**Modernising the Military: Promoting a New ‘Brand Image’ of the British Army, Navy and Air Force in the Post-National Service Era, 1957-63**

The 1957 Defence White Paper is widely regarded as a milestone in British military history, not least because it heralded the end of post-war conscription or National Service. The impact of the paper on the higher aspects of Britain’s defence policy, and on the nation’s place in Europe and the wider world, has been well documented. Yet, little is known about how the armed forces responded to the reforms with a series of large-scale military recruitment campaigns to boost their annual intake of volunteers. The gradual phasing out of conscription placed new pressures on the Army, Navy and Air Force, and this paper will explore how they sought to manage the transition from a partly-conscripted to an all-professional system in 1957-63. Exploring a range of promotion carried in newspapers, films, newsreels and broadcast media, it shows how recruiters drew on prevailing ideas of modernity, youth and affluence to try to entice a new generation of men and women to the military.

**Keywords:** National Service; affluence; advertising; public relations; modernity; youth.

The notion that Britain stood on the precipice of a new world became something of a cliché in the mid-twentieth century. Talk of a ‘new Jerusalem’ dominated the general election of 1945, and Harold Wilson invoked a similar theme in 1963 in his famous pledge to forge a ‘New Britain’ from the ‘white heat’ of a scientific and technological revolution.[[1]](#endnote-1) Politicians were of course in the business of making promises, and had a well-earned reputation for breaking them. Yet, they were not alone in thinking, or at least asserting, that Britain was on the cusp of something new. Full employment, high levels of economic growth and a series of sweeping technological advancements improved the lives and livelihoods of millions in the post-war era.[[2]](#endnote-2) Talk of a ‘space age’ infiltrated popular culture and mass media, and newspapers, hoardings and television broadcasts were filled with futuristic portrayals of everyday household items – washing machines, television sets, microwave ovens and so on – that both symbolised and helped to sustain the modern ‘affluent society’.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Any sense of national triumphalism was nevertheless tempered with persistent – and somewhat paradoxical – fears of decline.[[4]](#endnote-4) By the late 1950s, France and West Germany, Britain’s main continental rivals, were in the ascendency and the prospect of catching up with the great powers that had risen to the west and east of its shores had effectively disappeared by the time the Soviet Union and United States entered the space race in 1957. Britain barely had the wherewithal to develop its own nuclear weapons, let alone satellites, and spent a greater proportion of GDP on defence than its resources allowed.[[5]](#endnote-5) After the end of the Korean War, pressure grew on the Treasury to slash military expenditure, and once the debacle in Suez had confirmed Britain’s status as a second-rate great power the Conservative government of Harold Macmillan announced a new direction in defence policy.[[6]](#endnote-6)

Billed as the ‘biggest change’ to military strategy in modern peacetime history, the Sandys Doctrine, as it became known after the Defence Minister who proposed it, embodied the futurism of the times. National Service, which had defined the experiences of a generation of British men,[[7]](#endnote-7) would be phased out over a five-year period; the armed forces, swelled by various international and imperial commitments, would be slashed almost in half; and nuclear weaponry would be used to offset the reduction in the manned strength of the Army, Navy and Air Force. The impact of these reforms on the higher aspects of Britain’s defence policy, and on the nation’s place in Europe and the wider world, has been well documented.[[8]](#endnote-8) How the Sandys Doctrine changed the life chances and opportunities of young British men has also attracted significant scholarly attention, with many cultural historians portraying the abolition of conscription as a key factor in the growth of a post-war ‘youth culture’.[[9]](#endnote-9)

Much less is known, however, about how the armed forces responded to such changes with coordinated attempts to entice young people to the tri-Service. The British military boasted a time-honoured tradition of using advertising, public relations and propaganda to boost recruitment,[[10]](#endnote-10) and the period immediately following Sandys reforms was characterised by a frantic rush to enlist thousands of volunteers before the last national serviceman left his post in 1963.[[11]](#endnote-11) The military historian David French has explored the development of the Sandys Doctrine and the Army’s attempts to portray itself, in the words of the Adjutant General of the time, as a ‘good employer’.[[12]](#endnote-12) Yet, little is known about how it and the other Services used promotion to achieve this objective, and how newspapers, films and broadcast appeals were implicated in a post-war recruiting drive to increase the profile of the tri-Service.

Through a review of official documents and promotions, this paper highlights the important but neglected role of mass media in aiding the transition in Britain from a partly-conscripted to an all-professional military. Of particular interest are the ways in which recruiters sought to associate the armed forces with the very ‘New Britain’ that Wilson and others had prophesised. Using dramatic imagery of supersonic jets, ballistic warheads and tanks – high technology that came to symbolise the ‘new age’ that Britain was apparently entering – recruiters sought to attract young people to the armed forces by portraying the latter as modern employers which offered rewarding and well-paid careers. The lion’s share of their promotion was directed at Other Ranks,[[13]](#endnote-13) and their attempt to ‘modernise’ the military, to quote one individual involved in campaigning in 1960, was rooted in a prevailing belief that military service should modelled on the ‘changing manners and customs of the country’.[[14]](#endnote-14) How recruiters sought to achieve this objective, and whether their campaigns were successful in doing so, represent the primary concerns of this paper.

**Conscription, Voluntary Service and the Post-War Recruiting Crisis**

When Sandys announced his reforms to parliament in April 1957, public opinion had already turned against compulsory military service.[[15]](#endnote-15) Blamed for diverting finite resources from industry and commerce, National Service was persistently attacked in both the popular and quality press, with the *Daily Mirror* campaigning for an end to conscription since 1956 and even appointing the military commentator Basil Liddell Hart to draft a ‘defence policy’ that pre-empted the government’s. The *Times*, traditionally an ardent supporter of British imperial power, endorsed the termination of conscription, claiming it would help to ‘balance the budget’, while the *Observer* described the reforms as a dose of ‘realism’ for Britain’s fading Empire.[[16]](#endnote-16)

Though many journalists regarded the restructuring as a step in the right direction, some senior military figures nevertheless approached the return to an all-professional military with some trepidation. Writing to the Prime Minister in the summer of 1957, one retired Army officer warned that those who were

competent to judge take a most pessimistic view. They say that the Whitehall atmosphere remains unchanged; that there is no sign of a quickening of the Government’s machine which the Service Ministers, however good their intentions, come up against at every turn. Their conclusion is that unless a miracle happens, we shall not get the Regulars we need.[[17]](#endnote-17)

Though a ‘miracle’ was not in the event required, there was some truth to Brigadier John Faviell’s remarks. Throughout the 1950s, the Services and the Army in particular had struggled to attract enough volunteers. Conscripts had been used to make up the difference, but Regulars were still required to train them and to occupy the senior positions within the armed forces. This system had advantages and disadvantages. None of the Services was ever seriously under-manned, but the annual influx of national servicemen required significant resources and created problems of morale as well. As Anthony Head, Sandys’ predecessor, said in 1955:

The repeated training of National Service men places a great burden on the Army. Their run-out unsettles men and potential Regulars are made constantly aware of the attractive openings in civil[ian] life which the majority of National Service men are eagerly anticipating.[[18]](#endnote-18)

Convinced that the ‘existence of National Service itself’ represented ‘one of the main obstacles to…a healthy Regular Army’,[[19]](#endnote-19) Head called for an end to conscription more than a year before that decision had been formally announced. Justified partly on grounds that it would save money and partly because it would coincide with the development of an effective nuclear deterrent, the termination of National Service heralded a significant reduction in the size of the British armed forces. In 1955, the Army, Navy and Air Force employed a combined total of around 835,000 personnel, but by 1962 that number would shrink to 375,000.[[20]](#endnote-20) The decrease was so sudden and drastic that Head pointedly refused to oversee it, and Sandys (who had a penchant for cost-cutting) was therefore appointed in his place.[[21]](#endnote-21)

Smaller armed forces meant fewer recruits, but this did not necessarily make the task of recruiting any easier. In a somewhat paradoxical way, National Service had actually stimulated voluntary recruiting by encouraging many young men who would otherwise be compelled to serve to join up as Regulars. Since 1947 British men aged 18-21 had been given a choice of enlisting as a conscript in the Army or joining any of the three Services as a volunteer on longer but more preferable terms of service.[[22]](#endnote-22) Conscripts initially served for twelve months, but in 1950 that period was extended to two years, only a year shy of the minimum term of service for a Regular.

