Leisure, War and Marginal Communities: Travelling Showpeople and Outdoor Pleasure-Seeking in Britain 1889-1945.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the community of nomadic showpeople who provided entertainments and amusements as part of travelling fairs. The primary focus of the thesis is the development of the relationship between this marginal community and local and national authorities between 1889 and 1945. As part of this investigation the relationship between showpeople and settled British society is also examined. Exploring the physical space of the fairground is vital as this forms the encounter between showpeople and the public. The fair as a form of public leisure informs outside perceptions and understandings of the community behind it.

The thesis provides an overview of travelling fairs and associated issues up to the 1880s, before analysing the impact of attempts at temporary dwelling legislation. These attempts proved a formative experience; causing a disparate showland community to amalgamate in the politically active union of The Showmen's Guild. The thesis explores how this organisation was able to meet the legislative and practical challenges of the First World War. Through negotiation with authorities the Guild secured the viability of the showland business. In addition, they emphasised although separated by their commercial nomadism, travelling showpeople firmly considered themselves part of a British national identity. This concept is revisited in the final chapter which explores the experience of travelling showpeople during the Second World War. In addition to assessing how showmen were able to adapt to noise and lighting restrictions, the chapter also assesses the contributions of showland to the collective war effort, and to what extent the community was recognised as part of the collective narrative of 'The People's War'.

The third and fourth chapters of the thesis explore the travelling fair in the interwar period which saw local authorities attempting to exercise increasing control over fairgrounds through rent and relocation, but also saw the significance of the fair as a public leisure pursuit confirmed. The fair was presented and perceived as a uniquely British form of leisure, with close links to rural and urban working class traditions.

Overall the thesis concludes this unique group were transformed in the period assessed. The creation of the Showman's Guild in 1889 was a crucial step towards this group developing from a fragmented and misunderstood community, into a recognised body of commercial professionals. Alongside an improving business relationship with local and national authority, the thesis demonstrates the fairground remained a relevant and popular public recreation throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

Glossary Of Terms

- Tober – *Slang used by Showland Families to mean fairground or showground.*
- Flatties – *Term used by fairground communities to describe non-showfolk from settled society.*
- Tick-Off – *Fortune Teller or small stall holder/grafter peripheral to the main attractions of a fair, not necessarily part of a showland family but often an itinerant salesman who pitched at fairs.*
- Showman's Steam Engine/ Showman's Road Locomotive – *Steam Traction Engine designed specifically for use by travelling showpeople. Often highly ornate with elaborate paintwork and twisted brass decorations. Used for haulage of rides and to generate electricity by means of a belt-driven dynamo. First produced in the 1890s, the final examples were used sparingly into the 1950s. Manufacturers included Charles Burrell of Thetford, John Fowler of Leeds, and William Foster of Lincoln. In addition to factory produced engines, showpeople also purchased them second-hand from hauliers or farmers, and converted them to suit their needs.*
- Gallopers/Roundabout – *Rotating fairground ride developed in the 1880s with a central steam engine driving carved wooden animals, often horses but also cockerels, pigs and other animals, which moved around the central platform.*
- Switchback Ride – *A fairground ride developed in the Edwardian period which featured an undulating track which several 'Gondolas' or cars would traverse. Powered by its own steam engine in the centre of the ride, and often including a mechanical organ mounted in the middle of the front panel.*
- 'Scenic' Ride – *A development of the earlier Switchbacks which became popular in the 1920s. 'Scenic' refers to the high amount of carved wooden decoration typical of these rides, often featuring exotic or historical scenes.*
- 'Noah's Ark' and Speedways – *Fairground ride popular from the late 1920s into the 1930s, the 'Noah's Ark' featured fast moving animal shapes which were ridden by patrons, the*

Speedways were a development of this and saw the animals replaced with wooden motorcycles.

- Wall Of Death – *Travelling motorcycle stunt show; rides would seem to defy gravity by riding on the inside of a circular vertical wooden wall, held up by centrifugal force.*
- Chairoplanes – *Large fairground ride which featured miniature aircraft or small metal chairs suspended on cables which rotated around a central tower.*

Introduction

The travelling fair is a unique form of public leisure, a sensory explosion of colour, light and noise which sporadically spills out onto rural village greens and winds its way through city streets. The funfair creates its own landscape, absorbing patrons into its own world before packing away and vanishing as rapidly as it appeared. However, this encounter is one of paradox; for whilst the annual fair was often adopted as specific local tradition, the impermanency and itineracy of the fair prevented any locale developing an enduring relationship. An additional contradiction is whilst the rides and atmosphere of the fair were familiar to patrons, the nomadic families whose business was the provision of travelling amusements remained strangers; part of an exclusive community whose exchanges with wider society were few and often fraught.

Travelling fairs have considerable heritage; trading festivals in towns including Norwich and Nottingham go back to the tenth century, Bartholomew Fair in London was granted Charter by Henry I in 1120, and major fairs including Stourbridge and Kings Lynn were established by Charter by King John.[1] These events were based around mercantile trading, and although by the end of the nineteenth century, provision of entertainment was the predominant purpose of fairs, the commercial element still existed. Tyrwhitt-Drake states up to the mid-twentieth century "every market is not a fair but every fair is a market".[2] Statute or 'Mop' Fairs based around the hiring of agricultural labour, domestic servants, and other workers were once a prominent type of fair, but by the end of the nineteenth century institutions governing job markets negated their original role and henceforth these events were held purely for entertainment.[3] The origin of fairs designed exclusively around celebration and entertainment were local wakes and parish festivals, usually instigated by residents on traditional religious

[1] Ian Starsmore, *English Fairs* (Thames & Hudson, London, 1975), pp. 12-16.
[2] Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake, *The English Circus and Fair Ground* (Metheun & Co Ltd, London, 1946), p. 189.
[3] Tyrwhitt-Drake, *The English Circus and Fair Ground*, pp. 189 - 190.

holidays.[4] Although their role had changed the majority of fairs held throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century were still 'franchise' or 'charter' fairs, whereby the monarch had granted an individual or corporation the right to hold a fair.[5]

This thesis investigates the community of itinerant showpeople between 1889 and 1945 for whom the fairground was their livelihood. It focusses on their developing relationship with government and local authorities, often in response to official attempts to legislate against either the community or their business. It also explores the relationship between the showland community and wider society. The fairground as a physical space is crucial for this investigation as a point of contact between showpeople and the public; the encounter with leisure informs the perception and understanding of this marginal group.

A key issue this thesis addresses is how the travelling showland community understood their identity. Whilst a complex issue this, can be split into two areas of analysis. Firstly, investigating to what extent can their identity be interpreted as racially or ethnically different, and whether this community viewed themselves as part of a wider national identity or conversely emphasise their marginality. Through analysing documentation produced by showpeople, it is clear within this community identity was fluid and contested. This thesis proposes showpeople did not identify themselves as a separate racial group, avoiding comparison and association with Romany and other travellers, and emphasising they viewed themselves as British citizens. They acknowledged their separation from wider society but did not perceive this as a negative and were proud of their heritage and close-knit community. Marginality became a major issue when the separate identity of showland travellers was not recognised, and legislation designed to impact on other 'problem' groups of itinerants threatened to impact adversely on the travelling fairground industry and community. The marginality of the group was affirmed during periods of conflict– points at which concepts of national identity were reassessed – as it was necessary

[4] Tyrwhitt-Drake suggests most were held on the day on which the local church was dedicated, or the Saint's Day of the corresponding Saint. Tyrwhitt-Drake, *The English Circus and Fair Ground*, p. 190.
[5] Tyrwhitt-Drake, *The English Circus and Fair Ground*, p. 189.

for showland travellers to prove their right to inclusion in a national narrative, or else face exclusion. The significance of issues of marginality and identity changed over the course of the period this thesis investigates- transforming from attempts to separate showland from other travelling groups in the late nineteenth century, to a campaign of achieving acceptance and parity with settled society during global conflicts which heightened public interest in national identity.

This issue of identity, although core to the thesis, is inextricably linked with issues of public perception, and the reaction of authority. The thesis will therefore explore these themes alongside the developing narrative of showland identity. Anxieties over the fairground as a marginal and therefore dangerous form of public leisure can best be explored by examining the actions of local and national authorities. Through this documentation it is possible to assess whether showpeople were treated as a 'problem' group, recognised as a business, or a mixture of both. Disjuncture between national legislation and local application is a theme throughout this study. Frequently it is lack of consistent policy which presented problems for the showland community. The other key argument of the thesis is to demonstrate that the fairground was a significant leisure institution between 1889-1945, adapting to public tastes and expectations to endure as a relevant and enticing recreation, and remain representative of traditional working-class entertainment.

As this thesis explores both a form of a public leisure and a marginal itinerant community, there are two key bodies of literature which this thesis contributes to: the historiography of public leisure and liminal travelling groups in Britain. It is a common assumption travelling showpeople are linked to, or equivalent to, itinerant Gypsies. However, as Chapter I investigates, one element of showland identity which the community was certain upon was their distinction from Gypsies. One of the themes throughout the thesis is the tendency of authority and opposition groups to group showpeople with Gypsy travellers; it is only in these debates where Gypsies will be discussed. The presence of Fortune Tellers at fairs, and the emphasis on

exoticism created a blurred line for the public between show-person and Gypsy, and this is another instance where identities have been confused or erroneously combined.[6] In this manner this thesis contributes to the wider historiography of marginal nomads in Britain, out of which it is the Gypsy population which has received the most attention.

David Mayall and Becky Taylor have produced seminal works on the Gypsy community, and both emphasise that historically Gypsies have been neglected in academic discourse although Mayall posits it is "relative rather than absolute".[7] This thesis examines a marginal community which has been academically neglected in an absolute sense, for with the exception of R.D. Sexton's 1989 thesis, '*Travelling People in the United Kingdom in the First Half of the Twentieth Century*' which includes a brief overview of the showland community, there has been no academic investigation into travelling showpeople. A fundamental similarity between Mayall and Taylor in their exploration of Gypsy identity and culture is their focus on interaction between itinerant and sedentary society; by examining this relationship it is possible to explore "attitudes towards minorities, citizenship, and the meaning of inclusion and exclusion".[8] This thesis takes a similar approach but with the focus on a different marginal group.

Nomadism, occupation, and cultural traits (although these were often romanticised) are identified by Taylor, Mayall and Liégeois as primary indicators of the Gypsy population's marginality, the fact these indicators are equally applicable to travelling showland communities invites comparison. [9] However, to do so would be inappropriate, for when showfolk are mentioned in works on Travellers and Gypsies they are perceived as a distinct group. Mayall

[6] Colin Clark and Margaret Greenfields, *Here To Stay: The Gypsies and Travellers Of Britain* (University of Hertfordshire Press, Hatfield, 2006), pp. 41, 55.
[7] Becky Taylor, *A Minority and The State: Travellers in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2008), p. 1. David Mayall, *Gypsy Identities 1500-2000, From Egipcyans and Moon-Men to the Ethnic Romany* (Routledge, London, 2004), p. 26.
[8] Taylor, *A Minority and the State,* pp. 2-3.
[9] David Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers In Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988), p. 1. Taylor, *A Minority and The State,* pp. 29-31. Liégeois goes as far as to suggest the extent of contemporary embellishment of Gypsy culture rendered "the only good Gypsy" as "the mythical one – the one who does not exist". Jean-Pierre Liégeois (Translated by Tony Berrett), *Gypsies: An illustrated History* (Al Saqi Books, London, 1986), p. 141.

assesses John Swinstead and Henry Mayhew's attempts to categorise classes of travellers in the late nineteenth century, concluding Mayhew's criterion of occupation and Swinstead's of travelling were too unspecific to offer detailed understanding.[10] Both writers acknowledged the complexity of the nomadic population, but by grouping together a "miscellaneous assortment" they concealed as much as they revealed about itinerant identity.[11]To better comprehend the complexity of the itinerant population Mayall establishes which groups travelled "as a way of life" and which groups became nomadic sporadically to find employment but were otherwise sedentary, identifying showpeople as the former, and "tramping artisans, navvies and agricultural labourers" as the latter.[12] Mayall classifies travelling showpeople as a group for whom itinerancy was a defining *cultural* feature and yet are distinct from travelling Gypsies. Colin Clark and Margaret Greenfields similarly identify showpeople as separate from Gypsies and other nomads, and go as far to suggest travelling showpeople constitute Britain's "last lost tribe".[13] The authors offer no further explanation for this extravagant implication, and dismiss this group from their investigation of Gypsy nomads.[14] This is a frequent occurrence in the historiography of itinerant groups; showpeople are acknowledged as a legitimate travelling group with unique cultural distinctiveness, yet their identity is never explored. This thesis therefore will contribute to the wider historiography of travelling communities by examining a group whose itinerancy rendered them marginal, and whose relationship with wider society and authority was shaped in part by this liminality.

Leisure history is a vast topic which goes beyond a history of how, and where, people enjoyed themselves, it also intersects a range of social, cultural and economic themes.[15] Investigations into popular leisure began in the late nineteenth century, when a rise in real wages and therefore disposable income prompted Charles Booth to state in his survey of the London poor;

[10] Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers,* .p. 13-14.
[11] Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers,* p. 14.
[12] Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers,* p. 14.
[13] Clark and Greenfields, *Here To Stay,* pp. 12, 13, 17.
[14] Clark and Greenfields, *Here To Stay,* p. 14.
[15] Brett Bebber, 'Introduction: Contextualising Leisure History', in Brett Bebber (Ed.), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict in 20th Century Britain* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2012), p. 1.

" To 'what shall we eat, what drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?' must now be added the question, 'How shall we be amused?'".[16] Studying leisure necessitates exploration of social control, cultural change and contestation; yet despite wide historical significance Brett Bebber suggests leisure history is often marginalised.[17] The moderate body of literature which does exist can mostly be divided into two areas of analysis. Firstly, community recreations including cinema, radio, spectator sports, public houses, music hall and similar, have been explored by Brad Beavan, Brett Bebber, Jeffrey Hill, Norman Baker, James Chapman and others. The alternative, as explored most notably by James Walvin and John Walton, focusses on amusements away from home: the seaside excursion and holiday. What unifies these investigations is their preoccupation with permanent recreations, irrespective of their relative location to consumers. The body of literature which explores temporary recreations such as wakes, fairs and circuses is far smaller. Mark Judd states fairs are "as important to social historians as riots, festivals, chapbooks and ballads to an understanding of the beliefs and values that motivated plebeian behaviour", suggesting these events "may justly be considered an intrinsic part of English popular culture".[18] In addition to their role in rural tradition Judd emphasises trends in urban culture "may be discovered in the customs, shows and exhibitions of the fairground".[19] Despite the significance of these events to social history, Judd states investigation into fairs and wakes has been the preserve of "amateur and antiquarian" historians.[20]

Sandra Trudgen-Dawson and Mark Judd have produced works which are the exception to this general dearth of scholarly literature on outdoor amusements. Dawson's excellent article investigates how the travelling circus was able to articulate a sense of English identity and

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[16] Cited in James Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830-1950* (Longman, New York, 1978), p. 63.
[17] Bebber, 'Introduction' in *Leisure and Cultural Conflict*, p. 1
[18] Mark Judd, '"The Oddest Combination of Town and Country": Popular Culture and The London Fairs', in John K. Walton and James Walvin (Eds), *Leisure In Britain 1780-1939* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1983), p. 12.
[19] Judd, '"The Oddest Combination of Town and Country"', in *Leisure In Britain 1780-1939,* pp. 16-17. Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830-1950,* p. 115.
[20] Judd, '"The Oddest Combination of Town and Country"', in *Leisure In Britain 1780-1939,* p. 12.

heritage to remain commercially successful, and Judd explores the cultural exchange between rural and urban areas which traditional fairs and wakes facilitated. [21] Dawson focusses purely on circuses, and Judd only investigates the wakes of the mid-nineteenth century. This thesis explores a different leisure landscape, the impermanent travelling fair, over the course of more than half a century. This will contribute significantly to existing literature; enabling a comparison between permanent and itinerant recreation, the accompanying social issues and investigation into how a traditional 'Victorian' recreation institution was able to find its place in a modernising and changing leisure industry.

An additional element of leisure history which this thesis explores are attempts at social control through the regulation of leisure. Cunningham, Bebber and Walton discuss how attempts to control leisure pursuits had a significant impact on the development of leisure and can be interpreted as class conflict -upper and middle-class agents repressing entertainment enjoyed by those "increasingly thought of as working class".[22] Often regulation was in the form of physically controlling public spaces through bye-laws, or restricting entertainment through licensing.[23] The existing literature regarding the restriction of leisure includes tantalising references to travelling fairs. Walton notes as part of conscious efforts to restrain leisure in seaside towns, local authorities particularly attempted to suppress traditional wakes and fairs.[24] Walvin highlights fairs were deemed to have a detrimental effect on local employment as

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[21] Sandra Trudgen Dawson, 'Selling The Circus: Englishness, Circus Fans and Democracy In Britain 1920-1945' in Brett Bebber (Ed), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict In Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2012) Judd, '"The Oddest Combination of Town and Country"', in *Leisure In Britain 1780-1939,* pp. 16-17.

[22] Despite control and regulation being central themes in leisure history, Jeffrey Hill remarks that emphasis on this subject and social control as the "chief villain of the piece" can often lead to a simplified understanding of recreation and public leisure. Jeffrey Hill, 'What shall we do with them when they're not working?: Leisure and Historians In Britain', in *Leisure and Cultural Conflict,* p. 15. Hugh Cunningham, *Time, Work and Leisure*, *Life Changes In England Since 1700* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2014), p. 83. Bebber, 'Introduction' in *Leisure and Cultural Conflict*, p. 3. John K. Walton and James Walvin, 'Introduction' in John K. Walton and James Walvin (Eds) - *Leisure In Britain 1780-1939* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1983), p. 3.

[23] Hill, 'What shall we do with them when they're not working?', in Bebber (Ed.), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict,* p. 22.

[24] John K. Walton, 'Municipal Government and the Holiday Industry In Blackpool 1876-1914', in *Leisure In Britain 1780-1939,* p. 161.

employees celebrated these traditional festivities in addition to existing religious holidays, despite resistance from employers.[25] Local authorities feared the combination of large, potentially intoxicated, crowds and ineffectual methods of social control.[26] Judd relates in addition fairs were accused of encouraging disorder, and subsequently fairs were closed down.[27] Whilst Walton, Walvin and Judd acknowledge fairs were perceived as a threat to social order, they do not discuss the means by which authorities exercised control over them. This thesis addresses the developing relationship between authority and showpeople through investigating how showpeople responded to official efforts to regulate travelling fairs. Alongside this the thesis will assess to what extent fairs genuinely promoted more risqué entertainment, or whether they were part of the trend in leisure observed by Beaven which saw entrepreneurs capitalising on desires already existing within working-class culture and from these demands creating "appealing commercial ventures."[28] As with issues of social control it is the transiency of the travelling fairground which makes an investigation into its influence on morally questionable public taste so significant; as a temporary recreation the fairground had the potential to offer more salacious entertainments.

The multiple questions regarding showland identity this thesis investigates are inextricably interconnected and must be surveyed concurrently. It was therefore inappropriate to split the thesis into thematic chapters and instead it was separated chronologically. A start date of 1889 was chosen as this year represented the beginning of a united showland community interacting with bodies of authority and the public through the formation of what would become the Showmen's Guild. In addition, the late nineteenth century saw the first attempts at legislation specifically designed to address perceived problems with Britain's itinerant population, attempts which indirectly threatened showpeople. To explore the issues of identity it was

[25] Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830-1950,* p. 6.
[26] Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830-1950,* p. 9.
[27] Judd, '"The Oddest Combination of Town and Country"', in *Leisure in Britain 1780-1939,* p. 23.
[28] Brad Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men In Britain, 1850-1945* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2005), p. 44

decided to examine how this community experienced eras where the attention on a 'National Identity', imagined or real, was at its greatest – the First and Second World Wars. 1945 was chosen as the point at which to conclude the investigation, for despite continual legislative developments and attempts at modernisation, the fairgrounds of the Second World War were still physically reminiscent of those travelling at the turn of the century in terms of layout, attractions and patronage. After 1945 an influx of American style rides changed the size, space and therefore encounter of the tober. In addition, after 1945 there was a generational shift in showland communities; many key figures in the Guild had either died or had passed the running of their show to other family members. Chapter IV makes a slight departure from the combined approach by assessing the fairground as a public recreation. Whilst related to issues of identity, perception and municipal control, it was felt this theme could be properly explored within a separate chapter. The interwar period was chosen as this era saw the greatest and most rapid development of the wider leisure industry, and whilst progress in public leisure was no longer restricted by the conditions of war, this was an era which presented the greatest challenges to the traditional travelling fair – through increased competition and widespread economic uncertainty.

To answer the questions posed by this thesis it was initially tempting to focus the enquiry through two case studies; Nottingham Goose Fair and the Kings Lynn Mart – as these large fairs generated a wealth of available source material. Whilst an examination of these would have enabled some assessment of the complex relationship between authority, public and showpeople, it would not have facilitated comparison between the differing regional legislation and attitude towards public entertainments. Much of this thesis, particularly the wartime chapters, explores how disparities between local administration and fractured communication between national government and these local bodies was the primary cause of problems for fairground travellers. The key feature which dictated the separation of this community from wider society, and which shaped their dialogue with authority, was nomadism. It was therefore necessary to utilise a methodological approach which would facilitate a broad geographical

study of the developing relationship between showland, wider society, and authority. The largest fairs; Goose Fair, Hull and Lynn mart, still produced a greater total volume of source material, but these locations often proved to be exceptions to national trends in terms of legislation, restriction and development of fairgrounds between 1889 and 1945.

Source Material

The key questions of this thesis regarding the travelling fairground community revolve around issues of identity. Crucially the thesis explores how settled society and authority perceived the identity of showpeople, and behaved or legislated accordingly, but also how this community understood their identity and articulated this to wider society. Most primary source material consulted consisted of newspapers, both from the national and local press, and those produced by the entertainments industry and Showman's Guild.

The itinerancy of the showland community required a body of sources which would facilitate a broad geographic scope, in order to garner a more complete picture of the experience of this group. The thesis uses newspapers from both the local and national press, offering commentary on a large range of fairs of differing sizes in rural and urban settings. These sources also enable a broad investigation of the different relationships between local authorities, townspeople, and visiting showpeople. Utilising newspapers presents challenges, but also grants opportunities. It facilitates exploration of a diverse range of debates and material, allowing observation of how historical issues interact and intersect.[29] One limitation of using press sources is they were produced with a specific agenda; driven by commercial necessity to be popular and widely read, but also becoming what Jean Chalaby has termed a 'Magic-Mirror'.[30] Chalaby speculates the popular press intentionally presented a skewed reality to working-class readers – putting them at ease through "the comfort of knowledge without substance".[31] However, Bingham notes this argument both underestimates the intelligence of the readership and the influence of the media,

[29] Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press In Inter-War Britain* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004), pp. 6-7.
[30] Bingham, *Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press,* p. 11.
[31] Jean K. Chalaby, *The Invention of Journalism* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 1998), pp. 191-192.

and states the press could not function in isolation from the demands of readers.[32] Indeed Chalaby acknowledges journalists were ultimately catering for a popular audience and thus had to "continually adjust their discourse to the demands of the market".[33] The press had its own agenda which to an extent dictated content, but the debates within were also tailored towards, and a product of, the readership. A key method discussed by Bingham which is employed in this thesis is to examine the details omitted by the popular press in addition to the topics included; by examining various accounts of the same event it has been possible to observe how various newspapers interpreted the same issues and debates differently.[34] Local and national newspapers included articles produced by showland, authorities, and members of the public, enabling the developing relationship between these parties to be assessed.

The most significant newspaper the thesis has utilised is *The World's Fair*– the newspaper of the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain and Ireland. First published as a single-sided broadsheet by Guild Member Frank Mellor in 1904, by the 1950s it had a weekly readership of over 20,000. The newspaper was produced and edited by committee members of the Guild and is the main means of assessing the attitude of the showland community regarding events and legislation. The key elements of this publication which are of immense significance to this investigation are the news pages, and the commentary section 'What We Think' found on the last page of most issues. The former gives an excellent insight into the main issues facing showland throughout the period of this thesis, whether this be national legislation, local by-laws or internal struggles within the Guild.

A complete run of *The World's Fair* from the initial issue until the final publications produced before the newspaper went into administration in December 2019 is held in the National Fairground and Circus Archive in the Western Bank Library, forming part of the University of Sheffield Library Special Collections and Archive Division. The archive was formed in 2016 by

[32] Bingham, *Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press,* p. 9.
[33] Chalaby, *The Invention of Journalism,* p. 187.
[34] Bingham, *Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press,* p. 12.

Professor Vanessa Toulmin and is the largest repository of archival material relating to the fairground and circus community and industry. Whilst the archive holds a huge collection of photographs and ephemera, these were of limited use to this enquiry. A great number of the images are of rides and equipment, offering snapshot evidence of the types of amusement offered at various times by travelling showpeople, but rarely are showpeople themselves featured.[35]

In addition to *The World's Fair* the weekly national newspaper *The Era* has also been utilised in this thesis. First published in 1838 this publication was primarily concerned with current affairs regarding theatres and music halls. In addition to this focus *The Era* featured frequent articles relating to travelling fairs and issues facing the travelling fairground community . The last editor, Edward Ledger, was a notable supporter of travelling showfolk. This newspaper was particularly important in the investigation of the impact of the proposed nineteenth century temporary dwellings legislation. The Showman's Guild had only just been formed and had no official publication until *The World's Fair* was produced in 1904. *The Era* therefore provides the best source of documentation pertaining to the nineteenth century legislative challenge, and the response of showland to this threat.

The rapid developments during times of conflict meant for the 1914-1918 and 1939-1945 periods all weekly issues of *The World's Fair* were consulted, but time constraints necessitated a sampling approach be utilised for peacetime editions. To inform which editions were sampled Thomas Murphy's invaluable *History Of The Showmen's Guild 1889-1948* has been utilised to highlight times of contestation and development; and these have been where the most detailed analysis has been undertaken. Murphy was Guild Secretary for most of the period covered, and his testimony goes some way to overcoming one of the main problems the author faced when

[35] Elements of the archives photographic collection are still being categorised and researched. At present numerous photographs still require identification. A fellow PhD candidate Amy Goodwin has investigated the lives of five notable fairground females. She noticed early in her enquiry several photographs of fairground women were missing captions. This is one limitation of a relatively new archival institution, much of the material is yet to be fully catalogued and investigated, making it difficult to search and utilise the resources to their full potential.

researching this thesis – only Guild Members can access the archive of Guild Meeting Minutes, and therefore Murphy's account of Guild activity provided the best accessible material. A limitation of the source material is scarcity of existing documentation produced by the showland community. Except for Philip Allingham's *Cheapjack*, most available works take the form of compiled anecdotes – sorted according to locality or family. The choice of anecdotal evidence chosen to be reproduced in these collations is informative, for this demonstrates which issues and topics were most important to showland families and were deemed worthy of recording. It should be noted the issue of informal sources is not the preserve of showland history; Don Wilmeth states most available documentation pertaining to public leisure during the nineteenth and early twentieth century consist mostly of "chatty autobiographies and memoirs, undocumented histories and the like".[36]. Although the limited evidence from the showland community can be used to evidence certain elements of their business and relations with settled society, it is important to consider what is true for at one time for a family cannot be interpreted as representative of the whole community . This is another factor which has informed the decision to utilise a broad geographic survey.[37]

A further issue with source material, particularly from the nineteenth century, is the lack of a clear definition of a show-person or show. Establishing this identity and definition is an objective of this investigation but researching a community which wider society had difficulty defining presents its own issues; showpeople were often erroneously included in discourse which regarded travelling groups more generally – making specific sources hard to find. This thesis examines specifically travelling showpeople who toured the country providing mechanical amusements and visual shows at pleasure fairs. In addition to overcoming a relative dearth of reliable source material, the agenda of the respective authors must be considered when consulting material– whether produced by showland or other parties. The very nature of

[36] Don. B. Wilmeth, *Variety Entertainment and Outdoor Amusements* (Greenwood Press, Westport CT, 1982), p. 7.

[37] Becky Taylor identifies the same methodological approach must be utilised regarding the limited sources available for the Travelling Gypsy community. Taylor, *A Minority And The State,* p. 27.

showland leads to bombast and exaggeration in writing, and this is acutely the case with documents defending the livelihood of showpeople against persecution. Equally liable to use hyperbole were individuals or authority groups attempting to legislate against this form of entertainment. For these reasons a standard triangulation approach has been used to provide multiple perspectives of the events and debates discussed within the thesis, and to corroborate evidence.

Sections Of The Thesis

The first chapter will explore the development of the travelling showland community from a peripheral, marginal group to an organised national body. The chapter begins by examining wider literature on Victorian attitudes to race, identity and marginality to establish to what extent travelling showpeople were considered, and therefore can be investigated as, a separate racial group. Ultimately this section concludes that, although a liminal group, showpeople did not view themselves as ethnically separate. References to them as a racial group result from the Victorian tendency to apply the term 'race' with huge flexibility – it is therefore not appropriate to use this means of analysis in this thesis. The other important contextual function of this chapter is to provide a wider setting of the travelling fairground throughout the nineteenth century; how it developed from parish festivals based around employment and trade into mechanised public entertainment existing purely as a form of open-air recreation. The main analytical focus of the first chapter is an investigation into the formation of The United Kingdom Van Dwellers Protection Agency which became the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain and Ireland. The driving force behind this amalgamation was the threat presented by The Temporary Dwellings Bill and The Movable Dwellings Bill; attempts to regulate and reform itinerant peoples by ostensibly improving sanitary conditions of van dwellers and ensuring all traveller children had access to education. Opposition to this legislation was considerable from the showland community; they believed it intended to restrict travelling peoples to the extent they would be forced out of existence. Inextricably linked to the encounter of wider society and the travelling fair is the relationship between showland and authority – both local and national.

A primary focus of this thesis is the developing relationship between the showland community, local authority and national government. This first chapter introduces the debate surrounding travelling fairs and social control and investigates the origins of, and reasoning behind, opposition to travelling fairs.

The first chapter concludes with the Showmen's Guild being an established and recognised body, its members respected as businessmen with political influence. The second chapter investigates how the chaos of the First World War disrupted this newly established stability. The atmosphere of conflict caused an official and public reassessment of 'British' national identity, and in addition to reviewing this process the second chapter investigates how the showland community were able to demonstrate patriotism and sense of duty to prove themselves worthy of inclusion in narratives of national identity. The chapter assesses the contribution of showland to the war effort, and crucially to what extent this contribution was acknowledged. A major facet of this chapter is an investigation into how wartime pressures affected the relationship between showland and authority. The nature of fairs made them incompatible with emergency legislation such as the Defence Of The Realm Act. Government restrictions on light and noise emission and new taxation on entertainments also made running fairs difficult for the duration of the conflict. The interplay between national legislation and regional application will be investigated, for most problems experienced by showland during the First World War were because of failures in communication between national and local authorities, and showland's subsequent difficulty in adhering to confusing and fluctuating restrictions. Another element of increased wartime regulation which will be explored in this chapter is how restrictions could be utilised as a platform for opponents of fairs who used reasons of wartime emergency to further their own moral agenda. The chapter will explore how the Showmen's Guild was tested for the first time since the Temporary Dwellings Bills – to adapt and overcome increasing regulations and enable fairs to remain commercially viable. A major success for the Guild during this period was the reversal in official policy which saw corporations actively requesting the holding of fairs to provide recreation for war workers in

industrial areas – the first-time local authorities had proactively asked for fairs to be held and a significant precedent which proved significant during the Second World War.

The third chapter continues to explore the developing relationship between authority and showland. The interwar period saw national government taking less direct interest in public entertainments, allowing local authority greater control. National government still produced legislation which threatened travelling showpeople, and this chapter assess how showland through united opposition were able to defend against these regulations. In terms of local authority, the interwar period saw corporations keen to retain the level of control over public entertainments they had been afforded by emergency wartime legislation. However, without the conflict they had to find other ways of regulating fairs. This chapter explores how councils attempted to circumnavigate Charter Rights and control fairs through increasing ground rent and forced relocation. The chapter will also investigate the methods the Showmen's Guild employed to combat attempts at control; primarily through increased parliamentary representation and utilising the support of the public. Whilst the issues of identity discussed in previous chapters are less prevalent in discourse originating from authorities in the interwar period, discussions over identity were present within the Showmen's Guild , particularly regarding eligibility for membership. This chapter also assesses the role of the Showmen's Guild as a self-policing body which ensured members behaved in a manner which put the Guild in the best position to present itself as a body of respectable businessmen who demanded the same rights to a free livelihood as other members of society.

The fourth chapter focusses on the fairground as a form of public leisure in the interwar period. The chapter reviews the growth of the leisure industry in the interwar period, and how the widespread economic downturn affected public entertainments. The chapter examines how showpeople adapted and developed the traditional travelling fairground to compete with the growing variety of alternative amusements. This involves investigation into how showpeople embraced modern technology to transform the Edwardian fairground, the landscape of the

imagination, into opportunities for physical speed thrills to offer consumers an experience unparalleled in other forms of popular recreation.

Modernisation is not the only reason the travelling fairground was able to remain relevant in the interwar period, and this chapter analyses how close ties to local traditions, in both urban and rural areas, ensured its survival. A crucial part of this phenomenon was the ability of showpeople to present the fairground as an inimitably 'British' leisure institution and demonstrate its innate connection to working class culture. Additionally, the chapter investigates how opposition to fairgrounds developed in the interwar period, for whilst the moral 'killjoys' of the past were ultimately defeated by public demand during the First World War, new opposition emerged. Modernisation of the fairs saw opposition from observers including J.B. Priestley who viewed the transformation as cultural corruption; mechanisation and Americanisation, in their opinion, invalidated the fair's claim to be part of working-class street culture.

The final chapter of the thesis explores how the showland community coped with their greatest challenge since the Movable Dwellings Bill. The tumult of the Second World War resulted in increasing Government regulations pertaining to public entertainment: from closure to heavy restrictions on emission of light and noise, fearing the consequences of aerial bombardment. This chapter assesses the increased dialogue between national government, local authorities, and the Showmen's Guild , as the latter attempted to proactively overcome blackout restrictions. Through this dialogue agreements were reached which, albeit in a limited capacity, allowed fairs to continue, and the chapter examines how the Guild was able to argue for their continuation. The chapter will also investigate the role fairgrounds played in the 'Holidays at Home' scheme, which represented the pinnacle of cooperation between showland and local authorities. Opposition to fairs and public entertainments still existed during the Second World War; as in the previous conflict antagonist groups used conditions of war to protest fairs and public amusements, either from a pragmatic stance which deemed recreation to be a waste of

resources, or moral opposition which considered it inappropriate to enjoy leisure in the atmosphere of war. For the most part these critics were defeated by the demands of the masses for recreation, but importantly national Government and local authorities also recognised the importance of recreation for productive labour and promoted fairs through 'Holidays At Home'. Through the conditions of the Second World War the 'Killjoys' who had protested against fairs for decades were effectively silenced. As with the First World War, this second conflict once again prompted reassessment of national identity and the creation of the narrative of 'The People's War'; united citizens pledging their efforts for the collective war effort. In addition to reviewing the problematic use of this narrative to explain ideas of identity, citizenship, and belonging during the war, this chapter analyses whether fairground communities were able to prove part of this narrative through their contributions to the national war effort. Moreover, the chapter will assess to what extent the contribution of showland was recognises and their inclusion into the narrative of 'The People's War' was accepted.

The thesis overall explores the developing situation for itinerant showland families between 1889 and 1945. It incorporates assessment of their understanding of identity and marginality, how authority and wider society interpreted the identity of this transient community, and how the encounter of the tober demonstrates local authorities' attempts at social control, and the development of working-class public recreation. Ultimately the thesis argues the travelling showland community was a unique group which did not conform to existing understandings of marginality, and whose relationship with wider society and authority fluctuated according to outside events. Periods of war heightened notions of national identity, and during both world wars the fairground community was particularly proactive in articulating their 'British' identity in order to attain acceptance – and thus secure fair treatment from local and national government. The fight for acceptance which is apparent throughout the time period this thesis covers is equally an attempt to secure the commercial viability of the fairground industry –by emphasising the traditional travelling fair was a significant leisure institution intrinsic to British

culture showpeople could protect their livelihood and community from the attempts by authority and other pressure groups to regulate or eradicate this form of public leisure.

Chapter I – 1885-1914, Persecution to Amalgamation; The Legislative Attack and the Formation of the Showmen's Guild .

Introduction

Between 1895 and 1914 the lifestyle and livelihood of the travelling fairground community was threatened with eradication by a series of proposed temporary dwellings Bills. Ultimately this legislation was successfully opposed, but the fight against these Bills was a formative experience which must be explored to understand the origins of the Showmen's Guild , and their understanding of showland identity. Whilst the fairground community is the central focus of this investigation, it is necessary to first assess the legislation produced by other bodies, as the responses to this legislation provide evidence of how this community understood its identity, its rights, and its desires. Equally the design of the legislation demonstrates how the community was perceived by outsiders and authorities. Between 1885 and 1914 the showland community was transformed from a peripheral 'unknown' into an organised and recognised national body. The United Kingdom Van Dwellers Protection Agency, eventually to become the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain and Ireland, presented a united front to defend the professional and personal interests of showpeople against legislation, at local and national level, which threatened Guild members. The proponent behind amalgamation was itself legislative attack; the Temporary Dwellings Bill and The Movable Dwellings Bill were attempts to regulate and reform the itinerant population of Great Britain, supposedly to improve sanitary conditions of van dwellers and ensure all itinerant children could access education. The fairground community opposed this legislation, believing it was intended to force nomads off the road through regulation. Showfolk accused the Bill of wrongly grouping them with other travellers in need of legislation and were angered by clauses which would enable police officers to enter dwellings with negligible cause. This chapter will also seek to clarify why, whilst it is possible to investigate this group as a marginal 'other', it is not appropriate to analyse them as a separate racial group. The important developments in travelling fairs as public leisure over the course of

the nineteenth century deserve separate investigation, but here an overview discussing key developments and themes of direct relevance to this thesis has been included.

I - Nomadism and Otherness; Victorian Attitudes to Race and Culture

A crucial exercise for this thesis is to determine to what extent it is possible, or appropriate, to investigate travelling showpeople as a unique *racial* group. For this to be the suitable method it is necessary to answer the following questions: 1) Did travelling showpeople understand themselves to have a unique racial identity, and did they articulate their identity using racial terms? 2) Did wider society and institutions of authority refer to travelling showpeople as a separate race, employing racial terminology? However, this process is more complex as the language of race and identity has changed considerably since the nineteenth century. Terms we now consider specifically racial were then used in a different and often broader sense. It is therefore important to garner a wider understanding of Victorian approaches to race and identity, in order to be able to apply or dismiss these. Rather than viewing the travelling fairground community as distinct utilising *racial* terms, it is more useful to view it as one observed to be an 'other', whose culture and lifestyle rendered it separate from wider society. The more flexible nature of the term 'other' better fits a community which aroused conflicting opinions throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, varying from being respected as professional businessmen, to victimised as uncivilised vagabonds.

The word 'race' itself is problematic due to its ambiguity, particularly during the nineteenth century. Shearer West states during the Victorian era 'race' had connotations suggesting "a biological categorisation or physiological difference", but was also used "as a synonym for culture, religion, class, nation, and many other factors".[1] Douglas Lorimer similarly acknowledges references to racial characteristics during this period can be misleading for current researchers, such was the tendency to confuse race and culture which we now define

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[1] Shearer West, 'Introduction' in Shearer West (Ed), *The Victorians and Race* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 1998), p. 1.

separately.[2] An additional blurring of terminology apparent in Victorian discourse was between race and class. Although parallels between otherness and class will be discussed in more detail later, it is worth noting the racial stereotype of the 'savage' was used to demonise the working class – an example of racial terminology being applied to a group we would not consider to be ethnically different to the wider British population.[3]

Victorian discourse on racial identity was a "contested territory"; older liberalism which suggested cultural assimilation existed in contravention to a new doctrine of separate development.[4] This was the product of a changing environment; the abolition movement and expansion of empire resulted in increased encounters with different races and cultures, and race becoming "the subject of both academic discourse and popular journalism".[5] West states discussions over race and the creation of racial ideologies were in part due to the influence of mechanical printing.[6] Lorimer acknowledges during the first half of the nineteenth century there was a tendency to scientifically define race; confirming links between biological and cultural traits "to claim that the former dictated the latter".[7] Significantly however, Lorimer identifies by the end of the century the notion of race as a biological category was discredited; characteristics of culture and language were utilised instead.[8] He summarises "the Victorians of 1901 were not the same Victorians as those of 1837"; their perceptions of race, identity, and culture were equally disparate.[9]

The contradictory attributes of Victorian stereotypes were a key facet of racial discourse. Lorimer notes " 'The 'Negro' was depicted, as both the obedient humble servant, and the lazy, profligate, worthless worker; the natural Christian and the unredeemable sinner; the patient

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[2] Douglas A. Lorimer, 'Race, Science and Culture: Historical Continuities and Discontinuities, 1850 – 1914', in Shearer West (Ed), *The Victorians and Race* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 1998), p. 16.
[3] West, 'Introduction', in West, *The Victorians and Race*, p. 4.
[4] Douglas A. Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance – Britain 1870 – 1914* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2013), p. 10.
[5] West, 'Introduction', in West, *The Victorians and Race*, p. 2.
[6] West, 'Introduction', in West, *The Victorians and Race*, p. 3.
[7] Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance,* p. 61.
[8] Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance,* p. 59.
[9] Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance,* p. 18.

suffering slave, and the cruel, vengeful savage".[10] Conflicting stereotypes were also applied to travelling showpeople during this period.[11] In both instances ignorance and misunderstanding propagated prejudges against minority groups. Inconsistencies are a key area of interest when investigating identity and race during the nineteenth century; Lorimer emphasises the importance of analysing "sources in conflict rather than agreement".[12] This is a method which will be utilised in this thesis; particularly when analysing the contradictory elements of legislation directed at travelling communities between 1889 and 1945.

Between 1860 and 1919 xenophobic attitudes towards minority groups in Britain were prevalent; manifesting in anti-Irish feelings, agitation towards 'alien' immigrants, anti-Chinese and anti-black riots.[13] This behaviour resulted from minority communities being scapegoated for social and economic problems.[14] Although national discussions about minority groups were considered secondary to colonial debates, the experience of Imperial white privilege significantly propelled antipathy towards minorities domestically.[15] Despite the pre-eminence of these attitudes in Victorian society, parallels cannot easily be made between the experience of 'alien' groups and of travelling showpeople. Firstly, because it was accepted and emphasised at the time the British population could not be classified into separate races; the concept of race was not interchangeable with nationality.[16] Travelling showpeople originated and developed as an integrated part of British society. Sexton states the ancestry of the majority of showland families was in settled society, and although some were of high birth, "yeoman farmers" or "the son of a high ranking naval officer", the majority of showpeople originated from "social classes

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[10] Lorimer, 'Race, Science and Culture: Historical Continuities and Discontinuities, 1850 – 1914', in West (Ed), *The Victorians and Race,* p. 19.
[11] As will be discussed later in this chapter showpeople were described as both reputable and trustworthy by contemporary businessmen, but also as charlatans intent on deceiving the working classes out of their wages.
[12] Lorimer acknowledges the origin of this important methodological approach is largely a strategy of Georges Duby, who stresses "to study changes in an ideology over time one should trace the working out of its contradictions". Cited in Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance,* p. 7.
[13] Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance,* p. 109.
[14] Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance,* p. 109.
[15] Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance,* pp. 69, 109.
[16] Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance,* p. 87.

with which the average showmen might come into contact".[17] Far from a distinct group developing independently, travelling showpeople were from their origins linked to settled society; and this connection proliferated as people from settled society married into showland families.[18]

The historic association of itinerant showpeople with the travelling Gypsy and Romany population is the primary reason fairground travellers have occasionally been perceived as a separate racial group. Lord Justice Diplock defined a Gypsy as "a person without fixed abode who leads a nomadic life, dwelling in tents or other shelters, or in caravans or other vehicles" – by this definition alone it would be impossible to separate showpeople from Gypsy travellers.[19] Although as this Chapter will explore it was often official documents which further blurred the lines between Gypsies and showmen, formally the difference between the groups was recognised.[20] In 1910 the House Of Lords stated this distinction aimed "to separate the honest, respectable and well-to-do showmen, for whom no legislation was required, from the remainder, for whom it was".[21] For those who aimed to prove legislation *was* required for showmen, an obvious approach would be to draw correlations between showfolk and the 'problem' itinerant groups which required control. Prior to the House Of Lords' statement, the definition of Gypsy was flexible, and so an intentional blurring of lines was feasible to condemn showmen alongside other travellers. Mayall, in his study of nineteenth century travellers, is forced to group together "all Gipsies, Gypsies, pretended Egypcions, fortune-tellers, tent-dwellers, van-dwellers, didakais and tinklers", as these groups shared traits in occupation, nomadism and marginality.[22] Taylor notes "labels always obscure more than they reveal",

[17] Robert Douglas Sexton, 'Travelling People in the United Kingdom in the First Half of the Twentieth Century', (PhD Thesis, University of Southampton History Department, 1989), p. 22.
[18] Sexton, 'Travelling People in the United Kingdom', p. 22.
[19] Cited in Mayall, *Gypsy Identities,* p. 4.
[20] Mayall, *Gypsy Identities,* p. 4
[21] Mayall, *Gypsy Identities,* p. 4.
[22] Mayall, *Gypsy- Travellers,* p. 6.

evidenced by the fact that referring to non-Gypsy Travellers as 'settled society' conceals the fluid reality of settled persons, and Gypsy Travellers who settled.[23]

One way in which Gypsy travellers were marked as racially separate in the nineteenth century was through identifying physiological differences between these people and settled society.[24] This differentiation was considered necessary to "consolidate the picture of the Gypsies as a distinct race"; the unclear racial origins of travellers meant contemporary observers felt compelled to establish means by which they could be identified as separate.[25] There is no evidence showmen were separated from settled society by physical traits, and this suggests there was no desire to establish evidence of their racial uniqueness. Some mutual ancestry between showland travellers and Gypsies does exist however; in a series of interviews Sexton conducted, one showman openly referred to Gypsy ancestry and others mentioned ancestors having a lifestyle and livelihood similar to a 'Gypsy' existence.[26] Others interviewed conceded "if you went back far enough" there was some Gypsy ancestry, although implied this link was so archaic it was irrelevant.[27] Another reason why the groups were often perceived as interchangeable was commonality in business. Throughout the nineteenth century Gypsies were a common feature of fairgrounds, utilising crowds attracted by amusements and performances to ply their own trade.[28] It should be noted commercial tolerance waned considerably in the twentieth century; Gypsy traders, or even those who implied Gypsy origin, were prohibited from sites controlled by the Showmen's Guild as their presence was considered detrimental to the 'wholesome' reputation of a fair.[29] Although showland identity is

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[23] Taylor, *A Minority and The State,* p. 5.
[24] Mayall notes "olive or tawny-coloured flesh, black hair, dark eyes" are the features most commonly attributed to Gypsies, but the desire to physically distinguish Gypsies as a separate race led to more spurious features- "keenness or brilliance of eye" or a "peculiar loose walk" - being considered indicative of Gypsy identity. Mayall, *Gypsy Identities,* p. 125.
[25] Mayall, *Gypsy Identities,* p. 125.
[26] Sexton, 'Travelling People in the United Kingdom', p. 22.
[27] Sexton, 'Travelling People in the United Kingdom', p. 30.
[28] Sexton, 'Travelling People in the United Kingdom', pp. 30 – 31.
[29] Philip Allingham, *Cheapjack – Being the true history of a young man's adventures as a fortune-teller, grafter, knocker-worker, and mounted pitcher on the market-places and fairgrounds of a modern but still romantic England* (Golden Duck, Pleshey nr Chelmsford, 2010 – First Published 1934), p. 25.

hugely complex, one feature which remained current throughout the period of this thesis is aversion from comparisons with Gypsies and rejecting the notion of receiving similar treatment. This was to avoid undesirable parallels being made between showpeople and a group often perceived as uncivilised and parasitical by settled society.[30] However, rejection of comparisons to travelling Gypsies also demonstrates showpeople did not identify themselves as a separate racial group in the way Gypsies were commonly considered. Although their itinerant lifestyle and business differentiated them from settled society, showmen considered themselves British citizens, and wished to be viewed as such.

As showmen did not identify themselves as a separate race (using a current definition of the word), it is inappropriate to investigate them in this manner. However, the fact this community existed outside the parameters of 'normal' British society still rendered them susceptible to prejudice and persecution. It is therefore necessary to assess how their 'otherness' was perceived and understood. Barringer suggests Victorian society "defined itself through a series of structured oppositions"; any group perceived to contravene accepted concepts of social behaviour or values was confined to "the status of an inferior and potentially hostile other".[31] Travelling fairground communities fit well within Ludmilla Jordanova's definition of the 'other' as "something to be managed and possessed…dangerous, wild, threatening. At the same time, the other becomes an entity whose very separateness inspires curiosity, invites enquiring knowledge. The other is to be veiled and unveiled".[32]

Much of this thesis explores how their relationship with settled society was shaped by attempts by authority groups to legislate against and control this peripheral group, and how consistently

[30] As this chapter will later assess, the nineteenth century Temporary Dwelling's Legislation was largely designed to target the travelling Gypsy community – and implicitly affected travelling showpeople.
[31] Tim Barringer 'Images of Otherness and the Visual Production of Difference: Race and Labour in Illustrated Texts, 1850-1865', in Shearer West (Ed), *The Victorians and Race* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 1998), p. 34.
[32] Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions – Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 109.

their marginality allowed them to express reflections of popular culture considered dangerous and taboo – often a necessary component of their commercial success.

In the nineteenth century 'otherness', in terms of lifestyle and culture, was frequently discussed along racial lines. In *London Labour and the London Poor* Henry Mayhew identified "two distinct and broadly marked races… the wanderers and the settlers – the vagabond and the citizen – the nomadic and the civilised tribes".[33] In addition to defining travelling peoples as a 'racial' other based on their nomadism, Mayhew also linked physical differences to cultural itinerancy "the wandering races [were remarkable for] the development of the bones of the face… the jaws, cheek bones".[34] Mayhew's observed social distinction is "naturalised into racialised difference", and he employs scientific racial differentiation to highlight the marginality of nomads.[35] Mayhew's attempt to homogenise the poor of London and project an "otherness of race" ultimately failed because of the complexity of the social structure he encountered.[36] His attempt to separate nomadic society from settled society also "emerges as a fiction" according to Barringer.[37] Despite flaws in Mayhew's project, he does demonstrate the widespread lack of understanding about the itinerant population, describing them as "a large body of persons of whom the public had less knowledge that of the most distant tribes of the earth".[38] This lack of knowledge is a consistent cause of incorrect assumptions about the travelling fairground community throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, assumptions which propagated misdirected legislation and attempts at control. The association of nomadism with 'otherness' during the nineteenth century manifested in bourgeois ideology condemning itinerancy as contrary to modernity and progress.[39] Taylor equally notes nomadism was viewed as "the result

[33] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and The London Poor: A Cyclopedia of the Condition and Earnings of: Those That Will Work, Those That Cannot Work, and Those That Will Not Work* (1st Published 1851, this edition published New York, 1967), p. 1
[34] Mayhew, *London Labour and The London Poor,* p. 2.
[35] Barringer, 'Images of Otherness', in West (Ed), *The Victorians and Race,* p. 43.
[36] Barringer, 'Images of Otherness', in West (Ed), *The Victorians and Race*, p. 50
[37] Barringer, 'Images of Otherness', in West (Ed), *The Victorians and Race*, p. 50
[38] Mayhew, *London Labour and The London Poor,* Preface p. V.
[39] Mayall, *Gypsy -Travellers,* p. 3

of failure and social inadequacy, not as a positive and desirable choice".[40] An additional reason why itinerancy was viewed with suspicion, particularly by authority groups, is because it could be utilised as a mechanism for evasion.[41]

Criticisms of nomadism were equally applied to showmen and Gypsy travellers, but nineteenth century observers believed Gypsies to be "afflicted with an uncontrollable 'wanderlust'" – their itinerancy was deemed a hereditary trait present in their race but not in others.[42] Conversely showmen were considered commercial nomads; John Swinstead identified them as a separate class and Mayhew observed a middling group, between artisans at the top of his hierarchy and tramps at the bottom, of "pedlars, showmen, harvest-men, and all that large class who live by either selling, showing, or doing something through the country".[43] Nomadism for showmen was observed as inherent to their way of life, but for commercial reasons as opposed to the inherited trait believed to explain Gypsy 'Wanderlust'.

As a result of the above assessment this thesis will not assess the travelling fairground community as a separate racial entity, although there may be cases where source material consulted utilises what we would now consider racial terminology. The thesis will instead approach this group as one perceived as marginal to wider British society – a noted 'other', primarily as the result of nomadism.

II - Travelling Fairs During the Nineteenth Century – Showmen, The Dodo, and The Smell of Goose Fair.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the position of travelling showmen between 1885 and 1914. This will primarily involve an analysis of the Movable and Temporary Dwellings Bills, and exploration of the response from the showland community. To provide wider context this section will provide an overview of showmen, the development of the fairground, opposition,

[40] Taylor, *A Minority and The State,* pp. 10, 13, 14.
[41] Taylor, *A Minority and The State,* p. 16.
[42] Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers,* p. 15.
[43] Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers,* .p. 13-14.

and attempts at control during the nineteenth century. This section will also challenge the myth that the late nineteenth century heralded the 'extinction' of traditional showmen.

Many observers believed the end of the nineteenth century marked the end of the traditional travelling showpeople and fair. Thomas Frost suggested his work *The Old Showmen and the Old London Fairs* would be "a means of preserving all that is known of an almost extinct class of people".[44] Furthermore he concluded;

> "Fairs are becoming extinct because, with the progress of the nation, they have ceased to possess any value in its social economy, either as marts of trade or a means of popular amusement…The railways connect all the smaller towns, and most of the villages, with the larger ones, in which amusements may be found superior to any ever presented by the old showmen. What need, then, of fairs and shows? The nation has outgrown them, and fairs are as dead as the generations which they have delighted, and the last showman will soon be as great a curiosity as the dodo."[45]

Frost was not alone in his belief that traditional fairs and showmen were in decline. Reverend J. Howard Swinstead, an opponent of fairs, stated in his 1897 work *A Parish On Wheels* "That fairs are fast dying out seems to be but bald truth, and, in view of the evils which discolour their innocence there is, at first sight, no cause to regret their disappearance."[46] Upon interviewing several "old hands" a reporter for the *Dundee Courier* reported showmen themselves believed "the days of the genuine travelling showman were numbered".[47] Frost notes the emergence and success of the Music Hall was a major factor in the decline of fairs.[48] This is evidenced by the migration of the most successful street and fairground performers to permanent venues such as Music Halls at the end of the nineteenth century.[49] Indicative of the apparent decline of fairs was

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[44] Thomas Frost, *The Old Showmen and the Old London Fairs* (Tinsley Brothers, London, 1874), Preface VII.
[45] Frost, *The Old Showmen and the Old London Fairs*, pp. 377-378.
[46] J. Howard Swinstead, *A Parish On Wheels,* (Gardener Parton and Co, London, 1897), p. 40.
[47] 'Glasgow Fair', *The Dundee Courier and Argus* (July 23rd, 1896), p. 7.

[48] Frost, *The Old Showmen and the Old London Fairs*, p. 377.
[49] Judd, ' "The Oddest Combination of Town and Country" in Walton and Walvin (Eds.), *Leisure in Britain 1780-1939,* p. 13.

the falling size and quality of Nottingham Goose Fair, one of the oldest and largest fairs in the country. Previously a five or nine day spectacle, by 1880 Goose fair was a three day event and was poorly reviewed by *The Nottinghamshire Guardian* who found with the exception of Edmond's Menagerie stalls and shows were inferior to past events, and felt for regular fairgoers a visit was a "painful duty".[50] *The Nottinghamshire Guardian* in 1882 concluded "Goose Fair is no doubt on the wane", suggesting the attending crowds merely reflected a public desire the tradition should "die hard".[51]

However, Frost's implication that fairs were a dying institution is undermined by the attitudes of fairgoers at Goose Fair. In 1889 *The Nottinghamshire Guardian* reported a "bustling, good humoured, high spirited crowd" who "kept up 'the fun of the fair'" indicating that despite competition elsewhere, the traditional fair was able to maintain a healthy following.[52] A correspondent for *The Era* emphasised "The fact is that fairs have not decreased; that shows and showmen are more numerous than ever; that the days of fanatical opposition... are fast departing".[53] A York meeting of the Travellers National Total Abstainers Union in 1890 revealed the number of travelling showmen was high; 7,553 showmen were recorded as having taken up the pledge of abstinence and this obviously does not account for showmen who continued to indulge.[54] This figure also only represents some men from individual families, so the total number of showland travellers implied by this figure is much higher. Contradicting the popular notion "nomads are a dwindling race", a showman at the meeting stated "there is more of us than ever".[55] Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake, a former Circus proprietor disagreed with Frost, suggesting "The dodo is extinct, but not so the showmen. He is more alive, more prosperous, and more numerous than ever".[56] Although focussing on much earlier fairs and festivals, Samuel Mckechnie acknowledges "truly the things with which we are dealing with are not at all matters

[50] 'Nottingham Goose Fair' *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (October 15th, 1880), p. 7.
[51] Nottingham Goose Fair' *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (October 13th 1882), p. 3.
[52] 'Nottingham Goose Fair' *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (October 5th 1889), p. 4.
[53] 'The Showmen World' *The Era* (October 2, 1897), p. 20.
[54] 'Showmen's Tea At York', *The Yorkshire Herald, and The York Herald* (November 24th, 1890).
[55] 'Showmen At Tea', *Daily News* (January 13th, 1890), p. 3.
[56] Tyrwhitt-Drake, *The English Circus and Fair Ground*, p. 196.

of dead history" and discusses continuity between performers and shows of the seventeenth century and those of the 1930s – suggesting the late nineteenth century 'extinction' is a myth. [57]

III – Regulating The Tober

A potential reason why the dwindling of traditional fairs and showpeople was predicted, if not actually realised, was the increasing attention public gatherings received from local authorities. McKechnie notes the decline of Bartholomew fair was the result of bureaucratic actions in the 1850s; "the authorities were taking an interest in it only to suppress disorders, gambling, thieving, and undesirable forms of entertainment, to impose restrictive regulations, and greatly to increase the ground rents".[58] The same showman who reassured the *Daily News* of the number of travelling showpeople extant at the York meeting added "Not in London perhaps… London is too much infested with vestries". [59] This suggests the decline Frost and Swinstead observed was a localised phenomenon, prevalent in urban areas where fairs were targeted by local authorities as sources of disorder and public nuisance.

This section will outline some of the main attitudes held by wider society regarding fairs in the nineteenth century. In a review of the 1880 Nottingham Goose Fair, the reporter acknowledges the event was considered a "dangerous outlet" for the "expression of the lower classes".[60] There were concerns over "massing together… an enormous concourse of people, chiefly young, and without any of the restraints which ordinarily surround them".[61] The primary concerns were the scale of the gatherings and that they encouraged objectionable behaviour amongst the lower classes. These apprehensions were based on negative experiences of public entertainments in the previous century, which were not necessarily an accurate reflection of contemporary events. A good example is the reputation of Oldham Wakes acknowledged as traditionally being "a veritable outburst of rude junketings and orgies of feeding and drinking", with the presence of

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[57] Samuel McKechnie, *Popular Entertainments Through The Ages* (Benjamin Blom, New York, 1969), p. 29.
[58] McKechnie, *Popular Entertainments Through The Ages*, p. 54.
[59] 'Showmen At Tea', *Daily News* (January 13th , 1890), p. 3.
[60] 'Nottingham Goose Fair' *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (October 15th,1880), p. 7.
[61] 'Nottingham Goose Fair' *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (October 15th, 1880), p. 7.

rowdy gangs such as the "Oldham Roughheads".[62] However, *The Era* emphasised this was no longer the case and by 1897 "a new and better spirit" was evident at the Wakes.[63] Despite recent improvements in behaviour at these traditional festivals, it was the spectre of a rowdy past which informed official attitudes to fairs during the nineteenth century.

In addition to concerns over public disorder, nineteenth century opposition to fairs was propelled by concerns over immorality. Reverend Henry Zouch remarked:

> "When the common people are drawn together upon any public occasion, a variety of mischiefs are certain to ensue; allured by unlawful pastimes, or even by vulgar amusements only they wantonly waste their time and money to their own great loss and that of their employers."[64]

Another critic described Sawbridgeworth Fair of 1875 as " the prolific seedplots and occasions of the most hideous forms of moral and social evils- drunkenness – whoredom – robbing – idleness and neglect of work".[65] The notoriety of such events resulted in them becoming a casualty of moral reform and attempts to 'civilise' the metropolitan poor. The 1871 Fairs Act suggested fairs were "unnecessary" and the cause of "grievous immorality".[66] The Act enabled the Secretary of State for the Home Department to abolish fairs deemed problematic if petitioned by "any person or persons, or body of commissioners, or body corporate, entitled to hold any fair" who could prove abolition was for the "convenience and advantage of the public".[67] Risqué shows and side-stalls offered by showpeople were considered evidence of their immorality; a number of London shows incorporated the infamous Red Barn and Stanfield Hall murders.[68] Beaven suggests this does not prove showpeople were promoting immorality, but

[62] 'The Showmen World', *The Era* (September 4th, 1897),p. 19.
[63] The Showmen World', *The Era* (September 4th ,1897),p. 19.
[64] Rev. Henry Zouch quoted in E. Moir, *The Justice of The Peace,* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 107-108. As cited in Cunningham, *Time, Work and Leisure*, p. 67.
[65] Walvin, *Leisure and Society* p. 116.
[66] 'Fairs Act, 1871', (London, 1871), p. 1.
[67] 'Fairs Act, 1871', (London, 1871), p. 1.
[68] Judd, ' "The Oddest Combination of Town and Country"' in Walton and Walvin (Eds.), *Leisure in Britain 1780-1939,* p. 21.

demonstrates how "with few moral restraints, leisure entrepreneurs capitalised on traits within working-class culture and recast them into appealing commercial ventures". [69] Immorality already existed within the lower classes, and showpeople reflected the demands of their audience. Despite this, showpeople were continually "hampered by the narrow-minded, puritanical….sprit of the day": corporations and individuals who "regarded laughter as a waste of muscular energy" and the shows and rides as a "waste of time".[70]

Another cause of opposition to fairs originating in this period was the detrimental impact they were believed to have on commerce. Sexton notes opposition to fairs was most prevalent in areas of heavy industry; events such as the Durham Miner's Gala, Lancashire Wakes and Glasgow 'Holidays' were considered "disruptive" and an "economic loss".[71] Employers often took a direct role in corporate decisions to abolish fairs; in Leeds local businessmen supported a move to ban the Charter Fair in "a fit of puritanical zeal".[72] Not all were bent on abolishing fairs however; when Home Secretary Sir William Harcourt was asked by the Rotherhithe vestry whether visiting shows in the capital could be repressed "he told them he couldn't see his way to take away the pleasures of poor people who couldn't afford to pay more than a penny or two for a show".[73] It is clear that Harcourt's concern is for the welfare of fairgoers rather than showpeople, but his position was beneficial to showfolk who were concerned the Fairs Act would make business in London fraught. Whilst fairs generated numerous discussions in the press, perceptions of showpeople are less apparent. In the 1840s Follingham fair was accused of attracting the "refuse and scum of society", however it is not clear whether this refers to those providing or enjoying entertainments.[74] The *Preston Guardian* in 1891 claimed "Preston was invaded by an army of showmen, whose ulterior object was to extract silver from holidaymakers".[75] The lexicon used implies showpeople were unwelcome and aggressive

[69]Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men,* p. 44
[70] 'The Showmen World', *The Era* (July 3rd,1897), p. 16.
[71] Sexton, 'Travelling People in the United Kingdom, p. 66.
[72] 'The Showmen World', *The Era* (September 18th, 1897)p. 18.
[73] Showmen At Tea', *Daily News* (January 13th . 1890), p. 3.
[74] Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers,* p. 61.
[75] 'Entertainment For Showmen', *The Preston Guardian* (May 23rd,1891), p. 2. .

intruders, and the assertion their intention was to 'extract' money implies the business of showpeople was not acknowledged as legitimate, and they were viewed as charlatans.

Despite official agitation against fairs growing, their popularity did not dwindle during the nineteenth century. Takings at the 1828 Bartholomew fair in indicate public interest in such spectacles. The largest shows took as follows: Wombwell's Menagerie, £1700; Richardson's Theatre, £1200; Atken's Menagerie, £1000.[76] These all charged sixpence a head, so Wombwell's had 68,000 customers over three days, a phenomenal number in such a short period of time.[77] The popularity of traditional fairs ensured even when fairs were abolished by local authorities shows continued; in response to the closure of Leeds Charter Fair, showpeople held winter and summer fairs on private land, and on these days employees took their general holidays.[78] It was reported "the masters of labour learnt a valuable lesson…whilst you may succeed in altering conditions of work and wages, you cannot alter the people's inherent love of life and its possible pleasures".[79] The relationship between fairs and industrial labour is significant; many of the largest fairs happened in close proximity to heavy industry and manufacturing, and although many workers in the latter half of the 1800s travelled to the coast "many thousands were left at home and whose only chance for recreation were the fairs".[80] Fairs were considered an important opportunity for workers to escape from "their cribb'd, cabin'd and confin'd state of existence, and in sweet sunshine and fresh air making revel amidst the stalls".[81] In times of industrial unrest the fairs allowed striking workers to "forget their trade trials and troubles, and with the ready penny, which even the poorest could manage to spend, made business good for all the showfolk".[82]

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[76] Tyrwhitt-Drake, *The English Circus and Fair Ground*, p. 194.
[77] Tyrwhitt-Drake, *The English Circus and Fair Ground*, p. 194.
[78] 'The Showmen World', *The Era* (September 18th, 1897) p . 18.
[79] 'The Showmen World', *The Era* (September 18th, 1897) p . 18.
[80] 'The Showmen World', *The Era* (July 31st, 1897), p. 16.
[81] 'The Showmen World', *The Era* (September 18th, 1897) p . 18.
[82] 'The Showmen World', *The Era* (September 18th, 1897) p . 18.

The tradition of the annual or biannual fair was often enough to ensure its survival, even amidst the changing industrial and legislative environment. The survival of Leeds's Holbeck Fest was attributed to the fact it had "never ceased. Its origin is coterminous with the settlement and growth of the community".[83] This intimate relationship between a locality and 'their' fair was apparent in other locations as well. The Nottingham Goose Fair created a unique atmosphere inextricably linked with the winter season; "Shortening days, heavy mists at night, an indescribable flavour of walnuts, paraffin lamps, and decayed fruit in the air are the chief concomitants of the indescribable 'it'".[84] The spectacle became a unique and recognised sensory experience for the locale: "It smells like Goose Fair".[85]

The nineteenth century was a period of huge physical change for fairgrounds. New technology and changes in public taste resulted in fairs of the 1890s being very different to traditional wakes of fifty years previous. Notably this period saw decline in the popularity of "monstrosities" – human and animal freak shows.[86] Sexton posits in addition to a change in public sensibilities, this decline was also the result of improved social provision for afflicted individuals who often became involved in freak shows through desperation.[87] Travelling Menageries were still a feature of fairs by the end of the century, but their pre-eminence had been usurped by new mechanical rides; Switchback Railways, "Flying Swans" and the "Sea on land" were the attractions of note at the 1889 Nottingham Goose Fair.[88] New mechanical rides facilitated by steam power were a major development, "a strange 'by-product' of the industrial revolution: the marriage of steam and iron to reproduce a machine for amusement".[89] The most recognisable mechanical ride were Gallopers, or Steam Roundabouts, a consistent feature of fairs from the late 1800s until the present day.[90] The acquisition of mechanical rides by

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[83] 'The Showmen World', *The Era* (September 18th, 1897) p . 18.
[84] 'Nottingham Goose Fair', *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (October 5th, 1889), p.4.

[85] 'Nottingham Goose Fair', *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (October 5th, 1889), p.4.
[86] Nottingham Goose Fair', *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (October 5th, 1889), p.4.
[87] Sexton, 'Travelling People', pp. 64-65.
[88] Nottingham Goose Fair', *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (October 5th, 1889), p.4.
[89] Sexton, 'Travelling People', p.67.
[90] Tyrwhitt-Drake, *The English Circus and Fair Ground*, pp. 198-199.

showpeople in the 1890s had a transformative effect on the hierarchy within the showland community– those who owned the largest rides frequently became lessees of fair sites which they independently rented.[91]

Reflecting growing public fascination with technological progress, 'Scientific' amusements became prevalent towards the end of the 1800s. A primary example was phantoscopes and cinematographs, which evolved into Bioscope Shows, the first travelling cinemas.[92] Fairs also became showcases for new technology; one of the attractions at Oldham Wakes in 1897 was "Paine's Navy and Diving Exhibition, illustrating the operation of salvage work by working divers".[93] Technological innovation was not solely responsible for the continued success of travelling fairs; actions of showpeople themselves ensured their prosperity. It was remarked "The 'Record Reign' has been a period of marvellous success, of marked and evident progress amongst the 'men of the road'. No body of workers has shown more power of adaptability to the changing face of the times than the travelling showmen".[94] Success was accredited to the ability of showpeople to overcome adversity, particularly the abolition of charter fairs by corporations. *The Era* reported the relocation of Birmingham Onion Fair in 1897 was explicitly the result "of the business abilities of a travelling showman, Mr P. Collins".[95] It was noted "to keep thoroughly abreast of the times, and to give a thorough sense of security to his patrons, Mr Collins has always at command an efficient staff of police, sufficient to cope with and quell any riotous conduct".[96] Although *The Era* suggests Collins' precautions were for the benefit of the public, Collins was also reassuring the corporation that rowdy conduct associated with previous fairs would not be permitted on his site. The 1889 Nottingham Goose Fair was observed to have transformed from previous disappointments, and this regeneration was attributed to the ingenuity of showpeople: "Showfolk… are astute enough to perceive the changes which have

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[91] Sexton, 'Travelling People', pp. 66-67.
[92] Nottingham Goose Fair', *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (October 5th, 1889), p.4. Sexton 'Travelling People' Century', p. 82.
[93] The Showmen World', *The Era* (September 4th, 1897),p. 19.
[94] 'The Showmen World', *The Era* (July 3rd, 1897), p. 16.
[95] 'The Showmen World', *The Era* (October 9th, 1897) p.19.
[96] 'The Showmen World', *The Era* (October 9th, 1897) p.19.

come and continue to creep over public taste, and endeavour to adapt themselves to modern requirements in the way of amusements".[97]

The showpeople and fairground of the late nineteenth century had changed markedly from those of fifty years previous. These changes were the result of technological progress, reacting to changing public demands, and reassuring authorities. The loss of intimate relations with local authorities through the closure of charter fairs was countered by a continued reliance on the support of townspeople who made new independent fairs commercially successful. There was a move towards more professional and organised pleasure fairs, not necessarily negating traditional origins, but moving away from raucous and undesirable elements of their predecessors.

