

The Impact of World War Two on Crime and Policing in Cambridge

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the pattern of criminal activity in Cambridge during the Second World War to explore the commonly held view that Britain's population presented a united front and rose to the challenges of the conflict. Much of the historiography of crime during the war has focused on the Metropolis, large towns and industrial regions. Cambridge was neither a major manufacturing centre nor a strategic port, but during the war, it became home to a substantial number of evacuees, refugees and servicemen. National crime statistics reveal that recorded crime did increase as the war progressed and a comparison with the situation in Cambridge is made using data obtained from contemporary sources including The Chief Constable's annual reports. To add texture to the study, the quantitative analysis is augmented by material obtained from parliamentary papers and debates as well as national and local press articles. In addition to looking at crimes committed by civilians and the military it also considers the impact of the war on those employed to keep law and order.

The study concludes that although the increase in recorded crime in Cambridge coincided with the influx of refugees and servicemen, the reasons are complex and interconnected. The displacement of large numbers of people, the conditions created by the war, the introduction of new laws and changing attitudes towards crime and penal policy all contributed. Furthermore, the additional duties carried out by the police and the loss of officers to the armed forces are shown to have influenced the reduction in crime detection rates. Finally, contemporary records reveal the gender-biased attitudes towards the recruitment of, and duties carried out by female police officers and that the ratio of policewomen to their male counterparts remained low throughout the war.

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I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work and that I have not submitted it, or any part of it, for a degree at The Open University or any other university or institution.

Parts of this dissertation are built on work I submitted for assessment as part of A825.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation will examine the pattern of crime in Cambridge during the Second World War to test the belief that most people in the nation rose to the challenges presented by the conflict and displayed mainly positive and courageous behaviour. Malcolm Smith stated that 1940 was perhaps the ‘one genuinely heroic moment in twentieth-century British history.’¹ Other historians have questioned this view and Sonya O. Rose argued that this was an image created by those responsible for morale during the Second World War.² Rose also stated that Britain, particularly during the war, was a culturally constructed ‘utopian fantasy.’³ Edward Smithies examined social behaviour between 1939 and 1945 and cited a 57% increase in reported crime in England and Wales to support his argument that there was an ‘underside’ to the war.⁴ Smithies book, like much of the historiography of crime during the Second World War, was influenced by the national picture, focussing on criminal activity in the larger towns and cities that were targeted by the Germans due to their significance to the war effort. This study will attempt to add to the historiography by investigating criminal activity in Cambridge which was neither a major manufacturing region nor a strategic port but was home to a significant number of evacuees and servicemen during the war.

According to Angus Calder, the Second World War affected the lives of people at every level of society and he questioned whether the increase in recorded criminal

¹ Malcolm Smith, *Britain and 1940: History, Myth and Popular Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000), p.1.

² Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), p.2.

³ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁴ Edward Smithies, *Crime in Wartime: A Social History of Crime in World War II* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), p.2.

convictions was due to more people breaking the law or an increased focus on apprehending and punishing them.⁵ In a similar vein, Smithies argued that some of the growth in lawbreaking was due to a widening of the social groups responsible and that during the war, crime ceased to be ‘...exclusively a proletarian phenomenon...’⁶ Juliet Gardiner discussed the tensions created by a war that fostered an atmosphere of danger and fear but also provided increased opportunities for wrongdoing with some crimes such as rationing offences being specific to the conditions created by the war, while others, including looting, became more serious.⁷ Additionally, while most historians agree that crimes committed by juveniles increased during the Second World War, Kate Bradley has questioned if this was due to authorities becoming less tolerant and taking a more formal approach to punishment.⁸ The second chapter of this study will engage with these debates by analysing adult and juvenile civilian criminal activity in Cambridge during the Second World War.

Emsley has claimed that little has been written about military crime during wartime even though in 1943 alone over 5200 men were court-martialled for various offences.⁹ Despite claims that areas close to military bases suffered a crime wave during the war, a study conducted in Germany between 2003 and 2007 concluded that the closure of bases had little effect on crime rates in the surrounding area.¹⁰ Cambridge’s location made it a popular base and recreation centre for both British and overseas

⁵ Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p.225.

⁶ Smithies, p.105.

⁷ Juliet Gardiner, *Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2004), p.589.

⁸ Kate Bradley, 'Juvenile Delinquency and the Public Sphere: Exploring Local and National Discourse in England, c. 1940-69', *Social History*, 37.1, (2012), pp.19-35 (p.22).

⁹ Clive Emsley, *Soldier, Sailor, Beggarman Thief: Crime and the British Armed Services Since 1914* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), p.13.

¹⁰ Smithies, p.47, Alfredo R. Paloyo, Colin Vance and Matthias Vorell, 'Local Determinants of Crime: Do Military Bases Matter?' *Demographic Research*, 31.21, (2014), pp.625-658 (p.650).

military personnel and the third chapter will engage with these arguments by investigating crimes committed by servicemen in the town.

According to Roy Ingleton, there is a lack of material covering the role of the police in the Second World War despite it being their responsibility not only to enforce the additional laws that were introduced but also to absorb the extra functions created by the circumstances of war.¹¹ To provide a local perspective, the final chapter will study how the Cambridge Borough Police force adapted to deal with the demands generated by the conflict.

Barry Godfrey and Paul Lawrence have suggested that the history of crime should not rely solely on secondary sources and made a plea for greater utilisation of primary material from national and local archives.¹² In response, this study will use contemporary government data contained in House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (hereafter HCPP) to examine the changing pattern of crime in England and Wales during the war by focussing on offences against emergency legislation as well as indictable crimes committed by adults and juveniles. The papers also contain commentary and opinions that will help to contextualise the statistical approach. A sense of how the authorities viewed criminality will be obtained from parliamentary debates that were recorded in *Hansard* during the war. These reveal some of the concerns and contemporary ideology on subjects including the internment of aliens, juvenile delinquency and the role of women police officers. There is limited coverage of Cambridge in the debates and papers but *The Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Reports* published between 1939 and 1945 contain statistics and commentary on recorded

¹¹ Roy Ingleton, *The Gentlemen at War* (Maidstone: Cranborne Publications, 1994), p.1.

¹² Barry Godfrey and Paul Lawrence, *Crime and Justice Since 1750*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p.167.

adult and juvenile criminal behaviour, as well as providing an insight into some of the challenges faced by a provincial police force, including personnel shortages, sickness and the interpretation of the new emergency laws.

Smithies has claimed that crime reporting in larger city newspapers was severely affected by competition from war stories, whereas misdemeanours committed in smaller provincial towns continued to attract the attention of local publications.¹³ Articles and readers' letters from local newspapers appear to support this view and reveal some contemporary perceptions of wartime crime despite being subject to censorship and reduced in size. Offences committed by juvenile evacuees were regularly reported in the local press but focussed more on the act and punishment and not the context. However, The Women's Group on Public Welfare publication, *Our Towns: A Close Up* did reveal some of the debates on the conditions that facilitated an increase in juvenile crime in areas that received high numbers of children evacuees.

Local newspapers also found space to report on offences that were committed by the armed forces but while British soldiers who broke the law were tried in civilian courts, Americans who transgressed were outside the jurisdiction of the British criminal justice system.¹⁴ Therefore, this study will use civilian court records and newspaper articles to examine incidences of crime committed by the British military but will rely on press coverage and oral evidence to gauge the impact of non-British military crime in Cambridge.

Personal perspectives on wartime crime and policing in Cambridge are revealed in

¹³ Smithies, p.5.

¹⁴ J. Robert Lilley and J. Michael Thomson, 'Executing US Soldiers in England, World War II: Command Influence and Sexual Racism', *The British Journal of Criminology*, 37.2, (1997), pp. 262-288 (p. 264).

two books written during the war. Firstly, *Cambridge at War: The Diary of Jack Overhill 1939-1945* provides the opinions of a conscientious objector, while *Letters from Cambridge: 1939-1945*, by the Cambridge University academic A.S.F. Gow, contains first-hand accounts of events such as the internment of ‘enemy aliens’ early in the conflict. These sources offer an insight into some of the activities responsible for what has been called the ‘dark figure’ of offences that were never officially recorded and therefore question the validity of using statistics alone to investigate crime and penal policy.¹⁵ Consequently, this study will use material from local primary sources to add texture and context to the quantitative analysis of the impact of the Second World War on crime in Cambridge.

¹⁵ Peter King, 'The Impact of Urbanization on Murder Rates and on The Geography of Homicide in England and Wales, 1780-1850', *The Historical Journal*, 53.3, (2010), pp.671-698 (p.675).

2. 'DISLOCATED FAMILIES', ALIENS and EMERGENCY LAWS: CIVILIAN CRIME in CAMBRIDGE

According to Mike Huggins, most historians in the period immediately after the war portrayed Britain as a nation that had displayed 'social solidarity' during the conflict but revisionists including Calder had since challenged that view.¹ Calder pointed out that by the end of the war, 20% of the population had broken blackout regulations but claimed that those responsible for wartime propaganda had emphasised the positive and downplayed instances of adverse behaviour.² Trow has described crimes committed during the conflict as examples of the 'darker moments' that happened during 'Britain's finest hour'.³ In Emsley's opinion, criminal behaviour is influenced by geography, economic conditions, population and social structure.⁴ It could be argued that the war impacted all of these elements and Paul Addison claimed that during the conflict, recorded crime increased by 54% compared to a 21% increase in the previous five years.⁵ However, historians such as Gardiner have argued for a distinction to be made between offences that were created by the addition of more laws and those activities that would have also resulted in prosecution during peacetime.⁶ This chapter will engage with these arguments by investigating how the war affected crimes committed by civilians in Cambridge.

Contemporary government statistics will be used to study the changing pattern of

¹ Mike Huggins, Mike, 'Sports Gambling During the Second World War: A British Entertainment for Critical Times or a National Evil?', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 32.5, (2015), pp.667-683 (p.668).

² Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p.337.

³ M.J. Trow, *War Crimes: Underworld Britain in the Second World War* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2008), p.19.

⁴ Clive Emsley, *Crime, Police and Penal Policy: European, Experiences 1750-1940* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), p.1.

⁵ Paul Addison, 'The Impact of the Second World War', in *A Companion to Contemporary Britain 1939-2000*, ed. by Paul Addison and Harriet Jones (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p.4.

⁶ Juliet Gardiner, *Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2004), p.589.

civilian crime in England and Wales between 1939 and 1945, focussing on indictable crimes that were committed by adults and juveniles as well as offences against emergency legislation. An indication of where Cambridge fits within the national picture will be obtained from local crime figures contained in reports written by the Chief Constable to the Watch Committee during the war. Caution will be taken when making a comparison between the two sets of data as it has been recognised that standards of measurement may have been inconsistent. Additionally, historians such as Smithies have argued that crime statistics exclude the ‘dark figure’ of misdemeanours that varied depending on the nature of the offence.⁷ Furthermore, as Emsley pointed out, all crime statistics need to be viewed in context - and their limitations recognised - to gain an understanding of how crime has changed over time.⁸ He cited Mannheim who, while attempting to establish a link between crime and unemployment during the interwar years, found the only correlation was for incidences of juvenile misdemeanours.⁹ In Emsley’s opinion, this may have been an example of a historian taking statistics ‘at face value.’¹⁰ This study will adopt an ‘interactionist’ approach to statistics by using them in conjunction with changes in the criminal justice system and not as an absolute indicator of the state of crime.¹¹ Finally, evidence from contemporary sources including newspaper articles, questions asked in Parliament and personal testimonies will be used to gain a perspective of how the public and authorities viewed crime during the war.

⁷ Edward Smithies, *Crime in Wartime: A Social History of Crime in World War II* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), p.6.

⁸ Emsley, *Crime and Society in Twentieth-Century England* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2011), p.34.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.32.

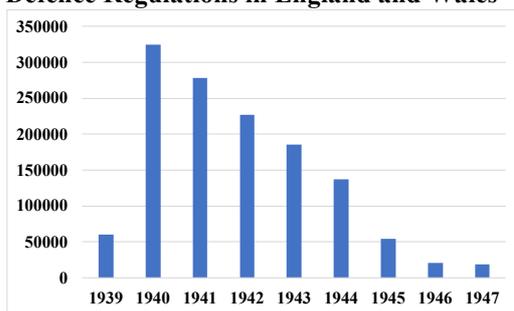
¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.33.

¹¹ Barry S. Godfrey, Paul Lawrence & Chris A. Williams, *History & Crime*, (London: Sage Publications, 2008), p.36.

