National Children's Home and Orphanage.  
National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland.  
National Juvenile Templars' Council.  
National Society of Day Nurseries.  
Representative Council of Girls' Associations.  
Scottish Sisterhood Mission.  
Time and Talents Guild.  
United Kingdom Band of Hope Union.  
Victoria League.  
Volunteer Service League.  
Waifs and Strays Society.  
Women's Civil Corps.  
Women's Legion.  
Young Women's Christian Association.



APPENDIX 2

'A Women's O.T.C'

Source: *The Times*, dated 16.10.37. Press cuttings in papers of Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan. NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-253-235

THE TIMES  
16.10.37

THE TIMES SAT

National Army Museum  
Archive: Ref. 9401-253-235

OF A. WOMEN'S O.T.C.

4,200  
LAK

FUTURE OFFICERS OF  
AUXILIARY UNITS

FOREST

PRACTICAL TRAINING IN  
CAMP

Numbers of young women who might be fitted by education and character for service as officers in women's corps for providing supplementary labour to the fighting Services are at present attending courses of instruction and an annual camp organized on something of the lines of the O.T.C. system. Such courses have been in progress for 18 months, and about 100 members have been enrolled. They include married women and single, who are willing to serve as officers if war should break out. Some are wives of serving officers, some are women in employment, and some are women who come to London from the country for periods of training.

Many of the married members have made arrangements for the care of their families if war should come, and have secured the approval of husbands for the steps they would take in that event to place their services at the disposal of the war ministries. So far those Departments of State have had no hand in their recruiting or directly in their training, but a benevolent attitude on the part of the War Office and the Air Ministry has meant that experienced officers in the Army and Royal Air Force have helped in giving instruction to the volunteers, who have been organized independently by the Council of Emergency Service, of which Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan is chairman and Mrs. E. St. C. Harnett is hon. sec.

A LESSON OF THE WAR

The organization has arisen out of the experience of some of those who served as officers of women's corps in the last War. Nearly 100,000 women who served in the Forces as cooks, clerks, store-women, telegraphists, telephonists, and in various other trades and mechanical grades, were controlled by women officers, who, in the early part of their service, had to learn the usages of the Services in matters of rations, pay, leave, correspondence, discipline, and the well-being of units while they served. Efficiency suffered during the learning period, and the present movement is an attempt to supply for any future emergency that which was lacking in the last—a body of potential officers for the women who might replace soldiers and airmen in certain essential occupations.

The movement has no external support. Its members pay a subscription of 10s a year, and in its present state of voluntary help that suffices for the expenditure it must incur. It benefits from the hospitality of those who approve its aims. Its next course of instruction for what may be called recruits is to be held, for instance, partly at the Ex-Service Women's Club, partly at the headquarters of the County of London Squadron of the Auxiliary Air Force, and mainly at the London District School of Instruction, Regent's Park Barracks. An advanced course for senior cadets is in progress at the headquarters of the County of London Squadron. For practical training at the annual camp a house and grounds are lent annually to the council, and cadets are required to attend for periods of eight to 15 days.

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THE RECI

MR. HORN

Mr. Horn-Bellé War, went to Depot in Whit recruiting system

Accompanied Adjutant-General Bellé's Inspector-Depot. In the h wall the color to be patient some civility some.

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(cont.)

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ARMY COOKERY STANDARDS

The camp is the main opportunity for practising the members in the duties in which they have been instructed. They live in the conditions of the ordinary military camp. They are given foot drill, and they have experience in moving parties of women in the orderly manner prescribed by military custom. By turns they undertake the duties of commanding officer, adjutant, orderly officer, drill instructor, and learn the routine of the orderly room. They provide their own food, according to the dictates of Army regulations, and this is prepared and served according to the Army cookery book and the military regulations. And until members have submitted themselves to these conditions and this practical training they cannot qualify.

