

Bridging the Gap: The British Prisoner of War & The Civil Resettlement Units 1943-1946

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Abstract

Despite an estimated 192,335 British servicemen captured during the Second World War, little is known of their experiences outside of captivity or of their transition back to civilian life. The Civil Resettlement Units (CRUs) represent a unique initiative of the Second World War era intended to help former POWs transition back into society. This thesis aims to fill the gap in the post war experience of former POWs and argues that the CRUs were effective as a mass resocialisation project. By examining the process of the planning and operations of the CRUs this research sheds important light onto the POW experience and demonstrates how both the government and communities would respond to the growing evidence that POWs would require assistance in transitioning back to civil life.

Incorporating evidence from the Wellcome archive, interviews, and contemporary articles and newspapers, this study demonstrates the active part that communities (both professional and civil) played in shaping how a post war resettlement scheme would shape. In addition, it demonstrates the complex negotiations between the psychiatrists who would run the CRUs, and a government primarily interested in winning the war. In its analysis of the CRUs, this thesis demonstrates that they were an effective way of resocialising returning POWs. Fundamental to this accomplishment, this thesis identifies a hierarchy of factors which underpinned the CRUs success, planning, location, and operations and concludes that of these factors, it was operations which was the most important factor.

Declaration

I certify that, apart from the guidance provided by my supervisor and the references cited in the text and bibliography, this dissertation is the sole work of Jonathan Harper and has not been previously submitted as part of the assessment requirements for any academic award.

J. Harper 20/09/2024

Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the inspiration for this thesis, my own grandfather, George Walter Gibson. He served in the 5th battalion, Green Howards and was captured in the North African campaign during the battle of Gazala (1942). From here he would spend the rest of the war in captivity were thankfully, upon its conclusion, he returned home safe. I count myself lucky that I was part of the generation that could still listen first hand to his accounts of his time during the war.

While my grandfather spoke little of his time in captivity, after his death, his closest friend Fred Ashman (who served with my grandfather and was taken captive alongside him) was able to fill in the blanks of their time in captivity. However, as a family, we still knew little of his journey home or the immediate aftermath of his release. It was at this time while discussing with a friend (whose grandfather had also served in the Green Howards and was captured at Dunkirk) that the CRUs would first be brought to my attention. I soon found there was little information regarding this scheme, yet it helped thousands of returning prisoners of war return to civil life and as such, was an important and unexplored part of social history. By exploring this topic, it was a tangible link to helping me understand what my own grandfather may have experienced and fill the missing pieces to his story.

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and guidance of a close coterie of people who have kept me on track and sane throughout. Primary amongst those is my supervisor, Dr Marcus Morris. It is with little exaggeration that I say that without his support, guidance, and commitment that this thesis would simply not have been completed and, although words cannot begin to express my gratitude, I hope that this small acknowledgment goes some way towards conveying my thanks.

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Figure 1: George Walter Gibson (left) and Fred Ashman, (unknown Date)

Contents

| | |
|--|------|
| Abstract | ii |
| Acknowledgments | iv |
| List of images..... | viii |
| Abbreviations and Acronyms | ix |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Literature Review. | 3 |
| Methodology..... | 18 |
| Chapter 1: A Forgotten Paradigm? | 26 |
| Captivity in the First World War and Barbed Wire Disease..... | 28 |
| Winning the war, Losing the peace: the POW community and narrative of remembrance. | 42 |
| Conclusion..... | 58 |
| Chapter 2: The Approaching Storm | 61 |
| A community mobilises..... | 65 |
| The Crookham experiment. | 86 |
| The Northfield Experiments. | 95 |
| Conclusion..... | 112 |
| Chapter 3: Final Hurdles. | 116 |
| Persuading the War Office: Evolution of Attitudes. | 118 |
| Trial and error: The SRTU. | 127 |
| Communication and the press campaigns..... | 139 |
| Conclusion | 150 |
| Chapter 4: Location, Location, Location. | 153 |
| A Matter of Time and Place. | 156 |
| A Home Away from Home: No. 6 CRU. | 165 |
| Trouble across the border? No. 9 & 20 CRU..... | 170 |
| The Forgotten CRU: No. 5, Ballymena. | 181 |
| Volunteers from the Republic of Ireland | 192 |
| Conclusion..... | 199 |
| Chapter 5: All work and no play. | 203 |
| An officer and a gentleman..... | 207 |
| The Regular Soldier. | 211 |
| Far East Prisoners of War (FEPOWS). | 216 |
| The ATS & The Civil Liaison Officers. | 225 |
| Vocational Officers and the Ministry of Labour. | 242 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Conclusion..... | 260 |
| Journeys End: A Return to Normality? | 263 |
| Appendix | 269 |
| Bibliography..... | 270 |
| Books & Theses | 270 |
| Journals..... | 278 |
| Parliamentary Debates..... | 283 |
| Interviews, images & personal | 285 |
| Newspapers | 286 |
| The National Archives, UK: Kew Gardens, London | 289 |
| The Wellcome Archive..... | 290 |

List of images

Figure 1: George Walter Gibson (left) and Fred Ashman, (unknown Date)

Figure 2: Framed letter from King George V: IWM EPH 4582.

Figure 3: National Army Museum 2013-02-39-12, Daily Telegraph Prisoners of War Exhibition programme, 1944.

Figure 4: ‘Ex-Prisoners of War Give a Party’, *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 24 May 1945.

Figure 5: Neil Armstrong, personal collection: Invitation to attend CRU

Figure 6: Abram Games (artist), Get in Shape for Civvy Street, (London: H.M Stationary Office, Fosh & Cross Ltd)

Figure 7: Unknown Photographer, Visitors Book, No. 1 Civil Resettlement Unit, Hatfield House.

Figure 8: Buchanan Castle, 1890’s. Photo courtesy of <https://www.theclanbuchanan.com/landmarks>

Figure 9: Locations of CRUs. Information taken from TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, ‘*Settling Down in Civvy Street: Mark II*’.

Figure 10: ‘Ex War-Prisoners Train for Civilian Occupation’, *Ballymena Observer*, 31 August 1945.

Figure 11: ‘A group of 50 regular soldiers arrive at No. 14 CRU, Sudbury Park’, *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 15 August 1946.

Figure 12: The ‘Foster mum’ at work. Mrs A. D. Brown taking part in a discussion group. ‘They Heal Minds of Ex POW’, *The Daily Dispatch*, 15 November 1945.

Figure 13: Repatriates visit Cadbury Bros Ltd Bournville. ‘Visit to Cadbury Factory’, *The Birmingham Mail*, 13 December 1945.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

| Term | Meaning | Further Information |
|--------|--|--|
| ATS | Auxiliary Territorial Service | The women's branch of the British Army during the Second World War. |
| BEF | British Expeditionary Force | The British Army forces that served in France and Belgium in the Second World War during 1940 |
| BRC | British Red Cross | The British Red Cross carried out extensive services for prisoners of war including relief parcels and monitoring of camp conditions |
| CO | Commissioned officer or commanding officer | Referring to those who hold a rank of 2nd lieutenant or above |
| CLO | Civil Liaison Officer | A social worker (usually a woman) employed by the CRUs to help resocialise POWs back to civilian life. |
| CRU | Civil Resettlement Unit | Units established during 1945 to resocialise returning prisoners of war. |
| DAP | Directorate for Army Psychiatry | Responsible for giving advice on training of Army psychiatrists. Many members would go on to plan and work at the CRUs |
| DGAMS | Director General Army Medical Services | Role to promote effective medical, dental and veterinary health services for the Army and provide a policy focus for individual medical training, doctrine and force development |
| EXPOWA | Ex Prisoner of War Association | An association set up after the First World War designed to provide relief for ex-prisoners of war. Also arranged annual gatherings of commemoration |

| | | |
|-------|-------------------------------------|--|
| FEPOW | Far East Prisoner of War | Acronym used to describe former British and Commonwealth prisoners of war held in the Far East during the Second World War |
| MO | Medical Officer | An individual who serves in the medical corps of the military |
| NCO | Non-Commissioned Officer | Referring to those who hold ranks from Lance Corporal to Regimental sergeant Major i.e. not officers |
| POW | Prisoner of War | The abbreviation for Prisoner of War. This term was considered preferable to prisoner which could cause soldiers to be confused with criminals |
| PTSD | Post-traumatic stress disorder | A mental health condition that can develop in military personnel and veterans after a life-threatening event or experience |
| RAMC | Royal Army Medical Corps | A corps of the British Army which provides medical services to personnel |
| SRTU | Special Reception and Training Unit | Referring to the pilot unit to the CRUs called No. 10 Special Reception and Training Unit. This unit was located in Derby and began in November 1944 |
| TWC | The Wellcome Collection | Shorthand in footnotes referring to sources used from this collection |
| WOSB | War Office Selection Board | Employed by the British army from 1942 onwards to select officer candidates using psychological methods |

Bridging the Gap: The British Prisoner of War & The Civil Resettlement Units 1943-1946.

Introduction

There has been a growing interest in the application of the psychological sciences in historical scholarship in recent years, with the centenary of the First World War engaging the public imagination around debates of the past, and with the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq throwing light on the psychological trauma that a new generation is experiencing. Despite a growing number of contributions, however, the psychological rehabilitation of prisoners of war has remained under researched. Studies of trauma or of demobilisation have focused on the returning combat veteran and the prisoner of war experience has been overlooked. Further, the extant scholarship on trauma has been dominated by shell shock or by specific debates surrounding the techniques deployed to keep soldiers in combat and maintaining their morale. Much of the available scholarship regarding twentieth-century prisoners of war and their experiences has revolved around biographical accounts of the prisoners themselves.¹ While this research has provided many insights into the traumas that these men suffered, little has been written on their experiences after captivity. Consequently, little is known about what provisions the British government set aside for the estimated 192,335 British servicemen captured during the Second World War and how were they helped to transition back into society.² This project will examine a specific initiative of the Second World War era intended to help former POWs: the Civil Resettlement Units (CRUs).

The Civil Resettlement Units (CRUs) were a scheme created during the Second World War to help British prisoners of war (POWs) return to civilian life and to assist families and

¹ John Nichol & Tony Rennell, *The Last Escape: The untold story of Allied prisoners of war in Germany 1944-45*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2003); Adrien Vincent, *The Long Road Home*, (Leeds: Sapere Books, 1956); Tony Vercoe, *Survival at Stalag IVB: Soldiers and Airmen Remember Germany's Largest POW Camp of World War II*, (Jefferson: McFarland, 2006)

² *Strength and Casualties of the Armed Forces and Auxiliary Services of the United Kingdom 1939 to 1945*, (London: HMSO, 1946), p. 9.

communities during their readjustment period. To assist in the two-way resocialisation the CRUs believed was necessary, the CRUs employed a number of specialist staff who worked extensively with communities and repatriates in achieving this objective (see chapter 5). This community aspect was deemed an essential part of the process and the ways that the CRUs engaged with communities would form a part of their operational success. The units were entirely voluntary and relied on various communication strategies (see chapter 3) to persuade POWs of their value. The CRUs would operate from 1945 – 1946 and in total, twenty units would be set up throughout the UK seeing some 19,000 ex-European and 4500 ex-Japanese POWs attend.³

This thesis argues that the CRUs were an effective way of resettling and resocialising prisoners of war. Key to this success were a hierarchy of factors, which are planning, location, and operations. In doing so it will answer a number of questions. How did the experience of the First World War effect the responses to resettlement during the Second? Was there evidence of consistent planning and development for a resettlement scheme, how did this shape the CRUs, and to what extent can this factor be attributed to their success? Why was location an important factor in the success of the CRUs and how did a unit's location affect its ability in resocialising repatriates? And, finally, what were the operational considerations behind the CRUs, how did those involved in their creation get approval of, and implement such a scheme, and how did the CRUs function within the community? Central to these questions is this thesis main argument, that out of the hierarchy of factors considered key to the success of the CRUs, operations were the most important factor.

³ Robert H Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army in the Second World War*, (London: Routledge, 1958), p. 240.

Literature Review.

The following literature review is broken down thematically by chapter and is reflective of how this thesis is organised. It will discuss literature in this order: captivity and demobilisation after the First World War; psychiatric knowledge and the politics of captivity during the Second World War; cultural geography; and, finally, demobilisation after the Second World War.

While there is plentiful literature exploring the experience of captivity during the First World War, there is a lack of focus on the prisoner experience upon their return home. Instead, works such as those by Oliver Wilkinson have focused on how British prisoners of war maintained their sense of identity despite the disorientation of prolonged captivity.⁴ Wilkinson demonstrates the struggles of captivity and explores the daily routines of captivity, the psychological strain prisoners faced, and the ever-present spectre of the ‘barbed wire disease’.⁵ Other scholars, however, such as John Yarnall, explore the political and diplomatic efforts to abide by the new conventions and laws regarding prisoners.⁶ For Yarnall, the experience of captivity is more one of neglect and ill-treatment, yet by exploring diplomatic efforts, Yarnall, like Wilkinson, touches upon a much larger history of wartime captivity. By exploring the nature of barbed wire disease both authors touch upon the wider consequences of the First World War regarding POW treatment and the developing attitudes towards the effects of long-term captivity. Heather Jones also hints at the wider consequences of First World War captivity

⁴ Oliver Wilkinson, *British Prisoners of War in First World War Germany*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁵ Richard Van Emden also explores the experience of captivity through the daily routine of prisoners and the psychological effect of captivity, Richard Van Emden, *Prisoners of the Kaiser: The Last POWs of the Great War*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2009).

⁶ John Yarnall, *Barbed Wire Disease: British & German Prisoners of War, 1914-19*, (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2011), other scholars such as Heather Jones have also explored the history of violence in captivity, Heather Jones, *Violence Against Prisoners of War in the First World War: Britain, France and Germany, 1914-1920*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014).

yet admits that any such comparison requires a book in its own right. This thesis therefore fills this gap in the current literature and by analysing the longer-term consequences of the First World War. It argues that responses during the Second World War were shaped by previous experiences and it was these that shaped how a resettlement scheme was conceptualised.

The experience of demobilisation, how the public and POWs perceived their experiences, and the reception upon their return would shape responses towards POWs in the Second World War. The first chapter of this thesis offers vital context for the subsequent chapters and explores a secondary argument that the experience of the First World War would, in some measure, shape responses during the Second World War. The CRUs were a unique project driven by the ex-POW community and of the concerns of the communities that these men would be returning to. These communities were determined to not repeat the same failures of First World War and support the men who would be returning. By focusing on these communities this thesis is filling a notable omission around the debates in communities and parliament surrounding prisoner repatriation. The treatment of such POWs highlights how both the government and civilians hoped to transition to peace and the post war society they envisioned. The CRUs provide a vital contrast between the returning POWs and civilians that has had little attention in the literature. By analysing the CRUs this thesis expands upon works by scholars such as Stephen Richards Graubard and Jon Lawrence who explore demobilisation after the First World War.⁷ Graubard explores the difficulties faced by the British government when implementing demobilisation and suggests that the while eventually demobilisation was based on fair principles and not just geared towards the needs of industry, the initial response did much to create bad faith. Jon Lawrence, however, explores a different aspect of

⁷ Jon Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 75, Iss. 3, (2003); Stephen Richards Graubard, 'Military Demobilization in Great Britain Following the First World War', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 19, Iss. 4, (1947).

demobilisation and discusses how both the government and public feared that returning servicemen had been irrevocably brutalized by war. Lawrence explores the myths of brutalization and the social and political consequences of the powerful fear it engendered. This thesis expands upon such works and analyses the longer-term consequences of such bad faith and how the disappointment of demobilisation after the First World War shaped public and government responses to resettlement during the Second World War.

The first chapter also demonstrates how the failure of POWs to mobilise as a distinct veteran group meant the POW experience was lost within the greater narrative of sacrifice and loss emerging after the First World War, which is an argument explored by Oliver Wilkinson.⁸ Wilkinson argues that the loss of the POW voice helped shape the public perception of their experience and contributed to a selective amnesia regarding POW experience and their difficulties experienced upon return to civilian life. Combined with new treaties designed to address loopholes in POW treatment that emerged from the First World War, this meant that by the start of the Second World War, the government and army had been complacent in addressing any issues of resettlement evidence after the First World War. This thesis questions the argument of selective amnesia by demonstrating the significant amount of public discourse surrounding POWs during the Second World War, many based on the experiences of the First World War. Additionally, a number of former POWs would come forward at the outbreak of war and this group was vital in highlighting the difficulties they had faced in resettlement and in pushing for a government response. However, like Wilkinson, scholars such as Alan Allport and David Rolf have also suggested that the army and government had fallen into a wilful act

⁸ Oliver Wilkinson, 'Ex-Prisoners of War, 1914–18: Veteran association, assimilation and disassociation after the First World War' in *Veterans of the First World War: Ex-Servicemen and Ex-Servicewomen in Post war Britain and Ireland*, eds. by David Swift & Oliver Wilkinson, (London: Routledge, 2019) pp. 172 - 190; Oliver Wilkinson, *British Prisoners of War in First World War Germany*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

of amnesia, forgetting the hard-won lessons of the previous war.⁹ This thesis questions this analysis, in particular with reference to POWs and the response towards their repatriation. By utilising key primary works from the First World War, it demonstrates there was a foundation of knowledge available vital for the planning and development stage of the CRUs. Both A. L. Vischer and Norman Fenton represent the only psychiatrists to produce follow up studies that highlighted the difficulties in resocialisation that POWs faced, and their work would be quoted in reports and articles during the Second World War.¹⁰ By exploring the emerging issues of resettlement after the First World War, this study contributes to the current literature surrounding demobilisation and expands on these works by correlating these experiences directly to the response of the government and ex-POW community to resettlement difficulties during the Second World War. By acknowledging the POW experience of the First World War and framing them in the context of events during the Second, this thesis adds to the current discourse and argues that such experiences were influential in forming responses to resettlement.

The second chapter analyses several studies involving POWs during the Second World War and how they influenced the planning and development of the CRUs. The conclusions from studies such as Crookham and Northfield would form the foundation upon which the CRUs would operate and were essential in both their planning and operations. Through the case studies of the Crookham experiment and both Northfield experiments, it discusses how the army's need for manpower and its employment of repatriated POWs once again brought resettlement issues to the foreground. In discussing these experiments, this chapter demonstrates that the planning of a post war resettlement scheme was not cohesive, rather the

⁹ Alan Allport, *Browned Off and Bloody Minded: The British Soldier Goes to War 1939-1945*, (London: Yale University Press, 2017), p.5.

¹⁰ A. L. Vischer, *Barbed Wire Disease: A Psychological Study of the Prisoner of War*, (London: John Bale, Sons & Danielsson Ltd, 1919), Norman Fenton, *Shell-Shock and its Aftermath*, (St. Louis: The C. V. Mosby company, 1926).

result of individuals who saw the value of their work beyond its military application. Yet such experiments were vital in informing the planning of the CRUs, as many of the staff who were involved in these earlier works would both plan and work at the later CRUs and the experience gained was a crucial step in the development of the project.

The CRUs, however, are almost never discussed in psychiatric histories and their omission leaves a gap in the understanding of the development of military psychiatry and its civil applications. Though there is little available literature written regarding the CRUs this thesis builds upon some key pieces of literature regarding the work done during Second World War regarding psychiatric care. Works by both Tom Harrison and Nafsika Thalassis focus upon the Northfield experiments whose work in psychiatry would be a blueprint for the CRUs.¹¹ A strength of Harrison's and Thalassis's accounts are their use of memoirs, hospital newspapers and patient questionnaires to build a greater picture of the successes and failures of Northfield away from the normal narrative focusing purely on the psychiatric work. This thesis uses a similar methodology and uses follow up questionnaires, newspaper interviews, and follow up studies in its analysis in how successful the CRUs were. Additionally, many of those involved at Northfield, such as Major Wilfred Bion, would join in the development of the CRUs. From the Northfield experiments the change in psychological ideas can be tracked and a link traced to the ideas that developed into the CRUs. By analysing Crookham and Northfield, this thesis contributes to the current literature and relates the importance of such works within a social and cultural context. By focusing on this aspect, it demonstrates the shift in attitudes that were required in the development of a resettlement scheme unlike previous works which choose to

¹¹ Nafsika Thalassis, 'Soldiers in Psychiatric Therapy: The Case of Northfield Military Hospital 1942-1946', *Social History of Medicine*, Vol. 20, Iss. 2, (2007), pp.351-368; Tom Harrison, *Bion, Rickman, Foulkes, and the Northfield Experiments: Advancing on a Different Front*, (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2000), Tom Harrison, 'Social fields, Battle fields and Northfield: The legacy of the 'Northfield Experiments'', *Group Analysis*, Vol. 51, Iss. 4, (2018). Tom Harrison, 'Response to The Northfield Experiments—a reappraisal 70 years on', *Group Analysis*, Vol. 53, Iss. 2, (2020).

relate these experiments to their military application or in the development of psychiatry during the Second World War.

Chapter two also analyses the response of the British public to the (re)emerging issues of the difficulties in resocialising and resettling POWs. It highlights how a number of articles written by escaped POWs brought issues of resettlement to the attention of the public. The public, including relatives of POWs and ex-POWs from the First World War, would mobilise as a community and apply pressure on the government to accept responsibility for their POW resettlement. By analysing public responses this thesis is filling a gap in the current literature on the politics of prisoners, which pays little attention to the domestic response. Works by Neville Wylie, Joan Beaumont and David Rolf address how political decisions influenced the treatment of POWs in captivity, with Neville Wylie being particularly critical of how key decisions were still made on the hoof with little thought given to past experiences.¹² However, little discussion has been given to how domestic politics influenced decisions regarding demobilisation and repatriation of POWs. Political decisions would impact on the planning and implementation of the CRUs and the government's unwillingness to direct attention away from fighting the war led to prevarication and delay with major decisions. This theme will be further discussed in chapter four and the delays in finalising a coherent demobilisation strategy would influence the decisions taken by CRU planners. How communities mobilised in support of POWs is important to this thesis's argument, with their engagement with the public and a region's cultural geography vital components in the operations of the CRUs. By demonstrating the role the public played in influencing decisions, this thesis contributes to the political

¹² Neville Wylie, *Barbed Wire Diplomacy: Britain, Germany, and the Politics of Prisoners of War, 1939-1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), David Rolf, "'Blind Bureaucracy': The British Government and Prisoners of War in German Captivity, 1939 – 1945' in Ed. Moore and Fedorowich, *Prisoners of War and Their Captors*, (Oxford: Berg, 1996), Joan Beaumont, "'Protecting Prisoners of War, 1939-45'" in Ed. Moore and Fedorowich, *Prisoners of War and Their Captors*, (Oxford: Berg, 1996), Bob Moore, *Prisoner of War: Europe 1939-1956*, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2022), esp pp. 114 - 203.

discourse regarding POWs suggesting that domestic politics played as important a role as diplomatic negotiations in the development of the CRUs.

The third chapter continues to analyse the factors that shaped the operations and planning of the CRUs. It discusses how the conclusions from the pilot scheme at Derby fed directly into the successful planning of the CRUs. It highlights how the CRUs successfully advertised the purpose of the scheme to both the public and returning POWs and how it was earlier research that led to its success. In its analysis, it demonstrates the importance of each in the successful planning and operations of the CRUs. This chapter also discusses the influence of the Tavistock Clinic in the development and operations of the CRUs. It was the influence of the Directorate of Army Psychiatry (DAP) and those of the 'invisible college' who demonstrated the effectiveness of their methods that would persuade the War Office of the need for a resettlement scheme. Many of the men who worked for this department had come from the Tavistock Clinic and would play a key role in the planning and implementation of the CRUs. It was their persuasive arguments that led to the establishment of the Special Reception and Training Unit (SRTU), the pilot to the CRUs. In turn, it was through this pilot scheme that plans for the CRUs would be finalised and the methods behind its operations refined.

There are few works that highlight the important role the Tavistock Clinic played in the development of psychiatry during the Second World War, with Alice Victoria White discussing the importance of their work through the War Office Selection Boards (WOSB).¹³ White dedicates a chapter in her thesis to the CRUs but is more concerned with the psychiatric underpinnings of the CRUs and the gradual move towards the acceptance of psychiatry in civilian applications. This method is similar to works by scholars such as Edgar Jones, Simon

¹³ Alice Victoria White, *From the Science of Selection to Psychologising Civvy Street: The Tavistock Group, 1939-1948*, (Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis: University of Kent, 2016), H. V. Dicks, *50 Years of the Tavistock Clinic*, (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul Ltd, 1970).

Wessely, and Ben Shephard who all explore the changes in attitudes towards the use of psychiatry in wartime.¹⁴ Jones and Wessely are particularly relevant to this study and show the changing attitude towards long-term captivity. While primarily psychologists, Jones and Wessely adopt a historical approach in their methodology, tracing the historic changes in psychological ideas and the corresponding changes in attitudes and practices. They argue that despite mounting evidence from schemes such as the Crookham rehabilitation study and the Northfield experiments, the government and army still viewed psychiatry with suspicion and were slow to act in any form of rehabilitation for returning POWs. This thesis adds to this analysis by demonstrating the role CRU planners played in shifting this attitude and how they persuaded the War Office of the usefulness of psychiatric methods in resettlement. By analysing the changing dynamics that played out between the CRUs and governmental departments it demonstrates their importance in the factors that underpinned changing attitudes.

Shepherd, however, focuses on the changing attitudes towards psychiatry seeing its initial adoption as a response to a fear of loss of manpower.¹⁵ Shepherd, unlike other works, also highlights the importance of public opinion regarding the treatment of soldiers with psychological problems. Public opinion, however, could also be of detriment and Shepherd argues that while there was widespread concern for soldiers suffering from shell shock during First World War, this was not so for soldiers and their neuroses during Second World War. With the Blitz, rationing and evacuation, civilians in Second World War had many problems of their own and had little sympathy for the soldier who broke down. Yet, there is little in the

¹⁴ Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, 'British Prisoners-of-War: From Resilience to Psychological Vulnerability: Reality or Perception', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 21, Iss. 2, (2010), Ben Shephard, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century*, (London: Pimlico, 2002).

¹⁵ For other such examples of this work see also: Edgar Jones & Stephen Ironside, 'Battle Exhaustion: The Dilemma of Psychiatric Casualties in Normandy, June-August 1944', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 53, Iss. 1 (March 2010), Edgar Jones, Andrew Thomas, and Stephen Ironside, 'Shell shock: an outcome study of a First World War "PIE" unit', *Psychological Medicine*, Vol. 37, (2007).

way of research on this claim. If, as Shepherd states, there was little sympathy for the returning soldier how does this account for such schemes as the CRUs? A fundamental principle of the CRU scheme was the outstanding importance of the family at home to understand the problems of the returning POW. The family and the community had to be involved for the CRUs to be a success. Further, if Shepherd's claim is to stand to scrutiny this does not explain such reports as the Mass Observation's 'The Journey Home', which clearly shows the concerns the public had for the returning soldier.¹⁶ This thesis, therefore, offers a counterargument to Shepherd by exploring the work of the CRUs. It argues against such apathetic responses from the British public towards returning servicemen. The active participation of the local community, the ability of the CRUs to project their work beyond the unit, and how staff worked closely with organisations in efforts to resocialise men were all part of the operations of the CRUs and were a vital factor in their success.

By choosing to discuss a hierarchy of factors which underpinned the success of the CRUs, this thesis expands the scope of their analysis beyond the employment of psychiatric methods as has previously been done. White, for example, does not explore the importance of location in the success of the CRUs and while White provides a map of the locations of CRUs, this map misses the unit at Ballymena completely. Chapter four aims to fill this gap in the literature and it discusses the factors of location to the success of the CRUs. It discusses the influence of operations behind these decisions and the physical and geographical factors deemed essential in a successful resettlement scheme. Through three CRU case studies, it will analyse the importance of the cultural geography of the regions CRUs were assigned to serve. By doing so, it demonstrates how CRUs adapted their approaches to meet the unique needs of each location and how by adopting the cultural norms of an area, this formed a key part in the success of resocialising repatriates. This chapter also contributes important research towards

¹⁶ *The Journey Home: A Report Prepared by Mass-Observation*, (London: Curwin Press Ltd, 1944).

demobilisation in Ireland and how the POW experience factored into this. Many works relating to the role of Ireland during the Second World War discuss the wartime service of Irish regiments or the relationship between Irish soldiers and the British Army but not of demobilisation. Richard Doherty and Neil Richardson explore the wartime service of Irishmen and women but offer little in the way of the experience of POWs.¹⁷ Other authors, such as Geoffrey Roberts and Ian Wood, offer a broader analysis of the Irish experience and cover the post war politics and social policy of the region, yet it is only Bernard Kelly who explores the Irish experience of demobilisation in any detail.¹⁸ Beyond more generalised histories, journal articles by Steven O'Connor, Philip Ollerenshaw, and Emmanuel Destenay provide a more focused approach to the experiences of Irish servicemen and explore Irish identity during the Second World War and the social and political situation of the region.¹⁹ Despite this literature, there is still little written on the POW experience and this thesis fills this omission, adding to the historiography of post war Ireland through the POW experience. It explores the complex relationship POWs had with identity, how this affected their resettlement, and the part CRUs played in negotiating the complex political and social environment of Ireland. In doing so, this chapter demonstrates the importance of location and a region's cultural geography in the success of the CRUs. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore in detail the concepts behind cultural geography, as an existing term there is considerable literature surrounding this

¹⁷ Richard Doherty, *Irish Men and Women in the Second World War*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd, 2021), Neil Richardson, *Dark Times, Decent Men: Stories of Irishmen in World War II*, (Dublin: O'Brien Press Ltd, 2012),

¹⁸ Ian S. Wood, *Britain, Ireland and the Second World War*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), Geoffrey K. Roberts, *Ireland and the Second World War: Politics, Society and Remembrance*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd, 2000), Bernard Kelly, *Returning Home: Irish Ex-Servicemen after the Second World War*, (Dublin: Merrion, 2012).

¹⁹ Philip Ollerenshaw, 'War, Industrial Mobilisation and Society in Northern Ireland, 1939-1945', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 16, Iss. 2, (May 2007), Steven O'Connor, 'Irish identity and integration within the British armed forces, 1939-45', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 39, Iss. 155 (May 2015), Emmanuel Destenay, "'Nobody's Children'? Political Responses to the Homecoming of First World War Veterans in Northern and Eire, 1918-1929', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 60, Iss. 3, (July 2021).

topic worth acknowledging.²⁰ As a key concept in this thesis how the term ‘cultural geography’ is defined and used is explained in greater detail in chapter four.

Chapter five analyses how operations underpinned the successes of the CRUs. It analyses how the CRUs approached returning repatriates and their differing experiences, discussing how a repatriate’s experience of captivity could affect their engagement with the scheme and what, if any methods, the CRUs employed to bridge these difficulties. In discussing the resocialisation process it will analyse the work of the Civilian Liaison Officer (CLO) and Vocational Staff. The CLOs were trained social workers, and their work was based as much in the community as the CRUs. They engaged with both the repatriate and their families, helped in the adjustment period, and provided support where needed. The Vocational Staff included a Ministry of Labour Officer and assisted the repatriate in navigating the job market, arranged factory visits and job trials, and whose efforts were directed at finding the repatriate a job suitable for their new attitudes and perspective on life. The work of the CLOs and Vocational Staff were an important part of the operations of the CRUs, bridging the gap between military and civil life and engaging in the two-way process considered vital in the success of the CRUs. By analysing the operations of the CRUs, this chapter contributes to the understanding of demobilisation after the Second World War and the post war British society.

The current literature concerning demobilisation and the returning soldier after the Second World War focus on the combat veteran and not the POW. Authors such as Ben Wicks, Barry Turner and Tony Rennel provide what may be considered ‘popular history’ and are rather anecdotal in their approach.²¹ However, scholarly attention to this subject is largely lacking

²⁰ Peter A. Jackson, *Maps of Meaning: An Introduction to Cultural Geography*, (London: Routledge, 1989), Mike Crang, *Cultural Geography*, (London: Routledge, 1998), Jon Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces*, (London: Routledge, 2015), *In Search of Ireland: A Cultural Geography*, ed. Brian Graham, (London: Routledge, 1997).

²¹ Barry Turner & Tony Rennel, *When Daddy Comes Home: How War Changed Family Life Forever*, (London: Arrow Books, 2014), Ben Wicks, *Welcome Home: True Stories of Soldiers Returning from World War II*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd, 1991).

with scholars such as David Englander stating that ‘the demobilisation and resettlement of the veteran in civilian occupations remains a curiously neglected process’.²² Crucially, then, this thesis focuses upon POWs, an entire demographic whose repatriation has received little attention and whose reintegration story is lost. Journal articles by Rex Pope and Jeremy Crang have gone some way to address this issue, with Alan Allport covering the British experience of demobilisation in much greater detail and contributing significantly to the historiography of post-Second World War Britain and the demobilisation process which has been largely ignored.²³ While work by Alan Allport sheds light on the hopes and fears of these returning men, the CRUs remain significantly understudied with Allport only mentioning them as a sidenote. Furthermore, as much of the literature surrounding POWs has focused on their traumatic experiences while in captivity, little focus has been paid to the social and cultural aspects of captivity and how this affected the POW’s experience and expectations upon repatriation. While works by Ben Shepherd and Clare Makepeace cover the CRUs, they are secondary to their argument.

Makepeace focuses on how prisoners of war came to terms with wartime imprisonment and provides an appraisal of how this impacted upon their masculine identity.²⁴ Makepeace analyses the sharp gender dichotomy between battle front and home front and how POWs created domestic fantasies to help them cope with captivity. Similarly, authors such as Linsey Robb argue that during the Second World War there was a ‘hierarchy of masculinity’ outside of the ‘soldier hero’ and explores masculine identities in reserved occupations.²⁵ However, as

²² David Englander, ‘Soldiers and Social Reform in the First and Second World Wars’, *Historical Research*, Vol. 67, Iss. 164, (1994), p. 319.

²³ Rex Pope, ‘British Demobilisation After the Second World War’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 30, Iss. 1. (Jan, 1995), Jeremy Crang, ‘Welcome to Civvy Street: The Demobilization of the British Armed Forces after the Second World War’, *The Historian*, Vol. 46, (1995), Alan Allport, *Demobbed: Coming Home After the Second World War*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

²⁴ Clare Makepeace, *Captives of War: British Prisoners of War in Europe in the Second World War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)

²⁵ Linsey Robb, *Men at Work: The Working Man in British Culture, 1939-1945*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

Robbs focus is on reserved occupations, there is little discussion regarding POWs or where they may sit within a hierarchy of masculinity. POWs and men in reserved occupations shared many similarities regarding masculine identity. Neither fit into the soldier hero archetype yet, unlike those in reserved occupations, who Penny Summerfield notes 'remain largely absent from popular representations of Second World War Britain', the CRUs were an acknowledgment of the POW experience.²⁶ Chapter five contributes to this discussion by analysing how the masculine identity of returning POWs impacted their resettlement and analyses the strategies employed by the CRUs in bridging this sensitive topic.

However, one of the weaknesses of Makepeace's work is its lack of a long-term analysis of the success of the CRUs and her conclusions do little to advance or question what has previously been written. Furthermore, unlike Ben Shepherd who provides background context on the work done by psychiatrists in the inter-war period, including the attitudes of other nations, Makepeace offers little conceptualised framing of pre-war attitudes regards POWs. Similarly, Shepherd states that the CRUs were an outstanding success yet provides little in the way of evidence or analysis for this conclusion. While Makepeace acknowledges that the lack of follow up work and accounts from returning prisoners makes an analysis of their success difficult, both authors by only using the established contemporary literature add nothing beyond what was written by people with a vested interest in promoting the success of a scheme they were involved in.²⁷ There is, therefore, a lack of analysis on the long-term success of the

²⁶ Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 119 - 20.

²⁷ The main contemporary literature regards CRUs is provided by Robert Ahrenfeldt and Adam Curle and Eric Trist. Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*. Ahrenfeldt acknowledges the contribution made by J. R. Rees in his work on the CRUs. Rees, who was appointed as a consulting psychiatrist for the British Army during World War Two, was a prominent member of the Tavistock group -whose members were heavily involved in the development of the CRUs.

Adam Curle & E. L Trist, '*Transitional Communities and Social Re-Connection: A Follow-up Study of the Civil Resettlement of British Prisoners of War Part 1 & 2*'. The follow-up study provided by Trist and Curle present the only available work regards an analysis on the effectiveness of the treatment received and the reintegration back into the community. Trist and Curle were both involved in the CRU scheme.

CRUs that challenges the official literature.²⁸ Additionally, the lack of work regarding demobilisation after the Second World War represents a clear gap that this thesis can fill. By highlighting the experience of POWs and how the effects of long-term captivity impacted their resettlement this thesis contributes to the knowledge of post war demobilisation through the POW experience, a little understood demographic.

Chapter 5 of this thesis also demonstrates the importance of women in resettlement. It explores the methods used by the CRUs to engage with this demographic and how they employed the CLOs (exclusively women) and the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) and demonstrates the importance that women played in the rehabilitation of these returning young men who often had no other adult identity than as a soldier. Scholars such as Michael Roper have analysed the vital importance of domestic ties in the emotional survival of the soldier.²⁹ Roper argues that the immediate emotional impact of the war was felt not within the public sphere but amongst families. This interpretation contrasts with previous authors such as Jon Lawrence and Stephen Graubard who have framed the soldiers return largely around the tensions played out in post war public life and politics.³⁰ Similarly, authors such as Barbara Hartley and Julie Summers explore the impact of captivity on the family and the social repercussions of their return.³¹ Captivity subverted the gender stereotypes and POWs were often now the submissive partner relying on their spouses/mothers for support. Upon their return, many faced a totally unfamiliar environment and could no longer perform their socially sanctioned role as protector.

²⁸ See the methodology section of this thesis as to how this study approaches these difficulties.

²⁹ Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

³⁰ Lawrence, *Forging a Peaceable Kingdom*, Graubard, *Military Demobilization*.

³¹ Barbara Hatley, *War and Welfare: British Prisoner of War Families, 1939-45*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), Julie Summers, *Stranger in the House*, (London: Pocket Books, 2009).

This chapter expands on the works by Clare Makepeace and Linsey Robb by analysing the impact of captivity on the masculine identity and how this affected a repatriate's homecoming. By discussing the POW experience this thesis also contributes to the discourse of the non-traditional masculine identity during the Second World War.³² This thesis is perfectly situated to expand upon the experience of women and the impact of the homecoming of POWs. By addressing the nature of masculinity and how this affected resettlement it explores the role of home and family in this process and contributes to the social and cultural understanding of demobilisation following the Second World War.

As this review has made clear, the existing material on the CRU project and that of the returning POW remains under analysed. There is great scope for this thesis to build upon the existing literature and expand upon this little known area of research. There is still little understanding on the impact of gender within rehabilitation nor of the attitudes of the communities that POWs would return to. Further, almost all work regards mental trauma and soldiers have focused on shell shock or of serving soldiers. The current gap in literature regards CRUs show that the practices and attitudes towards military psychology and psychiatry during the Second World War remain under-researched. This thesis by discussing the advancement of psychiatric work regarding rehabilitating POWs is filling in this gap of knowledge. The attitude towards rehabilitating POWs as a research topic has potential to shed light upon psychological thought and the resultant change in British culture towards its use. The studying of governmental policy and attitudes towards returning POWs will provide a better understanding of the social, economic, and political factors that influenced the decisions that were made regarding resettlement. Further, this study shall shed insight into the dynamics that played out

³² Alison Chand, *Masculinities on Clydeside: Men in Reserved Occupations 1939-1945*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), Tom Hickman, *Called Up, Sent Down: The Bevin Boys' War*, (Cheltenham: The History Press Ltd, 2010), Juliette Pattinson, Arthur McIvor, and Linsey Robb, *Men in Reserve: British Civilian Masculinities in the Second World War*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

between the military, psychiatrists, government, and communities - and the factors that underpinned changing attitudes. The CRUs and the work done by the Tavistock clinic had to achieve acceptance by both participants and patrons and the study of how the CRU scheme evolved is a useful addition to social and cultural studies.

Methodology.

To ensure this study can provide a balanced assessment of the factors underpinning the success of the CRUs, archive material from several sources was utilised. The Wellcome Collection proved particularly valuable as a source of evidence and gave access to the Tavistock collection. These included memoranda circulated amongst the CRU staff, planning and lecture notes, and correspondence. Additionally, this collection had copies of documents from the National Archives and articles otherwise hard to obtain (Captain Collie's article on the 'Rip Van Winkle effect' for example). Such information provides an understanding of the methods and aims of CRU planners, the potential difficulties they foresaw, and the methods they used to address them. This is something which has been missing from the historiography of the CRUs and by utilising these sources, this thesis aims to highlight this oft forgotten part of their function. However, when using such official documentation, it must be recognised that some of the memoranda were documents designed to persuade officials of the benefit of the CRUs and there is an agenda in pushing the success of CRU methods. As such, a degree of interpretational bias may be present in such documentation. Additionally, many of the documents present deal with policy and the 'bigger picture' and miss out small details such as the day-to-day running and the voices of the staff who ran the units. However, within the archive can also be found notes and memoranda from individuals whose voice is lost at policy level and provides balance to the 'bigger picture' narrative.

In addition to the Wellcome Collection, files from the National Archives, contemporary journals, newspaper articles, parliamentary debates, and studies by Mass Observation proved invaluable for this research. These provide an important balance to the official documentation and give more nuance to the analysis. Such sources are useful in building a picture of how the arguments made by CRU planners fit into the broader discourse regarding POWs. Medical journals in particular allow for a greater analysis of the psychiatric discourse and potential points of disagreement and overlap of how best to employ them. Documentation from the National Archives also allows this study to ground the debates surrounding POWs and resettlement in a broader analytical structure away from the vacuum of psychiatric debates and into a wider political context, the issues of manpower, demobilisation, and post war planning for example.

A quantitative approach was selected with newspaper articles which gave an indication as to what was the important issues of the time and that these were important to large sections of the populous. By selecting newspapers from a broad spectrum of political alignments this somewhat mitigated the issue of political bias and assisted in discerning if there was any political agenda behind the advertisement of the CRUs. This is not to suggest that editorial bias was not present, and letters and articles regarding the CRUs were used as a tool to influence opinion and in painting a positive spin towards the CRUs. Additionally, headlines are prone to exaggeration and opinions often portrayed as facts with little corroborating evidence. By supplementing the evidence provided by newspaper articles with other sources, this helped build a comprehensive analysis of the newspaper articles utilised. For example, an article may sum up a parliamentary debate in a form tangible to its readership but in doing so, miss out much of the detail or nuance involved. By supplementing this article with the full details of the debate from Hansard, and cross checking any figures with official documentation, the reliability of the article could be checked. However, despite such pitfalls, newspaper articles

were of particular use in the third chapter of this thesis and helped to highlight the cohesive strategy behind the CRUs advertisement campaign and the importance of language use in these articles which had been highlighted by CRU headquarters. The quantitative approach was an appropriate strategy for this purpose and gave the broad spectrum required when analysing a cohesive strategy.

Data collected from Mass Observation studies supplemented these findings giving access to interviews and surveys on subjects that are important in the context of this study. These include, opinions of demobilisation, expectations and fears of a post war society, and government responsibility towards this. These reports helped provide a balance to newspaper articles and provide a greater scope of public attitudes regarding issues of resettlement. The interviewees conducted by Mass Observation represented a broad range of ages, class, and locality, representing both city and rural concerns. By using such a wide base of interviewees Mass Observation shows that the concerns raised were not unique to a particular area or strata of society and that the conclusions had a broad support from society. While Mass Observation was occasionally commissioned by the government in research, it remained an independent organisation, and its conclusions are less likely to be influenced by external parties.

Supplementary to public opinion, Parliamentary debates give deeper insight into debates of the time and the developing thought process regarding POW resettlement. As ministers often gave speeches representing constituent's concerns, such debates lend weight to the analysis and show the way in which public opinion could influence policy decisions. In particular, the Hansard archive was a useful tool in tracing the legislative process behind the CRUs in both houses (parliament and lords) and the move from a generalised scheme for repatriation to the more specific CRUs. It is worth noting, however, the challenges when using such speeches. Parliamentary speeches could be used as a platform to promote a political career by championing a popular cause and are more for show than reflective of the opinion of the

orator. Decisions were not made in an echo chamber and, certainly towards the end of the Second World War, many decisions were made with the upcoming election in mind. POW repatriation represented an important test bed for any future governments intentions towards post war society and were reflective of the expectations of the nation. The rhetoric used is often designed to persuade or elicit an emotional response and may not be reflective of the reality of the situation and certain facts and figures may be omitted or exaggerated to push a political agenda. To provide balance to this thesis's analysis, speeches were checked with the addition of government papers from the National Archive and memoranda from the Wellcome Collection, providing a degree of validity to the claims made in speeches ensuring that facts presented in speeches were true. It is also important to not conflate localised issues raised in parliament with a wider, national narrative. In mitigating such a pitfall, newspaper articles, and the interviews provided by Mass Observation helped in providing validity to speeches and that they reflected the general mood of the public.

Alongside official policy decisions and public opinion, journal articles written by Major Newman and Captain Collie gave important insight into the development stage of the CRUs and highlighted the progression of thought in ways POW resettlement should proceed.³³ The articles by Newman and Collie, in particular, showed the scope of debate surrounding POW repatriation and gave this thesis access to a range of opinions on this matter including those outside the psychological profession. Collie and Newman, however, were not psychiatrists and were not best placed in providing solutions to the difficulties in resettlement. However, as both were POW escapees, their articles are useful in giving a voice to repatriates which is often missing during the debates surrounding resettlement. Their articles help balance the official psychiatric thought process and put it into the context of real-life concerns and how POWs

³³ G. F. Collie, 'Returned Prisoners of War: A Suggested Scheme for Rehabilitation', *The Fortnightly*, New Series, No. 153, (June 1943), P. H. Newman, 'The prisoner-of-war mentality: its effect after repatriation', *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, Iss. 4330, (1944).

themselves identified the difficulties they faced and the hopes they had in how resettlement should be handled.

As shown in the literature review, however, there is a weakness inherent in previous works which lack analysis regarding what made the CRUs the success they were. This analysis has previously been limited due to the lack of follow-up studies and the lack of testimony from POWs who attended the CRUs.³⁴ The official follow-up study was limited in its scope as the men selected for interview all lived in Oxford where there was full employment, and the nature of any unsettledness could be isolated from other factors. Unlike the follow-up study, chapter four of this thesis analyses the factors behind the choices of locating units and the difficulties experienced in these areas. There is therefore a much greater scope of analysis within this thesis than the original follow up study by discussing areas where there was greater unsettledness and the factors underpinning this. By engaging with how the CRUs utilised the cultural geography of the area they were assigned to, this thesis provides a deeper analysis of the factors effecting resettlement. In choosing to analyse units located in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and England, it broadens the scope of the original follow up study and demonstrates how units and CRU headquarters reacted to other, destabilising factors. Through this, this thesis is better placed to measure the success or failure of the CRU scheme.

This thesis also aims to address the weakness of a lack of testimony by utilising several additional sources to fill this gap. Official interviews conducted by CRU staff (and available from the Wellcome Collection) provide evidence that is surprisingly frank and covers a range of opinions from POWs on the scheme. Additionally, letters to the *Clarion* and *John Bull*

³⁴ The work of the ATS and Civil Liaison Officers are barely documented, and the voice of women are underrepresented in the literature surrounding CRUs. Official follow up work of CRUs include, A. T. M. Wilson, Doyle M, Kelnar J, 'Group Techniques in a Transitional Community', *The Lancet*, Vol. 249, Iss. 6457, (1947), Adam Curle, 'Transitional Communities and Social Re-Connection: A Follow-up Study of the Civil Resettlement of British Prisoners of War. Part I', *Human Relations*, Vol. 1, Iss. 1, (1947), Adam Curle and E. L. Trist, 'Transitional Communities and Social Reconnection: A Follow-up Study of the Civil Resettlement of British Prisoners of War. Part II', *Human Relations*, Vol. 1, Iss. 2, (1947).

magazine provide opinions outside of the official literature allowing for a more balanced analysis. The inclusion of these letters is particularly important as they were often written a period of time after attendance. The time lapse between attendance helps to balance whether the techniques employed by the CRUs helped in resettlement. Such letters, however, are reflective of the authors opinion and personal experience, and do not necessarily represent the wider opinion of the CRUs. Additionally, such letters are still subject to selection and editorial bias and may be used to push a certain agenda and influence opinions. By utilising both official interviews and interviews from the Imperial War Museum, this thesis aims to provide balance to these letters and give a more comprehensive opinion of the CRUs by those who attended. Additionally, by utilising unofficial correspondence this thesis aims to eliminate the possibility of leading questions within the official interviews and give a more honest opinion of how volunteers viewed the CRUs.

This thesis also utilises oral interviews from the Imperial War Museum. While there was difficulty in finding any POWs who attended the CRUs from these interviews, they helped give a wide spectrum of the POW experience and their difficulties upon their return. This allowed a comparison between those who attended units and those who did not and see if resettlement difficulties persistent over a length of time. The lack of available interviews has meant that this thesis has taken a mixed methodological approach to testimonial evidence with both quantitative and qualitative methods employed. A quantitative approach lent itself well in building a picture of the general experience whilst qualitative sources were utilised in providing balance and fact checking claims. There is, however, certain pitfalls in using oral history.³⁵ As many interviews are conducted after the fact, there is a risk that such a time lapse creates gaps

³⁵ There is a large body of literature available exploring the pros and cons of different types of sources , for some examples see: Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire eds, *Research Methods for History*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann eds, *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century History*, (London: Routledge, 2009).

in the memory and recollections of experiences are unclear. Interviews are also subjective, personal to the individuals experience, and may not reflect a majority opinion.

However, unlike written sources, a speaker can always be challenged immediately if discrepancies occur, general questioning will encourage subjective impressions, while detailed questions can draw out particular facts. Additionally, interviews can provide a far more accurate account than written records. Official documents may be doctored or information redacted, and letters may be tailored for a particular audience. Interviews, however, provide the historian with the exact words spoken, alongside the nuances of language and social clues such as uncertainty, humour, or pretence. This, of course, is balanced with the skill of the interviewer and the techniques utilised. By utilising interviews from The Imperial War Museum, the oral accounts utilised in this thesis are recorded by interviewers trained in the techniques of an oral historian and hindsight bias, omission of facts, and leading questions are somewhat mitigated, adding to the credibility of these sources. With the addition of qualitative primary and secondary sources,

This thesis also aims to address the underrepresented role of women in the CRUs and their experiences. Official documents provide some engagement with the role women played in the operations of the CRUs. M. E Barling, wrote of her experiences as a CLO and her writings provide an insight into the methods and effectiveness of social work in resocialisation. Journal articles by Margeret Bavin provide evidence of the role of the CLO in resocialisation and newspaper articles such as those from the *Daily Dispatch* proved useful giving interviews of CLOs and providing further insight into the operational approach of their work.³⁶ This thesis also utilises a number of magazines such as *Women's Own* and *Home and Country*. These magazines give insight into the concerns of women towards returning POWs and supplemented

³⁶ Margeret Bavin, 'A contribution towards the understanding of the repatriated prisoner of war', *British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*, Vol. 1, Iss. 1, (1947-1950).

by primary material from the Wellcome Collection, help build the picture of women's opinions and fears regarding returning POWs. Access to these archives have allowed this thesis to discuss the methods the CRUs employed to address these concerns and how the CLOs 'bridged the gap' between home and military life, thus highlighting the important role women played in their operational success.

By grounding this study in such primary works and utilising a variety of primary and secondary sources, this thesis is better situated to provide a balanced analysis on the CRUs. In doing so it provides solid evidence when addressing its central argument; that the CRUs were successful in resocialising repatriates and that out of the hierarchy of factors behind their success, planning, location, and operations, it was operations which was the most important factor underpinning the success of the CRUs.

Chapter 1: A Forgotten Paradigm?

The wars of the twentieth century have often been understood in terms of familiar paradigms: be that the brutal stalemate of the Western Front in the First World War or the huge sweeping battles of the Second, such as Kursk and El-Alamein. Both conflicts marked a significant change in the way wars were fought and were key moments in the development of mass, industrialised violence. Yet, given this context it is remarkable – as historians such as Heather Jones have argued, that one of the most significant paradigms of war has long been overlooked – mass military captivity.¹ The nineteenth and early twentieth century witnessed a slew of new treaties regarding prisoners of war and a resultant changing of attitudes as to how captivity was perceived. Such treaties would also see a growing public interest in how prisoners were treated and the responsibilities of governments towards such men. The First World War marked a watershed regarding captivity and prisoner treatment, as S. A. Kinnier Wilson, a contemporary neurologist noted: ‘In this war of wars, the herding together of prisoners interned on a scale commensurate with the gigantic numbers of combatants... With people of all ranks, races, sorts and conditions spending years of their lives in prisoner of war camps problems of a unique nature have been forced on public attention’.²

Public responses to perceived abuses of captivity would set a benchmark for community responses later and set a foundation of people with ‘lived’ experiences vital to the later adoption of the CRUs. Alongside public attitudes, there was also a growing body of knowledge on the consequences of long-term captivity. While there had been some knowledge of such effects prior to the First World War, it was not until the First World War when serious research and debates would take place. Many of the attitudes towards captivity and its effects were, however,

¹ Heather Jones, ‘A Missing Paradigm? Military Captivity and the Prisoner of War, 1914–18’, *Immigrants & Minorities*, Vol. 26, Iss. 1/2, (2008), p.19.

² A. L. Vischer, *Barbed Wire Disease: A Psychological Study of the Prisoner of War*, (London: John Bale, Sons & Danielsson Ltd, 1919), p.1.

still governed by pre-war attitudes. These attitudes governed the way POWs would be handled on their repatriation and the lack of understanding or help regarding their unique circumstances would colour the post war POW experience. This would be coupled with a questioning of their experiences that POWs, unable to form a distinct community could not effectively counter. As such, the way their experiences would be remembered would reflect later attitudes and responses during the Second World War.

This chapter analyses the knowledge of captivity prior to the outbreak of the First World War and how this knowledge would shape how the debates surrounding captivity neurosis would be discussed during the war. It will discuss the changing of attitudes towards captivity and how research would identify unique problems associated with long-term captivity and argue that it was this research that would provide a bedrock for future work and reasonings behind the implementation of the CRU scheme. Additionally, it will analyse the experience of repatriation regarding POWs and how their failure to form a community would silence their voice. It was this experience, however, which would lead to such a strong response from this community during the Second World War, something which would be a driving force in the government's decision to set up a scheme for repatriating POWs. This chapter will therefore provide a fundamental foundation for subsequent chapters by providing context to the attitudes and responses towards captivity during the Second World War. By demonstrating how these events would foreshadow the public response during the Second, it demonstrates this thesis's secondary argument: that the experience of the First World War would, in some measure, shape responses during the Second World War and the demand for a scheme such as the CRUs would not have been possible without these prior experiences.

Captivity in the First World War and Barbed Wire Disease.

With the outbreak of the First World War the dramatic scale of captivity took both military and governments by surprise, with an estimated 8.5 million soldiers taken prisoner - only slightly less than the 9-10 million soldiers estimated to have been killed.³ Captivity had become truly global in its scale and duration with POWs incarcerated in a variety of environments including Anatolia, Africa, Asia and the Americas. In First World War alone, Britain had an estimated 175,624 servicemen captured – only slightly more than the 142,319 captured by the Germans and Italians during the Second World War.⁴ In the early stages of the war, when information about conditions of captivity was sparse, it rapidly became apparent that pre-war conceptions and attitudes still influenced how POWs were viewed, especially regards any form of neurosis.

As Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely have hypothesised, psychiatric casualties occurred before 1914, if only partially recognised.⁵ Furthermore, the observations and hypotheses that gained prominence during the First World War were already in place and had been subject to limited debate.⁶ With regards to POWs, the effects of long-term captivity remained understudied. This was in part, driven by a belief that international treaties would secure the well-being of the captured. In addition, most of the psychiatric research done pre-First World War regarding the effects of long-term confinement was performed by those medical personnel working in civilian asylums. These practitioners, however, held a low professional status being seen as nothing more than glorified medical gofers or ‘quacks’.⁷ Psychiatry and psychiatric

³ Jones, *Paradigm*, p.20.

⁴ Jones, *Paradigm*, p.21; Makepeace, *Captives*, p.3.

⁵ There is a significant amount of literature regarding the historic psychological impact of war, for more information see: Fiona Reid, *Broken men: Shell Shock, Treatment and Recovery in Britain, 1914-1930*, (London: Continuum, 2011), Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, *Shell Shock to PTSD: Military Psychiatry from 1900 to the Gulf War*, (New York: Psychology Press, 2005), Anthony Babington, *Shell-Shock: A History of the Changing Attitudes to War Neurosis*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Select, 2003), Nigel Hunt, *Landscapes of Trauma: The Psychology of the Battlefield*, (London: Routledge, 2020).

⁶ Jones and Wessely, *Shell Shock to PTSD*, p.16.

⁷ Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p.6.

services pre-First World War remained little explored or available outside those civilian specialists who, with the mass overcrowding of asylums by 1913, had little time for research.⁸

In 1915, POWs became the focus of debates regarding the nature and causation of 'neurosis', with leading German psychiatrists observing a discontinuity in symptoms reported by soldiers engaged in combat and those held in captivity.⁹ British Army doctors had also observed that amongst captured German troops there was little evidence of traumatic neuroses with the physician, Captain Harold Wiltshire, concluding that infantry soldiers welcomed a diagnosis of 'shell shock' because it secured a period of hospitalisation away from the front, whereas the POW, who found himself in a place of safety, had no need of such symptoms.¹⁰ In 1916, a psychiatric conference was held in Munich regarding British and French prisoners of war where it was overwhelmingly agreed that POWs were immune from war neurosis such as shell shock.¹¹ Such arguments would foreshadow the difficulties psychiatrists faced during the Second World War in convincing authorities of the need for a resettlement scheme. As will be discussed in chapter two, the conclusions drawn from experiments such as Crookham reflected earlier attitudes towards prisoner neurosis and hindered early responses towards resettlement. Many would conclude that the repatriated medical personnel who took part in Crookham lacked the robustness of combat soldiers and interpreted the results as a sign of low morale rather than problems stemming from their captivity.¹²

This sentiment would be echoed in the 1922 Shell Shock Committee's conclusions, which stated that regarding the stress and strains of war, instances of psychosis amongst POWs were no higher than would be expected in peace time amongst civilians.¹³ Attitudes regarding

⁸ Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p.6.

⁹ Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, p.165.

¹⁰ Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, p.166.

¹¹ Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, p.164.

¹² Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, p.170.

¹³ 'The Psychoses in relation to Stress and Strain of War', *Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into "ShellShock"*, (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1922), p.113.