The Impact of Emergency Powers on Crime

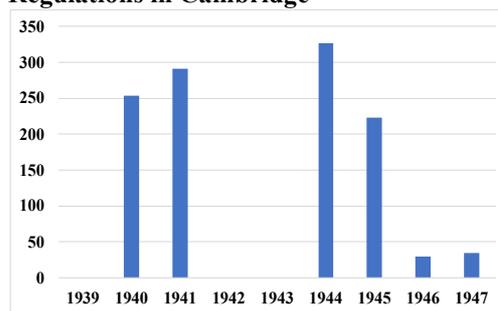
The first one hundred Acts of the Emergency Powers legislation were introduced on 29 August 1939 and according to Ingleton, more emergency laws were passed in two weeks than in the first year of World War One.¹² According to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, the increase in criminal activity during the Second World War was the result of there being more laws to break.¹³ Recorded crime statistics in England and Wales contained in Parliamentary Papers and included in The Chief Constable of Cambridge's annual reports appear to support this view. Despite gaps in the Chief Constable's Reports, Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show the rapid increase of offences against the Defence Regulations, nationally and in Cambridge, once they took full effect in 1940 as well as the significant decline once the war ended. Figures 2.3 and 2.4 reveal that offences against the 'Control of Lights and Sounds' were responsible for 73% of crimes committed against the Defence Regulations in England and Wales compared to 68% of those recorded in Cambridge.

Figure 2.1- Number of Offences Against Defence Regulations in England and Wales



Source: HCPP, PP. 1946-1947, Cmd. 7227, *Home Office. Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1939-1945, 1946 and 1947.*

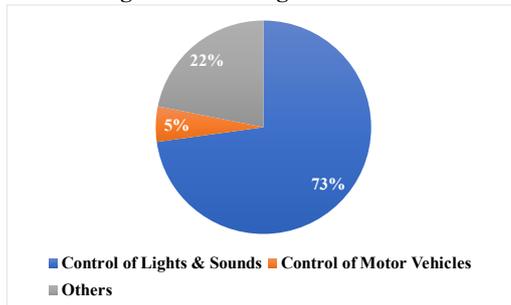
Figure 2.2 – Number of Offences Against Defence Regulations in Cambridge



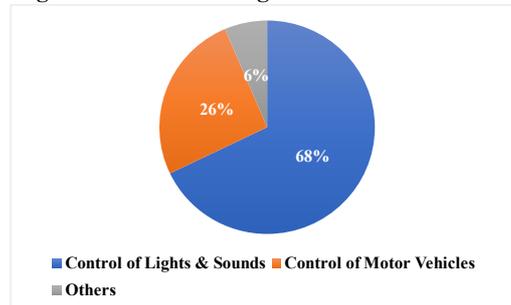
Sources: Cambridgeshire Archives (Hereafter CA) and Cambridgeshire Collection (Hereafter CC), *Chief Constable's Report on the Police Establishment and the State of Crime in the Borough of Cambridge for the Years ended 31st December 1944, 1945, 1946 and 1947.*

¹² Roy Ingleton, *The Gentlemen at War* (Maidstone: Cranborne Publications, 1994), p.69.

¹³ Gardiner, *Wartime Britain: 1939-1945*, p.588.

Figure 2.3 – Classification of Offences Against Defence Regulations in England and Wales

Source: HCPP, *Home Office. Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1939-1945*.

Figure 2.4 – Classification of Offences Against Defence Regulations in Cambridge

Sources: *CA and CC, Chief Constable's Report on the Police Establishment 1939 to 1945*.

However, analysis of the data also reveals that offences against the Emergency Powers accounted for almost 56% of total recorded crime in England and Wales in 1940 while in Cambridge they were responsible for only 15.4%.¹⁴ This disparity could be the result of a smaller data set in Cambridge but also due to differences in how offences were interpreted.

The arbitrary way in which some Emergency Powers were interpreted was apparent in the treatment of conscientious objectors. In a debate in The House of Commons in 1940, it was acknowledged that conscientious objection was not defined by law and local tribunals had to use their discretion when reviewing an application for enrolment on the Conscientious Objector Register.¹⁵ This could have led to inconsistencies in verdicts and for those whose application to the register was rejected, refusal to take a medical before military service was considered a criminal offence.¹⁶ Jack Overhill, a political conscientious objector living in Cambridge, was exempted from military duty due to his reserved occupation as a shoemaker and in his diary, on 8 September 1941, he recorded his attendance at the trial of another conscientious objector,

¹⁴ HCPP, *Home Office. Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1939-1945*; CA and CC, *Borough of Cambridge Chief Constable's Report on the Police Establishment 1939 to 1945*

¹⁵ *Hansard*, 9 November 1939, Volume 353

¹⁶ Gardiner, *Wartime Britain: 1939-1945*, p.117.

Frank Edwards, who had ‘...received a nominal fine of 10 shillings and [was] detained for a medical examination. He refused it and got three months.’¹⁷ Another example that revealed the difficulty in interpreting new legislation is contained in a local newspaper article that reported how air raid wardens and police witnesses had been on opposing sides in the prosecution of a Cambridge grocer, who was himself a warden, for not blacking out his shop window effectively.¹⁸

Although lighting transgressions dominated offences against Emergency Power legislation, it was the more unusual misdemeanours that routinely made the headlines in local newspapers. One article, under the headline ‘Cows Without Lights’, revealed that prosecution for disobeying the new wartime emergency lighting order was not confined to those driving motorised vehicles. It revealed how Archibald Richard Friend, a farm labourer, was summoned for driving cows without lights attached to those at the front and rear. This resulted in one of the cows being killed by a lorry and despite claiming that he ‘didn’t know a light was necessary’ Friend was fined 2s. 6d. and his employer received a five-shilling fine.¹⁹

Black market activity has received extensive coverage in the historiography of Second World War crime yet Peter Howlett has argued that the ‘...relatively small size of the black market...’ was evidence of the acquiescence of the majority of the population to the rationing system that had been imposed.²⁰ However, according to Calder most black market activity ‘evaded the courts of law’ and it was the ‘grey market’ of under-the-

¹⁷ *Cambridge at War: The Diary of Jack Overhill 1939-1945*, ed. By Peter Searby (Cambridge: Cambridgeshire Records Society, 2010), p.116.

¹⁸ *Cambridge Independent Press and Chronicle*, 10 November 1939, p.7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Peter Howlett, 'The Wartime Economy', in *The Economic History of Britain Since 1700: Volume 3: 1939-1992*, ed. by Roderick Floud and Donald McCloskey, 2nd edn (Cambridge: CUP,1994), pp.1-31 (p.18).

counter favouritism that was more prevalent, further compromising the accuracy of crime statistics.²¹ One example supporting this view is revealed in an entry in Jack Overhill's diary on 21 June 1941, where he recorded how he had '...bought a shirt today for which I gave up five coupons...the shirts were 8s. 6d. each [and] the storekeeper let me buy two which shows how easy it is to get round (sic) rationing...'²²

At the beginning of the war, it was estimated that there were over sixty thousand Germans and Austrians living in Britain.²³ As the fear of invasion increased, concern over the presence of aliens in the country was evident in a parliamentary debate in March 1940 when the Home Secretary, Sir J. Anderson responded to a question about the number of Germans and Austrians registered as aliens by stating, '...in the City of Oxford and the Borough of Cambridge [it] is 641 and 505 respectively...'²⁴ Just over two months later, *The Times* carried the Home Office announcement that 'The Home Secretary has authorised the temporary internment of all Germans and Austrians...over the age of 16 and under the age of 60.'²⁵ On the same day, a letter from A.S.F. Gow, a Cambridge University lecturer, revealed that his lunch had been interrupted by news that the police had '...arrested all male enemy aliens under 60,' including three of his pupils.²⁶ According to Gardiner, rumours that fifth-columnists had assisted Germany during the invasion of Norway in April 1940 increased fears of alien activity in Britain.²⁷ Two months later, on 10 June, Italy entered the war and Ingleton estimated that over nineteen

²¹ Calder, p.407.

²² *The Diary of Jack Overhill 1939-1945*, p.104.

²³ Calder, p.130

²⁴ *Hansard*, 7 March 1940, Volume 358.

²⁵ *The Times*, 13 May 1940, p.6.

²⁶ A.S.F Gow, *Letters from Cambridge: 1939-1945* (London: Cape, 1945), pp.44-45.

²⁷ Gardiner, *Wartime Britain: 1939-1945*, p.256.

thousand Italians resident in Britain became targets of abuse.²⁸ Gardiner went on to reveal that the next day the government ordered that all male Italians aged between seventeen and seventy should be interned.²⁹ The impact of this directive was felt in Cambridge where it was reported that following a round-up ‘...about a dozen [Italians] were detained’ by the police.³⁰ During the war, the police kept records of the number of aliens resident in Cambridge, including persons classified as ‘enemy aliens’ as well as those who were interned. The reports reveal that it was not only people of German, Austrian and Italian origin who were registered and the records included individuals from between thirty-eight and forty-four nations.³¹ In 1942, The Chief Constable also reported that two hundred and two workers ‘from Eire’ had been registered and it is perhaps significant that in the same year a newspaper article told of how an Irish labourer had been tried for attempted sabotage at an airport in Cambridge.³²

The Impact of the War on ‘Peacetime’ Crimes

Godfrey, Lawrence and Williams have argued that one way of determining the level of criminality in a period is by measuring the sum of indictable crimes as this classification includes all serious offences.³³ In Penny Legg’s opinion, the blackout conditions during the war provided the ideal environment for crimes such as murder and prostitution and one result was a 22% increase in homicide cases.³⁴ However, Calder claimed that larceny

²⁸ Ingleton, p.88.

²⁹ Gardiner, *Wartime Britain: 1939-1945*, p.256.

³⁰ *Cambridge Independent Press*, 13 June 1940, p.3.

³¹ K1360/CB/1/2/3, CA, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable’s Annual Report on the Police Establishment and the State of Crime in the Borough of Cambridge: 1943, 1944*: CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable’s Annual Report on the Police Establishment: 1939, 1940, 1941, 1945*.

³² *Cambridge Daily News*, 11 February 1942, p.5.

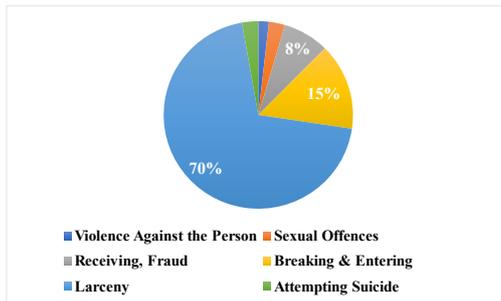
³³ Godfrey, Lawrence and Williams, *History and Crime*, p.45.

³⁴ Penny Legg, *Crime in the Second World War: Spivs, Scoundrels, Rogues and Worse* (Sevenoaks: Sabrestorm Publishing, 2016), p.53; *Ibid.*, p.63.

was the most common offence in England and Wales during the Second World War.³⁵

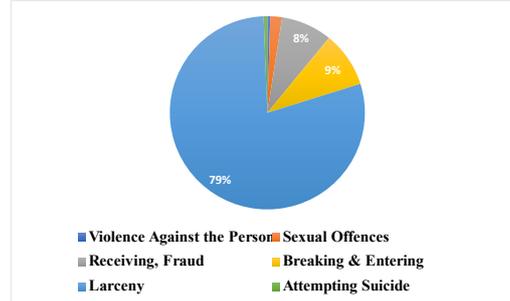
Recorded crime statistics appear to corroborate this view and Figure 2.5 reveals that larceny accounted for almost 70% of the indictable crimes recorded in England and Wales, compared to 79% in Cambridge (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.5 – Classification of Indictable Crimes in England and Wales



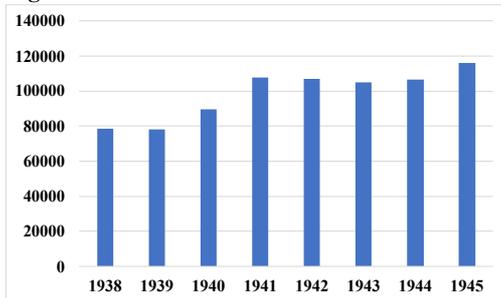
Source: HCPP, *Home Office. Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1939-1945.*

Figure 2.6 - Classification of Indictable Crimes in Cambridge



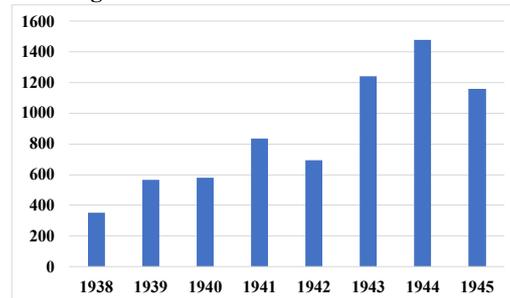
Sources: *CA and CA, Chief Constable’s Reports on the Police Establishment 1939 to 1945.*

Figure 2.7 – Number of Indictable Crimes in England and Wales



Source: HCPP, *Home Office. Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1939-1945.*

Figure 2.8 – Number of Indictable Crimes in Cambridge



Sources: *CA and CC, Chief Constable’s Reports on the Police Establishment 1939-1945.*

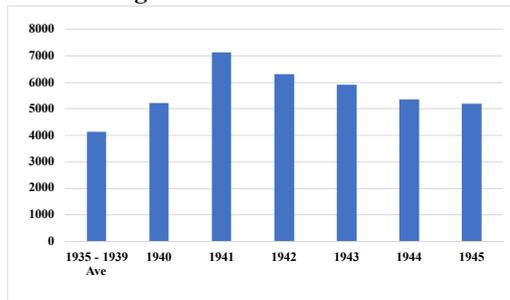
Furthermore, Figure 2.7 reveals that indictable crimes recorded nationally during the war levelled off after peaking in 1941, while Figure 2.8 shows that Cambridge broadly followed the national trend until 1943 and in 1944 indictable crimes were 237% higher than the pre-war level. But it has been argued that the person occupying the position of Chief Constable influenced the rate of recorded indictable offences in a region.³⁶ This may explain the exceptional growth seen in Cambridge in 1944 as a new Chief Constable,

³⁵ Calder, p.337.