Judging by the work which was found for women in the Services during the last war, it is presumed that some 1,500 women officers might be needed in a future war. The Council of Emergency Service could at present arrange four courses for 50 members each in the year, and its output of trained cadets may therefore amount to 200 a year. Present plans do not provide for more than four courses a year or for courses outside London.

do so, and the hands. Mr. Horn-Bellé of advice being before they had Colonel A. R. himself joined, ago. He deat them and how had a word f "Your instruct you, but they d prepared to be y instructors. If it you are in any di all the answers." Mr. Horn-Bellé of The Middlesex he watched ph machine-gun pra before having fun the orderly room

LORD ATTI FROM EMPLOYME SU A letter from

THE NEW COOKERY



## APPENDIX 3

### Statistical Tables

Source: Eric Taylor, *Women who went to War, 1938-1946*,  
Robert Hale, London, 1988, p. 234

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#### WOMEN WHO WENT TO WAR

*Chart showing strength of the three Services and the Nursing Services  
(in '000s)*

#### Women's Auxiliary Services

Date	Total	Women's Royal Naval Service	Auxiliary Territorial Service	Women's Auxiliary Air Force	Nursing Services
Sept. 1939	—	1.6	—	—	2.4
Dec. 1939	43.1	3.4	23.9	8.8	7.0
Mar. 1940	—	4.4	—	8.9	8.2
Jun. 1940	56.6	5.6	31.5	11.9	7.6
Sept. 1940	69.3	7.9	36.1	17.4	7.9
Dec. 1940	75.1	10.0	36.4	20.5	8.2
Mar. 1941	85.8	12.3	37.5	27.0	9.0
Jun. 1941	105.3	15.1	42.8	37.4	10.0
Sept. 1941	157.5	18.0	65.0	64.1	10.4
Dec. 1941	216.0	21.6	85.1	98.4	10.9
Mar. 1942	258.6	24.8	111.1	110.8	11.9
Jun. 1942	307.5	28.6	140.2	125.7	13.0
Sept. 1942	351.1	33.5	162.2	141.5	13.9
Dec. 1942	400.6	39.3	180.7	166.0	14.6
Mar. 1943	435.9	45.0	195.3	180.1	15.5
Jun. 1943	461.6	53.3	210.3	181.6	16.4
Sept. 1943	470.7	60.4	212.5	180.3	17.5
Dec. 1943	467.5	64.8	207.5	176.8	18.4
Mar. 1944	468.8	68.6	206.2	175.7	18.3
Jun. 1944	466.4	73.5	199.0	174.4	19.5
Sept. 1944	463.7	74.0	198.2	171.2	20.3
Dec. 1944	457.1	73.4	196.4	166.2	21.1
Mar. 1945	449.7	73.2	195.3	159.7	21.5
Jun. 1945	437.2	72.0	190.8	153.0	21.4

## APPENDIX 4

### Statistical Tables

Source: N. Loring Goldman, *Female Soldiers, Combatants or Non-Combatants? Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1982, p. 31

Great Britain and the World Wars . 31

**Table 1.2**

**Number and Percent of Women Utilized by the Armed Forces of Great Britain: 1939-1945 (by service and year)**

DATE	NO. WRNS	% NAVY	NO. ATS	% ARMY	NO. WAAF	% AIR FORCE	TOTAL IN 3 SER- VICES	% IN SER- VICES
Dec. 1939	3,400/	1.56	23,900	2.08	8,800	3.93	36,100	2.27
Dec. 1940	10,000	2.92	36,400	1.72	20,500	4.01	66,900	2.26
Dec. 1941	21,600	4.59	85,100	3.51	98,400	10.80	205,100	5.39
Dec. 1942	39,300	6.49	180,700	6.58	166,000	15.06	386,000	8.67
Mar. 1943	45,000	6.87	195,300	6.92	180,100	15.96	420,400	9.13
June 1943	53,300	7.47	210,300	7.29	181,600	15.81	445,200	9.38
Sept. 1943	60,400	7.84	212,500	7.35	180,300	15.51	453,200	9.39
Dec. 1943	64,800	7.89	207,500	7.19	176,800	15.04	449,100	9.19
Mar. 1944	68,600	8.20	206,200	7.14	175,700	14.94	450,500	9.20
Dec. 1944	73,400	8.60	196,400	6.64	166,200	14.44	436,000	8.79
June 1945	72,000	8.42	190,800	6.13	153,000	13.87	415,800	8.20

SOURCE: Great Britain Central Statistical Office (1951: Table 10).

