Public Schools, Politics and Associational Culture in England, 1899-1939

Edward Whiffin

Ph D Thesis

University College London Institute of Education

I, Edward Whiffin, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

This thesis examines the role of associational culture in helping public school boys develop their political interests in the first half of the twentieth century. This thesis explores two schools in-depth within the wider context of the public school system: Harrow, an elite, conservative, school and Gresham's, a less prominent but more progressive school. By drawing on two very different schools, this thesis shows the similarities between the schools, as well as their freedom to explore different educational opportunities.

Studying associational culture, this thesis explores the development of informal civics education. This is often missed in studies of broader efforts to promote civics education as well as general histories of the curriculum. Associational culture was and is a universal feature of public schools, but the specifics of how this is done varies from school to school. By examining extra-curricular activities, this study is able to explore more experimental methods of engaging with politics than the traditional curriculum was able to provide. The broad period covered also saw many developments in how people engaged in politics, and the boys in these schools demonstrate this.

Drawing primarily on the events recorded in the school magazines provides a consistent insight into school life as it was written, as well as how it was portrayed. The material comes from reports on the activities of the societies at the schools. This is primarily from debating societies, which ran throughout this whole period, with varying levels of success, and continue in the present day. New societies were formed at various points during this period, and their arrival into the life of public school boys are explored. Statistical analyses are also used to track trends across this period in order to provide a broader insight into how boys interacted with politics within the school.

Impact statement

Inside academia

This thesis provides a significant contribution to the history of education. It demonstrates the benefits of examining learners' experiences. This has been a growing area in the history of education, and this study seeks to fill this gap with regards to the public schools. Previous histories of public schools have focused heavily on institutional histories and biographies of individuals. This study demonstrates how a better understanding of the pedagogical methods of the public schools expands our knowledge of an understudied area of history. The English public schools have had a disproportionate amount of influence over the English education system as a whole. By better understanding how they functioned this research enhances our understanding of the education that policymakers frequently referred to.

Within the wider context of British history, this thesis explores the educational background of the elites which dominated positions of governance. By understanding their educational experiences, this research should help historians studying a wide range of British political history. Aspects of this relationship between policy makers and school boys' views are demonstrated in this thesis.

By using quantitative methods, this study demonstrates the benefits of using statistical analysis to enhance historical works. The benefits of providing contextual data to reinforce arguments in a clear and efficient way is clear from this thesis.

Outside academia

Public schools are a contentious political issue in contemporary Britain. This study will help shed light on the role these schools played in preparing their pupils for adult life. The public schools are often shrouded in ritualistic mystery and described through stereotypes. This thesis demonstrates how they functioned and the value they placed on certain types of education. This should help inform public debate over

the role of the public schools in British society. It also aims to demonstrate some of the beneficial pedagogical tools, such as debating societies, which have no reason to be exclusive advantages of public schools. Some organisations have sought to use the methods seen in this thesis in efforts to widen participation in university education and careers by holding special events and inviting guest speakers. This study hopes to demonstrate the benefits of their efforts.

Disseminating outputs

I have shared my findings with the History of Education Society, the International Standing Conference for the History of Education, the Children's History Society and the British Educational Research Association. I hope to continue doing this. I have worked with the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference on their 150-year anniversary project. I have used my research to add to the content of material for publication as part of this project.

Table of Contents

Abstract 3
Impact statement 4
Table of Contents 6
Abbreviations and terms 9
Tables and Figures 10
Introduction 11
1. Context 12
2. Aims 20
3. Structure 22
Chapter 1: Literature review 26
1. Historiography of the public schools 27
2. Practices and curriculum 44
3. Society and culture 53
Conclusion 65
Chapter 2: Theory and methodology 66
1. Methodology 66
2. Important theoretical concepts 80
Chapter 3: Associational culture as an educational tool 89
1. Debating societies 90
2. Political education 100
3. School magazines 103
4. Libraries 106
5. Understandings of political citizenship 110
Conclusion 114

Chapter 4: Imperialism and pre-First World War public schools 116

1. The mundane Empire 121

2. Imperial policy 123

3. Germany, invasion scares and the USA 126

4. Other Christians, Islam and the Ottoman Empire 129

5. China, Japan and 'Yellow Peril' 133

6. Irish nationalism 137

Conclusion 148

Chapter 5: Militarism and the First World War 150

1. War, militarism and recreation 152

2. Science and the military 154

3. Race and war 156

4. Conscription 160

5. The impact of the First World War 164

Conclusion 172

Chapter 6: Post-War Change and Continuity 174

1. Challenges to pre-war ideologies 177

2. New societies 182

3. New Politics 196

Conclusion 207

Chapter 7: The changing landscape of late interwar public school politics 210

1. The General Strike 212

2. The Recession of the 1930s 229

3. Changes in the schools' engagement with politics 231

4. Internationalism 235

5. Changes to the political landscape 242

6. Radicalism in the 1930s 246

Conclusion 261
Chapter 8: Boys' contributions to late interwar political culture 1926-1939 263
1. Norwood and Harrow 265
2. Literary culture 271
3. The communist clique 287
Conclusion 290
Chapter 9: Conclusion 292
A wider curriculum 294
Political culture and school life 297
Schools of Empire 299
Future Research 301
Bibliography 304
Primary Sources 304
Secondary Sources 310

Abbreviations and terms

Terms from Gresham's

Greshamian	Current pupil
Old Greshamian (O.G.)	Former pupil

Terms from Harrow

Harrovian	Current pupil
Old Harrovian (O.H.)	Former Pupil

Abbreviations

H.M.C.	Headmasters' (and Headmistress') Conference
H.S.O.T.C.	Harrow School Officer Training Corps
L.N.U.	League of Nations Union
M.P.	Member of Parliament
O.T.C	Officer Training Corps

Tables and Figures

Table 1: Topics of debates p. 76
Table 2: Example database entry of debate at Gresham’s p. 79
Table 3: Topic debated at Harrow, 1900-14 p. 118
Table 4: Topics debated at Gresham’s 1900-14 p. 118
Table 5: Annual totals of debates at Harrow, 1900-14 p. 120
Table 6: Annual totals of debates at Gresham’s, 1900-14 p. 121
Table 7: Gresham’s League of Nations Union Trips p. 188
Table 8: Gresham’s Sociological Society Trips, 1921-26 p. 194
Table 9: List of ’27 Club Meetings, Harrow p. 221
Table 10: Debates at Gresham’s 1926-1929 p. 224
Table 11: Number of Debates, speakers and topics at Harrow, 1926-39 p. 232
Table 12: Number of meetings and topics at the ’27 Club Harrow, 1927-39 p. 233

Figure 1: Harrow School, Speech Room, c. 1900 p. 67
Figure 2: Gresham’s School, Big School, c. 1900 p. 68
Figure 3: Harrow School, Library p. 93
Figure 4: Punch Cartoon, 1926 p. 213

Introduction

This thesis examines public school boys' politics and associational culture in England between the start of the Second Boer War in 1899 and the beginning of the Second World War in 1939. This period was selected as it encompasses the time when public schools appeared to be in their most influential position. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw rapid expansion of public schools, both of the number of schools and enrollment at each school. It was also, however, when their status began to be challenged. Concerns emerged over the quality of education provided whilst state involvement in secondary education expanded. Public schools' position in upholding class divisions also came under increasing criticism, both from within and beyond. The changing state of public schools also reflected the challenges faced by the British Empire. The public schools had been closely linked with imperialism. The schools had to adapt to the challenges faced by the Empire.

This thesis uses associational culture in two public schools as case studies, Gresham's School and Harrow School. Through these schools, the pupils' own experience and understanding of early twentieth-century elite education and society will be explored. This thesis builds on work which has examined the purpose of the education provided by public schools. The current historiography of public schools has been focused on the institutional level rather than the pupils. The failure to capture the experience of the majority of learners has been studied in the context of higher education.[1] Jacobs, Leach and Spencer demonstrated how the learners' experience influenced their personal development. This study will contribute to the literature on learners' experiences by demonstrating how pupils participated and engaged in the informal curriculum offered by the schools. This thesis builds on work done on associational cultures of English and British society in the early twentieth century. This has been increasingly done for the education of wider society and in the history of women. However, despite public interest and their influential position,

---

[1] Andrea Jacobs, Camilla Leach, and Stephanie Spencer, 'Learning Lives and Alumni Voices', *Oxford Review of Education* 36, no. 2 (April 2010): 219–20.

the experience of public school pupils has not been studied in depth. Quantitative analysis has been used to supplement traditional qualitative methods. Statistical tools have been used to track trends in the schools in order to provide a broader context to events.

I attended Gresham's School between 2004 and 2009. I am no longer directly connected to the school. My prior knowledge of some of the more interesting lives of former Gresham's pupils certainly provided motivation for this research. McCulloch has explored significant risks associated with insider research that I am confident that these have not affected the robustness of this research or its conclusions.[2] Insider research is known to present ethical problems particularly for practitioners within the institutions, which I am not. The school did not commission my research, now were they aware of it prior to me contacting the archivist. The majority of the material used is publicly available, with both schools' magazines accessible online and in the British Library. The school was supportive in providing me access to the archives. Harrow School, along with others, were equally supportive in providing access to their archives. This research focuses on an educational aspect of the school beyond living memory, rather than the school's current governance or any contemporary policies. The aim of the research is to examine an educational tool that was widely used at Gresham's, and across the wider educational system.

1. Context

The definition a public school has never been explicitly codified, whether through membership requirements for an organisation or a piece of legislature.[3] Towards the end of the twentieth century, the term public school was, in general, replaced by the term independent school. Most examinations of the public school system freely admit

---

[2] Gary McCulloch, 'Historical Insider Research in Education', in *Researching Education from the Inside: Investigations from Within*, ed. Pat Sikes and Anthony Potts (Routledge, 2008), 59.

[3] T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools: A Study of Boys' Public Boarding Schools in England and Wales from 1837 to the Present Day* (London: Nelson, 1967), 35–36.

that there is no clear definition.[4] Authors have, however, set out some criteria which generally includes schools which are members of the Headmasters' and Headmistress' Conference (H.M.C.), selective, fee-paying and independent from government control. The majority of pupils board, although there are a few notable exceptions such as Merchant Taylors and St. Paul's School. Other common features include the school being divided into houses, a prefectoral system where boys are, to some extent, self-governing, links to Oxford and Cambridge universities, and an 'Old Boys' network. The schools examined by the Clarendon Commission have always been considered public schools, whilst many others now considered public schools were covered by the Taunton Commission. The schools included in this study both exhibit features which fit them securely in the definition of being public schools; predominantly boarding, fee-paying, independent from government control, members of the H.M.C. and have a house system.

Public schools come from two main periods of foundation. Some were post-reformation grammar schools established by wealthy benefactors. These were founded primarily in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through a chartered trust to provide education to scholars. The foundation charters laid out conditions as to how the school should function. The curriculum was often restricted, only funding the teaching of Greek and Latin. This limited the schools to training boys for a career in the Church, although schools found ways to bypass this. Conditions were also often laid out as to who was entitled to attend the school, usually favouring local pupils, although this was equally as often ignored. Schools began to take on more pupils through boarding houses, and private tutors began to act as ad-hoc teachers for subjects not provided for by the foundation charter. These teachers would charge additional fees and often supplement their income by establishing boarding houses.

Schools began to grow in unofficial ways, and the aims of the original charters became neglected. In the most prominent schools serving aristocratic families, this led to disputes with local parents. As a consequence, the Royal Commission on the

---

[4] Fleming Committee, 'The Public Schools and the General Education System' (London: HMSO, 1944), 5–6, 34; George Macdonald Fraser, *The World of the Public School* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977), 2–5; David Turner, *The Old Boys: The Decline and Rise of the Public School* (Yale University Press, 2015), xii.

Public Schools, culminating in the Clarendon Report (1861-4), was formed to look at the nine most prestigious schools. The Schools Inquiry Commission, culminating in the Taunton Report (1864-8), examined the 782 remaining endowed grammar schools. The subsequent Public Schools Act (1868) and the Endowed Schools Act (1869) removed the constraints of the foundation charters.[5] The reformed schools were no longer subject to fixed rules, and this enabled them to adapt to changing educational demands. This led to curriculum reforms, greater control over staff numbers, and more recently, the admission of girls. This process was not immediate, however, and different changes took place at different periods. New schools were formed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as middle- and upper-class demands for education increased. These new schools were able to acquire funding from various sources, such as from religious organisations or joint-stock companies.[6] According to McCulloch, the educational purpose of the early twentieth-century public school was to create an elite to serve the state.[7] It was an inherently conservative education based on public service and anti-individualism which spread from the Clarendon Schools.[8] This did not exclude progressive educational ideas or parents of a more liberal or socialist persuasion, however. Questions over citizenship education, and by extension leadership training, were considered in depth by a people from a range of political orientations all with connections to public schools.[9]

The change in how schools operated was partly in response to increasing demand for secondary education from the rising middle and upper-middle classes. However, public schools have always served an additional purpose of securing the social

---

[5] Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, 109.

[6] Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, 20–25.

[7] Gary McCulloch, *Philosophers and Kings: Education for Leadership in Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[8] McCulloch, *Philosophers and Kings*, 14–15.

[9] Rob Freathy, 'Three Perspectives on Religious Education and Education for Citizenship in English Schools, 1934–1944: Cyril Norwood, Ernest Simon and William Temple', *British Journal of Religious Education* 30, no. 2 (2008): 103–12.

status of the parents and their children.[10] The schools that became public schools had tended to focus on educating the sons of a small segment of society. Aristocratic schools allowed their charges a great deal of freedom, even leading to school revolts by boys when staff challenged this freedom. Local grammar schools often had a severe shortage of pupils, their charters limiting them from providing the education desired by local parents. Following the Public Schools and Endowed Schools Acts a more mixed clientele of the upper classes and wealthier middle classes began to share schools. Some schools were founded with a specific aim, such as Wellington College in 1859; initially, the school was intended to educate sons of deceased officers in the Army but quickly converted into a more typical public school.[11] Reforms at schools were usually led by individual headmasters such as Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby School 1828-42, Edward Thring, headmaster of Uppingham School 1853-87, and Frederick Sanderson, headmaster of Oundle 1892-1922. At many schools praise of the founder, and if they were early grammar schools the headmaster who reformed the school, is a common feature in some school histories, with some schools entombing a prominent headmaster in the school grounds, often the chapel.[12] These reformists' ideas spread throughout the public schools creating a template for what a public school should provide.

This allowed schools to reform into what would be recognised today as public schools. In 1869 Edward Thring held the first meeting of the H.M.C., which aimed to link together certain secondary schools and their headmasters. Part of his aim was to counteract the influence of the schools covered by the Clarendon Commission. However, despite initial reluctance they soon became involved in the organisation, solidifying it as an overarching organisation for public school headmasters. By the start of the twentieth century, a public school could be loosely defined as being part of H.M.C., having the majority of pupils as boarders, charged fees, a system of

---

[10] Jane Kenway, Johannah Fahey, and Aaron Koh, 'The Libidinal Economy of the Globalising Elite School Market', in *Privilege, Agency and Affect: Understanding the Production and Effects of Action*, ed. Claire Maxwell and Peter Aggleton (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), 15–16.

[11] Brian Gardner, *The Public Schools: An Historical Survey* (Hamish Hamilton, 1973), 182.

[12] Paul J. Rich, *Elixir of Empire: The English Public Schools, Ritualism, Freemasonry, and Imperialism* (Regency, 1989), 41, 66.

games in place and providing a range of both classical and modern subjects. Whilst these schools bore little resemblance to their original foundations, they often emphasised their long histories.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the position of public schools in England's educational system was secure. New foundations were created whilst older ones reformed and expanded. This standardised concept of a public school created a shared culture. Each school was autonomous and had its own curriculum, structural hierarchies and dialects. However, they were all competing for a similar clientele. This helped create a new upper class not based on hereditary titles but the culture imparted by common educational background. The 'public school men' stereotype illustrates this shared culture.[13] The link between schools was reinforced by the universities attended, particularly Oxford and Cambridge. The shared culture amongst boys was reinforced by increasing interaction between schools through sport, military camps and other competitions. The expansion of the public schools enabled them to provide a broader education than their founding charter. This is most notable in the expansion of the sciences, modern languages and the humanities. At many schools, boys were separated into two different branches of the curriculum, the Modern Side and Classical Side. Some schools experimented with formal civics education, although this was rare. The autonomy of the public schools from curriculum control allowed staff to experiment in their subjects. The curriculum, particularly the sciences, expanded and schools began to drop the separation between the classical and modern sides. This was particularly common after the First World War when the Victorian educational theories based around character were challenged. The high casualties and death rate of the First World War shook confidence in the future of the public schools, particularly in the relevance of the education provided. The prominence of public school alumni in leadership roles

---

[13] J. R. de S. Honey, 'Tom Brown's Universe: The Nature and Limits of the Victorian Public Schools Community', in, Ian Bradley and Simon Simon, eds., *The Victorian Public School: Studies in the Development of an Educational Institution* (Gill and Macmillan, 1975), 33.

during the war opened up the schools to criticisms over the education they provided.[14]

In the interwar years, many other potential challenges to the public schools emerged. The rise of the Labour party to government, and its strong position even in opposition, presented an obvious political threat. The expansion of state secondary education was a significant concern of the public schools. Whilst it may not have threatened them financially, it did create fear over state interference in how they operated. The financial crises of the 1930s inflicted significant strain on the public schools. The huge expansion in the number of public schools and places within those schools in the previous two decades meant that a decline in pupils left many schools over-leveraged. This was potentially compounded by many former pupils, and therefore future parents, being killed in the First World War. The Second World War only exacerbated an already difficult situation. Some schools were even more severely impacted by having to evacuate from their usual location. In 1942 the Fleming Committee was established to examine the public schools, and even considered integration with the state system of education. Whilst the commission dismissed compulsory abolition or integration, the report did approve of the need for it to be an option for struggling schools. The committee faced remarkably little opposition from the schools or the politicians who had attended them, suggesting that the public school system was in dire straits by the end of the Second World War.[15] However, the segregation of schooling by ability rather than comprehensive schools was still the majority view of the decision-makers.[16]

The various changes that public schools have undergone demonstrate that they are successful at adapting to the educational desires of parents. The public school system has been able to survive the various challenges by morphing into what the

---

[14] Rupert Wilkinson, *The Prefects: British Leadership and the Public School Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1964), 121–22.

[15] Nicholas Hillman, 'Public Schools and the Fleming Report of 1944: Shunting the First-Class Carriage on to an Immense Siding?', *History of Education* 41, no. 2 (2012): 235–55.

[16] Gary McCulloch, 'British Labour Party Education Policy and Comprehensive Education: From Learning to Live to Circular 10/65', *History of Education* 45, no. 2 (3 March 2016): 230–33.

wealthy sections of society wanted. An aristocratic parent in the eighteenth century would be unlikely to consider much merit in the education called for by a wealthy capitalist parent of the 1920s. However, one consistent element they have provided is the elite culture and personal prestige that opened the doors to the ancient universities and allowed their former pupils to enter leading positions in society.

Public schools were and still are very much part of the English class system, both reflecting and reinforcing it.[17] The public schools were overrepresented in the political sphere, both on the left and right, as well as in other institutions, both public and private. This is still the case in many areas today, as has been demonstrated in research by the Sutton Trust.[18] The public schools were not representative of society as a whole. However, they educated many of the key decision-makers in British national and imperial policy. This means that the experiences of the boys who attended them and how their views were shaped in their adolescent years is worth considering in the broader context of British history. During this period, secondary education, and as a consequence, access to university and the professions was limited. There was not universal access to secondary education, and state funding was minimal. It did slowly expand during the first half of the twentieth century with the education acts of 1902 and 1918. New subjects entered the curriculum, which at some schools had remained primarily classical until the twentieth century. The universities had also begun to change, and new institutions were being formed. However, Oxford and Cambridge continue to recruit a disproportionate number of students from independent schools.[19] The educational world of the first half of the twentieth century was one that favoured those that attended public schools.

---

[17] Macdonald Fraser, *World of the Public School*, 21–22, 125; Gary McCulloch, *Cyril Norwood and the Ideal of Secondary Education* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 6–7, 12–16.

[18] The Sutton Trust, 'The Educational Backgrounds of the Nation's Leading People' (The Sutton Trust, 2012); Philip Kirby, 'Leading People 2016: The Educational Backgrounds of the UK Professional Elite' (Sutton Trust, 2016).

[19] University of Cambridge, 'Undergraduate Admissions Statistics, 2018 Cycle', June 2019, 4; University of Oxford, 'Annual Admissions Statistical Report', May 2019, 18.

Public school boys' opportunities to gain positions of power were not confined to the British Isles. The British Empire required a large administrative force, and public alumni were the favoured candidates for these roles. Public school boys also held a large number of commissions in the Army as well. Rupert Wilkinson has highlighted the irony that the public schools rejected science because they saw it as vocational training.[20] They almost all provided preliminary training for a military career. More important was the wider curriculum designed to allow boys to fit into the culture of the administrative and officer classes. Ross Mahoney has shown how even in the newly formed RAF public schools' alumni quickly rose to the higher ranks.[21] The overall expectation was that public school boys would take up leadership positions in whatever career or organisation they joined. Much research has been done on the over-representation of public schools' pupils in leadership positions.[22] However, less research has been undertaken to explore how the schools aimed to prepare their pupils for these roles. This thesis seeks to examine how boys themselves engaged with this training and how it influenced their development.

Current histories that specifically examine the public schools focus heavily on the institutional history or key figures within the educational establishment. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the broader learning environment of the public schools. This means examining the learners' experience not just of studying contemporary political issues, but how they interacted with others to develop their understanding further. McCulloch and Woodin emphasised this as an important field of study in the history of learning in 2010.[23] This thesis seeks to examine how the schools enabled boys to form their own views on contemporary political issues. The institutional histories provide a thorough background of the nature of the schools, and this study intends to build on that research by examining how pupils within the institutions

---

[20] Wilkinson, *Prefects*, 17–19, 79.

[21] Ross Wayne Mahoney, 'The Forgotten Career of Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, 1892-1937: A Social and Cultural History of Leadership Development in the Interwar Royal Air Force' (PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2015), 344–50.

[22] McCulloch, *Philosophers and Kings*.

[23] Gary McCulloch and Tom Woodin, 'Towards a Social History of Learners and Learning', *Oxford Review of Education* 36, no. 2 (April 2010): 136.

responded to their learning environment. How boys used the educational tools available to them to discuss politics, the freedoms they had to do so and how political ideas took root in the schools are areas that are not covered by institutional histories.

Memoirs and popular media have also looked at the public schools. Memoirs and biographies of former public school boys, both influential and obscure, help shed light onto day-to-day activities that are often not recorded in official histories. Memoirs do have disadvantages: they are from a self-selected group and often written at a later stage of life. However, they do provide a much more intimate and personal account of school life should not be overlooked. This is particularly true when it comes to historically taboo subjects, such as homosexuality and abuse. Former public school boys often wrote fictional stories which ranged from praise, through satire and exposé and onto outright criticism. The most well-known fictional public school boy and the book that started the genre is Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days*, with numerous adaptations and spinoffs across various formats.[24] Authors have been able to use the social divisiveness of public schools to highlight social divisions in their stories.[25] These fictitious creations provide further insight into how public schools are viewed both internally and externally and how they depict divisions and class consciousness in society.

2. Aims

Previous research has not thoroughly examined the political culture in public schools. Individuals' experiences have been examined in biographies, and many schools' histories give broad generalisations of the political leanings of schools. However, how boys engaged with and discussed their contemporaneous political ideas has not. This thesis will demonstrate that boys had a lively political culture that engaged with both topical issues and broader political thought. Whilst they were

[24] Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays, and, Tom Brown at Oxford*, Tom Brown at Oxford (Ware: Ware : Wordsworth Editions, 2007); *Tom Brown's School Days*, Radio, Radio (BBC Radio 4 Extra, 2008); Dave Moore, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Film (ITV, Company Pictures, 2005).

[25] William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, Educational ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1954).

isolated from their local society and the home environment, the boys were kept up to date with current affairs. Political culture does not refer exclusively to party allegiance, although party politics did have an influence. The much broader nature of politics is what concerns this thesis. All major political ideologies and worldviews are considered: capitalism, socialism and fascism, nationalism, imperialism and internationalism, militarism and pacifism, masculinity, faith and service. Boys' use of these concepts to help frame their understanding of topical questions will show how their early political development began at school. The presence of both mainstream ideas and more radical ones demonstrates a level of autonomy in boys' political development. Elements of counter-cultures within the schools themselves, or within the larger public school group, are also identified. This thesis asses these ideologies' ability to be inculcated amongst boys. More importantly, it explored boys' ability to form their own worldviews and relate these to their environment, their peers and wider society.

This thesis addresses three research questions:

1. How deeply did boys engage with political ideas within the public schools?
2. How important was associational culture in fostering interest in political ideas?
3. What influences did boys engage with and use to form their political identities?

These questions have been glossed over in histories of public schools and their pupils. Biographies of famous figures often cover their school life. However, they often fail to explore the role of school society in their early exploration of political ideas. Boys at all public schools were not there to learn a prescribed curriculum but the range of cultural and social skills necessary to function within elite society. This thesis will provide a context within which individual life experiences can be better understood. Based on a case study of two schools, this thesis will show how the public school system fostered an early interest in active participation in politics. The case studies will show different ways and ideas that boys engaged with, but the underlying methods used by the schools are relevant to all public schools, as well as other educational institutions.

3. Structure

Chapter three examines how debating societies, as well as the wider associational culture in public schools, functioned. It draws from a range of schools in order to show how associational culture was a feature of all public schools. By demonstrating the universality of associational culture, it is possible to place the two case studies within their wider context. It shows how associational culture was considered part of a public school education that was training boys for leadership roles. It concludes with a case study on how women's suffrage was debated within the schools during the early twentieth century. This is to highlight how boys saw the duties and qualifications for citizenship, voting and by extension their own future roles as leading figures in society.

Chapters four and five are concerned with the first period of study, the end of the long nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries. Chapter four looks at how imperialism was important to the public schools, both in terms of national and global politics, but also to the schools' identity. The everyday life of the Empire was displayed to the boys through a wide range of sources. This chapter begins by looking at how the schools introduced and tied in the boys to the British Empire. It covers both social aspects of imperial life as well as political topics, most notably tariff reform. Whilst the latter would generally be considered an economic issue the way in which tariff reform was discussed at both schools demonstrates the pervasiveness of imperialism in the debates of the period. Boys' views on imperialism, whilst overwhelmingly positive when concerned with British imperialism, were more mixed when other powers' empires were considered. By comparing their views on the British and other empires, it is possible to see how boys supported and justified imperialism. This chapter concludes with an examination of a conflict in British imperialism with the Irish Home Rule and independence movements. Here aspects of imperial authority, governance, religion and race are all seen. The debates on Ireland allowed boys to explore a range of potential forms that the British Empire could take. Ideas surrounding federalism, oppression and even withdrawal were explored.

Militarism in Britain was often overlooked at the time and often contrasted with pre-First World War Germany and Prussia. Chapter five explores how boys viewed martial culture, how they linked this to race and their interest in applying new technologies to war. The schools themselves were semi-militarised, having Officer Training Corps which whilst technically voluntary contained the majority of both schools' pupils, as well as masters serving as officers. The way in which a military life was promoted went beyond the direct provision of training. This chapter shows how military life was made accessible to boys in much the same way imperial life was, and this was often intertwined. The linking of war and leisure culture is clearly visible in letters from the Second Boer War and at the outbreak of the First World War, and the contrast between this and the realities that came with the prolonged industrial war makes for an interesting shift in attitudes. Other aspects of society can be seen as being militarised within public schools. Race, often a feature of imperialism, was also an important part of militarism. Claims of racial superiority, expressed both explicitly and implicitly, were used as a justification for the use of force in the British Empire. Boys were keen to discuss science, particularly the exciting new field of aeronautics, in a military context rather than a civilian one prior to the First World War. The chapter closes off with a look at the topic of conscription, an action that would create a more explicitly militarised society. Here the arguments for and against open militarism are seen, and so the contemporary perception of Britain not experiencing militarism can be clearly seen. It also allows for examples of how other activities seen as alternatives to conscription were promoted for their military benefits.

Chapter six explores the uncertainty that covered politics in the aftermath of the First World War. The early interwar period saw the upheaval of political systems across the world. In Britain, there was no constitutional overhaul, yet the expansion of the franchise to all men and some women theoretically overturned the political landscape. The changing world allowed for new ideas to take root, both in policy and in practice. New forms of active political participation through associational cultures sprung up both nationally and within the schools. Participation varied but at Gresham's a more vibrant associational culture took hold, with the League of Nations Union and Sociological Society both getting off to successful starts. At both schools, the emergence of new ideologies caught boys' attention. The rise of the Labour party

gave room for socialist ideas and policies to be seen as viable. Discussions on new forms of authoritarianism on both the left and right-wing began during the interwar period. Rather than the pre-war discussions, which focused on the inherited power of monarchs and aristocracies, boys began to consider the potential for absolute power to be held by a civil or military figure. Boys also explored how this form of government could be achieved and legitimised. Education, both their own and provision for others, became even more popular. This was in part due to the expansion of the franchise and ideas seen in debates over female suffrage re-emerge here. This chapter serves to bridge the gap between the certainties of the pre-First World War imperialists and the clouded political environment of the 1930s.

Chapters seven and eight look at this uncertainly through two forms. Firstly, chapter seven looks at how the ideological developments of the interwar period became the subject of debate. At this point, boys were looking towards a future when a change was inevitable. This chapter will cover the dominance of ideologically driven politics in the late interwar period. This covers both national and international spheres. The General Strike is the starting point; ideological lines became more clearly divided. The Strike made the threat of communism seem real, even if it did not reach revolutionary levels in Britain. Across Europe, the conflict between left- and right-wing ideologies at the expense of liberal democracies became more entrenched. At Harrow, there was a much greater effort to seek expert knowledge on politics. Interwar associational culture began to be implemented with the formation of the ’27 Club, which held regular political lectures. Harrow, in contrast to Gresham’s, also began to seriously engage with the ideas that would form part of the post-war settlement.

Finally, chapter eight examines how the political culture at both schools became more active in the late 1920s and 1930s. At Harrow, the arrival of new headmaster Cyril Norwood and his reforms to the sports curriculum and power structures provide an excellent example of active political participation. The conflict between old and new methods of implementing change also provides a small-scale example of the conflicts over democracy happening across the world. At both schools, a new literary culture emerged. This is particularly visible at Gresham’s where the English literature society began a journal of short stories. These often had political overtones and

several boys who would go on to have connections with various left-wing organisations authored pieces. The presence of political science fiction in the journal links boys to a wider literary culture that was present in late interwar Britain. By exploring such writing, the early formation of political leanings can be seen. This chapter explores active participation by boys in politics not in the traditional setting of debating, but still within the associational culture that the schools created. However, the scale of literature produced and published, and the content of this literature, demonstrates novel ways of engaging with politics for both schools.

Chapter 1: Literature review

The literature review will focus on three key areas, separated into subsections: the public school system, educational theories and the curriculum, and society and culture. The literature demonstrates a deep interest in various aspects of boys' public schools, their pupils, and the issues that they both faced. However, there is very little material about the boys' own views. The focus of most research to date has been on the institutional level, whether that has been the schools themselves, the curriculum provided, or the society that they participated in. Biographies and memoirs have explored individual experiences of public school life. However, these are selective, focusing on how one individual was affected by their school experience, with perhaps a mention of friends and a significant teacher. They often fail to explore the wider context of the school environment and culture. The lack of research on the learners' experience of the public schools means that the impact of these factors is unknown. The research on other types of schools and university students demonstrates how important learners' experiences are in building an understanding of how educational institutions, and their members, reacted to contemporary events. This thesis will contribute to this literature by exploring elite male experiences of education.

This thesis will also contribute to various aspects of British history. School pupils went on to participate in elite culture, both locally and nationally. The history of associational culture has shown the breadth of cross-class involvement in various movements. This thesis explores young males' early involvement with associational culture and will help show how early training allowed them to participate in adult societies more easily. Broader social trends can be seen through the parental decisions in what sort of education they wanted for their sons and how schools provided this. This thesis intends to provide an understanding of how public school boys treated their contemporary political environment. Young people are not absent from political histories. However, elite young people are often overlooked, despite their access and influence on politics, both in youth and later in life.

1. Historiography of the public schools

The public school system

Scholarly interest in the history of public schools, and the history of education as a discipline, grew during the educational reforms of the 1960s. In the UK, the History of Education Society was formed in 1967, and its journal launched in 1972. Briggs, writing in the first issue, saw this rise in interest as something driven by the educational reforms of the 1960s.[1] Briggs also suggested that the history of education was well situated to make use of the new methodologies that were arising from the growth of social history. Whilst public schools were outside of state control the government's actions could potentially have an impact on them. The system of education that had emerged in England and Wales following the Second World War had accommodated the public schools. The tripartite system created a model which left ample room, and even tacit support for the public schools. The Labour government of Harold Wilson (1964-1970) began implementing a comprehensive system. This directly challenged the alleged social benefits that public schools claimed to provide. Thomas Bamford's *Rise of the Public Schools* began a growth in scholarly interest in the public schools as institutions. His work informed much of the subsequent work on public schools.[2] Bamford highlighted the collective identity of public schools in the form of muscular Christianity, athletics, and the middle classes that formed during the nineteenth century.[3] Bamford also analysed how schools' relationship with institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge universities, as well as the Empire, influenced the style of education they provided.[4] During the 1970s other historians began researching public schools, beginning a new wave of scholarly research into the subject. Brian Gardner provided an overview of all schools that had a claim to public school status, highlighting the broad nature of the term.[5] His book provides an excellent reference text of public schools and the variety between them.

---

[1] Asa Briggs, 'The Study of the History of Education', *History of Education* 1, no. 1 (January 1972): 5.

[2] Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*.

[3] Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, 8, 19–20, 49–50, 57.

[4] Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, 108–13, 213–42.

[5] Gardner, *Public Schools*.

His work raised two key points of interest. Firstly, the difference between the original grammar schools formed after the Reformation and the changes brought about after reforms of the late 1800s. Secondly, the importance of old boys as part of a school's identity. Gardner's cultural history creates an understanding of the schools as communities with their own histories and social structures.

The public schools have continuously reformed and changed, and being able to compare their responses to various challenges provides a key understanding of how they functioned.[6] In particular, Brian Simon discussed the public schools' isolation from wider society which provided the microcosm in which boys developed their identities, and his work informs an important element of this thesis.[7] The relative isolation that the boys experienced whilst at school would have diminished influences from outside the school, such as family and media.

The schools' culture, especially in relation to Empire, has been extensively covered by P. J. Rich.[8] Public schools have often featured in the histories of the British Empire. Rich, however, has delved into the wider culture and identity that they shared with institutions and symbols of power. This ranged from clubs and clothing to the culture of the civil service and the military. This continuous culture extended the public school identity beyond a boy's school days. It also excluded those from outside from fully participating in these institutions, strengthening the public schools' influence on society. Rich's work is supported by Noel Annan's *The Dons*, which examined connections between educationalists within English society. Annan described a similar picture of headmasters and educationalists coming from a similar cultural, and often familial background, closing off the society of public schools even further.[9] Public school boys had near-exclusive access to positions of power, but seemingly few influences to prepare them for these roles. This thesis will challenge

---

[6] Macdonald Fraser, *World of the Public School*; Bradley and Simon, *Victorian Public School*.

[7] Brian Simon, 'Introduction', Bradley and Simon, *Victorian Public School*, 1–9.

[8] Rich, *Elixir of Empire*; Paul J. Rich, *Chains of Empire: English Public Schools, Masonic Cabalism, Historical Causality and Imperial Clubdom* (London: Regency press, 1991).

[9] Noel Annan, *The Dons: Mentors, Eccentrics, and Geniuses* (London: Harper Collins, 1999); William Whyte, 'The Intellectual Aristocracy Revisited', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 10, no. 1 (2005): 15–45.

this view in part by demonstrating how boys sought out and engaged with information about society beyond the school.

Interest in the history of public schools was not confined to the second half of the twentieth century however, and efforts had been made to discuss their history before. Cyril Norwood, headmaster of Marlborough (1917-1925) and then Harrow (1926-1934), outlined what he believed to be their history and ideals.[10] He used this to discuss how they were functioning in the 1920s in his *The English Tradition of Education*.[11] His version of the public schools' early history is largely fantastical, tracing a heritage back to Alfred the Great.[12] His analysis of the public schools as they were provides a valuable insight into what he saw as the strengths and weaknesses. Norwood was not writing merely to describe the public schools, however. Norwood had been recently appointed as headmaster of Harrow and was attempting to implement reforms in the face of strong resistance from more traditional masters. The 1944 Fleming Report, which Norwood was not involved in, provided a more sober view of public schools' history; in particular, it highlights the radical differences between the public school of the interwar period and the earlier foundations that the schools claimed as their history.[13] These two views help provide a snapshot of their contemporary society, albeit one that is in favour of public schools, written by men who had attended them.

Valuable scholarly work that focused on the spatial experience of education will also inform this thesis. Burke, Cunningham and Grosvenor noted the growing interest in the physical environment of education in 2010.[14] McCulloch has examined how James Bryce and the Schools Inquiry Commission was particularly concerned with a

---

[10] Cyril Norwood, *The English Tradition of Education* (London: John Murray, 1929), 9–129.

[11] Norwood, *English Tradition of Education*, 131–240.

[12] Norwood, *English Tradition of Education*, 9–19.

[13] Fleming Committee, 'The Public Schools'.

[14] Catherine Burke, Peter Cunningham, and Ian Grosvenor, '"Putting Education in Its Place": Space, Place and Materialities in the History of Education', *History of Education* 39, no. 6 (2010): 677–80.

whole range of sensory factors in the educational setting.[15] William Whyte has examined the importance of a specific architectural style in defining what a public school should look like, and how this was part of creating their identity.[16] Jane Hamlett has explored the importance of domestic influences on boys' spaces within public schools.[17] The role of individual housemasters and their wives impacted the level of domesticity and familiarity that boys would experience transitioning from the home to the school.[18] Medway and Kingwell study of the importance of the local environment in English teaching at a comprehensive school in the second half of the twentieth century has interesting parallels to the public schools.[19] They showed how the local environment could be used to encourage active participation in discussion and argument in writing. This is particularly relevant for Harrow where local issues and the expansion of London led boys to engage with local political issues. The link between the levels of pupil interest and the personal relevance of topics under debate will be clear throughout this thesis. Historical geographers and geographers have explored the learners' experiences of educational environments in an edited collection by Kraftl and Mills.[20] This focuses primarily on the second half of the twentieth century, and education outside of the classroom, such as youth clubs. These studies have helped create a broader understanding of learners' experiences. Debating societies have a series of spatial elements to consider: the layout and style of the room, the delivery of speeches and the formality of proceedings. Reports on societies' and individual's expeditions also feature commentary on sensory experiences.

---

[15] Gary McCulloch, 'Sensing the Realities of English Middle-Class Education: James Bryce and the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1865–1868', *History of Education* 40, no. 5 (2011): 599–613.

[16] William Whyte, 'Building a Public School Community 1860–1910', *History of Education* 32, no. 6 (2003): 601–26.

[17] Jane Hamlett, *At Home in the Institution: Material Life in Asylums, Lodging Houses and Schools in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 62–87.

[18] Hamlett, *At Home in the Institution*, 73.

[19] Peter Medway and Patrick Kingwell, 'A Curriculum in Its Place: English Teaching in One School 1946–1963', *History of Education* 39, no. 6 (November 2010): 749–65.

[20] Sarah Mills and Peter Kraftl, *Informal Education, Childhood and Youth: Geographies, Histories, Practices* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

Other disciplines have sought to examine the public schools, such as sociology and geography. Ian Weinberg and Ted Topper have both explored the financial, social and political reasons public schools survived.[21] Topper amusingly points out that in 1997 the prospect of a smaller armed forces posed a greater threat to public schools than Tony Blair's incoming government.[22] Historians have often pointed out the significance of 'old boy' organisations in a school's identity and prestige. Weinberg expanded on this by demonstrating their influence over the school in a manner similar to parent-teacher associations in the USA.[23] He also explored how the family role of socialisation is taken on by schools, creating a close attachment between the school and its pupils.[24] Sol Gamsu has examined the geography of elite education and access to Oxford and Cambridge.[25] He highlighted that wealth allowed access to schools that encouraged applications to more elite universities. The concentration of this wealth in the South East of England would suggest an already limited access to public schools and a cultural background more closely associated with the Home Counties rather than England as a whole. These approaches help inform this thesis of the wider socio-economic and cultural background of the public schools' clientele and their position in English society.

Both academic and less scholarly, yet still useful, commentaries about public schools engage with the public interest and controversy that surrounds the public schools. Public schools and the public school system feature in popular histories as well as fiction. Public schools are a politically contentious topic, and so popular histories are often written with a sense of purpose. These can take a historical approach, such as

---

[21] Ian Weinberg, *The English Public Schools: The Sociology of Elite Education* (New York: Atherton Press, 1967); Ted Tapper, *Fee-Paying Schools and Educational Change in Great Britain: Between the State and the Marketplace* (London: The Woburn Press, 1997).

[22] Tapper, *Fee-Paying Schools*, 16; Margaret Hodge, 'We Need Our Public Schools', *New Statesman*, 1997.

[23] Weinberg, *English Public Schools*, 154–55.

[24] Weinberg, *English Public Schools*, 50–51.

[25] Sol Gamsu, 'Maintaining the South-Eastern Skew: The Contemporary Geography of Educational Power and the Structural History of English Elite Education' (EERA History of Education Summer School, University of Groningen, 2016).

David Turner's book, *The Decline and Rise of the Public School*.[26] As the title suggests, Turner believed that the public schools would continue in strength. He raised important points, however, about their role not in promoting upward social mobility, but instead preventing downward social mobility amongst their members.[27] This, along with other factors such as patronage and marriage, have maintained the exclusive section of society that public schools create. This will be important in this thesis when considering how far schools held collective identities, as well as how boys maintained a school identity later in life. Anthony Seldon and David Walsh's examination of the public schools and the First World War also fits into this category.[28] Produced for the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War their book is as much a commemoration as a history of the public schools during that time. Seldon, as the Master of Wellington College at the time, praises the educational system, but also provides a useful amount of statistical information regarding public school boys during the First World War, and how they viewed their education as preparation for the war. Roy Lowe examined the history of how public schools came to hold charitable status and the tax benefits that this provides in the twenty-first Century.[29] Lowe highlighted how the links between the Anglican Church and the public schools secured their status as charitable educational organisations, despite the immense wealth of both the schools and their clientele. Lowe uses the history of charity legislation and education to demonstrate the lax regulation that allows schools and parents to benefit financially in the present day. Both their detractors and supporters engage with the histories of public schools to comment on the current system. A historical understanding of the public schools provides insights into contemporary social questions, and this thesis will expand on this knowledge.

---

[26] Turner, *Old Boys*.

[27] Turner, *Old Boys*, 26–48, 178–84.

[28] Anthony Seldon and David Walsh, *Public Schools and The Great War* (Pen and Sword, 2013).

[29] Roy Lowe, 'The Charitable Status of Elite Schools: The Origins of a National Scandal', *History of Education* 49, no. 1 (2 January 2020): 4–17.

Institutional histories

Institutional histories provide a chance to examine individual schools within the broader historiography of public schools. These histories, however, are authorised versions and therefore present a favourable view of the schools. They tend to come in two forms: the narrative history of the school and the extended prospectus-style book. The target audience of both would be old boys and, especially for the prospectus-style histories, parents.

A fear of post-war Labour governments was a likely reason for governors authorising new histories in the second half of the twentieth century. Examples include Labourde's *Harrow School, Yesterday and Today* and Linnell and Douglas' *History and Register of Gresham's School*, where Linnell wrote the history and Douglas composed the register.[30] These both sought to connect their histories and traditions to the present school. Labourde goes to exceptional lengths to link the school to the earth of Harrow Hill, and the natural environment being a feature of Harrow's success. [31] His history of Harrow is reminiscent of a nationalist polemic. In contrast, Linnell was faced with the challenge of linking the past to a school which suddenly and drastically changed in the early 1900s. To do this, he focused on connecting the modern, more practical education to the founder John Gresham's business career and the connection with the Fishmongers Guild.[32] Along with the deterministic history, both authors seek to show that the schools have always been keen to reform and adopt new methods of teaching.[33] These two histories heavily promote contrasting ideas of schools as rooted in tradition whilst constantly changing to provide the most advanced education. This contradiction with reality was highlighted by the Fleming Report.[34] However, this does make clear two features which are

---

[30] Andrew B. Douglas and Charles L. S. Linnell, *Gresham's School History and Register, 1555-1954* (Ipswich: W. S. Cowell Ltd., 1955); Edward Dalrymple Laborde, *Harrow School, Yesterday and Today* (Winchester Publications, 1948).

[31] Laborde, *Harrow School*, 13–15.

[32] Douglas and Linnell, *Gresham's School History and Register*, 11–13.

[33] Douglas and Linnell, *Gresham's School History and Register*, 17–21; Laborde, *Harrow School*, 38, 62–63.

[34] Fleming Committee, 'The Public Schools'.

important to public schools. First, the significance of tradition to public school culture. Secondly, their adaptiveness, which was not just to meet a political challenge but also to appeal to parents' changing educational desires.

'Old Boys' are a significant feature of public school histories but can be used in very different ways. Labourde's references to the Old Harrovians appear to have been for prestige purposes. Images of Peel and Byron's names carved in the Fourth Form Room and busts of Palmerston and Byron in the chapel linked famous old boys directly to the school.[35] Arnold dominates histories of Rugby School, but they have also featured other Old Rugbeians. C. R. Evers described the history of the school as one of biographies of men of 'character' throughout its entire existence, and he concluded with a list of current notable Old Rugbeians.[36]

Douglas used the register to provide a complete, concise list of all Old Greshamians.[37] This may have been because there were fewer famous figures on whom the history could focus. The limited amount of information about each boy is compensated for by the sheer number of boys. The most significant feature of this register was the plan to keep an inter-leaved copy in the library. This was to be accessible to current boys and continuously updated. This would have created a direct link between current and old boys. They would have been able to literally see their predecessors and contemporaries together, creating an element of a cross-generational identity.[38] Given Gresham's recent transformation into a public school, this may have been a conscious decision to help build a sense of collective identity. This would possibly have been more effective at creating a sense of continuity between different generations of boys than the use of famous Old Harrovians by Labourde. Whilst other schools produced registers, these were smaller, more regular publications.

---

[35] Laborde, *Harrow School*, 83, 161.

[36] C. R. Evers, *Rugby* (Glasgow: Blackie & Son, Ltd., 1939), 1, 166–74.

[37] Douglas and Linnell, *Gresham's School History and Register*, 34–287.

[38] Douglas and Linnell, *Gresham's School History and Register*, foreword.

The histories aimed at promoting the school share a common feature with extended prospectus-style school histories; they focus on buildings and boys. Linnell described the buildings, all relatively recently built, in a short section.[39] The extensive register compensates for the lack of architectural history. Sue Smart's *When Heroes Die* focused on individual Gresham's boys who served in the First World War but built these narratives around the construction of the school chapel.[40] Labourde intertwined his section on buildings and boys. It constitutes almost two-thirds of his book, demonstrating its importance.[41] Labourd used the examples of names carved on walls in study rooms to attach the boys to the buildings. Evers provided a literal guided tour around Rugby school.[42] The importance of this connection between boys and buildings highlights the sense of community which schools wished to display.

Schools have also used commercial publishers to produce histories that read like extended prospectuses. Their role is to promote the school as an organisation, rather than provide a deeper understanding of its history. Profile Editions, formerly Third Millennium, has produced a range of histories for both schools and businesses. Their reviews page, which suggests their work is an opportunity to 'build your brand', demonstrates the importance of the public perception of a school's history.[43] Robert Dudley's *Harrow: Portrait of an English School* was produced by Third Millennium to shine a positive light on Harrow's history. [44] Various chapters were dedicated to describing the buildings of the school both in their original and contemporary states. The section on the Vaughan library also followed the model that Labourde set. Dudley described the historical artefacts relating to the school or famous Old Harrovians held there as much as the building itself.[45] This emphasis on the buildings intends to give the schools in these histories a sense of permanence,

---

[39] Douglas and Linnell, *Gresham's School History and Register*, 24–26.

[40] Sue Smart, *When Heroes Die: A Forgotten Archive Reveals the Last Days of the School Friends Who Died for Britain* (Breedon, 2001).

[41] Laborde, *Harrow School*, 67–214.

[42] Evers, *Rugby*, 109–25.

[43] Profile Editions, 'What Our Clients Say', accessed 10 May 2020.

[44] Robert Dudley, *Harrow: Portrait of an English School* (Third Millennium, 2004).

[45] Dudley, *Harrow*, 42–44.

particularly for Harrow. Catherine Walston has edited a similar prospectus-history for Rugby, which waits for only twelve pages to launch a section on Tom Brown and Thomas Arnold.[46] The contributors to *With a Fine Disregard* focus on the activities and life within the school more than Dudley's work on Harrow, giving the book an even greater feeling of being a prospectus. Walston also has various contributions from current and former staff and pupils, a continuation of the focus on members of the school, particularly famous ones. Schools' use of such publications highlights how active they are in creating their own historical narrative.

More critical histories have been produced in the twenty-first century, however, such as Christopher Tyerman's *A History of Harrow School*.[47] Tyerman opened by admitting that Harrow could be elitist and even snobbish, and he did not shy away from tackling controversial issues such as sexual abuse.[48] Despite being supported by the governors and headmaster, on publication Tyerman had to defend himself in the national press against masters' criticisms.[49] These histories are rare but do provide a much more detailed analysis of how a public school functioned. The emphasis of Tyerman's history is still, however, on the institution, and individual boys' experiences rarely feature.

The most common feature of public school histories is the idea of a re-founder. The first headmaster to gain cult status was Thomas Arnold at Rugby School, headmaster 1828-1841. Even histories which examine the school after his death cannot avoid featuring him.[50] Labourde viewed Charles Vaughan, headmaster 1844-1859, as the re-founder at Harrow and gave him credit for a seemingly impossible list of achievements: reform of the school on Arnoldian lines, reconciliation with local

---

[46] Catherine Walston, *With a Fine Disregard* (Third Millennium, 2006).

[47] Christopher Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School, 1324-1991* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

[48] Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School*, 1–2, 270–74, 286.

[49] Sandra Barwick, 'Harrow Masters Upset by Tale of Bullying and Wife-Swapping', *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 December 2000.

[50] John Barclay Hope-Simpson, *Rugby Since Arnold: A History of Rugby School from 1842* (St. Martin's Press, 1967); Arnold Whitridge, *Dr. Arnold of Rugby* (Kessinger Publishing, 2004); Frances J. Woodward, *The Doctor's Disciples* (Oxford University Press, 1954); Norman Wymer, *Dr. Arnold of Rugby* (R. Hale, 1953).

people, widespread support of his appointment and increasing the number of boys at the school.[51] For Linnell the re-founder of Gresham's was George Howson, headmaster 1900-1919. Linnell credited him with a similar list of achievements: moving the school to a new site, raising numbers and transforming the school from a local grammar school to a public school, also apparently without the local population being angry at losing their school.[52] This is a common trend in school histories, and stems from the role of Thomas Arnold in reforming Rugby and the public school education system. P. J. Rich pointed out the easiest way to determine who is considered the re-founding headmaster: they are usually buried at the school.[53] The re-founder status provides schools with a chance to bridge the historical gap between the Reformation-era grammar schools for local scholars and the modern public schools for the upper and upper-middle classes. The hagiographical tone used to describe these headmasters often takes on propagandist character. By attaching the reforms to a single headmaster, school histories have made it appear as if their school was revolutionary in its transformation. They often ignore the importance of other developments, such as the threat of state intervention or the decline of the schools before these reforms.

Prominent individuals

Whilst re-founders have a prominent position within the schools' own histories, some educationalists had a broader influence. These figures influenced both the public school system and the emerging provision of state education. Thomas Arnold and Edward Thring have both been credited with creating the landscape that existed by the beginning of the twentieth century. In the twentieth century, Cyril Norwood was a hugely influential figure during his career, and George Howson was seen as implementing relatively liberal and progressive reforms at Gresham's. Biographies of prominent figures have often had to compete with hagiographical pieces by their supporters. Hagiographies offer some insight into their educational policies, but also demonstrate how widespread their popularity was. Biographies, alongside memoirs,

---

[51] Laborde, *Harrow School*, 52–53.

[52] Douglas and Linnell, *Gresham's School History and Register*, 24–25.

[53] Rich, *Elixir of Empire*, 41, 66.

provide an insight into the school at a specific time. This is useful in understanding either a particular educationalist's approach to the public schools or an individual pupil's experience of their schooling. However, it is limited in that it is only one person's experience. This thesis will expand on these insights by providing the context in which these people have been written about. This will help show both the uniqueness of some individuals, but also how their school experiences were not always unique.

Thomas Arnold has been a figure of significant interest. Bamford examined his educational practices and provided a selection of Arnold's works which highlighted his focus on active Christian citizenship, more commonly referred to as 'muscular Christianity'.[54] Bamford made an important distinction that this included team sports, but was not explicitly the cult of games that many historians still mistake it for.[55] Bamford later argued that schools would refer to their reforms as 'Arnoldian' partly to overcome opposition, and partly to give their school a claim to be a public school.[56] Most writers acknowledge that a part of the reason for Arnold's dominant position in the history of public school reformers is due to his pupils becoming headmasters of other schools or contributing to other aspects of education.[57] The number of biographies and frequency of their publication also reflects Arnold's significance.[58]

Arnold's political leanings and his running of the school have been the topic of debate. Bamford highlighted his disdain for the causes of poverty and his desire to instil this view in the boys he taught.[59] Others have disputed whether he was a liberal

---

[54] Thomas Arnold and T. W. Bamford, *Thomas Arnold on Education: A Selection from His Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 6–7, 11–12, 17–18.

[55] Arnold and Bamford, *Arnold on Education*, 71–73.

[56] T. W. Bamford, 'Thomas Arnold and the Victorian Idea of a Public School', in, Bradley and Simon, *Victorian Public School*, 58–71.

[57] R. L. Archer, *Secondary Education in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1966), 69; Gardner, *Public Schools*, 105; Turner, *Old Boys*, 95; Woodward, *Doctor's Disciples*.

[58] Terence Copley, *Black Tom: Arnold of Rugby: The Myth and the Man* (A&C Black, 2002); Hope-Simpson, *Rugby Since Arnold*; Whitridge, *Arnold of Rugby*; Wymer, *Arnold of Rugby*.

[59] Arnold and Bamford, *Arnold on Education*, 13–14, 47.

or a totalitarian. This has been based on his emphasis on boys being self-governing and his emphasis on Christianity's role in the state and education.[60] Bamford has argued that despite giving power to prefects, Arnold reduced the freedom boys had held by increasing the content of the curriculum and informal-curriculum.[61] Both sides have valid arguments, and the moral totalitarianism could be seen as a means of instilling discipline and reducing the need for direct staff control. Historians have not just debated the balance of power within public schools, but boys also discussed this. However, historians have not addressed boys' own opinions about school politics. To fulfil his desire to Christianise education Arnold combined the role of school chaplain with the headmaster and he was critical of those who undertook secular education, such as his description of University College London as 'the godless college in Gower Street'.[62] The role of the headmaster as a padre and the influence this gave him over boys' worldviews has also lacked detailed study.

Arnold also formed the public perception of a public school headmaster, and, to some extent, continues to do so, with the success of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*.[63] The figures of Arnold and Tom Brown continue to influence discussions on public schools. Two chapters of Bradley and Simon's *The Victorian Public School* specifically reference *Tom Brown's School Days*.[64] MacDonald Fraser's book also contains two chapters titled 'A day in the Growth of Brown Minor' and 'The Shadow of Tom Brown'.[65] This continued presence of Arnold as the figure who dominates public school history makes him a critical figure in almost all studies of public schools, even when he pre-dates the period of interest. It also highlights the

---

[60] R. L. Archer, *Secondary Education*, 23; Brian John, 'Thomas Arnold as Educator of the Liberal Conscience', *The Journal of General Education* 19, no. 2 (1967): 132–40; David Nicholls, 'The Totalitarianism of Thomas Arnold', *The Review of Politics* 29, no. 4 (1967): 518–25.

[61] Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, 74–80; Bamford, 'Thomas Arnold and the Victorian Idea of a Public School', in, Bradley and Simon, *Victorian Public School*, 64–67.

[62] Quoted in Michael Bentley, 'The Evolution and Dissemination of Historical Knowledge', in *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain*, ed. Martin Daunton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 177.

[63] Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays, and, Tom Brown at Oxford*; Gardner, *Public Schools*, 103–4.

[64] Bradley and Simon, *Victorian Public School*.

[65] Macdonald Fraser, *World of the Public School*.

influence of public schools in popular culture in historians' interpretations of public schools.

Edward Thring, headmaster of Uppingham 1853-1887, was another prominent reformer. He introduced the concept of the 'Almighty Wall' which emphasised the effect of physical space and environment of a school on boys' education both intellectually and morally.[66] Turner demonstrated how important this idea had become in attracting parents to use the schools by examining school brochures. He found that a school's good drainage was described alongside aristocratic patronage.[67] The growing influence of the school over pupils' lives was not just limited to the content of the curriculum but also, as seen above, in the school environment itself. Thring's influence came at a time when public schools were expanding their grounds and buildings. His ideas can be seen in the growth of school playing fields and the construction of new boarding houses.

Thring was also responsible for two significant developments in wider public school society: the mission and the Headmasters' Conference.[68] The school mission was an extension of Arnold's muscular Christianity and quickly spread to other schools and universities.[69] Leinster-Mackay highlighted Thring's Christianity which, following Arnold, he spread to the boys as chaplain and headmaster.[70] Leinster-Mackay also argued that Thring sought to expand extra-curricular activities further than just sport, such as with music, so that all boys could find some way to contribute to society.[71] Leinster-Mackay's work, however, is a prime example of the hagiographical style that

---

[66] R. L. Archer, *Secondary Education*, 54–55; Donald P. Leinster-Mackay, *The Educational World of Edward Thring: A Centenary Study* (Falmer Press, 1987), 85.

[67] Turner, *Old Boys*, 108.

[68] Leinster-Mackay, *The Educational World of Edward Thring*, 72–73, 87–92, 98–100.

[69] Nigel Scotland, *Squires in the Slums: Settlements and Missions in Late-Victorian London* (London: IB Tauris, 2007), 21–22, 101–2, 117–18.

[70] Leinster-Mackay, *The Educational World of Edward Thring*, 8–12, 116–17.

[71] Leinster-Mackay, *The Educational World of Edward Thring*, 71–72, 84, 90.

biographies can take, even going so far as to describe Thring as a Moses-like figure.[72]

Work on George Howson is more limited, with only one extended piece of work by J. H. Simpson.[73] Simpson was a master under Howson and became headmaster of a progressive school and his book focused on Howson's educational methods.[74] Simpson described Howson as rejecting the typical model of a public school, in particular his opposition to classics and athletics.[75] Howson's role in providing an alternative to the rigid separation of boys of different ages and masters was also a feature that Simpson praised, and was noted by Cyril Norwood, suggesting his influence extended beyond his own school.[76] Norwood also suggested that Howson's practices were continuing in the 1920s.[77]

Cyril Norwood was an active promoter of the public schools.[78] McCulloch's biographical study of Norwood examined the class divisions within the public school system. He argued that they are not a single unified upper-class or middle-class group, but a series of small but noticeable tiers.[79] This is important to consider when comparing public schools. Whilst being an accepted grouping, there are divisions between the schools. McCulloch described how Norwood was able to utilise the traditions of public schools to push through reforms, highlighting Norwood's educational agenda as well as the imagined and romanticised nature of history and tradition within public school culture.[80] Rob Freathy has also examined Norwood's

---

[72] Leinster-Mackay, *The Educational World of Edward Thring*, 12.

[73] J. H. Simpson, *Howson of Holt: A Study in School Life* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1925).

[74] W. A. C. Stewart, *The Educational Innovators: Progressive Schools 1881-1967*, vol. 4 (London: MacMillan, 1968), 100–106.