³⁶ Godfrey, Lawrence and Williams, *History and Crime*, p.30.

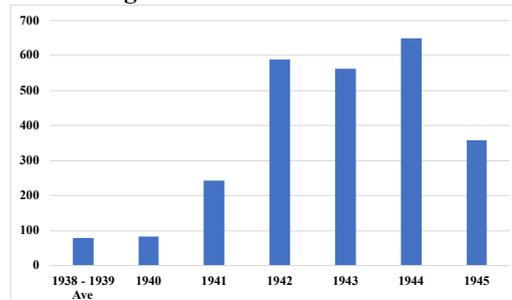
Norman Bebbington, was appointed that year and he suggested that the increase was ‘...due in the main to a different method adopted in recording crimes...’³⁷ Bebbington did not elaborate on that comment and further investigation would be necessary to understand what these changes were and why they were implemented. In Cambridge, bicycle theft was regarded as a major issue during the war and Figure 2.10 reveals that at its peak accounted for 43.9% of larcenies in the town in 1944 compared to the national figure of 5% (Figure 2.9).

Figure 2.9 – Number of Pedal Cycles Stolen in England and Wales



Source: HCPP, *Home Office. Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1939-1945.*

Figure 2.10 – Number of Pedal Cycles Stolen in Cambridge



Source: *CA and CC, Chief Constable's Report on the Police Establishment 1939-1945.*

One explanation could have been the relatively high number of students and temporary residents in the town and the problem of bicycle theft was highlighted by the Chief Constable in his 1944 annual report where he announced that a ‘Stolen Cycle Campaign’ had reduced the number of stolen bicycles per month from one hundred and thirty-three in January to fifty-one in April.³⁸

Larceny may have been the most prolific crime during the war, but statistics show that towards the end of the conflict, breaking and entering was responsible for the highest growth. According to the Home Office statistics, recorded incidents of housebreaking in

³⁷ CA, *Chief Constable's Report on the Police Establishment and the State of Crime in the Borough of Cambridge for the Year ended 31st December 1944*, p.3.

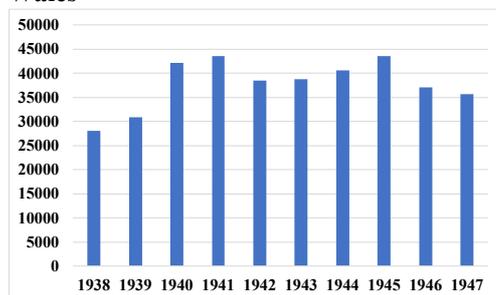
³⁸ CA, *Chief Constable's Report on the Police Establishment for the Year ended 31st December 1944*, p.3.

England and Wales were 96.5% higher in 1945 than in 1939, while the Chief Constable's annual reports reveal an increase in Cambridge during the same period of 270% and as disclosed in the next section, he attributed much of this rise to juveniles.

Juvenile Crime During the Second World War

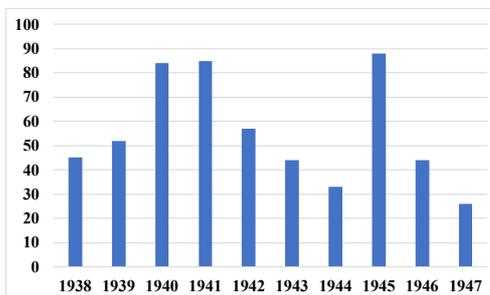
According to David Smith, historians have paid little attention to juvenile delinquency during the Second World War.³⁹ Those who have, such as Bradley, have emphasised the need for additional research and this section of the chapter will attempt a response to this request.⁴⁰ A comparison of Figure 2.12 with Figure 2.11 shows that recorded juvenile crime in Cambridge during the war shared some of the trends seen nationally.

Figure 2.11- Number of Indictable Crimes Committed by Juveniles in England and Wales



Source: HCPP, *Home Office. Criminal Statistics Police England and Wales 1938-1947.*

Figure 2.12 – Number of Indictable Crimes Committed by Juveniles in Cambridge



Sources: *CA and CC, Chief Constable's Reports on the Establishments 1938-1947.*

In 1941, offences by juveniles in England and Wales were 55% higher than before the war, while in Cambridge the increase was 89%. Both nationally and in Cambridge, recorded instances of juvenile crime declined after 1941 before peaking again in 1945. In his annual report, the Chief Constable of Cambridge suggested that the increase in 1945 was mainly due to more juveniles breaking into premises, but he hoped ‘...that with more

³⁹ David Smith, 'Official Responses to Juvenile Delinquency in Scotland During the Second World War', *Twentieth Century British History*, 18.1, (2007), p.78.

⁴⁰ Kate Bradley, 'Juvenile Delinquency and the Public Sphere: Exploring Local and National Discourse in England, c. 1940-69', *Social History*, 37.1, (2012), pp.19-35 (p.20).

stable family conditions returning, considerable improvement will be seen...'⁴¹ The reductions recorded in the two years following the end of the war appear to support his view.

The influence that the disruption to family life had on juvenile crime was also discussed by M.E. Bathurst, Second Secretary and Acting Adviser to North American Offices of the British Broadcasting Corporation. In his opinion the increase in offences committed by juveniles was due to '...the volcanic disturbances of home life caused by total war...and the amount of money earned by juveniles over the age of 14...'⁴² High wages, as a factor in the increase in juvenile crime, was debated in Parliament and in July 1940 Sir A. Sinclair, the Secretary for Air, responded to a question about the rates of pay for juveniles in establishments under his control by revealing that an unskilled fourteen-year-old boy could earn 14s. 6d. for a forty-four hour week, which was less than 17% of what a skilled twenty-year-old could receive.⁴³ A sense of perspective can be gained by considering that at this time the National Minimum Wage was forty-eight shillings per week and a Cambridge undergraduate could '...enjoy all their meals in Hall [for] 30 [shillings] a week.'⁴⁴ In December 1941, the Home Secretary, when asked about a connection between '...the disturbing effect of exceptionally high wages on the character and conduct of adolescents,' argued that '...many factors were affecting the incidence of juvenile delinquency...'⁴⁵

According to Ingleton, reasons for the increase in juvenile delinquency included

⁴¹ CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Annual Report for the Year 1945*, p.12.

⁴² M.E. Bathurst, 'Juvenile Delinquency in Britain During the War', *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 34.5, (1944), pp. 291-294.

⁴³ *Hansard*, 13 June 1940, Volume 361; Gow, *Letters from Cambridge*, p.61.

⁴⁴ *Hansard*, 1 July 1940, Volume 372

⁴⁵ *Hansard*, 4 December 1941, Volume 376

reduced schooling, a lack of parental control and a general lowering of moral standards, but he also pointed out that a 50% rise in juvenile convictions in Cambridge in 1940 was the consequence of an increased focus on crimes committed by evacuees.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Gardiner maintained that there were almost thirty-five million address changes during the war, out of a population of forty-five million, resulting in a ‘...dislocation of family life...’ and that this was one explanation for the growth of juvenile crime.⁴⁷ *Our Towns: A Close Up*, published by The Women’s Group on Public Welfare in 1943 examined the evidence that supported accusations levelled against evacuees and associated them with prevailing urban conditions in the country.⁴⁸ The study was carried out by a small group of professional working women who interviewed twenty-seven ‘experienced field-workers’ but included little evidence from those evacuated.⁴⁹ In the opinion of the authors, ‘...dishonesty is, unhappily, widespread in our society [but] lower down the social scale, there is a great deal of theft.’⁵⁰ They claimed that evacuees contained a high proportion of children from the poorest families who were faced with ‘...constant temptation to steal from shops and stalls.’⁵¹ Moreover, Smithies claimed that school-age children were responsible for the largest increase in juvenile crime during the war.⁵² It was estimated that the County of Cambridgeshire became home to over three thousand evacuated children and most of these stayed in Cambridge.⁵³ An article in the local press in October 1939 under the headline ‘Store Broken Into by Evacuees’ appears to support

⁴⁶ Ingleton, p.318.

⁴⁷ Gardiner, *Wartime Britain: 1939-1945*, p.601.

⁴⁸ Women's Group on Public Welfare, *Our Towns: A Close Up: A Study Made in 1939-1942*, 2nd edn (London: OUP, 1943), p.xi.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.xii.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.46.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.47.

⁵² Smithies, p.178.

⁵³ Glynis Cooper, *Cambridgeshire at War 1939-45* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2020), p.21.

the contemporary opinion that disruption to the traditional family structure could influence crime. It described how two evacuees broke into a shop in Cambridge and stole goods worth 26s. 9d. and in the opinion of their headmaster, ‘...the lack of male supervision was a factor...’⁵⁴

Bradley has argued that the rise in juvenile crime may have been due to changes in how data was collected and a greater willingness by the police to prosecute rather than deal with offences informally.⁵⁵ Additionally, Calder questioned whether the increase was the result of more young people breaking the law or because more adults were focussed on catching and punishing them.⁵⁶ Inconsistencies in how the criminal justice system dealt with juvenile offenders are revealed in contemporary sources. In October 1941, Jack Overhill recorded in his diary how a teenager in Cambridge had picked up a ‘souvenir’ from the site of a bomb-damaged shop, before being apprehended by two men who informed him that he could get ‘...about six months for looting...’ The noise attracted the attention of a policeman who did not pursue the ‘offender’ due to Overhill protesting that the boy ‘...wasn’t old enough to pinch...’⁵⁷ Furthermore, in 1944, Cambridge University students celebrated a ‘November-the-Fifth rag’ by lighting a bonfire on Market Hill before turning over cars and fighting policemen, resulting in one student receiving a £15 fine.⁵⁸ In Overhill’s opinion, this incident amounted to no more than ‘...a few men doing little damage during high spirits when most of the youth of the world is being trained to smash anybody and anything on the other side...’⁵⁹ This was not

⁵⁴ *Cambridge Independent Press and Chronicle*, 6 October 1939, p.9.

⁵⁵ Bradley, p.22.

⁵⁶ Calder, p.337.

⁵⁷ *The Diary of Jack Overhill 1939-1945*, p.81.

⁵⁸ *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 7 November 1944, p.8.

⁵⁹ *The Diary of Jack Overhill 1939-1945*, p.289.

a view shared by all Cambridge residents and many letters were published in the local press complaining of the nuisance, damage and waste of petrol including one written by ‘Disgusted East Anglian’ who claimed, ‘Had it been a lot of poor uneducated youths amusing themselves in such fashion...they would have been taken to gaol...’⁶⁰ Another newspaper article told of how five youths had raided electricity and gas meters in unoccupied houses in Cambridge. They were bound over and escaped prison as the bench did not want to ruin their careers.⁶¹ These examples reveal some of the inconsistencies in both public opinion and penal policy during the war as far as juvenile crime was concerned.

Summary

This chapter appears to confirm that recorded crime committed by civilians increased both nationally and in Cambridge during the first full year of World War Two, before declining the year after it ended. The rise in lawbreaking coincides with the introduction of new laws, but there was also an increase in the number of recorded indictable crimes that would have also been offences in peacetime. The records show that larceny was the most common category and while black-out conditions may have contributed to this, in Cambridge the theft of pedal cycles was regarded as a major factor during the war.