IV - Persecution Through Legislation- George Smith of Coalville and the Moveable Dwellings Bills 1885-1893

The attempts at passing a Movable, or Temporary, Dwellings Bill through parliament between 1885 and 1895 were a formative experience for showland. These catalysed a unification movement amongst travelling amusement caterers and the creation of the United Kingdom Van Dwellers Protection Agency, later to become the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain and Ireland. The significance of this amalgamation, particularly in how it shaped the developing relations between showland, wider society, and authority, should not be underestimated. This section will assess who the legislation was designed to control and examine why it inspired vehement opposition from multiple groups. This exploration demonstrates why showpeople were targeted by legislation, how legislation would affect them, and how their identity was perceived and often mistakenly confused with other nomadic groups.

To inform this discussion it is necessary to discuss George Smith of Coalville (1831-1895), a principal proponent of the Moveable Dwellings Bill. Smith was born in Clayhills, Staffordshire, in

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[97] Nottingham Goose Fair', *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (October 5th, 1889), p.4.

1831, rising from a poor background to own a brickyard in Reapsmoor.[98] In addition to industry Smith developed an interest in philanthropy, beginning with "moral and spiritual enlightenment" of his employees, but after these efforts resulted in him resigning from the Whitwick Colliery Company he embarked on more ambitious endeavours.[99] The first nomads to receive Smith's attention were canal boat dwellers, and his suggestions for reform and regulation of this group resulted in The Canal Boats Act Amendment Bill of 1884.[100] After this success, his attention turned to van-dwelling itinerants. His proposals for their reform manifested in the proposed Moveable Dwellings Bill, first presented to parliament in 1885.

George Smith's intentions with the Moveable Dwellings Bill were "to raise the travellers, van-dwellers and gipsies to the level of good and true English citizens".[101] He stated "My Bill places them on a level with other well-to-do and working classes".[102] In *The Era* Smith emphasises he was "fighting for the poor gipsy and van children".[103] He refers to their parents as "the English slave-drivers", who forced children to work "at the fairs and feasts, Sunday and weekday, all the hours God sends".[104] Smith emphasised a problem of considerable magnitude, stating fifty thousand itinerant children were living "outside sanitary, educational and protective influence".[105] However this figure, and other claims Smith made had little basis in reality; Smith's '*Gipsy Life: Being an Account of our Gipsies and their Children, with Suggestions for their Improvement'* published in 1880 is dismissed by David Mayall who describes it as "badly written and poorly argued, relying on exaggeration to draw lurid pictures and on anecdote combing freely with hearsay and factual information".[106] W.J. Sedgemore proposed Smith's emphasis on the plight of van-children was emotional leverage for his parliamentary agenda, stating Smith "never forgets to mention the words 'little nomads'. The wily old gentleman knows very well

[98] Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers*, p. 132.
[99] Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* p. 132.
[100] Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* p. 132.
[101] George Smith, 'Reply To Joe Caddick', *The Era* (January 10th, 1891), p. 17.
[102] George Smith, 'Reply To Joe Caddick', *The Era* (January 10th, 1891), p. 17.
[103] Smith, 'Reply To Joe Caddick', *The Era* (January 10th, 1891), p. 17.
[104] Smith, 'Reply To Joe Caddick', *The Era* (January 10th, 1891), p. 17.
[105] Smith, 'Reply To Joe Caddick', *The Era* (January 10th, 1891), p. 17.
[106] Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers,* p. 9.

they are the 'open-sesame' to the feelings of Aunt Martha and her few friends at the afternoon tea".[107]

The number of children Smith identifies who required the benefits of his Bill was a statistic contested by showpeople; James Dean enquired "Where does Smith find four thousand vans with an average family of five, to make his twenty thousand uneducated children?", and concludes Smith's estimate is "decidedly false".[108] F.T. Salva criticises Smith's method of estimating the population size of showpeople: "He [Smith] states at Oxford fair he counted two hundred caravans, inhabited by eight persons each".[109] Salva states this is "ridiculous", suggesting Smith counted unoccupied packing trucks accompanying the fair as accommodation.[110] Salva gives an example of the accurate proportions of inhabited versus non-inhabited vehicles; of one hundred vans at Kings Lynn Mart only twenty were inhabited.[111] Showlady Alice Tyler disputed many of Smith's claims, and detailed her encounters with Smith in a letter to *The Era*. Upon introducing him to her well-presented and educated children, Tyler records Smith remarked "in his writings he did not mean such as them". [112] Tyler stated these were true van children, and enquired where Smith's "slaves on English soil" were to be found.[113] Tyler suggests rather than accepting invitations from showpeople to inspect their sanitary living quarters, Smith sought out those who even Tyler describes as "wretched" and "scum".[114] By seeking out the worst examples, who genuinely could be described as living in unsanitary conditions and whose children wanted for proper education, Smith's argument that legislation was required was justified. In the popular press Smith made references to "many thousands of

[107] W.J. Sedgemore, 'Letter To The Editor', *The Era* (February 14th ,1891), p. 17.
[108] James Dean, *The Era* (January 31st, 1891), p. 17.
[109] F.T. Salva, 'Movable Dwellings Bill – Meeting In Manchester', *The Era* (February 28th ,1891), p. 17.
[110] Salva, *The Era* (February 28th, 1891), p. 17.
[111] Salva, *The Era* (February 28th ,1891), p. 17.
[112] Alice Tyler, 'Letter To The Editor', *The Era* (January 24th ,1891), p. 17.
[113] Alice Tyler, 'Letter To The Editor', *The Era* (January 24th ,1891), p. 17.
[114] Tyler, *The Era* (January 24th ,1891), p. 17.

unlettered, untaught, and unkempt poor little nomadic children", but fails to acknowledge those he observed which undermined his emotive claims.[115]

In the *Daily Graphic*, Reverend Thomas Horne criticised Smith's failure to distinguish between varied groups of travellers present in Britain.

> "That Mr Smith fails to make any distinction between say the living vans of George Sanger and the most miserable ramshackle carts ceiled over with hoops and canvas; between the true and legitimate showman and his family….and the veriest wretch of a miserable gipsy…vitiates his whole scheme."[116]

Horne was not alone in his condemnation of Smith. At a meeting of showmen at the Royal Agricultural Hall in 1891, Good Templar mission agent James Fish declared he "hoped they [showmen] would have the opportunity of pushing his lies down his [Smith's] throat".[117] Joe Caddick, a travelling photographer, accused Smith of asserting "in his most insinuating and dogmatic manner that the foulest blot on the social escutcheon of the nineteenth century was the immoral and depraved condition of the van-dweller, who in his eyes was a veritable 'bogie-man'".[118]

Smith harboured prejudice towards the nomadic community and viewed itinerancy as a means of "avoiding taxation, rents, the inspector of nuisances and the school board officer" and believed nomads lived" in defiance of social, moral, civil and natural law".[119] Smith reflects nineteenth century bourgeois ideology which condemned itinerancy as contrary to modernity and progress.[120] Smith was aggressive in his condemnation, considering the travelling population to be inherently immoral, evidenced by their dependence on "pilfering and

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[115] George Smith, 'Correspondence', *The Yorkshire Herald and the York Herald* (December 2nd, 1890), p. 6.
[116] Reverend Thomas Horne as cited in Thomas Murphy, *History Of The Showmen's Guild 1889-1948* (World's Fair Ltd, Oldham, 1950), p. 24.
[117] James Fish, quoted in 'Showmen and the Movable Dwellings Bill', *Glasgow Herald* (January 29th , 1891) p. 3.

[118] Joe Caddick, *The Era* (February 7th , 1891), p. 17.
[119] Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* pp. 135-136.
[120] Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* p. 3. Taylor, *A Minority and The State,* pp. 10, 13, 14.

poaching", and their poor hygiene resulting from living "huddled together like so many dogs".[121] Smith's vitriol was compounded with religious fervour, demonstrated in an attack on Joe Caddick's atheism.[122] Part of Smith's mission was to lead "our poor little nomads into morality and virtue", and he did not view a travelling lifestyle as conducive to either.[123]

Opposition to Smith's claims and views was considerable; notably the residents of the town he associated himself with were themselves opponents. In 1893 representatives of Coalville wrote to *The Era* and stated they "indignantly protest against the continued and unwarrantable assumption of their towns good name by a person styling himself 'George Smith of Coalville' who is neither a native nor resident", adding they did not support Smith's proposed Bill.[124] However opposition to George Smith was most ardently found in the showland community, opposition summarised by Joe Caddick:

> "Let Mr Smith throw off that cloak of philanthropy. It is threadbare, patched and ill-fitting. We can see through it, and it leaves his motive bare and exposed to the keen wind of criticism."[125]

The Bill ostensibly aimed to improve living conditions of van dwellers, ensure overcrowding and immoral behaviour was eliminated, and provide education for van children. To facilitate this the Bill proposed compulsory registration of all movable dwellings; failure to do so resulting in a twenty shilling fine.[126] If any moveable dwelling was considered a nuisance, injurious to health, or failing to provide provision for the separation of opposite sexes over the age of twelve, officers of the county or sanitary authority had the right to inspect the dwelling between six o'clock in the morning and nine o'clock in the evening.[127] In addition, for the purpose of educating children each dwelling was considered resident within the school district

[121] Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* p. 135.
[122] Smith, 'Reply To Joe Caddick', *The Era* (January 10th , 1891), p. 17.
[123] Smith, 'Reply To Joe Caddick', *The Era* (January 10th , 1891), p. 17.
[124] 'Residents of Coalville', *The Era* (October 21st,1893), p. 17.
[125] Joe Caddick, *The Era* (January 24th , 1891), p. 17.
[126] Moveable Dwellings Bill 1889-1893 as cited in Murphy, *History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 13.
[127] Moveable Dwellings Bill 1889-1893 as cited in Murphy, *History Of The Showmen's Guild ,* p. 14.

in which it was situated; and thus came under the temporary jurisdiction of the local school board.[128] Such legislation was considered necessary as existing powers held by local authorities were deemed inadequate, and authorities were disinclined to address problematic travellers, preferring to wait for them to leave.[129] This initial Bill did not distinguish between different travellers, and these restrictions would impact upon Gypsies, showpeople, travelling artisans, and casual tramps alike.

However, Mayall suggests the Bill had a more aggressive intention, and was designed to "regulate and control those who pursued a travelling way of life, with the ultimate aim of ending it altogether".[130] This opinion was shared by Mr. Atherley Jones, who in the 1887 Select Committee of the Temporary Dwellings Bill suggested to Smith by restricting the number of inhabitants per van it would "render it impossible in many cases for families to carry on their life under the same conditions that they are carrying it on right now".[131] Smith stated "I have no doubt that that would be the result, but I imagine that that is one of the results aimed at".[132] This reveals Smith intended the Bill to make it impossible for travellers to continue their nomadic existence and was therefore designed to eradicate as much as reform itinerancy.

If the Bill was indeed an attempt to force travellers off the road the beneficiaries of the legislation were not travellers as claimed, but the sedentary population. Chairman of the 1887 Select Committee, Isaac Elton, suggested "it was… almost altogether for the benefit of the towns rather than of the classes that were passing through that these provisions were suggested".[133] Smith claimed the Bill intended to reform travellers whose living conditions and behaviour made them a "mischief" to sedentary society and gave respectable nomads a bad name, but the

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[128] Moveable Dwellings Bill 1889-1893 as cited in Murphy, *History Of The Showmen's Guild* , pp. 14, 15, 24.
[129] 'Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill' (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), pp. 12-14. Accessed at House Of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.
[130] Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* p. 130.
[131] Llewellyn Atherley-Jones, 'Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill' (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p. 16.
[132] George Smith, 'Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill' (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p. 16.
[133] Sir Isaac Elton, 'Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill' (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p. 1.

Bill drew no distinctions between these problematic travellers and the "respectable" groups.[134] Elton suggested by using the term "van dweller" the Bill would interfere with more groups than it intended to; "respectable" travellers would be grouped with "nuisance" Gypsies.[135] Showpeople were identified by the Select Committee as a separate group for whom nomadism was a commercial necessity, but the Bill failed to make this distinction and although Smith claimed to appreciate a distinction between showfolk and Gypsies his legislation would impact upon both equally. [136] Smith was asked "can you at all discriminate between the Gypsies and travelling showmen and the general professional tramps?", to which he responded he "should imagine" a quarter were showpeople – demonstrating a lack of ability, and inclination, to separate travelling groups.[137] The formative contradiction of the Temporary Dwellings Bill is that those who discussed legislation recognised showpeople as a separate itinerant class, yet made no provision for this distinction and, if passed, the Bill would have adversely impacted upon the lifestyle and livelihood of showland. Indeed the Select Committee suggested as high numbers of van dwellers congregated at fairs, these events were noted as points where dwellings could be efficiently registered.[138] The regular pattern of fairs made it easier for local authorities (and would-be prosecutors) to predict movements of caravans.[139] Whilst it is true Gypsies and other itinerants often followed fairs, targeting fairgrounds would result in showpeople being excessively impacted by the Bill.

After the failure of George Smith's Temporary Dwellings Bill, Lord Clifford of Chudleigh attempted to introduce similar legislation, notably in 1911 and 1914. In the Second Reading

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[134] 'Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill' (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p. 6. Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* p. 131.
[135] Sir Isaac Elton, 'Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill' (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p. 1. Accessed at House Of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.
[136] Mr. Kelly, 'Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill' (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p. 22. Mr Kenrick, Sir Isaac Elton, 'Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill' (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p. 27.
[137] George Smith, 'Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill' (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p. 22.
[138] 'Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill' (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), pp. 15, 32.
[139] 'Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill' (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p.9.

Lord Allendale stated no legislation was required for showpeople and suggested "some provision might be made for eliminating this class altogether from the Bill".[140] Lord Clifford acknowledged accusations that this Bill was designed to drive van dwellers "off the face of the earth", and reassured his Bill would only be applied in areas where moveable dwellings were considered a nuisance.[141] However, Clifford concedes "the free and romantic life of the Gypsy must be sacrificed somewhat to the well-being of the crowded community in which we live", suggesting the legislation was to ensure the comfort of settled society, potentially at the expense of itinerant peoples. Despite Allendale's suggestion showpeople should be removed from the targets of the Bill, he remarks it is "rather difficult to draw a strict definition of what is meant by 'showman' or 'entertainer'".[142] Allendale goes on to state this was partially a consequence of being "no definition in law of a showman."[143]

It was clearly problematic to assure showpeople they would not be affected by the Bill, but also acknowledge it was difficult to discern them from other itinerants. Allendale was concerned if showpeople were specifically mentioned their opposition would result in the Bill failing, and for this reason they were omitted from clauses. As with the Temporary Dwellings Bill however, no provisions were made in the legislation to fully absolve showpeople from regulations.

V - Opposition To The Temporary Dwellings Bill

Opposition to Smith's Bill and later variants was a formative experience which demonstrated how the showland community was misunderstood and overlooked by authorities. Despite claims of widespread support, Smith's initial Bill encountered considerable resistance.[144] This section will analyse opposition from organised groups, particularly The Liberty and Property

[140] Lord Allendale, 'Movable Dwellings Bill' (House of Lords Debate 22nd February 1911, Vol 7 CC97-110 97), p. 3. Accessed at House Of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.
[141] Lord Clifford, 'Movable Dwellings Bill' (House of Lords Debate 22nd February 1911, Vol 7 CC97-110 97), p. 2.
[142] Lord Allendale, 'Movable Dwellings Bill' (House of Lords Debate 22nd February 1911, Vol 7 CC97-110 97), p. 4.
[143] Lord Allendale, 'Movable Dwellings Bill' (House of Lords Debate 22nd February 1911, Vol 7 CC97-110 97), p. 6.
[144] Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* p. 145.

Defence League (LPDL) and The United Kingdom Showmen's and Van Dweller's Protection Association (UKSVDPA) who frequently worked together to offer combined opposition.[145] These groups had differing reasons for concern; the LPDL opposed the Bill ideologically as they saw its methods as state intervention contrary to individual freedom whereas the UKSVDPA were concerned with the Bill's potential impact on their nomadic lifestyle and livelihood. This analysis will demonstrate how the showland community understood their identity and place in society during this period and investigating outside opposition reveals details of their relationship with wider society. It is also necessary to consider the inherent flaws in the proposed legislation which arguably condemned it to failure – irrespective of opposition.

The Liberty and Property Defence League was formed in 1882 by Lord Elcho for the support of laissez-faire free trade. Tt opposed the Temporary Dwellings Bill on the basis it meant invasive state interference at the expense of personal liberty. The LPDL were not asked by showpeople for support, but for their own reasons joined them in agitation against the Movable Dwellings Bill.[146] Of most concern to this organisation were the powers of entry the Bill granted to county and sanitary authorities, enabling them to enter any movable dwelling between six o'clock in the morning and nine o'clock in the evening. Lord Wemyss of the LPDL remarked "Is not this a gross violation of the rights of the subject? Every gipsy's van is his castle, and he should be at liberty to make a pig-sty of it if he likes".[147] LPDL member and M.P. Henry Stephens stated the Bill was unnecessary, and believed the powers of entry were "entirely unworkable and cruelly oppressive".[148] Despite acknowledging the negative impact upon the itinerant population,

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[145] Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* p. 142.
[146] 'Meeting Of Showmen, *The Era* (October 17th, 1891), p. 7.
[147] Lord Wemyss, as cited in Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* p. 140.
[148] Henry Stephens MP, as cited in Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* p. 139. Stephens noted the Bill was unnecessary on the following grounds: "(1) The sanitary object of the Bill is amply provided for by recent and adequate legislation; (2) the educational powers are useless for their object, and in their operation would greatly injure elementary schools; (3) the scheme of registration suggested by the Bill is unnecessary, because the summary powers of the Bill would work sufficiently without it; (4) the power of entry is most cruel and full of risk; (5) to define a movable dwelling is practically most difficult… (6) administration of the Bill by a county authority would impose insufferable waste and hardship upon persons living in Movable Dwellings." Henry Stephens MP, *The Era,* (February 4th, 1893), p. 16.

Stephens recognised by forcing them off the road, they would have no choice but to move "into our overcrowded towns where they are not at all wanted".[149] This suggests the LPDL was not necessarily protecting the personal liberty of van dwellers in their opposition, but also preserving separation of itinerant and sedentary populations. The LPDL agreed with proposals within the Bill for provision of education for Gypsy children, but the projected method of facilitating this was deemed unviable. To enforce compulsory education, Gypsies would be required to settle, and this was considered an attack on individual freedom and therefore even this altruism was rejected by the LPDL on grounds it compromised personal liberty.[150]

The LDPL was not constant in its opposition of the Bill; in 1890 George Smith stated the League were satisfied with the legislation once amendments regarding the powers of entry were added. The amendment was that only an individual appointed by the Justice of the Peace would be allowed to enter a movable dwelling, and instead of this being allowed to occur between 6AM and 9PM it was phrased " at any reasonable time" – to reflect the varying times at which showpeople would sleep and wake depending on their role in the travelling shows.[151] Smith was heavily critical of the LPDL for impeding the Bill's progress through parliament and "showing their folly in meddling with a Bill and subject they do not understand".[152] Despite displaying genuine concern for itinerant communities, it can be concluded the opposition of the LPDL was motivated by their concern that the Bill represented state intervention and violated personal freedom. The LPDL additionally believed the powers the Bill would grant were no more able to deal with the problem than existing legislation and would result in a greater drain on the resources of local authorities.[153] Although the LPDL were also keen to protect the interests of

[149] Henry Stephens MP, as cited in Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* p. 139.
[150] Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* pp. 140-141.
[151] The amendment stated only an individual appointed by the Justice Of The Peace would be allowed to enter a dwelling "at any reasonable time" reflecting the varying times at which showmen would sleep and wake depending on their role in the travelling shows. George Smith, 'The Movable Dwellings Bill', *The Liverpool Mercury* (September 2nd , 1890), p. 3.

[152] George Smith, 'The Movable Dwellings Bill', *The Liverpool Mercury* (September 2nd,1890), p. 3.
[153] Henry Stephens MP, *The Era,* (February 4th, 1893), p. 16.

settled society, their opposition bolstered resistance from those most at risk from the clauses of the Bill: van dwellers themselves.

Opposition to the Movable Dwellings Bill from travelling showpeople and other van dwellers resulted in the formation of The Van Dwellers Protection Association, which would later become the Showmen's Guild . This united organisation which existed to protect the interests of travelling showpeople will be a key focus of this thesis, and analysis of the reasons for its creation demonstrate the purpose and initial agenda of the organisation. Mayall states the association was formed in 1889 solely to combat the Temporary Dwellings Bill, and "was to protect the rights of showmen and van-dwellers against any possible harmful legislation".[154] The focus of the organisation was the protection of showland travellers, but it was acknowledged an attack on one van-dweller was a threat to all as divisions between classes of travellers were blurred by authority.[155] The showland community condemned the Bill for being "not only brutal but stupid" criticising it for failing to define a movable dwelling "and in doing so scooped up everything from an umbrella to a Lordly caravan".[156] The sentiment of unity was expressed in Manchester in 1891 where it was stated to protest the Bill was not only for the interests of showpeople, nor of travellers in general, "but on the behalf of the personal liberty of every person in this country".[157] Showpeople perceived the Bill as a threat to their way of life, their livelihood and their existence. The severity of the Bill's potential was reflected in the aggressive opposition mounted by showfolk and the militant language used in their campaign. The Manchester meeting protesting the bill in 1891 was promoted by "large posters calling them 'to arms' and appealing to one and all to attend and 'defend your liberties and your homes'".[158]

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[154] Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* p. 143.
[155] Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* p. 143.
[156] 'The Movable Dwellings Bill', *The Era* (January 31st ,1891), p. 17.
[157] 'Movable Dwellings Bill – Meeting in Manchester', *The Era* (February 28th ,1891), p. 17.
[158] 'The Movable Dwellings Bill', *The Daily News* (January 29th ,1891), p. 2.

The UKVDPA criticised the Bill's implication that nomads required more legislation, and thus were presumed to live in worse conditions than other members of society. Joe Caddick disputed the claim nomadism necessarily meant unsanitary living conditions, and referred to the fact that "Our very legislators... are tramping and scouring the country in movable dwellings to carry civilisation… With the Home Rule vans and the Unionist Van, civilisation is certainly not retarded by being propagated through the medium of a movable dwelling".[159] *The Era* also noted the utility of travelling for social and political movements; "we have the red vans of the Nationalisation of the Land Federation, the 'clarion' vans of the Socialistic Movement, the Church Army vans, the Gypsy Mission vans, the Salisbury Diocesan Mission vans, the C.E.T.S. vans, the Book Colporteur vans, the vans of the Church association".[160] Although vanning was increasingly pursued by a range of ordinarily settled individuals, their commonality was they were fringe organisations, offering alternative ideology, religion or politics from the mainstream. Their peripheral status continued the stereotype that those whose existence or occupation was nomadic were 'others' – separate from the sedentary social norm. An exception to this trend were the minority of ordinary people who chose to live in touring caravans during holidays, behaviour prompting one showman to question "why should it be wrong for other persons to do so for a living?".[161]

The UKVDPA were most concerned over the proposed registration of vans, and the powers of entry granted to local authorities.[162] The power to enter dwellings at any hour if the local Justice Of the Peace felt there was justifiable reason angered showmen as this was a power usually employed against suspected thieves.[163] James Allen stated "they want to legislate and make us worse than criminals….they call themselves philanthropists, but there is no philanthropy about this when they try to drive us off the face of the earth".[164] The implication of granting these

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[159] Joe Caddick, *The Era* (December 27th ,1890), p. 15.
[160] 'The Showmen World', *The Era* (August 21st,1897), p.17.

[161] H. Topham, *The Era* (January 17th , 1891), p. 15.
[162] Murphy, *History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 18.
[163] *The Era* (January 31st ,1891), p. 17.
[164] James Allen, *The Era* (January 31st ,1891), p. 17.

powers were clear; this community was to be targeted with the same suspicion as criminals on account of their itinerancy. Joe Caddick suggested as there were already existing laws in place allowing authorities to inspect dwellings – movable or otherwise – the restrictions of the new Bill were designed to "harass and worry us out of existence".[165] It was felt the proposed legislation did not recognise itinerants as true citizens, for such measures would never be imposed upon the sedentary population; James W. Fish, a travelling artisan, remarked "the Bill was un-English, for movable or unmovable, an Englishman's house is his castle, and its privacy ought not to be broken into".[166]

The Bill's intention to provide proper sanitation and education for the travelling population, was met with scepticism: "the pretext of sanitation is merely a 'blind' to secure the right of entry, and the sanitary authority is to be used do to spy-work for the local school board".[167] Joe Caddick also believed the Bill was designed to facilitate surveillance, terming the legislation "espionage".[168] Caddick also remarked objecting to the Bill was not evidence showpeople neglected the education of their children, and stated "we say education is the right of every child; so is the sanctity and privacy of a man's home his birth right.".[169] This statement was echoed by Edward Burgess at a meeting of showfolk in Norwich in January 1891 who confirmed showmen were "in favour of measures for encouraging sanitation and education, but not at the expense of the dearest liberties of the people".[170] The issue of education demonstrates a hierarchy existed within the travelling community, with showmen considering themselves above Gypsy nomads; it was suggested the Bill "proposes to punish the respectable parents for the sins of those more neglectful individuals who may perhaps be found amongst the lower class of the Gypsies".[171]

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[165] Joe Caddick, 'Address to Fellow Travellers', *The Era* (December 27th ,1890), p. 15.
[166] James W. Fish, *The Era* (January 31st ,1891), p. 17.
[167] *The Era,* (February 7th ,1891), p. 15.
[168] Joe Caddick, 'Letter To The Editor', *The Era* (December 27th ,1890), p. 15.
[169] Joe Caddick, 'Letter To The Editor', *The Era* (December 27th ,1890), p. 15.
[170] Edward Burgess, 'Meeting of Showfolk in Norwich on 5th January', *The Era* (January 10th ,1891), p. 17.
[171] *The Era* (February 7th ,1891), p. 15.

In terms of the lack of provision of education, outside commentators suggested the problem was the result of the attitude of schools rather than of travellers. Randall Williams suggested the difficulty of educating traveller children was not for the lack of inclination of their parents, but the unwillingness of schoolmasters to accept children on a temporary basis.[172] Edward Burgess spent five years on the Norwich School Board and confirmed if showmen applied to send their children to a Board School they were told it was full or only available to children who attended regularly.[173] Reverend J.H. Swinstead commented in his experience Board Schools were disinclined to accept travellers because the children did not stay long enough, firstly because this impacted on the child's education, but significantly also prevented children from completing yearly assessments and contributing to the school's reputation.[174] It is important to note cultural background was not among reasons for traveller children being rejected from schools. The primary issue was with the disruption caused by itinerancy, which suggests schools held a pragmatic if uncooperative stance, but not necessarily prejudice. Although showland children often worked in the family business from an early age, this does not prove parents were averse to formal education. Salva states that it was of benefit to showmen to have children properly educated, for they needed astute business minds to help run the family enterprise.[175]

An important element of opposition fronted by the UKVDPA was rejecting claims travelling showmen lived in unsanitary or immoral conditions and part of the counter to such accusations was demonstrating the settled population in places lived in worse conditions without regulation. Edward Burgess stated two hundred or more houses in Norwich failed to meet the standards set by the Movable Dwellings Bill for sanitation or separation of the sexes.[176] He remarked despite this no legislation was proposed "to make such harsh and unwarrantable

[172] Randall Williams, 'The Movable Dwellings Bill', *The Era* (January 31st, 1891), p. 17.
[173] E. Burgess, 'The Movable Dwellings Bill', *The Era* (January 31st, 1891), p. 17.
[174] Reverend J.H. Swinstead, 'Fourth Annual Meeting of Van Dwellers Association', *The Era* (January 26th ,1895), p. 20.
[175] F.T. Salva, 'Fourth Annual Meeting of Van Dwellers Association', *The Era* (January 26th ,1895), p. 20.
[176] Edward Burgess, 'Meeting of Showfolk in Norwich on 5th January', *The Era* (January 10th ,1891), p. 17.

intrusion upon the privacy of houses".[177] H. Topham compared the fluctuating occupancy of a show-person's caravan and a common lodging house, stating the latter (for which no legislation was proposed) were often in crowded areas with poor ventilation, leading to unhealthy conditions.[178] In contrast, a caravan was usually located in open country, and despite intensive inhabitation was always well ventilated.[179] W.J. Sedgemore, an outsider to the showland community, stated he had experience of living in both a settled dwelling and a van, and was convinced the latter was much healthier, and no more prone to issues of overcrowding than the majority of workers' dwellings.[180] Reverend J.H. Swinstead reasoned the living quarters of travelling showmen must be sanitary or else they would fall ill and would not be able to work and support their families.[181] By demonstrating caravans were sanitary when compared with sedentary dwellings it was made clear proposed legislation was primarily concerned not with the wellbeing of the itinerant population, but with registering them for purposes of control. This interpretation was adopted by groups such as the UKPDL who were opposed to such invasive behaviour.

The UKVDPA's opposition campaign involved interaction with MPs and other authority figures to provide evidence showmen were a respectable class who did not require legislation. The scale and organisation of the campaign was considerable; twenty petitions with several thousand signatures each were forwarded to MPs and Government officials, over 12,000 protest pamphlets were distributed nationwide, and 20,000 copies of letters written by F.T. Salva, Alice Tyler and Joe Caddick were distributed to Government bodies, the press, and local town officials.[182] 780 letters were sent to Chief Constables and other local dignitaries enquiring about trouble they experienced with travellers.[183] Of 180 replies, two were indifferent and one spoke

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[177] Edward Burgess, 'Meeting of Showfolk in Norwich on 5th January', *The Era* (January 10th ,1891), p. 17.
[178] H. Topham, *The Era* (January 17th ,1891), p. 17.
[179] H. Topham, *The Era* (January 17th ,1891), p. 17.
[180] W.J. Sedgemore, 'Letter To The Editor', *The Era* (February 14th, 1891), p. 17.
[181] Reverend J.H. Swinstead, 'Fourth Annual Meeting of Van Dwellers Association', *The Era* (January 26th, 1895), p. 20.
[182] James Dean, 'First Annual Meeting of the U.K.V.D.P.A', *The Era* (January 30th, 1892), p. 17.
[183] 'The Movable Dwellings Bill', *The Daily News* (London, Issue 13984, Thursday January 29th ,1891), p. 2. British Library Newspaper, Part I 1800-1900.

of showmen of bad character, “the others bearing direct testimony as to their being an honest, law-abiding community”.[184] Samuel Stephens, Chief Constable of Nottingham, stated “I have no hesitation in saying that, as a rule, the van-dwellers are an honest, law-abiding class of people”.[185] Stephen’s statement is significant as he controlled three large fairs, at Chesterfield, Rochdale and Nottingham Goose Fair. His assertion van-dwellers were law-abiding bolstered the claim legislation was unnecessary..[186] Another notable figure from the police force, Chief Constable of Chester G.F. Fenwick, wished “all the dwellers in the slums and alleys in our large cities and towns were as healthy and well cared for as your [van-dwellers} children are”, contrary to statements made by George Smith about the deplorable conditions van-children endured.[187] The endorsements made by high profile figures consolidated the opinion of showmen that “they had a right to expect fair treatment”.[188]

In addition to external protests, the Bill also instigated governmental opposition as it was deemed impractical in method and application. The 1887 Select Committee Report discussed the difficulty in creating legislation for van dwellers in comparison to the success of the Canal Boats Act. It was observed the success of the latter was partially because existing commercial shipping regulations provided precedent, and the defined route of canals enabled effective regulation.[189] There was no commercial precedent regarding itinerant van dwellers, and these nomads were dispersed over a vast network of roads, and were able leave an authority’s jurisdiction before summons were served; tracking and regulating this group would therefore be difficult.[190] A further criticism of Smith’s Bill was lack of available data indicating the population size of the van-dwelling community, and therefore no knowledge of how many

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[184] ‘The Movable Dwellings Bill’, *The Daily News* (London, Issue 13984, Thursday January 29th ,1891), p. 2. British Library Newspaper, Part I 1800-1900. James Allen, *The Era* (January 31st, 1891), p. 17.
[185] Samuel Stephens, *The Era* (January 31st, 1891), p. 17.
[186] Samuel Stephens, *The Era* (January 31st, 1891), p. 17.
[187] G.F. Fenwick, *The Era* (January 31st, 1891), p. 17.
[188] ‘The Movable Dwellings Bill’, *The Daily News* (London, Issue 13984, Thursday January 29th ,1891), p. 2. British Library Newspaper, Part I 1800-1900.
[189] ‘Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill’ (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), pp 8-9.
[190] Sir Hugh Owens, ‘Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill’ (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p.2.

individuals the legislation attempted to regulate.[191] Figures provided by Smith suggested a sizeable and growing population, but these figures were deemed inaccurate by the van dwelling community (as previously mentioned). It is plausible estimates were exaggerated to emphasise urgent need for legislation and increase support for the Bill. Sir Hugh Owen answered questions pertaining to the size of the itinerant population by stating “I have not the least idea, and I think there is very great difficulty in forming any accurate estimate”.[192]

In addition to no accurate estimate of population size, legislators admitted to having little understanding of itinerant living conditions or lifestyle, Owen remarking “I cannot pretend to have any special knowledge of them”.[193] George Smith’s attempt to prove travelling showmen supported his Bill reveals he had a poor understanding of the diversity of the nomadic population. He supplied as evidence three letters, from a travelling artiste, circus proprietor and a travelling clown.[194] Smith took three disparate individuals to represent the entire showland class, but none of these were proprietors of travelling fairgrounds and therefore showpeople in the traditional sense. This demonstrates even when showpeople were acknowledged as separate from other nomads, the diversity of travelling entertainers was overlooked and the class were homogenised. An additional fault with Smith’s evidence was the fact he received the letters in 1884 before the 1885 Bill was proposed and yet presented them as evidence of the situation in 1887.[195] It seems likely after the details of the Temporary Dwellings Bill were made known, many travelling artists would have retracted support.

Due to growing external opposition which accused the Bill of threatening personal liberty and being based on false information, and internal resistance which believed the Bill to be

[191] ‘Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill’ (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p.12.
[192] Sir Hugh Owen. Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill’ (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p.17.
[193] Sir Hugh Owen. Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill’ (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p.21.
[194] George Smith. Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill’ (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p 26.
[195] George Smith. Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill’ (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p 26.

unwieldly and unnecessary, support waned. The Temporary Dwellings Bill failed to pass through Parliament despite, except for in 1893, being proposed with various amendments every year between 1889 and 1895.[196] The Bill of 1911, whilst initially appearing a reincarnation of Smith's Bill, eventually confirmed the ambitions of opponents of the original Bill. Lord Allendale stated the Committee considered registration of temporary dwellings unnecessary, and called for this clause to be abandoned.[197] The Committee also suggested no legislation was required for travelling showmen and stated "some provision might be made for eliminating this class altogether from the Bill".[198] The opposition to the legislation succeeded, but the course of its campaign was a formative experience for the travelling community. Combining resistance with additional groups (in this instance the UKPDL) was demonstrated as an effective means of opposition – and would be a method employed in future campaigns. The amalgamation of showmen into the UKVDPA proved an effective way of mounting a nationwide protest, and this union had a significant impact on the activities of showmen throughout the twentieth century, informing how this group articulated their cultural and professional identity, responded to legislative challenges from local authorities, and understood their role in British society.

VI - Acknowledgement and Amalgamation – Showland Identity and the Formation of the Van Dwellers Protection Association.

The creation of the United Kingdom Van Dwellers Protection Association (UKVDPA), later to become the Showmen's Guild Of Great Britain and Ireland, in 1889 was a pivotal moment for the travelling fairground community. Forged in response to the legislative attack of George Smith and various Movable Dwellings Bills, the Association provided a unified platform from which showmen could combat other threats to their livelihood and nomadic way of life. In

[196] Mayall, *Gypsy Travellers,* p. 144.
[197] Lord Allendale, 'Movable Dwellings Bill' (House of Lords Debate 22nd February 1911, Vol 7 CC97-110 97), p. 3.
[198] Lord Allendale, 'Movable Dwellings Bill' (House of Lords Debate 22nd February 1911, Vol 7 CC97-110 97), p. 3.

response to these threats Tom Norman summarised the feelings of showmen and stated "we want combination, amalgamation and protection, and the sooner the better… other public bodies have their protection association, why not showmen?".[199] He added his support for such amalgamation was based on "the old adage 'united we stand and divided we fall'".[200] He was not alone for in the first eight months of the organisation's inception it boasted 470 members, but as generally only the leading showman of each family would sign up, this figure represents far more families.[201] This figure continued to rise; by March 24th 1891 the membership was between 500-600, and by January 1893 stood at over 700.[202] The UKVDPA also articulated a united showland identity, demonstrating to settled society and authority this group were capable, organised and respectable, not the helpless rabble in need of reform Smith portrayed. James Dean suggested the Association was "the only way they had of showing to the other portions of the world what sort of people they were".[203] It demonstrated "they were quite able to look after their own interests and they did not require interfering with at all".[204] This section will analyse how showmen understood their identity, and how others perceived the group, during the period of legislative debate immediately after the formation of the Association. This will result in a solid understanding of the position of this group and their relations with wider society at the start of the twentieth century. The section will also explore the stated purposes of the fledgling Showmen's Guild , what it sought to achieve, and the structure of the organisation.

In addition to the Movable Dwellings Bill the UKVDPA realised a combined position afforded them opportunities to oppose local by-laws which threatened their livelihoods. For this purpose a Leicester solicitor, Mr Watson-Wright, was appointed as legal adviser to represent showpeople.[205] On a national level it was deemed necessary to appoint a Parliamentary Agent

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[199] Tom Norman, 'Showmen Combine', *The Era* (October 17th, 1891), p. 7.
[200] Tom Norman, 'Showmen Combine', *The Era* (October 17th, 1891), p. 7.
[201] 'Meeting Of Showmen, *The Era* (October 17th, 1891), p. 7.
[202] 'Van Dwellers Association', *The Era* (November 14th, 1891), p. 16. 'Van Dwellers Association – Second Annual Meeting', *The Era* (January 28th, 1893), p. 3.
[203] James Dean, 'Van Dwellers Association', *The Era* (November 14th, 1891), p. 16.
[204] James Dean, 'Van Dwellers Association', *The Era* (November 14th, 1891), p. 16.
[205] Van Dwellers Association – Second Annual Meeting', *The Era* (January 28th, 1893), p. 3.

who would monitor parliament for Bills with the potential to affect the livelihood and lifestyle of Association members.[206] The unification of showpeople was not without issue, for although member families shared a livelihood and nomadic existence they were also in competition with each other. F.T. Salva recognised this and acknowledged "Everyone amongst them was bound to fight for his living" but reminded members "when they met in that association all these feelings should be buried and they must all stand up for their rights… for their homes and their wheels".[207]

The stated purpose of the organisation was "To watch any attempt at legislation affecting the business of showmen and van dwellers in general, and to take such proceedings in parliamentary and other matters as the association may deem advisable".[208] It was recognised agitation against the Movable Dwellings Bill "brought them together and had taught them the necessity of union…Just as a risk of a burglar breaking into their house made them look after the bars and bolts".[209] Despite the successful campaign against the Bill, James Dean recognised the "necessity of continuing to present a firm front to our common enemy", and believed the enemies of showland were greater than George Smith's proposed legislation.[210] Dean regarded the primary object of the UKVDPA was to maintain security; "to protect our wives and families and the sanctity of our hearths and homes from the prying eyes of a curious, and perhaps insolent and tipsy, village constable".[211] Dean believed local authorities and police forces presented a threat, and this concern would have been magnified should Smith's Bill have granted police powers of entry.

Before considering how wider society, local authorities, and national government perceived the showland community, it is vital to first assess how they perceived and articulated their own

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[206] Van Dwellers Association – Second Annual Meeting', *The Era* (January 28th, 1893), p. 3.
[207] 'Fourth Annual Meeting of Van Dwellers Association', *The Era* (January 26th, 1895), p. 20.
[208] 'Van Dwellers Association', *The Era* (November 14th, 1891), p. 16.
[209] Henry C. Stephens M.P, 'Van Dwellers Association – Second Annual Meeting', *The Era* (January 28th, 1893), p. 3.
[210] James Dean, 'Van Dwellers Association – Second Annual Meeting', *The Era* (January 28th, 1893), p. 3.
[211] James Dean, 'Van Dwellers Association – Second Annual Meeting', *The Era* (January 28th, 1893), p. 3.

identity and place within society; particularly how they *wanted* to be understood. The most frequently expressed element of identity during the 1890s was their perception of themselves as a distinct class; in his ‘Address To Fellow Travellers’ Joe Caddick expressed the concern the proposed Bill would “ultimately affect our very existence as a class”.[212] The use of this term to describe the community varies from referring to showpeople as an economic or social class. The decision to form an organised association for showpeople was prompted by a desire to be recognised in the same way as “other classes of the working population”.[213] This demonstrates showpeople wished to be considered workers and not judged purely on their itinerancy, meaning “instead of being looked upon with contempt they would then be looked upon with respect and esteem”.[214] However some showpeople did not wish to compared to the working class. Alice Tyler considered the manner she kept her home and raised her children was evidence she aspired to a “higher level” than the working class.[215] In addition to believing themselves superior to the sedentary working classes, the defeat of the Movable Dwellings Bill gave some showpeople cause to boast nomadism afforded them freedom from interference by police and authorities; intrusions settled workers had to endure.[216]

The class identity of travelling showfolk is complicated further as the term ‘class’ was used broadly in the nineteenth century, sometimes referring to a specific cultural, or even racial, identity instead of economic or social distinction. Protests against Smith’s Bill claimed the Government had “no right to treat them [showmen] as an alien class”.[217] According to the UKVDPA, despite their itinerant lifestyle, showpeople “were entitled to all the rights of citizenship”.[218] To prove this showpeople stated despite their commercial nomadism many were

[212] Joe Caddick, ‘Address To Fellow Travellers’, *The Era* (December 27th, 1890), p. 15.
[213] James Dean, *The Era* (November 14th ,1891), p. 16.
[214] James Dean, *The Era* (November 14th ,1891), p. 16.
[215] This comment was made in response to claims by George Smith that only through his Movable Dwellings Bill could showpeople be considered equivalent to the working class. Alice Tyler, *The Era* (January 24th ,1891), p. 17.
[216] *The Era* (January 26th ,1895), p. 20.
[217] ‘Van Dwellers Protection League – Meeting Between Members and George Smith Thursday 8th October’, *The Era* (October 10th, 1891), p. 17.
[218] ‘Van Dwellers Protection League – Meeting Between Members and George Smith Thursday 8th October’, *The Era* (October 10th, 1891), p. 17.

property owners and rate payers, and thus had the same rights as settled citizens.[219] Alice Tyler added “as a class we are as much interested in the political and social welfare of the country as the average middle-class population”.[220] Showpeople who did not have investments in settled property also contributed to society, for although they did not pay rent or rates “they paid in the shape of ground rent… a great deal more than most people who lived in the towns”.[221] As was often the case with the relationship between the fairground community and wider society, the former was an victim of presumption and misunderstanding. As the only contact with them was on the tober it was assumed showfolk were entirely nomadic. The fact showpeople owned property and were entitled to the same civil rights as settled families and ratepayers was unknown. Property ownership was a feature differentiating showpeople from canal-boat dwellers who were previous targets of legislation. The van-dwelling show-person could not be compared to canal boat dwellers, for the latter were employees renting accommodation, whereas the majority of showpeople owned their vans.[222]

This latter point highlights an important facet of how showpeople often articulated their identity; as with many groups they defined themselves by what they were not. When showfolk came to define their cultural identity, they were primarily concerned with separating themselves from nomadic communities they deemed to be disreputable; non-Romany Gypsies and casual tinkers. James Dean identifies showpeople as “travellers and van dwellers, but not Gypsies” and stated showpeople “justly claim to be as law-abiding a community as any other class of Her Majesty’s subjects” – implicitly suggesting the Gypsies he is keen to disassociate with were considered criminal.[223] A major theme of this thesis is the failure of authorities and wider society to distinguish between showpeople and other itinerant groups, resulting in the former being targeted by legislation not intended for them. Alice Tyler was of the opinion this

[219] Alice Tyler, ‘Letter to the Editor’, *The Era* (February 14th ,1891), p. 17.
[220] Alice Tyler, ‘Letter to the Editor’, *The Era* (February 14th ,1891), p. 17.
[221] *The Era* (October 10th ,1891), p. 17.
[222] Captain Lancy, ‘Meeting at Waverly Market To Protest The Bill’, *The Era* (January 17th, 1891), p. 17.
[223] James Dean, ‘Letter To Editor’, *The Era* (December 27th ,1890), p. 15.

homogenous and negative view of travellers was in part due to the spreading of "vile slanders" by George Smith.[224] The prevalence of his campaign, primarily to justify his Bill, meant people "naturally came to the conclusion… all who live in a movable dwelling are nothing more than rogues, thieves, vagabonds".[225] Smith was accused by the UKVDPA of ignoring respectable travellers and choosing the worst cases to support his case for reform, behaviour which furthered the misconception of showpeople as a uncivilised class and established a homogenised view of van-dwellers.[226] Part of the intention of the Van Dwellers Protection Association was to prove showpeople were respectable and not, in the words of F.T. Salva, "that miserable lot of travelling tinkers crawling along the roadside".[227]

The formation of an association was also motivated by a desire to be identified by wider society as reputable businessman and overcome the stereotype of showpeople being swindlers and cheats. F.T. Salva stated the tricks and tactics used by showpeople to generate income compared to sales techniques utilised by mainstream retailers. He remarks "reputable" and "honest" traders would label a garment at 1 Shilling but add 11 ¾d in small print, meaning the customer paid almost double the price they initially observed.[228] Salva remarked these salesmen "got them [the customer] into their clutches and skinned them just as much as the travelling photographer on the fairground".[229] Whilst this statement acknowledges the object for both traders was to relieve the customer of as much money as possible, it does beg the question if the tactics and objective were the same, why was the technique considered capitalist enterprise for the shopkeeper, and trickery for the fairground trader? It seems, as with other issues regarding showland identity, despite similarities the nomadism of showpeople resulted in them being tarnished with the disreputable perception of itinerancy. Salva commented in contrast to the low opinion held of showland traders, there was "no room for idlers in our business", life on the

[224] Alice Tyler, 'Letter To The Editor', *The Era* (February 14th, 1891), p. 17.
[225] Alice Tyler, 'Letter To The Editor', *The Era* (February 14th, 1891), p. 17
[226] 'Showman's Protection Organisation', *The Era* (February 14th, 1891), p. 17.
[227] F.T. Salva, 'First Annual Meeting of the United Kingdom Van Dwellers Protection Association', *The Era* (January 30th, 1892), p. 17.
[228] F.T. Salva, 'Fourth Annual Meeting of Van Dwellers Association', *The Era* (January 26th, 1895), p. 20.
[229] F.T. Salva, 'Fourth Annual Meeting of Van Dwellers Association', *The Era* (January 26th, 1895), p. 20.

tobers required long hours and hard graft to make a living.[230] Salva remarked far from a vulnerable people who needed the aid of settled society through legislation, showpeople should be viewed as “a body of thorough businessmen who were quite able to take care of themselves”.[231]

Salva emphasised showpeople had a significant relationship with the sedentary population and functioned as educators. He considered their shows “the museums and art galleries of the working classes” and showpeople “the instructors and disciplinarians of the rough and unlicked masses”.[232] He suggested “the rough town or country lad receives from us demonstrative object lessons in natural history, art, and science… his slumbering intellect is aroused perhaps for the first time”.[233] Whilst the primary function of travelling shows was to entertain rather than educate, their success depended upon encouraging the curiosity and fascination of the public – objectives often achieved by demonstrating new technological achievements, or by referencing historical events. Salva also considered shows to be a space where public order was enforced; “perhaps the only places where he [the working-class man] is made to behave himself”.[234] Showpeople were not only educators and a restraining influence, Salva suggests the fairground provided escape for workers from “their humdrum dull life” , and provided a platform for moral improvement by involving preachers and providing an alternative to “slums and gin palaces”.[235] By emphasising the important social functions of the fair and their positive influence on communities, Salva demonstrates the proprietors of fairs did not require legislation or deserve persecution. Joseph Ball summarised the important relationship between showpeople and the

[230] F.T. Salva, ‘Movable Dwellings Bill – Meeting in Manchester’, *The Era* (February 28th, 1895), p. 17.
[231] F.T. Salva, ‘First Annual Meeting of United Kingdom Van Dwellers Protection Association’, *The Era* (January 30th, 1892), p. 17.
[232] F.T. Salva, ‘Movable Dwellings Bill – Meeting In Manchester’, *The Era* (February 28th, 1891), p. 17.
[233] F.T. Salva, ‘Movable Dwellings Bill – Meeting In Manchester’, *The Era* (February 28th, 1891), p. 17.
[234] F.T. Salva, ‘Movable Dwellings Bill – Meeting In Manchester’, *The Era* (February 28th, 1891), p. 17.
[235] F.T. Salva, ‘Fourth Annual Meeting of Van Dwellers Association’, *The Era* (January 26th, 1895), p. 20.

working class, suggesting the former "ministered to the amusement of the working classes" and the latter "had sympathy with the showmen".[236]

Nomadism was a trait by which the showland community was most frequently defined and was used to compare travellers with recognised 'outside' groups. A good example of this is how George Smith described showland children as "little nomads", "roadside wanderers and ditch-bank Arabs", terminology which portrayed showpeople as vulnerable and needing assistance, but also drew parallels with an exotic 'alien' culture .[237] Caddick suggests the proposed Bill was evidence legislators believed showfolk "cannot be trusted to be left alone in the enjoyment of our own homes" and were thus "to be treated like beasts in a stable".[238] James Dean at the first meeting of the UKVDPA stated that, as issues of education and sanitation were already covered by Section 9 of the 1885 Housing of the Working Classes Act and Section 9 of the 1875 Public Health Act, the Bill's primary motivation was police registration of van dwellers.[239] Dean infers because such registration was only to be applied to the travelling community, they were considered a "disgraced" or "dangerous" class.[240]

In contrast to the low opinion of showfolk demonstrated by authority figures, 'flatties' who travelled alongside showpeople thought highly of them. E. Fletcher, a waxwork exhibitor based in Swansea, stated of 120 showfolk he knew in South Wales over a period of twenty years he recalled only one case of a charge of theft being brought against a showman, and no convictions regarding drunkenness.[241] James Fish, who travelled with showpeople as a mission agent, regarded them as "a class whom he regarded it an honour to shake by the hand".[242] George

[236] Joseph Ball as quoted in 'The Movable Dwellings Bill', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* (March 31st ,1891), p. 6. Also quoted in 'Meeting of Showmen, Van Dwellers and General Public on Wanstead Flats to Protest Movable Dwellings Bill', *The Era* (April 4th, 1891), p. 16.
[237] Joe Caddick, 'Letter To The Editor', *The Era* (December 27th, 1890), p. 15.
[238] Joe Caddick, 'Address To Fellow Travellers', *The Era* (December 27th, 1890), p. 15.
[239] James Dean, 'First Annual Meeting of the United Kingdom Van Dwellers Protection Association', *The Era* (January 30th, 1892), p. 17.
[240] James Dean, 'First Annual Meeting of the United Kingdom Van Dwellers Protection Association', *The Era* (January 30th, 1892), p. 17.
[241] E. Fletcher, *The Era* (February 7th, 1891), p. 17.
[242] James W. Fish, 'The Movable Dwellings Bill', *The Era* (January 31st, 1891), p. 17.

Smith implied travellers were troublesome for local authorities, stating their tendency to be omitted from census records was evidence of their intentional avoidance of local authorities who were pursuing them for crimes they had committed.[243] Smith does not acknowledge the transience of this community makes it plausible their omissions from the census were a result of them being on the road when it was taken. In contrast to Smith's opinion, local authorities and police officials reported good relations with the showland community. The clerk of Nottingham Market for nineteen years who had considerable contact with showpeople through the annual Goose Fair reported only twice in this time had he taken proceedings against them and commented he found showfolk to be well conducted.[244] Reverend J.H. Swinstead also commented upon the behaviour of travelling showpeople, stating "their living depended on their politeness. If they came with angry voice and swearing words their show would not be filled with the people they wanted. They wanted the monied people".[245] It did not make good business sense to get a reputation for behaving poorly; as Swinstead suggests it was necessary to make themselves agreeable to all classes of people and to authorities.[246] Misinformation about travellers, and in particular travelling showpeople, often resulted in incorrect assumptions becoming accepted as fact and used to legitimise persecution. Reverend Thomas Horne stated "about the showman and his wife and children, and the life they lead, they know nothing or have just enough knowledge that is so highly dangerous".[247]

Of paramount importance to showpeople during this period was to be recognised as business-people, and the support the UKVDPA received from companies which dealt with showfolk justified this recognition. FT. Salva refers to railway companies who transported shows, and particularly to businesses which produced rides.[248] The requisites for the fairground business

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[243] George Smith, 'Report From The Select Committee On The Temporary Dwellings Bill' (House Of Commons, 11th August 1887), p.21.
[244] Mr. Radford, 'Van Dwellers Protection League', *The Era* (October 10th, 1891), p. 17.
[245] Reverend J.H. Swinstead, 'Fourth Annual Meeting of Van Dwellers Association', *The Era* (January 26th, 1895), p. 20.
[246] Reverend J.H. Swinstead, 'Fourth Annual Meeting of Van Dwellers Association', *The Era* (January 26th, 1895), p. 20.
[247] Reverend Thomas Horne, as cited in Murphy, *History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 24.
[248] F.T. Salva, 'Movable Dwellings Bill – Meeting In Manchester', *The Era* (February 28th, 1891), p. 17.

"constituted the staple industry of [Kings} Lynn"; for addition to the custom generated by Lynn Mart Fair, Savages of Kings Lynn made centre engines and rides, and employed over four hundred men.[249] Frederick Savage presided over a meeting of showpeople on Wednesday 18th February 1891 and stated in thirty years of business he found showpeople to be equally as trustworthy and respectable as his other clients, commenting they had invested many thousands of pounds in his equipment, and their payments were always regular .[250] Mr Robert Tidman, whose Norwich firm constructed portable steam engines for powering fairground organs and rides, echoed Savage's opinions and said he had always found showpeople to be honest and respectable.[251] The fact manufacturers dealt with showpeople over such a long period of time and involving large capital indicates they recognised them as legitimate business-people. These companies put great trust in showpeople by allowing them to purchase expensive machinery gradually, an agreement which demonstrates these businesses acknowledged the seasonal nature of the fairground industry and the fluctuating economic position it created for proprietors. In addition to manufacturing industries, showpeople also forged relations with merchants to provide provisions for man, beast and engine when passing through. If showfolk were as untrustworthy as some portrayed them, they would have been unable to develop the necessary business networks to support their enterprise. Chief Constable of Nottingham Samuel Stephens stated showpeople's "business transactions seldom form the subject matter of complaint, and in that respect, they compare favourably with the ordinary residents of the district in which they are periodically located".[252]

However, the acknowledgement of showpeople as respectable professionals did not always result in approval from settled society. Salva notes that following the successful dismissal of The Movable Dwellings Bill, opposition to fairs emerged again in the form of legislation passed by

[249] F.T. Salva, 'Movable Dwellings Bill – Meeting In Manchester', *The Era* (February 28th, 1891), p. 17 & F.T. Salva, 'First Annual Meeting of United Kingdom Van Dwellers Protection Association', *The Era* (January 30th ,1892), p. 17.
[250] Frederick Savage, 'The Movable Dwellings Bill', *The Era* (January 31st, 1891), p. 17.
[251] Robert Tidman, 'The Movable Dwellings Bill', *The Era* (January 31st, 1891), p. 17.
[252] Chief Constable Samuel Stephens, 'The Movable Dwellings Bill', *The Era* (January 31st, 1891), p. 17.

local councils.[253] These bodies denied showpeople access to land and attempted to pass by-laws which prevented the erection of temporary structures on public thoroughfares.[254] Such measures were the result of the belief the annual fair impacted negatively on local business, and Salva's comments about the fair providing alternative entertainment for the working class suggests fairs did disrupt the regular trade enjoyed by local hostelries. Contrastingly however, the fair would attract visitors, and public houses and eateries would have benefitted as the fairground primarily catered to the public's appetite for amusement rather than for sustenance. This debate would continue to influence local legislation into the twentieth century and will be explored in other chapters.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced and discussed some of the main themes of this thesis. Through a review of Victorian attitudes to race and identity it is clear the nineteenth century usage of the term 'race' was much broader and fluid than contemporary understandings. During the Victorian period racial terms were used by individuals such as Mayhew to describe groups, which although economically and socially distinct, were not of an ethnically different background – race was then a synonym for culture or class. In nineteenth century discourse and in interviews conducted by R.D. Sexton a century later, showpeople continually refer to themselves as a *class* of British citizen, and whilst acknowledging their unique culture and tradition, do not use terms suggestive of identifying as a racial group. This thesis will therefore not discuss this group as a unique race but will focus on elements of culture which defined showpeople and often marginalised them. The key feature separating this group from wider society, usually with negative connotations, was their nomadism. Whilst not always the case, as many showfolk owned property, and a commercial necessity as much as a cultural choice, itinerancy was the feature by which the showland community was judged above any other.

253 F.T. Salva, 'Fourth Annual Meeting of Van Dwellers Association', *The Era* (January 26th ,1895), p. 20.
254 F.T. Salva, 'Fourth Annual Meeting of Van Dwellers Association', *The Era* (January 26th ,1895), p. 20.

The nineteenth century saw significant changes to the fairground industry. Most physically noticeable were changes to the type of amusements offered by showpeople. This period saw a transition from simple shows and primitive mechanical amusements to grander and complex spectacles incorporating new technological elements, and larger, steam powered, mechanical rides. Another significant development was the relationship between travelling showpeople and local authorities. A continued belief that fairs caused social upheaval and economic disruption meant when the Fairs Act of 1871 was passed many councils took the opportunity to abolish charter fairs. The result in most cases was fairs reappeared on private land through public support. The subsequent impact of this is the corporations bent on removing fairs sought other ways of shutting them down, eventually leading to the creation of various local by-laws. The constant battle between showpeople attempting to hold fairs without restrictions and local authorities wishing to exercise control over public gatherings is one of the most important elements of this thesis, as through this dialogue the perception of this marginal community is demonstrated and developed.

Attempts at national legislation were the most influential force on travelling showpeople during the late nineteenth century. Although unsuccessful, the Movable and Temporary Dwellings Bills threatened to impact on the way of life and livelihood of showland. Select Committee Reports indicate legislators, except for George Smith, recognised showpeople as separate from Gypsies and other nomads and not requiring the proposed legislation. Despite this, clauses within the legislation were designed to apply to all nomadic peoples, showfolk included. This is evidence of one of the most apparent contradictions in the perceptions of showpeople; they were acknowledged as separate from other travellers, but so little was commonly known about them, this difference was overlooked. The potential threat of these Bills was enough to inspire a combined movement of opposition from showpeople and other sympathetic organisations. The most important outcome was the formation of the United Kingdom Van Dwellers Protection Association, later to become the Showmen's Guild. This amalgamation transformed a fractured and non-political community into a united front of opposition; showpeople were now visible as

an institutional body with parliamentary representation. The opposition to the Movable Dwellings Bill fronted by the UKVDPA focussed on articulating the respectable and professional identity of travelling showpeople. This was accomplished by drawing on testimony from figures of note from the police, local authorities and business, who attested the 'showmen class' was a law abiding and reputable one, requiring no legislation. In addition, showpeople wrote articles appearing in the national press refuting the claims regarding unsanitary living and poor educational support that legislators such as George Smith had used to justify proposed Bills.

Through technological development, changing relations with local authorities, and amalgamation borne out of opposition to legislative challenges, showpeople on the eve of the Great War were in a different position from that of fifty years previously. Through the creation of the UKVDPA they had become a recognisable and politically active body, being able to effectively lobby and protest legislation perceived to threaten their livelihood or lifestyle. In successfully defeating the first incarnation of the Bill, and successfully obtaining exemption from later versions, the Association proved showpeople to be a capable group of organised businessmen, and further disproved the perception of their class as one of uncivilised vagrants. Despite these important developments, issues still existed for this community. Animosity towards fairs still existed and created tensions between showpeople and authority, the latter consistently trying to find ways to regulate the former. Wider society's perception of showfolk was varied, and because of this a clear understanding of the community's identity and place in British society remained uncertain. These issues of belonging and identity, and a tenuous relationship with authority, were exacerbated by the strains of the First World War and this forms the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter II – New Opportunities and New Challenges; Regulation, Recreation, and Travelling Showpeople during The Great War 1914-1918.

Introduction

The late nineteenth century saw significant changes for travelling showpeople; in their relationship with local and national authorities, and their internal organisation. By 1914 they were a recognised Guild, had successfully opposed the Temporary Dwellings Bill, and established parliamentary representation to monitor potentially harmful legislation. The Showmen's Guild used their newspaper – *The World's Fair* –to communicate with each other, and to articulate the activities and agenda of showland to a wider audience. Showpeople continued to interact with regional authorities, lobbying legislation harmful to fairs, or the fairground community. Through this, showpeople portrayed themselves as respectable businessmen and women, and expected fair treatment by wider society and authorities. However, this relative stability was challenged by the cataclysm of the First World War. This chapter will examine how war disrupted the lives of travelling showpeople, threatened their livelihood, and fractured established relationships with local and national authorities. The atmosphere of conflict also instigated a national reassessment of identity, and demonstration of patriotism and duty became necessary to prove belonging.

For travelling showpeople, proving British identity had been a necessary defence against potentially punitive legislation. For the wider populous however, the pre-war era was one of complacency regarding national identity. Winter suggests "there was little reason for native-born British people to ask themselves what Englishness was. Instead they simply could chime in with the delightful certainties of Gilbert and Sullivan about who or what was an English man."[1] The chaos of war rendered these certainties unviable. Samuel Hynes states the war was a great

[1] J.M. Winter, 'British National Identity and The First World War' in S.J.D. Green and R.C. Whiting, *The Boundaries of The State in Modern Britain* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996), p. 265.

political and military event, but also "the great imaginative event" which altered the way people thought "not only about war, but about the world, and about culture, and its expressions."[2] The reifying potential of the conflict was framed by rivalry, and George Robbs suggests a war "that pitted nation against nation and involved far flung empires necessarily heightened its participants' awareness of their own national and racial identities".[3] The unclear features of pre-war British identity were "brought into relief" by conflict.[4] Edward Said theorises "opposites and 'others'" must be created to construct an identity which becomes "subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their [the 'others'] differences from 'us'".[5] The First World War provided clear 'others', against which a British national identity could be created. This was a necessary reaction to the "emotion of a combined fear and hatred in war" which made it necessary "to find – and invent where it did not exist – the figure of the enemy" to release these feelings.[6]

In addition to the German enemy various internal 'others', real and manufactured, were also identified. The strain of war caused "increased resentment and increasing internal enmity" which Gregory suggests manifested "as sharpened class and ethnic antagonism."[7] Often the external and internal enemy were intertwined as enmity towards foreigners "spilled over into enmity towards Jews, the Irish and other minority groups".[8] This fragmentation had the potential to threaten communities already in a marginal position, including travelling showpeople. Widespread anti-German antagonism resulted in broader opposition; Robb suggests "in rallying to cries of 'nation' and 'race', the line between anti-German sentiment and

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[2] Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined – The First World War and English Culture* (Pimlico, London, 1992), p. ix.

[3] George Robb, *British Culture and The First World War* (Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke, 2002), p.5.
[4] Winter, 'British National Identity and The First World War', p. 262.
[5] Edward Said, *Orientalism,* (Penguin Modern Classics, London, 2003 – First Published 1978), p. 332.
[6] Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United – Popular Responses to the outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012), p. 98.
[7] Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War – British Society in the First World War* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009), p. 7.
[8] David Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda in First World War Britain – The National War Aims Committee and Civilian Morale* (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2012), p. 169.

hatred of all foreigners was easily erased".[9] Gregory agrees whilst anti-German behaviour was preeminent, "the rhetoric of the enemy within began to metastasise into a more generalised attack on unpopular minorities".[10] Travelling showpeople through their nomadism and livelihood were visibly different to settled society, and therefore could be targets for wartime antipathy.

As well as providing new opposing identities, the First World War changed how national identity was defined. Pennel suggests "citizenship was no longer defined by character, community, or law, but by blood and ethnicity".[11] Winter states the conflict instigated belief in new values defining, 'Englishness': "masculine 'decency', moral rectitude and martial values".[12] However, the idealised national identity did not reflect the diversity of Edwardian Britain.[13] David Cesarini states many soldiers "died for an England and an idea of Englishness that remained stubbornly impermeable to the particular needs and aspirations of the varied peoples which comprised the country's true population".[14] Concepts of Englishness were reformed and their significance reinforced by the atmosphere of conflict. Winter remarks the inter-war period saw a return to "the mythologies of a supposedly long established and immutable 'Englishness'".[15] This return to notions of 'Deep England' was central to political and cultural conservatism of the inter war period, and this movement presented an obstacle to any group perceived to be different. This process of marginalisation was cemented by the wartime emphasis on a 'national' army defending a "national way of life".[16]

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[9] Panikos Panayi, 'Anti-German Riots in Britain During the First World War', in Panikos Panayi *Racial Violence In Britain in the Nineteenth Century* (Leicester University Press, London, 1996), p. 77. Robb, *British Culture and The First World War,* p. 9.
[10] Gregory, *The Last Great War,* p. 238.
[11] Pennell, *A Kingdom United,* p. 117.
[12] Winter, 'British National Identity and The First World War', p. 262.
[13] Robb, *British Culture and The First World War,* p. 5.
[14] David Cesarini, as cited in Robb, *British Culture and The First World War,* p. 11.
[15] Winter, 'British National Identity and The First World War', p. 266.
[16] Aviel Roshwald and Richard Stites, *European Culture in The Great War – The Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914-1918* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999), pp. 346-347.

The overall showland experience of the First World War was not explicitly one of defending or attaining identity. Most discourse forming the relationship between state, society and showpeople was, like many domestic issues caused by war, related to challenges of invasive legislation. The war necessitated unprecedented levels of state intervention and control, and these mechanisms were incompatible with the irregular lifestyle and livelihood of travelling showpeople. Whilst increased Government restrictions impacted adversely on numerous groups, the itinerant fairground community were marginalised by legislation which demonstrated ignorance and indifference to the characteristics and needs of the community. The Showmen's Guild , in responding to this legislative challenge, affirmed its role as serving the interests of the showland community. In this way the conflict caused the community to become more introvert: when faced with the destructive potential of war, the Guild reacted to protect the fairground industry, community, and identity.

During wartime, individuals or groups recognised as carrying out their duty and making sacrifice in the national service were accepted as British citizens, and those deemed opposed to the war effort were demonised as un-patriotic and un-English. Serving in the armed forces was perceived to be the ultimate sacrifice, but this placed more pressure on civilians to contribute.[17] Pennell suggests "the morality of the home front had to be exemplary in order to make the soldier sacrifice worthwhile".[18] Consequently questions arose about whether civilians enjoying themselves during wartime were immoral or disrespectful; could amusement and patriotism co-exist? These questions bore relevance to the fairground community who engaged in this wider moral debate, trying to respect the seriousness and sacrifice of conflict, whilst maintaining 'business as usual' to sustain their livelihood.[19] Opponents of leisure during wartime viewed those enjoying football matches or theatre performances as slackers, unwilling to perform their national duty.[20] However the continuance of entertainments was also encouraged to maintain

[17] Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda in First World War Britain,* p. 173.
[18] Pennell, *A Kingdom United,* p. 83.
[19] Pennell, *A Kingdom United,* p. 220.
[20] Robb, *British Culture and The First World War,* p. 169 – 170.

the morale of the civilian population, and in particular of war workers.[21] Showpeople were also confronted with widespread opposition to perceived profiteering. Pennell notes "those who sought to benefit financially from the unique wartime economic conditions were highlighted as enemies of the national cause".[22] Profiteering was demonised as a crime of the wealthy committed at the expense of the poor, behaviour "corrosive of community solidarity".[23] It is important to assess to what extent the provision of outdoor entertainment was considered acceptable during wartime; to what extent fairground proprietors were recognised as supplying a demand, or accused of extorting patrons at the expense of the national cause.

Monger identifies three different forms of patriotism and duty performed by citizens: adversarial patriotism, civic patriotism, and sacrificial patriotism.[24] The former relies on identification of 'others' against which to define a superior national identity; those perceived to be internal adversaries included pacifists, conscientious objectors and striking workers – anyone shirking national duty.[25] Sacrificial patriotism Monger defines as "a willing acceptance of certain sacrifices – food and fuel restrictions, longer working hours – for the good of the community".[26] Finally he considers civic patriotism to be performing national duty – in recognition of belonging to "a national community which provided cherished rights and values".[27] Demonstrating solidarity with the national cause was proved by actions and by a state of mind. Pennell states "civilians were expected to demonstrate stoicism, selflessness, and endurance".[28] These definitions of patriotic behaviour are of significance to this thesis, for if it can be proven fairground families demonstrated these during wartime, then it can be stated they *should* have been included as part of national wartime identity. However, it is important to assess to what extent wider society recognised their contributions, for belonging is dictated by

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[21] Robb, *British Culture and The First World War,* p. 173.
[22] Pennell, *A Kingdom United,* p. 79.
[23] Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda in First World War Britain,* p. 137.
[24] Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda in First World War Britain,* pp. 91-92.
[25] Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda in First World War Britain,* pp. 91-92.
[26] Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda in First World War Britain,* p. 94.
[27] Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda in First World War Britain,* p. 93.
[28] Pennell, *A Kingdom United,* p. 78.

both participation and acceptance. The wartime activities of this community had consequences for their relationship with authorities and wider society in the post-war era. For authorities to pass punitive legislation against a group recognised as having made sacrifices and contributions to the war effort would be unpopular.[29] The war was therefore an opportunity for showpeople to emphasise unity with wider society and improve their relations with authorities. However, the pressures of war gave a new platform for those previously opposed to fairs and public recreations. They could use wartime concerns to further moral agendas, and campaign for the closure of public amusements.