[75] Simpson, *Howson of Holt*, 4–12, 20–22.

[76] Simpson, *Howson of Holt*, 12, 17; Norwood, *English Tradition of Education*, 72, 76.

[77] Norwood, *English Tradition of Education*, 72.

[78] Norwood, *English Tradition of Education*; Cyril Norwood, 'Report of the Committee of the Secondary School Examinations Council Appointed by the President of the Board of Education in 1941' (London, 1943).

[79] McCulloch, *Norwood and the Ideal of Secondary Education*, 12–13, 43, 49–51.

[80] McCulloch, *Norwood and the Ideal of Secondary Education*, 81, 87–109.

preference of informal education for citizenship based on Christianity, suggesting a continuation of the educational policy of Arnold into the mid-twentieth century.[81]

Memoirs are particularly useful at providing some insight into the learner's experience of schools, as well as staff experiences. George Macdonald Fraser edited a collection of memoirs and comments on the public school system.[82] W. B. Gallie also wrote a memoir of his school experience in the interwar period.[83] Whilst these are not always scholarly works, they do give a candid view of life within the public school, which historians can often struggle to explore when examining them as institutions. One of the most surprising features of memoirs of public schools is that they are among the few sources which explicitly mention women in the context of the school environment, whether as matrons, wives, staff or siblings.[84] Whilst women are present in the primary sources, as staff across all roles within the school and guest speakers to societies, they are conspicuously absent from the school histories.

Biographies are another area where public school boys' own experiences of schooling have been explored. Lois Banner provided an important insight into how biographies can reveal many facets to an individual's personality.[85] Importantly, she highlights how biographies demonstrate how an individual's experience and identity interact with their historical context.[86] Aspects of personal lives that are often omitted from official histories and documentary evidence of institutions are more readily available in both biographies and memoirs. This is particularly true of more taboo subjects. In the case of the public school, homosexuality is often left out of official

---

[81] Freathy, 'Three Perspectives on Religious Education and Education for Citizenship', *British Journal of Religious Education*.

[82] Macdonald Fraser, *World of the Public School*.

[83] W. B. Gallie, *An English School* (London: The Crescent Press, 1949).

[84] Macdonald Fraser, *World of the Public School*, 91–92, 181; Gallie, *An English School*, 74–75, 85–86, 115–16.

[85] Lois W. Banner, 'Biography as History', *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 (2009): 579–86.

[86] Banner, 'Biography as History', *The American Historical Review*, 583.

histories, and documentary records are scarce.[87] More detailed and intimate records in memoirs and biographies allow for a deeper understanding of boys' experiences of life within the public schools.

Interest in more famous or notorious figures has led to an examination of some experiences of public school education. This is particularly true for the 'Cambridge Five' spy ring, where there were connections between a range of British communists, left-wing figures and alumni of Gresham's school.[88] Memoirs and biographies, however, are limited in providing examples of learners' experiences of public schools. They are self-selecting, and only those who felt they had something worth recording wrote memoirs. Biographies are limited to select individuals who went on to have prominent careers as adults. Even in the case of famous left-wing figures from Gresham's, they only provide information on how a small group within the school experienced their education. Andrews' biography of James Klugmann for example provides extensive examples of the influence of one master, Frank McEachran, on Klugmann.[89] McEachran was not, however, Klugmann's private tutor, and alongside his classroom teaching, he was involved in a range of societies, and so would have influenced a wide number of boys. Biographies do not give a picture of how the majority of boys experienced school life. This thesis will add to the insights they provide by exploring the environment in which these individual experiences were made. Whilst, most notably in the case at Gresham's, a few pupils may have adopted radical ideas that biographies describe, this thesis will show how the school as a whole explored these ideas.

---

[87] Geoff Andrews, *The Shadow Man: At the Heart of the Cambridge Spy Circle* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2015), 23.

[88] Andrews, *Shadow Man*; Humphrey Carpenter, *W. H. Auden: A Biography* (Faber & Faber, 2011); John Smart, *Tarantuala's Web* (Norwich: Michael Russell Ltd., 2013).

[89] Andrews, *Shadow Man*, 20–22.

2. Practices and curriculum

The dominant educational theory the public schools adopted and reinforced was the Platonic model where men were educated for a specific position in life.[90] McCulloch has emphasised how this became the basis of education during in the nineteenth century as well as its importance of education for leadership, something the public schools claimed to provide.[91] This justification for exclusivity made the Platonic model a particularly appealing tool with which public schools could use to defend themselves. The role of masculinity shall be examined in the following chapter.

Character

The most important part of the public schools' educational aims was the creation of good character. Historians have argued that the concept of character dominated Victorian society, from education to politics.[92] Meadow and Brocks put forward a solid argument that because science was not seen as training character, it was not taught effectively in the public school system.[93] The Fleming Report's conclusion reinforced the point that the obsession with character did not necessarily make good scholars.[94] This obsession over character continues in the Department of Education, with grants available from 2016 for educationalists to devise programmes to instil it.[95]

---

[90] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), 102–6.

[91] McCulloch, *Philosophers and Kings*, 1, 11–12.

[92] Stefan Collini, 'The Idea of "Character" in Victorian Political Thought', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Fifth Series)* 35 (1985): 29–50; Nathan Roberts, 'Character in the Mind: Citizenship, Education and Psychology in Britain, 1880–1914', *History of Education* 33, no. 2 (2004): 177–97.

[93] A. J. Meadow and W. H. Brock, 'Topics Fit for Gentlemen: The problem of science in the public school curriculum', in, Bradley and Simon, *Victorian Public School*, 95–114.

[94] Fleming Committee, 'The Public Schools', 29.

[95] Department for Education and Edward Timpson M. P, 'Funding Boost for Schools Helping Pupils Develop Character', 26 May 2016.

Whilst there is no clear definition of character, it has often been considered as the qualities that made a good citizen. Educationalists thought character was built in three key ways: religion, service and athletics. Bamford's analysis of Arnold's reforms emphasised the religious role of the headmaster that Arnold created and his intention of encouraging active Christian citizenship.[96] This is commonly referred to as 'muscular Christianity'. This can be seen most clearly in Norwood's choice of chapter titles for part one, *Ideals*, of *The English Tradition of Education*; two chapters are on religion, followed by one on athletics and another about service.[97] Simpson delved into Howson's combined role of headmaster and lay preacher in promoting 'practical religion', the idea that faith should be seen in action rather than ritual.[98] The sermons of headmasters provide a rich source of material for historians examining the religious views that headmasters were preaching to the boys.[99] However, historians have rightly separated the theological aspect from the social aspect. Rob Freathy examined the importance of religion in citizenship education in the early twentieth century, and the success of indirect citizenship education through religion over explicit secular citizenship education.[100] This long-term link between the Arnoldian ideal of religious citizenship remained part of educational theory in the twentieth century, particularly for public schools.

Service was closely linked to religion in some aspects, such as school missions.[101] The missions were established across the public school system; however, by the twentieth century, they were in decline.[102] Nigel Scotland highlighted the flaws they

---

[96] Arnold and Bamford, *Arnold on Education*, 6–12; Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, 40–43.

[97] Norwood, *English Tradition of Education*.

[98] Simpson, *Howson of Holt*, 57.

[99] Arnold and Bamford, *Arnold on Education*; Thomas Arnold, *Passages from the Sermons of Dr. Arnold* (BiblioBazaar, 2009); George W. S. Howson, *Sermons by a Lay Headmaster G. W. S. Howson. Preached at Gresham's School, 1900-1918, Etc. [With a Portrait.]* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920).

[100] Freathy, 'Three Perspectives on Religious Education and Education for Citizenship', *British Journal of Religious Education*.

[101] Andrew Stebbings, 'A History of Harrow Mission Club', in, Dudley, *Harrow*, 198–201; Arnold and Bamford, *Arnold on Education*, 71–73; Fleming Committee, 'The Public Schools', 30.

[102] Scotland, *Squires in the Slums*, 209–10.

had: a condescending tone, an increasing lack of any real interest from the boys and their establishment as being part of keeping up with the other public schools rather than a real determination to help the poor.[103] Georgina Brewis highlighted a similar decline in missionary and settlement work in the universities in favour of social action.[104] Brewis, however, has demonstrated how the aims of the missionary and settlement movements continued in other forms. This adaptability of student associations in changing their methods is relevant in understanding how public school boys adapted their associational culture whilst maintaining similar aims.

National and imperial service, primarily through leadership, rather than religious duties, was an important reason for character education. P.J. Rich convincingly argued that education in public schools was specifically about creating a common culture and social mannerisms for the imperial administrator.[105] Wilkinson highlighted how the prefect system aimed to instil the desired form of leadership.[106] The principle was that boys of good character would be given the power to rule over younger boys and assist in the running of the school in order to build their own leadership skills. The primary aim of Arnold's reform of the prefect system, however, was to demonstrate the virtue of service to the younger boys, as well as the rewards that came with good character.[107] Service and leadership were intimately connected to the public school educational ideals. Norwood went to great lengths to argue that his ideal was active service, rather than the common practice of simply donating to the school's mission fund.[108] This understanding that boys were being trained for expected leadership positions, particularly in an imperial setting, is especially important for this thesis. The system continued throughout the interwar period as

---

[103] Scotland, *Squires in the Slums*, 129–30.

[104] Georgina Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering: Britain and Beyond, 1880-1980* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[105] Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, 241–42; Rich, *Elixir of Empire*; Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School*, 335–39.

[106] Wilkinson, *Prefects*.

[107] Arnold and Bamford, *Arnold on Education*, 129–36.

[108] Norwood, *English Tradition of Education*, 110–25.

imperial power declined. Boys' understanding of power structures through the prefect system, and their challenges to it were reflected in their political discussions.

The final tool in building character in the Victorian and Edwardian public schools was athleticism. J. A. Mangan convincingly argued in *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* that athleticism became both an educational tool and a nexus of identity amongst boys.[109] Tyerman highlighted how the development of the cult of games under Montague Butler, headmaster of Harrow 1859-1885, meant that 'manliness and citizenship replaced godliness and refinement', and how the education at Harrow became more about character than knowledge.[110] Tyerman argued that the cult of games came from the boys themselves rather than a top-down promotion of athleticism.[111] He highlights how boys created the Philathletic Society to oversee sports at Harrow. Mangan, however, suggests that Vaughan was probably influencing them.[112] This conflict between staff and pupil control over their sports is not just a historical debate, but one which boys themselves became involved in. In a separate article, Mangan studied the Sudanese Political Service where a policy of employing men with good character meant recruiting me who were successful at school and university sports.[113] This case study provided evidence for just how closely linked character and athletics were seen to be. When considering athletics' role in the curriculum, it was not just about occupying a large number of boys at once, but an educational tool for teaching character. It was also an important part of schools' culture, influencing not just boys' education but also their social interactions.

---

[109] James Anthony Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[110] Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School*, 328.

[111] Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School*, 270–71.

[112] Mangan, *Athleticism*, 28–32.

[113] James Anthony Mangan, 'The Education of an Elite Imperial Administration: The Sudan Political Service and the British and the British Public School System', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15, no. 4 (1982): 671–99.

This would suggest that when examining the importance of athletics and religion in the development of character, games should be given priority due to their popularity with boys and the ease with which they became part of the curriculum. Mangan strengthened his examination of athleticism by positioning it within the wider context of the public school curriculum. He highlighted the poor teaching and an uninspiring classical curriculum as a reason for the growth of athleticism, and how boys' successes in games were proudly proclaimed to parents as a sign of achievement.[114] He argued that the creation of a cult of games was not usually intentional, but the result of a lack of alternatives. W. B. Gallie's memoir of his school days reinforces this, where he suggested that athletics was not the only way to provide character training, but that it was the only method used at the school he attended.[115] This thesis will show that the emphasis on games did not exclude boys from political discussions: their interest in sports and games, as well as their governance, was an important motivation for boys' political activities. This thesis will show how boys were able to actively participate in politics through issues surrounding sports.

Formal curriculum

Curtis suggested that the division of schools into Classical side and Modern sides was broken by the introduction of the School Certificate in 1918, which required a range of subjects, including some humanities.[116] The extension of modern secondary education by the state also put pressure on the public schools to offer new subjects. The perceived vocational nature of some subjects saw resistance to their adoption, and it was not until after the First World War that the public schools fully accepted the need for science education.[117] Rich and Collini both highlighted the disdain for practical education and the preference for adaptable amateurs rather than trained

---

[114] Mangan, *Athleticism*, 103, 106, 134–36.

[115] Gallie, *An English School*, 34–37.

[116] S. J. Curtis, *Education in Britain Since 1900* (A. Dakers, 1952), 83–84.

[117] Meadows and Brock, 'Topics Fit for Gentlemen', in, Bradley and Simon, *Victorian Public School*, 112–14; Wilkinson, *Prefects*, 72–73.

specialists.[118] New subjects were, however, beginning to find a place in the twentieth-century curriculum.

McCulloch has highlighted how class consciousness helped influence the type of education both provided and sought out by parents.[119] In *Philosophers and Kings* he argued that former pupils' lack of scientific knowledge had opened up the schools to serious criticism. Public schools modernised the curriculum to hold onto their social position as the training grounds of leaders.[120] David Turner has suggested that the main driving force behind changes in the public schools was parents.[121] His most useful analysis is his stratification of the secondary education system of the period. Parents' social status differed greatly between the Clarendon schools, the rest of the public schools, and the grammar schools which offered classics alongside modern subjects. The latter were better able to compete with the public schools after the 1902 Education Act, and by the middle classes seeking a more affordable option or a wider curriculum whilst remaining within their own social and class groups dominated some schools.[122] Taken together, McCulloch and Rich provide a better insight into how curriculum changes came about in the public school system than they do alone. Public schools were not separate from the wider education system, and parents were willing to use state secondaries if they were seen as providing a more suitable education.

Heather Ellis has examined the role of masculinity in scientific education. The British Association for the Advancement of Science sought to emphasise redefine the scientist as a heroic masculine figure.[123] Ellis also notes the promotion of the idea

---

[118] Collini, '"Character" in Victorian Political Thought', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Fifth Series)*, 46; Rich, *Elixir of Empire*, 23, 36.

[119] Gary McCulloch, 'Education and the Middle Classes: The Case of the English Grammar Schools, 1868–1944', *History of Education* 35, no. 6 (2006): 689–704.

[120] McCulloch, *Philosophers and Kings*, 82–83.

[121] Turner, *Old Boys*, 111, 136–37, 173–77.

[122] Turner, *Old Boys*, 113–18, 164–66.

[123] Heather Ellis, 'Knowledge, Character and Professionalisation in Nineteenth-Century British Science', *History of Education* 43, no. 6 (2014): 777–92.

that science promoted independent action, a sign of good character. The British Association praised the formation of scientific societies at Harrow and Rugby by boys as demonstrating this.[124] Beyond the classroom, hunting, particularly in an exotic or imperial setting, was seen as a scientific endeavour and a demonstration of masculine character.[125] Associational culture helped foster an interest in different branches of science in the public schools. Debates which saw scientific endeavours as challenges suggest this image of the heroic scientist did filter into the public schools. The popularity of hunting as a route into science, and its links to the Empire, makes this even more relevant. Hunting was a cultural and leisure activity for the upper classes that boys may have been drawn from, and so gave them a domestic link to the subject.

Science was not the only subject that challenged classics' domination of the curriculum. History, geography and modern languages also began to feature as distinct subjects, rather than, supposedly, being covered by classics. Geography and history can be highly politicised subjects, and authors have examined how education, particularly through textbooks, reinforced nationalist and imperialist ideologies.[126] The idea of 'Greater Britain' certainly existed at Harrow with Labourde, the geography teacher who wrote the history of the school, producing a textbook on it.[127] This element of boys' education would have influenced their own political views.

R. L. Archer has examined the slow pace at which modern languages, history and the arts were introduced as timetabled subjects, and the pressure groups involved in

---

[124] Ellis, 'Knowledge, Character and Professionalisation', *History of Education*, 785–86.

[125] Jeffrey Richards, ed., *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 144–72.

[126] Philip Gardner, 'The Educational Afterlife of Greater Britain, 1903–1914', *Paedagogica Historica* 48, no. 5 (2012): 770–91; William E. Marsden, 'Rooting Racism into the Educational Experience of Childhood and Youth in the Nineteenth-and Twentieth-centuries', *History of Education* 19, no. 4 (1990): 333–53; William E. Marsden, '"Poisoned History": A Comparative Study of Nationalism, Propaganda and the Treatment of War and Peace in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century School Curriculum', *History of Education* 29, no. 1 (2000): 29–47.

[127] Edward Dalrymple Laborde, *Great and Greater Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930).

spreading them.[128] John Wilson, writing in 1962, suggested, however, that whilst the academic subjects had become more balanced, practical ones, including 'art, music, mechanical drawing, or even geography' were still not seen as proper subjects.[129] This may have been true of the formal curriculum, but associational culture provided ample opportunities for artistic pursuits.

Unofficial curriculum

Whilst the range of subjects may have been limited on the timetables, the subjects teachers actually taught may have offered a wider curriculum. Simpson argued that Howson allowed teachers freedom within their lessons, although Brian Simon, writing on his experience of Gresham's in the 1930s, suggests that few took advantage of this.[130]

This thesis is primarily concerned with associational culture and the literature on its history in the education system is relatively scarce. At both schools in this study, there was a range of active societies in both the humanities and sciences, as well as sports. The most prominent of these were the debating societies. University debating societies have been researched, including an in-depth study of the controversial 'King and Country' debate at Oxford in 1933.[131] These studies are relevant to this thesis as the public schools were closely linked with some universities. The style, rules and subjects of debate show an overlap. Even more relevant is Helen

---

[128] R. L. Archer, *Secondary Education*, 330–42.

[129] John Wilson, *Public Schools and Private Practice* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1962), 75–76.

[130] Simpson, *Howson of Holt*, 67–68; Brian Simon, 'My Education as I Wish It Had Been: Essays from the Institute of Education', 1937, DC/SIM/5/2/5, UCL Institute of Education Archives.

[131] Martin Ceadel, 'The "King and Country" Debate, 1933: Student Politics, Pacifism and the Dictators', *The Historical Journal* 22, no. 02 (1979): 397–422; Bertie Dockerill, '"Forgotten Voices": The Debating Societies of Durham and Liverpool, 1900–1939', in *Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Springer, 2018), 101–28; Sarah Wiggins, 'Gendered Spaces and Political Identity: Debating Societies in English Women's Colleges, 1890–1914', *Women's History Review* 18, no. 5 (2009): 737–52.

Sunderland's work on schoolgirls' debating societies.[132] Her research highlights just how important these girls' societies were for preparing them for a specific adult life. She demonstrated how specific expectations of class and gender roles influenced what girls were encouraged to discuss. Importantly Sunderland also showed how the girls challenged some aspects of these expectations. Her research is relevant when considering what boys were encouraged to do and how they challenged expectations of age, as well as class. The ideas surrounding informal education and associational culture have been studied in schools and informal educational settings for both youths and adults. However, this has not been done for public schools despite the broad range of associational culture available and its pervasiveness within the public school system. This thesis will be adding significantly to the historical understanding of the role of associational culture as an educational tool.

Research on debating as a pedagogical tool has been done, however, such as on its effect on reinforcing or challenging ideological stances.[133] De Conti argued that as well as having a risk of polarising issues, debating has an effect on critical thinking and argumentative writing that improves engagement across and beyond the formal curriculum.[134]

Studies of the Oxford and Cambridge Unions provide a comparable setting, and many boys would move from their school debating society into these institutions. Taru Haapala has examined the parliamentary style that these debates took, and this is important when considering how boys treated the school debating society experience.[135] Martin Ceadel has examined the famous 'King and Country' debate of

---

[132] Helen Sunderland, 'Politics in Schoolgirl Debating Cultures in England, 1886-1914', *The Historical Journal*, 2019, 1–23.

[133] Manuele De Conti, 'Debate as an Educational Tool: Is Polarization a Debate Side Effect?', in *What Do We Know About the World?: Rhetorical and Argumentative Perspectives*, ed. Gabrijela Kišiček and Igor Ž Žagar, Windsor Studies in Argumentation (University of Windsor, 2013), 321–53.

[134] De Conti, 'Debate as an Educational Tool', in *What Do We Know About the World?: Rhetorical and Argumentative Perspectives*, 324–26.

[135] Taru Haapala, '"That in the Opinion of This House": The Parliamentary Culture of Debate in the Nineteenth-Century Cambridge and Oxford Union Societies' (PhD Thesis, University of Jyväskylä, 2012).

the Oxford Union and noted that students were becoming more political during the 1930s.[136] However, Ceadel's focus on the university level overlooks how these men became politicised at school. A prime example would be his claim that Kenelm Digby (Gresham's, 1925-30), whom Ceadel states 'spoke from the left-wing Labour viewpoint he had acquired since coming up to Oxford'.[137] An examination of his school debates reveals earlier examples of Digby's left-wing views, including his belief that 'Socialism was the one solution to all such problems'.[138] This thesis aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining English public school debating societies and their members' responses to their contemporary political issues, and Kenelm Digby's speeches provide just such an example of how this is possible. The focus on university-level debating societies has meant that the school societies have been omitted from history. Students had been taught how to conduct themselves in debating societies whilst at school. This context is needed to understand better both boys' political knowledge and their ability to participate in adult politics. This thesis will address these issues.

3. Society and culture

Members of debating societies were able to draw on a wide range of information and sources in order to contribute to the debates. The underlying political ideas that were circulating during this period have been studied in depth. Print media enabled the boys to access a wide range of ideologies, and many were targeted towards youths. Other organisations, particularly within the education system of public schools and universities, also exposed boys to a range of ideologies. Guest speakers from political parties and campaigning organisations were common at public schools. This allowed boys to tap into a wide range of knowledge when discussing political ideas.

---

[136] Ceadel, 'The "King and Country" Debate', *The Historical Journal*, 414–16.

[137] Ceadel, 'The "King and Country" Debate', *The Historical Journal*, 403.

[138] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 13, no. 02, December 1928, 25–27; 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 13, no. 04, March 1929, 61.

Media

Print dominated youth media in the early twentieth century. Whilst there had initially been a moral panic over the contents of youth media, by the twentieth century this had largely subsided.[139] Books and periodicals aimed at boys were dominated by a few publishing houses and their stories, despite changes of characters' names and locations, consistently supported and was supported by the establishment, providing a world view for boys that was pro-imperialist, pro-militarist and masculine.[140] However, much of the historical work looks at the media presented to youths, rather than how they received, interpreted, and responded to it. This thesis, in examining boys' own views seeks to fill this gap.

Research by Michael Paris and Patrick Dunae focused on the political ideologies present in youth media. Dunae has argued that the popularity of the invasion scare stories after the Second Boer War were a manifestation of the shaken confidence in the Empire's military ability.[141] The wider work on fears over British military power in the early twentieth century supports this argument. Paris highlighted the romanticising of war and adventure, which continued undented after the First World War.[142] Both have provided an examination of other literature aimed at boys prior to and following the First World War. They demonstrated the similarities in plotlines, with the public enemy of the day becoming the antagonist, showing a continuity in

---

[139] John Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta Rap, 1830-1996* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 41–42, 61–62.

[140] Richards, *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*; Heather Streets, 'Military Influence in Late Victorian and Edwardian Popular Media: The Case of Frederick Roberts', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 8, no. 2 (2003): 231–56. The use of the term 'establishment' is refers to the political, military and social elite. Whilst the make-up of this group changed over time it is a useful if somewhat clichéd term for both those who held power and influence, as well as the social group public school boys were often drawn from and were expected to join.

[141] Patrick A. Dunae, 'Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870-1914', *Victorian Studies*, 1980, 105–21.

[142] Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 150–85.

youth media that only underwent superficial changes.[143] Springhall put forward a similar argument.[144] Dunae found that the majority of titles came from a limited number of publishers who, to maintain sales, avoided controversial topics.[145] Imperial settings were a common feature of boys' periodicals, combining a stock antagonist, the native, with a stock hero, the young British adventurer.[146] Hannabus described Ballatyne's use of native people in the Empire as 'Such "savages" were identikit villains' that needed to be brought to Christianity and 'civilisation' by Europeans, preferably Britons.[147] This research suggests that popular media for boys would have reinforced imperialist and militarist views. Spencer has described how the Empire was also alluded to in school stories for girls, further emphasising the pervasiveness of the imperial message aimed at youths.[148]

Kelly Boyd and Stephanie Olsen explored the messages about gender roles present in youth media. Boyd and Olsen have both focused on the much less explicit message about masculinity. They both examined how masculine identity was portrayed, with differing conclusions based largely due to the papers examined. Boyd focused on papers aimed at working-class audiences. She argues that the manly ideal depicted was similar to the public school ideal: service and sacrifice by middle-class, physically fit boys.[149] Elements of social Darwinism, racism and fears over national decline are prominent features according to Boyd. In contrast to Paris,

---

[143] Patrick A. Dunae, 'Penny Dreadfuls: Late Nineteenth-Century Boys' Literature and Crime', *Victorian Studies*, 1979, 133–50; Michael Paris, 'Red Menace! Russia and British Juvenile Fiction', *Contemporary British History* 19, no. 2 (2005): 117–32.

[144] Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics*, 93–94.

[145] Patrick A. Dunae, 'New Grub Street for Boys', in, Richards, *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, 17–18.

[146] Guy Arnold, *Held Fast for England: GA Henty, Imperialist Boys' Writer* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980); Robert H. MacDonald, 'Signs from the Imperial Quarter: Illustrations in Chums, 1892-1914', *Children's Literature* 16, no. 1 (1988): 31–55; Mark Naidis, 'G.A. Henty's Idea of India', *Victorian Studies* 8, no. 1 (1964): 49–58.

[147] Stuart Hannabus, 'Ballytine's message of Empire', in, Richards, *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, 58–59.

[148] Stephanie Spencer, 'Boarding School Fictions: Schoolgirls' Own Communities of Learning', *Women's History Review* 22, no. 3 (June 2013): 399.

[149] Kelly Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper in Britain: A Cultural History, 1855-1940* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

she suggests the effects of the First World War and the challenges to the Empire drove a crisis in masculine identity.[150] Olsen studied the domestic role of the man as a father and a leader of the family.[151] She argued that the uncertain masculine identity that Boyd discussed was seen as a consequence of a breakdown in moral leadership from father figures. She found that traditional gender roles were promoted to boys to try to reassert a masculine identity of paternal leadership. Whilst other authors have examined the depictions of masculinity, Boyd and Olsen have engaged effectively with the uncertainties surrounding masculine identity rather than just the broader fears over national and racial decline. The importance placed on masculinity in youth media aligns with the Tosh's study of the efforts that the public schools made to create a class-specific masculine environment.[152]

Stories set in schools have been studied in detail and provide an insight into how authors saw public school education. Spencer and Rossoff have done extensive work exploring girls' school fiction.[153] Holt has explored a number of English public school stories as well as their authors' views. However, how young people received these books is not explored in depth. Whilst it can be challenging to gauge readers' reactions to an individual story, this thesis will shed some light on how pupils either repeated or rejected the messages seen in both school stories and wider youth media through their debates.

The popularity of boys' novels and periodicals is uncertain, as circulation figures only show total sales, not total readers per copy or the social status of the readers. Boyd focused on papers aimed at working-class boys that may well have also been read by public school boys.[154] Some papers, such as the Religious Tracts Society's *Boy's*

---

[150] Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper*, 131–38.

[151] Stephanie Olsen, *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen, 1880-1914* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

[152] John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, Connecticut ; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 117–18, 177–78.

[153] Spencer, 'Boarding School Fictions', *Women's History Review*; Stephanie Spencer and Nancy Rosoff, *British and American School Stories, 1910–1960: Fiction, Femininity, and Friendship* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

[154] Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics*, 47–49.

Own Paper, were specifically targeted at middle-class families but featured moralistic adventure stories similar to Lord Northcliffe's papers. The popularity of the papers means that they should be considered part of boys' informal education. Boyd's argument that 'elite ideas were repackaged for a youthful audience' is certainly appropriate.[155] Richard Altick provided useful data on the circulation numbers for papers and periodicals and lists of bestselling books. His research has provided some indication of the topics that boys would have encountered, especially when taking into consideration the target markets detailed by Boyd.[156]

Youth participation in the creation of literature is also an important factor. Alongside their schoolwork boys produced their own literature, some of which was published in the school or other magazines. Pooley has demonstrated that children, even in a highly editorialised regional newspaper section, were eager contributors to literature.[157] Importantly the children's writing that Pooley examined showed a clear effort to espouse what the authors saw as positive moral values.[158] Whilst the work that boys produced may not have always had literary merit, Pooley has shown that it is a useful tool for understanding their world view. The public schools produced a large amount of literature outside of the classroom that is worthy of study. This thesis will add to the existing literature on youth media by exploring not just how youths adopted its themes and messages, but also how they engaged in its creation within the public schools.

Youth movements

Youth movements were widespread in the first half of the twentieth century, aiming to provide activities and a culture that would improve the wellbeing of both the child and society. Whilst many of these did not make inroads into the public schools their

---

[155] Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper*, 2.

[156] Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 379–99.

[157] Siân Pooley, 'Children's Writing and the Popular Press in England 1876–1914', *History Workshop Journal* 80, no. 1 (23 September 2015): 75–98.

[158] Pooley, 'Children's Writing', *History Workshop Journal*, 90–94.

presence reflects what their founders felt young people should be striving towards. Springhall argued that they almost universally positioned themselves as being an escape from urban decay to a rural idyll.[159] Edwards has sought to refocus attention of the importance of the rural aspect of youth movements. This was not just uniformed organisations, but also societies such as the Young Farmers.[160] These concerns were reflected in public schools' fears over the effect encroaching urbanisation on areas near the school, resulting in large land purchases to prevent development and even, in a minority of cases, migration to a new location.

Early youth movements, most notably the Boy Scouts, were inherently imperialist.[161] Tammy Proctor's study of interwar Scouting found that whilst it continued to reinforce imperialism, it was flexible enough to adopt new methods and ideas.[162] Social questions, such as changing gender roles, were not ignored. New organisations did spring up in the interwar period to offer alternative approaches compared to the more traditional Boy Scouts: groups such as the Woodcraft Folk and the Kibbo Kift. Their success was mixed, but Edwards' argument that they all aimed to promote some form of good citizenship is certainly valid.[163] The concerted effort to promote citizenship, not through the classroom but through extra-curricular activities, is important in understanding why public school association culture was significant.

As has been alluded to earlier, the military was a common career path for many public school boys.[164] Bamford's detailed research demonstrated that some schools, such as Harrow, were effectively feeder schools for the military academy,

---

[159] John Springhall, *Youth, Empire, and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883-1940* (Taylor & Francis, 1977), 14.

[160] Sian Edwards, *Youth Movements, Citizenship and the English Countryside Creating Good Citizens, 1930-1960* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

[161] Springhall, *Youth, Empire, and Society*, 15–19.

[162] Tammy M. Proctor, *On My Honour : Guides and Scouts in Interwar Britain*, vol. 92, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2002).

[163] Edwards, *Youth Movements*, 56–67.

[164] Tapper, *Fee-Paying Schools*, 94.

Sandhurst.[165] Research into the RAF's recruitment of officers who had attended public school reinforces this idea.[166] Wilkinson argued that, despite their disdain of education for a career, the public schools were providing vocational education for the military and imperial administration.[167] This has been reinforced by research on officer recruitment, which highlights the dominance of public school boys in commissioned ranks, even despite the Haldane reforms which formalised the creation of the Officer Training Corps in 1908, as well as created the Expeditionary and Territorial forces.[168]

Training in militarism was not always explicit, however, and the Boy Scouts, as well as other youth groups such as the Boys Brigade, carried ideological messages.[169] John MacKenzie and John Springhall have both highlighted public support of the imperialist and militarist overtones of youth movements, particularly after the failures of the Second Boer War. [170] Heather Streets' analysis of the racial dimensions of militarism and physical differences reinforces this idea that the Scouts, by improving the health of boys, would make them better soldiers in a future war.[171] Play culture

---

[165] Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, 212–13.

[166] Mahoney, 'The Forgotten Career of Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory'; Tony Mansell, 'Flying Start: Educational and Social Factors in the Recruitment of Pilots of the Royal Air Force in the Interwar Years', *History of Education* 26, no. 1 (1 March 1997): 71–90.

[167] Wilkinson, *Prefects*, 17–19, 71, 78–79.

[168] John B. Hattendorf, 'The Conundrum of Military Education in Historical Perspectives', in *Military Education: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Gregory C. Kennedy and Keith Neilson (London: Praeger, 2002), 1–11; David French, 'Officer Education and Training in the British Regular Army', in *Military Education: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Gregory C. Kennedy and Keith Neilson (London: Praeger, 2002), 105–27.

[169] Paris, *Warrior Nation*, 81–82.

[170] V. Bailey, 'Scouting for the Empire: The Boy-Scouts in Edwardian England', *History Today* 32 (July 1982): 5–9; John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 240–49; John M. MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); Springhall, *Youth, Empire, and Society*, 56–59.

[171] Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

could have contributed to boys accepting or supporting militarism from an early age.[172]

[172] Kenneth D. Brown, 'Modelling for War? Toy Soldiers in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain', *Journal of Social History* 24, no. 2 (1990): 237–54.

Imperialism and nationalism

The question over how popular imperialism was in British society has been hotly debated by many scholars, including John MacKenzie and Bernard Porter.[173] MacKenzie, as editor of the *Studies in Imperialism* series, has, along with other authors, highlighted the variety of ways imperialist ideology was spread to the public in England.[174] In contrast, Porter has argued that the public was largely unaware of the Empire, even those who worked with the products of it.[175] Porter addressed imperialism in the public schools. He argued that the classical curriculum was devoid of imperialism, and subjects such as geography and history were not prominent enough to contribute to it.[176] He briefly examined school magazines, claiming there was not much material of an imperial nature, especially before the Second Boer War.[177] Porter, however, seems to have overlooked the range of the curriculum beyond the official timetable and the contents of the discussions in clubs and societies. Others have sought to re-examine imperialism and opposition to imperialism and more effectively challenge the narrative of widespread support.[178] Claeys, along with others, noted the shift from an evangelical mission of Empire to a popular secular one.[179]

---

[173] The back and forth of this debate is largely in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*. Bernard Porter, 'Further Thoughts on Imperial Absent-Mindedness', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no. 1 (1 March 2008): 101–17; John M. MacKenzie, '"Comfort" and Conviction: A Response to Bernard Porter', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no. 4 (1 December 2008): 659–68; Bernard Porter, 'Popular Imperialism: Broadening the Context', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 39, no. 5 (1 December 2011): 833–45.

[174] Kathryn Castle, *Britannia's Children: Reading Colonialism through Children's Books and Magazines*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996); John M. MacKenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986); MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*; Richards, *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*.

[175] Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[176] Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 48–49.

[177] Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 52–55.

[178] Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850–1920* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[179] Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics*, 3.

Richard Price has produced an essay covering a huge range of arguments in imperial history and produced a useful conclusion that it is a mutually constituted history.[180] Price's critique of a wide range of literature highlights that historians examining different aspects of British and imperial society will have different conclusions: class, economic status and gender generated different responses. So whilst MacKenzie's arguments inform much of this thesis, other arguments are also relevant, particularly when considering those who dissented from the pro-imperialist view. Andrew Thompson has argued that even those of a similar cultural background could interpret imperialism differently.[181] The boys in this study had ample opportunities to enter imperial service and, particularly at Harrow, were in close contact with imperialist figures. Whilst direct contact with the Empire may not have been universal throughout British society, it certainly was for the boys examined in this thesis.

Rich has examined the continuity of culture and identity between the public schools and imperial culture, arguing that the public schools were an essential building block of the British Empire.[182] Wilkinson examined the prefectoral system as preparing leaders, particularly ones that would be ruling over people from different classes and cultures. This was seen training for roles both domestically and in the Empire.[183] Textbooks have also been seen to promote an imperialist world view, emphasising racial differences and presenting it as a justification for colonialism to youths.[184] Claeys' continued this study, finding imperialist rhetoric in school textbooks up until

---

[180] Richard Price, 'One Big Thing: Britain, Its Empire, and Their Imperial Culture', *The Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 03 (2006): 602–27.

[181] Andrew Stuart Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Longman, 2005), 9–10.

[182] Rich, *Elixir of Empire*, 13; Rich, *Chains of Empire*.

[183] Wilkinson, *Prefects*, 101–10.

[184] Castle, *Britannia's Children*; F. J. Glendenning, 'Attitudes to Colonialism and Race in British and French History Schoolbooks', *History of Education* 3, no. 2 (1974): 58–59.

the decline of the Empire in the 1960s.[185] According to Hannabus, the imperialist view of a Greater Britain, unified by Christianity and Western civilisation, was a key message of Ballatyne's and other authors' books for boys.[186] This narrative was one of benevolence where imperialism brought salvation and violence was only defensive, rather than an invasion followed by oppression. The popularity of youth media, as well as the cultural elements of imperialism present in schools and wider society, question Porter's analysis of British society and the Empire, particularly in relation to public schools. Imperialism was significant during the period covered by this thesis, and boys changing perceptions of it influenced much of their political discourse. Young people's responses to imperialism have largely been absent, and this thesis will provide some clarity on how public school boys discussed it. The focus on how pervasive imperialism was in Britain has been on the institutional level rather than on the individual. There is a lack of understanding of how imperialist views influenced opinions on a range of issues that were not explicitly imperial. By examining boys' own political views, this thesis will explore how boys framed a wide range of topics, such as their own education and scientific developments, within their views on the Empire.

Internationalism and the League of Nations Union

Internationalism during the interwar period provides an important example of how political ideas in public schools diverged during this period. The primary tool by which public school boys could engage with internationalist ideas was through the League of Nations Union. Research on individual experiences of the Union is limited, instead focusing on the institutional elements of the organisation. Donald Birn provided a detailed analysis of the executive body of the Union. He argued that its widespread support from Liberal politicians made it a respectable organisation amongst elites.[187] Helen McCarthy has sought to explore the importance of the League of Nations Union and how it became part of British social and political

---

[185] Anna Claeys, 'Britannia's Children Grow up: English Education at Empire's End', *History of Education*, 22 August 2018, 1–17.

[186] Hannabus, 'Ballatyne's message of Empire', in, Richards, *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, 66–69.

[187] Donald S. Birn, *The League of Nations Union, 1918-45* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

culture.[188] Pederson highlighted the League of Nations' difficult dynamic with imperialism.[189] Whilst the educational context is important, the impact of the conflict and collusion between imperialist and internationalist ideologies has not been fully explored.

The Union had a strong educational element, with branches present in schools and universities. In universities, students certainly became involved with internationalist activities throughout the 1920s and 1930s, including student-to-student aid and anti-fascism.[190] Work has been produced which has explored the range of educational materials and teacher involvement in the spread of the League of Nations Union to schools.[191] More significant is work on the creation of an internationalist ethos amongst pupils through the League of Nations Union. Watkins has shown how Badminton School for girls sought to implement an internationalist way of thinking throughout the school.[192] Wright has explored the role of Union branches at four schools.[193] Wright provides some insight into pupils' experiences and views on the society, noting how important committed individuals were to maintaining a successful branch of the Union.[194] This thesis aims to use a similar approach to Wright's to understand pupils' involvement in not just of the League of Nations Union, but a wider range of political organisations and activities. This research aims to address the gap in research on the Union in public schools. The public schools are an ideal study for this. As bastions of the imperial elite, some schools rejected the notion of a more liberal international organisation. However, others adopted more progressive

---

[188] Helen McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations: Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism, c. 1918-45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

[189] Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[190] Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering*; McCarthy, *British People and the League of Nations*, 117–23.

[191] Birn, *League of Nations Union*, 138–41; McCarthy, *British People and the League of Nations*, 105–17.

[192] Christopher Watkins, 'Inventing International Citizenship: Badminton School and the Progressive Tradition between the Wars', *History of Education* 36, no. 3 (2007): 315–38.

[193] Susannah Wright, 'Creating Liberal-Internationalist World Citizens: League of Nations Union Junior Branches in English Secondary Schools, 1919–1939', *Paedagogica Historica*, 2018, 321–40.

[194] Wright, 'Creating Liberal-Internationalist World Citizens', *Paedagogica Historica*, 329–38.

views and produced keen internationalists. How this conflict of ideologies unfolded amongst supporters and opponents of the League is an important gap that this thesis will address.

Conclusion

The histories of public schools are remarkably understudied given their significant amount of political influence throughout modern British history. The emphasis on significant figures does provide snapshots of individual experiences of the education provided within the public schools. This thesis will provide a broad context in which these individuals played a part. By studying this history, this thesis will enable a deeper understanding of how political ideas were formed amongst British elites during the twentieth century. More importantly, it will explore how the schools enabled and encouraged this early engagement with politics. The pedagogical tools used were not unique to any single public school, nor are they only compatible with a public school environment. Grammar schools and girls schools used several of these techniques. This thesis will provide a deeper understanding of how these tools functioned and how effective such techniques were at encouraging pupils to develop an interest in politics. The current literature on public schools focuses on their institutional, cultural and structural histories. In contrast, this thesis will provide an insight into their pupils' experiences. It will therefore contribute to our knowledge and understanding of how pupils could interpret the curriculum outside of the classroom. Moreover, this thesis extends our understanding of early twentieth-century youth culture. Existing studies of youth culture focus primarily on the production and consumption of media. Histories of youth organisations look at the values and skills that they try to instil. This thesis will explore what happens after. By examining pupils' own views, this research will demonstrate how they applied the values learned from youth culture to the wider world. This is particularly prominent for explicitly political questions, but also issues such as boys' own education. Research on university students and girls' schools has been able to explore individual political experiences and views. This thesis will extend that knowledge to include pupil school boys.

Chapter 2: Theory and methodology

This chapter explores the methodology and theoretic aspects used in this thesis. This research uses both traditional qualitative methods as well as quantitative methods through a database. The outline of the case studies demonstrates how the two schools offered a different educational experience within the public school system. The rationale behind the periodisation outlines why this period makes it possible to show how associational culture enabled schools to adapt their education despite significant shifts in national and global politics. This alone would offer ample material for qualitative research into the role of associational culture as an educational tool. The database demonstrates how it is possible to provide a wider context by examining trends across a long period of time. By combining these methods, this thesis provides an understanding of both immediate experiences as well as the broader role of associational culture in the public schools. Finally, important theoretical concepts on the role of gender and cultural capital have been explored. Ideas around cultural and social capital are clearly understood to be applicable to the public school system, and this thesis will demonstrate how these were provided.

1. Methodology

Case studies

Two public schools are the primary focus of this thesis. Firstly, Harrow in the historic county of Middlesex, now North-West London. This shift from county to town was a concern of the school during this period. Harrow is one of the most prestigious public schools and was examined by the Clarendon Commission. There is some suggestion of a school attached to the local church before John Lyon's foundation established what is now known as Harrow School, which was opened in 1615.[1] Its strong position as an establishment school makes it worth considering, but also made it slower to reform. In addition to this Cyril Norwood, headmaster 1926-34, was

---

[1] Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School*, 7–42.

a significant educational theorist and held a considerable amount of influence in political spheres. How he perceived and tried to reform Harrow as well as the educational system will provide a useful insight into how some institutions functioned.

Figure 1: Harrow School, Speech Room, c. 1900

The second school is Gresham's in Norfolk. Whilst having been a post-reformation grammar school it did not expand into a public school until the 1900s. Its reforming headmaster, George Howson, headmaster 1900-19, who had been a master under Thring at Uppingham, emphasised modern subjects and rejected the widespread support for athleticism and the cult of games.[2] Howson and his successor Eccles, were headmasters for the majority of the period covered by this thesis and both sought to cultivate patronage from liberal-leaning parents. However, the environment within the school was governed by a strict moral code of a honour system, where boys were expected to confess their own moral failings or report on others. W. H.

---

[2] Douglas and Linnell, *Gresham's School History and Register*, 24–25; Simpson, *Howson of Holt*.

Auden likened the school to a fascist state, with one biographer suggesting that the moral repression was designed to cause discomfort amongst those who deviated from it.[3] Brian Simon delved deeper into the honour system in an essay whilst at the Institute of Education.[4] He described it as a success in negating rules and punishments but that it was often broken, and false confessions were made by some to avoid arousing suspicion. He also argued that some boys internalised their guilt to such an extent it stifled their education. Several boys who attended Gresham's during the interwar period later went on to become prominent and notorious figures in left-wing movements in stark contrast to the common perception of a link between public schools and conservatism. The school's rural location also made it more isolated from potential influences, whilst Harrow's proximity to London allowed for greater interaction with public life.

Figure 2: Gresham's School, Big School, c. 1900

[3] Carpenter, *W. H. Auden*, chap. 2; Adrian Caesar, 'Auden and the Class System', in *W. H. Auden in Context*, ed. Tony Sharpe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 70.

[4] Simon, 'My Education as I Wish It Had Been'.

The two schools had very few connections with each other. They drew their clientele from separate sections of society. Gresham's did not initially play sports against other schools whilst Harrow had standing cricket matches at Lords. Harrow was a more established foundation whilst Gresham's experienced rapid expansion from the 1900s. This contrast resulted in vastly different approaches to politics. This happened on a functional level, with significant differences in the new societies formed during the interwar period and with the guests available to speak to the boys. It also affected the background and familial influences on the boys. Harrow had significant connections to the Conservative Party whilst headmasters at Gresham's sought to entice liberal families, including Liberal MPs, to send them their boys. These contrasting schools allow for an interesting and significant example of how the broad term of a public school does not denote a unified outlook. The individualities of the schools are important to understanding the divergences, but also how the public school system made these differences possible.

These two case studies are considered within the broader public school system. Generalisations across public schools are difficult to make as the headmasters themselves were relatively independent on how they ran their school, and governing bodies were independent of state control. This thesis aims to demonstrate that the educational experience of public schools in the early twentieth century enabled boys to explore a wide range of ideas, rather than claiming that they were forming an ideological stance common across public schools. This thesis takes the opportunity to show both the uniqueness of individual schools and how this was enabled by the associational culture present across the public school system.[5] The individual boys' experiences at each school show how the pupils participated in school life. Ivor Goodson has highlighted that the individual life stories are limited by their social and cultural setting.[6] McCulloch has similarly highlighted the importance of linking the

---

[5] Douglas Harper, 'Small N's and Community Case Studies', in *What Is a Case? : Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, ed. Charles C. Ragin and Howard S. Becker, 12th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 139–58.

[6] Ivor Goodson, 'The Rise of the Life Narrative', in *The Routledge International Handbook on Narrative and Life History*, ed. Ivor Goodson et al. (Routledge Handbooks Online, 2016), 18–19.

personal with the structural.[7] By examining learners' experiences within the school setting this thesis will demonstrate the importance of the school in the lives of individuals. The difference between boys' social backgrounds is also significant. Relative to each other, the boys were coming from separate strata of society. However, when considered in the context of English society, they represent two ends of the same group. The similarity between the schools' place in wider society and their educational structures allows for comparisons between them as communities.[8] These are not definitive examples of English public schools. Instead, they provide examples of how similar communities and educational environments can be experienced in different ways.

Girls' schools have not been included as the segregation of sexes in public schools lasted until the second half of the twentieth century. This study's focus is on boys' schools and the boys' experiences of how they were prepared for roles as men in early twentieth-century England. Gender roles were challenged during the twentieth century, even within the public schools. However, the institutions themselves were designed to reinforce masculine social norms. Interaction between boys and girls and the potential exchange of ideas was limited. Female guests, teaching staff and masters' wives were permitted to participate in debates at both schools. However, boys did not discuss politics with their female peers. Education was not just segregated by location, but also in the curriculum, with boys trained for a specific gender role within society.[9] The media and career options were also divided by gender, and so boys were given specific stories and magazines, whilst girls were expected to read different material. This division extended into school stories.[10] Whilst this would not prevent them from reading media intended for girls, it did limit what material the school would have provded. Masculinity is important in this thesis, as it relates to how boys understood their role in society. How boys' perceived women and girls, particularly in the political sphere, is also an important theme.

---

[7] Gary McCulloch, *Documentary Research in Education, History, and the Social Sciences* (RoutledgeFalmer, 2004), 7.

[8] Harper, 'Small N's', in *What Is a Case? : Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, 146–47.

[9] McCulloch, *Philosophers and Kings*, 11.

[10] Spencer, 'Boarding School Fictions', *Women's History Review*.

Furthermore, the expectations of girls' and boys' future roles as citizens in this period were significantly different, and Nicholas Hillman has highlighted how the Fleming Report saw boys' and girls' public schools as separate systems.[11]

Periodisation

The thesis identifies three separate periods which show how boys' ideas and political identities shifted over time. There was a continuous associational culture in the public schools, and the overlap between different cohorts ensured a continuous passing on of knowledge. However, how boys operated within this associational culture did change. New clubs and societies represented how associational culture could develop. Novel methods of thinking gained popularity, particularly in the late interwar period. The flexibility of associational culture allowed public schools to offer different learning experiences within a similar educational and cultural framework. Its continuity and universality enable comparisons between periods and schools. These are not absolute boundaries, and there will be some overlap. They are also subject to the school calendar, with events during the holidays having to wait until school resumed to become topics of group discussion.

The first period begins with the Second Boer War in 1899 and concludes at the end of the First World War. This period saw the public schools at their strongest, and nationalism, militarism and imperialism were all popular in the schools. The unexpected difficulties that the British Empire's armies faced in defeating the Boer forces prompted a significant amount of concern about the future of the Empire, and debates in the press filtered into the topics debated in the schools.

The second period lasted from the end of the First World War up until the General Strike of 1926. The public schools underwent significant changes during this period in reaction to the First World War. There were significant political changes, both nationally and internationally. The political spectrum in Britain widened with the introduction of universal male suffrage and the Labour began to gain legitimacy and

---

[11] Hillman, 'Public Schools and the Fleming Report', *History of Education*, 237–38.

ultimately for its first government. Internationally, new, ideologically based government were formed. The first Communist and Fascist states in Europe were established. The effects of the First World War and questions over the future of the world that was to follow enabled new ideas such as internationalism, pacifism and socialism to have a much stronger voice in the political discourse.

The third period runs from the General Strike of 1926 to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. The General Strike helped redefine the political spectrum in Britain. It brought radical political ideas to the forefront of discussion whilst, counterintuitively, reducing fears of a revolution. The rise of authoritarian ideologies across Europe prompted concerns over the future of liberal democracy. Large social upheavals that coincided with this, most notably the Great Depression in the 1930s created a range of topics focused around new political ideas, which pupils engaged with. Externally, public and political pressure was mounting on the position and role the public schools in British society. Awareness over class consciousness and conflict increased, and public school boys began to question the assumed superiority of their status that had existed prior to the General Strike. The disruption to life caused by the Second World War marks the endpoint of this thesis.

Sources

School magazines provide most of the primary material for this thesis. McCulloch's advice in *Documentary Research in Education* highlights the usefulness of magazines as a source.[12] Spencer has demonstrated their usefulness in her study of Sutton High School for girls.[13] She showed how the magazine was a means for the school to demonstrate its priorities, but also a chance to study how girls reinterpreted

---

[12] McCulloch, *Documentary Research in Education, History, and the Social Sciences*.

[13] Stephanie Spencer, 'Advice and Ambition in a Girls' Public Day School: The Case of Sutton High School, 1884–1924', *Women's History Review* 9, no. 1 (March 2000): 75–94.

these. Sloan and Pooley have argued that school magazines were an important part of engaging youths with media both as producers and consumers.[14]

The school magazines were formal publications and as such cover the entire period studied in this thesis. There are no gaps in the records, with copies preserved digitally, as well as physically by the schools and the British Library. The frequency of publication provides regular snapshots of school life. These were produced during term-time and edited by groups of boys. These were usually senior boys with representatives from each house and staff oversight was either explicitly mentioned or implied. The magazines provide details of regular and special events at the school, such as clubs and societies, speech days, important visitors, guest lectures, sports results, old boys' news, particularly from universities, and house news. Both boys and staff provided news and reports of activities from societies. In addition, magazines also featured editorial comments and a letters section, which in some cases involved heated discussions between current and former boys over the direction the school was taking at a particular time. The inclusion of letters to the editor shows an engaged readership. The papers were a part of the institution, but the involvement of boys in their production provides a direct link to boys' experiences of school life. Anonymity gave them more freedom to express their opinions, particularly criticisms of the school itself. However, it does mean that it is not always possible to determine the authorship of articles. During the First World War letters and news of former pupils were also published, sometimes as special supplements detailing those involved in the conflict. The school journals were available to the boys and masters, and were subscribed to by old boys, those connected to or with an interest in the school. Copies were sent to other public schools. The journals would themselves often draw on their contemporaries and the national press, including reproducing extracts of news about former members of the school.

This thesis will primarily focus on associational culture, using reports from the school magazines. Associational culture was a feature at all public schools. There is no

[14] Pooley, 'Children's Writing', *History Workshop Journal*; Catherine Sloan, '"Periodicals of an Objectionable Character": Peers and Periodicals at Croydon Friends' School, 1826–1875', *Victorian Periodicals Review* 50, no. 4 (2017): 769–86.

fixed list of societies, as some fell into decline while new ones were created to meet the demands of the pupils of each particular school. Naming conventions varied between schools as well, with school dialects and histories being used to name clubs rather than descriptive names. The governance of, and participation in, societies also varied. Some were entirely pupil-led, whilst others had a mix of staff and pupil involvement. This was usually done through election to committee positions, however, so staff leadership nominally had the consent of the boys.

The debating societies in the two schools are the most consistent active society explored in this thesis. Both schools had debating societies that ran in a similar manner. This allows for a comparison of how boys at both schools were engaging with politics. The content and regularity of the meetings varied, however. Staff were involved in the debating societies, both as participants and administrators. This reflects a broader political culture within the schools where adults' political views were both heard and challenged by boys. Guest speakers were also present at some debates, usually as proposers of a motion. These guests were usually representatives of organisations or political parties putting forward their cause to the boys. On some issues, their opposers were also guests, particularly for debates on political parties' policies. These guests would occasionally have connections to the school, such as former pupils or parents.

Debating societies were both an educational experience and a leisure activity. Allender and Spencer highlighted a range of work which showed how education, particularly informal education, often has multiple purposes and outcomes.[15] Haapala has noted how English university debating culture was a mimicry of parliamentary practice.[16] Dockerill has supplemented this understanding of university debating societies by showing how the topics and styles of debates can vary between superficially similar organisations with similar structures.[17] This work on university societies demonstrates how comparisons between different institutions'

---

[15] Tim Allender and Stephanie Spencer, 'Travelling across National, Paradigmatic and Archival Divides: New Work for the Historian of Education', *History of Education* 38, no. 6 (2009): 723–25.

[16] Haapala, 'That in the Opinion of This House', 25–27.

[17] Dockerill, '"Forgotten Voices"', in *Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland*.

societies can be made. Debating societies at schools followed similar rules and were part of a cultural training for elite society. Some debates were a chance for boys to discuss contemporary political issues, such as female suffrage during the 1900s or economic policy in the 1930s. Some motions were on more nebulous political ideas, such as conscription or economic intervention. Both schools' societies would also debate more frivolous topics, such as whether occult powers were real or advertising. Some topics which appear frivolous, such as sport, were of great importance to boys, and concern the structure of school society. Boys were also willing to expand upon motions, such as taking a motion on a contemporary issue and debating the wider currents in global politics that were influencing events. Neither Gresham's nor Harrow held mock elections during this period. However, both schools did hold debates on a preference for the government or opposition during election periods. These events are clear demonstrations of boys taking politics seriously whilst at school. Whether boys actually held the views they expressed or were merely arguing their side in a debate has been considered. This is not always obvious from the records of debates. However, even where boys were expressing a view for the sake of providing a counterargument, it would demonstrate an engagement with politics. This could be argued to show a strong understanding of their contemporaneous political environment; the ability to understand the opposing argument would require a deep understanding of an issue rather than superficial repetition of slogans and talking points.

Database

The debating societies' meetings at both schools have been tracked and recorded into a database. This has been used to provide a broad overview of interests and participation at both schools. Each motion has been categorised with a topic (table 1) to show the general theme of the debate. Where there is some ambiguity as to what the motion was really about the content of the debate has been used to settle on a single topic. How boys interpreted and responded to a motion is of particular importance as it shows what contemporary relevance they put on an ambiguous question. Below is a list of the topics used to categorise the motions and a brief description of what is included in these categories.

Table 1: Topics of debates

Athletics
Education
Ethics and Law
Ideologies
Imperial Politics
International Politics
Media
Military
National Politics
Science and Technology
Society

Athletics is any debate discussing games or sport, and the way in which it is conducted. This does not include debates on moral positions towards gambling, whether relating to sport or otherwise, as this is including under society.

Education covers both general education debates, such as preference for classical or modern education, and debates specifically on the schools themselves. This does not include sports or media unless the motion specifically states that it is in regard to the school or education.

Ethics and law refers to debates which discuss non-party political issues, such as suicide, capital punishment and the right to resist a dictator/despot. It does not include constitutional issues, such as reform of the House of Lords or suffrage, as these were issues of policy rather than general legal discussions.

Ideologies covers political topics which are broader than specific legislation, such as the merits of nationalisation and the right to strike, as well as debates over democracy. Debates specifically criticising a particular aspect of political life, such as hereditary peerages, are included here if they do not refer to specific legislation. Accusations of governments or policies as being of an ideology are considered

national politics rather than ideological discussions as they refer to specific events rather than general ideological stances.

Imperial politics refers to any debate over the position of the British Empire as a whole. This includes issues such as federation or expansion but does not include issues such as tariff reform which, despite often having an imperial dimension, was specifically a national policy.

International politics is anything political issues outside of the British Empire, whether it is involved or not. One example would be a debate on the risk of the Balkan Crisis imperilling British interests in India, where the motion is discussing the crisis in the Balkans, rather than specific dangers within India and how to manage them. This includes treaties, alliances and international crises, as well as international armaments and military treaties, such as calls for an international police-force/army.

Media covers both news media and literature, and if it discusses new media technologies potential impact on culture. For example, a debate on the content of cinema and morals would come under media, as would one on the role of the press do.

Military covers direct discussions of wars to preparation for wars and conscription. Government policy in regards to wars is included here if it is specifically about how war is to be conducted or abolished. New technologies are not included here unless the motion specifically refers to their use as tools of war. It does not include general discussions of international military treaties, such as disarmament, as these are related to organisations such as the League of Nations, and so are about international politics.

National politics covers contemporaneous domestic politics such as party's policies, legislature, or other immediate issues. This includes suffrage debates and Home Rule as it was an issue of parliament and domestic policy rather than foreign policy. Topics that are explicitly imperial but would affect national politics, such as federalism, are categorised under imperialism, whilst those which are specifically domestic, but have an imperial dimension, are included, such as tariff reform.

Science and Technology includes debates about new technology, its uses, and potential risks, as well as topics posed in partly moral dimensions, such as whether motorists should be restricted. Exploration, notably during the early twentieth century polar expeditions, is also covered. This topic also covers discussions of the occult due to its contemporary scientific status.

Society covers general and moral topics which include debates such as on charity, gambling, temperance etc. This also covers the idea of national decline such as debates over the benefits or harm of civilised society versus barbarism. Historical topics with a specific focus, such as the execution of Charles I, are included here, as they are less about ideology than more broad debates on despotism/democracy.

The turnout of debates was rarely explicitly stated. To compensate for this the total number of votes has been tallied, which indicates how many people attended. Votes were almost always divided between those for and those against, with a few rare instances of abstentions being recorded. Attendance provides a useful indicator of what topics most interested boys at different periods. There is no distinction in the records between votes of pupils and adults. However, the ratio of boys to staff and guests would mean that, in most cases, the number of votes is a valid indication of pupil interest. At Gresham's, the lowest turnout was 14 and the highest 173. The population of the school increased significantly between these two debates, but throughout the first half of the twentieth century there is a clear distinction in the popularity of topics at Gresham's. Some debates would draw in between 20 and 60 voters, presumably those who were regular and active members of society, and then debates where attendance would spike into the 100s, suggesting topics of widespread interest. At Harrow similar spikes in interest can also be seen. However, these results are less clear as occasionally reporters did not provide exact results, stating only whether large or small majorities carried the motion. To supplement this, they occasionally did state whether turnout was high or low, however.