Disruption to the traditional family structure has been cited as one reason for the increase in incidences of criminal acts committed by juveniles and in Cambridge this coincided with the influx of evacuees during 1940 and 1941. However, this chapter has also revealed the difficulty in relying totally on recorded criminal statistics due to

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.290

⁶¹ *Cambridge Daily News*, 20 December 1939, p.5.

inconsistencies in how laws were interpreted and enforced as the war progressed.

Evacuees were not alone in bolstering Cambridge's population during World War Two. East Anglia's geography and topography made it an ideal launching pad for airstrikes against Germany and it was estimated that by the end of 1944 there was an airbase every eight miles.⁶² This resulted in the arrival of a large number of military personnel and the next chapter will investigate the effect of their presence on crime in Cambridge.

⁶² Juliet Gardiner, *'Over Here': The GIs in Wartime Britain* (London: Collins and Brown, 1992), p.67.

3. The ‘FRIENDLY INVASION’: MILITARY CRIME in CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge’s central location made it a popular ‘Liberty Town’ for airmen and soldiers stationed in East Anglia during the Second World War.¹ In addition to British troops, it has been estimated that over a quarter of the 1.7 million Americans based in Britain by 1944 were stationed in East Anglia.² And, Smithies has argued that areas close to military bases experienced a ‘crime wave’, citing the Chief Constable of Essex who attributed the decline of criminal activity in London in 1941 to many young offenders leaving the city and serving elsewhere in the forces.³ Furthermore, in his foreword to John C. Spencer’s book *Crime in the Services*, Mannheim pointed out that ‘Little attention has been paid to the influence of service life on criminal behaviour.’⁴ This chapter will attempt to add to the historiography of service crime during the war by examining the impact the influx of British and overseas military personnel had on law-breaking in Cambridge.

It will question three assumptions: Firstly, it will compare national crime statistics with those compiled from available criminal records for Cambridge and London to challenge the view that during the war, criminal activity transferred from the metropolis to areas where military personnel were based. Next, it will examine the argument put forward by historians such as Spencer that service crime was dominated by desertion and absence without leave (AWOL) by using local court records to compare the types of offences committed by servicemen in Cambridge with the national picture.⁵ Finally, it

¹ Juliet Gardiner, *Over Here: The GIs in Wartime Britain* (London: Collins and Brown, 1992), p.94.

² Sam Edwards, *Allies in Memory: World War II and the Politics of American Commemoration in Europe. C1941-2001* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.31.

³ Edward Smithies, *Crime in Wartime: A Social History of Crime in World War II* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), p.47.

⁴ John C. Spencer, *Crime and the Services* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1954), p.v.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.46.

will study military recidivists to question the belief of officers during the war that lawbreaking in the services was largely the work of habitual criminals.⁶ In addition to using national and Cambridge records to assess the level of crime by those who were felons before the war, it will examine examples from local and national newspapers, court registers and websites such as Forces War Records to attempt to provide some insight into some of the personalities behind the data.

Did conscription of young men result in a reduction of crime in cities and an increase in areas near military bases?

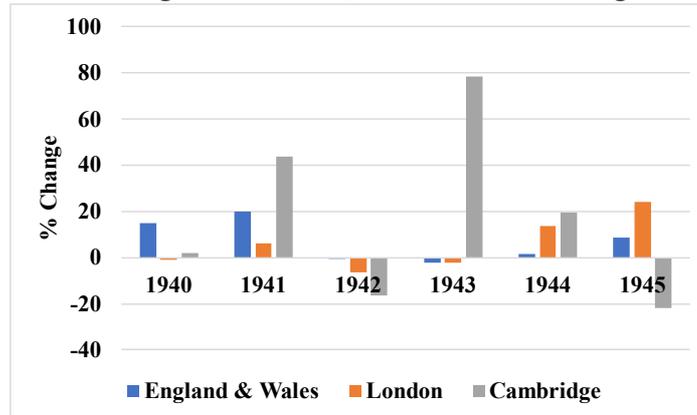
The Metropolitan Police Commissioner appeared to support the argument that incidences of crime fell in cities during the early years of the war by revealing that indictable offences in 1943 were 2% lower than those recorded in 1939.⁷ However, as Smithies has pointed out, the civilian population of London fell by almost two million during the war and if this is taken into consideration there were 10.95 indictable offences per thousand population in 1938 compared to 15 in 1945.⁸ Figure 3.1 compares the change in indictable crimes reported nationally with those recorded in Cambridge and London during the war.

⁶ Clive Emsley, *Soldier, Sailor, Beggarman Thief: Crime and the British Armed Services Since 1914* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), p.16.

⁷ National Archives (Hereafter NA), *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1945*, PP.1946, Cmd. 687, p.24.

⁸ Smithies, p.189.

Figure 3.1 – Comparison of the Percentage Change in Indictable Crimes in England and Wales, London and Cambridge



Sources: HCPP, *Home Office. Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1939-1945*.
 HCPP, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1945*:
 CA and CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Annual Report for the Year 1945*.

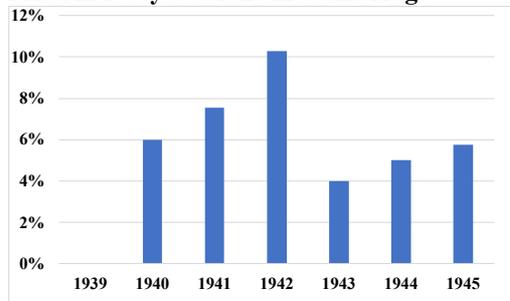
It reveals that the small decrease in crime in London during the first full year of the war was not replicated in Cambridge and there was a larger increase nationally. This suggests that other areas of the country experienced a greater increase in crime than Cambridge and the reasons for this require further examination. However, the 78% increase in indictable crimes recorded in Cambridge in 1943 coincides with the growth in the number of military personnel based in and around the town, especially the arrival of American troops the previous year. Towards the end of the war, the majority of servicemen left Cambridge and this coincided with a decrease in crime figures in Cambridge in 1945. At the same time, there was an increase in incidences of crime recorded in London and the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police suggested that ‘the serious increase in indictable crime’ was due in part to the presence of a large number of demobilised troops, especially deserters.⁹

These statistics do not discriminate between crimes committed by civilians and those attributed to service personnel and the picture is further complicated by the fact that

⁹ NA, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1945*, p.4.

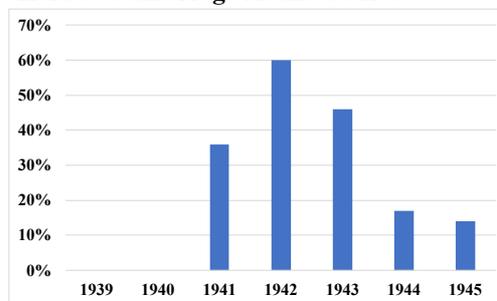
while soldiers who committed civilian crimes were tried in a civil court, perpetrators of military offences were subject to trial by courts-martial. According to Spencer, only 14.2% of convicted prisoners in 1945 were from the military and he also pointed out that only a small number of court-martial cases resulted in a civil prison sentence.¹⁰ However, an indication of the incidence of military crime in Cambridge can be gained through an analysis of recorded crime in the Petty Sessions Court Registers, as service personnel who committed criminal offences on the home front tended to come under the jurisdiction of the civilian criminal justice system. The records often identified servicemen by rank, regiment, age and identification number and Figure 3.2 shows the proportion of petty crimes attributed to military personnel in the town.¹¹ Servicemen who committed more serious crimes and serial offenders were tried in Assize courts and Figure 3.3 shows the percentage of military prisoners held after a hearing at Cambridge Assize Court.

Figure 3.2 – Percentage of Military Personnel Tried in Petty Sessions in Cambridge



Source: CA, *Borough of Cambridge Register of the Court 1939-1945*.

Figure 3.3 – Percentage of Military Personnel Held at Cambridge Assize Courts



Source: CA, *County of Cambridge: Calendar of Prisoners at The Assizes, 1903-1948*.

Despite the absence of the Cambridge Assize records for 1940, the graphs suggest that in both courts the percentage of felonies that involved members of the armed services peaked in 1942 which corresponds to the higher number of military personnel stationed in and around Cambridge. Furthermore, the percentage of serious offences committed by

¹⁰ Spencer, p.49

¹¹ Emsley, *Soldier, Sailor, Beggarman Thief*, p.58.

servicemen decreased in 1944 and 1945 and this coincides with the deployment of British and American soldiers to mainland Europe. However, caution needs to be exercised as this register did not always record the verdict of the trial and one example is the case of an RAF Officer, John Benner Nall. On 29 August 1943 a newspaper article, under the headline ‘Pilot Officer Accused’, described how Nall had been charged with rape.¹² Court records reveal that ‘John Benner Nall a Flying Officer in the RAF was charged with the assault and rape of Pearl Eileen Hall on 24 August 1943’.¹³ Whereas the outcome of the trial was not recorded in the court entry, press reports revealed that Nall was acquitted despite admitting to the assault but denying that he had attempted to ‘assault her criminally.’ Furthermore, his Adjutant had vouched for his ‘excellent service character’ hoping he could return to ‘Take part in offensive operations against the enemy’.¹⁴ Nall’s service record confirms his return to active duty with his reputation unblemished by the incident and that he was awarded the 1939-1945 Star Medal.¹⁵

The Assize records also reveal that despite a large number of air force bases in the Cambridge region, 68% of the military prisoners served in the army and this correlates with a government report which revealed that 64.3% of the 5,896,000 men who served in the armed forces during the war belonged to the army and that men aged between eighteen and thirty represented 70% of the armed forces.¹⁶ This supports Spencer’s conclusion that the age of the first conviction of military convicts averaged between 17.9 and 23.9.¹⁷ In Cambridge, the average age of military personnel whose cases were held at

¹² *Sunday Pictorial*, 29 August 1943, p.12.

¹³ K1360/OC/7/1, CA, *County of Cambridge: Calendar of Prisoners at The Assizes, 1903-1948*

¹⁴ *Leicester Evening Mail*, 15 October 1943, p.5.

¹⁵ Forces War Records in <<https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk>> [accessed 08 July 2021]

¹⁶ HCPP, PP. 1946, CMd. 6832, *Strengths and Casualties of the Armed Forces and Auxiliary Services of the United Kingdom 1939 to 1945*: June 1946, p.2.

¹⁷ Spencer, p.229.

Petty Sessions was 24.9.¹⁸ Additionally, the average age of military personnel who were tried for more serious crimes in the Assize Court was 26.9 and the variance could be explained by the smaller sample size.¹⁹

The problem of service crime is largely one of desertion and AWOL

This section will examine the claim by historians such as Spencer that desertion and AWOL dominated service crime during wartime.²⁰ Emsley has pointed out that despite senior officers blaming criminal activity on deserters who had been offenders in civilian life, an army report claimed that 89% of deserters had no history of lawbreaking.²¹

According to Smithies, desertion was the only option for a man wanting to leave the armed forces and a lack of access to identification papers and ration books forced many of them to turn to a life of crime to survive.²² Trow has estimated that there were over eighteen thousand absentee servicemen as the war came to a close.²³ However, Spencer has claimed that it was difficult to distinguish between AWOL and desertion as the two offences were often confused.²⁴ AWOL cases were recorded nationally in court-martial statistics and Figure 3.4 shows them as a percentage of total convictions (excluding specific military crimes). It has not been possible to obtain a record of court-martial cases heard in Cambridge, but Petty Sessions proceedings did record instances of AWOL and Figure 3.5 shows them as a percentage of crimes involving military personnel.

¹⁸ K1360/UNCAT/1/69 to 1/77, CA, *Borough of Cambridge Register of the Court, 1939 to 1945*

¹⁹ CA, *County of Cambridge: Calendar of Prisoners at The Assizes, 1903-1948*

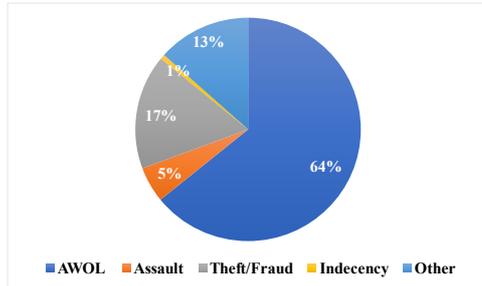
²⁰ Spencer, p.46.

²¹ Emsley, *Soldier, Sailor, Beggarman Thief*, p.34.