The First World War significantly impacted the travelling fairground community. The disruption wrought on all levels of British society by the war was felt severely by a nomadic community whose lifestyle and livelihood proved incompatible with unprecedented levels of regulation. Legislative pressure resulted in fractured relations between local authorities and showpeople, the former grappling with the complex demands of national government, the latter attempting to protect business and community interests from closure and regulation. The war also provided an opportunity for fairground travellers to demonstrate support for the national cause. By making the same sacrifices and performing the same duty as settled society they could theoretically prove their right to inclusion in British society, but inclusion relied on official and public recognition, and the role of the press and the Showmen's Guild in facilitating this was paramount.

I - "Lamenting the intolerable price of coconuts, and the marksmanship of grenade-trained soldiers"[30] – The Impact Of The War On Travelling Fairs

Total war disrupted British society and transformed the role of Government in controlling everyday life. The lifestyle and livelihood of travelling showpeople was incongruous with the demands of wartime restrictions and often incompatible with systems of state regulation. This

[29] Robb, *British Culture and The First World War,* p. 85.
[30] 'Barnet Fair', *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* (August 14th, 1916), p. 4.

chapter will analyse how the First World War impacted on the lives of fairground travellers, and how this community responded to state attempts to regulate and control some of its more unorthodox citizens.

It is worth noting the Showmen's Guild changed considerably during the war. In 1915 a 'Showman's Fellowship' was set up by Guild members as a benevolent fund for showpeople.[31] This fellowship would deal with charity work leaving the Guild to concentrate on parliamentary issues and legal defence. In 1916 Pat Collins presented plans for another structural change; the division of the Guild into six districts, each with a six-member committee, reporting to a national London office. [32] Collins felt separating local and national issues was more efficient, and reflected the Guild "had overcome all opposition… we are recognised, respected, and treated in a most courteous and friendly manner…our business is now a legitimate one".[33] The latter point of acknowledged legitimacy was further enforced by the registration of the Showmen's Guild in 1917 as a Trade Association.[34] All these efforts were designed to improve running of the Guild and allow it to support a larger number of members, possibly in response to the wartime decline in membership; the *World's Fair* repeatedly called for showpeople to take a more active role in supporting the Guild in its efforts to challenge wartime legislation.[35] Splitting the running of the Guild into regional districts allowed more intimate relationships to develop between local authorities and resident Guild members, whilst registration as a Trade Association emphasised the Guild's demands to be treated as businessmen. The formation of a Showman's Fellowship is suggestive of a community who wished to be self-reliant in supporting each other through hardship, and this is reflective of the close-knit families the Guild constituted. In a sense however, by looking inwards for benevolent support rather than reaching out, the distance

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[31] 'What We Think: Fellowship', *The World's Fair* (December 11th, 1915), p. 17.
[32] 'The Showmen's Guild: Opportune Time for Re-Organisation', *The World's Fair* (December 9th, 1916), p. 1.
[33] 'The Showmen's Guild : Opportune Time for Re-Organisation', *The World's Fair* (December 9th, 1916), p. 1.
[34] 'Guild Notes', *The World's Fair* (November 24th, 1917), p. 8.
[35] 'Are Showmen Businessmen?: A Plea for more Interest in the Affairs of Showland', *The World's Fair* (May 15th, 1915), p. 12.
'What We Think: The Guild', *The World's Fair* (September 8th, 1917), p. 13.

between fairground communities and wider society was preserved. The point of contact between the showland community remained either the Tober, or in legislative discourse with local and national Government.

A major impact of the war on travelling showpeople was widespread cancellation of fairs. This quelled income for showpeople, and the Guild responded with petitions to local and national authorities. The discourse produced between showpeople and authorities demonstrates how the relationship between the Guild and Government developed during the war. The Guild was optimistic upon the declaration of war; whilst acknowledging the conflict would cause disruption, *The World's Fair* remained confident "where there are people there are bound to be amusements".[36] Initially this optimism was justified, for although business quietened, fairs continued in the autumn of 1914.[37] However, some showpeople originally believed war would prove catastrophic. Anderton and Rowlands, one of the largest concerns in the West Country, were convinced war would end business; and subsequently on the 14th of August placed an advertisement in *The World's Fair* offering for sale three Burrell steam locomotives, presuming they would become redundant.[38] These engines were relatively new and represented a significant investment for the firm; selling them demonstrates how seriously some treated news of war. By 1915 large fairs including Hull, Peterborough, Oxford's Gloucester Green, and the Nottingham Goose Fair were shut down as corporations closed any events involving crowds.[39] Widespread cancellations continued throughout 1916 and 1917; Murphy noted in 1916 out of twenty large Midlands fairs, only three were permitted, and Mitcham fair was the sole midsummer event permitted in the London area.[40]

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[36] 'What We Think: Business', *The World's Fair* (August 15th, 1914), p. 17.
[37] 'What We Think: Afterwards', *The World's Fair* (October 31st, 1914), p. 17.
[38] Kevin Scrivens and Stephen Smith, *Anderton and Rowland's – Illusion and Reality* (Fairground Heritage Trust, Milford Devon, 2008), p. 82.
[39] 'What We Think: Hull Fair', *The World's Fair* (July 17th, 1915), p.17.
Thomas Murphy, *A History of The Showmen's Guild 1889-1948* (World's Fair Ltd, Oldham, 1950), p. 102.
'What We Think: Never Satisfied', *The World's Fair* (May 1st, 1915), p. 17.
It was noted until this cancellation the Goose Fair had been held uninterrupted for four hundred years.
'Nottingham Fair: Pleasure Side Abandoned During the War', *The World's Fair* (July 24th, 1915), p. 9.
[40] Murphy, *A History of The Showmen's Guild,* p. 106.

During 1915 the primary agents responsible for fair closures were local councils and committees; Hull Fair was abandoned following a Markets Committee decision, and cancellation of Goose Fair resulted from a County Council sitting.[41] Alderman Huntsman suggested that to hold Goose Fair was "undesirable" as it would compromise local recruiting, and as the fair would tempt people to spend "needlessly" it was adverse to the "need for national thrift".[42] Hull Markets Committee believed it ill-advised to encourage large gatherings of people.[43] The Showmen's Guild responded by stating urban centres naturally attracted crowds with or without a fair, so cancellation seemed unnecessary.[44] Providing showpeople obeyed lighting restrictions, the Guild saw little reason fairs should be abandoned at cost to showpeople, and disappointment to the public. The Guild also questioned the legality of prohibition; in response to Peterborough Corporation's suspension of the fair *The World's Fair* suggested cancellation was "contravening our Ancient Rights". [45] Peterborough amongst many others was a 'Charter' Fair, which in theory could only be stopped by Royal Decree.[46] Guild Chaplain Thomas Horne similarly protested against Nottingham Council's cancellation of the 1915 Goose Fair, referring to an earlier statement by the Home Office which warned Nottingham Town Clerk "there was not statutory power vested in the Corporation to suspend Goose Fair".[47] No legal action was taken by the Guild, but their protests emphasised their position that although they would yield to regulations of military authorities and the Defence of the Realm Act, they would object to "restrictions or prohibitions imposed by public bodies that are not applicable to other traders".[48] The protestations of showpeople were because they felt their business was the

[41] 'What We Think: Hull Fair', *The World's Fair* (July 17th, 1915), p.17.
'Nottingham Fair: Pleasure Side Abandoned During the War', *The World's Fair* (July 24th, 1915), p. 9.
[42] 'Nottingham Fair: Pleasure Side Abandoned During the War', *The World's Fair* (July 24th, 1915), p. 9.
[43] 'What We Think: Hull Fair', *The World's Fair* (July 17th, 1915), p.17.
[44] 'What We Think: Hull Fair', *The World's Fair* (July 17th, 1915), p.17.
[45] 'Showmen's Ancient Rights: Showmen's Protest in Reference to Peterboro' Fair', *The World's Fair* (October 30th, 1915), p. 17.
[46] 'Showmen's Ancient Rights: Showmen's Protest in Reference to Peterboro' Fair', *The World's Fair* (October 30th, 1915), p. 17.
[47] Thomas Horne – Letter to the editor of the Nottingham Guardian as reproduced in 'The Suspension of Nottingham Goose Fair: A Plea For Re-Consideration', *The World's Fair* (July 24th 1915), p. 9.
[48] 'Showmen's Ancient Rights: Showmen's Protest in Reference to Peterboro' Fair', *The World's Fair* (October 30th, 1915), p. 17.

victim of "invidious selection".[49] Guild President Pat Collins demanded fairs be subject to the same restrictions as theatres and cinemas; "To prohibit us altogether because we happen to be birds of passage was manifestly an injustice".[50] The assumption itinerancy was motivation behind regulations was perhaps a product of established cynicism present within the showland community regarding local authorities. To suggest discrimination between fairs and theatres or cinemas was a result of prejudice fails to admit a clear physical distinction of significance in times of war: the traditional pleasure fair is outside, whereas cinemas and theatres were undercover. The exposed nature of pleasure fairs combined with the threat of aerial attack motivated many closures; among the first were at Kings Lynn and Wisbech in reaction to East Coast Zeppelin raids.[51]

Lands on which fairs were held also became military assets during wartime; Carmarthen fairground was commandeered in 1914 to stable Canadian horses and Bradford fair was relocated in 1915 due to military requisitioning of the land for barracks.[52] Relocation could cause addition problems for showpeople; Dundee's St James' fairground at Fluthers was occupied by the military in 1915 so the fair was relocated to Curthaugh horse track, unsuitable for heavy engines: "many wheels are from a foot to a foot and a half sunk below the surface of the ground".[53] This demonstrates how impacts of the conflict had potential to cause additional problems for an industry which relied on routine, and was vulnerable to delay and accidents. Relocation was not always possible; the annual event held in the Royal Agricultural Hall was cancelled in 1917 as the building was commandeered.[54]

Fairs were also cancelled without any reason being given. In 1914 Pat Collins reminded Nottingham Clerk of the Markets, G.C.A. Austin, the Council had been advised by the Home

[49] Showmen's Ancient Rights: Showmen's Protest in Reference to Peterboro' Fair', *The World's Fair* (October 30th, 1915), p. 17.
[50] Murphy, *A History of The Showmen's Guild,* p. 106.
[51] 'Kings Lynn and Wisbech Fairs Not to be Held', *The World's Fair* (January 30th, 1915), p.1.
[52] 'For Army Recruits', *Western Mail* (December 9th, 1914), p. 9. 'The World's Fairograph', *The World's Fair* (June 26th, 1915), p. 4.
[53] 'Trials of St James' Fair Show-men at Cupar', *Dundee Courier* (August 2nd, 1915), p. 2.
[54] 'No World's Fair at The Agricultural Hall', *The World's Fair* (September 15th, 1917), p.1.

Secretary closing the fair without higher approval would be illegal.[55] However the fair was cancelled; the reason given was apparently showpeople had said it would not be worth opening if they had to meet stipulated lighting restrictions.[56] Horne rejected this, emphasising the Guild stated showpeople would comply with the lighting order and ensure stall fronts and roundabouts were shaded.[57] Murphy suggests the real reason the fair was opposed was "to punish the chairman of a committee for his unwise declaration that his committee held the decision in their own hands without reference… to the council".[58] The result of this political dispute set a dangerous precedent; cancellation of Goose Fair legitimised the closure of others. For Horne the decision was unjustified, and unpatriotic: "Why should our famous Goose Fair be sacrificed upon the alter of Kaiserism? Why give the enemy the victory of knowing that he is paralysing the life of our country and driving us into panic by his persistent policy of frightfulness?"[59] Horne stated the cancellation was an injustice to the soldiers at the front who would not want their families to be miserable, and to the showpeople who "sent their bravest and best into the fighting line", and yet those at home were denied the opportunity to continue trading.[60]

In 1916 the Minister of Munitions was granted the power to prohibit any fair considered to "impede or delay the production, repair, or transport of war material or of any work necessary for the successful prosecution of the war".[61] Despite this sanction, local authorities continued to impose their own decisions. In May 1916 Pat Collins received a letter from Oldbury District Council asking him not to hold the annual fair.[62] Collins had already made arrangements with

[55] 'Nottingham Fair: How Showman's Interests Are Looked After', *The World's Fair* (September 12th, 1914), p.4.
[56] 'Nottingham Fair: Pleasure Side Abandoned During the War', *The World's Fair* (July 24th, 1915), p. 9.
[57] Thomas Horne – Letter to the editor of the Nottingham Guardian as reproduced in 'The Suspension of Nottingham Goose Fair: A Plea For Re-Consideration', *The World's Fair* (July 24th, 1915), p. 9.
[5858] Murphy, *A History of the Showmen's Guild* , p. 93.
[59] Thomas Horne – Letter to the editor of the Nottingham Guardian as reproduced in 'The Suspension of Nottingham Goose Fair: A Plea For Re-Consideration', *The World's Fair* (July 24th, 1915), p. 9.
[60] Thomas Horne – Letter to the editor of the Nottingham Guardian as reproduced in 'The Suspension of Nottingham Goose Fair: A Plea For Re-Consideration', *The World's Fair* (July 24th, 1915), p. 9.
[61] 'The Holding of Fairs' from *The London Gazette*, reproduced in *The World's Fair* (August 26th, 1916), p.1.
[62] 'Munitions and the Holding of Fairs' *The World's Fair* (May 20th, 1916), p. 10.

lessees, and sent a letter to the Ministry of Munitions, stating lighting restrictions would be met and in the event of an air raid the site could be cleared quickly and safely.[63] R.V. Vernon, on behalf of the Minister, replied and stated whilst the Minister believed holding a fair after dark in a munitions area always incurred risk, he recognised Collins was doing all he could to minimise this risk, and therefore was "reluctant to interfere unnecessarily with a legitimate business".[64]. Similarly, despite contacting the Ministry of Munitions, showpeople received notice on August 23rd 1916 Hyde Wakes would be cancelled, despite the fact they had already paid rent deposit to the council.[65] The *Manchester Guardian* reported the abandonment came at great detriment to those in the borough who could not afford to travel for recreation and depended on the wakes for holiday amusement, it also impacted on rate payers who had to cover the deficit of the one hundred pounds usually generated by ground rent of the fair.[66] These cases suggest a disconnect between national and local authorities; the latter seemed unaware of the sanctions imposed by the former, and the Ministry were unwilling to counter local decisions.

The relationship between the Showmen's Guild and Ministry of Munitions provides insight into how the showland community interacted with national authority. In November 1916 MP for Walsall, Sir R. Cooper, asked the Minister of Munitions whether he had any evidence to suggest holding fairs interfered with munitions production any more than attendance of theatres or cinemas, and if this was the case were there plans to compensate showpeople whose livelihoods were suffering through closures.[67] The Minister stated "my information is that the holding of fairs is more likely to interfere with the production of war material than more permanent forms of amusements, such as cinemas and theatres", and in addition he was unaware of how the Defence of The Realm Losses Commission would respond to claims for lost earnings.[68] The

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[63] 'Munitions and the Holding of Fairs' *The World's Fair* (May 20th, 1916), p. 10.
[64] 'Munitions and the Holding of Fairs' *The World's Fair* (May 20th, 1916), p. 10.
[65] 'The Abandonment of Hyde Wakes', *The World's Fair* (September 23rd, 1916), p. 4.
[66] 'Hyde Wakes Prohibited – The Town Surprised', *The Manchester Guardian* (September 1st, 1916), p. 10.
[67] 'The Holding of Fairs and Wakes: Questions In Parliament', *The World's Fair* (November 11th, 1916), p. 1.
[68] 'The Holding of Fairs and Wakes: Questions In Parliament', *The World's Fair* (November 11th, 1916), p. 1.

response includes no evidence to support the claims, so it is unclear whether fairs genuinely interrupted munitions production more than settled amusements. Whilst the annual or biannual fair generate large crowds through novelty, this would only be available to off-shift workers for a few days. Permanent amusements would attract fewer people for each performance but would be open most evenings, meaning overall these forms of recreation would present more of a distraction to workers.

The World's Fair in November 1916 accused the Minister of Munitions of treating showpeople unfairly and of not knowing enough about them to form an accurate opinion.[69] To overcome this inaccurate assessment, the Guild sent a deputation of representatives to the Ministry. *The World's Fair* remarked it was necessary to make clear in "facts and figures" the scale of the showland concern, how much capital was at stake, and how many "business men" it involved.[70] The article reminded readers "every effort must be made to fall in with the wishes of the authorities, local and otherwise, and nothing that can be done to meet their wishes must be left undone".[71] 'Memorandum I' submitted to the Ministry disputed the claim "showpeople make the fairs" and "create the holiday atmosphere".[72] It stated the demand for holidays came from tired workers needing recreation; showpeople therefore supplied this demand.[73] The Ministry acknowledged rest periods for munitions workers were beneficial, and the Memorandum emphasises demand for open-air recreation was not fulfilled by theatres or cinemas.[74] This desire was evidenced by the popularity of seaside amusement parks, and the Memorandum argued showpeople could provide outdoor amusement for those unable to travel.[75]

[69] 'In The Barber's Chair: The Minister of Munitions', *The World's Fair* (November 25th, 1916), p. 11.
[70] 'What We Think: Munitions', *The World's Fair* (September 16th, 1916), p. 17.
[71] 'What We Think: Munitions', *The World's Fair* (September 16th, 1916), p. 17.
[72] Memorandum I submitted to the Ministry of Munitions by the Showman' Guild, reproduced in Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 107.
[73] Memorandum I submitted to the Ministry of Munitions by the Showman' Guild, reproduced in Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 107.
[74] Memorandum I submitted to the Ministry of Munitions by the Showman' Guild, reproduced in Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 108.
[75] Memorandum I submitted to the Ministry of Munitions by the Showman' Guild, reproduced in Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 108.

The cancellation of fairs had direct fiscal impacts on fairground proprietors. Smaller concerns were particularly vulnerable to financial trouble; Andrew Smith was over seventy when war broke out, and his wife and daughters depended on his stalls for their income.[76] Although Smith "resorted to collecting old iron and general dealing" to support his family, an accident put him in hospital with two broken legs, as a result two of his daughters were taken into the care of local asylums – the strain of which reputedly drove his wife to drink.[77] This vividly demonstrates how some showpeople lost everything when fairs closed. Often the overheads from buying and maintaining equipment meant they had little capital in reserve and depended on the takings from the next fair to provide for their family. The situation was worsened by irregular and contradictory actions by local authorities, some cancelling fairs while others let them continue. Some corporations announced cancellation at short notice, creating problems for showpeople with prior arrangements. Bureaucratic difficulties were not improved by the Ministry of Munitions having the final decision on whether fairs could be held; again, regulations were not applied uniformly and whilst fairs were prohibited in some munition areas, in other similar locations they continued. The key issue was lack of cohesive communication between national Government, local authorities, and showpeople - often at the expense of the latter. The press acknowledged this confusion, and in July 1916 the *Manchester Guardian* ran an article entitled "Lancashire Wakes As Usual? Decisive Lead From the Government Wanted".[78] Although not always successful, the Showmen's Guild responded to legislative irregularity with organised petition and discussion with the necessary authorities, leaving a precedent for dealing with other wartime issues.

Order 11 of the 1915 Defence of the Realm Act gave the Secretary of State power to require extinguishing of lights, and orders 11a and 12 granted these powers to the Ministry of

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[76] Frances Brown, *Fairfield Folk – A History of The British Fairground and It's People* (Isis Reminiscence Series, Oxford, 2004), pp. 116-117.
[77] Brown, *Fairfield Folk*, pp. 116-117.
[78] 'Lancashire Wakes As Usual? Decisive Lead From the Government Wanted', *The Manchester Guardian* (July 26th, 1916), p. 2.

Munitions and military authorities.[79] Naptha flares and electric arc lighting ubiquitous to travelling fairground rides and stalls were incompatible with these restrictions. The discourse and prosecutions resulting from the lighting order provide evidence of how a marginal group responded to legislation imposed by authorities who did not understand the community, or how the restrictions would impact on business. Initially showpeople feared the ban on lighting after sunset would end travelling fairs. In coastal areas military authorities prohibited all lights "which if unobscured, could be visible from the sea".[80] Although Walton fair continued by candlelight in 1914, coastal fairs were mostly abandoned from 1915 owing to the Zeppelin threat.[81] Lights at a seaside fair resulted in one of the first prosecutions against a showman violating the lighting order; James Cooke was fined 10s and 20s 6d costs for failing to obscure seaward lights on his roundabout in August 1915.[82] To prevent the order impacting inland fairs Thomas Horne presented to the Home Office a system of modifications and screens to ensure no excessive light was emitted from fairground rides and stalls, in theory the order became a matter "of practical treatment by the local authority and the showmen at the fair".[83] However, the numerous showpeople prosecuted suggests either the enforcing of regulations by local authorities, or the application of screening techniques by showpeople, was at fault – evidence reveals it was a combination. The Showmen's Guild in *The Era* advised members to "provide complete dark screening for the top, back and sides of every show, roundabout, shooting saloon, and stall and frames of every kind… No powerful arc lamps; use dark tinted incandescent lamps… co-operate with the authority. Show equal zeal with it to keep well inside all law for public safety, good rule and government. Upon your readiness to carry out the law depends the continuance and welfare of the show business".[84]

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[79]Alexander Pulling C.B., *Manuals of Emergency Legislation: Defence of The Realm Manual* (Published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 5th Edition February 28th 1918), pp.89-91.
[80] 'Illegal Lights at the Seaside', *Liverpool Daily Post* (August 13th, 1915), p. 6.
[81] 'Fairs on the East Coast – Roundabouts Lit By Candles', *The World's Fair* (November 7th 1914), p, 1. 'Kirkcaldy Spring Fair: Important to Scottish Travellers', *The World's Fair* (February 20th, 1915), p, 1.
[82]'Illegal Lights at the Seaside', *Liverpool Daily Post* (August 13th, 1915), p. 6.
[83] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 104.
[84] 'Showman World: Stricter Lighting Orders', *The Era* (September 20th, 1916), p. 21.

Despite warnings many showpeople were summoned for contravention of lighting restrictions; most weekly issues of *The World's Fair* in 1915 and 1916 contain such cases. Some flouted restrictions by using excessive lighting, flare or arc lamps, or failing to screen rides. Pat Collins observed many fairgrounds were full of stall holders operating illegally, noting offences often originated from lights in accommodation and side-stalls rather than rides.[85] Collins warned if such negligence continued fairs would close.[86] However, to operate a profitable fair and obey light restrictions was difficult. The *Yorkshire Evening Post* summarised that "Roundabout proprietors… had great difficulty in shading their lights so that they could not be seen at a distance, and at the same time give sufficient light for their shows to make them pay".[87] In areas of munitions production absolutely no lights could be shown "from half-an-hour after sunset until half-an-hour before sunrise", and showpeople remarked takings from daylight hours barely covered the ground rent.[88]

Showpeople were more likely to fall foul of lighting restrictions than other businesses for although their frequent change of location should not have been an impediment, as except for coastal and munitions areas the lighting order was uniform, in practice this was not the case as regulations varied by locality. Samuel Manning was fined 20s at Colchester for using three flare lamps, and yet claimed he used the same in Bedfordshire without complaint.[89] In addition to inconsistent restrictions, showpeople also faced differing methods of enforcement. One showman was fined 20s for failing to obscure lights whilst waiting for police to inspect them and advise whether they met local regulations.[90] The magistrates clerk "observed that the defendant had been obviously misled, as he should have been told that the lights must be extinguished".[91] Authorities also misinterpreted lighting orders "to mean no lights inside or

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[85] 'The Lighting of Fair Grounds', *The World's Fair* (September 30th, 1916), p.2.
[86] 'The Lighting of Fair Grounds', *The World's Fair* (September 30th, 1916), p.2.
[87] 'Showman's Offence Under The Lighting Order', *Yorkshire Evening Post* (May 15th, 1915), p. 5.
[88] 'Showmen and The Lighting at Fairgrounds: Appeal for the Reduction of Rent', *Yorkshire Evening Post* (August 22nd, 1916), p. 5.
[89] 'The World's Fairograph', *The World's Fair* (September 11th, 1915), p. 4.
[90] 'Lights On Roundabout, Defendant Misled', *The World's Fair* (October 23rd, 1915), p. 11.
[91] 'Lights On Roundabout, Defendant Misled', *The World's Fair* (October 23rd, 1915), p. 11.

outside the amusements on the fair".[92] The Guild feared if unchallenged this would mean the "closing down and ruin of the show industry", and through a deputation led by Thomas Horne to military authorities in Rotherham they proved their recommended system of screening allowed fairs to operate within the restrictions, it was hoped this would set a successful precedent - "what is possible for that town is possible for most towns".[93]

Lighting restrictions were also used to oppose fairs by those with long standing grievances against them. Pat Collins' Walsall fair in 1915 generated a petition from forty residents who suggested the fair close after dark.[94] Local authorities defended the fair; Councillor Evans remarked he observed no light travelling any distance from the fair, and this was confirmed by observations of the Chief Constable, who saw no light until he reached the fairground where he noted rides were "wonderfully screened".[95] Collins satisfied concerns about evacuating the ground in case of emergency, and overall the authorities were satisfied the fair was run in accordance with regulations. [96] Alderman J.N. Cotterell suggested "lighting was the peg on which to hang objections to the fair", Alderman Pearman Smith agreed and referred to "periodical complaints they got about the fair and the market" stating "there were people would like to do away with both".[97] This introduces a significant issue for fairground travellers during the First World War; those with existing grievances would use wartime concerns to further their agenda. The discourse surrounding the 1916 Walsall Easter Fair also introduces another tendency of showland's opponents: to make assumptions. Dr Layton remarked was it was unfair local householders had been indicted for contravening the lighting order when tenants on the

[92] 'Showman World: Stricter Lighting Orders', *The Era* (September 20th, 1916), p. 21.
[93] 'Showman World: Stricter Lighting Orders', *The Era* (September 20th, 1916), p. 21.
[94] 'Fair and Market Lighting – Authorities Determined to Ignore Protests', *Walsall Observer and South Staffordshire Chronicle* (May 13th, 1916), p. 3.
[95] 'Fair and Market Lighting – Authorities Determined to Ignore Protests', *Walsall Observer and South Staffordshire Chronicle* (May 13th, 1916), p. 3.
[96] 'Fair and Market Lighting – Authorities Determined to Ignore Protests', *Walsall Observer and South Staffordshire Chronicle* (May 13th, 1916), p. 3.
[97] 'Fair and Market Lighting – Authorities Determined to Ignore Protests', *Walsall Observer and South Staffordshire Chronicle* (May 13th, 1916), p. 3.

showground breaking the law were immune to prosecution.[98] Aside from the testimony from the Chief Constable proving Collins was *not* contravening the order, the evidence previously discussed demonstrates itinerant showpeople were frequently summoned and fined for failing to abide the conditions of the order.

Showpeople's difficulty adhering to confusing lighting regulations is another example of wartime legislation proving more practical in theory than in application. For permanent businesses, whether a local authority enforced lighting orders similarly to neighbouring areas was immaterial, but for itinerant showpeople irregular implementation of the order frequently resulted in prosecution, either through unawareness or the failure of authorities to openly state the regulations. The latter situation was frequent enough for *The World's Fair* to remind members it was safer to "see the persons in authority before you open... Don't wait for them to come to you…".[99] Lighting restrictions on fairs were borne out of fear the combination of crowds and bright lights could have tragic consequences in the event of aerial attack. The regulations worked, or the danger was less than anticipated, for throughout the conflict only one fair is recorded as being bombed, and although J. Murphy's scenic railways ride was destroyed along with many side-stalls, the fairground was evacuated, and no-one was injured.[100]

In 1916 conscription was introduced in Britain, requiring every eligible male to register for military service. This level of state control was invasive to the settled population, but attempts to regulate the nomadic population, including travelling showpeople, caused additional issues. Issues of the Police Gazette of London listed men considered to be absentees under the military services act, and between 1915 and 1918 one hundred and forty-seven 'Showmen' appeared on these lists.[101] However, this information is problematic; 'Showman' is a broad term, and although in some cases the surname of the absentee does link them to a travelling fair, many

[98] 'Fair and Market Lighting – Authorities Determined to Ignore Protests', *Walsall Observer and South Staffordshire Chronicle* (May 13th, 1916), p. 3.
[99] 'What We Think: Lights Low', *The World's Fair* (May 15th, 1915), p. 17.
[100] 'The Air Raid on the North-East Coast', *The World's Fair* (June 19th, 1915), p. 1.
[101] *Police Gazette of London* accessed through the British Newspaper Archive.

could be theatrical performers or involved with permanent amusements. Equally some of the many absentees listed as 'engine drivers', 'engine cleaners', 'traveller' or even 'labourer' may well have worked on the fairground circuit, if only on a casual basis. The vagueness of recorded occupations makes these lists of limited use, and the figures themselves are problematic; as I will go onto explain, featuring on these lists was no proof of absenteeism, only proving the authorities had no record of registration.

The chief obstacles for travelling showmen in complying with the Military Service Act were the need for a permanent registration address and a requirement the local clerk of the council should be notified of each change of address.[102] The frequent changes of address necessitated by the fairground business made this a complex process, and failures in administration by showmen and local authorities resulted in confusion and prosecution.[103] Showground labourers without a permanent address sometimes gave the address of *The World's Fair* -unpractical, as the newspaper became overwhelmed with communications from local officials, and published a list of the men who needed to contact authorities.[104] Showmen often registered in one town at the start of the fair season, and would sign up in another location later in the year. This caused many showmen to be reported to *The World's Fair* as absentees, yet in several cases the wanted men's subscriptions to the newspaper proved they were already in the army.[105] The situation of numerous police enquiries searching for absentees already enlisted, and who could not be found, no doubt contributed to the consensus travelling showmen deliberately avoided registration, and needed police involvement to locate.[106] The novelty of the showman's occupation resulted in newspapers singling these men out; an article in the *Daily Gazette for*

[102] 'National Registration, How To Fill In Your Form: A Guide For Readers', *The World's Fair* (August 14th, 1915), p. 4.
[103] George Cowes was fined 2s 6d for failing to notify authorities of their change of address in contravention of the National Service Act. 'Showman Fined at Wallasey', *Liverpool Echo* (April 11th, 1917), p. 3.
[104] 'Lord Derby's Recruiting Scheme – Showmen Who Ae Requested To Attest At Once', *The World's Fair* (December 11th, 1915), p. 1.
[105] 'What We Think: Information', *The World's Fair* (March 31st, 1917)
[106] 'Men For The Army – Arrests on Northwich Fairground, Crew Youth's Age', *Nantwich Guardian* (March 30th, 1917), p. 4.

Middlesbrough carried details of three men summoned for registration offences, but the headline "Dodging Military Service: Travelling Showman's Frank Admission", emphasised showman James Jackson's crime above the others.[107]

Itinerancy also caused complications in communication as legislation changed during the war. Joe Brewer, engine driver for Anderton and Rowland, was charged in 1917 for failing to report for the Army Reserve when called up for active service.[108] However he had papers from 1915 declaring him medically unfit, but because he failed to notify authorities of subsequent changes of address (as he had been rejected he felt no need) he had not received notice he was to be reassessed.[109] A further reason given for failing to notify authorities was Brewer's illiteracy; but despite these issues he was listed in the London Police Gazette as an absentee.[110] The magistrate presiding was sympathetic, believing Brewer had not deliberately avoided service, and the case was dismissed.[111] Brewer's misfortune was not unusual, other showmen including Charles C. Mutton and Abraham Ross were listed as absentees after failing to receive notice they were due reassessment as a result of failing to notify changing addresses.[112] The casual employment structure of the fairgrounds also caused problems with related legislation. In 1916 a Leeds proprietor was summoned for failing to display a list of men of military age in his employ - a legal requirement. He pleaded not guilty, stating the men were casual employees taken on as the fair built up and he had not time to collect names.[113]

Exemption tribunals provide evidence of the impact conscription had on showland and reveal how the business and community was viewed by authorities. In a tribunal at Long Sutton a showman explained his son was "an artist, ventriloquist, electrician, pianist, van builder, carver,

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[107] 'Dodging Military Service: Travelling Showman's Frank Admission', *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough* (July 2nd, 1916), p.3.
[108] Scrivens and Smith, *Anderton and Rowland's – Illusion and Reality*, p. 86.
[109] Scrivens and Smith, *Anderton and Rowland's – Illusion and Reality*, pp. 86-88.
[110] Scrivens and Smith, *Anderton and Rowland's – Illusion and Reality*, pp. 86-88.
[111] Scrivens and Smith, *Anderton and Rowland's – Illusion and Reality*, pp. 86-88.
[112] 'A Much-Rejected Engine Driver', *The World's Fair* (October 6th, 1917), p. 11. 'Military Service: A Question of Calling Up', *The World's Fair* (April 20th, 1918), p. 1.
[113] 'Men of Military Age: List of Employees Must be Exhibited", *The World's Fair* (September 23rd, 1916), p.2.

cornet player, arranger, scene artist, music composer, worker and speaker, letterer, painter, carpenter, clog-dancer, marionette, horseman, photographer, stage manager, business manager, etc".[114] Whilst exaggerated this indicates how multi-skilled fairground workers were, and how much a family could suffer when a 'jack of all trades' left for the army. Many showland families and businesses were based around the personality and direction of a patriarch. Losing this figure to military service impacted the business and disrupted familial structure.[115] Some tribunals were sympathetic and granted exemption to showmen with several dependants.[116] However, tribunals often viewed the work of showmen as not of national importance, and so refused exemption.[117] Although originally Welsh showman Alfred Deakin was granted exemption, military authorities challenged this and upon learning that Deakin was the proprietor of a shooting saloon remarked "better go abroad and shoot Germans".[118] The chairman of the tribunal confirmed Deakin's exemption after "it transpired that Deakin had had a brother killed in the army, another brother invalided out of the Navy, and another was in the army", demonstrative of a good family record.[119]

A consequence of showmen joining up was an acute shortage of labour in the fairground industry. *The Yorkshire Evening Post* estimated three quarters of the casual staff of fairs in 1914 were army and navy reservists, and so were lost immediately when war began.[120] The depleted staff of showland firms made heavy manual labour of building up, pulling down, and travelling between shows difficult.[121] Staff losses were worse for some firms than others; Hancock's lost a large proportion of their young men early in the war, and a communication from Private Bill Molt stated four out of ten men he was working with digging trenches were ex-Hancock's

[114] 'A Jack Of All Trades', *Newcastle Journal* (March 30th, 1916), p. 3.
[115] 'What We Think- Tribunals', *The World's Fair* (March 18th, 1916), p. 13.
[116] 'World's Fairograph', *The World's Fair* (March 4th, 1916), p.4.
[117] 'Showmen and The Tribunals', *The World's Fair* (March 11th, 1916), p. 11.
[118] 'Welsh Showman' Good Record', *The World's Fair* (June 24th, 1916), p. 1.
[119] 'Welsh Showman' Good Record', *The World's Fair* (June 24th, 1916), p. 1.
[120] 'The Darkened Showground of War-Time', *Yorkshire Evening Post* (April 14th, 1916), p. 7. Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 112.
[121] 'What We Think: Help Needed', *The World's Fair* (June 24th, 1916), p.13.

employees.[122] *The World's Fair* carried numerous advertisements in the early years of the war from showpeople being forced to sell rides and equipment as they had no staff to run them.[123] Engine drivers were in great demand by the military overseas and on domestic work of national importance. One proprietor had two engines on war work, but laid up another four through lack of staff - out of eighty four employees he appealed for exemption for four, one of whom had his wife steering the engine as the steersman had joined up.[124] Labour shortage caused showpeople further complications; Randle Williams was summoned for allowing wagons to block a major thoroughfare, but pleaded owing to lack of manpower he was unable to extricate them from mud they were stuck in.[125] Showpeople also struggled with the calling up of policemen who they had established relationships with; newly appointed officials were "ever on the watch to distinguish themselves in any way", and were more likely to prosecute.[126]

The Entertainments Tax was introduced on the 15th of May 1916 and was to be charged to the audience for any performance or show, except for persons not spectating.[127] If entertainments were solely for children or charitable purposes they were exempt, but exemption applications had to be made to commissioners for customs and excise.[128] The *Manchester Guardian* stated "the tax will be levied by means either of Government stamped tickets which will be obtainable by the proprietors of entertainments at the face value of the stamp impressed on them… or of adhesive stamps fixed to the proprietors' own tickets of admission", both were printed in rolls stamped either half pence, one pence or one and a half pence, and could be supplied by "any collector of Customs and excise".[129] These regulations were problematic for showpeople to follow, particularly as obtaining the stamps proved difficult. At Preston Whitsun Fair in 1916

[122] Kevin Scrivens and Stephen Smith, *Hancock's Of The West* (New Era Publications, Telford, 2006), p. 138.
[123] Scrivens and Smith, *Hancock's Of The West,* p. 137. An advert for an entire juvenile ride with transport for sale titled 'The Chance Of Your Life' appeared in *The World's Fair* (August 29th, 1914), p. 9, the reason given was that the proprietor had himself joined up.
[124] 'The War's Effect on The Merry-Go-Rounds: Engine Driver's Wife As Steerer', *The World's Fair* (November 11th, 1916), p. 5.
[125] 'Wagons Stuck In Mud- Showman's Difficulty', *Sheffield Daily News* (May 10th, 1916), p.2.
[126] 'What We Think: Be Reasonable', *The World's Fair* (March 4th, 1916), p. 13.
[127] 'The Entertainment Tax. Rules and Regulations', *The World's Fair* (November 11th, 1916), p. 14.
[128] 'The Entertainment Tax. Rules and Regulations', *The World's Fair* (November 11th, 1916), p. 14.
[129] 'Amusement Tax: How The Proceeds Will Be Collected', *The Manchester Guardian* (April 6th, 1916), p. 5.

showpeople were fined for failing to charge tax.[130] Barrister for the defence, Mr Madden, claimed "the Government passed Acts of Parliament, but omitted to provide the machinery to carrying them out" – in the short time between the passing of the act and the fair, proprietors were unable to obtain the stamps in any of the towns they had visited, and they were unclear about how to enforce or implement the tax.[131] J.M. Bostock, fined at Preston, found no stamps available locally and was advised to order from London – the defence confirmed "there was a frightful dearth of stamps".[132] Tom Norman was fined four pounds in 1918 for failing to charge tax, but claimed "other showmen besieged the local Post Office and bought up all the available entertainment stamps", the finite supply was a problem throughout the war.[133] Even when stamps were available, the system was impractical for smaller showmen who had little surplus capital prior to opening their show.[134] It was acknowledged by the Government the system of collecting Entertainments Tax was flawed; at the committee stage of the 1916 Finance Bill A. Fell "moved that the duty should be five per cent on the total gross receipts" as this was easier to collect and enforce, Mr. Barnes concurred "It was much better to tax the proprietor and let him pass it on", but despite these suggestions the unwieldy system was implemented.[135]

The regulations of the tax were laid out in November 1916 in *The World's Fair,* but even when showpeople abided by them they were liable to local authorities interpreting the Finance Bill differently.[136] Benjamin Hobson was summoned for failing to charge tax on shows he claimed were exempt as a children's matinee, but the prosecution stated as adults had entered he broke the law.[137] The Finance Bill exempted shows if "the entertainment is intended only for the amusement of children", so if it could be argued Hobson intended his shows solely for children

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[130] 'Showmen and The Entertainment's Tax - £70 in Fine at Preston', *Sheffield Daily News* (August 29th, 1916), p. 3.
[131] 'Showmen and The Entertainment's Tax - £70 in Fine at Preston', *Sheffield Daily News* (August 29th, 1916), p. 3.
[132] 'The Entertainment Tax: Important Action at Preston', *The World's Fair* (September 2nd, 1916), p. 6.
[133] 'And Then There Was A Rush', *The Globe* (September 7th, 1918), p. 4.
[134] 'What We Think – The Tax', *The World's Fair* (May 27th, 1916), p. 13.
[135] 'The Finance Bill, Committee Stage', *Manchester Guardian* (April 13th, 1916), p. 6.
[136] 'The Entertainment Tax. Rules and Regulations', *The World's Fair* (November 11th, 1916), p. 14.
[137] 'No Tax to See Fat Lady: Travelling Showman Fined at Bradford', *Leeds Mercury* (February 23rd, 1917), p. 4.

(holding them in the afternoon rather than the evening would support this), then he was within the law.[138] The law gave no stipulations for when adults attended children's shows – a distinct possibility when parents or carers attended with children. This element of regulation was therefore susceptible to the interpretation of local authorities. Similarly Pat Collins was fined £15 for not charging tax on shows held in aid of Walsall Hospital Fund.[139] The Finance Bill exempted shows "the whole of the takings thereof are devoted to philanthropic or charitable purposes without any charge on the takings for any expenses of the entertainment" – Collins therefore believed he was exempt.[140] *The World's Fair* claimed Collins was fined unfairly because the exemption notice sent to authorities was incorrect.[141]

The Entertainments Tax was hugely damaging to the show industry. A letter from Pat Collins to Chancellor of the Exchequer Reginald McKenna stated the tax was more detrimental to showpeople than to permanent entertainments.[142] Collins claimed showpeople were already paying rent, having takings cut by lighting restrictions, and often covered the cost of the tax as it was impossible to double the accepted cost of admission.[143] To charge one or two pence tax on a theatre seat costing sixpence would not impact significantly upon receipts, but to apply the same to a penny show would make it unaffordable for working class punters and therefore unviable for show proprietors.[144] Harry Fuller the proprietor of 'Wonderland' at Blackpool, like many, paid the tax himself to avoid doubling admission charges. [145] Figure 1 demonstrates for the 1917 season the covering the tax meant Fuller was unable to cover his running costs.[146] For small shows barely sustained by reduced receipts from fairs in 1914 and 1915, the amusements tax often forced closure and the seeking of alternative employment.

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138 'The Entertainment Tax. Rules and Regulations', *The World's Fair* (November 11th, 1916), p. 14.
139 'What We Think: Red Tape', *The World's Fair* (November 17th, 1917), p. 13.
140 'What We Think: Red Tape', *The World's Fair* (November 17th, 1917), p. 13.
'The Entertainment Tax. Rules and Regulations', *The World's Fair* (November 11th, 1916), p. 14.
141 'What We Think: Red Tape', *The World's Fair* (November 17th, 1917), p. 13.
142 'Showmen and The Amusement Tax', *The World's Fair* (July 8th, 1916), p. 5.
143 'Showmen and The Amusement Tax', *The World's Fair* (July 8th, 1916), p. 5.
144 ' The Amusement Tax – Our Readers Opinions', *The World's Fair* (July 15th, 1916), p. 7.
145 'RE. Entertainments Tax', *The World's Fair* (May 19th, 1917), p. 8.
146 'RE. Entertainments Tax', *The World's Fair* (May 19th, 1917), p. 8.

	£	S.	d.
Taxed Admission Takings	214	8	0
Entertainment Tax Tickets of 50-100%	77	16	10
Property Tax	15	1	0
Total Local Rate	66	10	0
Total Tax	169	7	10
Balance (Takings – Total Tax)	45	7	10
Site Rent and Working Expenses (Approx.)	300	0	0
Net Deficit	254	36	3

Figure 1: 1917 Season Finances for 'Wonderland' Blackpool, as published in *The World's Fair* by proprietor Harry Fuller.

Total war meant everyday life was disrupted, and for a business and community reliant on transport, staff and materials, the war years were fraught. Logistics became difficult as many showpeople relied on railways to transport their rides, shows, and living accommodation, and the military take-over of railways reduced available trains. Some fairs in 1914 including Oldham Wakes were depleted as proprietors were unable to organise alternative transport.[147] Lack of railway trucks meant showpeople relied on road locomotives, but restrictions and wartime shortages meant this reliance proved problematic. In October 1914 William Barker was summoned for using a locomotive without the necessary permit, and for drawing more than three trailers.[148] Barker pleaded guilty but stated if he left trailers behind he would have no employment for his men at the next fair, and he had no other means of transport.[149] Other

147 'The Shortage Of Railway Trucks', *The World's Fair* (September 5th, 1914), p. 8.
148 'Permits For Tractions an Unfair Decision', *The World's Fair* (October 3rd, 1914), p. 3.
149 'Permits For Tractions an Unfair Decision', *The World's Fair* (October 3rd, 1914), p. 3.

travellers obtained special permissions from local authorities. Mrs A. Ball wrote to local councils asking whether she could haul extra loads behind her engines to compensate for the lack of trains. [150] For every day this was done she pledged five shillings to the local War Fund, and she successfully obtained permission in Kent, Surrey, Bucks, Herts, Bedfordshire and Oxfordshire.[151] In addition to haulage issues, some showpeople were fined for allowing locomotives to produce smoke in residential areas, the consequence of no smokeless coal being available in wartime.[152] Showpeople were also summoned for lack of brakemen on trailers, the young men who would have performed this role having been drawn into the military, and this physical job was unsuitable for older showmen.[153] The struggles of wartime logistics are reflected in the humour of showman Private W. Mott who experienced the opposite whilst serving in France driving a steam wagon: "the traction engine is worth its weight in gold here… No policemen to ask for a brief or how much you weigh, or for your back lamp or communication cord… Four letters suffice, viz... O.H.M.S., pull what you can, sometimes 100 yards long of different loads".[154]

The conflict also caused supply shortages which impacted on showland. Necessities for the business including coal and petrol were rationed; a 1916 advertisement for Foster's Road Locomotives recognised this and emphasised the coal efficiency of their machines, by 1918 coal rationing for a fairground centre engine was enough fuel for six hours, half the usual period proprietors would run rides.[155] Factories producing machinery used by showpeople were taken over for war production; Fosters of Lincoln were devoted to the development and production of Tanks, and the Orton and Spooner Works (producers of living vans and rides) moved over to military production in February 1917.[156] Many horses used for transport were requisitioned by

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[150] 'Extra Load Behind Tractions', *The World's Fair* (September 9th, 1914), p. 1.
[151] 'Extra Load Behind Tractions', *The World's Fair* (September 9th, 1914), p. 1.
[152] 'The Difficulties of Road Travelling', *The World's Fair* (August 7th, 1915), p. 5.
'Locomotives On The Highways Act', *The World's Fair* (March 16th, 1918), p. 1.
[153] 'The Difficulties of Road Travelling', *The World's Fair* (August 7th, 1915), p. 5.
[154] 'Tober Sharping In France', *The World's Fair* (May 1st, 1915), p. 1.
[155] Advertisement in *The World's Fair* (February 191th, 1916), p. 4.
'Coal Rationing Order – Effect on Riding Machines", *The World's Fair* (October 26th, 1918), p. 8.
[156] 'What We Think: The Tanks', *The World's Fair* (October 28th, 1916), p.17.
'Government and Messrs. Orton and Spooner's Works', *The World's Fair* (February 10th, 1917), p. 1.

the military for war service; at Mitcham Fair in 1914 twenty-six were taken and it was remarked "bankers' drafts…were scant compensation for loss of faithful animals".[157] Targeting fairs was an efficient policy for the war office; they knew horses and engines would be present for requisitioning, but by doing this showpeople were left having to move rides and accommodation when the fair ended without motive power. Sundry items important to the fairground business were also scarce; Carbon filaments for arc lighting became unavailable as they were predominantly produced in Austria and Germany, the import of weapons was banned making rifles for shooting ranges scarce, and major factories supplying 'Swag' were closed as their employees joined the armed forces.[158] What goods could be acquired accrued a premium owing to scarcity. This had the effect of lowering profits as the excess could not be passed on: "a penny ride is still a penny".[159]

It can be determined the war had major impacts on the fairground industry. Through cancellation, conscription, regulation and taxation it became difficult for showpeople to operate and sustain their business and families. Although having forged a productive relationship between themselves and the Government by 1914, the Guild had to renegotiate with wartime emergency measures. Legislation considered necessary to protect British citizens and maximise wartime production was often poorly conceived, and the haste with which legislation was enforced resulted in confusion and irregularity in application. Regional enforcement of lighting restrictions and policies of fair cancellation was inconsistent, communication between bodies of authority poor, and infrastructure required to facilitate the Entertainments Tax insufficient. These factors proved incongruous with a community whose lives and business were transient. Many regulations showed little understanding of how the fairground industry and community functioned, and these issues of assumption and ignorance can be traced back to legislative

[157] Brown, *Fairfield Folk*, p. 179.
[158] 'The War's Effect On Useful Commodities', *The World's Fair* (September 12th, 1914), p. 12.
'Importation of Guns Banned', *The World's Fair* (August 5th, 1916), p. 1. 'Swag' is the fairground term for prizes (Ceramic goods, toys etc.) given at Houpla stalls and suchlike.
A notice from R. Thomas and Co. of Leeds appeared with the statement "From July 1st our Manchester Branch is Closed Down, all men having joined H.M.S", *The World's Fair* (September 1st, 1917), p. 6.
[159] 'What We Think: Exes', *The World's Fair* (February 12th, 1916), p.17.

confrontations in the late nineteenth century. Fractured communication between legislators and showpeople often resulted in unintentional lawbreaking by the latter and subsequent prosecution. Attempts were made by The Showmen's Guild and *The World's Fair* to improve the relationship between showland and authorities throughout the war, and some degree of success was achieved. However, the nomadism of showpeople and their livelihood made them more likely to fall foul of restrictions than settled society, the novelty of showpeople resulted in them becoming the subject of newspaper headlines, and often portrayed the community in a negative, if inaccurate, light.

II - Wartime Criticism of Amusements

The conditions of the First World War made it questionable whether fairs could continue, but also introduced the debate as to whether fairs *should* continue. Opposition to fairs and showpeople appeared in the press throughout the war, citing fairs as being an immoral waste of money and abled-bodied men. This section will assess the nature of these criticisms, from where they originated, the responses to them, and the resulting attitudes of the Government, public, and press.

A major criticism of wartime fairs was that they wasted money; A.W. Hopkins wrote to the *Evening Dispatch* suggesting for this reason it was "best for all the large pleasure fairs to be abandoned this year owing to the war".[160] The *Todmorden and District News* concurred, stating in peacetime "late shopping, late marketing, fairgrounds etc" were "woefully wasteful" and in wartime "a dangerous and criminal extravagance".[161] The *Sheffield Evening Telegraph* expressed concern over *who* was spending at fairs; "one could not but be struck by the lavish way in which the women paid out their pence on the showground", suggesting the environment of the fairground contributed to wartime distortions of traditional gender roles, promoting the financial independence of young women.[162] The *Gloucester Echo* stated whilst "the showman's

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[160] Letter to Editor by A.W. Hopkins, 'Pleasure Fairs', *Evening Dispatch* (August 24th, 1915), p. 4.
[161] 'War-Time Economy: Todmorden Market and Fair', *Todmorden and District News* (April 7th, 1916), p. 9.
[162] 'Whittingdon Wakes Week', *Sheffield Evening Telegraph* (July 29th, 1915), p. 6.

business is as legitimate and salutary in wartime as in peace" they supported taxation on these entertainments "not merely for the sake of revenue, but in order to discourage over-indulgence in amusements".[163] This can be interpreted as concern over the free spending of the working-class, the most frequent patrons of pleasure fairs. Both the *Echo* and *Todmorden and District News* suggest the fairground was a form of leisure which encouraged spending by groups whose financial freedom was undesirable, and therefore these activities should be monitored and discouraged. The fairground became disreputable; disrupting established social expectations regarding spending was suspect in peace-time but was scandalous during a period of expected austerity and thrift.

However, the comments of Hopkins suggest the issue was also with potential 'profiteering' by showpeople, for he queries "Why should we fill the showman's pockets these hard times?".[164] Hopkins' incredulity showfolk should profit in war-time suggests he did not view them as legitimate businesses and does not acknowledge austerity for the public meant hardship for showpeople. Hopkins' attitude is reminiscent of nineteenth century attitudes portraying showpeople as charlatans, an attitude echoed by 'A Disgusted Ratepayer' who wrote to the *Wigan Observer and Staffordshire Chronicle* referring to showpeople "extorting hard earned money" from patrons.[165] P.J. Barrett pointed out the economic concerns aired by 'Disgusted Ratepayer' were unfounded, as "Wigan does not spend a copper in bringing such shows to the place", and concluded he hoped Lancashire showfolk were not deterred by "the canting humbug".[166] Hopkins suggests the cancellation of Nottingham and Hull fairs justified wholescale abandonment, a point Thomas Horne disputed; "Why should Midland Towns… have no fairs because Hull is in the danger zone? Or that a wave of puritanism has overwhelmed Nottingham?"[167]

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[163] 'Economic Endurance', *The Gloucester Echo* (July 19th, 1915), p.3.
[164] Letter to Editor by A.W. Hopkins, 'Pleasure Fairs', *Evening Dispatch* (August 24th, 1915), p. 4.
[165] 'Wigan Fair. A Rate Payers Indignation', *The Wigan Observer and District Advertiser* (June 10th, 1916), p. 7.
[166] 'The Attack On Wigan Fair', *The World's Fair* (July 8th, 1916), p. 9.
[167] 'Pleasure Fairs', *The Evening Dispatch* (August 31st, 1915), p. 4.

The accusations of money being wasted 'filling the pockets' of showpeople are inaccurate, for although their calling was to encourage spending, conditions of war greatly impacted the business. Immediately after the declaration of war, leisure spending plummeted as people panic bought foodstuffs.[168] Consequently showpeople were forced to cut fares, from 3d to 1d in some cases, and the *Yorkshire Evening Post* stated showfolk existed on "half rations".[169] As the war progressed fairs benefitted from wartime wage increases; at Linlithgowshire in 1915 it was remarked "munitions workers are throwing money around at a great rate" with merry-go-rounds on the Saturday evening earning five pounds an hour.[170]. However, Thomas Horne stated overall the war meant showpeople struggled to make a living.[171] Showpeople felt victimised in accusations of financial wastage; Joe Caddick stated if munitions workers were granted holiday, what difference did it make if they spent money at local Wakes, or at amusements in Blackpool?[172] The *Manchester Guardian* remarked of Oldham Wakes "much of the money that the railways miss this year will probably go to the showmen", so war-time restrictions on rail travel effectively forced holidaymakers to patronise fairs.[173] Caddick suggests opposition to fairs was based on the misconception that showpeople created a holiday atmosphere, a notion he refutes, stating "it must be self-evident the proprietors of wakes amusements supply a demand…. Amusements of a proper character are as necessary to the human economy as any other business, or why have theatres, cinemas etc, become so popular with all classes".[174]

Fairs were also believed to encourage idleness in eligible men, both fair-goers and proprietors. 'A Patriot' wrote to the *Hull and Lincolnshire Times* condemning "the large number of eligible

[168] 'What We Think: Business', *The World's Fair* (August 15th, 1914), p. 17.
[169] 'How The War Has Affected the Feasts', *The Yorkshire Evening Post* (August 29th, 1914), p. 3.
[170] 'Pencillings of The Week', *Linlithgowshire Gazette* (May 26th, 1916), p. 2.
[171] 'Pleasure Fairs', *Evening Dispatch* (August 31st, 1915), p. 4.
[172] 'Mr Joe Caddick and the *Staffordshire Sentinel*: A Vigorous Reply', *The World's Fair* (August 5th, 1916), p. 12.
[173] 'Oldham Wakes: The Showground', *Manchester Guardian* (August 28th, 1915), p. 6.
[174] 'Mr Joe Caddick and the *Staffordshire Sentinel*: A Vigorous Reply', *The World's Fair* (August 5th, 1916), p. 12.

young fellows lounging about from place to place with this paraphernalia".[175] Accusations of fairs encouraging idleness amongst young men was disputed by the showland community. Frank Mellor stated far from "lounging around" thousands of showmen and fairground employees were "serving their King and country". [176] Mellor stated of showland engine drivers "ninety percent have joined the army and are using their practical knowledge for their country's good".[177] A showman's wife stated a number of showmen were involved in fighting at Hill 60 in Ypres, a campaign that resulted in high loss of life among new recruits, adding "I for one, have three sons in the firing line, and another ready to go as soon as he is wanted".[178] Another critic, using the alias of 'An Englishman', found the number of young men spending time and money on fairground amusements "disgusting", prompting Driver Joseph Rock of the Mechanical Transport Corps, to respond.[179] Rock remarked of those at home "Why should they be sad? Why not endeavour to keep a bright and courageous front to the enemy?", Rock himself lost his father and a brother in France and still enjoyed amusements when he could.[180] 'Preston Ratepayer' made similar remarks in defence of Wigan fairs, suggesting townspeople enjoying themselves did not "detract from our patriotism and loyalty", and the fair allowed "hundreds of aching hearts… to forget for a time their grief".[181] Rock also highlights the hypocrisy of complaints about 'idle' young men originating from those at home, and suggests 'Englishman' should enlist "and not interfere with other people's amusement".[182] Rock also refers to the

[175] 'Fairgrounds In Wartime; An Attack and A Reply', *The World's Fair* (June 19th, 1915), p. 12.
[176] Frank Mellor, 'Amusements In Wartime: Our Response To A Critic', *The World's Fair* (June 26th, 1915), p. 12.
[177] Frank Mellor, 'Amusements In Wartime: Our Response To A Critic', *The World's Fair* (June 26th, 1915), p. 12.
[178] 'Fairgrounds In Wartime; An Attack and A Reply', *The World's Fair* (June 19th, 1915), p. 12.
[179] 'Evesham Mop: An Attack by a Stay At Home, and A Defence By A Soldier', *The World's Fair* (November 13th, 1915), p. 5.
[180] 'Evesham Mop: An Attack by a Stay At Home, and A Defence By A Soldier', *The World's Fair* (November 13th, 1915), p. 5.
[181] 'Wigan Fair: A Reply to Ratepayer', *The Wigan Observer and District Advertiser* (June 17th, 1916), p. 7
[182] 'Evesham Mop: An Attack by a Stay At Home, and A Defence By A Soldier', *The World's Fair* (November 13th, 1915), p. 5.

disproportionate number of attacks on fairs for idleness, and asks of one critic; "Why not stop football matches and cinemas; you will find plenty of young men there?"[183]

'Patriot' had a low opinion of showpeople, remarking "they pay neither rates nor taxes, are enjoying the freedom of this glorious country, and do absolutely nothing to uphold it".[184] These comments demonstrate critics were often ignorant of showland, for whilst many did not pay rates in the same manner as settled society, a number of showpeople were ratepayers and property owners, and those who were nomadic paid ground rent to corporations for their rides and living accommodation. The perceived class of the patrons of fairs features in condemnation of wartime fairs. Critics were mostly middle and upper class and demonstrate in their criticism little awareness or concern for the realities and desires of the working class. E.T. Price-Streche in the *Lancashire Daily Post* criticised the financial wastage and idleness of those "who ought to be on national work".[185] R. E. Fowler dismissed this and retorted "These vulgar shows, roundabouts, and trips to Blackpool are much to be deplored. How much better would it be if the working classes would only save their money by living in semi-detached villas with nice gardens, and each family have a motor car and a servant or two".[186] Second-Airmen W.G. Breeze echoed the opinion of Fowler, and referred to "Great men who are at the head of affairs, reading and smoking in nice easy chairs, eating the best that money can buy, and then of course they needs must try, to stop the workers' amusement".[187] Breeze suggests in defending the right to hold fairs in wartime, the Showmen's Guild was not only protecting the livelihoods of showpeople, but working class rights to amusement and recreation.

Showfolk believed their industry was attacked disproportionately compared to other amusements, and this discrimination can be explained by many criticisms originating from long-standing opponents of fairs who used war-time concerns to bolster their arguments. The

[183] 'Evesham Mop: An Attack by a Stay At Home, and A Defence By A Soldier', *The World's Fair* (November 13th, 1915), p. 5.
[184] 'Fairgrounds In Wartime; An Attack and A Reply', *The World's Fair* (June 19th, 1915), p. 12.
[185] 'What We Think: Amusements', *The World's Fair* (June 16th, 1917), p. 3.
[186] 'What We Think: Amusements', *The World's Fair* (June 16th, 1917), p. 3.
[187] Appendix A, Second Airmen W.G. Breeze, 'The Showmen's Guild Of Great Britain: A Soldier's View', *The World's Fair* (August 5th, 1916), p. 12.

World's Fair noted war-time opposition to Blackburn Easter Fair was from the same source as previous years, remarking "the Kill-joys will stoop to any kind of action to attain their ends, and it is pitiful and disgusting to find them using the war as a lever to attain their objects".[188] This concept is supported by the *Todmorden and District News* which suggested "abnormal conditions… give another opportunity not only to effect a reform but to abolish a nuisance. For years the people living in the neighbourhood of the fair have longed for its abolition".[189] The source of the criticism clearly comes from residents who harboured grievances against the annual fair, irrespective of the conditions of war.

The ultimate example of wartime concerns providing a veneer for pre-existing vendettas against fairs and showpeople comes from 'A Disgusted Ratepayer' who wrote to the *Wigan Observer and District Advertiser* in 1916 complaining about the "hideous jangle of a filthy fair".[190] The author's prejudice is clear, stating the fair was "bad enough in days of peace", but in wartime was "an insult to every decent man and woman who… have to bear the odium of such blaring orgies".[191] The article describes the fair as a "pestilence" allowed to "spread its venom on the Market Square", concluding "Wigan would be disgraced and disloyal if this wretched fair represented its heart".[192] 'A Preston Ratepayer Who Visits Wigan' suggested "this grievance… is not original, for several cranks in years gone by have tried to dispense with this time-honoured fair".[193] It is clear 'Disgusted Ratepayer' echoes earlier opposition to fairs and showfolk, for he does not criticise the townspeople for enjoying the fair, but rather targets the proprietors – accusing them of extorting money and tainting the town with their influence. The onslaught from 'Disgusted Ratepayer' merited considerable response from supporters of fairs. 'Preston Ratepayer' disputed claims the fair brought uncleanliness: "where can pestilence and filth exist

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[188] 'What We Think: Concessions', *The World's Fair* (March 20th, 1915), p. 15.
[189] 'War-Time Economy: Todmorden Market and Fair', *Todmorden and District News* (April 7th, 1916), p. 9.
[190] 'Wigan Fair. A Rate Payers Indignation', *The Wigan Observer and District Advertiser* (June 10th, 1916), p. 7.
[191] 'Wigan Fair. A Rate Payers Indignation', *The Wigan Observer and District Advertiser* (June 10th, 1916), p. 7.
[192] 'Wigan Fair. A Rate Payers Indignation', *The Wigan Observer and District Advertiser* (June 10th, 1916), p. 7.
[193] 'Wigan Fair: A Reply to Ratepayer', *The Wigan Observer and District Advertiser* (June 17th, 1916), p. 7.

when the show apparatus is pulled down and kept clean each week".[194] A reply from 'Barnum' suggested Wigan townspeople viewed the fair as welcome relief from arduous labour, speculating "the heart of Wigan will scarcely blame the corporation in encouraging a little variation in the monotony of the shell billet or pick-axe".[195]

The Showmen's Guild believed despite national crisis it remained appropriate to hold fairs, and when in 1915 it was rumoured all fairs were to be abandoned, Thomas Horne produced a pamphlet to be distributed to press and authorities defending the holding of fairs. Horne pointed out showpeople made considerable sacrifices in supporting the war effort, and therefore requested "women and children, and those medically unfit for the rigours of war… shall suffer no unnecessary loss by the suspension of fairs".[196] The Guild demonstrated their defence of fairs was not solely driven by concerns for the showland community, but also considered "what is best for the great mass of the working public".[197] Horne argued money spent by workers on recreation was not wastage, quoting the adage "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy".[198] The Guild emphasised the importance of amusements for workers: "In these dread days of death and carnage, we fly to amusements for relief from mental strain, and we come away from them refreshed and with great heart for the continuance of the struggle".[199] Horne suggested the morality of enjoyment in wartime was a personal choice, and therefore the opinion of few should not dictate choices of others. [200] He suggested critics of fairs should consider the position of a working class family already deprived of a father serving; why should the wife and children be denied amusement?[201] Horne reiterates the sentiments of W.G. Breeze,

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[194] 'Wigan Fair: A Reply to Ratepayer', *The Wigan Observer and District Advertiser* (June 17th, 1916), p. 7

[195] 'Wigan Fair: A Reply to Disgusted Ratepayer', *The Wigan Observer and District Advertiser* (June 17th, 1916), p. 8.

[196] 'A Plea For The Continuance of Pleasure Fairs During War Time – Showmen's Guild Issues Pamphlet to Combat Kill-Joys', *The World's Fair* (September 4th, 1915), p. 10.

[197] 'What We Think: Better Prospects', *The World's Fair* (April 3rd, 1915) p. 15.

[198] 'A Plea For The Continuance of Pleasure Fairs During War Time – Showmen's Guild Issues Pamphlet to Combat Kill-Joys', *The World's Fair* (September 4th, 1915), p. 10.

[199] 'What We Think: Better Prospects', *The World's Fair* (April 3rd, 1915) p. 15.

[200] 'A Plea For The Continuance of Pleasure Fairs During War Time – Showmen's Guild Issues Pamphlet to Combat Kill-Joys', *The World's Fair* (September 4th, 1915), p. 10.

[201] 'A Plea For The Continuance of Pleasure Fairs During War Time – Showmen's Guild Issues Pamphlet to Combat Kill-Joys', *The World's Fair* (September 4th, 1915), p. 10.

portraying the Guild not only as defenders of the rights of showpeople, but vanguards of the right of workers' recreation. However, the economic consequences of cancelled fairs were always part of the Guild's message, and suggested many critics failed to acknowledge, or were ignorant to, the scale of the fairground business. Horne estimated between seventy and eighty thousand people depended on the business, and many subsidiary industries relied on the fairground industry, adding that "showpeople have invested their life's savings in the business and, like all other classes, claim fair play and justice".[202]

The Government emphasised amusement was acceptable providing it did not interfere with war production, and recreation was encouraged after it was proved conducive to the productivity of workers. H.M. Vernon observed in instances where manufacture was accelerated without providing rest periods "the strain proved too great" and production faltered.[203] Vernon noted "after a four-day holiday in August the output of a group of forty operatives remained high for five weeks, and was seven percent higher than the average during the next eight weeks".[204] Holidays were therefore crucial to productivity, and Vernon suggested regulated pauses were preferable; The Showmen's Guild suggested "the best resting time is the time fixed by custom and usage immemorial – the wisely arranged time of the local fair".[205] To justify the continuation of fairs in wartime, and form a tart reply to Price-Stretche's attack on Preston fair, the Guild utilised statements from public figures; "Lord Derby – 'We must have amusements in war-time', Sir W. Robertson [In charge of the armed forces] – 'There is no reasons why you should not be cheerful', and Neville Chamberlain – 'Amusement is an essential part of war-work'".[206] *The World's Fair* remarked "we venture to suggest that every one of the above has done more for…the war and the country's good than Mr. Stretche has done".[207] By 1918 the Government declared amusement a necessity, and entertainers therefore "helped to win the war by

[202] 'Pleasure Fairs', *The Evening Dispatch* (August 31st, 1915), p. 4.
[203] 'Fairs The Tonic Of Workers', *The Era* (September 27th, 1916), p. 26.
[204] 'Fairs The Tonic Of Workers', *The Era* (September 27th, 1916), p. 26.
[205] 'Fairs The Tonic Of Workers', *The Era* (September 27th, 1916), p. 26.
[206] 'What We Think: Amusements', *The World's Fair* (June 16th, 1917), p. 13.
[207] 'What We Think: Amusements', *The World's Fair* (June 16th, 1917), p. 13.

maintaining the morale and sanity of toilers and fighters".[208] Local authorities often reflected this; Glasgow Council saw recreation as vital to war workers, and as railway travel was restricted, advertised for showpeople to hold a fair on Glasgow Green in 1917.[209] The translation of official Government attitudes to local authorities however was not uniform, and support of fairs varied by locality and circumstance.

Showpeople believed the public were in support of the continuance of fairs, Joe Caddick claims if critics persuaded the public to follow "kill-joy notions" fairs would "die a natural death" without regulation.[210] Public support was demonstrated by patronage of fairs; Oldham Wakes in 1916 was a "good harvest" for showpeople, and the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* reported the 1917 May Fair was of a good size, with fairgoers enjoying a "diversion from shell-making".[211] The following description of Hull Fair illustrates the war-time attitude;

> "The picture was fairy-like, and the huge crowd which quickly gathered had evidently made up their minds to enjoy themselves, and to let those who care to be frightened by Zeppelins and bomb-throwing to stay away."[212]

This public support influenced the decisions of local authorities. Yarmouth Council permitted proprietors to open for an extra day, and a critic who queried whether there was "anyone in this old town of ours who cares a rap about the fair" was disproved by large crowds who thronged around the marketplace.[213] One resident voiced their disapproval, commenting those "who desire to rejoice should be sent to Germany to learn their lesson", but a "jovial countryman" retorted "if there be anyone who don't want no joy at all, I advises 'em to… follow the Kaiser!".[214] Support for fairs only establishes a public desire for recreation, not necessarily support for

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[208] 'Fairs Helping to Win', *The World's Fair* (February 2nd, 1918), p. 5.
[209] 'Proposed Fair on Glasgow Green' , *The World's Fair* (March 3rd, 1915), p. 1.
[210] 'Mr Joe Caddick and the *Staffordshire Sentinel*: A Vigorous Reply*, The World's Fair* (August 5th, 1916), p. 12.
[211] 'Oldham Wakes: War Shadow Not Apparent', *The Manchester Guardian* (August 28th, 1916), p. 10. 'Holiday Crowds Enjoy and Sunny Holiday', *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (May 28th, 1917), p. 2.
[212] 'Hull Fair Starts: Showmen, Visitors and The War', *Hull Daily Mail* (October 10th, 1914), p. 3.
[213] 'What We Think: Concessions', *The World's Fair* (March 20th, 1915), p. 15.
'As Others See Us: The Fair at Yarmouth, Kill-Joys Ousted For All Time', *The World's Fair* (April 24th, 1915), p. 8.
[214] 'As Others See Us: The Fair at Yarmouth, Kill-Joys Ousted For All Time', *The World's Fair* (April 24th, 1915), p. 8.

showpeople, but evidence of such support does exist in the replies to critics discussed previously which originated from public commentators who demonstrated awareness of the sacrifices and hardships of showland during wartime.