Table 2 gives an example of how an entry appears in the database. The columns of abstentions (0), as well as location in the magazine and link to the digital copy, have been omitted here for space.

Table 2: Example database entry of debate at Gresham's

Motion	In the opinion of this house, field sports are superior to games
Date	03/11/1990
Speakers for	3
Speakers against	2
Total Speakers	5
Votes For	5
Votes Against	9
Total Votes	14
Carried?	No
Motion Topic	Athletics

Other material

Other societies are also examined in the thesis. At both Harrow and Gresham's new societies emerged during the interwar period which aimed to provide a broader understanding of politics. These reflect a growing realisation that changes needed to be made to public school education as well as an increased interest in politics amongst boys. This growth came both from within the schools, through boys establishing their own societies, and from external influences, through forming branches of national and global organisations and the participation of external speakers. The later interwar period saw particularly strong growth in associational culture with a political element. Public schools may have been closed-off

microcosms, but they were not oblivious to the wider world. This thesis will demonstrate how their pupils used associational culture to react to a changing world. The importance of boys' participation in this change, both in pushing for it and reacting to it is the underlying feature that links the various elements of public school associational culture during this period.

2. Important theoretical concepts

Associational Culture

Public schools are often considered to be isolated from the outside world. The closed-off microcosm of the public school has sometimes been compared to monastic life or even a mafia life.[18] However, there was plenty of opportunity within the schools for boys to engage with the outside world. This came through the clubs and societies that made up public school associational culture. Brewis described associational culture as a term 'used by a number of historians to refer to societies marked by the strength and vigour of their clubs, societies and voluntary associations.'[19] McKibbin has argued that there were particular class, cultural and political elements for adult associations.[20] McCarthy expanded on this idea by exploring the more activist organisations and those without partisan allegiances.[21] Associations were a chance for people to participate in politics without conforming to a partisan group. It enabled those with similar interests to meet and discuss issues around a similar concern. Some societies did have a campaigning element, but it was not a requirement for an association, and various associations came together for a discussion of a wide variety of topics.

---

[18] Macdonald Fraser, *World of the Public School*, 113–15; Wilkinson, *Prefects*, 16, 21, 34, 101.

[19] Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering*, 13.

[20] Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1998), 84–90.

[21] Helen McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain', *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 4 (2007): 891–912; McCarthy, *British People and the League of Nations*; Helen McCarthy, 'Whose Democracy? Histories of British Political Culture between the Wars', *The Historical Journal* 55, no. 1 (March 2012): 221–38.

For this study, for an association to have an associational culture it needs to have the following aspects. First, participation is voluntary. School activities are often seen as compulsory events, but the associations examined in this study were voluntary activities, sometimes to the extent that societies fell into periods of silence. For a group to embody an associational culture, it requires willing participants. Whilst studies of associational culture such as McKibbin's and McCarthy's are helpful in defining what brings together a group to form an association, they overlook the freedom of adults to choose to participate. Compulsory (or near compulsory) organisations, such as the Officer Training Corps, were present at both schools, with alternatives provided for other groups, such as non-conformist religious sects. These do not represent associational culture within the schools as, whilst there may have been an element of choice, it was still a choice between compulsory activities.

Secondly, like adult societies, for a group to have an associational culture in schools required a defined field of interest. This is often evident in the name, such as the debating society, or through official declarations of purpose, such as the '27 Club seen in chapter 7. Georgina Brewis has explored how various university student organisations formed to achieve charitable aims, contributing to a wider associational culture within the student body.[22] However, associations do not have to be political. Both schools in this study had a range of societies that offered various optional educational opportunities without being politically focused.

Thirdly associations require a structure in order to develop an assocational culture. This means that it must require recurring participation and events, or at least attempt to, rather than being stand-alone gatherings. Two good examples of this come from Harrow School. The debating society entered a period of decline in the 1930s but continued to hold meetings to elect officers and attempt to arrange debates. However, the League of Nations Union's attempts to establish a branch at the school ended after a lecture and debate. At Harrow School, there was an associational culture of debating, but not one relating to the League of Nations. Structures could

---

[22] Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering*.

be internally formed, such as with debating societies or taken from an external model, such as the League of Nations Union. There was often a lot of overlap in how societies were structured both within the schools and between them.

A final aspect of the structure is membership. Whilst the voluntary aspect has already been discussed, it is important to note that an associational culture requires a specific body of members. This provides the necessary continuity for a culture to form. Again, studies of adult associational culture often overlook this as they are focused on the organisations themselves. Within a school, particularly boarding schools, this distinction between members and non-members is more important to define what constitutes an associational culture. Whilst guests and non-members were sometimes able to participate in an associational culture's activities, it was the membership that was able to influence and alter the structure of it.

A useful example of what does and does not constitute associational culture is the difference between a school play and a dramatic society. A school play might require the whole school or a specific year group to audition, whereas a dramatic society may only have a small group of pupils interested in more advanced theatre studies. A play is a specific goal, the performance, whereas a dramatic society has a more general interest in a range of plays. The school play has a fixed group of performers and organisers and a single script culminating in a final performance. In contrast, a dramatic society's members can move on as a group onto the next area of study, or put on a new performance, acquiring new members along the way or losing them as they change interest or leave the school. The public schools, alongside many of their activities, have various aspects of associational culture, but they lack various elements that make them what this study defines as an associational culture.

These societies opened up boys to outside ideas through guest speakers and research, as well as allowing them to express their own thoughts. This meant that for many boys, public schools were political environments. A range of extracurricular activities encouraged this. Associational culture provided both informal education, such as sports and travel, and non-formal education, where there were structured events such as debating societies and the Officer Training Corps. These were a significant part of the educational experience of the public schools. These form the

basis of how this thesis considers influences on boys and how they expressed themselves and engaged with others within the confines of school.

Masculinity

Public schools in the early twentieth century were specifically male spaces. Whilst females were not excluded entirely, they were confined to supporting roles such as matrons. Gresham's only began to admit girls in 1971, initially only to the sixth form, and Harrow continues only to educate boys. This thesis demonstrates the various ways in which boys engaged with the division of sexes in British society. The concluding section of the following chapter demonstrates how they had conflicting views over the prominence of gender and class, as well as how education tied into this.

Tosh, in his study of Victorian masculinity, argued that it was based on the independence of thought and action, alongside more general physical and character traits.[23] Tosh argued that this reflected the Victorian masculine ideal of the independent adventurer or small brotherhood overcoming challenges without domestic distractions, something seen in youth media examined on pages 54-5.[24] Tosh argued that Arnold's reforms created schools where boys were socialised into a masculine, upper-middle-class culture which promoted this independence.[25] The schools use of boys governing themselves certainly lends some credence to the idea that the schools were attempting to do this. Stephenson also argues that public schools' uniforms and dress codes were designed to imitate distinctly masculine adult fashions.[26] The various aspects of the curriculum, both formal and informal, had not only specific educational aims but also an underlying goal of instilling

---

[23] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 111.

[24] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 174–75.

[25] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 105.

[26] Kate Stephenson, 'Uniform Adoption in English Public Schools, 1830–1930', in *Uniform : Clothing and Discipline in the Modern World*, ed. Jane Tynan and Lisa Godson, 1st ed. (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019), 74–75.

masculinity in the boys. As noted on page 49 Ellis has shown how masculinity was used to promote science education.

Whilst it is certainly true that there was an effort to instil a certain form of masculinity in boys during their time in public school, Tosh argues that this was primarily done by removing them from domestic life and female contact entirely and that this extended later into adult social life.[27] For Tosh, this meant that women were effectively banished from public schools. However, the examination of memoirs seen in the literature review shows that women were present, and in some cases, quite influential. Hamlett demonstrated very thoroughly that, whilst there was a masculine environment, it was not done by removing the domestic. Instead, she showed how the schools recreated aspects of the middle-class home, including the domesticity and female influences.[28] In her article, 'Rotten Effeminate Stuff', she demonstrated how, particularly following the First World War, women were able to gain an increasing role within the public schools.[29] This aligns with the crisis over masculinity in the aftermath of the war that Olsen described.[30] Gender roles continued to restrict women's political activities, but both in the public schools and wider society, they were increasingly able to challenge these boundaries.

Ellis has also highlighted that the emphasis on masculinity has tended towards gender rather than maturity.[31] Masculine traits were meant to separate boys, as well as women, from men, and Ellis rightly argued that this was an important feature of Arnold's educational reforms. The boys examined in this study were encouraged to manage their own affairs, including their debating societies, in order to build the masculine trait of independent thought. This is in contrast to the girls' and elementary school debating societies studied by Sunderland. For sixth form girls, Sunderland

---

[27] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 117–18, 177.

[28] Hamlett, *At Home in the Institution*, 62–87.

[29] Jane Hamlett, '"Rotten Effeminate Stuff": Patriarchy, Domesticity, and Home in Victorian and Edwardian English Public Schools', *Journal of British Studies* 58, no. 1 (2019): 107.

[30] Olsen, *Juvenile Nation*.

[31] Heather Ellis, 'Thomas Arnold, Christian Manliness and the Problem of Boyhood', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 19, no. 4 (2014): 426–29.

noted that they often used arguments from male politicians and experts and suggests that they were recreating the gendered hierarchy of adult life.[32] She also highlighted that elementary school debates were teacher-led to engage students in classes rather than prepare them for political life.[33] This would align with Tosh's definition of masculinity as independent action alongside Ellis' efforts to refocus the concept of masculinity as a question of maturity as well as gender.

Boys were not isolated from these changes in British political life, and their reactions demonstrate the various ways in which these changes intersected with class and education and informed their political thinking. The concept of masculinity in the public school system and boys' concepts of their own and others role in society influenced their politics, but it was not the defining feature. Whilst gender roles are more evident in some debates than others, it would also have influenced boys' decisions over which topics they felt appropriate for themselves to discuss, as well as others' right to engage in debates both within the school and the wider political sphere.

Cultural capital and legitimate speech

The right to partake in politics and the ability to do so are two separate but inherently linked concepts. This is particularly true for early-twentieth-century Britain where class, wealth, gender all played a significant role in providing political authority. Bourdieu's thoeries on social and cultural capital are clearly applicable to the public schools, so it is worth exploring them in depth.

Social capital is an easily acknowledged fact; the public schools granted boys a network of peers who could help them gain access to positions of power, even with increasing bureaucracy and examinations.[34] The schools utilised this social capital in their provision of education. Prestigious guest lecturers were invited to address the

---

[32] Sunderland, 'Politics in Schoolgirl Debating Cultures', *The Historical Journal*, 940–41.

[33] Sunderland, 'Politics in Schoolgirl Debating Cultures', *The Historical Journal*, 945–46.

[34] Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John Richardson (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986), 21–24.

boys. Schools were able to draw on parents to give an insight into potential future careers. This was seen both in associational culture and more broadly throughout school activities. This access to a network was reinforced through alumni associations, colloquially referred to as the 'old boys' club. Events, such as dinners at universities, school functions, such Harrow's Founders Day, and sports matches, allowed boys to expand their network beyond their immediate peers. Associational culture offered a space where those with specific interests could meet and a means to encourage former pupils to return to talk to current ones. However, to fully access this social capital, a boy would have to have required the necessary cultural capital to participate in the 'old boys' network.

Bourdieu outlined three forms that cultural capital takes: embodied, objectified and institutionalised.[35] Whilst institutional capital is often understood to refer to qualifications it is worth noting that in the case of English public schools this could be stretched to merely having attended one, the 'old school tie', as well as sporting experience.[36] The combination of a concept of masculinity demonstrated through sporting prowess and a lack of universal, standardised secondary education qualifications gave public school boys a relatively unique form of institutionalised capital. Objectified capital was also something that could be acquired at a public school.[37] Knowledge of classical languages and mythology gave public school boys distinct cultural expertise that, outside of the church, distinguished them a having attended a specific type of school. This cultural capital has continued to be used by certain politically prominent former public school figures in the twenty-first century. Rich demonstrated how objectified capital was acquired, particularly through clothing, that linked the public schools to imperial offices.[38]

---

[35] Bourdieu, 'Forms of Capital', in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, 19–21.

[36] Mangan, 'Education of an Elite Imperial Administration', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*; John Benson, '"Get a Blue and You Will See Your Money Back Again": Staffing and Marketing the English Prep School, 1890–1912', *History of Education* 43, no. 3 (2014): 355–67.

[37] Bourdieu, 'Forms of Capital', in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, 19–21.

[38] Rich, *Elixir of Empire*; Rich, *Chains of Empire*.

Most important to this study is the idea of embodied capital, the knowledge of when and how to use their other forms of cultural capital. The acquisition of clothing or membership of clubs examined by Rich required the knowledge of how to wear the clothes and how to act in those clubs. Bourdieu argued that it requires a long period of socialisation and education in order to acquire embodied capital.[39] The public schools were an essential part of this. Here, Tosh's argument on the socialisation of boys at public school into a masculine upper-middle-class society is relevant. However, masculinity was one aspect of their cultural capital. It was part of their class identity, alongside the use of Latin in conversation or the correct codes of dress or the peculiarities of the rules of certain sports.

Associational culture was a crucial way in which public schools imparted this cultural capital. This thesis will show how it taught boys to participate in political life in particular, but this knowledge could also be applied to other societies that ran in the public schools. The various athletics clubs (theoretically) provided boys with a sense of sportsmanship to participate in adult sporting societies. Various arts, drama and literary societies gave them the knowledge and language to participate in cultural associations as adults.

Important to this was being received as legitimate participants in discussions. Bourdieu outlined the importance of having the correct style of speech, rather than the actual mastery of grammar, and the parliamentary style of debating societies would have enabled their members to have an advantage in being seen as viable parliamentarians.[40] Bourdieu's description of the characteristics of 'legitimate discourse' is visible in school debating societies: a legitimate speaker, a legitimate situation and legitimate receivers. Boys learned to use the correct language in order to be considered legitimate speakers, and guests came from the right classes. The debating society was the correct place for boys to express political opinions. The audience was limited to ‘legitimate’ participants rather than people compelled to be in a classroom setting. Debating societies were an opportunity for public schools to

---

[39] Bourdieu, ‘Forms of Capital’, in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, 17–19.

[40] Pierre Bourdieu, ‘The Economics of Linguistic Exchanges’, *Information (International Social Science Council)* 16, no. 6 (1977): 648–53.

grant legitimacy to their pupils' political opinions, both at school and later in life. Alongside providing their pupils with the necessary institutionalised and objectified capital public schools instilled the embodied capital that allowed boys to be perceived as legitimate speakers, and in turn, be determine who were legitimate speakers. How this was done is explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Associational culture as an educational tool

Before examining specific examples, the mechanisms public schools used to provide vocational training for politics must be understood. This chapter offers an outline of how associational culture functioned within the public schools and how boys participated in it. Examples drawn from a range of public schools, not just the two which make up the primary focus of this study, provide this outline. Whilst there was not a universal system, there were common elements that help understand how the case study schools functioned. Examples taken from a range of schools show how the underlying elements of associational culture were visible across the public school system. Not all boys, or masters, saw these activities as education for politics; for some, it was practice for public speaking whilst others used it merely for entertainment. However, it did introduce them to the cultural elements of politics and societies. This training helped prepare them for participation in such groups in adult life.

Public school pupils were not exclusively from the upper class, and for many, their pupils came from the middle and upper-middle classes. They did, however, create a shared social grouping and interests. Bamford showed how schools adjusted themselves in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to attract a wider clientele.[1] The significant part of Bamford's argument was that the middle-class pupils adopted the culture of the upper classes. This cultural education enabled their alumni to operate within the same social space, using the cultural capital provided by the schools.[2] This assimilation created a collective social group of elites based on education. The ceremony, clubs and culture that Rich has described were part of securing a boy's place in elite society.[3] There has not, however, been a thorough study of the use of extra-curricular activities to pass on cultural capital within public schools. Public schools were not the only educational institutions that used associational culture to

---

[1] Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, 8, 20.

[2] Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Stanford University Press, 1998), 3–10, 19–22.

[3] Rich, *Elixir of Empire*; Rich, *Chains of Empire*.

educate their pupils. Work on girls' schools and universities provides insights which provide valuable comparisons to the public schools.[4]

Foremost and most universal are the debating societies. These were not, however, the only means by which public schools provided an introduction to politics. Other school clubs and societies addressed political, social and economic issues. Some were more explicitly political, whilst others were more focused on understanding their contemporary world. Political education was both informal and formal. Traditional learning, through classes and guest lectures, allowed societies to access both knowledge and personal connections from outside each school and its facilities. Less formal educational trips allowed pupils to explore the world outside of school. These trips ranged from supervised visits to workplaces, schools and settlements to international travel. By facilitating these expeditions, associational culture was able to encourage boys to explore the world within the aims of an educational programme. The relationship between the boys and those providing this education is also significant. Masters held a pedagogical role, but also a paternal role given the closed nature of the society in which boys spent a significant part of their adolescence. Boys' independent study, through literature and media, would have further contributed to their understanding of political and social issues.

1. Debating societies

Debating societies were a significant feature of public schools' associational culture. In the national press debating societies, alongside other activities, were seen as a significant part of what made a good school. *The Times* reported on changes to the timetable at Cheltenham in 1920, noting the increased time for extra-curricular activities, including debating, 'which form a great part of any active school life'.[5] In a review of Australian public schools and the 'public school spirit' R. W. E. Wilmot saw

---

[4] Dockerill, '"Forgotten Voices"', in *Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland*; Helen Sunderland, 'Politics in Schoolgirl Debating Cultures in England, 1886–1914', *The Historical Journal*, n.d., 1–23.

[5] Special Correspondent, 'XIV.-Notable Year at Cheltenham', *The Times*, 5 August 1920, 42481 edition, 5.

debating societies as a valuable educational export.[6] School debating societies did not, however, get the coverage that sports events and speech days did in the national press.

The way debating societies functioned varied from school to school, and even internally with house and age-restricted societies. There are, however, some common themes. A debate would follow a recognised pattern, with a motion proposed and opposed by two speakers for either side. The debate would then be opened to the floor for any other speakers to comment. Finally, the proposer would have a chance to have a final comment, and the motion would be put to the vote. The process mimics Parliament, as well as the Oxford and Cambridge Unions. A Harrow Debating Society member's book from 1944-5 instructs boys on how to behave, with parallels to Parliament: speeches are addressed to the Chair, members are not to refer to others by name, as MPs refer to each other as honourable members or friends, and instructed members to cross the floor if their opinion changes.[7] The minute book from Farfield House's Debating Society at Gresham's specifically instructs boys to use parliamentary language.[8] This style certainly constituted a basic introduction to parliamentary behaviour and style for school boys who could reasonably expect to have an opportunity to become MPs or even members of the House of Lords.

Occasionally boys were able to engage with sitting MPs, who were often parents or old boys, participating in the debating society. At Gresham's one boy, G. F. Johnson, took it upon himself to question the motives of Noel Buxton, Liberal MP for North Norfolk and Old Harrovian, over the Parliament Bill in 1911.[9] This apparent lack of deference would suggest that in the Debating Society some boys saw themselves as peers of parliamentarians. Sunderland has argued that debates were specific places

---

[6] R. W. E. Wilmot, 'Public-School Spirit', *The Times*, 9 May 1927, 44576 edition.

[7] 'Harrow School Debating Society Member's Book, 1944-1945', 1944, N4/13, Harrow School Archive.

[8] Rule 10, Senior Debating Society Rules, 'Farfield Debating Society Book', n.d., GSA 32.2 (a), Box 28, Gresham's School Archive.

[9] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 4, no. 5, June 1911, 60.

where freedom of expression was not only allowed but tested.[10] Her study focused on how girls challenged gender roles and hierarchies. Whilst public school boys could have expected to have more political freedom than girls of a similar age, the debating societies allowed them to test those freedoms. Harrow had a wealth of Old Harrovians in Parliament to draw on to give speeches to the boys, and also published lists of all Old Harrovians in Parliament at general elections. By engaging directly with MPs in debates, as well as drawing on their experiences, public school boys were further drawn into the political culture and encouraged to see themselves as part of it. This connection can be seen most clearly at Harrow when it faced the prospect of a tram line running through the Hill, referring to the part of the town that the school occupies. The editors of the *Harrovian* suggested if it were a decision for Parliament it would not happen 'for there are many in Parliament who would never willingly see the Hill utterly ruined'.[11]

The space used for debates also contributed to the provision of political training. Descriptions of the layout of the room during debates are limited. However, a few insights can be gleaned from the reports in school magazines stating which room the debating society met. 'W. R. L.' in defending the Harrow debating society from criticism maintained that the library was the right venue because it 'resembles to some extent, at all events, the ordinary law court or public hall'.[12] W. R. L. is highlighting not just the political training the debating society offered but also the potential for training for a career in the law. The reconstituted debating society in 1943 had moved to the Speech Room, which the reporter in the *Harrovian* claimed lent itself to the debating styles of the Oxford and Cambridge Unions, university societies of which membership features in many politicians' CVs.[13] These serve different educational purposes, one training for a career, one for university. However, in both cases, links between the space and its contribution to boys' preparation for future life were made.

---

[10] Sunderland, 'Politics in Schoolgirl Debating Cultures in England, 1886–1914', *The Historical Journal*, 7–8.

[11] 'Tramways', *Harrovian*, 14, no. 4, June 1901, 46.

[12] 'Correspondence', *Harrovian*, 11, no. 9, December 1898, 116.

[13] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 57, no. 5, November 1943, 9.

Figure 3: Harrow School, Library

Debates had to be organised before they could take place, and the boys of the schools led this process. Records from Harrow show 'Billy' from Moretons House asking representatives in the other houses to put up notices to invite suggestions.[14] Billy's notes were passed through the various houses, with a list of recipients ticked off the envelope once they had received the note.[15] 'Billy', judging by the dates of the minute records and members books, was presumably W. H. J. Summerskill, who was elected president of the debating society in 1943.[16] Debating societies at Farfield House at Gresham's used a more formalised system of a suggestion book.[17] The President of the Farfield Senior Society would then choose the motion and find speakers for it.[18] Debates were held, with a few exceptions, on Saturdays across all schools. For Harrow this became problematic, and during the interwar period the

---

[14] Billy, 'Note 3' (N4/13, n.d.).

[15] Billy, 'Note 1' (N4/13, n.d.); Billy, 'Note 2' (N4/13, n.d.).

[16] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, November 1943, 9.

[17] Rule 16, Junior Debating Society Rules, 'Farfield Debating Society Book', 230.

[18] Rule 3, Rule 4a, Senior Debating Society Rules, 'Farfield Debating Society Book', 125.

Debating Society fell into periods of silence. This inactivity was in part due to conflicting schedules with Saturdays with other societies' events competing for the boys' attention. Of particular concern to the secretaries of the Harrow School Debating Society were the '27 Club and Mr Middleditch. The '27 Club was a society which hosted speakers on a range of political topics from 1927 onwards. Several secretaries criticised it for drawing away members, and the boys who enjoyed the political element of the debating society would quite likely have been interested in the topics on offer at the '27 Club.[19] Mr Middleditch, one of the house masters, was also blamed for poor attendance by holding a 'talk on Rugger' and house singing on Saturdays when debates were scheduled and compelled all the boys in his house to attend them.[20] Whether this was a deliberate attempt to disrupt the debating society or just indicative of a lack of time for multiple activities is unclear. The secretary's tone, however, suggests he saw it as intentional and, had the debate on who to eat first in a shipwreck not been scuppered, it would be no surprise how he would have voted.

Preparation for debates could take various forms. Proposers and opposers had a set amount of time to speak. They may also have had a specific interest in the topic and would have prepared a significant part of their argument in advance. This would have been especially true for guest speakers such as activists for Women's Suffrage who participated in some debates. Some had clearly researched topics, both as principal speakers and those from the floor. Reports of debates at Gresham's show that speakers referenced press reports and popular literature. One letter to the *Harrovian* from A. R. Churchill emphasised a desire to have time to prepare for the debates, calling for the motion to be posted in the library at least three days prior to the debate.[21] The issuing of members' books in the 1940s outlining the debates for

---

[19] Secretary's Report 1929, Secretary's Report 1932, 'The Harrow School Debating Society Minute Book, 1901-1947', 1901, A2011/14/2, N4/13, Harrow School Archive.

[20] Secretary's Report 1929 'The Harrow School Debating Society Minute Book, 1901-1947'.

[21] 'Correspondence', *Harrovian*, 14, no. 6, July 1901, 84.

the term seem to have resulted in more considerable preparation, with typed-up speeches and talking points for several debates.[22]

Topics of debates would often focus on politics, both as abstract ideological contests and real-world events. These were not, however, the only theme of debates amongst boys. Issues relating to the running of the school and education were regular topics and could prove popular and controversial. D. A. S. Adair, secretary of the Harrow School Debating Society in 1938, noted after a debate on the motion 'that in this School games are given far too much prominence' that 'school affairs provide the best material for debates'.[23] Had Adair looked back at previous debates on sport and the school he would have found a debate on the motion 'That Association Football should be substituted for the Harrow Game throughout the school' on 26th February 1898. [24] The society not only had a good attendance at the debate but spawned a series of correspondence in the *Harrovian* around the role of the Debating Society. The president pre-emptively wrote to the magazine to defend the importance of the society in boys expressing their opinions.[25] He noted the participation from various elements of the school, including those from its sporting community, and stated it was their only forum for expressing opinions on how the school ran. This letter resulted in a response from 'Conservative' (which was delayed an issue due to lack of space) defending Harrow football against Association football.[26] 'Conservative' not only continued the debate in the pages of the school press but called on others to follow suit. This controversy was not the only time football would be the source of political campaigning at Harrow. Cyril Norwood appears to have borne this debate in mind when he sought to replace Harrow football with Rugby football. He put this decision to a vote amongst the boys, and later wrote a new song, *The Song of the*

---

[22] 'Harrow School Debating Society Member's Book, 1944-1945'; E. I. Wigman, 'Typed Debate Preparation: State Control vs Free Enterprise' (N4/13, 1945); E. I. Wigman, 'Typed Debate Preparation: State Control vs Free Enterprise'; E. I. Wigman, 'Typed Debate Preparation: Press Freedom' (N4/13, 1945).

[23] 'Harrow School Debating Society Minute Book, 1933-47', 1933, A2011/14/3 N4/13, Harrow School Archive The debate was held on May 21st 1938.

[24] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 11, no. 2, April 1898, 19.

[25] 'Correspondence', *Harrovian*, April 1898, 24.

[26] 'Correspondence', *Harrovian*, 11, no. 4, June 1898, 47.

Forwards, to celebrate an unbeaten season in 1932.[27] Chapter seven explores the political upheaval caused by football under Norwood. School affairs appealed not only to current boys but to old boys and staff and could generate far greater depth of feeling than matters of state.

Discussion of explicitly theological topics was very rare, even going so far as to be banned in one set of rules.[28] This convention did not prevent faith or religion from being referenced in many debates, such as when Mr L. L. C. Evans arguing that the society should support Italy in its war in Tripoli as a matter of religion.[29] Furthermore, whilst theology was off-limits discussion of the occult was permitted. These debates were approached seriously by some while other boys were less serious and often told ghost stories. The debating society at Harrow debated the existence of ghosts and the supernatural in 1900, 1902 and 1903, with the final report suggesting that the topic had become exhausted.[30] The convention against theological topics suggests that there was a conscious effort to avoid doctrinal disputes. Discussing beliefs outside of Christianity was acceptable, however. The ban on theology seems to have been carefully observed, with no debates held at Gresham's or Harrow on Church matters. This convention is similar to how Bamford argued Thomas Arnold viewed religion and citizenship: that (Trinitarian) belief in Christ was essential, but how an individual practised their belief was not.[31]

The recording of debates took multiple forms. For readers of the magazine that were unable to attend a debate, reports were sent to the school journals' editors. Whilst some are clear and outline the general flow of the discussion, for some debates the record merely shows who spoke for which side. Some sections of more detailed reports are even more opaque than the reports which merely list the speakers. For example, it was reported that F. G. Womersley (Gresham's 1907-14) 'did not miss

---

[27] Dale Vargas, 'Harrow Football', in Dudley, *Harrow*, 59–60; Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School*, 471–72.

[28] Rule 10, Senior Debating Society Rules, 'Farfield Debating Society Book', 125.

[29] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 4, no. 8, December 1911, 104.

[30] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 13, no. 3, April 1900, 40–41; 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 15, no. 7, October 1902, 86–87; 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 16, no. 8, November 1903, 114.

[31] Arnold and Bamford, *Arnold on Education*, 5–7.

the opportunity of introducing his literary idol', and later 'the greatest of all novelists', without any indication as to who the boy is talking about.[32] Searching for Womersley's 'literary idol' is challenging, due to his regular presentations on authors at the Literature Society.[33] In one debate he did, however, mention Charles Dickens, and in a later debate had to restrain himself from mentioning Dickens.[34] This type of reference not only reinforces the sense of a closed community of those at the school. It also highlights how these were social events where the participants knew each others' personal preferences, rather than confrontational political battles. Womersley appears to have been a particularly clubbable member of the school and the Old Greshamian society. He participated in dinners and sporting events, served as secretary for the society, called for the foundation of a Masonic Lodge, and finally donated a book on Dickens to the school library sixteen years after leaving.[35]

A brief report from the debating society's secretary to the editor of the *Harrovian* provides an insight into what sort of information reporters conveyed to the magazine. The secretary emphasised that the discussion of the motion 'That a slump in farming can be prevented after this war' was on that it 'should' rather than 'would' be prevented, and stated which speeches were good or bad.[36] The report in the *Harrovian* is remarkably detailed given the shortness of the report and the secretary's apparent disinterest, as seen by his portraits of the various boys and the 'girl from bottom of hill'.[37] Minute books would provide the most reliable form of record-keeping for debating societies; however, many have been lost, or are not as detailed as magazine reports. Westminster School Debating Society, as well as their

---

[32] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 4, no. 11, June 1912, 154; 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 5, no. 3, February 1913, 37.

[33] 'Literature Society', *Gresham*, 4, no. 10, April 1912, 140; 'Literature Society', *Gresham*, 4, no. 12, July 1912, 188; 'English Literature Society', *Gresham*, 5, no. 2, December 1912, 26.

[34] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, April 1912, 140; 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1912, 23.

[35] 'Correspondence', *Gresham*, 13, no. 12, July 1930, 228; 'School Library', *Gresham*, 14, no. 11, June 1932, 201.

[36] Secretary of the Harrow School Debating Society, 'Report for the Harrovian', 11 November 1944, N 4/13, Harrow School Archive.

[37] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 58, no. 7, November 1944, 13.

political society, appears to be one school where there was a determined effort to preserve the societies' records. An instruction in the front of all minute books stated that they should be handed to the school archivist.[38] Harrow School Debating Society's minute books provide varying degrees of information on the debates. The level of detail depended upon the secretary for each year, and some secretaries' records were much less thorough. The most remarkable feature, however, is the conviction of the secretaries that the society would always have a future. Even when the society had been dormant for more than a year secretaries were elected, and each one had optimism that the next year would see a vigorous revival of the society.[39]

The sending and receiving of school magazines would have enabled debating societies to see what was happening in their corresponding societies at other public schools. The most likely outcome is the adoption of similar motions for debates. The debating societies of both schools in this case study discussed popular or notable political issues and events. The similarities in the wording of some motions, however, suggests a common cultural expectation, no doubt influenced by parliamentary and Oxford and Cambridge Union culture. Whilst current affairs may have primarily influenced the topics debated there was a common linguistic style used to frame motions. This link between public schools and the Oxford and Cambridge Unions are apparent in historiography as well as history. In Martin Ceadel's article on the 'King and Country' debate at Oxford he specifically lists their college and school for five people and for many others their connections, including in one case their current job at the time of the article's publication.[40] The training in the public school society undoubtedly prepared young politicians for the university stage of their career.

---

[38] 'Westminster School Debating Society Minute Book 1894-1918', n.d., WS/ECA/1/2, Westminster School Archives; 'Westminster School Debating Society Minute Book 1919-1927', n.d., WS/ECA/1/3, Westminster School Archives; 'Westminster School Debating Society Minute Book 1927-1947', n.d., WS/ECA/1/4, Westminster School Archives; 'Westminster School Political and Literary Society Minute Book 1931-1946', n.d., WS/ECA/5/1, Westminster School Archives.

[39] 'The Harrow School Debating Society Minute Book, 1901-1947'.

[40] Ceadel, 'The "King and Country" Debate', *The Historical Journal*.

For some boys the debating society was irrefutably an educational tool for those wishing to enter politics. Sunderland has demonstrated how for girls' schools debating societies prepared them for politics in three key areas: speechmaking, organisation and debating protocol.[41] She argued that these skills were transferable into other areas of politics beyond debate and public speaking. Public schools' societies would have also trained boys in these skills. One letter, signed with the pseudonym 'Conservative', to the *Harrovian* calls for current Harrovians looking at Harrow statesmen 'to remember that they learnt the rudiments of politics at Harrow'.[42] The writer stated that the expanding Empire needed more men to govern it but that Harrow was producing too many sportsmen and not enough statesmen. His explicit call for the reinvigoration of the debating society suggests that, for some, it was the founding block of a Harrovian's political career.

Despite all the inherent political and oratorical training of debating societies, it is important not to forget that they also served a social and leisure purpose. In the minute book for 1933-47 a secretary described the different varieties of speeches, from those which were intellectually sound but dull to those which were witty and carry the audience without relying on factual knowledge.[43] Michael Bind, secretary from 1939-40, reinforced the preference for good speeches rather than detailed ones. He praised the first four speakers of a debate for being able to deliver their speeches without notes and condemned those who failed to give coherent speeches as wasting time.[44] Whilst these are good skills for politicians, they would also have been conducive to an entertaining debate. Some topics lent themselves well to humour more than others, as can be seen in a debate on the influence of the supernatural on everyday life at Gresham's when J. R. Eccles, housemaster for Woodlands House, claimed the house was haunted, and a boy responded that he remembered being kicked down the stairs by 'an infuriated apparition'.[45] It is clear

---

[41] Sunderland, 'Politics in Schoolgirl Debating Cultures in England, 1886–1914', *The Historical Journal*, 13.

[42] 'Correspondence', *Harrovian*, 13, no. 7, October 1900, 100.

[43] 'Harrow School Debating Society Minute Book, 1933-47'.

[44] Michael Bind, 'Minutes for debate held 17 June 1939', 'Harrow School Debating Society Minute Book, 1933-47'.

[45] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, April 1912, 139.

that for some the society was as much entertainment as education. At Harrow there were concerns expressed by 'Silence is Golden' in correspondence to the *Harrovian* that this even went so far as boys turning up just for coffee and to read the magazines in the library, with no interest in the debates.[46] Silence is Golden sarcastically concluded that some good oratory was disturbing these boys' evenings and that speakers should be silent. On the opposite end of the scale, the rules of the Senior Debating Society in Farfield seem to suggest that the audience could become too animated and ensured that 'The President has the liberty to forbid the wearing or carrying of lethal weapons'.[47] The rules are dated 11th March 1936 but recorded no specific incident that necessitated such a rule. The unusual restriction, however, suggests over-enthusiasm from some of the members of the society.

2. Political education

At the start of the twentieth century debating societies were the only practical training for politics and public speaking in many schools. However, other elements within public schools which helped provide this form of training developed during the twentieth century. At both Gresham's and Harrow associational culture provided a range of different opportunities to learn about political issues. Like debates these did not limit themselves to contemporary political events but engaged with a range of socio-economic issues. Individual teachers also provided a source of political education. However, significant influences were often only remembered for a select few individuals who went on to lead politically exciting lives.

At both schools associational culture flourished during the interwar period. At Harrow the '27 Club, mentioned in the previous section, was formed in 1927. Its founding announcement in the *Harrovian* declared it was society to hear about issues of 'International, Social and Industrial importance' to create informed citizens rather than an arena to discuss politics.[48] The ’27 Club did give boys a chance to learn

---

[46] ‘Correspondence’, *Harrovian*, April 1900, 44.

[47] Rule 27c, Senior Society Debating Rules, ‘Farfield Debating Society Book’, 127.

[48] ‘The 27 Club’, *Harrovian*, 40, no. 6, October 1927, 98.

about specific issues in greater depth, and whilst less confrontational than a traditional debate this did not prevent ideas from being discussed. Gresham's saw the formation of a branch of the League of Nations Union in 1920.[49] In 1921 the 'keener political spirits of the School' formed a Sociological Society.[50] These societies, like the '27 Club, hosted regular lectures and papers. However, these came from boys and masters as well as guests. They also featured trips, with the League of Nations Union going on tours of Europe in the summer whilst the Sociological Society visited workplaces, primarily in Norfolk. Associational culture alongside pupil self-governance was a crucial part of boys' political education. It allowed the flexibility to expand their study beyond and without the constraints of the curriculum. Whilst masters were involved in a semi-supervisory role, particularly for expeditions, they were not the gatekeepers to these subjects.

Masters and headmasters who were interested in promoting an interest in politics and current affairs were not prevented from doing so, however. Engaging masters taught across a range of schools. At Gresham's G. W. S. Howson held, according to J. H. Simpson, weekly classes for all forms where they would discuss a range of topics, and often this covered contemporary events.[51] Brian Simon, the historian of education, attended Gresham's 1928-32, along with his brother. Brian Simon's history essays from school focus on examining contemporary issues as much as the past, with assignments such as 'The Advantages and Disadvantages of Democracy' and 'Britain's Industrial Future'.[52] The master in charge of history seemed keen to support Simon's intellectual activities, and the master's comments suggest that they discuss the issues Simon raised further.[53] Simon suggests in his writings on his education that in the 1930s staff had the freedom to teach as they saw fit and praises his English teacher as really teaching sociology and critical thinking.[54] The

---

[49] 'League of Nations Union', *Gresham*, 9, no. 2, December 1920, 26.

[50] 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, 9, no. 8, February 1921, 54.

[51] Simpson, *Howson of Holt*, 73–74.

[52] Brian Simon, 'History Essays from 1931', 1931, DC/SIM/5/2/1, UCL Institute of Education Archives; Brian Simon, 'History Essays from 1932', 1932, DC/SIM/5/2/2, UCL Institute of Education Archives.

[53] Simon, 'History Essays from 1932'.

[54] Simon, 'My Education as I Wish It Had Been'.

French teacher, Frank McEachran, provided James Klugmann (Gresham's 1926-31) with a range of material on Marxism.[55] Philip Mason, who attended Sedbergh School between 1918-26, recalled his time in the 'Clio', a specially created form of the Sixth Form which was nominally part of the Classical side, but focused on history rather than Latin and Greek.[56] Mason remembered how the master who did most of the teaching, Neville Gorton (master at Sedbergh 1914-34), commonly used serious contemporary issues as points of discussion and essay assignments.[57] Mason framed his two masters' and the headmasters' political views as being aligned with those of the *Manchester Guardian*, *New Statesman* and *Morning Post*.[58] W. B. Gallie (Sedbergh 1925-31) described three masters and seemed to link their political and religious views together.[59] His almost familial description of the masters he writes about suggests that they made a strong impression on him. The biography of Robert Somervell of Harrow discusses how the pupil room system gave masters considerable freedom over what they taught.[60] A range of freedom for masters seems to have certainly allowed those who wished to foster political discussions to do so. Whilst not all would have some, particularly history teachers it would appear, were keen to take advantage of this opportunity to apply their subject to contemporaneous society. It also demonstrates that despite there being no formal civics or political studies there was an effort to teach elements of these subjects.

Formal political or civics education was rare, however. At Repton, two masters who taught in 1917-18, Victor Gollancz and David Somervell, attempted to modify the curriculum to widen political education when it became apparent that the debating

---

[55] Andrews, *Shadow Man*, 21.

[56] Philip Mason, 'Teaching and Learning, 1900-1945', in *Sedbergh School, 1900-200: A Celebration*, ed. John Stacpool (The Old Sedberghian Club, 2000), 49.

[57] Mason, 'Teaching and Learning', in *Sedbergh School, 1900-200: A Celebration*, 55–56.

[58] Mason, 'Teaching and Learning', in *Sedbergh School, 1900-200: A Celebration*, 58.

[59] Gallie, *An English School*, 64–91.

[60] Robert Somervell, David C. Somervell, and Donald B. Somervell, *Robert Somervell: For Thirty-Three Years Assistant Master and Bursar at Harrow School : Chapters of Autobiography* (Faber & Faber, 1935), 90.

society was not up to the job.[61] Gollancz, transferred to the school by the Officer Training Corps, had held liberal views from an early age and would go on to be a prominent left-wing publisher during the interwar period, founding the Left Book Club.[62] Somervell, son of Robert Somervell the bursar of Harrow, was very much an insider of the public school system and went on to publish several political histories.[63] The two teachers introduced a voluntary civics class, produced a new school paper on politics and altered the sixth form curriculum to include more humanities and social sciences. They published their reform programme as *Political Education at Public School*.[64] They aimed to reinvigorate education in public schools away from the cult of games and classics towards a practical education for intellectually engaged political leaders.[65] They began their book not with a radical call to overhaul the public schools but a critical defence, highlighting the schools' failures whilst arguing they could still have a place in contemporary society.[66] Ultimately, Peter Gronn argued, it failed because it was seen as too liberal, bordering on pacifism and Marxism, and divided the boys (and masters) into opposing camps.[67] The events at Repton demonstrate two things: political or civics training was possible if there were masters available to encourage it and the boys could be highly engaged with it if it was available.

3. School magazines

School magazines were another area in which pupils could experiment with politics. As seen above, the correspondence pages offered a space to discuss the

---

[61] Peter C. Gronn, 'An Experiment in Political Education:"VG",'Slimy'and the Repton Sixth, 1916-1918', *History of Education* 19, no. 1 (1990): 3–4.

[62] Sheila Hodges, 'Gollancz, Sir Victor', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004).

[63] 'Somervell, David Churchill', in *Who's Who and Who Was Who* (Oxford University Press, 1 December 2007).

[64] Gronn, 'An Experiment in Political Education', *History of Education*, 6.

[65] Gronn, 'An Experiment in Political Education', *History of Education*, 7–9.

[66] Victor Gollancz and David Churchill Somervell, *Political Education at a Public School* (London: W. Collins, 1918), 1–6.

[67] Gronn, 'An Experiment in Political Education', *History of Education*, 13–17.

governance of the school and its institutions. The contents of the school magazines were reasonably consistent: there were editorials, school and old boy news, upcoming events, reports from sports teams and societies and correspondence. Occasionally special pieces such as articles by old boys, obituaries and notable school work, such as prize essays, were published. The readership would have encompassed current boys, staff, parents and old boys as well as those in other public schools. The editorship of the school papers was left to a committee of boys, although the final product would have staff oversight. However, there was relative freedom on how to report events. This autonomy could manifest in more humorous takes on mundane school events, such as one boy at Harrow reporting on an O.T.C. field day, where he mimicked the style of letters coming from the South African War.[68] Simon Welfare wrote how, being edited by a group of boys, the *Harrovian* allowed the editors to occasionally let off frustrations at the established elements of the school.[69] The *Harrovian* was particularly active in using the editorial to discuss national as well as school events.

School magazines offered the chance for boys and old boys to discuss school policy, primarily through the editorials and correspondence sections. As has been demonstrated, this could spring from the debating society, and a serious tone was used for the discussion surrounding the adoption of Rugby football at Harrow. What started as a serious issue could, however, turn farcical. This is most obvious in complaints about the school laundry service at Harrow. Complaints began with poems lamenting shirts coming back stained and stolen handkerchiefs, and the editorial reported that the laundry director 'humorously' claimed complaints had ceased.[70] Two boys wrote letters to the *Harrovian*, complaining that the Masters received preferential treatment from the laundry, and they are the ones that need to lead the way by switching firms, whilst the editors appeared to be receiving enough complaints to ask those writing in to direct their complaints to the laundry.[71] The

---

[68] 'Desperate Attack on Claydon House', *Harrovian*, 13, no. 5, July 1900, 57–59.

[69] Simon Welfare, 'Unfaded Copy - Editing The Harrovian', in Dudley, *Harrow*, 162.

[70] 'Sant Lacrimce Rerun', *Harrovian*, 12, no. 4, June 1899, 45.

[71] 'Correspondence', *Harrovian*, 12, no. 8, November 1899, 100; 'Now, Moab, to the spoil', *Harrovian*, 14, no. 1, February 1901, 12; 'Here and There', *Harrovian*, 14, no. 2, March 1901, 14.

issue finally appeared to be at rest following the publication of the story 'Ye Lamentable Legend of Ye Laundrie' which revealed that the school was suffering punishment from a bishop catching the cricket captain 'bussing' (kissing) one of the laundry maids, and cursed the school laundry to be done by 'sundrie mechanysme, so that there be no more winsome damsels to be bussed'.[72] This shift in the tone of contributions from suitable to *The Times* to *Punch* should serve as a reminder that whilst serious approaches were possible, comedy was just as appreciated in the boys' magazines. However, the school magazine could run more serious campaigns of op-eds and letters, as will be seen in chapter eight's examination of Norwood's sports reforms.

Specific societies produced their own independent magazines. *The Grasshopper* at Gresham's was the magazine of the Literature Society and first published in 1929. The contents, whilst fictional, often had clear political undertones. One author, J. G. BB. (*sic*; presumably John Gordon Bensusan Butt, Gresham's 1925-9), followed a distinctly anti-American tone through mocking the Scopes Monkey trial with a poem describing evolution entitled 'Monkeys' and later a story where a German scientist invented chemical weapons which were used by the 'president of the Two Americas' to obliterate the world.[73] Another story by D. M. BB (*sic*; presumably David Miles Bensusan Butt, Gresham's 1924-9 and brother of J. G. BB) entitled 'Res Antiquae' described an Anglo-Dictatorship, supported by the press which uses a cult of celebrity to distract the people until they are unable to deliver on their idealised lifestyle.[74] At this point, a 'joyful Communist Junta takes control' and shows Russian films. These revolutionary stories, with the cover of being fictional and produced for a school-sanctioned magazine, were able to be advertised in the *Gresham* and receive a wider circulation than a rogue publication. The society was even able to get the

---

[72] 'Ye Lamentable Legend of Ye Laundrie', *Harrovian*, October 1902, 85–86.

[73] J. G. B. B, 'Monkeys', *Grasshopper*, no. 1, 1929; J. G. B. B, 'Nemesis', *Grasshopper*, no. 2, 1930. The Scopes Monkey trial, formally known as The State of Tennessee v. John Tomas Scopes, took place in 1925. The state of Tennessee fined a high school teacher for breaking the law by teaching evolution in a state funded school. The fine was later overturned on a technicatlity but the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled that the ban was constitutional.

[74] D. M. B. B, 'Res Antiquae', *Grasshopper*, no. 3, 1931.

school library to pay for the first four issues of the *Grasshopper* in the Lent term 1933.[75] Rogue publications, not sanctioned by any official part of the school institution, were either rare or rarely recorded. One such magazine did appear at Marlborough in 1924, but it was suppressed after the second issue created a parody of then headmaster Cyril Norwood.[76] The range of media produced by boys demonstrates another political tool being practised by boys during their time at school, even when confined to the status of a state-sponsored press.

4. Libraries

Public school libraries were well stocked with books, journals and newspapers. It is easy to discover what was available in the libraries by examining the catalogues and donations announced in the school magazines. These records do not, however, provide any indication as to what boys wanted to or were actually reading. Useful records from the library at Gresham's have survived with the accession book (listing books as they entered the library), a book for boys to suggest new purchases and the Library Committee's minute book. These provide information on budgetary considerations for the main and departmental libraries as well as the desirability or undesirability of some publications and boys' reading interests.

The Library Suggestions Book at Gresham's provides a source of information on what boys wanted to read. Some boys submitted several requests on specific topics, such as F. R. Berthoud (Gresham's 1913-17), who requested several military history books in the Michaelmas term of 1915 and Lent term 1916. J. Roberts (Gresham's 1914-18) requested a vast swathe of books on British natural studies which the committee considered on 5th April 1919, with only one rejection.[77] Requests for books on academic subjects had a reasonable chance of being accepted by the committee. Fiction received a more detailed level of scrutiny. In the Michaelmas term, 1921, requests were made by J. Sapwell (Gresham's 1917-22) for thirteen

---

[75] 'Library Suggestions Book', n.d., GSA 2014.9, Build 2/3, Box 65, Gresham's School Archive.

[76] McCulloch, *Norwood and the Ideal of Secondary Education*, 85–86.

[77] 'Library Suggestions Book'.

books by Kipling and an anonymous request for seven of J. M. Barrie's plays. Only one Kipling book was approved, although four were already in the library and one of Barrie's plays was described as 'unobtainable' rather than rejected.[78] The request for Barrie's plays was part of a wider school interest. The English Literature Society had performed one the year before, and Farfield House's entertainment in 1924 performed another with the reviewer lamenting the fact that he had not had the chance to read the play.[79] The request for books by Kipling is the one instance where the Library Committee minutes recorded the vetoing of a book purchase, whilst passing the remainder of the list to the suggestion committee.[80] The Library Committee Minute Book does not provide any direct insight into the decision-making process, although it does provide some clues as to the budget available. The headmaster presided over the committee, and made up of boys and staff, giving all parts of the school a say in how the library ran until 1935 when it became a staff only committee. No explanation was given, although this could be due to a new headmaster, Philip Newell (Headmaster, Gresham's 1935-44).

Comparing the budgets granted to the library against an approved request demonstrates the level of importance given to boys' suggestions. In the Michaelmas term of 1913, the individual departments of Science, Classics, English and History (written in that order) were given £10 each for purchasing standard works.[81] In Michaelmas term 1916 the book selection committee was granted £20 by the school for the purchasing of new books.[82] When considering J. Roberts' request for science books in 1919 totalled £4 9s 5d its approval meant that it would have been a considerable part of the budget for that term. The specific budget for 1919 is unknown. However, it is equivalent to nearly half the value of annual departmental budgets from 1913 or a quarter of the selection committee's budget in 1916. Pupils

---

[78] 'Library Suggestions Book'.

[79] 'English Literature Society', *Gresham*, December 1920, 36; 'House Entertainments: Farfield', *Gresham*, 10, no. 11, June 1924, 169.

[80] Library Committee Meeting, July 2 1915, 'Library Minute Book', n.d., GSA 2010.33, Build 2.3, Box 65, Gresham's School Archive.

[81] Library Committee Meeting, November 12 1913, 'Library Minute Book'.

[82] Library Committee Meeting, November 17 1916, 'Library Minute Book'.

at Gresham's were able to exert influence over aspects of their own studies. So whilst any book could be requested academic texts appeared to take priority, and fiction was routinely rejected, even if it was likely to be widely read; there were budgetary limits, as well as difficulty in obtaining some publications. The only criteria specifically laid out in the suggestion book came from DKS which read 'Note: Suggestions are rarely accepted when the proposer has not read the book suggested' (original emphasis).[83]

Most requests listed only the basic details of the author, title, publisher, price, proposer and the committee's decision. However, some boys provided more detailed information on the book as well as reasons for purchasing it. J. E. Lascelles (Gresham's 1923-29), a frequent proposer of new purchases, would often provide more information on the contents of books, as well as a rationale for his request. One request for *Coal Mining and the Coal Miner* by H. F. Bulman and published in 1920 was placed in the Michaelmas term 1927.[84] Lascelles argued that it 'Gives facts of wages, pithead prices etc. which, in the view of the recent Coal Strikes, cannot be ignored'. He also requested *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* by René Fülöb Millar and published 1926.[85] Both were rejected; however, Lascelles' request for literature relating to the strike is clearly related to contemporaneous events and would suggest that some boys at least wanted to use the library to learn more about current affairs.

Books were not the sole form of media available in the library, however, and individual journal subscriptions were deemed worth recording in the Library Committee meeting's minutes, whereas individual book purchases were not. The library had subscriptions to a range of journals, from curriculum relevant ones such as *Nature* to current affairs and political journals such as *The Spectator*.[86] Some journals were suggested directly by the boys through the library suggestion book. A subscription to the *English Mechanic* and *World of Science* was proposed by P. R.

---

[83] 'Library Suggestions Book'.

[84] 'Library Suggestions Book'.

[85] 'Library Suggestions Book'.

[86] Library Committee Meeting, November 12 1913, 'Library Minute Book'.

Homan (Gresham's 1912-18) in the Michaelmas term 1918, and given specific consideration by the Library Committee which approved a one year trial.[87] *Foreign Affairs* was later suggested in the Summer term 1929 and was only marked as 'approved' in the suggestions book, with no discussion by the Library Committee.[88] The greater consideration given by the main Library Committee at Gresham's to journals than to books highlights not just the potential of ongoing costs, but also a desire to ensure that up-to-date information was available to boys.

Library records for Harrow are not available for this period. However, the Harrow School Debating Society minute book 1850-71 included rules for the library, including Rule 2 which required subscriptions to 'The Atheneum, The Examiner, Literary Gazette, Spectator, Critic, United Services Gazette, Army List, Oxford and Cambridge University Calendars, the Quarterly, Edinburgh and Westminster Reviews, Blackwood, Dublin University, Frazer (*sic*; presumably *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*) and Sharpe's Magazine' whilst Rule 5 banned sporting periodicals.[89] Here there are some of the links that Rich highlighted with the universities, the military and London clubs.[90] At both schools, boys were certainly able to access high-quality publications on contemporary political issues. More importantly, pupils had some say in the provision of books and journals. Where there are records, it is clear that boys were active in using the library to learn more about current affairs at a detailed level, alongside reading for entertainment.

The quality of the press was a regular debating topic, with motions such as 'That this house condemns the present attitude of the press'.[91] Whilst discussions covered a range of publications the broadsheets would often receive a reprieve whilst tabloids faced condemnation. The most popular tabloid to be discussed was the *Daily Mail*, with one motion at Harrow, 'that the *Daily Mail* is a disgrace to the English press'

---

[87] 'Library Suggestions Book'; Library Committee Meeting, November 24 1918, 'Library Minute Book'.

[88] 'Library Suggestions Book'.

[89] 'Harrow School Debating Society Member's Book, 1850-1871', 1850, A2001/16/1, N4/13, Harrow School Archive.

[90] Rich, *Elixir of Empire*.

[91] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 3, no. 8, December 1909, 108.

being a uniquely targeted statement.[92] Newspapers would also be used to reinforce claims made in debates, despite apparent disregard by some members of the societies of their quality. W. D. Blatch (Gresham's 1905-07) stated he had 33 cuttings from different newspapers arguing against the construction of a Channel Tunnel in 1907.[93] Boys read and were aware of the style of a range of papers, and held differing opinions on their quality. They were certainly conscious of the press' role in influencing public policy discussion as well. This is most clearly visible in a motion in 1912 arguing 'That this House considers the present estrangement between England and Germany is due to the action of the Press in the two countries, and not due to any natural antagonism between the two peoples', including one reference by F. W. Halsey to the 'excellent weekly journal entitled *Everyman*', which was subscribed to the following year by Library Committee.[94] Boys were not just rubber-stamping decisions of the library committee, but actively discussed both the role and desirability of branches of the media, particularly the press.

5. Understandings of political citizenship

Whilst it is clear that boys were able to acquire an education that fitted them for a career in politics, they also expressed views on who else should have similar access. At the start of the twentieth century, the franchise was limited by age, status, wealth and sex. The boys, who were likely going to become electors, held opinions on both sides of this issue. At Gresham's, there were two debates on expanding the franchise, one in 1909 and one in 1912, both times on the issue of female suffrage, whilst Harrow held four debates, one on universal suffrage in 1906, two on female suffrage in 1908 and 1913, and one on exclusively all-male suffrage in 1911. Various arguments were put forward for expanding the franchise, from service, force and the principle of legislators being directly responsible to those they legislate for. Discussions on the desirable characteristics of voters also took place.

---

[92] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 12, no. 9, December 1899, 111.

[93] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 2, no. 7, April 1907, 100–101.

[94] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1912, 21–23; Library Committee Meeting, November 12 1913, 'Library Minute Book'.

It is important to note that women were allowed a political voice at both Gresham's and Harrow, with both schools inviting suffrage supporters to speak at debates. Even when afforded the same rights as members of the society, women were still not seen as equals, however. At Gresham's five of thirty-seven speakers were women, with Margery Corbett, secretary of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, invited but unable to attend.[95] The second motion, opposing female suffrage, was proposed by Miss Mabel Smith of the anti-suffrage society, and opposed by Mrs Field, a self-proclaimed member of 'the most militant class of suffragists', wife to a master and mother of a pupil.[96] This was a rare example of the public schools allowing women to lead a debate on their right to vote, however. At Harrow a 'real suffragist' had been due to speak, but unable to attend for personal reasons.[97] She was replaced by a Mr Graham, who had spoken in favour of female suffrage previously. Allowing women a political voice did not, however, equate to them being given equal standing to men in the political sphere. The reporter described Mr Graham as having done a better job than any suffragist could. The role of women in society was often framed, whether supporting or opposing their political rights, as domestic. In the debate at Gresham's in 1912 one boy argued that the domestic political sphere was more suited to women than men by suggesting that any 'self-respecting MP would consult his wife on domestic matters.'[98] At Harrow it was argued by one boy who opposed female suffrage that women should focus on 'social duties', concluding that if any women should be allowed to vote it should be limited to mothers, suggesting that he believed only those that conformed to a traditional domestic role were worthy of the franchise.[99] Even when supporting the expansion of the franchise F. A. Reiss at Gresham's maintained the idea of a domestic role for women, arguing that 'since politics has invaded the home…women should enter politics.'[100] Only V. A. Farrar, in 1913, argued that women had a real role outside the

---

[95] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 3, no. 5, May 1909, 61–63; 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, June 1912, 151–53.

[96] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, June 1912, 151–52.

[97] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 21, no. 8, November 1908, 100–101.

[98] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, June 1912, 151–52.

[99] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 26, no. 2, March 1913, 19.

[100] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, June 1912, 152.

domestic sphere when he supported the expansion of the franchise on the grounds that 'Women took an interest in political and other matters' and that 'there were businesswomen as well as businessmen'.[101] It is clear that whilst women were seen as being allowed to have a political voice of their own, it was often limited to a separate sphere based on gender.

There were other characteristics which boys saw as necessary to be worthy of electors. Common qualifying factors for the franchise, for both men and women, were character and education. Many boys were satisfied with a limited franchise but saw no reason to limit it to just men. G. M. Gwyther, seconding the motion in favour of female suffrage at Gresham's in 1909, argued that suffragists were not 'criminals, idiots, lunatics nor paupers'. Both the proposer and opposer of the motion on universal suffrage at Harrow in 1906 argued that the wealthy should not cede ground to the poor. Both speakers interpreted the motion differently, but with neither seeking to exclude women of the same class as themselves.[102] There were repeatedly suggestions at both schools that education would be a better test than wealth, with one boy at Harrow even going as far as to suggest a reduction of the franchise to fewer men but expanding it to include educated women.[103] Some saw the extension of the franchise as inevitable, but to be gradually achieved as education improved, whilst on a separate debate on the merits of democracy one boy argued that exercising political rights was in itself educational.[104] No questions are raised over the eligibility of public school boys for future voting rights, indicating they assumed that they were educated well enough to vote. It was not just gender which boys saw as a reason to restrict the franchise, but the broader range of issues that separated themselves from wider society. This separation manifested itself in their beliefs as to who should receive political rights, based on how similar they were to the boys. This belief can be seen even in the case of more militant suffragettes, to whom Reverend Field, husband of Mrs Field, at Gresham's attributed the characteristics of the ideal of

---

[101] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, March 1913, 19.

[102] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 19, no. 8, November 1906, 104.

[103] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, November 1906, 104; 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, June 1912, 152.