Some officials thus feared that the end of compulsory military service would trigger a corollary decline in voluntary enlistment, and two powerful committees were set up in late 1957 to consider ways of preventing this from happening. Chaired by General Sir Lashmar Whistler and Sir James Grigg, these committees made a series of important recommendations that would shape official recruiting policy for the next five or so years. There should be an end to draconian discipline, a stepping up of recruiting of schoolchildren and school-leavers, an improvement in the quality of Service accommodation, and an increase in the enlistment of Officers and skilled and semi-skilled workers to fill the growing number of specialist and technical roles in the all-professional military.[[23]](#endnote-23) Material rewards – and pay in particular – should also be increased to entice more civilians from comparable jobs in industry.

Pay increases for all three Services were subsequently introduced in 1958, apparently leading to a 70% increase in enrolment rates for the Army and a 40% increase for the Air Force when compared to the previous calendar year.[[24]](#endnote-24) The forces also reviewed their many cadet, vocational and educational training programmes as part of a concerted drive to attract more adolescents. Minors had served in the British military since pre-industrial times. In the post-war era, they were offered a plethora of cadet programmes and technical and vocational training courses. All three Services also sponsored junior officers to go to civilian universities to read for degrees, and maintained their own recruiting machinery for doing so.[[25]](#endnote-25) Increasing applicants for these programme*s* became a key priority after 1957.[[26]](#endnote-26)

**Reforming the Military ‘Way of Life’**

The Whistler and Grigg committees confirmed the importance of material rewards to post-war British military recruitment. Yet, they did not address the crucial question of how such rewards would be conveyed in official advertising and public relations and what tactics and strategies could be used to inform the public of the advantages of a service career. By 1960 the initial surge in enrolment rates attributed to pay increases had subsided, prompting parliamentary criticism of the ‘bad public relations’ deployed by the armed forces[[27]](#endnote-27) together with fears that the government would need to extend or even reintroduce National Service altogether.[[28]](#endnote-28)

The government responded to these developments by appointing Sir Frederic Hooper, an industrialist and management expert who had served as the Ministry of Labour and National Service’s Director of Business Training, to review existing recruiting machinery. Hooper had also sat on the Committee on the Employment of National Servicemen and Resettlement Advisory Board,[[29]](#endnote-29) but his new appointment effectively involved the opposite process – encouraging men and women who would otherwise work in industry to enlist in the Army, Navy or Air Force – and he would advise the government on this matter until his death in 1963.

In contrast to Whistler and Grigg, Hooper had a business career prior to taking up roles in government and that experience coloured his recommendations. Managing Director of Schweppes, a multinational with a reputation for creative advertising, he had taken a personal interest in how his company marketed its wares to consumers. Credited by his biographer with developing the branding concept of ‘Schweppeshire’,[[30]](#endnote-30) he published a book in 1948 (subsequently re-released as a Penguin title in 1960) which made an impassioned plea to business leaders to change the ways in which they treated their employees. At the heart of *Management Survey* lay the idea that Britain had experienced a cultural ‘revolution whose full implications may be harder to assimilate than all the combined technical changes of the [past] century’. The UK stood ‘between two worlds’, Hooper claimed, ‘one dying and the other struggling to be born’, and those in positions of power had to appreciate this fact. It was no longer acceptable for employers to ‘exercise “power over” the working group’, and they should seek rather to practice ‘power with’ their employees to inspire ‘mutual confidence’ in their decisions and actions.[[31]](#endnote-31)

In retrospect, this philosophy might seem ill-suited to the armed forces whose internal hierarchies were based on the very principle of exercising ‘power over’ employees which Hooper castigated.[[32]](#endnote-32) Yet, they nevertheless became the bedrock of Hooper’s proposals which took the form of two reports released in July 1960. The first report dealt with the Army, the Service with the greatest manpower needs, and Hooper used it to argue that a ‘close parallel’ could be drawn between what had

taken place in industry since the war and what, in some form, ought to take place in the Army. Before the war, employers relied on the threat of the sack as their main inspiration in getting men to work; today no business can thrive unless there is mutual trust between employers and the people they employ.[[33]](#endnote-33)

Cultivating such ‘trust’ should, Hooper argued, become a key priority of the military, which could improve recruiting by relaxing discipline and aspects of military hierarchy. Yet, it was also vital to correct public impressions of the military as a ‘refuge for the unsuccessful’, a task that would involve an extensive campaign of public relations and advertising that promoted the military ‘way of life’.[[34]](#endnote-34) At the core of this campaign would be the idea that the military offered an ‘important, patriotic, modern, manly and adventurous’ career that was ‘so vital to the nation that only a good type of recruit [was] needed’. New recruits would enjoy the ‘almost certain prospect of a fruitful career in civilian life’ if they chose to retire from the military early, and a ‘soldier’s life’ would not only be portrayed as ‘economically more secure than any civilian’s, but also [as a life] that offers good pay and allowance as well as attractive opportunities for sport, travel and education’. Television was deemed the most appropriate medium to ‘tell a story of this kind’, with the Army in particular urged to make greater use of it to create a ‘background of national understanding’.[[35]](#endnote-35)

**Mobilising Departmental Press Bureaux and the Central Office of Information**

A fortnight after Hooper released his reports, Peter Thorneycroft, then Minister of Aviation, called a meeting with Hooper and the new Secretary of State for War John Profumo to consider what actions could be taken. Hooper had largely spared the Air Force and Navy of criticism, but all three Services subsequently prepared campaigns that drew inspiration from the general idea that they should present themselves to the public as ‘modern’ employers. They did so in different ways, with the Army undertaking what Thornycroft called an ‘experimental television publicity scheme’ and the Navy and Air Force prioritising a range of print media instead.[[36]](#endnote-36) With the end of National Service fast approaching, recruiters in all three Services stepped up their activities and began planning promotion for the 1960-63 period.

Like every major Whitehall department, the War Office, Admiralty and Air Ministry possessed their own public relations machinery. As Mariel Grant has shown, this machinery could be traced to the Great War and the subsequent growth of departmental press offices during the interwar years.[[37]](#endnote-37) The Home Office was probably the first government department in Britain to set up a dedicated Press Bureau,[[38]](#endnote-38) but was quickly followed by others including the three Service ministries. By 1939, as many as seventeen separate government departments possessed their own press bureaux, which had come to be known in official nomenclature as Press Offices or Public Relations Departments.[[39]](#endnote-39) Typically staffed by ex-journalists, these bodies represented the first and often last point of contact between departments and the wider public they served; they also managed relations with the press and broadcast media and in the case of the three Services, handled recruitment.[[40]](#endnote-40)

While they were the important sources of publicity, however, press bureaux dealt with only part of the promotional process. In 1946, a Central Office of Information (COI) was formed as a major common service agency. Common service agencies provided services to government departments that were too costly to house within individual ministries. The Stationary Office, for example, had acted as an official printer since 1883,[[41]](#endnote-41) but the COI took on a larger brief that incorporated more media and a greater range of services, such as the organisation of public exhibitions, the production of official films, newsreels and posters, and formal investigations into public opinion carried out by the government’s own pollster, Social Survey.[[42]](#endnote-42) Offering these services to government departments after the war, the COI was used frequently by the Service ministries after the return of rearmament in 1948.

Departmental public relations bureaux and the COI catered to ‘free’ and ‘paid-for’ publicity respectively. Fife Clark, the Director General of the COI, gave a good overview of what these types of publicity involved in a book published in 1970:

The press, radio and television are the primary channels through which government policies, actions and decisions are made known and explained to the general public. These media are free in two senses. When official material is used in the editorial columns and broadcast bulletins and programmes, the space or time secured costs the taxpayer nothing. The material is selected mainly for its news or interest value: and the newspapers and broadcasting organisations are free either not to use it or to use as much as they want, in any form they choose. Yet, while the free media can be relied on to report government news or views of public interest, there must be occasions when the government of the day has an important message which ought to reach people throughout the country but lacks high or continuing ‘news value’. Then the responsible departments needs a paid-for publicity campaign, making use of repetitive media such as films, posters, booklets, exhibitions, and press, cinema and television advertising.[[43]](#endnote-43)

Recruitment campaigns represented one such occasion, and entailed a mixture of so-called ‘repetitive’ media produced by the COI and ‘free’ publicity generated by departmental public relations bureaux. In earlier times, patriotism might have represented the driving force of the campaign and the main theme used in official publicity, but appeals to serve one’s country were conspicuous by their absence in 1957-63. This may have reflected a lack of public appetite for military service at the time. Though Britain had effectively been in a state of Cold War since 1948, this did not appear to arouse any strong feelings of patriotic loyalty on the part of civilians. Korea, the only major conflict of the 1950s, had a negligible impact on recruiting,[[44]](#endnote-44) and when Anthony Eden tried to depose Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1956 a ‘huge public outcry’ followed which emphasised ‘Law not War’ and crystallised public opposition towards foreign military excursions.[[45]](#endnote-45)

These factors influenced official recruiting strategies, but low levels of unemployment and rising living standards were also important. Since pre-industrial times, the armed forces had been able to rely on a large body of unemployed men to swell their ranks, with recruiters banking on economic necessity or what the eighteenth century economist Thomas Malthus called a ‘bad harvest, and a want or unemployment’ to get civilians to sign up.[[46]](#endnote-46) The full employment of the mid-twentieth century deprived the Services of men and women who in more straitened times might have joined up, and intensified competition between them and industry for recruits. Since businesses often offered more attractive pay packages and better working conditions, to say nothing of the military’s fondness for strict discipline, recruiters faced an uphill struggle that was frequently highlighted in official meetings and memoranda. As the War Office’s Director of Public Relations said in 1960:

we [must] appreciate that the world has moved on, and that the younger generation look for standards and interests which differ considerably, both in nature and in degree, from many of those upon which at least the older regular officers were brought up. We must be at pains to discover what appeals to the modern generation, and offer them what they are looking for.[[47]](#endnote-47)

The armed forces, in other words, needed to develop bespoke appeals that reflected the values and mores of young people. This involved two main activities: detailed investigations into public opinion carried out by Social Survey, to which I will return at the end of this paper, and a series of large-scale recruiting campaigns.