POWs were still governed by a belief that pre-war treaties would be sufficient protection despite growing evidence to the contrary. The treaties that had been agreed to regarding POWs pre-1914 were wholly inadequate. The Hague Convention represented for the first-time stipulations of a shared legal framework for captive POWs. However, there was no way to punish those who broke rules, and a major disjunction appeared between these universal aspirations and reality on the ground. Bi-lateral agreements for settling prisoner treatment did little to rectify this, instead states opted for reprisals to influence enemy behaviour.¹⁴

Furthermore, the Hague Convention did not consider cultural differences and western signatories judged those who did not comply to western standards. Lord Justice Younger in his report on the treatment of prisoners of war in Ottoman captivity accused the Turkish authorities of screening the truth regarding their treatment of British POWs. The report stated that the Ottomans, not ignorant of Western ideals and wishing to figure as a power of European enlightenment, were dependent on the screening of the truth.¹⁵ The treatment of British POWs by the Ottomans highlights the dangers that POWs faced. The majority of the British and Indian prisoners had been taken captive by the Turkish forces at the end of the siege at Kut-al-Amara, in Mesopotamia, on 29 April 1916. Their march into captivity was described by Lord Justice Younger as a 'historic crime' so long and terrible was their torture.¹⁶ Of the 16,583 British prisoners taken by Ottoman forces during the war, 3,290 were recorded as dying with a further 2,222 remaining unreported presumed dead, an incredibly high mortality rate of nearly a third of all prisoners.¹⁷ The lack of records kept by Ottoman forces could mean that these figures could be much higher.

¹⁴ Jones, *Paradigm*, p.26.

¹⁵ Lord Justice Younger, *Report on the treatment of British Prisoners of War in Turkey*, (London: His Majesties Stationary Office, 1918), p.3.

¹⁶ Younger, *Prisoners of War in Turkey*, p.9

¹⁷ Younger, *Prisoners of War in Turkey*, p.5

Mistreatment of prisoners did not just limit itself to Anatolia, the horrors of Wittenberg Camp being the subject of an official government report. With the unexpected scale of captivity in the early years of the war it was apparent that many nations were unprepared for housing the scale of prisoners taken. British prisoners arriving in Germany often found their camps under construction, often lacking any shelter or if any, consisting of rudimentary tents or hastily converted huts.¹⁸ Private Edward Page recalled how “the canvas shelters where we were compelled to sleep had been used for the temporary stabling of horses... as will be readily imagined it was in a most filthy condition”.¹⁹ The inadequate accommodation meant the first winter of 1914-15 was particularly harsh, exasperated by the fact that German soldiers would often steal the British Tommie’s greatcoats and deprive them of means of keeping warm.²⁰ The lack of proper hygiene facilities, the poor housing and overcrowding led to a Typhoid outbreak in Wittenberg.

The German authorities not ignorant of the danger, did nothing to prevent or minimise the spread of infection. Instead, the Germans evacuated the camp, patrolling the outside and failing to isolate cases who remained in proximity to the uninfected.²¹ It was not until after a month that six British medical doctors who had recently been captured, were sent to the camp. Through tireless work and the incessant seeking of supplies, the doctors, with the aid of 50 volunteers from the inmates, eventually triumphed over the disease but at great cost. Of the 1,975 cases recorded between 15 Jan and 23 July 1915, 185 men died including three of the RAMC doctors.²²

¹⁸ Stempel, *Behind the Wire*, pp.72-73.

¹⁹ Edward Page, *Escaping from Germany*, (London: Andrew Melrose Ltd, 1919), p. 39.

²⁰ Stempel, *Behind the Wire*, p.22.

²¹ *Official Report to the British Government, The Horrors of Wittenburg*, (London: C. Arthur Pearson Limited, 1916), pp.12-13.

²² Stempel, *Behind the Wire*, p.79.

The failure of treaties to protect prisoners and the inability to enforce them would be a recurring problem during the Second World War. The Japanese were not signatories to the Geneva convention and there was no guarantee they would adhere to internationally agreed terms regarding prisoner rights. Additionally, in the early stages of the war, Britain lacked sufficient numbers of Axis POWs for exchange programmes and was relatively powerless to influence or enforce POW treaties. As chapter two will demonstrate, during the Second World War the public was more aware of the difficulties facing POWs and sensitive to any perceived mistreatment or failure on the governments part to protect POWs. Such changing attitudes meant that many in the public believed that the Army and government had a responsibility in caring for these men upon their return and the governments perceived inability to protect those held in captivity may have influenced decision behind approving a resettlement scheme.

Medical officers visiting camps were chiefly concerned with hygienic arrangements and the mental health of inmates was simply not a priority. The medical profession's conservatism regarding mental health and POWs meant that those who supervised the health of such camps or observers, often arrived at negative judgements regarding anyone who showed signs of 'breaking down'.²³ Simply put, those who oversaw the care of POWs were not qualified to make judgements regarding their mental wellbeing and those sent to observe prisoner treatment were underqualified to make any psychological observations. As A. L. Vischer noted, signs of neurosis would not strike those visiting camps who were chiefly concerned with hygienic arrangements, the mental health of inmates would simply pass those observers by.²⁴ Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely further argue that the fact both British and German Doctors found no evidence of neurosis in POWs, were in part related to the conventions of war. Captured soldiers considered themselves combatants and to have admitted

²³ Vischer, *Psychology of the Prisoner of War*, p.23.

²⁴ Vischer, *Psychology of the Prisoner of War*, p.23.

psychological symptoms, would have been an acknowledgement of low morale and tantamount to surrender.²⁵ Norman Fenton noted that the tendency for the development of neurosis is much greater in those defeated, dispirited, and tired.²⁶ Something which, especially in the initial phases of their captivity, with the shock and realisation of their freedoms curtailed, POWs were at a high risk of developing. Earlier observations by Vischer and Fenton would influence the future CRUs. In particular the observation that POWs would either deny or not recognise symptoms relating to their captivity. The CRUs would adopt techniques designed to engage the repatriate, framing the scheme as a way of helping them return to civil life, normalising symptoms of unsettledness as perfectly natural and disassociating them from any negative association with psychological symptoms. As chapter three shall discuss, by advertising a resettlement scheme in such a way, it was hoped that repatriates would be more likely to volunteer for a CRU.

The treatment of POWs in Turkish hands and the case of Wittenburg highlight that the belief that POWs were removed from dangers as blatantly untrue. The continuous poor conditions and risk of reprisals were a common factor throughout the war and the risk to POW lives were a persistent danger. When analysing the death rate statistics of the British Army between serving soldiers and POWs a more nuanced image of captivity emerges and the assumption it was safer as a POW just does not add up. During some periods of the war, it was more dangerous to be a British prisoner than an ordinary British soldier. Between 1 October 1917 and 30 September 1918, other ranks in the British Army had a death rate of 4.0%. Mark Spoerer calculated an annual death rate among British prisoners of 5.2% for these dates, which was the period of conflict when Germany took most of its British prisoners.²⁷ These statistics show that for this phase of the conflict, the intensity of deaths among British prisoners was

²⁵ Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, p.166.

²⁶ Fenton, *Aftermath*, p.42.

²⁷ Jones, *Violence against Prisoners*, p.25.

comparable to the mortality rate of non-captured British soldiers. The final concluding words to the Wittenburg report dispel the naïve pre-war idealism of conditions for POWs and the defects with both the Hague and Geneva conventions:

The committee accordingly are forced to the conclusion that the terrible sufferings and privations of the afflicted prisoners during the period under review are directly chargeable to the deliberate cruelty and neglect of the German officials... in the words of the Geneva convention, to respect and take care of these men, wounded and sick as they were, without distinction of nationality, but who acted as if neither that convention nor even the ordinary instincts of humanity had any place in their scheme of things.²⁸

Evidence was also beginning to emerge that suggested POWs were also subject to neurosis unique to their predicament despite the prevailing belief otherwise. This was prevalent enough that both the allied and central powers had given such neurosis names: *psychose du fil de fer barbelé* in French, *stacheldrahtkrankheit* in German, and barbed wire disease in English.²⁹ It was this growing awareness which prompted a change of categorization of prisoner care from humanitarian to medical. In 1917 and 1918, France, Britain, and Germany, agreed to a series of prisoner exchanges negotiated at Berne and at The Hague. As a result, around 100,000 disabled POWs were sent home or were interned in a neutral country. Among the beneficiaries were also those who were suffering from ‘barbed-wire disease’, and those who had spent eighteen months or more in captivity.³⁰ The lead expert in this unique form of neurosis was A. L. Vischer. Vischer did not claim to be an expert on mental disease as he was a departmental surgeon, but his objective was to draw the attention of psychologists and

²⁸ *Horrors of Wittenburg*, p.30.

²⁹ R. Bing & A. L. Vischer, ‘Some Remarks on the Psychology of Internment, Based on the Observations of Prisoners of War in Switzerland’, *The Lancet*, Vol. 193, Iss. 4991, (1919), p.696.

³⁰ Reinhard Nachtigal, ‘The Repatriation and Reception of Returning Prisoners of War, 1918–22’, *Immigrants & Minorities*, Vol. 26, Iss. 1/2, (March/July 2008), p.173.

neurologists to what he believed was a problem well worth investigating to ventilate a subject of great social importance.³¹

The symptoms of barbed wire disease showed themselves in several ways. These included a deep mistrust of people and authority, difficulty in readapting to the outside world and restlessness, and a weary mind prone to forgetfulness and futility.³² Vischer believed that at the conclusion of peace, many men would return to their homes with a damaged mentality. A post war Europe would be infiltrated with individuals of abnormal physical tendencies, who will not be without influence on the collective psychology of the community.³³ Vischer had noted that very few POWs that had been in confinement for over six months were free from the disease. This represented an enormous number of POWs who would suffer from such a neurosis. For many POWs released back into society who were showing symptoms of barbed wire disease they faced what they called rather aptly, 'difficulty settling down'.³⁴ The thoughts of pre-war bliss that had kept many going throughout their captivity were brutally shattered upon their return. Society had changed and home life had not stayed still, the prisoners had come home, but home was now another country. In the short term at least, Vischer's research had little influence over policy, nor in changing attitudes of prevailing conservatism in organisations such as the RAMC. However, the research done by Vischer would prove a vital source of information for the future CRUs with those involved in their planning such as A. T. M. Wilson utilising Vischer's work in his own publication to the War Office regarding the necessity of a resettlement scheme.³⁵

³¹ Vischer, *Psychology of the Prisoner of War*, p.24.

³² Vischer, *Psychology of the Prisoner of War*, pp.30-46.

³³ Vischer, *Psychology of the Prisoner of War*, pp.24-25.

³⁴ R. Bing & A. L. Vischer, *Remarks*, p.696.

³⁵ The Wellcome Collection (hereafter TWC), SA/TH/B/2/1/2/2/1, *Technical Memorandum No. 13: The Prisoner of War Comes Home*.

For the relatives receiving their returned men, many were unrecognisable, their years of captivity changing the robust men they remembered into emaciated worn out souls. Joe Armstrong's mother and grandmother, when confronted with his physical appearance, 'cried their eyes out'.³⁶ Even worse, more than one household had a knock on the door from someone long listed as dead.³⁷ Such was the case for Private Ernest Wilson, who having been captured in 1917 and upon returning home found to his surprise, that he had been reported as killed in action.³⁸ Few ex-POWs settled in seamlessly and found home life alienating often leading to two reactions - 'Beating it up' – spending time partying, unable to settle at home due to their restlessness, or unused to being surrounded by people in an unfamiliar environment they became withdrawn.³⁹ Lieutenant Brian Horrocks spent the four years of pay he had saved in six weeks of partying, his years as a prisoner-of-war having taken their toll: 'I was young and physically fit, but my nerves were in rags. I was unable to lead a quiet life at home and was far too restless even to play games. So, I spent every available moment beating it up in London'.⁴⁰ Others, such as Bill Easton, became withdrawn unable to cope with people in the street 'In the end... I didn't go out too much, I was a sort of recluse'.⁴¹

Symptoms of barbed wire disease shown in captivity became in many, more pronounced upon release. Imprisonment offered an explanation for such changes in personality which release could not.⁴² Many returning POWs gave the impression of a personality that has been profoundly changed, their families coming to see them as completely altered. These symptoms remained for a long time after release and many former captives were prone to

³⁶ IWM, 10920, *Joe Armstrong*, Reel 7.

³⁷ Stempel, *Behind the Wire*, p.279.

³⁸ IWM, 4433, *Ernest Wilson*, Reel 3.

³⁹ Stempel, *Behind the Wire*, p.280.

⁴⁰ Sir Brian Horrocks, *Escape to Action*, (St Martin's Press: New York, 1960), p. 35.

⁴¹ Richard van Emden, *Prisoners of the Kaiser: The Last POWs of the Great War*, (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2000), p. 206.

⁴² R. Bing & A. L. Vischer, *Remarks*, p.697.

irritability, depression, and suicide. Mortality rates amongst POWs were five times as high as other veterans. The widow of Corporal Alfred Schofield was convinced his death was as a result of his wartime captivity. One witness statement confirming his breakdown in mental health read 'on returning to us... I noticed a marked difference in health and character. At periods he was quite lost, memory failed him, it was apparently impossible to express what he wanted to say'.⁴³ This witness statement suggests that Cpl Schofield may well have been suffering from the aftereffects of barbed wire disease, a failure of memory and a total lack of concentration on tasks a common symptom.⁴⁴ It is, however, impossible to say with any great certainty that a leading cause of Cpl Scofield's death was these aftereffects.

Some deaths, however, were less ambiguous. In March 1919, Major P. M. White committed suicide, his note proclaiming: 'Why should I live? I managed to stick it for two years, and then what became of me? A miserable prisoner! How could I possibly walk about in the future and meet people who had given their husbands, sons, or brothers, whilst I escape?'.⁴⁵ Such incidents represented growing instances of psychological problems manifesting in ex-servicemen. Contemporary psychologist, Millais Culpin, wrote in 1921 that 'few of us expected a large number of men to be disabled by mental symptoms which would persist indefinitely after the war had ceased. Yet that is what is happening'.⁴⁶ Psychologists such as Millais Culpin would continue to write for medical journals and would respond to Major Newmans article in 1944 advocating for a resettlement scheme. Culpin's response was undoubtedly due to his experiences after the First World War and his suggestion to utilise radio broadcasts as a way of engaging with the public and in dispelling any stigma attached to unsettledness would be adopted as part of the CRUs advertisement strategy.

⁴³ Stempel, *Behind the Wire*, p.285.

⁴⁴ Vischer, *Psychology of the Prisoner of War*, pp.50-51.

⁴⁵ Wilkinson, *British Prisoners*, p. 277.

⁴⁶ Millais Culpin, 'The Problem of the Neurasthenic Pensioner', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, Vol. 1, Iss 3-4. (July 1921), p. 316.

Ex-POWs were also just as likely to suffer from psychological problems. Cases such as Brian Horrocks and Alfred Schofield supported Vischer's conclusions that symptoms would not be cured by release from imprisonment.⁴⁷ Some symptoms shown by ex-POWs would now be explained in terms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Studies by Simon Wessely and Edger Jones have revealed a link between captivity and mental illness, in particular PTSD.⁴⁸ This perspective stands in contrast to the conclusions drawn in the Munich conference of 1916. This is not, however, to say that the conclusions drawn back in 1916, given the evidence available, were necessarily wrong. Undoubtably, the conclusions drawn by both the conference and the British government regarding POWs and neurosis were coloured by pre-war attitudes towards captivity. Indeed, the entire creation of the CRUs is proof that attitudes towards imprisonment changed drastically between wars. As Wessely and Jones conclude:

The reclassification of the effects of imprisonment implies that diagnoses in military psychiatry are culturally determined and can be understood only if they are placed in a context that includes changing beliefs about mental illness, the formal development of the psychiatric profession and the immediate needs of the armed forces.⁴⁹

Another possible explanation for the Munich conference failing to spot signs of psychological symptoms in POWs is that such symptoms were not recorded in war pension files until after the conference and arose at a time when conditions in camps deteriorated dramatically. The Allied naval blockade progressively cut off food supplies to Germany and as such, by the winter of 1917-18, growing numbers of British POWs were suffering from starvation, and increasingly vulnerable to diseases.⁵⁰ Alternatively, symptoms reported after

⁴⁷ Vischer, *Psychology of the Prisoner of War*, p.59.

⁴⁸ See also: Nancy Speed, Engdahl. B, Joseph Schwartz. J, & Eberly. R, 'Posttraumatic Stress Disorder as a Consequence of the POW Experience', *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, Vol. 177, Iss. 3, (1989), pp. 147-53, and Gadi Zerach, Shevlin. M, Cloitre. M & Solomon. Z, 'Complex posttraumatic stress disorder (CPTSD) following captivity: a 24-year longitudinal study', *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, Vol. 10, Iss. 1, (2019), pp.1-11.

⁴⁹ Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, p.163.

⁵⁰ Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, p.167.

1918 may represent delayed help-seeking, a phenomenon identified in relation to PTSD.⁵¹ Writing in 1920, Millais Culpin had identified a similar phenomenon regarding men who had suffered wounds. Culpin believed that protection from a wound against psychological disorder was only temporary stating that ‘since we know that repressions can light up symptoms at any time, it follows that we may expect to find the latter developing when men have recovered from wounds’.⁵² There was, however, very little help for returning British POWs. No special provisions had been made by UK government departments, such as the Ministries of Labour and Pensions for returning POWs, who received the same assistance as other veterans.⁵³ Government policy received ‘a good deal of criticism at the time’ with the War Office declining to assume responsibility for the rehabilitation of former POWs.⁵⁴ Part of the success behind the CRUs was how those involved in their creation persuaded both the War Office and government of the value of psychiatry and how it could be employed in a post war resettlement. Additionally, unlike the First World War, the CRUs would work closely with government departments in resocialising repatriates, and its operations were a fundamental factor underpinning their success. Such factors will be analysed in subsequent chapters, yet such considerations demonstrate that the mistakes from the First World War influenced the development of the CRUs.

Vischer noted that it was important to provide assistance to repatriated prisoners. Deliverance from their symptoms required long-term solutions coming neither from drugs nor instructions. Instead, he believed it was essential to anchor their recovery in their own homes, a return to family life being viewed as a solid basis for a healthy social mentality.⁵⁵ In addition, assistance must be provided in finding the returnee a suitable occupation, the cultivation of

⁵¹ Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, p.167.

⁵² Millais Culpin, *Psychneuroses of War and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), p.37.

⁵³ Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, p.168.

⁵⁴ TNA: ADM1/18875, Sir P.J. Grigg, ‘Rehabilitation of returned prisoners of war’, 22 Aug 1944.

⁵⁵ Vischer, *Psychology of the Prisoner of War*, p.83.

land preferable to the monotonous and joyless factory life. This would provide an existence of lessened agitation, away from a herded existence and allow the returnee an independence away from human influence.⁵⁶ If the disease had developed to any extent, recovery must entail a long period as observations in Switzerland had shown, without this period of recovery many will bear the traces of the disease ‘to the end of their days’.⁵⁷ These observations were influential during the Second World War with Major Newman, an escaped POW himself, writing in the *British Medical Journal* of his experiences upon repatriation.⁵⁸ Newman’s article relied heavily on the works done previously by Vischer stating that ‘all... those who have been in isolated areas for long periods, will show these symptoms to a certain extent’.⁵⁹ Newman also concluded that help must be available for the returning POW and that advice and rehabilitation centres must be made a priority.⁶⁰ Vischer’s conclusions, however, were far from universal and in Europe, research into Neurosis and reintegration back into civilian life lagged considerably behind those performed by psychologists based in America.

This represents a dichotomy of thinking between American and European psychologists. Americans were keen to research into the matter, seeing the cases of neurosis in European armies as a failure of care. American neurologists such as Tom Salmon and Pearce Bailey were determined to avoid what they saw as the worst mistake of the British, throwing men out of the army with their disorders uncured.⁶¹ The American government provided vocational guidance for those who were suffering from physical or mental conditions, prescribing the kind of work or training likely to be most worthwhile to them.⁶² In addition, the Home Service Section of the American Red Cross had offices throughout the country at which

⁵⁶ Vischer, *Psychology of the Prisoner of War*, p.84.

⁵⁷ Vischer, *Psychology of the Prisoner of War*, pp.59-60.

⁵⁸ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, pp.8-9.

⁵⁹ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 9.

⁶⁰ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 10.

⁶¹ Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p.131.

⁶² Fenton, *Aftermath*, p. 76.

there were trained social workers rendering service to ex-soldiers or to their families. American psychologists such as Norman Fenton conducted studies of discharged men regarding their social integration back into civilian life in 1919-20 and performed a follow up study in 1924-25. These follow up interviews highlighted that of those that sought assistance from the various governmental and social organisations developed for this service, they showed a marked tendency for improvement and social integration.⁶³ By 1926 (the date of Fenton's finalised research) there was strong evidence to suggest a community-led project for repatriates would be beneficial in any future conflict and this was just as vital to POWs as combat soldiers. The conclusions drawn by the Americans highlight that a scheme such as the CRUs, designed and developed to help soldiers reintegrate back into society was a benefit to any nation state and that the thought processes and evidence for the success of such a scheme was available if looked for.

The attitude towards POWs were still fundamentally influenced by pre-war attitudes. However, the belief that POWs protected from neurosis was flawed. Evidence throughout the war showed that POWs were far from protected, suffering reprisals and brutal treatment. This ran counter to the idealised image of a protected POW which did not stand up against a modern industrial war. With no way of punishing those that broke international treaties POWs were powerless victims often used to influence political decisions in tit for tat measures. Governments were mainly powerless when presented with early signs of mistreatment, as they had no means of enforcing treaties against the Central Powers other than influencing better treatment through reprisal. MOs that did visit camps such as Wittenburg, only observed what the Medical Corps deemed its priority, hygiene, and were underqualified to diagnose neurosis. As psychiatry remained a fringe profession shunned by the Medical Corps, there were few trained officers available to diagnose POWs. Despite the early conclusions made by the Munich

⁶³ Fenton, *Aftermath*, pp. 146-147.

Conference on POWs, which concluded that they did not suffer neurosis, a few trained neurologists such as Vischer and Bing challenged this assumption. Vischer was part of a small number of psychological minded doctors that shook the military establishment and prevailing attitudes. The conclusions by Vischer and the contribution of American psychologists such as Norman Fenton show that the foundation for a scheme such as the CRUs were already in place well before Second World War. Their research had shown that not just combat soldiers, but also, counter to prevailing belief, POWs suffered from neurosis. Vischer's belief that long-term care was required was proven by Fenton's follow up research which highlighted that those repatriates that had received long term help, better integrated into their community. As Vischer concluded, for this long-term care to succeed, it was vital it began at home within the communities these men would return to. There was therefore a body of work prior to the outbreak of the Second World War regarding the difficulties in resettling ex-POWs. This research would be utilised by psychiatrists and former POWs such as A. T. M. Wilson and Major Newman in bringing to light the difficulties facing POWs during the Second World War and fed into the ways in which CRUs would shape. Additionally, psychologists such as Millais Culpin would push for a changing of attitudes towards symptoms of unsettledness and his suggestions of educating the wider public and dispelling any stigma attached to difficulties resettling would be utilised by the CRUs.

Winning the war, Losing the peace: the POW community and narrative of remembrance.

At the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918 the guns of the First World War finally fell silent. For many this would be a time of celebration, for some, time for quiet reflection, and for others a period of reconstruction and reconciliation. For the estimated 175,624 British servicemen captured during the conflict, this represented a time of great uncertainty about their immediate predicament and for the future. The mass number of men requiring demobilisation and the logistics behind such a project also presented the nations these

men would be returning to a huge problem. Before the First World War, few nations had been confronted with large-scale demobilisations. Demobilisation represented a new problem of which precedents were completely lacking. The experience of Britain demonstrated the magnitude and difficulty of devising an equitable solution.⁶⁴

With Britain going to the polls for the first time in eight years in December 1918, the issue of demobilisation also became a highly politicised issue. Lloyd George now sought a mandate to win the peace and an appeal to the British ex-serviceman – around 3.9 million were eligible to vote - formed part of this strategy.⁶⁵ In a visit to Wolverhampton on November 24, 1918, Lloyd George made his now infamous speech promising to make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in. The British government had begun its study of demobilisation as early as 1916 eventually forming the Ministry of Reconstruction in August 1917. Edwin Montagu was appointed head of this committee with the government's primary concern to avoid mass unemployment, a policy that was criticised with both its trial-and-error application and its unfairness in how it selected the priorities of demobilisation order.⁶⁶ With thousands of men and POWs to be repatriated across multiple theatres of conflict the process was a complex affair, the handling of returning POWs in particular and how they were received can tell us a lot about the different war cultures which emerged in the belligerent nations of the First World War.⁶⁷

Repatriation was not simply a matter of mass transport logistics, however. The rituals of return, which families, localities, and states developed in response to their returning

⁶⁴ Graubard, *Military Demobilization*, p.297.

⁶⁵ Marcus Morris, Between workers and soldiers: The relationship between the Labour Party and ex-servicemen after the First World War, in *Veterans of the First World War: Ex-Servicemen and Ex-Servicewomen in Post war Britain and Ireland*, eds. David Swift & Oliver Wilkinson, (London: Routledge, 2019), p.48.

⁶⁶ Graubard, *Military Demobilization*, p.300.

⁶⁷ Nachtigal, *Repatriation and Reception*, p.179.

prisoners, were crucial to the former captives' reintegration into their home societies.⁶⁸ The British saw their prisoners of war as heroic victims, upon their return POWs were greeted by cheering crowds on the docksides – a reception fit for heroes.⁶⁹ Joe Fitzpatrick recalls the reception he got when returning through Hull as 'very warm' with civilian boats following them in and their horns blasting along the way.⁷⁰ Frederick Winterbotham, a returning POW, similarly recalls returning to Edinburgh station and being received with 'great joy'.⁷¹ Following their return home, every single British prisoner received a parcel from the King containing a pipe, cigarettes and chocolate and a letter thanking them for their contribution to the war that described them as 'our gallant officers and men'.

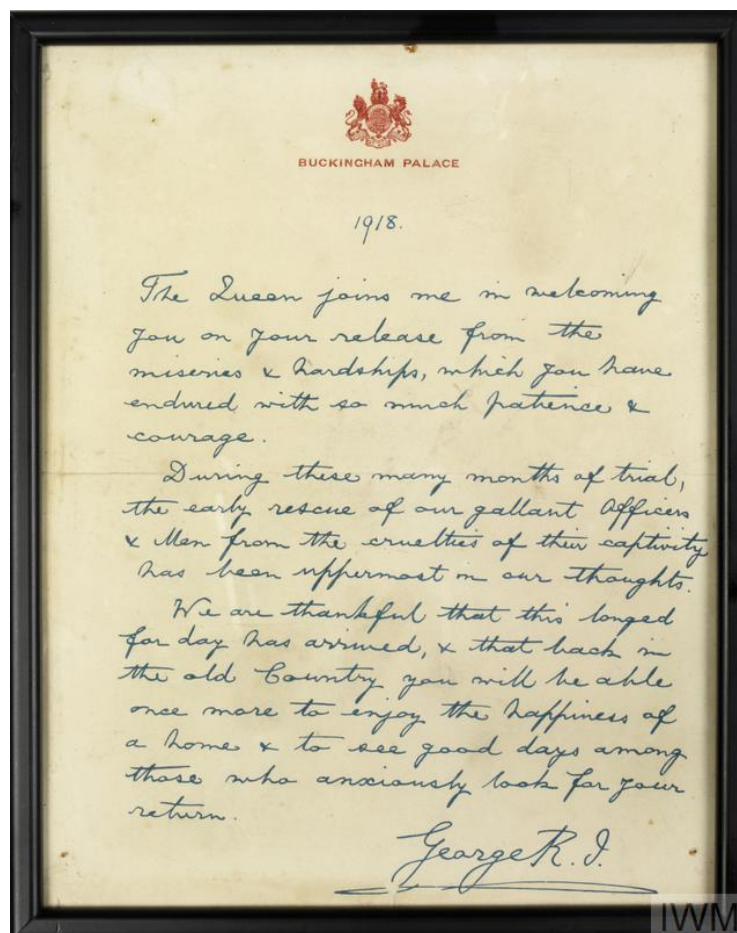


Figure 2: Framed letter from King George V: IWM EPH

⁶⁸ Jones, *Violence against Prisoners*, p.290.

⁶⁹ Stempel, *Behind the Wire*, p.274.

⁷⁰ IWM, 10767 Joe Fitzpatrick, Reel 17; See also 'Our Prisoners', *The Times*, 18 November 1918, p. 5.

⁷¹ IWM, 7462 Frederick William Winterbotham, Reel 3.

This was in stark contrast to how other countries had treated their POWs. Despite the French government's initial enthusiasm to highlight the terrible suffering and brutal treatment of POWs, former French POWs after 1918 faced problems of rejection and isolation in post war society, accused of disloyalty and defection and treated with the utmost distrust.⁷² The joyous scenes on their return, however, were balanced within a context of a Britain changed and one that was gripped by the fears of returning servicemen who had been brutalised by the mass carnage of the war.⁷³ These fears were exacerbated by memories of pre-war unrest, and the recent revolutionary examples, particularly in Russia, where soldiers and sailors had played a key role.⁷⁴ Indeed, the fear of Bolshevism was pervasive especially so with returning POWs who had contact with Russian POWs and the revolutionary spirit sweeping Germany after its defeat.

The nation was swept by a series of riots in 1919, that many of those involved in the unrest were ex-servicemen caused particular concern, as noted by one Home Office agent, 'in the event of rioting, for the first time in history, the rioters will be better trained than the troops'.⁷⁵ Large demonstrations involving soldiers such as those at Folkstone and Dover, specifically over demobilisation did little to quell these fears.⁷⁶ What was most shocking for many with these series of protests and riots was that soldiers should be there at all. Military training was supposed to set aside those men from the 'mob', their martial virtues an antithesis to the ill-disciplined and cowardly crowd – soldiers' presence therefore raised the prospect that something deeper and more organised would evolve.⁷⁷ Indeed, there was genuine fear that the soldier's anger would be directed at those who had run the war at home and whose perceived

⁷² Nachtigal, *Repatriation and Reception*, p.176.

⁷³ Lawrence, *Forging a Peaceable Kingdom*, p.557.

⁷⁴ Morris, *Between workers and Soldiers*, p.52.

⁷⁵ Morris, *Between workers and Soldiers*, p.52.

⁷⁶ Graubard, *Military Demobilization*, p.302.

⁷⁷ Lawrence, *Forging a Peaceable Kingdom*, p.567.

incompetence had led them into their predicaments.⁷⁸ This fear led to Britain's first gun control laws, the government responding to a series of violent robberies involving 'men who had become used to violence in war' introducing the firearms bill of 1920.⁷⁹

It is important to recognise, however, that many contemporaries adopted a more nuanced view of the problem. The war correspondent Phillip Gibb, for example, was prepared to argue that only a few irredeemable types had been damaged by military life and the majority had developed effective psychological defences against brutalisation.⁸⁰ Churchill, who would take over responsibility for demobilisation, would celebrate that with 'four million trained and successful killers' returning home, violence had declined, and prisons closed.⁸¹ Despite many contemporaries taking a more nuanced stance, it cannot be underestimated the extent to which the fear of the brutalising effects of war on soldiers was held by society. As will be demonstrated in the second chapter, the memories of demobilisation and the fear of violence were an important factor in public demand for a resettlement scheme during the Second World War and the response of the general public can be traced back to the experiences from the First World War.

Returning soldiers and repatriated POWs, however, formed a substantial block in Britain with the potential to mobilise as a distinct veteran community, and with elections looming, it was within the government's interest, at least initially, to try keep them onside. At the forefront of this agenda was the calls for recriminations against those who had mistreated POWs. In the run up to the armistice there had been lively debate in the House of Commons

⁷⁸ This was seen as a particular problem regarding POWs who had suffered months or years of captivity and whose anger could well turn towards authorities: TWC SA/TH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Problems of Civil Resettlement for Repatriated Prisoners of War*, p. 1.

⁷⁹ Lawrence, *Forging a Peaceable Kingdom*, p.562.

⁸⁰ Philip Gibb, *Realities of War*, (London: William Heinemann, 1920), pp. 432 & 450-452.

⁸¹ Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis Volume 4: The Aftermath 1923*, (New York: Rosetta Books, 2013), p. 61.

demanding that the perpetrators of such cruelty be brought to justice.⁸² Calls for justice coincided with popular pressure being exerted on the government, Captain Craig reflecting the 'rising anger of the public' regarding prisoner treatment.⁸³ Articles in the press also began to exert pressure on the government and reflected the popular mood of the time. *The Times* wrote about a meeting of the British Empire Union, presided by Lord Morris (the former prime minister of Newfoundland) who said that 'they met to indicate to the government, and to officials, what the feeling of the whole British Empire was in relation to the brutes who had committed atrocities against our men'.⁸⁴ On the 13 November, the *Daily Mirror* with the tag of 'Let justice be done', printed a list of alleged German war criminals including those who had presided over the Wittenberg camp.⁸⁵ Calls for action culminated in war crime trials held in Leipzig in 1921. Of the 1,059 charges formally brought against individuals in Germany, fourteen per cent related to crimes purportedly committed against prisoners.⁸⁶

The outcomes at Leipzig went some way to salving the British public anger against Germany over prisoner of war mistreatment that had built up between 1918 and 1921.⁸⁷ After the Leipzig trials, for many in the public, the issue was considered resolved, with the emphasis shifting to promoting European reconciliation, not pursuing war crimes issues. However, many former prisoners felt aggrieved at the entire process, witnesses felt ignored, their testimonies dismissed. The message seemed to many that their suffering had not mattered, and the British government's attitude was to sweep the matter under the carpet. There were many outside Germany who believed the trials had been a complete travesty because of the apparent leniency

⁸² Hansard: Statement by Captain Charles Craig, Vol. 110, Cols. 1296-1390.

⁸³ Hansard: Statement by Captain Charles Craig, Vol. 110, Cols. 1326.

⁸⁴ *The Times*, 18/11/18, p. 5.

⁸⁵ 'Let Justice be Done', *Daily Mirror*, 13 November 1918, p.3.

⁸⁶ Neville Wylie, The 1929 Prisoner of War Convention and the Building of the Inter-war Prisoner of War Regime, in *Prisoners in War*, p. 93.

⁸⁷ For details see: *German War Trials: Report of Proceedings before the Supreme Court in Leipzig*, (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1921). From an initial list of 900 reported crimes the British decided to proceed with only six cases.

of the court.⁸⁸ *The Times* printed an article calling the entire proceedings a ‘farce’; this view was shared by many MPs, one of whom called for the trials to be moved to London.⁸⁹ Despite such criticism, the British government consistently defended the process and by 1922 a commission of jurists reported that it was useless to proceed with further cases recommending the remaining accused should be handed over to Allied governments for trial. No attempt was made in following this through however and the results left many POWs with a bitter taste in their mouths and denied them a crucial platform in their own narrative.⁹⁰ The British government believed the cases at Leipzig were symbolic enough and the trials would serve a didactic purpose. By punishing some guilty German perpetrators, as an example, this would teach Germany the lessons of what Britain considered civilised war practice.⁹¹ The disappointment and frustration in the governments handling and response towards their grievances would inform how this veteran community would act during the Second World War. As will be discussed, many ex-POWs would be vocal in their push for the government to take responsibility for POW welfare and in providing some form of resettlement scheme upon their return.

However, by the time the trials vocalised British POW experiences, there was a shift in the popular mood from a desire for recriminations to a mood of disillusionment, disinterest, and a desire to forget.⁹² In fact, by 1921, some voices claimed that wartime accounts of atrocity had been fabricated by the state.⁹³ This argument was championed by the British Member of

⁸⁸ House of Commons, Hansards parliamentary debates: German War Criminals (Trial), 10th November 1921, Vol. 148, Cols. 529.

⁸⁹ Yarnall, *Prisoners 1914-19*, p.194; ‘The Leipzig Trials’, *The Times*, 31 May 1921, p. 15.

⁹⁰ Yarnall, *Prisoners 1914-19*, p.196.

⁹¹ Jones, *Violence against Prisoners*, p.295.

⁹² This can be evidenced by the lack of popular attention the Leipzig Trials received. Based on a search of the term ‘Leipzig Trials’ between the dates of 11/11/18 – 31/12/22, only 22 articles appeared in the *Daily Mirror* and 45 in *The Times*. For further examples of the way the war was conceptualised in the inter-war period see Janet S. K. Watson, *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and The First World War in Britain*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁹³ Jones, *Violence against Prisoners*, p.323.

Parliament and anti-war campaigner Sir Arthur Ponsonby. Ponsonby stated that ‘at the earliest possible moment stories of the maltreatment of prisoners have to be circulated deliberately in order to prevent surrenders’.⁹⁴ Such allied propaganda was a deliberate forgery, which was carefully manufactured and helped considerably in turning opinion in America in favour of coming in on the side of the allies.⁹⁵ Several key figures involved with the question of prisoner of war treatment had also modified how they wrote and spoke about their treatment. Lieutenant-General Herbert E. Belfield, who had been head of the Department of Prisoners of War at the War Office, in the diary he kept at the Hague Conference in June 1917, made continual anti-German comments, referring to the brutal treatment to which British prisoners had been subjected.⁹⁶ In 1923 however, in a speech to the Grotius Society, Belfield considered the ‘infliction of heavy punishments’ on British prisoners as legal as prisoners were subject to the German military code.⁹⁷ Similarly, Sir Reginald Acland, a former member of the Committee of Enquiry into Breaches of the Laws of War, challenged the former Home Secretary, Viscount George Cave, on his claim that there had been widespread prisoner mistreatment by Germany.⁹⁸ Such claims, however, led to complacency regarding POW policy. During the Second World War, a similar lack of planning and failure of its duty of care towards its captive men would in part mobilise communities into action. Both relatives of those captured and those who had experienced captivity continually put pressure on the government to act. This pressure would lead the government to consider POW repatriation schemes such as the CRUs and show, that unlike during the First World War, that they could uphold their responsibilities. The

⁹⁴ Arthur Ponsonby M.P., *Falsehood in Wartime*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1928), p.21.

⁹⁵ Ponsonby, *Falsehood*, p.21. Regarding claims of violence against POWs, see pp. 97, 99, 116, 158.

⁹⁶ Jones, *Violence against Prisoners*, p.320.

⁹⁷ Herbert. E. Belfield, The Treatment of Prisoners of War in *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, Vol. 9, *Problems of Peace and War*, (London: Sweet & Maxwell Ltd, 1924), p. 140.

⁹⁸ Minutes of the Proceedings of the Seventh Annual General Meeting in *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, Vol. 8, *Problems of Peace and War*, (London: Wiley & Sons, 1962), p. XXXVI.

experiences of captivity during the First World War, therefore, were a key influencing decision behind the adoption of the CRUs.

It was against this changing attitude that POWs had to find a way to re-compose their war experiences. While marginalised, a minority of prisoners did find composure by locating themselves in an emerging captivity narrative, the escape narrative.⁹⁹ This narrative focused on extreme resistance and was almost exclusively dominated by officers' memoirs. With officer treatment being relatively comfortable and the manner of their escapes written in suitably dramatic and daring prose, many such accounts came across as a 'schoolboy' adventure.¹⁰⁰ In the gossip column of the *Daily Mirror* in 1921, Captain Evans's book, *The Escaping Club*, was described as 'the true story of daring adventures by a jolly band of young British prisoners of war'.¹⁰¹ Accordingly, the view of harsh, brutal treatment endured by ORs disappeared to be replaced with a social narrative based on the hijinks of an officer camp. By their silence, those ex-prisoners whose experience differed, unwittingly endorsed it, and subsequently this became the dominant view of POW experience in the public imagination.¹⁰² This individual silence was compounded by the failure by ex-prisoners to mobilise as a body of men in order to publicise their distinct wartime experiences. The recognition of differing experiences and how this impacted resettlement would play a key role in the successful operations of the future CRUs. How the CRUs dealt with these individual experiences whilst delivering a large scale resocialisation project is explored in chapter five.

⁹⁹ Wilkinson, *British Prisoners*, p. 281.

¹⁰⁰ For some examples see: Godfrey Walter Phillimore, *Recollections of a Prisoner of War*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1930), Wallace Ellison, *Escaped! Adventures in German Captivity*, (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1918), Major M. C. C. Harrison & Capt. H. A. Cartwright, *Within Four Walls*, (London: Edward Arnold & Co, 1930). Some accounts became so popular as to be turned into feature films see: *Everything is Thunder*, (Milton Rosmer, 1936) & *Who Goes Next*, (Maurice Elvey, 1938).

¹⁰¹ 'To-Days Gossip', *The Daily Mirror*, 20 September 1921, p. 5. By 1931 there was also a national wireless broadcast comprising 16 episodes comprising men who had escaped from POW camps, BBC, 6/6/31 – 19/9/31: *The Times*, 04/07/31, p. 17.

¹⁰² Wilkinson, *British Prisoners*, p. 282.

National attempts made by former British POWs to collectively mobilise were slow to materialise and limited in their extent.¹⁰³ Comradeship had played a vital role in the battle for survival behind the wire and at the point of repatriation, many returning prisoners displayed a commitment to sustain such bonds. However, it was not until 1926 that an organisation targeted at British ex-POWs can be identified.¹⁰⁴ The Association of Ex-Prisoners of War, or Ex-Prisoners of War Association (EXPOWA), was open to all former British POWs, of any rank, who had been held captive in any theatre during the war. The activities of such an organisation were based on recognition, remembrance, relief and a desire to remember 'their' dead. One such example was the association's annual parade which marched to the Cenotaph to pay respects to those who had died in captivity.¹⁰⁵ These survivors would choose to adopt the established and recognised language of remembrance, silence, to pay respect to their fallen comrades. By aligning with a recognised form of remembrance it enabled these ex-POWs to perform their tributes in a manner that aligned their fallen POW comrades with the battlefield dead.¹⁰⁶ By adopting these elements of the Armistice Day ceremony the organisation reinforced the conceptualisation of the dead POW within the language of military death and of public remembrance based on suffering and sacrifice. Yet, by doing so, this had the effect of silencing their own, unique experiences within the broader frameworks of sacrifice. Evidently, this was something that some POWs were more than happy to let happen with General H. C. Rees stating that 'I have no wish to be remembered as the man who was taken prisoner in Germany'.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Wilkinson, Veteran Association, in *Veterans of the First World War*, p.174.

¹⁰⁴ Wilkinson, Veteran Association, in *Veterans of the First World War*, p.174.

¹⁰⁵ 'War Prisoners at the Cenotaph', *The Times*, 30 January 1928, p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Wilkinson, Veteran Association, in *Veterans of the First World War*, p.175.

¹⁰⁷ Wilkinson, *British Prisoners*, p. 281.

According to its own newsletter, the activities of the EXPOWA were very limited; it lamented that only a small number of ex-prisoner veterans had become involved.¹⁰⁸ Part of the reason as to why the British Ex-Prisoner Association was so weak was because the British Legion was so powerful. The EXPOWA could not meet the welfare needs of its members due to the increasingly socio-economic conditions present in Britain during the late 1920s and 1930s. As such, for POWs the EXPOWA lost much of its practical relevance, many instead, choosing to step outside their status based solely on captivity and seeking channels of welfare outside of this status. Other organisations such as the national veteran's organisation and, after 1921, the British Legion with higher membership and powerful backers such as Field Marshall Haig, were in a much better position to provide the kind of economic welfare that ex-POWs sought. The EXPOWA made efforts to assist its members revolving around a benevolent fund which was financed through social events and principally offered clothing to needy members.¹⁰⁹ Yet help was limited and as numbers began to drop, so too did the ability of the EXPOWA to help its members. The failure of the EXPOWA to mobilise the POW community would help inform how the CRUs would engage with repatriates. Instead of highlighting their status as former POWs, the CRUs would create common ground around the return to civil life. Additionally, the lack of engagement with the EXPOWA may also explain why later suggestions by Major Newman that advice and assistance for returning POWs be provided through prisoner of war clubs was ignored.¹¹⁰ The possible association with the failures of such organisations to provide assistance previously may well have influenced repatriate's decisions to volunteer for CRUs.

POWs had been particularly vulnerable to financial hardships, not least because of the way their repatriation was handled and their liability for pensions. Certain decisions were taken

¹⁰⁸ Jones, *Violence against Prisoners*, p.323.

¹⁰⁹ 'Prisoners of War: Annual Reunion in London', *The Times*, 12 March 1929, p. 21.

¹¹⁰ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 10.

in the repatriation process that would be detrimental for the POWs in the long run. Upon their return to Britain, authorities abandoned certain formalities in order that the men could reach home as soon as possible. The interview and quarantine process was reduced to just a day or two for example at the main repatriation centres set up at Dover, Leith, Canterbury and Ripon.¹¹¹ This, coupled with the prisoners' own impatience and eagerness to return home meant few could be bothered with filling out the repatriation forms or to apply for a pension which entailed waiting two or three days for a medical board.¹¹² As a result, many took the alternate, a gratuity of £2 and the signing of a disclaimer to the effect that the prisoner was not suffering from any war-related disability, a decision many regretted. Ex-POWs, such as Sergeant Hawtin Mundy, noted of the process that 'this is what's made me mad ever since. If someone had caught the flu or had a bit of a heart attack, they had a pension for life. I had been wounded three times, been a prisoner of war – and never had a bloody penny: I should have had that examination'.¹¹³ In addition, the medical officers in charge of pension claims were not trained to diagnose psychiatric problems and often they shared a predisposed bias regarding neurosis and were highly suspicious if not downright dismissive of such claims.¹¹⁴

Those POWs who attended such examinations were thusly at a double disadvantage. First, they were confronted by those who were inclined to be dismissive of their experiences and doubtful that neurosis was the primary explanation. Second, the line of questions they were asked, such as 'were you treated brutally?', were as Sergeant Mundy stated, "a bloody silly

¹¹¹ Jones, *Violence against Prisoners*, p.290.

¹¹² Stempel, *Behind the Wire*, p.278.

¹¹³ Max Arthur, *We Will Remember Them: Voices from the Aftermath of the Great War*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), p. 45. Even if they did fill out the required forms it was no guarantee they would receive a pension or that the amount would reflect the severity of problems, see: IWM, 12269 *Albert Barker*, Reel 4 & IWM, 9100 *John Pearson*, Reel 4.

¹¹⁴ Such attitudes were entrenched by the War Offices own conclusions regarding POWs that echoed earlier reports that in POWs neurosis hardly occurred and the war had only exacerbated pre-war conditions,

'The Psychopathic Predisposition' & 'The Psychoses in relation to Stress and Strain of War', *Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into "ShellShock"*, (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1922), pp.112-113.

question to ask”.¹¹⁵ For men who were possibly suffering from barbed wire disease and already exhibiting signs of suspicion, irritability, and anger towards authority, coupled with a desire to return home as quick as possible, as Sergeant Mundy’s rather exasperated reply shows, it is no wonder many POWs chose to either skip such committees or take the gratuity instead. During the Second World War, POWs would share similar complaints regarding the medical boards and the CRUs would put much effort into training medical personal in the correct handling of POWs and in methods of engagement designed to persuade the repatriate to volunteer for the scheme. This was an important part of the development of the CRUs and highlights how the lessons from the previous conflict had been learned. The important of engagement and the training of staff is discussed in chapter three and formed part of the operations of the CRUs that was a key factor to their success.

The steady decline in membership of the EXPOWA also showed the deep divisions within the ex-POW community that the association was attempting to appeal to. POW experience differed greatly depending on rank, theatre of incarceration or experiences in different camps within the same theatre, which further hampered efforts to organise a society based on a collective experience. The EXPOWA also had competition from the many splinter groups that formed around these differing camp experiences. When former POWs chose to associate, they tended to do so in small, exclusive groups, with the men to whom they could directly relate.¹¹⁶ Organisations like the British Legion also managed to successfully unite British veterans into a homogenised group with a unity of purpose that the EXPOWA could not. Many POWs feeling a sense of shame from their war time captivity preferred to identify

¹¹⁵ Arthur, *Voices of the Great War*, p. 45. Follow up studies by Norman Fenton had also shown that many soldiers, been so anxious to be discharged from the army, waived all claims to compensation. Further, due to prevailing attitudes towards neurosis in the medical profession, men were not keen to discuss their condition with medical officers believing they would be labelled as malingerers or persons seeking unwarranted compensation, Fenton, *Aftermath*, p.79.

¹¹⁶ Wilkinson, Veteran Association, in *Veterans of the First World War*, p.177.

with their pre-captive service. Private Edmund Herd, for example, makes it clear in his diary that the Battle of Bellewaarde and the actions of his regiment around Hooze were the defining aspects of his First World War service.¹¹⁷ While this distanced them from the negative, stigmatic connotations that some POWs perceived in their wartime fate, this lack of engagement deprived the POW community of a centralised organisation which could promote their experience and give them a voice outside of their community. The experience of ORs would be 'lost' in the inter-war period, yet memories of their treatment and experience, and a desire to not see others suffer such a fate meant that a significant 'silent' community remained.

This treatment had been the source of much controversy at the time with Douglas Houghton, the last Cabinet Minister born in the nineteenth century and the last veteran of the First World War to serve in the Cabinet and both Houses of Parliament, in his later correspondences stating that 'I think we have made rather a tame ending to victory. Fancy the prisoners of a victorious alliance being turned adrift to fend for themselves. I would have insisted that they be sent to the frontier in 1st class carriages.'¹¹⁸ Regarding the government's response to POWs, General Ivor Philips was equally dismissive, questioning in the House of Commons whether they 'received any encouragement or assistance from any member of the Government? Not on a single occasion! Every possible hindrance has been put in their way'.¹¹⁹ The bitterness over their treatment remained during the interwar period and at the outbreak of the Second World War, unlike after the First, the ex-POW community would mobilise and put significant pressure on the government to act regarding the welfare of returning POWs.¹²⁰ Such

¹¹⁷ Wilkinson, Veteran Association, in *Veterans of the First World War*, p.179.

¹¹⁸ Swift, ex-servicemen, in *Veterans of the First World War*, p.73.

¹¹⁹ Hansard: Statement by Captain Charles Craig, Vol. 110, Cols. 1312.

¹²⁰ IWM, 12269 *Albert Barker*, Reel 4, Barker remained very bitter over his treatment and the way his return to post war life was handled, see also General Philips statement to the house of commons - 'There was a feeling at the beginning of the War that there was something of contempt to be felt for a prisoner of war. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that the War Office took this line, and I am not certain that even to-day they have quite got rid of it', Hansard: Statement by Captain Charles Craig, Vol. 110, Cols. 1296.

men had been veterans of not just a military, but cultural war, and their identification with POWs during the second World War reactivated within them a sense of possessing an uncomplete task.¹²¹

A further hinderance to the POW voice during the interwar period was the lack of interwar research and the falling back into conservative attitudes by the RAMC. At the outbreak of First World War, the British Army had been caught off-guard by the scale of the neurosis problem, as such military psychiatry was haphazard, relying on volunteers from civilian practice.¹²² Civilian practitioners were, however, viewed with suspicion by the established hierarchy and often clashed with their military supervisors on the best case of action towards their patients. Many RAMC physicians appear to have been disillusioned by their wartime experiences, unless they were in special psychiatric hospitals, they had little opportunity to share their ideas and casework and throughout the war they had been regarded with suspicion by the military and scorned by other medical specialists.¹²³ Consulting Psychologists such as Charles S. Myer wrote about his experience, noting that 'I was by now tired of the many difficulties and frustrations which had beset me in my four and half years work.' William McDougall (who had worked at Maghull) confiding to a friend that 'I have done my best to serve my country during the war. I have returned to have my laboratory taken from me'.¹²⁴ The military hierarchy remained generally unreceptive to psychological ideas and those treating soldiers for neurosis felt undervalued, believing they had been tolerated so long as they were needed to support the war effort.¹²⁵ As such, many experts chose to deal with their experiences

¹²¹ Curle, *Transitional Communities I*, p. 56.

¹²² Jones and Wessely, *Shell Shock to PTSD*, p.18.

¹²³ Jones and Wessely, *Shell Shock to PTSD*, p.44.

¹²⁴ Charles S. Myers, *Shell shock in France 1914– 18, based on a war diary*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 139-140; Anon, Obituary, *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 4066, (1938), p. 1232.

¹²⁵ Jones and Wessely, *Shell Shock to PTSD*, p.45.

by returning to civilian practice and the army psychiatric services suffered from a 'brain drain' and a return to its conservative approach to mental health.

The government's inquiry into shell shock had stated that medical officers with special training in mental and nervous disorders was neither necessary nor desirable at the front and that to be a peacetime psychologist would be a great disadvantage.¹²⁶ The British government with the war won, was also looking at rebuilding, cutting its wartime expenses and balancing the books. The armed services would bear the fair share of such streamlining and efficiency saving methods. With the 1922 Committee on shell shock concluding that instances of neurosis could be virtually eliminated through vigorous selection methods and adequate training, psychiatric services were deemed an unnecessary expenditure. In addition, on 27 July 1929, a new convention regarding the treatment of prisoners of war was signed in Geneva. This new revised treaty was believed to have solved the issues of the past and governments believed this would draw a red line under such issues. As such, in the interwar period, any research or follow up work, especially regarding POWs, in a time of peace and rebuilding, was believed to be unnecessary.

The full consequences of the psychological brain drain would not be felt until the Second World War. The British Army's response to the emerging difficulties in employing repatriated POWs to address a growing manpower issue was limited due to a lack of trained personnel. Consequently, departments such as the Directorate of Army Psychiatry (DAP) would employ a number of civilian practitioners. Many of these men would come from the Tavistock Clinic and it was these men who would develop and plan the CRUs. The CRUs would also need to train sufficient personnel to staff units and this was a direct result from the

¹²⁶ 'Treatment of Shell shock and War Neurosis', in *Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into "Shell-Shock"*, (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1922), p.122.

lack of funding during the inter-war period. The development of the CRUs and training of staff will be covered in subsequent chapters and their importance in the hierarchy of factors behind the success of the CRUs discussed.

Conclusion.

This chapter has demonstrated how the aftermath of the First World War would shape and effect both public and government responses in their concept of responsibility towards POWs during the Second World War. Earlier attitudes towards captivity and a belief that POWs would be protected led to complacency from governments who did not foresee the deficiencies inherent in these treaties. In Britain, where governments failed in their responsibilities, the public stepped in and formed communities around which POW care and issues revolved. However, in part due to this community response, it established new norms in the way prisoners would be treated and a diminishing responsibility for governments. Later additions to the Geneva Convention were also believed to have closed any loopholes which had been revealed during the First World War further contributing to complacency over POWs. This attitude was not shared by the public who still expected the government to honour what they believed, to be the government's duty of care towards its captured men. Such complacency would be a future cause for the mobilisation of a large community who would pressurise the government into action and push for a resettlement scheme for returning POWs.

In addition to the changing conceptualisation of the responsibilities of governments towards captive men, there was a growing body of work that noticed the consequences of long-term captivity on prisoners. However, research, especially in military circles, was dismissive of neurosis generally, believing that such cases were a result of a history of illness and could be 'weeded' out at selection and training. This attitude would be reflected in the early responses to neurosis in the First World War. During 1916 POWs became the focus of important debates

surrounding the nature and causation of 'neurosis' and it was concluded that their 'protected' nature meant they could not suffer from such neurosis. By 1917, however, evidence of some form of neurosis in POWs had become apparent. This had been common enough for the term 'barbed wire disease' to be used in a series of exchanges between nations which specifically involved those who had been in captivity for a period of over six months.

Psychiatrists such as A. L. Vischer were at the forefront of such research and believed that unless help was provided, these men would continue to show symptoms relating to their captivity upon their release. Furthermore, research by Norman Fenton showed that a specific repatriation scheme would be beneficial for repatriates and evidence showed that those who attended such schemes were better settled. Prevalent attitudes regarding neurosis, however, meant that, by and large, this research was ignored in the immediate period after the First World War. It was however fundamental in the future and was a basis for those such as Major Newman and A. T. M. Wilson, to evidence that a resettlement scheme would be needed for returning POWs during the Second World War.

The way prisoner repatriation was handled and the responses to the POW experience also had long-term repercussions for POWs. The demobilisation process was poorly managed and failed to consider the problems POWs would face. The British government, believing the best thing for returning POWs was to get them back to their families as quick as possible, failed to provide for any long-term care that these men required. This led to much condemnation and left many POWs feeling bitter and betrayed by the government. Such resentment and a belief that no one should experience what they had would cause the ex-POW community to mobilise in the Second World War in a way that it failed in the first. Additionally, organisations such as the EXPOWA could not provide for their members as well as other, larger organisations could. Many ex-POWS also preferred to associate their wartime experiences with their regiment rather than their identity as a POW which further hindered efforts to mobilise this community.

The post war experience of POWs would, however, provide vital information for the future planners of the CRUs. The failure of POWs to engage with organisations based around their identity as prisoners of war would shape how the CRUs would engage with and advertise the scheme to repatriates. Units would be advertised as a place for repatriates to readjust back to civil life and this period of adjustment was perfectly normal for all who had served. The experiences of medical boards would also be considered, and medical officers would be trained in the correct handling of POWs and methods of persuasion to entice them to volunteer for a CRU.

The failure of organisations such as EXPOWA had also highlighted the limitations of such organisations and would influence the decision to establish professionally staffed units rather than rely on prisoner of war clubs as suggested. This is not to say that the CRUs would not utilise outside organisations, and as will be demonstrated in the course of this thesis, how the CRUs engaged with the community and other organisations – voluntary or professional – would be a key part of their success and demonstrate the effectiveness of CRU operations. The understanding of the effects of long-term captivity and what, if anything, was done for returning POWs provides vital context for understanding events during the Second World War and how a post war resettlement scheme was conceptualised. In analysing these issues this thesis addresses its secondary argument, that the CRUs success could not have been achieved without events from the First World War.

Chapter 2: The Approaching Storm

In the early morning hours of 1 September 1939, German forces crossed the border between Germany and Poland and thus started a conflict the size of which Europe had not seen since 1914. Two days later, on 3 September, France and the United Kingdom formally entered the conflict and officially declared war on Germany. The United Kingdom once again faced a period of mobilisation, the calling of reserves and conversion of industries to a wartime footing. The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) began arriving in France on 9 September 1939 and would consist of ten divisions (five regular and five territorial) totalling roughly 390,000 men.¹

While confidence remained high, little thought had been made regarding the provision for those who would be captured, the treatment of neurosis within the British Army, or of the consequences of allowing so many untreated men back into society after such a conflict. The army, as scholars such as Alan Allport suggests, had fallen into a wilful act of amnesia, forgetting the hard-won lessons of the previous war.² The caricature of ‘Colonel Blimp’ popularised by David Low of the *Evening Standard*, had come to represent everything that had been wrong with the British Army, an officer who was ‘hidebound’, reactionary, and averse to any and all change. This ran true in particular with anything involving psychiatry, which was still viewed with a great deal of suspicion.