[104] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 24, no. 8, December 1911, 138; 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, March 1913, 20.

the muscular Christian public school boy: they were willing to throw off personal feelings and suffer ridicule and physical challenges for the sake of their movement.[105]

Discussions on political rights also featured more general issues relating to enfranchisement. All debates on expanding the franchise raised the issue of representation for those affected by taxation and legislation. The uneven nature of the franchise was raised at Harrow in 1906 and again in 1908 by Mr Graham, whilst V. A. Farrar argued that politically and economically active people were being excluded based on gender.[106] Others at Harrow supported the idea of increased voting rights but retaining more for the wealthy on the grounds they had more at stake than the poor.[107] Other boys countered this, arguing that workmen had just as much at stake. Mrs Field argued that as society was made up of both sexes so both should have representation in the legislature.[108] Discussions also covered the use of force to obtain political rights. Boys at Gresham's challenged criticism of militant suffragettes at both debates by arguing that men had also used force to get the vote.[109] Some speakers made predictable claims about women needing the protection of men, but they were not unchallenged. The report of the 1909 debate at Gresham's stating that a speaker 'expressed some rather pedantic notions' about women needing the protection of the 'stronger sex'.[110] Reports on debates rarely reflected the personal views of the writer, and this rare interjection demonstrates how engaged boys were in the issue.

Boys saw themselves as eligible to have a political role, but their opinions of others' rights varied. Whilst there was not outright hostility to women or the working classes obtaining the vote, it was often limited to them meeting the same criteria that boys

---

[105] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, May 1909, 63.

[106] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, November 1906, 105; 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, November 1908, 100–101; 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, March 1913, 19.

[107] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, December 1911, 138.

[108] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, June 1912, 152.

[109] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, May 1909, 63; 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, June 1912, 152.

[110] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, May 1909, 63.

believed they met themselves. Education and character appeared to trump gender as a qualifying factor for political rights. Boys were more willing to accept women voters if they were of a similar background to themselves than they were of an expansion of the franchise to more men. Acceptance of political rights was not an acceptance of equality, however, and the divisions over whether women were to suited for politics mirrored traditional gender roles. This style of accepting the political legitimacy of groups based on their similarity to themselves is worth noting throughout this study, as this sliding scale of legitimacy appeared in other political discussions.

Conclusion

The public school system in the early twentieth century was open to allowing boys to explore ideas that would be considered subversive or radical by their contemporaries. The freedom to explore ideas underlines many of the discussions featured in this thesis. The importance of the flexibility of associational culture will be seen in how it responded to changing educational trends during the first half of the twentieth century. Debating societies, by their focus on contemporary topics, were easily able to engage with political issues. Other societies formed to address perceived shortcomings in the education provided. These societies allowed boys to engage with topics beyond the curriculum and through ways that would not have been possible through traditional schooling. They also demonstrate a strong commitment by boys to obtaining the political and civics education that has often been lacking in traditional education. Education was seen as a key requirement of being a citizen, and this restriction is visible in how pupils discussed suffrage.

Other means of obtaining a political education can be seen in public schools through the libraries and individual masters. However, these influences are often harder to analyse. Library records do not often provide insight into readership. Nor do they make it possible to see how boys responded to their reading. By looking at the associational cultures of public schools it becomes possible to see the flow of information from the libraries into boys' own views. This applies as much to fiction as it does to more highbrow literature. Boys' own literary creations provide a further way in which to analyse their political development. This is particularly true in the 1930s

when boys began a significant expansion in producing their own literary material, as will be discussed in chapter eight. The role of individual masters is even harder to determine. Beyond memoirs and biographies, the influence of an individual is hard to determine. However, staff involvement with associational culture in the public schools makes it possible to see when particular masters were reaching more boys than the private moments recorded in individual accounts of school life.

A range of schools in the first half of the twentieth century has been used here to highlight how associational culture functioned with public schools as a whole. Going forward, only two schools during the period between 1899 and 1939 will be studied: Gresham's and Harrow.

Chapter 4: Imperialism and pre-First World War public schools

This chapter explores imperialism within the public schools at the start of the twentieth century. The British Empire had a strong presence within the public school system, despite Bernard Porter's claims to the contrary.[1] For public school boys of the early twentieth century, the British Empire was ubiquitous to the extent it was mundane. It offered a range of places where they could reasonably expect to find themselves, whether for business or pleasure, in later life. This mundanity hides, however, a wider engagement of boys with imperialism and how the Empire functioned. They were engaged with the policies and politics of the British Empire and held opinions about how imperialism should be conducted. Imperialism was pervasive enough that public school boys used it as a framework of understanding across a range of topics. As a form of governance, British imperialism went almost unchallenged by public school boys. However, boys had varying views on the conduct and legitimacy of other powers' empires. How they examined these other empires further demonstrates their understanding of British imperialism.

The schools did not promote imperialism as actively as juvenile literature, popular culture and events such as Empire Day.[2] Patrick Dunae has argued that a quote from a contemporaneous adventurer and novelist that all youths would, if asked, support the Empire was broadly true.[3] When examining the culture of public schools there is little dissent from this view. The British Empire for boys held the pinnacle of imperialism; it was an Anglo-Saxon Christian empire of consenting equals. Boys did consider other empires, and how they responded to these further reinforces how this was the model. European Christian empires were usually considered valid empires and potential rivals. Prior to the First World War the German Empire, with its Protestant faith and northern-European ethnicity was seen as a challenge and

---

[1] Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*.

[2] Jim English, 'Empire Day in Britain, 1904–1958', *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 1 (2006): 247–76; MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*; MacKenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture*; Jeffrey Richards, 'Introduction', in Richards, *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, 1–11.

[3] Dunae, 'Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire', *Victorian Studies*, 105.

potential threat, but also a legitimate holder of imperial power. Boys were more sceptical of Catholic Italian imperialism, and often saw it as less refined than British imperialism. As their considerations moved further East, they discussed empires with a decreasing sense of legitimacy. Boys' perceived the Ottomans as poor governors, and their empire was seen as only worth maintaining until an alternative could be found. East Asian Empires, primarily China and Japan, were seen as unable to form real empires that could challenge the West. The case of Irish Home Rule, a direct challenge to the British Empire, shows how any division could be used to highlight boys belief in English supremacy. Boys tightened the qualifications of religion and race used to criticise the Italian, Ottoman and Asian empires to smaller distinctions of Protestant and Catholic and English and Irish.

Public school debating societies provide ample evidence of how imperialist views influenced political discussions in the early twentieth century. Boys debated a range of topics, from international affairs to abstract discussions on ethics. Tables 3 and 4 show the number of times each topic was debated between 1900 and 1914, and the average number of speakers and voters on each topic. The high turnout in some sections demonstrates a wider interest amongst boys, whilst more abstract topics received attention only from those interested in debating as a skill.

Table 3: Topics debated at Harrow, 1900-1914

Motion topic	Average number of speakers	Average number of voters	Number of debates
Society	11	35	28
National Politics	14	50	27
Science and Technology	10	46	18
Military	10	45	17
Education	10	38	14
Ethics and Law	10	42	10
International Politics	7	42	10
Media	8	34	10
Ideologies	10	37	7
Athletics	9	38	4
Imperial Politics	10	28	4
Average	10	40	14

Table 4: Topics debated at Gresham's 1900-1914

Motion topic	Average number of speakers	Average number of voters	Number of debates
National Politics	13	57	16
Science and Technology	14	44	11
Society	12	44	8
Ideologies	13	44	8
Military	10	43	4
Ethics and Law	10	39	4
Education	14	38	4
International Politics	11	43	3
Media	14	43	3
Athletics	6	32	2
Average	12	43	6

At both schools, national politics was a popular topic. Far more debates were held on national politics than any other subject at Gresham's, as well as having the highest voter turnout. At Harrow, national politics was the second most popular topic and had the highest turnout. Debates on national politics at both schools focused on specific contemporary questions including the suffrage debate, Irish Home Rule and government policy. However, these national questions would often revolve around imperial concerns. These attracted a higher than average number of speakers and the highest average voter turnout. Whilst masters would often participate in these debates they did not dominate them, and boys had plenty to say on national issues. The high voter turnout would suggest that these were topics that also attracted wider attention than just those interested in debating as an activity. At Harrow, in particular, it is worth noting the more abstract nature of debates on society, such as the motion on 'Proverbs are foolishness in concentrated form', 17th November 1906, had only 32 voters, the second-lowest for that term, but did allow for plenty of rhetorical flourishes.[4] In the same term debates on railway nationalisation, 20th October 1906, and universal suffrage, 27th October 1906, attracted 46 and 45 voters respectively.[5] These debates demonstrate that more substantive and pressing issues were the ones that would attract the attention of a higher proportion of the school to attend debates.

It is also worth noting the annual averages for total debates held, and the number of voters and speakers for these debates, which are in table 5. These totals provide a reference for how popular the debating societies were, and how the average numbers for topics compared to the overall average turnouts.

---

[4] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 19, no. 9, December 1906, 120–21.

[5] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, November 1906, 103–5.

Table 5: Annual totals of debates at Harrow, 1900-1914

Year	Number of Debates	Average number of voters	Average number of speakers
1900	11	48	8
1901	8	58	12
1902	13	43	9
1903	10	40	8
1904	4	17	7
1905	6	19	9
1906	14	34	10
1907	11	30	11
1908	8	49	26
1909	11	57	12
1910	11	50	13
1911	14	39	10
1912	10	35	9
1913	14	45	8
1914	4	38	8

Table 6: Annual totals of debates at Gresham's, 1900-1914

Year	Number of Debates	Average number of voters	Average number of speakers
1900	2	18	7
1901	5	25	11
1902	3	44	13
1903	4	41	11
1904	3	64	8
1905	2	40	10
1906	3	46	9
1907	5	46	11
1908	6	42	11
1909	6	48	11
1910	5	46	14
1911	5	62	13
1912	6	60	17
1913	5	49	15
1914	4	39	14

1. The mundane Empire

The economic aspects of imperialism were a framework for discussing the British Empire. As Marsden has argued, formal education, particularly history and geography, had imperialist and nationalist overtones, without seriously challenging prevailing concepts and stereotypes.[6] G. A. Henty, often considered the most imperialist and jingoistic of juvenile writers, took time to explore the social and economic features of imperial territories, using the Empire as a backdrop for his adventures.[7] Extracurricular activities often focused on imperial topics. Lectures on Empire within the schools often focused on leisure, with a loose element of science,

[6] Marsden, '"Poisoned History"', *History of Education*, 30–34.

[7] Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper*, 67; Dunae, 'Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire', *Victorian Studies*, 109–10; Richards, 'With Henty to Africa', in Richards, *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, 79–80.

by discussing hunting, a common activity for colonial elites.[8] The Scientific Society at Harrow was particularly interested in discussing social and anthropological aspects of the Empire.[9] Stephanie Olsen has argued that subtle moralising was part of the process by which juvenile literature promulgated its causes, rather than outright ordering youths to behave in a particular way. This can be seen in the promotion of the Empire as a place where boys might find themselves in the future through lectures and papers presented to public school boys.[10] There was only one call for education with a clear aim of training for imperial governance from one boy at Gresham's in 1909, who argued that classics were of no use in governing non-white people.[11] Educationalist, administrators and boys believed that the emphasis on character and leadership in the public schools provided sufficient training for governing the Empire.

More explicit calls to imperial service came from the missionary movement. This called for boys to go out and promote Christianity amongst indigenous populations and white settlers in the colonies. This message was particularly prominent at Harrow, where there were several lectures, sermons and letters promoting missionary work.[12] The decline in school missions on the domestic front would suggest that this approach was less successful, and the lack of missionary work featuring in boys' contributions to the papers and debates suggests that their interest in this field was limited.[13]

---

[8] 'Lecture by Mr E. N. Buxton', *Harrovian*, 12, no. 2, March 1899, 15–16; 'Life and Sport in India' *Harrovian*, 12, no. 7, October 1899, 83–84; 'Scientific Society', *Harrovian*, 24, no. 2, April 1911, 21–23; 'Camp Life in India', *Gresham*, 3, no. 2, December 1908, 21–24.

[9] 'Scientific Society', *Harrovian*, October 1899, 86.

[10] Olsen, *Juvenile Nation*, 10.

[11] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 3, no. 4, April 1909, 48.

[12] 'Lecture', *Harrovian*, December 1898, 111; 'Here and There', *Harrovian*, February 1901, 3; 'Correspondence', *Harrovian*, March 1901, 24; 'The Melanesian Mission', *Harrovian*, 14, no. 8, November 1901, 114; 'Lectures', *Gresham*, 1, no. 10, December 1903, 162.

[13] Scotland, *Squires in the Slums*, 209–10.

News of events and stories from the Empire often came from those connected to the schools. This network of old boys in the Empire was most noticeable at Harrow, with regular reports from Old Harrovian meetings and events in various territories. An annual Harrovian dinner was held in India, and at Simla in 1913 it was compared to the dinner in Great Britain as 'another gathering took place in Greater Britain'.[14] Later in 1913 a report on the public schools' polo tournament in Egypt featured, which despite the name was a contest between old boys, often in the military, rather than current boys.[15] These events support not only the idea of an elite culture that ran from the public schools to imperial administration, as discussed by P. J. Rich, but also the national associational culture that Tanja Bueltmann and Lesley Robinson have examined in Singapore.[16] In terms of seeing the Empire as a unified 'Kith and Kin', old boys associations provided an exclusive network of the boys' own kin.

2. Imperial policy

Two topics of imperial governance elicited particular interest from boys: tariff reform and federalism. These issues were interlinked, and writers such as Ballantyne promoted the concept of Greater Britain. Lectures to the boys detailed how imperial unity should be achieved through giving the colonies a voice lest the Empire repeated the same mistakes which caused it to lose the Thirteen Colonies.[17] The issue of colonial governance and sovereignty was a genuine concern of administrators, politicians and the press in the early twentieth century.[18] The media and other organisations, such as the Navy League, engaged public school boys in these debates. Some imperialists saw the use of land and economically profitable

---

[14] 'Harrow Dinner: India', *Harrovian*, 26, no. 6, October 1913, 110.

[15] 'Polo in Egypt', *Harrovian*, 26, no. 7, November 1913, 129.

[16] Tanja Bueltmann and Lesley C. Robinson, 'Making Home in a Sojourner World: Organised Ethnicity and British Associationalism in Singapore, C1880s–1930s', *Britain and the World* 9, no. 2 (2016): 167–96; Rich, *Elixir of Empire*; Rich, *Chains of Empire*.

[17] 'Lecture on "Empire and Its Responsibilities" by Dr Parkin', *Harrovian*, March 1913, 16–17; Stuart Hannabus, 'Ballatyne's Message of Empire', in Richards, *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, 65–68.

[18] Jesse Tumblin, ''Grey Dawn'in the British Pacific: Race, Security and Colonial Sovereignty on the Eve of World War I', *Britain and the World* 9, no. 1 (2016): 32–54.

activity as a justification for colonialism, whilst British imperial officials managed industrial and economic governance across the Empire.[19] The national and imperial economy were closely intertwined. Debates on economic policy in the public schools were often conducted as debates on imperial policy and this context should be emphasised.

Discussions of imperial policy often revolved around the present government. A discussion of tariff reform at Gresham's, held on 5th February 1910, with the motion 'That this House considers a policy of Tariff Reform to be essential to the future welfare of the British Empire' was won 28 votes to 18.[20] C. F. Shaw lamented that 'he had to pay so much more for English "Teddy Bears" than for German ones', but he also discussed corn prices and A. R. Herron used shipping statistics to compare colonial and foreign trade. Reverend Field sustained the imperial nature of the debate when he discussed the Colonial Conference. Reverend Field was a master at the school from 1905-1930 and, along with his wife and son, was a regular contributor to the debating society.[21] Whilst trade was nominally an economic question, boys debated it within the context of the Empire, and so touched on a whole range of imperial considerations. Harrow's debating society explicitly engaged with the tariff reform debate on two occasions. The first, held on 24th October 1908, under the motion 'Mr Chamberlain's Tariff Reform policy would benefit the country' was carried 50 votes to 10, whilst a second, held on 12th February 1910, with the motion 'We need Tariff Reform', was carried 73 votes to 11.[22] The wider margins of victory for protectionism suggests strong support for Conservative party policy at Harrow. It also reveals several other aspects of Harrovians' views on the Empire. In proposing the motion in 1908, Everard argued that 'traders had preserved English freedom', repeating the ideas that the British Empire brought freedom and that

---

[19] John Mackenzie, 'Hunting and the natural world in juvenile literature', in Richards, *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, 157–59; Benjamin Weil, 'Conservation, Exploitation, and Cultural Change in the Indian Forest Service, 1875-1927', *Environmental History* 11, no. 2 (April 2006): 319–43.

[20] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 3, no. 10, April 1910, 131–32.

[21] Douglas and Linnell, *Gresham's School History and Register*, 347.

[22] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 21, no. 7, November 1908, 88–89; 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 23, no. 1, March 1910, 8–9.

economic activity were the foundations of the Empire.[23] He also argued that colonial preference was necessary to preserve the Empire. The debate in 1910 focused more heavily on economic issues and considered the economic activity of Germany and the USA, but the Empire and colonial preference were central issues for those in favour of Tariff Reform.[24] In supporting the motion one boy, Monckton, 'made an eloquent appeal to the House to think imperially'.[25] Despite the seemingly dry nature of economics and Tariff Reform debates the turnout was above the average in both 1908 and 1910. The debates engaged with a range of factual and emotional arguments, suggesting that boys at both Harrow and Gresham's were interested in and informed on the major questions of Empire. With the motions explicitly discussing Tariff Reform, a pro-imperial policy, it could also be argued that these were votes in favour of closer imperial unity. The issue of Home Rule for Ireland, which will be discussed in more depth later, was also often framed as a question of imperial unity.

At Harrow Imperial Federation and the idea of Greater Britain were much more prevalent than at Gresham's. Philip Gardner has examined the imperialists who sought to create a concept of imperial citizenship, and at Harrow one geography master wrote a textbook explicitly supporting the notion of Greater Britain.[26] Harrovians debated the idea of a Greater Britain with the motion 'Imperial Federation is desirable' on 18th October 1902.[27] It appears to have been a one-sided debate: the reporter claimed the proposers' arguments were sensible, and the opposition collapsed under scrutiny, and the motion was passed 30 to 5. The combination of support for policies such as tariff reform with colonial preference at both schools does show some interest in discussing the concept of an imperial federation. However, Harrow's explicitly pro-federalist motion demonstrates more clear-cut support for the idea. This federalist movement even manifested itself in a prize-

---

[23] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, November 1908, 88.

[24] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, March 1910, 8–9.

[25] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, March 1910, 9.

[26] Laborde, *Great and Greater Britain*; Gardner, 'The Educational Afterlife of Greater Britain', *Paedagogica Historica*.

[27] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 15, no. 8, November 1902, 104.

winning poem of 1901, published in the *Harrovian*, entitled ‘Australia’ which declared ‘Our world-wide Empire owns with free consent // One throne, one Flag, one Fleet, one Parliament’.[28]

The Empire was seen as a potential solution to other domestic problems, such as unemployment. Boys at Gresham’s debated penal colonies, where they saw potential solutions to both crime and unemployment. O. W. Tyler saw even greater imperial potential in them as an opportunity to reform people into self-governing settlements, positing that active imperialism would be good for the convicts’ character.[29] So whilst Bernard Porter has argued that the schools prepared boys for imperialism ‘not by teaching them *about* the empire, or even to value it particularly, but by making them into good potential rulers’, it was, in reality, an ever-present part of their education and society.[30] They were well informed and heavily engaged with debates surrounding imperial policies. They did not need to be taught to support the Empire; it was a given that they did and their debates and voting reinforce Dunae’s argument that most boys supported the Empire. They were clearly interested in it, and the votes and topics raised in debates would suggest some degree of support for the idea of Greater Britain.

3. Germany, invasion scares and the USA

Britain was not the only empire in the twentieth century, and public school boys were aware of this, as has been seen in the Tariff Reform debates. White Christian Empires were not seen as unjustified or illegitimate. However, boys criticised their methods of imperialism as worse than the British. Boys did not, however, challenge their right to empires; instead, they viewed them as genuine rivals to compete with, rather than to be destroyed or ignored.

---

[28] ‘Australia’, *Harrovian*, 14, no. 5, July 1901, 60.

[29] ‘Debating Society’, *Gresham*, 2, no. 6, December 1906, 93–94.

[30] Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 55.

The shifting of power in the early twentieth century away from Britain and France to Germany and the USA became a frequent topic of debate. The invasion scare stories of the early twentieth century certainly influenced concerns over national and imperial defence. Germany replaced France as the main antagonist following the Entente Cordial in 1904, and broader concerns over Britain's declining world power were visible in juvenile literature.[31] These stories translated into debates over the likelihood of an actual invasion in 1910-12. These invasion scares were not exclusive to the debating chambers of public schools and popular fiction. They extended to the House of Lords with Viscount Middleton raising the question of whether the country could defend itself if the army were away defending a distant part of the Empire.[32]

At Gresham's the fears over growing German power were seen in debates over conscription and the role of the press in shaping public opinion. A debate over conscription on the 25th January 1908, with the motion in favour of conscription carried 22 votes to 19. The proposer, G. Hawksley stated 'General Von Gotzchkoff thought the invasion of Britain no chimaera, but a solid possibility' whilst G. C. Tyler argued for a citizen army so that the regular army could focus on the colonies.[33] Whilst Von Gotzchkoff was fictional, some boys' concern over the possibility of an invasion appeared to be genuine. Gresham's instead saw the invasion scares and the anti-German sentiment as the fault of the press. The first debate, held 20th November 1909, had the motion 'That this House condemns the present attitude of the Press' and was lost 24 votes to 11.[34] G. F. Johnson criticised the press for invasion scares. A. R. Herron, speaking for the opposition, suggested that the people had been fooled, but the *Daily Mail*'s Territorial Movement campaign and the *Morning Post*'s National Airship Fund demonstrated that these stories had fostered a stronger sense of patriotism in the country. On 19th October 1912 the motion 'That this House considers the present estrangement between England and Germany is due to the action of the Press in the two countries and not to any natural antagonism

---

[31] Paris, *Warrior Nation*, 97–99.

[32] Viscount Middleton, 'Imperial Defence' (House of Lords, 4 April 1911), vol. 7 cc. 919–920.

[33] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 2, no. 10, April 1908, 150.

[34] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1909, 108–9.

between the two peoples' was discussed and lost 27 votes to 28.[35] W. T. K. Braunholtz, proposing the motion, argued a similar line to A. R. Herron, that the 'poorer artisan classes…innate tendency amongst these people to grumble, was exploited by the editors of the inferior half-penny Press'. K. M. Moir, who was seconding the opposition followed a similar line, although he claimed there was always 'riff-raff who were continually thirsting for the blood of foreigners', and that it was not the press stirring this animosity up. Others argued that it was economic competition that was driving animosity, airing similar themes seen in tariff reform debates. Even the usually imperialist Reverend Field saw no harm in Germany and praised the Labour party for building international relations. Only one boy, R. R. S. de Rousey, saw the oncoming conflict by 'comparing the situation to that of two trains running against one another; something must happen'.

At Harrow, the concern over the threat of invasion varied and seemed to be taken less seriously. A debate on 13th March 1909 on the motion 'That it is the duty of every able bodied citizen to fit himself for the defence of his country' was carried 87 votes to 20.[36] The remarkably high turnout of more than double all but one other debate that term, saw claims that invasion was impossible and that the navy should be the focus of defence. A debate was held on the specific motion 'that the German invasion scare is bogus' on 26th February 1910, where the report states that wild ideas and amusing speeches were made; however, no result was given.[37] The next debate,held on the 12th March, discussed the proposal to migrate the school out of London.[38] G. K. M. Butler, who had opposed the previous motion on the German invasion scare being bogus, accused those who wanted to move the school as being afraid of being in the invasion path, but that they should 'not shirk from shedding their blood for their country'. A later debate on nationalising the railways strayed onto the topic of a potential invasion. One boy argued that nationalisation would allow the swift organisation of the military in case of invasion.[39] Most Harrovians saw the

---

[35] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1912, 21–22.

[36] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 22, no. 2, April 1909, 19–20.

[37] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 23, no. 2, April 1910, 18.

[38] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, April 1910, 19.

[39] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 25, no. 3, June 1912, 39.

invasion scares as laughable, however, there were at least a few who appear to have been convinced of an imminent threat. This reflects boys' interest in national and imperial defence, as well as demonstrating their underlying concern about Britain's waning imperial power.

Alongside dismissing the idea of hostilities between Britain and Germany, Harrovians welcomed the suggestion of an alliance with the USA. The motion 'that an Anglo-American alliance is possible' was debated on 17th March 1900.[40] The *Harrovian* reporter stated that both sides made 'the usual arguments'. One boy rose to say that the motion only said 'possible', not 'desirable', then proceeded to demonstrate how such an alliance was desirable. Whilst the motion was open to misinterpretation the result, 35 in favour, 7 against, demonstrated that Harrovians certainly believed that an Anglo-American alliance was a desirable possibility.

The mixed response at both schools suggests fear of decline rather than genuine geopolitical concerns. Growing German power was not, by many boys, seen as a direct threat to British interests. Boys appeared to give little credence to invasion scare stories, seeing them as either impractical plans or spurred on by the press. Germany, and even the Labour party, received praise from boys. However, their discussions of invasion scares demonstrate that boys were interested in the contents of popular fiction both as a source of leisure and as a means of promoting a political narrative. Both Germany and the USA were white, northern-European, Protestant countries, at least in governance. Boys at both schools saw no reason to challenge their increasing global influence, and their considerations of non-white and non-Protestant powers demonstrate how race and religion influenced this.

4. Other Christians, Islam and the Ottoman Empire

The changing balance of power in the Mediterranean garnered significant interest from boys at both schools. Italy, formed alongside Germany, was beginning to develop its own empire. This expansion came at the expense of the Ottoman

---

[40] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, April 1900, 41.

Empire. The Ottoman Empire's proximity and involvement with Europe and its state religion made it a frequent target for boys' criticisms of imperialism. Its lack of Christianity was the primary focus of the ways in which boys sought to delegitimise its empire, making it out to be unworthy of conducting imperialism, and, in any case, not a valid rival for the British Empire. Debates rarely considered it a direct threat to Britain, which had previously taken advantage of the Ottomans' weakened state to acquire Egypt. Instead, the boys discussed whether Ottoman instability could disrupt British imperial influence elsewhere. It was representative of the East-West divide. A lecture and a poem at Gresham's demonstrate how this divide was perceived. These were both heavily tilted in favour of the West. A boy's poem 'Virtus' described heroic, civilised, European Spartans holding off the barbaric, despotic, Asian Persians, and called for boys to emulate the Spartans fighting to the death. The lecture on the Balkan conflict, given in 1912 by progressive educationalist Cloudesley Brereton, described the events as part of Ottoman expansion being the historic 'struggle between Asiatics and Europeans'.[41] These depictions of East versus West are part of a wider context in which Easterners, in this case, the visibly declining Ottoman Empire, were considered not worthy of having an empire, whilst Christian nations were.

The debating society discussed the suitability of a nation for imperialism when Italy began the conquest of Tripoli. The motion 'That this House condemns the recent action of Italy in making war upon the Turks' on 18th November 1911 was narrowly carried 29 votes to 22.[42] Two boys, F. W. Halsey, who was proposing, and F. A. Reiss, both highlighted atrocities committed by Italian forces and argued that Italy was pursuing an empire the wrong way. They suggested instead that Italy should adopt a tributary system similar to the British position in Egypt. Those opposing argued that the Italians would make good colonists whereas the Ottomans were not fit to govern. The opposition raised the fear of Islam and excused atrocities committed by the Italians by dehumanising the Arab population. Italy's fundamental right to an empire was not, however, challenged. Harrovians heavily criticised both

---

[41] 'Virtus', *Gresham*, 2, no. 3, December 1905, 39; 'The War in the Balkans', *Gresham*, February 1913, 34.

[42] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1911, 104–5.

the Ottomans' and Islam's ability to govern in a debate on 11th October 1913 with the motion 'That it is to the advantage of Europe that the Turk should be driven out of Europe', which was, however, lost 30 votes to 35.[43] The boy proposing the motion argued 'Mohammedanism stands for retrogression. The Turk is a soldier; he has no idea of governing.' Other boys supported these ideas that the Ottomans governed by military force. One stated that the Bulgarian government was better than the Sultan's. Another claimed that the Turkish military supremacy had been challenged and it had lost its only claim to power. This criticism of the Ottomans was a rare admission that force was a necessary tool of imperialism but focused on Ottoman imperialism. This was in contrast to the belief amongst boys that there was widespread consent for the British Empire from subjects. Even those opposing the motion argued that Turkish government was bad, but that there was not a viable alternative to maintain peace. Harrovians' views on the Ottomans seem in direct reverse of Greshamians' views on Italy: force could justify Christian imperialism but delegitimised Eastern imperialism. However, it is also clear that they believed that Empires could be built, or at least maintained, without the use of force.

Religion framed the debates on the Balkan Crises and the Young Turk revolution. At Gresham's a debate which was nominally on the potential future of Ottoman power in Europe took place on 4th October 1908 with the motion 'That this House considers unsatisfactory any solution of the near Eastern question which includes the maintenance of the Ottoman power in Europe'.[44] The motion was lost 5 votes to 38. Whilst the votes would suggest no desire to remove Ottoman power, an examination of the debate reveals little sympathy for the Ottomans. Instead, the debate saw criticism for the lack of an alternative plan and the potential risks to British India should they be removed. W. Champneys, proposing, argued that Turkey would be out of sync with and a threat to Christian Empires as long as it remained Muslim, and the report states that he was able to discuss theological subjects from a political point of view.[45] Mr J. H. Simpson, a staff member, used racial criteria to justify

---

[43] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, November 1913, 129–30.

[44] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1908, 14–16.

[45] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1908, 14.

imperialism by grouping all non-Europeans as ‘subject races’ who could not be governed by democracy. Despite the loss of the motion, there was little support for the Ottoman Empire. Instead, boys backed the Ottomon Empire purely out of concern for what would happen if its influence and power were removed.

Boys and masters at Harrow also held the idea of Islam as a threat to Christianity. The debate of 26th October 1908 explicitly raised religion with the motion ‘If the Balkan trouble developed into a Holy War it would imperil British interests in India’, and was lost 11 votes to 21.[46] The reporter in the *Harrovian* suggested that ‘The subject seemed quite out of the reach’ of most speakers, however. G. L. Jackson, proposing, argued that the Russo-Japanese war of 1905 demonstrated that Christianity could be beaten, and put forward the threat of a global holy war if the Balkan states won. The Russo-Japanese war is often seen as significant as a defeat of a European power by an Asian power. However, the religious context shown by Jackson is unique. He linked this back to British imperialism by claiming that a holy war would be a greater challenge than the Sepoy Rebellion. Those opposing the argument emphasised that Muslims in India were reliant on British protection and that religious fanaticism was limited in the westernising India. V. A. Farrar went so far as to claim that ‘our Government has reconciled the various religions to each other’. Farrar’s claim once again demonstrates a belief in the idea of a British Empire built on consent. The debate on Ottoman power of the 11th October 1913 mentioned above also saw references to Turkish martial prowess, as well as atrocities, and for some speakers, Islam and the Ottoman Empire were directly linked.[47] Haddow, opposing the motion, opted to criticise the Allies because they were fighting for spoils rather than faith, suggesting that he would have supported them if they were fighting a holy war.

There was clear opposition from a range of boys to Ottoman imperialism, and more generally the idea of Islamic imperialism. Boys’ perceived Islam as violent and an unsuitable religion for imperialism. However, boys defended or excused Christian

---

[46] ‘Debating Society’, *Harrovian*, 25, no. 8, November 1912, 129–30.

[47] ‘Debating Society’, *Harrovian*, November 1913, 129–30.

imperialism's atrocities whilst they criticised Islamic ones. This demonstrates how important religion was to boys' views on global power and imperialism. Boys' differentiation of British-style imperialism built on economic efforts versus martial imperialism that they saw in Italy was limited. They argued against using force, but if it was by Christians or Westerners against Eastern non-Christians it did not delegitimise imperialism in their eyes. There were, however, some warnings at both Gresham's and Harrow against engaging in religious wars. N. H. Clifton at Harrow reminded others that the effects of the Thirty Years War still haunted Germany.[48] At Gresham's, W. T. K. Braunholtz warned of the dangers of holy wars and criticised a member of staff, Mr L. L. C. Evans, who argued Britain should support Italy as a matter of faith.[49] These were rare challenges, however: N. H. Clifton was criticised in the report for having forgotten the motion, despite speaking directly on the dangers of holy wars.

The Ottoman Empire and Islam, however, were not the only Eastern powers. Japan became increasingly assertive in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was by some considered as an equal to European powers. China, whilst half-way through the 'Century of Humiliation', was a hugely populous country that managed to threaten western imperialism during the Boxer Uprising, at a time when the Second Boer War had shaken British Imperial confidence. Whilst boys were generally dismissive of a potential military threat from East Asia, they did express opinions over the region's suitability to form modern empires, as well as concerns about race, as the next section will show.

5. China, Japan and 'Yellow Peril'

Discussions on the East Asian empires also saw efforts to dispute their legitimacy. These efforts were less problematic for debaters than the Ottoman Empire, however.

---

[48] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, November 1912, 129.

[49] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1911, 104.

European empires and the USA had already carved out territory and influence across East Asia. The largest powers, Japan and China, lacked trans-continental empires and neither had had much involvement in European affairs. These factors made it easier for boys to depict them as less threatening to British interests. Their frequent subjugation by European powers, particularly China, also made it easier for boys to question their legitimacy. Whereas in the nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire had been a significant, if declining, power in world affairs China had been undergoing repeated imperial encroachment. The USA had forced Japan to open up to Westerners, and Japan had adopted Western technology and political structures rather than challenging them. Japan had begun engaging in diplomatic relations with the Western imperial powers through trade, alliances and even joint military ventures.

Fear of 'Yellow Peril', focused on China, was particularly strong at Harrow, and William Meyrick Hewlett was a regular contributor to the *Harrovian* on the subject. Hewlett had attended Harrow and was working as a student interpreter in China during the Boxer Uprising and later served in various diplomatic roles in China. His account of the Boxer Uprising, printed in series in the *Harrovian* (and later the whole diary was distributed as a supplement), gave detailed information on events in the Legations.[50] He continued this with an extensive report to the *Harrovian* of Mr Doisy's lecture to the school on the 'Yellow Peril'.[51] Doisy's lecture focused on Japan's intentions over China, the threat of a united 'Asia for the Asiatics' and examined the causes of the Boxer Uprising. Another lecturer promoted the idea of Christian missionary work as a way to bring the East into closer alignment with the West in a lecture on 24th November 1913.[52] However, as has been noted previously on page 122, Harrow boys did not express much interest in missionary work. Instead, their discussions focused on racial and military topics. On 10th November 1906 the motion 'That Arbitration should be substituted for War' saw a member of

---

[50] 'The Siege of the Legations in Pekin' *Harrovian*, 13, no. 8, November 1900, 101; 'Boxer Hunting', *Harrovian*, February 1901, 5; William Meyrick Hewlett, *Diary of the Siege of the Peking Legations. June to August, 1900* ([London : Pub. for the editors of the 'Harrovian,' by F.W. Provost], 1900).

[51] 'Mr Doisy's Lecture', *Harrovian*, 17, no. 4, June 1904, 44–46.

[52] 'East and West', *Harrovian*, 26, no. 8, December 1913, 139–40.

staff and a boy both raise the threat of 'Yellow Peril', suggesting that all of Europe united would not be able to defend against a united Asia.[53] Dr Lunn raised the spectre of racial conflict, asking: 'could we resist the wave of Chinese and Japanese sweeping over the world unless Europe combine, as white against yellow, and not stand aloof through differences in individuality?' A boy, Roxburgh, argued that Britain must maintain its naval power to keep its agreements with Japan, a discussion point possibly raised thanks to Doisy's lecture. 'Yellow Peril' fears rapidly increased in the 1910s supported by official school policy, which set the English prize essay for 1909 as 6000 words on 'The Yellow Peril'.[54]

Harrovians held two debates which explicitly focused on the idea of 'Yellow Peril'. Neither was carried, and both had a below-average turnout of 34 and 36. The first motion, 'The "Yellow Peril" is a real and not an imaginary danger' was held on 19th November 1910 and was lost 13 votes to 21.[55] In proposing the motion Knollys raised the spectre of racial degeneration, suggesting that the Japanese had 'already proved themselves capable of applying the skill of the white man to his defeat', and was seconded by Butler who stated, with incredibly poor geographical knowledge, that the precursor to the invasion had begun: 'first USA (where Vancouver has already been ruined by the yellow influx)'. Gore-Brown argued that the West had become degenerate and compared the situation to the Gothic invasion of Rome. In opposing, Gordon argued that Britain was seen as a benevolent force for good in the East, and that 'Yellow Peril' damaged this reputation. However, he also argued that Japan had modernised too quickly. His views were supported by Renton, who repeated the argument that Japan had been too quick to modernise, as well as, along with Boyd, dismissing a Japanese invasion's viability even if the plan was real. Two boys considered the real threat to be to Australia and discussed the potential of Japan using aeroplanes to transport troops. The second debate discussed the whole of Asia with the motion 'That the East will ultimately overwhelm the west' on 22nd November and was lost 15 votes to 21, and was followed two days later with the

---

[53] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, November 1906, 105–7.

[54] 'Prize Exercises' *Harrovian*, April 1909, 28; 'Honours and Prizes', *Harrovian*, 22, no. 3, May 1909, 34.

[55] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 23, no. 8, December 1910, 129–30.

lecture mentioned above which promoted converting East Asia to Christianity.[56] Higham Senior, proposing the motion, divided the East into 'Indians, Japanese, and Chinese' and stated that the East had taken all that was best from Europe. He was supported by Samuelson who warned boys not to dismiss Japan's growth. He continued by arguing that the global balance of power, which had moved in the past from East to West, would swing back again. Opposing the motion, Mendel argued, similar to the earlier debate, that Japan was a poor imitation of Europe. Other speakers focused on discussing the unity not just of Eastern nations but arguing over whether Europeans would unite to fight a unified Asian power. One boy argued that Europe was just as divided as Asia, but another responded that Europe would unite to fight such a threat.

At Gresham's China was of much less interest, but Japan featured more regularly in several small ways. Japanese architecture was raised during a debate on the motion 'This house deplores the ugliness of modern life', where F. Jarvis praised their 'pretty little houses'.[57] Japan came to the fore in 1905 with the Russo-Japanese war and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Gresham's favoured the Japanese during the war, contributing towards *The National Review*'s Japanese Fund with a chapel collection.[58] On 1st November a lecture was given by a Dr Clarke which included a chance to try a tea ceremony, 'respiration', dressing in Japanese clothes and a rendition of the Japanese national anthem by a boy.[59] On 7th October a debate was held on the motion 'This House welcomes the recent Anglo-Japanese Alliance and regards it as an indication that the civilisation of Japan may now be regarded as on a par with that of the far West', which was lost 12 votes to 27.[60] Three boys used similar arguments to those heard at Harrow: that Japan had modernised to rapidly, with one describing it as a facsimile of the West. J. C. W. Reith, future Director-General of the BBC and Minister for Information, gave explicit praise of the Japanese, however, speaking 'of their religion and also of their cleanliness'. Reith's

---

[56] 'East and West', and 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, December 1913, 139–40, 147.

[57] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 1, no. 2, March 1901, 32.

[58] 'Chapel Collections', and 'Correspondence', *Gresham*, 2, no. 2, July 1905, 30, 32.

[59] 'Lectures', *Gresham*, December 1905, 40.

[60] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1905, 43–44.

praise of their religion, in particular, is unusual in that Christianity had been used by many other boys to praise European imperialism. The focus at Gresham's, however, appears to be on the cultural aspects of Japan and its civilisation, rather than being part of 'Yellow Peril'.

Whilst there was less interest in debates over East Asia than the Ottoman Empire, the discussions do highlight a few significant differences. There was a greater focus on the racial aspect of imperialism compared to the motions which discussed Ottoman or Islamic power. Boys feared European racial decline and the idea of a united Asian empire more than the Ottoman Empire. Boys saw religion as a less significant or threatening factor when discussing East Asia. These debates all reflect some of the wider fears about national decline and racial degeneration that were common at the start of the twentieth century, even if the boys did not seem to consider them serious threats.

6. Irish nationalism

The debates on Irish Home Rule and nationalism demonstrate how boys considered Englishness as central to the power and legitimacy of the British Empire. It was a more problematic topic for boys to discuss as it challenged the idea that British imperialism was built on consent. It also challenged the idea of a white Christian empire. The Irish Home Rule Bill was more significant than the granting of powers through dominion status as Ireland was part of the United Kingdom. Boys and masters both managed to avoid having to deal with this by applying the same distinctions used to compare British imperialism with other powers, but with smaller units: Christianity was reduced to smaller component sects, and whiteness was divided into Anglo-Saxon and Celtic. These divisions allowed boys to frame arguments in a similar context as before, where Protestant English Ulster was under threat from Catholic Irish Ireland.

The Home Rule Bill of 1912, and the political discussion surrounding it, provides ample opportunity to examine how public school debating societies provided training for boys in contemporary politics. The Prime Minister, Asquith, announced that the

Bill devolved power in three key areas to Ireland: taxation, administration and legislation.[61] The contents of the public school debates featured these issues, but also focused on the wider issues raised in public discussions of Home Rule. Religious issues and the potential overhaul of imperial administration had been put forward in previous arguments, but Home Rule increased the pressure to implement reforms. By 1912 the issue of Home Rule was one of the most controversial policies of the Liberals, and so became a political battleground between them and the Conservative party.[62] Self-determination had been a key point of Liberal, particularly radical Liberal, policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries both for Home Rule and the dominions.[63] Liberals also argued in both the press and Parliament for Home Rule in the context of other progressive policies. This included votes for women and proportional representation, and the hope that independence would allow new political parties to form that no longer focused on sectarian religious issues.[64] Unionists saw a need for closer unity across the British Empire, and allowing Home Rule to Ireland would prevent this.[65] Peatling also argues that this vision of Unionism and imperialism tolerated the idea of federalism, but was also inherently racist, with an emphasis on English peoples.

Parliament was not the only public arena where boys could learn about the issues surrounding Home Rule. The contents of *The Times* newspaper also reveals the aspects on which discussion of Home Rule focused. A speech by Richard Haldane, Liberal Minister and army reformer, outlined the requirements for him to support Home Rule: Irish representation in politics and religious equality through university provision.[66] Once the Bill was put before parliament, the editorials of *The Times* focused heavily on how it would affect the constitution of the British Empire, the

---

[61] Herbert Asquith, 'Setlement of an Old Controversy' (House of Commons, 11 April 1912), vol. 36 cc. 1424.

[62] Jeremy Smith, 'Bluff, Bluster and Brinkmanship: Andrew Bonar Law and the Third Home Rule Bill', *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 1 (1993): 163–64.

[63] Gary K. Peatling, *British Opinion and Irish Self Government, 1865-1925: From Unionism to Liberal Commonwealth* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2001), 61–62.

[64] Peatling, *British Opinion and Irish Self Government*, 68–72.

[65] Peatling, *British Opinion and Irish Self Government*, 111–21.

[66] 'Mr Haldane on Irish Affairs', *The Times*, 10 January 1908, 38539 edition.

potential threat to British power and the religious issues and potential fate of Protestant Unionists.[67] Michael Foy has argued that one of the key targets of Unionist propaganda was the British public, and aimed to convince them of the persecution that Protestants would face should Home Rule go ahead.[68] The importance of religion is evident in the boys' debates. Irish Home Rule was also set within the context for wider reforms to imperial governance.[69] Boys were exposed to a broad array of pro-Unionist views; however, many saw merit in the aims of the independence movement.

The debates at Gresham's and Harrow on Home Rule occurred primarily, although not exclusively, between 1910 and 1914, when there was a Liberal and Irish Parliamentary Party government, but before the First World War derailed the legislation. The two schools differed in how they discussed Home Rule. At Gresham's Ireland was raised during elections, despite Home Rule not explicitly featuring in the 1910 manifestos of the Liberal Party. Debates at Harrow came after the Home Rule Bill was a reality, rather than a proposed policy, perhaps reflecting the school's more Conservative allegiance. Notable in these debates is how imperial questions blended with national politics. Irish nationalism directly challenged many aspects of British imperialism seen in other debates, and boys opposed to Home Rule faced the rare challenge of having to actively defend British imperialism.

At Gresham's Home Rule was the explicit topic of two motions on 5th March 1910, carried 25 to 20, and 30th March 1912, carried 41 to 28, as well as featuring heavily in a debate on the motion 'That this House would welcome the fall of the present Government' on 3rd December 1910, which was carried 43 to 21.[70] The proposer for both the 1910 and 1912 motions in favour of Home Rule was a member of staff, Mr W. F. Bushell (staff, Gresham's 1907-1912). The more liberal aspect of the school

---

[67] 'The Third Home Rule Bill', *The Times*, 11 April 1912, 39870 edition, sec. Editorial; 'The Home Rule Bill', *The Times*, 12 April 1912, 39871 edition, sec. Editorial.

[68] Michael Foy, 'Ulster Unionist Propaganda against Home Rule 1912-14', *History Ireland* 4, no. 1 (1996): 51.

[69] Special Correspondent, 'Ireland and South Africa', *The Times*, 12 April 1912, 39871 edition, sec. Articles.

[70] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 3, no. 11, July 1910, 143–44; 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 4, no. 2, December 1910, 20–21; 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, June 1912, 153–54.

was particularly supportive of Home Rule. This was demonstrated when prominent nationalist and famous author Robert Erskine Childers sent his son Erskine Childers (Gresham's 1918-1924), later fourth President of the Irish Republic, to the school. Childers continued to attend Gresham's even after his father's election as a Sinn Fein representative to the Irish Dáil, his role in the anti-treaty forces and subsequent execution. Jeremy Quartermain described how the school was accepting of Childers' openly pro-nationalist views.[71] Childers' sole speech in the debating society was on 9th October 1920 when he argued that '83 percent of the Irish people were now Sinn Feiners, and everything was really going on well under the surface'.[72] The motion under debate was 'That in the opinion of this House under no conditions should independence be granted to Ireland', and was lost 21 to 28 votes. Mr J. R. Eccles remained supportive of the principle of Irish nationalism during his time as headmaster, but some boys taunted Childers with chants of 'black and tan'.[73] Eccles spoke in two of the pre-war debates, firstly on the 3rd December 1910, where he defended the Liberal government as having a plan for Ireland, and again on 30th March 1912 during the motion on Home Rule, where he argued that those opposing Home Rule were inconsistent in their reasoning.[74] Wynne Wilson (staff, Gresham's 1905-1925), expressed sympathy towards Childers Senior, recording in his memoir a time he visited for tea and that his 'subsequent history was tragic in the extreme'.[75] There was clearly a level of institutional support at Gresham's for Home Rule, which would have allowed the boys to express what could be considered unorthodox views for public school boys to hold. Some boys consistently expressed support for Home Rule, suggesting that this was a genuine belief in the Irish cause rather than loyalty to a party platform.

The first motion, 'That this House is in favour of the granting of Home Rule to Ireland', on 5th March 1910, had four speakers for the motion, five against and three

---

[71] Jeremy Quartermain, 'Erskine Hamilton Childers, 1905-1974' (2009).

[72] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1920, 33.

[73] Quartermain, 'Childers'.

[74] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1910, 21; 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, June 1912, 154.

[75] Wynne Wilson, 'Cheerful Yesterdays' (Box 36, n.d.), 402.

whose positions are unclear.[76] In proposing the motion Mr Bushell compared Ireland to North America, arguing that refusing self-governance to the Thirteen Colonies had caused them to break away, whereas by granting self-governance to Canada had secured its loyalty. The first boy to speak was G. F. Johnson, who began by arguing that self-determination was to be desired, in line with Liberal ideology, as well as criticising the heavy-handed nature of the British government in Ireland. A. R. Herron reiterated this point later in the debate. J. M. Reiss supported the motion and proposed a solution to the religious issue which received 'terrific applause'. The boys arguing in support were engaging directly with Liberal talking points, on the concept of self-determination, as well as the broader idea of an Empire built on consent. Boys still saw sectarian differences as a challenge but believed Home Rule could overcome, or at least temper, these problems.

Opposition to the motion came from several angles. Leading the opposition was Mr E. A. Robertson (staff, Gresham's 1905-1928), who saw it as a threat to the United Kingdom's unity, as well as describing the South of Ireland as 'medieval'. Boys' opposition began with H. W. Kiver blaming Irish-Americans for stoking nationalism. Kiver and J. D. B. Warwick discussed the role of trade. Kiver suggested that the 'ruination of British Trade' would cause the collapse of the Empire and Warwick explicitly raised the issue of tariff reform. Others discussed the military implications of Irish Home Rule and the Irish people's character. The opposition used the same language as broader pro-imperialist talking points: calls for an ever closer Empire, as well as elements of racism.

The debate on 3rd December 1910 on the motion 'That this House would welcome the fall of the present Government' had six speakers for the motion, seven against and three whose positions are unclear. Mr E. A. Robertson proposed the motion, continuing in his attacks on the Liberal government, criticising it as radical.[77] It was held at the beginning of the second election campaign of 1910, with the Liberal Party, supported by the Irish Parliamentary Party, seeking to overturn the House of

---

[76] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, July 1910, 143–44.

[77] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1910, 20–21.

Lords' veto of the budget. The debate at Gresham's, however, leant heavily on the question of Home Rule. A. R. Herron and J. M. Reiss returned to the defence of the Liberal government's policies. Herron, in leading the opposition criticised the Unionists for not declaring their policy. Reiss argued that Home Rule would help unify the Empire, and saw the Lords blocking the Liberals as preventing this. Mr J. R. Eccles also spoke in favour of the Liberals, both in regards to free trade and Ireland.

Those supporting the motion did so with reference primarily to the constitutional issue of the Lords' veto. Two speakers, Mr C. L. Graves (parent, Gresham's) and the ever imperialist Reverend Field alluded to the Irish question. Mr Graves, discussing the cabinet, referred to Lloyd George as being 'inaccurate to a truly Celtic degree'.[78] Reverend Field adopted a racist analysis, arguing that the 'Ulstermen' would fight the 'savage natives', and Mr Robertson replied that he too could not accept Home Rule. The use of racial classifications by Field to delegitimise Irish nationalism demonstrates how central Englishness was to imperialism. This debate, coming at the beginning of the election focused on wider issues of policy difference. The heavy consideration of the Home Rule question suggests that many at Gresham's did not, however, see it as an election exclusively over the Lords' veto.

The final pre-war debate on 30th March 1912 was exclusively on Home Rule, with the motion 'This House would view with approval the granting of Home Rule to Ireland', with six speakers for the motion, six against, and one whose position is unclear.[79] Fewer boys spoke at this debate compared to any other. Mr Bushell proposed the motion, arguing once again for the right to self-determination. Mr B. Cozens-Hardy, a lawyer from North Norfolk, seconded the motion and argued that democracy would end clerical control of Ireland, and that the colonies demonstrated the success of Home Rule. C. H. C. Osborne also argued that Home Rule would defeat sectarianism through the creation of secular parties, and referenced Hillaire Belloc, a Liberal MP and Catholic writer. Mr Eccles highlighted contradictions in Unionists' reasons for refusing Home Rule whilst G. F. Johnson saw it as selfish for England to

---

[78] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1910, 21.

[79] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, June 1912, 153–54.

maintain control of Ireland, and that close economic ties would help keep Ireland close.

Boys formed the majority of the opposition to the motion and focused on military issues. Mr H. Douglas King, Conservative candidate for North Norfolk in both 1910 elections, led the opposition with three arguments: that Home Rule was not as popular in Ireland as believed, that Ireland was prospering under the current system and that the Irish were a lawless people. G. B. Johnson used the invasions scare stories to argue that Ireland could assist a nation in invading England. H. Riggall inverted this argument, claiming that Ireland could not defend itself, and so could not become a nation. G. B. Johnson and G. L. Turney also noted the wording of the motion. Johnson questioned whether Ireland deserved Home Rule and G. L. Turney 'reminded the House that even if Home Rule must come some day, this does not prove that it is justified'. Mr J. C. Miller (staff, Gresham's 1900-1928), who was from Ulster, raised the issue of clericalism. He claimed the Irish peasantry was poorly educated and under the thumb of the priests, presumably referring to Catholics. Mr A. E. Robertson also spoke in this debate, claiming that no financial aspects had been covered and that there were still no practical proposals for Home Rule from those proposing. The opposition in 1912 appears to be more focused on specific issues than 1910, with an element of acceptance that Home Rule was ever more likely. Unionist supporters continued to use themes seen in previous debates on imperialism: they believed in English supremacy, extolled the economic side of imperialism and believed that the Empire was the best way to temper religious, or more specifically non-Anglican, influence.

Home Rule was also of interest at Harrow, with five pre-war debates on the issue. The first was remarkably early, being held 1st December 1906 with the motion' Home Rule for Ireland is desirable', and was lost 7 votes to 18.[80] The second 'That Home Rule is the only salvation for Ireland', held in either March or April 1911, was lost 28 votes to 56.[81] Although 'many people abstained from voting', this debate had

---

[80] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, December 1906, 121.

[81] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, April 1911, 20–21.

'attracted almost record attendance'. The third debate, on 6th October 1912, was on the motion 'That Home Rule would be possible for Ireland if Ulster were allowed to remain in the Union', was lost 9 votes to 15 and was described as 'neither interesting, spirited or brilliant'.[82] A fourth debate discussed a potential brake on Home Rule with the motion 'The King was justified in using his Prerogative to veto the Home Rule Bill' on 8th November 1913, and was won 24 votes to 17, although the reported described the speeches as 'very poor'.[83] Speakers discussed the Royal Prerogative more generally rather than in relation to Home Rule, and this debate is not worth examining in the context of Home Rule. The final debate was 'as to whether Carson was justified in his attitude towards Home Rule', and took place on 6th December 1913, when the proposers argued against Carson's position and lost 11 votes to 55.[84] Notably, the motions Harrovians discussed were on more specific aspects of Home Rule policy, most likely due to them being held after the formation of the Liberal and Irish Parliamentary Party coalition and the submission of a Home Rule Bill that was likely to pass, with the exception of the first debate.

The first debate, 'Home Rule is desirable for Ireland' in 1906, focused primarily on invasion scares, with religious and ethnic identities playing a role as well.[85] There were no specific proposals for Home Rule, although the Liberals had won the General Election that year. The proposers both sought to disarm both the religious concerns and the invasion fears. Lunn Senior sought to address the potential religious conflict and saw no reason for Protestants to oppress Catholics. His seconder, Ledward, argued that the Catholics would not invite German help because Germany was Protestant, seemingly contradicting Lunn's argument that religious identity was not a primary concern. In leading the opposition, Falcon had raised the threat of both German and French invasion. He also compared Irish Home Rule to Indian Home Rule and the fear of a Russian invasion there, managing to insert a whole range of invasion scare ideas into one speech. This fear of Ireland as a

[82] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 25, no. 7, October 1912, 115–16.

[83] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, November 1913, 130.

[84] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, December 1913, 147.

[85] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, December 1906, 121.

potential base for an enemy invasion was supported from the floor by one other boy. The boy seconding for the opposition used racial divisions between Irish and English as did two boys from the floor, with one explicitly stating that 'the Irish were a different race from the English'. Without a specific bill or proposal to discuss Harrovians used contemporary media and ideologies to frame this debate on Ireland. Their interest in invasion scares, seen earlier to be generally benign, did appear to have had some influence on their opinions on Home Rule.

The second debate, on the motion 'That Home Rule is the only salvation for Ireland' in early 1911 saw a significant focus on the economics of Home Rule, although the report on this debate is relatively brief.[86] One proposer, Reverend C. Goodrich, argued that despite poor economic prospects the Irish saw freedom as worth fighting for. This is in stark contrast to the contemporary imperialist argument that saw the Empire as being built of consenting people. G. K. M. Butler, son of Henry Montague Butler, seconding the opposition, argued that not only was Home Rule economically unviable, but that the economic strains would reignite sectarian violence, and another boy, Renton, spoke 'of the power of the Priests'. Once again the Empire was seen as tempering religious violence alongside criticisms of non-Anglican faiths. Most notable of this debate in terms of how boys' engaged with wider political culture is the reporter's statement that 'Aveling gave us considerable (and unacknowledged) extracts from Asquith, Birrell, and Winston Churchill'.[87] This comment demonstrates two things: that Aveling had been keeping up with notable political views on the issue and that the reporter was familiar enough with these speeches to recognise their origins. It also raises the question of whether Aveling thought any other boys had been keeping up with the events surrounding Home Rule.

The debates on 6th October 1912 and 6th December 1913 both focused on the Ulster question. The first was on the motion that 'Home Rule would be impossible for Ireland if Ulster were allowed to remain in the Union', proposed by F. C. Shaw, who

[86] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, April 1911, 20–21.

[87] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, April 1911, 21.

the reporter claimed made little sense.[88] The opposition speakers discussed the potential for sectarian violence, the economic issues and questions of imperial structure and security. D. R. Lawson linked religion and ethnicity to delegitimise Irish nationalism. He argued that the country was made up of two separate peoples: 'The Southerners who were both Catholic and poor would be hostile to the Ulstermen, who were Protestant and rich', and he quoted Lord Londonderry. Farrar, seconding the motion, referenced both Conservative and Liberal governments' policies towards Ireland.[89] Farrar saw Home Rule as an opportunity to take a 'step towards Imperial Federation which was good if well carried out'. Tallents, in seconding the opposition, saw India as a potential difficulty to forming a federation, and questioned why 'step on a journey which we could never finish?' Support for Home Rule in this debate came from those that saw it as a chance to revitalise the Empire. Rather than supporting Irish autonomy per se, Harrovians saw Home Rule as an opportunity to strengthen the Empire as a whole.

The second of these debates focused on Edward Carson, founder of the Ulster Volunteers paramilitary group, and the idea of violent resistance to Home Rule.[90] The exact wording of the motion was not recorded, but those supporting it were against Carson and violent resistance. The proposer, Mr Graham, criticised Carson for challenging the election result of December 1910, as well as speaking in favour of the idea of Home Rule, comparing it to dominion status. Hodgson Major, leading the opposition, argued that passive resistance to Home Rule had failed and so active resistance was necessary, whilst arguing that the South could not have Home Rule by itself. Both sides raised religion, whilst race was used by those opposing the motion. A master argued that uniting the Teutonic Ulstermen with the Celtic Irish was impossible, and a boy claimed 'Ulstermen were Englishmen, and should be treated differently to Irish men'. One boy asserted that Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, was the rebellious one, whilst Carson was a Royalist, seemingly putting forward his definition of the differences between a terrorist and a

---

[88] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, October 1912, 115–16.

[89] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, October 1912, 115.

[90] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, December 1913, 147.

freedom fighter, as well as raising Rhodesia's status as having rejected Home Rule. The earlier criticism of the use of force to maintain empires was ignored when it was to be conducted by English people. Both these debates saw the Ulster question, and Home Rule more widely, used to discuss the wider issue of Imperial Federation, as seen in debates on tariff reform but with actual practical questions to discuss.

There were significant differences between the debates held at Gresham's and Harrow. Harrow's debating society lacked regular attendance, with no crossover of speakers, whilst at Gresham's some boys spoke in multiple debates on Home Rule. Despite this, Harrovians appeared to be more aware of what politicians were saying on the issues, with direct reference to prominent national and regional supporters for and against Home Rule. At Gresham's, however, there was a greater focus on the overall politics of the topic, with greater emphasis given to party positions. This may have been due to the debates taking place around electoral and Parliamentary events, and so rather than being single issue-based debates Home Rule was linked to broader political platforms, resulting in less detailed analysis. However, it may also have been due to the greater level of interest in Home Rule at Gresham's. Boys and masters were more committed to their particular side of the debate and so would have been more engaged with the specific arguments, rather than relying on quoting politicians.

Two notable features stand out in the debates on Irish nationalism. The first is the importance of the division between Catholicism and Protestantism. As has been noted when considering Christian states fighting the Ottoman Empire, public school boys sided with Christians, even going as far as to excuse atrocities by Christians. This division ignored the doctrinal differences, whether supporting Catholic Italy or Catholic or Orthodox people in the Balkans, grouping Christianity against Islam. However, once the conflict was between Protestantism and Catholicism, this unity was dropped in favour of Anglicanism. There were some efforts to argue that the differences would not cause conflict. Some boys described the sectarian differences as a cultural feature rather than religious, in a similar manner to which some boys conflated Islam with the Ottoman Empire. Others specifically criticised clerical influence rather than doctrinal ones, separating the Irish people's faith from the

structures of the church. The overall reduction in the acceptability of different forms of Christianity cannot, however, be overlooked. Any element of ‘otherness’ was used to delegitimise a threat to the British Empire.