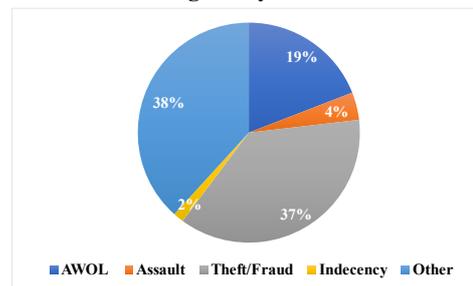
²² Smithies, p.51.

²³ M.J. Trow, *War Crimes: Underworld Britain in the Second World War* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2008), p.189.

²⁴ Spencer, p.57.

Figure 3.4 – Classification of British Military Court Martial Offences – 1939-1945

Source: Emsley, *Soldier, Sailor, Beggarman Thief*, p.73.

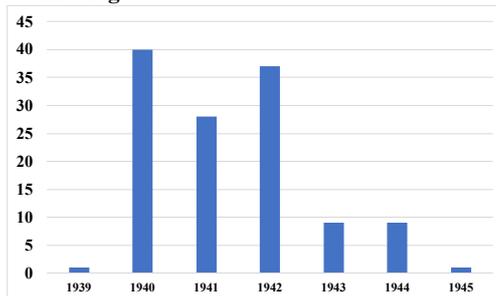
Figure 3.5 – Classification of Military Offences Heard in Cambridge Petty Sessions – 1939-1945

Source: CA, *Borough of Cambridge Register of the Court, 1939-1945*

The national figures support the claim that AWOL dominated court-martial offences during the war, but the Cambridge records indicate that only 19% of cases were for absenteeism and most trials were for theft and fraud. However, the lack of court-martial data for Cambridge makes direct comparison difficult and Spencer has argued that the lack of stigma attached to some service offences, including AWOL, led to many instances being accepted ‘within reasonable limits.’²⁵ In a similar vein, Trow has claimed that as the war progressed, apathy and ‘war-weariness’ influenced attitudes towards crime and this could explain the decline in AWOL cases recorded both nationally and in Cambridge as the war came to an end as revealed in Figures 3.6 and 3.7.²⁶

Figure 3.6 - Number of Incidences of Desertion in the British Army

Source: David French, 'Discipline and the Death Penalty in the British Army in the War Against Germany During the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 33.4, (1998), pp. 531-545, (p.541).

Figure 3.7 – Number of Incidences of AWOL in Cambridge

Source: CA, *Borough of Cambridge Register of the Court, 1939-1945*.

The duration that a serviceman was absent varied between a few days and years. The

²⁵ Spencer, p.5.

²⁶ Trow, p.189.

first AWOL case recorded in Cambridge involved Harry West who was absent for three days from 8 September 1939, just five days after the United Kingdom and France declared war on Germany.²⁷ His return to active service was relatively short-lived as he was recorded as killed in action on 29 May 1940.²⁸ An example of an absentee who evaded capture for a longer period was Henry Osborne from the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment, who had been AWOL for almost three years when he was charged with stealing an identity card and using an assumed name. His appeal against the sentence of one month with hard labour was rejected at the Cambridge Quarter Sessions and resulted in an increase in his punishment to six months.²⁹ Some absentees were caught following targeted police searches and in June 1944 four RAF servicemen were seized during an early morning check on identity cards at Cambridge's annual Midsummer Fair.³⁰ Not all absentees were captured during planned raids and some were discovered following their arrest after committing other offences. For example, William Frederick Johnson was found to be AWOL when prosecuted for stealing a car and money in 1940.³¹ A year later Harold Pickles from the RAF was charged with committing four counts of burglary while absent from his unit.³² AWOL convictions were not limited to the British armed forces and following a swoop on several cafes in Cambridge, led by the Chief Constable on the evening of 6 May 1944, two deserters from the Royal Hellenic Navy, Moxxourious Louvras and Athanaissious Vernados, were imprisoned for using false names and possessing fake identification documents.³³ While much of the

²⁷ CA, *Borough of Cambridge Register of the Court, 1939 to 1945*

²⁸ Forces War Records

²⁹ CA, *Borough of Cambridge Register of the Court, 1939 to 1945*, 29 June 1944

³⁰ *Cambridge Daily News*, June 1944, p.4.

³¹ CA, *Borough of Cambridge Register of the Court, 1939 to 1945*, 21 October 1940

³² *Ibid.*, 3 January 1941

³³ *The Evening Telegraph*, 8 May 1944, p.5.

historiography of service crime focusses on misdemeanours carried out by men there were recorded instances of offences committed by women. In 1943, Constance Ryan from the ATS was bound over for two years for a petty thieving offence and a year later Elizabeth Forrest, a private in the REME was found guilty of stealing items of clothing worth £13 13s. 4d. and at her hearing in Cambridge, received a four-month prison sentence.³⁴

Gardiner has discussed the impact on Britain of the ‘friendly invasion’ of American servicemen who began arriving in 1942.³⁵ By June 1944 around 1.5 million American servicemen were stationed in the United Kingdom and approximately three million had passed through on their way to mainland Europe before the war ended.³⁶ As previously stated, Cambridge was the temporary home to a large number of Americans but it is difficult to ascertain their contribution to criminal activity in the town as felonies were unlikely to be recorded in official statistics due to them being outside the jurisdiction of the British legal system but subject to trial by an American court-martial. The first US Court Martial case heard in the United Kingdom involved a private who was sentenced to six months hard labour for the involuntary manslaughter of a four-year-old boy in Cambridge as a result of driving an army vehicle at high speed.³⁷ However, the lack of press coverage reveals the extent of censorship that existed during the war as there was no mention of the incident in local newspapers and an article in *The Times* simply revealed that ‘The first court-martial will be opened in an English town.’³⁸

³⁴ CA, *Borough of Cambridge Register of the Court, 1939 to 1945*, 28 October 1943 and 5 December 1944

³⁵ Juliet Gardiner, *Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2004), p.547.

³⁶ Alan Allport, *Demobbed: Coming Home After the Second World War*, Paperback Edition edn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), p.91.

³⁷ Roy Ingleton, *The Gentlemen at War* (Maidstone: Cranborne Publications, 1994), p.323.

³⁸ *The Times*, 10 August 1942, p.2.

One outcome of the arrival of the Americans was tension between them and British servicemen which, according to Gardiner, was often the result of jealousy over women or money.³⁹ In his diary, Jack Overhill observed that '[Americans] are a rum lot with too much cash to spend, they buy up all the English women wholesale.'⁴⁰ He went on to allege that 'Their price for a woman seems to be over £3.'⁴¹ Furthermore, Smithies claimed that by May 1945 American soldiers were being charged £5 'for a short time', a rate that was out of reach for British soldiers.⁴² The difference in pay that caused the resentment was discussed by Gardiner who revealed that in June 1942 a private in the British army was paid fourteen shillings a week while his American counterpart received almost five times more.⁴³

Robert J. Lilley has pointed out that there was a deliberate campaign of segregating American soldiers in Britain as well as censorship of racial stories.⁴⁴ Racial tension during the war has been examined by historians including Gardiner who claimed that a disproportionate number of black GIs were prosecuted for offences.⁴⁵ This was supported by Jerry Rubin who revealed that out of eighteen executions of American servicemen in Britain between 1942 and 1945, eleven of them involved African Americans despite only 10% of US forces being black.⁴⁶ Despite the censorship, the issue of race was apparent in the press coverage of offences committed by American servicemen during the war. In Cambridge in 1943, Private David Cobb killed a senior

³⁹ Gardiner, *'Over Here': The GIs in Wartime Britain*, p.80.

⁴⁰ *Cambridge at War: The Diary of Jack Overhill 1939-1945*, ed. By Peter Searby (Cambridge: Cambridgeshire Records Society, 2010), pp.242-243.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.271.

⁴² Smithies, pp.139-140.

⁴³ Gardiner, *'Over Here': The GIs in Wartime Britain*, p.62.

⁴⁴ Robert J. Lilley, and J. Michael Thomson, 'Executing US Soldiers in England, World War II: Command Influence and Sexual Racism', *The British Journal of Criminology*, 37.2, (1997), pp. 262-288 (p.282).

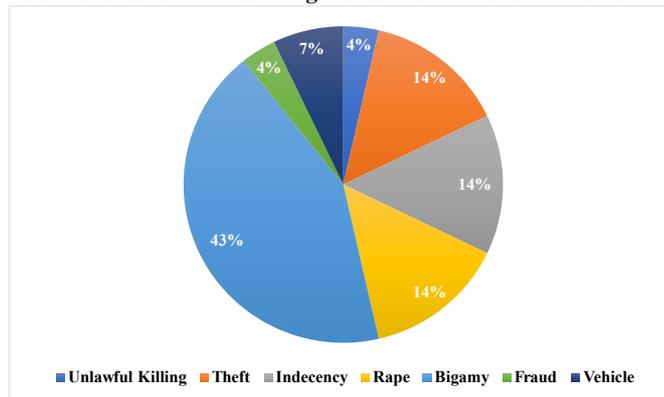
⁴⁵ Gardiner, *Wartime Britain: 1939-1945*, p.605.

⁴⁶ Gerry R. Rubin, *Murder, Mutiny and the Military: British Court Martial Cases, 1940-1966* (London: Boulter, 2005), p.343.

officer following an argument about leaving his post and the local press reported the case under the headline ‘US Soldier Sentenced to Death’.⁴⁷ *The Times* however referred to Cobb as ‘...a negro Private in the US Army...’⁴⁸ Following another incident in Cambridge, the same publication reported that ‘Private First Class Sammie Mickles, coloured...was sentenced to be hanged’.⁴⁹ However, evidence that racial remarks were not confined to the national press is contained in a local newspaper article under the headline ‘Cambridge Camp Drama. Woman Shot Through Heart By Coloured Sentry At American Camp.’⁵⁰

Emsley has claimed that bigamy was another offence that was exacerbated by the war, which put relationships under pressure through forced and prolonged separation.⁵¹

Figure 3.8 – Classification of Offences Committed by Military Prisoners Held at Cambridge Assizes Between 1939 and 1945



Source: CA, *County of Cambridge: Calendar of Prisoners at The Assizes, 1903-1948*.

Figure 3.8 appears to support this argument with bigamy comprising the largest category of military prisoners held at Cambridge Assizes during the war. Bigamy cases were also recorded in the Cambridge Petty Sessions and a typical case involved Sergeant Charles Burch who ‘...married Kathleen Sheila May Burch while still married to Violet Ward.’⁵²

⁴⁷ *Cambridge Daily News*, 7 January 1943, p.4.

⁴⁸ *The Times*, 5 January 1943, p.2.

⁴⁹ *The Times*, 5 January 1943, p.2.

⁵⁰ *Cambridge Daily News*, 7 July 1945, p.4.

⁵¹ Emsley, *Soldier, Sailor, Beggarman Thief*, p.136.

⁵² CA, *Borough of Cambridge Register of the Court, 1939 to 1945*, 22 December 1944

The length of the sentence was not always recorded but, when it was, it revealed how serious the crime of bigamy was considered to be and Ernest George Baker from the RAF was sentenced to six months in prison following his trial in Cambridge for the offence.⁵³

Did service life make good men better and bad men worse?

This section will attempt to address the question posed by Spencer of whether life in the services made good men better and bad men worse.⁵⁴ It will challenge the assumption made by some military officers that the majority of crimes in the services were committed by men with criminal backgrounds by examining how many of those convicted of committing crimes in Cambridge during the war had previous civilian convictions.⁵⁵ It will also follow the criminal careers of specific military personnel to add some narrative to the statistics.

Following his analysis of military convicts, Spencer argued that there were ‘precipitating and retarding factors’ influencing the criminal behaviour of men who had served in the armed forces. He believed that the main causes of delinquent behaviour included the absence of family life, a relaxation of moral standards caused by the scarcity of female company and changed attitudes towards crimes such as theft. These were counterbalanced by factors such as belonging to a regiment, comradeship and the influence of discipline.⁵⁶ The importance of discipline was discussed in a government report issued in 1943 which stated that military duties were ‘...summarised in the word “discipline”’ and ‘...without discipline fighting men perish.’⁵⁷ Despite this, there were

⁵³ CA, *County of Cambridge: Calendar of Prisoners at The Assizes, 1903-1948*, 14 October 1944

⁵⁴ Spencer, p.1.

⁵⁵ Emsley, *Soldier, Sailor, Beggarman Thief*, p.16.

⁵⁶ Spencer, p.30.