**Projecting a ‘Picture’ of the Army on Television, Film and Newsreels**

Hooper advised the War Office to allocate ‘a substantial proportion of the total appropriation…[for recruitment advertising to] commercial TV, less on the Press, a great deal less on posters, and very little indeed on the present multiplicity of pamphlets’.[[48]](#endnote-48) Given popular attitudes towards television in British society at the time, his recommendations were not surprising. In the 1950s and 1960s, the television set became a marker of affluence and modernity, with the medium itself frequently invoked in contemporary debates about social change and social class.[[49]](#endnote-49) The roll-out of commercial services in 1955 had a profound effect on the industry, forcing the BBC to adapt its programming strategy and heralding a more populist ‘style’ in news bulletins and entertainment features.[[50]](#endnote-50) However, it also led to the creation of a new promotional form, the TV commercial, which became an important vehicle for promoting the goods and services associated with post-war consumer culture.

From 1960 onwards, the same vehicle was used to sell careers in the Army – possibly the first time that a government department had used television in this way. However, only parts of Hooper’s recommendations were accepted. The first commercials, which aired over a two-month period in autumn 1960, cost £33,000 or roughly one-fifth of the total annual advertising budget of £170,000, with the remaining sum devoted to newspaper, poster and leaflet advertising. In correspondence with Profumo’s Private Secretary, the War’s Office’s Director of Public Relations gave a sense of why recruiters were reluctant to devote the majority of the advertising budget to television, claiming ‘any further reduction [in expenditure on newspapers] would emasculate the press advertising campaign’.[[51]](#endnote-51) The same individual also raised doubts about the efficacy of the pilot television commercials, which were only broadcast in the midlands, Northern Ireland and Wales.

To be effective, as an alternative to Press advertising, it seems to me that this campaign would have to be extended:-

1. over a much longer period than eight weeks…

(b) over the remaining regional networks, viz. Granada, Tyne and Tees, Scotland, Southern and AIV London…

[I]t clearly becomes an issue of “either”/”or”. “Either” TV; “Or” Press Advertising. One or the other; but not both.[[52]](#endnote-52)

A larger, national campaign was subsequently organised in 1961, with the overall amount devoted to paid advertising also increasing. According to Profumo, increases in expenditure occurred in *both* newspaper and television, with £210,000 allocated to advertising in 1961-62.[[53]](#endnote-53) Both the first and second television advertising campaigns were credited with increasing enrolment rates – so much so, in fact, that questions were raised in parliament as to the quality of applicant recruited.[[54]](#endnote-54)

Paid advertising nevertheless represented only part of the promotion carried on TV. Associated British Corporation, a commercial broadcaster that operated in the midland and northern regions, aired a public ‘lecture’ given by Army recruiting staff from the Northern Command. Broadcast at the same time the advertisements were being aired in the spring of 1961, the show was hosted by the channel’s Advertising Manager David Burry and recorded, somewhat unusually, in front a studio audience of recruiting sergeants.[[55]](#endnote-55) The BBC was also involved in a plethora of ‘free’ recruiting publicity. A public service broadcaster, the BBC did not offer slots for paid announcements in the manner of its commercial counterparts, but did offer space for ministerial broadcasts that allowed the government of the day to effectively ‘advertise’ itself. In the post-war era, these broadcasts were typically reserved for important policy announcements like the deployment of troops to Egypt or the termination of National Service, but recruiting also figured. In the autumn of 1958, for example, the Secretary of State for War and Minister of Defence gave four separate announcements calling for more voluntary recruitment after the 1957 reforms.[[56]](#endnote-56)

The BBC’s willingness to accommodate the government extended beyond the realm of official announcements. In 1960, its Director of Television Gerald (later Sir) Beadle reputedly offered to send Corporation television crews to film British military postings abroad, although it is unclear whether his offer was accepted.[[57]](#endnote-57) What can be surmised from contemporaneous *Radio Times* listings is that the military featured prominently on the airwaves in the 1957-63 period.[[58]](#endnote-58) Some items, such as performances from brass bands, annual Army-Navy rugby matches and a documentary on the withdrawal of British troops from Korea,[[59]](#endnote-59) were not explicitly intended to promote recruitment even if they may have boosted public awareness of it. But other programmes, such as the live coverage of annual Royal Tournaments and Edinburgh Tattoos, were considered valuable recruiting aids and were certainly treated as such by recruiters who drew up specific policies to govern their use.[[60]](#endnote-60)

The British military boasted a time-honoured tradition of using public spectacles to boost enlistment.[[61]](#endnote-61) Yet, the growth of film and broadcast media in the twentieth century and corollary development of a series of ‘media systems’ across the industrialised world turned such spectacles into quintessentially national phenomena.[[62]](#endnote-62) As a leading historian of British mass media has contended, the expansion of the national press, which ‘overtook the local and regional daily press in terms of circulation in the 1930s’ together with the development of radio and television ‘primarily as national systems…with local, regional and sub-national outlets’ helped to foster a ‘tenacious sense of national consciousness’ in Britain.[[63]](#endnote-63) The older media of print and radio, combined with the new medium of television, allowed the same story to be covered simultaneously in multiple formats, giving recruiters new opportunities to turn local events into definitively ‘national’ affairs.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, several large-scale military spectacles were organised to increase the prestige and status of the British armed forces. In June 1958, for instance, Hyde Park played host to the Golden Jubilee of the Territorial Army. A procession of 8000 servicemen presided over by Queen Elizabeth II, the rally was broadcast live on television in the afternoon, covered subsequently on radio in the evening, and reported in the coming days in newspapers, magazines and newsreels.[[64]](#endnote-64) Described by the *Illustrated London News* as a ‘memorial occasion of great note’, the Jubilee celebrated Britain’s fêted tradition of voluntary military service, but also underscored the extent to which its military institutions were being modernised.[[65]](#endnote-65) Tellingly troops wore brand-new blue uniforms especially made for the occasion, while Queen Elizabeth reviewed the parade in a Series II Land Rover, a new model released that year that symbolised Britain’s buoyant car industry.[[66]](#endnote-66)

Two years later, another major military spectacle was hosted at Earls Court. Lasting sixteen days, the Royal Tournament was the oldest and largest military tattoo in the world, having been held annually in Britain in peacetime since 1880.[[67]](#endnote-67) A celebration of Britain’s military, imperial and Commonwealth traditions, the 1960 programme was given what one reviewer has called an ‘up-to-date tone’ characterised by pyrotechnic displays and new weaponry like the surface-to-air Bloodhound missile.[[68]](#endnote-68) As with the Golden Jubilee, members of the Royal Family presided over the tournament which garnered coverage in multiple media, including newsreels, with *British Pathe* devoting three separate items to the event.[[69]](#endnote-69)

Film had been used for recruiting purposes since the time of the Second Boer War,[[70]](#endnote-70) and formed a bedrock of the COI’s work after 1945. To promote recruitment, the Service departments tended to use film to promote specific positions that were undermanned, like the shorts *Musicians in the Making* (1958) and *Military Policeman* (1961).[[71]](#endnote-71) Unlike newsreel items, shorts did not focus on a specific event or ‘story’ and tended to be dramatised in some way or another. Probably the largest production of the 1957-63 period was *Morning on Mount Kenya* (1960), a twenty-minute colour film that told the story of a fictional mountain rescue in Kenya. Designed to showcase the exotic locations that recruits were stationed in, it was produced through a collaboration between the War Office, the COI and Associated British Pathe,[[72]](#endnote-72) and like some of the films produced for the Navy and Air Force focused not just on the active service of recruits, but on their time off as well.