The second key point is that there were criticisms of the nature of British rule in Ireland at both Gresham’s and Harrow. As has been demonstrated through previous debates, boys would suggest that British imperialism was the model to follow, and whilst the criticism by boys was limited, it was present. At Gresham’s, during the debate on 5th March 1910, G. F. Johnson’ ‘denounced [the rule of Ireland] as an open scandal’, whilst A. R. Herron argued that Ireland’s disloyalty was due to ‘its treatment by England’.[91] At Harrow V. A. Farrar suggested that the Conservative policy of coercion would not necessarily work and that conciliation might be more effective, particularly in terms of long-term imperial policy.[92] Whilst these criticisms of British imperial policy were relatively unique, and in Farrar’s case minor, they do suggest two things. Firstly, that criticism of British imperialism was not impossible, nor forbidden. Secondly, boys did believe that the Empire was built on consent but that this might not have been true in Ireland.

Conclusion

Imperialism provided a significant framework for how boys understood both national and international politics as well as social and economic issues in the first half of the twentieth century. This will be seen in the following chapters. At the start of the twentieth century the British Empire was one of the foremost global powers and boys were strongly in support of its aims. This support was not passive, however. They actively engaged in key themes of imperialist discourse. This included support for the economic aspects of imperialism and some form of imperial unity. However, it was also demonstrated through support for Christianity, particularly Anglicanism. Despite not having much interest in the missionary movement either domestically or imperially, religion was a key part of boys’ imperial identity. In many cases, it was

---

[91] ‘Debating Society’, *Gresham*, July 1910, 144.

[92] ‘Debating Society’, *Harrovian*, October 1912, 116.

used interchangeably or in place of racial distinctions that are often seen in imperialist dialogues. The use of religion to include or exclude certain groups depending on the situation suggests that for many boys it was a more obvious and significant factor in determining ‘otherness’. This was particularly true when Anglicanism or Christianity collectively was in direct confrontation with another denomination or religion.

This allowed boys to be flexible in their support for imperialism. Prior to the First World War, boys were willing to criticise other imperial powers, but rarely British imperialism. Boys used the varying degrees of ‘otherness’ to either grant or refuse legitimacy to other powers. Boys would ultimately hold up Englishness as the pinnacle of imperialism. Empires which bore more similarities to Britain, both in religion and race, were seen as having a greater sense of legitimacy amongst boys.

Boys were also able to draw on a range of media to inform their political discussions. This was a particularly prominent feature of debates at Harrow. Pupils used factual sources, such as newspapers and reports of politicians’ speeches. They also drew on fiction, particularly the invasion scare stories. The imperialism of popular culture was certainly influencing boys’ discussions. They were, however, conscious that this media had various agendas, both political and commercial. They dismissed stories as both being entertaining but impractical as well as attempts to rile up anger to promote a political agenda. They were not uncritical consumers of imperialist propaganda, but neither were they all immune from it. Imperialism was at its most pervasive during this period, with few challenges to British imperialism, but the following chapters will demonstrate how it continued to inform much of boys later understanding of early twentieth-century politics.

Chapter 5: Militarism and the First World War

The military and martial culture were viewed positively during the early twentieth century, and there were various strains of militarism. There were large organisations, such as the National Service League, led by Lord Roberts, which campaigned for conscription, and Navy League, which wished to see the navy expanded.[1] Ann Summers has noted how wider society was broadly supportive of militarism, to the extent that even Quakers were willing to volunteer for service in the Second Boer War.[2] It was certainly present in literature, particularly with the enduring popularity of invasion scare stories and their calls for greater military spending.[3] Youth organisations certainly held militaristic elements, although there has been debate over how militarised they were.[4] Dedman argued that Baden-Powell's aims with the scouting movement were about health and national efficiency movements rather than militarism.[5] His argument fails to acknowledge that these movements were themselves a response to the lack of military success in the Second Boer War.[6] Matin did, however, highlight that believers in social Darwinism supported and donated to the National Service League. Race was an important feature in the popular understanding of health and martial prowess. Heather Streets has examined the influence of the National Service League in the media, particularly Lord

---

[1] A. Michael Matin, 'The Creativity of War Planners: Armed Forces Professionals and the Pre-1914 British Invasion-Scare Genre', *English Literary History* 78, no. 4 (2011): 801–31; Streets, 'Military Influence in Late Victorian and Edwardian Popular Media', *Journal of Victorian Culture*.

[2] Anne Summers, 'Militarism in Britain before the Great War', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 2 (1976): 105–7.

[3] Jeffrey Richards, 'Popular imperialism and the image of the army', in, MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, 80–108; Matin, 'The Creativity of War Planners', *English Literary History*, 811–15; Paris, *Warrior Nation*.

[4] John Springhall, 'The Boy Scouts, Class and Militarism in Relation to British Youth Movements 1908–1930', *International Review of Social History* 16, no. 02 (1971): 125–58.

[5] Martin Dedman, 'Baden-Powell, Militarism, and the "Invisible Contributors" to the Boy Scout Scheme, 1904–1920', *Twentieth Century British History* 4, no. 3 (1993): 201–23.

[6] Summers, 'Militarism in Britain', *History Workshop Journal*, 111–12.

Roberts'.[7] Children and youths, particularly boys, were exposed to military culture at an early age through books and play, such as with toy soldiers.[8] Mackenzie has noted that the heroic myths of the British Empire were military figures, emphasising Christianity and exploring exotic locations, despite Britain's more professional, career orientated military compared to other European states.[9] Whilst British civilians may not have had direct participation in the military, martial culture permeated British society.

There was not, however, a formalised political militarism such as in Germany during this period. The various figures and organisations were competing for policies and supporters, but they were not always campaigning for the same militarist policies or social change. In particular, the division over conscription versus volunteerism was contentious and only partly satiated by the Haldane Reforms. In the debates held at public schools during this period conscription was one of the few explicitly military issues debated. Like imperialism, however, military issues filtered through to boys' speeches in various forms. Science and technology was a popular topic, particularly with the recent developments in powered flight at the beginning of the twentieth century. Boys were quick to consider the military applications of new technologies. Whilst, as has been noted, the eugenics movement was not formally part of elite culture, social Darwinist beliefs did appear in boys' debates. These beliefs were particularly visible in discussions over the virtue of war versus arbitration, and military consideration of race by boys is worth examining. Military culture, both in the form of the O.T.C. and recreational activities which fed into the promotion of militarism, was a significant part of boys' engagement with militarism at school. This section examines how they considered the martial aspects of their education. Militarism was not, however, expressed as an independent ideology, but a supporting pillar of nationalism and imperialism.

---

[7] Matin, 'The Creativity of War Planners', *English Literary History*, 812; Streets, 'Military Influence in Late Victorian and Edwardian Popular Media', *Journal of Victorian Culture*; Streets, *Martial Races*, 116–50.

[8] Brown, 'Modelling for War?', *Journal of Social History*.

[9] Mackenzie, 'Heroic Myths of Empire', in, MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, 113.

1. War, militarism and recreation

Military activity as a form of recreation at both schools was linked to formal activities and is much more in line with the descriptions that Jeffries and Paris argued were present in popular youth literature.[10] A report from Gresham's described the Schools of the Empire Shooting Competition as a 'friendly competition' in 1908.[11] However, the reporter also considered 'the best possible preparation for that sacrifice which any of us may some day be called upon to make'. Descriptions of the O.T.C. camp appear more like a holiday report than training for war, with a boy reporting from the Aldershot Camp in 1905 that '"camp" has its many lighter sides' including 'practical jokes', 'nightly sing-songs' as well as excellent food and parades with beautiful views.[12] Harrow also made military training appear more leisurely than the reality that boys would face in the First World War. A field day exercise in 1900 mimicked the style of war correspondence, but with an element of humour. The report was 'telegrammed' with the headline on the front page of the *Harrovian* declaring 'Desperate Attack on Claydon House: Fierce Fighting: Harrow Hotly Engaged: Enemy Beaten Off'.[13] The correspondent described the poor conditions boys faced such as 'Most are hungry, having had nothing since breakfast' and the 'failure of the War Office to provide umbrellas'. The efforts to make war seem pleasurable were made more sinister by the trivialisation of casualties, with Lieutenant Borthwick falling whilst 'gallantly leading his men': he tripped on a tree root, 'exclaiming [The rest of the dispatch has for some mysterious reason been censored –Ed.]' and the loss of Private Trousers, which were torn. The light-hearted description ceased with the outbreak of war when the camp reports for 1914 appeared in the new academic year's magazines, which shall be covered later in this chapter.

Links between martial culture and recreation were not always explicit and occasionally focused on leisure pursuits. Much like imperialism, this was often in the

---

[10] Richards, 'Popular imperialism and the image of the army', in, MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, 80–83; Paris, *Warrior Nation*, 79–80, 111.

[11] 'Schools of the Empire Shooting Competition', *Gresham*, 3, no. 1, October 1908, 10.

[12] 'Aldershot Camp', *Gresham*, December 1905, 37–39.

[13] R. W. Gerant, 'Desperate Attack on Claydon House', *Harrovian*, July 1900, 57–59.

form of hunting. At Harrow during the Second Boer War letters from the front informed boys of the hunting opportunities in South Africa, with one letter praising the writer's Boer captors who invited him to come to their farms after the war to shoot buck, before listing the various other animals available to hunt.[14] The language of hunting could also be significantly more violent, with a suggestion from one other Old Harrovian that the only way to know how many Boers had been killed was if they were 'counted and laid out like rabbits'.[15] Another described a naval bombardment as having got a 'good bag' at Ladysmith.[16] The most extreme case of hunting and war being conflated was from William Meyrick Hewlett's description of the Siege of Legations, seen in the previous chapter.[17] One extract was published separately in the magazine entitled 'Boxer Hunting', which detailed Hewlett's expeditions out into the city to hunt Boxers and bring back prisoners and trophies. Included in the spoils of war was a human trophy of 'the pigtail of our chief prisoner'.[18] That the editors saw this as the ideal section to capture their readers' interest in imperial military conflicts suggests that, as in imperialism, hunting was a popular and engaging topic. Harrow held an exhibition of treasures that Hewlett had sent home to his family; the triumphal nature of the spoils of war would no doubt have engendered a sense of reward with military action amongst boys.[19]

Discussion of hunting could be conducted with some level of moderation, although it was still not free from martial or racial language. E. N. Buxton, Old Harrovian and MP in 1885-6 and a conservationist, spoke regularly to the boys on his various expeditions. His first lecture in 1899 covered his time in Asia Minor, Crete and the Carpathians where he described the various ethnic groups and their hunting methods, as well as the fauna available to hunt, but also concluded that 'if anyone wished to hunt without drawing blood' they could use a camera.[20] There is still a

---

[14] C. R. A. Toller, 'The War', *Harrovian*, 13, no. 6, July 1900, 82.

[15] Fusilier, 'Battle of Colenso: Another Account', *Harrovian*, 13, no. 1, February 1900, 7.

[16] R. H. Kearsley, 'The War', *Harrovian*, April 1900, 36.

[17] Hewlett, *Diary of the Siege of the Peking Legations. June to August, 1900*.

[18] Hewlett, 'Boxer Hunting', *Harrovian*, February 1901, 5.

[19] 'Here and There', *Harrovian*, March 1901.

[20] 'Mr E. N. Buxton's Lecture', *Harrovian*, March 1899, 15–16.

martial tone, with the connotation of drawing blood, but also an objection to unnecessary violence. He emphasised this in his address to the Harrow School Scientific Society on 'Big Game Preservation' in 1911, where he describes hunting as a sport but lamented the overhunting which had left areas depleted of elephants.[21] The following week the boys received a lecture on 'Game and Vermin' from M. D. Hill, from Eton, who ranked animals into three classes: ornamental which should not be shot, those where reasonable measures should be taken, and 'vermin' to which 'no mercy need be shown'.[22] These distinctions will be important when considering attitudes towards race in warfare further in this section. However, the prominence of hunting in Harrow school life demonstrates that it was pervasive, and the military connotations are present throughout. At Gresham's one boy directly linked hunting to military training by saying 'Let us learn to shoot birds, in order that we may be useful shots in war'; however, hunting featured much less regularly at Gresham's.[23] The links between leisure, hunting, fighting and imperialism suggest a belief that violence, particularly in an imperial setting, was something boys should view as rewarding and as having official support.

2. Science and the military

Like hunting, new technologies were a topic which, whilst not explicitly related to the military, would often turn to the military applications. New technologies such as aeroplanes, Zeppelins and dreadnaughts featured in youth literature, where a fictional hero helps win a war using a newly invented machine or super-weapon. However, Matin has argued that older military officials, particularly in Britain, refused to acknowledge the changes these would bring to war.[24] This section will show that boys at both schools were undoubtedly interested in the military applications of technology.

---

[21] 'Scientific Society', *Harrovian*, April 1911, 21.

[22] 'Scientific Society', *Harrovian*, April 1911, 22.

[23] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 1, no. 1, December 1900, 19.

[24] Matin, 'The Creativity of War Planners', *English Literary History*, 818–20; Paris, *Warrior Nation*, 89–95.

The shift towards motorised war machines and the potential decline of cavalry was discussed only briefly, with most debates focusing on the social impacts of cars. At Gresham's there was a debate on the motion that 'Motor Power is superior to horse power' on 22nd November 1902, where the focus was on the military considerations.[25] This debate did not just focus on land-based motors, however. The boy who proposed the motion argued that motor power also included 'ironclads', an explicitly military-style ship rather than civilian. Other boys and staff argued that horses would still have military applications, but alongside motors. The headmaster, the usually anti-militarist Mr Howson, made the direct comparison between knights and mechanised units. At Harrow the reference was more fleeting but suggests a similar link between horses and war. During a debate on the merits of motor cars, a boy speaking in opposition claimed that 'he has often, whilst on a fiery charger, been disturbed by the momentary whizz of a motor car.'[26] Whilst at first glance this is not explicitly military, the choice of describing the horse as a 'charger' lends a sense of purpose to the horse, much like the use of ironclad at Gresham's. So, whilst the debates over horses and motor cars were not explicitly concerned with militarism, they could quickly turn to the applications in war, and used military metaphors rather than civilian ones.

In the case of aeroplanes the military applications were addressed more readily and in a range of ways, including combat, espionage and sabotage. Harrovians debated the motion that 'The Danger of Aviation is such that it ought to be restricted by Law' on 8th October 1910.[27] It began with a series of (seemingly reasonable) suggested regulations which faced immediate opposition on the grounds that they would result in Britain falling behind in 'this new and deadly element of warfare'. Of eleven speakers, four explicitly discussed the use of aeroplanes in warfare. One other boy suggested that restraints on 'our heroes of the air' would be akin to discouraging 'Icarus, Stephenson, Dr Cook'. A boy challenged the idea of aerial warfare being the new tourney field of the modern knight, arguing that air combat 'would be too horrible

---

[25] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 1, no. 8, April 1903, 133.

[26] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 18, no. 2, March 1905, 22.

[27] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 23, no. 6, October 1910, 92–93.

for contemplation'. At Gresham's, a very similar pattern emerged in the debate on the motion 'That this House considers that the spread of aerial navigation is a menace to the best interests of the human race' on 4th March 1911.[28] The proposers put forward suggested regulations and the boy leading the opposition raised the military benefits, including the suggestion of aerial bombardment eight months before Italy first tried it in Tripoli. The horrors of air warfare were also raised by one boy, who naively argued that 'War would become so awful peace would surely ensue'. Of fifteen speakers, five spoke directly of aeroplanes' effect on war, although two of those in the belief that aircraft would make war too horrible an idea for anyone to start one, whilst three spoke of the potential criminal and espionage dangers.

Whilst these debates on new technologies were rare, they often became dominated by discussions of military applications. At both schools, boys and masters in the early twentieth century saw technology as a tool for war. Whilst motor power had the potential to revolutionise industry, commerce and medical care, these fields were less worthy of consideration than the military applications. It also reflects the views of popular literature that these would revolutionise war. Matin's argument that the pre-war military establishment was resistant to changing methods of war, and the post-war claims that schools had not fostered scientific pursuits, would suggest that senior military figures were at fault, rather than the schools.

3. Race and war

School boys linked racial status and war in various ways. This often took the form of social Darwinism, but without taking up the political campaigning of the eugenics movement. Some boys viewed war as a means to demonstrate racial superiority. Others saw it as a means of improving the health of the nation, with the racial connotations that this implied. Others used racial distinctions to define how to conduct warfare. Heather Streets has examined how race theory became formalised and entered military culture, including recruiting.[29] Kim Wagner has examined in

---

[28] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 4, no. 4, April 1911, 46–47.

[29] Streets, *Martial Races*, 7–10.

great detail how the rules of war were seen as less important by the British Empire when fighting 'savages' in colonial settings.[30] This was not limited to the political or military spheres but also the elements of the scientific community, which played a role in finding new means of waging war. Imperial officers, who were keen hunters, provided their knowledge of using new weapons in hunting big game.[31] The army medical officers examined the efficiency and destructive capabilities of new dum-dum bullets, which expanded upon impact, creating mutilating injuries. These were tested in the Battle of Omdurman on the Sudanese who 'unknowingly played the unenviable role of guinea-pigs' in the weapon's development. The resulting injuries were so severe that officials deemed them unsuitable for use against white people, but an acceptable weapon for colonial wars.[32] This combination of officers who were keen hunters and scientists judging new weapons for their racial suitability was reflected in some of the language seen in the public schools. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, public school boys saw imperial activity, including atrocities, as acceptable if it was by whites against non-whites, and this was present in their discussions of war. Wagner noted that the British refused to sign a prohibition against expanding bullets and only stopped using dum-dum bullets due to the practicalities of ensuring they were not used against white forces, whether accidentally or from being captured rather than moral reasons. This distinction between what was acceptable against some racial groups and not others underlines how many boys saw war.

This stance can be seen amongst Harrow boys who, at the outbreak of the First World War, discussed the motion 'That it is advantageous for us and our Allies to use black troops in Europe; but that Germany is justified in using dum-dum bullets against them' on 10th October 1914.[33] One boy argued that dum-dum bullets hurt Indians as much as whites, so disputed whether they should only be used against Indians. However, he added the caveat that Indian troops counted as civilised and

---

[30] Kim A. Wagner, 'Savage Warfare: Violence and the Rule of Colonial Difference in Early British Counterinsurgency', *History Workshop Journal*, 2018, 5–6.

[31] Wagner, 'Savage Warfare', *History Workshop Journal*, 7–8.

[32] Wagner, 'Savage Warfare', *History Workshop Journal*, 12–13.

[33] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 27, no. 7, November 1914, 131.

well trained. This distinction suggests that he would not have disapproved of the use of dum-dum bullets in other situations. Most arguments revolved around the viability of using Indian troops in Europe rather than the ethical issue of a weapon designed to mutilate. The potential number of Indian troops available, their suitability for the European climate and the risk of a lack of troops in India were all seen as logistical issues. However, one boy inverted the argument that it was appropriate to use mutilating weaponry by criticising Indian troops. He accused Indian troops of mutilating fallen Germans, bringing Britain into disrepute. This reversal of the ethical side of the question shows how boys adopted the racial classifications and ethics of Victorian and Edwardian military officials. A final question where 'Anderson asked how the Germans would distinguish the blacks from whites in battle', reflected one of the primary concerns: that boys felt dum-dum bullets were only suitable for non-white people.

Wagner's argument that more violent methods were seen as acceptable against non-white people were visible at Gresham's. In a debate on the Italian invasion of Tripoli one boy argued that 'one can't fight in kid gloves…the Italians thought it necessary to occupy at all costs'.[34] Another used dehumanising language, saying it was impossible to tell the difference between Arab men and women at fifty yards. Douglas Lorimer has argued that whilst there was some opposition to racialised violence for most it reinforced their belief in their racial superiority.[35] Boys at Gresham's and Harrow supported the use of more violent methods against non-white people by the British army command and government.

The racial considerations boys gave to the practicalities of war also extended to the overall purpose of war. At Harrow, the motion 'That it is impossible for one civilised nation to benefit by the conquest of another, and the general recognition of this fact in Europe, would add to our own national security' was proposed on 23rd November 1912 by guest speaker Norman Angell, journalist, writer, Labour MP 1929-31 and

---

[34] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1911, 105.

[35] Douglas A. Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance: Britain, 1870-1914*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester University Press, 2013), 19, 23–25.

Nobel Peace Prize winner 1933.[36] The motion was lost by a narrow margin of 35 votes for and 39 against. The motion set the terms of where war can and cannot be justified and did not challenge imperialism. Various wars, both historical and hypothetical, were discussed, but the Japanese occupation of Korea was the only non-white conflict mentioned. Economic destruction was seen as the main risk from war. Boys did not consider the impact on indigenous populations in colonial regions, suggesting they viewed colonial wars as acceptable, and potential economically beneficial. This supported the idea behind imperialism that land not being used economically could legitimately be taken, and shows that boys viewed war was a good way to achieve this, legitimising white states' Empires at the expense of non-white indigenous populations.

Boys at both schools discussed the racial ability for, and the benefits of, war in debates on military issues. At Gresham's three boys spoke in favour of the motion 'That this house would not welcome the abolition of war as a means of settling differences', on 19th November 1910; all of them argued that it improved the individual, through education in skills or character, and thus also the nation.[37] One boy argued that 'war was the sole agent for the propagation of the superior type', a clear demonstration of support for war as a form of social-Darwinism. At Harrow the raison d'etre of the Boy Scouts, to improve the health of urban youth following the recruitment failures in the Second Boer War, was clearly expressed by one boy who argued that 'the Boy Scout of to-day would be the Territorial of to-morrow' and this was achieved by taking 'gutter-snipes from the slums and [giving] them healthy fresh air'.[38] As well as supporting the health benefits, this statement also provides insight into the class element of public school boys' views: that they were already able to contribute and others should too. This will become apparent in the examination of debates on conscription. Whilst he was not the only one to speak in favour of the Boy Scouts for their potential military training, he was the only one to link it to health.

---

[36] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 25, no. 9, December 1912, 138–39.

[37] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1910, 19–20.

[38] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, April 1910, 19.

In comparison to imperialism, however, race and degeneracy were not used as a reason to support militarism or military culture anywhere near as often, and more as an afterthought to a more prominent issue. However, popular contemporary ideas of racial hierarchies and social Darwinism informed boys' views on war. Military issues were, however, seen as a key part of imperialism, particularly the maintenance of the Empire.

4. Conscription

National and imperial defence, as has been seen, was a major concern after the Second Boer War. The solution to potential and imagined threats was often seen to be some form of compulsory military training, usually conscription, to compensate for the lack of reserves and trained men.[39] Ralph Adams and Philip Poirier outlined how support for conscription came from various sources. Proponents included militarists, imperialists, supporters of tariff reform and those concerned about physical fitness.[40] Those opposed to conscription argued that the navy should be the focus of the defence budget rather than rejecting the use of force. The debates held within schools were not just discussions of abstract policy or a facsimile of national debates. Boys' attention often turned to what could be done regarding education, including within their own schools.

Many boys saw school as an ideal place to provide military training. At Harrow, a specific motion on making the school corps compulsory was held and lost in April 1911.[41] In debates on conscription, boys at both schools raised the idea that education should include some form of preparation in military skills. At Harrow, the boy seconding the opposition to a motion calling for compulsory military service on 17th February 1912 argued instead for compulsory corps to equip boys with basic

---

[39] Margaret Levi, 'The Institution of Conscription', *Social Science History* 20, no. 1 (1996): 136.

[40] Ralph James Q. Adams and Philip P. Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900–1918* (Springer, 1987), 17–25.

[41] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, April 1911, 21. No date or specific result was given, only that the motion was lost.

training.[42] He saw school as the best time to learn basic skills and argued volunteerism was better for the army, and that adult conscription would negatively affect businesses. At Gresham's a debate on compulsory military service on 25th January 1908 saw two opposing forms of education that would help prepare boys for future military service.[43] In proposing G. Hawksley argued for weekly drill in school to be followed by a year's military service. C. H. C. Osborne, opposing, argued that a boy's education should include the transferable skills of 'riding, shooting, swimming and elementary drill' as a way to avoid the need for compulsory service. Both were in favour of some form of training whilst at school to provide a large body of readily trained soldiers if the need arose. A third boy argued for drill training during vocational and professional courses for adults. Even in opposition to conscription, many boys expressed a desire to see some form of military training included in education, rather than peaceful alternatives.

Boys also saw military training and conscription as a means to improve society. A large part of this was from concern over racial health. Conscription was considered in the context of 'Physical Degeneration' by one boy in 1906.[44] Mr Moorsom, a staff member, proposing a motion for compulsory military service at Harrow on 17th February 1912, described his visit to the Oxford House settlement and the 'physical degradation of the London poor' compared to the conscripted German working classes.[45] However, others felt that military life was not the sole cure for poor health. Mr Russell, another staff member, opposed the motion and suggested that whilst military service would achieve this, there were better, non-military, alternatives, giving the (somewhat militaristic) Boys' Brigade as a potential alternative. At Gresham's, on a debate on the abolition of war in 1910, F. A. M. Goodliffe used a similar argument to those made at Harrow to support the motion. He argued that the physical benefits put forward by those in favour of war could be achieved through other means. He attributed the fact that he was 'enormously strong by reason of that

---

[42] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 25, no. 2, March 1912, 22.

[43] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, April 1908, 150.

[44] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 19, no. 3, April 1906, 30.

[45] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, March 1912, 21–22.

peaceful exercise known as Swedish Drill'.[46] So whilst there was support for military training for health reasons, it was not universal. At both schools, boys called for peaceful alternatives. These voices calling for peaceful alternatives did not, however, dispute the beneficial claims made in favour of military training.

The health benefits were thought to improve a degenerating urban society, but some boys saw increased militarism from conscription as a means to create a new, better society. Some saw conscription as a means to instil a sense of service in the wider population that public schools viewed as an important part of their own character training. Raymond Berridge most clearly expressed this at Gresham's. Speaking in favour of conscription on 15th February 1915, he declared 'that it was the manifest duty of every patriot to perform his share of personal service to the country', whilst his seconder saw it as a means to tackle shirkers and gambling.[47] Boys at both schools saw the working classes as being the ones in need of improvement through conscription. At Gresham's on the 16th February 1901, a boy proposing conscription suggested separating upper and lower classes extending privileges based on social rank to avoid 'The mingling of classes, and all its attendant evils'.[48] On the 24th February 1906 a Harrovian proposed a scheme where those that passed certain tests should be exempt.[49] In a similar vein, another Harrovian saw conscription as a means of instilling discipline to prevent strikes, suggesting that he believed in conscription as a means of training the working classes rather than public school boys.[50] This separation of society based on class is not dissimilar to that seen with race, and demonstrates how public school boys saw themselves as separate from wider society, but eligible to influence it. Boys at both schools demonstrated a belief that they saw their own education as preparing them for service to the nation, and therefore not requiring the additional training of conscription.

---

[46] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1910, 20.

[47] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 6, no. 4, April 1915, 43.

[48] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, March 1901, 37.

[49] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, April 1906, 30.

[50] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 24, no. 7, November 1911, 119.

There were some voices, however, that explicitly opposed the militarisation of society, although this was primarily once the First World War had begun. One boy at Gresham's argued in 1908 that conscription would negatively affect society as the unfit would profit and self-mutilation would be a means to secure a job vacated by a conscript.[51] Once the war had begun boys and staff at Gresham's saw German militarism as a source of the violence. Three speakers, two boys and C. H. C. Osborne, now a member of staff but who had opposed conscription previously as a boy in 1908, explicitly opposed conscription on the grounds that it would create a militaristic society and politics. They argued that such a society would favour war and would commit atrocities that they believed the Germans were committing.[52] This concern only really emerged once Britain was at war with a militarised society. Prior to the outbreak of war Germany had been seen as a potential friend and model. This shift in views would suggest that this was more of a passing concern than being about an explicitly militarised society. These worries did not feature significantly in debates during or following smaller colonial wars either, which would indicate that this was an attempt to create a separation between German and British martial culture.

If opposition to conscription was not about health benefits or social impact then the opposition to conscription, even during the war, needs to be explained somehow. Of the four debates on conscription at Harrow one motion was lost 8 votes to 23 (1902), one carried 17 to 15 (1906), another on having a compulsory O.T.C. was described as lost but no result was given (1911) and only one was carried by a large margin of 45 to 3 (1912). At Gresham's, a similar pattern emerges: one motion was lost 5 votes to 15 (1901), one carried by a slim margin of 22 votes to 19 (1908), and a motion arguing that conscription would be regretted during the First World War was carried by 43 to 5 (1915). There were three clear lines of argument against conscription. Firstly, and most obviously, that it was an infringement of individual liberty. Secondly, the idea that a conscripted soldier was less effective than a volunteer. Thirdly, and

---

[51] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, April 1908, 150.

[52] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, April 1915, 65–66.

most importantly, was that boys saw it not as undesirable, but that the army was less important to imperialism than the navy.

The debates on conscription reinforce both boys' and masters' support for the navy's role in maintaining the Empire. At Harrow, the boy seconding the opposition to conscription on 17th February 1912 argued that Britain did not need both a large army and a large navy and the financial cost was too high for both, rather than arguing for reductions.[53] The following speaker, a staff member, explicitly referenced the number of ships that Britain would have after the expiration of the naval treaty with Japan. At Gresham's a boy opposing conscription on 16th February 1901 argued that the navy could hold off an invasion long enough to train an army.[54] On 27th February 1915, another boy argued in favour of naval conscription, citing press gangs creating the navy which fought during the Napoleonic Wars, although another boy disputed this.[55] One pupil also saw conscription as a way of enabling professional troops to be deployed to colonies.[56] The opposition to conscription can be seen not as an opposition to a more militarised state, but a more nuanced consideration of which aspects of defence should receive the greatest focus. The acknowledgement that military power was needed to defend both domestic and imperial power, particularly against other imperial powers, demonstrates how force was accepted as part of imperialism, despite, as noted in the previous chapter, the belief in an Empire built on consent.

5. The impact of the First World War

The First World War dramatically challenged many of the claims and ideals that those in favour of militarism and martial culture put forward. The depictions and discussions of the Second Boer War demonstrated that these ideals were suited to colonial wars. Letters sent to Harrow are near-perfect copies of the imperial war

[53] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, March 1912, 22.

[54] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, March 1901, 37.

[55] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, April 1915, 65–66.

[56] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, April 1908, 150.

stories of G. A. Henty: detailed geographical and technical details were given, fighting was described using onomatopoeia, and Lord Roberts and General Buller made cameos to congratulate the men.[57] The economic aspects of imperialist ideology featured as well, with the British fighting Boers who damaged farms with raiding and stole livestock, justifying the seizure of Boer land.[58] The First World War created many problems for this sort of narrative, primarily due to the scale of the conflict. It was no longer a distant war of a small professional force. Instead, there were huge numbers of troops, little room for heroics, and fighting an industrialised, white, European enemy. This led to the challenging of not just views on war, but also race, disrupting two important pillars of imperialism.

Attitudes within the school are hard to come by. Reports of debates were significantly shortened, perhaps in response to calls to save paper. However, Wynne Wilson, housemaster of the junior house at Gresham's, provided some insight into how the war affected the culture within the school and responses to the war and militarism in his unpublished memoir. Wilson noted that cheers greeted the day boy who delivered the news of the British declaration of war on a motorbike and that the Boy Scouts cycled out to call up territorial soldiers.[59] He also reveals that some staff were less excited, with the school doctor 'shouting ~~out~~ "Don't cheer ~~you fools~~, you don't know what you are in for!". It is not clear why he chose to remove 'you fools', but it suggests that either he later saw this enthusiasm as foolish or the doctor had expressed similar sentiments at other times. This was not the only occasion where a member of staff deviated from the expected norm of celebrating the outbreak of war, and his description of a speech day address is worth noting in full:

'On one Speech Day during the war the prizes were to be given away by a certain Duchess who unexpectedly brought with her Lord Fisher, (~~it was during the Great War)~~. The latter was asked to speak and gave a very forcible address about

57 'Letters from the Front', *Harrovian*, February 1900, 2–5; 'Letters from the Front', *Harrovian*, 13, no. 4, June 1900, 50–52.

58 'Letters from the Front', *Harrovian*, February 1900, 5–7.

59 Wilson, 'Cheerful Yesterdays', 404.

"pushing your way to the front, using elbows and feet to get there" and a lot more in the same strain. With a colleague I was sitting in the gallery instead of the platform with the rest of the staff, and we watched the face of the Headmaster as brick after brick of this kind was dropped. The Headmaster I think spent a good deal of the rest of the term addressing the forms and trying to expunge this doctrine of force which was ~~of course~~ the very opposite of what he tried to inculcate. In the Press the speech was not reported and the very fact of Lord Fisher's presence was ~~not reported!~~ *Suppressed!*'[60]

This account presumably comes from speech day 1915, the only one where a Duchess was present. The headmaster's speech described the 'haunting oppression of the war'.[61] The suppression in the press of Lord Fisher's presence suggests that Wilson was referring to the school magazine, which failed to report his presence. His deliberate editing suggests that he later discovered that the magazine was instructed not to report his speech, rather than choosing to omit it. The relative impact of either speech is hard to measure, although the greater contact and personal connection of the boys to the headmaster appeared to have been more impactful. A collection of sermons produced by three former pupils after Howson's death featured a sermon in 1914 which criticised the destruction of the war and placed blame on militarism and materialism.[62] However, it is clear that whilst some elements of elite culture approved of encouraging support for militarism amongst public school boys, there was also resistance against these ideas. Neither the staff nor the boys were unquestioningly supportive of the First World War. The loss of life and the motivations of personal gain and glory were criticised within Gresham's.

Other aspects of boys' interests and the war are easier to explore. According to Wilson, interest in the new aerial warfare was easy to pursue, and something that boys had been interested in before the war. Wilson described how the area experienced one of the first Zeppelin bombing raids which hit the neighbouring

---

[60] Wilson, 'Cheerful Yesterdays', 417.

[61] 'Speech Day', *Gresham*, 6, no. 6, July 1915, 108–9.

[62] Howson, *Sermons by a Lay Headmaster*, 93–97.

village and killed 'one or two sheep and, ~~I think~~ a turkey' and how air patrols garnered much interest.[63] A desire to receive some form of training for war was also present. The *Harrovian* reported that 'Practically every able-bodied boy in the school has voluntarily joined the Corps' but noted that this had only increased numbers from 465 to 494.[64] Despite the extra parades, this small increase would suggest that martial culture within the school was already heavily supported. The initial outbreak of the war did little to either dampen or enhance it. However, the leisure aspect of the camp described earlier quickly vanished from reports at Gresham's.[65] It became apparent that this was no longer training for an abstract conflict, but immediate, real and industrialised war. Harrow had been unable to attend camp due to an outbreak of mumps, but the report carried a more serious tone than earlier writings on camp and O.T.C. activities.[66] The outbreak of the war offered opportunities to pursue interests in military culture and technology; this was not a new area of interest for boys at the schools. The discussion of these opportunities took in a more serious tone, however.

Despite the early excitement of going to war, it quickly became apparent to many of the former pupils that the war was not going to be like the depictions in youth literature. The anticipation and disappointment can be traced in a series of anonymous letters from an officer in the Shropshire Light Infantry to the Harrovian. Leaving England on the 8th September 1914 and arriving in France to fruit and wine on the 12th and on the 13th near his billets the officer reported 'feeling awfully excited about getting into action' despite the Germans looting all the bread, tobacco, champagne and wine.[67] Entering the trenches on the 21st and experiencing some shelling, he still expected to be soon charging at the enemy. However, by the 24th he was 'getting terribly bored with this show'.[68] The speed with which the excitement turned to boredom reflects an awareness that this was not going to be a heroic

---

[63] Wilson, 'Cheerful Yesterdays', 409, 412.

[64] 'H.S.O.T.C.', *Harrovian*, 27, no. 6, October 1914, 111.

[65] 'Camp, 1914', *Gresham*, 6, no. 1, October 1914, 9–10.

[66] 'H.S.O.T.C.', *Harrovian*, October 1914, 112.

[67] 'Letters from the Front and Elsewhere', *Harrovian*, 28, no. 1, February 1915, 10.

[68] 'Letters from the Front', *Harrovian*, February 1915, 11.

imperial adventure. The domestic tone of these letters, with deprivation coming from a lack of traditional luxuries and lack of action rather than romanticised heroic sacrifice, reveal the impact of the changed setting from an imperial to a European war.

The European nature of the war was also a clear cause of concern. Unlike imperial wars, the intra-European violence, potential threat of invasion and destruction of property caused greater distaste for the impact of war. An officer wrote to Harrow saying he would like to see English people visit the town he was fighting near 'to see what it is like for a country to be invaded'.[69] Despite this not being a traditional imperial war, the writer suggested that it was being fought for similar reasons, arguing that 'little Englanders and little Navyites' would change their stances on seeing the front. However, the scale of the destruction and lack of imminent victory would likely have created doubt about the viability of an industrial war for imperial gain. Letters from Gresham's also featured imagery of the destruction of European civilisation, such as the shelling of towns and churches.[70] This shift from conquering economically undeveloped places to the destruction of industrialised Europe, and from open ground to former towns and villages, certainly would have made it harder to view the First World War with the same level of economic justification that boys had used for imperial wars. It did not, at least initially, appear to challenge the sense of imperial mission among some of those fighting.

In the campaign in Mesopotamia the imperial mission was much more clearly expressed. As well as it being an 'exotic' location, letter writers to Gresham's reflected the views seen among boys in debates in previous years: that Turkish imperialism was bad and British imperialism was not just good but welcomed. Two former pupils, A. C. Gissing and J. K. Varvill, were involved in the capture of Baghdad and thoroughly supported this idea. Gissing reported that the inhabitants were glad to have the British take control.[71] Varvill wrote that 'they must have hated

---

[69] 'Letters from the Front', *Harrovian*, February 1915, 12.

[70] 'From the Front', *Gresham*, April 1915, 60.

[71] 'From the Front', *Gresham*, 7, no. 5, June 1917, 97.

Turkish rule' before turning to the imperialist economic argument, suggesting that the Iraqis were 'hopeful of making huge profits out of us'.[72] Varvill had been part of the debating society when it debated the motion 'That this house considers unsatisfactory any solution of the near Eastern question which includes the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire' on 17th October 1908, although had not spoken in that particular debate.[73] One of Varvill's contributions to the debating society had been in support of training boys to be imperial rulers and 'doubting whether a classical education would be of practical use in governing negroes'.[74] His belief that the arrival of British forces in Baghdad was beneficial to all involved ties together a range of British imperialist views: racial supremacy, economic gains and the consent of the governed. Whilst imperialist views of the First World War were possible at the time the European front made them more challenging to maintain. It was easier when this was in a more traditional imperial setting.

The industrial nature of the war also saw letter writers willing to express fear, in stark contrast to the heroic masculine military ideal in youth fiction. Two letters in 1915 express the psychological effects of the war, with J. R. Reith writing that after a night of heavy shelling he 'can't pretend to be thirsting for another such night' while another writer described how lookouts constantly imagined seeing advancing Germans only for nothing to happen.[75] In Mesopotamia, Varvill was even willing to express his fear about crossing the Tigris after seeing 'a MG open up…and everyone was killed, and the empty boats floated down the Tigris', as well as his relief when his order to cross was cancelled as the pontoons were not yet ready.[76] It was not just the expression of fear, but also the relief at having avoided rather than facing their fears and overcoming them. This contrasts with the ideal that boys were expected to have learned through character training. The writers and editors of the magazine appear to have acknowledged that this ideal was open to challenge. Both schools addressed the issue of shell-shock. In a letter to Gresham's, one soldier

---

[72] 'From the Front', *Gresham*, 7, no. 6, July 1917, 115.

[73] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1908, 14–16.

[74] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, April 1909, 48.

[75] 'From the Front', *Gresham*, 6, no. 3, February 1915, 43.

[76] 'From the Front', *Gresham*, July 1917, 114.

wrote that ‘we soon got used to the rifle fire, but it is the shells which it is difficult to get accustomed to’, whilst during a debate at Harrow there was an argument over the ‘mental after-effects of modern war’.[77] The fact that current and former pupils were addressing these issues demonstrates that the previous views of war as good for society and race were no longer so firmly held, to the point of being actively opposed.

As well as challenging the views on the merits of war, the First World War also enabled some challenge to racial hierarchies. The global scope of the war brought former pupils into contact with people from ethnicities that had been discussed at both schools. Information relayed from the front to the schools demonstrated changing attitudes towards Irish and Arabic people, although this is not always positive. The Irish serving in the British army received more praise than they had during debates on Irish nationalism. Letters describing interactions with Irish soldiers do not draw the lines of civilised and barbarian between the various groups as has been seen previously. Instead, the descriptions were more positive, though no less stereotypical. A letter to Harrow saw the Irish as bringing comedy to a horrific situation, with an Irish soldier pretending to be fatally wounded, with the author only realising he was fine after giving him half his brandy and described them as ‘what you call “*Some lads*”’ (italics in original).[78] A writer to the *Gresham* described how an Irish doctor saved his life, saying ‘The kindness of the Irish is wonderful’.[79] This realignment of former pupils’ views on race is particularly notable, given that one year previously staff at Harrow had been describing the conflict in Ireland as between Teutonic Ulstermen against Celtic Irish.[80] A lecturer who visited Gresham’s also inverted this distinction soon after the war broke out, stating that ‘It is better to die fighting for a cause than to live for ever as slaves of the Teutons’.[81] The dramatic shift from being seen as a separate, rebellious race of white people to being part of

---

[77] ‘From the Front’, *Gresham*, April 1915, 60; ‘Debating Society’, *Harrovian*, November 1914, 131.

[78] ‘Letters from the Front and Elsewhere’, *Harrovian*, February 1915, 15.

[79] ‘From the Front’, *Gresham*, 6, no. 2, December 1914, 33.

[80] ‘Debating Society’, *Harrovian*, December 1913, 147.

[81] ‘Lectures: “The War - Who is Responsible?”’, *Gresham*, December 1914, 21.

the imperial forces fighting for shared liberty demonstrates boys' flexibility on race depending on circumstances.

Arabic people received mixed appraisals from various Old Greshamians present in Mesopotamia. A. C. Gissing expressed incredibly negative views on Arabic society, saying that 'one cannot reach civilisation of any kind', and that their towns are 'very poor affairs', whilst describing Arabic bandits as 'only slightly above animals'.[82] His second letter appears to express surprise at the size and architecture in Baghdad, noting the beautiful mosques and minarets. Other writers were more curious and avoided patronising tones. One gave a detailed description of Basra and the various dress and activities of various social classes, ranging from raggedly dressed workers, the ordinary Arab 'in flowing robes of rusty brown or green', the Sheikh in 'gorgeous clothes' and people in coffee bars drinking and smoking hookahs.[83] Alongside the amateur anthropology, F. C. de L. Kirk described the benefit of Ford vans. He also described the same Arabic bandit attacks as Gissing, but without the hostility seen from Gissing, and explained how the British forces helped transport people such as 'a friendly Sheikh'.[84] Whilst some boys still used racist language, it is clear that some saw this as an opportunity to experience and share their knowledge of other cultures without treating them with a sense of hostility due to their race or religion. Elements of class were used to create distinctions amongst Iraqi society, in much the same way as they saw their own society. This further demonstrates the flexibility on race relations depending on circumstances, with the Arabic people allied to the British receiving praise, much like the Irish volunteers.

An interesting aspect arising from the letters from the Mesopotamia campaign is the lack of a school group identity being present on the front. Four Old Greshamians wrote to the school from the Mesopotamian front, three of them who had been at school together. In total fourteen Old Greshamian's were in the Indian Expeditionary

---

[82] 'From the Front', *Gresham*, 7, no. 4, March 1917, 46–47; 'From the Front', *Gresham*, June 1917, 96–97.

[83] 'From the Front', *Gresham*, 7, no. 3, February 1917, 53.

[84] 'From the Front', *Gresham*, 7, no. 7, October 1917, 138.

force in February 1917, down to ten by July.[85] Two of the boys, J. K. Varvill and F. C. de L. Kirk, were both involved in the crossing of the Tigris, and both reported that they were in shouting distance to the group of the fifty to sixty Lancashire troops that managed to cross and hold the opposite bank.[86] In all the letters from Mesopotamia, however, only Varvill's description of the crossing of the Tigris mentions another Old Greshamian, Soman, who was shot by a sniper.[87] This was significantly different from the letters from to Harrow from South Africa, which made every opportunity to highlight the activities of, and meetings between, Old Harrovians. This difference could have been due to different regiments and the larger scale of operations. However, with two boys being within shouting distance (with the noise of a battle) would suggest either that school identity at Gresham's was less significant, or that the industrial scale of the First World War made it seem less important.

Conclusion

Boys at both Gresham's and Harrow were interested in military topics. However, outside of new technologies, their interest usually stemmed from their support of imperialism. Military concerns were often focused on threats to the Empire's distant territories rather than to Britain itself. Letters from the First World War suggest that those fighting in the imperial setting rather than the European front were keener to share their experiences and had a more positive view of their experience. Even the death of a school friend was not enough to prevent Varvill from describing his time in a manner similar to an imperial adventure story.

There was little opposition to having a large military force. Instead, discussions focused on how to apply the force, with strong opinions held over preferences for land and naval power. Their view of war prior to the outbreak of the First World War was positive and reflected the language of both youth literature and letters directly

---

[85] 'List of Past Members of the School Serving in H. M. Forces', *Gresham*, February 1917, 66–73; 'List of Past Members of the School Serving in H. M. Forces', *Gresham*, July 1917, 126–34.

[86] 'From the Front', *Gresham*, July 1917, 114–15.

[87] 'From the Front', *Gresham*, July 1917, 114.

from the war in South Africa. Boys also demonstrated positive attitudes towards preparation for military training. Hunting was a leisure activity which they saw as an excellent way to train them in the use of rifles. As was seen in the previous chapter, this was a way in which mundane, domestic life could be linked to imperialism. Its connections with military training further reinforced both martial culture and boys' links to the Empire.

The First World War demonstrated that explicit support of militarism was temporary. The playful language seen in reports from the O.T.C. and camps disappeared. Letters from the front lines show how the war affected former pupils as well as current ones. The next chapter will demonstrate a more cautious approach towards the use of force during the interwar period. The Frist World War also demonstrated the flexibility in pupils' views of otherness seen in the previous chapter. Britain's active involvement in a conflict forced boys to redefine their position on various races and religions to align with the Empire's allegiances.

Chapter 6: Post-War Change and Continuity

In the aftermath of the First World War, many of the assumptions of pre-war politics could no longer remain unchallenged. The impact of industrialised warfare, high casualties and no decisive victory had largely removed the romantic idea of imperial warfare. Revolutions in the Central Powers and Entente empires had resulted in the establishment of republics, a short-lived communist uprising in Germany, a communist state in Russia, and entirely new countries were created along ethno-nationalist lines. A new, formalised international order created the opportunity for boys to explore new political ideologies. The creation of the League of Nations was demanded by US President Woodrow Wilson in his 1918 'Fourteen Points' for peace. The League was formed in 1920 and placed at least nominal limits on British, and other empires', power. This impacted the British Empire's acquisition of territory, through the mandates system, and its ability to enforce its power by naval restriction treaties. At both Harrow and Gresham's, British imperialism no longer enjoyed the largely unquestioned acceptance, demonstrated in previous chapters, which it had prior to the First World War. The boys' attempts to challenge or support these new global political developments will demonstrate a marked shift in how politics were discussed in the two schools. This also opened up the political sphere to other new ideas. The political uncertainty between the end of the First World War and 1926 allowed the exploration of new ideologies and policies. Following the General Strike, the divide between communism, authoritarianism and democracy began to influence how boys viewed politics.

Britain did not undergo a radical constitutional change in the aftermath of the First World War. The extension of the franchise to all men and some women shifted political power away from the limited electorate that boys would have entered. Luebbert has noted in a study of countries which remained liberal democracies after the First World War that the reforms that did take place did not divert political power away from the middle classes,

and maintained the political status quo.[1] Even when left-wing parties formed governments during the interwar period, Labour in the UK and the Popular Front in France, they were dependent on support from non-socialists.[2] This is reinforced by Catterall's argument that left-wing reform movements focused primarily on property and economics rather than constitutional reform during the interwar period and Second World War.[3] During this period the broader range of political views explored within the public school helps reinforce this argument that there was an acceptance of some forms of non-traditional politics, at least when held by public school boys. McCarthy explored the growth in membership and activism of non-partisan political organisations, such as the League of Nations Union, during the interwar period.[4] This expansion of both political views and forms of activism in Britain during this period was reflected in the public schools examined by this study, and this chapter will explore how new organisations, as well as old ones, explored these new options.

The increase in political activity and citizenship created the potential for a new concept of what it meant to be a citizen. Low overstated the idea that a pre-war concept of active citizenship guided by reason and rational thinking had been diminished and internalised to self- rather than collective improvement.[5] Snape argued that the First World War reinforced the idea of citizen service, actively increasing involvement not as a response to new extreme ideologies that grew in the interwar period but a desire to build on newly

---

[1] Gregory M. Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy: Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe* (Oxford University Press on Demand, 1991), 191–94.

[2] Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy*, 193.

[3] Peter Catterall, '"Efficiency with Freedom"? Debates about the British Constitution in the Twentieth Century', in, Peter Catterall, Wolfram Kaiser, and Ulrike Walton-Jordan, *Reforming the Constitution: Debates in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Routledge, 2014), 32.

[4] McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics', *The Historical Journal*.

[5] Eugine Low, 'The Concept of Citizenship in Twentieth Century Britain: Analysing Contexts of Development', in, Catterall, Kaiser, and Walton-Jordan, *Reforming the Constitution*, 190.

won democratic rights gained from the First World War.[6] Grant supported this view that volunteerism and philanthropy continued during the interwar period. He argued that as the state intervened in more areas of welfare and education, philanthropists refocused their efforts into new causes.[7]

The increase in the size of the political sphere and the growth of ideologically different political parties, most notably in the form of fascism and socialism, spread directly into school discussions. Whilst these had not developed into fully-fledged movements within the public schools during this period, this chapter will show that these ideas gained increasing legitimacy. Left-wing policies, such as nationalisation and trade union rights, began to be more serious topics of discussion, even at Harrow. New ideas of authoritarianism and dictatorships also began to feature, replacing more traditional alternatives to democracy, primarily the powers of the monarch. Politics as a form of identity, such as through dress or labels, began to also feature in school debates and expressions of political views in a way that party politics had not in the pre-war period.

Activism was not the only way in which people participated in the new political landscape. New organisations that promoted citizenship were founded during this period, such as the Young Farmers Club in 1921, which aimed to develop both personal and local political forms of active citizenship.[8] Boys at both schools had shown an interest in their own and public education in relation to politics and the electoral process, whether through formal education, informal education or the press. Suffrage debates had focused on the suitability of the proposed extensions to the vote and, with universal male suffrage, boys became more engaged with the topic of public education and this

---

[6] Robert Snape, 'The New Leisure, Voluntarism and Social Reconstruction in Interwar Britain', *Contemporary British History* 29, no. 1 (2015): 54.

[7] Peter Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action in the First World War: Mobilizing Charity* (Routledge, 2014), 170–71, 179–81.

[8] Alice Kirke, 'Education in Interwar Rural England: Community, Schooling and Voluntarism' (PhD Thesis, University College London, 2017), 169–70.

interest increased as the size of the electorate grew. Both Low and Snape, despite their different views on what drove it, saw education as a serious focus of those developing the concept of interwar citizens.[9] Universal suffrage appeared to be accepted; however, this chapter will explore how boys saw their own training for political life as the model which others should follow. It will show that concerns over the ability of the new electors to form political judgements properly were present in both schools, as well as support for means to address these concerns.

The debating societies at both schools experienced a lower turnout than before the war: at Gresham's turnout as a percentage of the school fell while the society at Harrow fell into a period of irregular meetings and low turnout. This did not mean, however, that politics was no longer of interest to the boys at either school, and other ways of engaging with politics did emerge during this period. New societies were particularly successful at Gresham's where a League of Nations Union and a Sociological Society were both formed and quickly gained both a large and active membership. These new organisations, whilst not a direct challenge to the previous public school system of education for positions of power, demonstrate an acceptance that the enclosed environment of the school was no longer enough to foster a proper understanding of the political system and that boys had to learn about society outside the school microcosm in a more engaging and direct fashion.

1. Challenges to pre-war ideologies

Whilst these new engagements in both international and domestic politics raised challenges to the pre-war order, the widespread support for imperialism and the status quo did not disappear. Conversely, it now needed to be defended and promote itself. This active support was seen both on the national scale as well as in the schools. Efforts were made to reinforce imperialism at home and across the Empire through naval displays and exhibitions. These did not, however, pass without challenge as the

---

[9] Low, 'The Concept of Citizenship', 190

case of the 1924 Empire Exhibition shows. [10] There was not often a direct challenge to the Empire as a political entity but against specific aspects of how it functioned versus how it was portrayed.[11] The advent of universal suffrage and collapse of monarchies across Europe also made it less fantastical to consider a future without a British monarch, as well as challenge the traditions and pageantry that reinforced the power of the monarchy.

Empires

At both schools, there were debates that could be interpreted as challenging the legitimacy of British imperial power. Although no explicitly anti-imperial motions were carried, this was a significant change from the pre-war period, where boys judged other empires in comparison to the supposed ideal imperialism of Britain. Only one debate in 1926 at Gresham's directly called into question the belief in the justness of empire, with the motion that 'In the Opinion of this House the British Empire is an Impediment to the Peaceful Development of the World'.[12] The arguments focused primarily on economic development for indigenous people, challenging one of the key pillars of imperialism. B. H. Roger Smith, seconding the motion, made an anti-capitalist argument against the Empire. He compared it to 'a man who kept a large park, using only part of it himself, but allowing no one else to enter the rest', as well as highlighting atrocities such as the enforcement of the opium trade on China.[13] The motion was ultimately lost 38 votes to 72: the debate attracted a large attendance, exceeding the average number of voters (75). Not only was it a popular topic, but also one where a sizable minority of those who attended supported the idea that the Empire was essentially harmful, something unseen in the pre-war school.

---

[10] John C. Mitcham, 'The 1924 Empire Cruise and the Imagining of an Imperial Community', *Britain and the World* 12, no. 1 (2019): 67–71.

[11] Sarah Britton, '"Come and See the Empire by the All Red Route!": Anti-Imperialism and Exhibitions in Interwar Britain', *History Workshop Journal* 69, no. 1 (2010): 71–75.

[12] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 11, no. 9, February 1926, 165–66.

[13] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, February 1926, 165.

Decline was another lens through which to view the aftermath of the First World War and the rebalancing of global power. This was seen in a debate at Gresham's in 1922 on the motion that 'In the opinion of this House England is rapidly losing her position as foremost nation of the world'.[14] Both those for and against the motion viewed the USA as the rising power, whether they liked the idea or not. P. Rowntree's view that perhaps Britain had already lost its place as the 'foremost nation', suggests that he saw the First World War as having demonstrated the limits of British power. J. P. Price, who later pursued a consular and diplomatic career in the Empire, opposed the motion based on Britain's ability to make its voice heard amongst the 'Council of Nations', but also saw industrial unrest as a potential threat, at least to other nations, claiming that British workers were happy.[15] Similar to the outright suggestion that the British Empire was a hindrance to peace, this debate also saw the beginning of a realisation that the post-First World War period marked the early stages of the end of the British Empire. Whilst this was not a widespread view, it was now a valid one compared to pre-war debates.

The Empire's ability to act as it wished across the world through the navy was one of its primary means of displaying power. In the pre-war period, debates had focused on how other empires were conducting themselves, with suggestions of how Britain could intervene. Both Harrow and Gresham's saw debates in the interwar period that called into question its ability to do so. At Gresham's boys debated the motion that 'neither Britain nor any other nation is justified in trying to obtain command of the seas' on 12th February 1921.[16] This debate was held prior to the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-22, amid growing concerns over a naval arms race. The proposers, both of whom were boys, argued that an international solution to ensuring safe passage across the sea was the best option, with P. W. Harris, seconding, 'strongly denied that British justice was really any better than that of other nations'. This radical departure from the

---

[14] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 10, no. 2, December 1922, 27–28.

[15] 'Price, John Playfair', in *Who's Who and Who Was Who* (Oxford University Press, 1 December 2007).

[16] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 9, no. 4, April 1921, 70–72.

pre-war consensus directly contradicted a great many speakers in past debates, where British imperialism had been seen as just, while others' empires had not. The idea that Britain should not try to dominate global order by itself, regardless of whether it was just or not, reflects growing support at Gresham's for international co-operation. This will be seen later in this chapter with the school's enthusiastic participation in the League of Nation Union. At Harrow, a debate was held in December 1919 on the motion 'That intervention, armed or financial, in Russia, on the part of Great Britain, is undesirable'.[17] Whilst most of the debate focused around the legitimacy of various factions vying for control of the Russian government, there were a few key features that also mark this as a question of imperial power. For one speaker not intervening was seen as a 'stain upon our honour'. Another saw nothing that Britain could do to alleviate the conflict, and the viability of a naval blockade was discussed. Both these debates, while lost by large margins, reveal a sudden shift away from a position of strength to one of uncertainty. This concern is particularly notable in boys' doubts in Britain's ability to project its power through the navy. More importantly, the boys' discussion demonstrated that they were no longer confident that Britain had an automatic right to intervene.

Collectively these debates over the potential limits of British power in the aftermath of the First World War are in stark contrast to those that followed the Second Boer War. Whilst the Second Boer War shook confidence in imperial power, there was no real challenge to the belief that it could or should be maintained. In discussions on other empires the criticism was outward, finding flaws in other imperial powers' methods whilst praising British ones. In these interwar debates, British dominance was no longer justified or assured, and the flaws of the British Empire were far more explicitly stated. This represents a seismic shift in global political views at both schools, and whilst the majority did not hold these views, their presence is significant.

---

[17] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 32, no. 8, December 1919, 120.

Monarchy

Imperial power was not the only feature of politics to suddenly be challenged. Monarchy, no longer the standard form of government across the world, was now liable to be called into question. Republicanism was a fringe movement, even during the hight of industrial agitation during the First World War, and never posed a direct threat to the monarchy.[18] Labour's, and after 1918 the Liberals', emphasis on economic and social, rather than constitutional reform resulted in republican voices being side-lined.[19] At Harrow, however, two debates in 1920 questioned the status and powers of monarchs. First, the boys discussed the viability of putting the Kaiser on trial, with those in favour suggesting that a fair jury of English men could be found.[20] This put the Kaiser as a civil appointee and peer of, at least in principle, ordinary men rather than a divinely appointed natural leader. The motion was defeated, but only by one vote, 24 to 25. This Cromwellian debate demonstrated that a reasonable number of Harrovians saw it as possible to hold a monarch to account in a court of law. Secondly, Harrovians debated the private life of the Prince of Wales with the motion that 'the Prince of Wales may marry anyone he liked' was carried by a large majority on 23rd October.[21] The Prince, being the heir apparent yet unmarried, would have been expected to have begun securing the line of succession. Whether Harrovians had any knowledge of his vigorous social life was not revealed in the debate. Whilst the debate was dominated by the back and forth between the proposers and opposers, various options were put forward. Those in favour suggested that the people trusted and loved the prince, and so he should be allowed this freedom. Those opposed put forward plans to limit his choice to a select few brides from the aristocracy. Those proposing countered that this would not set a new precedent. However, the willingness to discuss the freedoms versus duties of

---

[18] Mark Hayman, 'Labour and the Monarchy: Patriotism and Republicanism during the Great War', *First World War Studies* 5, no. 2 (2014): 173–76.

[19] Wolfram Kaiser, 'The Decline and Rise of Radicalism: Political Parties and Reform in the Twentieth Century', in, Catterall, Kaiser, and Walton-Jordan, *Reforming the Constitution*, 57–59.