The national and local press provide access to material relating to the opinions of authorities and individuals regarding wartime fairs, but it is also important to consider the attitude of the press itself. The opinions of the press reflected, and had the potential to influence, the opinion of public and authority. The press was largely sympathetic to difficulties faced by fairground travellers, and although offered a platform for individual critics, generally opposed those who attempted to prevent fairs. The *Loughborough Times* considered the cancellation of a fair by local authorities the action of those who believed "because we are at war we should live in sack cloth and ashes, abstain from all amusement, cease buying anything but the necessaries of life, and entirely scorn delights and live laborious days".[215] A *Sunday Chronicle* columnist warned "the fanatics and crank and extremists are out… all trying under the pretence of war necessity to ride down things they don't like or don't want themselves", reflecting the Guild's belief war had become a means to push existing anti-fair agendas.[216] *The Globe* welcomed the traditional fair as rural continuity amidst the chaos of war; "While in a London newspaper office the clicking tape machines keep on in hourly touch with the world-shaking events on the Continent, this reminder of the placid continuity of life in the English countryside has its piquancy".[217] In 1914 a columnist for *The Daily Mirror* emphasised "if we work we earn our right to laugh; only those who have shirked their duties need feel ashamed to be happy… The man who has contributed his share to the country's good need not fear to smile".[218]

However, newspapers were not ubiquitous in their support for showpeople; the *Nottingham Guardian* acknowledged the community was doing its bit for the country, but inexplicably

[215] 'Loughborough Town Council and The Fair- Newspapers Strong Criticism', *The World's Fair* (November 27th, 1915), p. 1.
[216] 'What We Think: Fanatics', *The World's Fair* (June 9th, 1917), p. 17.
[217] 'Men and Matters; All The Jolly Fun', *The Globe* (October 9th, 1914), p. 6.
[218] 'Britain At War: Readers Discuss the Duty Of Cheerfulness and The Café System', *The Daily Mirror* (October 2nd, 1914), p. 5.

alleged “the fair brought no good to the city” adding “they [showpeople] are not a bad lot on the whole... But after the war they will, it is hoped, find more profitable employment for their energies and capital”.[219] This echoed Victorian sentiments which regarded itinerant lifestyles and occupations as illegitimate. A *Manchester Guardian* article of 1917 favoured the music hall which apparently represented “an immense sophistication which has left the showman rather a long way behind”.[220] This opinion reflects the author’s personal dislike of modern fairground rides, which they describe as; “a great movement, the object of which seemed to be to put nausea at a cheap rate within the reach of everyone”.[221]

In 1916 the *Manchester Guardian* contained a damning report of a wartime fair;

> “How or for what reason it got there, why it does not go away, why it behaves so furtively and silently are mysteries of the first magnitude… The scene is unreal and ghastly. It is silent and lustreless; the merry-go-round rotates with the old velocity but with no merriment and no noise… It is the melancholy spectre of some sparkling fair of our youth…. Penance for the sins of the war-stricken world of to-day”.[222]

The article predicts a dismal future for fairs and showpeople, but the continued popularity of the traditional fairground until the end of the Second World War suggests otherwise. The morbid description evidences the devastating impact of the war on fairgrounds; lack of noise and light is ably explained by wartime restrictions, the lack of ‘lustre’ could be through lack of staff to maintain equipment. The accuracy of this description is questionable however, for two reasons. Firstly, the author gives no indication of the time of day they visited the fair; a fair newly set up would appear sparser and more unwelcoming than one bustling with evening trade. Secondly the author states “to enter this dismal haunted quadrangle needs a stronger nerve than the writer possesses”. [223] It is difficult to imagine how the author observed detail from the periphery. It seems this is not an accurate representation, rather an exaggerated

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[219] ‘What We Think: Missing Fairs’, *The World’s Fair* (October 13th, 1917), p. 13.
[220] ‘Miscellany’, *The Manchester Guardian* (January 18th, 1917), p. 3.
[221] ‘Miscellany’, *The Manchester Guardian* (January 18th, 1917), p. 3.
[222] ‘Miscellany’, *The Manchester Guardian* (October 12th, 1918), p. 5.
[223] ‘Miscellany’, *The Manchester Guardian* (October 12th, 1918), p. 5.

picture painted for the entertainment of readers. It therefore also can be dismissed as unrepresentative of the overall opinion of the press regarding fairs and showland.

III - Contribution of Showland to the National War Effort

In addition to investigating how the First World War affected the lives and livelihood of travelling showpeople, it is important to assess how the showland community contributed to the national war effort. In order to be part of the national wartime identity it was necessary for individuals to make sacrifices and perform duty in the national interest. More significantly, to be accepted as part of a collective identity, these contributions needed to be recognised by wider society.

Many young showmen contributed by volunteering for military service, although an accurate figure of serving showmen is difficult to establish. Helen Avery compiled a list of six hundred and twenty-nine, but many of the names she includes do not appear on the *World's Fair* 'Roll Of Honour', and vice-versa.[224] *The World's Fair* suggested a figure in the thousands, this is not necessarily exaggeration as vagueness of listed occupations often means records do not recognise showland experience (whether working in the show industry or not, for example, an engine driver would have just been listed as 'engine driver'). Additionally, the *World's Fair* did not differentiate between those serving abroad and those working on military contracts domestically, arguing both were serving King and Country. The labour shortage showland experienced at the beginning of the conflict was a result of showmen serving in the armed forces; many were reservists who re-joined their regiments when war was declared.[225] In 1914 Thomas Horne stated it was important showpeople demonstrated loyalty and patriotism by bearing "their share of the national burden", and Horne felt this was an opportunity for showland to show unity with the nation: "We claim to be… part and parcel of the national life. We have joined with the people in time of joy and merriment; it is now for us to be with the

[224] Helen Avery, *War Circus – Charting The Lives of the International Circus Community through the Great War 1914-1918* (Madame Le Bonche Publishing, 2017).
[225] 'Showmen Soldiers', *The World's Fair* (August 15th, 1914), p. 1.

nation in the hour of trial and struggle".[226] Throughout the conflict *The World's Fair* called on eligible showmen "to place their services at the Government's disposal at the earliest possible convenience", and organised with authorities where possible showmen would be grouped into the 23rd Welsh Regiment.[227] This is similar to how local recruiting drives encouraged young men to form pals battalions. *The World's Fair* suggested of showland that "probably there is no business where the people are more a race unto themselves", and it was felt by enabling them to serve alongside each other this would encourage young showmen to join up.[228] However, this also suggests serving showmen were keen to remain within their own community rather than assimilating with soldiers from settled society. Whilst *The World's Fair* saw this as preserving showland identity, in a sense the crisis of war caused showfolk to further isolate themselves from wider society.

Serving showmen were from all different branches of the community. A wartime poem about the diverse types of showmen reiterated all were "willing to take a chance; At his country's call he packed up his stall. To play the great game in France".[229] Many applied peacetime experience to their military work, working as farriers, or serving with the Army Service Corps driving traction engines.[230] This work was dangerous and exposed and at least one engine driver was killed by enemy shellfire whilst hauling guns behind the lines.[231] The unique skills of showmen were the subject of a humorous 'conversation' between a recruit and an Officer: "Officer: Name? Recruit: John Smith. Officer: Age? Recruit: 38. Officer: Occupation? Recruit: Proprietor of Aunt Sally Stall. Officer: Bomb Thrower..."[232] Whilst this was fictionalised, a factual account of a

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[226] Thomas Horne, 'Showmen And The War: The Rev. T. Horne's Appeal', *The World's Fair* (August 22nd, 1914), p. 1.
[227] 'What We Think: A Call', *The World's Fair* (November 27th, 1915), p. 17.
'What We Think: Comrades', *The World's Fair* (November 27th, 1915), p. 17.
[228] 'What We Think: Comrades', *The World's Fair* (November 27th, 1915), p. 17.
[229] 'Curious Types of Showmen', *The World's Fair* (July 22nd, 1916), p. 15.
[230] 'The Value Of Showmen In The Army', *The World's Fair* (February 13th, 1915), p. 1.
'A Trio of Engine Drivers In The Army Service Corps', *The World's Fair* (July 10th, 1915), p. 1.
[231] 'The Roll Of Honour – Traction Engine Driver Killed', *The World's Fair* (July 31st, 1915), p. 1.
[232] 'What Simon's Parrot Heard', *The World's Fair* (November 11th, 1916), p.8.

similar scenario exists. The *Nottingham Evening Post* reported on fighting at Menin Road, and included the following:

"One of our bombers, a man who before the war made a living by running a coconut shie had a grand time. Almost weighed down with bombs he stood up at a very close range to a pill-box which was holding out, and in a showman's voice he yelled 'Now then, who'll have a go. Three balls a penny and every nut full 'o milk!'".[233]

Frequently the front page of *The World's Fair* featured images of 'Showland's Sons' serving, and in August 1915 they published the first of several 'Rolls Of Honour' listing names of the many serving showland men.[234] Although the contribution of showland's men was publicised within the Guild newspaper it was feared the wider public were unaware. Rumours persisted that eligible men were idle on the fairground, and in response *The World's Fair* made 'Rolls Of Honour' available for proprietors to display, adding "It is the duty of all showmen, roundabout proprietors, and stallholders, to have one of these cards on exhibition to show the public what Showland is doing for King and country".[235]

In addition to serving in the armed forces, many showland men and women were engaged on war contracts on the home front. Practical skills required to run a travelling show were transferrable to the construction and operation of military infrastructure rapidly required at the start of the conflict. At a training camp at Sutton Veny forty showland workers were employed as "carpenters, painters, and sheeters", whilst their wives and daughters worked in the adjacent Government laundry.[236] *The World's Fair* reported in 1918 women from showland were working in munitions factories alongside the many 'munitionettes' from settled society.[237] The

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[233] 'How Londoners Fought at Menin Road: Corporals Stirring Account "Three Balls For A Penny"', *Nottingham Evening Post* (September 27th, 1917), p. 3.
[234] 'Showland's Roll Of Honour – List No. 1', *The World's Fair* (August 28th, 1915), pp. 12-13.
Appendix B, Image of Showmen Serving *The World's Fair* (October 3rd, 1914), p.1.
[235] 'What We Think: Publicity', *The World's Fair* (July 31st, 1915), p. 7.
Advertisement for Copies of Showland's Roll of Honour, *The World's Fair* (November 6th, 1915), p. 9.
[236] 'Showmen on Government Work', *The World's Fair* (April 3rd, 1915, p. 12), p. 12.
[237] Appendix C. 'A Munitionette – Showland Girl on Government Work', *The World's Fair* (August 3rd, 1918), p. 1.

most significant resource possessed by fairground travellers was motive power: their steam engines, horses, and the men who looked after them. During the war over fifty fairground steam engines were in the service of the military in France, and even more worked on Government contracts at home.[238] Some worked on temporary hire; Hancock's engine 'Cornishman' was contracted by the South Devon Granite Company for two months in November 1917, Miss Hancock was paid £60 and the engine was to be returned in the condition it was dispatched.[239] A return did not always occur; Anderton and Rowland's had four engines commissioned by the War Office but one, 'John Bull', was never returned, and considering the expense and importance of these engines this loss was significant.[240] Some showland engines were commandeered for the duration of hostilities, Charles Heal's Burrell Engine 'His Majesty' was engaged on Government haulage around Salisbury Plain from October 22nd 1914, and featured in *The World's Fair* with the headline 'England Expects Every Man – and Engine- This Day will do their Duty'.[241] A more unusual contribution were exotic animals from travelling menageries, including three of Bostock's African elephants, and two camels and an elephant from Sedgewick's.[242] Some were used on agricultural work in place of draught horses, whilst others were used in industry – Sedgewick's' Elephant 'Lizzie' was used by Sheffield steel firm Thomas Ward.[243] This demonstrates how the showland community were willing to offer help in any way to further the national effort. Although a major contribution from showland, it must be noted showpeople were given little choice in giving up their motive power; Pat Collins was

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[238] Arthur Fenwick, 'Showmen and The War', *The Newcastle Daily Journal* (April 7th, 1917), p. 8.
[239] Scrivens & Smith, *Hancock's Of The West*, p. 141.
[240] Scrivens & Stephen, *Anderton and Rowlands – Illusion and Reality*, p. 82.
[241] Appendix D, 'England Expects Every Man – and Engine- This Day will do their Duty', *The World's Fair* (March 6th, 1915), p. 1.
Appendix E, Image of Charles Heal's Burrell 8NHP Showman's Engine 'His Majesty' No. 2877 on Government Service in Glastonbury in 1915. Photograph reproduced with the permission of Adam Brown. Appendix F, Image of Mrs Catherine Bird's Foster Showman's Engine No.12538 on War Work at Haddenham Railway Station in 1915. Photograph from Authors Collection.

[242] 'Living Traction Engines – Military Authorities Secure Three of Bostock's Elephants', *The World's Fair* (August 22nd, 1914), p. 11.
'Farm Elephants – War Traction Engines', *The World's Fair* (June 17th, 1916), p. 8.
[243] Photograph of Elephant ploughing in England, *Popular Mechanics Magazine* (June 1917), p. 99.
'Farm Elephants – War Traction Engines', *The World's Fair* (June 17th, 1916), p. 8.

commissioned by the Ministry of Munitions in 1917 to procure engines and drivers for Government Work, but was warned "unless voluntary aid is forthcoming, the engines will be commandeered".[244]

The most recognised contribution of showland to the war effort was fund-raising efforts for national and local charities. In September 1914 the Showmen's Guild and *World's Fair* launched a Prince of Wales Relief Fund campaign, involving a day of a fair being devoted to the cause with all takings donated, or a percentage of the total takings being pledged. On September 5th *The World's Fair* reported Oldham Wakes raised £60 11s 8d, and Strood Fair raised £110 6s, noting contributions were made by all classes of showpeople, from established riding-masters to smaller stallholders.[245] Showpeople at the October Hull Fair donated "the whole of their takings from 3-5pm on Tuesday" to the Lord Mayor's contribution to the national relief fund, a generous offer considering the scale of Hull Fair.[246] By November of 1914 the Prince of Wales Fund received over £2,000 in donations from the Guild, a considerable sum in such a short period of time.[247]

Individuals also supported local causes, donating to Prisoners of War funds, providing entertainments for wounded soldiers, and supporting regional comfort funds.[248] The Guild also organised a 'Showman's Day' at Victoria Station, providing meals for returning soldiers and sailors and by December 23rd 1916 147 Shillings was raised.[249] Showpeople contributed significantly to 'Tank Bank' drives to sell War Bonds in late 1917 and 1918. Notable showmen pledged generously; Alderman George Thomas Tuby invested £1,000 into the Doncaster 'Tank Bank', and Pat Collins Jnr. was among the traders approached by the Mayor of Crewe who

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[244] 'Important To Traction Engine Owners', *The World's Fair* (January 6th, 1917), p. 1.
[245] 'The Nation Relief Fund -What Showmen Are Doing', *The World's Fair* (September 5th, 1914), p. 12.
[246] 'Hull Fair Stars, Showmen, Visitors, and The War – Showmen's Generosity', *Hull Daily Mail* (October 10th, 1914), p. 3.
[247] 'Guild Notes', *The World's Fair* (November 14th, 1914), p. 10.
[248] 'Showmen Entertain Wounded Soldiers', *The World's Fair* (November 6th, 1915), p. 1.
'Prisoners Of War – Benefit at Bargoed', *The World's Fair* (August 19th, 1916), p.1.
'Patriotic Showmen', *Yorkshire Evening Post* (September 24th, 1915), p. 5.
[249] 'The Soldiers and Sailors Buffet – Our Efforts for a Showman's Day – Will You Give a Shilling?', *The World's Fair* (December 23rd, 1916), p. 15.

wished to boost the towns contribution by £90,000 to reach the half-million-pound target – Collins invested £2,000 in support.[250] Patrick Collins Snr. spoke at Walsall Tank Week, and an eye-witness reported "I was impressed with his[Collins'] earnestness that he was not of the class that exhorts the people to do something that he was not prepared to do himself, and when he told us that he was personally subscribing £3,000 this came as an inspiration to the crowds to do their very best".[251] The Tank Weeks provided an opportunity for leading showpeople to demonstrate their support for the war effort publicly, an element lacking in previous fund raising by the Guild.

The Ambulance Fund organised by the Guild was well reported in the national press and raised money to purchase twenty motor ambulances for British cities to aid in the transport of wounded soldiers, each presented at civil ceremonies involving local dignitaries.[252] The campaign was charitable, but also made public the charitable work of the Guild. Each ambulance displayed a brass plate inscribed with "Presented By The Showmen of Great Britain" and *The World's Fair* acknowledged representatives of local councils would "look upon the travelling showman in a very different light to what… they have previously done", remarking "nothing but good can result by giving these people… an idea of showland as it is".[253] This fund was considered by the Guild to be an opportunity "to prove their claims to the admission to the Roll of Honour as loyal and dutiful subjects, and to be placed on the same plane as other commercial and kindred associations".[254] Showpeople felt they deserved to be treated equally to other businesses and institutions, and believed by demonstrating commitment to charitable causes this would be achieved.

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[250] 'Doncaster Tank Week: Alderman Tuby Invests', *The World's Fair* (May 11th, 1918), p. 1.
'Crewe Tank Week: Mr P. Collins (Jnr.) Invests another £2,000', *The World's Fair* (May 18th, 1918), p. 1.
[251] 'Walsall Tank Week – From One Of The Crowd – What I Saw and Heard', *The World's Fair* (April 20th, 1918), p. 6.
[252] 'Showmen and The War – A Gift To Manchester', *Manchester Guardian* (February 28th, 1917), p. 15.
Appendix G, 'The Showmen's Ambulances – Presentation Of The Walsall Car', *The World's Fair* (January 13th, 1917), p. 1.
[253] 'The Showmen's Ambulances', *The World's Fair* (December 2nd, 1916), p.1.
'What We Think: Doing Good', *The World's Fair* (March 3rd, 1917), p. 17.
[254] 'Showmen's Red Cross Ambulance Fund', *The World's Fair* (March 18th, 1916), p. 1.

In this instance the contribution of showland was widely recognised, but often the efforts of showpeople were invisible, as one showman remarked “we do a lot what seems to me like a man winking at a pretty girl in the dark. He knows he is winking, but she cannot see him”.[255] In some respects this is understandable; the work of national importance and military service of showmen was not public knowledge except in instances where the showland community defended itself against critics accusing showmen of shirking. The tendency of showmen to serve alongside each other on the front and at home rather than integrating, and the Guild’s preference to independently organise fund raising, did not encourage active cooperation with settled society or therefore awareness of showland’s contribution.

Conclusion

The First World War impacted significantly on the travelling fairground community but failed to transform the relationship between them and wider society. The demands of total war stalled development of the relationship between the Showmen’s Guild and authorities, whilst partial cancellation and widespread disruption of the annual fair circuit stifled the point of contact between showpeople and settled society. Although in some senses the war advanced showland’s interaction with wider society progress was varied. The disturbance of war meant some showpeople continued their business and official relations whilst others suffered prohibitive legislation and cancellation. The economic consequences of the war also affected showland inconsistently. Larger firms with established relations with local authorities could adapt and work within wartime restrictions and were able to capitalise on free-spending war workers, increased patronage of local amusements resulting from restricted rail travel, and active encouragement of fairs to boost morale. Smaller proprietors and those in areas where fairs were heavily restricted suffered more. Smaller firms were significantly impacted by shortages of machinery and manpower, and fair cancellations forced showpeople into finding alternative employment.

[255] ‘The Defence of Fairs’, *The World’s Fair* (October 14th, 1916), p. 5.

In regions where the wartime relationship between showland and local corporations was positive, a good business association developed which could continue in the post-war era. The contributions of showland to the national war effort improved the general opinion of this group and justified the consideration of the interests of showland. The material, financial, and human contributions of showland to the war effort were significant, proving showpeople fully demonstrated willing to perform duty in the support of the national cause, and made sacrifices which paralleled and often exceeded the expectations wartime society placed on British citizens. However, the repeated efforts of showland to make this contribution clear to wider society suggest their contributions were not widely acknowledged. Owing to the fact many showpeople were on Ministry contracts, their labour was not made public knowledge. National and local charity work, through independent and Guild-organised campaigns, was the most recognised contribution of showland and frequently gained the attention of the press. However, the positive impact of these campaigns was often regionally limited. Many showpeople served in the armed forces, but where possible they preferred to serve alongside fellow showmen, which did not promote integration within the armed forces, and their role remained isolated and unpublicised.

The First World War significantly altered how the Showmen's Guild perceived its role. In addition to defending the rights of showpeople it became a vanguard of the rights of workers' recreation. Whilst wartime campaigns and petitions were intended to protect the livelihood of showfolk, they also championed war-workers' right to holidays and amusement. Wartime opposition to open-air amusements demonstrates the negative impact of the First World War on this community. The physical attributes of the traditional fair, noise, light, and crowds, made funfairs potential human tragedies if fears regarding aerial attack were realised. For this reason, fairs were impacted harder than other amusements by wartime regulations on opening hours and light restrictions. The Entertainments Tax also impacted fairs disproportionately, as fairs charged low fares but required high capital investment , and tax became an additional expense for proprietors.

The lack of clear guidelines regarding regulations at a national level meant restrictions were open to interpretation in application and enforcement at a local level. This caused problems for fairground travellers who struggled to adhere to regulations which changed according to location. The result was in many cases relationships between showpeople and local authorities deteriorated due to the pressures of war. The failure of the national legislature to recognise the characteristics and needs of those it attempted to regulate was not unique to showpeople during the war but is reminiscent of nineteenth century legislation which also failed to acknowledge showfolk as a group which could be affected adversely. The regressive attitude of the Government can be attributed to the panic instigated by the war, and the short time between official recognition of showland identity in the 1911 Temporary Dwellings Bill and the beginning of hostilities.

The First World War saw individuals and groups previously opposed to fairs on moral or commercial grounds using wartime regulations to promote abolition. The widespread moral debate over whether entertainment was acceptable in wartime contributed to the validity of complaints. However, for the most part these 'Kill-joys' were met with staunch opposition from not only showpeople, but by the press and local authorities. Councils often bowed to pressure from the public whose patronage of fairs demonstrated they had no moral qualms about wartime recreation.

This conflict was a formative experience for the showland community. It challenged the ability of the Showmen's Guild to defend its members in the face of unprecedented regulation and provided an opportunity for fairground travellers to demonstrate willing to support the national cause, making great sacrifices to aid the war effort throughout the conflict. However, the result of this effort is unclear; some showpeople improved their relationship with authorities, but for others inconsistent regulation resulted in confusion and prosecution and a failure to advance their relationship with authority. The huge economic impacts of the war upon the fairground industry and the simultaneous growth in popularity of music hall and cinemas

meant the fairground industry was in a precarious position upon the cessation of hostilities. The traditional fair and showland community had survived the rigours of total war, but only just.

Chapter III - Relocation, Regulation and Restructuring – Legislation, The Rise of Municipal Control and the Showmen's Guild 1918-1939

Introduction

A primary function of this thesis has been to assess the developing relationship between showpeople (often represented by the Showmen's Guild), local authorities and national government. This chapter investigates how this relationship changed markedly in the interwar period and saw increased dialogue between the Guild and local authorities. The Guild were keen to rebuild and stabilise the fairground industry following the tumult of the First World War but found themselves faced with increased levels of legislation as regional authorities attempted to exert control over public recreation. This thesis has also sought to establish to what extent the perceived or articulated identity of fairground travellers played a role in their relationship with wider society and authority. This chapter demonstrates how the shift from national to local control over amusements also saw showland treated increasingly as a business rather than as a marginal community. The issue of identity still existed to a diminished degree during the interwar period; the few items of national legislation pertaining to showpeople continued to isolate the community, albeit in many cases unintentionally.

The interwar periodisation is significant as this was an era of major change in the relationship between local authority and central government. The abnormal wartime situation resulted in national government implementing unprecedented levels of control at a local level; although as the previous chapter investigated, application of national policy by regional authorities often varied according to locality. During the late nineteenth century the political enfranchisement of the "common man" compelled central government to "control, subsidise and advise" local authorities to ensure a healthy physical environment for the populous.[1] This policy, as dictated by the Local Government Act of 1888, was justified as local administrative areas were restricted

[1] K.B. Smellie, *A History Of Local Government* (George Allen And Unwin Ltd, London, 1968), p. 68.

in their scope by communications and transport – and thus needed centralised direction.[2] As Smellie notes, however, this act was passed before changes in technology and transport rapidly altered the boundaries of country and town, making it considerably easier for local authorities to govern regional areas without centralised direction.[3] The emergency situation of the First World War meant the opportunity for necessary reform to the outdated system did not occur until the interwar period. Small County Councils were amalgamated into larger County Boroughs (which increased in number from sixty-one in 1889 to eighty-two in 1925), and increasingly smaller authorities depended on neighbouring County Boroughs instead of the central government for amenities, services and legislative control.[4] John Willis notes conversely by 1935 Parliament had emerged as "true legislative body" which although giving "full scope" to specific local needs, aimed to give a "national coherence" to local administration.[5] On the eve of World War Two the relationship between local authority and central government was therefore bifunctional; national government was keen to avoid "congestion at the centre" and allowed local authorities a degree of legislative autonomy in serving the needs of their constituents, but maintained ultimate control by restricting them with parliamentary statutes. [6]

Although the bulk of this chapter will explore the developing relationship between local authorities and showland, showpeople also continued to be implicated in national legislation during this period. The continuation of legislation introduced under the Defence of The Realm Act affected the leisure industry as whole, and showpeople were among those campaigning for the cessation of wartime policies. The 1932 Salter Report on Road and Rail Transport was national legislation which threatened to tax shows off the roads. The debate regarding this report demonstrates how during the interwar period officials made false assumptions regarding

[2] Smellie, *A History Of Local Government,* p. 58.
[3] Smellie, *A History Of Local Government,* pp. 58, 72.
[4] Smellie, *A History Of Local Government,* pp. 56, 98.
[5] John Willis, 'Parliament And The Local Authorities' in Harold Laski, W. Ivor Jennings, William A. Robson (Eds) *A Century Of Municipal Progress 1835-1935* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London, 1935), pp. 400-405.
[6] Smellie, *A History Of Local Government*, p. 99. W. Ivor Jennings, 'Central Control' in Harold Laski, W. Ivor Jennings, William A. Robson (Eds) *A Century Of Municipal Progress 1835-1935* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London, 1935), p. 450.

the showland community and, as had occurred in the nineteenth century, attempted to pass punitive legislation which unjustly discriminated against itinerant communities. Although showland had effectively defended their rights as an itinerant community in response to nineteenth century legislation, and to some degree had been accepted as members of British society through their contributions to the national war effort, their separate cultural and spatial identity as itinerants was still overlooked by national legislature. The successful opposition to this report provides evidence the Showmen's Guild was able to articulate the rights of showpeople as businessmen and women, aligning themselves with other industries in their defence against the Salter Report.

The primary focus of this chapter is how showpeople met the challenges of increased municipal control over public recreation. As highlighted in the first chapter of this thesis, local authorities had consistently attempted to legislate against forms of public entertainment they claimed were socially disruptive or deemed morally unsuitable. Local authorities were often blocked in their attempts to abolish fairs by 'Charter Rights' – if a fair had been initially granted permission by Royal Charter, it was only royalty who had the power to abolish it. Whilst this was still the case in the interwar period, the increased freedom of local authorities to introduce By Laws and Bills gave them other means to restrict public entertainments – in some sense their incentive to do so was simply because for the first time they were able to. In addition to the precedent of pre-war attempts to regulate public entertainments, it is worth noting regional government remained influenced by local businesses, religious bodies and other pressure groups. In some areas these bodies had pre-existing grievances against fairs and capitalised on the increased ability of local government to regulate public entertainments by resuming their pre-war campaigns. As with many other aspects of this thesis, the situation depended on circumstance and locality. There was no uniform approach to regulating public amusement by local authority. Each corporation's reaction varied according to the existing local attitude to fairs, any precedent of them causing disturbances, or the influence of pressure groups on local governance.

As this chapter will discuss, the main ways corporations attempted to control fairs was through rent, pitch allocation and relocation. By increasing rents authorities could oust smaller proprietors unable to afford higher rates, thus reducing the size of fairs and controlling which shows attended. Relocating fairs, often under the auspices of public safety, enabled corporations to control the type of amusements permitted, the number of rides and the duration of fairs. The chapter will assess how local authorities attempted to control public recreation, but also how showpeople responded to new restrictions. In order to analyse the response of showfolk to these challenges it is necessary to investigate the changes the Showmen's Guild underwent during the interwar period. The increased legislation during the interwar period necessitated heightened political awareness and activity, and a key example of this which will be explored is Guild President Pat Collins' election as Member of Parliament for Walsall.

In addition to attempts to regulate fairs through rent and relocation, some local authorities endeavoured to re-introduce variations of nineteenth century legislation designed to control nomadic communities. Although successfully appealed by the Guild, these attempts at legislation demonstrate the identity of itinerants to an extent remained homogenised; showpeople continued to be erroneously included in legislation intended for other itinerants. Whilst this chapter primarily investigates how local authorities dealt with showpeople as business, these isolated examples will be assessed to demonstrate how issues of identity were still present, albeit less prevalent than in the previous century.

As with previous chapters the key resources utilised are newspapers from local and national press and the newspaper of the Showmen's Guild *The World's Fair.* New legislation regarding fairs appeared in the local press, and responses were reproduced in *The World's Fair.* Used in conjunction with legislative documents these sources provide a detailed insight into discussions between showpeople and authorities. Time constraints made it impractical to survey every weekly issue of *The World's Fair* published between January 1919 and May 1939, it was therefore decided to look at key events in the interwar period such as the Salter Report and

relocation of Nottingham Goose Fair to indicate which years and issues of *The World's Fair* would be analysed,

I - The Organisation and Policy of the Showmen's Guild

To investigate the developing relationship between showpeople, local authorities and central government during the inter-war period it is necessary to assess the experience of the Showmen's Guild, as representatives of showland, during this period. The cooperation Guild members displayed in wartime dissipated, and direct action was required from the Guild to retain unity in the face of new legislative challenges. Although debates over showland identity were not foremost in discussions with external authority during this period, deliberation over who was considered a showman and therefore eligible for Guild membership was a prevalent internal issue. This subject became urgent due to falling membership. Without the clear threat of punitive national legislation or wartime restrictions, membership was perceived by some as less vital.[7] When the Guild was faced with increasing legislative challenges and therefore escalating legal costs it was suggested membership could be extended to all amusement caterers and associated business – a suggestion which met with staunch resistance.

Despite the official position being "The Showmen's Guild is made for all, works for all, and should be supported by all", division amongst Guild members, and prospective members, was rife during the interwar period.[8] In 1920 *The World's Fair* stated traders, including jewellers, confectioners and novelty makers, had recently become part of the fairground scene and could potentially boost membership.[9] The concern was these businesses did not depend upon open-air fairs for their income, and their large numbers could skew votes on matters pertaining to travelling showpeople – the group the Guild was formed to protect.[10] Proprietors of permanent seaside fairgrounds were also refused full membership on grounds they were not threatened by

[7] What We think: An Appeal', *The World's Fair* (January 21st, 1928), p. 29. 'Reflections on the Annual Meetings: The Task Before the Guild – Call to Great Activity', *The World's Fair* (February 13th, 1932), p. 12.
[8] What We think: An Appeal', *The World's Fair* (January 21st, 1928), p. 29.
[9] 'What We Think: Membership', *The World's Fair* (January 31st, 1920), p. 12.
[10] 'What We Think: Membership', *The World's Fair* (January 31st, 1920), p. 12.

the same legislation as they were not nomadic, and therefore should not be allowed to vote on these matters.[11]

However, authorities increasingly attempted to control aspects of fairs equally applicable to permanent and travelling sites.[12] An anonymous contributor to *The World's Fair* expressed concerns if the large numbers of seaside and exhibition workers were not admitted to the Guild, they would form their own organisation "which will make the Guild in comparison look like a cockboat to a liner".[13] In 1932 the Central Committee decided membership would remain limited to "bona-fide showmen" who relied solely on amusements for their income, but did not discriminate between permanent or travelling proprietors.[14] At the 1932 Annual Meeting it was acknowledged "there are as many bona-fide travelling showmen outside the Guild and who have never been within the fold" and accordingly the Central Council suggested each section considered a campaign to increase membership.[15] Instead of widening eligibility for membership of the Guild, cooperation with other bodies in the industry (key among which was the Amusement Caterers Association) was encouraged. An important event which demonstrates more cohesion between the different elements of showland was the 1935 election of Bertram Mills as President, the first circus proprietor to be elected to any position on the Guild committee.[16]. Traditionally separate communities and industries only coming into contact at the largest fairs, the interwar period saw circus and fairground proprietors united by the itinerancy of their business. It was felt collaboration was required to establish a "united front" regarding legislation which could impact all travelling amusement caterers; "the matter is equally vital to the large amusement park proprietor and the biggest lessee as it is to the small stallholder".[17] By

[11] 'Are Showmen Original?', *The World's Fair* (March 8th, 1924), p. 15.
[12] Such debates included those over gambling machines, morally objectionable shows and opening hours. 'Are Showmen Original?', *The World's Fair* (March 8th, 1924), p. 15.
[13] 'The Fight Is On In The Guild and In The Courts', *The World's Fair* (January 7th, 1928), p. 9.
[14] 'Reflections on the Annual Meetings: The Task Before the Guild – Call to Great Activity', *The World's Fair* (February 13th, 1932), p. 12.
[15] 'Reflections on the Annual Meetings: The Task Before the Guild – Call to Great Activity', *The World's Fair* (February 13th, 1932), p. 12.
[16] Thomas Murphy, *A History of The Showmen's Guild 1889-1948* (World's Fair Ltd, Oldham, 1950), p. 193.
[17] 'Now For A United Front: The Days of Toleration Are Over, Our Livelihood In Danger', *The World's Fair* (October 3rd, 1936), p. 1 'What We Think: A United Front', *The World's Fair* (October 3rd, 1936), p. 45.

encouraging cooperation between associations, the Guild could protect against legislation affecting the whole industry, whilst remaining an organisation exclusively for the protection of travelling showpeople.

Murphy suggests poor economic conditions and lean trading was the cause of "general unrest in our ranks", and increasing hostility between showpeople is evidenced by several disputes over lessees increasing ground rents, attempting to squeeze more revenue out of fellow proprietors to improve their own income.[18] Conversely tenants occasionally booked pitches and failed to attend fairs– causing losses for the lessee.[19] This was reflective of perceived divisions between the larger and smaller proprietors; and the Guild responded by stating "Every member has, or should have, equal rights. They are all in the business for the same object and their cause is a common cause".[20] Internal Guild bureaucracy sometimes impeded this policy however; when the Scottish section attempted to establish standard rates for lessees to avoid disagreements, the Central Council's opinion was this was an illegal action of monopolising control over rents by the section, and prohibited the formation of a sectional rents committee.[21]

Although officially all Guild members were equal, Philip Allingham perceived a clear hierarchy. Allingham was not from a showland background but worked as a grafter and fortune teller at fairs and markets between 1928 and 1933, and noted advertisements in *The World's Fair* often stated "tick-offs need not apply".[22] Upon rejection from Dartford fair, Allingham was informed Guild members agreed to forbid fortune tellers from their fairgrounds.[23] Although as a non-member Allingham was ineligible to attend Guild regulated fairs, this does not explain the ban

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[18] 'Uxbridge Michelmas Fairs: More About The Earlier Years, Difficulties Of Present-Day Showmen', *Uxbridge And West Drayton Gazette* (October 15th, 1937), p. 13.Murphy, *A History of the Showmen's Guild ,* p. 170.
[19] 'What We Think: Be Fair', *The World's Fair* (February 4th, 1928), p. 29.
[20] 'What We Think: Unity', *The World's Fair* (March 26th, 1932), p. 37.
[21] Murphy, *History of the Showmen's Guild ,* p. 170.
[22] 'Tick-Off' was fairground slang for fortune tellers, grafters and other small-`time traders who often worked the periphery of the fair. Philip Allingham, *Cheapjack – Being the true history of a young man's adventures as a fortune-teller, grafter, knocker-worker, and mounted pitcher on the market-places and fairgrounds of a modern but still romantic England* (Golden Duck, Pleshey nr Chelmsford, 2010 – First Published 1934), p. 24.
[23] 'Showmen Frown On Palmists', *Northants Evening Telegraph* (January 11th, 1939), p. 4. Allingham, *Cheapjack*, p. 25.

on all fortune tellers.[24] I would suggest the Guild discouraged fortune telling at fairs to avoid comparisons with the Romany Gypsies inextricably linked to the trade – even tellers without Romany origin would claim lineage to emphasis exoticism and authenticity.[25] Showpeople had attempted to dissociate themselves from Gypsies since the legislative turmoil of the nineteenth century, and the policy of banning fortune tellers suggests an extension of this attempt at separation. This was not always a barrier for 'tick-off' workers however; Allingham noted many showpeople were not loyal to the policies of their organisation, and in hard times of economic depression "some of them preferred gelt to the Guild".[26]

Allingham's implication is demonstrative of isolated incidents of showpeople behaving contrary to the objectives and policy of the Guild. Confrontations occurred infrequently, but these incidents were deemed serious enough to be reported in *The World's Fair*.[27] Hooliganism at Kettering in 1920 prompted a damning response from the Central Committee who stated "we must set an example of what is right and proper. We trust the men concerned are now thoroughly ashamed of themselves and that their future lives will be much more creditable to the business to which they owe so much".[28] The close-knit nature of the showland community made publicly shaming those responsible an effective deterrent, but in 1936 *The World's Fair* suggested the closeness of the showland community was the origin of agitation. Living in small circles meant showpeople were intimately aware of each other's activities, and in the hard times this could result in jealously of those more successful.[29] *The World's Fair* called for "despicable" antagonism between showfolk to cease, for "lessees and tenants have enough to contend with to combat with grousers from outside".[30] This is evidence of the continuing role of the Guild as a

[24] Allingham, *Cheapjack*, p. 25.
[25] 'Show People', *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* (June 14th, 1939), p. 8.
[26] 'Gelt' was fairground slang for money. Allingham, *Cheapjack*, p. 25.
[27] 'Perth Hooliganism – Regrettable Scenes', *The World's Fair* (August 9th, 1919), p. 1. 'What We Think: Hooliganism', *The World's Fair* (July 17th, 1920), p. 12.
[28] 'What We Think: Hooliganism', *The World's Fair* (July 17th, 1920), p. 12.
[29] 'What We Think: Narks', *The World's Fair* (August 29th, 1936), p. 45.
[30] 'What We Think: Narks', *The World's Fair* (August 29th, 1936), p. 45.

self-regulating body, aware that to maintain cohesion within the showland community was the only way to protect against external threats.

No formal action was taken by the Guild to discipline disreputable members, and this inaction resulted in James Styles claiming corruption "shelters … beneath the cloak of the Showmen's Guild".[31] Styles believed dishonesty was more dangerous than "unjust laws and soulless restrictions" as these the Guild knew how to counter.[32] Internal threats were insidious, motivated by tough competition for pitches necessary to profit from dwindling crowds; "They want your plot of land at a fair, or maybe the driver of your lorry, or maybe the novelty that you depend on for a living. They will whisper into the ears of local authority that your show is not desirable or that you are working an illegal game".[33] Styles demanded the Central Council expel individuals proved to be operating to the detriment of other members, but no such policy seems to have been adopted.[34] However, it would not have been in the Guild's interest to make expulsions public knowledge through *The World's Fair,* and it is possible such measures did occur, but not on public record. No more articles such as Styles' appeared, and it is possible the threat of expulsion was enough to deter further instances of dishonest behaviour. Integrity was central to the ethos of the fairground community and industry, and it is likely once exposed anyone perceived to be cheating fellow proprietors would face ostracism and exclusion from fairgrounds – an outcome in harsh economic times showpeople were keen to avoid.

In addition to preventing confrontation between members, the Showmen's Guild also functioned as a body which policed interactions between authorities and showland. As laws were passed on National Insurance, volume of loudspeakers, lighting requirements on road vehicles and other bye-laws, the Guild reminded their membership to adhere to them at all

[31] James R. Styles, 'Destroy The Rats – A Satire On Existing Realities', *The World's Fair* (December 19th, 1936), p. 4.
[32] James R. Styles, 'Destroy The Rats – A Satire On Existing Realities', *The World's Fair* (December 19th, 1936), p. 4.
[33] James R. Styles, 'Destroy The Rats – A Satire On Existing Realities', *The World's Fair* (December 19th, 1936), p. 1.
[34] James R. Styles, 'Destroy The Rats – A Satire On Existing Realities', *The World's Fair* (December 19th, 1936), p. 4.

times.[35] Through *The World's Fair* the Guild condemned those who flouted regulations; an amusement caterer who played a mechanical organ without the necessary licence was reminded although "such bye-laws are irksome… they must be obeyed", adding the proper way to deal with regulations was to fight them before they became law.[36] The Guild acknowledged the showland community must be particularly careful about their activities as "it must never be forgotten that the private life of a showman as well as his business, must… be done in the eyes of the public".[37] The Guild emphasised fairgrounds should be kept free from "anything that may be thought to be objectionable", and when leaving grounds showpeople should ensure the area is left clean so local authorities had no reason to complain.[38] With growing competition from other entertainments it was important to present the most appealing image of showland to the public, and in an era of increased municipal interference it was advisable to keep corporations satisfied. Pat Collins in 1936 reminded showpeople the concessions and privileges they enjoyed were the result of hard-won legislative fights and stated "how foolish it is to attempt to anything contrary to the law" suggesting showpeople meet the expectations of their patrons and local authorities and "play the game".[39] This echoes an earlier statement from *The World's Fair* which suggested showland should be vigilant in upholding a good public image – "defence... is better than defiance".[40]

The pre-war structure of the Guild remained intact, and the division of the Guild by districts instigated in 1916 was completed in 1922 with the formation of the Notts and Derbyshire Section.[41] These Sections became more autonomous in this period, taking responsibility for their own accounts and dealing with issues relating to local fairs independently of the Central

[35] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , pp. 195-196. 'What We Think: Loudspeakers', *The World's Fair* (April 11th, 1936), p.45. 'What We Think: Road Transport', *The World's Fair* (August 11th, 1928), p. 29.
[36] 'What We Think: The Law', *The World's Fair* (February 21st, 1920), p. 12.
[37] 'What We Think: Improvement', *The World's Fair* (February 2nd, 1924), p. 21.
[38] 'What We Think: Improvement', *The World's Fair* (February 2nd, 1924), p. 21. 'What We Think: An Appeal', *The World's Fair* (April 7th, 1928), p. 29.
[39] 'What We Think: Play The Game', *The World's Fair* (October 31st, 1936), p. 45
[40] 'What We Think: An Appeal', *The World's Fair* (April 7th, 1928), p. 29.
[41] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild 1889-1945,* p. 133.

Office.[42] The work of the Guild increased to such a degree that by 1926 a staffed Central Office was established in Walsall, moving in 1929 to London.[43] The Central Office, in addition to dealing with issues within London, was also responsible for orchestrating responses to legislative cases brought to them by regional sections, either through direct contact with the relevant ministries, or through the House of Commons. [44] The influence of the Guild was recognised; James Styles in 1938 recalled "we used to crawl to an authority on our hands and knees and beg like children for what were our rights" but states "we are not crawling anymore".[45] Styles believed the Guild's power relied on its ability to generate public support; he warned "any party or any individual who tried to wipe us off the face of the earth" could be affected by the power of "10,000 loud speakers and men who can use them" at "200 fairs in this country every week" for the duration of the season.[46] Bertram Mills, speaking at the same public meeting as Styles, reassured members their influence would win over "not only the members of the House of Commons… but the great bulk of this country's population – and when you have them behind you, you have the world behind you".[47]

In addition to public support, the ability of the Guild to lobby against municipal and governmental legislation in the interwar period also relied upon parliamentary involvement. The Guild's Parliamentary Counsel, the Honourable Sir Evan Chatteris, had represented the Guild for over forty years by 1931 and had never lost a case in this time.[48] The Guild valued this presence and a levy of ten shillings was imposed on members in 1931 to cover the expenditure of parliamentary representation.[49] Liberal M.P. for Leyton West between 1920 and 1922 Alfred Newbould, although a cinematographer, identified himself as a showman and promised to monitor Guild interests in the Commons.[50] The Guild's parliamentary involvement was

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[42] Murphy, *History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 168.
[43] Murphy, *History Of The Showmen's Guild ,* pp. 153, 167.
[44] Murphy, *History Of The Showmen's Guild ,* pp. 153, 167.
[45] James R. Styles, 'Showmen's Power: Recognise Our Rights', *The World's Fair* (January 27th, 1938), p. 17.
[46] James R. Styles, 'Showmen's Power: Recognise Our Rights', *The World's Fair* (January 27th, 1938), p. 17.
[47] Bertram Mills, 'Public Meeting', *The World's Fair* (January 27th, 1938), p. 45.
[48] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 175.
[49] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 175.
[50] 'The Modern Showman', *Dundee Evening Telegraph* (January 21st, 1920), p. 2

bolstered between 1922 and 1924 by the election of Patrick Collins (Guild President 1920-1929) as Liberal M.P. for Walsall. Collins had been co-opted into Walsall Council in 1918 as a councillor for Birchill ward, and was recognised as a public benefactor and supporter of the Liberal cause having raised funds for the party and provided their headquarters.[51] For this reason he was chosen as Liberal candidate for MP of Walsall in 1922, although Kenneth Dean notes he was a "reluctant candidate", for whilst he had a strong personal following he was not well educated or an experienced orator.[52] His key support was predicted to be found in the Catholics in Bloxwich amongst whom Collins performed considerable social work, and the large local Irish population: both groups outside the "normal run of political people".[53] In addition Pat was renowned for his charity work, donating some twenty thousand pounds to local hospitals and other causes over the years.[54]

In his 1922 campaign Collins stood for a revision of the Peace Treaty and a strong League of Nations, for national economy and free trade.[55] However, the key to Collins' success was maintaining the cost of unemployment should be borne by the state and not ratepayers; it was this policy which "went straight to the hearts of the Walsall crowds".[56] Collins emphasised in a notice to electors published in the *Walsall Observer* "I can honestly claim if I am elected you will have a Walsall man to represent you", Collins chose to present himself not as a showman or politician, but as a respectable member of the local community, "a businessman, of large experience and endowed with a fair amount of intelligence and common sense".[57] Collins maintained he "had lived and worked amongst Walsall people… had a knowledge of local

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[51] 'Walsall', *Staffordshire Advertiser*, (October 28th, 1922), p.4. Freda Allen & Ned Williams, *Pat Collins King Of Showmen* (Uralia Press, Wolverhampton, 1991), p. 39.
[52] Kenneth J. Dean, *Town & Westminster – A Political History of Walsall 1906-1945* (County Borough of Walsall Libraries, Museums and Art Gallery Departments, Walsall, 1972), p. 93.
[53] 'The Showman's Candidate', *Freeman's Journal* (November 3rd, 1922), p. 4. Allen & Williams, *Pat Collins*, p. 52.
[54] The Showman's Candidate', *Freeman's Journal* (November 3rd, 1922), p. 4.
[55] Dean, *Town & Westminster*, p. 93.
[56] Dean, *Town & Westminster,* p. 93.
[57] Patrick Collins, 'To The Electors of Walsall', *Walsall Observer and Staffordshire Chronicle* (November 4th, 1922), as cited in Allen & Williams, *Pat Collins*, p. 52. Allen & Williams, *Pat Collins,* p. 54.

requirements, and knew the hardships of and sufferings of many of his fellow townspeople".[58] Collins was adopted as the "man in the street" of local politics, and his speeches received cheers of "Good Old Pat".[59] A pamphlet from his 1923 campaign reflected this popular support:

> "We've lived together nigh on 40 years,
>
> And it hasn't been too long at that;
>
> There's not a fellow in the whole wide land
>
> We'd swap for our dear old Pat.".[60]

Walsall's support for 'their' Pat was reflected in a victory in 1922 over Conservative candidate Lady Cooper, and Justice for the Peace of Walsall Rowley commented at the Showmen's Guild Annual Meeting in January 1923 this was "not a political victory but a popular victory" of a man "beloved by the working classes of Walsall".[61] Dean corroborates this, emphasising the 1922 election "had not been a victory for Liberalism, but a Triumph for Pat Collinsism".[62] The significance to the Guild of Collins' position as MP was reflected in their support of his re-election in 1923.[63] Guild Members addressed meetings of the electorate, held rallies, and provided transport throughout the campaign; the result of these efforts was Collins' re-election with a majority of 2,163 votes – an increase in support compared with his 1922 majority of 325.[64]

Despite running as a 'Walsall Man For Walsall', Collins' showland background sparked interest from the press. The *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* ran the article 'Prince of Showmen: Romantic Career of Walsall's New Liberal M.P.', and similarly *Freeman's Journal* remarked Collins was "one

[58] Walsall Observer and Staffordshire Chronicle (November 11th, 1922), cited in Dean, *Town & Westminster*, p. 94.
[59] Walsall Observer and Staffordshire Chronicle (November 11th, 1922), cited in Dean, *Town & Westminster*, p. 94.
[60] Dean, *Town & Westminster* p. 97.
[61] Cited in Allen & Williams, *Pat Collins*, p. 55.
[62] Dean, *Town & Westminster*, p. 95.
[63] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 135.
[64] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 135. Allen & Williams, *Pat Collins*, p. 51.

of the most romantic and picturesque candidates" noting he travelled "in a gorgeous caravan which would excite the envy of an Oriental Potentate".[65] Despite presenting himself explicitly as a Walsall citizen in his campaign, the press were keen to emphasise above this his exotic identity as a showman. This was not to the detriment of his campaign however, as Dean notes his position as a showman meant "thousands of the electorate regarded him as kind of Santa Claus who provided the thrills which made life a little more bearable". [66] This was a significant reputation when Walsall's poorer classes faced austerity and unemployment. In 1923 the Conservative candidate for Wednesbury attempted to use Collins' background to discredit him; remarking "there were many devious ways of trying to get into Parliament, but last year was the first time he heard of elephants and fat women… Parliament was not a circus".[67] Collins demonstrated his own political abilities, quickly retorting he would give this opponent "£10 a week and show him round the country as the only Conservative Labour man" he had ever seen.[68] The attack by his opposition suggests a class division in opinion regarding the showland industry in Walsall. The working class viewed showland, and Collins, as providing a welcome and necessary respite from labour. The upper and middle-class perception, reflected in the comments of the Conservative opposition, viewed showland as a novelty not compatible with the serious demands of national government.

Pat Collins directly challenged this perception in his first parliamentary Bill put before the House of Commons, a Bill which makes his election as M.P. significant for the subject of this chapter. In February of 1923 Collins proposed a new Bill, and alterations of the existing 1871 and 1873 Fair Acts, which would transfer power to cancel or alter dates of fairs from the Home Secretary to Parliament.[69] Collins stated the current law meant a petition from any party could

[65] 'Prince of Showmen: Walsall's New Liberal M.P.', *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* (November 20th, 1922) p. 6. 'The Showman's Candidate', *Freeman's Journal* (November 3rd, 1922), p. 4.
[66] Dean, *Town & Westminster*, p. 94.
[67] *Walsall Observer and Staffordshire Chronicle* (November 24th, 1923), as cited in Dean, *Town & Westminster,* p. 97.
[68] *Walsall Observer and Staffordshire Chronicle* (November 24th, 1923), as cited in Dean, *Town & Westminster,* p. 97.
[69] 'Showman M.P.', *Hull Daily Mail* (February 22nd, 1923), p. 3. 'Showman's First Bill', *Western Mail* (February 22nd, 1923), p. 8.

be sent to the Home Secretary, and it was left to his discretion to "do what he wishes".[70] Collins suggested this decision ought to be vested in Parliament owing to what was at stake; he stated such a decision "affects the rights of 70,000 showmen, who have invested capital of £100,000".[71] Collins' justification for the Bill involved making it clear the business of showland was a serious one, involving large numbers of employees and considerable finances; not the whimsy perceived by his Conservative opponents on Walsall Council. Collins' Bill reveals the concerns showland had regarding local control of fairs, for although the matter rested with the Home Secretary, any petition from a corporation or private party had the potential to result in closure without the opportunity for appeal should the Home Secretary give in to the demand. By ensuring the decision was put before Parliament where the Guild had presence, they would be able to articulate their case and achieve a fair outcome. Parliament was dissolved in 1923 before Collins' Bill could gain traction and following his defeat in the 1924 election it was not brought again before Parliament – a case of national political tumult impacting on the progress of private Bills.[72]

Following a defeat in a third election in 1924, which Dean attributes to the failure of the local Labour party, Collins stepped down as a candidate; he had previously implied he found his position as an M.P. frustrating, stating "there are too many brakes on the wheels of Parliament. I like to get on with the job".[73] Collins remained an influential figure in Walsall politics however, becoming an Alderman on 16th June 1930, and eventually becoming Mayor of Walsall in 1938.[74]

II - Interwar Relationship Between Showpeople and National Government

The period of the First World War saw increased dialogue between showland and national government. The Defence of the Realm Act placed restrictions on emission of noise and light from outdoor amusements, controlled opening hours of entertainments and placed strains on

[70] 'Showman M.P.', *Hull Daily Mail* (February 22nd, 1923), p. 3.
[71] 'Showman's First Bill', *Western Mail* (February 22nd, 1923), p. 8.
[72] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 138.
[73] Dean, *Town & Westminster*, p. 101.
[74] Allen & Williams, *Pat* Collins, p. 61. Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 139.

the fairground industry through regulation of material supplies, road and rail transport and Entertainments Tax. The troubled economy following the First World War meant some of these emergency measures, including the Shops Act and Entertainments Tax, continued. A *World's Fair* correspondent felt wartime emergency policy was being maintained to justify increased state interference; "some people seem to regard the war as an overcoat… It is a sort of overcoat that covers many a rent and hole in our clothes, but it is now a hateful covering".[75] However, the continuation of emergency policies was more a reflection of the uncertain national economy. First introduced in 1916 the Entertainments Tax necessitated proprietors to charge extra levies on admission and was a major inconvenience for showpeople who had to issue individual excise stamps, whereas cinema and theatre proprietors could pay tax on certified receipts.[76] These stamps were often difficult to obtain, and necessitated additional labour.[77] Despite protests to the Chancellor of the Exchequer by the Provincial Entertainments Proprietors' and Managers' Association and the Showmen's Guild in 1919, these and subsequent attempts were unsuccessful in securing any respite from the taxation.[78] Prosecutions for those flouting the tax continued; at Peterborough Fair in 1920 two showmen were fined five and seven pounds respectively for allowing customers to enter shows without paying tax.[79] The Labour budget of 1924 announced all admission fees for entertainments under sixpence would be tax free, and this was received as a boon for the "penny showman" who depended on cheaper shows for his revenue.[80] Pat Collins emphasised this also benefitted the working classes who relied on cheap and accessible forms of amusement for recreation, and stated it was "unjust and wrong in principle to impose taxation" which would restrict such entertainments.[81] The reduction was

[75] 'War Everlasting', *The World's Fair* (October 23rd, 1920), p. 1.
[76] 'Thanks Very Much – Showman Does Well In First Labour Budget', *The World's Fair* (May 2nd, 1924), p. 1.
[77] 'Thanks Very Much – Showman Does Well In First Labour Budget', *The World's Fair* (May 2nd, 1924), p. 1.
[78] 'Entertainment Tax- Provisional Managers Ask For it's Remission', *The World's Fair* (January 25th, 1919), p. 1. Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 126.
[79] 'An Echo of Peterborough Fair – Evading the Entertainments Tax', *The World's Fair* (January 17th, 1920), p. 9.
[80] Thanks Very Much – Showman Does Well In First Labour Budget', *The World's Fair* (May 2nd, 1924), p. 1.
[81] 'The Entertainment Tax – What Showmen Think of the Concessions', *The World's Fair* (May 16th, 1924), p. 10

not without opponents; in a Commons sitting in July 1924 Major Colfox moved to restore the 6d tax, suggesting revenue generated through taxing such luxury would be better used elsewhere.[82] Philip Snowden M.P. was of the opinion entertainments were not a luxury, and the amusements he observed benefitting from relaxed taxation were "rational and health giving".[83]

Complete abolition of the wartime tax never materialised. The continued economic troubles of the 1920s including the General Strike and coal stoppage of 1926 had long lasting impacts, forcing the Chancellor to announce in 1928 there was no prospect for the remission of the Entertainments Tax.[84] The unprecedented problem of national debt ensured treasury policy was dominated by "sound finance and balanced budgets"; unlikely to result in tax reductions.[85] This was a particular blow to showpeople already suffering economic downturn and coal shortages. Prosecutions continued for those struggling to meet the requirement of the tax; at Stratford-Upon-Avon in 1930 Joseph Silverstone was fined £60 for failing to charge tax on admissions to his "Drome of Death" show, Silverstone pleaded guilty but stated excise officers came to inspect the ride as he was trying to purchase more tax stamps.[86] The reprieve of the tax on lower priced admissions was also rescinded in 1932, reinstating the burden on smaller proprietors.[87] At a meeting of the Showmen's Guild in January 1934 J.R. Styles revealed the impacts of the tax on his livelihood; by taking his show to forty eight locations he had earned £1,148 throughout the season, but after expenses including £302 in rent and £287 in Entertainments Tax he was left with a weekly budget of £1, 3S, 7d to support a family of ten.[88] During Blackburn Fair in 1933 Styles earned £45, but after paying rent, petrol costs and £11 Entertainment's Tax he was left

[82] Colfox particularly emphasised it would allow the Penny Post to be reinstated. 'House of Commons', *The Times* (July 1st, 1924), p. 9.
[83] 'House of Commons', *The Times* (July 1st, 1924), p. 9.
[84] 'Entertainments Tax – No Remission In Coming Budget', *The World's Fair* (March 31st, 1928), p. 1.
[85] Malcolm Smith, *Democracy In A Depression: Britain In The 1920s and 1930s* (University Of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1998), p. 18.
[86] The 'Drome of Death' was a variant of the Wall Of Death Motorcycle stunt show. 'Showman Fined £60 – Mop Entertainment Sequel', *Birmingham Daily Gazette* (November 27th, 1930), p. 9
[87] 'What We Think: That Tax', *The World's Fair* (March 6th, 1932), p. 45.
[88] 'Tax Campaign: Showmen's Guild Meeting', *The Stage* (January 25th, 1934), p. 9. 'Showmen And Their Difficulties: Entertainments Tax Criticised', *The Times* (January 19th, 1934), p. 6.

with a 10s loss for three days labour.[89] Despite efforts of the Showmen's Guild the Entertainments Tax remained, and I would suggest this failure was a result of showpeople being isolated in their particular suffering under the tax. Whilst permanent amusements protested continuation of the tax, they were not susceptible to the problems the tax caused itinerant proprietors, and as it became clear the tax would not be revoked, other entertainment groups ceased lobbying. The Entertainments Tax also had the support of other businesses; the Association of British Chambers of Commerce in April 1924 protested any relaxation of the tax; emphasising other services such as the penny post deserved government funding, and the revenue was justly sourced from taxing entertainments.[90]

In addition to the Entertainments Tax, Early Closing legislation first introduced as part of D.O.R.A also continued. There was a desire post-war to continue this ruling for retail premises in peacetime, and although not applicable in design for amusements in 1919 *The World's Fair* warned if legislation were to become permanent law, entertainment venues could be included.[91] This warning proved timely as later that year showman William Talbot was brought before Barrow Police Court charged with continuing a retail business after nine p.m.[92] Talbot warned if the court was against him "it will have the effect of destroying not only the defendant's business, but also those of thousands of others".[93] Fortunately such a precedent was not set; the case was dismissed as the court ruled as his stall carried a sign stated goods could only be won not purchased, he was therefore not a retailer.[94]

However, this judgement did not prevent other showpeople being summoned; legislation regarding evening trading was vague enough to cause confusion amongst local authorities about

[89] 'Showman's Tax Protest: Left With 23s A Week For Family Of Ten', *Nottingham Evening Post* (January 19th, 1934), p. 7.
[90] 'First Labour Budget', *The Times* (April 28th, 1924), p. 12.
[91] 'What We Think: Early Closing', *The World's Fair* (April 12th, 1919), p.12.
[92] 'The Early Closing Act – Test Case From The Barrow Market, Prosecution Fails', *The World's Fair* (May 17th, 1919), p. 1.
[93] 'The Early Closing Act – Test Case From The Barrow Market, Prosecution Fails', *The World's Fair* (May 17th, 1919), p. 1.
[94] 'The Early Closing Act – Test Case From The Barrow Market, Prosecution Fails', *The World's Fair* (May 17th, 1919), p. 1.

what was, or was not, legal. In August of 1920 it was affirmed the closing act "shall not apply to any bazaar… or to any fair lawfully held", but this amendment was not immediately enforced, leading to Guild Secretary William Savage writing to the Home Secretary in September complaining despite the amendment showpeople were still being summoned and convicted.[95] This is similar to problems of wartime legislation where communication between national and local authority was fragmented, and different boroughs implemented different laws making it difficult for itinerant businesses to obey them.

An additional piece of national legislature which affected showland in the interwar period was the 1936 Public Health Act, Section 269 of which stipulated showpeople would be required to obtain a license for caravans remaining on the same ground for forty-two consecutive days or sixty days within twelve months.[96] The legislation exempted itinerant proprietors but whilst travelling the fair circuit showpeople spent little time in one place, and therefore exemption was meaningless.[97] What showpeople wanted was exception from licensing requirements when settled in winter quarters; but this was refused as it was deemed a caravan used as permanent residence during winter months should be subject to the same regulations as any other temporary dwelling.[98] This the Guild did not object to, their concern was showpeople would have to reapply for their permit every year. Changing attitudes of corporations could result in applications being rejected, and if this occurred, showpeople would be left without accommodation.[99] Although technically temporary dwellings, caravans in yards which formed winter quarters were in yearlong use, if not habitation, by showpeople. When the Public Health Bill appeared before the House of Commons, agreeable clauses were added which ensured showpeople would have no trouble in being approved for residency in their winter quarters.[100]

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[95] 'The Shops Act – Not To Apply to lawfully Held Fair', *The World's Fair* (August 14th, 1920), p. 1. 'Showmen's Guild And The Shops Act', *The World's Fair* (September 4th, 1920), p.12.
[96] 'Public Health Bill: Clause Which Will Seriously Affect Showmen', *The World's Fair* (July 11th, 1936), p. 1.
[97] Public Health Bill: Clause Which Will Seriously Affect Showmen', *The World's Fair* (July 11th, 1936), p. 1.
[98] 'Public Health Bill Clause Which Will Seriously Affect Showmen', *The World's Fair* (July 11th, 1936), p. 4.
[99] 'What We Think: Movable Dwelling', *The World's Fair* (July 11th, 1936), p. 45.
[100] 'What We Think: Good Work', *The World's Fair* (August 8th, 1936), p. 45. Murphy, *History of the Showmen's Guild* , pp. 201-202.

This is another example of how the unique business and living arrangements of showfolk posed a legislative puzzle, and if it were not for the intervention of the Guild, the Bill could have proved problematic.

Often it was not legislation which caused problems for showpeople, but inconsistency in application. Friction between local authorities and showland during the First World War was frequently the result of government policy being interpreted inconsistently by corporations, resulting in showpeople inadvertently flouting laws in one borough with activity considered legal in others. The trend of vague national policy leading to inconsistent regional application continued into the interwar period. National laws relating to categorisation of games of skill, and games of chance, the latter considered gambling, caused issues for showpeople. In 1923 at Bradford a showman was fined 10s for presenting an aeroplane 'spinner' stall which was deemed an illegal game of chance, and yet at Newcastle in the same year a case regarding the same game was dismissed.[101] The Showmen's Guild in 1928 communicated with the Home Secretary over this issue, and the official advice was games such as darts or coconut shies were not unlawful but could become illegal if played in proximity of other games – the nature of these 'other games' was not made clear.[102] *The World's Fair* observed this "was not very helpful to stallholders", for legality of stalls depended on local interpretation of law, potentially putting showpeople "at the mercy of any member of the police force who sees the prospect of a case".[103] Such an incident occurred at Brighton in 1936 when Coconut Shies were deemed to be an offence against the Betting Act; the *Daily Mail* reported "what a comic tangle it is – a flutter legalised on the race-track and a fling at the coconut prohibited at the fairground".[104] The *Daily Mail* also noted the High Court was due to pass judgement on the legality of 'Roll A Penny' games; the fact the *Mail* refers to the "austere intellectual atmosphere" of the court is

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[101] 'Skill Or Chance: Question Of Legality Of Fair Ground Games', *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* (September 14th, 1923), p. 3.
[102] 'What We Think: Games', *The World's Fair* (June 23rd, 1928), p. 37.
[103] 'What We Think: Games', *The World's Fair* (June 23rd, 1928), p. 37.
[104] 'The Law And Coconuts', *The Daily Mail* (August 28th, 1936), p. 8.

demonstrative of a class divide in perceptions of amusement.[105] The upper and middle classes passing judgement over entertainments were portrayed as aloof and unreceptive to the wants of the working classes, who felt their harmless traditional amusements were under attack. To avoid further prosecutions the Guild passed an extension to Guild Rule 15B in April 1936 which barred the use of gambling machines on Guild-run fairgrounds.[106] This demonstrates how the Guild self-policed showland, particularly when national and local authorities had failed to produce legislation clear or consistent enough to regulate fairgrounds.

Sunday Opening was another issue over which central government policy deferred to local control. In 1931 Home Secretary J.R. Clynes amended a 1780 Act and allowed local authorities to permit cinemas, lectures, speeches and debates to go ahead on Sundays.[107] The Government opted to amend rather than repeal the act, and retain power to prohibit other forms of leisure (horse-racing, boxing, prize-fighting and forms of gambling) from occurring on Sundays.[108] This establishes how Sunday Opening could be used to control forms of leisure considered on the margins of acceptability; and suitability was decided by regulators rather than providers or consumers of leisure. The 1932 Sunday Entertainments Bill affirmed local authorities held the power to block or permit Sunday opening of fairs, but included no specific criteria.[109] *The World's Fair* expressed concerns town councils could make decisions at odds with the opinions of ratepayers, however no evidence of any major debates over Sunday opening appears in sources from the interwar period.[110] The traditional moral opponents to Sunday opening, and fairs in general, had been defeated by the Government's policy of promoting open-air entertainments to boost civilian morale in the closing years of the First World War, and thus Sunday Opening was no longer a viable method of controlling fairs for corporations.

[105] 'The Law And Coconuts', *The Daily Mail* (August 28th, 1936), p. 8.
[106] 'Good And Bad Legislation: The Showmen's Guild And Money Games', *The World's Fair* (April 11th, 1936), p. 1.
[107] Stephen Jones, *Workers At Play – A Social And Economic History Of Leisure 1918-1939* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1986), p. 174.
[108] Jones, *Workers At Play*, p. 174.
[109] 'What We Think – The Sunday Muddle', *The World's Fair* (May 28th, 1932), p. 45.
[110] 'What We Think – The Sunday Muddle', *The World's Fair* (May 28th, 1932), p. 45.