Though film and television, as comparatively newer media, were used to portray the Army as a ‘modern’ employer, recruiters did not neglect newspapers. The dominant advertising medium of the day, newspapers were read by millions and were particularly useful for publicising public spectacles. Apart from large-scale rallies and tattoos, the Army also organised smaller, local events as part of its drive. Speaking on behalf of the Army in House of Lords in 1961, Lord Carrington, then First Lord of the Admiralty, gave a sense of the scale of its work:

During the summer months, parties of up to 200 of all ranks from 46 different units will be touring the recruiting areas for ten days or so. In addition, recruiting displays and stands will be present at over 500 shows throughout the country. At the same time, another 60 recruiting teams will be going up and down the country.[[73]](#endnote-73)

Carrington was in no doubt that the Army campaign was ‘on a very much larger scale than in the past’, and that the ‘picture of the modern Army’ that recruiters sought to project would show the ‘potential customer’ that the Army provides a ‘worthwhile career as a professional soldier in the service of the country’.[[74]](#endnote-74) Yet, we know from eyewitness testimony and government surveys that the ‘picture’ the War Office presented was not one accepted by many servicemen at the time. As French has noted, writing of the late 1950s and early 1960s, ‘most men who had a taste of Army life did not like it and left at the earliest possible opportunity’.[[75]](#endnote-75) This created obvious challenges for recruiters to which we will return at the end of this paper.

**Travel and Adventure in Air Force and Navy Promotion**

Though their needs were not perceived to be as great as the Army’s,[[76]](#endnote-76) the Navy and Air Force also organised major recruiting campaigns in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Like the Army, they possessed their own machinery for doing so and a network of recruiting depots that gave them a presence in most major urban areas in the country. Such depots typically represented the first point of contact between a prospective recruit and the military, and were staffed with individuals specially trained to exhort those who expressed an interest in joining up.[[77]](#endnote-77) They also housed pamphlets, booklets and other printed ephemera that contained substantive information on the various career pathways offered to prospective recruits.

In his report on the Army, Hooper cast aspersions on the efficacy of print media for advertising purposes, but reserved no such comments for the Navy or Air Force.[[78]](#endnote-78) The latter departments continued to invest heavily in posters, newspaper and magazine advertising, but like the Army did produce some films in the 1957-63 period. The Admiralty, for instance, sponsored a twenty-minute short called *Spring Cruise* (1958) which depicted a fleet of British ships visiting Caribbean islands before embarking on a training mission with the Canadian Navy off Nova Scotia.[[79]](#endnote-79) Though the film did not contain any direct recruiting appeals – no references were made, for example, to terms of service or pay – it did provide an overview of the different career options available to new recruits and an indication of the leisure activities that they might enjoy while on shore leave. Following the fleet as it moved from island to island on a ‘goodwill’ tour, *Spring Cruise* was in some senses closer to a travelogue than a conventional propaganda item, with sailors visiting historic towns, relaxing on pristine white sandy beaches, and enjoying local food and hospitality. The cruise itself was treated as a news item in at least one pictorial newspaper.[[80]](#endnote-80)

In a twenty-minute short released at the turn of the decade, the Air Ministry also blurred the boundaries between work and leisure. *Adventure with Skill* (1960) opened with a voiceover describing a group of teenagers playing football on a beach:

Some people are lucky, aren’t they? Holidays by the sea, plenty of sunshine, and nothing to worry about. But these boys aren’t on holiday. Their holiday is yet to come. They are trainees from a special RAF school for boys, and this is part of the fortnight summer camp. Right now they are relaxing, enjoying themselves. Look at young Peter. He is getting a real kick out of life in the Royal Air Force…Peter, in fact, is having a high old time, and yet only a few months ago he was still in school.[[81]](#endnote-81)

Since 1955 the Air Ministry had sought to increase the number of regulars it employed on long-service engagements.[[82]](#endnote-82) School- and college-leavers were considered particularly valuable in this regard because they could be enrolled on training courses that compelled applicants to serve for an extended period of time after graduation. The RAF possessed five academic and vocational training institutions.[[83]](#endnote-83) *Adventure with Skill* promoted feeder courses to a series of non-commissioned ground crew roles, including signalling, photography, accounting and cooking, and described military training disingenuously as ‘a bit like being at boarding school’. Referring to these courses as ‘trades’, it invited direct comparisons to equivalent industry training schemes, describing the RAF as a forward-looking employer that ‘is changing all the time, and changing very rapidly – not only keeping up with the present, but constantly looking towards the future’.[[84]](#endnote-84)

Futurism became a key trope of RAF campaigning at the turn of the decade and the basis of a slogan, ‘The Future is with the RAF’, that appeared in print advertisements in 1961-2. Coined by Clifford Bloxham and Partners Ltd., a commercial advertising agency hired by the Air Ministry to handle copy, artwork and space buying on its behalf,[[85]](#endnote-85) these advertisements appeared in a broad range of newspaper and magazine titles. Those targeting applicants for commissions in RAF universities, for example, were displayed in newspapers like the *Observer* and the *Times*, while promotions of the ‘technical’ roles showcased in *Adventure with Skill* were carried in mid-market titles like the *Daily Express* or tabloids like the *People*, the *News of the World* and the *Daily Mirror*. Minors between the ages of 15 and 17 were targeted with a series of cartoon-like advertisements that appeared in comic books popular with young boys at the time, including *Tiger*, *Wizard* and *Eagle*.

Though television eventually superseded the newspaper as Britain’s foremost advertising medium, its ascension was gradual rather than instantaneous. Between 1955 and 1960, expenditure on display advertising in national and provincial newspapers actually grew, with magazines following suit.[[86]](#endnote-86) There were several reasons for the reported increases. The UK boasted thousands of print titles that provided advertisers with more *space* to advertise their products, services or indeed careers than television. The lifting of paper restrictions in 1956 also increased the amount of space that each newspaper or magazine could offer to advertisers, and the amount of colour pages in particular which, as Winston Fletcher has noted in his history of British advertising, represented a ‘strong competitive advantage over monochrome television’ until the advent of colour broadcasts in 1967.[[87]](#endnote-87)

Perhaps one of the most significant factors, however, was the apparent affinity that many titles shared with specific demographic groups. In general, tabloid newspapers were popular with the working classes, broadsheets with middle class professionals and provincial papers with readers residing in specific parts of the country. Magazines, for their part, were associated with special interest groups and sometimes with specific age groups that shared a common interest.

Such ‘market segmentation’[[88]](#endnote-88) allowed advertisers to target specific socio-economic groups with bespoke appeals, and may explain why Clifford Bloxham and Partners advocated the use of ‘proved and established [print] media’ when pitching their campaign to the Air Ministry in 1961.[[89]](#endnote-89) This proposal was accepted, and a range of national, provincial and magazine titles was selected to promote the specific roles the RAF wished to fill. More than fifty different types of advertisement were developed and displayed in late 1961 and early 1962, with obscure titles like *Civil Service Opinion* and *Police Review* among those chosen alongside mass-circulation magazines like *Readers Digest* and *Titbits*. Using dramatic imagery of supersonic jets and rockets, many of these appeals fetishized military technology and glamourized martial endeavour, although the form that they took tended to differ according to the particular publication (and thus audience) targeted.

A series of advertisements in national newspapers, for example, targeted school-leavers through their parents, headmasters or headmistresses. Presented in the style of a newspaper article, these advertisements opened with rhetorical questions such as ‘A Headmaster asks – Will the R.A.F. need pilots in ten years [sic] time?’, before proceeding to alleviate any concerns that a person might have regarding the viability of a military career in the post-National Service era. The following excerpt, taken from an appeal aimed at fathers that was published in the *Sunday Pictorial*, *News of the World*, *People* and *Air Mail*, was typical.

You are a trained man with a good trade. What about your son? What will he be doing when he is your age?