## APPENDIX 5

### Statistical Tables

Source: Papers of Colonel Julia M. Cowper. NAM Archive. Ref. 9401-247-322-2

9401-247-322-2

Appx 'A'

#### Half Yearly Corps Strength ATS/WRAC

At the last day of:-	Officers	Other Ranks
1946		
June	2464	57888
December	1567	36911
1947		
June	1283	28191
December	1058	17320
1948		
June	956	13403
December	823	10781
1949		
June	727	8294
December	680	6595
1950		
June	553	5868
December	507	5562

## APPENDIX 6

### ATS Questionnaire. Issued by Sandra Jackson, 1996

Issued by Sandra Jackson at Thames Valley University, London.  
Questionnaire concerning ATS recruitment material and public image  
in Second World War Britain.  
**INFORMATION FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY.**  
Stamped, addressed envelope enclosed for your reply/replies.  
Thank you for your time and input to my research.

1. Please comment on any poster, radio broadcast, film, exhibition, press coverage, events or personalities which you think influenced women to join (or reject) the ATS.

2. What, as far as you can recall, prompted you to join the ATS?

3. What were your expectations on joining? Were they proved accurate?

4. What is your estimate of public opinion about the ATS during the war years? Could you suggest on what basis these opinions were being formed?

5. What remains most clearly in your mind as the "best thing" about the ATS?

Optional information  
Name

Rank in ATS

Dates of Service

## APPENDIX 7

### ATS Questionnaire. Issued by Sandra Jackson, 2002

**Questionnaire for Ex-ATS members  
Issued by Sandra Jackson at Thames Valley University, October 2002.  
Information given will be used only for academic research purposes. Thank you  
for your input.**

**Name (while in ATS)  
Dates of Service  
Rank in ATS  
WRAC Association Branch**

**AREA 1            Questions for ALL respondents.  
Would you please think back to your life in 1938 /1939 before the war**

Were you still at school or had you started work/further education?

How did you spend your spare time?

What were your ambitions for your adult life?

Did you think you would have to leave your home area to fulfil your ambitions?

Did you believe there would be a war? What did your friends/family feel about it?  
What was influencing your thinking on this matter?

Did you think you might be asked to volunteer for war service? How did you feel  
about that possibility? Did you imagine yourself in any particular role?

## APPENDIX 7 (cont.)

### AREA 2            Questions for ATS Volunteers

What date did you decide to join the ATS? Can you recall why you joined at that particular point?

What did your friends/family think about you joining the ATS?

How did you feel about wearing the uniform in public? What was the public response like?

Can you recall details of any efforts in your locality, for example through local newspapers or cinemas, to recruit women for the ATS around the time that you volunteered?

What were your first impressions of the other volunteers you met in the ATS? Was life in the ATS as you had imagined it? Did you regret volunteering?

## APPENDIX 7 (cont.)

### AREA 3. Questions for ATS Conscripts

Which year were you 'called up'? How did you feel about that?

Did you have any choice about which service you joined?

Were you made welcome by the women already in the ATS? Can you give some examples of your reception?

Was being in the ATS better or worse than you had expected? If so, in what respects?

What picture did you have of the ATS before you joined it? Where did those ideas come from?

Did your view of the ATS change in any way during your years of service?

## APPENDIX 7 (cont.)

### **AREA 4    Questions for ATS who returned to civilian life at the end of the war**

**What did it feel like to be 'demobbed'? How did it feel to be back in civilian life?  
What did you want to do with your post-war life? What was happening in your life by  
1950?**

**Did you feel that your ATS service had changed any of your attitudes to life? If so,  
could you recall in what ways you felt you had changed?**

**Did you keep in contact with former ATS friends? For how long? Do you still keep  
photographs and reminders of your ATS service? What are your feelings now about  
those years in the ATS?**



## APPENDIX 7 (cont.)

### AREA 5 Questions for those who stayed in the ATS as a career after 1945

What made you decide to make a career in the ATS? Did you consider military service an unusual choice of work for a woman in 1945?

What did friends /family feel about you staying in the ATS? Did any of your ATS friends stay in the service with you?

Did you stay in the ATS beyond 1949 to serve in the WRAC? After the war did you notice any changes in public attitude towards women in military service?

When did you leave the ATS/WRAC? What did you do in civilian life? What are your enduring feelings about women and military service?