[20] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 33, no. 2, March 1920, 23.

[21] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 33, no. 7, November 1920, 95.

royalty indicate boys' views of the monarchy were changing. The debate of Prince Edward's private life in particular demonstrated that a monarch's power increasingly relied on consent rather than divine right.

2. New societies

Following the First World War, the certainty seen in pre-war debates for both the legitimacy and practicality of imperial authority was severely reduced. All the empires of the Central Powers were dismantled, and monarchies, except Bulgaria, were either overthrown or removed. Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia all gained independence in Europe whilst states in the Caucasus experienced mixed but short-lived independence. Russia had overthrown the monarchy and western liberal democracy, and Finland, following independence and a brief experiment with a monarchy, opted for a republic. Greece, nominally part of the Entente, had deposed a monarch, appointed a new one, restored the previous one by referendum in 1920 and then saw him abdicate in favour of his son two years later. China experienced further collapse and the final removal of the Emperor and increasing conflicts between warlords, nationalists and communists. The end of monarchies as the standard form of government and their replacement by republics or dictatorships challenged previous concepts of a government's legitimacy. Even Britain and France, the victors of the war, were unable to impose their intended peace terms. The planned division of the Middle East as imperial possessions under the Skyes-Picot Agreement was reduced to mandates under the League of Nations system. With partition, Britain lost direct rule over most of Ireland. The changing political landscape was reflected in new forms of associational culture. At Gresham's, boys were quick to form new societies to broaden their understanding of the rapidly changing interwar world. How these new societies, the League of Nation Union and the Sociological Society, engaged with domestic and international issues both as concrete issues and more abstract concepts is explored in this section.

The League of Nations Union

In place of this traditional imperialism, a new international policy of national self-determination was being advanced. This was led primarily by President Woodrow Wilson of the newly confirmed superpower of the United States. Empires were divided up along ethnic and religious lines, although there were significant minorities in some parts of the newly formed countries. The expansion of the former imperial powers revealed the fragility of these new nation-states.[22] New states were formed as republics or democracies rather than absolute monarchies and became part of a new formalised international diplomacy under the League of Nations. Pederson has convincingly argued that the League was a continuation of the previous system of great powers and it represented another 'epoch in colonial history'.[23] McCarthy's exploration of the League of Nations Union's education activities highlights a broad range of educational efforts to spread the League's message to schools particularly the efforts to incorporate the Union's activities into existing displays of imperialism, such as through Empire Day, reinforcing the supplementary rather than conflicting relationship between the League and Empire.[24] The League did not directly challenge imperialism of the great powers on the Entente side; this analysis does not, however, factor in how the new order made it possible to envision an alternative to traditional imperial power. This new global political system had the potential to overhaul international relations, and boys began to raise questions about the future of the remaining imperial powers.

Historians' research on the League of Nations Union's activities at the school level has focused on the material and activities organised by the Union, teachers and Local Educational Authorities; we have learned little about pupils' opinions and engagement.

---

[22] Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Phoenix, 1998), 41–45; Oliver Zimmer, 'Nationalism in Europe, 1918-1945', in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, ed. John Breuilly, 21 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 414–34.

[23] Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 3–4.

[24] McCarthy, *British People and the League of Nations*, 103–25.

This has been rectified in part by Wright, who shows that a significant problem that League branches faced within schools was from participation, whether a lack of interest, conflicts in the timetable or, conversely, overdependence on a few committed, key pupils who, when they left school, left their branch without leadership.[25] This section will continue to address this imbalance by exploring pupils' opinions of the League at both schools as well as boys' involvement with Union activities.

Within the public schools in this study, the response to his new situation was varied. Representatives from the League of Nations Union, the society set up to promote the League of Nations and lobby domestically for greater political involvement by the government, visited both Gresham's and Harrow to promote the League. The activities of the League of Nations Union at Gresham's demonstrate that there was far more behind support for the League than the single issue of world peace. The different level of engagement with the League of Nations and the Union demonstrates two distinct responses to the new global order.

Harrow was quick to have a debate on the League, predating its foundation with the motion 'that a League of Nations is both desirable and practicable' on 12th October 1918, which was defeated 'by a large majority'.[26] Boys both proposed and opposed the motion, both as primary and secondary speakers. However, staff dominated the discussion from the floor. Major Freeborn, a staff member and newly appointed housemaster, saw war as a way of ensuring the masculinity of a nation, despite the destruction of the First World War. The debate was closed by a boy, however, who put forward what was to become the common response of Harrow that 'the League may threaten his Empire'. This debate did not seem to resolve the situation entirely, however, as on 22nd February 1919 J. H. Pratt, a Liberal MP, gave a lecture on the League.[27] The headmaster in welcoming the speaker noted that the debating society

---

[25] Wright, 'Creating Liberal-Internationalist World Citizens', *Paedagogica Historica*, 14–17.

[26] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 31, no. 7, December 1918, 123–24.

[27] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 32, no. 2, April 1919, 14–15.

had rejected the idea ‘for no apparent reason’ other than practical considerations. Pratt appeared to recognise his audience’s political tendencies by giving an imperial example of the relationship between the British Empire and the United States, with particular reference to the US-Canadian border. He concluded by arguing that the British Empire was the model which the League of Nations had copied. The headmaster’s conclusion, which the reporter says was the view of the majority of the school, that ‘C’est magnifique, mais ce n’est pas la guerre’ (it is beautiful, but it is not war), suggests that the League was seen, in the words of the debating society, as desirable but not practicable. Harrow remained hostile to the League of Nations, with a book review in 1924 of a collection of the Australian Prime Minister’s speeches. The reviews praised the Prime Minister’s support of the Empire over what the writer described as the League’s ‘nebulous internationalism of the intellectual Bolshevik’.[28] The pro-imperial, conservative attitude within the school would explain the rejection of the League on practical terms, as well as the distinct preference for the maintenance and strengthening of the British Empire. Whilst this did not amount to a rejection of pre-war imperialist views seen in previous chapters it does demonstrate a shift from an unshakable belief in the immutability of the Empire to a need to set forward its strengths, rather than just assuming that it was the only successful international system.

At Gresham’s, the response to the establishment of the League of Nations was far more favourable. An initial debate on 1st March 1919 with the motion that ‘the League of Nations is a snare and a delusion’ was proposed by Reverend Field as an excellent idea too great for human minds, similar to Harrow’s concept of desirable but not practicable, but was lost 13 votes to 22.[29] The discussion focused on concerns that the USA stood to gain the most, the potential of Germany joining the League and the practicalities the League itself. In the following year, boys heard a lecture from C. H. Roberts, a member of the committee of the League of Nations Union, on 14th November

---

[28] ‘What Every Briton Ought to Know’, *Harrovian*, 37, no. 2, April 1924, 24.

[29] ‘Debating Society’, *Gresham*, 8, no. 4, April 1919, 78–79.

1920.[30] The headmaster, Mr J. R. Eccles, opened the lecture by saying he had originally hoped to have Lord Cecil, a prominent pro-League member of the government and significant figure in the Union, address the boys, and concluded by stating his hopes of setting up a League of Nations Union branch at the school. In the following month, the *Gresham* printed both a criticism and a defence of the League.[31] The boys did not have a chance to reflect on these pieces, however as the same issue reported that they had formed a branch of the Union.[32] On the foundation of the school branch, 118 pupils were paid-up members (142 including staff). With the total number of pupils at 248, this represents 48% of the school.[33] Four of the seven officers of the society, including the position of secretary, were filled by boys. This widespread participation undoubtedly shows significant support for the League amongst boys and staff at Gresham's, and this support was seen in the level of activity during the early years of the League. Most importantly, this was active membership rather than paying into a fund, which was a common criticism of the school missions highlighted by Nigel Scotland.[34]

Whilst guest lecturers were a regular feature of the Gresham's branch of the League of Nations Union's activities, there were three types of activities which demonstrate much greater pupil involvement: symposiums, exhibitions and tours. The symposiums demonstrate perhaps the greatest level of pupil involvement. The first took place on the 21st February 1925, when 'a rather different type of meeting was held' at which 'Three members of the Branch opened discussions' focusing primarily on the financial issues of the League.[35] Three sixth-formers set up this symposium, one of whom, Henry Hodson, would later become a prominent imperial federalist, journal and newspaper editor, and a

---

[30] 'Lectures', *Gresham*, December 1920, 22.

[31] 'A conservative criticism of the League' and 'A Reply to criticism', *Gresham*, December 1920, 23–26.

[32] 'League of Nations Union', *Gresham*, December 1920, 26.

[33] Percentages based on school numbers recorded in Douglas and Linnell, *Gresham's School History and Register*, 355.

[34] Scotland, *Squires in the Slums*, 129–30.

[35] 'League of Nations Union', *Gresham*, 11, no. 5, June 1925, 88.

negotiator during the Indian independence movement.[36] The three pieces of research that the boys produced were well received by the society, and the event was considered successful enough that it inspired further symposiums such as on the ‘Mosul Question’ and ‘Disarmament’.[37] By conducting research and leading discussion, rather than just commenting on it, boys were demonstrating a much greater interest in the work of the League of Nations than by attending lectures. Exhibitions, held on speech days, were another opportunity for boys to actively participate in the L.N.U., as well as engage other boys and parents. Less information is available on these, other than an overview of the mix of posters and displays that could be seen in the schools on various occasions, such as speech days. Their purpose in displaying the educational benefits of membership of the League of Nations Union was, however, remarked upon by Sir Charles Trevelyan, president of the Board of Education, who was the prize-giver at speech day in 1924. He described them, along with other associational cultures, as opportunities for windows to ‘be opened in the mind’.[38] As well as reinforcing the importance of associational culture’s educational benefits, it also demonstrates how quickly and easily the League of Nations Union had become part of the school’s associational culture.

The expeditions which contributed so heavily to the exhibitions were conducted during the summers of 1923-6. Table 6 provides a brief overview of the details of the trips reported in the *Gresham*, showing the countries visited as well as what sort of activities were reported to have taken place.[39]

---

[36] Robert Wade-Gery, ‘Hodson, Henry Vincent [Harry] (1906–1999), Journalist’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 25 June 2006).

[37] ‘League of Nations Union’, *Gresham*, 11, no. 8, December 1925, 144–45; ‘League of Nations Union’, *Gresham*, 12, no. 08, December 1927, 134–35.

[38] ‘League of Nations Union’ and ‘Speech Day’, *Gresham*, 10, no. 12, July 1924, 99, 182.

[39] ‘League of Nations Union Expedition to Central Europe’, *Gresham*, 10, no. 7, October 1923, 103–5; ‘League of Nations Union Tour in Europe’, *Gresham*, 11, no. 1, October 1924, 3–5; ‘League of Nations Union Tour in Italy’, *Gresham*, 11, no. 7, October 1925, 118–20; ‘League of Nations Union Tour in France’, *Gresham*, 12, no. 1, October 1926, 4–7.

Table 7: Gresham's League of Nations Union Trips

Year	Trip Title	Countries	Tourist Activities	Political Activities
1923	L.N.U. Expedition to Central Europe	Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria	Yes	Yes
1924	L.N.U. Tour in Europe	France, Andorra	Yes	No
1925	L.N.U. Tour in Italy	Italy	Yes	Yes
1926	L.N.U. Tour in France	France	Yes	No

Information taken from the *Gresham* 10, 07 (October 1923), 103-105; 11, 01 (October 1924), 3-5; 11, 07 (October 1925) 118-120; and 12, 01 (October 1926), 4-7.

All four trips saw some tourist activity, usually exploring in nature or cities whilst only two had distinctly political elements. The first saw the expedition pass through a range of countries facing political upheaval. The *Gresham* reporter described how the boys on tour visited 'Communistic Lands Settlements' in Vienna whilst in Germany they experienced the currency problems. The reporter noted the continued antagonism between France and Germany, particularly when the train was stopped in the 'silent foundries and deserted factories' of the Ruhr, and the train inspected by French troops who only searched the German passengers.[40] In both Germany and Austria the reporter claims the tour group found intense hatred of the French whilst members of the group were treated courteously. The reporter goes on to contrast the role of the League in reconstruction. He described Vienna and Austria 'rising from decay' while Germany, suffering from exclusion from the League, faced factory closures and anarchy.

In Italy, the expedition encountered both of the newly significant ideologies of the interwar period, fascism and communism. Firstly they encountered a group of Communists in Brescia, described as 'rather an evil band', and that the few Fascists among them were 'Per Forca' (for the gallows), and despite requests from the boys to

[40] 'League of Nations Union Expedition to Central Europe', *Gresham*, October 1923, 103–5.

sing the Fascist Anthem, would only perform parodies of it.[41] Later in their trip whilst in Pisogne, they met the president of the local fascist committee, and over the next two days were shown around the town, visited factories and discussed politics with their impromptu tour guide.[42] The report claims that 'few political issues were left untouched', and that boys received tours of two factories when they raised questions over labour conditions under fascism. Whilst no report is given as to what they saw in these factories, this was not dissimilar to the activities of the Sociological Society at Gresham's discussed in the next section. A final comment from the reporter quotes G. K. Chesterton's description of despotism in *The Everlasting Man* as 'democracy in decline', arguing that fascism is despotism and 'only half a democracy', but it was not in decline. However, the reporter also expressed hopes that the nationalism of fascist Italy would broaden into a more internationalist outlook. Even when there was not an explicitly political element, it is clear that personal interactions resulted in political discussions, such as with 'Pierre, the Moat-Keeper of Villefranche, who held views on the poverty of the poor'.[43]

Tourist activities varied between urban and rural excursions. Whilst there was a wide array of physical activity through walking and mountaineering, there was no mention of sports being played with locals which some might expect from a group of public school tourists. The only instance of competitive activity came from a walking choral competition with a group of Italian students encountered on a hike.[44] Whilst these expeditions feature tourism, there are frequent references to how boys met with local people and learned more about them as individuals rather than a foreign nation-state. This understanding of other peoples, a key aim of the League of Nations Union, reinforces the political aspect of these tours: to break down the animosity between nations and build co-operation, and the conclusion of the report from the final trip that

---

[41] 'League of Nations Union Tour in Italy', *Gresham*, October 1925, 119.

[42] 'League of Nations Union Tour in Italy', *Gresham*, October 1925, 120.

[43] 'League of Nations Union Tour in Europe', *Gresham*, October 1924, 5.

[44] 'League of Nations Union Tour in Italy', *Gresham*, October 1925, 120.

'We always learn a great deal about ourselves, and even more about the people of another country than ours' suggest that the political aims of the League of Nations Union were being fulfilled, at least in part, through these expeditions.[45]

Two boys from Gresham's provide some insight into the changed international outlook within the school that the League and its Union could bring about. The first was F. G. Berthoud, who left the school in 1917 to join the army, only to be injured in early 1918 and was studying modern languages at St. John's College, Oxford by March 1918. By October 1922 he held a temporary post as a translator for the Secretariat of the League, a position the school magazine hoped would become permanent, which it did in 1923.[46] Whilst his views in school are unclear due to limited reports in the magazine during wartime, he was an active member of the debating society, the English literature society, and the library committee. His position with the League of Nations, however, enabled him to contribute an extensive article to the school magazine about his experience at the General Assembly.[47] Amongst the description of the various activities and political machinations at the Assembly, the description of a few significant figures stand out. However, the figures he focuses on differs from what might be expected. The first two people mentioned are Professor Murray from Australia, followed by Dr Fridtjof Nansen of Norway, both white, western Europeans and given praise for their intellect and character. Berthoud next noted that 'The black races are well represented' describing the Haitian delegate, Dantes Bellegarde, as an excellent orator. Berthoud even praised his criticism of the South African High Commissioner's policy towards native people in mandated South West Africa. He followed this with praise for the female delegate from Romania, Elena Vacarescu's 'lyrical rhapsody'. His penultimate description, perhaps unsurprising for a public school boy, was that 'First-class cricket is represented' by Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, with a final description of the secretary of the Indian delegation, C. B. Fry, another famous cricketer. This emphasis on non-white,

---

[45] 'League of Nations Union Tour in France', *Gresham*, October 1926, 7.

[46] 'O.G. News', *Gresham*, 10, no. 1, October 1922, 12; 'O.G. News', *Gresham*, 10, no. 8, December 1923, 133.

[47] 'League of Nations', *Gresham*, December 1922, 19–21.

western-European men certainly reflects a change in what would have been expected prior to the First World War. In particular, praise for a speech that was critical of the British Empire would have been highly unlikely before the Frist World War. It is worth noting, however, that there was still the class element that had allowed certain women to be seen as acceptable voters during the debates on suffrage, as well as the non-white people described here as being prominent figures in their national and international society.

A similar trend can be seen in extracts of letters printed in the *Gresham* from G. A. C. Field during his time working as an inspector of salt revenues in China. He was the son of Reverend Field, the pro-imperialist and pro-female suffrage staff member who spoke at a great number of debates, even proposing the motion that dismissed the idea of the League of Nations. G. A. C. Field, in contrast to his father, was a supporter of the League, being a founding member of the League of Nations Union at Gresham's and serving as the first officer for the day boys.[48] During his time in China he wrote a letter detailing his early experiences.[49] His letter featured some of the language that would be expected from an imperial agent: 'vilest-looking native quarters', 'the first thing vaguely resembling anything European'. Field went on to write in a less imperialistic tone, accepted the suggestion from a Chinese person to use the local, Chinese travel agency and even praised Chinese culture, stating that the 'ancient Chinese houses' are superior to western ones, and that the stories told in England about China and its people did not reflect the reality of life there. Most notable of these letters is a dramatic reversal on race from the pre-War period, particularly given the level of debate that 'Yellow Peril' inspired. In the first letter what starts out like a bad joke where his three companions on a train were 'an American, and Italian and a perfectly good Chinese!' the expected racial rankings were reversed: the Chinese person had lived in America and had spent the last three years at Oxford and was 'altogether a very decent chap'; meanwhile the Italian talked a little and the American could only occasionally be

---

[48] 'League of Nations Union', *Gresham*, December 1920, 26.

[49] 'A Letter from China', *Gresham*, October 1925, 131–33.

understood. This complete reversal of the standard racial hierarchy of the period, along with the emphasis on class status demonstrates at least some variance in racial attitudes. However, it also reflects Cannadine's arguments in *Ornamentalism* on class and race, where social status could mitigate racial prejudices, but on a more intimate and personal level of travelling companions.[50]

Both these former pupils' correspondence with the school reflected the tone of the conclusion from the final League of Nations Union tour: that national and racial stereotypes should not be applied and that meaningful connection between individuals was a positive way to build international relationships and understanding. This can also be seen in activities in universities during a similar period, such as with student relief, which aimed to help whilst maintaining neutrality, although this did cause some heated debate over aid to Germany.[51] This contrasts radically to the dehumanising language seen in chapter four in the diary extracts from the Siege of the Legations published in the *Harrovian* or in chapter five with the description of the Arab population at Gresham's in debates and letters from the First World War and suggests that perhaps a more individual approach to passing judgement on people had emerged.

The Sociological Society

The readjustment to the new political climate that public school boys would need preparing for during the interwar period required a more detailed education in domestic social, economic and political issues as well as international ones. At Harrow this would not take place until the formation of the '27 Club in 1927, a society specifically dedicated to regularly hosting lecturers who were experts in their field; however, that falls outside of the scope of this chapter and will be examined later. At Gresham's the efforts to explore issues facing wider society began sooner and tended towards social and economic issues rather than politics directly.

---

[50] David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism : How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2001).

[51] Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering*, 52–56.

In order to study the ‘Social, Political and Economic Questions of the day’, boys at Gresham’s formed a Sociological Society in January 1921.[52] It began by seeking literature from various political groups and, helping define the changing political landscape, received material from ‘Socialists’ and ‘reactionaries’. The change from politics being between the Liberal and Conservative parties to ideological groupings demonstrates how the uncertainty of post-First World War politics had opened up new spaces for political ideas that were explicitly different from the pre-war status quo. The society saw papers and lectures from staff, pupils and guest speakers, such as from French teacher and self-avowed Bolshevik A. S. Treves who gave a lecture on the Co-operative movement, of which he was president of the branch in a nearby town.[53] External influences and movements can be seen in a paper by a boy, G. A. Thesiger, who presented a proto-Nazi paper on a conspiracy of Jewish people, Freemasons and Marxists being ‘A Cause of World Unrest’ on 26th June 1921, a year after *The Times* translated the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.[54] Both these examples demonstrate a greater appeal to outside information than seen in guest lectures seen in the pre-War period, as well as a deeper level of political and research involvement than seen in debating societies.

The Sociological Society was not confined to the school, however. It undertook regular, and occasionally repeat trips to some workplaces, primarily within Norfolk, shown in the table 8. For three trips a date was not given; however, a reasonable approximation has been given from the date of other trips and the date of publication of the report in the magazine. The trips were predominantly to the county capital of Norwich. Repeat trips were often made, allowing new members of the society to reach different conclusions from the same place.

---

[52] ‘Sociological Society’, *Gresham*, February 1921, 54.

[53] ‘Sociological Society’, *Gresham*, October 1923, 110.

[54] ‘Sociological Society’, *Gresham*, 9, no. 6, July 1921, 103.

Table 8: Gresham's Sociological Society Trips, 1921-26

Date	**Destination**	**Type Of Destination**	**Town/City**	**County**
No date given c. 11/1921	Colman's Mustard Factory	Food production	Norwich	Norfolk
09/11/1921	Bolton and Paul's	Engineering	Norwich	Norfolk
08/02/1922	Caley's Chocolate and Cracker Works	Food production	Norwich	Norfolk
22/03/1922	Howlett and White's	Footwear factory	Norwich	Norfolk
22/03/1922	Great Eastern Railway Loco Works	Railway works	Norwich	Norfolk
13/06/1922	Watt's Naval Training School	School	North Elmham	Norfolk
25/10/1922	Mann Egerton	Motor works	Norwich	Norfolk
07/02/1923	Sexton and Everard's	Footwear factory	Norwich	Norfolk
No date given, c. 02/1923	Bullard's Brewery	Brewery	Norwich	Norfolk
No date given c. 06/1923	Colman's Mustard Factory	Food production	Norwich	Norfolk
31/10/1923	Eastern Daily Press	Newspaper office	Norwich	Norfolk
13/02/1924	Boulton and Paul's	Engineering	Norwich	Norfolk
29/10/1924	Hobbies*	Models and toy factory	Dereham	Norfolk
08/02/1925	Caley's Chocolate and Cracker Works	Food production	Norwich	Norfolk
04/06/1925	Great Eastern Railway Loco Works	Railway works	Norwich	Norfolk
28/10/1925	Colman's Wincarnis	Brewery	Norwich	Norfolk
22/12/1925	Talbot House	Mission	East London	London
10/02/1926	Steward and Patterson's	Brewery	Norwich	Norfolk
10/02/1926	Cardboard Box Factory	Manufacturing	Norwich	Norfolk
10/02/1926	Bull Close Council School	School	Norwich	Norfolk
10/06/1926	Colman's Mustard Factory	Food production	Norwich	Norfolk

Information taken from the *Gresham* 9, 8 (December 1921), 129; 9, 9 (February 1922), 143; 9, 10 (April 1922), 157-8; 9, 12 (July 1922), 184-5; 10, 2 (December 1922), 30; 10, 3 (February 1923), 41; 10, 7 (October 1923), 11; 10, 8 (December 1923), 129; 10, 10 (April 1924), 163; 11, 2 (December 1924), 26; 11, 4 (April 1925), 70-1; 11, 6 (July 1925), 110-11; 11, 8 (December 1925), 145; 11, 10 (April 1926), 185-6; and 11, 12 (July 1926), 226.

* Name of toy shop and factory

Trips were arranged and agreed to by owners and managers of the various businesses and included tours of the workplace and explanations of how the business operated. Most reports described the manufacturing process or business. Many reports went into greater sociological detail, however. Boys noted gender divisions in the labour force, working conditions, and pay. Boys considered alternative tertiary education at Mann Egerton's motor works, with the reporter described a three-year 'engineering course instead of a 'Varsity career'.[55] Criticisms were made of working conditions and business practices. At Sexton and Everard's boot factory the pay and conditions were described as good, but the work tedious and visibly depressing, whilst boys accused Howlett and White's factory of being 'perilously near overcrowding'.[56] Through these trips, boys were receiving a more rounded experience of the workplace. They did not approach the businesses from a managerial perspective but considered the workers' experience alongside the industrial methods. Their self-referential term of 'members' further enhanced their separation from both workers and management. They do not describe themselves as boys on a school trip but instead are part of an exclusive society of outside observers. Their interest is in both the practical side of the business as well as the workers' conditions.

The workers' gender and the division of labour was a topic which featured in seven of the twenty-one reports. Boys noted this on the first trip, where at Colman's mustard factory 'The majority of the workers are girls – a product of the war' and that they are more efficient and do all but the heaviest of the work.[57] This demonstrates two opinions of boys on women in the workforce: first, and most unsurprisingly, that the expectation that work was only open to young, unmarried women. Secondly, that women were now a permanent and beneficial part of the labour force, but conversely that there were still

---

[55] 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, December 1922, 30.

[56] 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, 9, no. 10, April 1922, 157; 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, 10, no. 3, February 1923, 41.

[57] 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, February 1921, 129.

limits on the work available to them. After the first trip, boys saw the presence of women in the workforce as normal. The reports that followed that mentioned the role of women in the workforce varied between using girls four times and women twice.[58] The division of language, where the work was for women, but workers were girls, suggests boys may have been observing the age of the workforce as well as the gender. The presence of a large, young, female workforce aligns with research by Scott: that industries preferred low-skilled juvenile workers who were lower paid and less likely to be unionised.[59] The reports' comments appear to reflect Scott's observations that this was a young workforce. They did not, however, comment on any union activity, or the lack of it.

These expeditions certainly gave the boys who attended a better experience of their wider society and gave context to debates and lectures on factory work and industrial life. The opportunity to actively criticise or praise employment and work practices created greater political engagement. This is seen in the debates from the same period. The discussion on the role of women in the workplace gives a particularly clear example of how boys were engaging with contemporary discussions on labour and conditions from observation rather than in abstract terms. This engagement was a significant shift from the pre-war missions which, whilst having similar aims, appeared to garner little more attention than the subscription fees.

3. New Politics

As well as the new societies that formed, other political changes of the interwar period were evident in the debates held at both schools during this period. The advent of the

---

[58] 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, 9, no. 9, February 1922, 143; 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, April 1922, 157; 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, February 1923, 41; 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, 11, no. 4, April 1925, 70–71; 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, 11, no. 10, April 1926, 186; 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, 11, no. 12, July 1926, 226.

[59] Peter Scott, 'Women, Other "Fresh" Workers, and the New Manufacturing Workforce of Interwar Britain', *International Review of Social History* 45, no. 3 (2000): 473–74.

Soviet Union and the rise of the Labour party led boys at both schools to consider the role of organised labour and socialism. This applied to both traditional parliamentary politics as well as wider political activism. Advancements in public education, changing labour conditions and relations and universal suffrage led to much greater interest in both public schooling and provision for education. The end of the European monarchies also created a new framework for autocratic government, with secular authoritarian regimes forming in new states the debates around alternatives to democracy also changed.

The rise of the left

The interwar period saw significant political upheaval, with the end of Liberal governments and the rise of the Labour party creating a new political divide between laissez-faire and state-controlled economies. The first Labour government in 1924 was, unsurprisingly, a focus point for discussing the viability of this 'new' party. Political attitudes within both Gresham's and Harrow appeared to soften towards left-wing politics during this period, although to differing degrees.

At both schools, the first Labour government was certainly seen as a significant event. Labour's rise to prominence following the First World War, first replacing the Liberals as the official opposition, then forming a government, generated significant interest amongst boys. Gresham's held a debate on 27th March 1920 with the motion that 'This House considers the time is now ripe for a Labour Government', and the motion was carried by a narrow 72 to 64 votes, the third-highest turnout of this period.[60] Seconding the motion, J. B. Holmes took a radical view that 'The Labour Party would build up a new world and he would welcome the downfall of the old'. Others both in favour and opposed to a Labour government were less extreme, describing a moderate but inexperienced party, with one boy urging support for the Labour party as a preventative measure against Bolshevism, of which he was 'mortally afraid'. In a rare expression of

---

[60] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 8, no. 11, June 1920, 206–8.

his personal opinion, the writer of the report of the debate in the *Gresham* summarised the mover's closing remarks as an argument to give Labour a chance 'on the principle of throwing one's self off a roof to try its effect'. This highlights the depth of feeling to this debate, as well as reinforcing some of the comments during the debate that Labour did not have enough press support (both nationally and within the school) to win an election. The Labour government's narrow margin of support at Gresham's was lost in the aftermath of the 1924 election, however. On 8th November the motion 'in the opinion of this House the Conservative Party will justify the confidence placed in it by the electorate' was won by 120 votes to 36, the second-highest turnout of the period.[61] There was still sympathy with Labour's aims amongst both staff and pupils, but Labour as a government was seen as ineffective by most, although those opposed to the motion highlighted its successes despite lacking a majority. In both these debates the Labour Party was perceived as a moderate force rather than a revolutionary one, and widespread approval of its aims, if not its effectiveness, show that left-wing economic ideas had support amongst boys at Gresham's.

After the formation of the Labour government Harrovians debated the motion 'That this House views with approval the advent of a Labour Government into power', on the 2nd February 1924, which was defeated by 'a large majority'.[62] Not much of the speeches were reported, other than 'general amusement' as the opposition criticised the concept of the Capital Levy. One particular feature of note, however, is the beginning of the attachment of a specific uniform to a political party when the seconder, 'Federspiel, who did not deign to wear the tail coat, which custom would expect on such an occasion, but appeared in a bright red shirt'. By donning the garb of a revolutionary, even satirically, Federspiel demonstrated the beginnings of a much deeper connection to a political ideology than seen in pre-war politics. Rather than being a divide on an issue or party, this action shows that politics was becoming recognised as a more personal commitment to a cause.

---

[61] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 11, no. 2, December 1924, 23–25.

[62] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 37, no. 1, February 1924, 4–5.

Both schools debated specific aspects of Labour policy and left-wing ideas. Harrovians and Greshamians discussed the role of trade unions and strikes. At Harrow on 18th October 1919, the motion 'That trade unions should be suppressed' was lost 'by a large majority'.[63] Even given the conservative-leanings of the school, the motion was rather extreme, and boys spoke in favour of trade unions as a moderating force and beneficial to workplace relations. The reporter described the motion as 'evidently absurd' and 'so hopeless a case'. Whilst the idea of outright suppression of trade unionism by the twentieth century was certainly a reactionary one, the support of trade unions shown by some of the boys reflects a significant shift at Harrow towards the acknowledgement of working-class political power. Discussion of unions' role in both creating and suppressing industrial unrest also demonstrates how the social aspect of economics and the workplace were now more strongly linked with politics by boys.

Greshamians debated the legitimacy of striking with the motion 'That this House is strongly opposed to the Policy of Direct Action' on 22nd November 1919, which was lost 35 votes to 23.[64] Boys speaking against the motion took radical positions, one accusing those in favour of being 'afraid of losing their wealth, position and privileges' and declaring that 'Parliament was not representative of the country'. Another stated 'that it was the right of every citizen to rise in armed revolt against oppressive rule' and concluded that 'Labour alone knew how to govern'. The debate, having turned to focus on whether reform was possible through Parliament, was reframed by the secretary, G. A. Thesiger. He described himself as a Labour supporter, and argued that the carrying of the motion would be a declaration of faith in the parliamentary system, although with the caveat that Parliament was 'nothing less than a five years' tyranny'. Events in Russia featured heavily throughout debates, and opposition to the British position on the Civil War was referenced as a cause for direct action. The lengthy debate highlighted that radical views were possible and permitted. More importantly, there were clear signs

---

[63] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 32, no. 6, November 1919, 95–96.

[64] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 8, no. 8, December 1919, 156–61.

that alternatives to parliamentary procedure and democracy were now being considered, even if only by a few, at Gresham's.

Less radical discussions were held at both schools as well. At Harrow, the idea of nationalising the railways was debated in 1919.[65] Whilst this was not a new subject to the debating society, the debate focused far more on efficiency and working conditions than pre-war debates, which had concentrated on the military benefits. After a 'lively debate' the motion was defeated by a small majority. However, it reflected changing views on both the aims and practice of nationalisation. At Gresham's the more philosophical motion that 'it is impossible under modern conditions for a man to acquire wealth honestly' was debated in 1924, and was defeated 6 votes to 30.[66] Neither of these motions saw particularly radical views put forward. However, both saw boys question the viability of capitalism. Moreover, these debates are notable in that they do not long for an imagined past often seen in pre-war debates on the decline or degeneracy of modern life. Instead, boys were now looking for alternatives for a better future. The impact of the rise of Labour is clear from how left-wing ideas were now a feature of debates at both schools, even if they did not garner widespread or consistent support.

Secular authoritarianism

The growth of non-monarchist authoritarian regimes in Europe prompted some debate over the future of democracy. Before the First World War the topic of authoritarian power had usually been debated through questioning heredity power and its limits rather than power held by the state itself. Debates at Harrow featured Charles I in 1901 and 1903, whether tyrannicide was justified in 1907, and the responsibility of the Stuarts for their downfall in 1911.[67] At Gresham's, the questions were framed as monarchy

---

[65] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, April 1919, 19.

[66] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1924, 23.

[67] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 14, no. 9, December 1901, 126; 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 16, no. 9, December 1903, 122–23; *Harrovian*, 20, no. 1, February 1907, 9–10; 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, November 1911, 120–21.

being preferable to republicanism in 1903, whether the French Revolution was justified in 1907, the abolition of hereditary peers in the House of Lords in 1909, and whether democracy was a bad form of government compared to an aristocracy in 1913.[68] This framing of debates on absolute power changed after the First World War. Harrow, perhaps conscious of the rapid fall of monarchies, limited itself to the relatively minor topic of the personal life of the monarch as discussed above.

At Gresham's, challenges to democracy were raised twice. First, the motion 'That, in the opinion of this House in the minority of cases the majority is wrong' was proposed by Mr A. S. Treves and supported by P. W. Harris on 6th November 1920.[69] G. A. Thesiger accused them of using the motion as a way to argue for a Bolshevik dictatorship, raising Treves' and Harris' previous declarations of supporting the Bolsheviks. Another boy argued in favour of the motion, claiming that 'crowds acted like herds of sheep'. Whilst this was a less radical call against democracy, the crisis in Italy in 1924 saw the motion that 'this House, in view of modern conditions, considers an autocratic more desirable than a democratic government' on 23rd February 1924.[70] This motion was of widespread interest, with a total voter turnout of 131, the fourth highest at the school, and the motion was lost 55 votes to 76. G. F. G. Pollard, seconding the motion, described the source of authority in England having shifted from kings to Parliament and now to the people. This reflected the changing perception of the source of legitimate power. This basis of power coming from popular consent did not necessarily support democracy, however. Pollard argued that it enabled an 'elected' dictator to act on the will of the people rather than a parliamentary collective doing so. Speakers repeatedly linked education and democracy, both in its role in fostering a functioning democracy as well being supported by one, whereas an autocrat would be expected to suppress education, an idea some boys supported.

---

[68] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 1, no. 11, April 1904, 173; 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 2, no. 9, December 1907, 141–44; 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, April 1909, 46–48; *Gresham*, 5, no. 8, December 1913, 101–3.

[69] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1920, 34–35.

[70] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 10, no. 10, April 1924, 160–62.

Whilst both schools rarely debated authoritarianism during this period, the fact that they took place does show that boys did not have absolute confidence in the future of democracy after the First World War. Widespread enfranchisement was still a new experiment in Britain and boys raised concerns in these debates about voters' political awareness, as they did in the debates about education. There was fertile ground for more extreme authoritarian ideologies to take root in the schools during the later interwar period. Boys expressed support for authoritarianism from both ends of the political spectrum at both schools. The range of extremes present in the debates left room for competing ideologies to enter the schools rather than a homogenous political view emerging, leading to such identifiers as 'Bolshevik' to be both a badge of pride and an insult.

Education

Education, regularly seen as an essential component of democracy, was unsurprisingly a topic of continued interest in the early interwar period. Just as boys before the First World War considered the purpose and practice of their own and others' education, they continued to do so during the interwar period. The failures of the British leadership, supposedly drawn primarily from the public schools, was heavily criticised for the various military and political failings during the war and so the education provided to them was a topic of great scrutiny. The schools were keen to defend themselves, and the interwar period saw many reforms, particularly the expansion of the modern side of the curriculum. The boys themselves engaged in ideas for school reform, as they had in pre-war debates which concerned the functioning of the school. They were not solely concerned with their own education either. Boys debated the expansion of the state's involvement with education through the 1918 Education Act. Gresham's, where the Sociological Society was keen to expand boys' knowledge of society outside their own school community, took an interest in a range of educational institutions.

At both schools, boys debated the continuation of the current system. Whilst boys at neither school proposed the abolition of public schools, they raised many criticisms over

both the style and purpose of their education. Even before the war had ended, Harrovians debated the motion 'that the Public Schools do not satisfy the needs of the Nation' on 28th September 1918.[71] The proposer took a moderate tone, suggesting improvement going forward rather than abolition. The motion was opposed solely on the basis of tradition, and the motion 'was, of course, defeated by a large majority'. The calls for reform rather than abolition continued after the end of the war with a motion that 'Science is an Inferior form of Education' being debated on 8th March 1919.[72] The proposer, W. D. Macpherson, rather than arguing in favour of classics suggested that education in politics and civics was the best form of education. Despite the support of this idea by the senior science master, the motion was lost.

A more radical discussion of what education should be came in a contribution to the 1920 Sixth Form Supplement to the *Harrovian*. An unnamed author wrote a piece entitled 'Sympathy and Education', which opened with a biblical call for people to 'Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep', quoting Romans 12:15.[73] From this, the author proposed education in empathy in order to build a better world. The emphasis is the importance of this for potential future leaders, such as clergy: 'the present education for ordination consists of … Mathematics, Classics, etc.' which had resulted in priests unable to relate to the problems of their congregation. The author noted that appeals for sympathy are commonplace, and bemoaned the endless speakers highlighting divisions in society and always calling for pulling together, but that 'sympathy is not to be had on so short a notice'. The author was not, however, merely highlighting a problem but also suggested ideas to train boys in empathy, as an aspect of understanding others' character as a beginning. He discussed E. V. Lucas' essay 'School for Sympathy' which described children experiencing simulations of various disabilities. The author concluded by making it clear that this is something he sees as necessary for himself and his peers, even if it meant state intervention: 'And if the

[71] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 31, no. 6, October 1918, 109.

[72] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, April 1919, 18–19.

[73] 'Sympathy and Education', *Harrovian*, 33, no. 8, December 1920, 103–4.

commissioners from Whitehall were to introduce such an education into the public schools, their labours would be more than justified in the interests of the nation as well as of the schools'. From this two things are clear; the author still saw the public schools as the training grounds of future leaders, but also that they were failing at this task. This was a radical statement, calling for emotional education at least on a par with traditional subjects. He argued that a true understanding of and empathy with the working classes was currently beyond what Harrow provided. He even approved of state intervention in the public schools. Whilst the idea of state intervention would have been unlikely to garner widespread support, the proposal for an education which would give Harrovians a better understanding of wider society may have been supported by those who favoured more civic and political education.

At Gresham's the motion 'That this House considers that the present public school education totally inadequate as a preparation for after life' on 14th February 1920, and was lost 5 votes to 21.[74] Despite the radical sounding motion, those who spoke in favour of it focused on the idea that their education did not prepare them for profitable work. Those opposed focused on the character element of their education. Even higher education came under criticism at Gresham's with the motion that 'in the opinion of this House the time and money spent on a University Education could be more profitably used otherwise' on 10th March 1923; this was lost 17 votes to 33.[75] Similar to the debate on public school education, the division rested on training for a career versus character. One boy argued against the motion on the basis that universities were 'a valuable steppingstone from the public school to the world'. Positioning the public schools and universities as part of the same system indicates that there was a continued belief in the exclusiveness of these institutions, and the future careers they offered access to. The contents of these debates were moderate, and their results give a clear indication that boys had their own opinions about what reforms might be necessary for the public schools, even if the majority did not support them. It is also clear, however, that there

---

[74] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 8, no. 10, April 1920, 191.

[75] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 10, no. 5, June 1923, 72–73.

was no desire amongst those speaking to see the system abolished. The repeated calls for a more vocational education suggests that at Gresham's some of the presumed access to professions, government and military positions no longer seen as being as guaranteed, in the way that it had been before the First World War.

The boys at Harrow also saw their own educational traditions as being open to challenge. However, they expressed no real appetite for change. When school issues were debated, they attracted large attendances. This popularity reflected boys' longstanding interest in their own education. On 5th March 1921, the boys discussed whether chapel services should be voluntary.[76] Those in favour argued the atmosphere in the chapel would be better if attendance were voluntary. Those opposing the motion argued that the removal of compulsion would lead to boys discouraging others from attending. This debate, then, was primarily about the potential impact of boys' behaviours on each other, rather than the role of chapel in school life; this reflects the fact that the boys still saw themselves as a self-governing body, which was an important part of public school culture. The motion was defeated 'by a large majority'. Late in the same year, the more general issue of the value of tradition was debated, the motion being simply 'That tradition should be maintained'.[77] The proposer argued that their traditions were what set public schools apart from state secondary schools, whilst his opponent retorted that the leading public schools' traditions were to 'scoff at religion' and 'worship … athleticism'. This criticism was met with 'A storm of protests'. An overwhelming majority carried the motion 70 votes to 7. Harrovians had no desire to change their culture, even if some, as shown earlier, had seen room to improve their curriculum.

It was not just their own education, however, that boys were interested in, but also in that of the wider public and the role of the state. At Harrow there was significantly less interest in education for others; however, it was not absent. On 14th March 1920, the

[76] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 34, no. 2, April 1921, 20.

[77] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 34, no. 7, November 1921, 90.

school welcomed Albert Mansbridge, co-founder of the Workers' Educational Association, to talk about his area of expertise.[78] Whilst engagement with his talk was limited, his invitation does suggest that Harrovians were concerned about the education of the electorate and preferred non-state-led education. At Gresham's the motion 'This House views with satisfaction the increasing tendency of the State to control Modern Education' was held on 4th November 1923 and was lost 48 votes to 116.[79] The debate was dominated by staff, although the large turnout, the highest of this entire study, shows the wider interest across the school. Those opposing the motion, the majority of speakers, were not, however, opposed to the expansion of education but were opposed to state control, repeatedly emphasising the 'individuality' available in the variety of the English system.

Boys at Gresham's were less limited in their knowledge of the education system than would be expected of those confined to the public school microcosm. Through the Sociological Society boys visited three schools. One on 13th June 1922 was Watt's Naval Training School at nearby North Elmham.[80] As a Bernardo's School, the pupil body was from a significantly different background to Gresham's, and the education was specifically for a maritime career. The report to the school magazine notes in particular that the education given covered 'not only how to do arithmetic, but also how to signal and scrub floors. In addition to such things, swimming is taught as a definite subject.' This reporter saw no flaw with this curriculum but also supported the individuality provided, at least in theory, of the choice between the education available at Watt's and Gresham's. Whilst this choice was not a real one, it suggests that boys were in favour of a more diverse range of education. Further exposure to other forms of education came in 1926 during a trip to London, where boys visited another naval school. During a trip to Norwich, boys visited the Bull Close Council School. The reports on both visits were short, despite the fact that 'The Council school was perhaps the most interesting of

---

[78] 'Workers and Education', *Harrovian*, March 1920, 23.

[79] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1923, 127–28.

[80] 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, 9, no. 12, July 1922, 184–85.

all'.[81] Clearly, there was an increased interest in education at Gresham's, and whilst they appeared in favour of increased provision they were also cautious of state involvement in both their own curriculum and that offered in other schools.

At both schools, boys expressed an interest in education. This may have come in part from a desire to see improvements to their own schooling. Harrovians expressed support for curriculum reform but were opposed to changes to the system of education in England. At Gresham's, the interest was more outward-looking and sought to expand boys' knowledge of other forms of schooling. At both schools, boys viewed education as an essential component of democracy and citizenship. Whilst this was not a particularly novel feature of debates on education at the schools it was now seen as being far more pressing, due to the expansion of the franchise in the aftermath of the First World War.

Conclusion

The expansion of political options during the early interwar period gives a clear insight into how more radical ideas could form during the increasingly polarised period that followed. The continued presence of pre-war imperialism and resistance to new ideas also demonstrates that there was not a complete overhaul of politics within the public schools in this study. The challenging of some of these views, as well as the growing uncertainty in imperial power, provides the evidence that the schools felt the impact of the First World War, even when it did not completely undermine traditional ideologies.

These new ideas, part of a wider experimentation with new concepts of citizenship, opened up the public school boys both to their own futures as well as those of others within Britain and the wider world. The remarkable success of the League of Nations Union at Gresham's, along with the involvement of former pupils, was undoubtedly helped by the school's more liberal tendencies prior to the First World War. However, it should not be underestimated how significant this engagement with a new, less

[81] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, April 1926, 185–86.

traditionally imperialist, ideology was. More radical thinking appeared in the later interwar period. The participation of pupils and staff reinforced the school as a place where boys could express left-wing views with a degree of approval. The practical engagement in politics through the Union and the Sociological Society mirrored the wider trend in England for a new form of engaged citizenship. This would come later at Harrow, but shows that the public schools were able to join in this new development without significant adjustment.

At Harrow, this new citizenship found greater depths in boys' considerations of education. Both schools examined education: Greshamians took an observational approach to examine wider society through the Sociological Society's trips, whilst Harrovians discussed alternatives to public school education. At Harrow, there was a more noticeable concern among the boys that their own education was no longer suited to their presumed future leadership roles. The society did not clearly address the separation seen in the reports from the Gresham's Sociological Society between the members and the workers they were observing. At Harrow, the piece on 'Sympathy and Education' in the Sixth Form Supplement is the most explicit admission that the boys' education was leaving them detached from the wider population. Both schools were only undertaking part of the work to understand and reform their schooling to fit the post-war world better. Neither school implemented any programmes to address these gaps directly.

More extreme political views were not commonplace in the early interwar schools, yet the beginnings of adherence to deeply held political ideologies can be seen. At Gresham's, the use of specific ideological labels, particularly 'Bolshevik', both as positive and negative terms had begun, creating a clear divide that was deeper than pre-war Liberal and Conservative party labels. At Harrow, the presence of a boy dressed in a red shirt rather than traditional tails gives a visual representation of this change. These labels and costumes may have been for show or rhetorical impact. However, they give potent indications that politics was becoming tied to how an individual was perceived, both by themselves and others. Extreme views, such as G. A.

Thesigers fear of a Jewish-Masonic-Bolshevik plot, were rare. However, this does show that more conspiratorial views were able to enter the public schools.

Where the early interwar period was one of political experimentation and exploration, it is obvious this could not last. The General Strike of 1926 would help create a dividing point where boys at both schools could begin to define themselves as being on a particular side. Whilst experimentation took place before the First World War and after the General Strike, this period was one where the new ideas were yet to have fully taken hold within the public schools. The Soviet Union was still new and fighting a Civil War into the 1920s, Mussolini only took power in 1922, and Labour formed its first government in 1924; All these were new, experimental governments without attempts to replicate them, giving a sense of uncertainty, novelty and potential. Public school boys followed these events closely, and their discussions and debates show that saw each new idea as a viable means for building a new society.

Chapter 7: The changing landscape of late interwar public school politics

The uncertainty of post-First World War politics began to solidify into a more distinct conflict between Conservative and Labour, and between private enterprise and state control following the General Strike. The financial crisis of 1929 and the fallout over the following years is often seen as a radicalising moment in popular culture. Radical ideologies certainly gained an increased following as the crisis affected countries around the world. However, Clarke has argued that it merely worsened an ongoing crisis in the British economy.[1] Instead, the General Strike was the point at which the Liberal party was no longer the second party, and Labour was now the natural opponent of the Conservatives. Whilst the General Strike was not a revolution, it enabled discussion of the ideas that would be part of the settlement that emerged after the Second World War. The General Strike began the conversation of political and social reform before the pressure of the 1930s economic crisis began to build momentum for it. This enabled vigorous discussions in the schools over the changes that were possible, from more moderate reforms to revolutionary ideas.

Boys at Gresham's and Harrow explored more extreme ideologies which were gaining significantly more influence in the rest of Europe during this period. Whilst these ideas did not really gain much traction in Britain, they did have some active supporters. The labels of these ideologies also became prevalent, particularly Socialist and Bolshevik, both as terms of pride and as insults. Alternatives to democracy were not limited to ideological labels, and the continued viability of democracy had to be defended. Other experimental ideas did not fade away, either, particularly internationalism which saw continued popularity. The institutions that had formed after the First World War came under increasing strain, however. The League of Nations, which began with a great deal of optimism, saw declining support

---

[1] Peter Frederick Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990*, vol. 9 (Penguin (Non-Classics), 1996), 151.

amongst boys during the 1930s. Parliament and politicians also faced decreasing confidence from boys. The separations of ideals and institutions allowed boys to hold seemingly conflicting views. The decline in support for institutions rather than ideals also provides some insight into how boys began to engage with ideas of social, economic and political reforms that would take place after the Second World War.

Brian Simon wrote, partly from his own experience, that the 1930s were the point at which student activism began to take real form, particularly the latter half of the decade.[2] Brewis argued that the rise in student participation in radical organisations at universities, particularly Oxford and Cambridge, came from the need for membership to attend societies meetings as well as active recruitment by the Communist Party of Great Britain.[3] The rise of economic pressures and the increased militarism of fascists both in Britain and Europe would certainly have made it easier to recruit people to left-wing groups. However, this chapter will demonstrate that school boys were already exploring these ideas. Kenelm Digby, despite Ceadel's claim that Digby developed his left-wing views while at Cambridge, was already espousing socialism as 'the one solution'.[4] James Klugman, a recruiter for the Cambridge Five spy ring, and Donald Maclean, one of its members, both spoke out against the modern selfishness and praised social service in a debate at school in 1930.[5] This clique of radicals developed their views in a school engaging with a range of new ideas. Their closeness is particularly unique and will be addressed in the next chapter. This chapter will show how boys were able to explore and engage with radical ideas while at Gresham's. School experiences were as important as university ones when considering how students adopted ideological positions. This chapter will demonstrate how boys engaged with radical ideas in a meaningful way.

---

[2] Brian Simon, 'The Student Movement in England and Wales during the 1930s', *History of Education* 16, no. 3 (1987): 191–92.

[3] Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering*, 90–91.

[4] 'Debating Society' *Gresham*, December 1928, 27; Ceadel, 'The "King and Country" Debate', *The Historical Journal*, 403.

[5] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 14, no. 02, December 1930, 28.

1. The General Strike

The General Strike of 1926 represented a pivotal moment in boys' interpretation of the political sphere. The strike itself was the consequence of both long-term economic problems within the mining industry and immediate concerns over wages. The government commissioned the Samuel Commission, which recommended a number of reforms along with a reduction in wages. The T. U. C. called for a miners' strike in response to the government accepting the recommendations. The strike quickly spread and exceeded expectations, lasting from 3rd to the 12th of May. The T. U. C. called an end to the strike after an agreement with the government to implement the Samuel Commission's proposals. Ultimately the implementation of the pre-strike proposals suggests that nothing was achieved. However, the strike did, in an unexpected way, make left-wing views more acceptable. The strike itself was not, however, an unexpected or revolutionary event. This was well depicted in a Punch cartoon of 13th January 1926: 'English revolutionary'. The Englishman is depicted as a calm figure dressed like a bank manager with a bowler hat and with a briefcase. He was compared to various revolutionaries kitted out with weapons and pseudo-uniforms (figure 1).[6] This non-revolutionary figure certainly appears to have emerged from the various histories of the strike, but is contrasted with the social upheaval both during and after the strike.[7] The historiography highlights the two contrasting interpretations of what happened during the strike, summarised in the title of Rachelle Saltzman's book 'A Lark for the Sake of Their Country': a carnival during a national crisis.[8] Saltzman interviewed a range of former students who had volunteered during the General Strike. Saltzman's interviewees describe a carnival atmosphere rather than a revolutionary one, whilst at the same time she analysed

---

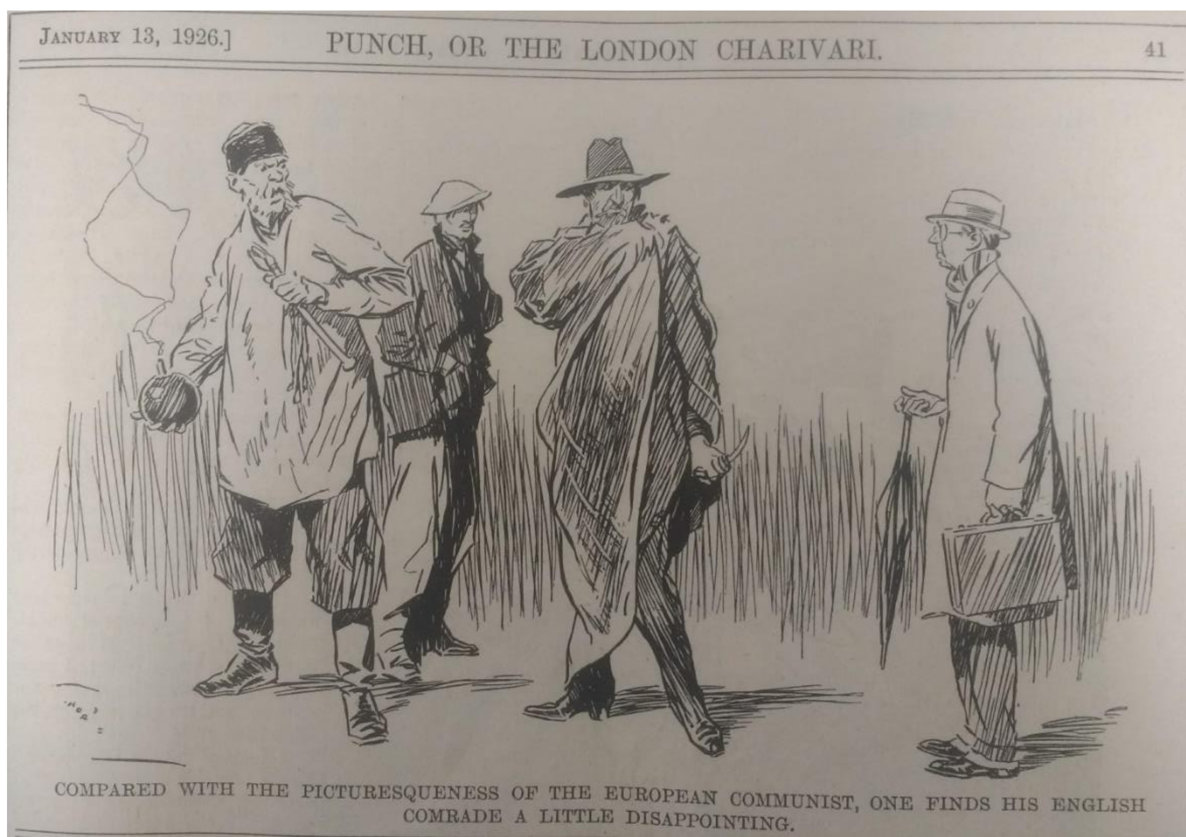
[6] 'Compared with the Picturesqueness of the European Communist, One Finds His English Comrade a Little Disappointing', *Punch*, 70, 13 January 1926, 41.

[7] Charles Ferrall and Dougal McNeill, *Writing the 1926 General Strike: Literature, Culture, Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), chap. Introduction.

[8] Rachelle Hope Saltzman, *'A Lark for the Sake of Their Country': The 1926 General Strike Volunteers in Folklore and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

how the memory of the strike was one of a divide between the two sides.[9] Selina Todd has highlighted how support for the aims of the strikers was not always aligned with support for the strike itself. [10] This distinction was an important factor in boys' discussions on the strike. Ferall and McNeill argue that the idea of the strike as a revolutionary action came from conservative media and politicians, and suggest that the divisions that emerged came from this rhetoric rather than actions taken during the strike.[11] The lack of a revolution may well have made it possible for radical ideas to be seen as relatively harmless.

Figure 4: Punch Cartoon, 1926



Ferall and McNeill's study of the importance of what the strike came to represent on all sides is key to understanding how it impacted both contemporary and future analyses. Histories of the General Strike have usually been written during periods of

[9] Saltzman, *'A Lark for the Sake of Their Country'*, 34–36, 203–5.

[10] Selina Todd, *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class, 1910-2010* (Hachette UK, 2014), 52.

[11] Ferrall and McNeill, *Writing the 1926 General Strike*, chap. 1.

economic crises. The economic crisis of the 1970s, for example, generated interest in the history of the General Strike.[12] More recently the strike has seen renewed attention during the austerity of the 2010s.[13] Ferall and McNeill suggested that the narrative of the Strike has remained important to the idea of the 'English revolutionary'. This connection between contemporaneous events and the General Strike was further reinforced by the emphasis placed on students' roles during the 1926 General Strike in recent histories. Saltzman's book, originally from work conducted in the 1980s was published following widespread student protests in England in 2010, taking twenty-five years to become a published work.[14] The narrative of student action was important to the General Strike, although largely in opposition to it. Saltzman acknowledges that the majority of volunteers who helped fill in jobs where the workers were on strike were not students, just that students were the most visible.[15] Georgina Brewis has gone into greater detail, examining the varied responses from different universities, finding that the majority of students from the older and more elite universities volunteered, and received greater press coverage.[16] These volunteers were not, however, representative of the university body as a whole. The university administration of Oxford was accommodating of the volunteers, but some students and faculty were certainly sympathetic to the aims of the strikers, and occasionally supportive of their actions.[17] The student body across the rest of the country was also far less united against the strike than the popular depictions of student volunteers would make out. Brewis demonstrated that at other

---

[12] Patrick Renshaw, *The General Strike* (Eyre Methuen London, 1975); Margaret Morris, *The General Strike* (Penguin Books, 1976); Gordon Ashton Phillips, *The General Strike: The Politics of Industrial Conflict* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson London, 1976); Jeffrey Skelley, *The General Strike, 1926* (Lawrence and Wishart London, 1976).

[13] Sue Bruley, *The Women and Men of 1926: A Gender and Social History of the General Strike and Miners' Lockout in South Wales* (University of Wales Press, 2010); Saltzman, *'A Lark for the Sake of Their Country'*; Ferrall and McNeill, *Writing the 1926 General Strike*; Mark D. Harmon, 'A War of Words: The British Gazette and British Worker during the 1926 General Strike', *Labor History* 60, no. 3 (4 May 2019): 193–202.

[14] Saltzman, *'A Lark for the Sake of Their Country'*, xv–xxi.

[15] Saltzman, *'A Lark for the Sake of Their Country'*, 34–36.

[16] Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering*, 75–76.

[17] Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering*, 78.

universities, students were more divided on the issue and less committed to strike breaking through volunteering.[18] In particular, Brewis' analysis of student papers has found 'those reporting seriously on the strike were in a minority', suggesting that for most student bodies the 'lark' took precedence over the crisis.[19]

During the strike

The importance of the emphasis given to student volunteers during the strike is particularly important in this study due to both schools', and public schools in general, connections with Oxford and Cambridge. The depictions of student volunteers gave boys an example of a model citizen, even someone whom they may have known in person, and certainly someone they could relate to. This link is proven in a direct letter from one old Greshamian studying at Cambridge to the school magazine in June 1926. In it he described both his own and others' experiences as volunteers.[20] The letter neatly encapsulated the dichotomy between carnival and war. It was written in a similar style as the 'Letters from the Front' published during the First World War. The writer described how they were 'called up' to jobs, and the hyper-patriotic change in atmosphere at the cinema when the national anthem was played. The writer included an account of other Old Greshamians delivering flour, who had been 'keeping up a speed of 25 m.p.h., which discouraged attack'. However, leisure activities and school life are both related to the action. The Old Greshamians' at Cambridge Society secretary's escape from an attack on their railway-line patrol was described as more easily escaped as 'the "sports" at Gresham's stood him in good stead'. The writer suggests the strike should not overshadow regular life, however. Volunteers who had gained scholarships and accolades were mentioned as well as how one boy achieved a personal best in the long jump and retained his title as Norfolk and Suffolk champion. This gives a more limited sense to the crisis, as a game that would pass and normal life will resume.