This is the era of the specialist. The best jobs go to the men with technical qualifications and a sound training behind [sic] them. But today, finding the training you want for your son is more difficult than ever before. The competition for apprenticeships is keener than it has ever been.[[90]](#endnote-90)

Minors required the consent of a guardian to enrol on a military training course, so it is perhaps unsurprising that appeals were developed for adults. What was noteworthy was the way in which these advertisements weaved together contemporary anxieties about employability, vocational training and the social change that seemed to underpin the ‘era of the specialist’. The above advertisement suggested that the post-war baby boom had created a situation in which there were ‘More Boys – [but] Fewer Chances’, with the Air Force offering an opportunity to minors to enjoy a ‘fine future ahead’. The training offered was reputedly the ‘finest…in the world’, but if a new recruit decided to leave the Service early he would ‘enter industry before he is 30 with excellent qualifications and considerable practical experience behind him: just the background he needs to get him a first class job’.[[91]](#endnote-91)

Advertisements aimed directly at minors used different kinds of appeals. *Eagle*, a pioneer of the ‘narrative adventure in strip form in Britain’, was among the comics that hosted recruiting advertisements in 1961-2. Known for its ‘informative articles and superbly drawn diagrams of aeroplanes, battleships and other machines’, it may have been targeted by the RAF because of a lead character called ‘Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future’.[[92]](#endnote-92) One advertisement that appeared in it in the autumn of 1961 and spring of 1962 actually took the form of a comic strip which told the story of a fifteen-year-old recruit showing a friend around his training school. Entitled ‘Mach 2 Rocket-Firing Fighters’, it contained scenes of a jet fighter, a sporting competition and a far-flung tropical beach, telling a kind of story to readers that collapsed the boundaries that separated entertainment from promotion.[[93]](#endnote-93)

Other advertisements aimed at older teenagers and young adults emphasised the travel and leisure opportunities available to new recruits, particularly aircrew. One opened with a quote from senior aircraftman Brian Woodcock: ‘Travel books? I could write one’. Another claimed that ‘opportunities for sport, for healthy relaxation and recreation of every kind are probably without parallel in any other career’.[[94]](#endnote-94) Most advertisements reserved at least some space for pay and drew direct – and typically favourable – comparisons to industry employment, with a number suggesting new recruits would be ‘well paid from the day [they] join[ed]’.[[95]](#endnote-95)

Both leisure activities and consumer goods and durables took on a special significance in post-war youth culture.[[96]](#endnote-96) Markers of affluence and social status, they featured prominently in recruitment advertising for all three Services, with connections drawn between new recruits’ pay, their consumption habits and their lifestyles. Somewhat ironically, many advertisements sold the idea of a military career by focusing on what serving men and women did when *not* on duty. One RAF advertisement, for example, quoted Corporal Dennis Hill to give readers a sense not only of his salary as a grounded engineer, but of how he chose to spend it:

My pay of £9-odd a week is pocket money – and my food, uniform and rent are free. I bought my car on what I saved in the Service and all my suits are tailor-made. I’m a keen photographer too – and I can still afford to go out in the evening.[[97]](#endnote-97)

Cars came to be seen as ‘instruments of personal freedom’ in the post-war era,[[98]](#endnote-98) and they were certainly portrayed as such in recruitment advertising. Yet, the actual experiences of serving personnel belied such rosy depictions. No recruit possessed the freedom to ‘go out’ when they pleased since all were constrained by normal disciplinary codes and procedures. Though some were relatively well paid, moreover, the majority had no say over where they would be posted after joining up. A lack of personal freedom and over-zealous discipline represented one of the main gripes of conscripted men,[[99]](#endnote-99) but regulars were subjected to the same strictures and were equally capable of voicing criticisms of them. The rigors, disciplines and moralities of service life, as Rachel Woodward and Trish Winter have argued, sat at odds with the youth cultures and countercultures that emerged during the period.[[100]](#endnote-100)

Since men accounted for around 85% of the workforce,[[101]](#endnote-101) most of the characters featured in military recruitment promotion were male. Some appeals were nevertheless directed at women, such as a 1959 pamphlet advertising the Women’s Royal Naval Service (WRNS). Each Service possessed its own female auxiliary force,[[102]](#endnote-102) and the WRNS offered applicants a variety of non-combatant, shore-based roles. Women across all three Services were paid less than men in the same roles and ranks,[[103]](#endnote-103) with their promotion prospects also severely restricted. The 1957 Defence White Paper neglected to even mention female auxiliary forces, let alone make any recommendations to improve their recruiting or retention, and it was not until July that year that an agreement was struck to retain women as part of the all-regular military. Nevertheless, servicewomen still occupied a subsidiary place in the armed forces until a measure of gender equality was introduced in the 1990s.[[104]](#endnote-104)

Recruitment promotion reflected such a gendered division of labour. While male recruits were enticed to the Navy with images of travel and adventure, their female counterparts were treated to a much more domesticated portrayal of service life. In one scene in the aforementioned pamphlet, a group of women were pictured sitting in armchairs reading newspapers and books by a fire. The text that accompanied the image claimed that all women were permitted to leave the Navy within a month’s notice if they married or if their ‘family circumstances changed’ after marriage.[[105]](#endnote-105) Male recruits, however, were given additional allowances and special dispensations if *they* married, reinforcing the impression that they were essential to the continued existence of the Navy while women were effectively expendable.

Institutionalised sexism within the armed forces was not of course new, but one of the peculiar aspects of the campaigns for recruits in 1957-63 is how seldom women featured in them. Each female auxiliary force was expanded in size after 1957,[[106]](#endnote-106) so there was clearly a need to recruit more servicewomen. But when women did make an appearance in promotion, it was usually as companions of men, in appeals aimed *at* men. There were far fewer promotions directed at women, with the subject only occasionally raised in official meetings and memoranda.

**Assessing the Campaign for Volunteers in 1957-63**

Were recruiters successful in attracting men, women and children to Britain’s armed forces? According to official estimates, in the decade beginning 1957 the Army experienced a ten-year recruiting high in 1962.[[107]](#endnote-107) In the same year, the Air Force reported a year-on-year growth in applications for cadetships and direct entry commissions to air crew roles, with no ‘major shortages’ noted elsewhere.[[108]](#endnote-108) The Navy, the least active recruiter, registered more mixed results, with the Lord of Admiralty Ian Orr-Ewing informing Parliament that ‘a number of branches are fully up to our needs, but there are still some shortfalls in the seaman, communications, naval airman, naval air mechanic, sick berth and steward branches’. In 1962, the main fighting branches of this service fell 3% short of requirements.[[109]](#endnote-109)

These figures would seem to suggest that official exhortations were at least partially effective, and that the strategies adopted by the Macmillan governments to manage the transition from a partly-conscripted to an all-volunteer military worked. This was certainly the conclusion drawn by Profumo, who claimed in the summer of 1961 that it is ‘quite clear that television advertising is proving a most successful way of turning on the tap’, even if it was not so effective in stopping soldiers leaving the Army once they enrolled – the so-called ‘plug’.[[110]](#endnote-110) A belief in the potency of recruiting appeals could also be found outside of Whitehall, with a *Times* journalist posthumously praising Hooper’s involvement in campaigning in an obituary that claimed the ‘great success of the 1961-62 campaign was largely due to his advice and imagination’ and a corollary improvement in the Army’s public ‘image’.[[111]](#endnote-111)

An increase in enlistment could indeed be interpreted as evidence of an improvement in the Army’s reputation. Yet, it is important to recognise that advertising and public relations were not the only factors affecting popular attitudes towards enlistment. Pay, promotion prospects and leave entitlements were also important motivations that had been recognised by the Whistler and Grigg committees as early as 1957, and by the government’s own research into public opinion. Between 1956 and 1960, the Service departments commissioned four separate studies into popular attitudes towards the military in an attempt to improve the efficacy of their exhortations. Carried out under the auspices of Social Survey, a specialist in statistical analyses of public opinion, these studies confirmed the importance of material rewards to recruitment, with the Air Ministry finding, for example, that individuals were more likely to enlist in times when RAF rates of pay equalled or exceeded those offered in industry for comparable work, or when an absence of work in industry compelled men to serve in the armed forces.[[112]](#endnote-112)

The MOD drew similar conclusions from a 1956 survey that found that pay, job security and favourable comparisons between Service and civilian employment influenced people’s decision-making to varying degrees. Recruiters took special care to emphasise such things in their advertising, but the same study also found evidence that many civilians displayed ‘rather diffusely sceptical’ attitudes towards official promotion, with ‘[f]ew think[ing] it paints a very true picture of what things are like...[and m]ost criticis[ing] it for omitting some unpleasant aspect of Service life’.[[113]](#endnote-113) Recruiters may well have emphasised material rewards in their campaigning, in other words, but there was no guarantee audiences took such appeals seriously.