Although, as this chapter will investigate, local authorities were the primarily agents attempting to assert control over fairs in the interwar period, the biggest threat to showland came from central government. Although the Ministry of Transport was formed in 1919, local councils retained control over the maintenance and licensing of highways until 1929 when the Local Government Act abolished rural districts as highway authorities; transferring control to county boroughs under the instruction of the Ministry of Transport.[111] Jennings states the "relative importance of the highways authorities" was reduced "as the control of the Ministry of Transport increased".[112] An additional development in the interwar period was the huge growth in commercial road users; in 1922 there were 15,000 goods vehicles on the roads, but by 1936 this number had risen to 459,000.[113] This meant increased competition for the railways and increased demands on the road infrastructure. In 1932 the Salter Road-Rail Transport Commission was set up by John Pybus, Minister of Transport. The intention was to alleviate the increasing costs of road maintenance by increasing taxation on commercial vehicles, particularly those weighing above five tons and steam vehicles exempt from the petrol tax.[114] Chaired by Arthur Salter the commission consisted of four representatives from the road haulage industry and heads of the four major railways.[115]

Although designed to create balance between road haulage and railways, the report generated criticism for appearing "only to examine and determine a thesis advanced by the railway companies", and consequently the investigation and outcomes were biased against road haulage.[116] The National Council of the Commercial Motor Users Association stated hauliers deserved a reprieve rather than an increase in taxation, which was growing to the extent "many

[111] Jennings, 'Central Control' in Laski, Jennings, Robson (Eds) *A Century Of Municipal Progress*, p. 449. Smellie, *A History Of Local Government,* pp. 61, 78.
[112] Jennings, 'Central Control' in Laski, Jennings, Robson (Eds) *A Century Of Municipal Progress*, p. 450.
[113] Smellie, *A History Of Local Government*, p. 61.
[114] 'Heavy Road Vehicles Must Pay More – Commission's Warning In Reply To Critics', *Daily Mail* (December 19th, 1932), p. 17. Murphy, *History Of The Showmen's Guild* , pp.180-184.
[115] What We Think: The Salter Report', *The World's Fair* (August 20th, 1932), p. 45.
[116] 'Moves In Road and Rail Battle', *Daily Mail* (January 20th, 1933), p. 13. 'Salter Report – Road Users' Criticism', *The Times* (October 28th, 1932), p.18.

owners cannot bear".[117] The main criticism of the report were the projected costs of future road maintenance, which justified tax increases, were much higher than previous expenditure and unsupported by evidence.[118] A fifty percent reduction in licence duties and a reduction in petrol tax to 6d a gallon would provide enough revenue to cover road maintenance costs, leading the CMUA to claim taxation was purely to generate revenue.[119] This suggestion is supported by the fact between 1911 and 1920 road maintenance cost £7,127,000, but in the same period £22,992,000 was collected from road users in licensing fees, fuel and other taxation.[120] The Salter Report's justification of increased taxation to cover maintenance was based on fallacy as the majority of revenue from road users was not used in the upkeep of highways. Additionally, it was feared the Report's recommendations could impact adversely on other industries. The increased taxation on goods vehicles was of detriment to vehicle manufacturers, and excessive taxation on steam vehicles endangered the domestic market for coal at a time when the coal industry needed support.[121]

Those who were most at risk from the Salter Report proposals were travelling showpeople, for whom road transport was essential to their business.[122] In 1932 the license cost for a heavy steam locomotive or motor lorry was £30, and for trailers was £10- if the Salter Report rates were applied this would increase to £435 per steam locomotive, £60 for all motor lorries (not just those over 10 tons) and £16 per trailer.[123] Proprietors could not afford such an increase; the *Times* article cited one showman would see his annual license fees increase from £520 to £6,132.[124] Even prosperous riding masters faced catastrophe; Pat Collins would experience an

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[117] 'The Salter Report – Commercial Motor Users' Objections', *The Times* (February 3rd, 1933), p. 7.
[118] 'Salter Report – Road Users' Criticism', *The Times* (October 28th, 1932), p.18.
[119] 'Salter Report – Objections of Road Users, Memorandum To M.P.s', *The Times* (December 14th, 1932), p. 7. 'Taxation Of Heavy Vehicles: Effect On Industry', *The Times* (April 26th, 1933), p. 10. 'Salter Report – Road Users' Criticism', *The Times* (October 28th, 1932), p.18.
[120] Rees Jefferys, *The King's Highway – An Historical and Autobiographical Record Of The Development of the Past Sixty Years* (The Batchworth Press, London, 1949), p. 60.
[121] A Deputation from the Coal Utilisation Council remarked the Salter Report brought about the premature scrapping of many steam vehicles, and so depleted a domestic market of 950,000 tons of steam coal annually. 'Taxation of Heavy Vehicles – Effect On Industry', *The Times* (April 26th, 1933), p. 10. 'Tax On Heavy Oils – Benefit To The Coal Industry', *The Times* (March 9th, 1934), p. 16.
[122] What We Think: The Salter Report', *The World's Fair* (August 20th, 1932), p. 45.
[123] 'Making a "Merry England" – Travelling Showmen's Part', *The Times* (January 20th, 1933), p. 10.
[124] 'Making a "Merry England" – Travelling Showmen's Part', *The Times* (January 20th, 1933), p. 10.

increase from £870 to £5,511 which he would find "impossible to pay" and would be forced to close.[125] The proposed increases were based on an estimate showland vehicles averaged 8,000 miles on the highway annually, a figure the Guild considered "ridiculous and absurd".[126] In the report submitted to the Ministry of Transport, the Guild made the following calculations:

> "A) The working season in each year is from 7 to 8 Months.
>
> B) The average number of working hours is 30 on the fair ground, per week.
>
> C) The average mileage covered from fair to fair is 21 miles.
>
> D) The number of hours occupied in such removal is 3 ¾, being one day in each week.
>
> E) The total average annual mileage covered in each period of the working year is 500 miles."[127]

The Guild attested they should only pay according to the time they used the highways.[128] To substantiate their protest the Guild, through the *World's Fair,* asked showpeople to complete a questionnaire to determine an accurate average annual mileage.[129] This was calculated to be 541.56 miles, a fifteenth of the distance the Salter Report estimated.[130] This formed the strongest argument in the Guild's protest; through conducting their own survey they proved "our average mileage is so low, and the time spent upon the road so little, the present license fees should be reduced rather than increased". [131] They also stated unlike commercial hauliers with which they had been erroneously grouped with "showmen are not using the roads for the

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[125] 'Travelling Showmen and The Salter Report', *The Times* (March 30th, 1933), p. 4.
[126] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 183.
[127] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild ,* p. 183.
[128] 'What We Think: A Call To Arms', *The World's Fair* (August 27th, 1932), p. 45.
[129] The questionnaire was as follows: "A) What class of vehicle they are using; B) Whether one or more; C) The length of the working season, that is the date commencing and finishing the same; D) The number of wakes or feasts attended during this period; e) How many working weeks; F) The mileage from fair to fair; G) The number of hours taken to do this; H) The gross mileage covered during the working season" 'Showmen and the Salter Report: Final Reminder To Guild Members', *The World's Fair* (October 15th, 1932), p.1.
[130] 'What We Think: Showland's Reply', *The World's Fair* (November 19th, 1932), p. 45.
[131] 'Showmen And The Salter Report: Final Reminder To Guild Members', *The World's Fair* (October 15th, 1932), p. 1.

purpose of trade and industry": the less time showpeople spent on the road the better, as this meant attractions were open longer.[132]

The Salter Report was another case of false assumptions directing legislation, which if unchecked, could have had calamitous consequences for showland. The Guild noted although the Committee intended to regulate showpeople, unlike road hauliers they were granted no representation - an omission not necessarily because of prejudice, but the result of a false assumption about the logistical activities of showland comparable to other hauliers.[133] The proactive response of the Guild in protesting inaccurate reasoning behind the Salter Report's proposed increases resulted in 1933 showpeople securing dispensation for trailer licenses, and the license for showmen's steam locomotives being fixed at £55.[134] Although some increase was unavoidable, they prevented exorbitant taxation of heavy locomotives which would have crippled the business. The response to the Salter Report is an excellent example of the function of the Guild in the interwar period, as a watchdog for dangerous legislation, and as a body which could coordinate a representative response from the membership. The Salter Report demonstrates how legislation designed to regulate showland often relied on a lack of knowledge, owing to lack of representation in the decision-making process.

The interwar period saw less dialogue between the Showmen's Guild and Government than had been experienced in wartime. However, the threatening legislation which did appear was problematic for the same reasons: lack of knowledge about showpeople's business and lifestyle, and failure to include representatives of showland in discussions. In most cases once the Guild became involved, legislation was usually amended in an agreeable manner. The main exception to this was the continuation of the wartime Entertainments Tax. Despite consistent protest from the Guild and other entertainments associations, the national depression made the Government

[132] 'What We Think: Showland's Reply', *The World's Fair* (November 19th, 1932), p. 45. 'Making a "Merry England – Travelling Showmen's Part', *The Times* (January 20th, 1933), p. 10.
[133] 'What We Think: Showland's Reply', *The World's Fair* (November 19th, 1932), p. 45.
[134] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 188.

disinclined to make any concessions, particularly to a sector of industry expanding at the rate leisure was during this period.

III -The Interwar Relationship Between Showpeople and Local Authorities – Rent Increases, Relocation, and the Return of the Movable Dwellings Bill

The First World War created a complex relationship between local authorities and showland. Whilst corporations had unprecedented control to close fairs through lighting regulations, the need to maintain morale of industrial labourers meant open-air recreation was also promoted in some areas. Some councils attempted to continue wartime suspension of fairs into peacetime; Stafford Corporation abolished its May Day fair in 1919, and there was considerable agitation in 1919 for abolition of Oxford St Giles Fair.[135] In February 1919 Alderman E. Hunt stated when he moved a resolution on Goose Fair in 1915 he hoped to be dealing a "death blow", and suggested wartime cessation provided the corporation with an opportunity "for preventing in future this kind of amusement".[136] Although not ubiquitous these cases demonstrate how municipal authorities used wartime cancellation as an opportunity to propose permanent closure. The Showmen's Guild recognised this and took the initiative in seeking permission from councils to reinstate fairs before agitators could propose abolition; Murphy notes early in 1919 they obtained consent to hold fairs in Kings Lynn, Wisbech, Peterborough, Stamford, Hull and Lincoln.[137]

The interwar period saw councils attempting to exert an unprecedented level of control over fairs. Social issues, including immorality, drunkenness and large public gatherings, had been associated with travelling fairs since the nineteenth century and continued to be of concern. It became a key municipal objective to control and monitor the working class, whose potential agency and fragmented composition made them a cause for concern. As the working-class demand for leisure became "insatiable" during the interwar period, authorities stopped trying

[135] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* ,p. 124. 'Oxford Fair', *The World's Fair* (April 5th, 1919), p. 1.
[136] 'Nottingham Goose Fair: Town Council Discussion', *The World's Fair* (February 15th, 1919), p. 1.
[137] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild ,* p. 124.

to ban forms of leisure deemed unacceptable, instead opting to achieve control over existing organised forms of leisure.[138] Permanent recreations including public houses, music halls and cinemas afforded a certain level of control through licensing. Equally the seating of cinemas and theatre venues encouraged a more sedate, and passive form of entertainment. The travelling fair was the antithesis: a sporadic and precarious disruption which encouraged crowds and disorder in town centres. To maintain public order local authorities desired to control such events but had previously been denied this control by Charter Rights. During the interwar period local authorities for the first time had the means at their disposal to circumnavigate Charter Rights, using rent, relocation, and restriction of opening hours to control fairs. The incentive for control remained the same as it had been in the nineteenth century; regulating these public spaces would prevent anti-social and immoral behaviour. The key difference in the interwar period was the shift in power from central to local government meant corporations now had the mechanisms to exert the control they had long desired.

Restricting opening hours was one method employed by local authorities to regulate fairs. Liverpool Corporation allowed the summer fair to reopen in 1919 but would only allow it to run until 10.30pm, limiting revenue for proprietors.[139] In 1933 showpeople asked for an extension to Hull Fair to cover two Saturdays in compensation for increased rents and additional costs.[140] Local shopkeepers claimed the fair was detrimental to trade, and the extension was denied: the *Hull Daily Mail* stated the council "did the right thing" but curiously admitted the fair brought people and prosperity to the city.[141] In addition to curtailing the fair, Liverpool Corporation also set restrictions on the prices of rides at the fair.[142] Usually proprietors set fares in accordance with crowd sizes, temporary raising prices to prevent overcrowding. Unable to do this

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[138] John Clarke and Chas Critcher, *The Devil Makes Work – Leisure In Capitalist Britain* (Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, 1985), p. 67.
[139] 'What We Think- The Fly', *The World's Fair* (July 26th, 1919), p. 13.
[140] 'Hull Fair: Showmen's Guild Apply For Extra Saturday', *The World's Fair* (April 25th, 1924), p. 1. 'Two Saturdays For Hull Fair This Year: Showmen's Plea', *Hull Daily Mail* (September 30th, 1933). 'What Hull Gets Out Of Its Fair - £3,300 In Rents', *Yorkshire Evening Post* (October 11th, 1934), p. 5.
[141] 'No Hull Fair Extension', *Hull Daily Mail* (October 13th, 1933), p. 10.
[142] 'What We Think- The Fly', *The World's Fair* (July 26th, 1919), p. 13.

proprietors at Liverpool were forced to close attractions meaning "a deal of money was lost, and people were prevented from enjoying themselves" .[143] By refusing extensions and controlling fares councils restricted the profitability of fairgrounds, effectively granting them control over the number of showpeople who would attend and the quality of amusements.

In some cases, local authorities attempted to pass direct legislation over fairs. In 1921 Wigan Corporation proposed a Bill granting them complete control of the holding of fairs within the borough whether on corporation or private land.[144] The Guild viewed this as violation of Charter Rights and their parliamentary representative Evan Chatteris successfully opposed the Bill in the House of Commons.[145] It was agreed Wigan Corporation could only withhold consent if a fair threatened to compromise public safety, public decency or public health.[146] The Guild was not wholly satisfied as it felt these conditions were open to interpretation, but nonetheless felt this protest demonstrated the Guild was "not to be treated lightly", and the successful amendment had a "restraining influence" on other authorities who may have promoted similar legislation had Wigan been unchallenged.[147] In 1930 West Bromwich proposed a Bill which would mean permission was required to hold any fair not covered by Charter Right or Statute (held under right of Ancient Custom).[148] The vagueness of the legislation concerned the Guild; the Bill included no indication of which fairs came under "Ancient Custom". After Guild intervention it was agreed fairs held in West Bromwich for the last forty years counted, and the Guild withdrew opposition to the Bill.[149] Despite constant vigilance of the Guild in opposing Bills which infringed the rights of showpeople, in 1936 legislation was proposed by London County Council enabling them to veto any fair deemed opposed to public safety, or encouraging "nuisance and annoyance.[150] As with the Wigan Bill, the Guild expressed concerns the stipulated conditions

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[143] 'What We Think- The Fly', *The World's Fair* (July 26th, 1919), p. 13.
[144] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 130.
[145] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 130.
[146] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 130.
[147] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , pp. 131.
[148] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , pp. 171-172.
[149] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , pp. 171-172.
[150] 'Control of Fairgrounds: System of Licensing Advocated In London', *The World's Fair* (January 11th, 1936), p. 1.

were open to interpretation. A similar system of licensing had been applied in Scotland and showpeople found licenses were denied even where objectors were in a considerable minority; it was feared if this became law in London "there is no doubt that the position of the travelling showman…would be an almost impossible one".[151] *The World's Fair* acknowledged the severity of the precedent these proposals could prove, and stated the Guild would "need all its strength to combat this latest menace… one of the most serious problems showland has had to face for a long time".[152] The desire to monitor the suitability of amusements in public entertainments was made apparent in a 1932 meeting of the Health Resorts Association. T. Moutford Taylor viewed the presence of gambling machines "with Yankee-sounding titles" and peep show cinematograph machines at funfairs contrary to common decency.[153] The meeting concluded local authorities should be given power through a system of licencing or bye-laws to exercise control over such amusements.[154] In response to this *World's Fair* columnist 'Q' suggests showpeople should "endeavour to see that there occurs in their conduct of the funfair nothing that can give offence to the fair-minded public".[155] Although complaints in the report were directed at permanent seaside amusement parks, 'Q' believed opposition could shift to travelling fairs, and therefore recommended showpeople "cultivate the friendship and win the respect of the local officials".[156]

Transactions between showpeople were traditionally informal, rarely involving a written contract and relying on the good word of fellow proprietors, but when dealing with corporations showland adapted to follow a "business-like procedure".[157] As corporations took

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[151] 'What We Think- The London County Council Proposals', *The World's Fair* (January 11th, 1936), p. 53.
[152] 'What We Think- The London County Council Proposals', *The World's Fair* (January 11th, 1936), p. 53.
[153] 'Control of Funfairs – Discussion At Health Resorts Association', *The World's Fair* (June 11th, 1932), p. 15.
[154] 'Control of Funfairs – Discussion At Health Resorts Association', *The World's Fair* (June 11th, 1932), p. 15.
[155] Q, 'Local Authorities and Fun Fairs: A Question of Importance To Showmen', *The World's Fair* (June 11th, 1932), p. 15.
[156] Q, 'Local Authorities and Fun Fairs: A Question of Importance To Showmen', *The World's Fair* (June 11th, 1932), p. 15.
[157] 'The Showman's Word: Where The Written Contract Is Rarely Used', *Yorkshire Evening Post* (January 3rd, 1921), p. 5.

more direct control over fairgrounds, rent negotiations with municipalities became part of the business and the presence of the fairground inspector or "Tober Mush" was an anticipated precursor to the opening of a fair.[158] The interwar period saw corporations raising ground rents considerably in many places, using this as a method to control the size of fairs and the nature of attractions included. Wisbech Corporation was amongst the first to drastically raise ground rents; upon reinstating the fair the daily rent on a large ride increased from three to seven pounds.[159] Wigan Markets Committee similarly raised rents for the 1919 May Fair, but *after* deposits from showpeople had been accepted.[160] *The World's Fair* condemned this as a "despicable trick", suggesting if ratepayers "knew to what depths their representatives have sunk to gain a little revenue" they would be unlikely to support them at subsequent elections.[161] One motivation for raising rents was to prevent smaller fairs from opening on village greens by making them financially unviable. John Cariss was sued at Seaham Harbour County Court for seven pounds ground rent by Easington Parish Council in November 1919, who were charging this to prevent the fair going ahead.[162] Cariss stated he had attended Easington for forty years and had never previously been charged rent, but the court judged in favour of the council.[163]

Another way in which corporations used rent to regulate fairs was to offer pitches only via applications. Hull Fair in 1933 was oversubscribed by applicants which enabled the corporation to choose the attractions it deemed suitable and most profitable, thus restricting the proprietors, types of ride admitted, and the size of the fair.[164] The *Hull Daily Mail* speculated increased rents for the 1933 fair would encourage showpeople to bring their most up-to-date equipment "to recoup themselves for their heavier outlay".[165] However, the fact showpeople

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[158] 'Roundabout Rents', *The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* (September 9th, 1938), p. 6.
[159] 'What We Think- Rents', *The World's Fair* (August 2nd, 1919), p. 13.
[160] 'What We Think-Wigan', *The World's Fair* (May 24th, 1919), p. 13.
[161] 'What We Think-Wigan', *The World's Fair* (May 24th, 1919), p. 13.
[162] 'Rent For Village Green, Roundabout Proprietor To Pay After Forty Years', *The World's Fair* (November 22nd, 1919), p. 1.
[163] 'Rent For Village Green, Roundabout Proprietor To Pay After Forty Years', *The World's Fair* (November 22nd, 1919), p. 1.
[164] 'Hull Fair Sites Sold Out – Many Showmen Turned Away', *Hull Daily Mail* (September 16th, 1933), p. 5.
[165] 'Hull Fair Sites Sold Out – Many Showmen Turned Away', *Hull Daily Mail* (September 16th, 1933), p. 5.

were required to present stalls for inspection by the Chief Constable prior to opening to eliminate "games of chance and other undesirable attractions" implies rent increases and application processes were a means for the corporation to regulate entertainments incorporated in the fair.[166] Nottingham Corporation made efforts in 1924 to regulate the number of casual traders or "hawkers" present on the fairground; individuals wishing to trade had to pay a toll and would receive a badge in turn - anyone without one would be ejected.[167] Hull Fair, the largest municipally controlled event, saw consistent increases in rent throughout the interwar period; by 1924 the corporation had increased ground rents fifty percent on pre-war levels, and the ground rents continued to increase annually in the thirties.[168] In addition to increasing rents Hull Corporation introduced additional charges for water supply and for permits for traction engines.[169] Local authorities also used rent to control the settling of showpeople in the off-season. Rugby Markets Committee received a request in 1925 from Messrs. Thurston applying to rent the fairground for storage of living vans and equipment during the winter at established rate of £2 a week.[170] The committee replied with new terms; the rent would now be £5 per week, accommodation was exclusively for the Thurston family, and they could occupy no more than a quarter of the site.[171] This prevented Thurston allowing other families to share the lot, and as Thurston had always been based in Rugby the corporation were aware he had little choice but to agree increased rent and additional terms.

As most local authorities raised rents, showpeople were forced to concede to them or give up their business, when they occurred, yielded little; in 1927 the Showmen's Guild protested rent increases at Burnley, but a letter to the Markets Committee resulted only in a reply stating the rates would remain.[172] The obedience of the usually tenacious Guild reflects their difficult

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[166] 'Hull Fair Sites Sold Out – Many Showmen Turned Away', *Hull Daily Mail* (September 16th, 1933), p. 5.
[167] 'Goose Fair', *Nottingham Evening Post* (September 17th, 1924), p. 1.
[168] 'Hull Fair: Showmen's Guild Apply For Extra Saturday', *The World's Fair* (April 25th, 1924), p. 1. 'Two Saturdays For Hull Fair This Year: Showmen's Plea', *Hull Daily Mail* (September 30th, 1933). 'What Hull Gets Out Of Its Fair - £3,300 In Rents', *Yorkshire Evening Post* (October 11th, 1934), p. 5.
[169] 'Hull Fair Extension', *Hull Daily Mail* (October 2nd, 1933), p. 4.
[170] 'Increased Charge For Fairground', *Rugby Advertiser* (November 20th, 1925), p. 2.
[171] 'Increased Charge For Fairground', *Rugby Advertiser* (November 20th, 1925), p. 2.
[172] 'Rents Of Fairground Pitches', *Burnley News* (June 1st, 1927), p. 5.

position, protesting rents and regulations could prompt corporations to oppose fairs entirely and impose restrictions designed to cause showpeople to abandon a fair. Once a fair was abandoned Royal Charter Rights became invalid and the fair could be abolished. The Lancashire Section of the Guild were an exception to the general passivity; in response to proposed rent increases at Bolton midsummer fair in 1923 Lancashire proprietors boycotted the fair, demanding reduced rents and an hour extension at the New Year's fair, the latter being accepted but rent reduction rejected.[173] Although sympathetic the Central Committee of the Guild expressed concern over the Lancashire Section's decision to act without Guild consent; after involvement of the Guild General Secretary, Bolton Corporation agreed rents would remain at the 1922 level, suggesting a more organised approach yielded better results.[174] However, this was in part disproved the following year when Bolton Corporation attempted to shorten the fair from six to four days, and required tenants to tender for spaces, the idea being to generate equivalent income to a six day fair in four.[175] The Lancashire Section demanded the tender system was removed, and stated in compensation for curtailment, proprietors would only accept positions at a twenty-five percent reduction. [176] The proposal was refused, forcing the section to agree tenants would submit tenders all twenty-five percent lower than they paid the previous year, and if rejected would boycott the fair.[177] This united show of strength resulted in the corporation relenting, and offering tenants pitches at a reduced rate.[178] This successful campaign was an isolated incident however, and increasing ground rents remained an issue until the eve of the Second World War. At Lynn Mart in 1939 rents were as high as eight shillings per foot; a side-stall might pay ten pounds daily, a large riding machine twenty-five pounds. [179]

[173] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , pp. 137-138.
[174] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild ,* p.138.
[175] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild ,* pp.144-143.
[176] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , pp. 144-143.
[177] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , pp. 144-143.
[178] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , pp.144-143.
[179] 'King's Lynn Mart – Showmen Complain of High Rents', *The World's Fair* (February 25th, 1939), p. 35.

Whilst the Guild generally viewed rent increases as Councils taking advantage of the showpeople's need for pitches, and viewing showpeople as "easy money", the Guild also acknowledged spiralling rents were partially a self-perpetuating problem.[180] In 1928 a *World's Fair* column suggested proprietors "have offered and given fabulous rents when times were exceptional, and they are now finding the greatest difficulty in getting these inflated rents to normal charges".[181] An example of this was the rejection by Newcastle Corporation of a six hundred pound offer to hold a fair on a recreation ground in 1921; the Corporation stated in previous years they were offered as much as a thousand pounds, but showpeople stated the economic climate meant they could not offer a similar amount.[182] The natural tendency of proprietors to exaggerate, particularly about takings, was also a factor *The World's Fair* considered detrimental to the realistic perception of the business . Whilst the fraught economic situation and poor weather made the 1920s and 1930s difficult for showfolk, publicly boasting about good takings would not incentivise councils to reduce rents.[183] In the 1933 debate over the Hull Fair extension, proprietor Mr. Corrigan remarked showfolk were inaccurately "put down as millionaires", but the boasting noted by *The World's Fair* supported rather than challenged this perception.[184] Part of the showland business which encouraged corporations to take greater financial control over fairs was subletting of pitches. In 1926 the *Rugby Advertiser* reported the "profiteering" of Henry Thurston who had rented the fairground for eight days for £35, but earned considerably more by requesting a percentage of his lessee's takings.[185] This prompted the Markets Committee to consider the method adopted elsewhere of the corporation taking individual rents, preventing one lessee subletting, and increasing council revenue.[186] The

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[180] 'What We Think – Rents', *The World's Fair* (May 17th, 1924), p. 29.
[181] 'Rents Again', *The World's Fair* (August 18th ,1928), p. 37.
[182] 'Showman's Dilemma – Nowhere To Pitch Their Tents For Race Week', *Shields Daily News* (May 25th, 1921), p. 3.
[183] 'What We Think: Don't Talk', *The World's Fair* (February 11th, 1928), p. 29.
[184] 'Two Saturday's For Hull Fair This Year – Showmen's Plea', *Hull Daily Mail* (September 30th, 1933), p. 5.
[185] From lessee Robert Theodore, in ground rent and twenty five percent of gross takings, Thurston earned a total of £47 12s 2d. 'Rugby Street Improvement – Does Profiteering Exist', *Rugby Advertiser* (July 24th, 1925), p. 2.
[186] 'Rugby Street Improvement – Does Profiteering Exist', *Rugby Advertiser* (July 24th, 1925), p. 2.

Guild also noted the traditions of the older generation in attending key fixtures, notably Goose Fair or Lynn Mart, meant they willingly paid inflated rent costs to ensure a pitch instead of protesting unrealistic charges as the Lancashire Section had done, or submitting lower tenders.[187]

In addition to utilising rents as a mechanism of control, there were practical reasons for increasing rents in the interwar period. Hull Fair, the most widely reported case of ongoing rent increases, saw considerable infrastructure improvements during the 1930s including a new central road through the fairground and the provision of a separate area for living accommodation.[188] Although Hull's annual fair was not the main use of the site, it was exclusively the Markets Committee that was responsible for the costs of road maintenance and site improvements and it was therefore necessary to source revenue from the fair.[189] Although in some instances infrastructure improvement and poorly balanced municipal funding resulted in ground rents increasing, in the majority of cases no such reasons were made clear. Evidence suggests rents and systems of letting were altered by corporations to control the size and duration of fairs, the proprietors admitted, and the amusements they provided.

In combination with rising rents, the interwar period also saw fairs relocated away from traditional sites. The justification for these relocations was complex; economic reasons and public safety were often cited, but relocation also afforded local authority greater control over fairgrounds. Without the power to ban them, some councils opted to financially cripple them by sending them "right out into the wilds where no one will ever trouble to go".[190] The presence of an annual fair was considered by some detrimental to the income of local businesses; the Hull Chamber of Trade resisted any extension of the annual fair claiming "it has a serious effect on the takings of shop keepers".[191] Similarly in 1938 Councillor E.S.L. Collins, speaking on behalf of

[187] 'King's Lynn Mart – Showmen Complain of High Rents', *The World's Fair* (February 25th, 1939), p. 35.
[188] 'Hull Fair Sites Sold Out – Many Showmen Turned Away', *Hull Daily Mail* (September 16th, 1933), p. 5.
[189] 'Hull Fair Income', *Hull Daily Mail* (January 11th, 1936), p. 2.
[190] 'Uxbridge Michelmas Fairs: More About The Earlier Years, Difficulties Of Present-Day Showmen', *Uxbridge And West Drayton Gazette* (October 15th, 1937), p. 13.
[191] 'Hull Fair Revenue', *The World's Fair* (October 31st, 1936), p. 1. 'Hull Fair Extension', *The Hull Daily Mail* (October 2nd, 1933), p. 4.

traders in Wells, stated businesses struggled to compete with the fair, and he believed "the time has come when we should cut down these shows as much as possible".[192] Conversely after Hereford Council voted to relocate the annual fair to a site away from the city centre in 1931, traders found their revenue depleted as they no longer benefitted from the influx of fair goers.[193] In March 1932 a majority voted Hereford fair should return to its original site, and *The World's Fair* suggested this reversal was due to a campaign by local businesses.[194] Showpeople at Hull Fair in 1936 were granted the previously refused extension owing to revenue generated by the fair for local business; Alderman Farmery stating "I have yet to learn when there is a fair or anything in a city, and you have thousands of visitors, that they don't spend money when they come".[195] Although extensions were denied, the physical relocation of Hull Fair never occurred and agitations regarding this were dismissed by the Lord Mayor when opening the fair in 1934.[196] However, in situations where the fair disrupted local business, as was the case with Lincoln Cattle Market, there were campaigns to relocate the pleasure fair.[197]

Another explanation for fair relocations were public complaints. In 1923 the *West London Observer* reported several complaints from residents to Fulham council about a site being rented to showpeople. They stated "a showground with all the rowdy accompaniments of a country fair… becomes a nuisance when prolonged".[198] Issues of noise and smoke pollution from steam engines provoked complaints at Berridge Road Fair in Nottingham in 1925 and Morpeth in 1937.[199] In the latter case it was stated disturbances to residents were the reason shows would not be permitted on the site in future "not because the Council had anything against

[192] 'Wells City Council Refuse Facilities For Fair', *The World's Fair* (January 8th, 1938), p. 1.
[193] 'What We Think- Hereford', *The World's Fair* (February 13th, 1932), p. 45. 'What We Think- Back Again', *The World's Fair* (March 12th, 1932), p. 45.
[194] 'What We Think- Hereford', *The World's Fair* (February 13th, 1932), p. 45. 'What We Think- Back Again', *The World's Fair* (March 12th, 1932), p. 45.
[195] 'Hull Fair, Extension Granted: Loud Speakers Ban', *The World's Fair* (February 22nd, 1936), p. 1.
[196] 'What Hull Gets Out Of It's Fair: £3,300 In Rents', *Yorkshire Evening Post* (October 11th, 1934), p. 5.
[197] 'Amusement Apart, There Is Another Side Of Lincoln Fair', *Lincolnshire Echo* (April 20th, 1934), 'Meat Trade In Danger – Cattle Market Criticised', *Lincolnshire Chronicle* (February 12th, 1938), p. 13.
[198] 'A Public Nuisance', *West London Observer* (February 9th, 1923), p. 6.
[199] 'Editor's Letter Bag – Berridge Road Fairground', *Nottingham Evening Post* (January 6th, 1925), p. 6. 'Showground Problem', *Morpeth Herald* (April 2nd, 1937), p. 9.

roundabouts and shows".[200] Although not directly a decision of local authority, the relocation of fairs away from urban centres in response to resident complaints was a blow for showpeople – the popularity and profitability of fairs was based close proximity to customers, a benefit lost when fairs were forced out of residential areas.[201] Another concern for local authorities was traditional sites for urban fairs were often adjacent to or on main thoroughfares and market places. The combination of increased motor traffic and larger fairs made these locations logistically impractical and a perceived danger to public safety.[202]

Whilst in the above cases clear reasons were cited for changes to fair times and locations, there were other instances when reasons for relocation were not given by corporations. At Newcastle Races in 1921 proprietors were denied use of the usual aerodrome site, and their offer of £600 to rent a nearby recreation ground was refused by Newcastle Corporation Town Moor and Parks Committee.[203] An alternative site was offered, but one showman stated "the dust kills us there…I don't suppose you could select a more unsuitable site", for this reason the site was deemed unprofitable, and the fair abandoned.[204] Similarly in 1923 Pat Collins was denied the use of Hanley Market Square to hold the annual Wakes, and instead was offered Hanley Park for a reduced rent – an offer he refused owing to the perceived unprofitability of running the Wakes away from the urban centre.[205] Although Newcastle and Hanley Councils did not abolish fairs, by

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[200] 'Showground Problem', *Morpeth Herald* (April 2nd, 1937), p. 9.
[201] Councillor Besford of Morpeth stated, "Showmen naturally preferred to hold their fairground almost on people's doorstep, as it was better for business". 'Showground Problem', *Morpeth Herald* (April 2nd, 1937), p. 9.
[202] One of the first local authorities to propose the relocation of the fair was Mitcham Council in 1919 who cited concerns over public safety as prime motivation for the proposal. 'Mitcham Fair: Is The Charter an Invention, Proposed Removal', *The World's Fair* (October 11th, 1919), p. 1. The Fulham Palace Road fair was also considered problematic due to its location adjacent to major roads. 'A Public Nuisance', *West London Observer* (February 9th, 1923), p. 6.
[203] 'Showmen's Dilemma – Nowhere To Pitch Their Tents For Race Week', *Shields Daily News* (May 25th, 1921), p. 3.
[204] The problem of dust in dry weather and mud in wet weather were cited as the main reasons why Burnley Cattle Market required paving and rebuilding in the mid-twenties. 'Improving the Cattle Market', *Burnley Express* (May 21st, 1924), p. 5. ' 'Showmen's Dilemma – Nowhere To Pitch Their Tents For Race Week', *Shields Daily News* (May 25th, 1921), p. 3.
[205] 'Hanley Wakes Question Again – Attempt To Upset Council's Previous Decision', *Staffordshire Advertiser* (July 28th, 1923), p. 4.

forcing showpeople to relocate to unviable sites, they prevented the fairs being held and demonstrated how relocation could give corporations increased control.

The most notable example of how relocation gave a local authority unprecedented control was the relocation of Nottingham Goose Fair. In 1919 the corporation attempted to encourage proprietors to seek larger sites on private land by relinquishing direct council control; however, concerns over the policing of the fair on private land meant relocation was not approved until 1928, and in the interim the fair continued under corporation supervision in the marketplace.[206] In 1928 the construction of the Exchange Hall prompted the fair to be moved from the marketplace to a new site on the New Forest Recreation Ground.[207] The purpose-built fairground featured gas and water mains, levelled ground, drainage systems and a new entrance for heavy vehicles and the public, the intention was to create a site which alleviated problems of overcrowding and site instability which had proved problematic for showpeople and the corporation.[208] However, wet weather in 1930 revealed the site was poorly designed; fairground workers spent "the greater part of the night digging ditches to act as drains", the waterlogged ground made it difficult for proprietors to extricate vehicles and impacted adversely on takings.[209] By building and operating the site, the corporation were able to impose more restrictions; the council forbade "sale by auction', 'hand-selling', 'lecturing' or 'pitching'" and any games considered to be of an "undesirable character" on the new site, and no stall was allowed to open until approved by the police.[210] By taking complete control of the site the corporation was able to remove traits of the fair they considered unwholesome or disruptive. The concern for showpeople was that 'undesirable' was a very vague term, and it was not clear which amusements would be prohibited. It was entirely possible a show-person whose amusements were accepted in other areas could be prohibited at Nottingham. Unlike the

[206] 'A Great Victory, Nottingham Fair To Be Held Again In Market Place', *The World's Fair* (March 8th, 1919), p. 1.
[207] *London Daily Mail Atlantic Edition* (June 15th, 1928), p. 5
[208] 'Preparations For Goose Fair's New Home', *The World's Fair* (August 18th, 1928), p. 1.
[209] 'The Weather And The Fair – What The Rain Meant To The Showmen', *Nottingham Evening Post* (October 4th, 1930), p. 1.
[210] 'Goose Fair Restrictions', *The World's Fair* (September 20th, 1928), p. 1.

marketplace site, which could be extended along neighbouring streets, the new site was fixed at ten acres and the corporation allowed no expansion; "the excess of demand over supply" facilitated "more discrimination to be exercised".[211] Whilst the council claimed this was to ensure the quality of the fair, this method of ensuring overapplication for the smaller forest site gave the corporation control over which entertainments would be permitted access, enabling them to remove elements of the fair they considered disruptive or unsuitable.

The smaller site and fewer rides resulted in Nottingham Markets Committee raising rents; hoping to generate the same revenue from the new fairground as they had done from the larger marketplace Goose Fairs, an expectation *The World's Fair* considered "nothing short of scandalous".[212] In 1938 the corporation made a profit of £5,000 from the Goose Fair, but showpeople did not experience the similar increases in revenue on the new site.[213] In the first year on the Forest Recreation Ground proprietors reported "takings were only one-third of last year" and although in part due to fog, the relative remoteness of the site compared to the central location of the marketplace exacerbated the impact of the adverse weather; people had to travel further to get home, and if the weather was poor would leave earlier or not venture out in the first place.[214] Showpeople also complained the corporation failed to understand "the peculiarities of this huge fair", and had designed the showground poorly.[215] The council mixed the entertainments, contrary to the traditional practise of grouping large rides in the centre and arranging sideshows and stalls around the edges; the result was the centre of the ground was profitable but those on the periphery struggled to meet expenses and rent.[216] By moving the fair away from the marketplace, Nottingham Council were able to command total control over the size and form of the fair, and the nature of the entertainments permitted to pitch on it. The reordered Forest Recreation Ground, in addition to affording great control, also had a negative

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[211] 'Goose Fair – Carnival Will Be Better Than Ever', *Nottingham Evening Post* (October 3rd, 1938), p. 11.
[212] 'Hull Fair: Showmen's Guild Apply For Extra Saturday', *The World's Fair* (April 25th, 1924), p. 1. 'What We Think- Nottingham *The World's Fair* (June 9th, 1928), p. 37.
[213] 'Goose Fair – Carnival Will Be Better Than Ever', *Nottingham Evening Post* (October 3rd, 1938), p. 11.
[214] *Daily Mail* (October 6th, 1928), p. 9.
[215] 'Forest As Fairground – Unprofitable Pitches', *Nottingham Evening Post* (October 8th, 1932), p. 1.
[216] Forest As Fairground – Unprofitable Pitches', *Nottingham Evening Post* (October 8th, 1932), p. 1.

impact on trade as the council increased rents and designed the site with little knowledge of the fairground business.

In addition to the parliamentary work of the Showmen's Guild, many corporations' attempts to legislate against fairs were stalled by public opinion. In debates over the holding of Nottingham Fair in 1919 Councillor H. Bowles suggested the council "had no right to barter away the privileges and pleasures of the people" and suggested a plebiscite of ratepayers should be conducted.[217] Alderman Huntsman warned against this on the basis a referendum could be a dangerous precedent and the plebiscite was voted down by twenty-one votes against to nine for, with twelve abstinences.[218] Despite this the opinion of the ratepayers was considered by the Nottingham Markets Committee which submitted a report to the Council stating even without their involvement the fair must go ahead "under the auspices of the Showmen's Guild" for "the glory of Nottingham Fair must be maintained".[219] In March this report encouraged the Council to retract their earlier decision, and the Sheriff of Nottingham acknowledged "this is one of the things that we have no right to go against if the public wants it".[220] However, it is plausible this reversal occurred as much out of self-preservation as public spiritedness; Alderman Ward warned other council members "you can't kill Goose Fair… But Goose Fair may kill some of you", the implication being ratepayers would not support councillors who opposed the fair when elections came around.[221]

At Oldham in 1919 the Chamber of Trade and Commerce acted similarly to the Nottingham Markets Committee; opposing any change in date of the Wakes as it would be against public opinion.[222] The Showmen's Guild recognised the importance of public opinion in preventing local corporations from interfering with fairs, and the Guild sometimes took direct action in

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[217] 'Nottingham Goose Fair: Town Council Decision', *The World's Fair* (February 15th, 1919), p. 1.
[218] 'Nottingham Goose Fair: Town Council Decision', *The World's Fair* (February 15th, 1919), p. 1.
[219] 'What We Think: Nottingham', *The World's Fair* (February 15th, 1919), p. 9.
[220] 'A Great Victory: Nottingham Fair To Be Held Again In Market Place', *The World's Fair* (March 8th, 1919), p. 1.
[221] 'A Great Victory: Nottingham Fair To Be Held Again In Market Place', *The World's Fair* (March 8th, 1919), p. 1.
[222] 'Oldham Chamber of Trade: Opposition To Alteration of the Wakes Holiday', *The World's Fair* (December 20th, 1919), p. 1.

prompting public response. When Horsham Rural District Council abolished the Crawley Fairs in 1922 with the backing of the Home Secretary, the Guild distributed a petition around local residents whose overwhelming support for the fair resulted in an overturn of the council decision and the return of the fair in 1923.[223] The influence of public opinion remained an important influence over municipal authority throughout the interwar period; in 1938 agitation to remove Newbury fair resulted in a plebiscite of local inhabitants, whose response ensured "nothing more was heard of the matter" and Murphy suggests as with other councils, Newbury "heeded the warning".[224]

The Showmen's Guild was formed in direct response to proposed national legislation over temporary and movable dwellings; legislature which if unaltered would have impacted severely on the travelling show community. By 1914 various forms of the Movable Dwellings Bill were defeated in parliament or had exemption clauses added so as not to interfere with travelling showpeople. The interwar period increasingly saw local authorities rather than national government attempting to introduce Bills regarding temporary dwellings, and again the Showmen's Guild acted to protect the liberty of its membership. In 1928 a meeting of the West Riding Farmers Union revealed support for a Movable Dwellings Bill was still present, and although in this instance it would be primarily to legislate against Gypsy travellers, *The World's Fair* suggested "it is up to members of showland to keep their powder dry" in case, as with previous Bills, the proposed legislation were to inadvertently impact on showland.[225] In 1931 Surrey County Council attempted to revive the conditions of previous bills without an exemption clause for fairground travellers, and a year later West Riding County Council proposed a private Bill to regulate van dwellers in terms of health and sanitation. [226] Neither Bill was designed to impact upon showpeople, but both corporations had failed to exempt them from the legislature and if passed into law the Bills would impact upon this group. The attitude

[223] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 134.
[224] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild ,* p. 216.
[225] 'Movable Dwellings', *The World's Fair* (October 20th, 1928), p. 37.
[226] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 171. 'What We Think: Movable Dwellings Bogey', *The World's Fair* (October 29th, 1932), p. 45.

of *World's Fair* was this attempt "will need watching just as carefully as its predecessors" noting the Guild was equipped to counter this legislation as it had done in the past.[227]

Whilst the Guild achieved exemption clauses in both cases, a more concerning development in the interwar period were attempts by local authorities to pass legislation over not the inhabitants of temporary dwellings, but the structures themselves. With the Movable Dwellings Bill and its successors, it can be argued showpeople were not the target as the Bills intended to exercise control predominantly over Gypsies and transient labourers. However, Bills such as the one promoted by Newcastle Corporation in 1926 which sought powers to prevent caravans entering or staying in the city without consent from the corporation was designed with the intention of exerting control over all caravan dwellers, showpeople included.[228] In 1927 Salford, Sunderland, and Glasgow Corporations proposed similar legislation which would require permission from the borough before temporary structures could be erected; the nature of the constructions could be anything from tents to wooden structures, the latter definition it was feared could be applied not only to living quarters, but to rides as well.[229] If unchallenged these Bills could have caused showland considerable hardship, for although some corporations would give showpeople permission, those opposed to the holding of fairs could use this legislation as a means to prevent them.[230] This legislation had the potential to be more damaging than rent and location changes, for these controls only applied to fairs on corporation land, whereas temporary structures Bills could be applied on any land within a borough. In response the Central Office of the Guild instructed section officials to take up the matter with local authorities; the result was exemption clauses for showpeople were achieved in all cases from 1926 and 1927.[231]

This did not prove a precedent however; in 1929 the Guild "met with point blank refusal" when attempting to secure an exemption clause in temporary structure legislation proposed by

[227] 'What We Think: Movable Dwellings Bogey', *The World's Fair* (October 29th, 1932), p. 45.
[228] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 153.
[229] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 156.
[230] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 156.
[231] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 156.

Hendon Urban District Council.[232] Subsequently the Guild protested the entire Bill, and after it was brought before the House of Commons the Guild were successful in blocking the legislation.[233] This verdict proved to be the precedent the Guild needed; Edmonton Council proposed similar legislation in 1929 but following the Hendon case, contacted the Guild to agree upon exemption clauses to prevent the Guild protesting the bill.[234] In addition to using parliamentary agents, the Guild also lodged objections with the Ministry of Health to ensure exemption in cases where legislation dealt with health and sanitation issues regarding temporary dwellings. This method was used to achieve exemption from proposed bills by Barnstaple, Renfrew and Sunderland Councils in February 1932.[235] This method did not guarantee success however; in May 1932 the Health Committee of Colchester stated bye-laws "so far as they affected roundabout proprietors, etc., were reasonable, and they were unaware why they should not apply in these cases".[236] This demonstrates through discussion with local authorities, petition through parliament or to the Ministry Of Health, the Guild were successful in gaining exemption for showpeople in the majority of interwar temporary dwellings bills, but some were passed and enabled councils to exert further control over showfolk and fairs.

Conclusion

The interwar period saw major developments in the relationship between the travelling showland community and authority. This development was in part due to the increasing autonomy of local authorities over public entertainments, and simultaneously the diminishing direct control of national authority over regional issues.

The issue of showland identity which has been a core element of previous chapters does feature in the interwar period but manifests differently. The question of showland identity became one

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[232] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , pp. 164 – 165.
[233] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , pp. 164 -165.
[234] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 165.
[235] 'The Guild and Local Bye-Laws – Safeguarding The Showman's Rights', *The World's Fair* (February 13th, 1932), p. 1.
[236] 'Colchester Bye-Laws', *The World's Fair* (May 14th, 1932), p. 1.

assessed internally by the Guild, rather than from outside observers. Faced with a crisis of dwindling membership, The Showmen's Guild experienced debates over the course of the interwar period over what constituted an authentic showman, and therefore who was eligible for membership of the Guild. The question of showland identity was still an aspect of national and local legislation, and in much the same way as previous legislative attempts, it was the failure to distinguish showpeople from other nomads which made such legislation problematic. On a national level the Salter Road-Rail Report threatened the showland industry, and if unchallenged its false assumptions about the showland business could have resulted in the industry and community being forced off the road. In addition, revivals of nineteenth century temporary dwellings legislation would apply to all classes of itinerants, and although not designed to legislate against showpeople, if unchecked these bye-laws would have adversely impacted on the community.

The successful appeals against potentially harmful legislation were the result of an organised and proactive Showmen's Guild. During the interwar period the Guild furthered its parliamentary influence through agents like Evan Chatteris, and the support of Pat Collins as M.P. for Walsall. Through these influences and directly approaching local authorities as businessmen the Guild were able to successfully overturn or achieve exemption from most potentially harmful legislation introduced in the interwar period. Successful campaigns against the Salter Report, Early Closing Acts and other forms of legislation relied upon the ability of the Guild to present the plight of showpeople as part of a wider group, amalgamating their interests with other hauliers in response to the Salter Report for example. The main exception was their failure to successfully campaign against the continuation of the wartime Entertainments Tax, and although they initially presented a united front with other entertainment industries in protesting the tax, the campaign faltered as permanent proprietors less affected by the taxation withdrew support. The Guild recognised that to successfully achieve exemption from harmful legislation they had to present themselves not as a marginal group, but as a serious concern of legitimate businessmen who had the same rights as any other industry. In addition, the Guild's

role as a self-policing body continued in the period, addressing instances of friction between Guild members, and condemning behaviour which portrayed showland in an unprofessional light to ensure the Guild remained a reputable and united body.

The major developments in the interwar period were increased attempts by local authorities to exercise control over fairgrounds. Although Charter Rights prevented corporations from directly abolishing fairs (although some attempted to pass legislation over fairs on council grounds) local authorities were able to exert considerable control over fairs through relocating sites, increasing ground rents and restricting opening times. By increasing rents and restricting the length of fairs corporations could make fairs commercially unviable, forcing proprietors to default on Charter agreements and allow the fair to be abolished. By taking control of subletting, councils were able to regulate the size of the fairs, and by requiring showpeople to submit tenders for space they were able to choose the proprietors and entertainments they deemed suitable. Relocating fairs gave corporations the same ability to exercise control over the tenants of the fairground, both in size and content. Through protest and negotiation, the Showmen's Guild was effective in limiting the impact of new methods of control, and ensured fairs continued to be commercially viable. Equally important was the public support for fairs, which often forced local authorities to retract plans to cancel or relocate events.

The legislative challenges of the interwar period were a mixture of reiterated old regulations, in the case of new temporary dwellings bills, and new restrictions from local authorities who took a greater interest in controlling public entertainments. Despite the numerous and consistent attempts to regulate against fairs, they remained a popular and commercially viable form of public entertainment in the interwar period. It was the actions of the Guild which prevented new regulations from impacting terminally on the showland industry, and the significance of their work was reflected in the statement of Stuart Beveridge: "I can safely say that had there been no Showmen's Guild there would now have been very few fairs and very few showmen,

and it would only have been a matter of time before they were entirely wiped out. It is only by the persistent efforts of the Guild that the showmen's existence has been preserved".[237]

[237] Stuart A. Beveridge, 'Showmen's Guild Celebrates Jubilee, *The World's Fair* (January 14th, 1939), p. 16.

Chapter IV - An English Tober? – The Culture of Recreation, Societal Contestation, and the Travelling Fairground 1918-1939

Introduction

The previous chapter examined how the travelling fairground community dealt with new legislative debates with local and national authority during the interwar period. These were not the only challenges faced by showland during the interwar period; by far the biggest threat was the rapid growth of the wider leisure industry and increasing competition from other forms of public amusement. The entire leisure industry was affected adversely by economic depression, and outdoor amusements were additionally impacted by periods of poor weather. This chapter will explore how the showland community responded to these challenges to ensure the industry survived as a viable and popular form of public entertainment ,able to hold their own amidst new competition. A key part of this was modernising the fair, responding to changing public tastes and demands. In a conversation at a garden party in 1923, King George V asked Guild President Pat Collins how business in showland was; Pat replied, "the bottom's knocked out of it your majesty", to which the King replied "Well, get the bottom repaired, and carry on!".[1] This chapter will assess to what extent showland was able to 'repair the bottom'.

The chapter will also assess to what extent the survival of the traditional travelling fair was due to its ability to articulate itself, and be perceived as, a 'British' recreation and part of concepts of a British national identity. This will involve exploration of the links between travelling fairs and the changing concepts of rural and urban British culture in the interwar period. A key element of this debate is how the travelling fairground fits into a wider discourse on leisure as an expression of class identity. This chapter assesses to what extent the travelling fairground represented the recreation demands of the working-class, and equally to what degree the repression and criticism of fairs in this period reflects attempts of the middle and upper classes

[1] Freda Allen & Ned Williams, *Pat Collins King Of Showmen* (Uralia Press, Wolverhampton, 1991), p. 43.

to regulate and control working-class leisure in this period. The ability of the travelling fair to present itself as a key element of traditional working-class street culture was an important factor in its continued popularity and success amidst increasing competition.

For fairs able to continue during the First World War business was good. Although impacted by shortages of materials and labour and abundant restrictions, they enjoyed the benefits of workers having more disposable income: the average unskilled weekly wage of between thirty-five to forty-five shillings a week pre-war had risen by 1918 to four or five pounds a week.[2] In 1919 *The World's Fair* acknowledged these were "abnormal" circumstances, remarking wartime wages were "superfluous as far as the workers were concerned" and predicted a return to more steady spending.[3] In addition to a post-war return to normal spending, showpeople were also experiencing inflation in the necessities of their trade. Murphy notes a steam road locomotive costing £850-900 pre-war now cost £2,000, a Scenic Railway ride costing £3,600 pre-war was now up to £10,000, and even coconuts, previously costing up to twenty shillings a bag had more than trebled in price.[4] In 1932 a rise in petrol prices added to the growing list of commodities which grew drastically in price in this period.[5] However, the poor financial situation of the population meant additional costs could not be passed on to the consumer; most fairs in the twenties and thirties relied predominantly on 'penny-fares' to turn a profit, and Murphy noted the period 1922-1934 was a particularly lean time for showland.[6] Returning servicemen had an additional financial impact on proprietors of coconut shies, rifle ranges and 'Aunt Sally' stalls; military training rendered these games little competition. A proprietor at Sheffield Feast remarked of one punter "Look at him knocking them cokernuts off as easy as winkin'".[7] In 1932 *The World's Fair* reported most fairs of the year had shown negative balance rather than a

[2] Thomas Murphy, *A History of The Showmen's Guild 1889-1948* (World's Fair Ltd, Oldham, 1950), p. 124.

[3] 'What We Think: Is It A Sign?', *The World's Fair* (June 28th, 1919), p. 13.
[4] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 125.
[5] 'What We Think: Petrol', *The World's Fair* (July 2nd, 1932), p. 45.
[6] 'What We Think: Newcastle', *The World's Fair* (July 2nd, 1932), p. 45.
[7] 'Effect of The War on Sheffield Feast', *The World's Fair* (January 10th, 1920), p. 1.

profit, and remarked "it is really remarkable how many are carrying on".[8] Industrial action also impacted regionally on fairs; a national coal strike meant miners attending Wrexham fair in 1921 had little or no money to spend, and Oldham Wakes of 1928 was poorly attended owing to troubles in local cotton and engineering businesses.[9] The seventeen-week coal strike in 1926 hugely impacted the revenue of proprietors whose traditional routes incorporated heavy industrial areas where so many were without work, and in addition it became very difficult for showpeople to source coal for rides and locomotives.[10]

A major problem for showland and for the wider leisure industry was economic depression and unemployment. The depression was felt worst in areas of traditional heavy industry, which as they collapsed through lack of trade were forced to shed labour and cut wages to remain competitive.[11] The economic downturn of this period was different from the struggles of the industrialising nineteenth century, for this era was Britain "on the dole", where workers had been made redundant through processes out of their control; "their self-respect in shreds, their very manhood going under".[12] Jones notes the period was defined by regional differences between a prosperous South and Midlands and a depressed North East, Southern Wales and Central Scotland.[13] In the most depressed areas unemployment could be as high as three quarters of the insured working population, but in contrast the areas which saw new manufacturing industry grow were experiencing a boom period.[14] In addition to depression the interwar period as a whole saw an increase in national income per head, and subsequently a substantial increase in expenditure on entertainment and luxuries.[15] However, key to

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[8] 'What We Think: Good Riddance 1932', *The World's Fair* (December 31st, 1932), p. 37.
[9] Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins,* p. 42. 'What We Think: Oldham', *The World's Fair* (September 1st, 1928), p. 37.
[10] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild ,* p. 153.
[11] Malcolm Smith, *Democracy In A Depression: Britain In The 1920s and 1930s* (University Of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1998), pp. 15, 30, 31.
[12] John Baxendale, *Priestley's England – J.B. Priestley and English Culture* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2007), pp. 55-56.
[13] Stephen Jones, *Workers At Play – A Social And Economic History Of Leisure 1918-1939* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1986), p. 4.
[14] John Pearson and Chris Cook, *The Slump: Britain In The Great Depression* (Pearson Education Limited, Harlow, 2010), pp. 13,19.
[15] Pearson and Cook, *The Slump*, pp. 25, 26.

understanding the impact of the depression on the entertainments industry, and fairgrounds in particular, is the regional disparity in the economic downturn. Whilst overall wages did improve, this benefit was not felt by those unemployed, and although on average the weekly wage remained at £3 a week, this could mean £4 weekly in prosperous new trades and £2 weekly in depressed traditional industry.[16] The seasonal routes of travelling fairs encompassed both prosperous and depressed areas, but the locations of many large fairs were based on traditional Wakes Weeks held for industrial workers, those most affected by the economic downturn. Showpeople therefore were faced in many instances with workers whose income was stretched, for whom recreation was a luxury they could do without.[17] The *Dundee Evening Telegraph* acknowledged in 1933 showfolk had been amongst those hit hardest by the economic downturn, and cited the case of one showman who had been forced to sell his prize possessions in order to feed his family.[18] For many families on the poverty-line who could barely afford food or rent, the expansion of available leisure in the interwar period was not a development they could afford to experience, and it was showpeople who depended on the leisure industry for their livelihood who stood to suffer as a result.[19]

As fairs were primarily open-air ventures, travelling showpeople were also at the mercy of long periods of bad weather during the interwar period. The start of Pat Collins' 1920 season, at Cowen in March, was beset with such wet weather his driver Walter Hobbs "had great difficulty steering the engine across the sea of mud".[20] This situation was indicative of many interwar fairs; Allen and Williams remark Collins moved many tons of straw and ashes to make waterlogged tobers accessible.[21] High running costs and fewer customers already made things difficult, and poor weather was often enough to ruin an entire season; 1927 was a particularly wet year, and *The World's Fair* reported "numerous cases where after a little had been put to the

[16] Pearson and Cook, *The Slump*, pp. 24-25.
[17] Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins*, p. 40.
[18] 'Ups And Downs Of Showfolk: How The Depression Has Affected Them', *Dundee Evening Telegraph* (April 30th, 1933), p. 2.
[19] Jones, *Workers At Play*, p. 57. 3
[20] Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins*, p. 41.
[21] Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins,* p. 41.

right side of the exchequer, a bad fair has taken the lot".[22] Although no exact figures for the impact of bad weather on fairs have been found, comparable data from other outdoor entertainments demonstrate how rain could affect turnover. The Bell Vue Amusement Park in Manchester saw a £13,000 drop in revenue between the 1930 and 1931 seasons, and the two-day Shrewsbury Floral Fete suffered a loss of £2,656 in 1931 – in both cases wet weather was posited as the primary cause.[23] Despite both poor economic and weather conditions, the primary challenge faced by showland during the interwar period, as this chapter will investigate, was the competition it faced from a growing variety and scale of alternative popular leisure.

I - The Contemporary Scene

The consumption, provision and experience of leisure between 1918 and 1939 was shaped and directed by the social context of the period. Nineteenth-century industrialisation established demarcation of work and free time, a division which remained recognisable throughout the twentieth century.[24] However, the role of national and local Government in the provision and regulation of popular leisure changed considerably between the nineteenth century and interwar era. Previously municipal and state authorities considered public entertainments a cause of public disorder requiring regulation, leading to the suppression of leisure considered detrimental to social control, and the promotion and provision of rational and suitable alternatives "to wean the working-class away from the alleged degenerations of their own culture".[25] Victorian and Edwardian regulations also aimed to ensure leisure reflected and promoted 'British' moral values.[26] However, the First World War proved a formative experience; although initially authorities attempted to restrict entertainment, demands of total war on production forced authorities to consider workers' need for recreation and respite. As a

[22] 'What We Think: A Review', *The World's Fair* (January 7th, 1928), p. 25.
[23] 'What We Think: Losses', *The World's Fair* (April 30th, 1932), p. 45.
[24] Jones, *Workers At Play,* p. 2.
[25] Jones, *Workers At Play*, p. 88.
[26] Jones, *Workers At Play,* p. 91.

result, open-air recreations including fairs were promoted to improve the morale and therefore productivity of war workers. Clarke and Critcher suggest from 1918 onwards, although retaining a regulatory role, the government "abdicated most direct power to commercial control".[27] This was not only the result of war-time concessions, but also because of the increasing financial significance of the leisure industry.[28]

The interwar period saw huge expansion in the leisure industry, in terms of scale, accessibility and variety. Key to this development was the growing amount of leisure time available to workers. On average the working week was reduced from fifty-four hours before World War One to forty-eight hours by the 1920s.[29] In addition the Shops Act of 1934 and Factories Act of 1937 limited working hours to forty-eight maximum.[30] Partly due to the 1938 Holidays With Pay Act, between 1931 and 1939 the number of workers entitled to paid holidays also increased from one and a half to eleven million.[31] The increased leisure time workers enjoyed was complemented by increased means of access to entertainment, both financially and physically. More accessible public transport, improvements in inner-city travel, and better links between rural communities and urban areas allowed more people to travel for leisure; Clarke and Critcher suggest the emergence of the Bank Holiday exodus to the seaside is the primary example of the combined effects of better transport and increased disposable income of the working classes.[32] In 1926 the *Leeds Mercury* reported "astronomical figures" were earned by proprietors of stalls at Blackpool over a Bank Holiday.[33] These increases in revenue are explained by growing visitor numbers at coastal resorts; by the late 1930s twenty million workers visited the seaside annually, and in 1937 the August Bank Holiday saw 500,000

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[27] John Clarke and Chas Critcher, *The Devil Makes Work – Leisure In Capitalist Britain* (Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, 1985), pp. 78-79.
[28] By 1920 100,00 people were employed in the entertainment and sports industry, and this figure rose to 247,000 by 1938. Smith, *Democracy In A Depression*, p. 44.
[29] Smith, *Democracy In A Depression,* p. 43.
[30] Smith, *Democracy In A Depression,* p. 43.
[31] Smith, *Democracy In A Depression,* p. 43. Stevenson And Cook, *The Slump*, pp. 33.
[32] Clarke and Critcher, *The Devil Makes Work,* p. 73.
[33] 'Sea-Side Money Making – Astronomical Figures', *Leeds Mercury* (August 3rd, 1926), p. 7.

descend on Blackpool carried by 50,000 motor vehicles and 70 trains.[34] Although the improvements in transport in the interwar period saw the seaside excursion become ever more accessible and popular, Clarke and Crichter are wrong to suggest the seaside excursion 'emerged' in this period; this tradition had origins in the eighteenth century, and by the late nineteenth century improvements in rail travel made the annual excursion to the coast a popular choice for many.[35] As will later be discussed the increasing accessibility of a holiday away from home would have an impact on the attendance of entertainments which traditionally enjoyed success from offering leisure on workers' doorsteps; the most notable being the travelling fair.

Leisure also became more financially accessible during the interwar period. Although the many unemployed were unable to enjoy the expansion of recreation, those enjoying increasing wages also benefitted from decreasing costs of entertainment. Workers who could not afford to go out for leisure could still enjoy music and variety entertainment via gramophones and radio sets. The latter were accessible to seventy-five percent of families by the mid-1930s.[36] Cinema was by far the most popular form of interwar public entertainment, particularly for the young.[37] The cost of cinema admission decreased during the 1930s, from an average of 1s in 1930 to 10 ½ d in 1938, and this put them in direct competition with fairs as a form of low-budget recreation.[38] The cinema continued to grow in popularity during this period. By 1939 twenty million tickets were sold annually.[39] The demand facilitated increased investment in the industry with four thousand three hundred cinemas operating by 1934, an increase of three hundred on the previous decade.[40] In addition to the films the cinema experience was part of the attraction; the

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[34] Stevenson And Cook, *The Slump*, p. 33.
[35] See James Walvin, *Beside The Seaside: A Social History of the Popular Seaside Holiday* (Allen Lane, London, 1978).
[36] Smith, *Democracy In A Depression*, p. 45.
[37] David Fowler, *The First Teenagers: The Lifestyle Of Young Wage-Earners In Interwar Britain* (Woburn Press, London, 1995), p.99
[38] Fowler, *The First Teenagers*, p. 118.
[39] Stevenson And Cook, *The Slump*, p. 34.
[40] Brad Beavan, 'Going To The Cinema: Mass Commercial Leisure and Working-Class Cultures in 1930s Britain' in Brett Bebber (Ed), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict In Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2012), p. 64. Jones, *Workers At Play*, p. 37.

extravagant art-deco buildings, theatre pipe organs, refreshments, and the opportunity to enjoy the spectacle with a group of friends, added to the appeal.[41]

Alongside the increased popularity of the cinema and radio, football matches saw growing attendance in the interwar period; 1908-1909 saw six million spectators at First Division matches with an average crowd of sixteen thousand.[42] By 1937-1938 the average match crowd was thirty thousand and a total of fourteen million watched First Division games.[43] Similarly greyhound racing and motorcycle speedway saw continued growth in the interwar period, with a largely urban working-class audience.[44] In addition to radios the private leisure sector saw increased bicycle ownership and cycling as a leisure pursuit.[45] Walvin refers to a forty-nine percent increase in mass entertainment between 1931 and 1939.[46] The majority of this was in post-1918 forms of entertainment, but traditional amusements such as music-hall and dancing venues also experienced increased investment and consumption.[47] Voluntary associations also offered an increasing number of youth groups, sports clubs and similar activities.[48] As well as growth in commercial leisure the interwar period saw increased municipal provision through considerable council in parks, museums, libraries and concert venues.[49] By directly providing recreation, local authorities were able to regulate where, when and how entertainment took place, and gained control over the content of recreation ensuring it was morally suitable and would not encourage public disorder. By providing yearlong recreation nullified the novelty of the travelling fair; Beaven suggests by 1939 going to the cinema or football match became a

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[41] Smith, *Democracy In A Depression*, p. 52. Andrew Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty – Working Class Culture In Salford And Manchester 1900-1939* (Open University Press, Buckingham, 1992), p. 94.
[42] Smith, *Democracy In A Depression*, p. 50.
[43] Smith, *Democracy In A Depression*, p. 50.
[44] Stevenson And Cook, *The Slump*, p. 35.
[45] Smith, *Democracy In A Depression,* p. 51.
[46] James Walvin, *Beside The Seaside: A Social History of the Popular Seaside Holiday* (Allen Lane, London, 1978), p. 107.
[47] Walvin, *Beside The Seaside*, p. 107.
[48] Jones, *Workers At Play*, p. 6, 9.
[49] Jones, *Workers At Play*, p. 6, 9. Smith, *Democracy In A Depression*, p. 45.

weekly ritual of leisure - a marked change from the calendar of recreation many experienced in previous decades.[50]

Showpeople were aware of their growing competition; in 1928 *The World's Fair* noted although takings at Easter Fairs was generally good "it must be remembered the counter-attractions today are very different to what they were twenty years ago. There are many ways for people to take their pleasures, and the increasing number of people travelling leaves less money realistically".[51] It was acknowledged fairgrounds still retained their unique charm, but modern opposition of "greyhound racing, motoring, charabanc trips" was impacting on their share of people's depleting spending capacity.[52] Equally it was observed more comfortable amusements were desired by some customers, and the fairground in comparison seemed unrefined;

> "We should never think of seeking our amusement in what is little better than a ploughed field, tripping over electricity cables, bumped by unruly youths, shouted at, blared at by steam organs, blinded by batteries of miniature searchlights, confused and deafened, when for a few pence we can recline in an easy chair whilst entertainment is hoisted at us, which may seduce all our senses… or lull us into a soothing doze".[53]

II – Scream If You Want To Go Faster: New Ventures and Modernisation of the Tober

The primary challenge for showpeople in the interwar period was to remain competitive with other forms of cheap, popular entertainment and remain viable in the unfavourable economic circumstances. It was acknowledged by showland the fairground must innovate and keep pace with public demand: if it was to survive, the traditional travelling fair had to be brought up to date.[54]

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[50] Beavan, 'Going To The Cinema' in Bebber (Ed), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict,* p. 63.
[51] 'What We Think – Easter Fairs', *The World's Fair* (April 14th, 1928), p. 37.
[52] 'What We Think: Rents', *The World's Fair* (April 21st, 1928), p. 29.
[53] 'Uxbridge Michelmas Fairs: More About The Earlier Years, Difficulties Of Present-Day Showmen', *Uxbridge And West Drayton Gazette* (October 15th, 1937), p. 13.
[54] Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins,* p. 47.

To overcome adverse weather several travelling shows moved to undercover premises in the 1920s.[55] These ventures were successful, and the large concerns of Bertram Mills and Fred Ginnett sought semi-permanent sites for their shows throughout the decade, and by the end of the twenties Bostock's Menagerie which had been travelling since the nineteenth century had also purchased a site in Earls Court.[56] Travelling showpeople also invested in permanent amusement parks, mostly in coastal locations, to supplement income derived from itinerant shows. Pat Collins set up his first permanent site at Sutton Park, Crystal Palace, but to capitalise on the increased popularity of coastal resorts in the interwar period he took a lease at Great Yarmouth Pleasure Beach in 1928 and another at Barry Island in 1930.[57] Collins retired older rides to permanent sites, meaning those kept on the road were up to date, but ensuring he continued to earn revenue from prior investments.[58] Older rides continued to enjoy popularity amongst those who enjoyed the nostalgia they evoked.[59] Seaside amusement parks were a popular feature of coastal resorts which complimented the existing infrastructure, many were operated by travelling showland families; Gordon Bostock was from a family of travelling menagerie and circus proprietors, but in 1932 announced plans to create a permanent amusement park at Clacton.[60] Investment in piers and promenades in the 1930s reflected public demand for 'fairground' style amusements at the seaside; the New Palace Pier at St. Leonards featured "a full-scale fairground suspended above the waves", a facility which attracted a million visitors in 1936.[61]. Walton speculates permanent seaside fairgrounds offered "popular and controversial emblems of carnival… challenges to gravity... equilibrium, calm and modesty".[62] The popularity of permanent fairs in seaside locations reflects the fact coastal resorts and

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[55] Sandra Trudgen Dawson, 'Selling The Circus: Englishness, Circus Fans and Democracy In Britain 1920-1945' in Brett Bebber (Ed), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict In Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2012), p. 88.
[56] Trudgen Dawson, 'Selling The Circus', p. 88.
[57] Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins,* pp. 101, 113.
[58] Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins,* p. 61.
[59] 'Uxbridge Michelmas Fairs: More About The Earlier Years, Difficulties Of Present-Day Showmen', *Uxbridge And West Drayton Gazette* (October 15th, 1937), p. 13.
[60] 'Gordon Bostock's Venture – Amusement Park For Clacton', *The World's Fair* (February 27th, 1932), p. 1.
[61] John K. Walton, *The British Seaside: Holiday's and Resorts in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000), p. 106.
[62] Walton, *The British Seaside*, p. 109.

fairgrounds were attractive to patrons for similar reasons; they were both spaces which encouraged freedom of expression, and escape from the rigours and restraint of ordinary life. However, the success of coastal fairgrounds had an adverse impact on showpeople without permanent premises who continued to travel fairs on the seaside circuit; Walton notes the Corrigan family in Yorkshire were pushed to offer more modern rides and equipment to compete with fair sites at coastal resorts and following the Second World War they also purchased premises at Scarborough.[63] Showpeople who were financially able also invested in other forms of permanent entertainment; Pat Collins was exemplary in this respect and purchased skating rinks, theatres, and cinemas.[64] This was not a new phenomenon; proprietors who pioneered travelling bioscope shows in the early twentieth century were amongst the first to open cinemas, however the scope of investment in permanent amusements and the number of showpeople participating in the interwar period eclipsed pre-war ventures. [65] The fact individuals such as Collins continued to develop travelling fairs in addition to investing in permanent venues demonstrates both forms of leisure were in public demand, and if managed effectively could operate in conjunction.

Changes in location were not the only way in which travelling amusements adapted to compete with other forms of popular amusement. Trudgen Dawson notes many travelling circuses lowered seat prices in attempts to encourage greater footfall.[66] Fare prices for rides and shows were kept as low as possible, often sticking to 'penny fares', to ensure the fairground remained accessible for the working class.[67] Circuses also found by travelling a circuit of smaller towns, with fewer permanent entertainments, they had less to compete against and generated greater profits in these places.[68] Whilst fairgrounds maintained an 'urban' presence in the interwar period, they enjoyed a higher proportional attendance in rural communities where competition

[63] Walton, *The British Seaside*, p. 109.
[64] Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins,* p. 39.
[65] See Peter Yorke *William Haggar, Fairground Film Maker – Biography of a Pioneer of the Cinema* (Accent Press, Mid Glamorgan, 2007).
[66] Trudgen Dawson, 'Selling The Circus', p. 91.
[67] 'What We Think: Newcastle', *The World's Fair* (July 2nd, 1932), p. 45.
[68] Trudgen Dawson, 'Selling The Circus', p. 91.

was less. Cushing relates the country fairs of the twenties were significant for all ages and offered one of the only opportunities for recreation.[69] The increasing investment in mass entertainment during the interwar period was not ubiquitous, and the transience of the fairground meant it continued to be a popular form of recreation in rural and more isolated areas which were yet to be affected by the expansion of popular commercial leisure.

In addition to finding ways to compete with other forms of entertainment, travelling fairs also moved towards greater cooperation with other leisure pursuits. Although very similar, travelling circuses and fairs had previously remained quite separate as the draw of a big tent circus show was believed to detract from other attractions at a fair. Increasing competition for all travelling entertainments prompted greater cooperation between proprietors, evidenced by circus owner Bertram Mills being the first non-showman to be admitted to the Showmen's Guild, later becoming President in 1938.[70] The continuing popularity of larger urban fairs also prompted permanent entertainments to offer leisure which complimented the arrival of the fairs; in addition to public houses extending opening hours, the annual Nottingham Goose Fair encouraged local theatres to put on a special programme of performances.[71] The combination of Goose Fair and existing entertainments was a sufficient draw for travel companies from distant locations, including London and Lincoln, to promote excursion trips by rail and by motor coach - comparable to day trips offered to coastal resorts.[72] Promoting the fairground as a unique novelty, whilst complementing existing entertainments, ensured fairs remained profitable.