---

[18] Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering*, 76.

[19] Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering*, 78–79.

[20] 'Cambridge O.G. Letter' *Gresham*, 11, no. 11, June 1926, 204.

Whilst those on the 'frontline' of strike volunteering had exciting tales to tell, life at Gresham's was not uninterrupted. The chapel fund experienced a drop in donations due to the disruption.[21] Some at the school appear to have been aware of the rising level of industrial unrest, with one boarding house putting on a production of the play 'Strife' by John Galsworthy. Originally produced in 1909 it foresaw the events of the General Strike, from the rising dispute, the initial offer being the deal finally reached and the conflict between the unions and the strikers. The reviewer summarised the play as pessimistic, but 'the conditions of modern industry do not lend themselves to optimism'.[22] The editor of the school magazine wrote that the strike 'had inflicted suffering on thousands'. He then appeared sympathetic to the strikers when he added that there had been 'great outbursts of loyalty on both sides, great efforts and great achievements'. The review suggests that modern industry is to blame, while the editor appeared to be supportive of some level of direct action. Here the crisis was again reduced, the strikers received praise rather than admonishment, and legitimacy was given to their efforts.

The sense of the strike as a lark appears to have dominated at Harrow, despite the school's proximity to the capital. Two creative works relating to strike printed in the *Harrovian* help highlight this. A poem on 'Strike Duty' was published in May and detailed various factions' activities during the strike.[23] Whilst it suggested elements of revolution and mentioned volunteers the poem's final half declaimed that the O.T.C., parading in the rain, would crush the revolt, and now the strike has passed it continues to parade in the rain. It is unlikely (though not impossible) that the author believed the Harrow O.T.C. could crush a revolution, the sense of impermeability of school life to outside events is clear. This crisis had passed and school life, despite the excitement, would continue. In the July issue, another author wrote in a classical style a short poem describing a striker, who had shirked war duty, joining Mr Cook and Mr Smith and learned the song of the strikers.[24] The consequences for this

---

[21] 'Editorial' and 'The Chapel' *Gresham*, June 1926, 193–94.

[22] 'House Entertainments: Howsons' *Gresham*, February 1926, 160.

[23] 'Strike Duty' *Harrovian*, 39, no. 03, May 1926, 41.

[24] 'Correspondence: The Song of the Striker' *Harrovian*, 39, no. 05, July 1926, 92.

striker were more severe than facing the Harrow O.T.C. however. The poet imagined the responses of various Roman gods to the events. Bacchus, god of wine and debauchery, and Venus, goddess of love and beauty, laughed at the song. Jupiter, god of the sky and leader of the gods, was enraged by the strikers. He struck them down with lightning from his 'motor-chariot'. Giving Jupiter a motor chariot suggests not only that the author approved of military action against revolutions but also that he may have been drawing on examples seen in Germany of armoured cars used against rebellions. Both these creative pieces give an insight into Harrovians' views of the strike as an amusing sideshow to daily life. However, they also suggest that if the strike had truly threatened the established political system, it would have been something to be put down rather receive sympathy. The response at both schools reflects the split between national crisis and carnival that is seen in histories of students during the strike. Harrovians saw a revolution as something that would need to be crushed, but the strike was not deemed a serious threat. At Gresham's, the fighting was seen as real, and the style of its reporting reminiscent of the First World War, but it was couched in terms akin to those used to describe leisure activities.

Consequences of the strike on politics at the school

Pupils' approaches to politics changed at both schools following the General Strike. Left-wing groups had, if unsuccessfully, demonstrated the potential power of direct action to challenge traditional authority. The lack of success and the failure of a revolution to materialise had the effect of making radical left-wing ideas less threatening. At both schools, the possibility of an authoritarian regime became much more real, society having experienced state intervention on a large scale during the strike. This was not solely due to the General Strike - 1926 saw Mussolini consolidate his power in Italy. The strike provided a context in which Britain could descend into a situation where an authoritarian regime could be installed, however. Authoritarianism in Britain was no longer seen as a theoretical discussion revolving around the monarchy or Cromwell but a contemporary threat or opportunity.

At Harrow, the desire to better understand political, social and economic issues resulted in the formation of the ’27 Club.[25] The intention was to be a non-partisan organisation that could secure speakers with a significant reputation to lecture on their area of expertise. This was not dissimilar to the Sociological Society at Gresham’s, although with less involvement from boys and featuring more prominent speakers. It certainly achieved this, as between its founding and the 1929 economic crash it held sixteen meetings (table 1), of which thirteen speakers now have entries in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. The importance of the strike in permitting and legitimising new ideas can be seen in the lecturers invited. Four of the speakers talked directly on an ideological issue, both in the national and international setting. The ’27 Club invited two speakers with extensive literary and media experience from opposite ends of the economic spectrum to espouse their views to the boys. Henry Hamilton-Fyfe, former editor of left-leaning and pro-Labour newspapers including the *Daily Herald* and the strike paper *British Worker*, and Ernest Benn, libertarian author and founder of the publishing house, The Individualist Bookshop, visited the school in 1928 and 1929.[26] Both brought their preferred ideologies into the school, and the reports indicate that there was constructive engagement with their political philosophies. Hamilton-Fyfe’s examples of moderate socialism were described as ‘part of the program of any sane political Party’ and an inevitable part of progress.[27] The reporter was not, however, convinced that the success of this sort of socialism was guaranteed. Benn’s philosophy of laissez-faire capitalism was quite the opposite of Hamilton-Fyfe’s. Benn’s speech advocated free-trade, arguing that tariffs and protectionism harmed the nation and that the power of the state was wholly unsuited to be involved with business.[28] The reporter states that many boys had questions and acknowledges that it was an attempt at proselytizing the boys by thanking Benn for coming down to ‘“individualise” us’. The reporter’s moderate tone towards both speakers as well as the acknowledgment that they were

---

[25] ‘The 27 Club’ *Harrovian*, October 1927, 98.

[26] H. B. Grimsditch and A. J. A Morris, ‘Fyfe, (Henry) Hamilton’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004); Deryck Able and Marc Brodie, ‘Benn, Sir Ernest John Pickstone, Second Baronet’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004).

[27] ‘27 Club’ *Harrovian*, 41, no. 08, December 1928, 162.

[28] ‘27 Club’ *Harrovian*, 42, no. 02, April 1929, 33.

putting forward viable political viewpoints provides evidence that the political spectrum had expanded. These were no longer seen as fringe views but electable policy platforms.

Two speakers explored authoritarianism, but only through international examples. First was Sir Phillip Gibbs, a journalist who in 1921 had visited Russia as part of the Imperial Famine Relief fund and had written a novel inspired by his journey.[29] His lecture focused on the poverty he saw, and the political aspects of Russia appear to have been dominated by his descriptions of famine.[30] The second speech on the decline of democracy in Europe came from Catholic writer Hilaire Belloc in 1929.[31] Belloc's talk, unlike others, was deemed important enough to receive full coverage in the magazine.[32] The full report describes how Belloc spoke strongly in favour of a new, post-First World War form of dictatorship, if not of the dictators themselves. Belloc described the practicalities of this new authoritarianism, particularly the means of leadership selection and succession. The report described Belloc as open to criticising dictatorships, however, describing a number of them as pursuing an aggressive foreign policy to mask domestic problems, as well as their effect on free speech. Belloc's primary argument for a dictatorship rested on fighting communism, and he, therefore, saw Britain as unlikely to need one. The '27 Club's report, however, suggested that support for Belloc's ideas was limited, and the writer concluded that 'whether we agree with Mr Belloc or not, the address was certainly one of the best the Club has heard'.[33] This summary perhaps best encapsulates the purpose of the '27 Club: to hear speakers of interest on topics, without having a political agenda of its own. These early considerations given to authoritarian ideas would become increasingly relevant as radicalism grew in the 1930s. The exploration of these ideas in the aftermath of the General Strike shows that arguments for the reform of society began to gain recognition prior to the student radicalism of

---

[29] Reginald Pound and A. J. A Morris, 'Gibbs, Sir Philip Armand Hamilton', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 23 November 2004).

[30] '27 Club' *Harrovian*, 40, no. 7, November 1927, 111.

[31] '27 Club' *Harrovian*, 42, no. 01, March 1929, 24.

[32] 'Dictatorship in Contemporary Europe' *Harrovian*, March 1929, 12–13.

[33] '27 Club' *Harrovian*, March 1929, 24.

the1930s described by Simon. The student radicals of the 1930s had engaged with the concepts they would be fighting for or against whilst they were at school.

Table 9: List of '27 Club Meetings, Harrow

Title of Meeting	**Date Of Meeting**	**Speaker**	**Topic**
Some Causes of Crime	03/10/1927	Alexander Paterson	Ethics and Law
The Truth About Communism (Soviet Russia)	24/10/1927	Sir Philip Gibbs	Ideologies
Some of the Causes of Social Discontent	08/11/1927	Mr J. L. Hammond	Society
The Prevention of Strikes	08/03/1928	Sir Horace Wilson	National Politics
Education for Workmen	19/03/1928	Mr Albert Mansbridge	Education
The Changing World	15/05/1928	Canon H. Garfield Williams	Society
Unselfconsciousness as the best end in life	29/05/1928	Mr John Galsworthy	Society
India	25/10/1928	Reverend W. Paton	Imperial Politics
Disarmament	01/11/1928	Mr Lowes Dickinson	International Politics
American Civilisation	05/11/1928	Dean Inge	Society
Educational Experiments	22/11/1928	Mr G. C. Golledge	Education
Socialism	26/11/1928	Mr Hamilton-Fyfe	Ideologies
The Decay of Parliamentary Government of the Continent	31/01/1929	Hilaire Belloc	Ideologies
Politics and Economics	14/03/1929	Ernest Benn	Ideologies
The Empire as a factor in World Peace	03/10/1929	Dr. L Haden Guest	Imperial Politics
Ideals in Business	17/10/1929	Mr Best	Society

Harrovians neglected the debating society during this period, but the ’27 Club held one debate. This debate was on the motion that ‘the ideals and aims of the Liberal Party are more calculated to help the country in its present state than those of the Conservative party’ in March 1928.[34] The motion was proposed and opposed by representatives from the Liberal and Conservative parties rather than being pupil-led, reflecting the aim of ’27 Club to focus on expert opinions. Labour was left out, despite having formed a government more recently than and beating the Liberals in every election since 1922. The Liberals lack of recent governance was used to criticise their policies as only having been tried on paper. The audience clearly favoured the Conservative speaker, and the reporter described how he spoke of the ‘many excellent improvements the Conservatives had made’. The reporter was not blindly loyal to the Conservatives, however, with Conservative foreign policy being called into question. The motion was, unsurprisingly, easily defeated. Labour’s exclusion from the debate, even whilst acknowledging that debates are traditionally two-party affairs, is certainly unusual. Boys dismissed the Liberal representative as being from a party that had not been in power in so long their policies were purely theoretical. This suggests that Harrovians were aware that Labour was now the alternative to the Conservatives, rather than the Liberals.

At Gresham’s the debating society became the focal point for discussion of alternatives to democracy following the General Strike. The society held fifteen debates in the period between the General Strike and the 1929 economic crash (Table 10). Of these, five were on ideological issues. The first represents a direct question over the outcome of the General Strike. Two were held on the parliamentary contests between Conservative and Labour and one on the role of women in public life. The extension of women’s suffrage did not feature explicitly, but the debate does indicate that progress was being made in public discussions. The significant surge in ideological debates following the strike focused on alternatives to parliamentary democracy. Greshamians no longer discussed the possibility of a Liberal government. This demonstrates the shift away from pre-First World War and

[34] ‘27 Club’ *Harrovian*, December 1928, 33–34.

early interwar politics and the rise of the newer ideologies and parties. This early push for reforming society was not as ideologically focused as the 1930s, however.

Table 10: Debates at Gresham's 1926-1929

Motion	Date	Motion Topic
In the opinion of this House the tyranny of Fascismo [sic] is preferable to that of Trade Unions	16/10/1926	Ideologies
This House regrets the indiscretion of Columbus in discovering America	06/11/1926	Society
This House welcomes the entry of women into public life	04/12/1926	Society
Convention is the curse of civilization	05/02/1927	Society
This House would welcome an overwhelming Labour victory at the next General Election	05/03/1927	National Politics
This House believes in Ghosts	08/10/1927	Science and Technology
In the opinion of this House a Conservative Administration is the best suited to the British temperament	05/11/1927	National Politics
In the opinion of this House it is better to walk than to ride	26/11/1927	Science and Technology
This House would prefer to live in the days when knights were bold	04/02/1928	Society
That politicians create more evils than they cure	03/03/1928	Ideologies
In the opinion of this House the State interferes too much with Personal Liberty	06/10/1928	Ideologies
In the opinion of this House sport is taken too seriously	08/12/1928	Athletics
In the opinion of this House Socialism is the one solution	15/12/1928	Ideologies
This House views with alarm the proposed construction of a Channel Tunnel	02/02/1929	Science and Technology
In the opinion of this House Democracy is the best form of government	02/03/1929	Ideologies

The first debate directly pitted the most radical European ideologies against each other. The motion, 'In the opinion of this House the tyranny of Fascismo [sic] is preferable to that of Trade Unions' appears to define the debate as between Mussolini's fascism and the idea of a British communist revolt led by the trade unions.[35] The proposer, Ian Maclean, son of a Liberal M.P. confirmed this when he called on the house to compare the accomplishments of Mussolini to Mr Cook, leader of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. The opposition appeared willing to acknowledge Mussolini's successes but argued that Italy had no alternatives, whilst Britain did. Those speaking against the motion focused their efforts on highlighting the difference between trade unions and communist revolutionaries, whilst those in favour did the opposite. The motion was ultimately lost by a narrow margin of 22 votes to 26. It does represent, however, that for some at Gresham's the General Strike was seen as a real threat. Whilst the majority did not see fascism as the answer in Britain, there certainly were those who were attracted to it. Those opposing the motion did not necessarily oppose it as a solution to a real communist revolution. This debate helps clarify how some boys at Gresham's saw the General Strike as a revolutionary moment. This was the most extreme response, and as politics returned to some level of normalcy, so did the subject of debates.

The two debates which discussed national politics, both in 1927, pivoted around the same issue: whether Labour or the Conservatives should be in power. This would suggest that the idea of a direct threat to traditional parliamentary government had passed. Whilst the Labour government was still a novel concept, it operated within the bounds of traditional politics. The first debate, held on 5th March 1927, was on a motion supporting the prospect of a Labour victory at the next general election.[36] This motion was lost 20 votes to 95. The second debate, held on 5th November 1927, proposed that the Conservative party was more suited to the country's temperament.[37] This motion was carried 113 votes to 60. Both votes show a high turnout, although there were few speakers in favour of the Labour Party. Labour

---

[35] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 12, no. 02, December 1926, 28–29.

[36] 'Debating Society' *Gresham*, 12, no. 04, April 1927, 64–65.

[37] 'Debating Society' *Gresham*, December 1927, 132–33.

appeared to perform particularly poorly on foreign policy, as well as on the general fear of ‘the “dark horse” of Socialism’, but one boy defended its ‘wealth of intellect’.[38] Another boy declared the Conservative government’s actions as being the root cause for the General Strike, whilst another said he could not reconcile himself with a disciplinarian government.[39] This continued the themes raised during the debate between fascism and socialism following the strike. However, the debate was brought closer to the centre of the political spectrum, suggesting a solidification of support for the parliamentary system. The Liberal Party only received one mention across both debates, clearly relegated to third party status. The political atmosphere had shifted into a divide between socialism and conservatism, and radical ideas would not return to the forefront until the 1930s.

Two debates focused to varying degrees on democracy as a process. They showed that it was now possible to challenge democracy, and particularly the parliamentary system and politicians. The first, held on 3rd March 1928, was on the motion ‘That politicians create more evils than they cure’.[40] Speakers on both sides discussed the role politicians had in shaping both large and small issues, from bribery and the press to the payment of M.P.s and the local water supply. Critics of politicians focused on their malleability and called for stronger leadership. The motion was rejected 27 votes to 41. A more explicit motion stating ‘that in the opinion of this House Democracy is the best form of government’ was debated a year later on 2nd March 1929.[41] The first boy to speak out in favour of democracy stated that democracies consider the good of their subjects whilst the same thinking led to the downfall of autocracies. Kenelm Digby, a future socialist who had spoken out against politicians the previous year, defended democracy by comparing tyranny to a hot bath that goes from soothing to dangerous, whilst praising democracy for supporting freedom of thought. This was countered by another boy who claimed democracy was the cold bath that you felt better off out of. Those in favour of autocracy proposed

---

[38] ‘Debating Society’ *Gresham*, April 1927, 65.

[39] ‘Debating Society’ *Gresham*, December 1927, 133.

[40] ‘Debating Society’ *Gresham*, 12, no. 10, March 1928, 168–69.

[41] ‘Debating Society’ *Gresham*, March 1929, 62–63.

more moderate forms, from an annual election of a dictator to a technocracy akin to Ancient Greece. This motion was carried 69 votes to 51. The support for democracy at Gresham's was still in the majority; however, various forms of dictatorship were beginning to appeal to a significant number of boys in more ways and greater numbers than seen before the General Strike. These early debates laid the groundwork for future debates on authoritarian ideas.

Two more debates were held in 1928, which focused on socialism and its policies. Both debates saw real engagement with what these actually meant rather than simple reductions of slogans and labels. The first, on the 6th October, alluded to nationalisation with the motion 'that the state interferes too much with personal liberty'.[42] Digby spoke against the motion, extolling the equalisation of classes and in favour of state intervention. Another boy countered the common criticism of nationalisation that everything would have to be shared, by stating that he was in favour of nationalising the postal service and railways, but that he was 'averse to the Communal tooth-brush'. One boy discussed democracies and autocracies. He drew comparisons between Britain, Italy and the U.S.A., arguing that as individuals Britain had no state interference on personal life. However, he then called for the introduction of prohibition in Britain as a positive way for the state to intervene in personal liberty. The motion was lost by a significant margin of 10 votes to 46. This set the scene for the much better-attended debate on the motion that 'In the opinion of this House Socialism is the one solution' proposed on 3rd November by Kenelm Digby's father and future Labour parliamentary candidate Edward Digby.[43] In proposing Edward Digby focused on moderate reform rather than Bolshevik revolution. The competitive aspect of capitalism, its failure to provide a meaningful income or life for those at the bottom, was strongly criticised throughout. Kenelm Digby, speaking last from the floor, repeated his father's motion that socialism was 'the one solution'. In a reversal of the previous debate, the motion was lost 61 votes to 106. Despite this, both the high turnout and significant support for socialism make this debate a key moment in the rise of socialism as a viable ideology at Gresham's.

---

[42] 'Debating Society' *Gresham*, December 1928, 25–26.

[43] 'Debating Society' *Gresham*, December 1928, 26–27.

The similarity in turnout and votes to the motion in support of a Conservative government is also notable, as it shows a clear demarcation of both party and ideological lines and the size of these factions within Gresham's. It also shows how boys were beginning to engage with what socialism would actually mean, with specific elements of nationalisations and the consequences and aims of redistribution featuring in both debates. This post-strike solidification of a socialist bloc at Gresham's continued into the 1930s and developed an even more committed and intellectually engaged following.

The increased legitimacy given to both socialism and authoritarianism at both schools following the General Strike is clear. These ideologies may not have been the views of the majority of boys, but they were no longer seen as fringe experiments. The acceptance of elements of these ideologies into mainstream party programmes by those opposed to them demonstrates their newfound legitimacy. This appears to reflect the Punch cartoon's depiction of the English revolutionary, not a radical but a gradual reformer. The General Strike itself may have been seen as more of a lark than a crisis at both schools. However, it managed to prompt a significant change in the political landscape. This came before the economic crisis of the 1930s, suggesting that the narrative of the strike was more important than the causes of it to the boys' political development, something supported by Ferall and McNeill's work discussed earlier in this chapter. The economic issues that socialism aimed to prevent were relevant. However, boys' views of socialism as an ideology were highly dependent on the threat it posed. Once the revolutionary atmosphere had passed socialist ideas became more acceptable. At Gresham's and Harrow the use of force, whether military or political, was seen as a legitimate way to handle revolutionary threats. Socialist ideas themselves were not seen as a threat within traditional parliamentary politics, and this helped give them greater consideration in debates in the following decade. The narrative of the strike helped define the new electoral landscape between Labour and Conservative, in a way that was far clearer than between the Liberals and Conservatives prior to the First World War and the uncertainty of the early interwar period.

2. The Recession of the 1930s

The ongoing economic problems in Britain began to worsen significantly in the 1930s. The Wall Street Crash was initially a problem for the U. S. A. and passed without comment at either school. The first editorial following the crash at Gresham's was a criticism of the cult of games.[44] At Harrow an opportune moment to discuss the crash came with a speech to the '27 Club on 'Ideals in Business' on 17th October.[45] The speaker discussed the role of various organisations contributions to their states throughout history but gave no mention of Wall Street or the crash. Clarke argued that Britain had been in a long period of economic depression since the early 1920s and that 1930s saw an intensification of the problems it faced. He argued that it was not until the effects had spread to the rest of the world and Britain's situation worsened that the sense of a crisis emerged. [46] The report of the May Committee in 1931, proposed by Liberal M.P. and Gresham's parent Sir Donald Maclean, calculated a £120 million deficit and proposed drastic cuts. This ultimately led to the fall of the second Labour government, the formation of the National Government and adoption of the report's proposals. Both schools did come to discuss economic policy as the impacts began to affect Britain. Economic policy and the wider debate over how to respond to a depressed economy attracted a remarkable amount of interest in both schools. The link between economic policy and ideological thought is not dissimilar to the debates on tariff reform prior to the First World War. The recession allowed for radical economic and political discussions to take place. These views had been allowed to flourish following the General Strike. However, the economic and political problems of the 1930s were not treated as a passing event, or a lark like the strike was. The 1930s also saw more moderate views put forwards and even glimpses of what would become the post-war settlement.

Sir Alfred Hurst, under-secretary to the Treasury, spoke to Harrovians about monetary policy in 1930 and 1931. His first lecture, prior to the May Report, was

---

[44] 'Editorial', *Gresham*, 13, no. 07, October 1929, 115.

[45] '27 Club', *Harrovian*, 42, no. 06, October 1929, 126.

[46] Clarke, *Hope and Glory*, 9:150–57.

highly critical of the Gold Standard and called for international cooperation to respond to the crisis.[47] Hurst's views appeared to have some popularity with the boys as the reporter in the *Harrovian* suggested that 'he should raise his voice a little more often, we should hear less of Lord Beaverbrook'. Lord Beaverbrook was the owner of the *Express* and founder of the Empire Free Trade Crusade party, which later merged with Lord Rothermere's United Empire Party. The reporter's comments suggest that even imperialism was seen as counter-productive when it came to the economic crash. This dramatic shift away from imperial preference as an economic policy represents a significant change in politics at Harrow.

Hurst's second lecture to the '27 Club came on 6th October, with the National Unity government having been formed and an upcoming general election at the end of the month.[48] The reporter welcomed Hurst for coming to explain the complexities of the economic conditions and political actions taken. Hurst was far more political during this lecture. As well as reiterating his previous points Hurst blamed the lack of market confidence on three factors: the actions of Labour in opposition, the Naval mutiny and the threat of a potential Labour government. Hurst also endorsed the policy of the May Report and the National Unity government, particularly the reduction of the dole and an increase in unemployment insurance premiums. Hurst's views seem to have received some level of acceptance at Harrow, and boys made no effort to challenge them. The policies espoused by Hurst are notable in that they diverge significantly from Harrovian's pre-First World War and early interwar economic views. At Harrow, this move towards international cooperation over imperial unity was a significant change. This shift was not limited to economic policy, and the small change in attitudes towards internationalism at Harrow will be discussed later in this chapter. They were still, however, relatively orthodox views that were carried through in part by the National Government.

---

[47] '27 Club', *Harrovian*, 43, no. 2, April 1930, 37.

[48] '27 Club', *Harrovian*, 44, no. 06, October 1931, 130–31.

At Gresham's, monetary policy was the subject of a lecture to the Sociological Society on 9th October 1931.[49] The lecturer was Wilfred J. Hinton, Director of Studies at the Institute of Bankers, an organisation which aimed to promote training and ethical and professional standards in banking and financial standards. Hinton argued borrowing was acceptable when prices were stable, but in current circumstances it was unsustainable. In particular, he criticised leaving the Gold Standard and lending given to Germany (presumably for reparations payments). This policy was then discussed by the debating society on 30th January 1932 under the motion 'At the present time this House believes it is better to spend than to save'.[50] Proposing the motion was future Labour M.P. and alleged K.G.B. agent Bernard Francis Castle Floud. Floud set out the case for a Keynesian approach, arguing that investment would lead to production and a fall in prices, enabling consumption. The opposition took the side of the national government, arguing that all parties agreed a reduction in spending was needed, and experts only debated where to make cuts. The discussion fluctuated between whether this motion referred to the personal budgeting or the national economy. Floud was accused of being a socialist by one speaker, although the report states that the accuser was assured this was not true. Ultimately the motion was lost 19 votes to 30. Whilst there was only a small minority in favour it does reflect that there was an interest in economic policy amongst boys. This included novel economic policies and tools that were to gain mainstream acceptance in the post-war social democratic settlement.

3. Changes in the schools' engagement with politics

Both schools experienced some significant changes with how they engaged with politics following the General Strike. Less formal means of exploring politics through fiction will be examined in the next chapter. The traditional means of political engagement at both schools saw a change. Harrow had the most radical shift, moving from pupil-led debates to lectures from experts. The debating society

---

[49] 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, 14, no. 08, December 1931, 144.

[50] 'Debating Society' *Gresham*, 14, no. 10, April 1932, 180–81.

suffered a significant decline following the First World War until a successful revival in 1937.

Table 11: Number of Debates, speakers and topics at Harrow, 1926-1939

Total numbers of debates, votes and speakers per year Harrow			
Year	**Number of Debates**	**Average Number of Votes**	**Average Number of Speakers**
1929	3	17	5
1933	1	75	19
1937	1	116	4
1938	3	102	6
1939	4	91	12
Topics of Debates 1926-1939 at Harrow			
Topic	**Number of Debates**	**Average Number of Votes**	**Average Number of Speakers**
Athletics	1	88	9
Ideologies	4	75	7
International Politics	1	75	19
Media	1	116	4
Military	1	54	10
National Politics	1		*
Society	3	88	9

*Report limited

The debating society's changing fortunes contrast with the '27 Club's steady progress throughout this period. Boys' appetites for exploring political, social and economic issues had clearly not waned. Whilst the debating society fell into disuse the '27 Club filled the gap, providing a similar number of events per year. At its highest peak, it provided almost as many lectures in one year as the debating society during this whole period. This certainly makes it clear that politically active boys were keen on widening their knowledge of political and social issues.

Table 12: Number of meetings and topics at the ’27 Club, Harrow, 1927-1939

‘27 Club Meetings		**‘27 Club Meetings Topics**	
Year	Number of lectures	Topic	Number of lectures per topic
1927	3	Athletics	1
1928	9	Education	3
1929	4	Ethics and Law	3
1930	10	Ideologies	12
1931	7	Imperial Politics	8
1932	6	International Politics	9
1933	6	Media	6
1934	5	National Politics	6
1935	4	Science & Technology	6
1936	3	Society	15
1937	3		
1938	5		
1939	4		

At Harrow, both the Debating Society and the ’27 Club had a clear focus on ideological and societal issues rather than national and imperial politics or the always popular debate topic of education. Both of Harrow’s societies also followed current affairs more closely than prior to 1926. Of the eight talks on imperial politics, four were held between 1930 and 1932, coinciding with the Indian Round Table Conferences. The speakers were from particularly prominent sectors of Anglo-Indian society, including Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India.[51] Despite its usually pro-Empire stance the ’27 Club invited members of the nationalist cause to speak, including the representative for Indian Christian nationalists, Kanakarayan Tiruselvam Paul and Pakistani nationalist Sir Muhammed Zafrullah Khan.[52] This broader range of speakers extended from seeking reform and self-governance within the Empire to independence from it represents a marked shift at Harrow. There is certainly an

[51] ‘27 Club’, *Harrovian*, 44, no. 7, November 1931, 150.

[52] ‘27 Club’, *Harrovian*, 43, no. 8, December 1930, 180; ‘27 Club’, *Harrovian*, 51, no. 2, October 1937, 7.

acknowledgement of the decline of imperial power. This is most clear from Sir Muhammed's speech, where boys were disappointed they had not learned more about the Indian Round Table Conferences. The reporter in the *Harrovian* lamented that 'It was perhaps a pity that his subject was not merely the Constitutional Position in India, for he was prevented by time from explaining the wishes of the Indians and the objections to British rule'. This is remarkably different from the Women's Suffrage debate in 1908. In that debate, a man stepped in for a real suffragist, and the reporter suggested he did a better job for their cause than any woman could have.[53] In contrast by the 1930s, representatives for dissident and marginalised views were not only given a chance to give their case but were seen as the ideal candidates to do so. This could be in part due to the differing objectives of the societies. The debating society was, in part, a chance to practice public speaking and rhetoric whilst the '27 Club was there to provide expert opinions to the boys. However, the shift in attitudes should not be entirely dismissed. At the start of the twentieth century, boys were dismissive, if not blind, to any potential challenge to the British Empire. By the 1930s, not only were challenges acknowledged, but they were given a chance to be heard within an elite public school.

The reputation of the speakers represents a preference for expert views rather than a contest of ideas. Of the sixty-seven speakers (two spoke twice) thirty-seven have entries in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. There are some flaws in using this as a measure of the calibre of speakers: the ODNB's entries are selected by a modern audience, excluding those whose influence was more fleeting, and it does not always include people who would hold a similar status in their own countries' histories. However, it does indicate that over half the speakers are considered to have contributed notably in their area of expertise. Harrow had a wide network of powerful and influential figures to draw on and had done in the past. This effort to reach beyond Old Harrovians and even beyond the normal realm of British expertise suggests a new venture in education through associational culture. Rather than giving the boys familiar faces or traditional parliamentary-style debates, there was an effort to expose them to a wider range of educational opportunities and viewpoints.

---

[53] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, November 1908, 100–101.

This can be seen in the generally positive reporting of the speeches, noting good turnout and appreciation for their guests' knowledge. The only exception to this appears to be when it came to D. C. Somervell's, an Old Harrovian, lecture on the origins to the Labour Party. His lecture not only had poor attendance but the report for the *Harrovian* was accidentally omitted until a year later.[54] D. C. Somervell had no connection of the Labour Party, and whilst he was a historian and teacher, none of his works focused on the Labour Party or organisations connected to it. Whether this poor turnout stemmed from disinterest, his lack of a reputation for knowledge of the Labour party or was a genuinely unfortunate coincidence is unclear. Harrovians' change in preference to receiving expert information demonstrates that the '27 Club's aim to expand their knowledge was a genuine desire rather than a slogan.

The Sociological Society at Gresham's was reconstituted in the autumn of 1938 to provide a more formalised system of lectures. The ad-hoc nature of meetings and trips were turned into weekly meetings, and all fifth and sixth formers were members by default.[55] Whether attendance was mandatory is unclear, but the aim was to give 'those who will soon be called upon to exercise their votes as citizens' first-hand knowledge of society. This ran in parallel to formal civics and economics education for A Block, the senior boys who had passed the School Certificate.[56] Civics education at Gresham's was certainly seen as an important subject by 1938 but was limited to the older boys, particularly those who were likely to go on to university. The aversion to involving the younger boys from politics is not entirely clear, and could have been from the perspective of general maturity, but could also have been for concern over the appeal of more extreme ideologies to youths which will be seen later in this chapter.

4. Internationalism

As nationalism increased and the threat of war became more imminent throughout the 1930s, the enthusiasm for internationalism, primarily at Gresham's, began to

---

[54] '27 Club', *Harrovian*, 44, no. 3, May 1931, 52.

[55] 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, 18, no. 02, December 1938, 22.

[56] Curriculum, School Timetable, 'Prospectus', 1938, 6, 15, Box 37 Man 5, Gresham's School Archive.

wane. It was not, however, entirely extinguished. Participation in aspects of internationalism saw a small increase at Harrow. The League of Nations during this period faced several challenges, none of which it effectively responded to.[57] It failed to arbitrate on conflicts and did not enforce the Covenant of mutual defence of its members. Throughout the 1930s the League faced dwindling support as an institution at both schools. This came from disappointment in its failure to act and from growing ideological hostility towards national and imperial states. Whilst many boys were willing to criticise the League of Nations' failures, they also saw merit in its founding aims. These contrasting positions reflect how boys were able to separate ideas and institutions and engage with both the principles and practicalities of internationalism.

Its ineffectiveness was the topic of debate at Gresham's multiple times in response to its failure to act. The League's inactivity during the Manchurian Crisis led to the motion 'In the opinion of this House the League of Nations does not justify its existence' being debated on 5th November 1932, and lost 49 to 76 votes.[58] Brian Simon, seconding the motion, denounced the League saying that Geneva had become little more than a holiday resort. However, the purpose of the League, to band together against aggressors, was supported both by Simon and the seconder for the opposition. Both argued that strength of force was needed, with Simon saying the League had failed in its responsibilities and in pushing for disarmament while the opposition claimed the League was the tool to fight aggression. The aims of the League were still seen as desirable, but its ability to achieve them was now in doubt. Following Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, a debate was held on the motion 'This House approves the attitude of His Majesty's government toward the Italo-Ethiopian dispute' on the 12th October 1935.[59] Despite the debate being nominally about the British response, both speakers framed it as a question over the failure to enforce the League's covenant. The boy who led the opposition argued against war at any cost, stating that military sanctions could lead to war. If sanctions, the League's first tool

[57] Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 358.

[58] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 15, no. 02, December 1932, 36–37.

[59] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 16, no. 08, December 1935, 145–47.

against an aggressor, were deemed as too dangerous then the League's aims would have been unachievable. Optimism about the League's potential dissipated as it continued to fail to respond to crises.

The League's inability to act was highlighted in two other forms by the Gresham's League of Nations Union branch itself. Firstly a boy's paper to the Union on Memel described the League's oversight as 'pseudo-supervision'.[60] An experimental model assembly resulted in a derisive assessment of the League with the comment that 'Following closely the example of the League, the Assembly came to few real agreements'.[61] The range of criticism that was levelled on the League is in stark contrast to the optimism of the early interwar period. Whilst the branch was still holding meetings, lectures and symposiums throughout this period, it no longer held the same level of support or belief that it was able to fulfil its aims.

The criticisms of the League's failure to act did not come without caveats and calls for action. The purpose of the League was still supported, and criticism of the League came from its supporters as well as opponents. In a paper on the Manchurian crisis one boy, in criticising the League, acknowledged that there were difficulties in implementing a pan-national response.[62] A significant part of the League's inability to act was placed on Britain and France. One boy, speaking for the motion 'That in the opinion of this house Great Britain must be prepared for world-wide commitments under the Covenant of the League' on 31 October 1936, argued that if Britain and France acted strongly against Italy, it would encourage others to do so, and their failure gave room for other countries to slacken sanctions.[63] C. M. Lloyd, a regular guest speaker and former editor of *New Statesman*, gave two lectures to the Sociological Society in 1934 and 1935.[64] Coming from a socialist background, Lloyd saw the rise of fascism as a threat that the League would be

---

[60] 'League of Nations Union', *Gresham*, 16, no. 07, November 1935, 123–24.

[61] 'League of Nations Union', *Gresham*, 17, no. 02, December 1936, 29–30.

[62] 'League of Nations Union', *Gresham*, 15, no. 08, December 1933, 157.

[63] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1936, 27.

[64] 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, 16, no. 03, February 1935, 50; 'Sociological Society', *Gresham*, December 1935, 144–45.

needed to counter rather than simply appease. L. N. Mosseri most effectively emphasised this view. Mosseri had been taught in fascist Italy before coming to Gresham's and described how ideology had been part of the schooling during a debate.[65] In a debate in 1937, he 'rapidly and explosively deplored' the League's inactivity and called for a 'universal alliance'.[66] His idea appears to have been to replace the League with a new League that actually enforced the Covenant. He did not see it as defunct yet, however, in another debate in 1938, he challenged critics of the League to explain why Hitler and Mussolini had expended so much effort to weaken it.[67] A rare example of someone who had experienced life under fascism, Mosseri provides an insight into how some viewed the League as a potential bulwark against the expansionist aims of fascism.

The role of the British and French Empires as arbiters for peace also emerged in discussions on disarmament. Two boys in the Gresham's L.N.U. led a discussion on the idea of an international police force in 1934. [68] R. B. Ford, presented in favour of the idea and suggested that capitalism, nationalism and dictatorships were inherently counterintuitive to peace. His solution was an international police force, but with the caveat that it must work towards its own abolition by achieving world peace. C. F. Paton countered this by arguing that this would be an air force and that peace created by it would not be a real peace, but one backed by war. He went on to argue that war was immoral, regardless of who was conducting it. His alternative was an end to imperialism and to 'put right running sores' as well as a reversal of Versailles and global disarmament. This was to be led by Britain to give it moral weight. He acknowledged that this was idealistic but that the conditions required for an international police force were far more idealistic. The following discussion was reported as useful but did not reach a definitive resolution. Britain's role as an arbiter for peace was seen from both sides of the argument here. Boys on both sides saw Britain as crucial for leading the way towards world peace. This meant that boys

---

[65] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 18, no. 04, April 1939, 59–60.

[66] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 17, no. 08, December 1937, 149–50.

[67] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 17, no. 10, April 1938, 187.

[68] 'League of Nations Union: The possibilities of an international police force', *Gresham*, 15, no. 02, December 1934, 35.

were, to varying extents, criticising British imperial military power. Paton is most explicit in this, seeing imperialism as a key impediment to world peace. This is a significant shift away from even early interwar attitudes where Britain was perceived as an enforcer of peace.

Traditional sources of power were not seen as the only way to achieve the League's aims. Ford's criticism of capitalism being inhibitive to peace reflected this idea. Marxist opposition to war as a part of capitalism and fascism at universities.[69] This appears to have been present at Gresham's as well. In both debates, the League was supported and opposed on ideological grounds. In the debate in 1932, C. M. Lloyd saw the League as an arena to challenge national aims. The report describes him as a 'humble Bolshevist', although it is unclear whether this epithet was used by Lloyd himself or by the reporter.[70] In response to the Abyssinian crisis, imperialism saw both supporters and opposers. Those in support of imperialism saw Italian ambition as no different to British interests in Africa. This was a serious change from imperialism in the past, which, at least for Britain, had not received any real challenge to its legitimacy. The opposition saw imperialism as the cause of the invasion, accused the League of collaborating with imperialism and even called for a rejection of imperialism altogether.[71] A guest speaker also questioned the legitimacy of the League from a Marxist perspective.[72] Mr Frankenburg, speaking on the British Anti-War movement, saw other areas for action, from protesting militarist films and action in the universities. Ultimately he described the League itself as ineffective due to it being an assembly of governments all fighting for markets. His solution to achieve peace was to form a genuine international working-class movement. The ideological attacks on the League came amidst heightened political tensions not just globally but within the school. The League's position as the post-war settlement that would bring stability had clearly failed, but belief in its objectives was still present.

---

[69] Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering*, 114.

[70] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1932, 37.

[71] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1935, 145–47.

[72] 'League of Nations Union', *Gresham*, December 1933, 157.

Ultimately the League of Nations Union was unable to continue as normal at Gresham's. In the autumn of 1939 Gresham's L.N.U. branch was reconstituted as 'The International Relations Society and League of Nations Union'. This reform was explicitly to allow boys who had an interest in international affairs to participate in discussions without having to align with the aims of the League.[73] The ideological ground that the League had been formed on no longer existed. There was clearly a continued interest in the areas that the L.N.U. covered, but not the League itself. This reflects not just the boys' interest in international politics, but also the adaptability of their associational culture.

One area of internationalism continued to be important: the formation of personal international friendships. This idea survived the decline of the League of Nations Union at Gresham's. In 1931 both Harrow and Gresham's received a visit from Kurt Hahn and twenty boys from his school in Salem.[74] Hahn was a prominent Jewish educator who, unsurprisingly, opposed Nazism. He moved to England in 1933 following imprisonment for speaking out against the Nazis and established a new school, Gordonstoun, in Scotland. His schools worked on a similar basis to English public schools but with a greater emphasis on outdoor activities. This visit was unreported in the *Harrovian*, but the *Gresham* notes that their inclusion in Hahn's trip was thanks to one of their staff member's visiting Salem during a year's sabbatical exploring schools around the world. Gresham's reciprocated with a trip by the hockey team to Salem in 1932. The report described the various people they met as they crossed Europe and concluded that 'The friendship begun in this way will probably not end with this incident. It may grow and become a small part of that wider friendship of which the world stands in so great a need'.[75] The hockey match received only half a paragraph in a two-page report. Gresham's continued playing hockey against Hahn's students after he established Gordonstoun, despite the distance, suggesting that a solid relationship had been built between the schools. Within the L.N.U., personal experiences of travel received positive feedback;

---

[73] 'I.R.S. & L.N.U.', *Gresham*, April 1939, 60.

[74] 'Schule Schloss Salem', *Gresham*, 13, no. 05, June 1931, 84–85.

[75] 'The Hockey Team In Germany', *Gresham*, 14, no. 11, June 1932, 196.

however, this exposed another area for an improvement in relations: class. O. R. Barclay attended the Duke of York camp in 1937, an outdoor activity camp founded by the Duke of York (future King George VI) for boys from all sections of society. Barclay stated the importance of personal relationships, but also the difficulties he found relating to boys of different class backgrounds.[76] The importance of building these relationships to bridge political divides is apparent from all the reports and shows a continued interest in on of the key aims of the L.N.U.

At Harrow, there was interest in two areas of internationalism. First was Harrow's only involvement with the League of Nations Union through the summer school in Geneva. The summer schools were organised by the International Federation of League of Nations Societies (IFLNS), which brought together the various national versions of the League of Nations Unions.[77] The IFLNS aimed to help the various societies coordinate and ran the summer schools to promote internationalism in potential future leaders. In 1932 seven Harrovians attended the summer school and reported that there were interesting lectures, but also expressed disappointment in not seeing the assembly in action.[78] The report suggests that far more interest was shown in the leisure activities and excursions that the boys took during this trip. Despite this, the benefits of forming international friendships on a personal level were clear even to the more imperially minded Harrovians. On a technical level, Harrovians in the '27 club showed interest in the prospect of an international language.[79] An international language, disregarding the difficulty of implementing it, would no doubt aid in the formation of international relationships and ease the challenge of travel. Harrovians' interest in the idea suggests that efforts to improve international communication had their support. This aspect of internationalism is significant for Harrow in that it challenged the importance of imperial hegemony. The suggestion of a language other than English for international communication suggests that Britain's position as the global leader was no longer seen as fixed, and

---

[76] 'League of Nations Union', *Gresham*, 17, no. 04, April 1937, 66.

[77] Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 247.

[78] 'League of Nations: Fourth Summer School', *Harrovian*, 45, no. 6, October 1932, 149.

[79] '27 Club', *Harrovian*, 51, no. 12, December 1937, 46.

alternatives were not necessarily to be feared. Harrow had never been closed to international visits, but the move towards areas that the League of Nations covered shows a small shift away from their imperialist tendencies.

The failure of the League of Nations is clearly reflected in its declining support at Gresham's. The Peace Ballot itself was not reported on at either school. Held in 1934 and 1935, it asked five questions on the League of Nations, disarmament and collective action. The debate on an international police force suggests that some elements of it were considered at Gresham's, however. Compared to the school's early enthusiasm, this failure to rally behind the Peace Ballot demonstrates the decline in boys' support for the League itself. The reform of the League of Nations Union acknowledging declining support suggests that the League of Nations itself was significantly discredited by the late-1930s. The continued support for the aims and purpose of the League, peace and international cooperation demonstrates that it was the institution that Gresham's had lost faith in, rather than the ideals. Other ideological approaches to internationalism and continued efforts to form personal connections demonstrate support for the ideals of internationalism even if the practical elements were still unresolved.

5. Changes to the political landscape

This period also saw a rise in engagement with radical ideas. This did not always mean boys that adopted these ideologies. In some cases they appeared to, but the general trend towards examining radical ideas suggested that boys were aware of their novelty and growth. The challenges faced by democracy from economic, social and political pressures elicited great interest from the boys at both schools. Traditional politics were disturbed by the formation of the National Government in 1931. This split both the Liberals and Labour and left little room for strong parliamentary opposition. The Labour Party was particularly divided on whether to pursue a radical policy platform or not.[80]

---

[80] Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (London: Macmillan Education UK, 2015), 84–87.

Both schools showed significantly more interest in the decline of the Liberal party than the fortunes of Labour. The Liberal party's electoral decline was certainly reflected in the boys' views of the party, although some boys and staff at Gresham's were still supportive. At Harrow, the '27 Club hosted a debate between representatives from the Liberal and Conservative parties on the motion 'the ideals and aims of the Liberal Party are more calculated to help the country in its present state than those of the Conservative party' in 1929.[81] The reporter suggests that the Liberal speaker failed to extol any benefits of having the Liberals in government, declaring them a deceased party. The motion was 'easily defeated', although Conservative foreign policy was seen as a weak point. At Gresham's, a similar discussion was held on the motion 'This House regards the continued existence of the Liberal Party, as an independent body, as essential to the well-being of the nation' in 1930.[82] Proposing the motion was J. Duncan Millar, Liberal M.P. for East Fife, and seconded by a boy. Seconding the opposition was Kenelm Digby, the future proposer of the 'King and Country' debate at Oxford. Digby, along with others, saw the Liberal party as untrustworthy and called for it to be swept away. Others argued that the Liberal party, and third parties in general, as problematic in elections, preferring two-party races to avoid weak minority governments. In defence of the Liberal party boys and staff, including the headmaster, saw the Liberals as a moderating force on both other parties. The motion was ultimately carried, 80 votes to 76, out of a total of one hundred and fifty-six votes. Not only was this a very high turnout, demonstrating intense interest in the subject, it also shows just how divided the once Liberal-leaning school had become on the future of the Liberal party.

Alternatives to democracy were presented at both schools. However, this did not necessarily mean socialist or fascist regimes. Dictatorships had spread across Europe without subscribing to fascism or communism and often without the backing of a popular political movement.[83] This usually came as a response to social and

---

[81] 'Debate', *Harrovian*, April 1929, 33–34.

[82] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, 13, no. 10, March 1930, 179–80.

[83] John Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe: From the Renaissance to the Present*, 2nd ed. (London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2004), 1119–21.

political unrest in the states created out of the dismembered empires of the First World War. Often they were reactionary and led by existing elites emphasising traditional conservative elements of nationalism and militarism to reinforce their legitimacy. Boys discussed how this could be applied to Britain in light of the challenges faced during the late interwar period. At Gresham's, this was first put forward in a debate on the motion that 'In the opinion of this House Democracy is the best form of government' in March 1929.[84] The motion was ultimately carried 69 votes to 51 and saw boys both in favour and against democracy. Kenelm Digby, despite being against the Liberal Party was strongly in favour of democracy, comparing dictatorships to a 'hot bath, first soothing, but later tyrannically dangerous', although another boy countered this with democracy being a 'cold bath: you felt better when out of it.'. Liberal M.P. and Gresham's parent Ernest Simon put forward a challenge to the franchise with the, presumably tongue in cheek, motion 'In the opinion of this House the troubles of the world are mainly due to the stupidity of public opinion' on 27th February 1932.[85] The majority of boys spoke against the motion, including Ernest's wife Shena and son Roger, blaming political leadership rather than the voters. One boy spoke in favour of the motion, but with the caveat that public opinion could not be blamed for what happened after the war. The motion was carried, however, by 80 votes to 36. Whilst it would seem unlikely that a Liberal M.P. would have been criticising the extension of the franchise, he, and those voting in favour of the motion, may have been critical of the options put forward to voters and the electorate's support of them.

Boys at Gresham's were later exposed to the idea of an authoritarian government in a 1938 lecture on European dictatorships from former intelligence officer in Germany and Disarmament Commissioner in Berlin Lt.-Col. Stewart Roddie.[86] Roddie argued that dictatorships resulted in countries' futures being subjected to the success of a single man, but in some cases, this had been necessary to restore stability. Roddie contrasted Italy, which he saw as having required a dictatorship to restore order, and

---

[84] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, March 1929, 62–63.

[85] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, April 1932, 181–82.

[86] 'Lecture', *Gresham*, 17, no. 09, February 1938, 164–65.

Germany, which he viewed as not having needed a dictatorship, and that propaganda and fear propped up the Nazi regime. Roddie also looked at Russia, where he saw failures in the leadership, but also gave some praise for the economic progress. Roddie ultimately gave the boys the conclusion that dictatorships would have to become democracies, ideally on the British model, or face war.

Ideas for authoritarian regimes were put forward at Harrow, although they did not prove popular amongst the boys. The ’27 Club received lectures on a range of dictatorships. Hilaire Belloc described his idea of an absolute monarchy in Europe and how he viewed Latin Europe as incompatible with parliamentary democracy.[87] K. G. Grubb, who had ‘been in twelve revolutions’ and worked as a missionary in South America, provided a unique perspective on the continent.[88] He described in depth the problems in Brazil that a presidential system dependent on patronage faced but also the gradual progress towards democracy. Douglas Jerrold lectured the boys on his vision of an ideal ‘positive state’ made up of a super-bureaucracy managing distribution versus the ‘negative state’ of individualism backed by the English Fascists.[89] Jerrold argued that redistribution by the state would enable greater liberty for the individual. The report in the *Harrovian* suggests a very different view from Jerrold’s support of fascist Italy and Spain.[90] The unusual focus on fascism and authoritarianism in Catholic countries may have reflected a view that it was not an ideology suited to Britain.

Boys at Harrow debated these ideas with the motion ‘that this house believes that only a dictatorship can save Great Britain from decline’ in 1938, with strong support in favour of democracy.[91] The proposers argued that parties put their own interests first and called for an elected dictator to save the country, but the reporter stated that once the debate was opened to the house, the majority were clearly in favour of

---

[87] ‘27 Club’, *Harrovian*, March 1929, 24.

[88] ‘Debating Society’, *Harrovian*, 45, no. 07, November 1932, 174.

[89] ‘27 Club’ *Harrovian*, 47, no. 08, December 1934, 196.

[90] Jason Tomes, ‘Jerrold, Douglas Francis (1893–1964), Publisher and Author’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

[91] ‘Debating Society’, *Harrovian*, 52, no. 11, December 1938, 42.

democracy. He does, however, link the idea of dictatorship and fascism by writing that the proposer concluded with ‘a very able summing up of the fascist case’. Whilst by 1938 dictatorship was more clearly associated with fascism, it is worth noting that the ideas put forward do not align with a particular example, suggesting a more nuanced view of authoritarian regimes than just Hitler’s or Mussolini’s.

A debate in March 1939 on the motion ‘that this House approves the violent removal of tyrants’ saw a series of debating conventions broken.[92] Firstly, ‘topical illusions’ were banned from the discussion, and so the most contemporary events discussed were the Russian Revolutions. This left the reporter feeling disappointed by the lack of ideas for ‘Pooh-traps for Hitlers’. This did, however, enable interesting thoughts on what constituted ‘tyranny’ as well as ‘violent removal’. The second break to convention came from allowing theology to be discussed. Even discussion of killing being in breach of the ‘Thou shalt not kill’ commandment was permitted. The debate revolved around the legitimacy of a tyrant. This included whether kings, appointed by God, could be tyrants or if a constitution or election was what allowed a dictator to be exempt from the label of tyrant. The result was tied twenty-four votes each, and the reporter praised the open minds during the debate, even if the speeches were mostly poor. However, the desire to focus on the idea of what made authoritarianism legitimate suggests that even a few months prior to the outbreak of war dictatorships were still considered potentially legitimate regimes by Harrovians, even if they were not considered suitable for Britain.

6. Radicalism in the 1930s

Alongside traditional debates about authoritarianism and parliamentary democracy, boys discussed the more novel and radical ideologies and regimes. Following the General Strike, socialism had seen increased support both for its policies and as an ideological way to approach politics. However, support for socialism was not universal. The proportion of boys supporting socialism did not appear to increase. However, there was an increase in those using elements of Marxism, both through

[92] ‘Debating Society’, *Harrovian*, 52, no. 23, March 1939, 89.

language and concepts of social and economic relations. This marked a significant change of emphasis from policy to ideology. Fascism began to be discussed as a specific ideology in the schools, and increasingly as a counter to communism. Mussolini had established a model, which had been discussed prior to the 1930s. However, it was not until the 1930s that the expansionist and militarist elements of fascism became a reality rather than rhetoric. The impact of fascism on society also became visible, such as youth movements or on a more personal level, Kurt Hahn's experiences. Whilst socialism, communism and Marxism became more tolerated as their threat to Britain decreased, fascism lost support as it became associated with hostile regimes in Europe.

At Gresham's, the motion 'In the opinion of this House a Fascist Dictatorship is preferable to Socialism' in November 1933 clearly defined the ideological divide. The motion was carried 99 votes to 54.[93] The vote represents a similar split to the debate on socialism as the 'one solution' in 1928.[94] This debate differed greatly from the post-strike debate; it emphasised the ideological differences rather than the practicalities of socialism and reform. Kenelm Digby, by this point a student at Oxford, returned to second the motion. He praised the General Strike and hoped to see a similar event in the future and saw socialism as the way to prevent war. Digby went on to denounce the National Government as dictatorial and criticise fascist economic policy. Two other boys spoke out in favour of socialism over fascism, one seeing it as a matter of personal liberty and Christian principles, the other as the path to peace, saying that Hitler and Goering were both 'intensely militaristic, and that both were due for assassination'. The high turnout, seventh-highest during the whole of this period and above-average number of speakers demonstrate a significant interest in the topic. When faced with a choice between a socialist or fascist revolution, the school voted in favour of fascism. With one-third voting in favour of socialism, however, left-wing views had become firmly established amongst a third of the school.

---

[93] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1933, 154–56.

[94] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1928, 26–27.

Socialism, Communism and Marxism

Left-wing views had been seen in the 1920s, and staff, parents and pupils at Gresham's had tended to lean towards more progressive politics. The 1930s, however, saw a significant increase in both the engagement with and commitment to socialism amongst elites and intellectuals.[95] This shift was also seen in Gresham's, where those speaking in favour of Marxist ideas began to use an intellectual approach rather than discussing policy. This can also be seen in the guests that they invited. At Harrow left-wing views were primarily examined in the context of foreign countries. This is similar to how they discussed authoritarianism and suggests a similar feeling that a Marxist regime was not suited to Britain. Instead, the left-wing views that did gain some traction with Harrovians were the more moderate reforms that were part of the post-war settlement, such as universal secondary education and state control of critical industries. That these ideas had gained support amongst Harrovians so easily is surprising. However, they did not represent a threat to the status quo, and the lack of radicalism made them far more acceptable.

The intellectual aspects of Marxism can be seen in several speeches by boys in debates. Rather than arguing for specific policies to alleviate the economic hardships of the 1930s, boys argued against the current political system. One boy's claim that 'the governing classes could not control the power in the hands of the lower classes' in 1932 demonstrates a class-based understanding of economic and social relations.[96] In October 1933, R. G. Medley, who would speak against fascism a month later, claimed that it was an 'inefficient social order' that was the cause of social problems. [97] He also accused capitalists of being the source of 'present troubles' by 'profiteering by abusing the gifts of science'. By 1937 the use of Marxist arguments appears to have been commonplace. During a debate on the motion 'In the opinion of this House, industrial progress is incompatible with social progress' the concept of a planned economy was used by two boys.[98] One boy, O. R. Barclay who

---

[95] Clarke, *Hope and Glory*, 9:169–73.

[96] 'Deabting Society', *Gresham*, 15, no. 03, February 1933, 62.

[97] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, December 1933, 154.

[98] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, April 1937, 63–64.

had noted the problem of forming relationships across the class divide at the Duke of York camp, blamed capitalism for forming two classes: workers and non-workers. The most explicit evidence of the use of Marxist language came during this debate when R. H. Sutton 'proved his complete detachment from Marxism by quoting Karl Marx'. Sutton is not being associated with a part or policy platform, but with an ideology. This shift towards an intellectual approach to socialism is a marked difference to politics of the earlier interwar and pre-war period. The adoption of Marxist language suggests a deeper commitment to the ideology than to specific policies or a party. Boys' shift away from policy and parliamentary goals demonstrates a deeper allegiance to a political culture that at any other period. This ideological approach and commitment is more significant than their use of imperialist and internationalist ideologies. Those were more explicitly associated with events and lacked the more abstract concepts seen in some of the Marxist comments. Whilst imperialism may have been more pervasive, it lacked the intellectual support amongst boys that Marxism developed. Internationalism received greater levels of support at Gresham's, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. However, staff supported this, and the emphasis was on specific policies and practices such as disarmament and international friendships. The intellectual approach can also be seen in the next chapter in the creation of fiction as a social and political commentary.

The source of this increase in Marxist dialogues may have come from lecturers at the League of Nations Union. In 1933 a paper from one guest lecturer criticised capitalism as being incompatible with democracy, forcing competition and conflict, while socialism was the path to international co-operation, and was 'for the good of the many rather than the few'.[99] Socialist writer and alderman of Norwich Fred Henderson spoke to the boys on 'World Economics', arguing that humanity had the means to live in a post-scarcity society. Henderson did not blame malignant forces for this; instead, he lambasts humanity for voting for politicians who allow wealth to remain in the hands of a few and called for all classes to challenge this.[100] A Mr

---

[99] 'League of Nations Union', *Gresham*, December 1933, 157.

[100] 'League of Nations Union', *Gresham*, 15, no. 10, March 1934, 202.

Grant, from the League's Relief Works Committee, described Russia as moving forward economically and intellectually. [101] He argued that the Soviet Union was not the apotheosis of communism. However, he noted that the Five Year plans demonstrated its progress towards its peak. In 1936 Colonel Delahave, recently returned from Germany, in his lecture, 'The Psychology of War', argued that militarism and war were based on economic unrest.[102] He contrasted Germany, Italy and Japan, which had poor conditions in peacetime, as being easier to mobilise to war than the U.S.S.R., which being progressive internally was pacifistic externally. The absence of a good life, Delagave argued was the cause of unrest and conflict in the world. These viewpoints suggest that the League of Nations Union at Gresham's was particularly interested in speakers able to articulate a Marxist concept of economic progress being a path to stability and peace to the boys. The boys' adoption of these views and the language surrounding it suggests that some of them were willing recipients for Marxist ideology whilst at school.

Socialism and communism were only formally discussed at Harrow in the 1930s through lectures to the '27 Club. Their lack of interest in left-wing politics in Britain is evident from D. C. Somervelle's lecture on the origins of the Labour Party in October 1930.[103] Not only was attendance poor it was forgotten about in the reports until a term later. The reporter gave a clue as to the cause of poor attendance, stating boys had missed a historical lecture rather than a political one. This suggests that perhaps boys had been put off by the idea of hearing about the current Labour Party. Harrovians were more interested in examining how communism functioned in foreign countries. Two lectures from a historian of Russia, Sir Bernard Peres, gave the boys some insight into how a communist state functioned. In his 1933 lecture, he discussed the Soviet Union's economic policies, arguing that industrial output had increased in quantity if not quality, whilst its agriculture had seen significant failures.[104] The reporter's view was made clear, however, when he thanked Peres for

---

[101] 'League of Nations Union', *Gresham*, November 1935, 127.

[102] 'League of Nations Union', *Gresham*, 16, no. 10, March 1936, 186–87.

[103] '27 Club', *Harrovian*, May 1931, 52.

[104] '27 Club' *Harrovian*, 46, no. 4, July 1933, 167.

illustrating ‘the absurdities of Communism’. Peres’ second lecture came in 1936, where he suggested that Russia was, in the face of increased threats, returning to capitalism and nationalism in preparation for war.[105] Harrow boys were clearly not expecting radical socialist political successes and an overhaul of society in Britain. Instead, much of their understanding of communism came from reports of the established communist state of the Soviet Union.