# APPENDIX 8

## Sample of data collation for ATS Questionnaire, 1996

Question 3		Sheet 1		* = expectations were inaccurate									
Question 3		What were your expectations on joining?										Questionnaire 1996	
Were they proved accurate?		1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945				
RESPONSE	144.			2* 79, 89, 138 177, 190		53, 95, 159, 180 242							
Something better than her civilian life/ something new	141,			24, 27, 60, 214	60, 90, 99, 123 130, 136, 142B 149, 158, 185, 216 217	19, 20, 37, 52, 65 71, 97, 113, 114 130, 163, 165* 259, 288.	5, 171, 55, 64, 74 117, 169, 161, 204 245, 211.						
No 'expectations'	144.				8,	120, 148							
Uniform	78				8, 50	120, 148						116	
Discipline / strict rules (78)		112					192						
working with lots of different people (82)				190	6, 143, 208	161, 213	179, 268,	145					
'to work hard' (89)					122,								
'to be home sick'		9, 188, 290				115, 148							
to be happy in job helping the new effort					10								
		22, 217		11, 12, 18	50, 82, 155, 180 86, 210	91, 115, 169, 176 183, 187, 202 213, 222, 242	62, 182	156					

APPENDIX 9

Sample of data collation for ATS Questionnaire, 2002

ATS who returned to civilian life	Post War Destinations	ATS Questionnaire 2002	Area 4
Respondent No (and source dates)			
(1943-1946)	1	Had been trained in London. Rep. for wedding 21 Dec 1946. was asked to return to my job as civilian. I was 'boss lady' CEAO (Central Engineer's Accounts Office), salary £250 a year. Husband to be demobbed from Army returned to job as bank official (salary £285 a year) BUT the Bank Director forbade working wives! Income was therefore halved... In 1950 I continued to police - married for 4 years and with a little son of 2 1/2 years. I transferred College 1968-75. Hon. French Degree + Dip. Ed. Taught 13-17. Joined WRAC Assoc. 1991	
(1943-1947)	2	Was demobbed and could not settle. I had no idea what job I would do - there were plenty of opportunities for employment at all levels. My boyfriend had been demobbed six months before me and used to see me back off to camp at the railway station. By 1950 I was married, I have spent 53 happy years with my husband. Because as woman would Employment Officer for Chelmsford, placing hundreds of children in employment.	
(1943-1946)	3	I was demobbed Dec '46. went work to the Civil Service for ten months then got married Oct 7 1947 to the Scottish I have stayed in Northern Ireland ever since (married 55 years next month). By 1950 I had my first son.	
(1942-1945)	4	Took some getting used to. I had been in Aik-Aik on a command post, I met my husband here and married in Feb 1945. Demobbed July 1945.	
(1940-1947)	5	I was very sad to be leaving the life I loved. I had signed on by Gentlemen's Agreement, waiting for a place at Teacher's Emergency Training College... awarded a place in Nov 1947 so by 1950 I was a teacher in a secondary Modern School. (This, at the time, seemed to offer a more secure future than if I'd stayed on in the ATS.	
(1942-1946)	6	Great. Went back to former job. Got married.	
(1942-1946)	7	Being demobbed had a strange feeling as the Army rules your life in all ways, where they put you, what you wear, your work, washing then return to civilian life has almost like starting life again, but I coped. I had a job to go back to so I was lucky. By 1950 I was settled as a civilian again and happy at home.	
(1942-1945)	8	I was married in 1945 and was demobbed in August of that year. My husband went on for another 2 years. I went back to my previous job as a sleep assistant for Boris the Clown. By 1950 I had 2 children as I was a mother and a housewife.	
(1941-1946)	9	Because my work as a Radar Operator in the ATS came to a halt at the end of the war I was 'unemployed' + my boyfriend had returned from Trieste we became engaged and on August 18 1945 we married (I received Boris in Cardiff's wedding dress scheme) these dates made us feel really 'L.A.M.O.R.O.S.'... We wanted at that point was to find a home and have a family. My husband was a Regular Serviceman so I travelled in the UK with him. We rented a farm labourer's cottage near his RAF station and by 1950 had produced 2 darling little girls (now 54 and 50)!	
(1940-1946)	10	Marvellous to begin with, but then a fort A boredom crept in and we missed the life we'd become used to. I wanted to get a job abroad but turned down opportunities to go first to Rhodesia and after to Australia and then in 1951 I married a farmer and became domesticated!	

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