Further, the Government had considered the matter of soldier neurosis closed with its publication of its enquiry into shell shock in 1922. However, there were signs that some in the government were at least preparing for the possibility that psychiatric casualties would remain an issue, and perhaps with memories of the reaction of the public to victims of shell shock, aimed to cut off this possible cause of dissent on the home front. In May 1939, the Minister of

¹ Julian Jackson, *The Fall of France: The Nazi Invasion of 1940*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 56.

² Allport, *Browned Off*, p.5.

Health, as chief guest at the Tavistock Clinic's annual luncheon, noted that 'the additional strain which might be placed upon the medical services in dealing with the situation that would arise in the event of war' and heavily implied that the clinic would play a part in this role.³

Nevertheless, with confidence remaining high, no one in either the government or the army believed that the provision for dealing with mass amounts of POWs on their own side was necessary. With so few POWs taken during the 'Phoney War' the subject of prisoners was not one that bothered Whitehall.⁴ This total lack of urgency was confirmed by Sir F. M. Sheppard, working at the Foreign Office, who commented in February 1940 that 'history seems to be repeating itself'.⁵ Additionally, while the war remained an exclusively European one, the issue of prisoners was not regarded as one of pressing urgency as all participants were signatories of the Geneva Convention of 1929 and had agreed to abide by common regulations regarding prisoners.⁶

The campaigns of 1940-41, however, can only be described as a string of disasters for the Allies and an expansion of the war beyond the European theatre. On 9 April 1940, Germany invaded Norway and the hastily pieced together allied operation was quickly overrun leading to a series of embarrassing withdrawals around Narvik, Aandalsnes and Namsos. Yet, casualties had remained relatively small, and despite the embarrassment which led to the resignation of Neville Chamberlain and the appointment of Winston Churchill as his replacement, the spectre of large-scale Allied internment remained far from the thoughts of the planners. On the same day that Chamberlain resigned, however, the German army unleashed its Blitzkrieg upon northern France.

³ White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 23.

⁴ Rolf. D, "Blind Bureaucracy" in *Prisoners of War and Their Captors*, p. 48.

⁵ Rolf. D, "Blind Bureaucracy" in *Prisoners of War and Their Captors*, p. 48.

⁶ Hatley, *War and Welfare*, p. 143.

What followed was the complete disintegration of the Allied forces and the encirclement of not only a sizeable contingent of French forces, but the entirety of the BEF around Dunkirk. The British Government now faced the entirely realistic prospect of all remaining personnel landing into German captivity. While Operation Dynamo and the evacuation that followed was widely lauded as a miracle and indeed led to the successful evacuation of some 328,000 troops, the fact remained that the entire campaign of 1940 had been an unmitigated disaster. Some 68,000 British troops were left behind including the entirety of the 51st Highland Division who were cut off from any evacuation and were forced to surrender.⁷ For every seven soldiers who escaped from Dunkirk, one man became a prisoner of war leaving around 40,000 British soldiers in German captivity.⁸

In 1941, further disasters were to follow, with the withdrawal from Greece of British and Commonwealth forces and the following rushed evacuation from Crete which left nearly half of the 32,000 defenders in captivity, compounding British woes further. 1942 provided little respite with the fall of Singapore in February netting the largest surrender of British forces in history and, with the Battle of the Gazala Line (where of note, this author's grandfather was captured), and the fall of Tobruk in June the same year, news from Africa was similarly dire. As a result, by mid-1942, there was upwards of 100,000 British POWs held in Axis captivity. In government circles these men would be labelled as 'the awkward lot'.⁹ This chapter will chart the continual progression of knowledge and research emerging throughout the war regarding problems of resettlement. It will highlight the changing stance of the government towards resettlement through both public pressure and new, emerging research, and how these factors would be important in forming the CRUs and the methods they employed.

⁷ Sean Longden, *Dunkirk: The Men They Left Behind*, (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd, 2009), p.2.

⁸ Longden, *Dunkirk*, p.391.

⁹ Clare Makepeace, 'Bringing home World War Two's 'awkward lot'', *The Psychologist*, Vol. 31, (2018), p.82.

The first section argues that the discourse in the public sphere surrounding POWs and resettlement was vital in shaping the vision of post war Britain and pressurising the government to address public concerns. It highlights how a number of escaped POWs would first bring attention to the government and public of the problems of resettlement facing POWs. This would lead to a wider discourse on how post war Britain would be envisioned and demobilisation and the welfare arrangements for returning POWs were the subject of great anxiety. This wider discourse represented a wide range of voices, which included ex-POWs, psychiatrists, and relatives of the captured men. These voices would mobilise together with the anxieties of the public to force government to address its responsibility towards returning POWs and confront matters of resettlement.

The second section discusses the developing knowledge of resettlement problems facing POWs through increased contact with escapees and the Crookham experiment. Crookham would represent the first large-scale contact with POWs and the first attempt at addressing their resettlement. This section will argue that the government response to their rehabilitation was still influenced by older attitudes regarding the use of psychiatry and the greater issue of manpower. Crookham, however, was vital in providing research on POWs and the effectiveness of a rehabilitation course. Its methods would influence later methods of rehabilitation and ultimately be pivotal in forming the concepts utilised by the CRUs.

The last section will use the Northfield experiments as a case study to track the progression of ideas of the therapeutic community and the continued development of lessons learnt regarding resettlement. The observations and techniques employed at Northfield filled in the gaps in knowledge from Crookham and provided a solid foundation of research for the CRUs to build on. The continued development of ideas shows how psychiatrists built on the lessons learnt from the past, but this was not a smooth process. Northfield also highlights the difficulties that psychiatrists faced in changing attitudes of their use and how their methods

were utilised. Despite facing many difficulties, Northfield would play an important role in developing how post war resettlement would be handled.

Ultimately, this chapter argues that the initial development and planning of a post war resettlement scheme was a vital factor behind the success of the CRUs. This earlier work provided the foundational blocks upon which the CRU planners would build upon. The influence of these studies and the wider discourse regarding POWs is evidenced by how the CRUs shaped and in their methods of resocialisation. These methods were a direct result of previous studies such as Crookham and Northfield and directly factored into the CRUs ability in successfully resettling POWs. However, the early planning and development of a resettlement scheme was not coherent and rather represented several individuals who believed their work was important and had applications beyond its military use. These individuals had, however, come to similar conclusions and the experience they gained from these experiments would be an important factor in the success of the CRUs.

A community mobilises.

The dominant policy towards POWs before mid-1940 had been one of benign neglect. Neither the Admiralty nor the Air Ministry had felt the matter was sufficiently important enough to divert dwindling resources towards.¹⁰ Only after the collapse of France did the War Office create a unified directorate of prisoners of war and key decisions were still made on the hoof with little thought given to past experiences.¹¹ Detailed studies from the last war regarding prisoners of war, such as General Belfield's 'lessons learnt' study, had been left undisturbed in the War Office library leading Lord Phillimore to lament that 'its utility... would have been

¹⁰ Wylie, *Politics of Prisoners*, p. 66.

¹¹ Wylie, *Politics of Prisoners*, p. 66.

considerable if more copies had been available and its existence had been known earlier to the officers of the Prisoner of War Directorate'.¹²

As such, few in the War Office were sufficiently aware of resettlement issues and were unable to give POW matters the kind of sustained and sympathetic consideration they required. There would need to be a psychological shift in attitudes towards prisoners and their resettlement needs for change to happen and this could hardly be accomplished overnight. As this chapter will highlight, it was a number of influential studies which convinced the war office to reconsider its position on POWs. These studies revealed that returning POWs would require help in bridging the gap between army and civil life and their suggestions helped lay the foundations of the CRUs. In addition, as will be shown, there was considerable public opinion that the government held responsibility for these men. By supporting a scheme such as the CRUs, the government could regain control of the narrative and show to the public it took its responsibilities seriously.

From 1940 onwards, those with specialist knowledge and personal experience gained from the previous war, helped fill the void regarding resettlement and repeatedly drew attention to the situation which could arise with the return of over 100,000 men at the end of hostilities.¹³ Those who did so urged the government to give this question careful and considerate attention. In the early years of the war, however, earlier attitudes of captivity still permeated the government's response. Prisoners were protected under the Geneva Convention of 1929, and it was believed the loopholes from the last war had been rectified. As the last chapter demonstrated, the Red Cross had also established itself as an arbitrator of prisoner welfare further diminishing direct government responsibility.

¹² Lord Phillimore, *Recollections of a Prisoner of War*, (London: Edward Arnold & Co, 1930), pp. 7-8.

¹³ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p.226.

The government's own propaganda would also influence public attitudes regarding captivity. The December 1943 edition of *The Prisoner of War* magazine confirmed popular beliefs that captives were lucky to be out of the war and contained photographs of British POWs skiing, eating a hearty meal, and taking part in games in a 'friendly atmosphere'.¹⁴ This in part served to deflect accusations against the government that they were failing in their responsibilities towards POWs whilst also reassuring the families of captured servicemen. This, however, had the consequence of creating dissonance between POWs and UK society whose image of captive life was coloured by such news. For a resettlement scheme to be realised, attitudes needed to change, and the messaging had to convince both the public and the government of the difficulties returning POWs would face. In order to 'bridge the gap' of knowledge and persuade both sides, returning POWs, relatives, and psychiatrists from the last war mobilised to highlight the problems returning POWs faced and the necessity for a resettlement scheme.

Evidence of the difficulties POWs would face in resettling began appearing in the press around 1942 when several articles written by ex-POWs on the consequences of captivity appeared. Captain George Collie, who had escaped from a POW hospital in Paris in 1942, penned an article for the *Fortnightly Magazine* on the 'Rip Van Winkle' effect.¹⁵ Collie explained that much like the aforementioned Rip – who had slept through the Revolutionary War - POWs would be returning to a country changed, whereas they and their opinions had not. These returning men would be badly in need of a period of readjustment. The primary need of these men was to grow their social roots again, if this was not done first no amount of retrospective aid would do.¹⁶ The environment they longed to return to was no longer the one

¹⁴ Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, pp.171-172.

¹⁵ Makepeace, *Awkward Lot*, p.81.

¹⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/12, *Regular soldier survey and paper on group meetings*, 'Rip Van Winkle', p.1.

they knew, and these men would have to grow into it again. Crucially, for Collie, this process of reintegration back into the community must be a task faced by all, not just the soldier.¹⁷

Collie's analysis highlighted the disconnect between soldiers and civilians and the dangers that this would pose for peacetime Britain. An attitude that reflected public fears of returning soldiers bringing violence back with them and similar scenes to that of the botched demobilisation of the First World War. Interviews conducted by the *Mass Observation* highlighted such fears, one draughtsman from Sheffield stating that 'the chaps left from this war won't be so docile as those left from the last lot' and another housewife foreseeing 'incidents such as happened after the last armistice'.¹⁸ There was therefore a proportion of the population that feared future demobilisation. A scheme that was designed in reintegrating POWs back to these communities would have to work closely with them to facilitate a change in such attitudes, and community engagement would be a key principle of the CRUs. In addition, by supporting POWs in the current war, the government offered a gesture of reassurance to civilians that the same would not happen again.

Servicemen were unlikely to become violent due to wartime experiences and the reception these men would receive would be crucial to how they reacted to their new environment. During their service these men had formed a group conscious with a single purpose to defeat the enemy, to defeat those opposed to one's own group. If the transition from service to civvy street alienated these returning serviceman there was always a possibility that they would gang up with others and attack those who they irrationally fear to be the common enemy.¹⁹ In an environment when a post war consensus of what Britain would be like was still far from agreed, the inability of society to re-integrate its returning men provided an

¹⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/12, *Rip Van Winkle*, p.2.

¹⁸ *Mass Observation, Journey Home* p. 39.

¹⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/12, *Rip Van Winkle*, pp.4-5.

opportunity for demagogues to nominate scapegoats and rally ranks in the face of a supposed common enemy.²⁰ The failure of reintegrating soldiers back into society had been part of the story of the rise of fascism post-First World War and failure to act could see the rise of dangerous fringe parties in any post war settlement. It was essential that the army and government acknowledged this, and that the community would be at the heart of any such scheme proposed to solve this problem.

As Collie stated, Rip had not changed, it was the community he was returning to that had – as soon as Rip was recognised, his problems were solved – he just wanted to settle down back into the familiar. Collie advocated for a considerable improvement in the present attitude towards the returned prisoner and the responsibility of the state towards these men.²¹ His article was explicitly written to effect this change, and urge that sufficient time be given to put a community-based scheme into practice.²² Collie's article thrust the POW experience back into the public conscious and highlighted how thousands of men captured during the fall of France had 'no conception of life in Britain today or of the changes in the outlook for the future', and that 'these blanks in the knowledge of events are a serious matter for the prisoner of war'.²³ His article effectively underpinned the change in attitude required and that returning prisoners were not to be feared. Resettlement of these men needed to be faced by the community they would return to and with their understanding and help, these men would reintegrate with little difficulty. The influence of Collie's article can be seen in the later CRUs. Collie's suggestion that the Ministry of Labour be present in any future 'rest centre' to provide useful statements on the conditions of work and that repatriates should be given time to learn of events and

²⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/12, *Rip Van Winkle*, pp.4-5.

²¹ G. F. Collie, 'Returned Prisoners of War: A Suggested Scheme for Rehabilitation', *The Fortnightly*, New Series, Iss. 153, (June 1943), pp. 407-11.

²² Collie, *Returned Prisoners of War*, p. 411.

²³ Makepeace, *Awkward Lot*, p.81.

societal changes during their convalescence were both aspects CRUs would adopt.²⁴ Educating the public in the difficulties POWs would face formed an important part of the advertisement campaign and was considered key in mobilising the curiosity of the public, and promoting the two-way resocialisation required. The ways in which the repatriate and the community would interact was an important factor in the success of the CRUs and evolved from works such as Collie's. At the mid stage of the war, however, Collie was only one individual and no cohesive planning for a resettlement scheme on the lines suggested had taken place.

Other articles followed, with Major Newman, a POW escapee, writing in the *British Medical Journal* in 1944 highlighting the problems that returning POWs faced. Major Newman's article relied heavily on previous work by Vischer and Salmon and highlighted what little research had been done on the effects of long-term captivity between the wars. Newman, however, was able to provide a unique insight into the problem having been a former POW himself unlike Vischer, who had drawn his conclusions as a visiting psychologist studying patients.²⁵ While Vischer had carefully traced the origins of the mental attitude experienced during captivity, he had not described symptoms after release from camp. For Newman, this constituted one of the more important post war problems arguing that the POW's reactions in camp were of minor importance in comparison with those he would show on return when he may again be beset by large responsibilities.²⁶

Newman likened the reactions POWs would experience to Cassion Disease. This was normally experienced while in an underwater or compressed-air caisson, such as is used in tunnelling. Similarly, while in captivity the POW had adapted themselves to a high-pressure environment. It was only when the caisson was raised, and the pressure fell back to normal that

²⁴ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p.228.

²⁵ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 8.

²⁶ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 8.

symptoms were are apt to appear.²⁷ For the POW these symptoms would most likely surface when the POW was trying to regain his emotional balance upon his return home, and it was in this readjustment period that some form of assistance would be required.²⁸

In his article, Newman suggested that with the considerable changes that had occurred in wartime Britain, the repatriate would be ill equipped for the difficult period of readjustment required for him to regain emotional balance and resume the responsibilities of his former life. Much like Collie's conclusions, for Newman, it was therefore vital that those at home would help fill gaps in knowledge and help POWs resettle.²⁹ In addition, Newman was keen to avoid any associations that POWs were a 'mental abnormality', seeing this as counterproductive to resettlement and anything that would single out POWs as a special case should be avoided.³⁰ Educating the community and enacting a change of attitudes was vitally important to prevent misunderstandings and provide an atmosphere conducive to resettlement. Such a stance would be adopted by the CRUs and their messaging to the public reflected this.

The article concluded that help should be made available in resettling any returning POWs but as to where, when, and how to apply this aid was a difficult problem. The returning POW had one main objective in view, to return home as soon as possible and any form of assistance that prolongs the time between disembarkation and his arrival back is doomed to failure.³¹ Newman did not advocate for a series of rehabilitation centres seeing any such massing of repatriates as an unnecessary and difficult step in many cases. Instead, Newman foresaw the need for a more distant and more subtle form of control:

i.e., a form of long-distance guidance, an influence of which the repatriate is only just vaguely aware in the dim background, but which he can at any time make contact with should he feel the need for its help. It must be unobtrusive, so that it does not impress the

²⁷ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 8.

²⁸ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 10.

²⁹ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 9.

³⁰ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 8.

³¹ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 10.

majority with their need for assistance, but it must be accessible enough to be at hand if and when its assistance is required.³²

Newman made several suggestions for any organisation that was to be set up to aid returning prisoners of war. These would be an important first step in establishing how post war resettlement would form and gave a solid foundation for future research to develop.

Newman foresaw the important role that using a wide range of media could play in engaging with the public and advertising any help to POWs. A pamphlet should be made available to every returned prisoner of war containing simple advice for him during his period of convalescence and informing him of the presence of an advice organization should he require it. Millais Culpin, (a psychologist who had previous experience treating ex-servicemen after the First World War) in reply to Newman's article, would add a further suggestion to advertising any future scheme. Culpin believed that a radio broadcast with extracts of Newman's account of the deprivation and frustrations of POWs would be useful for the public and in dispelling any stigma attached to these symptoms.³³ Such a concept would be utilised by the CRUs to inform the public of the purpose of the scheme and encourage community participation in the rehabilitation process. Through such methods, any anxiety the public felt towards returning POWs would be diminished and a positive response to the resettlement needs of these men would be harboured. The CRUs would also provide a booklet to all POWs which followed Newmans's advice and aimed to inform him of the CRUs purpose and his rights attached to its use. Newmans's suggestions were therefore an important step towards the development of the CRUs and influenced the methods of engagement they would adopt. These

³² Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 10.

³³ Millais Culpin, Correspondence, 'The prisoner-of-war mentality', *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, Iss. 4334, (1944), p.95.

methods formed an important part of their operations and were fundamental to the success of the units.

Newman also believed that provisions should be made for the establishment of prisoner-of-war clubs in all large towns with a population over 100,000, where ex-prisoners may gather and seek advice if required. These should be staffed by individuals who recognized and were capable of dealing with "release" phenomena. Medical practitioners who had been prisoners of war would be of great value in these circumstances.³⁴ These advice centres would also be available for relatives' seeking advice in handling returned prisoners.³⁵ The location of these help centres had been an important consideration in how Newman foresaw resettlement should be administered with the aim in providing help for as many repatriates as possible. Considerations behind the location and physical environment of resettlement centres would continue to be developed in future experiments which will be covered in this chapter. The suggestions and observations made by both Newman and these experiments would play an important role in how CRU planners located the twenty units that would emerge.

By relying on prisoner-of-war clubs as a main focal point of gatherings and advice however, Newman had failed to understand how such associations had failed after the First World War. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, POWs had found it difficult to form a distinct veteran community and there was no such new evidence that would suggest this would remain the case after the Second War Two.³⁶ By relying on such associations Newman's recommendation would risk driving those seeking help away. POWs wished to distance themselves from the negative and stigmatic connotations associated with their captivity. A number of interviews with ex-POWs had shown that many experienced feelings of guilt over

³⁴ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 10.

³⁵ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 10.

³⁶ See Clare Makepeace, 'For ALL Who were Captured? The Evolution of National Ex-prisoner of War Associations in Britain after the Second World War', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, Vol. 7, Iss. 3, (2014), pp. 253-268.

being captured and of not doing their part whilst relatives at home suffered.³⁷ This suggestion clearly highlighted the lack of prewar research and information regarding POWs, and it was only through progressive research that POW feelings towards this matter would be revealed. The planners of the CRUs would make every effort to disassociate the scheme from such negative connotations in an effort to entice volunteers and normalise their resettlement. In this, Newman's earlier suggestion of using media would influence their response and was an important factor in the CRUs success.

Finally, Newman stated the need for the establishment of one rehabilitation centre for the country, with consultant psychologists and a trained rehabilitation staff. The patients at this centre would consist of those recommended from advice centres and by members of the medical profession throughout the country.³⁸ Yet, even with such recommendations Newman had shown oversight in a critical area. Statistical evidence from studies such as Crookham, suggested that Newman had failed to grasp the scale of POWs who would return unsettled and require some form of help. As such, the staffing of a singular national centre would prove to be inadequate for their needs. A meeting held in September 1943 under the chairmanship of Lt-Gen. Sir Alexander Hood, the Director General of the Army Medical Services, had referred to an investigation carried out on ninety British POWs recently repatriated from Italy. This investigation found that of the ninety men, after three months of returning home, one third had shown sufficient evidence of maladjustment to warrant some form of action being taken.³⁹ If this same fraction repeated itself in the 142,319 British POWs in German hands the number of men requiring assistance would be upwards of 50,000 men and this does not include those in captivity in Japanese camps. These numbers would be far too great for a singular centre to

³⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/1, *Directorate of Army Psychiatry, Technical Memorandum No. 13: The Prisoner of War Comes Home*, pp. 7-14.

³⁸ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 10.

³⁹ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p.229.

process and would result in either unacceptable waiting times or a complete lack of participation by those seeking such help.

Such numbers would highlight the scale of the problem the government would face and the need for a resettlement scheme on a larger scale than even Newman had anticipated. It is clear with his recommendations that Newman foresaw any help to be localised and community based, while help would be made available the onus was very much on the POW and his relatives in seeking any such advice. The CRUs would take a more proactive approach and directly engage and encourage POWs to attend. As such, the potential volume of volunteers and the number of units necessary to cater for them were of much greater concern. While the involvement of the community would be an important aspect of the methods employed by CRUs in resocialising attendees, it was only part of their success. Planners would develop Newman's concepts of the advice and rehabilitation centres, combining the principals of both into what the CRUs would become. The sheer number of volunteers that attended the CRUs, however, was an area of oversight that was never truly grasped. While the trial scheme held at Derby would provide a rough estimate, this was limited by the circumstances and set up of this unit. This demonstrates a limitation in the planning of the CRUs and areas of oversight that other factors behind their success would need to solve. This will be discussed in the next chapter and the number of volunteers and the methods the CRUs employed in dealing with them show the flexibility of the operations of the scheme in adapting to external pressures.

Nevertheless, despite such oversights, returning prisoners like Newman and Collie opened the discussion over the repatriation of returning POWs to a wider audience and did much to highlight the scale of the incoming problem to the authorities. Correspondence in the *British Medical Journal* contributed to the developing of Newman's ideas and these discussions continued throughout 1944 and 1945 highlighting the growing interest and concern in British society regarding its captive men. Such correspondence provided a layer of oversight to areas

which Newman had not considered. Contributors to Newman's article, such as those from John Harkness, noted that in discussing the plight of the officer prisoner, Newman failed to consider the majority NCOs and other ranks whose conditions would differ sharply from that of the officers. Demonstrative of the evolution of thought and success in the planning of the CRUs, the background and experiences of the individual POW would be considered by CRU planners. The ways in which the scheme could run a large-scale resettlement programme while considering individual circumstances, was part of the operations of units and a factor behind their success. However, as will be demonstrated in both this chapter and chapter five, this planning was somewhat limited and the lack of contact and experience with Far East Prisoners meant that engagement with these men was problematic.

Harkness, however, believed Newman was too optimistic around the recovery of POWs and that many would carry problems for the rest of their lives. It was his hope that interest in POWs would be sustained throughout the post war years and some long-term advocacy of the people and press would play its part in this. Further, Harkness believed the establishment of POW clubs would retard rehabilitation and the POW should be encouraged to mix with others who have not suffered similar experiences to merge into normal service or civil society.⁴⁰ Harkness's conclusions highlighted the need to include the community in the resettlement process and shared a remarkable similarity with research that would come from the Northfield experiment which suggested that resettlement was aided by 'socialising' recovery, and it was key to get the community involved in this process.

Other contributors such as B. Richardson Billings sought to highlight the plight of those held in Japanese captivity. Billings noted that as few POWs had escaped from Japanese captivity much was yet to be learned of the 130,000 held and what their reactions would be

⁴⁰ John Harkness, Correspondence, 'The prisoner-of-war mentality', *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, Iss. 4346, (1944), p.568.

regarding repatriation. The few correspondences received from those held captive had highlighted extremely poor conditions, abuse, and a lack of any facilities those POWs in the west would have access too. This would likely exasperate any such symptoms and Billings stated that there would be only one class of man or woman who could experience all of this and be rehabilitated to fit into normal reconstructed society – that of a superman – the remainder will be a problem for the remainder of their lives.⁴¹ The lack of information on Far East prisoners would be problematic and they proved to be a group that needed separate consideration regarding resettlement. Provisions for these men would, however, remain little different from those who had been captured in Europe. As will be discussed in chapter 5, initial reports suggested this group showed little sign of problems and it was only after longer observation and contact with these men that their needs became apparent, and provisions changed. The responses to Newman's article demonstrate the range of discourse regarding POWs and several individuals advocating for a resettlement scheme. However, there was some disagreement as to what shape this would be, and no cohesive strategy had been adopted.

In a sign that Newman's article had engaged far beyond those in the medical profession, relatives of those captured joined in the correspondence. I. Magrath writing in concern of her husband held in the Far East asked what help would be available for him upon his return and questioned if some form of help would be directed at the wives and families left behind in teaching the necessary attitude to adopt towards their husbands.⁴² This correspondence went beyond that of the *BMJ* and references to prisoners of war in newspapers continued to increase throughout the period 1941 to 1945, further reinforcing the public concern and anxiety surrounding POWs and a growing voice that neither the army or the government could ignore.⁴³

⁴¹ B. Richardson Billings, Correspondence, 'The prisoner-of-war mentality', *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, Iss. 4332, (1944), p.90.

⁴² I. Magrath, Correspondence, 'The prisoner-of-war mentality', *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, Iss. 4385, (1945), p.95.

⁴³ White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 159.

Opinions towards resettlement were not just confined to the relatives of prisoners. Some 180,000 Britons had experienced captivity in the First World War and they as a community were determined that the generation of 1940 were spared from the same official indifference that had blighted their lives.⁴⁴ Former prisoners such as Squadron Leader E. H. Keeling, were the first to take up the prisoners' cause. In the postscript of his book, *Adventure in Turkey and Russia*, he denounced the response of the government regarding prisoners from the last war noting 'that neither the Foreign Office nor the War Office would shoulder the responsibility for these men'.⁴⁵ Now, as an MP himself, he was in the perfect positions to argue for greater discussions around these matters. Lord Salisbury in a letter to the MP Brendan Bracken, and Minister of Information from 1941 to 1945, also highlighted that the welfare of prisoners 'rightly touches the heart of a vast public opinion by no means confined to the relatives of the prisoner's themselves'.⁴⁶

Alongside the *BMJ* and greater newspaper correspondence, the discourse of POWs continued at a local level. The British Red Cross (BRC) organised County Committee meetings for relatives of POWs to allow for the exchange of information between relatives and to help explain regulations and legal matters.⁴⁷ Although the actual number of such meetings is not recorded, the controller of the Far East Section, Mr S.G. King, personally addressed over 150 meetings with audiences varying between thirty and three thousand.⁴⁸ A regular feature of these meetings was an open question and answer session which attempted to cover a wide variety of issues, especially concerns of a lack of information and government action regarding POWs. At a national level, the Red Cross released several films designed to inform families, and the general public, about conditions for prisoners of war. In 1942, *In Enemy Hands* was released

⁴⁴ Wylie, *Politics of Prisoners*, p. 98.

⁴⁵ E. H. Keeling, *Adventures in Turkey and Russia*, (London: John Murray, 1924), p. 235.

⁴⁶ TNA PREM 4/98/1, Lord Salisbury to Brendan Bracken, MP, 4 Dec. 1940.

⁴⁷ Hately, *War and Welfare*, p. 185.

⁴⁸ Hately, *War and Welfare*, p. 187.

for theatrical distribution, and the short silent films *Until the Day* (1942) and *A Bit of Home* (1943) were shown in non-theatrical locations.⁴⁹ In addition to the committees and films, and in conjunction with the *Daily Telegraph*, the British Red Cross also held an exhibition in the grounds of Clarence House in London between 1 and 20 May 1944.

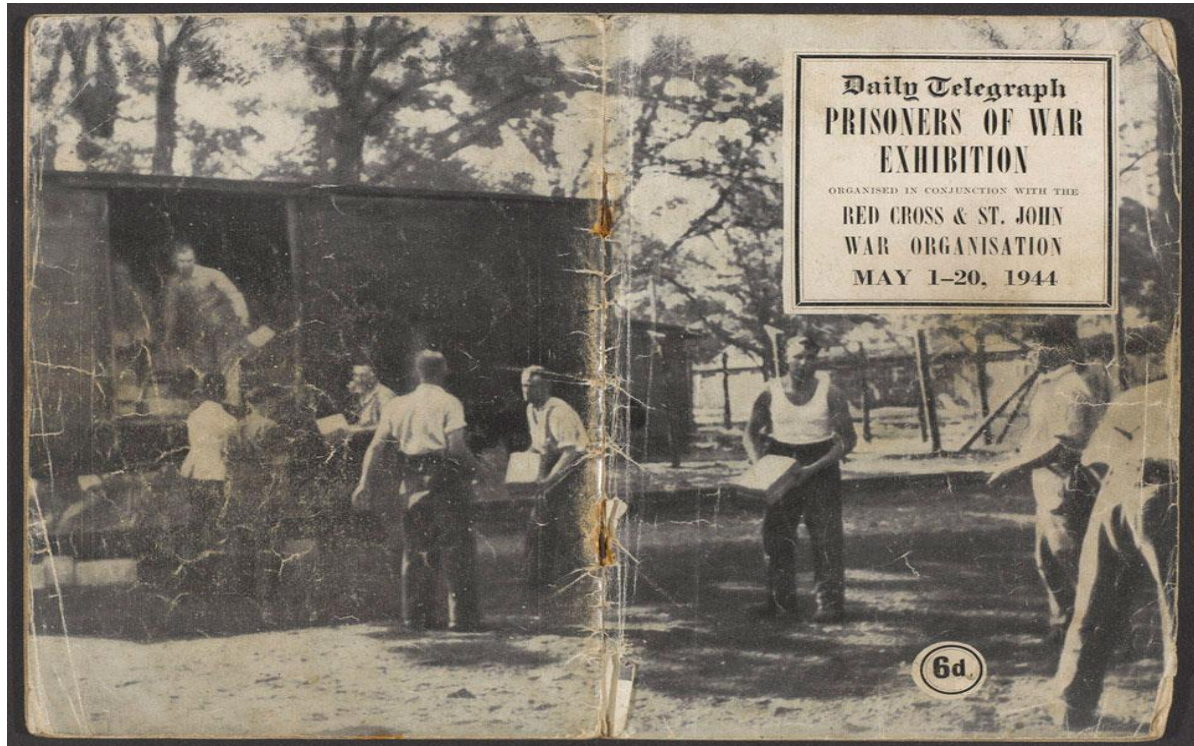


Figure 3: National Army Museum, Daily Telegraph Prisoners of War Exhibition, programme, 1944, NAM. 2013-02-39-12.

It was believed that this type of exhibition would give POW relatives, as well as the general public, an insight into the lives of those held in captivity. The exhibition contained a number of huts which showed typical living quarters, examples of arts and crafts undertaken by prisoners, religious facilities, education, recreation, food, and medical services.⁵⁰ These displays no doubt acted as a boost of morale for visiting relatives and were designed to show ‘how gallantly they (POWs) have adapted to conditions of captivity’.⁵¹ The accompanying booklet also contained maps of prisoner of war and civilian internment camps and was full of

⁴⁹ Hately, *War and Welfare*, p. 184.

⁵⁰ Hately, *War and Welfare*, p. 187.

⁵¹ ‘Woman’s Sphere’, *Eastbourne Gazette*, 3 May 1944, p. 3.

comforting information highlighting the efforts of the Red Cross in delivering food parcels and the protection the POW receives under the Geneva Convention. However, although the exhibit proved popular with over 181,509 people attending, by remaining in London it was inaccessible for the majority of prisoner of war relatives spread around the country.⁵² For future resettlement schemes to succeed, it would be important to engage with communities beyond London and the CRUs would adopt a number of strategies to achieve this which will be covered in the next chapter.

The exhibit had also been advertised as ‘practically reproducing everything seen in a German prison camp’, however, no similar exhibition was suggested showing the daily lives of those held captive by the Japanese.⁵³ There was, therefore, an entire demographic of POWs whose experiences had not been presented. The public, therefore, could only filter Far East POWs experiences through the knowledge of what life had been like for those in Europe. This did little to help solve the dissonance between those back at home and POWs in the Far East. This would have an impact on their resettlement, as the gap of understanding was far greater amongst this demographic and the communities they would be returning too. Although it was possible that insufficient information was available on conditions in these camps, it is more likely the government did not want to draw attention to conditions in the Far East and highlight their own shortcomings in this matter.⁵⁴ Opinions on how POWs had been handled were still an important subject and if the public felt that the government had shirked its responsibilities towards these men, it could affect a future election. That such failures could come to light was further reason to support a resettlement scheme. By supporting these men upon their return, it would deflect criticism and ease feelings of abandonment they may have felt.

⁵² ‘Nearly £17,000 From POW Exhibition’, *West London Chronicle*, 16 June 1944, p. 1.

⁵³ *Eastbourne Gazette*, p. 3, Hately, *War and Welfare*, p. 187.

⁵⁴ Hately, *War and Welfare*, p. 188.

The exhibit had straddled a fine line between providing comfort to relatives and presenting fact. As with all media surrounding POWs there was a difficult balancing act between being accused of not presenting a true picture of camp life and being accused of causing unnecessary distress to relatives.⁵⁵ This rather sanitised view of POW life, however, made discourse as to true matters of camp life difficult and this sanitised portrayal was a source of much grievance for men returning from camps.⁵⁶ The lack of information available on Far East POWs would have a direct impact regarding the CRUs. Provisions remained the same for POWs regardless of theatre and it was only with close contact and time spent observing them that their needs could be addressed. This highlights the limiting factors in the planning of the CRUs, yet the speed in which they adapted their approaches towards returning Far East prisoners demonstrates how operations would be a vital part in the success of the CRUs. Chapter 5 of this thesis analyses in greater detail how units responded to POWs from Far East and the importance of operations behind the success of the CRUs.

From 1942 onwards, information regarding the unique circumstances POWs faced and the need for assistance in resettlement had begun to circulate. The engagement with journals, responses in newspapers, and the popularity of the POW exhibit suggest that this dissemination of information had worked, and the public became more active in response to POW repatriation. Prisoner voices could still be heard through the communities they came from, and a number of organisations kept the discourse going at a local and national level. While their main priority was providing comfort for relatives, they also maintained pressure on the government to accept a level of responsibility for the welfare of these men upon their return.

The Red Cross, despite providing a vital role in the welfare of POWs and of communication between relatives, did not, however, escape criticism from the public, and the

⁵⁵ Hately, *War and Welfare*, p. 184.

⁵⁶ Makepeace, *Captives*, p.214.

continuing involvement of the BRC with matters regarding POWs had ‘the unfortunate corollary of providing the government with a convenient scapegoat for some of its own shortcomings’.⁵⁷ This meant that the government did not address ongoing issues as effectively as it could have and delays in response did nothing to help change attitudes for POW welfare or in convincing those in charge that such matters needed careful consideration. It was only with the building concern from the public and evidence coming from experiments such as Crookham and Northfield that attitudes changed and the realisation that some form of help for POWs would be required.

Criticism of the Red Cross was highlighted by the ‘parcel crisis’ of 1940. By the autumn of 1940, the situation regarding delivery of parcels to camps in Germany became critical with many relief routes through France and Belgium closed. In conjunction with *The Sunday Express*, Mrs Winifred Coombe Tennant, a former member of parliament, whose son was a POW, led a campaign criticising the work of the Red Cross in managing the forwarding of parcels.⁵⁸ It was however, the Post Office, who were responsible for the transmission of these parcels but the BRC proved a useful scapegoat for the government and was allowed to ‘shoulder the lion’s share of the blame’.⁵⁹ It was not until July 1941 during a sitting in the House of Commons, that it was admitted that despatch of these parcels was outside the control of the BRC. No public announcement was made however, which did much harm to the reputation of the BRC. As Edward Keeling MP, in a parliamentary inquiry into the crisis stated:

I suggest that the present agitation against the Red Cross is harmful. It undermines the confidence of the relatives and causes anxiety. It is also likely to dam the flow of funds into the Red Cross and therefore to injure the interests of the prisoners themselves. If the agitation were well-founded that would not matter but, as I have said, my experience is that the administration is good, and the agitation is not well-founded.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Hately, *War and Welfare*, p. 178.

⁵⁸ Hately, *War and Welfare*, p. 179.

⁵⁹ Rolf. D, “Blind Bureaucracy” in *Prisoners of War and Their Captors*, p. 55.

⁶⁰ House of Commons, *Hansards parliamentary debates: British Prisoners of War (Inquiry)*, 6th August 1942, Vol. 382, Cols. 1285.

Nevertheless, despite such criticisms, the Red Cross would provide vital assistance to the future CRUs. A Red Cross welfare worker was attached to each unit and worked alongside the Extension Officer and Civilian Liaison Officer.⁶¹ Alongside other voluntary organisations essential in keeping the extension scheme running, the Red Cross was instrumental in providing house to house visits of all repatriated POWs who had cancelled or failed to volunteer for the scheme.⁶² The ability of CRU staff to work with outside organisations and project their work into the community formed part of the operations of CRUs and was an important factor underpinning their success.

Further signs that civilians were becoming more active in demands for either the government or the army to provide some sort of scheme was evidenced in the Mass Observation Report, *The Journey Home*, published in 1944. Through a series of interviews and their own extensive records taken throughout the war, Mass Observation intended to provide a qualitative assessment of what people expected from demobilisation and the post war world. The interviewees themselves represented a broad range of ages, class, and locality, representing both city and rural concerns. By using such a wide base of interviewees, the report showed that the concerns raised were not unique to a particular area or strata of society and that the conclusions had a broad support from society. This support was driven by a growing sense of social awareness in the electorate manifesting itself in a keen interest in reconstruction and some form of social reform. The survey showed that throughout the years 1941 to 1943 social reform remained a top priority for people and that interest in reconstruction remained a top priority.⁶³ Governmental reports such as the *Beveridge Report* (1942) and its popularity further

⁶¹ Brigadier L. Bootle-Wilbraham, D.S.O., M.C., 'Civil Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War', *Mental Health (Lond)*, Vol. 6, Iss 2, (1946), p. 42.

⁶² Wilbraham, *Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War*, p. 42.

⁶³ *Mass Observation, Journey Home* pp.16-19.

highlight how policy regarding reconstruction and social reform was both popular and a vote winning policy. The growing public interest in post war planning and an electorate that as the war progressed, became increasingly political, meant that any issues regarding demobilisation or post war Britain became political capital for those who would back such policy.

This desire for reform was balanced by a feeling of apprehension in the older generation who still carried shades of 1920 in their thoughts and a general fear that soldiers would act if they experienced the same problems their parents' generation had upon demobilisation.⁶⁴ This foreboding of post war anarchy was not just present in the older generation but a widespread feeling of disquiet in the general population. This was based almost entirely on recollections first or second hand of the last war and lead to a general determination that things must be different this time.⁶⁵ Worryingly, for anyone in authority reading the report, was the frequent feeling amongst service personnel that members of the armed forces would take matters into their own hands if things were not managed well this time.⁶⁶

Towards the end of the Second World War, a further dimension was added to the concerns of the government. With victory over the Axis powers seeming inevitable, people's minds turned to the peace that would follow and the general election delayed since 1940. It was believed that returning servicemen would be a key constituency in this election and it would be a means of registering protest if they felt that the government had not fulfilled its responsibility to them or their families.⁶⁷ There was a fear within some circles of the Conservative Party that these servicemen would overwhelmingly support Labour. This was not least because of suspicions that the Army Bureau of Current Affairs, who had been in charge of organising education sessions for service personnel regarding current affairs and social and

⁶⁴ Mass Observation, *Journey Home*, pp.25 & 111.

⁶⁵ Mass Observation, *Journey Home*, p.30.

⁶⁶ Mass Observation, *Journey Home*, p.49.

⁶⁷ Hatley, *War and Welfare*, p. 245.

domestic policies, were being used as a means of covert Labour propagandising by left-leaning officers.⁶⁸

As it transpired, these fears were unfounded, and the force's vote was a relatively small slice of the national turnout. Yet, even if these fears proved untrue, the Conservative Party took them serious enough to consider demobilisation and how it was handled seriously. By supporting POWs and a scheme designed to help in their resettlement, it showed to the public a vision of reconstruction and a commitment to change that they demanded. The announcement of the CRU scheme would also help dispel the feelings of disquiet present in the civil population. By supporting POWs' return to civvy street and addressing issues which had emerged after the last war, the perceived violence that erupted from these failures it was believed would be less likely to happen. Such an initiative could therefore help 'win the peace' and be an influential factor in the upcoming election. Although, as the war neared its conclusion, thoughts turned to peacetime and elections, this was not the only factor underpinning a changing of attitudes towards POW repatriation.

The circumstances of war also served to highlight future difficulties in adapting POWs back to civil or army life. The army, always suffering from manpower issues and wishing to employ repatriates, began to realise the problems that these men would pose. Following Italy's surrender in 1943, a number of escaped POWs made their way back to allied lines. A study of forty of these escapees showed that they were suffering from unusually high anxiety and aggression and such symptoms inhibited re-adaption to service life.⁶⁹ Such was the concern over the possible loss in manpower that in order to investigate the problem further, the

⁶⁸ Allport, *Browned Off*, p. 280.

⁶⁹ Manfred Jeffrey and E.F.G. Bradford, 'Neurosis in escaped prisoners of war', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, Vol. 20, Iss. 4, (1946), pp. 422–35, This reflected an earlier follow up survey in 1942 involving repatriates from Italy which confirmed impressions as to the reality and intensity of the difficulties experienced in rehabilitation and successfully employing these men, Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p.227.

government established a rehabilitation scheme at the RAMC depot at Crookham. This would further confirm the difficulties in employing repatriates and the difficulties in resettlement. Crookham would play an important part in gaining experience and highlighting problems POWs faced to government and the knowledge gained would influence methods utilised in resettlement and influence the CRU scheme.

The Crookham experiment.

As the previous section highlighted, public opinion on the matter of demobilisation was particularly sensitive and the handling of repatriates would be seen as a test case of the intentions and capabilities of the authorities responsible for demobilisation and reconstruction.⁷⁰ Moreover, any trial scheme that may be implemented regarding repatriates would be keenly watched by the families of those held in captivity and those who remained in captivity. Mishandling of any 'trial runs' could therefore give rise to strong reactions, causing far greater public unrest. For those interviewed by Mass Observation, the most important factors of post war planning were those surrounding unsettledness, the difficulty in which demobilized men would have settling into routine civvy life once again.⁷¹ The popularity of the Beveridge Report, published in 1942, had further shown the interest the public held in post war reconstruction and a drive for social reform.

As the war progressed, what people expected from a post war Britain became more clarified. Expectations became less sanguine and a growing sense of frustration regarding the authority's ability to deliver what was expected grew. Faith in the future became increasingly pinned on the will of ordinary people to build it, and decreasingly on the goodwill of politicians and leaders.⁷² Interviews from the Mass Observation report had made clear to the government

⁷⁰ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, pp. 231-232.

⁷¹ Mass Observation, *Journey Home*, p.47.

⁷² Mass Observation, *Journey Home*, p.114.

as to what the people's priorities would be in a post war world. For the conservatives in the coalition government, worryingly, it had also shown that Labour was more trusted to enact the changes wanted.⁷³ Both Labour and Conservatives politicians were aware of the support for social reform and the need to show their intentions of what a post war Britain would look like. A weekly bulletin by *Mass Observation* summed up the public mood 'the great need at present is for some tangible and incontrovertible sign that post war promises are in earnest. Without some such sign of goodwill people are likely to remain impatient of words'.⁷⁴ Therefore, POWs presented a perfect showcase of the authorities' intentions in alleviating fears of a repeat of 1918, a commitment to the soldiers and their families, and that the government was aware of its responsibilities.

For any repatriation scheme to succeed, however, it would require the cooperation of the civil community. It was therefore vital for the government to dispel the sense of foreboding and to regain public trust. To that end, anything done regards demobilisation would have to be designed for an end that seemed just.⁷⁵ The public frustration could only be resolved if men and women knew not only how they were coming out, but what sort of a world they would find themselves in after the war. A POW repatriation scheme would be a perfect example for the public to see governmental intentions and dispel tensions both real and imagined. The parties of the coalition, however, shared differing views of a post war Britain. The Labour Party's manifesto was strongly influenced by the Beveridge Report and included a commitment to full employment, affordable housing, and social security and health care for all. In contrast, the Conservative campaign focused on Churchill's reputation, lowering taxation, maintaining defence spending, and encouraging private business interests.⁷⁶ While Churchill acknowledged

⁷³ Mass Observation, *Journey Home*, p.105.

⁷⁴ Mass Observation, FR1786 *Fortnightly Bulletin* (8), p. 10.

⁷⁵ Mass Observation, *Journey Home*, p.74.

⁷⁶ Henry Pelling, 'The 1945 General Election Reconsidered', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 23, Iss. 2, (Jun 1980), p. 407, 'The Prime Minister's Four Years Plan', *Nature*, Vol. 151, Iss. 3830, (1943), p. 359.

a need for social reform, he argued that this should be done privately rather than by the government. A scheme such as the CRUs had the potential to gain cross party support as it shared many principles in line with both manifestos. For Labour, with the support it offered men and the community, it mirrored social welfare programmes and its support in returning men to work was in line with committing to full employment. For the Conservatives, it was a limited assistance programme that emphasised giving returned men the tools to succeed by themselves rather than a continued state intervention or expensive welfare support. It was therefore a scheme that both parties could support and allow them to showcase a vision of post war Britain and a commitment to change that was sought.

There was, then, a considerable body of public opinion which considered something should be required for those demobilized which would help transition the period of ‘unsettledness’ and back into civilian life. Further, organizations such as the BRC were being strongly pressed by the relatives of prisoners of war for the introduction of some scheme responsible for their rehabilitation – and for many, it was agreed that the army had a moral responsibility in this matter.⁷⁷ The growing demand for the British Army, who more and more were seen as having an obligation towards those in captivity, could also harm the image of the army if they did nothing. A. T. M. Wilson, a member of the pre-war Tavistock Clinic who would later run the Crookham experiment, suggested to the War Office that the army ‘had been responsible for getting prisoners into ‘the bag’ it had now to accept responsibility for getting them out of it in as good shape as when they went in’.⁷⁸ The growing number of voices were vital in pressurising those in charge to reconsider the POW question. The government could no longer shift responsibility and needed to act on what many believed was their moral

⁷⁷ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p.230.

⁷⁸ Eric Trist, ‘Working with Bion in the 1940’s: The Group Decade’, in *Bion and Group Psychotherapy*, ed. by Malcolm Pines, (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2000), p. 23.

responsibility. This would also have to correspond with a shift of attitudes in the army which had also become more aware of the problems associated with utilising repatriates.

Beyond the concerns of public attitudes and post war reconstruction, there was also a practical concern regarding POW repatriation. The British Army, with a continual concern that it had fewer men than other nations, could ill afford to waste any men, even repatriated POWs.⁷⁹ POWs represented a considerable body of trained men that could be utilised. The immediate need for more troops meant that the army had become more open to the idea of psychiatric work and the possibility of its uses in returning those who had been held captive back to duty. The idea of some form of repatriation scheme therefore became a useful tool that could be utilised for this need.

However, a May 1942 survey revealed the difficulty the army was having in rehabilitating and employing escapees and repatriates from Italy with high rates of disciplinary offences occurring in those returning to duty.⁸⁰ These difficulties were further highlighted during the course of 1943 when the attention of military authorities was drawn to the high invaliding rate amongst repatriated officers and regular soldiers who had recently returned to the United Kingdom who otherwise had exemplary military records.⁸¹ Such surveys would feed into the future planning of CRUs. As will be demonstrated in chapter 5, the CRUs would also consider the individual background of repatriates, changing the methods of engagement for regular soldiers and assigning a CRU catered for officers. These earlier events however, further highlighted the need for a repatriation scheme if the army was to employ these men in any future service. Yet, due to the circumstances of the war, little opportunity provided itself for a study of repatriates with prisoner exchanges few and

⁷⁹ White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 160.

⁸⁰ Makepeace, *Captives*, p.193, Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p. 227.

⁸¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Civil Resettlement Planning Memoranda II*, 'Recognition of the Special Problems of Repatriation and Early Military Experiments in Rehabilitation of Repatriates', p.1.

far between. Attempts had been made to exchange POWs between the belligerent nations such as what had been negotiated in Berne (1917). During September 1941, German authorities had agreed to the repatriation of 1,200 British POWs, but this exchange was cancelled when it was found that only 150 suitable German prisoners were available for return.⁸²

It was not until October 1943 when a transfer of 5,000 British and American POWs was arranged. Amongst these numbers were 1,200 members of medical units who became the focus of an influential study, the Crookham Experiment.⁸³ To test the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes and discover more about the effects of captivity, the Directorate for Army Psychiatry (DAP) devised an experiment which would run between November 1943 and February 1944. This would be held at No. 1 RAMC Depot, Boyce Barracks, Crookham, near Aldershot and was to be run by A. T. M. Wilson, a member of the Tavistock Clinic. The experiment would involve 1,154 recently repatriated men, mainly RAMC personal or stretcher bearers, the majority of whom had been imprisoned for over three years as a result of capture in France, Greece or Crete.⁸⁴ Interestingly, no officers were included in the study, possibly due to the stigma still attached by officers to captivity and of surrendering command.

During the first week of the scheme both questionnaires and interviews were completed by the participants. These revealed that what was termed a ‘stalag mentality’ had developed in POWs, falling disproportionately amongst those who had been held captive for more than eighteen months.⁸⁵ Features of this included ‘a very real but unfounded feeling that their physical or mental health has been somewhat damaged’, with symptoms of

⁸² Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, p.168.

⁸³ Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, p.168.

⁸⁴ Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, pp.169 – 170.

⁸⁵ Makepeace, *Captives*, p.194.

‘depression and guilt’ due to their captivity and ‘anxieties of re-adaption’.⁸⁶ It was further assumed that other soldiers, who were not RAMC personnel, and who had not been able to work in their own occupations during captivity, might show an even greater abnormal reaction upon their return home.⁸⁷ A six-week residential course was devised to address these issues which would include vocational training, entertainment, education, and games. During this course attendees would be screened for both physical and mental injuries by Captain J.C.B. Nesfield and Lt Colonel A.T.M. Wilson. These methods represented the first real attempt to address issues of resettlement and the idea of a residential course would be developed by both Northfield and the CRU planners. The ideas and lessons learned from Crookham played their part in shaping how post war resettlement would be approached.

There was, however, disagreement regarding certain conclusions which reflected a divide between trained psychiatrists such as Wilson, and those who viewed Crookham’s purpose purely as returning men to active service. The experiment would assess the morale, general health, rates of sickness and absenteeism amongst POWs which were compared with 1,311 controls (depot staff, transfers and RAMC recruits). This revealed that when compared to the control group, ex-POWs were more likely to go ‘absent without leave’ or report sick.⁸⁸ Having regained their freedom, soldiers appeared cheerful on admission, though a reaction set in when it dawned on them they remained eligible for active service. These reactions were interpreted as a sign of low morale rather than problems stemming from their captivity.⁸⁹ Low morale was viewed as something which could be corrected with a short respite and access to the basic amenities that POWs had been denied. Attitudes towards this reaction were reflective of the 1922 committee’s conclusions which had put

⁸⁶ TNA WO 32/10950, A. T. M. Wilson, *Report to the War Office on Psychological Aspects of the Rehabilitation of Repatriated Prisoners of War*, (February 1944), p.2.

⁸⁷ Makepeace, *Captives*, p.194.

⁸⁸ Makepeace, *Captives*, p.194.

⁸⁹ Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, p.170.

cases of low morale in troops down to poor conditions and the elimination of these factors would go a long way to addressing the issue.⁹⁰

Colonel D.C. Scott, the Crookham depot commandant, appeared to share the view that the problems identified would be short term reporting that ‘there is little doubt that some of the repatriated men are inclined to be difficult and appear out of their depth, but ... this is not such a big problem as the psychiatrists fear it will be’.⁹¹ Yet, the results remained difficult to interpret and Colonel Scott’s opinion was purely made from the basis of an army professional, not psychiatric. Scott perhaps still carried the pre-war suspicion that army psychiatrists were exaggerating symptoms to increase their influence, or that medical personnel lacked the robustness of combat soldiers.⁹² Scott’s opinion suggests the presence of a hierarchy of masculinity in the military with different branches viewed less favourably than others and Crookham’s results merely acted to confirm this bias.⁹³ Such attitudes hindered early responses towards resettlement, yet the work done at Crookham and that of Wilson, would be crucial in changing such attitudes. Crookham had demonstrated the effectiveness of psychiatry in re-adapting men and the knowledge gained from Wilson’s observations would underpin his report to the War Office in 1944 in which he made important recommendations regarding rehabilitation of POWs.

Scott’s belief that patients were somehow suffering from transitional or superficial disturbances was not helped by the repatriates themselves. It was not uncommon for repatriates to deny the seriousness of their difficulties with reactions to questioning described variously as

⁹⁰ ‘The Prevention or Lessening of the Incidence of Shell-Shock’, in *Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into "Shell-Shock"*, pp. 150-151.

⁹¹ Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, p.170.

⁹² Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, p.172.

⁹³ Ramon Hinojosa, ‘Doing Hegemony: Military, Men, and Constructing a Hegemonic Masculinity’, *The Journal of Men’s Studies*, Vol. 18, Iss. 2, (2010), pp. 117-194, The development of ‘hierarchies of masculinity’ was not uncommon with those in reserved occupations experiencing similar bias depending on their role, see Robb, *The Working Man*.

truculent, suspicious, or downright hostile.⁹⁴ This attitude, however, did little to relieve the repatriates' suffering or assist the military authorities in solving these problems. Follow up studies conclusively proved that the accuracy of the viewpoint of repatriates seldom suffering from neurosis was incorrect. These studies had shown that in a significant proportion of cases there were no signs of a rapid recovery to the personality to return to its previous level of adjustment.⁹⁵ Further, even when men had been back for eighteen months or longer, serious and persistent difficulties were reported, which strongly proved both the need for therapeutic measures and that the hypothesis that these states were somehow self-correcting or transitional, false.⁹⁶ This evidence was also supported by wives and other members of family of repatriated POWs from the First World War, who provided a wealth of evidence regarding the extent to which their husbands or brothers had remained, for months or years, unaware of their own behaviour or the distress they were causing others.⁹⁷

The Crookham Experiment had also run into serious difficulties regarding disputes with the repatriates over pay, promotion, and Christmas leave, which had led to considerable tensions between the repatriates and the authorities. The early breakdown of trust between patient and authorities had broken down any such environment where the repatriate could feel themselves and be able to open up and discuss any such problems. The considerable tensions between authorities and repatriates also emphasised the necessity for those in the home community to participate at some level and realise the special difficulties of the repatriate and the extent to which the emotional burden of readaptation fell on members of the community and not the repatriate alone.⁹⁸ To avoid any such misunderstandings as had happened at Crookham, it was further suggested that for any future scheme, an immediate effort should be

⁹⁴ Jeffrey and Bradford, *Neurosis in escaped prisoners of war*, p. 422.

⁹⁵ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.241.

⁹⁶ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.241.

⁹⁷ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.241.

⁹⁸ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Civil Resettlement Planning Memoranda: II*, p. 1.

made to keep POWs informed regarding any scheme and its purpose, a suggestion that the CRUs would utilise to great effect. The lessons learned from Crookham would establish principals of basic importance for all subsequent developments, both theoretical and practical. The establishment of an atmosphere where trust and cooperation were mutual would be deemed essential by the CRUs.⁹⁹ Additionally, the realisation that members of the community would need to be involved in the resettlement process began at Crookham and this observation allowed future research to address how this would be approached.

However, despite the growing recognition that captivity caused a severe psychological shock and growing concern from third parties, the Crookham study did not prompt an immediate policy change.¹⁰⁰ Parliamentary debates at the time state that while ‘careful and special attention is given to the mental condition of prisoners of war’ (specifically referring to RAMC personnel) they were still eligible for deployment in a theatre of war overseas if they were medically fit for such employment.¹⁰¹ This suggests that such repatriation schemes were still seen in terms of manpower rather than in equipping these men in resettling back into society. Despite its inability to prompt immediate change Crookham’s importance in influencing future developments should not be underestimated. It was the first experiment to actively engage with repatriates on a larger scale than previous studies from Italy had and the observations made by Wilson would be important in persuading the War Office in the future. Its solutions to addressing the problem of re-adaptation and the concept of a residential course would be developed by later experiments at Northfield and would shape how future resettlement would be conceived. It established that to meet the needs of repatriates and to achieve a successful rehabilitation it would require a unit with the correct atmosphere and that

⁹⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Civil Resettlement Planning Memoranda: II*, p.1.

¹⁰⁰ Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, pp.172-73.

¹⁰¹ House of Commons, Hansards parliamentary debates: *Repatriated RAMC personnel*, 26th July 1944, Vol. 132, Cols. 1179; House of Commons, Hansards parliamentary debates: *Repatriated Prisoners Of War*, 24th May 1944, Vol. 400, Cols. 753.

such a unit should be staffed by those able to identify and understand the unique psychological problems relating to captivity.¹⁰²

The Northfield Experiments.

The Crookham experiment highlighted the conflict of interest between the military and psychiatrists. The evidence emerging from Crookham had remained open to interpretation and the greater interest of winning the war had won out. It did, however, suggest that difficulties in adjusting were not transitional and POWs would need help in resettling. There was need for additional evidence to convince those in government of this need and a necessity for a fundamental change in attitudes regarding psychiatry and its uses towards this goal.

Within military circles at least, attitudes towards psychiatry remained sceptical despite growing evidence of its applicable uses in rehabilitation and preventative measures employed on the front lines. J. R. Rees had lamented such attitudes stating that ‘earlier in this present war we were often told that psychiatrists were the fifth columnists of the army, and this because they were advising the discharge of men who were obviously too dull or too unstable to soldier’.¹⁰³ Such low opinions had been shared as high as Churchill who in a ministerial committee in 1942 had said regarding the work of psychiatrists: ‘I am sure it would be sensible to restrict as much as possible the work of these gentlemen, who are capable of doing an immense amount of harm with what may very easily degenerate into charlatanry’.¹⁰⁴

Despite such opinions, the army had employed a rudimentary psychiatric system with ‘exhaustion centres’ located a few miles behind the front lines to combat manpower wastage. It was believed that a few days’ rest, a shower, and hot meal was all that was needed to return the soldier into an effective combatant again. For many in the top brass, ‘battle exhaustion’

¹⁰² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Civil Resettlement Planning Memoranda: II*, p. 1.