Continuing prosperity relied upon remaining popular, and the interwar period was an era of shifting public taste which showpeople had to respond to. Their main competition, the cinema, offered a sedate recreation and to remain competitive showland needed to upgrade the thrills it could offer, particularly when it was suggested "A ride on the top of a London Bus is much more

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[69] George Cushing with Ian Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford* (David And Charles, London, 1990), p. 146.
[70] Trudgen Dawson, 'Selling The Circus', p. 88.
[71] 'The Goose Fair Week's Theatre Shows', *Nottingham Journal* (September 30th, 1933), p. 9.
[72] 'All The Fun of The Fair' *West Sussex Gazette* (October 12th, 1933), p. 8. An advertisement from *The Lincolnshire Echo* (October 3rd, 1933), p. 2 - The Lincolnshire Road Car Co. Ltd. Offered a coach trip to Nottingham Goose Fair on their new Leyland Tiger Saloon Coach for 4 Shillings Return.

exciting than the most hectic effort the old steam roundabout can produce".[73] The most modern rides of the 1920s built upon traditional Victorian and Edwardian ideas of grandeur and utilised colour and exquisite wooden carvings to create magical landscapes which gave them their name: 'Scenics'. They represented a slight departure from earlier rides however, for in addition to exaggerated versions of farmyard animals, new Scenic rides increasingly featured mythical creatures including monstrous whales and dragons.[74] Charles Thurston's 'Royal Golden Dragons' debuted at Kings Lynn Mart in 1920, and according to the *Bury Free Press* "claimed to be the largest, grandest and costliest electric scenic railway in the world", at a cost of approximately eight thousand pounds the ride featured "fearsomeness of huge fanged beasts of mythology, with heads poised a loft, green and lurid red eyes as big as saucers… cavernous mouths... that excel all pictures in the story books".[75] George Cushing was present at the 1920 Lynn Mart and noted the ride featured "real waterfalls irradiated with kaleidoscopic electric prisms".[76] Cushing suggests the construction of these rides, the scenic carving and the lights, transported patrons to a "magic land" - a true escape from the often monotonous reality of their surroundings.[77] The *Bury Free Press* also commented the patrons were whirled around accompanied by "Machiavellian music", suggesting there was something more sinister about the dragons and the magic land they encouraged patrons to inhabit.[78] Elements of 'danger' and exoticism were part of the appeal of many fairground attractions; even bioscope cinema shows occasionally featured real lions behind the projector screen to provide real roars throughout a screening.[79]

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[73] 'Uxbridge Michelmas Fairs: More About The Earlier Years, Difficulties Of Present-Day Showmen', *Uxbridge And West Drayton Gazette* (October 15th, 1937), p. 13.

[74] For a more comprehensive account of the veritable menagerie of animals featured in Scenic Rides and Switchbacks see Kevin Scrivens and Stephen Smith, *The Electric Scenic Railway* (New Era Publications, Telford, 2005) and *The Circular Steam Switchback* (Fairground Association of Great Britain, Newcastle Under Lyme) by the same authors.

[75] 'All The Fun Of The Fair: "Royal Golden Dragons" at Bury', *Bury Free Press* (October 23rd, 1920), p. 5.

[76] 'All The Fun Of The Fair: "Royal Golden Dragons" at Bury', *Bury Free Press* (October 23rd, 1920), p. 5. Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford*, p. 130.

[77] Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford*, p. 130

[78] 'All The Fun Of The Fair: "Royal Golden Dragons" at Bury', *Bury Free Press* (October 23rd, 1920), p. 5.

[79] Michael E. Ware, *Historical Fairground Scenes* (Moorland Publishing Company, Buxton, 1977), p. 43.

The popularity of Scenic rides depended on their ability to offer patrons a fantastical contrast to the grey reality of their surroundings. However, as the surroundings modernised with new technology, and new music and culture imported from the United States, traditional Scenic rides became obsolete. Cushing notes when the first Waltzer, which utilised very little in the way of elaborate decoration, appeared at Lynn Mart in 1929 "most of the visitors to the fair left everything else to go and have a look".[80] By 1936 *World's Fair* correspondent 'Kingsley' noted traditional Scenics and Gallopers were absent from the Mart, having been replaced with Thurston's Waltzer and Farrar's Dodgems, Noah's Ark and Motorcycle Speedway.[81] Similarly Ware notes the most popular ride of the mid-thirties was the 'Moonrocket', which utilised a slope to generate centrifugal force on the speeding train of cars.[82] These rides typified the public obsession with speed in the air, in motorsport, and on the roads around them. A showman at Uxbridge Fair in 1937 noted the change in the public; "What we used to call country yokels ride about on motor bikes and wear the latest cut suits. They want modern stuff".[83] Cushing noted by the mid-thirties traditional Scenics were disappearing, and the rides changed from being "a journey which you went on in your imagination to a machine with gave you the physical experience of flight… and flirted with the dangers of speed".[84]

In addition to the physical sensation of speed, the artwork and physical design of rides increasingly reflected the public obsession with speed. Carved wooden animals were replaced with imitations of motorcycles and 'Noah's Ark' rides become 'Motorcycle Speedway's' and 'Downhill Racers', traditional painted panels featuring exotic natural scenes were now adorned with motorcycles, airplanes and racing cars.[85] This transformation was complete by the mid-1930s but had begun earlier; debuting alongside Thurston's Dragon Scenic at Lynn Mart in 1920

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[80] Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford,* pp. 170-171.
[81] Kingsley, 'Kings Lynn Mart', *The World's Fair* (February 22nd, 1936), p.1.
[82] Ware, *Historical Fairground Scenes,* p. 31.
[83] 'Uxbridge Michaelmas Fairs: More About The Earlier Years, Difficulties Of Present-Day Showmen', *Uxbridge And West Drayton Gazette* (October 15th, 1937), p. 13.
[84] Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford*, p. 131.
[85] Pat Collins' 'Speedway Ark' and Farrar's 'Super Speedway' were just two such rides travelling in the 1930s which featured panels depicting all that was modern and fast in the technological world. Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins*, p. 6. Ware, *Historical Fairground Scenes*, p. 38.

were Fred Gray's 'Scenic Motors', a similar ride to Thurston's but instead of Dragons the Gondolas were replicas of large touring motor cars, giving working class patrons a simulation of motoring.[86] This demonstrates not only how showpeople were adept at altering their rides to reflect public interests, but also how they recognised their patrons were mostly working class and therefore offered them experiences otherwise unattainable for their social standing.

Proprietors believed public obsession with speed was the saviour of the business, allowing them to remain a competitive amusement novelty: "The Patron Saint of showland is Mercury, the thrill of the fairground ride is mercurial... speed…salvation had arrived… in the form of a motorbike".[87] This remark refers to the arrival in June 1929 of the travelling 'Wall Of Death motorcycle stunt show, growing in popularity alongside which were bumper cars or 'Dodgems', a ride imported from American amusement parks.[88] The ultimate simulation of motoring was the petrol motor speedway and the first to appear on a travelling fairground was Charles Thurston's which debuted at Peterborough Mart in 1936, described as "100ft long by about 50ft wide… the cars move at a very fast speed and attract much attention".[89] These entertainments once again ensured the fairground could offer something totally unique; cinema could offer the same journey of the imagination old scenic rides created, but could not provide physical sensations. Conversely the fairground could provide speed thrills or a tangible experience of motor technology by watching the 'Wall Of Death', piloting a Dodgem car, or driving a miniature racing car on a speedway track. Showpeople were aware of the edge this gave them in competition with other entertainments and emphasised this in their advertising; Pat Collins billed his closing event of 1929 in Leicester as "The British Showman's Reply To The Talkies".[90]

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[86] 'Kings Lynn Mart, Three New Machines, Interesting Ceremony', *The World's Fair* (February 28th, 1920), p.1. Scrivens and Smith, *The Electric Scenic Railway*, pp. 107-112.
[87] Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins*, p. 49.
[88] Advertisement For 'Modern Dodgems', *The World's Fair* (March 7th, 1936), p. 5.
[89] 'Peterborough Mart – Messrs Thurston's New Ride', *The World's Fair* (March 21st, 1936), p. 1.
[90] Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins,* p. 50.

It must be noted however the new rides could be problematic as they were hugely costly to buy and run, and some proprietors therefore considered them "too easy to lose money on".[91]

Traditional rides did not disappear from the Tobers entirely in the interwar period as proprietors were aware in addition to young thrill seekers, they also catered for older patrons for whom nostalgia was equally important. Pat Collins ensured older rides were preserved "to create the right blend of machines" and attract a broad range of customers.[92] The transformation of the Tobers during the interwar period demonstrates how keenly showpeople responded to changes in public demand; confirming the fairground was leisure directed by the desires of patrons, rather than prescribed by the proprietors. Pat Collins at the 1939 Walsall Easter Fair concluded the public were now looking for "speed and thrills" and correspondingly his latest 'Airways' machine whirled patrons around at twice the speed of the Gondolas he had travelled a decade previously.[93]

Rides were not the only aspect of fairgrounds which changed markedly in the interwar period, the performance of music and the transportation of the fairs also developed through technological advances. At Darlaston Wakes in 1937 Pat Collins took delivery of a new four-way panatrope speaker; replacing mechanical organs usually fitted to large rides.[94] This change facilitated the playing of popular new records, preferred by the public over the traditional tunes of the organs, but were also an economic advantage for whilst a mechanical organ required an attendant and was an extra load to transport the panatrope was much smaller and could be operated from a gramophone inside the rides' paybox, saving an extra wage and load.[95] Pat Collins confessed he had "little liking for loudspeakers, but we have to keep pace with the times, though in my opinion, the times are not always right".[96] In addition, advances in internal

[91] 'Uxbridge Michelmas Fairs: More About The Earlier Years, Difficulties Of Present-Day Showmen', *Uxbridge And West Drayton Gazette* (October 15th, 1937), p. 13.
[92] Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins*, p. 65.
[93] Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins*, p. 77.
[94] Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins,* p. 70.
[95] Ware, *Historic Fairground Scenes*, p. 29
[96] Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins*, p. 77.

combustion saw steam engines replaced by diesel lorries and generating sets.[97] Although a physical change, the substitution of steam for internal combustion power also altered the sight, smell, and sound of the traditional fairground. The *Nottingham Evening Post* commented on the excitement generated by a convoy of show-vehicles making its way to Goose Fair: "In spite of aeroplanes and other modern wonders, a traction engine still grips boyish interest, and when one rolls by every ten minutes… the wayside juvenile population is on the road to a boy".[98] The *Uxbridge & West Drayton Gazette* described steam at the fair as an almost organic part: "massive traction engines -spotless monsters of power-which pant their hearts out to pump current through the cables which run like veins across the ground".[99] The steam engines and mechanical organs complemented traditional rides to give a unique sensory experience, something which could not be replicated by more efficient modern replacements.

In addition to speed thrills, proprietors also utilised risqué imagery and themes in their rides and shows to entice patrons. Although many interwar rides continued to create exotic landscapes and fantasy worlds to attract patrons, frequently more dangerous imagery was used. Dancing chorus girls were a traditional 'front-of-house' act; performing on stage in front of a show to attract punters, but some riding masters offered more salacious entertainment where exotic dancing was the primary attraction. [100] Frequently these were referred to as 'Oriental Mysteries', but one such show which appeared at Norwich Fair as late as 1937 openly offered 'Parisian Beauties'.[101] Equally problematic for conservative, or religious, observers were the use of satanic images in ride decoration; 'Devil's Discs' and 'Satan's Globe' were renamed versions of the 'Joy-Wheel' and 'Wall of Death', designed to make proprietors' rides stand out from competitors. Ware features an image of one such 'Devil's Disc' from the 1920s and remarks the

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[97] At Wrexham in 1938 a reporter noted his surprise that only three steam engines were present – the proprietor having just taken delivery of a Fowler-Saunders diesel generating set. Allen and Williams, *Pat Collins,* p. 71.
[98] 'On The Way To Goose Fair', *Nottingham Evening Post* (October 2nd, 1933), p. 6.
[99] 'Uxbridge Michelmas Fairs: More About The Earlier Years, Difficulties Of Present-Day Showmen', *Uxbridge And West Drayton Gazette* (October 15th, 1937), p. 13.
[100] Ware, *Historic Fairground Scenes*, pp. 45, 50.
[101] Ware, *Historic Fairground Scenes*, p. 50.

decoration incorporated a "monstrous and almost obscene characterisation of Hell", with a myriad of entangled figures, including many barely dressed women.[102] In addition to the names and decoration of signs, proprietors would also play into the gender dynamics of young adolescent groups to encourage competition and increase takings. The fairground striker is an excellent example of this; a good show-person would encourage young men to compete against each other, impressing young women in their group with displays of masculine virility to prove who could hit the striker hard enough and ring the bell.[103] To this extent the fairground did encourage customers to indulge in behaviour which otherwise might have been considered improper or even immoral. Although these desires appeared to be innate and part of the intentions of patrons, showpeople recognised this and tailored their rides and shows to reflect the demands of the public. This reciprocal relationship is indicative of the way the fairground both prescribed and reacted to consumer demand during this period, and the changes this brought to the fairground in the interwar period were considerable.

III - British Identity and The Travelling Fairground

The modernisation of the travelling fairground in the interwar period explains in part how the industry was able to compete with the growing variety of public entertainments. However, the fairground's link to ideas of national identity, heritage and tradition, also contributed to its ability to remain a relevant and popular recreation pursuit. The itinerancy and physical manifestation of the fair meant inhabitants of both urban and rural areas formed a special bond with the fair, ensuring continued popularity throughout the interwar period. 'British' or 'English' identity is a theme inextricably linked to the history of popular culture and leisure. Brett Bebber posits leisure can be assessed as an expression of identity and character, and therefore can be utilised by authorities to investigate which national values were expressed and held by citizens.[104] In addition to being a means for review, the way citizens chose to spend their

[102] Ware, *Historic Fairground Scenes*, p. 38.
[103] Ware, *Historic Fairground Scenes,* p. 54.
[104] Brett Bebber, 'Introduction- Contextualising Leisure History", in Brett Bebber (Ed), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2012), p. 3.

free time also raised questions of whether their chosen recreation was appropriate, often in a moral sense but also prompting assessment of whether certain activities were "appropriately British".[105]

Concepts of national identity were often formed through making contrasts with visible or constructed 'others', and forms of leisure which involved travel, even domestically, invited citizens to make comparisons between familiar surroundings and the different groups and locations they encountered on holidays.[106] This effect was magnified as entertainments projected exaggerated depictions of exotica to enthral consumers. Ward notes Blackpool in the 1930s was a fabricated 'melting-pot' of diverse cultural influences in music, entertainments, and architecture.[107] However, J.B. Priestley felt this diversity had a negative impact on the 'Britishness' of leisure. Of Blackpool Priestley noted it "lacks something of its old genuine gaiety. It's amusements are too mechanised and Americanised.[108] He remarked traditional Blackpool songs of "our own silly innocent nonsense" had been replaced with "weary negroid ditties… probably reduced to such misery by too much gin or cocaine".[109] Baxendale notes although Priestley associates racial difference with immorality, his primary concern is seaside songs have been Americanised and have become abstract from the experiences of their audience.[110] Traditional recreation through song as featured in Music-Hall tradition, was rooted in British working-class life. Priestley viewed the interwar replacement as vacuous and lacking authenticity, encouraging audiences to empathise with 'foreign' narratives they could not identify with.[111] The Americanisation of leisure was rapid, and Walvin notes by 1939 the US entertainments industry was exercising an "unprecedented and increasing influence" over

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[105] Bebber, 'Introduction', p. 3.
[106] Paul Ward, *Britishness Since 1870* (Routledge, London, 2004), p. 85.
[107] Ward refers to a Mass Observation study on Blackpool culture which described the strong influence of "Negroid... Indian... Oriental and… Buddhist" culture on the resort. Ward, *Britishness Since 1870*, p. 86.
[108] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 235.
[109] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 236.
[110] John Baxendale, *Priestley's England – J.B. Priestley and English Culture* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2007), p. 131.

[111] Baxendale, *Priestley's England,* p. 132.

British leisure.[112] Priestley posited this influence was equally the result of recreations' failure to utilise new technology and media in a way which represented "real English life".[113] In a similar manner to the Americanisation of Blackpool music Priestley also noted in a Birmingham Non-Conformist chapel a strange contrast between the dour midland congregation and the fantastical "Oriental Stuff" which the sermon concentrated upon, which seemed bizarre to him.[114]

One way in which leisure facilitated comparison between British identity and a foreign 'other' was by offering a 'window on empire'. Beavan suggests interwar cinema was the only interaction the working-class had with imperialism.[115] This meant authenticity of the depiction of empire was of no consequence and Smith states "Hollywood turned British imperial history into a sub-genre of the Western".[116] Richards summarises the cinema emphasised the basic understanding of the empire; it was "the mythic landscape of romance and adventure. It was that quarter of the globe…coloured red and included 'Darkest Africa' and the 'mysterious east', in short it was 'ours'".[117] Fairgrounds also reflected the public desire for the exotic. Scenic rides produced after the First World War incorporated complex carvings which mimicked exotic flora and fauna, colourful wooden panels featuring lions and tigers, and even waterfalls which cascaded down the centre of the ride.[118] Travelling menageries displayed the wonders of the Empire throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and although fewer in number after World War One, Bostock and Wombwell continued to travel a sizeable menagerie showcasing animals from around the globe until 1931.[119] In this respect travelling fairs of the interwar period offer a counter to Beaven's assertion the cinema was the only working class interaction

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[112] Walvin, *Leisure and Society*, p. 139.
[113] Baxendale, *Priestley's England*, p. 130.
[114] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 114.
[115] Beaven, 'Going To The Cinema', in Bebber (Ed), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict*, p. 65.
[116] Smith, *Democracy In A Depression*, p. 55.
[117] As cited in Beaven, 'Going To The Cinema', p. 73.
[118] Cushing and Ian Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford* , p. 130.
[119] The most comprehensive history of a traditional menagerie is Dr J.L. Middlemiss, *A Zoo On Wheels – Bostock and Wombwell's' Menagerie* (Dalebrook Publications, Burton-On-Trent, 1987).

with imperialism, for whilst less frequent, travelling fairs and shows also offered a 'window on empire'.

In addition to providing stark contrasts against which a clear 'British' identity could be formed, entertainments also presented themselves as inimitably 'British' to attract custom. Sandra Trudgen Dawson suggests circus proprietors were able to rejuvenate the industry by emphasising how the circus was a British invention based on cavalry riding and military skill and was therefore "'ultra' British, masculine and virile".[120] Whilst the travelling fairground was unable to offer a comparable origin, the circus' evidence of representing democracy through being accessible to all classes of citizen, is equally applicable to travelling fairs.[121] Proprietors emphasised the British origins of the circus, and its "timeless" value as traditional entertainment, cementing the business within "an older and irrepressible national identity" and offering audiences a link to a stable national heritage.[122] Cinema echoed this trend and used historic settings to transport customers to the "pomp and glory of the Victorian and Edwardian eras".[123] The 1920s and 1930s were rife with social inequality, economic hardship and uncertainty, it was therefore desirable for entertainments to associate themselves with the Edwardian era of imperial expansion and more secure, comfortable, surroundings.

Rather than promoting and reflecting widely accepted national values, identities expressed in leisure time were often in direct contrast. Ward and Walton both support the idea of holidays as marginal spaces where rules of national character did not apply, and in these circumstances "displays of excess, challenging authority…flouting the everyday norms" was possible.[124] Entertainment usually considered inappropriate or vulgar was possible in the context of seaside resorts which catered for audiences with a common background.[125] Tony Bennett, discussing

[120] The success of the circus' 'rebirth' in the interwar period is demonstrated by the fact the number of circuses in Britain quadrupled between 1921 and 1945. Trudgen Dawson, 'Selling The Circus', in Bebber (Ed), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict*, pp. 85-87.
[121] Trudgen Dawson, 'Selling The Circus', in Bebber (Ed), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict*, p. 84.
[122] Trudgen Dawson, 'Selling The Circus' , in Bebber (Ed), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict*, pp. 85, 87.
[123] Beaven, 'Going To The Cinema', p. 73.
[124] Ward, *Britishness Since 1870,* p. 85. Walton, *The British Seaside*, p. 96.
[125] Ward, *Britishness*, p. 88.

Blackpool, suggests abandoning inhibitions was the "temporary triumph of leisure and frivolity over the mundane and the workaday".[126] Although this argument specifically refers to seaside resorts, the nature of the travelling fairground created an equally 'free' environment. George Cushing stated in the fairs of his childhood "there was a lot of illusion, so that you lost your sense of the scale of the ride, and your sense of place and time soon followed".[127] Fairs were similarly capable of transporting people away from their ordinary lives, albeit in a psychological manner rather than the physical movement involved in a seaside holiday. The travelling fair also promoted an adapted version of national identity which did not necessarily correspond to normal societal values or expectations, the identity of "the English on holiday".[128] The success of popular amusements relied on their ability to offer an accessible escape from reality and facilitate a more free state of mind.[129] The marginality of the fairground environment was increased by its transience and by the nomadism of its proprietors. Showpeople and fairground workers did not fit into expectations of the settled 'British' citizen, and so entertainments they provided were directed by the desires of their patrons, rather than a need to conform to societal expectations of suitable entertainment. Although the seaside holiday was a temporary release from the restraints of everyday life, the resorts themselves were permanent and were accountable to outside observers critical of entertainments promoting unsuitable behaviour. The physical space of the fairground was temporary, and the environment in which immorality could occur would be gone within days. In many respects the experience and encounter of the fair existed only in memories, and memories could not be regulated.

Part of the way in which the fairground was connected to ideas of a national identity was how it became interlinked with landscape and location, as both a feature of the annual rural calendar, and a traditional urban festival. As travelling fairgrounds have no permanent site, their

[126] As cited in Walton, *The British Seaside*, p. 19.
[127] Cushing & Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford,* p. 130.
[128] Ward, *Britishness Since 1970,* p. 88.
[129] Don. B. Wilmeth, *Variety Entertainment and Outdoor Amusements* (Greenwood Press, Westport CT, 1982), p. 4.

relationship to landscape is complex, and whether the fair is primarily a rural or urban feature is contested. Separating the urban and rural in the interwar period is itself problematic, Matless argues to understand the rural it must be viewed in conjunction with the city and suburb.[130] The archetypal 'rural idyll' is also difficult to base in reality during this period, and Matless is critical of its use as an analytical framework, positing subsequent findings "reproduce that ease and slackness which it purports to distinguish".[131] Patrick Wright notes to be a true subject of the idealised 'Deep England' one needed experience of true rural life: "more specifically one must have grown up in the midst of ancestral continuities".[132] Wright suggests this definition limits those who have experienced 'Deep England' to primarily the upper-middle 'landed' class.[133] Wright suggests in addition to identifying their own rural experience, this also prompted class conflict over who 'belonged' in the countryside, for the upper-middle class also noted "the philistinism of the urban working class as it stumbles out, blind and unknowing, into the countryside at weekends".[134] In addition to the inhabitants of 'Deep England' being difficult to ascertain, the existence of a traditional rural England following the First World War is also debated. In *England And The Octopus* (1928), Clough Williams-Ellis reproduced a *Punch* cartoon which depicted a man leaving to fight in the First World War to defend his idyllic rural village, but upon returning found it transformed by telegraph poles, factories and housing developments; the wartime sense of 'English' identity was based upon a disappearing ideal.[135] The fear of the urban world encroaching on 'true' rural England motivated preservationist movements during the interwar years to defend the countryside from commercialisation and the discordance of urban living: "the honk of the motor-car, the sound of the gramophone".[136]

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[130] David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (Reaktion Books, London, 1998), pp. 16-17.
[131] Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 16.
[132] Patrick Wright, *On Living In An Old Country: The National Past In Contemporary Britain* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009), p. 81.
[133] Wright, *On Living In An Old Country*, p. 82.
[134] Wright, *On Living In An Old Country*, p. 82.
[135] Cited in Matless, *Landscape and Englishness,* p. 25.
[136] Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, pp. 26, 69.

Perhaps because of the fractured origin and threatened existence of the typical English rural idyll, the concept remained common currency throughout the interwar period as it was preferable to seek comfort in a manufactured ideal, rather than face a complex reality. Sián Nicholas argues Edwardian jingoism and imperialist imagery had been discredited following the First World War and replaced with the growing popularity of a constructed countryside ideal.[137] The economic tumult and growing international uncertainty which characterised British society during the interwar years promoted belief in a more stable, traditional idea of the British landscape – the enduring and eternal pastoral idyll.[138]

Although exaggerated, partially manufactured and occasionally misappropriated, it is this traditional rural idyll to which the travelling fair belonged in the years immediately after the First World War. Fairs were intimately linked to the calendar of agrarian life. They took place at major points during the farming year: spring sowing, summer hay gathering and the main corn harvest.[139] Walvin notes in the previous century the arrival of the fair was "the crowning event of the year" for rural communities, but also notes these respites from labour continued "beyond the years of industrialisation".[140] This idea is evidenced by the testimony of George Cushing, born in rural Norfolk in 1904, and whose vivid recollections offer a unique understanding of the importance of fairs to rural communities in the 1920s. Held annually on February 14th Cushing states King's Lynn Mart heralded "the end of winter and the hopes for the coming of spring"; it was believed locally spring would come within two weeks of the 'Mart'.[141] The physical fabric of the fair reflected elements of agricultural life; farmyard animals such as cockerels, horses and pigs were transformed by colour and light and took on a magical appearance as part of the

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[137] Sián Nicholas, 'From John Bull To John Citizen: Images of National Identity and Citizenship On The Wartime BBC', in Richard Weight and Abigail Beach (Eds.), *The Right To Belong – Citizenship and National Identity in Britain- 1930-1960* (I.B. Tauris, London, 1998), p. 37.
[138] Richard Weight and Abigail Beach, 'Introduction; in Weight and Beach (Eds), *The Right To Belong*, p.3.
[139] Judd, ' "The Oddest Combination of Town and Country"' in John K. Walton and James Walvin (Eds) - *Leisure In Britain 1780-1939* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1983). p. 2.

[140] Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830-1950*, p. 116. Walvin, *Beside The Seaside*, p. 52.
[141] Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford*, p. 128.

fairground rides.[142] Agricultural labourers could also compare steam engines they were familiar with from farms with similar engines used by proprietors to haul and power rides. For these observers the huge showman's road locomotive with its brass decoration, bright paintwork ,all bathed in electrical light ,was a spectacle in itself "every detail... made to the limits of the skill and knowledge of the period", Cushing, himself a labourer familiar with industrial technology, stated "after the darkness of North Norfolk the showman's engine was something of a miracle".[143]

The relative isolation of small rural communities, and the lack of alternative forms of commercial entertainment magnified the importance of travelling fairs as an opportunity for leisure; Cushing relates popular tunes brought to villages by mechanical organs at the fairs were heard throughout the year, whistled by farmhands and sung in public houses, remaining popular until the fair returned with new music.[144] The lack of alternative entertainment was largely because many rural communities did not have good transport links, and even where they did exist, agricultural labourers were financially unable to exploit them. The isolation of rural communities from developing urban centres with alternative entertainment allowed travelling fairs to flourish without competition. Cushing summarises: "The atmosphere was marvellous. You went home and thought about it and looked forward to the next year's fair because there was nothing else like it".[145] However, the 1930s saw increasing availability of motorised transport, a greater number of private cars, and new bus networks linking rural villages with each other, and to larger towns and cities.[146] Philip Allingham commented previously "when a fair visited… practically the entire place had been saving up for it months previously. The petrol engine had certainly changed all this. Villagers were now as sophisticated

[142] Prior to the Second World War in addition to the familiar 'Galloping Horses', 'Leaping Cockerels' and 'Flying Pigs' were other variants. Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford* p. 12.
[143] Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford,* pp. 146, 81.
[144] Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford,* pp. 35-36.
[145] Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford,* p. 146.
[146] Jones, *Workers At Play*, p. 21.

as townsfolk"; the era of the travelling fair's monopoly on rural entertainment was very much at an end, and they now had to compete with a variety of other leisure pursuits.[147]

Walton suggests the notable absence of rural workers from seaside resorts was a result of low and uncertain wages, combined with "the absence of a pattern of surviving and traditional holidays" in provincial areas.[148] Whilst this explains why few rural labourers could afford to travel to the coast for recreation, Walton's assertion rural communities had no fixed recreational traditions is false. Traditional wakes and parish festivals had long been held in accordance with "the rhythms and patterns of agricultural life" and continued to be into the interwar period.[149] The close link between key events in the agricultural calendar and traditional holiday periods may offer an additional explanation for why few rural workers travelled to seaside resorts. The main corn harvest involved the entire community, and it was necessary for other tasks to be postponed until the harvest was complete. The logistics of organising an outing or daytrip for the whole workforce were not possible in the same way as for urban workers. Rural workers could not afford to spend time away from the land, and yearly variations in the time of harvest would have made it difficult to book trips in advance. Entertainment in a form which travelled *to* the community was therefore a more practical option for these agrarian communities.

In addition to traditional parish festivals in agricultural communities the travelling fairground equally originated from markets and Charter trade fairs in towns and cities. Fairs in the nineteenth century bridged urban and rural spaces, bringing elements of traditional 'local' festivals to the metropole, and simultaneously bringing new technology and urban culture into the rural landscape. In this respect the travelling fairground facilitated regional cultural exchange and became "the oddest combination of town and country".[150] However, by the

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[147] Allingham, *Cheapjack ,* p. 264.
[148] Walton, *The British Seaside,* p. 52.
[149] Walvin, *Beside The Seaside*, p. 52.
[150] Judd, ' "The Oddest Combination of Town and Country"' in Walton and Walvin, *Leisure In Britain 1780-1939*.

interwar period the function of urban fairs had changed considerably. J.B Priestley noted in 1933 the commercial aspect of the Nottingham Goose fair was completely absent, although Goose Fair had turned into a pleasure fair long before Priestley's *English Journey*.[151] In addition to commerce, urban fairs traditionally played an important function in the hiring of seasonal labour, but these statute or 'mop' fairs were gone by the twentieth century.[152] Holiday periods for urban workers were no longer instigated by the annual hiring of labour, and although some fairs continued to be held on these traditional dates, periods of recreation for urban workers were now dictated by Bank Holidays.[153]

The fairground remained an important feature of urban culture during the interwar period, building up on market squares and along winding city streets fairs were an extension of traditional informal street entertainments, an important aspect of working-class recreation and culture.[154] The physical manifestation of the fairground linked it closely to people's places of work and homes; at Hull fair in the late 1920s Philip Allingham observed small stallholders and pitchers would rent frontage from householders and fortune tellers filled the front gardens of houses - the fair was literally on people's doorsteps.[155] In Lancashire Cotton towns the tradition of "flocking into the town centre" was common, and the location of annual fairs on market squares was part of this tradition.[156] The interwar period saw this spatial relationship eroded by the scale of modern fun fairs and increasing municipal control necessitating relocation. Despite the movement of Nottingham Goose fair away from the market square to the New Forest Recreation Ground on the edge of town in 1928, the fair remained an important part of Nottingham's social and civil calendar.[157] *The Nottingham Journal* noted in 1933 a proposed change of the fair date to mid-September (which was unrealised) would impact on the election

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151 Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 135.
152 Judd, ' "The Oddest Combination of Town and Country"' in Walton and Walvin, *Leisure In Britain 1780-1939*p. 16. 'Fairs', *The Daily Telegraph* (August 15th, 1928), p. 8.
153 Judd, ' "The Oddest Combination of Town and Country"' in Walton and Walvin, *Leisure In Britain 1780-1939,* p. 16.
154 Jones, *Workers At Play*, p. 78.
155 Allingham, *Cheapjack*, p. 149.
156 Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, p. 137.
157 Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 133.

campaigns which traditionally started following Goose Fair, stating in addition "several societies and church organisations govern their movements by the fair".[158] This demonstrates the annual event of the fair was as influential in shaping urban life as it was in the countryside.

Cushing notes the impermanence of the travelling fair separated it from other forms of entertainment, and this novelty appealed equally to city dwellers and rural communities.[159] For educated observers a fairground embracing technological innovations epitomised the modern city; in a letter to author Harold Acton, travel writer Robert Byron implored Acton "come to Paddington… here are public houses, fun fairs, buses, tubes, and vulgar posters".[160] As well as linking the fair to the exciting bustle of a mobile urban population, Byron also places the fair alongside the vulgarity of commercial advertising hoardings, and it is this implicit association with crudity and 'low' forms of urban landscape that in some respects causes a negative perception of urban fairs during the interwar period. Ward notes since exponential urban expansion of the nineteenth century, towns and cities were linked with "crime, poverty, anonymity, unsanitary conditions and immigration"; social issues considered corrosive to a "wholesome sense of national identity".[161] If the fair was considered a feature of urban working-class living, to what extent could it be blamed for encouraging these undesirable traits? Additionally, if the fair was a means by which elements of urban culture was transmitted to the countryside, then it was equally culpable of bringing discord and disruption to the undisturbed rural idyll.

Some observers of urban fairs in the interwar period suggest the charm and innocence of the traditional country fair had not been translated into the urban environment, and the increased scale of metropolitan fairs had corrupted the original atmosphere. Robert Roberts offered this melancholy description of the bi-annual Salford fair around the time of the First World War: "It

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[158] 'New Goose Fair Controversy', *The Nottingham Journal* (October 9th, 1933), p. 6.
[159] Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford,* p. 36.
[160] Cited in Peter Mandler, *The English National Character- The History of An Idea From Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (Yale University Press, New York, 2006), p. 132.
[161] Ward, *Britishness Since 1870*, p. 55.

brought us tattered gaiety and a music at times so plaintive that, heard in the dark approaching lanes, it filled one with a sort of infinite regret".[162] Although Roberts admits the fair was popular, "under bursts of naptha light the 'croft' ran alive with Lowry-like figures, he states he "never felt easy or happy there".[163] Priestley echoed these negative observations, writing that the spectacle of Nottingham Goose fair was only enchanting when viewed from a distance, for once inside the intensity of the crowds, noise, and sensory assault made the experience chaotic and sordid.[164] Priestley concludes the "Golden Goose Fair" which "sparkled and sang in the minds of children", reminiscent of the images recalled by George Cushing, was nothing more than "a superb romantic illusion, glittering in the night".[165]

To site the travelling fairground within contemporary understandings of 'British' identity and cultural heritage necessitates investigation into how this form of popular leisure was representative of, interacted with, and dictated by class. Definitions of 'Britishness' depended on the identification an 'other' (created or real) against which 'British' identity could be contrasted. This "anti-citizen" was often found in the perceived vulgarity of the working-class, whose behaviour necessitated exclusion from wider society.[166] Working-class identity was most openly expressed during free time, and thus landscapes of recreation became contested territories where the perceived immorality of working-class leisure confronted the sensibilities and expectations of society. In addition to investigating leisure as expression of class identity it is also necessary to assess middle-class attempts to regulate and repress working-class recreation.[167] The previous chapter of this thesis investigated how the interwar period saw increased municipal attempts to control fairs, circumnavigating the barrier of Charter Rights by regulating fairs through rents and relocation. This was part of a larger desire for control over working-class leisure which originated in nineteenth century attempts to simply ban

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[162] Robert Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling: Growing Up In The Classic Slum* (Mandolin [Manchester University Press], Manchester, 2003), p. 67.
[163] Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling*, p. 67.
[164] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 139
[165] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 139.
[166] Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, pp. 62, 67.
[167] Walton and Walvin, 'Introduction' in Walton and Walvin (Eds), *Leisure In Britain*, p. 3.

'unsuitable' forms of leisure. The limited success of this tactic led corporations in the interwar period to instead regulate organised forms of leisure, ensuring control if not total prevention.

As previously discussed, the origins of the travelling fairground in rural and urban settings as a reprieve from labour demonstrate it is a working-class leisure institution. The significance of the fair for the working-class was its financial and physical accessibility; for those who could not afford the seaside excursion or Music Hall, or could not travel beyond their immediate locality, the fair offered "a glimmer of colour and enjoyment… irrespective of social station or money".[168] Robert Roberts emphasises this fact by stating his family, and others in his neighbourhood, struggled to save for a seaside excursion but were able to enjoy Salford Fair.[169] Beaven suggests the cinema made commercial entertainment accessible for those on low incomes, and Jones relates the cinema was popular even with the unemployed who equally "demanded the right to fantasise and laugh".[170] However, the cinema was only an option if a venue was geographically accessible, not an issue for labourers in towns and cities, but problematic for rural workers. Although as has been noted the growth of public transport in this period linked remote rural communities to urban areas, travelling presented its own cost on top of the cost of recreation at the destination. For this reason, the itinerant fair remained an important recreation for workers who could not afford to travel. In some respects, the cinema was a costlier entertainment than a visit to the fair. Fairs were erected on common ground and commanded no entry fee, the marvels of electric light, the colours of the lavishly decorated rides, and music from mechanical organs provided a sensory experience which was free of charge. Ware notes the front of house shows designed to attract patrons, often girls dancing to the tunes from the organs or samples of the performance offered in the main shows, were free entertainment for fair goers.[171] The rides and shows were consistently inexpensive; the charge to ride Chas. Thurston's 'Royal

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[168] Walvin, *Leisure and Society*, p. 118. Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford*, p. 140.
[169] Cited in Walvin, *Beside The Seaside*, p. 96.
[170] Beaven, 'Going To The Cinema', in Bebber (Ed) *Leisure and Cultural Conflict*, p. 69. Jones, *Workers At Play*, p. 119.
[171] Ware, *Historic Fairground Scenes,* p. 45.

Golden Dragons' scenic railway at Bury Fair in 1920 was threepence, and more than a decade later J.B. Priestley noted fares of threepence at the 1933 Goose Fair.[172] Trudgen Dawson notes similarly the circuses of the interwar period were affordable to all classes of patron, with prices ranging from as much as a Guinea for the best seats, to as little as a penny.[173]

A key argument for fairs being a traditionally working-class form of leisure, and an explanation for why they were able to remain popular and compete against other forms of entertainment during this period, is their spatial relationship with working-class areas. Although other forms of leisure were well established in towns and cities by , for working families on the lowest wages the street remained "the great recreation room".[174] Street culture remained important as it removed the barrier of poverty from participation.[175] Davies notes the continuation of "Victorian pattern of street life" alongside modern entertainments such as the cinema "forms one of the most striking characteristics of working-class leisure during the 1930s".[176] The survival and continuing popularity of travelling fairs during the interwar period reflects this trend, for whilst they faced competition from an increasing number of alternatives, they remained a working-class form of recreation and an intrinsic part of street and market culture.

During the interwar period leisure became a means of breaking down social barriers. Davies notes the Dance Halls of Salford saw "the sons and daughters of the skilled and unskilled" dancing together, a mixing of the different elements of the working-class community.[177] Through the increasing affordability of cinema and theatre tickets a democratisation of leisure occurred; all social classes were able to not only patronise the same entertainment, but also "obtain the same enjoyment".[178] Fares on rides at travelling fairs also facilitated this phenomenon. Fairs gave workers the opportunity to look their best and project an image of

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[172] 'All The Fun of The Fair: "Royal Golden Dragons" At Bury', *Bury Free Press* (October 23rd, 1920), p. 5. Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 137.
[173] Trudgen Dawson, 'Selling The Circus', in Bebber (Ed), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict*, p. 90.
[174] Jones, *Workers At Play*, p. 78.
[175] Davies, *Leisure, Gender, And Poverty*, p. 109-111.
[176] Davies, *Leisure, Gender, And Poverty,* p. 170.
[177] Davies, *Leisure, Gender, And Poverty,* p. 89.
[178] Trudgen Dawson, 'Selling The Circus', in Bebber (Ed), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict*, p. 90.

higher social status; Allingham notes the Ashton-Under-Lyne fair caused "holiday spirit to invade the town" prompting mill girls to "discard their clogs and, dressed in their best clothes, adopt as best they can the language and airs of their favourite film star".[179]

The circus marketed itself as a recreation which equalised social classes, patronised by everyone from manual workers to those from the highest echelons of society.[180] This mixed patronage was equally true for travelling fairs; the 1920 Kings Lynn Mart recalled so vividly by Cushing, a manual labourer, was also patronised by royalty. Reported nationally in the press, Princess Victoria attended the Mart on the Saturday shortly after the civic opening, enjoying "a ride on the roundabout and tried her skill at the coconut shies".[181] Significantly she attended with a small entourage, arrived on foot and moved freely about the fairground "recognised by very few"; this was not an official Royal visit and the casual manner in which the Princess attended the fair suggests her attendance was motivated primarily by the desire to enjoy the fair as a recreation.[182] The Prince Of Wales similarly enjoyed a country fair at Sherwood in 1923, and was reported to have "caught the spirit of jollity" and took "boyish delight" in participating in a "Bowling For A Pig" game.[183] Priestley in *English Journey* viewed the popular seaside resort of Blackpool as a product of "industrial democracy", stating "you were all as good as one another so long as you had the necessary sixpence", and equally praised a Leicester Square cinema for its accessibility to a mixture of patrons.[184] Interestingly although the rides he experienced were the same fare for any patron, Priestley does not recognise Nottingham Goose Fair as being an equally egalitarian form of leisure – suggesting he viewed this form of recreation as very separate from the seaside resort or cinema.

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[179] Allingham, *Cheapjack*, p. 78.
[180] Trudgen Dawson, 'Selling The Circus', in Bebber (Ed), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict*, p. 89.
[181] 'Social And Personal', *Birmingham Gazette* (February 16th, 1920), p. 4. 'Kings Lynn Mart, Three New Machines, Interesting Ceremony', *The World's Fair* (February 28th, 1920), p. 1.
[182] 'Princess On The Roundabouts', *Nottingham Evening Post* (February 16th, 1920), p. 2.
[183] 'The Prince At A Country Fair', *Leeds Mercury* (August 3rd, 1926), p. 9.
[184] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 235. Baxendale, *Priestley's England*, p. 116, 122.

IV – Interwar Opposition To Travelling Fairs

One of the reasons authorities sought control over fairs was these events were believed to encourage rowdy and immoral behaviour. Victorian Fairs were accused of representing the worst aspects of working-class culture, encouraging disruptive behaviour, drunkenness, idleness, promiscuity and crime.[185] For the most part this perception was less prolific after the First World War, but opposition still existed as suggested by the *Uxbridge and Drayton Gazette* which as late as 1937 stated "One upon a time the fair was the most exciting thing in life… But now a fairground is looked upon by some as a breeding ground for hooliganism and to suggest a visit is regarded as a sure sign of a low mentality".[186] Long-standing opposition to 'irrational' recreation still existed in the interwar period, largely propagated by religious and church-based organisations.[187] Jones notes these opposition groups were less vocal, still advocating practical and educational leisure, but ultimately accepting "it was the right of individuals to decide for themselves the ways in which to use their spare time".[188] Despite changing markedly since the turn of the century the travelling fairground was unashamedly a recreation of frivolity: an 'irrational' pursuit. However, by the interwar period those critical of such entertainments were in the minority, and the overwhelming public support ensured criticisms had little impact.

One of the key debates regarding public recreation in this period, was whether anti-social behaviour was encouraged by the nature of the leisure or was an inherent product of the patrons. Beavan notes cinema managers in the interwar period struggled to maintain control over groups of young men who bombarded auditoriums with "rowdy cat-calls, wolf whistles and guffaws", but notes the "gregarious behaviour" of young men and the camaraderie of the group was part of the appeal of a cinema visit; the behaviour was motivated by the patrons rather than by the amusements.[189] Rowdy behaviour was also observed at fairs in the inter war

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185 Walvin, *Leisure and Society*, p. 116.
186 Uxbridge Michelmas Fairs: More About The Earlier Years, Difficulties Of Present-Day Showmen', *Uxbridge And West Drayton Gazette* (October 15th, 1937), p. 13.
187 Jones, *Workers At Play*, p. 169.
188 Jones, *Workers At Play,* pp. 168-169.
189 Beaven, 'Going To The Cinema' in Bebber (Ed), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict,* p. 76.

period; Cushing recalls “children were munching, fighting and giggling, and everyone was affected by the gaiety of it all. It was festive, innocent and loud”.[190] Whilst Cushing implies the fairground atmosphere encouraged good natured boisterousness, J.B. Priestley suggests a more sinister transformation. Priestley refers to crowds of young men, “pushing and cat-calling and screaming in the crowd… their faces grinning and vacant in the whirl of coloured light” looking “like members of some sub-human race surging up from the interior of the earth”.[191] Priestley implies that rather than encouraging childish joy, the chaos of the fair exaggerated the degenerate tendencies of these adolescents, encouraging them to behave wildly. However, displays of excess and the rejection of the rule of authorities was also part of the escapism offered by trips to the coast.[192] Contrasting with his opinion of fairgoers Priestley viewed working-class holidaymakers at Blackpool as “vital beings who burst out of their factories for the annual spree as if the boilers had exploded and blown them out”, and he praises the energy and “hearty vulgarity” of the traditional Blackpool experience.[193] Priestley remained critical of Goose Fair who concluded his initial review by stating “you could not believe in the hundredweights of warm pennies changing hands, the sordid humbug, the syphilitic faces, the children dragged around like sacks”. [194] He remained was incredulous this “was Goose Fair, and Merrie England”.[195]

It is important to consider Priestley’s background and his intentions for *English Journey* in order to better explain his poor opinion of Goose Fair. Priestley presents his audience with contrasting opinions of popular leisure throughout *English Journey*. Stuart Maconie acknowledges Priestley is not far removed “from the bright teenage lad who kicked about Bradford looking for fun, girls, books and beer”, and refers to Priestley’s vehement defence of the infamous working-class

[190] Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford*, p. 127.
[191] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 136.
[192] Walvin, *Leisure and Society*, p. 82.
[193] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 236.
[194] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 138.
[195] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 137.

'monkey parades' participated in my young working class men and women. [196] However, alongside this defence of working-class leisure traditions Priestley can also be disparaging of them; in addition to his criticism of Goose Fair he also is dismissive of boxing fans, suggesting "that religion, art, politics, would give them something infinitely truer and more enduring".[197] He also demonstrated a low opinion of the consumers of entertainment, stating many forgot "the patrons of cheap, popular amusements, the cinema and the wireless and so on, have largely come from a class of persons that before did nothing in its leisure but gossip and yawn and kick the cat and twiddle its thumbs".[198]

This statement I would suggest goes some way to suggesting, although still defensive of traditional entertainments, Priestley had somewhat lost touch with the demands of working-class consumers. In particular, by the time he visited Goose Fair he was forty years old, and therefore his age group were not whom proprietors were attempting to satisfy.[199] As an outsider attending the fair alone, Priestley would not have experienced the communal spirit so important for groups of people visiting fairs. Cushing attended fairs as an adolescent (he was sixteen when he attended the 1920 Lynn Mart), surrounded those of a similar age and background, and for him the experience was one of communal enjoyment: "there were more and more people until there was a sea of faces… the night air seemed crisper… and everyone more handsome than usual".[200]

An overriding concern of Priestley in *English Journey* was to describe and chronicle genuine English culture, citizens at work and at play. He was concerned this traditional way of life was under threat from homogenisation and Americanisation. At the beginning of his journey on the road between Southampton and Ramsey Priestley noted the road and its surroundings only differed "in a few minor details from a few thousand roads in the United States where the same

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[196] Stuart Maconie, 'English Journey: A Contemporary Perspective' in J.B Priestley, *English Journey* (Great Northern Books Edition, 2018, Bradford), p. 22.
[197] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 141.
[198] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 128.
[199] Baxendale, *Priestley's England*, p. 36.
[200] Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford*, p. 127.

tooth-pastes and soaps and gramophone records are being sold, the very same films are being shown.[201] Although more complimentary about seaside amusements at Blackpool, Priestley suggested they had lost their authenticity and origin in the people.[202] This reflects an additional interwar debate regarding public leisure; to what extent it was driven by producer or consumer. Priestley emphasised control over recreation should come from the demands of the public, the concern aired by Priestley was now "businessmen were now in charge… manipulating the audience to like what suited them, turning them into passive consumers".[203] During his visit to Bournville Priestley observed the culture of company provided recreation, and suggested he would prefer workers "using their leisure and demanding its increase, not as favoured employees but as citizens, free men and women".[204] Jones similarly recognises a growing concern that the decision-making regarding entertainments was increasingly becoming the preserve of proprietors rather than consumers, who now received leisure rather than created it.[205] However, Jones acknowledges in order for leisure enterprises to succeed they needed to respond to the desires of working-class consumers, and would therefore still reflect traditional working-class society.[206] Commercial entertainments could be reclaimed as indicative of working-class culture; the public house, although a part of a large commercial enterprise retained its status as a community hub.[207] The travelling fairground can equally be considered a commercial leisure pursuit which, although modernising and changing in the interwar period, was re-appropriated by the working classes. A 1936 Public Health Congress aired concerns about 'Spectatoritis' and the increasingly passive consumption of leisure.[208] *The World's Fair* suggested whilst the comfort and warmth of cinemas and theatres encouraged passive recreation, fairground rides which "tend to get rougher and more thrilling" were "guaranteed to

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[201] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 46.
[202]. Baxendale, *Priestley's England*, pp.116-117.
[203] Baxendale, *Priestley's England*, p. 129.
[204] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 106.
[205] Jones, *Workers At Play*, pp. 82-83.
[206] Jones, *Workers At Play,* p. 83.
[207] Jones, *Workers At Play,* p. 84.
[208] 'What We Think: Spectatoritis', *The World's Fair* (November 21st, 1936), p. 45.

bestir the most placid individual" and in this aspect the modernisation of fairground rides presented a solution to the trend of passivity.[209]

The modernisation of the travelling fair so vital to its continuing success in the interwar period attracted its own criticism. For J.B. Priestley modernity in leisure was corrosive to the true value of working-class entertainment, he suggested popular culture was an expression of the "innate energy… of the common people", whereas modern mass culture was prescriptive and a result of the leisure industry apparently exercising increasing control over inert audiences.[210] Priestley offered a contrasting opinion of mechanisation in leisure; suggesting "although machinery has enslaved some people, it has liberated others, who have found a world they can enjoy", but also describing the rides at Blackpool's South Shore Amusement Park as "fantastic idiocies".[211]Priestley's account of the 1933 Nottingham Goose Fair demonstrates a clear disapproval of the modern mechanised fair. He begins his review by suggesting the fair was now "an assembly of devices, chiefly mechanical, contrived to attract the largest number of pennies in the shortest possible time", and this automation did not offer the opportunity for people to amuse each other.[212] Priestley believed mechanisation had replaced the role of the patrons in contributing to the enjoyment of the fair, to the extent machines were now creating the emotional response to pleasure – laughter. He refers to "several of these machines, hooting and bellowing with satanic mirth", remarking even H.G. Wells had not "contrived that one-day machines would laugh for us".[213] For Priestley the replacement of human laugher with noises from machines was proof the innocent fair of old was gone, and the modernised version was something sinister and incompatible with his idea of pure recreation. The removal of the human element in leisure is something Priestley ruminated on previously in his *English Journey.* He posited there was a danger inherent in "robot employment" that it would inevitably "alternate

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[209] 'What We Think: Spectatoritis', *The World's Fair* (November 21st, 1936), p. 45.
[210] Baxendale, *Priestley's England*, p. 3.
[211] Priestley, *English Journey*, pp. 126, 233.
[212] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 136.
[213] Priestley, *English Journey,* pp. 137-138.

with robot leisure, passive amusement as standardised as the tasks at the machine”.[214] In contrast to his previous remarks about the liberating elements of mechanisation in motor cars and the suchlike, Priestley was unimpressed by fairground rides which reflected the public fascination with speed, describing a ride on a “ruby and emerald fish” as rushing “up and down and round and round” mixing “the whole fair into a spangled porridge”.[215]

Priestley suggested the visual appeal of the traditional fair was gone by the time he visited Goose Fair in 1933, describing the rides as “tawdry paraphernalia”.[216] However, contemporary evidence suggests this criticism was unjust. The *Nottingham Evening Post* reported before opening at the 1933 fair proprietors were making a final push to ready their attractions for the public; “paint pots and polishing rags were to be seen everywhere… Showmen realise that brightness must be the keynote of everything, and that it is no use coming to Goose Fair with anything that is dowdy or shabby”. [217] In contrast to Priestley’s opinion the report states it was an unwritten law riding masters would repaint and repair equipment prior to Goose Fair to ensure it was looking its best.[218] Priestley’s criticisms do not make logical sense for it makes poor business sense to present a ride which looked tired or uninviting, particularly at Goose Fair as since the move to a purpose-built site in 1928 spaces for proprietors were limited and controlled by the corporation, who would reject shows considered unsuitable or appearing neglected.[219]

Priestley’s final comment on Goose Fair emphasises his outdated perspective on the travelling fair. He concludes;

> “the modern fair… is no true carnival. There is a great deal of noise and a great many coloured lights, but there is not much fun. It is at heart cheap, nasty and sordid. It offers

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[214] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 131.
[215] Priestley, *English Journey*, pp. 126, 137.
[216] Priestley, *English Journey,* p. 138.
[217] ‘Fair Scenes’, *Nottingham Evening Post* (October 4th, 1933), p. 8.
[218] ‘Fair Scenes’, *Nottingham Evening Post* (October 4th, 1933), p. 8.
[219] Goose Fair Restrictions’, *The World’s Fair* (September 20th, 1928), p. 1. ‘Goose Fair – Carnival Will Be Better Than Ever’, *Nottingham Evening Post* (October 3rd, 1938), p. 11.

no grand release from ordinary reality. It does not expand a man. It cannot light the mind in retrospect. It does not suggest a people letting loose their high spirits, but a people trying to keep away low spirits. It has the wrong, catch-penny kind of ingenuity. It blinds, deafens and stuns us into accepting a momentary pretence of pleasure.".[220]

Priestley's tone is reminiscent of those who promoted 'rational' recreation in the nineteenth century; he considered the fair a pointless activity from which little could be gained or learned by patrons. Although far more critical, Priestley does echo the sentiments conveyed by George Cushing, that the modern fair relied upon the experience of speed provided by mechanical amusements and no longer facilitated a journey of the imagination which was as much the product of the patron as the proprietor.[221] Priestley's only admission of the traditional 'journey' of a fairground ride was upon alighting the Ghost Train when he remarked "at the end of two or three minutes I felt that I had had a terrific adventure".[222]Somewhat at odds with his criticism of Goose Fair Priestley advocated a return to annual festivities rather than constant access to entertainments, suggesting "If we could only agree to devote a few days to the craziest folly, and then let folly alone for the rest of the year, we might be a wiser people".[223] However it must be noted the Goose Fair which left Priestley aghast was patronised by those who *did* have yearlong access to amusements; one can only speculate how Priestley would have reacted to the behaviour of fairgoers whose release was limited annually to Goose Fair.

Fairs were often accused of encouraging large crowds to become intoxicated and difficult to control.[224] This concern was still aired in the interwar period by groups lobbying against forms of leisure they deemed to be morally corrupting.[225] However few cases of public drunkenness were directly attributed to fairs in the interwar period; Nottingham Corporation actually permitted public houses to remain open longer during the period of Goose Fair, action the police

[220] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 144.
[221] Cushing, *Steam At Thursford*, p. 131.
[222] Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 138.
[223] Priestley, *English Journey,* p. 144.
[224] Walvin, *Leisure and Society,* p. 9.
[225] Jones, *Workers At Play*, p. 169.

did not object to, and they stated incidences of public drunkenness were minimal during Goose Fair.[226] Of equal concern to local authorities were the size of crowds; Cushing referred to the "pull of the crowd" in a positive light, but Priestley found the scale of the masses overwhelming at Goose Fair – referring to "a square of blazing bedlam. Its narrow avenues… so thickly packed with people that you could only slowly shuffle along, pressed close on every side".[227] These large masses of people were a challenge to public control and a magnet for petty thieves. Nottingham Corporation's solution to the pickpocket problem was to monitor railway and bus stations, hoping to apprehend known criminals and suspects, and prevent them accessing the fair.[228] The growing scale of crowds and the increasing complexity of urban infrastructure was one incentive for corporations to force relocation; the purpose-built Forest Site which the Goose Fair moved to in 1928 enabled the corporation to take complete control .[229]

A key moral debate surrounding leisure in this period was regarding the enjoyment of leisure by young men and women, and how leisure facilities allowed contact between members of the opposite sex. Recreation for women was traditionally restrained by expectations of respectability, and leisure opportunities for women were fewer than for their male counterparts.[230] The seaside holiday was one of the first leisure pursuits which facilitated greater mixing of the sexes, resulting in concerns coastal resorts promoted promiscuity among young women caught up in the holiday atmosphere.[231] This atmosphere was also generated by travelling fairs, and they similarly enabled young men and women to interact in a manner impossible in normal circumstances. Cushing suggests the unique space of the fairground played an important practical role in courtship in rural areas; "Young fellers met their girlfriends on the horses or on the gondolas… the streets were dark then, whereas the

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226 'Longer Drink Hours: Granted For Period Of Goose Fair', *Nottingham Journal* (September 30th, 1933), p. 9.
227 Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford,* p. 127. Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 138.
228 'Police Smartness', *Nottingham Journal* (October 5th, 1933), p. 4.
229 Allen and Williams. *Pat Collins*, pp. 48-49.
230 Hill, ' "What Shall We Do With Them When They're Not Working?"' in Bebber (Ed.), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict,* p. 29.
231 Walvin, *Leisure and Society,* p. 82.

fairground was all lit up. They could see each other and then there was every chance to get acquainted". [232] Priestley conversely portrays a less innocent scene; at Goose Fair he was dismayed by the appearance and behaviour of young women; "whose thickly powdered faces were little white masks… daubed with red and black… like dolls out of some infernal toyshop", another group of teenagers he encountered on one of the rides he described as "slavering maenads".[233] The allusions to hell, and the comparison of the girls on a ride to the raving intoxicated followers of Dionysus, demonstrate how affronted by the patrons Priestley is, and suggests he believed fairs brought out the worst qualities in the working-class, allowing them to indulge in behaviour otherwise unacceptable.

The design of fairground rides encouraged greater physical contact between the sexes than would have normally been acceptable. Cushing relates "if the horses were full they'd ride on the same horse, in the same gondola or motor car on the Switchback, and they could force a conversation".[234] Cinemas provided an opportunity away from home for young couples to engage in physical contact and even amorous behaviour in privacy of darkness, and whilst some managers were concerned this would make the establishment disreputable, others capitalised on this attraction by creating auditoria with double seating on the back row. [235] Similarly, the 'Tunnels of Love' rides at seaside resorts openly emphasised romantic possibilities, but the travelling fairgrounds' 'Channel Tunnel Railways' and Ghost Trains also involved enclosed tracks concealed in darkness, and proved consistently popular with young couples.[236] As with the issues of rowdy behaviour, courting couples utilising the spatial landscape of the fairground to enjoy closer contact than was otherwise acceptable is another example of the 'disreputable'

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[232] The 'Gondola' was a boat shaped wooden car which was part of the Switchback and Scenic Railway rides popular between 1910 and 1930. Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford*, p. 36.
[233] Priestley, *English Journey*, pp. 136-137.
[234] Cushing and Starsmore, *Steam At Thursford*, p. 36.
[235] Beaven, 'Going To The Cinema', , in Bebber (Ed), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict*, 77. Davies, *Leisure, Gender, And Poverty,* p. 94. Fowler, *The First Teenagers*, p. 118.
[236] Ware, *Historic Fairground Scenes,* p. 76

behaviour associated with fairgrounds originating not from the fairs themselves, but from the desires of patrons, seizing opportunities to express and enjoy themselves freely.

Despite concerns over fairs, and other public amusements, the opposition was minute compared to the growing demand for amusement. The target of Priestley's criticism, Nottingham Goose Fair, demonstrated considerable growth in attendance during the period. The public transport ticket receipts from Nottingham Corporation over the 1933 Goose Fair showed an overall increase of £314 on the previous year, and the LNER put on special excursions to cater for long distance visitors – both demonstrating growing attendance of the fair.[237] Rent receipts generated by the pleasure fair on the Nottingham Forest Recreation Ground for the local corporation also show an increase; from £4, 168. 18s. 8d. in 1931 to £4, 657. 14s. 4d. in 1933.[238] If the Goose Fair was not popular, showpeople would not profit, and would not continue to attend; the fact they did so shows Goose Fair was still popular during the time of Priestley's visit. The significance of Goose Fair to its working-class patrons is best reflected in a poem submitted to the *Nottingham Journal* in 1933. In it the author summarises the Goose Fair experience: "myriad gleaming points of light", "flashing colours driven high", "children who with bated breath and wide-eyed wonder loiter there: and faces, faces everywhere!".[239] Priestley's affirmation that any alternative popular festival must be better than Goose Fair since he did not "want to hear any more laughter from machines", was clearly not a belief held by the majority of those who enjoyed Goose Fair and other traditional travelling fairs during the interwar period.[240] Most opposition to travelling fairs in the interwar period was silenced by overwhelming public demand for these traditional amusements to continue, and it would take another conflict for the 'killjoys' to reappear in force.

[237] 'Goose Fair Traffic', *Nottingham Journal* (October 10th, 1933), p. 3. 'L.N.E.R. Excursions', *Derby Daily Telegraph* (September 27th, 1933), p. 5.
[238] 'Goose Fair Receipts', *Nottingham Journal* (October 19th, 1933), p. 3.
[239] Appendix H, Charles H. Merrey, 'Goose Fair', *Nottingham Journal* (October 5th, 1933), p. 6.
[240] Priestley, *English Journey,* p. 144.

Conclusion

In addition to presenting new legislative challenges from local and national authority, the interwar period saw huge growth in popular recreation, and the travelling fairground had to compete for custom in an era of economic downturn. The increase in variety of public entertainment, particularly the development of the cinema, was combined with increasing access to recreation. The monopoly the fairground previously enjoyed in more isolated areas was eroded by the motor bus and increasing private car ownership. Despite increasing competition, the fairground remained a relevant and popular form of recreation throughout the period. It achieved this by remaining financially accessible to all, adapting and modernising to reflect developing public tastes, and continuing to reflect traditional working-class and 'British' values.

The travelling fair remained affordable and required no extra travelling cost, and thus continued to be a popular recreation choice for workers on a budget, of which there were many in the depressed twenties and thirties. In addition, proprietors were quick to adapt the traditional Edwardian fair to reflect public tastes; the fantasy and flair was replaced with imitations of modern motor technology. Instead of transporting patrons through imagination, rides thrilled fairgoers with the physical sensation of speed and flight. As well as reflecting a public demand for speed and danger, this modernisation of the fairground ensured it remained a unique sensory experience; other recreations could not offer a physical experience of speed. The process of modernising the fairgrounds was not without complications; critics continued to accuse fairs of bringing out immoral and anti-social elements of working-class culture, and increasing mechanisation was accused of demonstrating the baseness of the fair as recreation. However, the continued popularity of fairs in the interwar period is testament that the changes made to the fairs reflected popular demand. Despite concerns leisure was increasingly directed by commercial interests and passively consumed, the content of the fairground remained answerable to the desires of the patrons.

Another key reason the fairground survived and prospered in the interwar period despite challenges, was the link between this form of public recreation and ideas about national identity. The fairground was associated with both urban and rural traditions and was an extension of working-class street culture. The travelling fair was an ancient custom, and this heritage allowed the fair to represent a more stable and secure 'Merry England'; an ideal many people sought comfort in during the economic turmoil and social anxiety rife during the interwar period. Through adaptation, modernisation and continually emphasising how the fair was inextricably linked to ideals of Britishness and working-class life, showpeople were able to ensure the continued popularity of the fairground as a leisure pursuit throughout the interwar period, successfully recovering from the impact of the First World War and putting the business in a strong position to eventually meet the challenges of another global conflict.

Chapter V– Outcasts and Funfair Kings, Travelling Fairgrounds during the Second World War 1939-1945

Introduction

The position of travelling fairground communities within society, and their relationship with authority changed markedly in the first decades of the twentieth century. After overcoming the hardships of the First World War, the industry continued to develop and become an important feature of public entertainment and popular culture during the 1920s and 1930s. The chaos wrought upon the nation by the Second World War would present the greatest challenge to the business and to the community of showpeople who depended upon it. This chapter will assess how showland was able to adapt to wartime regulations, continue business, and attempt to demonstrate the fairground community was worthy of inclusion in the narrative of 'The People's War'.

The threat of aerial attack was far greater than in the First World War, and consequently the level of state regulation governing public entertainments increased. Blackout restrictions on the emission of both light and sound made running fairs almost impossible, and necessitated increased dialogue between national Government, local authorities, and the Showmen's Guild . Through this dialogue agreements were reached allowing fairs to continue, albeit in a limited capacity. The Second World War also created a new national identity, united citizens pledging their efforts for the collective war effort, a narrative which would become known as 'The People's War'. For showpeople to continue their business within the constraints of war, it was necessary for them to demonstrate they were part of this collective struggle, to prove they were 'good' active citizens whose work was of national importance. This chapter will explore how fairground communities contributed to the national war effort, but also how this contribution was articulated by them, and recognised by wider society. The use of the 'People's War' narrative also facilitated productive dialogue between showland and local authorities. The

significant role played by fairs in the Holidays At Home programme represented a major development in the relationship between corporations and showpeople; for the first-time local authorities actively requested the provision of outdoor entertainments.

Despite this considerable progress, opposition to fairs and public entertainments still existed during the Second World War. Antagonist groups used the conditions of war to protest fairs and other public amusements, either from a pragmatic stance which deemed recreation a waste of resources, or moral opposition which considered it inappropriate to enjoy leisure in the atmosphere of conflict. These critics were mostly defeated by public demand for recreation, but national Government and local authorities also recognised productive labour required workers to have periods of respite. The conditions of war therefore silenced the 'Killjoys' who had protested against fairs for decades. A heightened sense of national identity had other consequences for the travelling fairground community, for whilst they were mostly recognised and respected as businessmen, their nomadism still identified them as a group separate from settled society. In some cases, legislation impacted excessively on showpeople, as they were not treated distinctly from other travellers. This chapter will assess how, as in peacetime, showpeople dealt with the legislation, and how they positioned themselves within the wider wartime national identity.

To assess whether the travelling fairground community can be included in the narrative of a wartime national identity, it is necessary to consider what this consists of, where it originated, and how representative of society this constructed identity was. The notion of a 'People's War' has been prevalent in both academic and popular discourse regarding the Second World War, but without further interrogation it often ignores the complexities and inconsistencies present in wartime understandings of identity and inclusion. This chapter will therefore explore the concept of a collective wartime national identity, and how in many senses this was not a realistic reflection of society, but more a manufactured ideal.

Calder suggests the formative events of Dunkirk, the Blitz ,and the Battle of Britain were influential in defining features of wartime national identity; they demonstrated the admirable national qualities which were being defended.[1] The main concepts conveyed by these events were a sense of communal effort, a collective willing to make sacrifices for the good of the nation, and stoicism and solidarity (often through humour) in the face of adversity.[2] Calder identifies issues with these seminal events, and discusses what Mackay terms the "discreditable features" of the war: feelings of defeatism, criminal activity, profiteering, and antagonism towards minority groups.[3] Arthur Marwick suggests the effect of pivotal events on public behaviour, such as declines in absenteeism and increased productivity, dissipated over time: "The Dunkirk spirit was real, but it was temporary".[4] Marwick noted these impermanent bursts of 'active' morale motivated by events were less common than 'passive' morale – the collective resilience and willing to 'carry on'.[5] Significantly however, these inconsistences do not contravene what Calder terms the "Big Facts"; life and industry continued in Britain despite adversity and thus the 'myth' of these events still shaped contemporary behaviour and promoted the ideals of a 'People's War'.[6] If showland families can be proved to have contributed actively to the war effort and demonstrated willing to 'carry on', theoretically they qualify for inclusion in the narrative of a national wartime identity. However, the 'People's War' narrative was one publicly propagated and inclusion was decided by public acceptance. It is thus necessary to assess to what extent the contributions of showland were *recognised* for them to be included. Mackay also suggests "behaving well" and demonstrating good morale was a key part of wartime identity, it is therefore important to examine whether the showpeople were

[1] Angus Calder, *The Myth of The Blitz* (Pimlico, London, 1991), p. 1.
[2] Calder, *The Myth of The Blitz*, p. 1.
[3] Robert Mackay, *Half The Battle – Civilian Morale in Britain During The Second World War* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2002), p. 5.
[4] Arthur Marwick, *Britain In The Century Of Total War: War, Peace and Social Change 1900-1967* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 296.
[5] Cited by Mackay, *Half The Battle,* pp. 4-5.
[6] Calder, *The Myth Of The Blitz,* pp 119-120.

observed as behaving in an acceptable manner, or whether their activities were deemed incompatible with a narrative of communal effort.[7]

Although the mobilisation of the Home Front during the First World War was demonstrative of a communal war effort, the Second World War has been referred to most consistently as 'The People's War'.[8] Rose views the conflict as one involving an unprecedented collective endeavour, with personal differences put aside in the national interest.[9] This 'People's War' has been perceived, contemporaneously and subsequently, as involving 'ordinary' men and women, whose efforts and sacrifice were as much part of the struggle as the actions of those in the armed forces.[10] This conflict also stressed the role of the citizen and the efforts of the 'little-man', rather than exaggerated manifestations such as John Bull prevalent in the previous war.[11] J.B. Priestley directly addressed and praised the 'ordinary' contributors to the war effort in his Broadcasts, and Winston Churchill emphasised this was "a war of people and causes" calling upon "unknown warriors" to do their duty.[12] By being utilised by commentators and politicians the features of the 'People's War' were reinforced, and whether an accurate reflection of reality or not, they became a pervasive influence over wartime behaviour.

Citizens could prove they belonged to the wartime national identity by demonstrating they were aiding the war effort, despite not necessarily serving in the forces. One way was to perform work of national importance in 'Reserved Occupations'.[13] The regimented structure of

[7] Mackay, *Half The Battle*, p. 5.
[8] Peter Mandler, *The English National Character- The History of An Idea From Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (Yale University Press, New York, 2006), p. 144.
[9] Sonya Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford, 2003), p. 1.
[10] Rose, *Which People's War,* p. 161.

[11] Nicholas, 'From John Bull to John Citizen', in Richard Weight and Abigail Beach (Eds.), *The Right To Belong – Citizenship and National Identity in Britain- 1930-1960* (I.B. Tauris, London, 1998), p. 37.

[12] John Baxendale, *Priestley's England – J.B. Priestley and English Culture* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2007), p. 146. Cited in Calder, *The Myth of The Blitz,* p. 51.