This begged the question of what or perhaps *who* civilians did listen to. For young people especially, the decision to join up was often not a decision of one person, but of many who held sway in their lives at that particular moment in time. Recruiters had long recognised the importance of peer pressure in shaping individual attitudes towards enlistment, and the War Office commissioned another study in 1959 to try to measure the influence that ‘people who mattered’ had on prospective recruits’ career choices. Family members, friends and partners were among the individuals found to influence young person’s perceptions of military service, which can explain why appeals were subsequently fashioned that targeted civilians through their fathers, wives and headmasters or headmistresses.[[114]](#endnote-114) Many volunteers had familial connections to the armed forces, and the institution of the family took on a special significance in the aftermath of the Second World War.[[115]](#endnote-115) However, the War Office survey also found that many family members, and mothers and fathers in particular, would think worse of a respondent if he decided to join the Army.[[116]](#endnote-116)

Even if the results of such surveys could be called into question,[[117]](#endnote-117) they helped to inform the campaigns explored in this paper. Recruiters made a conscious effort to gauge public opinion before they started campaigning, and it was through such investigations that they recognised the limitations of their efforts. They had little control over the broader social or economic environment within which the military operated, and no say over such things as the salaries offered to civilians in industry or the national unemployment rate. Though they routinely stressed the material and financial rewards of Service careers in official exhortations, their role was restricted to advertising the military, not reforming it from within, and they were given limited time and resources to do so. Hooper was acutely aware of this, claiming it ‘is better to remain silent than to project an image [of the military] that does not exist in reality’, and so too were recruiters, with one War Office official warning in 1960 of the dangers of ‘present[ing] a brand image [of the Army] which is, in a considerable number of cases, not only manifestly, but also demonstrably, biased or untrue’.[[118]](#endnote-118)

There was a limit, in other words, to what promotion *could* do, and any assessment of the campaigns for recruits in 1957-63 needs to take account of that fact. If television advertising was as successful as Profumo claimed, after all, one would expect to see high enrolment rates throughout the 1960s. The Army invested heavily in promotion carried on television from 1960 onwards, but was embroiled in a major recruiting crisis in 1963.[[119]](#endnote-119) By 1969, manpower shortages had become so acute that a new law was passed which allowed for a limited measure of conscription of ex-National Service reservists. A response to a failed recruiting campaign the previous year, the Army Reserve Act was derided in parliament by Labour’s Emerys Hughes, who claimed that the ‘young generation’ were ‘too intelligent to be dragged into the Army’.[[120]](#endnote-120) Though no men were in the event conscripted, the looming threat of compulsion illustrated the precariousness of the voluntary system and the difficulty of official attempts to avert cyclical declines in enrolment rates.

Putting aside the question of enrolment, however, it is important to recognise the broader social and cultural significance of the campaign work explored in this paper. To paraphrase the American academic Bernard Cohen, even if recruiters could not tell young people what to think, they could influence what they *thought* *about* by shaping the news and current affairs agenda.[[121]](#endnote-121) In 1957-63, recruiting did not just become a recurring theme in official advertising and public relations, but a staple of popular culture as well. Service comedies like *The Army Game* (1957-61) were broadcast on television, with the subject also featuring on the stage.[[122]](#endnote-122) A young person growing up at the time would likely have encountered one of the appeals examined here, and would certainly have been aware of the broader changes to British defence policy given their impact on their life chances and opportunities.

That many men, women and children opted for ‘civvy street’ over military service is perhaps unsurprising given the ‘different social reality’ that materialised in Britain in the 1960s.[[123]](#endnote-123) Young men who grew up in 1960s were the first in generations to be given a choice, denied to their older brothers, fathers and grandfathers, to enlist or not.[[124]](#endnote-124) To many of them, and to the much smaller numbers of women targeted by the three female auxiliary forces, the military seemed like an anachronistic institution that belonged to a bygone era, a belief that found a strong voice in the anti-war and anti-nuclear movements of the late-1960s. Recruiters tried to counteract such apathy by presenting the Army, Navy and Air Force as ‘modern’ employers which, in use the words of one briefing document, had become progressively ‘civilianised’ since the war.[[125]](#endnote-125) Yet, at heart of such civilianisation lay a paradox. Though the three Services were by definition fighting forces, scenes of wars and conflict rarely featured in the promotion explored here. Military service was instead portrayed as an almost benign experience that did not threaten people’s lives or personal freedoms. More research is thus needed to consider how the ‘brand image’ of the armed forces portrayed in official exhortations in the 1950s and 1960s differed from the actual experiences of military life documented by service personnel.