¹⁰³ John Rawlings Rees, *The Shaping of Psychiatry by War*, (London: Chapman & Hall Ltd, 1945), p. 27.

¹⁰⁴ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War Vol-4*, (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd, 1951), p. 815.

remained a physical, not mental reaction, and any further psychiatric evaluation would only offer an easy way out. Far from preventing wastage, it would only exasperate the problem by taking away perfectly healthy men who only required a brief respite. This attitude was reinforced by the evidence appearing from exhaustion centres which suggested that with treatment at the front, 'four out of every five men who break down under the stress of modern warfare are capable of further useful service'.¹⁰⁵

For those medical staff manning the exhaustion centres, the spectre of a conflicting desire to administer what was right for the patient and the needs of the army arose once again. Despite this, however, for those cases whose stay in these exhaustion centres were deemed inadequate, the majority were evacuated back to England and put into one of the armies' mental hospitals. Working with such cases, these hospitals generated an enormous amount of literature and developed an extraordinary range of techniques for treatment of their wards. One such hospital, the old Hollymoor mental hospital, more commonly known as Northfield, would pioneer treatment in rehabilitation. Scholars such as Tom Harrison have written extensively regarding the influence of the Northfield hospital in the development of therapeutic communities describing its almost legendary status amongst those practitioners of group therapy.¹⁰⁶ Despite this status, the influence of the techniques and how widely they are referred to, both in the professional press as well as in literary works, there has been little attention paid to how they actually impacted on subsequent psychiatric practice. Of particular interest for this study is the personnel involved in the development of these techniques and the influence Northfield had in the development of the CRUs.

¹⁰⁵ E. L. Cooper & A. J. M. Sinclair, 'War Neurosis in Tobruk: A Report on 207 Patients from the Australian Imperial Force Units in Tobruk', *The Medical Journal of Australia*, Vol. II, Iss. 5, (1942), p. 74; This was widely shared, and it was estimated by others that 56 to 70% of men treated in forward units returned to fighting and that only 5% broke down again during the same battle, Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p.169.

¹⁰⁶ Tom Harrison, 'Social fields, Battle fields and Northfield: The legacy of the 'Northfield Experiments'', *Group Analysis*, Vol. 51, Iss. 4, (2018), p. 442.

When talking of Northfield, it is important to emphasize that the hospital was a military hospital. In April 1942, the British Army had turned it into the largest military hospital in the country with the aim of treating psychiatric casualties and to persuade the patients to go back to fulfilling their social-military roles.¹⁰⁷ However, this often placed the military requirement to maximise effective manpower over and above the longer-term health of its personnel. The site was divided into a hospital wing, where patients received active psychiatric treatment, and a training wing where patients would complete their treatment under modified military training designed to return them to duty. However, the two units were sharply delimited, there were no nursing sisters or medical officers in the training wing and the training officers remained suspicious of psychiatry. Siegmund Foulkes, a psychiatrist who would work on the second Northfield experiment noted the attitude of the military wing: “The medical staff seemed to the military men to be... inexperienced in the ‘old soldier’ tricks which were practiced upon them. They saw men running to their psychiatrists like children, and often blamed the psychiatrists for the patient’s condition”.¹⁰⁸ Despite these clashes, however, Northfield was the site of two influential experiments between 1942-1944 and played a pivotal role in advancing methods towards resocialising ‘troubled minds’.

Those who would run these experiments, Harold Bridger, Tom Main, Wilfred Bion and John Rickman, were part of the ‘invisible college’ – a phrase that was applied to those who were either members of the Tavistock Clinic, or who became attached to it after the war. Over the winter of 1942-43, Wilfred Bion and John Rickman were assigned to Northfield and began what would be termed as the first Northfield experiment. Much like the work performed by the Tavistock Clinic, Bion and Rickman brought a flexibility and range of techniques to Northfield.

¹⁰⁷ Nafsika Thalassis, ‘Soldiers in Psychiatric Therapy: The Case of Northfield Military Hospital 1942 – 1946’, *Social History of Medicine*, Vol. 20, Iss. 2, (2007), p. 352.

¹⁰⁸ S. H. Foulkes, *Introduction to Group-Analytical psychotherapy*, (London: Heinemann, 1948), pp. 151-152.

Central to their purpose was a constant questioning of the proper way to perform the task of treating soldiers who break down. This approach, however, did present some problems, which in the long term would lead to the shutting down of the first Northfield experiment.

The gradual development of therapeutic methods at Northfield was a matter of trial and error. There was little co-ordination between the various therapeutic, occupational, and other activities in the hospital, and there was no continuous, consistent plan for the treatment and rehabilitation of the various types of patients.¹⁰⁹ For many doctors, Bion and Rickman were seen as being rather insular and arrogant, causing friction, misunderstanding and communication problems regarding the treatment of patients.¹¹⁰ The importance of effective communication amongst staff would be a lesson learnt from Northfield. The CRUs would implement weekly staff meetings designed to promote discussions on group work and for staff to pool and exchange ideas.¹¹¹ This would allow any problems to be shared on a common basis and techniques to improve and be more effective for the repatriate and staff.

The work done at Northfield, however, was hampered in its early years by a lack of experienced psychologists or personnel who had received specialist training for the conditions appertaining to the army. Much of the hospital-based psychiatry had relied almost entirely on a hotch-potch service run mainly by civilians who had been given emergency commissions. This included Rickman himself, who had been a civilian consultant at emergency medical hospitals before joining the Royal Medical Corps in 1942.¹¹² The problems with the lack of experienced staff would foreshadow issues faced by planners of the CRUs and the speed at which new units could be opened. The issues of staffing also served to highlight the limited extent that psychiatry had been utilised up to this point. Army mistrust of psychiatric methods

¹⁰⁹ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p.150.

¹¹⁰ Harrison, *Social Fields*, p. 444.

¹¹¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/12, *Group Meetings*, p. 2.

¹¹² Harrison, *Advancing on a Different Front*, pp. 106-107 & Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, pp. 15-17.

only allowed limited numbers of psychiatrists to be deployed in very specific roles. This hampered any chance of gaining a pool of experienced men. This was despite warning by both Newman and Collie that a sufficient pool of men with experience would be required in any future resettlement scheme. Planners of the CRUs would somewhat mitigate this problem with a rolling training programme first implemented in the trial run at Derby. However, quality and numbers of staff would remain an ongoing issue.

The main focus of Northfield, however, reflected the ethos that would be adopted by the CRUs. As Bion stated, his purpose was to ‘produce self-respecting men, socially adjusted to the community and willing to accept their responsibilities whether in peace or war.’ Bion, when employing his techniques, saw the task of persuading men to ‘tackle neurotic disability as a communal problem’.¹¹³ Recognising that the army already constituted of groups, he could utilise this familiarity and dynamics to bridge difficult subjects. Both Bion and Rickman recognised that the power of the group lay not in individual therapy, but of the explicit resolution of intra-group dynamics and exploring the ‘here and now’. Through this type of group therapy, the individual was able to explore the impact of his behaviour on others and modify his relationship in real time.

In group therapy sessions, Bion and Rickman employed a method of leading a group by appearing not to do so. Bion and Rickman allowed the group to develop in silence without introductions by the group leader. Rickman had experience of Quaker meetings that both acted as a precedent and experience in taking this approach. He had previously written an article on this practice describing how the meeting would wait in silence ‘until the spirit moved’.¹¹⁴ This passivity was central to their approach, allowing the group to evolve and only comment when

¹¹³ Tom Harrison, ‘Response to The Northfield Experiments—a reappraisal 70 years on’, *Group Analysis*, Vol 53, Iss 2, (2020), p. 267.

¹¹⁴ Harrison, *Social Fields*, p. 446.

it became clear what might be happening. By taking a step away from this leadership role, members would gradually become more aware of their roles in the dynamics of the relationships forming a 'group mentality'. The principals and practices of group techniques would be an integral part of how future resettlement would shape, and such methods would be utilised in developing the approach of the CRUs. Northfield laid down the foundations of this method and was fundamental in shaping how post war resocialisation would be conceptualised.

The methods of group therapy were not just practiced in monitored therapy sessions. The men in the training wing decided upon their own activities and were encouraged to look at the consequences of their decisions. It was believed that once the soldier had a say in what was happening to them, they would begin to take charge of their lives. The emphasis was on what the soldiers themselves could do to help themselves and each other and to gain insight into their interactions. When individuals felt they could not take part in the activities of the training room, Bion employed military discipline in the form of a rest room. The effect of this was to make any person using this 'respite' feel very uncomfortable as he would feel 'frozen out' by his colleagues.

Bion and Rickman would encourage social activities and, as such, activity groups multiplied with a great deal of discussion held outside group meetings.¹¹⁵ These groups, however, led to much chaos and indiscipline. Instead of trying to arrest the breakdown they found in the training wing, Bion and Rickman deliberately let it continue. By allowing things to get so bad, the collective neurosis would be displayed to the point where the men themselves would be driven to organise ways of controlling it.¹¹⁶ Within a few days, the patients began to complain that the wards were dirty, and drunkenness and absence was going unchecked. When patients demanded they act, Bion refused, instead, encouraging groups to form and allow men

¹¹⁵ Harrison, *Advancing on a Different Front*, pp. 188-189.

¹¹⁶ Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p. 259.

to take on personal responsibility for their living arrangements. Bion and Rickman did not set out to create groups, or be a group therapist, they enabled the dynamics of the group to reveal themselves rather than dictating the direction the group should take. A. T. M. Wilson writing for the *Lancet* provided one example of how this practice had assisted resocialisation at a CRU unit. A group of fifteen men had refused to take part in social activities causing disruption and refusing to take their responsibilities seriously, instead using the CRU as a holiday home. It was their fellow patients who would persuade them to take responsibility for their behaviour and regain the self-discipline needed in civilian life.¹¹⁷ Evidently the feelings of being frozen out of the group was enough for the repatriates to recognise their disruptive behaviour and alter it accordingly.

The work done by Bion and Rickman, however, was limited. They often faced an uphill struggle in implementing their ideas, facing stiff opposition from traditional attitudes both within the army and from outside. This kind of antagonism was not helped by Bion and Rickman themselves. Upon arrival they made the fatal mistake of plunging into their experiment without carrying with or informing their medical colleagues in the hospital or the War Office.¹¹⁸ As such, alarmist reports filtered back to Whitehall. The War Office sent officials to pay Northfield a lightning visit and shocked at the perceived chaos they witnessed, the project was immediately terminated and Bion and Rickman were posted elsewhere. The first Northfield experiment had lasted barely six weeks. This did little to advance the cause of psychiatry, nor in changing attitudes of its uses where it mattered. Its closing would set back the progress made in developing techniques that would be suitable for resettlement, yet it would

¹¹⁷ A. T. M. Wilson, Doyle M, Kelnar J, 'Group Techniques in a Transitional Community', *The Lancet*, Vol. 249, Iss. 6457, (1947), pp. 735-738.

¹¹⁸ Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p.260.

influence the second Northfield experiment and fill gaps in knowledge on resocialising men that had been absent in the interwar years.

The first experiment, although curtailed abruptly, established the principles upon which subsequent works were built. Bion and Rickman identified core issues which needed to be faced and shifted therapeutic thinking from individual treatment with its limited horizons to enabling men to survive the relationships and responsibilities of fighting in war. They sundered traditional doctor/patient relationship and reconfigured the task as one of mutual endeavour, engaging men in the process of recovery. The issue of illness became secondary. The task was to re-establish the individual as someone who could operate effectively in a social environment. While it is difficult to estimate the influence of the first Northfield experiment, they clearly contributed to a significant social change in how psychiatry could be practised. They suggested the possibility that therapy could involve a community of people with all participants offering their skills according to their abilities rather than remaining entrenched in the traditional doctor dominated discourse.¹¹⁹ By showing the effectiveness of these techniques their research would influence the ideas behind the ‘therapeutic community’ utilised by the CRUs. This would involve engagement with the community in the resettlement process, something which Crookham had concluded as essential and which Northfield would build upon. Crookham and Northfield show a process of trial and error in methods of resocialising men and the evolving process from previous lessons learned.

Northfield, however, had many issues and the hospital setup proved problematic with providing an environment conducive to recovery. The hospital location was remote, and patients faced a lengthy drive, the first sight that greeted them was the sites large iron gates which they had to wait for a member of staff to unlock. The entire feeling was that of arriving

¹¹⁹ Harrison, *Social Fields*, p. 451.

in a prison. One patient, Bob Hingston, referred to it as a 'Looney Bin', something which POWs were eager to avoid been stigmatised as.¹²⁰ Northfield was no rural idyll, it was overlooked by barrage balloons and presented a foreboding institutional appearance, its original arrangement could have hardly been better designed to deter men from getting better. Further, many patients arrived bewildered and confused. Patients received little explanation as to where they were being sent and for many it was a common experience to not even be given an explanation about the purpose of their referral or the duration of their stay, with many arriving believing they were going to be incarcerated for life.¹²¹

To further add to the general claustrophobia and feeling of imprisonment, security was a high priority. Doors and windows were locked and even in the most private of areas, such as the toilets, there was a sense of being continuously watched with large gaps in the stalls preventing total privacy. The corridors were long and unwelcoming, patients were confined to hospital after 8 o'clock in the evening, and the layout was separated by military guards. Military police oversaw discipline and serious breaches were treated badly with those taking any unauthorised leave hunted down and put in confinement.¹²² This led to considerable distress and irritation with 'out of bounds' notices and guards patrolling making many feel they were back in a stalag.¹²³ A further distinction was enforced upon those receiving treatment in the requirement to wear 'the blues', a uniform consisting of a white flannelette shirt, red tie, blue jacket and trousers. 'The blues' revived memories of patches they had to wear as POWs and made attendees feel like marked men.¹²⁴ Such observations provided information on how physical and geographical factors could affect individuals, especially regarding POWs. Such factors would not be conducive to providing an environment where men would feel

¹²⁰ IWM, 14789 *Bob Hingston*, Reel 20.

¹²¹ Harrison, *Advancing on a Different Front*, p. 165.

¹²² Harrison, *Advancing on a Different Front*, p. 164.

¹²³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/1, *Notes on Ex POWs: Patients at Northfield*, p.1.

¹²⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/1, *Patients at Northfield*, p. 1.

comfortable and could seriously hinder their resocialisation. The environment at Northfield caused considerable distress and reminded many that they were back at the stalag again.¹²⁵ The lessons learned from Northfield played their part in developing advice for the CRUs and physical and geographical factors would be important considerations. If repatriates were put in a position where they felt they were treated like prisoners, it would not help in building trust towards the staff or the intentions of unit. Cooperation of attendees was essential and physical and geographical factors could play their part in establishing a healthy atmosphere congruent with this.

‘The blues’ were universally disliked and meant that patients were easily identified by locals and could be the target of abuse such as ‘skrim-shankers’ and worse.¹²⁶ This vilification was often made worse by prejudice about nervous disorders and the fact patients were not subject to the same rationing restrictions as civilians, having regular meals provided for them. Despite some form of prejudice, local attitudes could vary, and abuse was not widespread. These mixed reactions highlighted the need to educate the community regarding the purpose of a resettlement unit and to explain how those attending were not abnormal, rather they just required a short period of resettlement. To this end an effective communication strategy would have to be adopted and this observation fed directly into ways the CRUs would address this problem and will be covered in the next chapter.

Northfield would also demonstrate how local sympathy and curiosity could be mobilised in resocialising men. Those wearing the blues were banned from visiting the local pubs, often trying to hide the uniform under a greatcoat. Some locals, having found this out, would take patients to the pub and buy them drinks.¹²⁷ This hospitality could extend even

¹²⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/1, *Patients at Northfield*, p. 1.

¹²⁶ Harrison, *Advancing on a Different Front*, p. 157.

¹²⁷ Harrison, *Advancing on a Different Front*, p. 179.

further, men and women in the local factories made collections on behalf of the soldiers and held concerts to raise money. This would be spent on cigarettes, biscuits and confectionary which would be delivered to the hospital every Saturday. Local girls would arrange to accompany patients for walks, picnics or cinema visits and weekly dances at the hospital became very popular with the local women, the music sometimes being performed by the patients themselves. Weekly dances would be a continual feature of the CRUs and staff would be encouraged to engage with prominent members of the community to build close relationships which could be utilised for the benefit of the repatriates.

Harold Bridger, who would later run the training wing during the second experiment, recognised the contribution of these women and the community stating that his social therapy department was providing a service ‘together with the whole of the neighbouring population’.¹²⁸ Contact with women was of particular importance to the rehabilitation of patients many of whom only just past their eighteenth birthday, were inexperienced in life and displayed shyness around the opposite sex. This symptom was particularly amplified in POWs whose shyness and anxiety around women was very much related to their removal from society and captivity. It was therefore important to slowly reintroduce patients to women if they were to be able to function in society. Towards this end, Northfield also had a number of nurses from the Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS) supplemented by 70 ATS workers. R.E. Curtis remembered these nurses with particular fondness: ‘we adored them... we had a good repour with them’.¹²⁹ The effectiveness of this approach would be copied by the CRUs who employed a number of ATS staff on a similar basis. The CRUs would expand the role of women by employing them as trained social workers who would act as a bridge for

¹²⁸ Harrison, *Advancing on a Different Front*, p. 180.

¹²⁹ Planned Environment Therapy Archives, R. E. Curtis, TCVOICES/124.

the repatriate and his relatives in the resettlement process. These women would be known as Civil Liaison Officers and their role will be discussed in chapter 5.

With the shutting down of the first experiment, however, Northfield returned to its former gloom and inertia, but with the opening of the second front in France during 1944, Northfield's fortunes were revived. The revival of Northfield's fortunes also coincided with an increasing influence of the 'invisible college' and the way the army implemented psychiatry in its processes. A. T. M. Wilson had shown the effectiveness of such techniques with the Crookham experiment, and despite its early termination, Bion's (also a pre-war member of the Tavistock Clinic) techniques in group therapy had shown promise. Harold Bridger, Bion's replacement at Northfield and member of Tavistock, would continue to refine Bion's work in therapeutic communities. Bridger's appointment was in no small part thanks to the influence of J. R. Rees, who as head of the Directorate of Army Psychiatry, had persuaded the army of the effectiveness of psychiatry with his work in the War Office Selection Boards (WOSBs). Due to success of this work, the brass became much more receptive to Rees's recommendations. The army was keen to engage with methods that would reduce wastage and rehabilitate trained soldiers as a cost-effective way of resolving manpower issues. Bridger's work at Northfield was seen as a vital component in resolving such issues. Such appointments showed the increasing influence of members of the Tavistock Clinic in aspects of rehabilitation and their research and methods would shape the post war CRUs.

When Bridger took over the Northfield experiment, one of his first tasks was to establish a cohesive 'hospital as a whole' ethos. It was apparent that the different wings maintained separate identities, and these needed to be broken down in order to establish a coherent system. The second phase was characterised by Bridger's attempts at resolving the conflicts between the military and clinical sphere. Bridger made sure that staff and the War Office were informed of methods employed and what these were to achieve. Further, staff were

selected who had acquired a positive understanding of the psychiatric point of view, and, in particular, of group psychological orientation which had been practised with the WOSBs.¹³⁰ It was clear that with his careful selection of staff, Bridger was attempting to resolve the issues of the previous experiment and by effectively communicating with both staff and the War Office, he eliminated one of the key reasons behind the first experiment's failure.

To further break down barriers and enforce cohesion, Bridger persuaded the commanding officer at Northfield to abolish the training wing with its military discipline and turn it into 'an organisation for promoting activities of sorts'.¹³¹ The layout was also changed with a large ward in the centre of the hospital cleared, designated the 'hospital club'. This would be left empty with its purpose left unspecified. Bridger would then wait for the patients to react to its presence; the idea was that the training wing would become a convalescent depot of sorts. Continuing the methods employed by Bion and Rickman, Bridger and the staff under his direction took a step back, causing the patients to realise they had to take personal responsibility for the gap in their treatment and organise things in the way that they wanted. It was during the second experiment that Northfield also received a significant number of POWs from both northern Europe and the Far East. There had been few opportunities since Crookham to observe the effectiveness of resocialisation techniques on POWs and Northfield would provide important information towards this goal. By effectively shutting down the military wing, Bridger was also prompting his patients to develop personal responsibility away from the structure of army. These methods would be employed by the CRUs whose purpose was designed to get repatriates out of the military mindset and bridge the gap between military and civil life.

¹³⁰ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p.152.

¹³¹ Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p.265.

The effectiveness of Bridger's method was highlighted with the events surrounding the hospital club. The hole in the middle of the hospital soon became a live 'here and now' issue for the patients and became a matter of great discomfort for them. Thus, as Bion had first mapped out in the first experiment, and, as Bridger had believed, a group neurosis was formed, and members began to take steps in tackling the cause of this disturbance. This challenge was taken up cautiously at first, with small groups of patients asking the social staff when the club would open and when the furniture and fittings were going to arrive. Each time the patients were reminded that it would start as soon as they organised it. Soon, there were discussions as to what the men might do in the way of leisure or work activities and the patients' previous interests and skills were resurrected, leading to the formation of teams taking up individual activities.¹³²

The concern the patients held over the empty space in the middle of the hospital culminated in a meeting of patients to which Bridger was summoned, the patients wishing to know why he was wasting time and money in wartime. The commanding officer was horrified at this meeting believing a mutiny was at hand, but Bridger was delighted: 'I thought my god, this is wonderful! Fancy thinking of the war... They were supposed to be ill and here they are saying, my god, the war!'.¹³³ After this meeting, the patients realised that they could take responsibility and power, and as a result, the first committee was formed because of this protest group. While the social club was not always a smooth ride, at times it was vandalised, progress was made, and it acted as a therapeutic test bed. It helped form a community and a real-life example to attendees as to what was acceptable behaviour in a group or social setting which they could then attach to their own lives. Such results proved the effectiveness that resocialising in a community setting could achieve and these ideas would be utilised by the CRUs. By

¹³² Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p.209.

¹³³ Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p.266.

involving everyone in the repatriation process it prompted mutual understanding and further bridged the gap between the military and civil life.

The second experiment would also further refine methods of group therapy. Working alongside Bridger was Siegfried Heinrich Fuchs (also known as Michael Foulkes). Foulkes had been involved in the first experiment and continued his role as group therapist for the hospital. However, while Bion had been rather challenging with his groups in the first experiment, Foulkes was less combative believing, as Bridger did, that the function of a psychiatrist was to put the patients at ease and take a hands-off approach.¹³⁴ Patients in group therapy would be told they could bring anything forward and should express anything that comes to mind. Treatment as a group should be patient led with the role of the psychiatrist mainly as an observer.

Foulkes believed that group therapy was a more efficient use of a psychiatrist's time than individual interviews. Group therapy allowed the psychiatrist to observe his patients away from the artificial atmosphere of a consulting room, in a quasi-social environment. Patients who had difficulty interacting with others could be gently led into contact with the group, above all, by getting the group to take personal responsibility for themselves, gradually, its individual members would too.¹³⁵ These principals would be adopted by the CRUs to identify and help any individual who may be termed as 'sticky'. This was where an individual may be experiencing difficulties similar to those which they had experienced in their own home or in social settings.¹³⁶ Group discussions produced a cohesive spirit and common ground for individuals to externalise problems, bringing them to the forefront of the discussion. Through

¹³⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, 'Group Analysis in a Military Neurosis Centre' S. H. Foulkes, M D Frankfurt, L. R. C. P. E, Major RAMC, *Specialist in Psychiatry from a Military Hospital*, p. 4.

¹³⁵ Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p.264.

¹³⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/12, *Group Meetings*, p. 2.

this process the individual could see his problems were common to all and by venting these difficulties and prompting discussion, it would benefit everyone.¹³⁷

As with Bridger, Foulkes also saw the benefits of social clubs. Both shared the opinion that patient run clubs would bring patients into contact with, and cooperation with others. The social club was a way that individuals could place insights gained from their personal treatment into a social context and test out the consequences in a ‘here and now’ community. It made it possible for them to ally their personal energy with a social purpose and come up with the organisational structures required to achieve it.¹³⁸ Such approaches are a good example as to the influence Northfield had in the development of the approach towards resettlement in a post war setting.

A particular important example of patients taking responsibility towards their own treatment was the realisation that the ‘old hands’ could contribute to the care and support of recent admissions. From this a mentoring system was set up, and an information booklet prepared ‘by a patient’ for new arrivals. The way this information was implemented would inspire the later booklet prepared by the CRUs, *Settling Down in Civvy Street*, and formed part of their communication strategy. By observing the ways that attendees communicated a scheme such as Northfield, planners could see the language used and the important communication points from a patient perspective. The booklet gave information about activities, leave arrangement and the purpose of the hospital, and did much to alleviate any anxieties. This was given to new arrivals by a reception group made entirely of patients within three days of their arrival. The new arrivals were encouraged to discuss the contents and make sure they understood all of the implications before being taken on a tour of the hospital to introduce all

¹³⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/12, *Group Meetings*, p. 2.

¹³⁸ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p.209.

the facilities available. Such a method would be adopted by the CRUs and the influence of Northfield can be seen in their planning.

Due to patient feedback, Northfield was also the first place to support work placements for people with mental ill health in the UK.¹³⁹ Patients could volunteer to work at the Austin Motor Company, the Avoncroft agricultural college or shops in town. A patient newspaper was also established going through a number of incarnations as *the Mercury*, *The Weekly Bulletin* and *The Blues Flash*. Several hundred copies were produced in a run and copies were even given to little shops in the local area to circulate.¹⁴⁰ Both examples showed the eagerness of patients to engage with the public, educate them as to the purpose of the unit, and try out practical activities relating to civilian life. Such approaches to the outside community were effective methods of ‘bridging the gap’ and the methods employed by Northfield became so famous that it prompted visitors to observe the practices used. Of these visitors, a group of officers, both ex-POW and others, were sent to Northfield to gain experience of the group work taking place as the Civil Resettlement Units were being established. The methods of resocialisation and community activities were therefore an important influence on the CRUs and without the experience gained from Northfield, it is doubtful that they would have operated as effectively as they did.

Despite the innovation, attention, and success the second experiment was experiencing, it became a victim of the course of the war. With victory in Europe, the atmosphere and the atmosphere of the hospital changed. Lack of enthusiasm for the Japanese campaign and hope of early demobilisation were a problem in the army, and this was reflected in the attitude of patients and staff alike. The patients, afraid of further service overseas, were unwilling soldiers

¹³⁹ Harrison, *Advancing on a Different Front*, p. 210.

¹⁴⁰ Harrison, *Advancing on a Different Front*, p. 210.

anxious for discharge and the staff were concerned for their civilian future.¹⁴¹ Further, key participants had inevitably left or been withdrawn and had been replaced with less experienced and constantly changing personnel. These concerns were only exacerbated after VJ day with the patients publishing an angry front-page article in *The Mercury*. They demanded that Northfield ‘make up its mind between being a military institution rehabilitating a man back into the army, or a hospital for resurrecting an abnormal man back to a normal civilian’.¹⁴² There was even suggestions that Northfield be run as a Civilian Resettlement Unit, yet this did not come to pass. Ultimately, with the end of the war, Northfield had lost its main purpose and by 1948 the hospital was finally vacated by the army. Despite its rather ignominious end, Northfield, as authors such as Ben Shephard and Tom Harrison have suggested, had already entered psychiatric folklore. They had pioneered group therapy in rehabilitation and shown the benefits of close ties to the working community surrounding the patients. Further, key personnel such as Bion and Bridger had gained invaluable experience in rehabilitation and would employ this experience working with the CRUs.

Conclusion.

The British government had been slow to realise both the scale of captivity and the nature of the resettlement problems these soldiers would experience. There was little thought given to past experiences in relations to returning POWs and efforts to address these issues were hampered by a lack of research and large gaps in knowledge. It was only in 1942 that returning POWs would begin to fill this void in knowledge and highlight the problems of resettlement they faced. A number of articles written by escaped POWs highlighted the need for these issues to be tackled and that the community these men would return to would need to be part of the resettlement process. The discussion their articles created spread to the wider

¹⁴¹ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p. 153.

¹⁴² Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p.270.

public and served to ignite concerns over future demobilisation. The prisoner of war narrative was kept in the public domain by a number of articles and exhibitions that spoke to the public concern towards such unsettled men. Public anxiety evidenced a growing concern regarding returning men and that something must be done to prevent any perceived failures of the past. Continued pressure from volunteer groups, relatives, and groups such as the Red Cross forced the government to address the concerns of the public who now believed that the government and Army had a responsibility in helping these men resettle. The wider discourse regarding POWs and public pressure would play a role in the decision to authorise the CRUs. Additionally, the public vision of how a post war Britain would shape would inform CRU planners in the ways they could utilise the public's concern that mistakes of the past should not be repeated to their advantage.

It was not just returning POWs and the public which served to highlight the concerns of resettlement. The Crookham experiment was devised to address the problems of returning POWs back to duty through a short residential course. This early experiment would reveal the extent of resettlement problems returning POWs faced but their needs became subservient to the aim of winning war. Its conclusions were open to interpretation, and many believed such issues would not manifest outside of RAMC personnel. Nevertheless, Crookham had allowed various problems associated with POWs to be identified, mistakes to be avoided and had set a 'backbone' for future work. Crookham showed how effective a residential course could be and the work of A. T. M. Wilson would influence how post war resettlement would shape and provide a wealth of information for CRUs planners. Crookham however, would foreshadow the difficulties that CRU planners would face in convincing those in authority of the value of psychiatry in a mass resocialisation project.

The Northfield experiments would provide further experience in addressing resocialisation and the use of psychiatry in this process. building on the conclusions of

Crookham these experiments would aid the planning of CRUs by identifying factors which led to distress in repatriates such as the suitability of the location, the uniform, and the close attachment to the military. Northfield identified the importance that the civilian community could provide with resettlement. Weekly dances proved a popular way of reintroducing repatriates to women and by giving repatriates a chance to publish their own newspapers, it built confidence by mutual understanding. Northfield was further, the first place to support work placements which became a major aspect of the later CRUs and showed how practical activities aided in resettlement. Northfield would be a large influence for the future CRUs with officers visiting to gain experience of group work, and many of those who had run it, also becoming involved in the planning of the CRU scheme.

Both Crookham and Northfield evidence the development of ideas around resocialisation of POWs and a progressive building of lessons learned previously. The work done at Crookham and Northfield feed directly into the methods that would be utilised by the CRUs and the final realisation of a resettlement scheme would not be possible without the foundation built by this earlier work. This chapter shows the long process in refining what form of unit would emerge post war and the importance of planning in the hierarchy of factors behind the success of the CRUs. In addition, the public response to the information emerging from former POWs and concerned parties was just as essential in bringing attention to the government the need for action. The public would be just one catalyst amongst many that would pressurise the war office to address the concerns of resettlement and act. What the CRUs became could not have happened without the research done prior to their formation and both the public and efforts of psychiatrists were essential in shaping the vision of post war society and resettlement.

However, this chapter also demonstrates that the concept and development of a resettlement scheme was not cohesive, it was rather led by several important individuals who

believed in the value of their work in resocialising POWs. For such a scheme to become a reality it would need someone in a position of power to influence doubters in the government and War Office and that the psychiatric methods utilised in earlier experiments would be essential in any mass resocialisation scheme. This person would also need to bring together the disparate individuals involved in the earlier experiments and provide some cohesion in the planning and operation of the future CRUs. The next chapter will analyse the work of J. R. Rees and his importance in the formation of the CRUs. It will continue to demonstrate the important factors in the development and planning of the CRUs and how these contributed to their success.

Chapter 3: Final Hurdles.

By 1944, there was a growing recognition that captivity caused a severe psychological shock in POWs. This awareness highlighted the need for assistance in addressing the gap between their pre- and post-captivity experiences that POWs would face. Returning POWs such as Cpt Collie and Major Newman had highlighted the problems associated with long-term captivity and the consequences of allowing these men back into society without some form of rehabilitation scheme. Newspapers and journals articles had spread the discourse beyond the burgeoning psychiatric community and into the public sphere. This contributed to growing public anxiety, concerns around the number of POWs involved, and the concerns of their families which resulted in the demand that something should be done for these men. The public had further concluded that the government and the army bore ultimate responsibility to provide for their care.

Chapter 2 has highlighted the progression of this thinking and the public mood was summed up by Lieutenant Colonel Sir Thomas Moore in a speech to parliament where he stated that ‘there is great sympathy for prisoners of war among our people and I am sure that generous and understanding treatment of these men, on their return, will be expected not only by their relatives but by the general public’.¹ Experiments such as those preformed at Crookham and Northfield had, furthermore, shown the effectiveness of employing psychiatry in rehabilitating men and that the techniques used to return a soldier to duty, could also with slight modification, be employed to return him to his previous role in civilian life. Despite a softening on the stance of the use of psychiatry by the War Office, the employment of such methods was still mired in the attitudes embedded in the post war period. This first section of this chapter charts the efforts of J. R. Rees and the ‘invisible college’, a group of psychiatrists working for the Department

¹ House of Commons, *Hansards parliamentary debates: Prisoners of War (Ministerial Responsibility)*, 17th March 1944, Vol. 404, Col. 2357.

of Army Psychiatry (DAP) in persuading the War office of the effectiveness of their methods. By following the work of Rees and his colleagues it will track a period of changing attitudes and the persuasive methods they used to convince the War Office of the effectiveness of psychiatry and how this could be employed towards a repatriation scheme. The work of Rees and his colleagues proved to the War Office that their methods worked and that they were perfectly placed to help returning POWs. This section will also chart the effectiveness of Rees and the DAP in both persuading and mobilising the separate branches involved in repatriation into a cohesive entity with a shared goal. This goal would be directed at implementing a repatriation scheme with a specific purpose in helping POWs return to civil life. There was, however, some disagreement as to how such a scheme would be implemented. Direct knowledge of repatriating POWs was still relatively sparse, and it was agreed that some form of 'trial run' would be needed to finalise methods of approach and the training of staff.

The second section of this chapter shall follow the progress of the trial scheme held at Derby. This section will also show the influence of previous experiments on the methods employed and how this further cemented those of the invisible college as the experts in POW repatriation. By exploring the methods and conclusions from the trial run, it will track the process of refinement and how these would be utilised by the later CRUs. Finally, the third section, links to the initial theme of persuasion and follows the task of selling the CRU scheme to both POWs and the public. This was vital in both recruiting volunteers and in collectivising the public interest into something that could be utilised. As the CRUs were to be transitional communities it was essential that both POWs and the community's they would be returning to had sufficient knowledge of the scheme. Such advertising strategies would be used to alleviate any anxieties that either party felt and in educating the public on the unique problems facing repatriated POWs. Ultimately, this chapter argues that what was happening prior to the establishment of the CRUs fed directly into how they would be shaped. Chapter 2 highlighted

how public opinion shaped decisions and how both Northfield and Crookham proved a crucial step in shaping strategies of resocialisation. This chapter continues this theme and argues that without the effort of J. R. Rees and the DAP the value of psychiatric work in rehabilitation would not have been highlighted. Their work was fundamental in shifting attitudes towards acceptance and its use outside of winning the war. The experience gained through their work and in experiments such as Crookham and Northfield would influence how the experimental unit at Derby would proceed. The experience gained from this unit would inform the methods and strategies employed by the CRUs and the contact with POWs that this allowed, fed directly into the effective communication strategy the CRU planners adopted.

Persuading the War Office: Evolution of Attitudes.

The task of persuading the War Office of the effectiveness of psychiatric methods would fall on the shoulders of J. R. Rees. Rees was appointed head of the DAP at the outbreak of war and faced an uphill struggle in persuading a government concentrating on winning the war that the DAP would not deprive it of manpower, and instead, could be a force for good. There remained a deep-seated belief that psychiatry within the army could be used as a way of offering those who were inclined to do so, a way out, or an opportunity to malingering. At an institutional level, many within the British Army still saw cases of neurosis as a one off or as the consequence of enlisting such a large volunteer army. Many still held onto the belief that neurosis could be reduced or neutralised through adequate training and selection upon recruitment as concluded by the 1922 Shell Shock Committee. In addition, during the 1920s the government implemented a series of expenditure cuts known as the Geddes Axe. The army saw its fair share of cuts and as psychiatric services were deemed an unnecessary expenditure such services were greatly reduced.² As such, at the outbreak of the Second World War, the British Army was

² The immediate aftermath of the First World War and the impact upon the RAMC has been covered in the previous chapter, especially the loss of resources and the 'brain drain'.

woefully unprepared in this department. The lack of preparation by the British Army towards any psychiatric problems was highlighted when, at the outbreak of the Second World War, they had fewer than 50 psychiatric beds available for the British Expeditionary Force during the Battle of France.³ The large numbers of psychiatric casualties set alarm bells ringing, yet, even as late as 1944 and the invasion of Normandy, the British Army continued to underestimate psychiatric casualties.⁴ This was in part, informed by conclusions made after the First World War and a belief that such casualties could be minimized by proper selection, training, morale, and leadership. When planning for the invasion of Europe it was therefore believed that the problems of the psychiatric battle casualty could be managed by careful preparation and clinical understanding.⁵

The DAP had been hindered in its responses in the early period of the war suffering as it had done from a lack of experienced men. This was in part due to budgetary cuts but also due to the exodus of talented psychiatrists leaving the army at the end of the First World War. It was therefore necessary to find suitable methods of training an adequate number of staff to replace the shortage of men with both civilian and military experience in their methods. As head of the DAP, Rees had influence and control over policy and utilised his influence to appoint many new members of staff. Many of these men were drawn directly from the Tavistock Clinic which had gained much experience in the field of psychiatry in the inter-war years. The Tavistock Clinic opened in 1920 and was founded by Hugh Crichton-Miller who wished to carry on into the civilian sphere the experiences gained in the First World War in psychotherapy and treating neurosis.⁶ The clinic ran both an adult and child department and the team worked from a multi-discipline format covering all aspects of personality study; the

³ Jones and Wessely, *Shell Shock to PTSD*, p.59.

⁴ Jones & Ironside, *Psychiatric Casualties in Normandy*, p.117.

⁵ Jones & Ironside, *Battle Exhaustion*, p. 109.

⁶ H. V. Dicks, *50 Years of the Tavistock Clinic*, (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul Ltd, 1970), p.1.

psychiatrist, the psychologist, and the social worker. The clinic's facilities were in massive demand and by 1932 it was necessary to move to larger accommodation to cope with such demand. It was also in this period that J. R. Rees took over the running of the clinic and, as such, he personally knew many of the appointees and their methods. The clinic's doctrine had been of having no doctrine; that is, it was meant as a meeting ground of psychotherapists of several schools, which, while leading to a certain vagueness of theoretical homogeneity, provided flexibility and for a wide range of techniques and viewpoints.⁷ The Tavistock Clinic therefore had much influence in the work of the DAP and as many appointees had both civil and military experience, they understood what was required in 'bridging the gap' between the two. This balance was significant as the future CRUs function was to resocialise men back into civilian life and away from their army mindset. Those staffing the CRUs would need to understand the repatriate's army experience while also having experience in civilian life to guide their resocialisation. Chapter 2 shows the importance of this balance and the effectiveness of this approach in resettling men back into the community.

The difficulty that the DAP would face in convincing the army and some in the government of the value of their work, however, was aptly highlighted in a speech in the House of Commons by Sir V. Warrender who stated that anyone who wished to modernise the Army by revolutionary methods 'is an exceedingly foolhardy and rash person'.⁸ Yet, there were signs that attitudes towards psychiatric services were changing and that its value was beginning to be recognised. The DAP's reputation was boosted with its work in officer selection. With the introduction of conscription, the army suffered from a shortage of trained men who they thought of as suitable for leadership. The lack of officers became especially problematic, and

⁷ Dicks, *Tavistock*, p.2

⁸ House of Commons, Hansards parliamentary debates: Army Estimates, 1938, 10th March 1938, Vol. 332, Cols. 2241.

the process of selection was still based on the traditional aristocratic attitude.⁹ In a letter to the War Office written in 1939, J. R. Rees suggested the Army should implement scientific selection methods in officer selection, citing the results of research in industrial psychology and the employment of special aptitude tests in the selection of technical work to support his argument.¹⁰

Rees hoped that such methods would speed up the selection process and that tests would provide a more accurate way of filtering bad and good candidates. Such methods had already been employed in both the American and German army and proved the value of psychiatric methods in officer selection. While some remained resistant to such changes, Rees argument that ‘the efficiency of the Army for the primary purpose of winning the war is the concern of everyone’ won out.¹¹ The resultant War Office Selection Board (WOSB) was highly successful and proved the role that psychiatry could play in the war effort.¹² There is no doubt that the invisible college’s adaptability in understanding and working with a civilian army had contributed to the success of the WOSBs and it was exactly this flexibility and ability to work outside of the military mindset that Rees required when it came to planning for a rehabilitation unit. This flexibility did, however, sometimes clash with the establishment and was the cause of some friction as with the result of the first Northfield experiment. However, with its experience of working in the community and in reintegrating those suffering from trauma the

⁹ Debates had raged on the selection process of officers as early as 1938 and such processes were caught in wider discussions of democratising the army. For examples of such debates see; House of Commons, Hansards parliamentary debates: *Army Estimates, 1938*, 10th March 1938, Vol. 332, Cols. 2134 – 2249.

¹⁰ See Patricia E. Allen & Percival Smith, *Selection of Skilled Apprentices for the Engineering Trades: Second Report of Research*, (City of Birmingham Education Committee, 1934) & Alec Rodger, *A Borstal Experiment in Vocational Guidance*, (London: His Majesties Stationary Office, 1937), Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p. 31.

¹¹ J. R. Rees, ‘Three Years of Military Psychiatry in the United Kingdom’, *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, Iss. 4278, (1943), p. 6.

¹² For a thorough examination of the WOSB’s see, Alice Victoria White, *From the Science of Selection to Psychologising Civvy Street: The Tavistock Group, 1939-1948*, (Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis: University of Kent, 2016).

appointments from the Tavistock clinic had the experience needed and the expertise required to plan and run a rehabilitation scheme. Planning of a rehabilitation unit designed for POWs had, however, been hindered due to the lack of studies or statistical data on this problem from the First World War to provide guidance.¹³ The experiments at Crookham and Northfield allowed such methods to be tried and tested and for the gathering of persuasive data. It would be this data that would inform the strategies and methods adopted by the trial unit at Derby and fed directly into how the later CRUs would function.

Even with such data gathered, however, attitudes had remained relatively stubborn towards any resettlement problems POWs would face. Some officers involved in Crookham had even suggested that the instances of unsettled behaviour witnessed would not occur in combat soldiers. Many held a negative opinion of the medical personal that had been the subject of the study, believing they lacked robustness and would use psychiatric diagnosis to avoid service.¹⁴ Such attitudes were reflected by the War Office who shared a reluctance to utilise psychiatric methods in a way that was not directed at winning the war. Crookham may have proven the effectiveness of psychiatric methods in returning 'troubled' men back into service, but the needs of manpower had overridden any further resettlement needs. As manpower remained a precious commodity, any association POWs may have had with psychiatric care was met with suspicion by an army desperate for personnel. Psychiatrists, therefore, changed tack.

In an attempt to disassociate their work from negative stereotypes, psychiatrists were keen to separate POW problems from the attitudes of the past still present in certain quarters of the army and government. While acknowledging that returning POWs might have problems,

¹³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Special Problems of Repatriation*, p. 1.

¹⁴ See chapter two for details of the Crookham experiment and its conclusions.

they argued that these were perfectly normal and unlikely to be related to experiences of war.¹⁵ This distanced the POWs' problems from shellshock and other such psychological casualties of the previous war. It was hoped by A. T. M Wilson (who had headed the Crookham Experiment) and other members of the invisible college that by framing the argument in such terms it would weaken accusations of malingering by linking disturbances to 'the frequent occurrence of the disease among civilian prisoners'.¹⁶ This had the effect of highlighting that it would be a long-term problem, which would carry over into civilian life and was a separate condition unrelated to military service.

The publication of the DAP *Technical Memorandum No. 13, The Prisoner of War Comes Home* in May 1944, further highlighted to many in the War Cabinet that POWs were a discrete group with their own particular problems that would require some form of resettlement.¹⁷ The recommendations set within this article convinced the Adjutant General of the army, General Sir Ronald Forbes Adam, to take the matter to the Secretary of State for War, Sir P. J Grigg, who would be a key figure in obtaining the cabinet's agreement to plan a resettlement scheme.¹⁸ This article, alongside previous works published by Major Newman and Captain Collie created a great deal of attention within government circles and pressure to act had been building for some time.¹⁹ In addition to the mounting psychiatric evidence towards the necessity of a resettlement scheme, wider public discourse also played its part. Chapter 2 has highlighted how pressure from families and organisations meant that POWs had become something of a political 'hot potato' for the War Cabinet, who now took steps to show that they

¹⁵ White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 168.

¹⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/1, *Technical Memorandum No. 13: The Prisoner of War Comes Home*, p. 3.

¹⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/1, *Technical Memorandum No. 13: The Prisoner of War Comes Home*, p. 2.

¹⁸ Makepeace, *Captives*, p. 196.

¹⁹ TNA WO 32/10757, Rehabilitation of Repatriated Prisoners of War, Minutes of a Meeting Chaired by Lieutenant-General Sir Alexander Hood, 16 September 1943; House of Commons, Hansards parliamentary debates: *Army Estimates, 1944*, 2nd March 1944, Vol. 397, Cols. 1625-1631. Lieutenant Colonel Gluckstein's speech to parliament directly references the language used in both articles in urging the War Office to act.

were doing everything in their power to help. Many in the House of Commons were ‘conscious of the disquiet felt by relatives of prisoners of war’ and that ‘the present system of divided ministerial responsibility is unsatisfactory’.²⁰ The spectre of men returning with numerous conditions after the First World War was not something that the public had forgotten, and public demand and concern would not allow those fighting men to be failed in such a way again.²¹ Returning POWs to civilian life was, for the War Office and government, a useful way to show the public their intentions for demobilisation and that the failures of the past would not happen again.

This public pressure was not to be underestimated with the Director General of the Army Medical Service (D.G.A.M.S) Lt. Gen. Sir Alexander Hood, stating that the question of rehabilitating repatriated POWs had come to a head due to the publication of Capt. Collie’s article on the ‘Rip Van Winkle effect’.²² In September 1943, a meeting was held with the D.G.A.M.S and D.A.P to discuss the question of rehabilitating POWs. A scheme was proposed that was similar to that put forward by Capt. Collie but different in certain details. It was proposed that the relatives of these men should be given instructions on the best way to look after them and then, after a period of four weeks leave, these men would be sent to special depots for investigation and disposal. It was clear, however, that this proposal was a non-starter. The Director of Army Psychiatry stated that the public had a strong opinion that the army had a responsibility to provide for these men and that proposals that shifted the greater responsibility onto the relatives would be unacceptable.²³ As shown in chapter 2, the numerous articles emerging from 1942 onwards, such as those from Capt. Collie and Major. Newman

²⁰ House of Commons, *Hansards parliamentary debates: Prisoners of War (Ministerial Responsibility)*, 17th March 1944, Vol. 404, Col. 2352.

²¹ See chapter 2 for more information on these attitudes. Surveys for Mass Observation provide evidence that was a concern held by many, *Mass Observation, Journey Home*, p.30.

²² Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p.229.

²³ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, pp. 229 – 230.

suggested that the responsibility lay not just with the public but also with the government. The wide range of discourse these articles generated and pressure from groups such as the Red Cross and relatives suggest this opinion had wide support and a belief that the government and army should shoulder part of the responsibility in resettling these men.²⁴ In his report to the War Office, A. T. M. Wilson suggested that the problem concerning prisoners of war had an importance out of all proportion to their actual numbers.²⁵ Considering the sensitivity the public had towards the handling of repatriates, it was considered that greater time and thought should be given to the topic and with regards to public attitude.

The debate moved forward considerably after the conclusion of the Crookham experiment. As a result of the experience gained from Crookham, in February 1944, A. T. M. Wilson forwarded a report to the War Office regarding ‘psychological aspects of the rehabilitation of repatriated prisoners of war’.²⁶ Wilson suggested that successful rehabilitation could only be achieved through an understanding of the special psychological problems facing POWs and a unit was required with ‘a certain kind of atmosphere and certain types of opportunities’.²⁷ Further proposals by Wilson suggested that the aspects of resettlement should be more fully considered by the various government departments, and he pushed for closer integration and cooperation of departments that would be involved in this. In addition, for any proposed future rehabilitation scheme to succeed, a mass campaign of communication aimed at POWs before their discharge should be implemented. Such a campaign should aim to inform the repatriate of his rights regarding the scheme and should give him contact and familiarity with the civil organisations which would take place of the army when he returned to civil life.²⁸

²⁴ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p. 230

²⁵ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, pp. 231 – 232.

²⁶ TNA. WO 32/10950, A.T.M. Wilson, *Report to the War Office on Psychological Aspects of the Rehabilitation of Repatriated Prisoners of War*, February 1944.

²⁷ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p. 236.

²⁸ It can be argued that governmental departments even before the report was issued had already foreseen their responsibility towards these men, and that at some level, they would be involved in the

Convinced by evidence from earlier experiments and the Ministry of Labour, Sir P. J. Grigg, the Secretary of State for War, instructed that a programme for the resettlement of POWs should be designed stating that ‘there will be a considerable public demand’ for the government to correct the problems associated with long term captivity.²⁹ By March 1944, an advisory panel was set up to discuss the problems facing the repatriate in conjunction with representatives of the D.A.P. The need for an experimental rehabilitation unit was recognised with the aim of the planning of future developments, the training of specialised staff, and acquiring experience working with repatriated POWs. The same month, the War Office agreed to the introduction of a general scheme similar to that outlined by Wilson. The Ministries of Pensions and Labour also showed interest in such a scheme and, at an interdepartmental meeting in the spring of 1944, accepted their responsibility in the need to cooperate in the workings of a rehabilitation scheme.³⁰ This new unit would be called the No. 10 Special Reception and Training Unit (SRTU), located in Derby. The DAP under J. R. Rees was the obvious choice to plan and undertake such a task. This scheme would provide an opportunity to devise an experimental procedure for the rehabilitation of POWs and cement the expertise of the ‘invisible college’ regarding resettlement. As many members of the Tavistock Clinic had been involved in either the WOSBs or the experiments at Crookham and Northfield, they were the only psychiatrists with the necessary experience needed in running such a unit. The experience that members of the ‘invisible college’ gained prior to the establishment of the CRUs would be vital for future developments. Their work shaped an evolution in attitudes

successful repatriation of prisoners of war. Parliamentary debates from December 1943 onwards show that Ernest Bevin (Minister of Labour) was constantly reassuring parliament that concerning repatriation of prisoners of war ‘the necessary measures are now being devised in consultation between the Departments concerned’. House of Commons, Hansards parliamentary debates: *Returned Prisoners of War (Rehabilitation)*, 9th December 1943, Vol. 395, Cols. 1105; House of Commons, Hansards parliamentary debates: *Discharged Prisoners of War (Civil Reinstatement)*, 8th December 1944, Vol. 400, Cols. 1485; Lords Chamber, Hansards parliamentary debates: *Repatriated RAMC Personnel*, 26th July 1944, Vol. 132, Cols. 1179.

²⁹ TWC SA/ TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Technical policy for civil resettlement*, Appendix “A”, p.1.

³⁰ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p.237.

towards psychiatry and its employment in resocialisation. In addition, Members of the DAP such as A. T. M. Wilson and J. R. Rees would be pivotal in persuading authorities of the need for a specialist unit such as the CRUs.

Trial and error: The SRTU.

With the backing of the War Office the go ahead was given for the creation of the SRTU which began in November 1944. Wilson was selected to head this Unit, rather than Bion, possibly because of the circumstances surrounding his dismissal from the first Northfield experiment leading his superiors to conclude he was an unsuitable choice to continue leading experiments. Bion expressed his dismay at this choice in a letter to fellow psychiatrist John Rickman stating that Wilson ‘fails to realise the nature of resentment that exists amongst the repatriates’ and he did not foresee progress towards resettlement being made.³¹ Evidently, Bion did not think Wilson up to the task and believed that the psychological principles underpinning resettlement, which built on his earlier work at Northfield, were underdeveloped and needed further refinement.

Wilson was given two months to train the required staff and make ready for an expected 60 repatriated POWs. These men would not be volunteers but knew that at the end of the course they would be leaving the army. To help run such a scheme Wilson invited several colleagues who had previous experience around the ideas of ‘therapeutic communities’ pioneered during the first Northfield experiment. These colleagues included members of the ‘invisible college’ such as Eric Trist and Harold Bridger. Trist had previously worked at No. 21 WOSB whilst Bridger had replaced Bion and ran the second Northfield experiment.³² These choices were

³¹ Dimitris Vonofakos and Bob Hinshelwood, ‘Wilfred Bion’s Letters to John Rickman (1939–1951)’, *Psychoanalysis and History*, Vol. 14, Iss. 1, (2012), p. 82.

³² Eric Trist, ‘Working with Bion in the 1940’s: The Group Decade’ in *Bion and Group Psychotherapy* ed. Malcom Pines, (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd, 2000), p. 23, White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 174.

therefore well suited for the work expected at the SRTU and were familiar in some way to the methods that would be employed. Such a selection highlighted the importance of earlier work and the principals of resocialisation that had first been trialled at the WOSBs and built upon by Northfield. Bion's influence was therefore an important part of the development of the CRUs. By selecting staff familiar with Bion's methods, Wilson would successfully mobilise a network of men who would become key staff for the CRUs later on.³³

During the initial planning of the SRTUs there was debate over how long the course should run. This was initially set as a three-week course but went through many variations during its operation changing to six, before finally settling at four. This period, it was concluded, proved to be one in which interest could be maintained without undue difficulties from men with intense longing to 'try things out in civvy street themselves'.³⁴ Interestingly, four weeks had been the timeframe that the Crookham experiment had also concluded and would be the official length the CRU scheme would adopt with the option for staying on as long as three months if the repatriate so desired.

The purpose of the unit was to try out methods of assisting the reorientation of those repatriates due for discharge. Earl Fortescue described the features of the scheme in the House of Lords before plans had been finalised.³⁵ Fortescue stated that repatriated POWs would 'undergo a special rehabilitation course to fit them as efficiently and happily as possible into their new environment'.³⁶ This course was designed to fit these men back into civilian life and would consist of medical examinations, lectures, discussions, demonstrations, and films. Fortescue would also state that special attention would be taken 'to ensure as far as possible that the men are found suitable employment'.³⁷ The SRTU would also maintain close contact

³³ Trist, *Working with Bion in the 1940's*, p. 23.

³⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, 'Outline of work of pilot CRU at derby', p. 1.

³⁵ White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 173.

³⁶ House of Lords, Repatriated RAMC Personnel, 26th July 1944, Vol. 132, Cols. 1179.

³⁷ House of Lords, Repatriated RAMC Personnel, 26th July 1944, Vol. 132, Cols. 1179.

with the civil community and utilise the curiosity of locals to their advantage. Wilson employed much of the lessons learned from both Crookham and Northfield throughout the trial run. Communication was considered key; unlike at Northfield, where many attendees arrived with little knowledge of why they had been assigned there or the purpose of the unit. Upon arrival, Civil Liaison Officers would hand out a booklet designed to reassure any anxieties regarding myths surrounding the programme that soldiers believed would affect them.

As a result of the pay disputes at Crookham, care was taken to highlight that attendance would not affect pension claims and the drawing of pay and allowances while attending were in addition to any other leave or payment to which attendees would be entitled.³⁸ This would help reduce any anxieties or mistrust surrounding the programme and help to create a relaxed mind more conducive to resettlement. Such methods would be utilised in the later CRUs, where it was believed necessary that at all stages repatriates should be involved in the process. Repatriates attending CRUs were informed from the start of the purpose of such units and, at all stages, staff highlighted that the CRUs were not an attempt to run them in for further service. Any attendees would go straight from a CRU back to civvy life, and at no point would an attempt be made to press them for further service. Such conclusions would not have been possible without the previous work done which had identified such difficulties and allowed staff to develop a more effective approach to their methods when dealing with repatriates. As this chapter will later discuss, this research would feed directly into the advertisement strategy adopted by CRU planners and providing the repatriate with such information played its role in persuading repatriates to attend the CRU scheme.

To facilitate the repatriation period attendees would take part in regular group therapy sessions and a civil liaison officer was on hand to help the repatriate deal with personal and

³⁸ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *pilot*, p. 1.

domestic problems relating to the readjustment to family life. Some aspects of the course proved more popular than others with the number of lectures proving unpopular. Many repatriates experienced difficulties in concentration and memory, and the balance between practical and theoretical was readjusted. Participants particularly enjoyed visits to the workshop to try out new practical skills, and small shop visits proved unexpectedly popular. As such, fewer lectures were scheduled and greater engagement with the Ministry of Labour and local businesses was pursued.³⁹ Greater care was also taken in involving the community with the SRTUs. It had been concluded that while civilian reception of the attendees at Northfield was, on the whole positive, further priority must be given to bridge the gap between army and civil life and the trial scheme should be on intimate terms with the surrounding community.

Just as articles by Cpt Collie and Major Newman had previously highlighted, for the process of readaptation to have any positive effect, the task of resettlement had to be faced by all, not just the soldier. Communication was therefore not just important to the attendees, but also, the wider community. It was therefore vital that the local community understood what the SRTUs' aims were and that it was not just another military training unit. Military units were often seen as transient, regarded as a guest by the community, and parasitic by others.⁴⁰ The breaking down of these barriers was a priority so that both would be in a position to assist each other. This task was taken up by the Ministry of Labour who acted as advisors in all matters of civil liaison. Those within the community whom staff wished to work with were encouraged to visit the SRTU. The Ministry of Labour arranged visits from groups representing various industries and guests were given an initial explanation of the purpose and hopes of the scheme.⁴¹ These discussions would be accompanied by informal visits by staff to these

³⁹ White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 175.

⁴⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Pilot*, p. 1.

⁴¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Pilot*, p. 1.

factories. In addition, many off the record meetings were encouraged to help develop working relations of a 'sincere and solid nature'.⁴²

As social evenings had been such a success with both the attendees and the community at Northfield, it was believed to be of great importance to continue such an activity. Weekly dances were arranged, and these were attended by the CO and officers. This would help break down barriers and allow for mingling in a relaxed atmosphere. These dances further enabled the good will of the community and allowed their curiosity to be put to good purpose. Such was the case with the local rotary club which became closely associated with the welfare work at the camp and provided entertainment such as cabaret shows and providing refreshments for the evening dances. The dances proved incredibly popular with the local populace and between 100 and 250 civilians usually attended despite severe weather.