[13] The list of 'Reserved Occupations' – those of national importance, was drawn up in November 1938 to prevent a dearth of skilled labourers in the event of large numbers of people volunteering for the armed forces. Angus Calder, *The People's War* (London, 1969), p. 51.

agricultural production, heavy industry, and transport, enabled the media to describe these workers using a military lexicon and make direct comparisons to those serving.[14] Men working in occupations of national importance could still be susceptible to accusations of shirking duty from onlookers, as critically these workers did not wear uniform: recognisable proof of service.[15] The official designation of occupations of national importance, and importantly those perceived by society as such, caused issues for businesses not obviously vital to the war effort. This situation applied to showpeople, who throughout the conflict had to defend the importance of the fairground industry to both authorities and the public. This was necessary not only to secure their livelihood, but in order to demonstrate the community was contributing to the national effort and were not shirking duty. In addition to performing work of national importance citizens could contribute to the war effort through volunteering. This could be on an individual level as fire watchers or ARP wardens, or by becoming involved in national fund raising, or campaigns such as 'Dig For Victory'.[16] One of the events Calder cites as instigating the tropes of wartime identity was the Battle of Britain, and this gave rise to its own national campaign. Spitfire Funds were initiated by towns and institutions to collectively pay for a Spitfire fighter.[17] Successful towns had their name on the Spitfire, so whilst physically uninvolved they could make a tangible contribution to the Battle of Britain.[18]

In addition to performing civil duty, the narrative of the 'People's War' also emphasised the importance of equality of sacrifice. It was expected regardless of class or background individuals would place the interests of the collective above their own.[19] Marwick suggests parity came as a result of the equality of threat; aerial bombardment was indiscriminate and "gave the country a unity in the face of a common danger".[20] This element of the 'People's War'

[14] Rose, *Which People's War?* p. 191. Rose also notes it was common for the media's portrayal of work of national importance to be highly masculine; the role of women in reserved occupations was often side-lined. Rose, *Which People's War?* p. 185
[15] Rose, *Which People's War?* pp. 182-183.
[16] Rose, *Which People's War?* p. 19.
[17] Calder, *The People's War,* pp. 149-150.
[18] Calder, *The People's War,* p.p. 149-150.
[19] Rose, *Which People's War/* pp. 4, 5, 14.
[20] Arthur Marwick, *The Explosion Of British Society 1914-1970* (London, 1971), p. 98.

was rebuffed by J.B Priestley who criticised propertied classes fleeing dangerous areas, shirking duties of defence and participation in the national efforts, leaving behind "country houses and estates which they expect the rest of us to defend for them".[21] This supports the idea the reality of wartime experience did not always reflect the 'People's War' ideal; far from placing the collective interest above their own, Priestley suggests the group he considered the "traditional backbone of England" were "a waste of space" in wartime.[22]

The Second World War also saw a re-emergence of discussions regarding the concept of 'England' and 'Englishness'. Baxendale suggests the war effort "was validated by and in turn revalidated the myths of Deep England – timeless and pastoral".[23] Benedict Anderson posits that, although culturally constructed, national identity does not depend on a common agreement about what the nation is, "it is the process of national culture which makes the nation".[24] The previous chapter revealed the popularity of the fair in the interwar period was partly due to its intrinsic links to working-class culture in both rural and urban settings. This chapter will explore how showpeople continued this emphasis, articulating the fairground's place in Deep England, and demonstrating involvement with wartime cultural practices to prove involvement in the 'People's War'.

The notion of tolerance was promoted as a key element of 'English' wartime identity, and the pressures of war forced increased contact between different groups, individuals, and institutions which would not have occurred in peacetime; the home front became "a laboratory, a forcing house for change".[25] Baxendale suggests the First World War heightened the sense of belonging to a nation, whilst the Second World War emphasised being "one of the people".[26]

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[21] Baxendale, *Priestley's England,* pp. 150-151.
[22] Baxendale, *Priestley's England,* p. 150.
[23] John Baxendale, ''You And I – All Of Us Ordinary People': Renegotiating 'Britishness' in Wartime', in Nick Hayes and Jeff Hill (Eds.), *Millions Like Us? – British Culture in The Second World War* (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 1999), p. 298.
[24] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities- Reflections On The Origin And Spread Of Nationalism* (Verso Books, London, 1991), p. 6. As cited in Baxendale, 'You And I' in Hayes and Hill (Eds), *Millions Like Us?,* p. 301.
[25] Juliet Gardener, *The Blitz – The British Under Attack* (Harper Press, London, 2010), pp. 366-367.
[26] Baxendale, *Priestley's England,* p. 147.

However, affirmation of national identity in wartime existed alongside increasing suspicion of identifiable 'others', whose loyalties were feared to lie elsewhere.[27] Gardiner notes under the pressure of the Blitz in London this manifested in pre-existing anti-Semitism being reformed and "given a bitter wartime topicality".[28] Jews were accused of being disproportionately involved in black marketeering, and although proved false, this allegation demonstrates how pressures of war often led to marginal groups being accused of behaviour counter to the collective war effort.[29] Although by 1939 the travelling showland community were not marginal in the same way as London's Jewish population, their nomadism still separated them from settled society. Their itinerancy also enabled comparisons, and negative connotations, to be made between showpeople and Gypsies – despite the former's continuing attempts to disassociate themselves from the latter. This chapter will assess how the increased emphasis on a national identity, defined by expressions of accepted 'national' characteristics, affected the perception of showpeople by authorities and wider society as a marginal group. The wartime narrative of the 'People's War' had the potential to impact adversely on those it excluded, for these people would be perceived as acting counter to the collective war effort.

The experience of the Blitz reinforced traditional 'English' values, responding to adversity with stoicism and humour, demonstrating a willing to "keep smiling on".[30] Contemporary journalists had many examples of cheerful resilience from those of all classes suffering through air-raids.[31] Businesses responded similarly; broken shop windows were covered with signs stating "More open than usual" and the suchlike.[32] Although much lauded in popular memory the experience of raids and the prevalence of 'Blitz Spirit' was not ubiquitous. Often the Blitz is considered only through the lens of the capital. Whilst the London Blitz set a national precedent and prompted

[27] Gardener, *The Blitz,* p. 370.
[28] Gardiner, *The Blitz,* p. 369.
[29] Gardener, *The Blitz,* p. 370.
[30] Rose, *Which People's War?,* p. 154.
[31] Calder notes in Kensington it was reported during a raid a young woman decided "to hand out brandies to everyone in the flat" and in Croydon a house-wife warned an ARP warden not to "mess about with my flowers, I'm keeping them extra special to give Hitler a bouquet". Calder, *The Myth Of The Blitz,* p. 139.
[32] Calder, *The People's War* , p. 174.

other cities to adopt feelings of 'if they can take it so can we', it also created regional antagonisms as other cities felt awareness of their suffering was overshadowed by the bombing of London.[33] Cities outside the capital experienced more sporadic raids, and without a constant threat residents did not adapt or respond in the same way as Londoners accustomed to regular attacks.[34] Despite these inconsistencies, the emphasis on collective resilience and humour prevailed as a result of public choice. The choice was either to embrace the notion of unified endurance or live with "scepticism and fears"; the 'myth' of the Blitz was sustained in preference to acknowledging an unpleasant reality.[35]

The idealised image of 'The People's War' failed to acknowledge the varying experience of war for different classes and groups, but ultimately this idealised narrative was projected by the Government and adopted by the public. The subsequent societal expectations of civic duty, sacrifice, and communal stoicism determined who would be accepted as part of the 'People's War'. This narrative directed the behaviour of citizens throughout the conflict, and this chapter will investigate how the travelling showland community reflected these expectations. This was a challenge for an industry which had to negotiate with local and national authorities to continue business within wartime restrictions and was simultaneously faced with opposition to leisure and recreation in wartime.

I- Leisure in Wartime

Fairgrounds were one of many leisure industries adversely affected by the Second World War, and it is important to review how the conflict affected other forms of recreation. Many entertainments were affected differently to fairs owing to their different nature, but other amusements were affected in ways comparable to the experience of travelling fairs. This

[33] Calder, *The Myth of The Blitz,* pp. 127-128.
[34] Calder, *The People's War,* pp. 281-219.
[35] Calder, *The Myth of The Blitz,* p. 120.

section will also review how the relationship between government and leisure was transformed by war, and how this affected the provision and consumption of recreation.

A major challenge for all entertainments was lighting restrictions imposed in response to the fear of aerial attack on population centres. One of the first Government acts was to close all music halls, theatres, cinemas and other public entertainments, fearing they could become "death traps" in air raids.[36] However this uniform closure did not last, as fears of bombardment were not initially realised. Spectator sports soon resumed, although often restricted to limited regional programmes.[37] When predicted aerial attacks did not materialise, cinema proprietors lobbied parliament to allow them to reopen.[38] This was made public in articles in the trade newspaper *Kinematograph Weekly*, which suggested closing places of entertainment and leaving pubs open was "detrimental to public order", stating cinema was a valuable provider of entertainment and proprietors had a duty to satisfy the public demand for escapism.[39] Crucial to the success of the cinema proprietors' campaign was their use of language reflecting the ideals of the 'People's War'. Although the reopening of cinemas was in the commercial interest of owners, proprietors phrased their request to demonstrate this was for the benefit of the public, whilst emphasising their sense of duty: "We seriously appreciate our position as public servants… to help maintaining the mental balance of the community is no unworthy job of work".[40] The appeal was successful and within a week of the declaration of war cinemas in safer areas were open; within a month most cinemas in urban areas had re-opened. [41] The correlation between the success of the appeal and the way in which it was presented is significant, and this chapter will later explore how showpeople also embraced the language of the 'People's War' in successful appeals to keep fairs open.

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[36] James Chapman, 'British Cinema and 'The People's War' in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?*, p. 36.
[37] Norman Baker, 'A More Even Playing Field? Sport During and After The War', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us,* pp. 128-129.
[38] Chapman, 'British Cinema', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?*, p. 36.
[39] Chapman, 'British Cinema', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?*, p. 36.
[40] 'Re-open The Kinemas', *Kinematograph Weekly* (September 7th, 1939), p. 2. As cited by Chapman, 'British Cinema', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?*, p. 37.
[41] Chapman, 'British Cinema', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?*, p. 40.

Although comprehensive closure was overturned, public amusements were still impacted by conditions of war. Travelling for recreation was hampered by petrol rationing and the limited trains available.[42] The Blackout made travelling to and from leisure facilities difficult, and the imposition of Entertainments Tax on seat prices impacted attendance.[43] Chapman notes despite this, cinema attendance increased during the war and suggests lack of consumer goods meant more money was spent on available leisure facilities.[44] Although cinema patronage increased, eye-witness accounts utilised by Juliet Gardener suggest the majority of cinemas in London were closed during the Blitz.[45] Although reopened in many places, theatres and cinemas remained closed in areas which experienced the most intense bombardment. The limited opening of public entertainments due to the Blackout had an additional effect on private recreation; Sian Nicholas notes use of wireless sets increased as people were left confined to their homes.[46] However, the wartime disruption of work and leisure time impacted adversely on radio audiences; Nicholas notes the number of listeners halved after 8pm as people headed for air raid shelters.[47] Radio sets were also fragile and susceptible to damage during raids, and wartime shortages meant spare sets and replacement parts were scarce.[48] Shortages also affected sports teams, who were unable to replace worn equipment, but moreover sporting events struggled with shortages of physical space as playing fields were given over to food production, and swimming baths closed to save fuel used to heat them.[49] As this chapter will examine, travelling fairgrounds were vulnerable to all of these wartime issues. The nature of traditional fairs made them incompatible with the light and noise restrictions of the Blackout,

[42] Chris Sladen, 'Holidays At Home In The Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History* (Sage Publications, Vol. 37, No. 1, January 2002), p. 68.
[43] Mackay, *Half The Battle*, p. 213. Chapman, 'British Cinema', p. 40.
[44] Chapman, 'British Cinema', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?*, p. 40.
[45] In September 1940 some cinemas in the West End were noted as open by "hardly did any business" and on New Year's Eve 1940 Phyllis Warner found "every theatre and cinema shut". Gardener, *The Blitz*, pp. 44, 245.
[46] Sian Nicholas, 'The People's Radio: The BBC and It's Audience, 1939-1945', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?*, p. 69.
[47] Nicholas, 'The People's Radio', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?*, p. 72.
[48] Nicholas, 'The People's Radio', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?*, p. 72.
[49] Baker, 'A More Even Playing Field?', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?*, pp. 129-130.

and in addition to being affected by shortages of material and land, travelling fairs also relied upon man-power and heavy equipment, both in short supply due to the conflict.

In addition to practical impositions on recreation, the Second World War also brought about changes in the relationship between Government and entertainment. Increased state involvement in cultural production and provision was necessitated by the need to uphold and improve civilian morale.[50] This compulsion was justified by Mass Observation reports which affirmed "good Morale means hard and persistent work, means optimum production, maximum unity", and in addition good morale was also believed to reflect a population willing "to carry on with the utmost energy… with it a readiness for many minor and major sacrifices".[51] Whilst sustaining basic needs of the population was the priority, the Government also devoted considerable energy to encouraging welfare through recreation.[52] This commitment was reflected in steps made to relax wartime restrictions on entertainment, and in some instances expand provision.[53] Home Secretary Sir John Anderson stated in a 1940 House of Commons debate "experience has proved if workers are to maintain their efficiency for more than a very limited period some measure of relaxation is essential" adding the Government were "anxious to avoid interfering unduly with facilities for sport and recreation".[54] Anderson's successor Herbert Morrison also extolled the benefits of leisure, affirming in 1942 "popular entertainments act as a lubricant rather than a brake on the war machine".[55]

Sporting events benefitted from the belief that in addition to raising morale, they promoted physical fitness of civilians and military personnel.[56] Radio programmes and films, whilst not providing physical stimulation, were acknowledged as boosting mental wellbeing and morale which could enhance the productivity of workers. 'Music While You Work'– thirty minutes of

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[50] Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Post-War Britain* (Continuum, London, 2004), pp. 47-48.
[51] Mass Observation Report 904 of October 1941 and Report 878 of September 1941, as cited by Mackay, *Half The Battle* , p. 2.
[52] Mackay, *Half The Battle,* p. 209.
[53] Mackay, *Half The Battle,* p. 209.
[54] 'Race Meetings', Hansard, HC Deb, 30th May 1940, Vol. 361, Col. 657-658.
[55] 'Public Entertainments: Restrictions', Hansard, HC Deb, 12th March 1942, Vol 378, Col. 1177-1180.
[56] Baker, 'A More Even Playing Field', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,* p. 130.

popular dance music broadcast three times a day–was a programme designed to bring relief to factory workers performing repetitive tasks for long periods.[57] Cinema similarly provided escapism for "increasingly war weary audiences".[58] However as Leslie Halliwell notes, cinemas were also useful vehicles for propaganda.[59] The freedom given to the film industry was therefore also motivated by the Government's interest in keeping the industry economically sound in order to utilise it for propaganda purposes.[60] The Government likewise had a vested interest in promoting BBC Radio, for this was now a "vital instrument of public information" in addition to entertainment.[61] The value of open-air entertainments was acknowledged more readily after the intensity of the Blitz began to dissipate, and as this chapter will investigate, the inclusion of fairs in the Holidays At Home scheme demonstrates this form of recreation was also one deemed to be a positive contribution to public morale of productivity.

Leisure and recreation during wartime were not without disapproval however, and opponents of recreation used the context of the war to exacerbate antagonism. Leader of the Commons Sir Stafford Cripps viewed activities such as boxing and dog racing as "completely out of accord with the true spirit of determination of the people", and assured steps would be taken to ensure similar activities were "no longer allowed to offend the solid and serious intention of this country to achieve victory."[62] James Griffiths MP articulated similar disapproval about greyhound and horse racing taking place in wartime, resenting the notion that "workmen need circuses to enable them to do their best for the nation. That is an insult".[63] Cripps and Griffiths emphasise their criticism of wartime recreation was primarily due to the wastage it incurred; Griffiths lamented the wasted petrol in cars used by people to attend races, and Cripps stated "personal extravagance must be eliminated… and all unnecessary expenditure".[64] Even those

[57] Mackay, *Half The Battle,* p. 209.
[58] Chapman, 'British Cinema', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,* p. 61.
[59] Cited by Chapman, 'British Cinema', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,* p. 60.
[60] Mackay, *Half The Battle,* p. 212.
[61] Nicholas, 'The People's Radio', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,* p. 63.
[62] Hansard, HC Deb, 25th February 1942, Vol. 378, Col. 230-322.
[63] 'Ministerial Changes', Hansard, HC Deb, 24th February 1942, Vol. 378, Col. 48-50.
[64] 'Ministerial Changes', Hansard, HC Deb, 24th February 1942, Vol. 378, Col. 48-50. Hansard, HC Deb, 25th February 1942, Vol. 378, Col. 230-322.

without emotive opposition to recreation echoed concerns over wastage. Emanuel Shinwell MP declared himself "no killjoy" but enquired of the 93,500 strong attendance of the 1941 FA Cup final, "whether we are crazy, think of the petrol consumed, the transport used and the services used… and ask yourselves whether we are really organising our resources for war".[65] Although the large attendance at this fixture suggests the views of Cripps and Griffiths were not held by the public, a Mass Observation Report from 1943 does indicate that although interested in sporting events some people "didn't feel able to, or that it was proper, to indulge their feelings in the present time".[66] Questions of both wastage and suitability would also be directed towards travelling fairs during this period, and how these accusations were dealt with by showpeople often dictated their relationship with authorities and their ability to continue trading.

As had been the case in the previous conflict, wartime restrictions were often utilised by groups and individuals with pre-existing grievances against popular amusements to campaign for abolition. Opponents of blood sports, critics of gambling and those who opposed recreation on the Sabbath used conditions of war to strengthen their agenda.[67] This fact was recognised, and the Government was wary of the motivation of those agitating against entertainment. In July 1941 Herbert Morrison warned there was "a disposition to accept the war as an opportunity to push personal opinion and... personal intolerance".[68] Many parallels can be drawn between this debate and the opposition to fairs which emerged during the war. Fairs also had long standing opposition, and adversaries utilised wartime regulations to strengthen antagonism. By branding fairs detrimental to the war effort, and therefore showpeople as opposed to the collective struggle of 'The People's War', critics hoped to convince local and national authorities to abolish fairs. The collective contribution of the population to the national war effort justified their expectations were met by authorities, even in terms of leisure provision. Nicholas notes the

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[65] Cited by Gardiner, *The Blitz,* p. 343.
[66] 'Some Notes On The Use Of Leisure", Mass Observation File Report 1632 March 1943, cited by Baker, 'A More Even Playing Field', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,*pp. 131-132.
[67] Baker, 'A More Even Playing Field', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,*p. 132.
[68] As cited by Baker, 'A More Even Playing Field', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,* p. 132.

demands of the listening audience meant the variety department of BBC Radio was able to declare a populist agenda, broadcasting material previously considered vulgar.[69] However, the temporary situation of the 'People's War' was reflected in a fleeting deference to popular demands in radio, for Nicholas notes the traditional pre-war aims of radio to "elevate and educate" persisted post-war.[70] As this chapter will demonstrates, the Second World War provided fairs with a concrete victory over their traditional opponents, facilitated by major developments in the relationship between showland and authority.

Wartime leisure also reveals much about how the war transformed concepts of national identity. Prior to the conflict the advent of mass media and mass literacy ensured discourse on national identity was accessible to a wide audience.[71] Government influence over these mediums during the war allowed authorities to project the idea of a 'People's War', and enabled the concept to become widely accepted.[72] Many wartime films were designed to reflect narratives of collective struggle and promote an idealised view of national identity.[73] Chapman notes in some cases the results were totally unrealistic; he describes Anatole's *The Demi-Paradise* as "quaint, whimsical and absurd".[74] The subjects of wartime films demonstrate a shift in public focus from the war to the struggle on the home front, and stressed characteristics of "tolerance, humour, tradition and sense of duty" deemed intrinsic to national identity.[75] The popular dance music broadcast by the BBC was equally popular among civilians and soldiers, providing a link between combatants and the home front.[76] Radio programmes were designed to maintain national pride by emphasising the history and culture of the nation, but attempts to depict a more regional and class diverse society were interpreted as "stereotypical and

[69] Nicholas, 'The People's Radio', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,* p. 80.
[70] Nicholas, 'The People's Radio', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,* p. 91.
[71] Baxendale, *Priestley's England*, p. 145.
[72] Nick Hayes, ' "An English War" – Wartime Culture and "Millions Like Us"' in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us? ,*p. 16.
[73] Chapman, 'British Cinema', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,* pp. 33, 51.
[74] Chapman, 'British Cinema', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,* p. 48.
[75] Chapman, 'British Cinema', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,*p. 51.
[76] Nicholas, 'The People's Radio', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,*p. 83.

tokenist", in fact revealing a gulf between producers of entertainment and consumers.[77] Hayes suggests leisure and recreation demonstrates inequalities and division present in wartime society, despite the myth of unity.[78] J.B. Priestley in 1941 referred to the "cocktail bars, salmon and lobster, good air and sunlit gardens, orchestra and entertainments" available in Bournemouth, but noted these were only available to wealthier residents – and not to those in most need of relaxation and recreation.[79] Travelling fairs were recognised as amusements available to all, but were most popular with the working classes. This chapter will explore how showpeople used the rhetoric of protecting the recreation of workers in their defence of fairs.

II- Wartime Relationship Between Showpeople and Local Authorities

One of the aims of this thesis is to explore the relationship between the travelling showland community and authorities at local and national level. The Second World War heightened state involvement in industry, private life, and recreation. Technological advances meant threat of aerial attack was far greater than experienced during the First World War, and the fairground industry was subsequently faced with increasing levels of regulation and restriction. Through the dialogue between authority and showpeople it is possible to explore how the relationship between showland and wider society developed throughout the Second World War. Fearing the consequences of air-raids on crowded venues the government immediately closed places of public recreation.[80] Of all public entertainments, travelling fairs were most incongruous with the threats of aerial warfare; the London correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* acknowledged "travelling showmen live on bright lights, noise and crowds – the very things that a black-out Britain cannot afford".[81]

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[77] Nicholas, 'The People's Radio', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,*p. 75.
[78] Hayes, 'An English War', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,*p. 17.
[79] J.B. Priestley 'I Look At Bournemouth', *Picture Post* (June 21st , 1941), cited in Hayes, 'An English War', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us? ,*p. 17.
[80] Chapman, 'British Cinema', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?* , p. 36.
[81] 'Our London Correspondence', *The Manchester Guardian* (January 19th, 1940), p. 12.

The World's Fair expected external lighting would "be extinguished as a permanent condition throughout the war", resulting in the closure of fairs.[82] When fears of immediate attack did not materialise, Alfred Denville MP and Major J.H. Milner MP approached John Anderson about the likelihood of reopening fairs. In response to a question raised in the Commons by Milner, Anderson affirmed "the position is that there are no restrictions on fairs as such, but entertainment where a fee is paid for admission… is forbidden in evacuated areas" emphasising "Lighting restrictions must in all cases be adhered to, so there must be no open lights after black-out time".[83] Anderson stated fairs came under the Public Entertainments Order and therefore could remain running until 10pm providing the Lighting Order was obeyed.[84] The Showmen's Guild , having experienced inconsistencies between official policy and local enforcement during the previous conflict, made copies of Anderson's statement to distribute amongst showpeople to be used as evidence should local authorities attempt to cancel fairs unjustly.[85]

One of the problems encountered by showpeople during the First World War were inconsistencies in application of lighting regulations by local authorities, due to the fragmented chain of command between government to local enforcement. During the Second World War regulations for air-raid protection were centralised in London, but regional councils and cities remained "nearly autonomous".[86] Twelve Regional Commissions were created to orchestrate regulations, but these would not overrule local bodies except in an emergency situation. [87] Local authorities remained in control, decisions were implemented by one hundred and twenty A.R.P. controllers.[88] The issue of corporations applying regulations incoherently therefore persisted; no overarching authority existed to maintain uniformity. As a result, some fairs carried on even

[82] 'Entertainments in Wartime', *The World's Fair* (September 2nd, 1939), p. 1.
[83] 'Fairs Can Remain Open Until 10pm', *The World's Fair* (September 23rd, 1939), p. 1.
[84] 'Fairs Can Remain Open Until 10pm', *The World's Fair* (September 23rd, 1939), p. 1.
[85] Thomas Murphy, *A History of The Showmen's Guild 1889-1948* (World's Fair Ltd, Oldham, 1950), p. 229.

[86] Tom Harrisson, *Living Through The Blitz* (Faber and Faber, London, 2010), pp. 32-33.
[87] Harrisson, *Living Through The Blitz,* pp. 33, 35.
[88] Harrisson, *Living Through The Blitz,* pp. 33, 35.

after the order to close entertainment venues.[89]Although officially fairs could remain open until 10pm under Blackout conditions, some councils decided to cancel them; Hull Fair was cancelled at the cost of £8,000 to the council in lost rent, depriving proprietors of business and the townspeople of recreation.[90] Nottingham Goose Fair was also cancelled in 1939 because of lighting concerns, but it was acknowledged even if the fair continued many local showpeople had limited means of transporting attractions as their steam engines had been requisitioned by the War Department.[91] Smaller fairs were also cancelled in 1939; *The World's Fair* reported seven cancellations including Glossop fair which was abandoned "owing to the imposition of lighting and other restrictions" .[92] The cancellation of Barnstaple fair in 1939 revealed both corporations and the Showmen's Guild recognised improvements in aircraft technology resulted in more stringent restrictions.[93] The majority of early cancellations were decisions of local market managers and town clerks and were made irrespective of Government policy. Entertainments remaining open were impacted by curfews and transport closures which made it harder for people to travel to and from venues.[94] In addition to official closures, the Showmen's Guild also decided to cancel fairs for commercial reasons. The 1940 Hereford Fair was reduced to daylight hours, decreasing trade, and the corporations' demand for full rent meant the Guild considered the fair unviable and boycotted it.[95] *World's Fair* columnist 'The Bard' suggests this situation was common, with smaller stallholders struggling to maintain business, and 'Bard' suggested authorities should lower rents to reflect the loss of trading hours , but there is no evidence any municipality did so.[96] The failure of local authorities to make

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[89] Bradley notes Bob Wilson's Brooklands Speedway was open in London on September 29th and had been every day since the beginning of the war. Philip Bradley, 'A Long Time Ago', in *The Fairground Mercury* (Winter 1981/1982), p. 10.
[90] 'Kiddies Had A Grouse Today: There Was No Hull Fair', *Hull Daily Mail* (October 11th, 1939), p. 3.
[91] 'No Goose Fair - £4,000 Loss To City Rates', *Nottingham Evening Post* (September 21st, 1939), p. 1.
[92] *The World's Fair* (September 9th, 1939), p. 2. *The World's Fair* (September 16th, 1939), p. 2. *Nottingham Evening Post* (September 4th, 1939), p. 8
[93] 'Barnstaple's Ancient Fair – Pleasure Side To Be Abandoned', *North Devon Journal* (September 7th, 1939), p. 2. *The World's Fair,* (September 16th, 1939), p. 8.
[94] *The World's Fair* (September 20th, 1941), p. 15.
[95] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 235
[96] 'South Wales Gossip', *The World's Fair* (April 27th, 1940), p. 15.

concessions suggests at this stage of the conflict fairs were not considered an important issue; the loss of business to showpeople was deemed a casualty of the conflict.

Travelling fairs, in addition to a spectacle of light, also involved loud music from mechanical organs and panatrope record players. These were equally incompatible with Blackout restrictions, leading to further discord between showpeople and authorities. Lilian Studt was fined at Caerphilly Police Court in 1940 for permitting a roundabout organ to be heard.[97] Police Sergeant John Bassett reported "no effort had been made to enclose the show and lights were piercing the sky... the noise from the dynamo when the engine is working is like an air-raid siren".[98] His comment regarding the dynamo is puzzling as the 'whine' of a dynamo generating is much quieter than a siren, only sounding similar when so close the source of the sound would be obvious. The court's main fear was the sound of the organ could have masked an air-raid warning, and with similar concerns London County Council banned such instruments from fairgrounds.[99] Guild representatives, worried this would impact adversely on their entertainments, successfully sought a compromise; music could be played providing it was inaudible beyond the ride.[100]

In addition to Blackout regulations, poor collaboration between the Showmen's Guild and local authorities also caused fairs to be cancelled between 1939 and 1941.[101] Summer fairs to replace cancelled autumn events were suggested by Nottingham and Hull corporations, but without consulting the Showmen's Guild , and by the time decisions were made public proprietors had already committed to other events.[102] The debate over holding Hull Fair in 1940 was complicated when the Markets Committee Clerk stated it was legally impossible to change the

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[97] 'Sounded Like Air-Raid Warning – Organ Played at Fair Ground', *The World's Fair* (January 13th, 1940), p. 1
[98] 'Sounded Like Air-Raid Warning – Organ Played at Fair Ground', *The World's Fair* (January 13th, 1940), p. 1
[99] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 234. Lucio, 'Miscellany – Less Noise', *Manchester Guardian* (March 27th, 1940), p. 4.
[100] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 234. Lucio, 'Miscellany – Less Noise', *Manchester Guardian* (March 27th, 1940), p. 4.

[102] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 235.

date as Hull was a Charter Fair; by the time this issue was resolved it was too late to book enough lessees, and the Guild decided the fair was not worth holding in a depleted state.[103] *Hull Daily Mail* published a cancellation notice which did not mention the protracted council discussions which caused the issue, implying the result was the fault of the Guild.[104] The conflict over rent concessions proliferated beyond 1939; the Guild boycotted Oldham Wakes in 1941 due to the council's refusal to alter rents owing to reduced opening hours.[105]

The impact of the Blackout on fairs was reflected in a *Newcastle Chronicle* columnist who asked in summer 1940 "Where are the fairground showmen? Gone is the blatant brass organ and gone are the blazing smelly naphtha lights. Fairs are forgotten and silence reigns during the black-out and curfew hours".[106] The Showmen's Guild estimated in 1940 only two percent of the membership was still operating, mostly in Lancashire where Guild officials had proactively developed air-raid provisions and liaised with local authorities.[107] Showpeople who remained cordial with authorities established the most fruitful relationships and were able to remain in business. It was crucial for proprietors to impress upon corporations they understood the constraints of the Blackout and ensured they would operate within the restrictions. The Blitz impacted upon the running of the Guild itself; the intense bombing of the capital forced the Central Office to relocate to Shrewsbury in 1940 and conscription and war-work meant it was short-staffed, with those remaining under increased pressure to cope with the increased wartime workload.[108]

As Blackout lighting restrictions were unavoidable, showpeople sought means of keeping their business going within regulations. Indoor venues were one option; Arthur Studt utilised a

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[103] 'Hull Fair', *Hull Daily Mail* (February 10th, 1940), p. 3. 'Hull Fair Still In The Air', *Hull Daily Mail* (May 11th, 1940), p. 2.
[104] 'No Summer Fair in Hull', *Hull Daily Mail* (June 14th, 1940), p. 6
[105] 'Oldham Wakes Without Fair', *Manchester Guardian* (August 30th, 1941), p. 5.
[106] W.H.D., 'This Summer Is Different', *Newcastle Chronicle* (August 3rd, 1940), p. 1.
[107] 'Our London Correspondence – The Hardest Hit Industry', *The Manchester Guardian* (January 19th, 1940), p. 12.
[108] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild ,* p. 240.

vacant brewery with "The Noah's Ark opened up in the hop store".[109] However as the number of available buildings big enough to house fairground rides was inadequate a more viable solution was to screen the rides, and Pat Collins developed an enclosed fair system in October 1939.[110] Thick tarpaulin sheeting was used to screen rides which were lit by shaded low-light bulbs.[111] By using a larger top sheet more rides could be covered, and by attaching canvases to the edges of the biggest rides the walkways and sideshows between them were covered.[112] Murphy states for large machines, six sixty-watt lamps were enough to illuminate the ride without penetrating tarpaulin surrounds.[113] Oversized rides including chairoplanes remained outside the enclosure, and although theoretically restricted to daylight operating, Bradley reports a few months into the Blackout people "developed cat-sight to a remarkable degree" and unlit rides ran into the dusk.[114] In addition to the rides, steam engines used by proprietors needed canvas sheeting to mask light from the ashpan and firehole door.[115] Some corporations made additional stipulations to screening; Lincoln council required "avenues between the stalls and attractions are to be wider to permit the rapid dispersal of the crowd in the event of an air-raid warning", and the Chief Constable held the right to cancel the fair at any point when "enemy action renders such a course desirable".[116]

Although many proprietors used these Blackout techniques, fairs were cancelled irrespective of precautions. In attempts to keep Hull Fair open the Guild stated the Chief Constable of Doncaster had observed a covered fair from an aircraft and considered it to have met Blackout

[109] *The World's Fair*, (October 7th, 1939), p. 12.
[110] *The World's Fair* (October 21st, 1939), pp. 1, 29.
[111] Information from a description of John Studt's undercover fair at Swansea from *The World's Fair* (January 6th 1940), p. 12, and Bradley, 'A Long Time Ago', in *The Fairground Mercury* (Winter 1981/1982), p. 11.
[112] Information from a description of John Studt's undercover fair at Swansea from *The World's Fair* (January 6th 1940), p. 12, and Bradley, 'A Long Time Ago', in *The Fairground Mercury* (Winter 1981/1982), p. 11.
[113] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 246.
[114] Bradley, 'A Long Time Ago', in *The Fairground Mercury* (Winter 1981/1982), p. 11.
[115] The firehole door is the door on the footplate of the engine through which fuel is added to the fire, the ashpan is a compartment at the base of the firebox which collects hot ashes which have passed through the firebars. Freda Allen & Ned Williams, *Pat Collins King Of Showmen* (Uralia Press, Wolverhampton, 1991), p. 82.

[116] 'Lincoln Fair Restrictions: To Close Each Day At Blackout', *Lincolnshire Echo* (April 13th, 1940), p. 1.

requirements, but this was apparently not enough as the October fair was cancelled.[117] The Guild emphasised it was vital members obeyed all regulations; "it is... the duty of all to guard against anything that might be harmful to the war effort and might imperil the lives of innocent people".[118] Whilst cooperating with local authorities demonstrated showpeople were modifying their behaviour in the national interest, it also made it more likely fairs would be held and remain open longer; it was therefore a business policy as much as a moral stance. The potential benefits for proprietors who cooperated can be seen in the successful petition to Lincoln Corporation in response to the early closing of the 1940 fair (8.39pm on the first night).[119] The Notts and Derbyshire Guild section intervened and as Blackout restrictions were being met, shows were granted an additional half an hour opening, a decision which improved the fairs' profitability, one showman remarked "the last half-hour last night was worth all the other three hours put together".[120]

Ultimately the closing hour for public entertainments was determined by local authorities, and although this was often earlier than government policy allowed, proprietors adapted by opening fairs earlier to recoup for the evening trade lost by early closing.[121] Although in the minority, some fairs continued unimpeded under Blackout conditions during the Blitz. Showpeople at Shipley Feast in 1940 were praised for managing "an astonishing feat in perfecting black-out arrangements that satisfy the authorities, yet retaining the popular features that draw children and adults alike", providing the "fun of the fair" and playing "the all-important role... of a merriment maker" without presenting a hazard to public safety.[122] The debates over opening hours and Blackout regulations suggests the disconnect between national and local authority which complicated restrictions in the First World War was equally apparent during the Second World War. However, with the precedent of the previous conflict, showpeople who were

[117] 'Hull Fair', *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* (April 13th, 1940), p. 13.
[118] 'Restrictions', *The World's Fair* (April 22nd, 1944), p. 15.
[119] 'Early Closing At The Fair – Showmen's Protest At Lincoln Ruling', *Lincolnshire Echo* (April 20th, 1940), p. 1.
[120] 'Pleasure Fair Concession: Show Granted Extra Half-Hour', *Lincolnshire Echo* (April 24th, 1940), p. 1.
[121] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild* , p. 234.
[122] 'Shipley Feast – Continuing', *Shipley Times and Express* (July 31st, 1940), p. 1.

proactive in arranging suitable adaptations to shows and who could operate under the Blackout regulations were able to continue. By cooperating with local authorities and presenting the provision of amusement as important for workers needing recreation as well as vital to showpeople needing income, the Guild was able to forge productive relationships with corporations.

Itinerancy meant wartime conditions impacted the fairground community differently to settled society and this necessitated dialogue with authorities to overcome this obstacle. Essential items such as gas masks and ration books were distributed to settled society through local administration, but for a community with no permanent address this was unviable. Through communication between the Guild and the Ministry of Food Production a system of Travellers Ration Books was set up, and Guild members could obtain cards which would be valid at shops in whichever location showpeople happened to be.[123] The supply of various items for the showland business was only possible through cooperation with relevant authorities, and although like other industries showland suffered shortages, productive discourse between the Guild and Government ensured supplies of fuel, confectionary, .22 rifle ammunition and other necessities continued.[124] Issues over personal wireless sets demonstrates authorities were not cooperative in every instance however; national legislation outlawed radio equipment in private vehicles and the police applied this to showland caravans and in some instances panatrope speakers on rides were also confiscated although only used for announcements and not themselves radio sets.[125] Despite protests from the Guild, the Home Secretary stated caravans could not be exempted unless their wheels were removed to make them stationery dwellings; something showpeople were unable to do.[126] This is a case where the itinerancy of

[123] Thomas Murphy, 'Travellers' Ration Books', *The World's Fair* (December 21st, 1940), p. 1.
[124] 'Problems Raised By The War', *The World's Fair* (January 13th, 1940), pp. 1,5. 'Chocolates As Prizes: No Permits Required', *The World's Fair* (April 11th, 1942), p. 1. 'Supply Of Cartridges', *The World's Fair* (April 22nd, 1944), p. 1.
[125] 'What We Think: Wireless Sets', *The World's Fair* (June 8th, 1940), p. 21.
[126] *The World's Fair* (April 19th, 1941), p. 19.

showpeople made them susceptible to legislation in a way which did not affect settled society, and despite objections, the Guild was unable to gain exemption.

James Styles interpreted this piece of legislation as discrimination against caravan-dwellers. In an article titled *'The Outcast'* Styles suggests the confiscation of his wireless set and being forced to relocate to away from military installations was a result of prejudice against nomads: "People who live in caravans cannot be trusted like all the honest people who live in houses. People who live in caravans might help the enemy if ever they invaded".[127] Styles states as a caravan dweller he "cannot reasonably expect to be included in any category of social standards". [128] He felt the common bond between the all classes of society was being house dwellers and thus he was separated by this "social barrier", a barrier upheld By Laws which operated against nomads.[129] Styles identified an obstacle in overcoming this barrier is the fact as a traveller with no fixed address, he had no voting rights or say in the creation and implementation of laws which adversely affected itinerant communities.[130] The war was an opportunity for showpeople to demonstrate they were good citizens worthy of a place in wider British society, and could prove this by supporting the national war effort. However, Styles suggests despite the sacrifices he had made; "I have watched my business crash without grumbling and seen the result of all my labours lying in ruins at my feet", his contribution was not recognised and the showland community was still treated "as rogues and vagabonds".[131]

The increased cooperation between showland and authorities throughout the conflict, which enabled the business to carry on despite restrictions, would suggest Styles' assertions are exaggerated. However, evidence exists which suggests despite their contributions to the war effort, prejudice against travelling groups could still result in poor treatment of showpeople. Councillor William Edwards in 1942 became engaged in a dispute with Alf North regarding a

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[127] James R. Styles, 'The Outcast', *The World's Fair* (June 22nd, 1940), p. 4.
[128] James R. Styles, 'The Outcast', *The World's Fair* (June 22nd, 1940), p. 4.
[129] James R. Styles, 'The Outcast', *The World's Fair* (June 22nd, 1940), p. 4.
[130] James R. Styles, 'The Outcast', *The World's Fair* (June 22nd, 1940), p. 4.
[131] James R. Styles, 'The Outcast', *The World's Fair* (June 22nd, 1940), p. 4.

scrap metal depot North set up on Edwards' land. Edwards insisted North "as good as commandeered the land" remarking "instead of a Ministry of Supply Depot I found I had a gipsy encampment on my land".[132] North refuted the statements made by Edwards, stating he had rented the land from Edwards and received Ministry permits to set up the depot.[133] North particularly disputed accusations his family had any relations to Gypsy travellers. These parallels historically caused issues for showpeople when they were brought under legislation designed to impact on Gypsy travellers.[134] Regardless of the inaccuracy of Edwards' comparison, it suggests his grievance was not with the renting of the land or its use – his issue was with the itinerancy of those occupying the site. Significantly North's defence utilises rhetoric in popular use at the time; he remarked his endeavour was "criticised by people who did not realise there was a war on" and further solidified his position by referring to his family's military service in this and the previous conflict.[135] This was not an isolated case of prejudice; Elizabeth Carroll was fined by Llanelly Police Court in 1940 for an unshaded light being emitted from her caravan.[136] While the persecution was understandable, Carroll claimed the amount she was fined was excessive, commenting it was not "at all fair to fine one person half-a-crown and then… fine me…15s for the same offence.[137] Regional prejudice against travelling groups in some cases manifested in unfair treatment of showpeople, regulations were occasionally applied excessively and the line between showpeople and Gypsy was blurred.

III - 'Doing Their Bit' – Showland's Contribution To The War Effort.

To be recognised as part of the wartime collective citizens had to demonstrate their contribution to the national war effort. Showpeople pledged their manpower, skills and material assets towards the war effort, but crucially to be accepted as part of the collective identity

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[132] The Bard, 'South Wales Gossip: Councillor's Attack On Showman', *The World's Fair* (June 6th, 1942), p. 6.
[133] The Bard, 'South Wales Gossip: Councillor's Attack On Showman', *The World's Fair* (June 6th, 1942), p. 6
[134] The Bard, 'South Wales Gossip: Councillor's Attack On Showman', *The World's Fair* (June 6th, 1942), p. 6
[135] The Bard, 'South Wales Gossip: Councillor's Attack On Showman', *The World's Fair* (June 6th, 1942), p. 6
[136] 'Caravan Dweller and Black-Out', *The World's Fair* (January 20th, 1940), p. 12.
[137] 'Caravan Dweller and Black-Out', *The World's Fair* (January 20th, 1940), p. 12.

contributions needed to be recognised by wider society. This section will establish how showpeople contributed to the national effort and assess to what extent this was acknowledged.

Serving in the armed forces was the most direct way an individual could aid the war effort, and many showmen made this personal contribution. Benjamin Freeman-Biddall was called up in 1941 and estimated ninety-five percent of eligible showmen served during the war.[138] Whilst accurately corroborating this estimate is difficult, the wartime labour shortages impacting on the showland business suggests a high percentage of showmen signed up. *The World's Fair* were keen to promote those serving, reporting in January 1940 the first serving showman, William Smith, was in France within three weeks of the outbreak of war.[139] From the end of January 1940 *The World's Fair* published weekly photographs of "Showland's Sons" accompanied by the phrase "Now Serving Their Country" or "Serving With The Forces".[140] The Guild emphasised showmen were as willing to join up and fight as men from settled society. Guild President C.W.R. Thurston joined the RAF in 1942, after previously holding a commission in the Home Guard.[141] In addition to the military, showmen joined the Merchant Navy, and Harold Steer remarked this service appealed to the adventurous nature of showmen.[142] With the exception of the high profile cases such as Thurston, awareness of how many showmen were on military service would not have proliferated beyond the showland community. Until 1942 few fairs were held owing to Blackout restrictions, and so labour shortages caused by young showmen joining up would not have been visible to the public. Although the most significant contribution individual showmen could make to the war effort, serving in the forces was one of the least visible and therefore most unrecognised by wider society.

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[138] Benjamin Freeman-Biddall, 'Memories of a Young Showman; Scottish Section of the Showmen's Guild ', *WW2 People's War – BBC Archive,* (Article A7544810, BBC Archive, 2014). Accessed at http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/10/a7544810.shtml on 8th March 2018.
[139] *The World's Fair* (January 6th, 1940), p. 1.
[140] 'Showland's Son Now Serving Their Country', *The World's Fair* (January 27th, 1940), p. 32. 'Showmen's Sons Serving With The Forces', *The World's Fair* (January 13th, 1940), p. 1.
[141] *The World's Fair* (August 2nd, 1942), p.1.
[142] Harold Steer, 'Showmen In The Merchant Navy', *The World's Fair* (September 27th, 1940), p. 2.

In addition to military service showmen also performed civic duties on the home front. Out of thirty drivers and lorries requested by the Western Traffic Area ARP group, twenty-nine volunteers were showmen.[143] Air Raid Precaution or Home Guard service was seen by elder showmen as an opportunity to do 'their bit' despite being too old for military service.[144] However, the transient nature of the fairground community sometimes made community roles inconvenient. *The World's Fair* commented in response to the national call for all men between eighteen and sixty to register for fire-watching duty it would be difficult for showpeople to register and perform their duty as they were not in one location long enough.[145] However it was suggested showpeople compromised and performed fire-watching at the locations where fairs were held, if only on a temporary basis. [146]

Work of national importance was another way in which showpeople contributed to the national effort. In some cases, war-work performed by showland families was the same as performed by settled society; with fairs restricted by Blackouts and shortages many sought work in factories producing munitions and other war materials. Many young women from showland worked in munitions factories. In one instance the unusual background of a showland 'munitionette' merited an article in a worker's magazine – titled *'Winsome Workers For Victory – From Fair Ground To Factory'*.[147] The subject of the article, Dolly Fenwick, was from a notable showland family whose fairs had been closed by lighting restrictions, and the magazine commented "for the better part of two years… Dolly has been 'going to it' with a will and determination that is a credit to her sex".[148] The praise suggests it is more surprising and commendable for a woman to perform such tasks, but showland women often took an active role in the running of the fairground business, so for members of this community the shift to factory labour was not such

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143 Kay Townsend, *Fairgrounds At War 1939-1945* (Penryn, 2010), p. 50.
144 *The World's Fair* (January 27th, 1940), p. 27.
145 'What We Think: Fire Watching', *The World's Fair* (September 27th, 1940), p. 15.
146 'What We Think: Fire Watching', *The World's Fair* (September 27th, 1940), p. 15.
147 Cited in 'From Fair Ground To Factory – Showland Girls' War Work', *The World's Fair* (May 16th, 1942), p. 1.
148 Cited in 'From Fair Ground To Factory – Showland Girls' War Work', *The World's Fair* (May 16th, 1942), p.1.

a transformative experience for young women as it was for many women from settled society. In addition to factory work, young show-women worked as land girls, and several articles appeared in *The World's Fair* mentioning girls working on farms across Britain.[149] Owing to food shortages, dealing with wartime harvests was of utmost important, and showpeople offered their steam engines and drivers to assist in the national effort.[150] The *Sunday Express* reported in October 1942 "Each morning this week Mr. Bates' gilded traction engine has stood in some South Lancashire farmyard, its belt driving a threshing machine as for years it has driven the dodgems or musical motor cars".[151] Arthur Bates was one of several showmen who responded to the Ministry of Agriculture's request, and in addition some proprietors bought sets of threshing tackle and operated as agricultural contractors when fairs were not running.[152] While showpeople were willing to aid the harvest with their engines and staff, their motivation was not solely altruistic. As fairs became less commercially viable, proprietors looked for alternative incomes. Threshing using equipment they already owned was an obvious choice. Equally this work brought them into contact with farmers and local workers, publicly demonstrating showpeople were contributing to the war effort.

In addition to agricultural work, the skills and equipment at showpeople's disposal were also easily adapted to haulage, another industry of national importance. In December 1940 *The World's Fair* reproduced an announcement from the Ministry of Transport, encouraging showpeople to hire out trucks or register as hauliers "to help the national war effort".[153] Although showfolk had been doing this previously in the war on certain contracts (Silcock Bros

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[149] Showland Girls reported working on land at Thirsk in Yorkshire. *The World's Fair* (April 27th, 1940), p. 1. 'Helping In The Harvest', *The World's Fair* (December 19th, 1942), p. 1. Appendix I.
[150] 'Farmer's Merry-Go-Round', *Dundee Courier* (December 11th, 1942), p. 4.
[151] *Sunday Express,* (18th October, 1942) as cited in 'Showmen Help To Thresh Harvest: Another Contribution Towards Victory', *The World's Fair* (October 24th, 1942), p. 1.
[152] *Sunday Express,* (18th October, 1942) as cited in 'Showmen Help To Thresh Harvest: Another Contribution Towards Victory', *The World's Fair* (October 24th, 1942), p. 1. Townsend identifies eight showman's engines at work on threshing, but the number of showland employees engaged in agricultural labour far exceeds this figure – each engine and set would have been worked by at least a dozen men – most of whom would have been ex-showland employees. Kay Townsend, *Showman's Engines At War* (Kay Townsend, 2009), pp. 7-21.
[153] 'Haulage Work For Showman's Lorries: Ministry Of Transport Announcement', *The World's Fair* (December 28th, 1940), p. 1.

were reported as using one of their trucks to transport concrete blocks for M.O.D. construction projects in November 1939), they had been limited by obtaining the correct licence to operate as general hauliers.[154] The Ministry of Transport acknowledged the licensing obstacle and in December 1940 made it possible for showpeople to obtain the necessary 'B' licence.[155] Individuals as well as larger firms also capitalised on the opportunity; Wall Of Death riders Trudie and 'Fearless' Bob Todd bought lorries and were engaged on gravel haulage throughout the war.[156] A high percentage of able showmen gave up travelling to perform work of national importance; the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* noted of sixty families at the summer fair, the menfolk of forty-five were engaged on war work, leaving women and the elderly to run fairs.[157] Lead tenant John F. Thomas stated the "Government have been able to draw from an invaluable source of labour", emphasising "by the very nature of their business" showmen had become proficient as drivers and mechanics, and were used to long working hours.[158] The article also reveals showpeople continued to run fairs, giving up their spare time so workers could enjoy some recreation; Thomas refers to showland munition workers going straight from a fair to a night shift, and were back working on the tober the following day.[159] Thomas' assertion showland was an important source of skilled labour is supported by government bodies directly contacting the Guild for assistance. Murphy notes the Guild was contacted by the Ministries of Supply, Agriculture, and Transport regarding employment of showpeople and their equipment.[160] Other bodies were also keen to utilise the particular skills of Guild members; The Royal Forestry Commission in 1939 contacted the Guild Secretary and arranged a conference to discuss "obtaining… traction engines for timber cutting and haulage work", and in 1940 the

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[154] 'South Wales Gossip', *The World's Fair* (October 28th, 1939), p. 9. *The World's Fair* (November 11th, 1939), p. 3.
[155] Haulage Work For Showman's Lorries: Ministry Of Transport Announcement', *The World's Fair* (December 28th, 1940), p. 1.
[156] *The World's Fair* (September 11th, 1943), p. 1.
[157] 'Showmen Of England Render Yeoman Service', *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (August 7th, 1941), p. 3.
[158] 'Showmen Of England Render Yeoman Service', *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (August 7th, 1941), p. 3.
[159] 'Showmen Of England Render Yeoman Service', *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (August 7th, 1941), p. 3.
[160] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild*, p. 238.

Guild were asked to supply "six Fowler-Sanders diesel lighting sets" by the Admiralty who wished to use them to combat sea mines.[161]

In addition to working in agriculture and industry, the engines and drivers of showland also played an important role in another defining event of 'The People's War': the Blitz. Bombed buildings gutted by fire presented a danger in urban areas, and the most effective way of demolishing them was to use winch ropes on powerful steam engines to pull down structures as these could remain stationary and pull buildings down from a distance.[162] Numerous showpeople volunteered engines and drivers to corporations, and several press articles appeared praising their efforts. Engines belonging to H.P. Studt were observed by the King and Queen on their visit to Swansea, and *The World's Fair* commented the "authority can consider themselves lucky that the amusement caterers were near at hand and willing to respond to the call for aid".[163] *The Daily Mail* article 'Hurdy-Gurdy to Rescue' discussed the valiant efforts of showmen involved in the Manchester Blitz clean up mentioning that the Manchester authorities were thankful for the assistance of the "fun-fair kings".[164] One of John Collins' engines became known as 'Jumbo' and was the subject of two reports in the *Manchester Guardian* which discussed the unusual spectacle of a fairground engine "with all its gay paint sadly soiled and tarnished".[165] Observers were fascinated by the machine that "rumbles around... looking for jobs that defy other available agents of destruction". [166] The reporter mused "whatever its performances were like on the fairgrounds of more peaceful summers, in this new arena it can be relied upon to bring the house down every time".[167] The scale of showland involvement in this work was considerable. Philip Bradley noted in London in October 1941 "the unforgettable

[161] Murphy, *A History Of The Showmen's Guild*, pp. 231, 239.
[162] 'Hurdy-Gurdy To Rescue', *Daily Mail* (August 20th, 1941), p. 3. Footage of an unknown Fowler Showman's Engine pulling down bomb damaged structures was featured in British Movietonews Reel BM24001 from 3rd September 1942. Appendixes K- P are images of showland engines engaged on demolition work in Manchester and London.
[163] 'Good Work', *The World's Fair* (March 15th, 1941), p. 7.
[164] 'Hurdy-Gurdy To Rescue', *Daily Mail* (August 20th, 1941), p. 3.
'National Newspaper's Tribute To Showmen', *The World's Fair* (August 23rd, 1941), p. 2.
[165] 'Fairground Silenced', *Manchester Guardian* (August 29th, 1941), p. 3.
[166] 'The Wakes Ground Worker', *Manchester Guardian,* (September 1st, 1941), p. 3.
[167] 'The Wakes Ground Worker', *Manchester Guardian,* (September 1st, 1941), p. 3.

sight, in the midst of appalling devastation… a greater number of showman's engines than had been assembled on any fairground for years past".[168] The showmen working on demolition still continued to run wartime fairs in addition; Bradley recalls Fred Gray's Foster Engine 'Olympic' "absolutely smothered in masonry dust, proceeding at good speed up the Pentonville Road… on its arrival the belt was immediately fitted and it was running Mrs Gray's Chair-o-planes within minutes".[169] To work on demolition during the day, and continue fairs in the evening required man and machine working long and hard hours. For the public attending the fair, it may have appeared showland was unaffected by the conditions of war, but they may not have been aware many showpeople were working around the clock on work of national importance.

The juxtaposition of a showman's engine amidst shattered buildings is demonstrative of how the Blitz distorted ordinary life in Britain. The brightly painted engines with brass decoration and proud names were designed to visually complement the rides and shows they powered. For these engines to become instruments of destruction and their appearance tarnished by brick dust and rubble is indicative of the transformative effects of war. Drivers who used the engines to give pleasure were now using them to destroy the remains of homes and public buildings. This distortion of normality can be likened to the part played by pleasure steamers in the Dunkirk evacuation. J.B. Priestley in his '*Postscript on Dunkirk*', commended these boats, which symbolised the "ridiculous… foolish… old fashioned" seaside holiday, and reminded Priestley of holiday-makers, "bottled beer… pork pies… children sticky with peppermint rock".[170] The "Brighton Belles and Brighton Queens" as he refers to them, left their world of pleasure and innocence and entered the "inferno… to defy bombs, shells… mines, torpedoes, machine gun fire".[171]

[168] Bradley, 'Long Time Ago', p. 12.
[169] Philip Bradley as cited in Townsend *Fairgrounds At War* p. 136. Appendix M shows 'Olympic' as she appeared in 1938.
[170] J. B. Priestley, 'Wednesday 5th June 1940', *Postscripts* (William Heinemann, London, 1940), p. 3.
[171] Priestley, 'Wednesday 5th June 1940', p. 3.

Another significant contribution to the war effort made by the showland community was through donations and fundraising for local and national charities. Raising money for worthy causes was an established practice of showpeople, and during the First World War donations were directed to causes relating to the national struggle. This continued during the Second World War, with many donating percentages of takings at fairs to charity or declaring one day of a fair to be totally in aid of a cause. The humanitarian causes supported were varied; articles in *The World's Fair* and wider press reveal showpeople donated to the Red Cross, King George's Merchant Navy Fund, St John Fund, Russian Aid Fund, and localised War Savings and Prisoner of War Funds.[172] The Showmen's Guild had no overarching policy about charity donations, so it was up to individuals or groups of tenants to decide which charities would be supported and often this decision was influenced by which charities were supported by local corporations in 'Mayor's Funds'. An example of local fund raising by showmen was the £1,000 sponsoring of a hospital bed in Lincoln County Hospital.[173] Another case was the subscription set up by the Lancashire Section of the Guild to purchase a bus for the use of No. 4 Company Salford Home Guards.[174] *The World's Fair* noted for showpeople to support local and national causes was especially generous as the Showmen's Guild had its own fund for travelling showmen serving in the forces, and through Charity Dances and subscriptions Guild members raised large sums for the Guild's Central Benevolent Fund.[175] In addition to monetary donations, proprietors also provided rides and performances free of charge. In some cases, free rides were provided to all as part of local 'War Charities' weeks, but more often free tickets were provided to local authorities to distribute amongst children whose fathers were serving in the forces; twenty thousand such tickets were given to the Mayor of Nottingham to be used at the 1943 Summer

[172] 'Doing Our Bit', *The World's Fair* (April 20th, 1940), p. 21. 'Showmen At Coventry Help Two Funds', *The World's Fair* (April 22nd, 1944), p. 1. 'Showmen Aid Russian Fund', *The World's Fair* (September 5th, 1942), p. 1. 'War Savings', *Barnoldswick and Earby Times* (June 7th, 1940), p. 1. 'What We Think: Charity Efforts', *The World's Fair* (August 14th, 1943), p. 15.
[173] 'What We Think: Charity Efforts', *The World's Fair* (August 14th, 1943), p. 15.
[174] *The World's Fair* (August 24th, 1940), p. 4.
[175] 'What We Think: Charity Efforts', *The World's Fair* (August 14th, 1943), p. 15. 'London Showmen's Comforts Fund Dance', *The World's Fair* (March 9th, 1940), p. 13.

Goose Fair.[176] In a similar act of generosity Bristol showman Charles Heal invited relatives of the city's Prisoners of War to a free pantomime performance at the Empire Theatre, an offer which resulted in many letters of gratitude from the audience.[177]

Although undoubtedly generous, it was clear showpeople viewed these activities as necessary to demonstrate they were contributing to the national effort and therefore maintain good relationships with local authorities. In April 1940 *The World's Fair* stated fundraising at fairs "will do much to enhance the prestige and standing of the travelling showmen, as well as opening the door to first-class positions".[178] In 1940 the situation for the fairground industry was precarious with many fairs closed due to lighting restrictions. Holding fairs to generate revenue for charity was viewed by the Guild as a means to ensure the cooperation of local authorities. In addition to publicly demonstrating the contribution of showland to the national effort these efforts also sustained the commercial viability of the business. In one instance fundraising encouraged a local authority to reverse its position on the legality of amusements offered by showpeople. Previously Grantham persecuted proprietors for running 'games of chance', automatic machines and 'penny throw' games were considered a form of gambling and were therefore illegal.[179] In 1943 money raised by such devices was donated to a local hospital fund, and Councillor Cheshire moved "If it was fair to prosecute a fair-man for having money making gadgets then it was fair to prosecute the hospital committee for the same thing".[180] Although Cheshire acknowledges both showpeople and the hospital were culpable, the view taken by the mayor was in a time of struggle he hoped "the police will turn their eyes in another direction".[181] Although an isolated case, this demonstrates how pressures of war changed priorities of local authorities, and if activities of showpeople were seen to be beneficial to the war effort, they often received preferential treatment. Although most fundraising by the

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[176] 'War Charities Week', *The World's Fair* (October 11th, 1941), p. 4. 'Goose Fair's Third Day – Why Rides Soared To 1/6 Each', *Nottingham Evening Post* (August 3rd, 1943), p. 1.
[177] 'Bristol Showman's Gesture Appreciated', *The World's Fair* (February 26th, 1944), p. 13.
[178] 'Doing Our Bit', *The World's Fair* (April 20th, 1940), p. 21.
[179] 'Cut Out The Illegal Gadgets' Advises Councillor Cheshire', *Grantham Journal* (July 2nd, 1943), p. 1.
[180] 'Cut Out The Illegal Gadgets' Advises Councillor Cheshire', *Grantham Journal* (July 2nd, 1943), p. 1.
[181] 'Cut Out The Illegal Gadgets' Advises Councillor Cheshire', *Grantham Journal* (July 2nd, 1943), p. 1.

Showmen's Guild was in aid of the Central Benevolent Fund, the Guild made significant loans to the Government to aid the war effort : £4,580 in total by 1944.[182] Supporting local charities improved relations between regional authorities and showpeople and Guild loans were hard evidence to the Government showpeople were aiding the national effort. Evidence which could be called upon to support the Guild when issues affecting showland appeared in Parliament.

A significant national campaign to which showland contributed was the Spitfire Fund: fundraising which towns, villages, and companies undertook to fund the production of a Spitfire aircraft. In July 1940 Pat Collins donated half of a Wednesday evening's takings at Worcester Fair towards the local 'Fighter Plane Fund', but this is the only case reported of a showman donating to a local fund of this kind.[183] In August 1940 the Showmen's Guild announced their own Spitfire Fund: "Other industries have raised funds... we, the travelling showmen, must do the same".[184] The Guild stated as showland had "received reasonable consideration from the Government and local authorities" this was an opportunity to show their gratitude and the Spitfire Fund demonstrated this to "the country and fighting services" in a practical, visible, way.[185] The announcement in *The World's Fair* demonstrates this fund was designed to raise the profile of showland's contribution to the war effort: "Let us... do our bit and know that when victory comes, although we were not in the front line of defence, we contributed our mite in providing OUR LADS with the best weapons possible".[186] This echoes the national narrative of the Home Front demonstrating solidarity with those serving. Although not directly involved in the Battle Of Britain those who contributed to a Spitfire Fund could show they had made a physical contribution, and the Guild's emphasis on 'Our Lads' shows although a separate community they foremost identified as British citizens and supported the national struggle. The Guild's campaign was successful, within three weeks £2,500 was raised and by December of

[182] 'Showmen's Guild Helps War Effort' , *The World's Fair* (June 10th, 1944), p. 1.
[183] 'Showman Helps Fighter Plane Fund', *The World's Fair* (July 20th, 1940), p. 1.
[184] 'Showmen's Guild Opens Spitfire Fund', *The World's Fair* (August 24th, 1940), p. 1.
[185] Showmen's Guild Opens Spitfire Fund', *The World's Fair* (August 24th, 1940), p. 1.
[186] 'Showmen's Guild Opens Spitfire Fund', *The World's Fair* (August 24th, 1940), p. 1.

1940 the total had reached £4,300, with many Guild members having made repeat donations.[187] In January 1941 the Central Committee of the Guild made up the remainder of the necessary fund, and sent a cheque to Lord Beaverbrook to pay for the aircraft which was to be named 'The Fun of The Fair'.[188] In February 1941 *The World's Fair* reproduced a letter of thanks received by the Guild from the Ministry of Aircraft Production, in which Beaverbrook acknowledged "travelling showmen have made a most valuable contribution to the air strength of this country" and affirmed 'The Fun of The Fair' would soon be "ready to play its part in ridding our skies of the menace of the Luftwaffe".[189] In addition to this recognition a memorial plaque was given to the Guild, acknowledging their gift to the nation, and the Guild suggested all those who contributed to the fund should have a photograph of the plaque to display on their rides and shows.[190] This suggests for the Guild the Spitfire Fund was an important piece of publicity, the aircraft and the plaque were tangible physical evidence of showland's contribution. The name of the aircraft symbolised "the activities of showland" and was "proof that we [showpeople] are not behind in lending assistance to the war effort". [191] It was considered by the Guild to be their "crowning achievement".[192]

In addition to pledging financial assistance, it was possible for citizens to demonstrate 'active' citizenship by engaging in government promoted campaigns to aid the war effort. One such campaign showpeople supported was the national scrap drive and the salvage of waste materials to go towards war production. Scrap metal was in great demand, and showpeople donated obsolete rides and equipment to the cause. Messrs Butlins Ltd donated over two hundred tons of scrap metal from coastal amusement parks, Scottish showman Daniel Taylor weighed in a thirteen-ton traction engine to boost local collections, and Alf North in South Wales

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[187] 'What We Think: Spitfire Fund', *The World's Fair* (September 7th, 1940), p. 21. 'Spitfire Fund, An Appeal By The General Secretary', *The World's Fair* (December 28th, 1940), p. 1.
[188] 'The Fun of The Fair; Look Out Jerry', *The World's Fair* (January 20th, 1941), p. 1.
[189] 'Showman's Spitfire For The Nation – Lord Beaverbrook's Thanks', *The World's Fair* (February 22nd, 1941), p. 1.
[190] 'In The Cause Of Freedom, Memorial of Showman's Gift To The Nation', *The World's Fair* (October 11th, 1941), p. 1.
[191] 'What We Think: The Fun Of The Fair', *The World's Fair* (November 8th, 1941), p. 1. Appendix J.
[192] 'What We Think: The Fun Of The Fair', *The World's Fair* (November 8th, 1941), p. 1. Appendix J.

actively collected scrap from other sources to donate to the salvage effort. [193] The strange notion of items of pleasure being turned into instruments of destruction was not lost on observers, and a *Manchester Guardian* columnist stated, "It is curious to think that the little cars which used to charge about and crash into each other on fairgrounds may yet be found bumping around as part of a tank in the Libyan desert or on the Eastern Front".[194] Waste paper and rags were also in demand, and showland contributed to this salvage effort. Proprietors Hibbert, Barlow and Cooke at Hyde fair in October 1942 arranged for children to exchange bundles of rags for rides, resulting in twelve Cwt. of rags being collected.[195] This effort was acknowledged by Salvage Office T. Nicholson who commented "the generosity and patriotism of the amusement proprietors was beyond praise".[196] Whilst a genuine contribution to the national effort, it is undeniable showpeople acknowledged the publicity value of such efforts. When Guild Secretary Thomas Murphy suggested a system of waste paper collection be employed on fairgrounds, he stated "It was thought by making such an effort our members would create a good impression on the authorities and show that we were quite alive to the national situation and were helping in the Save Waste campaign".[197]

In addition to contributions from the Guild and groups of proprietors, individuals from the showland community also demonstrated the qualities expected of 'good' citizens. During an air raid in Southern England Paddie O'Neill, a young woman from a showland family, was one of the first to respond when a street of houses was damaged, despite herself being badly shaken by the blast.[198] She was put in charge of a rest centre, and although the raid was still going on "she sang many songs and led the people in popular choruses, showing that the people of Southern England can still take it and that our morale is of the best".[199] This account of a showland

[193] 'Tanks From Dodgems', *The World's Fair* (April 11th, 1942), p. 1. '13-Ton Traction Engine For Salvage', *The World's Fair* (July 24th, 1943), p. 1. 'More Help', *The World's Fair* (May 3rd, 1941), p. 6.
[194] 'Fairground Changes', *The Manchester Guardian* (April 7th, 1942), p. 3.
[195] 'Salvage Effort at Hyde Fair', *The World's Fair* (October 17th, 1942), p. 1.
[196] 'Salvage Effort at Hyde Fair', *The World's Fair* (October 17th, 1942), p. 1.
[197] Thomas Murphy, 'Collection of Waste Paper On Fair Grounds', *The World's Fair* (June 1st, 1940), p. 1.
[198] 'Showland's Own Radio Star, Miss Paddie O'Neill, Helps In Blitz', *The World's Fair* (July 1st, 1944), p. 1.
[199] 'Showland's Own Radio Star, Miss Paddie O'Neill, Helps In Blitz', *The World's Fair* (July 1st, 1944), p. 1.

woman playing a key role in responding to an air-raid demonstrates the situation of war put showfolk in direct contact with settled society in ways they had not done previously. Paddie's decision to lead the victims in song reflects the popular narrative of keeping cheerful in the face of adversity. In 1941 a group of fairground travellers displayed communal spirit and self-sacrifice in situation where ordinary citizens failed to do so. The *Daily Telegraph* reported that refugees made homeless by the Plymouth Blitz walking away from the city "complained of motorists who refused lifts to footsore women and children", and according to the *Nottingham Journal* local householders refused to let the refugees into their homes.[200] In contrast a group of showpeople encamped on the outskirts of the city "rigged up make-shift tents for the homeless, gave them all their blankets, and in the morning lit fires and cooked all the food they had for them", actions J.S. Fisher described as of true "Samaritans".[201] *The World's Fair* praised the selflessness of these showfolk, but noted also "their action has received wide publicity" and hoped this meant when war was over "the public will not forget those who prove themselves real Christians in the nation's hour of adversity".[202]

The wartime identity which formed the narrative of the 'People's War' encompassed more than actions, and to be included required citizens to demonstrate national 'spirit': a sense of determination to carry on through showing stoicism and humour in the face of adversity. Showpeople were keen to publicly demonstrate these feelings and did so through the medium they knew best: their rides and shows. In 1939 numerous advertisements appeared in *The World's Fair* for topical novelties used as prizes for fairground sideshows, including 'The Last Will and Testament of Adolf Hitler', and 'Hitler's Peace Terms – The Funny Edition' – reflecting the more optimistic view of the public at the time.[203] Other proprietors adapted machines to mock Hitler and other German leaders, including H. Percy's 'Sock The Führer', and the 'Smash

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[200] Cited in J.S. Fisher 'A Fellow Feeling', *The World's Fair* (May 3rd, 1941), p. 1. 'Empty Cars Pass Homeless, But Poor Caravanners Rig Tents and Give Food", *Nottingham Journal,* (April 26th, 1941), p. 1.
[201] J.S. Fisher 'A Fellow Feeling', *The World's Fair* (May 3rd, 1941), p. 1.
[202] 'True Christians', *The World's Fair* (May 3rd, 1941), p. 15.
[203] *The World's Fair* (September 16th, 1939), p. 3. *The World's Fair* (October 7th, 1939), p. 5.

Hitler' shooter.[204] Although clearly a profitmaking exercise, the imagery used demonstrated unity with the sentiments of the public; feelings of defiance in the face of the Nazi threat and overcoming fear by ridiculing the enemy. Showpeople also utilised their transport to emphasis their determination to carry on. Billy Smart's vehicles were adorned with Allied flags and became known as the 'Victory Road Show', and Danny Baker's Burrell Steam Engine 'Princess Elizabeth' carried the slogan "On With The Show – Don't Mention Defeat To Us!".[205] In 1939 Jimmy Norman's set of Gallopers stated "All Hitler's Horses and All Hitler's Men, can't stop Norman's Horses Going Around Again!".[206] For showpeople to display patriotic messages made good business sense, but it was also an attempt to demonstrate to the public the showland community were unified with wider society in facing adversity with determination and pluck. As the showland community had little contact with wider society beyond business transactions, using shows and transport ensured the public received the message at the point of encounter.