**Notes**

1. . Wilson’s speech is of course well known. What is less commonly acknowledged, however, is the ‘critical examination of the basis of science and technology policy’ pursued by his governments from 1964 onwards, an examination, as David Edgerton has noted, which ‘led to policies for technology quite different from those implied by the rhetoric of the “White Heat”’. ‘The White Heat Revisited: The British Government and Technology in the 1960s’, *Twentieth Century British History,* 7 (1996), 54. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. . On the economic causes and consequences of post-war affluence, see Catherine Schenk, ‘Austerity and Boom’, in Paul Johnson (ed.) *Twentieth-Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural Change* (London: Longman, 1994); Hugh Pemberton, ‘The Transformation of the Economy’, in Paul Addison and Harriet Jones (eds.) *A Companion to Contemporary Britain* *1939-2000* (Oxford, 2005); Richard Whiting, ‘Affluence and Industrial Relations in Post-War Britain’, *Journal of Contemporary History*,22 (2008), 519-536; Matthew Hollow, ‘The Age of Affluence Revisited: Council Estates and Consumer Society in Britain, 1950–1970’, *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 16 (2016), 279-296. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. . On the social and cultural history of affluence, see Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States* (Oxford, 1998); Andrew Rosen, *The Transformation of British Life 1950-2000* (Manchester, 2003); Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties* (London, 2006); Kevin Jefferys, ‘“Content, Complete, Complacent”: Affluence and Popular Politics in the 1950s’, *A History of British Democracy Since 1918* (London, 2007). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. . As Glen O’Hara has noted, the idea of national decline came about through critical but not necessarily accurate comparisons between Britain and other industrialised nations perceived to be outperforming the UK at the time. ‘“This is What Growth Does”: British Views of the European Economies in the Prosperous “Golden Age” of 1951–73’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 44 (2009), 697-718. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. . On British defence policy in the post-war era, see Harriet Jones, ‘The Impact of the Cold War’, in Paul Addison and Harriet Jones (eds.) *A Companion to Contemporary Britain* *1939-2000* (Oxford, 2005); David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970* (Cambridge, 2006), chs. 2, 5 and 6; Till Geiger, ‘The British Warfare State and the Challenge of Americanisation of Western Defence’, *European Review of History*, 15 (2008), 345-374. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. . Though Suez marked the end of Britain’s imperial ambitions in the Middle East, Sandys placed more stock on long-term attempts to cut defence expenditure. See *Defence: Outline of Future Policy* (London, 1957); G. C. Peden, ‘Suez and Britain’s Decline as a World Power’, *The Historical Journal*, 54 (2012) 1073-1096. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. . On the impact of conscription on young men’s lives, see Frank Myers, ‘British Trade Unions and the End of Conscription: The Tripartite Committee of 1950-56’, *Journal of Contemporary History*,31 (1996), 509-520; Tom Hickman, *The Call-Up: A History of National Service* (London, 2004); Roger Broad, *Conscription in Britain, 1939-1964: The Militarisation of a Generation* (London, 2006); Richard Vinen, *National Service: A Generation in Uniform 1945-1963* (London, 2015). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. . Martin Navias, *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic Planning, 1955–1958* (Oxford, 1991); Matthew Grant, ‘Home Defence and the Sandys Defence White Paper, 1957’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*,31 (2008), 926-949; Joseph Vasquez, ‘More Than Meets the Eye: Domestic Politics and the End of British Conscription’, *Armed Forces & Society*, 37 (2011), 636-656; David French, ‘Duncan Sandys and the Projection of British Power After Suez’, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 24 (2013), 41-58. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. . On post-war youth cultures, see Christian Bugge, ‘“Selling Youth in the Age of Affluence”: Marketing to Youth in Britain Since 1959’, in Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton (eds.) *An Affluent Society? Britain’s Post-war ‘Golden Age’ Revisited* (Aldershot, 2004), 185-203; John Street, ‘Youth Culture’, in Johnson, *Twentieth Century Britain*; Bill Osgerby, ‘Youth Culture’, in Addison and Jones, *Contemporary Britain*; Alan France, *Understanding Youth in Late Modernity* (Berkshire, 2007). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. . This tradition is usually traced to the Great War, but Nicholas Hiley has unearthed a major recruiting campaign organised in the year leading up to that conflict. ‘Sir Hedley Le Bas and the Origins of British domestic propaganda in Britain 1914–1917’, *Journal of Advertising History*, 10 (1987), 30-46. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. . The initial date for the end of National Service was December 1962, but Richard Vaughan, the last national servicemen, actually left the Army in May 1963. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. . Sir Charles Loewen, citedin *Army, Empire, and Cold War: The British Army and Military Policy, 1945-1971* (Oxford, 2012), 172. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. . Most of the material examined in this paper concerns regular recruitment. I consider aspects of officer recruiting in another paper. Brendan Maartens, ‘Your Country Needs You: A Short History of Military Recruitment Advertising and Public Relations in Britain, c. 1913-63’, *Media, War & Conflict* (forthcoming). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. . T[he] N[ational] A[rchives], WO 32/20397, Recruiting Recommendations to the Secretary of State for War, 7 July 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. . Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945* (London, 2003, 4th ed) 76-77; Kenneth Morgan, *Britain Since 1945: The People’s Peace* (Oxford, 2001, 3rd ed), 76. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. . ‘A Startling New Defence Plan’, *Daily Mirror* (21 January 1957), 1; ‘Cuts in Defence Costs and the Budget’, *Times* (5 April 1957), 4; ‘Risk and Realism’, *Observer* (7 April 1957), 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. . TNA, PREM 11/2088, National Service and Regular Recruiting, 26 June 1957. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. . TNA, PREM 11/816, Anthony Head to Anthony Eden, 23 November 1955. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. . *Op cit.* [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. . Navias, ‘Terminating Conscription? The British National Service Controversy 1955-56’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 24 (1989), 197; John Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence: British Nuclear Strategy, 1945-1964* (Oxford, 1995), 246-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. . Peter Hennessy, *Having it So Good: Britain in the Fifties* (London, 2007), 464. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. . Women, miners, members of the merchant navy, Ulsterman, conscientious objectors and the medically unfit were all excluded from the draft. L. V. Scott, *Conscription and Attlee Governments: The Politics and Policy of National Service* (Oxford, 1993), 99-100. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. . Records of these committees can be found in TNA, WO 163/579, Advisory Committee on Recruiting, July 1958; TNA, WO 32/16882, Committee on the New Army (Whistler) to investigate methods of discipline, training and economy, 1957-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. . *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons),596, 24 November 1958, 54. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. . The Army, for example, appointed both Schools Liaison Officers and a Youth Liaison Officer to increase boy entrants to cadet, vocational and officer training programmes. TNA, WO 32/20397, Principal Secretary, 12 July 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. . A useful indication of the scale of military training programmes can be found in TNA, WO 163/750, U.K. Individual Training Schools, 1900-71. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. . *Parliamentary Debates* (Lords), 626, 13 July 1960, 242-244. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. . The problem became so severe in 1961 that plans were drawn up to conscript 20,000 men on a one-time basis. They were shelved. French, *Army, Empire*, 218. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. . TNA, LAB 8/2214, Resettlement Advisory Board Appointments, 1957-61; WO 32/17243: Wolfenden Report (‘Report of the Committee on the Employment of National Servicemen)’, 1 October 1956. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. . Kenneth Rose, ‘Hooper, Sir Frederic Collins’, in H. C. G. Mathew and Brian Harrison (eds.) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. . *Management Survey* (London, 1960 [1948]), 21, 22, 75. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. . Hooper’s theories shared much in common with the human relations movement pioneered by the Australian academic Elton Mayo in the 1930s. For a recent study of that movement, see Kyle Bruce and Chris Nyland, ‘Elton Mayo and the Deification of Human Relations’, *Organization Studies*, 32 (2011), 383-405. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. . TNA, WO 32/20397, Recruiting Recommendations to the Secretary of State for War, 28 July 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. . The presentation of a British ‘way of life’ also became a priority COI’s Overseas Service Division. TNA, INF 12/792, Publicity for ‘British Way of Life’, 1959-60. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. . TNA, WO 32/20397, Recruiting Recommendations, 28 July 1960; Public Relations and the Army, 5 December 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. . TNA, WO 32/20397, Minutes of a Meeting, July 25 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. . *Propaganda and the Role of the State in Interwar Britain* (Oxford, 1994). [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. . As Nicholas Wilkinson has shown, the Press Bureau came into being to assume the work of wartime censorship. *Secrecy and the Media: The Official History of the United Kingdom’s D-Notice System*. London: Routledge. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. . These bodies were subsequently renamed ‘Information Offices’ in the post-war era. Brendan Maartens, ‘From Propaganda to “Information”: Reforming Government Communications in Britain’, *Contemporary British History*, 30 (2016), 542-562. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. . For an account of how this work was handled in the War Office, see TNA, WO 32/4587, Director of Public Relations, 1937. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. . Marjorie Ogilvy-Webb, *The Government Explains: A Study of the Information Services* (London, 1965), 40. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. . For an account of the establishment of the COI, see Mariel Grant, ‘Towards a Central Office of Information: Continuity and Change in British Government Information Policy, 1939-51’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34 (1999), 49-67. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. . Fife Clark, *The Central Office of Information* (London, 1970), 14. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. . For official enrolment statistics, see TNA, INF 12/321, Defence Publicity: Statistical Notes for Chairman, 29 September 1951. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. . Morgan, *Britain Since 1945*, 152-3; Tony Shaw, *Eden, Suez and the Mass Media* (London, 2009), 193-194. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. . Cited in Taylor, *Munitions of Mind: A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Day* (Manchester, 2003, 3rd ed)*,* 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. . TNA, WO 32/20397, Director of Public Relations to Principal Secretary, 19 October 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. . TNA, WO 32/20397, Recruiting Recommendations, 28 July 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. . On the history of television, see Des Freedman, ‘How her Majesty's Opposition Grew to like Commercial Television: The Labour Party and the origins of ITV’, *Media History*, 5, (1999), 19-32; Lawrence Black, ‘Whose Finger on the Button? British Television and the Politics of Cultural Control’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 25 (2005), 547-75; Rob Turnock, *Television and Consumer Culture: Britain and the Transformation of Modernity* (London, 2007). [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. . Jean Seaton, ‘The Fall of the BBC’, in James Curran and Seaton (eds.) *Power Without Responsibility: The Press, Broadcasting and New Media in Britain* (London, 2003, 6th ed), 167. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. . TNA, WO 32/20397, Director of Public Relations to Private Secretary, 19 October 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. . TNA, WO 32/20397, Director of Public Relations to Private Secretary, 19 October 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. . *Parliamentary Debates* (Lords), 231, 7 June 1961, 1126; see also TNA, WO 32/19450, Draft Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, undated. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. . These questions were raised because of an increase in wastage. *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 643, 26 June 1961, 64-104. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. . ‘Recruiting Drive’, *The Stage and Television Today*, 9 March 1961, 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. . A comprehensive list of ministerial broadcasts from 1952 until 1965 can be found in *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 718, 8 November 1965, 255-257W. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. . TNA, WO 32/20397, Minutes of a Meeting, 25 July 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. . The listings have recently been digitised for the BBC’s Genome Project and can be accessed at <http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/>. Unless otherwise stated, all references to broadcast programmes have been derived from this website. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. . *The Army Leaves Korea* was broadcast on 26 November 1957. Brass bands and inter-service sporting competitions were a regular feature on broadcast media. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. . TNA, WO 32/15121, Tattoos: General Policy, 1953-65. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. . Scott Myerly, ‘“The Eye Must Entrap the Mind”: Army Spectacle and Paradigm in Nineteenth Century Britain’, *Journal of Social History*, 26 (1992), 105-131. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. . For a review of the concept of the media system, see Henrik Bastiansen, ‘Media History and the Study of Media Systems’, *Media History*, 14 (2008), 95-112. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. . James Curran, ‘Media and the Making of British Society, c .1700-2000’, *Media History*, 8 (2002), 135-154. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. . *Territorial Army Golden Jubilee* was broadcast on 22 June 1958 in the afternoon, with *Golden Jubilee Review of the TERRITORIAL ARMY by Her Majesty The Queen* following it on radio in the evening. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. . ‘Centenaries, Anniversaries and Memorial Occasions of Great Note Honoured by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth’, *Illustrated London News*, 12 October 1963, 565. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. . Morgan, *Britain Since 1945*, 42.For accounts of the Jubilee, see ‘The Golden Territorial Army Review: the Queen at the Great Parade in Hyde Park’, *The Illustrated London News*, 28 June 1958, 1110-1111; ‘The T.A. on Parade’, *Sphere*, 29 July 1958, 466-467. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. . One of the key features of the Royal Tournament was music. See Jeffery Richards, ‘“All the King’s horses and all the King’s men”: The Aldershot Tattoo’, *Imperialism and Music: Britain, 1876-1953* (Manchester, 2001), 211-247. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. . ‘The Royal Tournament at Earls Court’, *Sphere*, 2 July 1960: 12-14; ‘The Forces on Parade and in Action: Exciting Moments in this Year’s Royal Tournament at Earls Court’, *The Illustrated London News*, 2 July 1960, 30. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. . *Royal Tournament March Past*, *Queen Mother and Princess Margaret Attend the Royal Tournament*, and *Queen at the Royal Tournament*. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. . Jonathan Meller, ‘The Development of Modern Propaganda in Britain, 1854-1902’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, Durham University), 147. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. . These films were among those released by the British Film Institute as part of a special DVD collection, *COI Collection Volume Three: They Stand Ready* (2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. . Files of this production can be found in TNA, INF 12/792, Productions: Regular soldiers recruiting film, 1959; INF 6/875: Morning on Mount Kenya, 1959-60. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. . *Parliamentary Debates* (Lords), 231, 7 June 1961, 1148-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. . *Op cit*., 1149. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. . French, *Army, Empire*, 176. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. . The Army required 165,000 personnel, the Air Force 135,000 (a significant proportion of which were non-combatant ground crew) and the Navy 87,000. *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons) 667, 23 November 1962, 1574-675. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. . According to Hooper, the Admiralty even hired a ‘senior psychologist’ to train staff in the science of interviewing techniques. TNA, DEFE 7/1245, Recruiting recommendations to the Secretary of State for War, 28 July 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. . TNA, DEFE 7/1245, Recruiting Recommendations, 28 July 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. . A copy of the film can be found in the Imperial War Museum’s film collection: COI 425: *Spring Cruise* (1956). Production documents can be accessed here: TNA, INF 6/834, Spring Cruise (recruitment: Royal Navy), 1958-59. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. . ‘During the Navy’s Spring Cruise: HMS Bulwark Passing the Yacht Angelita in the Caribbean’, *The Illustrated London News*,22 March 1958, 455. [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. . I[mperial] W[ar] M[useum], C[ental] O[ffice of] I[nformation] 350, 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. . C. G. Jefford, ‘The Demise of the Auxiliary Fighter Squadrons Revisited’, *Royal Air Force Reserve and Auxiliary Forces: Royal Air Force Historical Society* (Northmoor, 2003), 79-95. [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. . Cranwell, Henlow, Locking, Halton and Bircham Newton. [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. . IWM, COI 350, 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. . Though no references to this agency appear in the major histories of British advertising, it appears to have worked for the Air Ministry well into the 1970s. TNA, INF 2/191, Royal Air Force: Clifford Bloxham and Partners Ltd, 1972-3; *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 831, 15 February 1972, 63-4W. [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. . Expenditure on display advertising in national newspapers grew from £35 million in 1955 to £62 million in 1960, a 77% increase. Provincial papers reported slower growth of 23% with magazines slightly higher at 29%. Winston Fletcher, *Powers of Persuasion: The Inside Story of British Advertising* (Oxford, 2008), 30. [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. . Op cit., 30.The BBC commenced colour broadcasting in 1967, but it was not until 1969 that both it and commercial stations regularly broadcasted in colour. [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. . While the tactic of dividing up audiences into segments based on their media consumption habits is often associated with late-twentieth century advertising, it has older roots. Liz McFall, *Advertising: A Cultural Economy* (London, 2004), 46, 55. [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. . TNA, INF 12/927, ‘Clifford Bloxham and Partners Ltd.’, 2 November 1961. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. . TNA, INF 2/176, When your son is 15, 1961. All advertisements mentioned in this paper have been sourced from this collection. [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. . Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. . Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000* (London, 2000), 231. [↑](#endnote-ref-92)
93. . This appeal appeared in several comic books over a four-month period beginning in November 1961. TNA, INF 2/176, Mach 2 Rocket-Firing Fighters, 1961-2. [↑](#endnote-ref-93)
94. . TNA, INF 2/176, Travel Books? I could write one; A Young Graduate Asks – Is there a career in flying with the R. A. F.?’, 1962. [↑](#endnote-ref-94)
95. . TNA, INF 2/176, A valuable trade – means a successful future, 1962. [↑](#endnote-ref-95)
96. . As Michael Paris has noted, a ‘whole new service economy sprang up to cater to [the] needs [of young people] in the 1950s’. *Warrior Nation*, 224. [↑](#endnote-ref-96)
97. . TNA, INF 2/176, I bought my car at 20 with what I saved in the Service, 1961. [↑](#endnote-ref-97)
98. . Marwick, *British Society*, 91. [↑](#endnote-ref-98)
99. . Vinen, *National Service*, ch. 8; Hickman, *The Call Up*, 243. [↑](#endnote-ref-99)
100. . Rachel Woodward and Trish Winter, *Sexing the Soldier: The Politics of Gender and the Contemporary British Army* (London, 2007), 31.  [↑](#endnote-ref-100)
101. . The 1960 Defence White Paper put the precise figure of female personnel at 14.5% of total manpower. *Report on Defence 1960* (London), 19. [↑](#endnote-ref-101)
102. . For an account of the emergence of women’s auxiliary services in all three forces, see Jeremy Crang, ‘The Revival of the British Women's Auxiliary Services in the Late Nineteen-Thirties’, *Historical Research*, 83 (2010), 343-357. [↑](#endnote-ref-102)
103. . According to figures discussed in parliament, in the majority of positions women were paid between 85% and 88% of men serving in the same rank. *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 733, 3 August 1966, 457-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-103)
104. . Kathleen Sherit, ‘The Integration of Women into the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, Post-World War II to the Mid 1990s’ (Unpublished PhD thesis: University of London, 2013), chs. 3 and 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-104)
105. . TNA, INF 13/16, A Life that is Different, 1959. [↑](#endnote-ref-105)
106. . Sherit, ‘The Integration of Women’, 116. [↑](#endnote-ref-106)
107. . The Army welcomed 36,600 new recruits in that year, as compared with an overall average of 21,000 across the entire decade and 21,500 in 1967, their least successful year. Statistics derived from French, *Army, Empire*, 176. [↑](#endnote-ref-107)
108. . *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 677, 8 May 1963, 406-7; *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 686, 19 December 1963, 245W. [↑](#endnote-ref-108)
109. . *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 671, 6 February 1963, 421. [↑](#endnote-ref-109)
110. . Ending over-strict discipline, increasing leave allowances and offering National Servicemen bounties to stay on as regulars formed part of the War Office’s strategy to decrease wastage. *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons) 644, 19 July 1961, 1242-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-110)
111. . ‘Sir Frederic Hooper’, *Times* (5 October 1963), 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-111)
112. . TNA, AIR 77/244, A Survey of Recruitment from Civil Life into the Royal Air Force Since 1947, 1956. [↑](#endnote-ref-112)
113. . TNA, RG 23/250, The Ideas of Civilian Young Men about Certain Aspects of Life and Conditions in the Armed Forces, October 1956. [↑](#endnote-ref-113)
114. . TNA, RG 23/254, Young Men’s Attitudes Towards the Regular Army, September 1959. [↑](#endnote-ref-114)
115. . Martin Francis, ‘The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century British Masculinity’, *The Historical Journal*, 45(3) (2002), 644. [↑](#endnote-ref-115)
116. . TNA, RG 23/254, Young Men’s Attitudes. The records considered in this paper do not make clear how or whether the Army addressed this problem, although it is possible that it was dealt with on a regimental level. [↑](#endnote-ref-116)
117. . Several contemporaries cast aspersions on the reliability and accuracy of opinion polls. In 1948, the American sociologist Herbert Blumer, for instance, argued that a poll ‘intrinsically [determined] its own objective’, conflating the object of their investigation – the study of public opinion – with its results. ‘Public Opinion and Public Opinion Polling’, *American Sociological Review*, 13 (1948): 543. [↑](#endnote-ref-117)
118. . TNA, WO 32/20397, Public Relations and the Army’, 5 December 1960 and Director of Public Relations, 19 October 1960. [↑](#endnote-ref-118)
119. . *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 681, c194W, 24 July 1963. [↑](#endnote-ref-119)
120. . *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 779, 12 March 1969, 1509. [↑](#endnote-ref-120)
121. . *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton, 1963), 13. [↑](#endnote-ref-121)
122. . While contemporary productions like *The Times* mocked the armed forces in a light-hearted war,George Farquhar’s post-restoration play, *Recruiting Officer*, was also tellingly revived in 1963. Steve Nicholson, *Modern British Playwriting: The 1960s* (London, 2012), chs.1-2. [↑](#endnote-ref-122)
123. . Hennessy, *Having it so Good*, 541. [↑](#endnote-ref-123)
124. . Ken Roberts, ‘Leisure: Stability and Change’, in M. Wadsworth and J. Bynner (eds.) *A Companion to Life Course Studies: The Social and Historical Context of the British Birth Cohort Studies* (London, 2011), 173. [↑](#endnote-ref-124)
125. . TNA, WO 32/19450, Manning Situation of the Army in 1962, undated. [↑](#endnote-ref-125)