Figure 4: 'Ex-Prisoners of War Give a Party', *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 25 May 1945

⁴² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Pilot*, p. 1.

The interest that the unit generated became obvious by the number of personal contacts made at such events.⁴³ The experience gained working with the local community would become the standard operating procedure for the CRUs who would continue to encourage the community to take an active part in the resettlement process. The work of SRTU highlights the importance of the work performed prior to the CRUs and how this would directly feed into how they would operate. While it was envisioned that the prototype unit would close upon the experiment's completion, as we shall see in the next chapter, certain circumstances meant that the unit would operate beyond its initial remit.

Feedback from the course was positive overall with the general view of the staff being that the course was more successful than they had anticipated. The unit had given an opportunity to further test the methods underpinning the therapeutic community and given insights into what attendees found most useful. Those men who attended the pilot scheme also agreed that they had received benefit from attending, and, in many instances, had witnessed a change in their overall attitude.⁴⁴ Participants were encouraged to take part in a follow up survey which was anonymous. In this way it encouraged those who took part to be honest. When asked what they would say to men still in prison camps about the course, answers ranged from short and curt 'very good and interesting', to a more detailed: 'I would tell him to try this course first for a little while, take notice of the things he is interested in and, what he is not, let go in one ear and out the other. I would tell him some of these things are quite necessary to know for civvy street'.⁴⁵ The name change from SRTUs had been one final change implemented from this feedback. One recommendation from an attendee had been that 'I would not call it a Special Training Unit to any man about to come to this camp. I think the

⁴³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Pilot*, p. 3, 'Ex Prisoners of War Give a Party', *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 24 May 1945, p. 4.

⁴⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Pilot*, p. 4.

⁴⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Pilot*, p. 5.

word “training” should be changed’.⁴⁶ This suggestion was very much in line with what both Captain Collie and Major Newman had considered in their articles. This would ensure the POW felt his symptoms were ‘normal’ and reduce fear that by attending he would be labelled with a diagnosis and considered abnormal. Thus, the name ‘Civil Resettlement Units’ was derived. This was thought to both convey the meaning of the scheme while also not labelling it with any negative connotations and such language was utilised when it came to selling the scheme to POWs.

Despite such positive feedback, the pilot scheme had also revealed certain limitations with its scope and implementation. As those who attended were due for discharge and not volunteers, it remained unclear as to how many men would join future units on a voluntary basis. With no mean results available, those planning likely numbers for CRUs could only provide a provisional estimate. This was based on the assumption that 50% of those being discharged or released from the army would volunteer for the course. Planners therefore hoped that a single unit could deal with 256 trainees (16 officers and 240 ORs at a time) and that by the end of the first year 35,000 men would have passed through these units.⁴⁷ This estimate, however, proved to be woefully inaccurate and the actual numbers of volunteers was much higher. The CRU planners had been victims to the delays by the British government regarding decisions on demobilisation and POWs in particular. Churchill’s unwillingness to distract attention from fighting the war led to prevarication and delay with major decisions, including that of the actual criteria for demobilisation, which was put off till late 1944 after the successful invasion of France.⁴⁸ Until decisions on demobilisation criteria had been established, it had

⁴⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Pilot*, p. 5.

⁴⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, ‘*An introduction to special problems of repatriation*’ (draft for discussion), p. 5.

⁴⁸ Rex Pope, ‘British Demobilisation After the Second World War’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 30, Iss. 1. (Jan, 1995), p. 67, see also *Hansards parliamentary debates: Prisoners of War (Ministerial Responsibility)*, 17th March 1944, Vol. 404, Col. 2356 as to the confusion and uncertainty regarding demobilisation and POWs.

been hard to plan for the numbers of prisoners who would be eligible. This meant that the previous assumption of the number of repatriates who would be due for discharge had not consider the possibility that release on age and length of service may begin soon after the war with Germany had ended. If this was to be the case, the percentage of prisoners due for discharge would be much higher as a large majority of prisoners had comparatively long war service.⁴⁹ This led to extended waiting lists for some locations and the necessity to implement an extension scheme to address the high rate of cancelations. While the CRU planners could hardly be blamed for such underestimations, this incident did highlight the limitations of previous experiments and the confusion surrounding POW repatriation which hindered CRU planners.

The accommodation used by the pilot scheme had also proven less than ideal. The hutted accommodation bore the unfortunate resemblance to a stalag, especially so in the cold winter months and the wooded area that had surrounded the camp had lent to a dark oppressive atmosphere where those attending hardly saw the sun.⁵⁰ While the physical space had been considered a poor choice, the location had been considered perfect. The SRTU at Derby had been located within easy reach of towns and industrial districts, which made it possible for trainees to go out each evening and try their hand at a mix of activities. Derby was therefore considered an ideal location where men and communities could be reintroduced and ‘bridge the gap’ between military and civil life. Further, a mixed industrial element and rural agricultural surrounding would be able to cater to all men’s tastes.⁵¹ The SRTU at Derby provided planners of the CRUs with important lessons and was key in identifying the difficulties that were associated with the siting of a unit. Such conclusions would feed directly

⁴⁹ It had been previously assumed that only 20% of POWs would be due for discharge and given the new criteria this was revised to 50%.

⁵⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Pilot*, p.5.

⁵¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Special Problems* (Draft), p. 2.

into how the planners of the CRUs would approach this task and it was concluded that all future locations for CRUs should follow these guidelines. The next chapter shall cover the process of selecting locations and their importance to the effectiveness of the CRUs.

The SRTU had also experienced problems with the selection of staff. It had not been possible to submit the staff to a selection procedure as had been hoped due to the time limitations. The pool of potential staff had been further limited as the inclusion of former repatriates had been seen as greatly desirable.⁵² It had been concluded that staff who had themselves been prisoners of war would be capable of not only understanding the problems of repatriates, but of also withstanding in themselves the emotional stresses arising in work where it was necessary to overcome suspicion or hostility associated with the unique problems of long-term captivity.⁵³ It was therefore foreseen that staffing would be an issue in any future scheme so a training scheme was designed aimed at producing competent staff in as short a time as possible. Such a process would be called ‘budding off’, where principles of the resettlement process would be spread by apprenticeship to a working unit.⁵⁴ This training would be under the guidance of officers with experience of the psychological problems concerned with POWs. It would also include contact with appropriate civilians and civil bodies, introducing new staff to the community they would be working with and building relations which could be utilised in their work. Under such tutelage, trainees would gain knowledge on the correct way of handling the special requirements of POWs and in the methods employed in creating a therapeutic community. This would be the standard method employed by the CRUs and proved essential in keeping a pool of trained staff available.

⁵² This had been suggested as early as January 1944 by Major Newman in his article *The Prisoner of War Mentality*. Newman had suggested that any future organisation designed to deal with repatriates should be staffed by medical practitioners who ‘understood the prisoner of war life.’ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 10.

⁵³ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p.239.

⁵⁴ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p.239.

Wilson was also keen to provide training for staff who would be in direct communication with POWs such as those medical officers who would attend the medical boards. Such training was implemented before the CRU scheme had been given approval and shows the confidence Wilson had in his approach. Lectures were arranged for officers who were going to prison camps detailing how to approach potential volunteers and explain the benefits of attendance in a way that the POW could process. Guidance was given to officers regarding how to approach men in a ‘manifestly sincere manner’, with emphasis that POWs would resent the offer of sympathy or pity.⁵⁵ When bringing up the topic of the repatriate’s captivity, phrases such as “when were you captured” should be avoided, instead, if necessary, a better phrase would be “when were you taken”.⁵⁶ MOs were also advised to not refer to the repatriate as a prisoner. In a man who was already in an uncertain frame of mind and who may be suffering from guilt and depression, any association with prisoners would, in their minds at least, put them in the same category as pickpockets and burglars further setting them apart from the community they were trying to return to.⁵⁷ Sincere communication and honest approach was a vital part of the voluntary system as any attendee who felt forced or coerced into the units would arrive with a resentment towards staff much like that between the POW and their former camp oppressors.

It was believed that the success or failure of the CRUs relied heavily on the boards as it was here that the repatriate would signify their wish to volunteer. The training and demeanor of the officer’s present would therefore have a great influence on their decision to attend. Trust was an essential component as those who were most likely in need of resettlement were also the least likely to volunteer because of their excess of suspicion of authority. Therefore, officers were advised to act with as much good faith and honesty as possible in their communications.

⁵⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Notes for Advisors*, p. 3.

⁵⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Notes for Advisors*, p. 3.

⁵⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Notes for Advisors*, p. 3.

It was also seen as desirable that MOs should have seen CRUs in action and invitations were extended for a visit at their mutual convenience.⁵⁸ The importance of the MO's role in persuading the repatriate to attend the CRU scheme was highlighted in the notes given to advisors who, it was noted, had a moral responsibility to prevent 'misery and unhappiness in repatriated men and their families'.⁵⁹ If men did not volunteer on the spot, then a postcard with details of the scheme would be issued and the repatriate would be told that they would be eligible to volunteer up till the forty-eighth day of their terminal leave.⁶⁰

Figure 5: Neil Armstrong, personal collection: Invitation to attend CRU

⁵⁸ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, Notes for Advisors, p. 3.

⁵⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, Notes for Advisors, p. 1.

⁶⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, Notes for Advisors, p. 2.

Further advice was provided for staff at medical boards and a leaflet was issued which highlighted common arguments against volunteering and ways to counter these.⁶¹ During the interview, MOs were encouraged to ask as many questions as possible and, if the repatriate posed questions that could not be immediately answered, MOs could ring up CRU HQ, even in the middle of an interview. This, it was believed, would act to build up trust in the mind of the repatriate towards the scheme. With such trust earned, the repatriate was more likely to engage and offer reasons as to why they feared attending. Such reasons included a lack of understanding of the scheme and what it could offer and provide, and a misconception that the scheme was similar to pre-war vocational training schemes. It was believed by Wilson that communicating the scheme effectively and ensuring the POW understood its purpose was necessary as if POWs were to 'sign a form without understanding it, they may possibly change their minds and fail to turn up'.⁶² The leaflet also gave advice in dealing with familial pressures and in countering common complaints that relatives gave the returning man.⁶³ Outside influence could have just as much effect on the decision to volunteer and engagement with relatives was just as important. Planners therefore began to think of ways to engage with relatives and the public and to ease any reservations relatives had of their men attending a CRU. Despite the teething problems, however, the pilot scheme had been fruitful in shedding light in areas that had needed improvement and was deemed sufficiently successful to justify the inauguration of a general civil resettlement scheme. In March 1945, the War Office would finally agree to the creation of twenty Civil Resettlement Units.

⁶¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, 'Volunteering for Civil Resettlement Units, Notes for Military Advisor Officers', pp. 9-10.

⁶² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Notes for Advisors*, p. 1.

⁶³ Such complaints included the repatriate's wife being against the scheme and counterarguments included reminding the repatriate what would their wives say if they got into the wrong job?

Communication and the press campaigns.

As discussed previously, the planners of the CRUs wanted to engage repatriates as early as possible and great emphasis was put into the training of the medical officers who would staff the medical boards or visit POWs 'in theatre'. There was also a continuation of engaging with POWs upon their return. Alongside this there was a concerted effort to publicise the purpose of the CRUs to the public. It was hoped that by generating public interest in the CRUs, this could be used to their advantage and communities would be more engaged with the resettlement process. Such a campaign also gave the public a better understanding of repatriates needs and normalised a set of terminology that the CRUs used.

Planners arranged, as a matter of urgency, a dinner at Hatfield House (No.1 CRU) where representatives of the general public, radio and press attending could learn more of the scheme and disseminate this information to a wider audience.⁶⁴ Wilson also believed that the Red Cross could be utilised in keeping men informed of the 'aims, methods and results of rehabilitation' in the period before their return.⁶⁵ In June 1945, the Red Cross in its journal *The Prisoner of War* (free to both POWs and their next of kin), published an article highlighting the CRU scheme.⁶⁶ In this article entitled 'Bridging The Gap' (itself echoing the terminology used by the CRU planners), the language was tailored to appeal to the returning repatriate. The voluntary nature of the CRUs was highlighted, and it was made clear that men could leave at any time. Further, evenings would be the repatriate's own time to do as he pleased with weekend leave available or sleeping out passes for those with homes nearby. At all times the article highlighted that the CRU was a 'half-way house', where the repatriate could feel comfortable in catching up with events which had taken place in his absence, and where he can

⁶⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, Civil Resettlement Planning Memoranda III, 'The Formation and Work of the Planning Staff', p. 3.

⁶⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Civil Resettlement Planning Memoranda III*, p. 2.

⁶⁶ The Prisoner of War, "Bridging the Gap", *The Official Journal of the Prisoners of War Department of the Red Cross and St John War Organisation*, Vol. 4, Iss. 38, (1945), p. 7.

access advice from qualified persons on employment, finance, health, and personal matters.⁶⁷ By noting that discipline would be kept to a minimum and that the repatriate's only duties would be to keep his 'bed and belongings tidy', it further emphasised the 'half-way' nature of the units and a step back from the army.⁶⁸ The frequent reference to the staff as qualified experts and highlighting the repatriate's freedom of choice were a direct result of experience gained from the SRTU. Such features had been popular amongst attendees of the SRTUs and had proven to have great appeal to repatriates.⁶⁹ Further emphasis was put on the location and facilities. Camps would be in 'pleasant surroundings' near a town of their choice and they would sleep in 'a real bed, with springs and... between sheets', an appealing prospect for men who had been accustomed to sleeping on the hard bunks of the stalags.⁷⁰ Thus, the locations were as much a selling point as the benefits of attending the scheme and played their part in the repatriate's decision to volunteer. The emphasis placed on these facilities directly resulted from the lesson learned from the SRTU and their successful employment in the advertisement of the units would not have been possible without the conclusions drawn from this experiment. The planning and selection of locations played such an important role that chapter four of this thesis is dedicated to their analysis.

The advertising campaign was also supplemented with posters, and, in addition to the interview at the medical board, POWs were also issued with a pamphlet entitled 'Settling Down in Civvy Street'. This was to be sent to the repatriate two weeks after they had started their leave and would explain in greater detail the purpose of the CRUs and the benefits of attending. During this fortnight break it was considered vital that some form of communication be kept with the repatriate as it was the period when they may experience difficulties settling. Much

⁶⁷ The Prisoner of War, "*Bridging the Gap*", p. 7.

⁶⁸ The Prisoner of War, "*Bridging the Gap*", p. 7.

⁶⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Notes for Advisors*, p. 6.

⁷⁰ The Prisoner of War, "*Bridging the Gap*", p. 7.

like Major Newman's article had suggested, for some it would take time for symptoms to surface and for repatriates to identify and realise that some form of readjustment would be beneficial. This pamphlet was updated soon after repatriates from the Far East began to arrive in the UK and had a second edition printed six months after its initial release.⁷¹

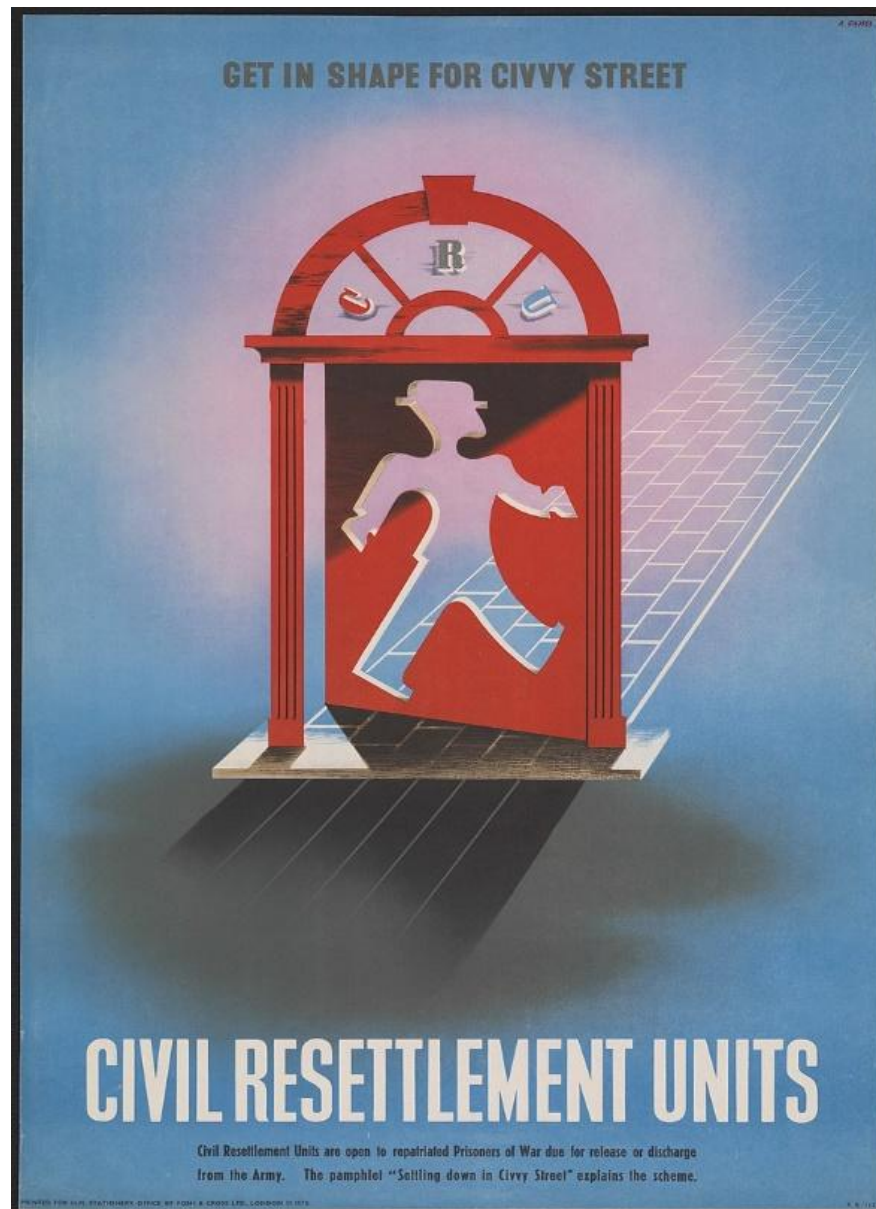


Figure 6: Abram Games (artist), Get in Shape for Civvy Street, (London: H.M Stationary Office, Fosh & Cross Ltd)

⁷¹ TWC SA/TH/B/2/1/2/2/3, 'Settling Down in Civvy Street', 'Settling Down in Civvy Street: Mark II'.

The terminology used in the booklet was carefully selected and reflected earlier research focusing on personal choice, emphasising that for rehabilitation to be successful, the repatriate must not feel coerced and must opt in voluntarily. As with the article in *The Prisoner of War*, care was taken to highlight the comfy surroundings and good food that the CRUs would provide. This was designed to appeal to POWs by reinforcing the idea that attending would not delay or deny comforts that had been denied to them for so long.⁷² In all matters the POW would have freedom of choice and, ultimately, would be responsible and in control of his own experience. The emphasis on the repatriate's freedom of choice would form part of his resocialisation back into democratic society. It was hoped it would promote independent thought away from his army mindset where things had often been done for him. Additionally, for the CRUs to succeed they needed the cooperation of the repatriate, so it was essential that he did not feel forced to participate in activities. Such conclusions had been drawn from the previous work done by Bion at Northfield and the WOSBs. Bion believed a voluntary scheme would be the only way to prevent POWs from responding with negative feelings towards assistance.⁷³

The language use in 'Settling Down in Civvy Street' was highly persuasive. Any change in attitude the POW may believe had taken place within himself was never referred to as negative: 'you are more experienced... you have a new outlook on civil life, a more developed outlook, and, quite possibly, a better one than before'.⁷⁴ Conditionals such as 'if' were employed to highlight this personal choice and great emphasis was placed that such units would neither impede the repatriate's freedoms nor delay their return home indefinitely.⁷⁵ Return to civilian life may be confusing, but this was not the fault of the POW as 'civvy street'

⁷² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Notes for Advisors*, p. 6.

⁷³ Trist, *Working with Bion in the 1940's*, pp. 19-21.

⁷⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Settling Down: Mark I*, p. 3.

⁷⁵ White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 186.

had also changed. A stay at a CRU would bridge this gap and give the attendee time to readapt and find his feet again. The booklet, while highlighting the benefits of attending a CRU, was also keen to highlight what it was not. The CRUs were neither a training camp nor a job finding agency, instead with the help from experts, they would help the repatriate make an informed decision ‘because your future happiness depends on the job you take’.⁷⁶ This was a direct result of the research conducted at the SRTU unit in Derby. Results from the questionnaires of those who had attended showed that mentions of training camps or any believed association with the army’s own pre-war vocational scheme were detrimental when it came to matters of volunteering. This was to reassure the volunteer and dispel the myth that the CRU was a means for running them into further service and at no stage would any attempt be made to delay their return to civilian life.

The booklet also appealed to the potential volunteer beyond the personal benefits and how attendance could also benefit the repatriate’s family. The CRUs were a place that would give attendees a better chance of supporting their families with specially trained staff on hand to guide decisions and to allow the repatriate to try their hand in roles before making up their minds. This was a direct appeal to the repatriate’s masculinity and the expected role of the bread winner. By taking personal responsibility and attending a CRU, this would give agency back to the repatriate in their home life, a place where they may no longer be the sole provider. This appeal made the CRUs particularly attractive to those younger repatriates who may not have had a career to return to or those who had yet to secure a job. At all stages, however, the voluntary nature was reinforced. The repatriate was encouraged to talk things over with their family; the booklet’s casual tone was designed to appear encouraging, not forced. The sign off was almost offhanded in its nature, more of what friends would say to each other, ‘good luck to you anyways’. The ball was firmly in the repatriate’s hands with only a small word of advice

⁷⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Settling Down: Mark I*, p. 6.

offered: 'a few weeks won't make much difference after all these years'.⁷⁷ The effective use of such persuasive language came directly from the lessons learned from interviews with repatriates from the SRTU. The way the language was utilised in persuading repatriates to volunteer was defined by the previous experience gained from this contact and helped shape how the CRUs approached repatriates.

Alongside the information available to POWs, there was an information campaign targeting local communities. In addition to the talk and radio broadcast held at Hatfield House, staff assigned to CRUs held talks in the local area where they were assigned. Major Davies of the Sherborne unit (No. 19 CRU) held a talk at the local rotary club explaining the purpose of the CRUs. In this talk Major Davies highlighted the importance of the local community and made a direct appeal to those present asking if any would be able to accept men in their places of work or shops for one or two days or would be willing to allow visit parties.⁷⁸ Major Davies also appealed to the sense of community and collective responsibility. As research previously done by Mass Observation in *The Journey Home* had suggested, there was an underlying belief that demobilisation after the First World War had been mishandled and that it had to be done right this time.⁷⁹ By suggesting that the returning men held a general anxiety and feeling of not being wanted or being able to fit in back home, Davies was tapping into this sense that, as a collective, the local community could endeavour to right this wrong. By engaging with this public mood, the advertising campaign framed resettlement as a 'shared struggle' aiming to utilise the public's curiosity and desire to help to the CRUs benefit. This approach was shaped by previous experiments which highlighted the effectiveness in mobilising the community in support of resettlement.

⁷⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Settling Down: Mark I*, p. 8.

⁷⁸ 'Prisoner of War Resettlement', *Western Gazette*, 28 September 1945, p. 7.

⁷⁹ Mass Observation, *Journey Home*, pp. 25, 30, 77 - 99.

By holding the talk at the rotary club, this had also been carefully targeted as to engage with as many people of influence as possible. The national press also ran articles. *The Times* published the article, 'Helping Repatriated Prisoners of War', in April 1945, even before information had been circulated by the Ministry of Labour.⁸⁰ This article closely mirrored the information which would be published in the pamphlet issued to POWs and *The Times* clearly had contact and advice from CRU headquarters when it was written. Articles from the *Gloucestershire Echo* and the *Derby Daily Telegraph* also echoed the official language of the CRU planners, regurgitating the phrase 'Bridging the Gap' and 'half-way house'.⁸¹ Articles were tailored to the publication's readerships and designed to make the CRUs as appealing as possible with the comfort of the accommodation, the expertise of the staff, and the freedom of choice that the repatriate would have frequently featured. Further, the appeal for help was directed at the readership's belief of the mismanagement from the First World War, with Lieutenant Colonel A. C. Whitcombe stating that the aim of the units was to "avoid the mistakes of the last war of not helping ex-prisoners to resettle in civilian life".⁸²

However, the biggest publicity coup that the CRUs achieved was on Thursday, 12 July, when Hatfield House received a royal visit. Each publication published the event in its own style and advertised the CRUs in a way designed to best engage with their readership, highlighting the benefits of attending and the expertise of the staff. *The Times* advertised the scheme as the noblest of philanthropic traditions wrapped up in the patriotism and prestige of royal assent describing children, 'some of them smaller than the Union Jacks they waved', lining the walls and cheering the King and Queen.⁸³ The article outlined 'the imaginative

⁸⁰ White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 188, 'CRU Camps', *The Times*, 26 April 1945, p. 2.

⁸¹ 'Helping Ex POWs back to Civilian Life', *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 2 November 1945, p. 4; 'Helping Them Back to Civvy Street', *Gloucestershire Echo*, 27 July 1945, p. 4.

⁸² 'Helping Ex POWs back to Civilian Life', *Derby Daily Telegraph*, p. 4.

⁸³ 'Resettling War Prisoners: Aids to Civil Life: The King and Queen at Hatfield', *The Times*, 13 July 1945, p. 4.

scheme' in the most positive of lights and tactfully with careful word choice, set the scheme as desirable to join, referencing the beautiful country home and the long list of volunteers for the scheme.⁸⁴ The positive tone ran throughout the article with 'one old sweat' volunteering that 'he and his comrades had arrived to look for the catch in it all. But went on to add that there were no catches, that he and his friends were thoroughly enjoying their stay, and that it was a first-class scheme'.⁸⁵

This is further evidence that CRU headquarters had a hand in their advertisement. In the planning stages of the CRUs, much emphasis was put on dispelling any myths or suspicions volunteers would have regarding the unit, and this seemingly innocuous line, was well telegraphed to do such. An article in the *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* reported on the King and Queen's visit with a concluding nod to the local area. This article also reflected the official terminology of the CRU planners with explanations of men's anxieties in returning back to 'the brave new world', reflecting the notes for vocational staff.⁸⁶ To engage with the local readership further, this article also coincided with the imminent opening of the CRU based at Ilkley and concluded with another positive testimony of the work of the CRUs, stating that 'if Hatfield provides any guidance, they will not want to leave them quickly'.⁸⁷

As a sign of the unifying purpose of the CRUs, the reporting was positive across the entire political spectrum. The *Daily Worker* would publish an article on the CRUs stressing the role the community would play in the units and encouraging locals to visit the unit.⁸⁸ Local participation was further encouraged with Lieutenant-Colonel Christie stating that if local clubs such as darts, billiards, and tennis could get involved, 'they... will be doing the chaps a very

⁸⁴ 'Aids to Civil Life', *The Times*, p. 4.

⁸⁵ 'Aids to Civil Life', *The Times*, p. 4.

⁸⁶ 'The King and Queen with Ex-Prisoners: Visit to Civil Resettlement Unit', *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 13 July 1945, p. 3, TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/5, *Notes for vocational staff. No. 3. The CRU programme from the vocational angle*, p. 1.

⁸⁷ 'Ex-Prisoners', *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, p. 3.

⁸⁸ 'Halfway House to Civvy Street', *The Daily Worker*, 22 August 1945, p. 3.

good turn'.⁸⁹ The press coverage was designed to emphasise the role of the CRUs as a bridge between military and civilian life while carefully imitating official language as a persuasive measure to engage volunteers.

As the experience with the SRTU unit had shown, there was a large wellspring of curiosity within communities regarding the CRUs and by advertising the scheme to the public, it would allow the units to take advantage of such curiosity. There was also a belief that by advertising to the public, they could tie the CRUs into the wider discussion of demobilisation reinforcing the idea that POWs were normal. It was therefore hoped that the advertisement strategy would prompt 'discussions we desire to see... In this way the problems of the repatriated prisoner of war can be dealt with as part of a larger problem without singling them out in a way which is often open to misinterpretation'.⁹⁰ The advertising, therefore, played a role in normalising the needs of POWs and in bringing communities together towards a common objective of righting a previous wrong. Despite the media campaign, however, by the end of December 1945 some serious problems with POW engagement had been identified.

While discussing the development of the civil resettlement extension scheme it was noted that attempts to publicise the CRUs through pamphlets, press reports, broadcasts and other means had clearly failed to cover the 'field of potential need' and that many repatriates were still unaware of the scheme.⁹¹ This failure of communication was so great that some units took matters into their own hands with No. 14 unit (Derby) advertising in the local paper in a direct appeal to ex-POWs and the community that the unit could help in many ways even if the men could not attend the CRU for a full course.⁹² This was an area where the extension visitors

⁸⁹ 'Halfway House', *The Daily Worker*, p. 3.

⁹⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Notes for Advisors*, p. 6, White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 187.

⁹¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *The Development of the Civil Resettlement Extension Scheme Since December 1945*, p. 2.

⁹² 'Letter to the Forces – Or you may lose', *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 21 March 1946, p. 3.

were ideally placed to assist and help could be given on a non-residential basis.⁹³ Many POWs who had missed the initial call up procedure may have already found themselves employed but still in need of advice and assistance. At this stage of their resettlement, attending a full course would prove difficult with employment responsibilities. By advertising in this way, the Derby unit could provide maximum assistance without disrupting the POW's routine and unbalance their resettlement progress. It would also act as a powerful persuasion tool as assistance could be provided to the repatriate in a manner convenient to himself in an environment he was comfortable in. Such non-intrusive methods would act to normalise any difficulties the repatriate may be experiencing and this approach towards normalising resettlement reflected the development of previous research and its employment by the CRUs.

Such breakdowns in communications were not just limited to communication upon the repatriate's return. It had also proved difficult to engage POWs prior to their release from captivity. During a parliamentary debate, Sir J. Grigg (Secretary of State for War) was challenged regarding the arrangements for communicating post war information to POWs. His reply made it clear that the relocation of POWs around Germany had made such efforts difficult and that to send such information 'in any large numbers would clog up the arrangements for prisoners getting mail, and so would not be very much to their liking'.⁹⁴ Mail from home was thus given priority over such information and many remained unaware of the scheme.

In an attempt to rectify the breakdown in communication the extension scheme became directly involved in contacting those POWs who had not attended a CRU. There was an estimated 100,000 POWs who had yet to register interest and the contacting of these numbers proved beyond the resources available to the CRUs. Therefore, the role of the CRU would

⁹³ TWC SA/TH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Development of Extension Scheme*, p. 4.

⁹⁴ House of Commons, *Hansards parliamentary debates: Post war Training and Employment*, 6th March 1945, Vol. 408, Cols. 1805-1806.

become more consultive, co-ordinating the voluntary bodies who would be responsible for spreading the scheme more widely.⁹⁵ Organisations such as the Red Cross assisted in this task, working alongside CRU staff by compiling and formatting a complete record of all POWs who had not attended. For ease of administration, the country was divided into regions coinciding with Red Cross county divisions and it was hoped that this would speed up the contacting process and assigning those repatriates wishing to attend a CRU. The scale of the operation highlighted how important advertisement and communication was to the CRUs. In order for the CRUs to adequately discharge their responsibilities, as many POWs had to be made aware of the units and their rights connected with them.⁹⁶ The extension scheme found almost immediate success, finding that need for help existed in many cases which would have never reached a CRU.⁹⁷ The extension scheme shows the constant development and streamlining of procedures that the CRUs would adopt throughout their lifespan. Units were not stagnant but a living part of a community, would adapt to circumstances, and responded to their needs. This flexibility of approach was a sign of the influence of members of the ‘invisible college’ whose work at the WOSBs and Northfield shaped the methods employed by the CRUs. By utilising the ‘budding off’ method to train staff, it ensured they would be familiar with how this flexibility in approach could be effectively used and respond to changing situations in an effective manner. The flexibility of units and how they adapted to the circumstances of the communities they served would go beyond the extension scheme and touch on the peculiarities of each region’s cultural geography which shall be explored in the next chapter.

⁹⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Development of Extension Scheme*, p. 2.

⁹⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Development of Extension Scheme*, p. 2.

⁹⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Development of Extension Scheme*, p. 4.

Conclusion

Even as late as 1943, the War Office's opinion was that POWs did not constitute a vulnerable or problematic group. It was the work of J. R. Rees and his colleagues in the invisible college that did much to change this opinion. Rees had recruited many of these men at the outbreak of war and the Tavistock Clinic and its methods influenced much of the psychiatric work performed during the Second World War. These officers had previously used their expertise at the WOSBs, Northfield and Crookham dealing with difficult repatriated personnel and problem officers. The compelling evidence that the invisible college collected regarding POWs was used as a means of mobilising the collective responsibility of the various governmental departments towards cooperation and action.

This was a remarkable turnaround in such a short amount of time and could not have been achieved without Rees whose ability to work within the framework of the army while enlisting constant and enthusiastic support for his methods carried much weight. The continued support of Rees and the methods implemented under him showed the mark of confidence in the approach of the Tavistock despite its unorthodox approach. The results of previous work such as the WOSBs marked a changing of attitudes towards the employment of psychiatry and its ability to help. While there was also a growing public demand that both the army and government act, the influence of Rees and his colleagues should not be underestimated in persuading the War Office that a repatriation scheme should be implemented. With a general scheme agreed upon, the members of the invisible college were the obvious choice to plan and implement such an undertaking. The man selected to run the Trial unit, A. T. M. Wilson, utilised both staff and principles from previous experiments such as Crookham and Northfield.

The SRTU was a refinement of these earlier methods and did much to address the problems they had experienced during these experiments. The trial run allowed further

refinement of methods and in providing much experience in POW handling that had hindered earlier works. By working closely with the attached community and with thorough follow up work, the pilot scheme identified key areas that would require attention before the CRUs could be implemented. New guidance on the nature of the future CRUs were implemented from the experience and feedback. The importance of engaging with the local businesses and people was paramount and extra time would be given when opening new units to build close working relationships with the community. The length of the course had also been refined, and feedback had shown that the balance between practical and theoretical needed to be redressed. Due to the difficulty in retaining concentration, theoretical was reduced and more practical activities arranged. These practical activities were of much greater interest to attendees and allowed them to try new things and regain confidence in their own abilities. In addition, a training scheme was enacted and ‘budding off’ aimed at producing the necessary numbers of trained staff that were required. This proved successful enough that it would be employed by the CRU scheme later. Finally, the limitations of the location and psychical space had been highlighted. This would influence planner’s decisions as to the siting of CRU units and the environment was considered just as important as the content of the course for future volunteers.

With the SRTU considered a success and the go ahead given for the CRUs, a large publicity drive was enacted. This was not just aimed at communicating the purpose of the scheme to the public but also involved contacting the vast number of POWs who would be eligible for the course. The campaign had some notable successes in generating publicity and was disseminated at both national and local level. This publicity campaign was designed to educate the civilian population, engaging the curiosity surrounding the scheme and persuading those of influence within the local communities to support its aims. By emphasising how CRUs would act as a ‘bridge’ between civilians and the military, the campaign effectively aimed at psychologising home communities to the problems POWs would face.

At the POW level, it aimed to dispel any anxieties they would face and in answering common questions regarding the scheme. POWs would be kept informed of the benefits of attending during all parts of the repatriation process and with careful language use, aimed at persuading rather than forcing, the POW. When it was noted that POW awareness of the scheme appeared to be below expectation, steps were taken to rectify this engaging with local and national organisations to reach as many of those who were in need as possible. Despite certain inadequacies in the advertisement of the CRUs, the range and wide dispersal of material cannot be dismissed. The engagement with local communities and especially with the creation of extension visitors, must be seen as a success and built upon previous knowledge from SRTU Derby, and Northfield. By responding to such difficulties, the CRUs evolved with the community, streamlining procedures, and responding to the needs of repatriates. New methods of engagement such as the extension scheme would have a positive impact on the attendance and efficiency of units and put the work of the CRUs at the heart of the community. By evolving and adopting new procedures the CRUs could effectively respond to new circumstances. The next chapter shall continue to explore the difficulties planners faced and the responses towards these.

Chapter 4: Location, Location, Location.

Previous chapters have highlighted the development of POW resettlement and how this shaped how the CRUs would function. Aside from factors behind resocialisation, a common theme had emerged from such research, that of the importance of the physical appearance of the accommodation and the importance of a unit's geographical location. Conclusions from both Northfield and STRU Derby highlighted several issues planners would need to address when locating units. Beyond the importance of its physical appearance, there would be further considerations that planners would need to address. These included the region's cultural geography and the individual prospects of the area a unit would serve. The rapid need for CRUs would also be an important factor in the decisions made and units would need to not only meet such factors as above but also be as practical a choice as possible to reduce set up.

In this chapter the term 'cultural geography' will be referred to frequently and it is worth explaining in which ways this thesis will define and utilise this term. This study defines this term within the context of cultural values, experiences, and practices helping form a shared identity either as a grouping a people (a unit of soldiers for example), or within a defined location (such as the regions CRUs would be assigned to). In addition, this study also utilises the term to refer to a region's economy, its prospects and work traditions. As this chapter will demonstrate, grounding resocialisation in the familiar through regional identity would form a part of the CRUs success and would play their role in how units would approach the regions they were assigned to. It is worth noting that as an existing term, cultural geography has multiple definitions and the literature surrounding this field will be acknowledged further in this chapter.

This chapter provides more context to the decisions taken when choosing suitable locations and accommodation for CRUs and the factors surrounding these decisions. There

would be a total of twenty Civil Resettlement Units (21 if the ‘forgotten’ CRU at Ballymena is included) and as such, it would be impossible to provide an in-depth analysis of all 20 units. The unit at Ballymena is missing from current literature surrounding the CRUs and by including this unit this thesis is uniquely placed in the current secondary literature. As the quality of record keeping and follow up studies could vary from unit to unit, there is also more information readily available for some units than others. To provide a good sample of analysis this chapter will use three units as a case study to analyse the importance of location. These units will be No. 6 Co. Durham, No. 9 and 20 Scotland, and No. 5 Ballymena. These units have been chosen as they represent a good geographical spread of the UK with differing social and cultural norms. This allows this chapter to provide a clearer understanding of how each region’s cultural geography was an important factor in resocialisation and the differing methods of approach CRUs would take in utilising them. Additionally, there is more readily available information in the primary literature on these units, and thus, a greater degree of evidence and analysis can be provided.

The first section will explore the reasonings behind the choice of the country house as suitable accommodation for CRUs. It will examine why these locations were chosen and how this choice was made for psychological as well as practical reasons. In this analysis it shall also highlight how the rapid return of POWs and the need to establish units would affect the initial response in finding accommodation and the solutions, if any, planners would utilise. This section shall also argue that in siting CRUs there was a more nuanced reasoning behind the final choices. These considerations would include aspects of future proofing and the importance of a region’s cultural geography. In doing so it argues that a region’s cultural values and traditions and how the attached CRU interacted within this element, was an important factor in their success in resocialising repatriates.

Continuing the theme of cultural geography, the second section shall examine the work of No. 6 CRU Co. Durham. By using this unit as a case study, it will discuss how the region's culture shaped how the CRU responded to the needs of its volunteers. By embracing the region's identity, it will show how the CRU integrated into the community and by creating an atmosphere of a 'home away from home', how this helped in successfully resocialising those who attended.

The third section will analyse the situation in Scotland. It will discuss how the countries prospects factored into the decisions taken in finding a suitable location for Scottish units. It will explore the difficulties that Scottish units faced, and whether a slow response to Scotland's need for units affected the CRUs ability to function effectively. By analysing these factors, it will discuss how Scottish units responded to these difficulties, whether such difficulties should have been foreseen, and if the solutions offered were effective. In the analysis of the ways in which the CRUs would respond to regional difficulties, it will argue that operations would be a key factor in overcoming locational difficulties.

The final section shall explore resettlement in Ireland. It will explore the situation in Northern Ireland through the 'forgotten CRU' located at Ballymena. This unit is omitted in the current literature, which only refers to the 20 units located in England, Scotland, and Wales, and as such, there is no mention of a CRU in Ireland and its role had been 'forgotten'. It will discuss if there were any extra difficulties facing repatriates in Ireland, how did the community view its wartime experience and whether this affected the response to CRUs. It will further explore what, if anything, was done for volunteers from the Republic of Ireland and what role did the CRUs play in this. By discussing these factors, it will analyse if these shaped how resettlement was approached in Ireland and if the choice of location for the unit was suitable. By analysing the difficulties experienced in Ireland, it will argue that cultural geography played a significant role in the performance of the unit at Ballymena and in the approach taken by

CRU planners in extending help to the Republic of Ireland. Where regional difficulties were identified as being problematic, operations would offer practical solutions that a physical unit could not.

By analysing the factors underpinning the choice of accommodation and how units were located this chapter argues that planners approached the locating of units in a much more nuanced way than previously thought. Previous experiments had provided a foundation of information as to how physical and geographical factors could affect resettlement and planners would expand upon this to include numerous other considerations. Each unit was shaped by the region it served and cultural factors and regional differences played an important role in how CRUs approached resocialisation. By demonstrating the role location played in resocialisation and the ways in which cultural geography was utilised, this chapter shows the importance of this factor in the CRUs success. In doing so, however, it highlights failures in the planning stage and the unsuitability of many locations. While location was clearly considered important in the hierarchy of factors underpinning the success of the CRUs, this chapter suggests it was not the main factor.

A Matter of Time and Place.

It was barely a year after Crookham and Northfield had begun when approval was given for the formation of the CRUs. Planners now faced the reality of preparing to return thousands of POWs back into civilian life. As such, a number of planning meetings were held in which policy regarding the locations of the CRUs were discussed. These meetings would draw upon the experience gained from Northfield and the SRTU and aim to eliminate destabilising elements that had been identified from the conclusions of these experiments. A major task in fulfilling this objective would be finding suitable accommodation for these men. A great deal

of thought was put into siting these locations taking into consideration the practicalities of running the units and of the physical and geographical aspects of these locations.

Repatriated prisoners of war had already begun to arrive as early as February 1945, well before the War Office had given the go ahead for the creation of the scheme. Luckily, with the SRTU running from November 1944, sufficient work had progressed that an outline of the CRUs was formulated. This had meant that a proportion of POWs who had arrived in February had been given details of the CRU scheme. It was estimated that around 150 of the 600 men told, would volunteer and accommodation for these men would be required post haste.¹ Allowing for the six weeks leave period, these POWs would require accommodation as early as mid-March. It was further estimated that there would be another intake of around 200 men in March that would need accommodation any time after 15 May.² There was therefore a rush to find accommodation for these repatriates, and the scheme had already begun with a potential delay. Negotiations were underway for taking over Hatfield House (HQ, No. 1 CRU), which would only require minimal alterations to accommodate the planning staff and the attached CRU. Given the need to make essential contacts within the community and the necessity for any alterations and moving of equipment, it was believed to be just possible to select and train the requisite staff in the six-week time frame.³ This left a very slim margin for error and if any delays were to occur in completing the negotiations, or in selecting and training the staff, it was highly likely that the unit would not be operational in time. As a temporary solution, it was agreed that the SRTU at Derby, despite its unsuitability could be used to accommodate part of the first batch of volunteers. The pace of returning POWs and the initial lack of resources initially overwhelmed the ability of CRU headquarters to find suitable accommodation. As shown in chapter 3, this in part could not have been foreseen and the unexpected progression

¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/4, *Weekly Statistical Statements: The Civil Resettlement Situation*, p. 1.

² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/4, *Resettlement Situation*, p. 1.

³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Notes on the policy on the location of crus*, p. 1.

of Allied armies in Germany added an extra sense of urgency in establishing units.⁴ The average turnaround from development to a working CRU would be four weeks and the speed of setting up units and the ability in finding solutions to the initial unpreparedness demonstrate the importance of operations management behind the success of the CRUs.⁵ The quick turnaround of units, however, was not perfect and the four week turnaround was considered the minimum time required in training staff adequately.⁶



Figure 7: Unknown Photographer, Visitors Book, No. 1 Civil Resettlement Unit, Hatfield House

While it was concluded that the location at Derby had been ideal, located near a sizeable town with a ‘mixed industrial element and rural agricultural surroundings’, the camp itself reminded many of the stalags they had just been liberated from.⁷ The search for future locations would thus have to eliminate this physical barrier to resettlement whilst also fulfilling the practical needs of the unit and its men. The lessons learned from Derby and Northfield would

⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Location of crus*, p. 2.

⁵ See appendix for graph of progression of working CRUs.

⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/2, SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Civil Resettlement Planning memoranda IV, ‘Rates of Formation of Working CRUs’*, p. 3.

⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Special Problems (Draft)*, p. 2, TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Pilot*, p.7.

be invaluable in informing the decisions in locating CRUs. It was eventually decided that accommodation should be, where possible, located in country houses and these locations were decided upon for as much psychological as practical reasons. It was believed country houses would present the most agreeable surroundings and act as a promise of the culture and wealth that active participation in post war democratic society might offer the repatriates.⁸ These democratic principles were a component so often missing from army and prisoner life and it was hoped such surroundings would help facilitate the reconnection with the democratic society they would be returning to.⁹ In addition to this, many country houses had already been requisitioned by the government and had been converted to use as barracks, hospitals, military headquarters, and evacuation centres.¹⁰ As such, they were the perfect choice to accommodate both staff and the large numbers of volunteers expected. This also enabled planners to utilise any preexisting structures and facilities attached to these locations, reduce costs, and, as with Hatfield House, mean there would be less work in converting them to CRUs.¹¹ As POWs were already beginning to arrive, this would help speed the process of establishing units and cut down waiting lists. The decisions made behind the location of CRUs represented a fine balancing act, planners needed to work within a limited budget whilst addressing the issues from the conclusions of the SRTU at Derby. Such considerations demonstrate the importance of operations when planning locations. The effective management between meeting the needs of the repatriate, keeping within budget, and applying this on a large scale was a considerable factor behind the success of the CRUs.

⁸ White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 161, TWC SA/TH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Notes for Advisors*, p. 7.

⁹ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.243.

¹⁰ For a history of the uses of the country house during the Second World War see, John Martin Robinson, *The country house at war*, (London: Bodley Head Ltd, 1989).

¹¹ The CRUs were very expensive to run and one of the reasons for their short operating period was this cost.

When considering suitable locations, planners would also consider the future development potential of areas, and a degree of future proofing was discussed. This would include the present and future demand of industry, demand for labour and availability of housing.¹² This ensured that it was not just the immediate needs of the repatriate that was met, with future resettlement issues also considered. There was, however, a limitation regarding such future planning and there was a level of uncertainty as the nearing election and the shape of the future government could change much. As new units opened, it quickly became apparent that given the parameters for locating suitable sites that the ‘objectives had not been reached’.¹³ It became clear that there was a disparity in opportunities in certain areas, especially the deprived parts of the country whose industries had experienced decline even before the outbreak of war. Information emerging from CRUs suggested that in areas with a long history of industrial depression POW life tended to merge with other disturbances. Repatriates in these areas experienced more widespread unsettledness suggesting a complex relationship with the area’s industrial crises and traumata in social morale experienced in these communities.¹⁴ The impact of an unsuitable location in a CRU’s ability to resocialise repatriates shows their importance. That the CRUs had failed to meet their objectives with some sites, however, demonstrates a failure in planning. To some extent, this could not be helped, the urgency of units and the uncertainty behind future developments limited how CRUs could respond. To address these difficulties a number of specialist staff would be on hand to provide the repatriate with assistance in finding employment and in social matters. Both the Vocational and Civil Liaison Officers would help repatriates bridge these difficulties working closely with the Ministry of Labour in areas experiencing high unemployment and maintaining contact with social services to assist with difficulties at home. Therefore, in areas where a CRU had failed

¹² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/10, *Report on a Visit of Lt. Col Bridger and Miss Menzies to the Board of Trade*, 12 August 1946, p. 1.

¹³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Notes on Reduction*, p. 1.

¹⁴ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.244.

to meet its locational objectives, these units could still function effectively. The specialist staff formed an important part in the operations of the CRUs and were an important factor underpinning their success. As they were such an important factor, the work of the Vocational staff and Civil Liaison Officers will be highlighted in the next chapter.

Planners would also consider the areas cultural (human) geography and its possible impact on resettlement. Beyond matters of economic impacts, planners would also note the significance that the community's local culture and traditions would play in the repatriates' resocialisation. There was, therefore, an element of the 'culture of geography' that fed into the group and cultural dynamic of the CRUs beyond its physical location. Such considerations highlight a more nuanced approach to the locating of units. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore in detail the concepts behind cultural geography, as an existing term there is considerable literature surrounding this topic worth acknowledging.¹⁵

The repatriate's culture represented the means at his disposal for handling his relationships and through it, he learned how to interact and resocialise with other members and groups belonging to his society.¹⁶ If the repatriate returned to an area where he experienced a disconnect with the community's cultural norms, it risked his regression to the isolated existence of his captivity, effectively making him feel as a passive prisoner of his own society.¹⁷ This was an important issue to be addressed and it was feared that this isolation risked the repatriate fomenting feelings of embitterment towards his own society, leading to possible

¹⁵ Peter A. Jackson, *Maps of Meaning: An Introduction to Cultural Geography*, (London: Routledge, 1989), Mike Crang, *Cultural Geography*, (London: Routledge, 1998), Jon Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces*, (London: Routledge, 2015), *In Search of Ireland: A Cultural Geography*, ed. Brian Graham, (London: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁶ A.T.M. Wilson, Eric Trist, and Adam Curie, 'Transitional Communities and Social Reconnection: The Civil Resettlement of British Prisoners of War', in *The Social Engagement of Social Science, a Tavistock Anthology, Volume 1: The Socio-Psychological Perspective*, eds. Eric Trist, Hugh Murray and Beulah Trist, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), p. 90.

¹⁷ Wilson, Trist, Curie, *Social Reconnection*, p. 92.

violence or alignment with dangerous fringe parties.¹⁸ Chapter two of this thesis has explained how both communities and the government harboured anxieties over the possibility of violence demobilised men could represent. The CRUs would therefore become a focal point of the community they served and act as a bridge in resocialising the repatriate in the local customs and norms.

Conclusions from previous experiments had highlighted that resocialisation was a two-way process, and it was key that the community would play an active part in this. A. T. M. Wilson had viewed the resettlement process as a reciprocal process involving the repatriate, his family, and the community he was returning to.¹⁹ Their participation would open relationships to the repatriate in a community whose culture was fashioned in terms of his own values. The existence and compatibility of these cultural norms was itself proof to the repatriate of their compatibility with the home society and his acceptance in a community which shared his values.²⁰ CRU planners acknowledged the significance of this cultural element noting that each unit built up its own morale which adjusted to the peculiarities of the district it served.²¹ As discussed in chapter three, the CRUs had great success in mobilising community support and their contribution through social evenings and game days did much to encourage the reciprocal readaptation that Wilson had envisioned. This formed a vital part of the operations of the CRUs and the location of a unit was an important factor in its ability to project into the community. The choice's planners made in location therefore affected a unit's ability to engage in the two-way resocialisation required for effective resettlement and an important factor in their success.

Aside from cultural differences, further geographical characteristics were considered by CRU planners. Whether the repatriate's background was from the countryside, or an urban

¹⁸ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/12, *soldier survey*, p. 5.

¹⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Civil Resettlement Planning Memoranda V, 'An Outline of the Work of the Pilot CRU at Derby'*, p. 2.

²⁰ Wilson, Trist, Curie, *Social Reconnection*, p. 93.

²¹ TWC SA/ TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Technical policy for civil resettlement*, Appendix "A", p. 2.

environment, would also factor into their decisions in the distribution of units. It was believed that the difference in outlook between country and town-bred repatriates would affect attendance.²² It was reasoned that those who had grown up in the countryside would have less problems in resettlement. The reasoning behind such a conclusion was based on the idea that during their captivity, the things they were used to, trees, air, insects etc, were not denied to them and the environment would be less foreign compared to those from urban areas.²³ Upon their return there would also be little or no change to the environment of rural locations with little bomb damage visible compared to cities.²⁴ The wants of a country man were believed to be simpler than a town man and there would be less ‘culture shock’ compared to the urban repatriate as his ‘idealised’ image of home was less likely to be shattered upon his return.²⁵ Weekly statistical reports such as those from Jan 1946 show that units such as No. 4 Ilkley, which served a greater rural population, had a high proportion of short stayers and a more rapid turnover of repatriates than other units.²⁶ This does suggest such conclusions had some basis in fact. The rapid turnover and presence of large number of short stayer’s hint that the transitional period for repatriates in this region was smoother than other areas. However, it is equally possible that the simplified interpretation to resocialisation in the countryside was incorrect and repatriates felt unsupported in these regions. Evidence suggests that volunteers were to some extent, self-selecting, recognising the need for assistance and if they felt unsupported, they may well have left the course early.²⁷

However, further analysis on this topic is hindered due to the lack of follow up work in this region. It is therefore difficult to pin the high turnover on the above factors alone. It is

²² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *The Medical and Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement*, p. 11.

²³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *The Medical and Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement*, p. 12.

²⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *The Medical and Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement*, p. 12.

²⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *The Medical and Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement*, p. 12.

²⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/4, *Weekly Statistical Statements: the civil resettlement situations*, Iss. 7, 31 Jan 1946.

²⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Notes for Advisors*, p. 2.

possible that the geographical disposition of repatriates and the cultural outlook of the region played a role in the rapid turnover, and resettlement was achieved quicker because of these factors. It is also just as possible that numerous other factors helped in this matter. The average length of captivity experienced by repatriates may have been shorter in this region and their emotional unbalance lessened as such. It is also equally possible that repatriates in this area felt unsupported and chose to leave early, though the high waiting list for No. 4 suggests that engagement remained high throughout its operation. The effectiveness of individual call up procedures from unit to unit also influenced the turnover of repatriates and No. 4, when compared to similar units, was particularly efficient in this procedure.²⁸ Despite the rapid turnover of men, waiting lists remained high and the Yorkshire to the Scottish border area was identified as having too few units for the numbers of repatriates wishing to attend.²⁹ This does suggest that the belief men from the countryside would experience less resettlement issues was incorrect and there was the presence of cultural bias during the planning of unit locations which highlight failures in planning.

Other units which covered large rural populations such as those in Wales, Scotland, and the North West would similarly experience large waiting lists.³⁰ Such large waiting lists show that rural regions still experienced a level of unsettledness on a scale that was not expected. Such unexpected results highlight that despite the previous research done prior to the CRUs, there was still gaps in knowledge regarding factors of resettlement. This research was to some extent, hindered through the lack of contact with POWs. The small sample size of the SRTU meant that some generalisations had been made based on cultural assumptions and there is the presence of some cultural bias in decisions which highlight fundamental issues in the planning

²⁸ No 6, 9 and 20 CRU were identified as having poor call up procedures which had led to such high waiting lists: TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/4, *Weekly Statistical Statements*, Iss. 7, 31 Jan 1946; TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/4, *Weekly Statistical Statements: the civil resettlement situations*, Iss. 11, 28 Feb 1946.

²⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Notes on Reduction*, p. 1.

³⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Notes on Reduction*, p. 2.

of the CRUs. This meant that some regions, particularly those in rural areas, lacked sufficient units and experienced higher than usual waiting lists. The difficulties in addressing these issues were in some way due to the urgency of setting up units. Staff had insufficient time to work out call up procedures and the pace of returning POWs and the initial lack of resources overwhelmed the initial response. Chapter 3 shows how the CRUs would implement an extension scheme to help mitigate waiting lists and how this response was only possible due to the flexibility instilled in staff at the CRUs conception. Such issues do question the effectiveness of location in the hierarchy of factors underpinning the CRUs success. Planners clearly considered location important, and evidence of long-term planning and strategies of engagement based on an areas cultural geography highlight this. A unit's location was linked to its ability to effectively project into the community and promote the two-way resocialisation required. Additionally, a poor location could negatively impact on the repatriate's resettlement. A unit's morale was closely linked with the cultural geography of the region and locations in depressed areas risked compounding the difficulties of resettlement. The effectiveness of a unit was, therefore, closely linked to the suitability of its location and this factor was vital in their success.

A Home Away from Home: No. 6 CRU.

Such considerations show how the process of choosing locations for units was far more nuanced than simply the geographical and physical. CRU planners considered a wide range of factors affecting resettlement beyond what previous experiments had considered, and the geographical culture of each area had been considered an important factor in resettlement. The approach of utilising the cultural locality in engaging, and successfully resocialising repatriates is highlighted with No. 6 CRU, New Washington. This unit was located centrally to the communities it served, located halfway between the population centres of Newcastle and Sunderland. The type of repatriate attending also helped form a close social bond in their

resocialisation. Most were from mining communities, from territorial battalions, and had been captured early in the war.³¹ Repatriates therefore had a shared cultural background with many ex-miners or farm labourers amongst them and their experiences had a degree of similarity. No. 6 would use this knowledge to great effect and the unit's onsite workshop, with its close connection to firms on Tyneside, would prove a popular pull for men from mining communities who had no wish to return to their previous role. Such was the case for Corporal Mackenzie who had been a miner before the war and had 'no desire to return to that line of work'.³² No. 6 used its knowledge of the area and the cultural background of its attendees to tailor its approach in engaging these men. By highlighting its ties to firms in the area and the role of its workshop in developing new, practical skills, it spoke to the desire of men from mining and labouring backgrounds and their wish to change their employment. In interviews conducted by CRU staff regarding the main reasons for volunteering, the opportunity to better themselves and doubts over a return to previous employment were listed as a primary reason for attending.³³ This tailored approach highlights the effectiveness of CRUs operations. Staff would utilise their understanding of the local area and background of the repatriates to make the CRUs more attractive to potential volunteers. CRUs could therefore run as a mass resocialisation project whilst tailoring their approach locally to the specific background of its volunteers and the difficulties of the region they were assigned to.

No. 6 would, furthermore, encourage repatriates to independently engage with the community in their free time. A list of the local public houses was posted in the communal hall and repatriates were encouraged to visit local clubs and engage with the community in their down time.³⁴ It was hoped that as 'the pub is a centre of social activities... the main scene of

³¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *A Comparison of Repatriates from Europe and the Far East*, p. 1.

³² 'Morpeth Men Train for Post war Jobs', *Blyth News Ashington Post*, 3 September 1945, p. 1.

³³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *The Main Reasons for Volunteering for CRUs*, p. 1.