⁵⁷ HCPP, PP.1944, Cmd. 6484, *Report of the Prime Minister's Committee of Enquiry into Detention Barracks:1943*, p.4.

people such as Baden-Powell who believed that young male volunteers with criminal backgrounds were ideally suited to life in the forces.⁵⁸ Once war broke out the National Service Act was introduced and a large number of boys were discharged from borstal and over 70% of inmates released on licence entered the military, particularly the army.⁵⁹ One example is the Cambridge resident, Victor Haylock Holmes, who was sent to borstal for two years in 1938 for stealing cheques and using them to defraud tradesmen.⁶⁰ A newspaper report revealed that Holmes had been released from borstal on licence in September 1939 and two months later he pleaded guilty to stealing a bicycle while claiming he was awaiting call-up from the RAF. He received a six-month prison sentence and the Chairman of the Court told Holmes that, ‘...the RAF want men of integrity.’⁶¹ Less than a year later he was sentenced to eighteen months hard labour for four counts of forging banker's cheques.⁶² It was later reported that he had stolen the cheques to enable him to mix with wealthier university undergraduates and Detective Inspector Bird had described him as a ‘vain, conceited, cunning and persistent thief.’⁶³ Despite this, and perhaps supporting Baden-Powell’s theory, Holmes was accepted by the army and his service record reveals that he was a prisoner of war in July 1944.⁶⁴ Evidence supporting the argument that service life had little impact on men’s behaviour is revealed in a post-war newspaper article which stated that ‘An army deserter, Victor Haylock Holmes, 28, appearing in battle-dress and wearing parachute wings...pleaded guilty of six charges of stealing...’ and that he had asked for fourteen other offences to be taken into

⁵⁸ Emsley, *Soldier, Sailor, Beggarman Thief*, p.36.

⁵⁹ Spencer, pp.168-169.

⁶⁰ CA, *County of Cambridge: Calendar of Prisoners at The Assizes, 1903-1948*, (1938)

⁶¹ *Cambridge Daily News*, 27 November 1939, p.3.

⁶² *Borough of Cambridge Register of the Court, 1939-1945*, (8 June 1940)

⁶³ *Leicester Evening Mail*, 27 July 1940, p.9.

⁶⁴ Forces War Records, Missing, Dead, Wounded and POW’s Collection.

consideration.⁶⁵

Spencer cited a study, carried out by Major J.C. Penton, of over three thousand deserting soldiers on their suitability to return to military duty and discovered only 11% had records of committing crimes when civilians.⁶⁶ Furthermore, Spencer investigated two hundred military convicts and discovered that 62% of them had an average of 5.7 previous convictions but his study focused on three specific prisons that held those who had committed more serious offences.⁶⁷ A similar examination of military prisoners held at Cambridge Assizes reveals that only 22% of them had criminal records with an average of 5.3 previous convictions.⁶⁸ Despite the smaller sample size, analysis of the statistics in Cambridge appears to support the argument that a large proportion of military offenders had no civilian criminal records, but many that did were serial offenders. Some of the Cambridge recidivists, including Private George Jackson, perpetrated crimes of a similar nature to those carried out while they were civilians. He received a five-year prison sentence for housebreaking, the same offence for which he was convicted before being called up.⁶⁹ Others committed different crimes and Christopher Walter Tovey was found guilty of bigamy during the war having previously served time in prison for burglary.⁷⁰ Despite these convictions, their service records reveal that they remained in the army and contain no reference of their criminal activity.⁷¹ Additionally, four men from the RAF, James P. Hobart, Clifford Price, Alexander J. Theocharides and Edward Browse were tried in Cambridge in 1944 for offences including theft, housebreaking and

⁶⁵ *The Western Morning News*, 8 January 1947, p.6.

⁶⁶ J.C. Patton, cited in Spencer, pp.44-45.

⁶⁷ Spencer, p.110.

⁶⁸ *CA: County of Cambridge: Calendar of Prisoners at The Assizes, 1903-1948*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 11 January 1945.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Forces War Records

assault and research suggests that they also have unblemished service records.⁷²

However, military crimes were recorded as revealed in the case of Charles Patrick Samuel McMenamain who was sentenced to six months for bigamy and at his trial, in January 1946, it was disclosed that he had three previous convictions.⁷³ His service record contained no reference to these convictions but did include his court-martial for desertion on 2 November 1945.⁷⁴

Following his study of military convicts, Spencer concluded that service life was only partially responsible for the behaviour of military personnel and that the entire history of an individual should be considered of equal importance and the case of Victor Haylock Holmes discussed earlier, appears to support this view.⁷⁵ However, linking criminal activity to military experiences is problematic and Emsley has argued that the armed forces of a nation are representative of the population for which they fight and include men who would probably have been lawbreakers had war not broken out.⁷⁶

Summary

A comparison of crime statistics appears to support the view that during the war the presence of military personnel did influence the number of cases recorded in London and Cambridge. Furthermore, while the national courts-martial statistics support the argument that service crime was dominated by AWOL cases, that was not the experience in Cambridge. However, Cambridge did follow the national trend of declining AWOL convictions towards the end of the war, and this could endorse the view that indifference

⁷² CA, *Borough of Cambridge Register of the Court, 1939-1945*, 1944

⁷³ CA, *County of Cambridge: Calendar of Prisoners at The Assizes, 1903-1948*, 16 January 1946

⁷⁴ Forces War Records.

⁷⁵ Spencer, pp.258-259.

⁷⁶ Emsley, *Soldier, Sailor, Beggarman Thief*, p.7.

towards certain offences grew as the war progressed. Finally, records suggest that life in the services had limited influence on criminal activity and statistics reveal that the great majority of servicemen, both in Cambridge and nationally, had no criminal records before being called up.

This study has shown that demographic changes, new laws and the conditions brought about by the Second World War all had an impact on the pattern of recorded crime and the final chapter will examine how this affected those tasked with maintaining law and order during the conflict.

4. PENSIONERS, PIGEON FANCIERS and ‘SILLY GIRLS’: POLICING CAMBRIDGE DURING WORLD WAR TWO

According to Barbara Weinberger, most of the historiography concerning the police ignores the years between the end of the First World War and the second half of the twentieth - century and she attempted to fill that gap by using oral history to test the theory that this was a ‘golden period’ of policing.¹ This chapter will engage with this debate through a study of policing in Cambridge during one significant event during this period, The Second World War. Due to the paucity of local oral testimony, it will use evidence from contemporary sources including minutes from Watch Committee meetings, annual reports from the Chief Constable and local newspaper articles to address three main themes.

The introduction of emergency laws and the changing demographics instigated by the war resulted in additional responsibilities for police forces across the nation and the first section will examine how this affected the duties and tasks that were carried out by the Cambridge Borough Police Force. Next, it will look at the structure of the police during the war and in particular the effect of an ageing police force on crime detection rates following the loss of younger men to the armed forces. Finally, it will investigate the influence of the conflict on the employment and responsibilities of policewomen both nationally and in Cambridge.

¹ Barbara Weinberger, *The Best Police in the World: An Oral History of English Policing From the 1930s to the 1960s* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p.1.

The Changing Duties of Police During the War

On 25 August 1939 a local newspaper article described how the Cambridge Borough Police Station was almost unrecognisable due to sandbags covering the base.² This may have been what Ursula May McPherson was referring to when, following a visit to Cambridge two weeks later, she observed ‘The only difference so far is a few sandbags’.³ Ingleton has argued that at the beginning of the Second World War, the role of the police in the event of an invasion was unclear.⁴ However, Weinberger has disclosed how in August 1939, a Home Office publication, *Police War Instructions*, identified that the additional responsibilities expected of police forces would include ‘...intelligence work, control of aliens and the protection of vulnerable points’.⁵ This section will examine how this, together with the introduction of emergency powers, affected the duties carried out by police officers in Cambridge.

In 1940, the Chief Constable of Cambridge noted that the pressures caused by increased duties had resulted in many of his officers giving up part of their annual leave ‘...without any additional remuneration.’⁶ The Chief Constable’s annual reports throughout the war provide an insight into the variety of extra tasks carried out by his officers. In addition to recording the number and nationality of aliens in the town and maintaining order during the black-out, the reports contained examples of some of the more extraordinary responsibilities created by the conflict. In 1939, the Chief Constable revealed that one of the Emergency Powers (Defence) Acts concerning restrictions on the ‘possession and control of certain pigeons’ necessitated one of his officers visiting ‘lofts

² *Cambridge Daily News*, 25 August 1939, p.4.

³ Mass Observation Online: D5366, Diary for September 1939.

⁴ Roy Ingleton, *The Gentlemen at War* (Maidstone: Cranborne Publications, 1994), p.167.

⁵ Weinberger, pp.122-123.

⁶ CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable’s Report for the Police and Fire Brigade Establishments and Annual Report of the Criminal and Other Statistics for the Year Ended 31st December 1940*, p.27.

and pigeon fanciers' to issue certificates confirming they were not being used for spying.⁷ Furthermore, as previously discussed, Cambridge became home to several thousand servicemen, and in 1940 two officers were employed full-time on arranging billets for them.⁸

Smithies has argued that during the war, traffic police experienced more changes than any other section of the force.⁹ According to Weinberger, the lack of petrol not only reduced the number of vehicles on the road but also resulted in officers focussing less on offending motorists and spending more time acting as chauffeurs for their superiors when they were required to attend an incident.¹⁰ Table 4.1 shows the impact of the war on traffic violations by comparing traffic-related offences recorded in Cambridge and England and Wales immediately before the war and in 1944.

Table 4.1: Percentage of Non-Indictable Offences That Were Traffic-Related

	1938	1944
Cambridge	56%	21%
England and Wales	67%	36%

Sources: CA and CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Report for the Police 1939 and 1945*; HCPP, *Home Office Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1939-1945. Statistics Relating to Proceedings for the Criminal Crime and Year 1947*, PP. 1948, Cmd. 7528, p.5.

The 35% reduction in traffic-related infringements recorded in Cambridge is comparable to the 31% drop experienced in England and Wales, but despite this, the Chief Constable's reports reveal that number of officers employed full-time on motor patrol duties in Cambridge increased from six in 1939 to seven in 1940 and stayed at that level for the remainder of the war.

Trow has argued that dealing with the after-effects of air raids was one of the

⁷ CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Report for the Police and Fire Brigade Establishments and Annual Report of the Criminal and Other Statistics for the Year Ended 31st December 1939*, p.28.

⁸ CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Report for 1940*, p.26.

⁹ Edward Smithies, *Crime in Wartime: A Social History of Crime in World War II* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), p.194.

¹⁰ Weinberger, p.125.

most hazardous tasks assumed by the police.¹¹ Although Cambridge did not suffer the same volume of attacks from the Luftwaffe as London or industrial towns and cities, four-hundred and nineteen alerts were recorded in the town during the war with a peak of twenty-eight in January 1941.¹² Evidence of how seriously the threat of air-attacks was taken by the Cambridge police is contained in a 1942 report, which revealed that a war-room had been created at the police headquarters to control operations in the event of enemy air-raids and included a direct telephone line to the duty inspector's office.¹³ Furthermore, one year later the Police Auxiliary Messenger Service was formed and twenty-three youths were employed to deliver missives in anticipation of a loss of telephone communication during an attack.¹⁴ Censorship during the war meant that press reports of air-raids omitted some details including precise locations and casualty numbers to prevent them from being used as propaganda, but they did celebrate acts of heroism. In 1941, an article revealed how P.C. Haynes from the Cambridge force recovered survivors from the site of a crashed aircraft despite the danger from unexploded bombs.¹⁵ Additional responsibilities were not confined to officers on the beat and according to Calder the Chief Constable of a Borough was usually its Chief Warden and civil defence was built around the local police force.¹⁶ This appears to have been confirmed by the Chief Constable of Cambridge when he revealed that he had assumed the duties of Coordinating Officer and Air-Raid Protection Controller in 1939.¹⁷

Despite the number of extraordinary duties created by the war, Emsley has argued

¹¹ M.J. Trow, *War Crimes: Underworld Britain in the Second World War* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2008), p.175.

¹² *Cambridge Daily News*, 9 June 1945, p.2.

¹³ KCB/ 2/CL/3/24/7, CA, *Borough of Cambridge: Watch Committee Minute Book, January 1939 to September 1946*, pp.154-155.

¹⁴ CA, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Annual Report on the Police, 1943*, p.4.

¹⁵ *Cambridge Daily News*, 19 December 1941, p.43.

¹⁶ Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p.193.

¹⁷ CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Report for the Year Ended 31st December 1939*, p.26.

that much of the police work carried out during the conflict was mundane, citing the entries in Occurrence Books as evidence.¹⁸ It has not been possible to obtain access to Cambridge Occurrence Books, but the Chief Constable appeared to support this view when he commended his officers on their performance ‘....on the beat, a duty which though at times monotonous is so essential in the prevention of crime.’¹⁹

How Did the War Affect the Structure of the Police?