The variety of contributions made by showland to the national war effort was considerable, as summarised by a *World's Fair* correspondent; 'If it's lorries, the showmen will handle 'em. Horses? The showmen know 'em from A to B. Cars? They are born mechanics. Munitions? Yes we're there. Heavy manual labour requiring skill? Yes, every time. The forces, yes we're in them too".[207] However to be acknowledged as part of the collective national effort, the contributions of showland needed to be recognised by wider society. The Showmen's Guild were of the opinion the public were largely unaware of showland's contribution. In 1941 they praised the initiative of Willie Shaw who displayed on the entrance to his shows the letter of thanks from Lord Beaverbrook sent to the Guild regarding the Spitfire Fund.[208] Despite authorities acknowledging this significant contribution, the Guild's successful campaign to buy a Spitfire failed to make the national press, and it was suggested other proprietors follow Shaw's example

[204] *The World's Fair* (October 14th, 1939), p. 27. *The World's Fair* (April 3rd, 1943), p. 1.
[205] Townsend, *Fairgrounds At War*, pp. 135, 210.
[206] Townsend, *Fairgrounds At War,* p. 4.
[207] 'Versatile', *The World's Fair* (August 30th, 1941), p. 1.
[208] 'Remind Them Of The Showmen's War Effort', *The World's Fair* (March 8th, 1941), p. 1.

to inform the public of "something that most of them are ignorant of".[209] The Central Office of the Guild subsequently arranged for posters to be made and distributed through the regional sections so other proprietors could display the letter from Beaverbrook.[210] Further evidence of the Guild's desire to make showland's contribution more widely known, and specifically whom they wished to make aware, is the "propaganda" talk given by Guild President C.W.R. Thurston to the Wellingborough Rotary Club in 1942.[211] The presentation included a history of fairs and the Guild, but also emphasised the role showpeople were playing in the war effort.[212] The civic positions held by many of the Rotarians was noted by the Guild, and it was felt this talk was an opportunity for them to be "given a correct picture of the activities of our business" and to get public leaders on the side of showland, of benefit to those trying to persuade local authorities to allow fairs within wartime restrictions.[213] This example emphasises the link the Guild made between demonstrating showpeople were contributing to the national effort, and improved relations with corporations – and therefore better commercial opportunities.

By 1942 press coverage of showland's contributions had increased sufficiently for *The World's Fair* to suggest the public were more aware. An article from the *Yorkshire Observer* was cited;

> "The people in charge of the entertainments are themselves war workers. The man who stokes the swing-boat engine is on munitions, the operator of one of the roundabouts is a corn thresher; one stallholder is in the N.F.S in Bradford, and a member of the side show's staff is on Government transport works… many of the girls on the 'try your skills' stalls are ordnance factory workers"[214]

[209] 'A Smart Piece Of Work', *The World's Fair* (March 15th, 1941), p. 19. 'Remind Them Of The Showmen's War Effort', *The World's Fair* (March 8th, 1941), p. 1.
[210] A Smart Piece Of Work', *The World's Fair* (March 15th, 1941), p. 19.
[211] 'Valuable', *The World's Fair* (March 14th, 1942), p. 15.
[212] 'Valuable', *The World's Fair* (March 14th, 1942), p. 15.
[213] 'Valuable', *The World's Fair* (March 14th, 1942), p. 15.
[214] *Yorkshire Observer* (May 30th, 1942), as cited in 'What We Think: War Workers', *The World's Fair* (June 10th, 1942), p. 15.

The article even remarked fairground workers were to be especially praised as they had forfeited their Whit Holiday "to entertain the mass of other workers".[215] In addition to this article in 1944 *The Showman's Life in Wartime* was the subject discussed by F. Grisewood and Tom Norman on *The World Goes By* Radio Feature on the Forces Programme.[216] In this programme it was discussed how showland was "playing their full part" in the national effort, and Grisewood predicted "the fairground would again see bright and prosperous days".[217] Despite isolated examples of publicity, the Guild was overall of the opinion showland's contribution was not widely acknowledged. It was possible their contribution was amalgamated within the cumulative national effort. Although this demonstrates showpeople were accepted into the narrative of a collective effort, the fact their individual contributions were not widely acknowledged presented issues when their main point of contact with the public, their business, came under attack. The nature of their livelihood meant the encounter between showland and the wider public would be most commonly recalled as the consumption of leisure, rather than interactions between showland and local authorities which directly contributed to the war effort.

A way in which showpeople could overcome this problem was if it was possible to prove the holding of fairs, and providing recreation for the public, was itself work of national importance. The key argument made by proprietors was that fairs and shows maintained morale and provided temporary relief from the strain of war. The *Chatham News* in September 1939 suggested the local fair was "one of the finest possible antidotes", reporting the public resolved to "forget all about crises and dictators and pacts", and stated the shows and rides "whisk the mind away from all cares and fears into a fantasy world where such things do not exist".[218] Showpeople declared their business was as legitimate as other major industries; "as much a part

[215] *Yorkshire Observer* (May 30th, 1942), as cited in 'What We Think: War Workers', *The World's Fair* (June 10th, 1942), p. 15.
[216] 'Radio Tribute To Showland', *The World's Fair* (February 26th, 1944), p. 1.
[217] 'Radio Tribute To Showland', *The World's Fair* (February 26th, 1944), p. 1.
[218] 'Cure For The Crisis: Medway Townspeople Enjoy All The Fun Of The Fair', *Chatham News* (September 1st, 1939), p. 5.

of our national life as the cinema and public house", and in 1940 *World's Fair* correspondent 'Tiersman' suggested the Guild should outline a plan to be proposed to the Government so key showmen be spared national service to allow the industry to continue, noting most industries had been granted this privilege.[219] Although this suggestion was not followed through, official Government policy did acknowledge the importance of recreation; as mentioned previously Sir John Anderson and his successor Herbert Morrison both emphasised recreation was beneficial to the war effort and were wary of interfering with public entertainments.[220]

The Government particularly identified the importance of catering to the recreation needs of war workers, to maintain efficiency and productivity of output. Despite concerns over Blackout restrictions Herbert Morrison emphasised provision of entertainment for war workers was "consistent with the war effort" and instructed Chief Police Officers amusements should not close earlier than 10pm, and where possible no curfew should be imposed other than the general 11pm closure order.[221] The policy of 11pm closure announced in 1940 came as a result of lobbying by amusement proprietors.[222] In 1939 Alfred Denville MP, a parliamentary representative of the Showmen's Guild , appealed to John Anderson to extend the entertainment closing hour from 10pm to 11pm, stating "we do not see that air raids are going to be more dangerous at 11 o'clock than at 10".[223] Denville added "the extension... would be warmly welcome not only by those seeking- and needing- entertainment, but by those who are anxious to provide it and so meet the requirements of their patrons"; astutely presenting the extension as one which would benefit showpeople and the public.[224] The *World's Fair* acknowledged the Government policy was primarily to meet the demands of war workers; extension to opening

[219] Tiersman, 'What Of Us?', *The World's Fair* (May 18th, 1940), p. 1.
[220] 'Race Meetings', Hansard, HC Deb, 30th May 1940, Vol. 361, Col. 657-658. 'Public Entertainments: Restrictions', Hansard, HC Deb, 12th March 1942, Vol 378, Col. 1177-1180.
[221] 'Closing Hour For Entertainments', *The World's Fair* (October 25th, 1941), p. 1.
[222] 'Public Entertainments' (Closing Hour) HC Deb 16th October 1941 Vol. 374 Cols 1487-8.
[223] 'Closing Hour', *The World's Fair* (November 4th, 1939), p. 29.
[224] 'Closing Hour', *The World's Fair* (November 4th, 1939), p. 29.

hours of entertainments ensured those on long day shifts could still have some recreation, but clearly this allowance also improved the commercial situation for showpeople.[225]

The continuance of fairs throughout the war was perceived by showpeople as not only vital to their business, but as the course of action expected by the public. J.S. Fisher states the public viewed travellers, and showmen in particular, to be hardy 'tough guys' who would show strength in the face of adversity and keep going despite hardship.[226] Fisher uses public expectations as a rallying cry to unite showpeople emphasising action, not "wringing your hands or cursing the Government", would allow showland to continue.[227] Tiersman suggests showpeople "are essential to our country in these times… when the public see our games and rides going up 'as usual' it creates a fresh feeling of confidence"; the continuance of this traditional form of recreation would be plain evidence "England will carry-on".[228]

The most conclusive evidence of the importance of fairs to the productivity of workers, and therefore to the national war effort was the important part they played in the Government's 'Holiday At Home' initiative. Conditions of war meant provision of public recreation was difficult; permanent leisure facilities were compromised by labour shortages, and by summer 1940 traditional seaside destinations were covered with "barbed wire, tank traps, and pill boxes".[229] Fuel rationing and restrictions on rail transport further hampered recreation by restricting access; there was a need for entertainments "not far from home, but not at home".[230] The 'Holiday At Home' scheme was the proposed solution, an expansion of existing summer amusements in urban programmes.[231] Beginning in 1941 the programme suffered due to concerns over the potential consequences of encouraging 'general holiday' periods, and a lack of

[225] 'What We Think: No Curfew', *The World's Fair* (October 25th, 1941), p. 1.
[226] J.S. Fisher, 'We Must Keep Going', *The World's Fair* (January 6th, 1940), p. 32.
[227] J.S. Fisher, 'We Must Keep Going', *The World's Fair* (January 6th, 1940), p. 32.
[228] Tiersman, 'What Of Us?', *The World's Fair* (May 18th, 1940), p. 1.
[229] Mackay, *Half The Battle,* p. 215.
[230] Sladen, 'Holidays At Home', p. 68. From an April 1940 Mass Observation Survey of 150 Observers, cited in Sladen, 'Holidays At Home', p. 69.
[231] Mackay, *Half The Battle*, pp. 214-215.

support from the Ministries of Labour and Information.[232] Chris Sladen suggests the poor promotion of the programmes reflects ministerial opposition to the "provision of non-essential services to Britain", despite the position of Anderson and Morrison who both advocated wartime recreation.[233] A 1941 Home Intelligence Report posited the scheme had become "a broad farce" as expecting workers to relax in the same surroundings as they worked was an ill-conceived concept.[234] The programme's opponents also stated for many, travel *was* the holiday; "the 'chara', the car, and the train were both the symbol and the vehicle of escape and refreshment… the journey was the essence".[235]

In February 1942 *The World's Fair* reported "the type of entertainment provided by our readers forms the main part of the [Holiday At Home] programmes, for it is being realised that the public of to-day demand something a little more varied than the usual bands and concert parties".[236] The scale of fairs proposed as part of the scheme surpassed pre-war norms; Birmingham Corporation projected twelve fairs on forty eight sites between the 24th of June and the 5th of September 1942.[237] Similar arrangements, often on sites made available to showpeople for the first time, featured in the 1942 and 1943 Holiday At Home programmes of Liverpool, Manchester, Hull and Nottingham.[238] The requests for simultaneous summer fairs were so numerous that by 1944 some Guild sections were incapable of meeting the demand, particularly as many firms were short of labour and equipment.[239]

The constant demand reflected the immense popularity of the war-time fairs. Liverpool's 1942 Holiday At Home season attracted one million people, and two hundred thousand of these were

[232] Sladen, 'Holidays At Home', pp. 70-73.
[233] Sladen, 'Holidays At Home', p. 74.
[234] Cited in Sladen, 'Holidays At Home', p. 72.
[235] 'A Policy For Pleasure', *The Observer* (June 21st, 1942), p. 4.
[236] 'What We Think – Holiday's At Home', *The World's Fair* (February 21st, 1942), p. 15.
[237] 'Holidays At Home Fairs: Big Plans At Birmingham', *The World's Fair* (June 6th, 1942), p. 1.
[238] 'Tenders Wanted, City of Liverpool: Fun Fairs in the Parks', *Liverpool Echo* (February 18th, 1943), p. 1.
'Manchester's Holiday Plans', *Manchester Guardian* (July 31st, 1942), p. 5.
'Hull Fair Showmen: May Assist in Stay At Home Holidays', *Hull Daily Mail* (June 13th, 1942), p. 3.
[239] 'Not Enough To Go Round', *The World's Fair* (July 15th, 1944), p. 6.

customers of fairs and circuses.[240] The popularity of the Holiday At Home fairs prompted extensions to be granted by local authorities, actions rarely taken in peacetime.[241] The importance of fairs also overcame regional prejudice; Mitcham fair had long been a source of contention between local authorities, showpeople, and lobbying opponents, and in 1942 a ratepayers association again petitioned the holding of the fair, deeming it an unnecessary temptation, but the importance of the fair was acknowledged by the council and the proprietor Fred Gray was granted an extension.[242]. This decisive victory for the Guild against a long-standing opponent reveals the significance of the Holiday At Home scheme. In 1944 the *World's Fair* stated, "the relations between showland and local authorities had never been better".[243] Nottingham Corporation's relationship with showland improved significantly, the cancellations and bureaucratic obstacles typical of earlier in the conflict were replaced in 1943 by the opening of the Summer Goose Fair by the Lord Mayor, declaring "they were all glad that after four years of war and toil and playing the game, Nottingham could again have a fair".[244] Alderman Freckingham regarded the 1944 fair as "bigger, better, and brighter than its predecessor".[245]

The popularity of the Holiday At Home fairs caused its own problems for showpeople, one of which was overcrowding. In 1942 crowds of eighty thousand thronged to Newcastle's Exhibition Park Fair and fearing a crush, proprietors doubled the ride fares at 8pm in an attempt to control the crowd.[246] Complaints were made to the organiser Robert Parker, and Parker organised a conference with proprietors to find out the cause of the increases.[247] Parker reported the raised fares were to safeguard fairgoers and showland workers from the dangers

[240] 'Liverpool Holiday's At Home: Popularity of Fairs and Circuses', *The World's Fair* (October 1st, 1942), p. 1.
[241] 'Bristol and District Notes: Horfield Common Fair', *The World's Fair* (July 25th, 1942), p. 13.
[242] 'Holiday Fair Extension: Mitcham "Killjoys" Disappointed', *The World's Fair* (July 18th, 1942), p. 1.
[243] 'What We Think: Holidays At Home', *The World's Fair* (September 2nd, 1944), p. 15.
[244] 'Been To The Fair?', *Nottingham Evening Post* (July 31st, 1943), p. 1
[245] 'The Summer Goose Fair – Tribute To Showmen', *Nottingham Evening Post* (August 5th, 1944), p. 1.
[246] 'Holiday Crowds Rush Rides: Showmen Unable to Cope With Demand'. *The World's Fair* (June 27th, 1942), p. 1.
[247] 'Holiday Crowds Rush Rides: Showmen Unable to Cope With Demand'. *The World's Fair* (June 27th, 1942), p. 1.

of crowds surging against rides, and he remarked "if only the people would behave themselves reasonably they would get cheaper and better rides".[248] Similar complaints about rising prices arose at the 1943 Summer Goose Fair. Lead lessee Jack Proctor stated at peak times queues for rides were ten people deep, and the fares were increased to dissipate these crowds.[249] He also stated increases also reflected the fact running costs had trebled and labour costs doubled owing to the war.[250] Despite these reasons, in some cases authorities accused showpeople of profiteering; at Bristol in 1942 Councillor W.A. Wilkins demanded an enquiry into the prices of rides, even though the proprietor forewarned increases may be necessary to prevent overcrowding.[251]

The World's Fair accused some members of "gross profiteering", and demanded "prompt and vigorous action to prevent these evils in our midst"; by 1944 the Guild introduced fines for any member who charged a fare of over one shilling.[252] This self-policing demonstrates the Guild was aware they needed to secure the support of the press and local authorities if they were to continue to hold fairs. Profiteering was behaviour which undermined the ethos of a collective war effort, and such behaviour by individuals could have had series implications for the business if unchecked. The scale of the Holiday At Home scheme made fairs, and showpeople, more visible to examination by the public, the press, and local authorities. It was therefore more important than ever for showpeople to operate in a professional manner within the expectations of 'good' wartime citizenship. The inclusions of fairs in Holiday At Home programmes signified a change in how authorities provided their inhabitants with entertainment. The provision of concerts and public performances were part of what Sladen refers to as the "tradition of municipal enterprise": corporations directly providing

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[248] 'Holiday Crowds Rush Rides: Showmen Unable to Cope With Demand'. *The World's Fair* (June 27th, 1942), p. 1.
[249] 'Goose Fair's Third Day – Why Rides Soared to 1/6 Each', *Nottingham Evening Post* (August 3rd, 1943), p. 1.
[250] 'Going Strong – Big Crowds at Goose Fair', *Nottingham Evening Post* (August 2nd, 1943), p. 1.
[251] 'Bristol Protest'. *The World's Fair* (June 27th, 1942), p. 1.
[252] 'What We Think: Holidays At Home', *The World's Fair* (September 2nd, 1944), p. 15.
'The Summer Goose Fair', *Nottingham Evening Post* (August 5th, 1944), p. 1.

entertainments .[253] However, the addition of semi-permanent fairs in programmes signified a reversal of preceding municipal doctrine.[254] Local authorities previously tended to oppose the expansion of traditional fairs, often legislating against what they believed to be a corruptive influence, detrimental to civil obedience. For councils to request fairs as part of Holiday at Home demonstrates the pressures of war forced local authorities to respond to popular demand, comparable to the BBC's Variety Department's wartime programming reflecting working class tastes, incorporating content previously considered 'vulgar'.[255]

IV - Wartime Opposition To Fairs

Despite the success of the Holiday At Home fairs, and local authorities acknowledging their importance to public morale during wartime, opposition to fairs still existed throughout the period of the war. In 1940 James Styles warned established opposition to fairs and public recreations would use wartime regulations to "mask their real aims".[256] Styles suggested elements of local authority still opposed to traditional fairs were also using wartime conditions to prevent fairs from being held. Ground rents were exponentially increased "when black-outs, no music, shortage of labour… make it a greater gamble than ever", and one council stipulated the lessee of the fairground must build an air-raid shelter for two hundred people despite the ground accommodating five thousand.[257] As fairs were protected by Royal Charter, local authorities had no power to close them down, but by creating extra wartime regulations they could make it economically unviable for proprietors to set up, and once a fair Charter was defaulted upon showpeople could no longer claim the right the following year.[258] In response to this fear *The World's Fair* stated "no fair must be yielded without strenuous opposition", unless conditions of war indeed necessitated cancellation.[259] The *Manchester Guardian* acknowledged

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[253] Sladen, 'Holidays At Home'. pp, 81, 82, 88.
[254] Sladen makes no reference to Holiday At Home Fairs, bar scant references to Houpla and Aunt Sally Stalls, Sladen, 'Holiday's At Home', p. 77.
[255] Nicholas, 'The People's Radio', p. 80.
[256] James R. Styles, 'A Call To Arms', *The World's Fair* (March 9th, 1940), p. 21.
[257] James R. Styles, 'A Call To Arms', *The World's Fair* (March 9th, 1940), p. 21.
[258] James R. Styles, 'A Call To Arms', *The World's Fair* (March 9th, 1940), p. 21.
[259] 'What We Think: KillJoys', *The World's Fair* (August 3rd, 1940), p. 21.

the threat wartime regulation posed to fairs. A correspondent voiced concerns the war would allow "sound suppressors" to "fasten comparative silence on our fairgrounds after the war is over", remarking that "having got their gag in now it may need a bit of a tussle to remove it".[260] The emergency legislation of wartime, if allowed to proceed unimpeded, could have consequences for the peacetime restriction of entertainments.

The "snake of snobbery" Styles referred to is evident in one virulent wartime attack on pleasure fairs which appeared in the West Cumberland Times, and was reported in *The World's Fair.*[261] An anonymous contributor commented on the Cockermouth and Whitehaven Hiring Fairs and suggested the pleasure fair was "probably instituted by some astute vagabond who saw an opportunity to fleece the credulous country-folk by means a trifle more legitimate than picking pockets" and concludes the affair was "the world's most unscrupulous racket".[262] Such an accusation would have been a poor reflection on showpeople, but in wartime the idea the fair was taking advantage of people was even more damning. *Sunday Pictorial* columnist George Nelson remarked he was dismayed "to see decent citizens being openly diddled out of their hard-earned cash", referring to automatic machines where it seemed impossible for the punters to win.[263] It was a difficult dilemma for proprietors; the conditions of war made it morally questionable for them to be seen to profit from games and machines which by their nature involved a measure of chance, and yet these activities were a staple element of fun fairs. The issue of morality and gambling was an element of fairs which attracted negative attention from religious groups in peacetime, and the atmosphere of war only escalated this issue. In a 1944 House of Lords discussion of the proposed Town and Country Planning Bill, the Bishop of London raised concerns this bill would give local authorities the power to hand over church buildings "for a cinema or a fun fair… or even lower forms of public life".[264] *The World's Fair*

[260] Lucio, 'Miscellany – Less Noise', *Manchester Guardian* (March 27th, 1940), p. 4.
[261] James R. Styles, 'A Call To Arms', *The World's Fair* (March 9th, 1940), p. 21.
[262] Cited in 'What We Think: KillJoys Again', *The World's Fair* (November 29th, 1940), p. 15.
[263] George Nelson, 'What A Week', *Sunday Pictorial* (September 10th, 1944), cited in *The World's Fair* (September 16th, 1944), p. 15.
[264] 'What We Think: More Humbug', *The World's Fair* (November 4th, 1944), p. 15.

retorted this form of public life "held more attraction to the masses" than church services, suggesting the opinion of the Bishop was not reflected in the large number of wartime fair-goers.[265] The Bishop of London's low opinion of public amusements was not held by all religious figures; Reverend Louis A. Ewart supported the holding of fairs and praised the efforts of the Showmen's Guild , and opened John Thurston's 1944 fair at Earls Barton before giving a Sunday Service at the event.[266]

The origin of the traditional opposition to fairs, which manifested in some extreme cases during the war, did not exclusively place the blame with the proprietors of the fairs. The contributor to the *West Cumberland Times* was equally scathing about fairgoers; "it is a remarkable commentary on the attainment of this age of civilisation… people still get a thrill from being propelled in dizzy circles sitting in painted wooden boxes whilst a mechanical organ... grinds out a mutilated version of the latest hit" adding the "same people find inexplicable enjoyment in rolling pennies down slots".[267] This vitriol suggests the snobbery James Styles warned about was not necessarily the product of religious opposition, but of a class divide in opinion on what constituted 'respectable' recreation. Those who espoused such low opinions of fairs in wartime likely held the same opinions in peacetime but did not have the conditions of war as added justification for their agenda. Moreover, many opponents of fairs also disapproved of other popular entertainments; Styles considers these opponents a "class foreign" and a "British Gestapo" who wished to outlaw Sunday cinema, fairs and any other form of entertainment they considered unwholesome.[268] The existence of groups who lobbied against many forms of recreation and sport was acknowledged by the Government; Herbert Morrison recognised wartime conditions were being used to further personal agendas, and similarly Sir Leonard Lyle

[265] 'What We Think: More Humbug', *The World's Fair* (November 4th, 1944), p. 15.
[266] 'Vicar Preaches On Feasts and Fairs', *The World's Fair* (October 14th, 1944), p. 1.
[267] Cited in 'What We Think: KillJoys Again', *The World's Fair* (November 29th, 1940), p. 15.
[268] James R. Styles, 'A Call To Arms', *The World's Fair* (March 9th, 1940), p. 21.

MP stated “a lot of people are trying to stop every form of sport which they do not happen to patronise themselves”.[269]

However, the travelling fairground did invoke criticisms relating to wartime wastage of manpower, fuel and money. In 1942 at a meeting of the Worcester Trade Council, R.M. Hall of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) proposed the council should send a resolution to the Minister of Fuel condemning fairs and suggesting they be “restricted entirely” on the basis they were a “scandalous waste of fuel and transport”.[270] Hall considered it incongruous whilst factory workers were encouraged to avoid wastage in the national effort “three huge steam tractors and many petrol wagons were used to convey this ‘useless stuff’”.[271] W.R. Daniels of the Amalgamated Engineers Union accused Hall of losing his sense of proportion, remarking factory workers patronised the fair, and should not be deprived of recreation.[272] Another NUR member described showpeople as a highly organised and respectable body, and suggested Hall’s grievance was personal.[273] Despite opposition, and the fact the resolution would be contradictory to one previously made by the council congratulating Worcester City Council on their Holiday At Home scheme, the motion was passed by eight votes to seven suggesting opposition to fairs was still present in municipal bodies.[274]

More concerning than accusations of fuel wastage was the assertion made by a correspondent in the *Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph*, that “men and youths of military age were raking in the pennies at the fair when they ought to be raking the Germans in Libya with machine gun fire”.[275] This appears to have been a case of the press making assumptions and publishing them as fact without further investigation. John Thurston challenged the columnist and stated of three attendants employed on one of his rides “one is a lad waiting to be called up, another has been

[269] As cited by Baker, ‘A More Even Playing Field’, pp. 132-133.
[270] ‘Attack On Fairs: Lively Discussion at Worcester Meeting’, *The World’s Fair* (July 25th, 1942), p. 1.
[271] ‘Attack On Fairs: Lively Discussion at Worcester Meeting’, *The World’s Fair* (July 25th, 1942), p. 1.
[272] ‘Attack On Fairs: Lively Discussion at Worcester Meeting’, *The World’s Fair* (July 25th, 1942), p. 1.
[273] ‘Attack On Fairs: Lively Discussion at Worcester Meeting’, *The World’s Fair* (July 25th, 1942), p. 1.
[274] ‘Attack On Fairs: Lively Discussion at Worcester Meeting’, *The World’s Fair* (July 25th, 1942), p. 1.
[275] ‘What We Think: Fair Request’, *The World’s Fair* (July 18th, 1942), p. 15.

discharged… and the third is a Dunkirk veteran".[276] False information was also published in the press regarding the financial situation of the fairground business. The *Sunday Express* of November 5th 1944 ran an article which claimed proprietors were "tumbling over each other... to buy more cars, roundabouts, swingboats and other fairground equipment" to benefit from the wartime boom in business; one showmen reputedly refused offers of £5,000 for his dodgems, as he could apparently make £200 a day with them.[277] The *World's Fair* dismissed this as fantasy, "enough to stagger the imagination of any showman".[278] The notion spread in the press that showland was " a sort of El Dorado" was inflated by the erroneous reports of increased wartime ride fares. [279] BBC presenter Jean Metcalfe claimed it now cost two shillings to ride on roundabouts and two shillings sixpence for the dodgems.[280] This was refuted by *The World's Fair* which stated except in cases where ride prices were inflated to control crowds, the larger 'Noah's Ark' rides and Roundabouts were between three to six pence, and the Dodgems around one shilling.[281] Further evidence to suggest Metcalfe's figures were incorrect is the one shilling limit the Guild applied in 1944 to prevent profiteering.[282]

It is difficult to ascertain why showland was consistently portrayed as a lucrative business during the war, often to the detriment of showland's reputation. The impact of the war on showland was considerable; even those benefitting from Holiday At Home schemes were suffering from shortages of labour and materials, so it was hardly a 'boom' period for the business. It is possible the natural tendency of showpeople to present a show of grandeur to excite and entice customers was misinterpreted by press observers as evidence of financial wealth. Gaily painted rides with gold and brass decoration certainly stood out from the austere surroundings of wartime Britain. This was part of the appeal of the fair for workers, it was an opportunity for escapism, to envelop themselves in a world away from reality. The same

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[276] 'What We Think: Fair Request', *The World's Fair* (July 18th, 1942), p. 15.
[277] 'What We Think: Distortion', *The World's Fair* (November 11th, 1944), p. 15.
[278] 'What We Think: Distortion', *The World's Fair* (November 11th, 1944), p. 15.
[279] 'B.B.C. Comment On Ride Prices', *The World's Fair* (April 29th, 1944), p. 1.
[280] 'B.B.C. Comment On Ride Prices', *The World's Fair* (April 29th, 1944), p. 1.
[281] 'B.B.C. Comment On Ride Prices', *The World's Fair* (April 29th, 1944), p. 1.
[282] 'What We Think: Holidays At Home', *The World's Fair* (September 2nd, 1944), p. 15.

demand motivated the emphasis on fantasy in the wartime film industry.[283] However, the necessity for showpeople to make rides and shows colourful and appealing also encouraged criticism from those who saw this display as incongruous with the wartime need for thrift, and therefore deemed the fairs inappropriate. It should be noted accusations of financial wastage were sometimes made in conjunction with existing bias against fairs. The *Evening Advertiser* reported of the first wartime fair in Swindon "no doubt many pounds which might well be diverted to more useful channels will be frittered away tonight on empty mechanical amusements" adding there is "no accounting for taste".[284] The *World's Fair* pointed out "many hundreds of pounds 'which might well be diverted to more useful channels'" would be spent in Swindon's cinemas every week, and yet this greater 'waste' was not commented on by the *Advertiser*, which instead ran a front page article on the re-opened cinema.[285] The distortion of facts and clear bias against fairgrounds present in some press articles was of great concern to the Showmen's Guild who felt they were being misrepresented, considering some allegations "so obviously unfair and untrue", but just vague enough to avoid accusations of libel.[286] The Guild were quick to counter falsehoods appearing in the press, replying to articles and refuting claims made therein. It is interesting to note in cases where this happened (Such as the reply of John Thurston to the *Evening Telegraph*), no subsequent reply was received from the original commentator, indicating the original allegations were indeed without factual basis. It was of paramount importance the Guild maintained the image of showland as a group who contributed to the communal war effort and were not profiting from wartime conditions. The success of the Holiday At Home fairs suggests erroneous claims made in the press did not influence the opinion of the wider public, or of local authorities. The continued patronage of the former and the good relationship which developed between showpeople and the latter indicates a good

[283] Chapman, 'British Cinema', in Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us?,* p. 61.
[284] *Evening Advertiser* (Monday 1st, April, 1940), cited in 'Swindon's First Wartime Fair', *The World's Fair* (April 6th, 1940), p. 1.
[285] 'What We Think: Humbug', *The World's Fair* (April 6th, 1940), p. 29.
[286] *The World's Fair* (September 16th, 1944), p. 15.

opinion was held of showpeople as businessmen and women, and as an institution who were part of the collective struggle.

Conclusion

The Second World War proved a transformative event for the travelling fairground community. Initially restrictions introduced to cope with the threat of aerial attack presented a challenge to the industry, the combination of light and sound ubiquitous to travelling fairs made them incompatible with Blackout regulations, and many fairs between 1939 and 1941 were cancelled or heavily reduced in scale, to the financial deficit of showpeople and corporations. However, through a combination of adaption and dialogue with local authorities, showpeople were able to keep fairs open, albeit in a diminished capacity with restricted light and noise. Key to the success of discussions between showland and local authorities was adhering to the expectations of 'The People's War'. By proving their work was of national importance and they were contributing to the war effort by performing their duty as active citizens, showpeople developed good relationships with local authorities. Concessions were made by corporations to keep fairs going due to pressure from above and below. Workers demanded recreation and respite from long hours of war work, and the Government wished to provide entertainment which would not further stress transport systems, and so municipal entertainments including fairs were supported. Local corporations had little option but to allow fairs to continue providing they met Blackout restrictions. The covered fairs pioneered by showpeople ensured this could happen in a commercially viable way.

The Holiday At Home scheme was the result of the Government's insistence entertainment should be provided for workers as locally as possible, and travelling fairs were subsequently in such great demand between 1942 and 1944 that proprietors were unable to meet all the requests from local authorities. The great success of Holiday At Home Fairs transformed the relationship between corporations and showpeople. The pressures of the conflict consolidated the position of fairs as a mainstay of popular recreation. The main opposition to travelling fairs

during the first half of the twentieth century originated from local authorities, and through public demand and the Government's support of entertainments this was eradicated during the Second World War. Other opposition groups who agitated against public amusement attempted to use the conditions of war to further their agenda. However, these groups did not reflect public or Government opinion, nor did they reflect the notion of carrying on in the face of adversity. These 'KillJoys' were therefore silenced by the popular ethos of 'The People's War'.

Crucial to the commercial survival of the showland community during the war was their ability to demonstrate they were part of the communal narrative of 'The People's War'. Showland communities contributed in many of the ways wider society did, by pledging their bodies, skills and money towards the war effort. In addition, the continuance of their industry fulfilled the important function of maintaining the morale of the civilian population by providing recreation and an escape from everyday realities. However, in order to be considered part of wartime national identity it was crucial the efforts of showland were recognised and accepted by wider society, and as this chapter has evidenced showpeople demonstrated concerns their efforts were not being widely recognised by wider society. Owing to the direct contact between the Guild and authority at local and national level there was official recognition of the numerous contributions made by showland in service of the nation, and concessions which facilitated the continuance of fairs was aided by this recognition. The public, however, were not aware of these contributions, nor did they have any reason to be. Other than instances where showland workers took on new jobs in the community (threshing the harvest on farms for example), the point of encounter between the public and showpeople remained the fair. Although acknowledged by the Government as of national importance, the significance of entertainments to the war effort was less obvious to the public. The press offered differing opinions, some newspapers praising the efforts of showpeople on and off the tobers, but other commentators were quick to suggest the frivolity of the fair was at best wasteful, and at worse, inappropriate during a time of national emergency. In extreme cases, often from traditional sources of antagonism, accusations of profiteering were made towards showpeople. These were heavily

rebuffed by proprietors who pointed out they were based on mistruths and were not accurate portrayals of an industry struggling under wartime regulation. The role of the Guild in responding to such attacks in the press demonstrates how important they felt it was to maintain the image of active citizenship, and this also explains why the Guild took measures to prevent any profiteering taking place by individual showpeople.

The contested recognition of showland's contribution in the press leads to an ambiguous conclusion about their inclusion in the collective narrative of 'The People's War'. Whilst evidence of their contributions confirms they did everything expected of active citizens, and therefore should make them eligible for inclusion, the lack of widespread contemporary recognition suggests they were largely omitted. The nature of the fairground business, and the limited opportunities for contact between showpeople and wider society goes some way to explaining this. Inclusion in a collective wartime identity was much more feasible for settled citizens who had consistent involvement in the war effort of a town, city or company, the lack of a fixed locale for the showland industry rendered the showland wartime experience insular. Although the Second World War facilitated more productive and cordial relations between showpeople and authorities, the relationship between showland and wider society remained fragmented due to the itinerancy of the former. Although in retrospect it is possible to prove fairground communities *should* be included in 'The People's War', at the time their contributions were not obvious enough to warrant popular recognition and therefore inclusion in the collective experience of the conflict. The fantasy world so significant in providing an escape from the fears and worries of reality for settled society, also concealed the sacrifices and efforts of the showpeople who created it.

Conclusion

This thesis investigates the marginal community of travelling showpeople in Britain between 1889 and 1945. The thesis can be separated into three core areas of analysis, although these issues interact and intermingle with each other, and each key area is multi-faceted. For each area of investigation, the thesis has utilised source material produced by authorities, wider society, and showpeople. The latter often includes material produced by the Showmen's Guild , and an exploration of the formation, intentions, and development of this body forms another crucial part of this thesis; analysis of this group has not previously been conducted academically. The first issue which has been assessed is showland identity; evaluating to what extent showland travellers were, and can be, analysed as a marginal group in terms of race, culture or class. This exploration necessitated the use of material produced both by showland and by wider society, to establish how the former understood its own identity, and to what extent the latter prescribed or even constructed an identity for this liminal community. The issue of identity was heightened considerably during the First and Second World Wars – with the showland community forced to prove they were deserving of inclusion in new concepts of British national identity – particularly necessary to join the constructed narrative of the 'People's War' during World War Two.

Secondly, although clearly linked to perceptions of showland travellers, this thesis has explored the developing relationship between showpeople and authority at both a national and local level. The proposed Movable and Temporary Dwellings legislation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was based upon a desire to regulate nomadic communities, but confusion over the complex identity of itinerant communities rendered showpeople unintentional targets of the regulations. After the successful protest of these by the newly formed Showmen's Guild , subsequent attempts to regulate this community by national and local authority focussed primarily on the commercial aspects of showpeople. The regulation of the fairground itself was part of a broader objective to achieve control over public recreations. Frequently a disconnect between national policy and local enforcement proved problematic for

showpeople attempting to follow convoluted regulations, and this fraught situation was exacerbated by wartime pressures.

Municipal desire for control over public entertainment became particularly prevalent during the interwar period, an era of huge development in the wider leisure industry. This time period was investigated as part of the third focus of this thesis; an analysis of the fairground as a form of public leisure. The fairground provided a unique sensory experience, and the thesis explores to what extent the itinerancy of the industry enabled the provision of amusements which were on the edge of acceptability. The nomadism of the fair also facilitated a unique spatial relationship with rural and urban communities, and the thesis demonstrates how the fair became an intimate part of working-class leisure and tradition. This area of analysis investigates the relationship between wider society and the fairground, and concludes it was the popularity of the traditional funfair as a 'British' form of leisure which enabled it to compete in a vastly expanded leisure industry during the first half of the twentieth century.

In exploring the issue of showland identity it was first necessary to determine to what extent showpeople could be considered, and analysed as, a separate racial group. Whilst nineteenth century observers did use racial terminology when talking about travellers, and occasionally showpeople, their usage of 'race' was broad and often utilised as a substitute for class or cultural differentiation. Racial terminology was used to describe groups with no ethnic differentiation from wider society, but who were distinct in terms of social group or economic status. This evidence dictated the thesis would not assess showpeople as a separate racial group but would focus on elements which determined them to be considered an 'other' and distinct from wider society. The Movable and Temporary Dwellings Bills proposed between 1885 and 1895 reveal distinctions between travelling groups were not clear, and failure to distinguish between travelling showpeople and other nomads was an issue which continued throughout the period this thesis examines. Although less prevalent by the time of the Second World War there remained instances where opposition groups deliberately described showpeople as Gypsies,

relying on the poor reputation of the latter to discredit showpeople. Throughout the period this thesis covers showpeople consistently distanced themselves from Gypsies, and this became formal policy of the Guild who banned Gypsies and fortune tellers from Guild fairgrounds.

In exploring the legislative challenges of the nineteenth century, it became apparent the feature of showpeople which rendered them marginal was their nomadism, and this factor continued to separate the showland community from wider society throughout the period this thesis examines. Attempts to legislate nomadic communities, including showpeople, was borne from an inherent belief itinerancy proved inferiority and failure rather than a cultural or commercial choice. Although nineteenth century legislation was blocked by the actions of the Showmen's Guild , itinerancy proved to be the factor which complicated further regulations introduced during times of peace and war. The debate regarding showland identity, also occurred within the showland community, most notably within the Showmen's Guild . In response to falling membership following the First World War, some felt to increase membership it was advisable to allow permanent amusement caterers and other proprietors to join whereas others believed membership should continue to be reserved only for travelling showmen. This prompted an internal discussion over what determined a 'true' showman; ultimately membership remained restricted, but the Guild sought increased cooperation with other entertainment-based unions and organisations achieving a united front against potentially harmful legislation without compromising the purpose and function of the Guild. The outcome of this internal debate and the defeat of the Movable Dwellings legislation demonstrates a key conclusion this thesis can make regarding showland identity. In order to protect the lifestyle and livelihood of its membership, showpeople (often through the Guild) needed to articulate a professional identity; ensuring they would be respected and treated like other businesses rather than persecuted because of their itinerancy. This was partially a successful campaign, for whilst showpeople were ultimately respected as a professional body, for practical reasons their nomadism remained the primary factor determining how they were impacted by regulations.

Another facet of the exploration of showland identity was assessment of to what extent this group were considered, and considered themselves, 'British' citizens. Throughout the nineteenth century showpeople emphasised they believed themselves to be true British citizens, deserving the same rights as settled society. Despite this, the experience of the First and Second World Wars suggest this expectation was never completely fulfilled. Conflict heightened debates over a national identity, and who this wartime identity included. To be accepted into this narrative required groups and individuals to demonstrate commitment to the national war effort. During both conflicts the showland community made a significant contribution towards the communal effort, pledging manpower, skills, finances and machinery. This would indicate showpeople deserved inclusion in a national wartime identity, but the fact showland repeatedly had to make their efforts clear to wider society demonstrates their contributions were not widely recognised. The investigation conducted in this thesis reveals the key factor in explaining this lack of recognition was the point of encounter between wider society and showpeople continued to be the fairground throughout both conflicts. The contribution of showfolk to the national effort was not obvious through this interaction, and thus although evidence suggests this group was deserving of inclusion in a national narrative, their liminal existence and temporary contact with settled society meant they remained marginalised.

The fairground's survival and relative prosperity through periods of legislative attack, economic depression, and war, can also be attributed to its links to concepts of national identity. The extensive heritage of the fairground enabled it to embody the stability and comfort of an imagined 'Merry England', offering an escape from often unpredictable and unpleasant realities. Showpeople capitalised on this, and continually emphasised the fairground as a uniquely British, and often specifically working-class leisure pursuit. In addition to defending the personal and business rights of showpeople, the Showmen's Guild portrayed itself as a vanguard of workers' rights to open-air recreation. Although in part altruistic, this stance also put showpeople in a strong position against authorities and groups who wished to curtail fairs. The protection of worker's rights to entertainment was utilised as the primary defence against

groups and authorities who tried to abolish fairs. These groups were branded by showland as 'Killjoys' who existed solely to rob the working class of their right to freedom of recreation and expression.

Crucial to the presentation of showpeople as a body of professional businessmen was the role of the Showmen's Guild as a self-policing body, continually monitoring the behaviour of its members to present the best possible image of showland to authorities, and therefore maximise the possibility of attaining harmonious relations. The most practical way of self-regulating was communicating with membership through *The World's Fair*. In peacetime the Guild was vigilant in maintaining a reputable image of showland, responding to instances of conflict between members, and openly condemning any behaviour which could be perceived as dishonourable. During conflicts the Guild emphasised to members the importance of adhering to all forms of regulation, noise and light emission, transport laws, and paying Entertainments Tax. In addition, the Guild saw the value of publicly contributing to national war efforts, again utilising *The World's Fair* to organise charitable campaigns; most notably the Ambulance Fund during the First World War and the Spitfire Fund during the Second World War. The self-regulating conducted by the Guild was effective in reducing friction between members, evidenced by the few instances of conflict. Externally the Guild's self-policing role was successful in presenting showland in a professional manner; but variations in local regulation often meant however the Guild presented the industry, opposition and obstruction remained.

A further investigation into the workings and policy of the Showmen's Guild would be one way this thesis could be expanded upon. This depth of investigation was prevented from being part of this thesis firstly because it would have distracted from the aim of demonstrating the development of the community over time, and secondly because the ideal source material was inaccessible. The Showmen's Guild Meeting Minutes are not publicly available and can only be accessed by Guild Members, which regrettably the author is not. The investigation which has been conducted into the Guild has been completed utilising material produced in the *World's*

Fair and *The Era*, often reproductions of Meeting Minutes, but this does not represent a comprehensive picture of Guild policy, and therefore this has not been a primary focus of this investigation.

The way showland presented itself through the Guild was a crucial element of the second key issue this thesis explores: the developing relationship between showpeople and authority, both local and national. A key problem with legislation, originating from local and national government, throughout the period of this thesis was the failure to separate showpeople from other itinerant groups. The campaign against nineteenth century temporary dwellings legislation revealed this major contradiction in the perceptions of the showland community; whilst acknowledged as distinct from other 'problem' itinerants, the lack of knowledge about fairground travellers meant this distinction was unconsciously overlooked. The result was legislation not specifically designed to inhibit travelling showpeople would implicitly affect them if the Guild did not challenge it. During the interwar period reiteration of the nineteenth century legislation appeared along with new local bills pertaining to the erection of temporary structures. In both cases travelling showpeople were not the intended target, but if it were not for the proactive campaigning of the Showmen's Guild and granting of exemption clauses legislation would have impacted adversely on the lifestyle and livelihood of showland travellers.

The 1932 Salter Road and Rail Report was another piece of legislation which threatened to end the lifestyle and livelihood of travelling showpeople; in this instance through excessive taxation. As with temporary dwellings legislation of the nineteenth century, the report's incorrect assumptions about the showland community would have resulted in the collapse of the business had it not been for the intervention of the Showmen's Guild . Crucial to their success in overturning clauses of the Salter Report was the ability of the Guild to present a united front with other industries. Rather than isolating the cause of travelling showpeople and emphasising their marginality, the Guild amalgamated opposition with recognised businesses. In addition, the Guild recognised success in opposing government legislation was due to their parliamentary

presence. The appointment of Evan Chatteris as official parliamentary representative and the successful election of Guild President Patrick Collins as M.P. for Walsall in 1922 demonstrates the Guild were aware of how important it was for showpeople to have representation at this level, enabling them to watch for legislation potentially threatening to the showland community.

The relationship between showpeople and authority was put under intense pressure by the strain of conflict during both the First and Second World Wars. Total War resulted in unprecedented levels of state interference and regulation, and when combined with the other impacts of war society on travelling fairs, almost brought the fairground industry and showland community to its knees. The traditional fairground relied upon loud music and bright lights, but when these were combined with crowds, fairs became potential human tragedies in the event of aerial attack, particularly during the intense Blitz between 1940 and 1941. As a result, during both conflicts fairs were heavily restricted by wartime regulations on opening hours, light and noise restrictions. During the First World War showpeople struggled to adhere to restrictions which varied greatly depending on locality. The lack of clear national guidelines meant regulations were interpreted and enforced differently across the country; a major impediment for itinerant showpeople. In many cases proprietors were prosecuted for flouting regulations they believed they were adhering to, and in this respect the relationship between fairground travellers and local authorities deteriorated. The failure of wartime national legislature to recognise the itinerancy of the travelling showground as requiring special dispensation can be interpreted as a continuation of the flaws in nineteenth century legislation; failing to acknowledge the characteristics of showland travellers which could render them vulnerable to uniform legislation.

In the closing years of the First World War local authorities, recognising worker's needs for recreation, promoted the holding of fairs providing they adhered to light and noise restrictions. This precedent proved highly valuable when showpeople were faced with wartime restrictions again in 1939, and through adapting their shows to conform to restrictions were able to

continue their business. Following on from the provision of workers with outdoor recreation during the First World War, between 1942 and 1944 the Government promoted the Holiday At Home scheme. This scheme involved local authorities actively requesting the provision of fairs, and the success of these events finally enabled showpeople to attain a productive working relationship with local authorities; something they had been trying to achieve since the inception of the Guild in 1889. It must be noted however the positive developments in relations between authority and showland during the First and Second World Wars varied according to location. Both conflicts caused partial cancellation and disturbance to the annual fair circuit, disrupting relations between authority and showpeople and denying the encounter between showpeople and wider society afforded by the fairground. The ability of showpeople to cope with the demands of Total War varied; larger concerns such as the Collins family enjoyed more productive relations with local authorities, had the necessary capital and infrastructure to cope with the economic and practical impacts of wartime restrictions and were able to capitalise on temporary boom periods. Smaller showland families were hit much harder by wartime restrictions and shortages, unable to continue within regulations these showpeople were forced to find alternative employment or give up their itinerant business entirely. It can be concluded the main factor which impeded showpeople's ability to adhere to regulations was ultimately their itinerancy, and the failure of authorities to recognise this further complicated the relationship between showland and government.

The interwar period also saw major developments in the relationship between authority and showland as local authorities attempted to exercise increasing control over fairgrounds as part of a wider campaign to regulate public, and working-class, spaces. Corporations were unable to abolish fairs owing to Charter Rights, and therefore attempted to control fairs through raising rents, relocating fairgrounds, and restricting opening hours. By controlling rent applications for pitches councils were able to choose tenants who they believed offered appropriate recreation and regulate the size of the fairground. By making a fair economically unviable due to excessive rent it was possible to effectively shut down fairs. Relocating fairs away from their traditional

sites, away from patrons, was another means of rendering fairs unprofitable and forcing closure. Relocating fairs to purpose-built sites, as occurred in Nottingham in 1928, enabled councils to take complete control over the layout, content and duration of fairs. This unprecedented interference by local authorities had the potential to be ruinous to the fairground industry, but the extent of council control was restricted by public support for fairs and the actions of the Guild. The Guild utilised this popular support, and through petition, protest, and negotiation the Showmen's Guild was able to limit the impacts of these methods of corporate control. Throughout the period of this thesis it can be concluded the combination of continuing public support and proactive lobbying by the Showmen's Guild was vital in preventing legislation intentionally, or unintentionally, impacting adversely on the fairground community.

The public support for fairs throughout the period of this thesis demonstrates the fairground was considered an important form of public leisure. The third main component of this thesis has been an investigation into the role of the funfair as recreation: for whom it catered, how it differed from other amusements in terms of provision, and how it was able to remain relevant and compete with a growing leisure industry in the interwar period. The travelling fair was closely linked to both rural and urban patterns of recreation; the fair season was based around traditional holiday periods for industrial workers, and the pattern of annual harvest for rural communities. The fairground was unique in existing temporarily, but also in how this recreation physically intertwined with localities; it became a part of wherever it set up, becoming an extension of working-class street culture. In addition to being physically accessible to working communities, the fairground remained financially within reach of workers – of significance to those struggling in the troubled twenties and thirties. For these people the expanding leisure opportunities were financially and spatially beyond reach, but the fair remained an affordable means of escapism. The fairground retained its support and commercial viability by remaining true to the demands of its core patronage: the working class.

In order to remain a popular recreation, the travelling fair developed considerably in the period the thesis covers. By the end of the nineteenth century the trading function of Mop fairs had dissipated, replaced instead by new steam-powered mechanical entertainments and electrical lighting; features which typified pleasure fairs throughout the next half century. The development of the travelling fairground paused during the First World War due to austerity and a shortage of materials, labour and motive power. It was not until the interwar period when progress once again changed the tobers. The combination of a vastly expanding leisure market, increased access to transportation, and a period of widespread economic uncertainty, meant the fairground needed to modernise and keep pace with public taste to remain profitable. In response to public demands and rising competition, the elaborate landscapes and gentle Switchbacks of Edwardian rides were replaced by imitations of racing cars, motorcycles, aircraft and the speed of the modern age. In this aspect fairs were able to offer a unique experience, which separated them from the increasing competition of the cinema. On rides fairgoers could physically experience the sensation of speed or flight- something which could not be achieved on a screen. The transience of fairgrounds also enabled them to promote leisure, and social behaviour, which was generally considered to be taboo or on the edge of moral acceptability. Critics of fairgrounds emphasised the recreation provided by fairs was inherently lowbrow and necessitated restriction, and often these opponents considered showpeople responsible. However, the ongoing popularity of fairs throughout the period studied by this thesis indicates showpeople were responding to a demand for more salacious entertainments. The temporary nature of the fairground enabled patrons to act in freer manner than other forms of recreation allowed, particularly in terms of the contact it facilitated between young men and women on crowded rides, occasionally under the cover of darkness. Although only the interwar chapter of this thesis explores in detail the fairground specifically as a leisure institution, it would be possible to frame further research around this. As there has been no significant work investigating fairground travellers as a marginal group, it was decided this community would be

the primary focus of this thesis, rather than the fairground itself. With this community assessed it would now be more feasible to focus research more on the encounter of the fairground.

Critics of fairgrounds consistently viewed them as a space where the worst elements of working-class culture could occur uninhibited; the identity of 'The British On Holiday' was enabled in their own towns and cities by the temporary space of the fairground. The 1871 Fairs Act was an attempt to gain more control over fairs which were considered by some to encourage immoral behaviour and social unrest. However, few specific cases of unruly behaviour at fairs being observed or prosecuted during the nineteenth century have been discovered. This suggests the opposition to fairs was less motivated by a practical concern, but by a perception of working-class recreation as inherently immoral and something which therefore should be restricted. This opposition continued throughout both the First and Second World Wars and was compounded by critics who deemed any kind of recreation was inappropriate in times of conflict. These critics were overshadowed by overwhelming public support for the continuance of open-air entertainments, and with the productivity of war workers at stake, national government encouraged local authorities to permit fairs to continue in industrial areas. The official support for the Holiday At Home Scheme was the final blow to long standing opposition to traditional fairs; private criticism lost out to the recognition of public demand by authority. The modernisation of fairs which occurred in the interwar period attracted additional criticism; removing the traditional elements of wakes and fairs and replacing them with increasing mechanisation was deemed to be removing the core working-class values . However, the continued popularity of fairs throughout the period this thesis studies, and to the present day, suggests whatever amusements were offered reflected a public demand. If they were in anyway morally questionable, or of 'low' taste, this was what popular opinion desired. The purpose of the fair, whether the Edwardian fantasy world of exoticism or the interwar celebration of modernity and technology, was to provide an escape from reality. Despite numerous challenges between 1889 and 1945 this thesis has demonstrated this purpose was fulfilled.

This thesis has discovered fairgrounds, and travelling fairground communities, often prove to be exceptional . The encounter of the fairground continued to offer an exclusive sensory experience within a unique, temporary space, which in turn facilitated interaction and entertainment which could only happen within this environment. The relationship between fairgoer and showpeople was itself contrary to other recreations; most entertainments prescribed amusement to the consumer, whereas showpeople constantly adapted to reflect public tastes. This extraordinary situation allowed a public leisure pursuit with arguably more extensive heritage than any other to remain relevant and prosperous. The impermanency and itinerary of the fairground which afforded commercial prosperity equally resulted in considerable adversity for travelling showpeople. Whilst identifying themselves as true 'British' citizens, the nomadism made necessary by their livelihood left fairground travellers susceptible to punitive legislation; not all of which was ever intended to impact them. This legislative battle was even more prominent during times of conflict, and the Showmen's Guild was especially vital in forging positive relations with wider society, local authority, and national government. Although organised and articulated primarily through the Guild, their position was constantly consolidated and justified by continued public support for the fairground as a traditional aspect of British working-class leisure. It was largely through the will of the people the fairground survived adversity, and the show went on.

Appendix

Appendix A. Second Airmen W.G. Breeze, 'The Showmen's Guild Of Great Britain: A Soldier's View', *The World's Fair* (August 5th, 1916), p. 12.

Showmen in the days gone by,

Have fought for recognition,

Our Guild to-day keeps up the cry,

We must have combination,

Members standing side by side,

Everyone whose roof is a mollicroft,

No shirker who waits for the turn of the tide

Show the kill-joys what you are made of.

G stands for greatness,

U for unity,

I for independence,

L for liberty,

D stand for dependants of P.P.A.C.

Our lads give their lives for the country's sake,

Fighting for those who would our livelihoods take.

Great men who are at the head of affairs,

Reading and smoking in nice easy chairs,

Eating the best that money can buy

And then of course they needs must try

To stop the workers amusement.

But have they heard about the Showmen's Guild,

Right willingly they'll try to defend the people's rights

If by the people themselves the ranks are filled

The time for idle chatter is when the work is done,

And when the battle's over and the victory won,

If you have done your little bit for husband, wife or son,

No one will reap the benefit more than you and yours.

Appendix B. Images of Serving Showmen published in *The World's Fair* (October 3rd, 1914), p. 1.

FOR KING AND COUNTRY.

Quartermaster Robert Bloom

Regimental Quartermaster Robert Bloom, whose photograph we give above, is a well-known travelling auctioneer and jeweller, and is now on active service with the Northumberland Yeomanry. As will be seen from our photograph, the gallant Quartermaster is a fine example for any regiment.

Lance Corporal J. A. Cook

Amongst those who have re-joined their regiments is Lance-Corporal Cook, whose photograph we give above with his wife. They are more familiarly known to our readers as "Colonel" and Madame Zana (the well-known Clairvoyante). The gallant "Colonel" would be pleased to hear from all old pals. His address is 11376 Lance-Corporal J. A. Cook, King's Own Regiment, Saltash, Cornwall.

READY FOR THE ENEMY.

Mr. T. SCOTT AND STAFF IN TRAINING.

It is not all who can, for many reasons, join the various forces now being organised to fight for their King and Country, and those who are in such a position will be doing useful service by preparing themselves in readiness for any emergency. Our photograph shows Mr. Tom Scott, of Worcester, with some of his tenants and staff preparing themselves by drilling and practicing shooting, and their example is one that should be copied by others. As will be seen they are all fully equipped and they would, we feel sure, give a good account of themselves.

Appendix C. 'A Munitionette – Showland Girl on Government Work', *The World's Fair* (August 3rd, 1918), p. 1.

A MUNITIONETTE

MISS AMY BEDFORD

Congratulations to Miss Amy Bedford who celebrates her 21st birthday tomorrow (Sunday). Miss Bedford is the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Bedford who are as widely known in Lancashire and Yorkshire as they are in the London district. Miss Bedford has for some considerable time been working on munitions being employed at Messrs. [illegible] large works at Failsworth, near Manchester, where, along with others, she is assisting to provide the necessary implements of war for our soldier boys at the front.

SCOTTISH ORGANISERS AN

TOMBOLAS IN ENGLAND

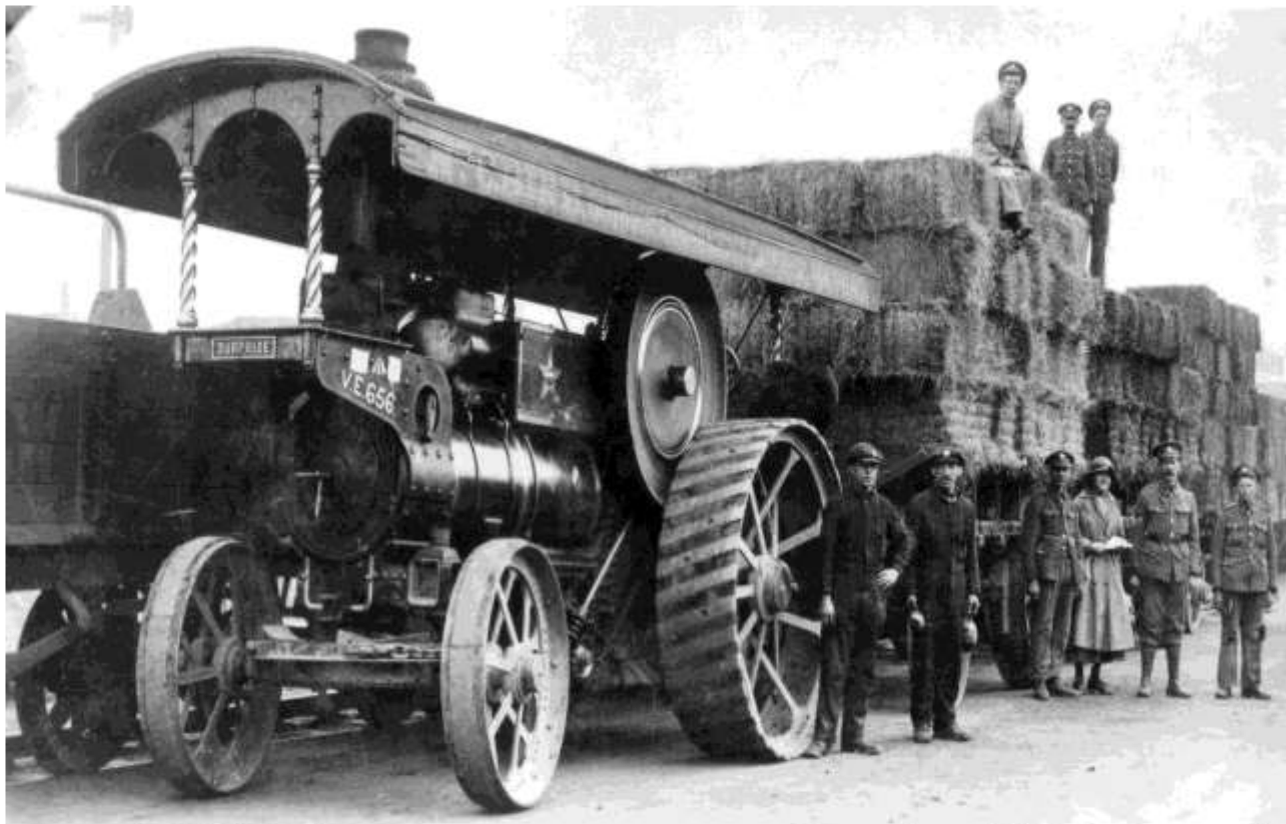
Appendix D. 'England Expects Every Man – and Engine- This Day will do their Duty', *The World's Fair* (March 6th, 1915), p. 1.

England Expects Every Man--and Engine--

This Day will do their Duty.

In addition to the large number of men that have responded to the call of King and Country many traction engines from Showland are being used in various kinds of transport work. Our photograph above shows the engine belonging to Mr. Charles Heal, Amusement Caterer, of Bristol, which has been employed on Government work on Salisbury Plain since October 22nd last year.

Appendix E. Charles Heal's Burrell 8NHP Showman's Engine 'His Majesty' No. 2877 Built in Feburary 1907 Reg. HT3163 on Government Service in Glastonbury in 1915. The dynamo has been removed from the front bracket of the engine whilst engaged on war work. Photograph reproduced with the permission of Adam Brown.



Appendix F. Mrs Catherine Bird's Foster 6 NHP Showman's Engine No.12538 Reg. NK 1745 Built October 1910 on at Haddenham Railway Station near Oxford in 1915. In this photograph she is on war work transporting horse fodder, and during this period of work her dynamo was removed from the front bracket. Photograph from authors collection.

Appendix G: The Showmen's Ambulances – Presentation Of The Walsall Car', *The World's Fair* (January 13th, 1917), p. 1.

THE SHOWMEN'S AMBULANCES

PRESENTATION OF THE WALSALL CAR

Our photograph above shows the presentation of one of the fleet of Showmen's Ambulances now being presented to the Red Cross Society and subscribed for by our readers. The ambulance above is the one presented to Walsall and has been gratefully received by the town. Further cars have been presented to the cities of Hull and Birmingham, and others will shortly be handed over to other cities. Our readers will be able to see by the photograph the fine appearance the ambulances have and we feel sure they will feel rewarded for any sacrifices they have made when they read the grateful way they have been accepted. The ambulances will do a great deal to point out to the heads of the various corporations that Showland is not behind in its duty and their good feelings towards Showland will no doubt be increased. The photograph above is by Mr. H. Smith, of Walsall, and the block reproduced by the kind permission of the proprietors of the "Walsall Obser

Appendix H: Charles Meersy 'Goose Fair', *Nottingham Journal* (October 5th, 1933), p. 6.

<u>Goose Fair</u>

A sunny day, a cold clear night:

God send us Goose Fair weather!

For Goose Fair in the mellow glow

Of autumn sun's as fine a show,

As any fair in all this land,

It's gaily-decked pergodas stand,

Like monstrous figures queer and quaint,

That any child with cloth and paint

Might make into a toy array:

A jolly caravanserai.

But Goose Fair on a cold, clear night,

With myriad gleaming points of light

And flashing colours driven high,

Against the velvet dark-blue sky!

The babel, the conflicting blares

Of half-a-dozen different airs:

The clowns outside the circus door

And from within – the lion's roar.

The roundabouts, the pedlar's bawl:

The giant 'caterpillar's' crawl,

The 'ghost train' and the 'wall of death'

The children who with bated breath

And wide-eyed wonder loiter there:

And faces, faces everywhere!

A sunny day, a cold clear night:

God send us Goose Fair weather!

Charles H. Meersy

Appendix I Arthur Bates' engine Burrell 7NHP No. 3817 of 1919 'Perseverance' 'Helping In The Harvest', *The World's Fair* (December 19th, 1942), p. 1.

HELPING IN THE HARVEST

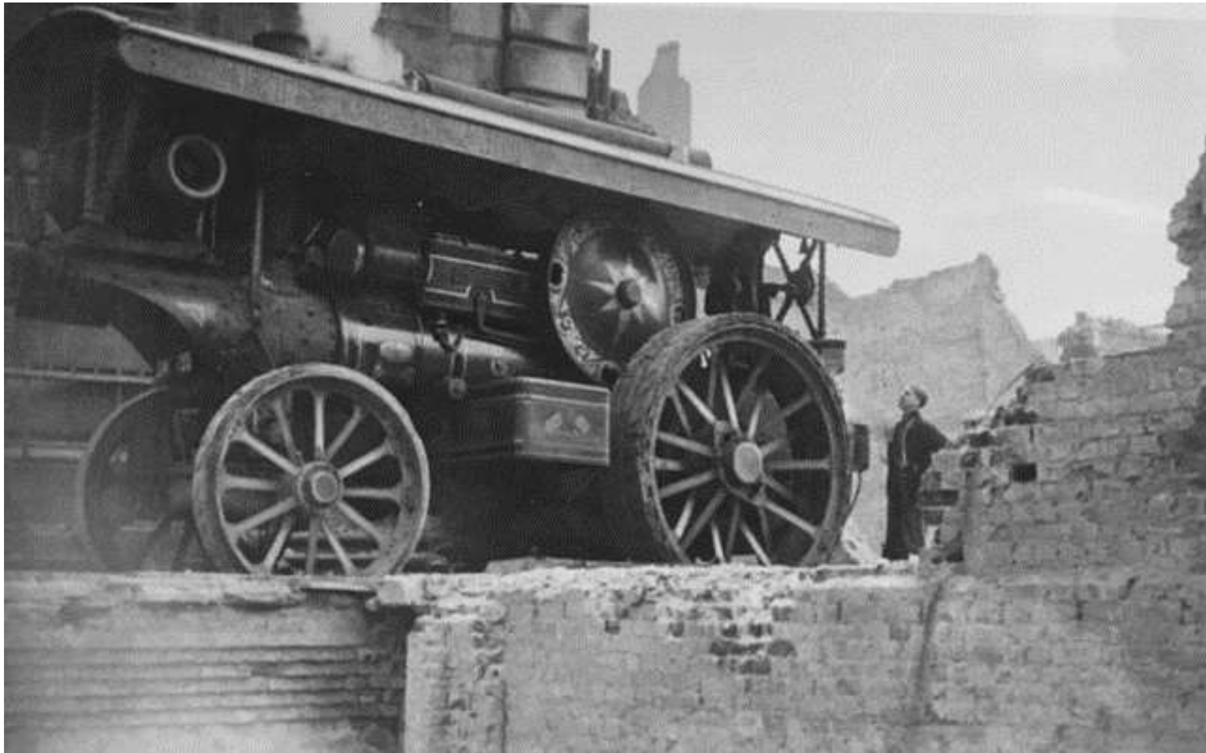
Mr. Arthur Bates's threshing machine which has done valuable work in the Lancashire-Cheshire area. This photograph which is reproduced by courtesy of the "Sunday Express," shows two Lancashire show girls, Miss Jennings (left), and Miss Agnes Bell pitching the

Appendix J – The Spitfire Aircraft 'The Fun Of The Fair' bought by The Showmen's Guild Spitfire Fund. 'What We Think: The Fun Of The Fair', *The World's Fair* (November 8th, 1941), p. 8.

SHOWMEN'S GUILD SPITFIRE

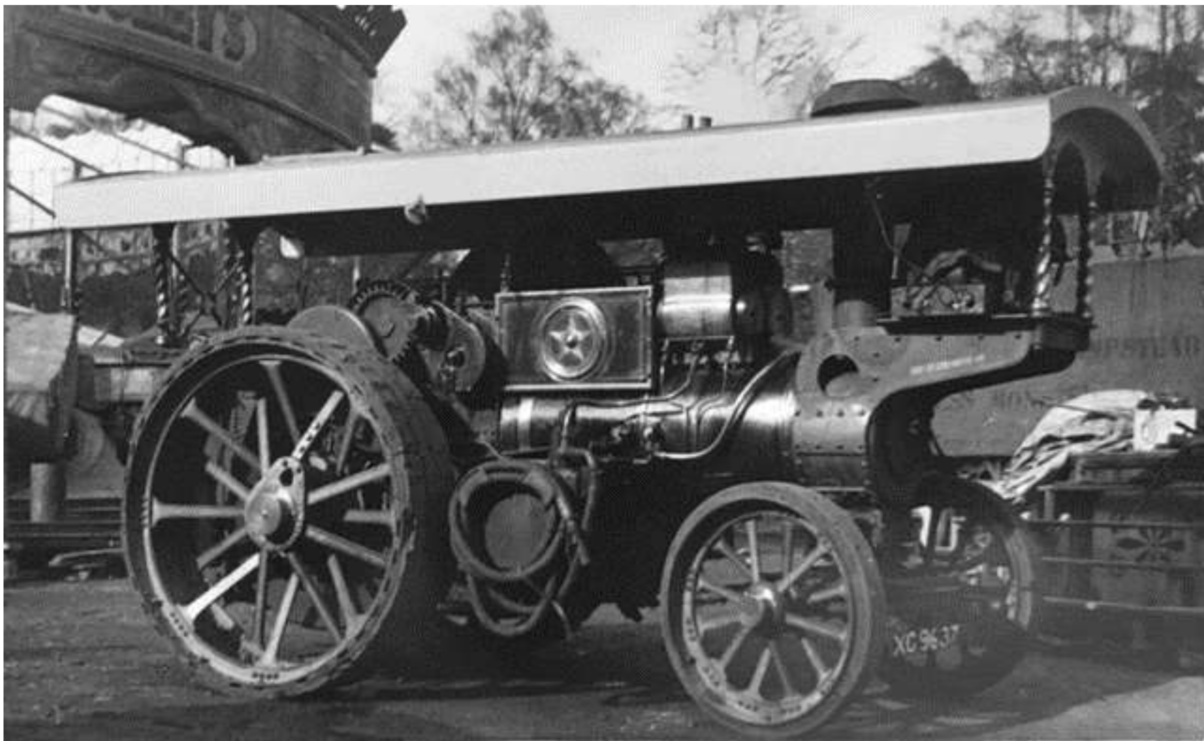
"The Fun of the Fair" Ready for Action

Appendix K - Billy Smart's Fowler R3 Road Locomotive 'The Princess' No. 14868 Reg. BN5793 built in 1917 engaged in pulling down bomb-damaged buildings using its wire winch rope in Little Britain, London E.C.1 Photograph taken on October 24th , 1941. Authors Collection.



Appendix L - Billy Smart's Fowler R3 Road Locomotive 'The Princess' No. 14868 Reg. BN5793 built in 1917 engaged in pulling down bomb-damaged buildings using its wire winch rope in Little Britain, London E.C.1 Photograph taken on October 24th ,1941. Authors Collection.

Appendix M – Foster 8NHP Showman's Engine 'Olympic' No. 12468 built in 1909. Original Photograph taken by Philip Bradley at Hampstead Heath fair on the 29th March 1938. The engine was later used on demolition in London during 1941 and 1942. Photograph from authors collection.



Appendix N – Fowler 7NHP Showman's Engine 'Norah' No. 10302. On demolition work for owner Billy Smart's in London in 1941. Photograph from authors collection.

Appendix M – Fowler 8NHP Showman's Engine 'The Princess' No. 14868 built in 1917 in the foreground with what is believed to be Fowler No. 14902 in the background. Both engines on demolition work in London, likely in 1942 when Philip Bradley records seeing 14902 at work. Photograph from authors collection.

Appendix O – Fowler Showman's Engine 'King George VI' photograph pulling down the bomb damaged Victoria Hotel in Manchester in 1941 whilst in the ownership of John P. Collins. Photograph from authors collection.

Appendix O – Believed to be John Collins' Burrell 8NHP Showman's Engine 'The Albert' No. 2818 built July 1906. The engine was used on demolition in Manchester during 1940 and 1941. Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of George Bridson.

Appendix P – John Sanders of Peckham's Fowler A7 Showman's Engine 'Spitfire' No. 13152 built in 1913. Photographed on June 5th 1942 after slipping backwards into a cellar during demolition work on Lower Victoria street in London. Although the engines dynamo came loose and lodged itself in the canopy, the driver escaped uninjured. Photograph from authors collection.

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