³⁴ 'Post war Jobs', *Blyth News Ashington Post*, 3 September 1945, p. 1.

social life' it would promote the two-way interaction desired.³⁵ Such interactions would serve the community as well as the repatriate and assist in the CRUs aim of 'bridging the gap'. With greater contact between the two, less formal relationships could be sustained via communal practices. This would act to reinforce broader social solidarities and assist in the repatriate's resettlement into these communities.³⁶ To further cultivate 'cultural solidarity', the staff at No. 6 were recruited from the local area and the atmosphere for repatriates had been one of 'Geordies amongst Geordies'.³⁷ The unit's Medical Officer was singled out for praise in tackling difficult issues especially when dealing with repatriates 'sex problems'.³⁸ Such openness and approachability was a factor in the unit's high attendance and demonstrated the importance of locating CRUs in a place where they could best take advantage of regional ties. The location of units, therefore, formed a large part of the success of CRUs.

The physical appearance of the site, however, was not ideal and despite the recommendations brought forward by both Northfield and the SRTU, the site's physical appearance fell short of what had been desired. It had not been possible to find a suitable country house in this area and the accommodation instead consisted of prefabricated huts that had been originally designed to accommodate bombed out families from Newcastle and Sunderland.³⁹ There was a danger, however, that these huts would be associated with accommodation not dissimilar to those in captivity and steps had to be taken to offset this. The huts were decorated and furnished in a 'homely way' and the site boasted a variety of modern

³⁵ Mass Observation, *The Pub and the People: A Worktown Study*, (London: Purnell & Sons Ltd, 1943), p. 311

³⁶ Mass Observation, *The Pub and the People*, p. 311; Ben Clarke offers a more nuanced approach to the public house as the centre of the community instead arguing that they could be equally isolating to outsiders or those of different class. Nevertheless, the idea of the pub as the centre of the working-class community was embedded within thinking of the time, Ben Clarke, "'The poor man's club': The Middle Classes, the Public House, and the Idea of Community in the Nineteen-Thirties", *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, Vol. 45, Iss. 2 (2012), pp. 39-54.

³⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Notes on Reduction*, p. 1; TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4., *The Medical and Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement*, p. 18.

³⁸ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *The Medical and Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement*, p. 18.

³⁹ 'New Camp for Repatriates', *Shields Daily News*, 31 August 1945, p. 2.

onsite social amenities.⁴⁰ These consisted of a gymnasium, dance hall, reading room, library, large communal dining hall, and NAAFI. The physical appearance of the unit was offset by modernising the facilities available and was designed to disassociate any thoughts of the similarity towards the huddled accommodation of prison camps that lacked such facilities and home comforts. The presence of a NAAFI meant that food was available outside mealtimes. This was particularly attractive as ‘food occupied a significant place in the order of things’ for many POWs and it allowed them to structure their days outside of strict timetabling, further highlighting personal choice and freedom.⁴¹ The presence of these facilities was designed to encourage social interaction and combat homesickness and it was believed that providing a variety of activities was an ‘efficacious measure against painful introspection’.⁴² The facilities and physical environment were considered so good by some volunteers that one Pvt Douglass described it as a ‘palace’.⁴³

Despite its outer appearance, the location chosen for No. 6 had undoubtedly been a savvy one, which utilised its past connection with the local community to its advantage. By cultivating the regional identity in its efforts to resocialise its attendees, it developed feelings of kinship between repatriates and the community through a cultural medium. This greatly assisted in resettlement and helped ground the repatriate’s resocialisation in the familiar.⁴⁴ By embracing the regional culture, the CRU provided the repatriate a set of social norms to which they could learn to interact and resocialise with other members and groups of the community. This approach, it was believed, would assist in breaking down barriers put up by the repatriate during their service and lower anxieties of being viewed as an outsider by reintroducing them to local customs. Follow up studies suggest the effectiveness of this approach, and that those

⁴⁰ ‘Post war Jobs’, *Blyth News Ashington Post*, 3 September 1945, p. 1.

⁴¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Pilot*, p.6.

⁴² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/1, *Technical Memorandum No. 13: The Prisoner of War Comes Home*, p. 6.

⁴³ ‘Post war Jobs’, *Blyth News Ashington Post*, 3 September 1945, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Curle, *Transitional Communities I*, pp. 64-65.

who attended a CRU were more ‘socially settled’ than those POWs who did not.⁴⁵ While there is an admittance that other factors contributed to this success, the positive pattern of resocialisation was in part due to the ‘therapeutic community’ that the CRUs created, and the role culture played in demonstrating normative patterns of behaviour.⁴⁶ No. 6 CRU is demonstrative of how a unit’s location was a contributing factor underpinning the success of the CRUs.

The success of No. 6 in employing its cultural geography in resocialising its repatriates was in direct contrast to the problems faced when planning an additional unit to serve Wales. No. 13 CRU, Caerphilly, was deemed as the only suitable location for the entire of Wales with other areas either too isolated or with insufficient access to a variety of industry. In lieu of another Welsh site, the only other considered option was Bristol. Bristol had good lines of communication, a great range of industry, and promising future development. This was, however, expected to be a cause of much difficulty. It was not expected that Welshmen would like to attend such a location, nor that Bristolians would be ready to welcome Welshmen or encourage their settlement in the area.⁴⁷ The Welsh in particular seem to be singled out and “the difficulty experienced in the past in trying to settle Welshmen outside Wales” is highlighted.⁴⁸ The case of Wales suggests that there was a clear correlation between the location and the importance of local cultural differences in resettlement. The conclusion drawn by the CRU planners reinforced the decision to locate units close to regions they would serve. Regional identity was an important aspect in resettlement and by resocialising repatriates in an area whose customs differed from their expected norms, it could risk their resettlement and

⁴⁵ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.283.

⁴⁶ Curle, *Transitional Communities I*, pp. 63-64, A. T. M. Wilson, Eric Trist & Adam Curle, ‘Transitional Communities and Social Reconnection: The Civil Resettlement of British Prisoners of War’, in *The Social Engagement of Social Science, A Tavistock Anthology: Volume 1, The Socio-Psychological Perspective* eds. E. Trist & Hugh Murray, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1990), pp. 101 & 110.

⁴⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/10, *Board of Trade*, p. 3.

⁴⁸ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/10, *Board of Trade*, p. 3.

increase feelings of isolation. There was also a practical side in locating units as near to the repatriate's home as possible and the repatriate's dislike of going away from home was considered 'one of the strongest factors in the repatriate's decision to volunteer'.⁴⁹ Sites located away from their primary region and with considerable travel distances for volunteers and their relatives were therefore undesirable. A unit's location was therefore an important factor underpinning the success of the CRUs. Such considerations would come to a head with units located in Scotland whose constant high waiting lists would force CRU headquarters to implement a policy of voluntary relocation for repatriates.

Trouble across the border? No. 9 & 20 CRU.

For some communities in the United Kingdom the burden of imprisonment fell on them more than others, this burden fell particularly heavily in Scotland. During the summer of 1940, the encirclement of the 51st Highland Division at St Valéry meant that nearly one in four prisoners captured hailed from Scotland. As the 51st was predominately a 'highland' division, a sizeable portion of the 9,447 Scots registered as POWs by early 1941 came from the Seaforth, Cameron, and Gordon Highlander regiments. A large number of these men hailed from Glasgow (1,209 prisoners) and Edinburgh (812), with the rest hailing from Aberdeen (643) and its neighbouring counties – Aberdeenshire (642), Ross and Cromarty (527) and Inverness-shire (522).⁵⁰ This long list was further added with the fall of Hong Kong and the surrender of Singapore which netted a further 4,000 Scots into captivity. However, within these localities and elsewhere across the highlands, returning prisoners benefited from the existence of well-established regimental associations and tight-knit rural communities.⁵¹

⁴⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Notes for Advisors*, p. 6.

⁵⁰ Neville Wylie, *Barbed Wire Diplomacy: Britain, Germany, and the Politics of Prisoners of War, 1939-1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 97.

⁵¹ Wylie, *Politics of Prisoners*, p. 97.

Support groups in Scotland had formed relatively early and built on these pre-existing social, regimental, and regional networks. This could be no better illustrated by the gathering of ‘almost 1,000’ relatives in Glasgow to form a ‘Glasgow and District POW association’ and to demand that an ‘authoritative body of MPs form who would pass on complaints and suggestions to one responsible government authority’.⁵² Within a week, the association had been inundated by inquiries from relatives who were anxious to add their weight to the call for reform.⁵³ With evidence of such a strong supportive community, areas such as Glasgow, presented a solid foundation for CRUs to build upon. As a population centre and with a variety of industries available, on paper at least, Glasgow seemed to fit the criteria for locating a unit.

The eventual site for the Glasgow unit would be No. 20 CRU, Buchanan Castle, Drymen. This location was most well-known for its time holding Rudolf Hess, a high-ranking member of the Nazi Party. Prior to the war, the house had been converted into a hotel with attached golf course and at the outbreak of hostilities it was requisitioned as a hospital. It therefore required little conversion for its role as a CRU set up as it had been, to accommodate a large number of personnel with facilities to serve their needs. Whilst the location of Buchanan Castle was considered ideal regarding its size and ‘half-way’ nature between town and country, some difficulties were identified. The nearest industrial site to Drymen was located in the Vale of Leven and was a severely depressed area with a small variety of industry. In addition, the location of Buchanan Castle to the north of Glasgow meant it was difficult to reach the south side of the city due to the distance and bad lines of communication. The south side was generally considered to have a good range of industries and a site located near East Kilbride, Cambuslang or Hamilton had been deemed preferable to the current location.⁵⁴ However, due

⁵² ‘Glasgow and District POW association’, *The Glasgow Herald*, 10 February 1941, p. 9.

⁵³ Wylie, *Politics of Prisoners*, p. 116.

⁵⁴ TWC SA/TH/B/2/1/2/2/10, *Report on a Visit of Lt. Col Bridger and Miss Menzies to the Board of Trade*. 12 August 1946, p. 2.

to the pressing need of a unit to serve the Glasgow region and the lack of suitable ready accommodation in these areas, Buchanan Castle was chosen having met nearly all the criteria for a good site.



Figure 8: Buchanan Castle, 1890's – the Castle did not survive in this form after 1950 and is little more than an overgrown ruin today. Photo courtesy of <https://www.theclanbuchanan.com/landmarks>

Employment prospects in this area of Scotland were low and its geographical remoteness from London had been a problem both during and after the war. It has been suggested that Whitehall did not always give parity of treatment to Scottish interests, and that English interests did much to prevent a large-scale dispersal of factories to less vulnerable Scotland in the early stages of the war.⁵⁵ Politicians such as Sir Basil Brooke, Minister of Commerce from 1941, had been consistent in their views that war contracts should be awarded

⁵⁵ Philip Ollerenshaw, 'War, Industrial Mobilisation and Society in Northern Ireland, 1939-1945', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 16, Iss. 2, (May 2007), p. 181; Richard Saville, 'The Industrial Background to the Post war Scottish Economy' in, *The Economic Development of Modern Scotland 1950-1980*, ed. Richard Saville, (Edinburgh: John Donald Ltd, 1985), pp. 26-8.

to Scotland and was supported by trade unionists who opposed the dilution of skilled labour and the transfer of personal to England.⁵⁶ To help mitigate some of these concerns, the CRU planners would take time to assess the future prospects of the area, visiting the Board of Trade to help identify the potential developments scheduled in these areas. The Kilbride area of Glasgow was scheduled for development and the central government had, for some time, pushed for the development of hydroelectric power in the Highlands.⁵⁷ The Hillingdon trading estate, located on the south side of Glasgow offered good employment opportunities with the presence of lighter industries which the treasury favoured over investing in the larger industrial sectors in the region.⁵⁸

This planning, however, could not foresee everything and relied heavily on the government's keeping of promises. It also could not foresee the impact of the change in government and the adoption of Keynesianism economic policy. Such planning, however, demonstrates the depth of thought surrounding unit locations beyond just their physical appearance. The pressure of the need for a secondary unit in Scotland meant that compromises had to be made in the locating of the Glasgow unit, and it fell short in meeting several required objectives regarding its location. However, the solution in overcoming these deficiencies demonstrates the importance of planning behind the success of the CRUs. Where problems had been identified, through careful future proofing, it was hoped that resettlement issues could be resolved.

Despite the initial fears of industrial depression limiting the CRU's response to employment needs, the unit received an impressive response from local firms volunteering

⁵⁶ Ollerenshaw, P, *Society in Northern Ireland*, p. 181.

⁵⁷ Saville, *The Economic Development of Modern Scotland*, p. 27, TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/10, *Board of Trade*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Saville, *The Economic Development of Modern Scotland*, p. 25, TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/10, *Board of Trade*, p. 2.

their services with some 150 firms participating in the first month of its opening.⁵⁹ By the time of its closure in December 1946, *The Scotsman* reported that of the 734 repatriates that had attended the unit, 53 per cent had found employment, 38 per cent had applied for training in trades and 4 per cent had joined the regular army.⁶⁰ The unit therefore had a relatively high success rate in finding repatriates employment despite the feared difficulties the region presented. However, due to the lack of follow up work done in this region it is hard to pinpoint the factors behind such a high percentage. Undoubtedly, the work of the unit's vocational staff and Ministry of Labour officer factored into this to some degree, especially for those training in trades. As for the remaining percentage, as to whether the employment found was of a permanent basis or the repatriate was happy in this role is uncertain.⁶¹ It should also be noted that while the *Scotsman* was eager to report on the unit's successes, it did not cover its failures and the statistics provided left at least five per cent whose employment status remained unreported. Such statistics, however, suggest that despite deficiencies in a unit's location, through effective engagement with the local community and effective use of its staff, a unit could still be successful and is demonstrative of a CRU's operations being a primary factor underpinning their success.

While the Clydesdale area that No. 20 would be serving was identified as having problems with the possibilities of employment, CRUs in Scotland would experience further difficulties that set them apart from other units. As previously noted, Scotland had a particularly high percentage of POWs of which many had been taken captive early in the war. The time it would take to establish the two units that would serve Scotland would have a knock-on effect for the repatriates in Scotland. Evidence supported the urgency and need for units in Scotland.

⁵⁹ 'Ex Prisoners of War Resettlement Scheme Spreads', *The Scotsman*, 13 February 1946, p. 3.

⁶⁰ 'Scots Repatriated POW', *The Scotsman*, 25 November 1946, p. 3.

⁶¹ See chapter 5, particularly the section regarding the work of the vocational staff. This highlights the problematic nature that the enthusiasm of the Ministry of Labour could have regarding job satisfaction.

Observations made in *Technical Memorandum No. 13: The Prisoner of War Comes Home*, had highlighted that emotional problems were disproportionate in men who had been in captivity for longer than eighteen months.⁶² Additionally, earlier works by Major Newman noted that more acute symptoms could be directly correlated to the length of captivity.⁶³ As many Scottish POWs had been captured early in the war, they fell into this category. That units in Scotland were not given greater priority despite the available evidence that repatriates from Scotland could suffer from heightened emotional problems, represents a clear failure in the planning stage.

Despite such evidence, No. 9 CRU, located near Edinburgh, was noted as only being in the development stage eleven weeks after No. 1 CRU Hatfield House was established (31 May 1945). And No. 20 CRU (located near Glasgow) would only be listed as fully operational a full sixteen weeks after initial conception (for No. 20 this was January 1946 and No. 9 this was September 1945).⁶⁴ Given the short period of time that had been given to establish units, from training of staff to full operation, both units would take six weeks to open and this was a remarkably quick time. The initial delays in acquiring staff had made it difficult for planners to keep up with demand for units and the policy of budding off staff as a training method, while necessary, at the beginning of the scheme at least, was a slow process.⁶⁵ The finding of suitable locations and the considerations of geographical and regional factors affecting resettlement had also contributed to the delays, yet the fact that all 20 units were fully operational by January 1946 is testament to the work of both planners and the units attached staff. While the speed of opening units is commendable, it highlights the failures in planning regarding units in Scotland. The lack of priority given to locating units in Scotland meant that they had been to some extent,

⁶² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/1, *Technical Memorandum No. 13*, p. 11.

⁶³ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 8.

⁶⁴ See appendix for detailed graph of CRU development over time. TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/4, *Weekly Statistical Statements: the civil resettlement situations*, Iss. 7, 31 Jan 1946, p. 5.

⁶⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Planning Memorandum V*, p. 3.

considered unsuitable. In these instances, engagement with the attached community was key and the operations of CRU staff would be a primary factor in the success of units such as No. 20.

However, the delay in implementing working CRUs in Scotland coupled with the number of volunteers meant that units faced a large backlog before they had even opened. Consequently, these units had a higher than usual waiting time than most with the average waiting time expected for repatriates in Scotland at around twelve weeks.⁶⁶ These waiting times were not helped because of the poor response to call up notices and the attempt to fill vacancies from non-attendance last minute. This meant that units in Scotland had the contradictory position of having large waiting lists but spaces on courses. The long waiting times and inefficiency in filling spaces meant that Scotland had a higher-than-average cancelation rate than the rest of the UK, sitting at 21% higher than the average cancelation rate of 37%.⁶⁷ The waiting times in Scotland became so bad that to cope adequately with the situation, a policy of voluntary transfer to empty units further south was implemented. Considering that distance from home was a main reason behind volunteering, this was considered as a temporary measure only. CRU staff would engage with local papers to persuade volunteers in taking this offer up with articles running testimonials from local repatriates praising the scheme and urging others to ‘take a chance’ at a ‘golden opportunity’.⁶⁸

It is, however, difficult to say how many men transferred to other units. While the CRUs kept records of waiting lists, cancelations and those who had completed a course, they did not record transfers. Through 1946 Scotland continued to have long waiting lists and a high cancelation rate suggesting that a low number of repatriates took this offer up. To rectify this

⁶⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Papers relating to the administration of Civil Resettlement Units*, ‘The Position in Scotland with Respect to Repatriates waiting to go to a CRU’, p. 1.

⁶⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/4, *Weekly Statements*, iss 11, Feb 1946, p. 5.

⁶⁸ ‘Help into Civil Life’, *The Press and Journal*, 5 November 1945, p. 4.

situation, No. 9 CRU introduced a personal contact system with the aim to reduce the poor response to the call up notices and decrease the waiting times for repatriates. It was hoped that with an improvement of efficiency in these procedures, the unit would be able to function adequately. Much like the policy of voluntary transfer, it was also hoped this would be a temporary measure until No. 20 unit was running.⁶⁹

While it was clear by January 1946 that some units were not running as efficiently as they should be, the picture was more complex than poor call up procedures. While units may have failed to anticipate large outputs, this could vary from month to month and was hard to predict. Output was also affected by the proportion of long-stay repatriates, with Scotland having a high proportion of long-stayers. It is possible, given the available evidence, that the proportion of long-stay repatriates in Scotland should have been predicted yet, by January 1946, there was an upward trend of POWs spending more than four weeks at units suggesting more acute resettlement problems.⁷⁰ It was likely that the slow turnaround in setting up working CRUs in some locations and the resultant waiting lists, caused a greater proportion of repatriates with accentuated problems. It had been observed that ‘there was very little doubt that repatriates attending the scheme from January (1946) were more severe (those experiencing greater distress and anxiety in their civilian life) than those from two to three months ago and that these repatriates were part of those who had been on extended leave’.⁷¹ Along with a policy of voluntary transfer, extended leave was an option that had been used in Scotland.⁷² This, however, had been a necessary step to allow repatriates to attend a unit in their community without taking the offer of voluntary transfer.

⁶⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/4, *Weekly Statistical Statements: the civil resettlement situations*, Iss. 1, 29 Nov 1945, p. 5.

⁷⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Location of crus*, p. 2.

⁷¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Location of crus*, p. 2.

⁷² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Location of crus*, p. 2.

The increase in severe cases could also have been due to several other factors.⁷³ The extension scheme had been running since December 1945 and a system of priority entries had been implemented which had a reasonable relationship to cases of severity. Previously entry had been based on factors such as age, service groups, release dates or application dates. Extension visitors had worked hard to identify cases of urgency within the community and make personal contact with known cancelations to enable such a move. The extension officer attached to No. 9 had been particularly efficient in their role and was in touch with civil advice councils in Aberdeen and Inverness providing support to repatriates further north and prioritising cases.⁷⁴ This widened the contact in the extended community and allowed the advisory board to assist in carrying out the case work of the CRU.⁷⁵ It was therefore likely that the higher rate of difficult cases appearing by January was a direct result of the success of this new prioritisation alongside the increased efficiency in call up procedures implemented by No. 9 CRU. By March 1946 there were signs that the establishment of No. 20 and the implementation of new procedures were working. Cancellation rates in Scotland were reported as falling and while No. 20 CRU still had a high waiting list, overall, waiting lists in Scotland had been reduced.⁷⁶ The situation in Scotland had improved so much that No. 9 would be closed by August. No. 20 would remain open till December 1946 and alongside the established extension scheme, would continue to serve the remaining cases in the wider community.

Such unpreparedness is not necessarily a fair reflection on CRU planners who had to respond quickly to the unexpected numbers of returning repatriates on a national scale. The rapid need for units had meant that locations had not always met planners' objectives, yet the speed of establishing functioning CRUs is remarkable given the circumstances and should be

⁷³ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.241 – 242, pp. 258-260, & p. 274.

⁷⁴ 'Resettlement Scheme Spreads', *The Scotsman*, 13 February 1946, p. 3.

⁷⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Development of Extension Scheme*, p. 1.

⁷⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/4, *Weekly Statistical Statements: the civil resettlement situations*, Iss. 12, 7 Mar 1946, p. 4.

seen as a success in operations. Additionally, when looking at the spread of CRUs from 1-9 (considering before its closure, the Ballymena unit was No. 5) it demonstrates how planners had considered operational coverage in locating units and aimed to provide assistance to all parts of the UK as quickly as possible. This coverage, however, was limited by budget and there were large parts of England such as the East coast, and North West without units. The decisions informing the choice of locations were informed by as much as operational objectives as assumptions made in the planning stage. The assumption that those from the countryside would have less problems in resettlement may well have informed the decision to locate fewer units in these areas and suggests that mistakes had been made in the planning stage.



| | | |
|--|--|---|
| No. 1 CRU Hatfield House, Hertfordshire (20 miles North of London) | No. 8 CRU Kneller Hall, Twickenham, Middlesex | No. 15 CRU Kenry House, Kingston Hill, Kingston-on-Thames, Surrey |
| No. 2 CRU Peover Hall, Knutsford, Cheshire (near Manchester) | No. 9 CRU Riccarton House, Currie, Midlothian, Scotland (near Edinburgh) | No. 16 CRU Mabledon Park, Tonbridge, Kent |
| No. 3 CRU Wightwick Hall, Wolverhampton | No. 10 CRU Daglingworth Camp, Gloucestershire | No. 17 CRU Stourport-on-Severn, Worcestershire |
| No. 4 CRU Middleton Hotel, Ilkley, Yorkshire | No. 11 CRU Hermitage, Newbury, Berkshire | No. 18 CRU Witton Park Camp, Blackburn, Lancashire |
| No. 5 CRU Acton Place Camp, Long Melford, Sudbury, Suffolk, Essex | No. 12 CRU Clatterbridge Hospital, Bebington, Wirral, Cheshire | No. 19 CRU Haydon Park, Sherborne, Dorset |
| No. 6 CRU New Washington, Co. Durham | No. 13 CRU Resettlement Centre, Caerphilly, South Wales | No. 20 CRU Buchanan Castle, Drymen, Stirlingshire, Scotland |
| No. 7 CRU Lilford Hall, Nr. Oundle, Peterborough, Northamptonshire | No. 14 CRU Sudbury, Derby | 21 (No. 5) CRU St Patricks Barracks, Ballymena, Northern Ireland |

Figure 9: Locations of CRUs. Information taken from TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, ‘Settling Down in Civvy Street: Mark II’.

Further mistakes were made regarding units in Scotland and considering the available knowledge regarding length of captivity and unsettledness, greater priority should have been given to a Scottish unit. As such, No. 9 unit experienced larger waiting lists and cancellation rates than other units. Evidence suggests that the temporary measure of voluntary transfer was unsuccessful, and location was a primary factor in the decision to volunteer. To address the high waiting lists the extension scheme worked closely with local voluntary organisations to help in situ and the success of their work demonstrates how operations were a leading factor in the success of Scottish units. Location, however, still played an important role and Scottish sites had been located near areas with a tradition of support for POWs and with organisations experienced in their needs. Scottish units were therefore able to utilise the regions cultural geography to their advantage. To some extent this factor also assisted in addressing the concerns over the suitability of No. 20 CRU and the number of firms volunteering to work with the scheme highlight how cultural geography was an important factor in the CRU’s success.

The Forgotten CRU: No. 5, Ballymena.

By the beginning of the Second World War there were only nine surviving Irish regiments in the British Army. These regiments fought in all theatres of the war and Irish regiments were present at the evacuation of Dunkirk, the campaigns of North Africa, Italy, Europe, and the Far East. Many Irishmen would serve in non-Irish regiments and the RAF proved a popular recruitment ground. Of the many volunteers who joined the British Army from Ireland, a large percentage of these would hail from the Republic of Ireland, whose official policy was of neutrality. There were an estimated 1000 Irish volunteers who were held as POWs during the Second World War, but the actual numbers could be far greater.⁷⁷ The history and divided loyalties of this region meant that some POWs experienced a complex relationship with their identity as both Irish nationals and men who had served in the British Army. Such attitudes could also be reflected in the communities they would be returning to and as will be shown, could create a disconnect with the communities they were trying to resocialise back into. This did not necessarily mean, however, that returning Irish POWs would experience any greater difficulties in resocialisation than other repatriates, yet to dismiss the complex nature of the Irish experience out of hand would be of great disservice to these men.

When planning for the locations of CRU units, it was envisioned that the twenty units would provide coverage for all areas of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland. Yet, skipping forward to February 1946, within the pages of ‘Settling Down in Civvy Street’, on the list of CRUs, a unit that would cover Northern Ireland is notable for its absence.⁷⁸ However, earlier newspaper articles from *The Times* dated July 1945 had clearly stated that a unit would be open in Northern Ireland ‘within the next few weeks’.⁷⁹ Articles from the *Belfast News-*

⁷⁷ Bernard Kelly, *Returning Home: Irish ex-servicemen after the Second World War*, (Dublin: Merrion, 2012), p. 67.

⁷⁸ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Settling Down: Mark II*, p. 2.

⁷⁹ ‘Aids to Civil Life’, *The Times*, p. 4.

Letter and the *Belfast Telegraph* both confirm that one such unit did indeed exist in Northern Ireland, No. 5 CRU Ballymena, opened 2 August 1945.⁸⁰ This unit, therefore, remains shrouded in mystery and its existence has remained relatively unknown. To this author's knowledge, the only other scholar to map the locations of CRU units, Alice Victoria White, omits the unit at Ballymena entirely.⁸¹ This section, therefore, fills in a gap in knowledge regarding the CRUs and in the experience of returning Irish POWs.⁸²

The unit's commander, Lt. Col Aveling, in an address to a local rotary club, stated that this unit had faced 'greater difficulty about resettlement in Northern Ireland than in any other part of the United Kingdom'.⁸³ Yet, records remain sparse on what the difficulties Lt. Col Aveling was alluding to. Despite what were seen as greater difficulties, evidence suggests that the community did respond and take an active role in the resettlement of POWs. Indeed, in an article written on 31 October, Aveling would go on to thank the local community and praise the unit's success.⁸⁴ In this same article, however, the unit's closure would be confirmed noting that some 200 repatriates had passed through the unit. This number would be confirmed by the CRUs own attendance records, which show that as of 22 November 1945, 197 repatriates had passed through this unit.⁸⁵ The unit itself would have a relatively short lifespan, running for only three months. This section will offer an explanation as to what the greater difficulties facing repatriated POWs in Ireland Lt. Col Aveling was suggesting were, how these would shape the unit's location, and why the unit closed after only three months.

⁸⁰ 'Bridging Gap 'tween Army and Civil Life', *Belfast Telegraph*, 22 August 1945, p. 3; 'Aiding War Prisoners', *Belfast News-Letter*, 25 July 1945, p. 3.

⁸¹ White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 228.

⁸² See the literature review of this thesis for greater context of literature surrounding the Irish experience.

⁸³ 'Rotarians Hear Expert on Civic Resettlement', *Belfast Telegraph*, 13 August 1945, p. 3.

⁸⁴ , 'Resettlement Unit Closing Next Month', *Belfast Telegraph*, 31 October 1945, p. 6.

⁸⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/4, *Weekly Statistical Statements: the civil resettlement situations*, Iss. 1, 29 Nov 1945, p. 3.

Resettlement in Ireland would be set against the complex relationship with Britain and regional and national identities. Communities faced division amongst sectarian, Unionist and Republican ideologies. This added a further difficulty in resettlement and persuading repatriates from these differing backgrounds to attend a unit would be challenging. In addition, service within the British Army could be the cause of disruption and disturbance in the home. Many returning POWs, especially from Republican backgrounds were cautious to identify with their wartime service and this may well have influenced CRU attendance from these communities.⁸⁶ Jack Harte, a returning POW, writing about his experience in returning home, noted the shouting matches that would erupt between himself and his brother. While his brother was glad Jack had returned, he was ‘barely able to keep his Republican views in check... and couldn’t understand how three of his brothers could have joined the British Army’.⁸⁷ He would suffer further insensitive comments when he returned to work at the Guinness Brewery with some employees making fun of the fact he had spent two years as a POW.⁸⁸

The verbal abuse towards ex-servicemen was not uncommon and there were scattered reports of animosity reported which could even include from close family members. Stephen Kennedy, who had served with the Royal Tank Corps, remembered the reaction he received from his uncle who had said that ‘I like a good Irishman and I like a good Englishman, but I don’t like an Irishman who fights for England’.⁸⁹ The dominant reaction to returning servicemen in both states was that of indifference and the difference between wartime experiences had the potential to affect the resocialisation and resettlement of returning repatriates. A report by Mass Observation summed up the apathy in Northern Ireland stating

⁸⁶ While it was common that those who closely identified with republicanism would also be Catholic, this should in no way be taken as a generalisation.

⁸⁷ *To the Limits of Endurance: One Irishman's War: An Irishman's War*, ed. Jack Harte, (Dublin: Liberties Press, 2007), p. 233.

⁸⁸ Kelly, *Returning Home*, p. 39.

⁸⁹ IWM, 19089, *Stephen Anthony Kennedy*, reel 6.

that ‘anyone who is keen on the war effort is liable to feel uncomfortable in Ulster’ with some government ministers such as John McDermott stating that Northern Ireland was ‘only half in the war’.⁹⁰ A suitably located CRU unit could, however, provide a place where a POW would be surrounded by people with similar experiences and where the impact of this disconnect would be felt less. Advertisements in Irish newspapers were keen to stress this point and the aim of creating ‘a family atmosphere’ which eliminated doubt and worry had multiple mentions.⁹¹ By providing an atmosphere where the repatriate felt comfortable, they would feel more open to discussing problems and these issues could be addressed. It is therefore possible that CRU planners believed a unit located in Ireland would act as a key cornerstone for the community in bridging this disconnect.

Even within the Protestant community, support of the war was not as strong as expected. The rate of voluntary recruitment to the British Army had been disappointing, with voluntary recruitment declining from 2500 per month at start of war to just 600 by December 1940.⁹² These levels marked the region out as the least mobilised in the United Kingdom for the duration of the war. At the outbreak of war, a decision was made to not introduce compulsory conscription. The two main arguments against the imposition of conscription were well founded fears of political and social disorder. The mere mention of conscription during the First World War had been enough for groups to organise and hostility towards Britain increase. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) was still active and continued its operations well into 1940. By August 1939, there had been 127 such explosions in England and the government were keen

⁹⁰ Mass Observation, *FR 1309*, Ulster Shipping Situation, June 1942, p. 3, Brian Barton, *Northern Ireland in the Second World War*, (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1995), p. 24.

⁹¹ ‘Bridging Gap ‘tween Army and Civil Life’, *Belfast Telegraph*, 22 August 1945, p. 3; ‘Putting Ex-Prisoners on the Road Back’, *The Northern Whig and Belfast Post*, 14 August 1945, p. 4.

⁹² Philip Ollerenshaw, ‘War, Industrial Mobilisation and Society in Northern Ireland, 1939-1945’, *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 16, Iss No. 2, (May 2007), p. 174.

to avoid adding any further excuses for future bombings.⁹³ Additionally, it was suggested by a Mass Observation report that Northern Ireland was psychologically ‘cut off’ from the war having not experienced the upheavals of bombing, evacuation, conscription, or the masses of military camps to the extent that England, Scotland, and Wales had.⁹⁴ This disconnect was felt to a greater extent in the Republic of Ireland and some veterans would complain of how the Irish public needed to be ‘shaken badly’ to the horrors of the war and were dumfounded by the ignorance on display.⁹⁵ There was a danger that such differences in experience could lead to repatriates experiencing feelings of isolation with the possibility this may develop into cynicism and embitterment.⁹⁶ In a period where many still harboured fears of possible violence that returning soldiers could bring, and given the history of the region, it was doubly important for a unit in Ireland to bridge this gap in experiences.

The CRUs would be open to citizens of both states and when deciding on where to locate such a unit, planners would need to consider local as well as national politics. With the General Election of 1945, there was great uncertainty for unionism in Northern Ireland. Fear of a successful Labour Party, traditionally favourable to the unification of Ireland, was unsettling for the Northern Irish government, even if such fears proved unfounded.⁹⁷ By locating a unit in the North, any future government highlighted its commitment to Unionism by setting policy towards repatriation along the same line as Westminster. There was also a wider backdrop that Britain had not kept to its promises in the past. Within the Unionist community there had been widespread suspicion among veterans that Britain had not fulfilled

⁹³ Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain During the Second World War*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 30, ‘Five Killed, 50 Injured: Cars and Shops Wrecked’, *The Times*, 26 August 1939, p. 7.

⁹⁴ Mass Observation, *FR 1309*, pp. 3-4.

⁹⁵ Kelly, *Returning Home*, p. 33.

⁹⁶ TWC SA/TH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Civilian Attitude Towards Soldiers*, p. 12.

⁹⁷ See headlines such as those in the *Irish Democrat* which encouraged ‘ALL Irishmen should vote Labour’, *The Irish Democrat* (Incorporating Irish Freedom), New Series No. 6, June 1945, p. 1.

its moral obligations after the First World War.⁹⁸ This was reflected in Ballymena itself, where a promised rebuilding project for veterans had fallen well below what was expected, the few houses built, having no provision for a water supply and tenants had to fetch their water from a well 540 yards away.⁹⁹ Many Irish recruits had come from working-class communities whose memories of the First World War and the failures of demobilisation ran deep. The decision to site the CRU unit at Ballymena would also, then, take on a symbolic role, showing both Stormont's and the British government's commitment to the community in a place where they had previously failed and that mistakes of the past would not be repeated. Addresses by Lt. Col Aveling to the Belfast rotary club highlighted this commitment and his speech was prefaced with an appeal to 'give all help possible, so that the heroes of this war unlike those of the last, would have something to come home to'.¹⁰⁰ This speech also framed a greater responsibility to help men within the wider community regardless of background or loyalties in an effort to engage with unionist and republican alike and highlight that all were welcome to attend a CRU.

The chosen site at St. Patricks Barracks was a relatively new building having been constructed in 1940 and been used as a staging area for U.S troops during the war. The site was advertised as one of the most 'up to date and best equipped in Britain' having everything except power plugs for razors.¹⁰¹ While there had been options to utilise one of many of Ireland's country houses, the past associations of such places ruled them out, with the possibility they would be seen as places of repression by Catholics and republicans.¹⁰² For those attending the

⁹⁸ Destenay, E, *Nobody's Children*, P. 644.

⁹⁹ Destenay, E, *Nobody's Children*, P. 647.

¹⁰⁰ 'Putting Ex-Prisoners on the Road Back', *The Northern Whig and Belfast Post*, 14 August 1945, p. 4.

¹⁰¹ 'Bridging Gap 'tween Army and Civil Life', *Belfast Telegraph*, 22 August 1945, p. 3; 'Rotarians Hear Expert on Civic Resettlement', *Belfast Telegraph*, 13 August 1945, p. 3.

¹⁰² Between 1920-1923 an estimated 275 'big houses' had been burned during the Irish war of independence and civil war. Partly as reprisals against British responses and partly as they were seen as symbolic of the dominance of the protestant Anglo-Irish class at the expense of the native Catholic population. Andy Bielenberg, 'Exodus: The Emigration of Southern Irish Protestants During the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War', *Past & Present*, Iss. 218, (2013), p. 204; Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland: A Study of Irish Landed Families, 1860-1960*, (Dublin: Wolfhound Press Ltd, 2001), p. 10.

CRU, a camp was also set up in the Harryville area of Ballymena with machinery installed for the purposes of retraining.¹⁰³ The town boasted good rail links to Belfast's industrial areas and the unit received strong support from the local area with nine industrial firms volunteering to help the scheme and local residents inviting repatriates to stay in their homes.¹⁰⁴



Figure 10: 'Ex War-Prisoners Train for Civilian Occupation', *Ballymena Observer*, 31 August 1945.

Even with a number of firms volunteering to help the scheme, the economic and employment prospects of the area remained grim. Northern Ireland was dependent to a considerable extent on textiles, shipbuilding and engineering, centred on Belfast. The region suffered substantial structural and cyclical unemployment in the interwar period, and by July 1938 unemployment stood at 29.1 per cent of the insured industrial labour force.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ 'Aiding War Prisoners', *Belfast News-Letter*, 25 July 1945, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ 'Bridging Gap 'tween Army and Civil Life', *Belfast Telegraph*, 22 August 1945, p. 3; 'Rotarians Hear Expert on Civic Resettlement', *Belfast Telegraph*, 13 August 1945, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Ollerenshaw, P, *Society in Northern Ireland*, p. 173.

Unemployment remained well above the British average throughout war and although it fell steeply from spring 1941, reaching a low point in autumn 1944, the regional economy never sustained full employment. Little in the way of new industries had manifested in the area and Ireland, much like Scotland, missed out on war contracts and movement of key industries. So few war contracts had been handed out that a batch of propaganda posters exhorting men and women to work harder and including the slogan 'Go to it', were seen as an embarrassment and the Belfast government asked not to display them on the grounds there was very little for workers to go to.¹⁰⁶

Unemployment, as in the war, continued at a much higher level in Northern Ireland than in the rest of the UK. Such depressed areas made resettlement difficult and could cause further disillusionment for the repatriate and his situation. Ireland would also face the extra issue of possible discrimination along sectarian lines. Protestants were more likely to have access to 'steady and sheltered' employment, such as the constabulary, a force almost exclusively Ulster Protestant and as a result, viewed with great mistrust by Catholics. In the post war period there was also evidence that religion was being used as a reason for accepting or rejecting an application for work.¹⁰⁷ This, however, may not have been discrimination, rather a habit of these communities existing in their own worlds since before 1945, it simply did not occur to businesses to look outside of their own religious circle.

One returning serviceman would recall that 'I wouldn't call it discrimination', 'I suppose if you're moving in a certain circle... it will always brush off'.¹⁰⁸ This policy may also reflect the traditional patterns of movement of labour in Northern Ireland and the practicalities involved in hiring people outside their own communities. For example, when applying for a

¹⁰⁶ Ollerenshaw, P, *Society in Northern Ireland*, p. 177.

¹⁰⁷ Niall Meehan, 'Shorthand for Protestants: Sectarian Advertising in the Irish Times', *History Ireland*, Vol. 17, Iss. 5, (2009), pp. 46-47; Ollerenshaw, P, *Society in Northern Ireland*, p. 191.

¹⁰⁸ Kelly, *Returning Home*, p. 98.

travelling sales job, one repatriate was told that a Catholic would be preferable, not because of any secarianism, but because the sales territory was in Galway and it was felt a Catholic would be better received there.¹⁰⁹ Long distance movement of labour was something comparatively new to Irish labour which had a strong custom of walking a short distance to work, with some in Belfast reluctant to accept employment even a short ride away.¹¹⁰ This may well have been reinforced by sectarianism and a strong sense of territoriality between working-class areas. Such teritoriality would have only increased the aversion to travelling through areas perceived as hostile. Ballymena was situated in a strong unionist area and this may well have put many Catholics off travelling to this area. This may, to some extent, explain the low numbers of volunteers that the unit at Ballymena experienced. The unit was also closed before plans had been finalised for an extension scheme (December 1945). This limited its outreach to the community and the assistance it could provide in contacting non-volunteers was limited.

In addition to this, the attitudes of Republicans and Unionists towards those who had served and the way both communities saw their wartime service, may well have affected attendance. Unionist communities enshrined their veterans' collective sacrifice within their commemorative canon and offered both veteran and the community a way of sharing traumas and remembering sacrifices.¹¹¹ Unionist veterans could share a common sense of belonging with the rest of the Unionist community. This let them reassert their British identity and anchor the memory of their service within Unionist canon, which both welcomed and acknowledged returning soldiers as heroes and martyrs. In a part of the UK where there was concerns of a lack of engagement with the war, locating the unit in Ballymena, a strong unionist area, made sense. It was here that staff could utilise the stronger feelings towards veterans and participation in the war to their benefit. The Catholic community, however, was still seeking a narrative that

¹⁰⁹ Kelly, *Returning Home*, p. 98.

¹¹⁰ Ollerenshaw, P, *Society in Northern Ireland*, p. 190.

¹¹¹ Destenay, E, *Nobody's Children*, p. 635.

made sense of their involvement in the Second World War, needing to accommodate participation in the war, reject any association that this had to Britain, whilst still confirming their Irish, Catholic national identity.

For any potential Catholic volunteer, participation with a CRU would be a constant reminder of this service. If the unit had been located in an area with strong republican sympathies or a large Catholic population, it would only serve to inflame tensions and act as a symbol reminding them of involvement in a war many were struggling to make sense of. Such was the example of Leading Seaman James Joseph Magennis, a Catholic volunteer and winner of the Victoria Cross. Upon his return, Magennis found that republican Belfast gave him the cold shoulder for his service in a British war, while the Unionist-controlled city council showed little inclination to give any special recognition to a Catholic. While his actions were considered brave, they had been for the British armed forces and not the Republican cause. For many in this community, this made Magennis a traitor.¹¹² Considering the reception Magennis received, it is likely that many other Catholic volunteers did not wish to attend something which would only serve to highlight their identity as having served in the British forces.

Yet, despite such feelings, there appears to have been a positive community response to the unit. Both commanding officers were loud in their praises of the cooperation they received from local Ulster firms and the response to social evenings and invitation of home stay by locals had helped create a ‘family atmosphere’, which helped eliminate the repatriate’s doubts and worries and restore his confidence.¹¹³ Upon its closing, Lt. Col Aveling in a column for the *Belfast Telegraph* stated that the unit’s success had been down to the ‘lively interest on the part of all organisations and individuals with whom we came into contact with’ and the

¹¹² Neil Richardson, *Dark Times Decent Men: Stories of Irishmen in World War II*, (Dublin: The O’Brien Press Ltd, 2012), pp. 200-204.

¹¹³ ‘Bridging Gap ‘tween Army and Civil Life’, *Belfast Telegraph*, 22 August 1945, p. 3.

cooperation of the civil community had dispelled any doubts surrounding such issues.¹¹⁴ Such an article, however, was bound to be full of praise and while some truth may be gleaned from Aveling's words, they cannot provide a full picture of the unit's happenings.

Despite such words, the unit at Ballymena would have a comparably small number of volunteers. The low number of volunteers may be reflective of the challenges faced by the Ministry of Labour and the staff of the CRU who had to work in this region. Attempts had been made towards breaking down community barriers with advertising and outreach to persons of influence. These efforts, however, had been limited and without the presence of an extension scheme, outreach in the community was restricted. The low attendance suggests a failure in engaging with their primary targets. Attempts to convince participation and attendance had to cross the divide of both communities and as far as this research has found, advertisement of the scheme only appeared in newspapers considered Unionist. This would appear to be an area of oversight and greater effort could have been made to engage with Republican and Catholic communities.

Without knowing an exact total number of Irish POWs in Ireland, though, it remains difficult to say as to whether the attendance rate was considered low. Weekly statistics from as late as March 1946, however, show that in Northern Ireland, there were only 62 volunteers available for the entire month, which should have amounted to a week's intake for a unit.¹¹⁵ Given the expense of running a CRU it is reasonable to conclude that the low numbers of repatriates volunteering was a major factor in its early closure. Additionally, CRUs in other areas of the UK were pressed for trained staff and experiencing large waiting lists. This may well have convinced authorities that the resources could be best deployed elsewhere and it was no longer practical to keep the unit at Ballymena open. The opening of a vocational training

¹¹⁴ 'Resettlement Unit Closing Next Month', *Belfast Telegraph*, 31 October 1945, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/4, *Weekly Statistical Statements*, Iss. 12, 7 Mar 1946, p. 3.

centre in Belfast meant that help would remain for any POW who had missed the chance to attend the unit at Ballymena and the unit had done as much as could be expected given the numbers.

However, it cannot be dismissed that the low attendance and relatively short lifespan of the unit represents a failure in planning and operations and its early closure may well have been an admittance that such a scheme was unsuitable for Northern Ireland. Instead, much as with the Republic of Ireland, 'soft intervention' would be of preference, utilising pre-existing services that did not come attached with the same negative association with the British Army that CRUs had. Given the complexities of the region the difficulties in engagement should have been foreseen by planners. Additionally, the operations of the unit failed in engaging with their primary target and greater priority should have been given to projecting the work of the unit into the wider community. This does, however, demonstrate the importance of an area's cultural geography in the success of CRUs. Evidence suggests that Units which could successfully recognise and utilise this to their advantage, like No. 6, proved most successful, whereas a unit that failed to do so (either due to poor location, or as with Ireland, the difficult political and social situation of the region) were not.

Volunteers from the Republic of Ireland

This does not, however, cover the entire story of resettlement for returning POWs in Ireland. While all Irish volunteers would be offered a chance to attend a CRU, volunteers from the Republic of Ireland would present a delicate situation and their status of British servicemen was mired in political controversy. The British government would still seek provisions for these men and the CRUs would be just one way in which they could reward their service. There was, however, little chance that a unit could be established in the Republic of Ireland and other strategies would be employed by the CRU planners and the British Government to ensure the

welfare of POWs from the Republic of Ireland would be met. Despite the Taoiseach's (prime minister), Éamon de Valera, decision to keep the Republic of Ireland officially neutral during the war, the Irish government did nothing to stop its citizens from joining British forces. The Republic of Ireland contributed a substantial number of recruits to the British Army with estimates of around 60,000 – 70,000 volunteers joining the wartime British effort.¹¹⁶ During wartime both governments had chosen to ignore this fact, yet, during peace, for the Republic of Ireland to recognise these men, it would be problematic. If they chose to directly help these returning men, then it would be tantamount to admitting that Irish neutrality had favoured Britain and a source of domestic embarrassment for a supposed sovereign and independent state.

There was also genuine concern from certain quarters of British society for the welfare of these volunteers and what provisions should be provided. Even before the war ended there was debate as to what would happen to volunteers from the Republic of Ireland, in 1944 the British Legion in Dublin recommended that 'everything possible should be done to dissuade men from coming to their homes in Eire pending release from the services' owing to 'practically no work to be found for ex-servicemen in Eire'.¹¹⁷ Viscount Addison echoed the growing concern of the future welfare of these men, writing in October 1945 that 'these men from Eire are volunteers...who...On their return they cannot hope for benefits from their own government but on the contrary may even be exposed to disabilities or become objects of local criticism'.¹¹⁸

Public opinion in Britain also shared these concerns and many believed that those who had shown loyalty to Britain should be treated as heroes, even in their own land. In a letter to

¹¹⁶ Steven O'Connor, 'Irish Identity and Integration Within the British armed forces, 1939-45', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 39, Iss No. 155, (May 2015), p. 418; The actual figure of Irish enlistment has never definitively been settled with figures ranging from 150,000 – 50,000 see Kelly, *Returning Home*, p. 6.

¹¹⁷ TNA, DO 35/1229/28, 'Release of Eire volunteers.'

¹¹⁸ TNA, DO 35/1229/28, 'Release of Eire volunteers.'

The Times, Hubert Gough urged the British government to give unemployment benefits to those Irish who were due to be demobilised, even if they were to return to the Republic of Ireland, because ‘they gave their services when needed’ and ‘as a matter of public policy it would be a wise and generous act’.¹¹⁹ There was, therefore, a strong belief that Britain had a moral responsibility towards volunteers from the Republic of Ireland. This was reflected in debates in parliament with the Minister of National Insurance, James Griffiths stating “I think it is a matter of general consent that something should be done now to help men and women from Eire who during the war joined His Majesty's Forces and helped us to beat our enemies’.¹²⁰ Griffiths would finish his statement by stating that ‘we want to make them feel that the United Kingdom is not unmindful of the services they rendered’.¹²¹ The British government, however, would need to walk a fine line when confronting this issue. Its response was limited as it could not directly intervene in Irish policy without risk of being accused of interfering in matters of a sovereign state. The CRU scheme was a good compromise, offering returning POWs the use of CRUs was one way of rewarding their service and rebuilding bridges after diplomatic relations had been strained by Irish neutrality. By taking the responsibility of resettlement away from the Irish government it would act to preserve their neutrality and would serve to deflect any criticism that the British government was shirking its responsibilities. Whilst this meant that POWs from the Republic of Ireland would be unable to attend a unit within their community, at this early stage it was the best that could be offered.

The push for welfare provisions was further emboldened by a fear that volunteers from the Republic of Ireland would suffer discrimination or reprisals with ministers openly admitting that ‘there was a possibility, almost amounting to a likelihood, that there would be some

¹¹⁹ ‘Demobilisation of Irishmen’, *The Times*, 12 Jan 1945, p. 8.

¹²⁰ *Hansard's parliamentary debates: Unemployment Insurance (Eire Volunteers) Bill*, 15th October 1946, Vol. 427, Col. 859-861.

¹²¹ *Hansard's parliamentary debates: Unemployment Insurance (Eire Volunteers) Bill*, 15th October 1946, Vol. 427, Col. 859-861.

discrimination against these men in Eire'.¹²² These fears were not entirely unjustified with Flight Sergeant Kehoe and Corporal Shannon, both of whom had just been released from captivity in May 1945, arrested by the authorities upon their return to Ireland and tried for desertion.¹²³ Their trial was part of the much larger desertion crisis experienced by the Irish Defence Force, and while their experience was not reflective of all POWs, it is a demonstration as to the difficulties faced by returning servicemen from the Republic of Ireland.

The trial attracted massive publicity and was portrayed by elements of the British press as a vicious attack upon the Irish volunteers who fought for Britain in the war. The *Daily Mirror* stated the trials were 'an affront to every moral principle that should guide the conduct of governments', while Dr T. H. O'Higgins, leader of the opposition (Fine Gael), called the treatment of returning Irish volunteers as 'brutal, unchristian, and inhuman'.¹²⁴ Such fierce opposition and public outcry from the British press had an effect and due to the public scrutiny that the trial had attracted, Shannon and Kehoe were discharged from the Irish army and set free.¹²⁵ This was not to say that Shannon and Kehoe did not face further discrimination as the Irish Taoiseach, Éamon de Valera, sought an appropriate means of punishing deserters without incurring a diplomatic backlash. This was accomplished with the Emergency Powers (No. 362) Order, 1945 (the starvation act). Under this legislation, all troops deemed to have deserted would have all pay and allowance rights forfeited and lose all entitlement to a pension or gratuity. Furthermore, they were prohibited from obtaining employment in any state or public body and barred from all work remunerated from public expenditure. In addition, a 'blacklist' was sent to all public bodies and local government offices around the state to ensure that they

¹²² *Hansards parliamentary debates: Unemployment Insurance (Eire Volunteers) Bill*, 15th October 1946, Vol. 427, Col. 862-863.

¹²³ Joseph Quinn, 'The 'desertions crisis' in the Irish defence forces during the Second World War, 1939-1945', *War in History*, Vol. 28, Iss. 4. (Nov 2021), p. 844.

¹²⁴ 'Deserters', *Daily Mirror*, 20 Oct 1945, p. 2; '4,000 Eire 'Deserters' get 7 years 'Hard', *Daily Mail*, 19 Oct 1945, p. 1.

¹²⁵ 'Irish Army Deserters Set Free', *The Irish Times*, 16 Jun 1945, p. 1.

were known to these organizations.¹²⁶ This bill was not repealed until May 2013 with the then Minister for Justice and Defence, Mr. Alan Shatter, announcing to Dáil Éireann (Irish assembly) that his government were ‘committed to issuing an apology for the manner in which those members of the Defence Forces who left to join the Allied side during World War II ... were treated by the State’.¹²⁷ While it was clear that the wartime British government was aware of the special considerations involving demobilised volunteers from the Republic of Ireland, as citizens of another state, there was little they could do except apply diplomatic pressure to the then Irish government.

This pressure would pay dividends regarding POWs when in December 1945, representatives of the CRU scheme approached the Irish High Commission in London with the prospect of extending it to the Republic of Ireland. To make sure no POW would return home without been screened by resettlement officials, medical examination boards were set up in the Republic of Ireland. These would consist of one Ministry of Pension official and two local doctors and these boards would be authorised by De Valera himself.¹²⁸ This would be an important step in efforts to extend the CRU scheme outside Northern Ireland. This kind of ‘soft’ intervention would utilise infrastructure already in place without the need for the presence of a unit in the Republic of Ireland. The medical boards also extended help beyond that of the unit at Ballymena and would cover those POWs returning from the Far East or those from the European theatre who had missed the initial call for volunteers.

There was still, however, the matter of disconnect between returning servicemen and the communities they returned too. Irish neutrality meant that there was little room for public discourse or space for remembrance ceremonies. Many ex-servicemen would choose to return

¹²⁶ Quinn, J, *Desertion Crisis*, p. 845.

¹²⁷ Seanad Éireann debate - Wednesday, 6 Feb 2013, Vol. 220 No. 10, Defence Forces (Second World War Amnesty and Immunity) Bill 2012: Second Stage.

¹²⁸ Kelly, *Returning Home*, p. 96.

to the UK, dissatisfied with their life in the Republic of Ireland and unhappy at being sidelined.¹²⁹ But for those who remained there was a number of associations where a veteran community would form. The British Legion, the Men of Eire, the Aircrew Association, and the Burma Star, would all play their part in forming a subculture of veterans within the Republic of Ireland. These organisations had their own flags, songs, and commemorative ceremonies which set them apart from the Irish public at the end of the war. It was these associations that veterans turned to for comradeship and comfort and it was here that they could make sense of their roles and resocialise. Where a CRU was not present, these associations would step into the void. Resettlement and resocialisation of POWs in the Republic of Ireland would bear a remarkable similarity to what Major Newman had originally envisioned in his article, “The Prisoner of War Mentality”. Help would be available, but at a distance, with advice available through POW clubs (in this case associations and the medical board).

Help would be made available regarding finding work through the Ministry of Labour in Dublin with arrangements made so that ‘anyone who wishes can make application to that office for the various types of employment which are open in this country as a result of the present man-power shortage’.¹³⁰ For any ex-servicemen who wished to remain in the Republic of Ireland and find themselves unemployed, there would also be an agreement arrange that they would receive unemployment insurance at the British rate.¹³¹ This would be vital support for POWs, as volunteers from the Republic of Ireland did not have the protection of the 1944 Reinstatement in Civil Employment Act, which their British counterparts had. This act required employers to rehire ex-workers who had served in wartime forces for at least six to twelve months. The economic situation in the Republic of Ireland would influence many volunteers’

¹²⁹ Kelly, *Returning Home*, p. 184.

¹³⁰ *Hansards parliamentary debates: Unemployment Insurance (Eire Volunteers) Bill*, 15th October 1946, Vol. 427, Col. 867.

¹³¹ Kelly, *Returning Home*, p. 108.

decisions regarding their post war prospects and many would choose to stay in Britain.¹³² An article in the *Irish Times* in 1947 summed up their prospects: ‘Southern Ireland is a depressed area for ex-servicemen. Their chances of obtaining employment are understandably small... It is no secret that great numbers of them have been compelled to return to England... to seek employment there’.¹³³ This decision may have also been influenced by possible discrimination based on their service, with Patrick McGarth, Fianna Fáil TD for Cork, referring to a post war electrification scheme that ‘preference should be given to Irish Ex-Servicemen over British Ex-Servicemen’.¹³⁴

Much like their Northern counterparts, POWs returning to the Republic of Ireland would face several difficulties regarding their resettlement and unique to their location. The poor economic prospects, discrimination and disconnect that they faced may well have been enough to persuade them to stay in England and attend a CRU there. Nevertheless, the CRU planners and the British government had made provisions for returning POWs from the Republic of Ireland. This help was similar to what a CRU could provide. Support was available through the Ministry of Labour and welfare benefits were available at the British rates if they fell on hard times. The medical boards ensured the POWs health could be monitored and that if resocialisation was needed, a stay at a CRU could be recommended. Political negotiations and pressure would, to some extent, ensure protection for the welfare of returning POWs but for the most part, their experience would be political and social indifference. This ‘soft’ intervention worked within the political controversies surrounding POWs from the Republic of Ireland and while this help was limited without the presence of a unit, it is a good example

¹³² Kelly, *Returning Home*, p. 2.

¹³³ ‘An Irishman’s Diary’, *The Irish Times*, 31 January 1947.

¹³⁴ Dáil Éireann debate: Committee on Finance. - Electricity (Supply) (Amendment) Bill, 1951—Second Stage (Resumed), Wednesday, 13 Feb 1952, Vol. 129, No. 3.

of the efforts of the CRUs to ensure that all POWs who had served in the British forces would receive help in resettlement.

The situation in the Republic of Ireland highlights that where difficulties of location proved to be a barrier, the ability of CRU headquarters to work closely with other organisations in assisting POWs proved how successful operations were as a factor underpinning their success. More generally, the ability of the CRU scheme to project its work into a neutral country and beyond a unit demonstrate how successful the scheme was in meeting its objectives of providing care for all POWs who served in the British Army.

Conclusion.

When selecting sites for suitable accommodation, CRU planners had a solid foundation of research from previous studies. Conclusions from both Northfield and SRTU Derby had provided a number of preferable objectives that would need to be met regarding a unit's physical appearance and location. For the CRUs to function efficiently it was important that planners would, where possible, meet these requirements. The choice of accommodation would be, where possible, country houses, as it was hoped that such surroundings would help facilitate the reconnection with the democratic society repatriates would be returning to. Such sites were also chosen for practical reasons with facilities to accommodate the large number of staff and volunteers expected. Additionally, as many had been requisitioned for wartime service, they would require little conversion and help facilitate the rapid turnaround required. A degree of future proofing would also be discussed for each region where a unit would be located which considered potential future resettlement issues. This had been an important consideration and units had observed how in areas of industrial depression, there was widespread unsettledness in repatriates. The rapid return of POWs and the immediate need for accommodation, however, would put a degree of urgency in selecting locations and meant that some locations did not

meet the initial objectives. It was further, difficult to evaluate the exact prospects of each area with a degree of uncertainty as to how the path of the UK would develop so close to an election year.