This section will examine how police forces adapted to cope with the additional demands created by the Second World War and the loss of younger officers to the armed forces. According to an official report issued at the beginning of the war, policing was regarded as a reserved occupation and all men, except those with existing reserve obligations, were exempt from military service, but the recruitment of new officers virtually stopped.²⁰ Despite policing being a reserved occupation the impact on police strength was significant and over three thousand, mostly younger officers, had been conscripted by 1940.²¹ Figure 4.1 compares the change in regular police strength in Cambridge with the national picture.

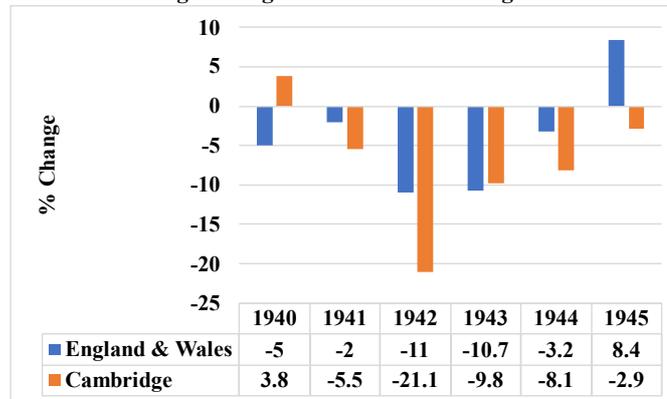
¹⁸ Clive Emsley, *The Great British Bobby: A History of British Policing From the 18th Century to the Present* (London: Quercus, 2009), p.239.

¹⁹ CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Annual Report for the Year 1945*, p.3.

²⁰ HCCP, PP. 1946-1947, *Home Office Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1939-1945. Summary of Statistics Relating to Crime and Criminal Proceedings for the Years 1939-1945*, p.5.

²¹ Roy Ingleton, p.7.

Figure 4.1- Percentage Change in the Number of Regular Police Available for Duty



Sources: CA and CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Report for the Police 1939 and 1945: HCPP, Home Office Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1939-1945*, p.5.

The pattern appears to be comparable between 1941 and 1944 with reductions of between 5.5% and 21.1% in Cambridge and between 2% and 10.7% nationally. In both cases, the peak reduction occurred in 1942, and the Chief Constable of Cambridge reported that, as required by the National Service (Armed Forces) Act introduced in 1939, all officers under the age of twenty-five were de-reserved resulting in the loss of twenty-three officers to the armed forces and 'No new appointments were made during the year'.²² The Cambridge force represented less than 2% of the total regular police strength in England and Wales and small variations in the number of officers employed in the town could contribute to the variations, especially in 1940 and 1945.

One attempt to address the resultant shortage of manpower was through the recruitment of reserves and an increase in the number of special constables.²³ The first category, the First Police Reserves, were retired policemen who received £3 per week in addition to their pension.²⁴ Next were the Police War Reserves, formed in 1938 in

²² CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Annual Report, 1942*, p.1.

²³ Barry Godfrey and Paul Lawrence, *Crime and Justice Since 1750*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p.26.

²⁴ Ingleton, p.33.

preparation for a potential war and initially contained volunteers without any previous police experience.²⁵ In his 1939 annual report, the Chief Constable of Cambridge pointed out that due to the extra burden on his force he had ‘...no alternative but to call upon the services of the First Police Reserve and the Police War Reserves.’²⁶ The final group of auxiliaries were Special Constables who were unpaid volunteers formed initially during the First World War.²⁷ At the end of 1940, two hundred and thirty-nine part-time Special Constables were registered in Cambridge, but the Chief Constable revealed that only fifty ‘had been equipped with a uniform, [and] caps and mackintoshes have been provided for the remainder.’²⁸ Shortage of supplies may have been one reason behind this but so too could financial constraints as indicated by the chairman of the Standing Joint Committee of the Cambridgeshire Constabulary who pointed out that The Home Office only paid half of the cost of supplying uniforms to Special Constables.²⁹ At the end of the war, an official report acknowledged that the lack of a uniform was one of the factors that had hindered the acceptance and effectiveness of the specials.³⁰ This could have been what Spud Murphy, a criminal, was referring to in his comment that ‘Most of the police was (sic) in the armed forces [and] reserve policemen was (sic) only Mickey Mouse policemen.’³¹

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 compare the composition of total police strength in England and Wales with that in Cambridge. They reveal that in Cambridge, regular police made up between 57.4% and 68.8% of the total strength during the war which is comparable to

²⁵ Ibid., p.43.

²⁶ CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Report for the Police, 1939*, p.6.

²⁷ Ibid., p.35.

²⁸ CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Report for the Police, 1940*, p.6.

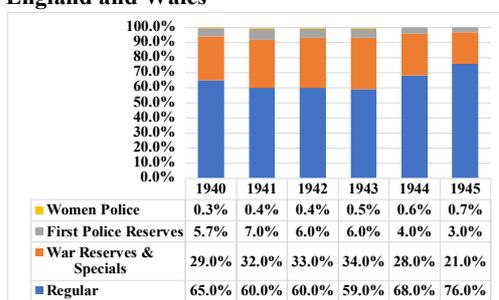
²⁹ *Cambridge Daily News*, 3 July 1942, p.3.

³⁰ HCCP, PP. 1946, *Police Counties and Boroughs England & Wales: Report of His Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary: For the Year ended 29th September 1945*, p.9.

³¹ Steve Humphries and Beverley Hopwood, *Green and Pleasant Land: The Untold Story of Country Life in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 2000 edn (London: Channel 4 Books, 2000), p.46.

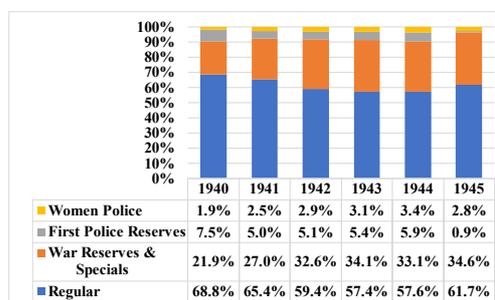
the national picture of between 59% and 76%. They also show the similarity in the proportion of Police War Reserves and Special Constables hired during the conflict as well as the relatively small number of First Police Reserves employed. Finally, they expose that policewomen, who will be the focus of the final theme of this chapter, made up only between 0.3% and 0.7% of the national police and between 1.9% and 3.4% of the Cambridge force.

Figure 4.2 – Composition of the Police in England and Wales



Source: HCPP, *Home Office Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1939-1945. Statistics for the Year 1947*, pp.5-7.

Figure 4.3 – Composition of the Police in Cambridge



Sources: CA and CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Report for the Police 1940 to 1945*.

As the war progressed, conscription into the armed forces was not the only reason for the reduction in police strength as increased demand for war industry labour forced the Home Office to agree to the release of police reserves.³² Despite Cambridge having relatively little war-related industry the impact of this directive on police numbers was noted by the Chief Constable who reported, 'On 24 March 1944, The Home Office informed the police authority that a further substantial contribution was needed to meet the needs of the armed forces and war industry.'³³

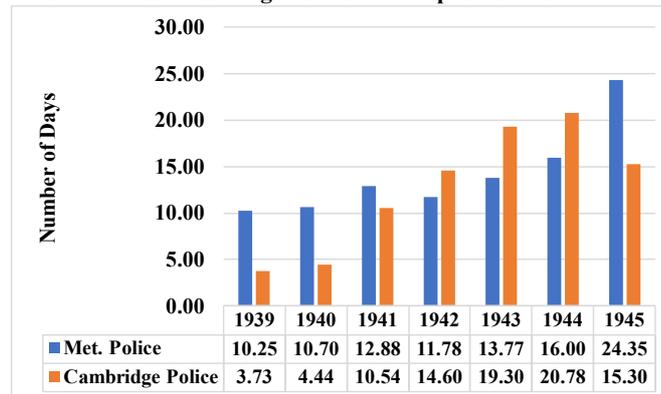
It has been argued that one of the consequences of the organisational changes was a reduction in crime detection rates. Smithies has claimed that as the war progressed, younger and fitter constables were replaced by older men which increased the number of

³² Weinberger, p.121.

³³ CA, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Report on the Police, 1944*, pp.8-9.

days lost due to sickness citing as evidence an article in *The Police Review*, which claimed, ‘Sickness among the police is much more prevalent than it was.’³⁴ Ingleton has also maintained that although the increase in days lost through sickness during the war was most marked in London, it was also evident in other parts of the country.³⁵ The Chief Constable of the Metropolitan Police revealed that at the end of the war, the average age of his force was forty-five compared to thirty-five in 1938.³⁶ In Cambridge, the age difference was smaller, but it still increased from just over thirty in 1938 to thirty-four in 1945.³⁷ Figure 4.4 appears to show a correlation between the increase in the age of officers and the number of sickness days recorded during the war in both The Metropolitan and Cambridge police forces.

Figure 4.4 – Comparison of the Number of Sickness Days Recorded in Cambridge and the Metropolitan Police



Sources: HCCP, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1939 to 1945*; CA and CC *Chief Constable of Cambridge Annual Reports 1939 to 1945*

However, caution needs to be taken when using these statistics as the number of sickness days reported could have been affected by a few officers having prolonged periods of absence. In Cambridge, for example, it was reported that in 1940 ‘Superintendent

³⁴ Smithies, p.191.

³⁵ Ingleton, p.349.

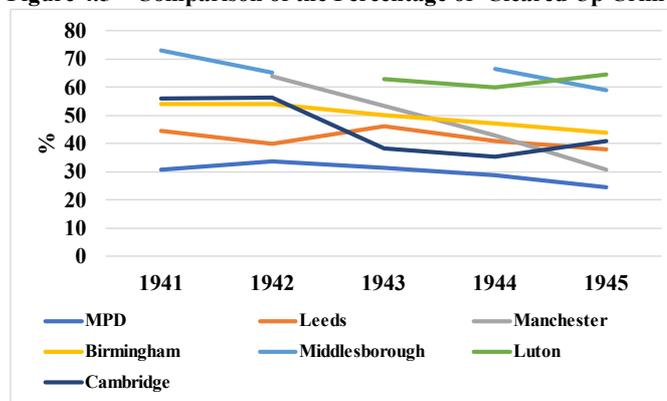
³⁶ HCCP, PP. 1946, Cmd. 6871, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1945*, PP.1946, p.5.

³⁷ CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable’s Report for the Police, 1938*, p.4 and *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable’s Annual Report for the Year, 1945*, p.7.

Sharman was absent for 190 days...and Inspector Witham...for 70 days due to a bicycle accident.’³⁸

Smithies has argued that one outcome of the increase in days lost to sickness was a deterioration in the detection of crime.³⁹ Figure 4.5 appears to confirm that, in several police forces, there was a correlation between the number of days lost through sickness and the performance in clearing up crimes, especially in Cambridge between 1942 and 1944 when sickness days were at their highest level.

Figure 4.5 – Comparison of the Percentage of Cleared Up Crimes



Source: Smithies, *Crime in Wartime*, p.191

Finally, one comment made by the Chief Constable of Cambridge highlights the disparity between what was accepted as fitness for duty between the police and different branches of the armed forces. He reported that a constable who was discharged from the RAF on medical grounds in 1943, re-joined the police only to be called up by the army three months later.⁴⁰

The Role of Policewomen During the War

Despite the challenges of maintaining adequate police strength throughout the war, one potential solution appears to have been overlooked. The recruitment of women police

³⁸ CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Report for the Police, 1940*, p.4.

³⁹ Smithies, pp.189-190.

⁴⁰ CA, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Annual Report on the Police, 1943*, p.5.

officers did not seem to be a priority to many Chief Constables in England and Wales and Susan Ehrlich Martin has described how policing has been ‘stereotyped as masculine.’⁴¹ Furthermore, according to Godfrey and Lawrence, women police were given tasks that ‘conformed to contemporary gender assumptions.’⁴² And, Jackson has claimed that a policewoman’s gender-specific duties grew as the war progressed.⁴³ This section will attempt to engage with these arguments by examining how gender affected policing in Cambridge during the war.