Aside from the accommodation, planners would also consider the cultural geography of the region a unit would be serving. This would serve as an important part of a repatriate's resocialisation. A region's cultural geography provided the repatriate with a set of social norms through which they could interact with the community, would help eliminate feelings of isolation, and help resocialisation. By embracing this approach, the CRUs could facilitate readaptation and reintegration fashioned in terms of shared values. By rooting resocialisation in the familiar it was also hoped this would encourage a reciprocal readaptation with members of the community. The effectiveness of this approach is demonstrated by no. 6 CRU. This unit used a variety of strategies to engage with the community and its volunteers. By hiring local staff and leaning into its connections with the local community (both past and present) the unit created an atmosphere of 'home away from home'. Additionally, it used its knowledge of the type of volunteers attending to tailor its approach to meet their needs.

Inevitably, however, some mistakes were made. Given the evidence available, greater priority should have been given to Scottish units, yet despite extended waiting lists, No. 9 utilised the local community effectively in reducing its case load. In Ballymena, while it is difficult to say for certain as to why the unit had a relatively low attendance, the lack of engagement with the wider community may well have played a role. In contrast to these mistakes, the handling of volunteers from the Republic of Ireland should be considered a triumph of diplomacy. The position of volunteers from the Republic of Ireland was particularly difficult and for the Irish government to recognise their service and take responsibility for their resettlement would be an admittance that Irish neutrality had favoured Britain. By offering the use of the CRU scheme to these volunteers it saved any embarrassment whilst addressing

political pressure from sectors of British society that the British government had a moral responsibility towards these men. Through negotiation it was agreed that a medical board could be set up in the Republic of Ireland and services comparable to CRU made available to volunteers, this was nothing short of a triumph for the CRU scheme, extended the umbrella of assistance they could provide, and represented the type of soft intervention acceptable in the region.

The response of each unit to the difficulties of their region would not have been possible without the cooperation of the attached community. The effective engagement with the cultural geography of each region was an important factor in each unit's success. Therefore, the considerations behind a unit's location went beyond its physical appearance and was far more nuanced. Units would adopt a flexible approach in the area they served and would need to consider local factors such as traditions, the background of the unit's volunteers, and as is the case in Ireland, navigating political and sectarian divides. Where possible these local elements would be adopted and utilised in the two-way resocialisation that had been envisioned. Such flexibility in how the CRUs dealt with regional difficulties represent a culmination of previous experiences and put the community at the heart of decisions.

Ultimately, the factors of a unit's location would be a key cornerstone behind the success of the CRUs. A unit's physical appearance was a powerful tool in persuading volunteers to attend. Beyond this, it played an important part in the resocialisation of POWs, demonstrating the cultural and wealth benefits of active participation in a democratic society. Regional geography would also be an essential factor in a unit's ability to engage with the community it was attached to. Through this medium it allowed a unit to enable the two-way resocialisation required and allowed repatriates to slowly acclimatise their resettlement in the familiar. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, the rapid need for units had meant that some locations had not met their initial objectives. As such, it soon became apparent that there

was a disparity in opportunities in certain areas. There was also a clear failure in planning, and given the knowledge of the time, there should have been greater prioritisation given to establishing a unit in Scotland. Such disparities meant that some units experienced more widespread unsettledness with their repatriates and evidence suggests that this was in part, linked to the complex relationship with the area's industrial crises and social morale. In these areas a unit's specialist staff would prove essential in bridging these difficulties and a unit's operations would be essential in the response of the CRUs where locational factors had not met their objectives. While a unit's location and the regional geography of the area it was assigned to serve was clearly considered an important factor by CRU planners and a key component behind their success, the failures in certain aspects of planning mean it should not be considered as the main factor. The next chapter will further explore the operations of the CRUs and how they extended their work into the community by exploring the work of the Vocational and Civil Liaison Officers. It shall also explore how planners would consider the repatriate's background and how this affected their resocialisation.

Chapter 5: All work and no play.

The previous chapter highlighted the importance of the location and physical environment in the success of the CRUs. This was built upon by previous experience and how certain locations adapted to the unique environmental difficulties of their region were a vital component towards their success. This chapter continues the theme of the adaptability of the CRUs and how this contributed to their success. Some 40,000 to 50,000 ex-POWs would attend a CRU and the recognition that each man came with their own set of experiences and anxieties based on their military background and experience of captivity formed part of how the CRUs worked.¹ The CRUs constantly evolved their methods, and during their operation and greater contact with those they would care for, new difficulties would emerge. How the CRUs engaged with these and adapted their approach to the repatriate's needs would be a cornerstone of their engagement strategy and towards their success in resocialising men from such varied backgrounds.

The first section of this chapter analyses how the background and experiences of captivity affected the engagement of repatriates with the CRUs. By exploring the methods they employed to identify and address the difficulties faced by these groups it will analyse areas of success and failure. It shall begin by looking at the unit at Kneller Hall, a CRU set aside for Officers only and discuss why this measure was seen as necessary. In highlighting how this unit altered its approach to resettling officers, it demonstrates the challenges faced by the CRUs

¹ A. T. M. Wilson, E. L. Trist & Adam Curle, 'Transitional Communities: A Study of the Civil Resettlement of British Prisoners of War', in Guy. E. Swanson, Theodore M. Newcomb and Eugene L. Hartley eds, *Readings in Social Psychology*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1952), p. 565; There is some discrepancy in these numbers however with Ahrenfeldt stating that some 19,000 ex-European and 4500 ex-Japanese POWs entered a CRU. This figure is at odds with a later statistic he provides stating that some 60% of ex-prisoners of war from Germany attended a CRU, Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p. 240. This author shares the view that 19,000 ex-European and 4.500 ex-Japanese POWs attended a CRU. The higher number is either an exaggeration used to show the success of the CRUs or includes those who were helped with the extension scheme in their homes and as such, did not pass through a unit.

in delivery a mass resocialisation scheme. The ways in which the CRUs negotiated the complexities of delivering a scheme whilst considering the experiences and background of individuals was a vital part of their operations and a key factor in their success.

The section will continue in its analysis of differing experiences by discussing how the regular soldier viewed the CRUs. The regular soldier presented a very different repatriate from his non-regular counterpart and his long service and attitudes played a role in their engagement with the CRUs. It will analyse if the regular soldier would experience differing problems in their resettlement and how the CRUs would alter their approach to engage with these men. It was this flexibility of approach towards repatriates that formed a vital part of the CRUs operations and in their success in resocialising these men. Finally, this section shall explore the experience of those repatriates from the Far East. Repatriates from this theatre of war were the least to attend a CRU and this section analyses as to why this was. It will explore the mistakes made stemming from the initial contact and how the botched repatriation of these men would affect their attitude towards any help. It will show how the CRUs would attempt to adapt their approach for these men and whether this was successful or not. By analysing the lack of engagement by repatriates from this theatre of war, it shall demonstrate an area of failure of the CRUs. Far East Prisoners of War (FEPOWs) would instead, chose to form kinship groups of their own with the purpose of demanding public recognition for the way their lives had been damaged by the war. As the CRUs were built around dissocialising the repatriate from his army experiences and in regaining his civilian identity, they could not offer the recognition FEPOWs were demanding. Despite this lack of engagement, some FEPOWs would choose to attend a CRU, and this section argues that despite some difficulties, the CRUs were successful in resocialising men on a large scale and the operations of the CRUs were a major factor in this success.

The CRUs would employ a number of specialist staff to assist in the repatriate's resettlement. Aside from a Commanding Officer, each CRU employed a Civil Liaison Officer (CLO), medical officer, Vocational Officer, technical officer, and four syndicate officers who lead a 'syndicate' of 60 men who would arrive weekly. The syndicate officers would be the repatriate's first point of contact and took control of the introductory period (usually the first three days). They would help the repatriate in the settling in phase and help establish bonds between the repatriate and the unit. Their role would take a back seat towards the end of the first week of a repatriate's stay where the attention of the repatriate would be directed towards the vocational staff. Participants had the opportunity to attend workshops, visit nearby workplaces or have work-experience placements. They were able to attend group discussions, meet with the Vocational Officer to talk about careers, and meet with the CLO to talk about social or relationship concerns. A large proportion of the other CRU staff were Auxiliary Territorial Service staff (ATS): POWs might not have interacted with women for years, so these women staff were intended to help repatriates become more comfortable in mixed company as well as to facilitate the running of CRUs. Psychiatrists would be hired on a part time basis or as associates, or, where appropriate, either the medical officer or CLO if trained, could fill this role. For this thesis, the most notable members of staff are the CLOs and the vocational staff. While all members of the CRU staff would be considered as equally important, it was the role these members played which were considered particularly important in resettlement and why their roles deserve a greater analysis.

The second section of this chapter will explore the work of CLOs and how the CRUs utilised the presence of ATS staff in the resocialisation of repatriates. It will explore the methods the CLOs used in engaging both the community and the repatriate in a two-way resettlement process and highlight the importance of how this close link formed part of the success of their role. The CLOs would also be important in helping the repatriate regain his

masculine identity and the success of the CRUs would not be possible without the work of these women. By analysing how the CLO helped repatriates bridge the gap between military and civilian life, this section demonstrates the importance of this factor in resocialisation. The methods employed by the CLOs and their close work with volunteer organisations enabled the CRU to project assistance beyond the unit, engage with the wider public, and highlight the effectiveness of operations in the success of the CRUs

Finally, the third section analyses the work of the Vocational Officers. It shall explore the troubles that repatriates had in resettling in work and how the Vocational Officers helped in easing their transition. It will discuss the problems repatriate faced in their employment decisions and how the vocational staff would assist the repatriate in forming his goals. It will explore the reaction of the civilian community towards returned repatriates in the work environment and how the repatriate's reactions towards this unfamiliar environment affected his resettlement. By highlighting these difficulties this section will show how the vocational staff helped the repatriate in his transition back to work and the ways in which they helped repatriates in finding jobs suitable for their new attitudes and outlook.

This chapter ultimately argues that operations were the key factor in the success of the CRUs. It demonstrates how the CRUs adapted their methods in recognition of the differing experiences of repatriates and how this adaptability in running a large-scale resocialisation scheme, while considering individual needs was vital in their success. The work of the various staff was a critical component in the resocialisation of the repatriate and their approach, and methods proved successful in resettling the repatriate and the community he was returning to. The ability of the CLOs and vocational staff to work with other organisations and extend their work beyond the unit and into community was key to promoting the two-way resocialisation required and fundamental to how a CRU would operate. The methods of engagement and working relationships created within the community demonstrate how operations formed a

vital part of the success of the CRUs, and in the hierarchy of factors, should be considered as key in the delivery of a successful resocialisation scheme.

An officer and a gentleman.

Until this stage, it has been convenient to label those who attended a CRU simply as repatriates or ex-POWs. This, however, is a simplification of the term and does not reflect the variety of experiences, both physical and geographical that these men emerged from. Attitudes and reactions to a CRU could differ greatly depending on the theatre of war they had been captured, their rank, or whether they had been a regular soldier or volunteer. For those from the Far East in particular, the CRUs would need to learn ‘on the job’ as how to best approach these men and the emerging picture of the difficulties they had endured. Whilst the CRUs worked to resocialise these men as part of a ‘therapeutic community’ they also recognised the individual and the need to address the difficulties that each would face. The CRUs would therefore recognise the unique resettlement issues that these differing experiences would entail and worked to resolve these throughout their operation.

While most CRUs retained a mix of ranks in their volunteers, one unit, No. 8 CRU Kneller Hall, was allocated for officer ex-POWs.² Officers would volunteer for CRUs in much smaller numbers, yet the War Office recognised that they would need the facilities provided by the units as much as those without commissions.³ There is a suggestion that the smaller number of officer volunteers was due to a fear of ridicule or shame attached to volunteering and that it would harm future promotion prospects.⁴ In the post war period, admissions registers and case notes for officers who had been treated for psychological disorders had been systematically

² Brigadier L. Bootle-Wilbraham, D.S.O., M.C, ‘Civil Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War’, *Mental Health*, Vol. 6, Iss 2, (July 1946), p. 42, TNA, LAB 12/352, *Notes of a Discussion on the Civil Resettlement of Repatriated Officer Prisoners of War*, Kneller Hall 2 October 1945.

³ TNA, LAB 12/352, *Notes of a Discussion on the Civil Resettlement* 2 October 1945.

⁴ Jones & Ironside, *Battle Exhaustion*, p. 117.

destroyed and it appears this policy had been to protect their identity and any possible promotion bias.⁵

The need for such a unit was further highlighted by Brigadier L. Bootle-Wilbraham who stated that ‘generally speaking, we have found that their (officers) difficulties are more acute than those of the other ranks’.⁶ Bootle-Wilbraham believed that this was perfectly natural and that ‘officers, all of whom have been leaders in some capacity during the war, would be less prone to seek help and more liable to try to solve their own problems’.⁷ Such observations had also been noted by Newman who chose the officer prisoner of war for discussion as ‘during internment he... has to rely on his own resources’.⁸ In recognition of these ‘greater difficulties’ the unit at Kneller Hall would have a resident psychiatrist.

It had been the original intention to provide whole-time psychiatric help in each CRU, but this had proven impractical owing to a lack of trained personnel.⁹ For most other units psychiatric help was offered to individuals where it was identified as needed and there was a reliance on the part-time employment of civil or military psychiatrists to fulfil this role.¹⁰ The choice to employ a resident psychiatrist at Kneller Hall suggests that officers had greater problems rather than the possibility they were given a better service due to their status. Scholars such as Clare Makepeace conclude that the former is more likely given that at another unit attended by all ranks, 15 per cent of other ranks saw psychiatrist compared to 25 per cent of the officer intake.¹¹ CRU planners saw it vital that the courses should remain indistinguishable from each other, and it was noted that the use of special privileges and luxuries was resented

⁵ N. Greenberg, E. Jones, N. Jones, N. T. Fear and S. Wessely, ‘The injured mind in the UK Armed Forces’, *Philosophical transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological sciences*, Vol. 366, (2011), p. 262.

⁶ Bootle-Wilbraham, *Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War*, p. 42.

⁷ Bootle-Wilbraham, *Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War*, p. 42.

⁸ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 8.

⁹ TWC SA/ TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Technical policy for civil resettlement*, Appendix “A”, p.3.

¹⁰ TWC SA/ TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Technical policy for civil resettlement*, Appendix “A”, p.3.

¹¹ Makepeace, *Captives*, pp. 219 - 220.

by officers. On the one hand, this played on his fears that he was a 'damaged person' in need of help and, on the other, it aroused suspicion that he was being offered 'bread and circuses' to cloak the fact that his real difficulties were being shelved.¹² This further reinforces that the choice to staff a resident psychiatrist at this unit was for practical reasons rather than a special privilege.

The provision of a good standard of amenities appropriate to his status was, however, necessary since it implied recognition that he still possessed the status he feared he had lost.¹³ Major Newman noted that this was particularly felt by the officer who upon their capture 'realizes very quickly the loss of his own reputation and prestige'.¹⁴ While the physical environment would act as a restorative measure to this perceived loss, the unit at Kneller Hall would also employ successfully repatriated officers on its staff. It was believed this would give a 'special character' to the unit and its group discussions while also demonstrate that attendees could be successfully resettled.¹⁵ These staff members would also provide a figure with whom repatriates could identify with and further helped to break down barriers towards seeking help. The presence of such staff also meant that the officer repatriate could come with the knowledge that someone would be present who could understand the mental sufferings of which 'one is perhaps a little ashamed'.¹⁶

There is no suggestion of class or social status playing a role in a repatriate's decision to engage with the resident psychiatrist. However, it is likely that it affected this decision in part. Many POWs were captured in the early war period and, as such, a large percentage of officer repatriates represented the makeup of the 'old army'. The army of 1939 had not quite

¹² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Civil Resettlement Planning Memoranda: II*, p. 3.

¹³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Civil Resettlement Planning Memoranda: II*, p. 3.

¹⁴ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 8.

¹⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Civil Resettlement Planning Memoranda: II*, p. 3.

¹⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Contribution to the Discussion of Psychological Aspects of Resettlement in Repatriated Prisoners of War*, p. 1.

evolved into the citizen army of the later war and those officer recruits still represented the old 'public school' recruitment tradition. As such, it is likely these officers still carried older attitudes towards psychiatry and would be less likely to approach them without further encouragement. However, as Alan Allport suggests, despite later attempts at 'democratising' the army, officer selection remained bound within social class and elitism and even those officers captured in the later part of the war may well have shared similar attitudes.¹⁷ Evidence, however, suggests the effectiveness of the approach adopted at Kneller Hall and it was observed that officers would come to the resident psychiatrist on their own initiative.¹⁸ Direct spontaneous requests would continue to steadily increase and indicated that at Kneller Hall, the psychiatrist was no longer seen as a frightening object and someone with whom, the repatriate felt comfortable in discussion his difficulties with.¹⁹

Major Newman had believed that the use of psychological treatment for any returned prisoner of war was debatable as it could carry with it a public acknowledgment of difficulties.²⁰ The social environment of Kneller Hall worked to normalise these difficulties and help rebuild the loss of status officers felt as a result of their capture. Language use and how this treatment was framed also proved useful in this with words such as 'mental rehabilitation' avoided and terms such as 'resettlement training', 'reorientation' or 'readjustment' preferred.²¹ This normalisation helped dispel the perceived stigma towards help of this nature and formed an important part in the resocialisation process for officers. In cases where adequate arrangements could not be made, and problems carried by the individual proved too difficult, the unit acted as a 'parent' of sorts.²² Extension officers would be utilised

¹⁷ Allport, *Browned Off*, pp. 97 - 99.

¹⁸ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Contribution to the Discussion of Psychological Aspects*, p. 1.

¹⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Contribution to the Discussion of Psychological Aspects*, p. 1.

²⁰ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 8.

²¹ Makepeace, *Captives*, p. 212.

²² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Civil Resettlement Planning Memoranda: II*, p. 4.

to keep in touch with these men by letter or visits and would give the opportunity to return if desired. In this way, those who had been identified as needing assistance could be monitored and if their difficulties persisted, help could be offered.²³

The Regular Soldier.

As the work of the CRUs progressed, it was observed that there were greater difficulties in engaging with regular soldiers. A pattern had begun to emerge as to non-attendance between the regular and non-regular POWs. As it was likely that these soldiers would often be the ones with the longest service, they had been identified as a group in greater need of assistance in resettlement. To some extent, this lack of engagement had been predicted due to the opinion that regular soldiers held of the MOs and, as part of their training, the regular soldier had been conditioned to not report sick unless absolutely necessary. Therefore, as will be explained later, the CRUs would change their strategy in engaging these men. Yet, even in the regular soldier, there was no universal pattern regarding the attitude towards the medical board. The age of the MO seen had a particular effect on the decision to attend a CRU. MOs who appeared too young were thought to lack experience to understand their troubles, or conversely, some believed that the MO being young meant they would be more up to date with treatments and should know the answers to their problems.²⁴ Some units had more success than others in breaking down these barriers with the high rate of attendance at No. 6 unit attributed to the MO whose work resulted in 'the difference between regulars and non-regulars (had) been practically eliminated'.²⁵

²³ It was generally agreed that symptoms would dissipate in a period between 2-6 months and as such, this monitoring would not be required on a permanent basis, TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement*, p. 13.

²⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, 'Non-Attendance of CRUs Between Regular & Non-Regular', *The Medical and Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement: A Report by the Deputy Assistant Director of Medical Services, Civil Resettlement HQ*, p. 6.

²⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *The Medical and Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement*, p. 18.

In interpreting figures of attendance regarding regulars, there was a further split between those with longer service and short. Those with shorter service and who may have joined just before the war held a similar outlook to their non-regular counterparts. Discussions with those short service regulars at the regimental association of the Middlesex Regiment had shown a good response to a short talk on the CRUs, with those attending the discussion confessing they had suffered some degree of unsettlement when returning to civilian life and that the CRUs would give valuable assistance in the transition.²⁶ When questioned with what they were unsettled over, answers had remained vague but after further discussion factors included lack of self-confidence, inexperience of civvy life, and difficulty in deciding on employment. Typical remarks included “one feels at a loose end” and “everything seems so different” with the most common problem discussed as to the fear of finding a job.²⁷ The attitude and needs of short service regulars were, therefore, little different to those non-regulars, with the need for a greater understanding of the civilian community and advice in employment the most common anxiety. Evidently, due to their shorter service, with little experience of peace time soldiering or the segregation between regular and non-regular units their longer serving colleagues had experienced, the short service regular had a similar war experience to his non-regular colleague. With little segregation the short service regular also experienced less separation between his military and civilian life having close contact with those volunteers and conscripts who viewed their service as short term and identified closer with their life as a civilian. This difference in experience meant that those short service regulars retained a link to their former civilian life that was not present in those with longer service.

Further research regarding those long serving regulars highlighted the importance of outreach work. Regular soldiers were seen as a group who would suffer disproportionately with

²⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/8, *Report on Discussion with Members of the Regimental Association of the Middlesex Regiment*, p. 1.

²⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/8, *Report on Discussion*, p. 1.

resettlement issues. This was in part due to how well many had adapted to life in captivity, being as they were more accustomed to barracks life.²⁸ Regulars had also displayed an enthusiasm for practising all types of resistance to authority while in captivity which had an unwanted effect of shattering their belief in all external forms of authority.²⁹ These men also faced the prospect of many more years in the armed service unlike volunteers or conscripts who were being demobilised. These factors made readjustment all the more difficult for regulars. Visits to barracks and discussions on the purpose of the CRUs were of particular value in gaining the trust of regulars and helping ease the resistance and suspicion towards authority and the assistance they were providing.

There was a general held belief amongst regulars that the CRUs would be run like any other army camp were they would be forced to adhere to a strict programme under army discipline.³⁰ Upon visiting Victoria Barracks and briefing a group of Grenadier Guards (all with service from eight to twenty-four years) of the work of the CRUs and of their benefits, all agreed they had suffered some form of unsettlement and showed an interest in the scheme.³¹ It was also noted that longer serving regulars had a greater disconnect with civilian life and had become complacent about their future with many carrying great anxiety surrounding housing and employment when facing discharge.³² While these anxieties shared similarities with their shorter term and non-regular counterparts, there was a greater emphasis surrounding trades they had learned while in the army and a need for guidance as to how this experience could be applied in civvy life.³³ When given an opportunity to visit a working CRU, those regulars who

²⁸ Vischer, *Psychology of the Prisoner of War*, pp. 53-6.

²⁹ Makepeace, *Captives*, p. 209.

³⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/8, *Report on Visit to Holding BN, Grenadier Guards at Victoria Barracks, Windsor, 12-14th June 1946*, p. 2.

³¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/8, *Grenadier Guards*, p. 1.

³² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/8, *Report of Visit to No 1 Holding BN Colchester*, p. 1; TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/8, *Grenadier Guards*, p. 2.

³³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/8, *Grenadier Guards*, p. 2.

attended were all interested in what they witnessed and were impressed that points they had raised in discussion were being dealt with. However, this was followed by a marked increase in anxiety and a greater realisation that the difficulties they were experiencing were real and with which they had not been able to articulate fully.³⁴

This attitude was reflective of evidence coming from No.14 CRU Derby, whose MOs had noted that with their first intake of regulars, it had taken two or three consultations before they would relax enough to unburden their problems.³⁵ It was further noted that there was a difference in responsiveness dependent on rank. NCOs and other ranks retained the officer-other rank attitude towards MOs until they were convinced, they could safely trust the doctor with their inner thoughts. However, once this barrier had been broken, they had responded well, possibly due to feeling more secure from possible blame or stigma attached to their problems.³⁶ Throughout the process of resettlement, the regular soldier was less responsive to the same conditions than the non-regular despite the evidence suggesting that the regular soldier was just as likely to suffer from resettlement difficulties as the non-regular soldier.³⁷ This lack of recognition was in part, due to an attitude to subdue negative reactions and ignore symptoms which had been drilled into them throughout their training and service. Furthermore, regular soldiers had a greater disconnect between civilian life having given up this mode of life for the army. This was not as present in the non-regular or shorter service man, who had only embraced the army temporarily and did so with mental reservations.³⁸ This is perhaps a generalisation and there were many whose army experiences had been positive, yet, as Alan Allport suggests,

³⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/8, *Grenadier Guards*, p. 2.

³⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/2, *The Psychological Aspect of Resettlement Generally in View of Past Experience: D. A. D. M. S, Civil Resettlement Headquarters*, p. 3.

³⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/2, *Aspect of Resettlement Generally in View of Past Experience*, p. 3.

³⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/2, *Psychological Aspect of Resettlement past experience*, p. 4; TWC, SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *Non-attendance Between Regular and Non-Regular*, p. 6.

³⁸ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/2, *Psychological Aspect of Resettlement past experience*, p. 4.

for the majority of men, their service had been ‘tiresome’ and a delay in living their lives.³⁹ The greater disconnect present in regular’s would, however, lead to a particular difficulty in convincing those longer serving regulars to attend the scheme unless they had witnessed the work of a CRU first hand. This was almost certainly down to the mistrust of authority built over the years of service, the perception of prewar army training schemes, and the complacency of any post-service planning. As such, those regulars who had not yet registered for the scheme were a priority for extension officers.



Figure 11: A group of 50 regular soldiers arrive at No. 14 CRU, Sudbury Park. ‘Soldiers Farewell – New Version’, *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 15 August 1946, p. 4.

The CRUs, therefore, would adapt in their approach to engaging ex regular-service POWs. To break down the resistance and suspicion towards the scheme greater emphasis was

³⁹ Allport, *Browned Off*, pp. 313-316.

placed on home visits and discussions at barracks. As a persuasive tool, visits were arranged for regulars to see a working CRU with no obligation to sign on afterwards. Both the discussions and visits proved effective and as visits to the Middlesex regiment and Grenadier Guards show, would force the repatriate to confront their own anxieties and highlight the usefulness of the CRUs in assisting them resettle. While the regular soldier would show a slightly greater anxiety in returning to civvy life, there was little difference between the regular and non-regular soldier in resettlement issues. With wider engagement the CRUs effectively engaged with regular repatriates and its approach was successful enough that discussions were held in relation to modifying the scheme for use on a regular basis.⁴⁰ These discussions would prove fruitless in the end yet are proof enough of the value the army saw in the CRUs methods and the value that the scheme had in resettling the regular soldier.

Far East Prisoners of War (FEPOWS).

Although research had previously identified that the length of time since repatriation made problems of resettlement more apparent, with extended contact with repatriates from the Far East it was becoming clear that not only did symptoms of unsettlement take longer to manifest, but domestic upsets also appeared higher.⁴¹ This was, in part, due to the conditions of their captivity. This apparent oversight into the potential severity of symptoms in repatriates from the Far East was partly due to the lack of reliable information coming from the Far East regarding captives, and partly from the initial observations of Lieutenant Colonel R. F. Tredgold and T. F. Rodger (the psychiatrist attached to Mountbatten's South East Asia Command), who were responsible for the early handling and treatment of these men. The recovery of Far East prisoners of war and internees would be undertaken by an organisation

⁴⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/8, *Notes on Visit to D.A.W.S., 19 July 1946*, p. 1.

⁴¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, 'Difference in Attitude Between European and Japanese POWs', *The Medical and Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement: A Report by the Deputy Assistant Director of Medical Services, Civil Resettlement HQ*, p. 14.

under the same name (RAPWI) which was also part of Mountbatten's South East Asia Command.

With knowledge that prisoners released from German and Italian hands had shown signs of a 'prisoner mentality', it was not unnaturally expected that the recovery of allied prisoners of war and internees from Japanese hands would be in the same, if not worse state.⁴² Initial observations, however, showed that mental health in Far East repatriates was 'unbelievably good' and group morale was so good 'as almost to shock the early observers'.⁴³ Morale had remained high and anxiety was relatively low, in part, due to the utter contempt that the captives held towards their captors. The frequent brutality only increased this contempt, with POWs seeing their captors as 'not civilised', 'not natural' and 'just savages'.⁴⁴ It was the view of one Doctor (unnamed prisoner) that this attitude contributed to their stability: 'death was possible any day, so that one became resigned to fate. There was thus little conflict and no anxiety'.⁴⁵

Rodger reported to London that British POWs recovered from Japanese hands showed fewer psychiatric symptoms than those from German captivity. Rodger considered this to be 'due in large measure to the contempt which British soldiers were able to feel for the Japanese and the absence of any feeling that the enemy was a man of a similar outlook and cultural background to themselves'.⁴⁶ High morale had also been a factor in the prevention of psychiatric problems and had been demonstrated through the prisoners' ingenuity shown in improvising all types of equipment and hiding it from the Japanese. This had a positive effect

⁴² The recovery of Far East prisoners of war and internees would be undertaken by an organisation under the same name (RAPWI) which was part of Mountbatten's South East Asia Command.

⁴³ TWC RAMC/1816/8/3, 'The Health of Recovered Allied Prisoners of War and Internees', *Files of reports re the health of Recovered Allied Prisoners of War, with some reports and notes for the Medical History of the War re tropical medicine*, 1945, p. 18.

⁴⁴ TWC RAMC/1816/8/3, *Health of Recovered Allied Prisoners of War*, p. 19.

⁴⁵ TWC RAMC/1816/8/3, *Health of Recovered Allied Prisoners of War*, p. 19.

⁴⁶ TNA WO 165/129, A. M. D. 11, Brigadier T.F. Rodger, *31st Meeting of Command Psychiatrists*, 2 Jun 1945, 5.

on the prisoner's self-respect with few cases of loss of self-respect and discipline observed. It was further remarked that few cases of psychological illness were reported, and those few cases observed were comparable to normal peace time rates or had only manifested in those who had previous history.⁴⁷

These observations were not helped by the repatriates themselves. Sidney Lawrence recalling his experience with talking to fellow Far East Prisoners of War (FEPOWs), noted how they were reluctant to approach authorities over symptoms with fear of being labelled 'a maniac' or 'mentally deranged'.⁴⁸ The slow process of their recovery and repatriation did not help with anxieties over resettlement and one observer from *The Times* noted how it was 'complete chaos' with many prisoners referring to RAPWI as 'retain all prisoners indefinitely'.⁴⁹ One FEPOW, Thomas Adams, did not arrive in England till February 1946, a period when many CRUs had begun the process of closing down.⁵⁰ This would be increasingly problematic and with greater observation of FEPOWs it rapidly became clear that earlier observations had been wildly optimistic with army psychiatrist noting that in some cases, it took nine to twelve months for symptoms to manifest.⁵¹ Lord Mountbatten raised his concerns in a meeting regarding the recovery of prisoners of war from the Far East during September 1945. Mountbatten was concerned that the decision to return Far East POWs via sea voyage would give the repatriates additional time to recover and would mask the worst treatment experienced due to the rapid recovery of the former prisoners. Mountbatten suggested that 'it was essential that the public should realise the privations and maltreatment which our prisoners had suffered' and that 'these facts might well otherwise be lost sight of, since the appearance and condition of RAPWI had so greatly improved after a period of medical care and proper

⁴⁷ TWC RAMC/1816/8/3, *Health of Recovered Allied Prisoners of War*, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁸ IWM, 9706 *Sidney Lawrence*, Reel 5.

⁴⁹ 'Pressure Resisted', *The Times*, 10 September 1945, p. 4.

⁵⁰ IWM, 5206 *Thomas Adams*, Reel 5.

⁵¹ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p. 235.

food'.⁵² Despite these concerns, however, the government remained cautious with the amount of information it was willing to divulge. This decision also effectively disguised the government's shortcomings regarding personnel that had fallen into Japanese hands and any questions in its wartime performance and inability to provide assistance to these men. However, with the change of government in 1945 the Labour Party could distance itself from such failings as it had been the Conservative members of the coalition government who had overseen the way the war had been prosecuted whilst they had dealt with social policy. Their manifesto pledge in implementing the contents of the Beveridge Report highlighted their commitment to providing social change and supporting returning soldiers. Despite this, however, the gagging order had a negative effect on the resettlement of Far Eastern POWs whose guilt factor was already higher than those from Europe, especially those from Singapore who believed they were captured without a fight.⁵³

In part, the repatriate's experience hindered their ability to understand their own symptoms. As their survival had often depended on their ingenuity and wits, with any neurotic symptoms resulting in harsh treatment, this led to a disregard for anything but the most extreme of symptoms.⁵⁴ Conditions in camp were often so bad that anything was seen as better and contact with the UK with its shortages and shortcomings would not become apparent until the repatriate had forgotten the contrast. This meant that the usual period of 'release' euphoria experienced by all POWs would last much longer before disillusionment would set in, and symptoms would appear much later after release.⁵⁵ The initial observations made by Tredgold had fallen under this period of euphoria and more serious symptoms had therefore been missed. It was only upon their return and with closer observation by the MOs staffing the CRUs did

⁵² WO 203/5194, *Liberation and plan for repatriation of Allied prisoners of war from Far East*, SAC's 285th Meeting, 25.9.45. Item 11: Percentage of Deaths among APWL.

⁵³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *Difference Between European and Japanese POWs*, p. 14.

⁵⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *Difference Between European and Japanese POWs*, p. 14.

⁵⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *Difference Between European and Japanese POWs*, p. 15.

some MOs note that ex Far East POWs being retrieved by the extension scheme were in a much worse state than those who had returned from Europe.⁵⁶

Returning FEPOWs were observed as experiencing greater anxiety over their personal future, especially regarding health and employment.⁵⁷ Amongst the first 1000 repatriated FEPOWs from Malaysia and Singapore examined there was evidence that 60% showed 'some degree of anxiety'.⁵⁸ The increasing evidence emerging of the problems facing FEPOWs showed the necessity of engaging with these men and the value of attending a CRU, as such the extension scheme gave FEPOWs priority when allocating available spaces and in home visits.⁵⁹ The extended period of elation that many FEPOWs experienced upon their release would also prove problematic as to their attendance rates of CRUs. As they were voluntary in nature, the CRUs relied in part on the repatriate to recognise his symptoms and that assistance was needed. The long period of euphoria the repatriate experienced meant that many missed the chance to attend a unit and only recognised the need for assistance when help was no longer available.

The longer the period of his return home, the greater the anxiety would manifest in the FEPOW with it being observed that 'the thought of returning to the UK was not greeted with the enthusiasm one might expect'.⁶⁰ News from home had been almost non-existent and the fear of displaying ignorance of changes was much higher in those from the Far East. This would often manifest in the home with FEPOWs experiencing greater 'domestic upsets' almost entirely 'due to the total lack of home news' they had received.⁶¹ The transition to home life for Far Eastern POWs was also a protracted affair, not least helped by the lack of information

⁵⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *Difference Between European and Japanese POWs*, p. 16.

⁵⁷ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p. 236.

⁵⁸ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p. 236.

⁵⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/4, *Weekly Statistical Statements: the civil resettlement situations*, Issue No. 9, Dec 1945, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Ahrenfeldt, *Psychiatry in the British Army*, p. 236.

⁶¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *Difference Between European and Japanese POWs*, p. 14.

that was made available to the relatives of the repatriate. The full extent of the ill treatment by the Japanese was not widely known at this time, and although official statements had been made, the effect on individuals was little understood by relatives. This was further made difficult by the British government's attempts at controlling information coming out of camps. While press exposure was inevitable, official orders were issued to prisoners which emphasised that any information given to the press could cause great distress to the relatives of their fallen comrades, and speaking to the press without official permission was forbidden.⁶² As a result, many returning prisoners were reluctant to talk of their experiences, and without this openness to sharing, found it difficult to regain their emotional balance at home with relatives who could not understand these experiences.⁶³ Similar to its approach with officer repatriates, in an attempt to provide the repatriate with someone who he could identify with, CRUs would 'make the fullest use of repatriates completing their course in the initiation of newcomers'.⁶⁴ Every effort was expended on finding each man a personal friend within the unit and it was hoped that this would help break down the barriers that FEPOWs had erected. Engagement with FEPOWs, however, would remain difficult. Many showed a high degree of resentment and distrust of authority due to the circumstances of their captivity. FEPOWs were often liberated by men with better equipment, which further heightened the feelings of abandonment and that they had been sent to war underequipped and ill-prepared.⁶⁵ Coupled with their tendency to disregard symptoms of resettlement over European POWs, it made the work of engaging with these men and persuading them to attend a CRU difficult at best.⁶⁶ This reluctance to talk and

⁶² Andrew Chesworth, *Planning and Realities: The Recovery of Britain's Far East Prisoners of War 1941-1945*, (PhD Thesis: University of Sheffield, 2007), pp. 170-171, Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p. 318.

⁶³ Newman, *The prisoner-of-war mentality*, p. 9.

⁶⁴ TWC SA/ TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Technical policy for civil resettlement*, Appendix "A", p.3.

⁶⁵ TWC SA/ TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *Difference Between European and Japanese POWs*, p. 13.

⁶⁶ TWC SA/ TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *Difference Between European and Japanese POWs*, pp. 14-15.

engage with other about their experiences hindered settlement at home and in admittance of any resettlement problems regarding their wartime experiences.

One returning FEPOW, Ian Watt, had found that the lack of recognition and information regarding his experiences meant there was a tendency amongst himself and his colleagues to ‘pooh-pooh the idea that anything had happened to us’.⁶⁷ Watt would, however, attend a CRU and he believed that attending helped him in putting the camp experience behind him. He felt that the staff ‘knew something that we didn’t know’:

That as prisoners we had been forced to build up a total block against expressing, or even allowing ourselves to feel, our deepest emotions; it would have been too dangerous for us to realise how sorry for ourselves we were. They knew, too, that this habit of repression had to be broken and that the best way of doing it was to show us that it was there – in all of us.⁶⁸

Watt’s experience was not universal, however, and there was a marked difference in the attendance rates between European POWs and FEPOWs with only around 4500 of the later attending a CRU.⁶⁹ Most men preferred to stay with their families, and it was only much later when the wives and daughters of these men wrote of their experiences that their difficulties in adjustment emerged.⁷⁰ One anonymous contributor to the *Guardian* wrote that it was considered ‘not manly to admit you had problems adjusting’ and that the only way her father could ease the pain of a victim, was to become a persecutor in their home.⁷¹ Many FEPOWs did readjust, however many suffered from medical conditions for the remainder of their lives. For their part, the CRUs recognised that the number of cancelations from repatriates from the

⁶⁷ Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p. 321.

⁶⁸ Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p. 322.

⁶⁹ Wilson, Trist & Curle, *Transitional Communities: A Study of the Civil Resettlement of British Prisoners of War*, p. 565.

⁷⁰ Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p. 320.

⁷¹ ‘War Baby’, *The Guardian*, 17 August 1995, p. 7.

Far East had been alarmingly high and those units with extension officers had targeted these men as a priority.⁷²

Despite the offer of assistance, many FEPOWs harboured residual bitterness towards both their captors and fellow countrymen.⁷³ Many, such as Ian Watt, felt there had been a disappointing lack of recognition of their experiences. The Ministry of Pensions was, furthermore, determined to avoid paying out for psychoneuroses and was keen to avoid the commitment it had taken on after the First World War when 120,000 ex-servicemen had been declared eligible for a pension for a 'preliminary psychiatric disability'.⁷⁴ This resulted in a lack of recognition for the traumatic experiences FEPOWs faced during their captivity. Eric Lomax, a FEPOW, writing of his experiences on his return simply stated:

The entire extent of my attention from the British Army after the war consisted of a brief medical examination at an army centre in Edinburgh in November 1945. I could walk across the room, was warm to the touch and had no incurable diseases, so they turned me loose. Get on with your life, the doctor seemed to say, as though it was the easiest thing in the world. The wounds were not on the surface, nor detectable by stethoscope.⁷⁵

Earlier observations suggesting that the high morale, general disdain for their captors and maintenance of self-esteem present in FEPOWs had meant these men were remarkably protected from neurosis were taken as gospel. There was, therefore, little enthusiasm in London to question such conclusions with a desire to keep post war pension payments to a minimum. With such a reception, it was little wonder that many chose to stay at home and shun help such as that offered by the CRUs. Instead, a significant number of ex-FEPOWs chose to retrospectively make sense of their wartime experiences. These men would form their own

⁷² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/4, *Weekly Statistical Statements*, Issue No. 9, Dec 1945, p. 4.

⁷³ Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p. 322.

⁷⁴ Allport, *Browned Off*, p. 308.

⁷⁵ Eric Lomax, *The Railway Man*, (London: Vintage Books, 2014), p. 155.

clubs to 'keep going the spirit that kept us going'.⁷⁶ These clubs would, Clare Makepeace suggests, create a fictive kinship group of their experiences, whose unifying purpose was built around the claim for compensation and the demand for public recognition for the way their lives had been damaged by the war.⁷⁷ These clubs offered something which a CRU simply could not. The CRUs were built around dissocialising the repatriate from his army experiences and in regaining his civilian identity. Their democratic nature had also necessitated that no man should feel different or singled out because of his experiences. As such, while FEPOWs could still gain benefit from attending, they could not address an issue that many felt strongly about, that of recognition of their experiences.

It is clear that some mistakes were made in the repatriation of FEPOWs and that many suffered as a result of this. Some FEPOWs, however, would choose to volunteer, and the methods the CRUs employed, especially in ways of helping FEPOWs express themselves would be of great assistance. Engagement with this group, however, remained difficult and that only 4,500 FEPOWs attended the CRUs points towards underlying difficulties. Unfortunately, evidence is hard to come by regarding FEPOWs as there was no specific follow up surveys designed for them. By 1948, however, social workers began to report that 'a significant number of Far Eastern prisoners developed depressive reactions and a consistent increase in suicide rates was noted in this group'.⁷⁸

The delay in returning these men home would also hinder the response as many returned in a period when CRUs were closing their doors. The initial observations on FEPOWs also hindered the understanding of these men's experiences and their resettlement issues were

⁷⁶ Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p. 322.

⁷⁷ Clare Makepeace, 'For 'ALL Who were Captured'? The Evolution of National Ex-prisoner of War Associations in Britain after the Second World War', *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, Vol. 7, Iss. 3, (2014), p. 258.

⁷⁸ D. Robson, E. Welch, N.J. Beeching, G.V. Gill, 'Consequences of captivity: health effects of Far East imprisonment in World War II', *QJM: An International Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 102, Iss. 2, (2009), p. 90; Shepherd, *War of Nerves*, p. 322.

believed to be little different from those POWs from Europe. It was only after an extended period of observation that it was realised that these men were prone to suffer much greater disturbances at home. For their part, the CRUs, once these symptoms had been identified, gave priority to FEPOWs with waiting lists and in home visits. They would also institute a system of assigning a personal friend to repatriates in an attempt to give the incoming man someone who he could identify and share his experiences with. The CRUs adapted their approach to try and cater for FEPOWs needs, yet their response was limited due to lack of observable contact. Time would also limit their response as many units would begin closing in 1946. The extended period of euphoria and distrust of authority that many FEPOWs experienced meant that by the time they realised they needed assistance, such formal support had been withdrawn. As such, many would find the assistance and support from group and associations they formed and whose purpose was the recognition of their experiences, something which a CRU was not designed to do. Despite some difficulties, however, the ability to deliver large-scale resocialisation in a suitable format for all POWs while recognising individual needs and providing solutions in a way that did not disrupt the overall effectiveness of the units, demonstrate how operations were a fundamental factor underpinning the success of the CRUs.

The ATS & The Civil Liaison Officers.

Of the many staff that made up the CRUs, there was a conscious decision that women would play an important part in the functionality of the units. The work of the ATS cannot be over-exaggerated and they played a big part in the settling of the repatriate not only in normal contact but also in the many social occasions held.⁷⁹ POWs placed a great deal of importance on food and the conditions of eating with it noted that queuing for meals caused a deal of anxiety and raised 'Stalag memories'.⁸⁰ To eliminate these problems, meals would be served at 'pleasantly

⁷⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Problems of Civil Resettlement*, p. 5.

⁸⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Civil Resettlement Planning Memoranda V*, p. 2.

arranged tables' by ATS staff and would be attended by all ranks, repatriates and staff. This midday event would further serve to symbolise the democratic nature of the CRUs and assist the repatriate in discovering a common identity as a potential civilian.⁸¹ The presence of the hundreds of ATS staff also served to create a mixed community, doing much to diminish the exaggerated fears of women held by many returning repatriates. It was believed that 'by the friendly and non-threatening way they interacted with the repatriates in carrying out their duties' it helped repatriates become more comfortable in mixed company.⁸² Brigadier L. Bootle-Wilbraham noted of the presence of ATS staff that their 'feminine influence is of great value in the scheme'.⁸³

The role of women would extend beyond the work of the ATS and into specialist roles. These staff members would be called Civil Liaison Officers (CLO), and their role was that of a trained social worker. There was, however, criticism levelled at the decision to employ only women in this capacity with some arguing that men would never take their problems to women, particularly if it involved relationships. The opposite in fact ran true, and those men who admitted that they had problems at home found they could discuss it with a woman, whereas 'they would have felt diminished in their fellow man's estimation by the fact they could not handle it themselves'.⁸⁴ It was found that men who made such statements regarding the use of female social workers would often be found using a woman as a confidant or wishing they had one.⁸⁵ It was therefore agreed that 'there was... much good for using women... [and] the advantages outweighed the disadvantages'.⁸⁶

⁸¹ A.T.M. Wilson, Eric Trist and Adam Curie, 'Transitional Communities and Social Reconnection: The Civil Resettlement of British Prisoners of War' in, *The Social Engagement of Social Science, A Tavistock Anthology: Volume 1: The Socio-Psychological Perspective*, eds. E. Trist & Hugh Murray, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), p. 95.

⁸² Trist, *Bion and Group Psychotherapy*, p. 24.

⁸³ Bootle-Wilbraham, *Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War*, p. 40.

⁸⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/5, *The Work of the Social Service Officer*, p. 2.

⁸⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/5, *Social Service Officer*, p. 3.

⁸⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/5, *Social Service Officer*, p. 1.

This decision was also influenced by the practical side of recruitment, the field of social work generally being populated with women, with female students of social sciences often outnumbering male and voluntary societies manned largely by women.⁸⁷ As standard, all CLOs were expected to have had three to four years of training in social work and have experience in a working environment with a social and domestic angle suitable for the resettlement of returning prisoners of war.⁸⁸ It was considered that the employment of untrained or volunteer workers could do great damage through their unskilled approach.⁸⁹ It was therefore inevitable given the expected standard that the search for qualified social workers would lead to the employment of women. For the repatriate, the very fact that they were women, civilians, and social workers created a confidence which results could be built.⁹⁰ Because of their training and experience they offered a good middle ground between civilian and military. They had experience of the difficulties through which civilians had passed during the war while appreciating the problems which the repatriate had experienced.⁹¹ With an understanding of both, they were best placed to guide the repatriate and their families through the period of readjustment both would have to make.⁹²

The work of the CLOs was therefore important and the decision to hire trained social workers formed an integral part of a CRUs work in “bridging the gap” and promoting the two-way resocialisation considered vital in resettlement. The CLOs’ ability to project their work into the community was in part down to the trust that came with their experience and training but also, as women, in their ability to open discussions with repatriates that their male

⁸⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/5, *Social Service Officer*, p. 1.

⁸⁸ Advertisement for this role emphasised the professional standards expected and that applicants should be prepared to work in any part of the United Kingdom; ‘Situations Vacant: Government and Municipal’, *The Scotsman*, 22 June 1945, P. 8.

⁸⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *The Work of the Civil Liaison Officer*, p. 2.

⁹⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/5, *Social Service Officer*, p. 1.

⁹¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *The Work of the Civil Liaison Officer*, p. 2.

⁹² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *The Work of the Civil Liaison Officer*, p. 2.

counterparts found difficult. Their work with both repatriates and their family formed an important part of a CRU's operations and was a vital factor behind their success.

The work of the CLOs was so important that it was considered that the CRUs would be failing in their task if the repatriate's difficulties in social readaptation were not given equal importance to his difficulties in choosing a job.⁹³ One could not happen without the other and settling in a job was dependent on settling at home. The work of the CLOs, however, could not proceed without the support of the repatriate's relatives and there was much work involved in both preparing and involving the relatives in the process of repatriation. As the repatriate had to build defences to make his imprisonment bearable, so too had the passage of years meant that the family left behind experienced change. While friends and relatives of the repatriate may be worried that the returning man may have changed, experience showed that those who remained in the country with familiar and relatively unchanged features were much less aware of change in themselves than the repatriate for whom things seemed very different.⁹⁴ Cooperation was therefore important to bridge these differences, the re-united family would have to break down the defences that were built up during separation and learn and appreciate the changes that have taken place. These defences would not disappear automatically, only disappearing with time and mutual understanding.⁹⁵

It was also important to include the wives of the repatriate in the process to help avoid any antagonistic feelings they may hold towards their husband attending a CRU. Many felt that their husbands had had their leave and that it was time that they came home and helped the family with their domestic difficulties while others thought that the man was just having a nice cushy holiday.⁹⁶ The routine of CRUs was therefore set up with the inclusion of relatives in

⁹³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *The Work of the Civil Liaison Officer*, p. 1.

⁹⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/1, *Technical Memorandum No. 13: The Prisoner of War Comes Home*, p. 1.

⁹⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *The Work of the Civil Liaison Officer*, p. 1.

⁹⁶ Bootle-Wilbraham, *Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War*, p. 42.

mind and, where possible, were open to receive and include them. Each CRU had one day a week set aside for showing wives round the camp and showing what the unit set out to do for their husbands. In some places, where communication was poor, a hut was set aside in which the wives could stay the night and alleviate the problems of travel. The close presence of family was a vital process in accustoming the repatriate to home life. Men attending were allowed to come and go to their home during their stay allowing them to gradually assimilate to changes that had taken place personally and within family members during his absence. Where this was not possible, allowing wives to stay overnight or be involved in the daily routine helped bridge this difficulty. Every encouragement was given to embrace the family in the process of resettlement and with agreement of those repatriates attending, it had even been possible to get wives to take part in group discussions.⁹⁷ The CLOs also organised a weekly tea attended by the wives and parents of the repatriate, here the CLOs could work with both family and repatriate and explain the maladjustments encountered. on both sides.⁹⁸

In the follow up study several wives told the interviewer of the dread they held of their husband's return but his attendance of a CRU had allowed them to achieve a good adjustment in their marriage relationship.⁹⁹ Group discussions had been a useful tool in achieving this result with a universal agreement that they had highlighted the nature of tensions at home and helped the anxious barriers towards communication breakdown.¹⁰⁰ In contrast, women such as Frances Campbell Preston whose husband had not attended a CRU recalled that upon his return, neither of them really understood what the other had been through during the five years of

⁹⁷ Bootle-Wilbraham, *Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War*, p. 42.

⁹⁸ G. P. Jones, 'Impressions of a Medical Officer to a Civil Resettlement Unit', *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps*, Vol. 88, Iss. 4, (April 1947), p. 163.

⁹⁹ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p. 278.

¹⁰⁰ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p. 283.

separation and that 'it would have been helpful to have counselling... like advice on how to settle down together'.¹⁰¹

Such meetings were therefore helpful to wives and relatives who during the repatriate's absence had to develop strategies to cope with the realities of day-to-day life without them during the war years. The support networks they had developed, such as POW associations and clubs, vanished almost overnight. As a result, wives were rapidly deprived not only of the coping strategies they had developed, but also of outside support from those in similar situations.¹⁰² I. Magrath, writing in the *BMJ* spoke for many when she asked what form of help would be directed at the wives and families of POWs in teaching the necessary attitude to adopt towards their husbands.¹⁰³ Some wives faced difficulties in adjusting to the new realities of their husband returning with one woman writing in *Woman's Own* that 'I feel wretched... he seems a stranger... I am almost in despair'.¹⁰⁴ Another, speaking retrospectively, simply stated that 'when their war ended, our war began'.¹⁰⁵ The work of the CLOs in engaging the repatriate's family provided a support network and was a recognition that relatives needed help in readjustment too. The advice given to relatives during these meetings regarding the changes both had experienced in their absence was crucial in promoting mutual understanding and bridging the gap between army and civilian life.

The advice given to families of repatriates started before his release and was based on what to expect upon their return and how to approach situations which may arise. This started with simple advice such as highlighting the annoyance of repatriates that their relatives would

¹⁰¹ Julie Summers, *Stranger in the House*, (London: Simon & Schuster Ltd, 2009), p. 127.

¹⁰² Barbara Hatelly-Broad, 'Coping in Britain and France: A Comparison of Family Issues affecting the Homecoming of Prisoners of War following World War II' in *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace: Captivity, Homecoming and Memory in World War II*, ed. Bob Moore & Barbara Hatelly-Broad, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005), p. 150.

¹⁰³ I. Magrath, *Correspondence*, 'The prisoner-of-war mentality', p.95.

¹⁰⁴ Summers, *Stranger in the House*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁵ Summers, *Stranger in the House*, p. 20.

come to meet them at the station, instead 'let him meet you at home, as a rule that's where he's always imagined'.¹⁰⁶ This extended to his first meetings with others and the advice was to limit the repatriates first meetings to members of his own family circle. The introduction of too many relatives and friends could confuse and overwhelm him, those eager to meet the returned man would understand if it was explained that visits must be 'rationed' for the first day or two. While relatives and especially wives, may be eager to 'get their husband back' their husband may want to be alone, and this is quite natural; he is getting into the run of things in his own way.¹⁰⁷

Such advice highlighted that there would be difficulties, but the relative must show understanding while avoiding sympathy or pity, the man will open up in his own time. The eagerness and speed with which the family may wish the repatriate to return to his normal duties may be more damaging in the long run. This advice was used as a supplement to the advertisement campaign aimed at educating those at home of the difficulties of resettlement and played an important part in the operations of the CRUs. This engagement was vital in the success of the CRUs aiming to gain the cooperation of partners and facilitating the two-way resocialisation required in resettlement. This advice was designed in a way to persuade doubting wives of the benefits of their partners attending a CRU and how they could be part of his successful repatriation. While also discussing the changes in the repatriate, it also highlighted that the relative had also experienced change and by participating with the CRU it would help both resettle into a new routine, this may take time and a motto was provided for relatives: 'help him, don't hurry him'.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/1, *Technical Memorandum No. 13: The Prisoner of War Comes Home*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/1, *Technical Memorandum No. 13: The Prisoner of War Comes Home*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁸ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/1, *Technical Memorandum No. 13: The Prisoner of War Comes Home*, p. 19.

By doing so, advice worked to emphasise that the repatriate could not be dealt with as an isolated individual and attention must be paid to the whole social unit in order for successful resettlement. The CLOs work also extended into the community, with the extension scheme working closely with local and national social service organisations. For those who were identified as, for whatever reason, not volunteering for a CRU, the CLO would arrange for the repatriates to attend an interview in their own homes. Such visits would be coordinated with the help of the local Red Cross workers or someone equally qualified as the CLO and entry to a CRU course or hospital treatment would be advised when necessary. The work of volunteer organisations proved to be a useful supplement to the work of the CLOs with the Leeds branch of the WVS making over 300 visits to ex-POWs and the Colonel of No. 2 CRU thanking the Red Cross for the 'invaluable cooperation in getting 2,500 repatriated men to undertake the course'.¹⁰⁹

The main problem the CLOs would address, however, would be in helping the repatriate settle in his home and in overcoming contact-based anxiety. The difficulty in settling in at home was seen as a fundamental blow to the repatriate's self-esteem and something which he often refused to accept for a long time.¹¹⁰ It was therefore of great importance to address this issue if the repatriate had any chance of resettling. A common fear of repatriates was that of social contact, with a general anxiety of displaying ignorance and embarrassing themselves preventing social connections despite a desire to make them.¹¹¹ Yet this was also a two-way street. For those who remained and had not shared in his experiences the repatriate inevitably seemed strange and tensions could develop within the family unit and community in response

¹⁰⁹ 'W. V. S. Flashes', *The Yorkshire Observer*, 7 January 1947, p. 2, 'Resettlement', *Leicester Evening Mail*, 20 June 1947, p. 8.

¹¹⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *The Work of the Civil Liaison Officer*, p. 2.

¹¹¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Problems of Civil Resettlement*, p. 2, T. F. Main, 'Clinical Problems of Repatriates', *Journal of Mental Science*, Vol. 93, Iss. 391, (April 1947), p. 362.

to this perceived changing of attitude. Men who attended a CRU had the advantage of learning through discussions with the CLO that tensions would be bound to arise in resettlement and that these would not be one sided.¹¹² By involving the relatives and working with organisations within the community the CLOs aimed to diminish the anxieties of both through gradual contact and take advantage of the affection and interest the civil community held its returning soldiers. The work of the CLO was a vital component in bridging the gap, their ability to project their work into the wider community, engage with volunteer organisations, and gaining the cooperation of the repatriate and their relatives highlights the effectiveness of the operations of the CRUs and was a key factor behind their success.

Despite the efforts of the CLOs to maintain good relations with the community and organisations outside of the CRU, many had reservations as to the continued effectiveness of such work. One such officer working at No. 3 CRU, M. E. Barling, suggested that the need for a CRU in a neighbourhood and amongst people continued after a unit's closure, and that the CLO's work cannot be thoroughly finished because problems tended to persist.¹¹³ Barling further concluded that looking back at the last nine months of her work, it struck her as to how long a period was needed to help repatriates in any but a martial sense.¹¹⁴ This was somewhat supported by recorded approaches to CLOs at CRU units. The number of approaches increased exponentially over time, showing that trust in such issues took time to develop and the longer a repatriate stayed at a unit, the easier it was for them to talk of such issues. While this may reflect changing priorities for the repatriate in their resettlement process, there was a recorded upward trend of approaches made to CLOs over a six-week recorded period.¹¹⁵ This evidence led to further doubt amongst many as to the plan to handover cases to the civilian community

¹¹² Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.278.

¹¹³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Experiences at No. 3 CRU*, p. 1.

¹¹⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Experiences at No. 3 CRU*, p. 3.

¹¹⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *The Voluntary Approach of Repatriates to CRU staff*, pp. 2 (Table 1) & 6.

upon the CRU schemes closure. With at present no large-scale social organisations working on anything like the lines developed and the trend that problems persisted, this would seriously limit the civil community in giving the help required.¹¹⁶

For the married repatriate there was a danger that his return home would be overshadowed by a fear that in his relationships, the bond may not be the same as it had been before.¹¹⁷ This was compounded by general confusion that came with the complexities of post war life and the change in social customs. The CRUs with a mixed community and democratic atmosphere, could gradually introduce the repatriate to these changes within society. Relatives would also share such fears, and a common story told was that ‘he was all right the first few days; he was so glad to get home, but he seems changed. He used to be so cheerful. Now I don't know what to do with him. Nothing I do seems right for him. He's a different man’.¹¹⁸ Such minor domestic upsets in the beginning were common with the repatriate and wife often experiencing phases of depression, irritability, and bitterness which could last between three and nine months.¹¹⁹ The solution of such difficulties relied as much on the wife as on the repatriate and the work of the CLO was undertaken with an understanding that mutual education would lead to mutual tolerance and a slow adaptation to a new way of life. It was therefore essential that close contact was maintained with the repatriate's relations, preferably at the CRU with weekly meetings, or if not, through services provided through the extension scheme. A home visit by a CLO to the wife or her attendance at a CRU was found to be helpful in interpreting the difficulties and anxieties of one to the other and helped promote a desired mutual understanding.¹²⁰ Promoting mutual tolerance and understanding of these habits was key in overcoming these difficulties and by educating both, the repatriate and his relatives

¹¹⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, *Experiences at No. 3 CRU*, pp. 1-3.

¹¹⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Problems of Civil Resettlement*, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ Main, *Clinical Problems of Repatriates*, p. 363.

¹¹⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Problems of Civil Resettlement*, p. 12.

¹²⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/5, *Social Service Officer*, p. 3.

would realise how easy these anxieties would disappear.¹²¹ There is some evidence to suggest the effectiveness of such strategies and the follow up report of those relatives of POWs who attended a CRU points to the frequent remarks made by wives, such as “you’d be surprised at the difference” and “before he didn’t seem to think of anyone but himself, but now he’s so considerate and much more cheerful”.¹²²

There was still a danger, however, that a sense of inadequacy could develop through frustrations at home, with many resenting their wife’s efficiency in organisation and financial capacity.¹²³ For a repatriate struggling to regain his masculine role in the household, their wife’s new independence and freedom of thought could be overwhelming. Some repatriates resented the fact that their wife was now managing their affairs even though he recognized that it was necessary for somebody to do this in the face of his own incapacity and lack of initiative.¹²⁴ One CLO, Margaret G. Bavin, noted that women were ‘a particular source of uncertainty and bewilderment’ and that women’s increased independence, alongside many wives wages now exceeding a man’s pre-war wage, were felt to constitute a threat to the repatriates manhood arousing a fear that their place in the family was no longer necessary.¹²⁵ Wives would also have to come to terms with their fantasies about their husband’s physical and emotional status and many viewed the return of their husband as a threat to what had effectively become the ‘rewards’ of separation.¹²⁶ Even where wives were patently only too pleased to relinquish their new responsibilities, for some the changes were problematic. Research by McCubbin, Dahl and Hunter concluded that ‘the wives who adjusted well to wartime separation were the ones whose

¹²¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement*, p. 12.

¹²² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *Civil Resettlement: Follow up Report*, p. 10.

¹²³ Main, *Clinical Problems of Repatriates*, p. 358, TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/5, *Social Service Officer*, p. 2.

¹²⁴ Main, *Clinical Problems of Repatriates*, p. 358.

¹²⁵ Margaret G. Bavin, ‘A Contribution Towards the Understanding of the Repatriated Prisoner of War’, *British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*, Vol. 1, Iss. 1, (1947), p. 32. There is a particular lack of literature surrounding the returning POW and masculinity and great scope to explore this topic.

¹²⁶ Barbara Hatley-Broad, *A Comparison of Family Issues*, p. 150.

families had the greatest difficulties adjusting to their renewed status as an intact family'.¹²⁷ Both outside research and CLOs would comment on how a partner's newly-found independence often created a role conflict within the household causing the repatriate to suffer a feeling of loss of standing as the natural protector.¹²⁸ This also applied to any children the repatriate had, as by habit the children would often defer to the familiar mother rather than the stranger in matters of the home. This inadequacy was further enhanced by feelings of guilt over their capture. In the eyes of many repatriates, having been captured and no longer being a fighting soldier, meant he was an unheroic figure and less lovable in the eyes of his wife and family.¹²⁹ The task of the CLO was therefore to bridge such difficulties helping the repatriate and his relatives understand each other and help both find a place in the household reflective of their new attitudes and realities. Communication played an important role in the effectiveness of CLOs and the ability to project their work beyond a CRU into the repatriate's home, work with volunteer organisations were necessary, and promote a two-way resocialisation was an important part of the operations of a CRU and a key factor behind their success.

There was a possibility that the feeling of loss of masculine identity in the household could affect the repatriate's relationship with their wives, with a danger of repatriates experiencing feelings of inadequacy and inferiority alternating with a suspicious attitude towards their wives.¹³⁰ With the aim of combating such feelings, the CLO would work with the repatriate and help rebuild his confidence in domestic matters. In an unfamiliar environment

¹²⁷ Hamilton I. McCubbin, Hunter E. J, & Dahl B. B, 'Residuals of war: Families of Prisoners of War and Servicemen Missing in Action', *Journal of Social*, Vol. 31, Iss. 4, (1975), p. 108.

¹²⁸ Alfred Torrie, 'The Return of Odysseus: The Problem of Marital Infidelity for the Repatriate', *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 2, Iss. 4414, (Aug. 11, 1945), p. 192; TWC SA/TH/B/2/1/2/1/5, Social Service Officer, p. 2; Reubin Hill, *Families Under Stress: Adjustment to the Crises of War Separation and Reunion*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1949), p. 85.

¹²⁹ Torrie, *Odysseus*, p. 192.

¹³⁰ Bavin. M, *Understanding the Repatriated Prisoner of War*, p. 33, Main, *Clinical Problems of Repatriates*, p. 356.

where the wife would often display a level of independence not expected by the repatriate, the CLO would encourage the man and offer guidance how to manage himself and his affairs. By offering solutions of a practical matter to even the most mundane of tasks, a leaking tap for example which had defied the efforts of the repatriate to stop it leaking and was a cause of disillusionment and disappointment, this would have a therapeutic effect.¹³¹ By solving such a problem, it was hoped the repatriate would experience a sense of achievement and steadily regain the perceived lack of masculinity within the household. The CLOs would use such strategies to gain the confidence of the repatriate, and it was hoped by gaining his trust, he would be encouraged to admit to and tackle larger problems.¹³²

Cooperation between the CLO and repatriate was a vital step in a volunteer's resocialisation and the gaining of the repatriate's confidence was key in addressing factors in his social life which he felt were barriers in his resettlement. One CLO, Mrs A. D. Brown, working at No. 12 CRU wrote how she had become 'some sort of foster mother to the repatriates'.¹³³ With this relationship established, men would soon move on from talking of 'trivial domestic difficulties' and 'come to the real point. Their domestic and personal problems'.¹³⁴ One of the most common anxieties facing repatriates was the fear that their experiences had caused both physical and mental deterioration leading to fears over sex. The loss of manhood and their masculine identity was a common fear and of 100 repatriates from prisoner-of-war camps in Germany and Italy treated in a psychiatric unit, 24 had marital disharmony as the main precipitating factor in their neurosis.¹³⁵ CRU planners had considered recovery from this as a major factor in the resettlement of the repatriate and the tackling of this

¹³¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/5, *Social Service Officer*, p. 4.

¹³² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/5, *Social Service Officer*, p. 4, See also footnote 115, and the increased approaches towards CLOs which suggests such strategies

¹³³ *The Daily Dispatch*, Nov 15, 1945, p. 4.

¹³⁴ *The Daily Dispatch*, Nov 15, 1945, p. 4.

¹³⁵ Torrie, *Odysseus*, p. 192.

sensitive topic was of prime importance.¹³⁶ It was recognised that the emotional splits between a man and wife were often too embarrassing to both for help to be sought, and as such many suffered the distresses of rows, violence and sexual estrangement in shame and unhappiness.¹³⁷ In order to normalise talking about such problems, it was mentioned during the Medical Officer's introductory talk, and then discussed further in group discussions. Care was taken in these discussions as to not to single out problems of impotency from other symptoms such as 'indigestion, loss of memory, lack of concentration, rheumatic pains, etc'.¹³⁸ Some CLOs had also taken psychiatric courses, and this was extremely important in helping men with their domestic problems.¹³⁹



Figure 12: The 'Foster mum' at work. Mrs A. D. Brown taking part in a discussion group. 'They Heal Minds of Ex POW', *The Daily Dispatch*, 15 Nov 1945, p. 4.

¹³⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, Planning Memoranda X, 'Impotence in Repatriated Prisoners of War', p. 1.

¹³⁷ Main, Clinical Problems of Repatriates, p. 361.

¹³⁸ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/2, Planning Memoranda X, p. 4.

¹³⁹ Bootle-Wilbraham, *Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War*, p. 42.

By normalising this problem, it enabled the CRUs to broach a difficult subject and make seeking help more acceptable. There was, of course, the sadder cases of men who returned to unhappy homes and who sought divorces. The repatriate upon his return could find his relationships irrevocably changed. The fiancé may have been waiting a long time and jilted him or there may have been cases where the wife had been unfaithful. While it should not be assumed that failing marriages or bigamous relationships were solely the prerogative of POWs, it was not uncommon for repatriates to return home to find out their wives, assuming their husband was dead rather than a prisoner of war, had remarried.¹⁴⁰ This was the case when a Mrs Ford, upon receiving notification of her husband's death in March 1942 remarried a Private Appleton in September the same year. In June 1943, however, Mrs Appleton received notification that he was a prisoner of war in Japanese hands.¹⁴¹ In such cases, the War Office decreed that in these circumstances it was up to the spouse to make up her own mind as to her future based on the good faith belief that their previous spouse had been killed. In cases of divorce, the CLOs were on hand to offer advice and guide the repatriate through the proceeding.¹⁴² A follow up study by Adam Curle and Eric Trist, found that men who had attended a CRU and who experienced difficulties in marriage, while unhappy and distressed, had not allowed their domestic upheaval to disrupt the rest of their lives.¹⁴³

While effort was directed towards men with families, there were also many single men who attended a CRU. Many of these men were, at time of capture, so young as not to have had experience with women. For these men the social events organised by the CRUs played an important role in bonding with the community and building confidence with women in a

¹⁴⁰ Hately, *War and Welfare*, p. 91.

¹⁴¹ Hately, *War and Welfare*, p. 90; This type of case had become so common both during and immediately after the war that it was referred by the treasury as an Enoch Arden case after the poem by Lord Tennyson retelling the trials of Enoch, a shipwreck survivor returning after several years to find his wife, believing him dead, had remarried.

¹⁴² Bootle-Wilbraham, *Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War*, p. 41.

¹⁴³ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.278.

controlled and safe environment. Most repatriates indeed wanted to meet people especially of the opposite sex yet were overcome with shyness when they met them.¹⁴⁴ Even with a latent desire to make social connections, the fear of displaying ignorance coloured these interactions, a common complaint being wanting to know what to ask for “without being laughed at”.¹⁴⁵ With weekly interaction with the CLO the repatriate could, over the course of conversation, be filled in on the gaps in his knowledge naturally. This was balanced with a degree of independence and encouragement for the repatriate to find out of the changes himself and regain confidence in social interactions. The presence of ATS staff and the CLOs also helped the repatriate gain confidence in their interactions with women and helped to mitigate the uncertainty and shyness they experienced in these interactions.¹⁴⁶

The CLOs provided vital assistance to the repatriate and to their relatives in mutual understanding of the anxieties that both shared in the resettlement process. Their presence at the CRUs helped in lowering social tensions the repatriate was facing regarding the social changes that had taken place in his absence. Further, the presence of ATS staff and CLOs gradually climatised the repatriate with social interaction towards women. In the transition back to civvy life, CLOs were on hand to assist the repatriate in a number of social and domestic difficulties. Their open and understanding approach was key in building trust and opening discussion to further problems. This work was dependent on the support of the community and the repatriate’s families, and much effort was given to involving both in the repatriate’s resettlement. To encourage family participation, the CLOs would run visit days and if visitation proved problematic due to travel, many CRUs had a place to stay overnight.

¹⁴⁴ Main, *Clinical Problems of Repatriates*, p. 362, TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Problems of Civil Resettlement*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/1, *Technical Memorandum No. 13: The Prisoner of War Comes Home*, p. 12.

¹⁴⁶ Trist, *Bion and Group Psychotherapy*, p. 24, Bootle-Wilbraham, *Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War*, p. 40.

The work of the CLOs extended to the community, working with the extension scheme to identify those who had not attended and facilitating home visits where possible. They would keep in contact with local organisations to help monitor repatriates and provide aid if needed. Where a repatriate was struggling to reaffirm his role in his household, their open and friendly approach was key in building trust. By discussing small matters, it would often open the discussion towards more difficult subjects such as impotency or feelings of displacement at home. CLOs would assist in these matters as many repatriates felt uncomfortable talking to men on subjects of the home and often experienced feeling of diminishment being unable to solve these matters themselves. As such many felt more comfortable in discussing problems with women social workers and many CLOs took on the role of a ‘foster mum’ to many.¹⁴⁷ Where appropriate, the CLOs would encourage the repatriate to overcome or find solutions to these difficulties himself. By overcoming such difficulties on their own initiative, it would rebuild the repatriate’s lost confidence, and in household matters, help them regain their masculine identity. Discussions with both the repatriate and his relatives would help ease the transition and mutual understanding of the changes that had occurred in both, helped ease tensions at home and facilitate resettlement. The work of the CLOs was of vital importance in the resettlement of the repatriate and the community he would be returning to. Their position as a half-way between civilian and military helped facilitate bridging the gap between these spheres and the importance of their work was recognised by several observers. The increasing number of visits and follow up work evidences the importance they were held by the repatriates and their success in resettling these men. Follow up studies which observed the repatriate’s relationship with his family, employers and community life and compared them to social norms also showed the positive effect the CLOs had on the repatriate.¹⁴⁸ It was found that those who

¹⁴⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/5, *Social Service Officer*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, pp. 256-258.

attended a CRU showed ‘more adaptability and cooperativeness’ than normal and had discovered how to get the most out of their relationships over those POWs who had not attended.¹⁴⁹

Vocational Officers and the Ministry of Labour.

The decision to return to the job market was fraught with pitfalls for any repatriate as they had been out of touch with the changes in civilian employment during their captivity. In their absence industry had turned over from peacetime production to a war footing and now upon their return, the reverse was true. Notes to vocational staff were keen to highlight the emotional tensions repatriates faced and the dangers of these men, whose attitude had undergone profound change, often manifesting in a distrustful attitude towards authority and suspicion not conducive to employment, back into the work force.¹⁵⁰

Additionally, CRU planners had been careful to highlight such dangers to the Ministry of Labour and at a meeting involving the Ministry of Productions A. T. M. Wilson stated that even if there was ‘no social or economic problems in the post war period, and even if everyone were to return to an assured position in the home community’ psychological problems of resettlement would still remain and could in no way be avoided.¹⁵¹ The rather alarmist language used by CRU headquarters did not necessarily reflect the reality of the situation in post war Britain, which was experiencing a labour shortage. However, it is likely the language use was strategic and used as a method of persuasion in gaining the cooperation of the Ministry of Labour, whose participation in the scheme was not guaranteed. CRU planners wished to ensure that the Ministry of Labour felt their role in units was vital and such language use ensured this. The importance CRU headquarters put on this cooperation was recorded in the minutes of

¹⁴⁹ Wilson, Trist & Curle, *Transitional Communities: A Study of the Civil Resettlement of British Prisoners of War*, p. 568.

¹⁵⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/5, *Introductory notes for vocational staff*, p. 1.

¹⁵¹ White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 181.

meeting with the Ministry of Labour at Hatfield House, where it was noted that CRU staff wanted to work closely with the Ministry of Labour in overcoming the ‘considerable difficulties in civil-military liaison’.¹⁵² The persuasive language appeared to have the desired effect and a letter included in a memorandum circulated to Ministry of Labour staff written by J Harmer stated that ‘we feel sure that any assistance we can give as a department in this venture may well save us considerable trouble and difficulties later’.¹⁵³ The work in gaining the cooperation of the Ministry of Labour is indicative of how effective operations were in the success of the CRUs, and it is likely they would have experienced greater difficulty in resettling repatriates without gaining the close cooperation of outside organisations who supplemented the work of CRU staff with their own expertise.

For the returning repatriate the end of the war did not necessarily mean a return to their old job and old routine. Many were looking for something new, a chance to begin with a clean slate and a fresh start in life. For the Vocational Officers staffing the CRUs, it was hoped that a change of occupation, even of a temporary nature could provide an opportunity to diminish the feelings of restlessness, boredom and of being tied down which many repatriates showed and felt on their first return to civilian work.¹⁵⁴ By offering the repatriate a chance at exploring different occupations and offering workshops to develop new skills, the CRUs would be particularly attractive to those seeking such a change. To facilitate this, the first task of a Vocational Officer was to contact the local Ministry of Labour representative and invite groups of guests representing various industries and trades to the unit. In this meeting the Vocational Officer would explain the scheme and discussions would take place as to how repatriates could make informal contact with those on the job. It was hoped that a developed CRU should be in

¹⁵² TNA LAB 12/352, ‘Minutes of a Meeting with Ministry of Labour Regional Controllers at CRU Planning HQ, Hatfield’, 1945, pp. 1–2.

¹⁵³ TNA LAB 12/352, J.H. Harmer, ‘Letter to All Regional Controllers: Civil Resettlement Units for Ex-Prisoners of War’, 10 May 1945, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *The Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement*, p. 14.

touch with 200 to 400 firms and social institutions willing to allow visits by repatriates.¹⁵⁵ There was some notable successes and the community on a whole was eager to participate in the scheme. An article in the *Scotsman* noted that in the Glasgow area alone, there were no fewer than 150 firms who had volunteered to participate, this was despite the area being considered industrially depressed in a later visit by Col. Bridger and Miss Menzies.¹⁵⁶ While Col. Bridger and Miss Menzies were perhaps not the best judges of this, their visit demonstrates the importance CRU headquarters put in prioritising matters of employment and the concern behind how industrially depressed areas could effect a repatriate's resettlement (see chapter 4 for more details).

The role of the Vocational Officer was to help guide the repatriate into finding a suitable job through group discussions on the changing nature of industry and by arranging visits to surrounding factories, workshops, and employment exchanges. The Ministry of Labour Officer would be on hand to provide information on vacancies and condition of employment and not the vocational staff. Vocational staff were warned against giving such advice as it may be construed by the repatriate as a guarantee of employment and if this was not forthcoming, they may feel let down by the staff.¹⁵⁷ It was noted that in their role, the Ministry of Labour were extremely helpful 'and their Liaison Officers at each unit are amongst the keenest of those taking part in civil resettlement'.¹⁵⁸ It was noted, however, that in their anxiety to get the repatriate a job, the Ministry of Labour Officer would forget that 'if the job is not one to which the man is temperamentally and physically suited, he will not be happy in it and he will not

¹⁵⁵ A.T.M. Wilson, Eric Trist and Adam Curie, 'Transitional Communities and Social Reconnection: The Civil Resettlement of British Prisoners of War' in, *The Social Engagement of Social Science, A Tavistock Anthology: Volume 1: The Socio-Psychological Perspective*, eds. E. Trist & Hugh Murray, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), p. 95, TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Civil Resettlement Planning Memoranda III*, p. 3

¹⁵⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/10, *Board of Trade*, p. 2, 'Resettlement Scheme Spreads', *The Scotsman*, 13 February 1946, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/5, *Introductory notes*, p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ Bootle-Wilbraham, *Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War*, p. 41.

stay in it'.¹⁵⁹ Such eagerness comes across in newspapers articles with Mr Edwin Price, a Ministry of Labour Officer, stating that he would write a personal letter to employment exchanges on behalf of the repatriate and that 'I don't think one manager so far has replied to me that he was unable to find a job for the ex-prisoner'.¹⁶⁰ It was therefore important that the Vocational Officer was present to advise and oversee the repatriate's decisions and that both roles worked closely with each other. The Vocational Officer would act as a balancing force to the Ministry of Labour Officer and remind them that the purpose of the unit was to 'see that he (the repatriate) gets employment in the sort of job that will suit him and in which he will be happy'.¹⁶¹ The need for close cooperation and communication between both roles and the careful balancing act staff had to navigate is demonstrative of the success of the operations of the CRUs. The effectiveness of this combined approach is reflected in the follow up study. Despite worries of the over-eagerness of the Ministry of Labour Officer, in the sample of repatriates interviewed, those who attended a CRU showed higher personal satisfaction with their chosen job over those who did not attend, who experienced heightened problems of adjustment due to their inability to find a suitable job.¹⁶²

Rather than give the repatriate a job, the aim of the vocational staff was to help the repatriate navigate through the process of finding a suitable job and of refreshing skills so they could get a job themselves. This, it was hoped, would promote a sense of doing something for themselves, dispel any anxieties surrounding the job market and help rebuild confidence in their ability to regain previous skills.¹⁶³ By doing so, this would promote personal responsibility, give the repatriate personal agency so long denied in captivity and build confidence in an

¹⁵⁹ Bootle-Wilbraham, *Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War*, p. 41.

¹⁶⁰ 'They Heal Minds of Ex POW', *The Daily Dispatch*, 15 November 1945, p. 4.

¹⁶¹ Bootle-Wilbraham, *Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War*, p. 41.

¹⁶² Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, pp.279 - 280.

¹⁶³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/5, *Introductory notes*, p. 2, TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/5, *Notes for vocational staff No. 3*, p. 1.

unfamiliar environment helping in the general resettlement process. Vocational staff could, furthermore, arrange job attachments, which allowed the repatriate to have a trial run of a particular job under the actual employment conditions but without any liabilities or commitments. Throughout the course and as part of the advertising campaign, it was made clear that the CRUs were not like previous army vocational courses and were not intended to teach a trade in four to six weeks. Rather, attendees would be able to examine various trades and perhaps try some before making up their minds. This was designed specifically to appeal to POWs who feared swapping one routine for another and carried suspicion that attendance of such vocational schemes would mean a continuation of service.¹⁶⁴

This also helped differentiate the CRUs from other such employment schemes such as the Ministry of Labours Resettlement Advice Service, which had faced some criticism, not least with its flagship emergency teacher training scheme. This scheme had not lacked for volunteers with 5,000 applicants applying every month by November 1945, but failed completely in providing adequate means to train them.¹⁶⁵ Waiting lists had become so long that many returning servicemen took up other jobs instead and the incident did not help in dispelling the public's perception of the advice service being much like the foreboding pre-war labour exchanges.¹⁶⁶ The labour exchanges did not have a good reputation and were associated with unemployment, the dole, the means test, and latterly during the war, with compulsory direction of labour to industry.¹⁶⁷ The fact that the Ministry of Labour Officer was a resident at the unit and took part in activities had a decisive effect on the attitude of repatriates towards the Ministry of Labour and in building trust.¹⁶⁸ It was considered of vital importance that the

¹⁶⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement*, p. 11.

¹⁶⁵ Allport, *Demobbed*, p.146.

¹⁶⁶ Allport, *Demobbed*, p.145.

¹⁶⁷ Bootle-Wilbraham, *Resettlement of Ex-Prisoners of War*, p. 41.

¹⁶⁸ Adam Curle, 'Transitional Communities and Social Re-Connection: A Follow-up Study of the Civil Resettlement of British Prisoners of War Part 1', *Human Relations*, Vol. 1, Iss. 1, (1947), p. 66.

repatriate should have trust in the Ministry of Labour and one representative J. H. Harmer, observed that the War Office ‘attach considerable importance to POWs visiting local Ministry offices as apparently the experiment at Derby has proved the value of this beyond doubt’.¹⁶⁹

Advertising would also play a role in distancing the units from any negative association with previous schemes and highlight how the CRUs differed from those schemes. It was made clear in *Settling Down in Civvy Street* and in interviews at the Medical Board that the vocational aspect of the course was intended to give the repatriate a chance to examine various trades, provide information and opportunities on jobs, and differed in its approach from army vocational training or labour exchanges.¹⁷⁰ By attending the unit it would allow the returning man to make a good decision in employment, ‘because future happiness relies on the job you take’.¹⁷¹ The emphasis was on freedom of choice, further promoting the democratic nature of the CRUs. The entire process was designed to give the POW agency, allow them to make informed decisions, and dissocialise them from an army life where decisions had been made for them. The search for employment was a key component in bridging the gap between civilian and army life and by dissociating the CRUs from previous vocational courses, it aimed at dispelling the mistrust of authority present in POWs and offer them something new, specifically designed for their needs. Communication towards the repatriate was, therefore, an important part of the operations of the CRUs. The upward trend in approaches towards the vocational staff during a repatriates stay evidence that they were effective in rebuilding a degree of trust in authority and the acceptance of help.¹⁷² The follow up report commissioned by the CRUs highlights the success of their methods, with the vocational side of a repatriates stay receiving universal praise. Remarks included observations like ‘when I got to a CRU, it was like coming

¹⁶⁹ White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 183.

¹⁷⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Settling Down: Mark I*, p. 5.

¹⁷¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/3, *Settling Down: Mark I*, p. 6.

¹⁷² TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4., *Voluntary Approach of Repatriates to CRU staff*, p. 3 table II a & pp. 6 – 7.

into the sunshine out of the fog' and 'the CRU does help you to find your way round civvy street again'.¹⁷³ One repatriate stated that, 'well, I must say the CRU helped me at the time, but of course I'd have got right all on my own soon enough'.¹⁷⁴ This remark was seen as demonstrative the effectiveness of the CRUs in resocialising men, and such an attitude was evidence that as a man recovered his poise, pride, and self-reliance, he was apt to reject the idea he ever needed help.¹⁷⁵

If the CRUs were to be considered successful and to ease the repatriate back into the world of work, the very real problem of civil employment had to be dealt with. Part of the CRUs' role was therefore to help deal with the problems this decision involved. During captivity the planning of post war life took on a large part of the POW's existence, these plans had no hope of being put into action until an uncertain time in the future and, as such, plans tended to shade into daydreams or wish fulfilment, becoming less and less related to the hard facts of life taking on an importance of their own and becoming a part of the POWs mental background.¹⁷⁶ When faced with the realities of civil employment their daydreams, camp suspicions and uncertainties would combine to cloud their judgement. The vocational staff would therefore inform repatriates of the new realities of employment, dispel their mistrust with authority and ground the repatriate's decisions in the facts of their situation.

To achieve this, the method of dealing with these problems were broken down into two aspects. First, the vocational staff would, through group discussions, reintegration activities and modification of army routine intended to disperse anxiety, lower the emotional tensions of the repatriates. The aim of this was to clear the repatriate's mind so they may better adapt to absorb information on present industrial conditions and come into contact with the realities of

¹⁷³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *Follow up Report*, p. 10.

¹⁷⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *Follow up Report*, p. 10.

¹⁷⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/4, *Follow up Report*, p. 10.

¹⁷⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/5, *Introductory notes*, p. 2.

civvy life.¹⁷⁷ The first of these group discussions would take place near the end of the first week of attendance at the CRU and just after the repatriate's visit to the employment exchange. The first discussion acted as an introductory talk and fulfilled a useful function designed to orientate the repatriate's mind in an appropriate direction and in creating a suitable atmosphere designed to reduce the diffidence and self-consciousness of the repatriates and initiate conversation. Thereafter, a discussion would be held after the first visit to a factory at the beginning of the second week and at a time when the primary interest of the repatriate begins to focus on the vocational side and in speaking to the vocational staff.¹⁷⁸ Group discussions would run alongside arranged individual meetings where the experience and background of the repatriate could be talked about in private.



Figure 13: Repatriates visit Cadbury Bros Ltd Bournville. ‘Visit to Cadbury Factory’, *The Birmingham Mail*, 13 December 1945, p. 1.

¹⁷⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/5, *Introductory notes*, p. 2.

¹⁷⁸ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/5, *Notes for vocational staff No. 3*, p. 1.

Together, these discussions would allow the staff to address the second aspect, providing information about employment opportunities, giving special attention to those with particular vocational issues, and developing a range of activities for any individual with special requirements, factory visits, farm work, and job rehearsals.¹⁷⁹ As the Vocational Officer's role was to answer any specific questions which may be put to them regarding employment, it was therefore important that vocational staff should have sufficient knowledge of the field in which they specialised, while at the same time being willing to find out answers to any out of the ordinary questions.¹⁸⁰ To facilitate such knowledge, a number of films were selected as training tools for vocational staff including many region-specific films.¹⁸¹ These films were split into four separate categories, vocational, sociological, educational, and miscellaneous, and covered the various changes in industry and work environment precipitated by the war.

Region-specific films included *Green Mountain Black Mountain* scripted by Dylan Thomas. This showed the social and economic changes that industry had brought to the Welsh valleys and its theme was designed to appeal to POWs feeling disillusioned after the fatigue of captivity or questioning if their sacrifice was worth it. It contrasted the relief that new industry brought to Wales with the hardships of the depression, showing a bright new Wales and helping dispel the rose-tinted view which POWs often held their post war lives. It promised a brighter future and ended with an optimistic note of "Remember the march of the old young men, it shall not happen again".¹⁸² Others, such as *Power for the Highlands*, showcased the new opportunities emerging in Scotland and how the introduction of industries could help develop the highlands while still preserving its natural beauty. The training was set in such a way that Vocational Officers would have a wide breadth of knowledge and, where appropriate, specialise

¹⁷⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/5, *Notes for vocational staff No. 3*, p. 1.

¹⁸⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/5, *Notes for vocational staff No. 3*, p. 3.

¹⁸¹ For a comprehensive breakdown of these films see: TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/6, *Appendix "A" To Civil Resettlement Training Note No. 5*.

¹⁸² IWM, UKY 379, *Green Mountain Black Mountain* (1942).

in regions or industries relevant to their areas. In situations where the Vocational Officers could not answer enquiries or the repatriate posed obscure or difficult questions, the Ministry of Labour Officer was on hand to answer these, lending their specialist knowledge to the situation.

The decision on employment was not an easy one for the repatriate. In many cases jobs that appeared suitable before the war were no longer attractive and one of the main anxieties reported was of finding suitable employment.¹⁸³ No. 12 CRU reported that around 70 percent of those attending had job problems, and even if they had a job lined up, they could not decide whether to go to it or not.¹⁸⁴ The repatriate's decision on employment was not just solely based on his lack of understanding and could also be affected by a changed attitude. His experiences and wartime role may have changed his post war desires and office jobs or working in shops may no longer be attractive to one who had responsibility and action in war. As an article in *Soldier* magazine reported, 'men will find factory life monotonous and office conditions lonely after the tempo and companionship of the forces'.¹⁸⁵ Such was the case for Bert Scrivens who upon returning to work for an advertising agency 'couldn't get used to being stuck in an office, at a desk. I'd been too used to being out – free to do as I wanted to do my job'.¹⁸⁶ Letters to *John Bull* show the frustration which many in the armed services were showing with job prospects, one Sergeant fitter in the RAF, having worked on experimental aircraft engines could get 'nothing more than a job as a lorry driver'.¹⁸⁷ There was much frustration and worry surrounding jobs and as guides, vocational staff would have to consider many factors, the repatriate's own wishes and attitude, his aptitudes, capacities, experience, and personality, and the vacancies available and conditions of employment set. In the end, however, the repatriate's own wishes would be the final determinant, but it was hoped that through advice, the repatriate

¹⁸³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/8, *Grenadier Guards*, p. 2.

¹⁸⁴ 'They Heal Minds of Ex POW', *The Daily Dispatch*, Nov 15, 1945, p. 4.

¹⁸⁵ Allport, *Demobbed*, p.135.

¹⁸⁶ IWM, 29536 *Bert Scrivens*, Reel 16.

¹⁸⁷ 'Skilled Servicemen – "Unskilled" as Civvies', *John Bull*, 6 October 1945, p. 14.

could see if their wishes were based on a realistic appreciation of the situation and not just fantasy.¹⁸⁸ The CRUs were therefore best suited to guide the repatriate through this process and the work of the Vocational Officers and the attached Ministry of Labour Officer was essential in helping the repatriate in their decision.

Even for those who wished to return to their previous jobs there was benefit in attending a CRU. The reception that many received from their former bosses and colleagues was not always a happy one. Wartime had disrupted the generational hierarchy at work with many returning men reporting to former colleagues or subordinates who had received promotions during the war. That many of these men were often young enough to be their children, was particularly galling. Walter Harris recalls upon returning as a fitter for a car dealership, despite his previous experience, 'they were treating me as if I was the young bloke that was with them those years before... and things didn't quite work out'.¹⁸⁹ Upon returning to work, Fred Hazell found that he still had the Sergeant Major attitude towards everything and found the younger employees who had not served undisciplined and threatened 'to throw them out the of the jolly window'.¹⁹⁰ Employment for those who had leadership roles in the service proved difficult with employees and workers were less willing to accept senior NCOs immediately into supervisory roles as man management in the army was somewhat different from industry.¹⁹¹ By attending a CRU, the repatriate was slowly encouraged to modify his routine and relieve himself of the military mindset. Through discussions and talks by the Vocational Officer the repatriate built up a knowledge of the 'civvy way' of doing things and what was to be expected in the work environment. With visits to the repatriate's workplaces Vocational Officers would inform his

¹⁸⁸ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/5, *Introductory notes*, p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ IWM, 20944 Walter Harris, Reel 9.

¹⁹⁰ IWM, 17229 Fred Hazell, Reel 16.

¹⁹¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/9, *Report on the Discussion with Mr H. P. Bond, Ministry of Labour and National Service*, p. 1.

colleagues on what to expect and promote an understanding between both to reduce workplace tensions.

Things were not helped by the Ministry of Labour's own guide, which cautioned that ex-servicemen might show little initiative in the workplace 'because they will have gotten into the habit of waiting for orders'.¹⁹² While this advice was meant to be helpful to employers, it might have caused some reluctance to hire ex-servicemen who appeared more trouble than they were worth. By attending a CRU, the repatriate would be showing both initiative and a track record of resettlement and deprogramming from army life attractive to employers or their old workplace. During the follow up investigation, it was noted that several large factories had encouraged POWs in their employ to visit a CRU and that the change in attitude the CRUs promoted was seen by management as a net positive for his assimilation back to the work environment.¹⁹³

Vocational Officers could also attend the repatriate's workplace and offer advice to employers through the extension scheme. Vocational Officers would tailor their approach towards management and their language use was designed to appeal to not just matters of morality, but good business sense. A. T. M. Wilson, addressing industrial federations and trades associations, stated that good personnel management was not just a humanitarian responsibility, but by implementing them, satisfactory results would be reflected in the annual reports of companies.¹⁹⁴ Much effort was extended to educating those in direct contact with returned servicemen and advice was given to management on how to approach returning POWs. This advice was based around restoring trust in authority and methods in rebuilding this without making the repatriate feel 'different' or singled out. A meal or cup of tea in the canteen would

¹⁹² Allport, *Demobbed*, p.140.

¹⁹³ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.280.

¹⁹⁴ White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 182.

mean more than an interview with the managing director who the repatriate may not be completely at ease with on return to his job.¹⁹⁵ It was believed by Vocational Officers that morale based on respect and affection was the only sound foundation for discipline and factory discipline would improve enormously if the repatriate had the opportunity of learning to respect those who must supervise and control them.¹⁹⁶ It was important to convince the repatriate that any authority was trying to understand and help than to insist on the letter of the law.¹⁹⁷ This approach to resettlement was grounded in psychological thinking and evidence from studies such as those conducted in the 1920's at the Hawthorne works factory near Illinois. The conclusions from this experiment suggested worker output had increased because workers were encouraged by management trying to understand them, and Wilson suggested that through this inexpensive approach, businesses might achieve similar results towards POWs.¹⁹⁸

Work on the extension scheme extended to reconnecting with any cancelations. There were concerns that cancelations with the reason given that the repatriate had found a job, was a possible excuse that repatriates would think would be acceptable.¹⁹⁹ Lack of attendance, then, did not mean the repatriate did not need assistance. Many repatriates feared that attendance of a CRU would mean a job would not be available for them and they would find it hard to gain one. Vocational staff worked hard to persuade these men that attendance would only be beneficial and would discuss any practical problems of their case. Vocational Officers could also help the repatriate navigate the minefield of reinstatement in a job. The 1944 Reinstatement in Civil Employment Act had required employers to rehire ex-workers who had served in wartime forces for at least six to twelve months. To guarantee this right, ex-

¹⁹⁵ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement*, p. 14.

¹⁹⁶ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement*, p. 14.

¹⁹⁷ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Psychological Aspects of Civil Resettlement*, p. 14.

¹⁹⁸ White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, p. 181.

¹⁹⁹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *CRU Research Report No. 4, Cancellation of Applications for Civil Resettlement Units Summary*, p. 4-5.

serviceman had to approach old firms within a month after their demob and had to be available to work within a further month. Yet even this was no guarantee, the act had left much unclear, some vacant jobs were filled by men who had then been called up to serve, and it was unclear as to which had the legal right to the job.²⁰⁰

Vocational Officers together with the Ministry of Labour representative could represent the repatriate and ease any anxiety around retaining their previous jobs. In addition, if the repatriate had any anxieties that his previous skills had lapsed during his captivity, unit workshops were provided so that tradesmen could have the opportunity to use their tools again and regain their previous skills. These workshops also allowed men to try out new occupations and to encourage the repatriate to do something constructive which could be useful in their homes and satisfy the urge to do something creative.²⁰¹ Many repatriates, however, did not know what they wanted to do, or wishing to try something new, lacked guidance and knowledge on the subject. Ken Bean, returning after three years in the Royal Navy, summed up the general mood stating, 'I think I suffered from feelings many people had that I didn't know what I wanted to do'.²⁰²

Many POWs had been taken prisoner too young to have found permanent jobs prior and had lost five to six years of their youth which would have gone into fitting them to whatever job they decided suitable.²⁰³ In addition, many firms had reorganised during the war and had changed the nature of their business entirely, previous workplace experience could now be totally irrelevant. Previous jobs could appear no longer suitable with the repatriate's changed attitude, or simply monotonous, mundane, or lead to a sense of frustration that they could not implement the new skills they had learned while in service. One returning repatriate

²⁰⁰ Allport, *Demobbed*, p. 137.

²⁰¹ TWC SA/ TIH/B/2/1/2/2/6, *Technical policy for civil resettlement*, Appendix "A", p.4.

²⁰² Allport, *Demobbed*, p. 141.

²⁰³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/1/3, *Problems of Civil Resettlement*, p. 3.

complained to the *Daily Mirror* that ‘I cannot settle down in my own trade... I feel I must do something practical’.²⁰⁴ For these repatriates who were finding the transition difficult, the CRUs may have been particularly attractive, offering advice on changes in the workplace and the chance to try their hand at new jobs.

Not all trades had a civilian application and there was a limit to the number of skilled tradesmen that Britain could accommodate. By the summer of 1945 firms advertising positions for drivers and engineers were receiving far more applications than they could hope to satisfy.²⁰⁵ Newspaper articles were also tempering the expectations of returning servicemen with the *News of the World* urging ex-servicemen to be conservative in their career choices.²⁰⁶ In these instances, Vocational Officers and Ministry of Labour Officers were on hand to help the repatriate make a decision based on these realities and, in the case of the Ministry of Labour, could suggest a retraining scheme if needed. This was designed to place the repatriate in an industry that best reflected the repatriate’s new skills, dispel his frustration with the job market and show the repatriate that the government was doing everything possible for them. This aided the resocialisation process and eased their resettlement by finding a job they would find satisfying. Cpl H. J. Aberdein praised the work of the CRUs in helping him inform his decisions, saying that through it ‘you can settle in your mind your future job of work’.²⁰⁷ The follow up study in Oxford suggests that the CRUs had been successful in this objective with those attending a CRU finding more satisfaction in their jobs than those who had not and experiencing far less resettlement issues as a result.²⁰⁸ The limited scope of this study makes it difficult to apply to a national scale however, yet as has been previously shown, even in areas

²⁰⁴ “‘Unskilled’ as Civvies’, *John Bull*, 6 October 1945, p. 14, ‘They are Lucky in their Loyal Wives’, *Daily Mirror*, 29 Nov 1945, p. 7.

²⁰⁵ Allport, *Demobbed*, p. 145.

²⁰⁶ Allport, *Demobbed*, p. 148.

²⁰⁷ ‘Help into Civil Life’, *The Press and Journal*, 5 November 1945, p. 4.

²⁰⁸ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, pp. 279 – 280.

where planners believed the area had been industrially depressed, the CRUs had achieved positive results returning men to work.²⁰⁹

CRUs would also accommodate those whose apprenticeships had been interrupted by their call up, giving them a chance to practice their trade or, through the Ministry of Labour, rejoin an apprenticeship scheme. However, this was still no guarantee of a job and those wishing to pursue a trade found it difficult to get a job in an essentially closed shop.²¹⁰ Employers generally preferred workers with industrial backgrounds over soldiers unfamiliar with industry except in jobs where trustworthiness and high discipline were important and the attitude of employers were much coloured by the unions they had to deal with.²¹¹ Unions had been rather hostile to any repatriate wishing to continue a trade into civvy life. One *John Bull* reader who attended a public lecture on the matter stated that trade unionists ‘were completely hostile to the schemes... and considered the whole thing a conspiracy to flood their trades with cheap labour’.²¹² Indeed, an important reason for such hostility appeared to be a deliberate policy of keeping down the supply of trained labour to maintaining high wages.²¹³ This attitude extended to the industrial sector with trade union officials and workers on the factory floor not very receptive on the whole towards repatriates who they considered rivals.²¹⁴

The work of the Vocational Officers was not in a vacuum and the opposition from unions reflected the ongoing bargaining between a Labour government whose commitment to full employment and a planned economy faced some resistance from unions hostile to particular employment schemes. Unions however, had been less resistant to change than after the First World War with the Trade Union Congress (TUC) supporting the Labour manifesto

²⁰⁹ See chapter 4 in particular.

²¹⁰ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/8, *Grenadier Guards*, p. 2.

²¹¹ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/11, *Notes on Attitude in Industry to the Employment of Ex-Regular Soldiers*, p. 1.

²¹² ‘Will Servicemen come back to Fight?’, *John Bull*, 6 January 1945, p. 12.

²¹³ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/11, *Attitude in Industry*, p. 2.

²¹⁴ TWC SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/11, *Attitude in Industry*, p. 1.

and issuing a statement supporting controls as ‘a protection against industrial and economic exploitation, and...a means of enlarging the boundaries of [workers'] freedom’.²¹⁵ However, the price for such cooperation and endorsement was control over wages and labour and the refusal of the unions to accept some compromise over their powers of collective bargaining somewhat limited the ability of Vocational staff in their work.²¹⁶ The attitudes of the community towards helping find returning POWs work was therefore somewhat mixed. While most agreed that the mistakes of demobilisation after the First World War should not be repeated and that men should have something to return to, certain sectors remained hostile to the influx of new workers. The CRUs were designed to tackle these difficulties by building a close working relationship with industries and the community. The Vocational Officer would work with the Ministry of Labour explaining the purpose of the scheme to various industries and part of their role was developing working relations with those of influence with an eye on overcoming these difficulties.

During the course of a factory visit, one labour supervisor stated that he would have not provided his facilities if not for the fact that ‘he learned from experience that men who had been to CRUs were far more satisfactory workers than those who had not’.²¹⁷ It was for this reason that most management teams actively encouraged POWs to visit a CRU and were much more receptive to employing a POW who had attended the scheme.²¹⁸ For those POWs who attended, the Vocational Officers, by giving advice on the adaptability and aptitudes required for certain trades, giving an understanding of the civilian community, and giving guidance as to the correct channels through which to apply for particular jobs, gave the repatriate a chance to use his initiative and dissocialise from army life. Under these conditions it was hoped the

²¹⁵ Stephen Brooke, *Labour's War: The Labour Party and the Second World War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 320.

²¹⁶ Brooke, *Labours War*, pp. 254 – 256.

²¹⁷ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.280.

²¹⁸ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.280.

repatriate would develop a greater power of self-direction and a greater knowledge of present-day civilian life, which enabled them to take part in activities suitable to their case. While the repatriate's own wishes were the final determinant in the process of finding a job, through this advice they could see if their wishes were based on a realistic appreciation of the situation and not just fantasy.

Evidence supported the effectiveness of the vocational staff and of attending a CRU for the purposes of finding help in employment. A follow-up study by E. L. Trist and Adam Curle with a sample of attendees and non-attendees showed a correlation between finding suitable employment and resettlement.²¹⁹ A high proportion of those who did not attend, impelled by restlessness and ill-formulated desire for change, changed jobs unnecessarily and the inability to make an adequate choice on a new job heightened problems of adjustment.²²⁰ In comparison, those who attended a CRU showed a higher satisfaction rate with any change of job, with some of those who attended neglecting opportunities of a more lucrative job because they gained more satisfaction from a less well paid job. It was considered by Trist and Curle that such a realistic attitude was a positive sign of resettlement and a reflection of the facilities of adequate choice that had been extended to them.²²¹

It is unfortunate, however, that there is little personal testimony from those who attended the scheme and their reaction to the CRUs is hard to gauge. Some testimony remains, yet these remain inconclusive. 'K.S.' writing in the *Clarion* gave 'appreciation to the staffs of various CRUs and hospitals which helped me during my two years convalescence' and highlighted how the staff 'understood me better than I understood myself'.²²² Another POW, however, described how they failed to deal with ex-POWs' real problems because of their

²¹⁹ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.279.

²²⁰ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.279.

²²¹ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, pp. 279-280.

²²² Quoted in Makepeace, *Captives*, p. 220.

‘ignorance of our positives, not our negatives’.²²³ It is possible that the latter fell into a category of POW with greater resocialisation problems and follow-up studies showed that those POWs who attended a CRU were 74 per cent more likely to be settled, with only 26 percent who were not.²²⁴ The background from which the sample was taken, however, may have minimised such problems as the men had all originated from Oxford, an area of relative full employment.²²⁵ This makes it difficult to evaluate the success of the vocational staff yet the evidence in this chapter suggests that on balance, the work they performed at the CRUs was a net positive for repatriates and the value in attending can be shown by successes such as those from No. 9 CRU, which boasted that in its first month of opening, 100 repatriates who had no job to go to, had found one.²²⁶

Conclusion.

The methods of the CRUs in delivering a large-scale resocialisation scheme while considering the needs of the individual and in engaging in the community with domestic and work difficulties was a key factor behind their success. The community would play an important role in the resocialisation of the repatriate and the specialist staff would do much work in making sure this would be a two-way process. Operations was a vital factor behind how the CRUs engaged with the community and in the close working partnerships with other organisations. By gaining the cooperation of the community the CRUs could effectively ‘bridge the gap’ and smooth the transition from military to civilian life for all involved.

Operations would play a vital role in the methods of engaging repatriates and in formulating solutions to the difficulties that arose. Planners for the most part had foreseen the difficulties that could arise, and the CRUs would adapt their approach as necessary. Kneller

²²³ Quoted in Makepeace, *Captives*, p. 220.

²²⁴ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.274.

²²⁵ Curle & Trist, *Transitional Communities II*, p.244.

²²⁶ ‘Battle HQ Now Training Centre’, *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 12 October 1945, p. 4.

Hall would be assigned as an officer only unit and would employ repatriated officers on its staff who would act as figureheads, help break down any stigma of attending and demonstrate that attendees could be successfully resettled. There were signs this approach was successful with approaches to Resident psychologist done at repatriate's own initiative. Greater effort was also extended to regular soldiers with their suspicion of authority identified as a problem. To engage with these men staff would extend their operations beyond the CRU with home visits and discussions at barracks arranged. This approach was deemed successful enough that a modified scheme for use on a regular basis would be discussed. There was, however, some deficiency in planning regarding FEPOWs. CRU planners could hardly be blamed for this however, as a lack of information and contact with these men meant that any resettlement difficulties in these repatriates were difficult to predict without an extended period of observation. Undoubtedly, some mistakes were made, yet the CRUs were quick to respond and the ability of the CRUs to implement a large-scale resocialisation project while factoring in the individual experiences and backgrounds of repatriates was a key factor behind their operations and fundamental in their success.

In order to 'bridge the gap' between civil and military life the CRUs would need to gain the cooperation and participation of both the relatives of the repatriate and of the wider community. Operations formed a key factor in the success of staff to project their work beyond the CRUs, engage and work with organisations, and promote the two-way resocialisation required. By gaining the cooperation of, and working with local and national social service organisations, it gave the CRUs a degree of flexibility in the way they could assist the repatriate. This was important and effectively extended the radius of assistance that units could provide and allowed the CRUs to engage with far greater numbers of repatriates than would have been possible. Additionally, the close partnership with volunteer organisations formed part of the effectiveness of the CLOs work and demonstrates the success of CRU operations. This was

key to their approach and the methods the CLOs employed lent themselves well in bridging difficult issues the repatriate was experiencing. The ability of the CLOs to project their work into the community, engage with the repatriate and their relatives at the CRUs and in their homes was a key factor to the success of the CRUs.

Supplemental to the work of the CLOs, helping the repatriate 'settle' in work was considered a large part of his resettlement back into a civilian routine. The cooperation of government departments such as the Ministry of Labour was considered an important part in how this would be achieved, and the Ministry of Labour would supplement the work of CRU staff with their own expertise. However, such cooperation was not guaranteed, and it was only through the persuasive language used by CRU planners that this cooperation was secured. The work of the vocational staff was reliant on the communication and close cooperation between themselves, and the Ministry of Labour Officer attached to each unit. The Vocational Officer would act as a balancing force to the Ministry of Labour Officer and the close working partnership between the two is demonstrative of the success of the operations of the CRUs. Additionally, how the vocational staff projected their work beyond the units and work closely with organisations and local businesses was a large factor in their success. The work of the vocational staff, however, was not in a vacuum and the CRUs would have to navigate the post war politics and disputes between the government and unions. Such cooperation was gained through meetings and visits to factories and the persuasive language of staff would highlight the moralistic and monetary benefits for businesses hiring those POWs who had attended units. The ability of the CRUs to gain the cooperation of government departments and navigate outside pressures is demonstrative of how successful their operations were. While it is difficult to judge the success of the CRUs through the words of the repatriates themselves, follow up studies evidence the effectiveness of the methods employed by the staff and that those who did attend, would experience fewer difficulties in resettling than those who did not.

Journeys End: A Return to Normality?

This thesis has told the story of the Civil Resettlement Units and the methods employed in resocialising returning prisoners of war. It has discussed three main contributing factors in their development and day to day running, that of planning, location, and operations. In its analysis of these it has argued that the CRUs could not have been the success they were without each component. By exploring the factors underpinning their success it has aimed to answer one simple question, which factor was the greater contributor to this success? In the course of this analysis this thesis demonstrated that in this hierarchy of factors, it was operations that contributed the most to the success of the CRUs. Linked to this question this thesis offers a secondary argument and argues that such success could not have been achieved without events from the First World War influencing responses during the Second. Such events did not happen in isolation and former POWs and the relatives of these men helped create an interventionist culture that factored into the development of the CRUs. In doing so this thesis has filled a gap in the current literature, expanding on the works of authors such as Heather Jones, Oliver Wilkinson, and John Yarnall.¹ By analysing the longer-term consequences of First World War captivity this thesis adds to the understanding of the post war social and political environment and how this shaped responses to resettlement during the Second World War. This thesis therefore demonstrates that the creation of the CRUs should not just be viewed in terms of the culmination of psychiatric methods or government intervention, rather in a much broader cultural context.

In addressing its primary argument, this thesis demonstrated that the initial planning of a post war resettlement scheme was not cohesive, rather it was the coming together of minds

¹ Jones, *Violence against Prisoners*, Yarnall, *Prisoners 1914-19*, Wilkinson, *British Prisoners*. While these authors hint at the wider consequences of the First World War regarding captivity, there is little analysis of the long-term implications.

who saw their work as important and beyond the scope of just returning men to combat. Such work was an important factor in the process of the development of the CRUs which would have not been possible without this foundation and the conclusions drawn from earlier experiments. Conclusions from earlier experiments such as Northfield and Crookham would be refined in the later pilot scheme, the SRTU at Derby. Such planning was not done in isolation and outside factors would limit planners' ability to foresee all possibilities. This led to oversights that only became apparent when the scheme was running. The responses towards these deficiencies while highlighting failures in planning, would also demonstrate a flexibility in CRU operations that underpinned their success. By analysing how the CRUs were planned and how previous research would influence how post war resettlement would shape, this thesis contributes to the historiography of wartime psychiatry by focusing on how it was implemented regarding resettlement and resocialising POWs. Previous histories have instead focused on either the use of front-line psychiatry or an underpinning change in attitudes towards its use.²

Another factor under consideration as fundamental to success of CRUs is location. By exploring the factor of location, chapter four argued that the cultural geography of an area was not just an important consideration in locating units, but also a key factor in their success. By analysing location as a factor behind the success of the CRUs, this thesis offers a new approach in their analysis. Authors such as Clare Makepeace, Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, and Alice Victoria White have omitted this factor in their analysis of the CRUs. By analysing the cultural geography of communities and their response towards CRUs this thesis contributes to the understanding of post war British society and fills a notable omission around the debates in communities and parliament surrounding prisoner repatriation.

² See: White, *Psychologising Civvy Street*, Jones & Wessely, *Psychological Vulnerability*, Jones & Ironside, *Psychiatric Casualties in Normandy*, Edgar Jones, Thomas, and Ironside, *Study of a First World War "PIE" unit*.

This thesis has also contributed to the understanding of demobilisation in Ireland and how the complex social and political makeup of this region would play a role in how CRUs approached resocialisation in this region. It demonstrated how CRU headquarters, through diplomacy, extended their work into the Republic of Ireland and through 'soft intervention' achieved great success. Additionally, in choosing to analyse several units this thesis was able to provide a more balanced assessment of locational factors than the original follow up study. In doing so, it has demonstrated the importance of location in the hierarchy of factors in the success of the CRUs. However, in the process of analysing this factor it has also demonstrated that the location of units was often considered unsuitable. Areas that experienced difficulties resulting from decisions of location would need to adapt to their area. While cultural geography played an important factor in a unit's ability to successfully perform its primary function, the operations behind the CRUs gave the flexibility to address each regions unique difficulties and respond quickly to deficiencies in location.

In analysing the factors behind planning and location a clear pattern emerged that operations contributed at each stage in the CRUs development. The contribution that operations played in the development of CRUs has been signposted throughout chapters two, three and four. Until 1944, the planning of a large-scale resettlement scheme had been disjointed, lacked cohesion, and was more a result of individuals with a belief their work could be utilised beyond military application. Men such as J. R. Rees were able to bring these minds together and give a unifying purpose to the development of the CRUs. Additionally, his ability to demonstrate a need for a scheme such as the CRUs to those of influence and gaining a freedom of control in their development, was a key step in their success. Chapter three also demonstrated that the SRTU had identified the need for a reliable and effective training scheme to provide for the staffing needs of future units. The implementation of the 'budding off' system and the ability to implement and control a large-scale training program able to produce staff familiar in the

difficulties facing POW resettlement demonstrates the importance of operations in the success of the CRUs. This was run parallel to a large-scale public advertisement program which included radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, and public talks. This had been designed to educate the public, persuade relatives of returning POWs of the benefits of their loved ones attending, and in utilising public curiosity in engaging and assisting in the scheme. This encouraged the two-way resocialisation that the CRUs required and the ability of the CRUs to project into the community was considered important and further demonstrative of the key role operations played in the success of CRUs. By analysing the CRUs, this thesis has significantly contributed to the historiography of post-Second World War Britain and the demobilisation process. Much of the literature surrounding demobilisation after the Second World War focus on the combat veteran and not the POW. By focusing upon the POW, this thesis fills this gap and shines a light on the experiences of this demographic whose repatriation has received little attention.

Chapter five draws together the argument that operations was the fundamental factor underpinning the success of CRUs. The CRUs faced many challenges in resocialising returning POWs and the implementation of an effective large scale resettlement scheme while still having the capability to treat repatriates as individuals with different experiences was due to the effectiveness of its operations. Certain groups of POWs, however, would prove difficult to engage with and extension officers gave priority in outreach work in these instances, visiting repatriates in their homes or giving talks at Barracks. Despite some failings, notably those Far East Prisoners of War, the CRUs effectively managed to deliver a large-scale resettlement scheme. The CRUs ability to garner public support, engage with outside organisations and project its work beyond the unit was a crucial factor in their success. Chapter five demonstrates how the CLOs and vocational staff utilised these connections and their importance in resocialising repatriates. The work of the CLOs was vital in the operations of the CRUs and

their ability to engage with the repatriate, his relatives, and project their work beyond the unit was an important factor in their success. Similarly, the work of the vocational staff would not have been possible without their ability to work closely with outside organisations and local businesses and demonstrates the importance of operations in their success.

Ultimately, the success of the CRUs came down to the methods employed to bridge the gap between the military and civil life. While planning had given the theory behind this, it was only with the pilot unit at Derby that techniques could be finalised. The limited scope of the pilot unit, however, meant that it was only until the CRUs were operational that certain deficiencies in the planning process were identified. Similarly, while location was an important factor and cultural geography played an important role in resocialisation, pressures of time had meant that many locations would be unsuitable, and staff would need to adapt their approach in addressing localised issues. The management of limited resources, training of staff, the ability in working with other organisations, navigating complex social and political factors, and effective engagement with the public and repatriates all fell under operations. Therefore, of the hierarchy of factors discussed in this thesis, it has demonstrated that operations were the fundamental factor underpinning the success of the CRUs. There is, however, scope beyond this thesis and expand upon the understanding of POW repatriation.

While this thesis has focused on events of the Second World War there is scope for the work of this thesis to be expanded. This thesis has only analysed what provisions the British government provided for British POWs and has not included what assistance, if any, was available for dominion or colonial troops. Further, there is greater scope to explore if any such similar scheme was adopted after other conflicts such as Korea and how the socio-political environment of the time effected POW repatriation. Finally, and in a more unfortunate turn of events, since this thesis was started the war in Ukraine began. While prisoner exchanges have


occurred, the longer-term consequences of captivity in this war have yet to be analysed and there is scope for a scheme such as the CRUs to assist in resocialising the victims of this war.

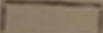
Appendix

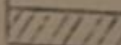
RATE OF PROVISION OF WORKING C. R. U's.

APPENDIX 'A'

| Weeks | 1 - 2 | 3 - 4 | 5 - 6 | 7 - 8 | 9 - 10 | 11-12 | 13-14 | 15-16 |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| UNIT 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 2 | | | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3 | | | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 4 | | | | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 5 | | | | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 6 | | | | | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 7 | | | | | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 8 | | | | | | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 9 | | | | | | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 10 | | | | | | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 11 | | | | | | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 12 | | | | | | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 13 | | | | | | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 14-20 | | | | | | | 14-20 | 14-20 |


 ATTACHED -
 TRAINING


 DEVELOPMENT


 WORKING

TWC SA/TH/B/2/1/2/1/2, Planning memoranda IV, Rates of Formation of Working CRUs, Development for No. 1 CRU Began in May 1945.

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BOX SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/9

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BOX SA/TIH/B/2/1/2/2/10

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