By July 1940, one hundred and twenty-eight policewomen were employed in eight county and thirty-three city and borough forces and a further one hundred and thirty-three were employed by the Metropolitan Police.⁴⁴ Although the number of attested policewomen increased by over 48% during the war to four hundred and eighteen in 1945, this still represented less than 1% of the total police strength.⁴⁵ To put this into perspective, women made up almost 44% of the total industrial workforce in 1943.⁴⁶ Cambridge was one of the regional forces that did employ policewomen before the war and according to a newspaper article, was one of the first to try ‘the experiment’ by appointing two policewomen in 1916.⁴⁷ The 1945 report of His Majesty’s Inspectors of Constabulary proudly boasted of the increase in the number of policewomen during the war but noted that the growth would have been greater ‘had more suitable women been

⁴¹ Susan Ehrlich Martin, ‘Police Force or Police Service?’ *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Science*, 561.1 (1999), pp. 111-126, (p.115).

⁴² Godfrey and Lawrence, p.27.

⁴³ Louise Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp.25-26.

⁴⁴ Ingleton, p.123.

⁴⁵ Emsley, *The Great British Bobby*, p.245.

⁴⁶ Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p.196.

⁴⁷ *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 13 August 1943, p.3.

available.⁴⁸ This point was also made by Alderman Stubbs when he informed the Cambridge Watch Committee that ‘It was not possible to recruit suitable women.’⁴⁹ Furthermore, the recruitment of women police was a topic frequently debated in parliament during the war and in 1943, The Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison answered Viscountess Astor’s question by stating that forty-seven out of one hundred and fifty-eight police forces employed women police and in his opinion, ‘Those that did had an advantage...but the trouble is finding suitable candidates.’⁵⁰

The ambiguity surrounding the definition of suitability was pointed out in parliament by Viscountess Davidson when she claimed that ‘many of the right kind of women have gone into other work.’⁵¹ In addition to industry, Ingleton has argued that the police also faced competition from the armed forces for female recruits.⁵² However, Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird have maintained that in common with the police, women in the armed forces were recruited to support their male counterparts.⁵³ Furthermore, Emsley has argued that there may have also been concerns over women police being unable to handle physical violence and of being corrupted by their exposure to vice.⁵⁴ In an attempt to expand the number of ‘suitable’ women, the requirement for them to be single was dropped during the war but, as Emsley has revealed, pay for policewomen remained ten per cent lower than their male equivalents.⁵⁵ This however compares favourably to women’s pay in industry which varied between 44% and 52% of

⁴⁸ HCCP, PP. 1946, *Police Counties and Boroughs England & Wales: Report of His Majesty’s Inspectors of Constabulary: For the Year ended 29th September 1945*, p.67.

⁴⁹ CA, *Borough of Cambridge: Watch Committee Minute Book, 1943*, p.223.

⁵⁰ *Hansard*, 4 November 1943, Volume 393

⁵¹ *Hansard*, 20 March 1941, Volume 370

⁵² Ingleton, p.175.

⁵³ Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird, ‘Women in the Firing Line: The Home Guard and the Defence of Gender Boundaries in Britain in the Second World War’, *Women’s History Review*, 9.2, (2006), pp.231-255, (p.232).

⁵⁴ Emsley, *The Great British Bobby* p.239.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p.245.

a man's wage during the war.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Smithies has claimed that suitability may not have been the only motivation behind the reluctance to recruit permanent policewomen, and concern over them encroaching on the 'male preserve of the police station' could have also been a factor.⁵⁷

In 1944, Mr Mander asked The Home Secretary what he was doing to encourage the employment of women police and received the response that he was 'anxious to encourage recruitment in areas where there was a need for them.'⁵⁸ However, the unwillingness of the government to directly influence local recruitment policies is revealed in a newspaper article which reported that the Chief Constable of Huntingdonshire's refusal to employ policewomen was because in his opinion, 'There was little crime among girls in the county.'⁵⁹ This view was not shared by his counterpart in the neighbouring Cambridge force who revealed that in 1944, policewomen arrested nineteen criminals, reported a further thirty-six suspects for summons and spent over fourteen hundred hours looking after female prisoners.⁶⁰ Indeed, Cambridge was cited in newspaper articles that advocated the advantages of employing policewomen and one report revealed that 'Despite frequent debates on the subject, the Cambridgeshire County Police Force have not yet introduced women into their ranks' before quoting the Chief Constable of Cambridge as being 'Abundantly satisfied with the work [policewomen] have been doing for many years past.'⁶¹ However, despite being held up as enlightened in its recruitment of women police the number employed in Cambridge only increased by one during the war and Table 4.2 shows that the ratio of policewomen to regular male

⁵⁶ Summerfield, p.200.

⁵⁷ Smithies, p.193.

⁵⁸ *Hansard*, 17 February 1944, Volume 397

⁵⁹ *Cambridge Daily News*, 5 December 1939, p.3.

⁶⁰ CA, *Chief Constable's Report on the Police Establishment, 1944*, p.6.

⁶¹ *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 13 August 1943, p.7.

officers in both Cambridge and nationally remained low throughout the conflict despite the shortage of manpower.

Table 4.2 – Comparison of the Ratio of Policewomen to Policemen

	1940	1945
Cambridge	2.73%	4.55%
England and Wales	0.49%	0.90%

Sources: CA and CC, *Borough of Cambridge: Chief Constable's Report for the Police 1940 and 1945*; HCPP *Home Office Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1939-1945*, p.5.

Ingleton has argued that initially, a policewoman's duties were closer to that of a social worker.⁶² This view was shared by Cara Rabe-Hemp who claimed that policewomen were employed in 'Stereotypical feminine roles such as protecting young girls ...'⁶³ Contemporary newspaper articles appear to support this and in 1943 Mrs Rackham, a Justice of the Peace in Cambridge, was reported as saying that '[policewomen] provide that touch of homeliness which is so useful in putting women and children at ease [in court].'⁶⁴ Early in the war, there was a belief that policewomen were suitable for employment in areas where there was a concentration of troops as revealed in a 1940 parliamentary debate when Miss Rathbone asked the Home Secretary about the role of policewomen as 'protection against the nuisance caused by loose women and silly girls' who hung around military camps.⁶⁵ The debate continued during the conflict and in 1943 The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, in a letter to *The Times*, argued that 'A large number of women police would help in checking promiscuity.'⁶⁶ This view appeared to be shared by the Chief Constable of Cambridge who noted the advantages of involving policewomen in 'cautioning girls about their behaviour.'⁶⁷

⁶² Ingleton, p.175.

⁶³ Cara E. Rabe-Hemp, 'POLICEwomen or policeWOMEN: Doing Gender and Police Work in Feminist Criminology', *Feminist Criminology*, 4.2, (2009), pp.114-129, (p.115).

⁶⁴ *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 13 August 1943, p.9.

⁶⁵ *Hansard*, 24 October 1940, Volume 365

⁶⁶ *The Times*, 20 October 1943, p.2.

⁶⁷ CA, *Chief Constable's Report on the Police, 1944*, p.6.

Gender-specific duties of policewomen often went beyond looking after juveniles and young women and Jackson has discussed their role as undercover decoys.⁶⁸ In Cambridge, it was reported that policewomen in plain clothes visited public houses to ‘check underage drinking [and] “observing” brothels...’⁶⁹ Additionally, in 1942 a newspaper article reported how two policewomen pretended to be customers at a sale of fur coats at a Cambridge hotel and, following their report, three men from Manchester were fined a total of £300 for contravening Board of Trade Licensing Laws.⁷⁰ These examples appear to support Rabe-Hemp’s argument that by carrying out gender-specific duties policewomen maintained the ‘hegemonic masculinity’ of police work.⁷¹

Ingleton concluded that the contribution of policewomen during the war was difficult to calculate.⁷² However, during the 1945 debate on the amalgamation of the Cambridge Borough and Cambridgeshire County police forces, the employment of women was a key part of the argument against the proposal made by The Chief Constable of Cambridge, Norman Bebbington. In a memo to the Watch Committee, in preparation for a meeting with the Home Secretary, he claimed ‘It is difficult to see how the County Authorities managed for so long without policewomen.’⁷³ However, his conclusion that female officers carried out ‘duties relating to women and girls which could not be carried out by men’ appears to confirm the issue of gender in policing was prevalent throughout the war and that at the end of the conflict policewomen were not yet fully integrated into the main force.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Jackson, p.115.

⁶⁹ CA, *Chief Constable’s Report on the Police, 1944*, p.6.

⁷⁰ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 14 March 1942, p.4.

⁷¹ Rabe-Hemp, ‘POLICEwomen or policeWOMEN’, p.116.

⁷² Roy Ingleton, p.189.

⁷³ K1360/CB/2/3/2, CA, *Borough of Cambridge Police Correspondence, Information and Complaints*, Draft Memo to the Watch Committee, 12 November 1945

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Summary

The introduction of new laws increased the number and types of duties carried out by the police during the war and this, together with the loss of younger officers to the armed forces, increased the pressure on the police. Replacement by auxiliaries resulted in an ageing force which coincided with an increase in sick days and may have contributed to the reduction in the number of recorded crimes cleared up as the war progressed. Despite the pressure to maintain adequate police strength, it appears that there was a reluctance to appoint full-time attested policewomen and even in those police forces that did employ women the ratio to male officers remained at a very low level throughout the war.

5. CONCLUSION

Summary

This study of crime and policing in Cambridge during the Second World War examined what Sonya Rose described as the contradictions that challenge the perception that the population of the nation presented a united and positive front during ‘The People’s War’.¹ Chapter two examined crimes committed by civilians during the conflict, both those that were the consequence of the introduction of emergency laws and those that would have been considered misdemeanours in peacetime. It revealed that the influx of evacuees in the town coincided with an increase in recorded crime, particularly those carried out by juveniles and that larceny was the most common category, with the theft of pedal cycles regarded as a particular issue in Cambridge. Chapter three analysed the criminal activity of military personnel in Cambridge which, because of its location, became home to a large number of British and American servicemen. The statistics appear to support the view that crime in the town peaked during the period when military presence was at its highest. The records also reveal that most servicemen had no criminal records before joining up which is contrary to the belief of those in authority during the war. In chapter four it was suggested that the loss of young male officers added to the pressure of maintaining police strength during the war and one result of replacing them with reserves and special constables was a rise in the average age of police officers. This corresponded to an increase in the number of days lost due to sickness as well as a reduction in the number of undetected crimes. It was also revealed that one potential solution, the recruitment of policewomen, was overlooked by many Chief Constables and

¹ Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), p.2.

the ratio of female to male officers remained at a very low level throughout the war.

Further Research

This study has not considered any underlying trends in recorded crime during the first half of the twentieth century and additional analysis of crime statistics in the years leading up to, and immediately after, the Second World War could provide some useful context. Crimes considered as offences against military law were held in courts-martial and it has proved difficult to obtain data and reports, especially for American hearings and a more in-depth investigation of courts-martial records would help understand the nature and frequency of military crime during the war. Finally, there appears to be a significant gap in the historiography of gender in policing, especially in the first half of the twentieth century. and this is another area worthy of further research.

Conclusion

This study of crime in Cambridge during the Second World War does appear to challenge much of the historiography of the conflict which depicts a nation inhabited by ‘brave, obedient [and] conscientious’ people.² While the cases of recorded crime in Cambridge did increase once the war began in earnest, it has been revealed that the reasons were both complex and interconnected. The introduction of new laws, demographic changes brought about by the influx of evacuees and military personnel, shortages of supplies and increased opportunities created by such conditions as the blackout all impacted recorded crime statistics. Additionally, it has uncovered how some attitudes towards certain

² Donald Thomas, *Underworld at War: Spivs, Deserters and Racketeers and Civilians in the Second World War* (London: John Murray, 2003), p.392.

offences committed by both civilians and the military changed as the war progressed and this together with the subjective manner in which some laws were interpreted confirms that statistics need to be treated with caution. Despite a belief that most crimes in the services were committed by men with existing criminal records, the study reveals that the great majority of servicemen, both in Cambridge and nationally, had no convictions before being called up. The increase in regulations combined with the loss of young men to the armed forces demonstrably impacted those expected to uphold the law during the war. Both in Cambridge and nationally, one outcome of an ageing police force was the increase in the number of days lost through sickness and a corresponding reduction in crime detection rates. Finally, although Cambridge was one of the police forces that employed women during the war, the low number of attested full-time policewomen in the force, combined with the duties they were expected to carry out, reveal that gender was a significant factor in policing in Cambridge as well as nationally.

In conclusion, this investigation of criminal activity in Cambridge during the Second World War reveals that there were changes in the pattern of civilian and military lawbreaking which appears to support the argument that there was an underside to the conflict. No single reason has been identified, but it has been shown that demographic variations, wartime conditions, new emergency laws and changes in opinions on crime and penal policy all contributed. The study also exposes the difficulties in maintaining the strength and effectiveness of those tasked with upholding the law as the war progressed. Finally, contemporary sources have also provided an insight into some of the views on subjects such as race and gender that were prevalent during the conflict.

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