Less radical elements of socialism and social democracy did generate interest amongst Harrovians. A. G. Pape put forward his vision of the ‘New Political Fellowship’ to the boys in 1931.[106] Pape’s vision of an international technocratic economy, led by scientists above party politics was viewed as idealistic by the reporter in the *Harrovian*. It did, however, represent an alternative view from the rising radicalism of the 1930s. Sir Andrew McFadyean, a senior civil servant provided some insight into elements of social democracy that were suitable for Britain. McFadyean argued against both a planned economy and *laissez-faire* policies. Instead he argued that in most areas private enterprise is best, but in a few sectors, such as transport and energy some form of public control was beneficial. These examples show of how elements of the post-war settlement were beginning to gain traction prior to the war. Harrow’s aversion to more radical ideas may have come in part from their experience of the General Strike as more of a ‘lark’ than a revolutionary moment. Their invitation of more moderate speakers reflects their more tempered view of the 1930s than those at Gresham’s. It helped legitimise elements of socialist policies within the school, without generating the radicalism seen at Gresham’s.

Fascism

Fascism, perhaps by not having a strong following in Britain, did not see such a vigorous ideological examination as socialism or communism. Garau argued that

---

[105] ‘27 Club’ *Harrovian*, 49, no. 03, June 1936, 55.

[106] ‘27 Club’ *Harrovian*, 44, no. 08, December 1931, 167.

British fascism was more of an ultra-conservative movement.[107] He highlighted that British fascism focused on loyalty to the crown and Christianity, as well as anti-socialism and anti-parliamentarianism.[108] As an ideology, it lacked a consistent, universal movement, and so the examples discussed in the schools focused on specific European cases. Mussolini's fascism, being the first major example, was often seen as another form of authoritarianism. It was not until the second half of the 1930s that fascism began to be seen as a coherent ideology binding together a group of European powers. The growth of the power of fascism has also been seen as a reason for Britain rejecting it.[109] Fascism, unlike socialism, was gaining significant power over states in Europe and by the 1930s was seen as a credible revolutionary threat. In Britain, the rise led to a loose alliance of the more radical left-wing organisations and parties for anti-fascist actions, but the Labour party avoided joining this militant coalition.[110] Williamson has challenged the narrative of the left leading anti-fascist efforts by highlighting how the Conservative party also sought to supress far-right movements.[111] Elements of Williamson's arguments of the Conservatives emphasis on maintaining the existing parliamentary system can also be applied to the other two major parties. Hitler's rising power caused particular alarm in both schools. This came not just from his expansionist policies but also the Nazi reformation of society along ideological lines. Fascist emphasis on youth involvement in their vision for society also caused concern. Collins argued that British fascism invoked a similar concept of masculinity to the public schools and expressed similar concerns over the health of the nation as had been seen in the

---

[107] Salvatore Garau, *Fascism and Ideology: Italy, Britain, and Norway* (Routledge, 2015), 152.

[108] Garau, *Fascism and Ideology*, 154–55.

[109] Daniel Woodley, *Fascism and Political Theory: Critical Perspectives on Fascist Ideology*, Routledge Issues in Contemporary Political Theory 2 (London ; New York: Routledge, 2010), 59, 62.

[110] Nigel Copsey, *Anti-Fascism in Britain*, Second edition., Routledge Studies in Fascism and the Far Right (London: Routledge, 2017), 9–13.

[111] Philip Williamson, 'The Conservative Party, Fascism and Anti-Fascism 1918–1939', in *Varieties of Anti-Fascism : Britain in the Inter-War Period*, ed. Nigel Copsey and Andrzej Olechnowicz (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 73–74.

public schools throughout the first half of the twentieth century.[112] Whilst boys did not seem to respond to this targeting of youth, adults connected to the school certainly challenged it.

An early exploration of what Nazi Germany really meant for world politics took place at Harrow in November 1933. The motion debated was 'That this House is more in sympathy with the policy of Germany than with that of France'.[113] However, speakers addressed the wider impacts of Nazism and fascism. Those in favour argued that Germany's position was limited and that its demands were reasonable. The boy who seconded the motion also sought to seek support for fascism as a counter to communism. He argued that a key reason for Hitler's rise was that 'he had come into power to crush Communism'. The opposition attacked Hitler's international policy, primarily that by leaving the League, they were moving towards war. There were also serious concerns raised over his internal policies, particularly on persecution. One boy, E. L. Rothschild, called on the house to vote against the motion specifically because of Hitler's treatment of religious minorities. Anti-Semitism came in response when the next boy to speak aligned with the Nazis in accusing the Jews of a plot to destroy civilization. Another boy spoke on the issue of persecution, arguing that the Nazis were worse than the Spanish Inquisition, which at least allowed them to recant their faith. Boys at Harrow were clearly aware of the racial policies of the Nazi party and viewed them as a key part of Hitler's fascism. This did not, however, automatically mean criticism of these policies. However, the international policy of Nazi Germany was seen with less hostility. Elements of appeasement and opposition to the Versailles Treaty were clear, even being seen as part of progress towards world peace.

Harrovians were lectured on Mussolini and Italian fascism in the same month.[114] The lecture was split between a biographical account of Mussolini, followed by a political

---

[112] Tony Collins, 'Return to Manhood: The Cult of Masculinity and the British Union of Fascists', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 16, no. 4 (December 1999): 145–62.

[113] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 46, no. 08, December 1933, 180–81.

[114] 'Lectures: Mussolini and Modern Italy', *Harrovian*, 46, no. 07, November 1933, 165–66.

examination of modern Italy. The speaker described the chaotic, pseudo-civil war following the First World War and Mussolini's reform of society. The lecturer praised Mussolini's achievements in restoring Italy's power and prestige. The reporter appears to agree when he wrote that the speech must 'certainly have disillusioned any heated anti-Fascisti'. The two different views of fascism reflect the undefined nature of the ideology in the early 1930s. This is particularly notable on internal policy. Hitler was viewed as an aggressor against part of the German people, whilst Mussolini was seen as having restored order and prestige. This would suggest that Harrovians could see a fascist dictatorship as legitimate if it appeared to have popular support. This is in line with their earlier discussions on authoritarians and tyrants. Both dictators' rises were also seen as a counter to left-wing ideas. This was similar to the debate at Gresham's on the preference for a fascist dictatorship over a socialist one. Most boys at both schools rejected revolution as a political tool, but if they were forced to choose an ideology to back in the event of one, the majority opted for fascism. At Harrow, there appeared to be some acceptance of the role of fascism, particularly in Italy. When seen as a counter to the threat of a communist revolution, Harrovians were more supportive of fascism. However, this is in an international context, and there were no calls to mirror these regimes in Britain. Expansionism and war had not yet become a key aspect of fascist policy, which would later help increase hostility towards the ideology, as already seen at Gresham's with the invasion of Abyssinia.

Germany and Italy were not the only fascist states that emerged during the 1930s. Spain was examined once by the debating society and once in a lecture to the '27 Club. Harrovians widened the discussion to Spain, a fascist state that did not align with the Axis powers. This provides a useful example to analyse how they viewed fascism in a neutral state. A debate was held on 12th February 1938 on the motion that 'the cause of General Franco in Spain is justified'.[115] The proposer justified Franco's actions in response to rising support for the Communists. This was coupled with the idea that he had brought order to the territory he controlled. He accused opposition to Franco as being caused by 'Left-Wing propaganda'. Opposition to

---

[115] 'Debating Society', *Harrovian*, 51, no. 17, February 1938, 65.

Franco saw the nationalists as prompting the rebellion. Spain was also seen as a conflict point between the various ideological blocs in Europe, with ‘someone’ announcing Franco supported Mussolini and another claiming that Franco’s money came from abroad. The proposer, in summing up widened the international ideological conflict, arguing that USSR and France, governed by the left-wing alliance of the Popular Front, supported the Republican side. The motion was carried, with boys supporting Franco by a ‘small margin’ of 71 to 59. The reporter highlighted the communist versus fascist nature of the conflict, concluding that the ‘Bolshevik menace was providentially repulsed from Harrow’. The proposer’s stance reflects the anti-revolutionary sentiment at Harrow. Franco was not leading a revolt but reacting to one. Harrovians were certainly opposed to Nazism and the idea of a dictatorship in Britain by the late 1930s, as seen above. However, Franco’s Spain was not explicitly hostile to Britain, and Harrovians were willing to support his fascism whilst opposing German and Italian fascism.

Nazi Germany came under scrutiny at Gresham’s in 1936 when the realities of fascist political persecution were discussed by someone who had been a victim of them. A debate on the motion ‘In the opinion of this House the Interests of World Peace demand that Germany's political and territorial aspirations should receive legitimate satisfaction’ on 22nd March 1936.[116] The debate was held partly in response to a lecture from a Nazi and a scathing letter from T. O Garland calling on the school to invite someone from a concentration camp to dispel the myths put forward by the ‘well known Nazi propagandist’.[117] Proposing was Professor Conwell-Evans, professor of English literature at Konigsberg University and translator between Lloyd-George and Hitler. Conwell-Evans’ genuine position is unclear, and he is viewed as both an avid pro-German appeaser and a British intelligence asset.[118] Opposing the motion was Herr Hans Weiser, who had been a political

---

[116] ‘Debating Society’, *Gresham*, March 1936, 184–86.

[117] ‘Lecture: German Youth Movements’ *Gresham*, 16, no. 04, April 1935, 61–62; ‘Correspondence’, *Gresham*, 16, no. 05, June 1935, 89.

[118] Donald Cameron, ‘Chamberlain’s Ambassadors’, in *Diplomacy and World Power: Studies in British Foreign Policy, 1890–1951*, ed. Brian J. C. McKercher and Michael L. Dockrill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 146.

prisoner in Nazi Germany, and Garland. Weiser called for sympathy for Germans, but not for Hitler or the Nazis, calling for a distinction between the two. Fulfilling Garland's call for a victim of Nazi rule to speak to the boys, he described his own experiences of the concentration camp. No boys spoke in favour of the Nazis, with one calling for the League to step in and another arguing Japan was the more immediate threat to Britain. Boys' focus on the international threat posed by Nazi Germany suggests that the militarist elements of fascism were their most significant concern. The motion was defeated 39 votes to 80, suggesting limited support for Nazism and Germany at Gresham's.

Personal experiences of fascist states were not just based on politics, but also on the daily life within the countries under fascist rule. In 1937 N. G. Foulkes visited Schwarzwald, South-West Germany, for five weeks.[119] His article opened by stating how many uniforms were present. Whilst he said that the wearers were not often very imposing themselves, the uniforms were 'resplendent and a trifle intimidating to the democrat'. He went on to describe the progression from youth organisations to conscripted service to party paramilitary branches, leaving little time for the individual outside the control of the state. Foulkes noted that the German people were not entirely supportive of these organisations, however, describing how the upper classes disliked them while the masses supported them as a means to rise in social standing. The racial elements of Nazi policy were also described, with shops stating the racial purity of their owners and other places 'often unwillingly' displaying notices banning Jewish people. Foulkes further described the pageantry of Nazism, describing the significance of parades and the Nazi salute. He also described an experience of the Nazi justice system, with a friend of his hostess having just returned from prison. However, Foulkes did try to provide a balance, stating that the German nation was experiencing economic growth, but contrasted this with what he suspected was a lack of intellectual and cultural growth. Foulkes' account emphasised how the Nazi party has permeated all levels of German society, but also the resistance to it. Weiser's call to separate Nazism from Germany appears to have been heeded, to the extent that Foulkes was able to see some places resentfully

---

[119] 'Germany 1937', *Gresham*, 17, no. 07, October 1937, 126–27.

complying with Nazi racial laws. Even in the notes on the uniforms' role of imposing Nazism on society Foulkes was able to separate, in his mind, the German from his Nazi uniform.

N. L. Eckersley experienced both Italian fascism and the expansionist policies of Nazi Germany with a trip to Austria and Italy in 1938.[120] Eckersley also appeared to separate the different strands of fascism and Nazism and Germany, when he opened his report stating that he visited 'the Greater German Reich … and saw, for myself, the outcome of the Nazi regime. Later, I travelled in Italy, which afforded a favourable comparison to the present Germanised Austria'. His host family in Salzburg were reportedly opposed to Anschluss, but the town itself was holding a festival and Nazi regalia was overbearing. The pageantry of Nazism was evident to Eckersley, but also how this was a cover, and the residents were apparently very much opposed. The disruption to daily life brought about by the expansion of the Nazi Reich was clearly seen and, like Foulkes, Eckersley was able to separate the Nazism from the people subjected to it. His view of Italian fascism was much more positive. He described a happy and cheerful people and Rome as a 'triumph of town planning' and limited, accident-free traffic. He noted the symbols of fascism in the form of new buildings and public works again. This pageantry is, however, seen less as an overcoating like in Austria but part of the fabric of Italy.

Travel reports were not unusual features of the *Gresham*. These reports could be seen as both conforming to and deviating from the norm with their cultural analysis. Whilst accounts of foreign countries would describe the local culture and people; Foulkes' and Eckersley's accounts emphasise the political elements of fascist culture. The pervasiveness of Nazism would have made this unavoidable. Both boys, however, highlight how the populace received this new culture in a way that would have been novel and interesting to readers. These two boys' experiences in fascist countries recall the appeal for international friendships that survived the decline of the League of Nations Union. There is no hostility to the people of Austria or Germany and support of them in their dislike of the Nazi regime. Weiser's message

---

[120] 'Austria and Italy, 1938', *Gresham*, 18, no. 01, October 1938, 5–6.

of distinguishing between the party and the people was not isolated from the wider idea of international friendships being a way to overcome national divisions. These boys' holiday experiences clearly show how this was possible even under the most extreme of circumstances. By staying with host families, they received, and took good advantage of, personal experiences of those living under fascism. They also shed light on the elements of Nazism that clearly made it stand out from others. The pervasiveness of Nazi culture in trying to impose itself on Germany is much clearer than Italian fascism, where there was a greater emphasis on integration with existing Italian culture, both through the monarchy and the Catholic Church. The boys' ability to distinguish the importance of symbolism and pageantry to the Nazi's efforts to subvert normal life to the party suggests an understanding of how fascism functioned to subvert the normal state.

Harrovians were also given an account of life under fascism, this time from a member of staff, Mr E. D. Gannon. Gannon visited Nationalist Spain. He reported his findings in a lecture to the '27 Club on 29th January 1939.[121] His visit occurred during the Catalonia offensive in the winter of 1938-1939, although no specific dates are given other than it being the school holidays. Gannon stated that he chose Nationalist Spain because he 'did not wish to starve or be bombed'. He noted that there was economic activity in the towns he visited and described Spaniards as hostile to Britain and France and favourable to Italy and Germany due to which side each was helping. Gannon visited the front and claimed to have seen the Nationalists treating the prisoners kindly as part of their programme of conciliation. This would support the view seen in the debate on the Spanish civil war where atrocities were seen as left-wing propaganda. Gannon's favourable view of Nationalists economic and military policies suggests support for the fascist system in Spain. Whilst the Spanish civil war had factions in both sides of the conflict, Gannon's description suggests a more united Nationalist front, set on uniting the whole country. He also appears to praise Italian efforts to rebuild Spain, describing their work on infrastructure and 'came to appreciate the work done by Italians in traffic control'. Gannon's views aligned with the pro-Franco views seen in the

[121] '27 Club', *Harrovian*, 52, no. 15, January 1939, 58.

previous year's debate on the Spanish civil war, suggesting a consistent approach amongst a segment of the school. Gannon does not comment on the Republican factions' politics. However, his praise of Franco's forces, as well as the Italian involvement, suggest a favourable view of Italian and Spanish fascism.

Boys' situational responses to fascism highlight the important role of ideologies in conflicts during the 1930s. Fascism, as an ideology, was not necessarily seen as a negative. Boys approved of fascist leaders abroad if they held popular support or were fighting communism. However, when it directly challenged British democracy, their popularity amongst boys dropped significantly. Where they were well established or demonstrated support (or concealed resistance) from the populace, it was seen as a legitimate political system. The contrasting views between authoritarian and fascist regimes and Nazism make this clear. At Harrow, boys supported Franco's regime, yet when discussing the removal of tyrants, boys had to be dissuaded from spending the entire debate plotting Hitler's assassination. This may reflect in part on the speeches which emphasised how dictatorships were dependent on one person, and the view of Hitler personally may have been less favourable. However, the acceptance of fascism or dictatorships as a viable solution to crises in other countries can be seen in both lectures and debates. This suggests that far-right ideologies had gained a level of legitimacy within both Gresham's and Harrow. However, the idea of a fascist regime for Britain was frequently rejected unless it was a counter to a left-wing revolution.

One element which has been touched on but is worth exploring in a little more depth is the importance of youth to radical ideologies. This is primarily apparent with fascism at Gresham's. On 9th December 1933 N. R. C. Cohn, a former pupil at Gresham's, gave the boys a lecture entitled 'Germany and War'. He opens by criticizing the failure to reassess the Versailles treaty. He then moved on to discuss Germany following the war, the loss of all social structure with the removal of the Kaiser, the military and disruptions to daily life. He argued that the resulting conflict between left and right to create a new society had given Hitler his opportunity and that the immorality of the socially unstable Weimar Germany had seen the appeal of 'Hitler, a vegetarian, a teetotaller and a non-smoker' and his uniformed SA and SS.

This, he argued, resulted in a 'child-like' faith in Hitler and the Nazis as an orderly model which a new society had formed around.[122] Herr von Graefe, a judge in Berlin, delivered the lecture on Nazi youth groups in 1935 which caused Garland's outraged response and subsequent debate mentioned above.[123] Graefe had claimed that they were not militaristic 'but it is merely that discipline, order and distinction are necessary, and also there is the German spirit of flags, uniforms and order which always prevails'. Garland's response was gravely concerned that such a view was allowed into the school, partly being the antithesis of its liberal aims, but also due to being targeted at young boys.[124] Mosseri, the boy who had studied in Italy, had first-hand experience of how fascist education 'had endeavoured to corrupt his opinions'.[125] All these views suggest that education was seen as a key part of how fascists reformed society which would support them in the long term. Education for the electorate had long been a popular topic at both schools, and the importance of it to dictators was not missed.

At Harrow, the solution put forward to '27 Club by Mr St. John Ervine was to banish the youth from politics, much to the opposition of the boys.[126] Ervine proposed to limit the franchise to those between twenty-eight and sixty-five years old. His primary motivation appeared to have been to limit support for left-wing movements. He argued that youth movement under patronage of Shaw and Wells had sprung up following Boer War and led to a reaction to the First World War of 'the old made the war, the young died in it' as unjustified. The specific mention of left-wing writers and their appeal to youth during a rise in student activism make clear his opposition to socialism. His views were not popular at Harrow, despite the boys' opposition to socialism. The reporter suggests that the speaker may 'have felt chagrined by the friendly welcome and the fact that he was able to leave the hall with his coat still intact', suggesting quite a negative response to his proposals, even if he himself was welcomed.

---

[122] 'Lecture: Germany and War', *Gresham*, 15, no. 09, February 1934, 181–82.

[123] 'Lecture: German Youth Movements', *Gresham*, April 1935, 61–62.

[124] 'Correspondence', *Gresham*, June 1935, 89.

[125] 'Debating Society', *Gresham*, April 1939, 59.

[126] '27 Club', *Harrovian*, December 1933, 183.

Conclusion

There was no great revolutionary moment that inspired boys at either school to push for radical reforms to society. Instead, the General Strike enabled these conversations to begin. It saw a push for new ways to engage with politics as well as new ideas. These ideas quickly saw moderation as any sense of revolution had passed. Boys at both schools were aware of the destabilisation of the political status quo both nationally and internationally. Their responses differed, however. At Gresham's a segment of the school explored radical new ideas. At Harrow moderation, reflecting the school's response to the General Strike, led to boys exploring ideas that would be form part of the post-war settlement. At both schools, this period reflects the shift from the start of the century when Britain and its policies were considered the model for the world to one where change was possible, and to some desirable.

At neither school did a majority consistently support an extreme ideology. Instead, however, there was a consistent opposition to radical change at either school. This was particularly true of Harrovians. They were tolerant of authoritarianism as a response to radicalism and threats to the status quo. However, they did not see radicalism in Britain as particularly threatening. In foreign countries, boys saw dictatorships as a necessary step in restoring order. This also suggests, as was often put forward in debates, that dictators were seen as temporary figures. This supports the idea put forward by Williamson that anti-fascism was the preserve of direct action from the left. Instead, a significant feature of conservative and liberal politics was the preservation of the existing system against both the left and right extremes. This did not always oppose change, but it was only accepted within the existing framework. This political conservatism in the public schools increases our understanding of the failure of the British Union of Fascists in recruiting from the public schools.

At Gresham's, the use of political philosophy, primarily Marxism, is significant. Boys' past engagements with politics had been on issues and policies. The use of language and intellectual arguments for an ideology was a significant change. It

demonstrates a committed, if minority, group that had aligned themselves with a new way of thinking that combined ideology and identity. This was part of a wider trend amongst intellectuals and elites in British society. Whilst associations such as the Bloomsbury Group were significant, they were not unique. Within Gresham's, a left-wing clique was able to form.

This chapter also demonstrates the importance of considering the whole life in politics. Associational culture in the public schools was able to foster radical views alongside traditional ones. This chapter demonstrates the importance of considering the whole life of an individual. Personal and political relationships between boys with similar radical views were able to be fostered through associational culture. Brewis' statement that 'Many students arrived at university from school ripe for recruitment to the Communist Cause' in the 1930s can certainly be applied to Gresham's.[127] They had already developed the language and had friends with similar views. The left-wing clique at Gresham's went on to supply universities with a connected group of student activists. The next chapter will explore this group's activities.

[127] Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering*, 91.

Chapter 8: Boys' contributions to late interwar political culture 1926-1939

Pupils' participation in political activities was nothing new to either Harrow or Gresham's. However, pupils were far more active in their participation in political activities during the late interwar period. Previous chapters have focused on how boys explored contemporary political issues. This chapter will demonstrate how they could create their own political material and campaigns. Boys' participation in the cultural aspects of politics was not novel; the late interwar period saw them taking a more active role, particularly in forming new outlets for politics. Previous school campaigns, such as writing letters about the laundry service at Harrow in 1899, had been rare and engaged less with real political issues.[1] Debating societies and the school magazines were formal parts of wider public school culture, and even the newer societies such as the Sociological Society and the '27 Club were not novel in how they functioned. The increase in creative works that addressed political issues in this period, however, reflects a new way in which boys engaged in politics.

Youths' creation of literature has been explored, particularly for the second half of the nineteenth century. Sloan has noted how self-guided reading was seen as beneficial and influenced pupils' literary creations at one school.[2] Boys' literature being derivative of more popular media is certainly seen in the cases in this section. Hilliard has noted that a middle-class public school background opened up the possibility to become a writer by removing economic constraints.[3] This advantage may have encouraged boys to pursue the potential of a career in a creative field. He also highlighted the cultural efforts of anti-fascism, which is apparent in some of the literature produced at Gresham's.[4] Whilst not from working-class backgrounds, the

---

[1] See chapter 3, p. 93

[2] Sloan, 'Periodicals of an Objectionable Character', *Victorian Periodicals Review*.

[3] Christopher Hilliard, *To Exercise Our Talents: The Democratization of Writing in Britain* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 3–4.

[4] Hilliard, *To Exercise Our Talents*, 6.

more radical writers would perhaps have liked to position themselves as aligned with the working classes. The creation of literature in public schools during this period was motivated by political aims as well as being a leisure activity. This growth of public school boys' creative works and the changing tone should be seen not as separate from the wider histories of working-class interwar writing, but alongside it.

Literary contributions had featured in both schools' magazines throughout their publication history. Youth contributions had even featured in columns in regional newspapers in the in the nineteenth and twentieth century.[5] These had been both prose and poetry and did, on occasion, contain political elements. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, however, literary contributions became more regular and eventually featured in independent school publications of their own. The content of the literature produced by the boys also began to challenge political, social and cultural norms. At Harrow, the 1928 and 1929 issues of the *Harrovian* included voluminous supplements of literary contributions. At Gresham's, a magazine, the *Grasshopper*, was created by the literature society, which ran from 1929 until after the Second World War. The contributions to the *Grasshopper* varied and the majority of political pieces were written during the earlier 1930s.

The use of fictional literature allowed pupils to explore ideas beyond conventional politics. Boys used science fiction to write about the consequences of imagined wars and advanced technologies that fundamentally altered the world. Mythology gave characters traits with which boys would be familiar. Most important is the use of satire and parody. Ridicule and comedy played a prominent role in some of the pieces written by boys, particularly when they challenged existing social hierarchies. The use of satire demonstrates not just a creative style, but also a knowledge that their work contained a political aspect. By using comedy, boys could make political points that would reach a wider audience and greater acceptance. In highlighting what they saw as the absurdities through comedy, boys may have had more freedom to be critical of topics relating to the school.

---

[5] Pooley, 'Children's Writing', *History Workshop Journal*, 77–78.

Boys wrote on the political and social concerns seen in the previous chapter, particularly on the idea of a revolution. The creative works produced reflected the views of some already seen at each school. At Gresham's, the socialist views supported by a notable minority who wrote stories that supported the idea of an upheaval of society. A concern over revolution is visible in work produced at Harrow. The debate over intervention and pacifism spread into literary works as well. The radical socialist cadre at Gresham's went on to be significant figures in the history of British communism. This chapter will demonstrate how the expanded media coverage allowed boys more space to express their ideas on pressing subjects.

1. Norwood and Harrow

Boys and staff challenged traditions and social and political hierarchies at Harrow. The questions over the power structures at Harrow were not just a school issue, however, but reflected wider concerns over democracy and the power of the state. McKibbin's characterisation of the middle class as being divided between the older, Edwardian culture in the early 1920s and the modern, 1930s middle class is a useful tool for examining the conflict.[6] McKibbin's argument that the later interwar middle classes were less hostile to collective democracy and centralisation of the state can be seen in the way in which the school adopted rugby football. Both school and sports drew a wider interest from boys. This conflict reflected wider constitutional disputes of the interwar period at a school level. The seemingly simple act of changing the sports played at Harrow brought in issues that mirrored the centralisation of state power, the dispute between representative and popular democracy and manipulation of the electorate.

At Harrow, the familiar territory of school politics was brought to the attention of the national press following the arrival of Cyril Norwood as headmaster in 1926. Norwood was not from an upper-class background, and in his rise through the public school system he had encountered snobbery and resistance.[7] Despite this Norwood

---

[6] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 68–69.

[7] McCulloch, *Norwood and the Ideal of Secondary Education*, 43–90.

strongly supported many of the systems and structures that made up Arnoldian public school culture, and espoused his support for these in his 1929 book, *The English Tradition of Education*.[8] His position as an outsider able to introduce reforms led to the headmaster of Eton recommending he take the post at Harrow.[9] Norwood had yet to begin reforming the power structures within the school, however, when an anonymous contribution to the Harrovian made him out to be a dictator:

> It is fitting that we should give a respectful salute to the new autocrat who orders our comings and goings. Like his predecessors His Majesty is simply bubbling over with detailed information, only more so, and with it all he contrives to be trifle more explicit: like them, and like the mules in the Iliad, he goes uphill and downhill and sideways and across, but preferring the two latter movements he has become broader than he is long, though not less stately on that account. An authority, who merely tells you who is who, is put hopelessly into the shade by one adding in a moment all information about where is what and when is which.[10]

Norwood's first reform, begun as soon as he arrived, was one that faced a remarkably strong backlash: the adoption of rugby football. Norwood both used and subverted Harrow's existing systems to push through his reforms. Firstly, he had the Philathletic Club, a pupil-run body nominally in charge of all sporting matters, vote on the reform. When the Philathletic Club voted against rugby, he sought the support of masters and current and former pupils, culminating in a school-wide referendum that came out in favour of the change.[11] The sports timetable was adjusted, having Harrow football up until Founder's Day in October, followed by rugby football, and then Harrow football returned for the Lent term. Harrow football would continue,

---

[8] Norwood, *English Tradition of Education*; McCulloch, *Norwood and the Ideal of Secondary Education*, 79, 81–82.

[9] Norwood, *English Tradition of Education*, 91–95.

[10] 'Worksanddays' *Harrovian*, 39, no. 7, November 1926, 107.

[11] 'Philathletic News' *Harrovian*, 39, no. 8, December 1926, 121.

whilst association football was dropped. Despite this, many saw the reforms as an assault on both Harrow's football and traditional pupil and staff autonomy.

Much of the debate over timings focused on the impact of weather and soil conditions on the viability of the games. Harrow football, an eleven a side game played with a uniquely shaped ball, had a similar purpose within the schools as rugby and association football. The game was seen to hold the same benefits as other team sports: building character, teamwork and sacrifice. This meant that opposition to the change was not about the educational, physical or technical benefits of the differing sports. Tyerman, in his history of the school, sees this change not just a reform of school sports but as part of Norwood's modernisation of the school.[12] Not only did it bring Harrow more in line with the rest of the public school sports community but positioned Norwood against the more traditionalist masters. Most notable of these was G. C. Pope, an Old Harrovian, and current housemaster. By the end of the conflict Pope had left the school, officially resigning, but Tyerman claimed that he was sacked.

The referendum of the whole school did not settle the matter, however. A group of Old Harrovians, masters and pupils launched a letter-writing campaign in the *Harrovian* and *The Times* against the change and, by association, Norwood. The leading protest in *The Times* was more committed than a letter to the editor. An anonymous Old Harrovian took out a personal advert and P.O. box in the Saturday 11th December 1926 issue, calling for others to send in postcards against the change.[13] By taking on the expense of an advert and P.O. box in a national newspaper, the strength of feeling about football, at least from the advertiser, and the school's culture and traditions, is obvious. The writer also makes this about the headmaster, placing the decision squarely on him despite the referendum. A more balanced report was published in the arts and sports section. It stated that it was the headmaster's proposal but approved by the school and challenged the claims over

[12] Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School*, 472–74.

[13] 'Harrow Football', *The Times*, 11 December 1926, 44452 edition, sec. Personal, 1.

the soil. It also defended the adoption of rugby as a means for Harrow to play matches against other schools, something that was indisputable.[14]

This did not, however, appear to dampen moods and by Monday both a governor, Colonel F. S. Jackson, and Norwood himself had written to *The Times*. Jackson was an Old Harrovian, former cricketer, M.P., chairman of the Conservative Party and president of the Marylebone Cricket Club, and was to take up the governorship of Bengal in 1927.[15] Despite his other, and arguably more important duties, he felt the need to write his one and only letter to *The Times* to reassure the public that the soil conditions would be considered but that the governors were open to playing both Harrow and rugby football, as well as praising the role of house matches and competition.[16] Norwood responded with a letter defending the change, emphasising support from Harrovians past and present, as well as the referendum. He did not hold back from challenging those opposed to rugby, criticising them for refusing to let the school experiment and change.[17] Old Harrovians wrote further letters for and against the change, including G.C. Pope.[18]

The level of interest in the change displayed in *The Times* only shows a small part of the reaction. The correspondence pages of the *Harrovian* demonstrate an even greater depth of feeling. Both sides played on tradition during the conflict. Those opposed to rugby regularly expressed fears that Harrow football would cease to be played, despite the reforms removing association football to create space for the

---

[14] 'Harrow Football: A Change to Rugby Rules', *The Times*, 11 December 1926, 44452 edition, sec. Arts and Sports, 15.

[15] Das Suranjan, 'Jackson, Sir (Francis) Stanley (1870–1947), Cricketer and Politician', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 6 January 2011).

[16] Colonel F. S. Jackson, 'Football at Harrow: Colonel F. S. Jackson on Proposed Change', *The Times*, 13 December 1926, 44453 edition, 6.

[17] Cyril Norwood, 'Harrow Football: To the Editor of The Times', *The Times*, 13 December 1926, 44453 edition, 15.

[18] R. L. Holdsworth, 'To the Editor of The Times', *The Times*, 14 December 1926, 44454 edition, sec. Opinion and Editorial, 10; G. C Pope, 'Points from Letters', *The Times*, 15 December 1926, 44455 edition, sec. Opinion and Editorial, 12.

Harrow game. Two letters detailed a series of other traditions that the writers considered under threat, including the relationship between Old Harrovians and the school, the house system and school songs, particularly '40 Years On'.[19] This was countered, however, in a letter which suggested that rather than enforcing traditions, they should be brought up to date.[20] The writer cited the song 'Five Hundred Faces', a reference to the number of pupils in the school, with the suggestion that either numbers become limited to five-hundred or, preferably, the song be changed. Norwood was not oblivious to the political fallout and created a new school song, 'The Song of the Forwards', to help ease the adoption of rugby football.[21]

Most significant is the conflict between Pope and Norwood. Whilst Pope's letter in *The Times* was relatively short, his correspondence in the *Harrovian* shows a significant power struggle taking place within the school.[22] In it, he refuted allegations that he tried to manipulate members of the Philathletic Club, particularly those in his own house while accusing Norwood of unleashing a propaganda campaign in the run-up to the referendum. He even went so far as to insinuate that Norwood may have chosen the timing of the referendum to maximise support for rugby, although claims he was not accusing Norwood of anything. Such a public conflict between a headmaster and housemaster would be significant on its own. The added context of Norwood being an outsider and Pope being an Old Harrovian mirrors the conflict between the school's own sport versus a more universal one. Pope's criticism of the change alludes to this being an attempt to open up Harrow to more outsiders, saying that the change is unlikely to lead to an influx of 'boys from rugby-specialist schools (even if it was desired on both sides)'.[23] This adds to the notion that this was a rift between a pre-war exclusive society, where only a few were allowed to make decisions, and a post-war one of a universal franchise and less deference between classes.

---

[19] 'Correspondence' *Harrovian*, December 1926, 133, 135.

[20] 'Correspondence' *Harrovian*, December 1926, 134.

[21] Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School*, 472.

[22] 'Correspondence' *Harrovian*, December 1926, 132–33.

[23] 'Correspondence' *Harrovian*, December 1926, 133.

'A member of the school' used an anonymous letter which demonstrated how opposition to outsiders was part of the resistance to the change. He accused the masters in favour of rugby as having never played Harrow football, and the pupil vote as being dominated by younger boys who did not know the game well enough to see its merit.[24] Equally important is that this pupil saw the bypassing of the Philathletic Club's vote as a challenge to boy-rule in school matters. This observation certainly supports Tyerman's view that this was the beginning of a wider centralisation of powers in the hands of the headmaster away from not only the housemasters but also the pupils.

Whilst these arguments are focused on reform within the school, they reflect a wider question of how boys and staff felt democracy should function. The contribution quoted in full on page 266 shows the hostility towards an authoritarian headmaster. The overriding of the Philathletic Club's vote by a plebiscite is a mico example of the debates seen over the alternatives to parliamentary democracy. Pope's letter to *The Times* compares the school vote to the miners' vote, questioning how representative it truly was.[25] Whilst it was not directly alluded to in the letter campaign, the conflict between popular and representative democracy that was seen in debates at Gresham's in the previous chapter is certainly present at Harrow. Questions over the suitability of referenda as a tool for reform is obvious. However, there were also questions about the suitability of the electors. The anonymous Harrovian criticised those who voted in favour of rugby as not knowing what they were voting on. This reflects opinions in previous debates over the expansion of the franchise. In those debates, and those on education, the importance of an educated electorate to make democracy work was frequently seen as a necessity. In the conflict over football, the anonymous boy did not deem this to be the case. Pope's accusation of Norwood using propaganda mirrors debates where boys accused the press of misleading the electorate. These were not new accusations but were usually levelled by boys at the wider public, rather than a master at his charges.

---

[24] 'Correspondence' *Harrovian*, December 1926, 135.

[25] Pope, 'Points from Letters', *The Times*, 12.

The popularity of school issues, alongside Harrow's tradition of boy governance of sports, made this an excellent opportunity for active participation in politics. The lacklustre performance of the debating society during this period is not an indication that boys were unwilling to participate in politics. Instead, political energies were being turned towards issues which directly affected the boys.

2. Literary culture

Both school magazines had included literary contributions throughout their publication history. These had appeared irregularly and were often connected to formal schoolwork, such as prize poems and essays.[26] The end of the 1920s, however, saw a more vigorous effort to engage with popular literary culture. The literature society at Gresham's experimented with both prose and poem in their magazine, the *Grasshopper*. It described itself as a 'cheerful insect, inclined to rashness, a little garrulous, imbued with a pleasant sense of his own importance, but altogether a well-meaning and law-abiding citizen' in its first issue in 1929.[27] The *Grasshopper* contained both political and apolitical stories, including obviously satirical pieces. Contemporary science-fiction's influence is also clear in some stories. At Harrow, there was a significant increase in literary contributions to the *Harrovian*. This was only formalised once in a supplement in 1929; however, an increasing number of pages were given over to literary contributions throughout the 1930s compared to previous years. There was also an effort to allow aspiring poets more space through the creation of the *Gate* in 1931. This new literary magazine aimed to 'preserve the Public School Muse from strangling herself in the welter of House Matches and letters from Old Boys'.[28]

McKibbin has argued that the later interwar period saw a change in middle-class reading tastes and the content of middle-brow literature. This could help explain the expansion of schoolboy writings, as whilst the boys themselves may not have been middle class, particularly at Harrow, they would likely have been exposed to

---

[26] See chapter 3, p. 126.

[27] 'Editorial', *Grasshopper*, no. 1, 1929, 5.

[28] 'The Gate', *Harrovian*, 44, no. 01, February 1931, 13.

literature targeted at the middle classes. He argued that the middle classes were less concerned over social hierarchies and were more in favour of progressive social change, as well as literature that reflected this.[29] Particularly relevant to school boys is McKibbin's and others' argument that modern education was enabling a view that scientific advances could lead towards something approaching utopia.[30] Other historians have countered this view of literature's optimism about the future, particularly in science fiction where the progress leads towards a dystopia, often tying in the contemporary science of eugenics.[31] Claeys holds Huxley up as the most prominent English author who engaged with this vision of a materialistic authoritarian society created by genetics, psychology and drugs. He argued that Huxley's criticism is of modern technical societies drive for peace at the expense of people's humanity.[32] One boy referenced Huxley's writings on India in a review of travel literature at Harrow, and boys at Gresham's received a lecture on writing novels where Huxley was discussed.[33] Huxley, in particular, was clearly seen as part of boys' reading habits during the late interwar period, and other science fiction authors were also likely to have been read.

This explosion of schoolboy literary culture does not have a single, clear explanation. One story seen in the next section suggests that there was a change in the culture at Harrow away from sports towards a more academic focus. This would align with the aim of the *Gate*. Another poem in the Harrovian suggests that boys wanted their own voices to be heard. One poet mocked the claims put forward about youths in a letter in *The Times*. His concluding verse, however, is where his views on the author come out: 'Who, gazing through a vapour // At forty years ago, // Take pens, and ink, and paper, And write as men who know!' The author made a specific reference to Harrow

---

[29] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 483–85.

[30] Peter Fitting, 'Utopia, Dystopia and Science Fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6.

[31] Gregory Claeys, 'The Origins of Dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell', in *Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6–8.

[32] Claeys, 'Origins of Dystopia', in *Utopian Literature*, 9–12.

[33] Shell, 'Travel and Travel Books' *Harrovian*, April 1930, 43; 'Lectures: Writing Novels' *Gresham*, December 1931, 134.

with forty years, given its corresponding Harrow school song of ‘Forty Years On’. He is perhaps not challenging the traditions of Harrow but is certainly questioning the right of those long since gone to claim intimate knowledge of current goings-on. Writing also gave boys greater freedom to express their ideas in depth. Debates, by their very nature, are confrontational and require responding to and countering others’ points with little time to reflect on them. By writing, boys were in control of the issue, allowing greater freedom to express their own views. Societies, run at least nominally by boys, establishing magazines edited by boys ostensibly filled with fictional content for entertainment would have allowed significant freedom. Norwood had suppressed a parody of the school magazine whilst headmaster at Marlborough, and his arrival at Harrow would have meant freedom of the press would not have been absolute.[34] By branding them as works of fiction, the stories produced during the 1930s could have given the boys greater liberty to be critical of their own society. This expansion of school boys’ production of literature reflects new styles of writing but also new reasons for writing not seen in the pre-war and early interwar period, in the form of acceptance of social change and a desire to avoid a modern, totalitarian dystopia.

Challenging class, social and political structures

The increasing ambivalence towards loosening social hierarchies that McKibbin argued had spread amongst the middle classes can be seen at both schools, unsurprisingly more at Gresham’s than at Harrow. There was also some resistance to this, with support for traditions continuing at both schools. However, rank no longer guaranteed deference and instead was increasingly seen as having to be earned. Elements of middle and upper-class culture were particularly open to challenge, perhaps because they were more easily ridiculed as unnecessary pageantry. This included the ceremonial aspect of hunting, as well as school-specific features such as sporting titles. As has been seen previously, Harrovians’ concerns focused more inwards towards school culture, whilst Greshamians turned their attention more outwards. These pieces often examine themes seen in both earlier interwar and pre-war debates. Alternative forms of society began to be put forward,

---

[34] McCulloch, *Norwood and the Ideal of Secondary Education*, 85–86.

however, as well as how they might be brought about. The way this would happen is often vague, but it is clear that change was now seen as a real possibility rather than something to merely hope would happen. Previous debates had focused more on whether existing structures were functioning. The proposal of alternatives reflects a wider sense that a societal change was probable rather than just possible.

At Harrow, an earlier piece from 1926 on this theme targeted the schoolboy's traditional enemy: the master. An anonymous writer created a song in the style of W. S. Gilbert for a fictional society for pushing people off pedestals.[35] The opening explanation claims Frank Roscoe, lecturer in education at the University of Birmingham, proposed the society at a teacher training course when he suggested teachers should be less pompous. The writer decided to flex his creative muscles and create a song should anyone wish to found such a society. The writer states that the younger boys see teachers as prophets, and as he grew older he realised that they were merely authority figures on a pedestal. He goes on to argue that their pride is inflated by deference and that it is right to challenge their position. The writer did, however, seem to offer some warning of allowing any and all to have their opinion respected, stating that 'The work we do is jointly run // By men with brains and men with none, // So there's a chance for everyone, // For dunce as well as scholar'.[36] The author may be warning against mass democracy or communism. However, the idea of allowing everybody the right, or giving them the responsibility, to challenge those in a position of authority is certainly the stronger message of his song.

A piece of prose from 1938 shows how further changes were taking place to school culture at Harrow. Norwood's efforts to modernise the curriculum and limit the former power of pupils appeared to have taken root in a piece by 'Groise'.[37] In his 'plain tale from The Hill', the author describes a pupil working in his study, and worrying about his exam results whilst resenting his sporting commitments. The antagonist, a Blood (a prefect through sporting rank) in all the regalia of his rank, enters and criticises the student for working. The bell then rings, and a conflict starts when the student says

---

[35] 'Down with the Pedestals' *Harrovian*, 39, no. 6, October 1926, 94–95.

[36] 'Down with Pedestals!' *Harrovian*, October 1926, 95.

[37] Groise, 'Blood-Sports: A plain tale from The Hill', *Harrovian*, 51, no. 18, February 1938, 69.

he will be late for ‘Bill’, to which the Blood corrects him that it is called ‘School Yard’ and threatens him with violence for not knowing the correct term. As the Blood’s threats became more imminent, a master walks by and orders them both to get to Bill to avoid being late. The Blood is humiliated and left with the prospect of being powerless when the master threatens to remove his privileges. Both the student and the master then ignore the Blood’s protests. The author is describing what is still an elite setting, but no longer a unique and isolated culture, but a more modern educational system where staff controlled the power, and sports were no longer the primary path to success. The author of this piece seems to describe this as the new norm. Whilst this may be optimistic, it challenges the traditional powers of the sporting prefects, as well as the focus on an intellectual rather than general training to participate in elite culture and society.

One Harrovian was willing to challenge the broader culture of elite aristocracy in a short story on hunting.[38] The author of the piece tells the story of a vixen as both predator and prey. As a predator, she is hungry, had had an unsuccessful night’s hunt for a duck and eventually managed to catch a pheasant. The kill is quick and has a purpose: the fox needs to eat. In the second part, morning dawns and the fox is awoken by the sound of a hunting horn. The vixen runs, exhausted, trying to hide, but is eventually caught by the hounds and ripped apart. The huntsman arrives, holds up ‘all that is left of that which a short hour before enjoyed the over-brimming measure of life – a limp bloody thing, fit only to throw to the hounds’. Hunting had been a common topic of lectures at the school and was seen as a normal and healthy sporting pursuit. This challenge to the upper-class culture that Harrovians came from was more dramatic than the other pieces that questioned the education system.

At Gresham’s pupils’ literature envisioned changes in society at both a personal and a societal level. A tale of a sandwichman watching men going to work depicted the risk of rapid downward social mobility through alcoholism. The author revealed that the sandwichman is a former surgeon who killed a patient whilst drunk and has fallen

---

[38] Anonymous, ‘Literary Supplement: Prey’, *Harrovian*, April 1929, v–vi.

from a position of respect and lavish parties to destitution and envy of others.[39] This story drew on prohibition debates and is a rare example of support of the movement from within the public schools. Another story told of a modern world and city brought low by a natural disaster.[40] By destroying modern society, the author envisioned a new humanity no longer 'shackled to machines or politicians'. Again, this was not a new theme, criticism of modern modes of working and politicians were seen throughout the early twentieth-century public schools. This piece, however, envisions both the path to and structure (or lack thereof) of a future society. The author appeared to view a cataclysmic event as necessary and desirable to truly change society, but also that the current system is not permanent or inevitable.

At Gresham's, the *Grasshopper* published two pieces which challenged the culture and pageantry of the aristocracy. Peter Floud railed against modern hunting as a sport, comparing the hunter of 1929 B.C. with sixty 'gentlemen' hunting a fox in 1929 A.D.[41] Floud saw the prehistoric hunter as a heroic provider for his family whilst the modern hunter as the savage. Whilst hunting for sport, both in methods and practice, had been challenged before, the culture of the aristocratic hunt had not been as clearly criticised at Gresham's. An anonymous piece in 1937 directly challenged the role of the monarchy.[42] Presumably set during the coronation of George VI the author described a newspaper salesman who, whilst still a royalist, is angered by the cost of the ceremony when there was greater need elsewhere. He considered becoming a communist like his neighbour but remembers that the Coronation Committee is sending something for his youngest child, who is ill, and feels his royalist views justified. However, when the parcel arrives, it is only a mug and book about the King and Queen. The story ends, but the message is clearly against the monarchy, both the pageantry and expense and posits communism as a better alternative. Whilst this short story has a dystopian element, its direct tie into contemporary events cannot be ignored. The contrast between the ornamentation of the coronation and plight of the Jarrow March, and other hunger marches, is an

---

[39] D. D. M., 'The Sandwichmen', *Grasshopper*, no. 3, 1931, 17–19.

[40] R. H. B. M., 'While of Unsound Mind', *Grasshopper*, no. 5, 1933, 15–17.

[41] P. C. Floud, 'A Comparison', *Grasshopper*, no. 1, 1929, 27.

[42] Anonymous, 'Pomp and Circumstance', *Grasshopper*, no. 9, 1937, 8.

appeal to the reader to consider political alternatives. This radical criticism of the monarchy and call for a change in the political system is certainly a dramatic shift from the earlier interwar experimentation. Some boys were looking towards a fundamental shift in the form that the state should take rather than focusing on specific policies of parties.

Changes to how politics functioned were also discussed. In the short story 'Bird's Eye View' the Society of Man Watchers, a group of birds that observe humanity, are receiving a lecture from Sir Carrion Crow.[43] Carrion Crow argues that man is benign, but acknowledges the threat of some such as gamekeepers. He calls for humans to be preserved in sanctuaries known as cities, even if the population there is not entirely healthy. He is opposed by game birds, as they are always hunted, and urban birds who face population controls. The variety of human species are discussed. The gold crested king is in decline, being replaced by presidents, which are indistinguishable from the common politician or dictators of various coloured breasts. The Society of Man Watchers is concerned with modernism and urban life, which is not a new theme. The decline of kings appears to be lamented, as they are viewed as something unique and beautiful. Most significantly, the rise of dictators with various prominently displayed colours reflects the more polarised political landscape. The common politician appears as drab, yet the ideological dictators have bright colours that are a core part of what they are. This reflects the increasing emphasis on politics being part of a publicly displayed identity. This is not a new means of political description, but it does clearly demonstrate the shift away from the less ideologically committed 'common politician', towards the more fixed extreme ends of the political spectrum.

Opposition to significant change is not absent, and much of this criticism comes from Harrow. One parable appeared to criticise the more decadent and selfish aspects of capitalism.[44] The author describes a dream of a city lit not by the sun but, as his guide explains, by two giant candles, the 'Light of Prosperity' and 'the Light of

---

[43] A. R. W., 'Bird's Eye View', *Grasshopper*, no. 5, 1933, 12–15.

[44] 'A Vision of Charity', *Harrovian*, July 1933, 106–7.

Misery'. Each can only light certain aspects of the city, and the author says they can see only splendour as the Light of Prosperity is burning so brightly. His guide points out a small speck, Charity, climbing the light of prosperity to extinguish it. Once he has succeeded the author can see that the gold is dirty and the people dejected. He is targeting the boys of Harrow, who were raised in significantly greater wealth than many in London were. The author was not, however, calling for a total reorganisation of society but for greater efforts through the conventional solution of charity. The story reads similarly to appeals for the missionary movement and calls on boys to realise that misery, in the form of poverty and squalor, must be their first consideration. One more moderate writer contributed an opinion piece, 'At the feet of Janus'.[45] The author was directly addressing Harrovians by drawing on classical mythology. In his piece, he described how most men either look to the past with sentimentality or to an imagined future. Instead, he calls for men to look both ways, as Janus the two-faced god did. The author criticises rapid attempts at change, as well as those who cling to the past out of sentimentality, stating that 'New building must constantly be undertaken, but he who would build a new Jerusalem must not forget the foundation that is laid'. The author is undoubtedly aware of a need for change and progress, and in favour of it, and even pre-emptively uses a Labour slogan. However, he is also warning against too radical a change, particularly a revolution which would completely dismantle his contemporary society. This boy's piece, like the lectures and debates seen in the previous chapter, is calling for moderate changes akin to the post-war settlement of Attlee's 'New Jerusalem'.

Concerns over ideological conflict were present at both schools. R. H. S. published the 'Chorus of Adolescents' in the 1937 issue of the *Grasshopper*.[46] He used the song to decry how youth in the interwar period had been caught up in increasing political violence. He gave the victims of this violence a sense of martyrdom, however: 'Our fellow beings crucified on every kind of tree:// Unemployment, socialism, fascism, cruelties, suppressions'. R. H. S. separated the wider population from the political culture in a similar manner to the reports of boys who visited

---

[45] Anonymous, 'At the feet of Janus', *Harrovian*, October 1929, 130.

[46] R. H. S., 'Chorus of Adolescents', *Grasshopper*, no. 9, 1937.

Germany and Austria during the same period. Historical fiction was used by Harrovians to warn against revolutionary fervour. A boy imagined being present in eighteenth-century in his story of 'The Execution of Marie Antoinette' Paris. He envisioned being engulfed by the mob heading to see the execution.[47] He described the revolutionaries as savages, with mouths like 'a blood-stained cavity', 'bestial sights' and 'a leering rascal, with face all pox-marked'. He contrasted this with the supposed beauty of Marie Antoinette, which he says was enough to cause the mob a moment's hesitation, before her execution. The contrast between the savagery of the mob and its reaction to beauty suggests that the author views humans as being capable of appreciating beauty but also able to ignore it when they succumb to the fervour of a mob.

It is interesting that eugenics was not an explicit feature in any of the stories. Bland and Hall have highlighted the fact that the eugenics movement had supporters from both the left and right wing, as well as it being a particularly middle and upper-class movement.[48] This, combined with its regular presence in the science-fiction that influenced boys' writings, suggests that it could have featured in some of the stories, either as a positive or negative influence. A vague reference can be seen in a 1929 travel report with the 'hearty primitives' in a German fourth-class rail coach.[49] The topic of evolution was covered in a poem poking fun at those opposed to evolution in the Scopes Monkey Trial.[50] Race had been seen in earlier discussions of degeneracy and decline, as well as racialised arguments on imperial topics. However, at neither school did it feature as a formalised ideology aligned with the eugenics movement. There were no lectures at either school specifically promoting eugenics, but it would be improbable that boys had not been exposed to them in some form.

---

[47] 'The Execution of Marie Antoinette', *Harrovian*, 45, no. 8, December 1932, 216.

[48] Lucy Bland and Lesley Hall, 'Eugenics in Britain: The View from the Metropole', in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford Handbooks Online, 2010).

[49] 'Fourth Class', *Grasshopper*, no. 1, 1929, 20.

[50] J. G. B. B, 'Monkeys', *Grasshopper*, 26.

Both schools contained boys that wanted to see social change, although Harrovians were also much more cautious towards how to achieve this. Those in favour of social change are also remarkably inward-looking. This turn inwards could be considered a continuation of the broader trend seen in attitudes towards imperialism. As the earlier chapters showed, pre-war public school boys mostly viewed British imperialism as the model for all others, and this gave way to more sceptical views in the early interwar period. Boys at both schools were willing to criticise the symbolism of the British elite by the late interwar period. Sports, seen as an excellent addition to the imperial civil servant's curriculum vitae, was now seen as an archaic tradition that should be superseded by academic success. Hunting, a common way domestic life was linked to imperial life, is no longer a noble pursuit but a barbaric practice, behaviour imperialism claimed to prevent. Whilst not in a majority, these boys' willingness to challenge traditional social hierarchies certainly agrees with McKibbin's argument that some in the middle and upper classes were willing to accept social change. Literature is an excellent vessel for reflecting on their own society's practices, and boys' willingness to use it allowed them to explore their views in much more depth than the confrontational atmosphere of a debate.

Militarism

The First World War did not produce a complete rejection of war. Gregory demonstrated that attitudes towards war were more generally positive.[51] Many boys at Gresham's saw it as a tool which the League of Nations should use, particularly to counter expansionist fascist powers, a seen in the previous chapter. However, opposition to war had been growing. Some boys viewed war as purely destructive. Others saw it as a tool of capitalism to expand markets and opposed it on ideological grounds. Boys at both schools began to question the role of the military in society. The O.T.C. faced the majority of criticism, presumably due to boys' direct interactions with it. Near universal participation seen before the First World War was no longer expected. The ideological opposition to war also applied to the O.T.C. during this period. Pre-war discussion over the O.T.C. had focused primarily on

---

[51] Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 266–73.

whether it provided the supposed health benefits and martial training. However, the social and cultural impact of it has a martial youth group can now be seen as well.

The casual acceptance of the O.T.C and sports as part of a public school education was criticised at both schools. An anonymous poet at Harrow questioned the fundamental purpose of the O.T.C. In the poem, a boy has spent three years trying to find the reason for the existence of the Corp.[52] He ultimately received an answer from ‘the mighty HE who runs the Rifle Corp.’ that it is not training for war, and is useless for that, it ensures funds for the rifle store. However, the main reason for its existence is because it is now a tradition. The author concluded that ‘Oh! The H.S.O.T.C., ‘tis a wondrous sight to see, //Though in battle ‘twould prove anything but grand! // How we tingle, how we thrill // At the thought of Friday’s drill! // How we revel when the Ansell (military rule book) is at hand!’. By refuting the O.T.C.’s educational value as well as its position within the school, the author took a radical view for a Harrovian. There was also a subtle criticism of the arms trade in the comment that it provides funds for the rifle store. Disarmament was rarely seen as worth discussing by Harrovian, and this line may have been the author’s attempt to put forward an ostracised view. An outright polemic against the arms trade may have resulted in rejection from the paper or school society. By allowing the boys to laugh at a master, however, the author was able to disarm the issue. This poem resonates with the one published during the General Strike, where the O.T.C., whilst not a real military force, is presented as a timeless tradition of Harrow.[53] Unlike previous discussions, this author did not suggest that it provides physical or moral education, and instead saw it as a ceremonial tradition that costs the school money.

Pieces for and against the O.T.C. appeared in the 1937 issue of the *Grasshopper* at Gresham’s. H. R. A. M.’s essay argued against the current system of both games and the O.T.C.[54] The author saw positives in games as both exercise and recreation. Where he saw the flaw in games is the emphasis on ‘Team Spirit’, which should mean co-operation, but all too often is ‘Totalitarian Team Spirit’. He defended the

---

[52] ‘Born 1854 - Still Going Strong’, *Harrovian*, 39, no. 2, April 1926, 25.

[53] ‘Strike Duty’, *Harrovian*, May 1926, 41.

[54] H. R. A. M., ‘Games: A Criticism’, *Grasshopper*, no. 9, 1937, 11–13.

basis of team games by saying co-operative team spirit is urgently needed in the world at that time. The authoritarian nature of contemporaneous team spirit is seen as being much more forceful in the O.T.C., where he claimed that the leadership training is only suitable for the Army or the British Union of Fascists, while the exercise provided was poor and not suitable for school boys. The author tied political ideologies directly into the contents of the school's curriculum, both the support of promoting cooperation for international solidarity whilst opposing conditioning the boys to accept totalitarianism. H. R. A. M. also argued that the compulsory nature of games took the recreational aspect out of them and called for a reform of the games system. H. R. A. M. was not just challenging the perpetuation of tradition, but also the ideological impact of school culture. The focus on ideology rather than practice reflects a wider trend amongst some of the boys at Gresham's seen during the 1930s.

P. H. S. opposed this in his piece 'Pacifism', where he intended to explore both the role of the O.T.C. and the school's view of it.[55] He argued that not joining is the easy option and that the alternative, the manual labour corp., has more comfortable uniforms, better activities and a more enjoyable camp. He criticised those who abstained from calling members of the O.T.C. militarists. The author argued that joining is the better choice, not just from an educational standpoint, but also a moral one. He argued that the issues facing the world need action and that pacifism would only be morally sound if man can be 'like Christ'. P. H. S. appeared to be in support of military action rather than militarism, reflecting the views of the League of Nations Union. Published around the time of the opening of the Japanese invasion of China, and with many calls in Britain to oppose Japan's expansion, P. H. S. would not have been making his arguments in a political vacuum. Rather than opposing military action, the author, like the Union, called for military intervention as a moral requirement to ensure world peace. Boys' contrasting views on militarism and authoritarianism reflect views on interventionism and the League of Nations. However, they both reflect a change in the debate over the role of the O.T.C. It is no longer focused on the defence of the nation in a traditional military conflict, but of an

---

[55] P. H. S., 'Pacifism', *Grasshopper*, no. 9, 1937, 20–22.

ideological one. Both see the threat of authoritarian regimes, yet they differed on whether the threat comes from internal or external groups.

The role of technology and the military also re-emerged. Pre-war fiction for boys contained visions of new technology and machines saving the Empire J. G. B. B. imagined how a future war could be fought was far more pessimistic.[56] His vision, however, reflects the science fiction of the late interwar period. His story described a distant future after the 'Last of Wars' between the Two Americas and the Sino-Eurasian Government which 'like most wars, was hardly justified by its origin'. It began after a kidnapping and failure of diplomacy and resulted in total annihilation through constant fighting and gas warfare. In a six month truce, the President of Two Americas toured the world, seeing nothing but destruction and a few remaining indigenous peoples. Ultimately he finds a survivor at the American State Laboratories in Salt Lake City. The survivor is a German professor, and he has produced a chemical capable of destroying all life. The president orders the reluctant professor to produce enough for the whole world. Upon its release, the professor freezes himself in his laboratory for two thousand years. When he emerges, he sees nothing but desolation, and the gas, still lingering, kills him. J. G. B. B.'s piece has distinct similarities to his contemporary professional science fiction authors, with global governments, reluctant scientists and catastrophic consequences; their influence on him is evident. Whilst pre-war attitudes towards technology and the military did have some reservations they were never as pessimistic as J. G. B. B. He drew on one of the most terrifying tools of the First World War to envision the destruction of all life on Earth. Whilst he described the war as unjustified and destructive, the use of gas becomes self-destructive. The death of the professor is quick and mundane, set only in a barren landscape. His death from his own creation and its use to rapidly conclude the story suggests that the author views this as a just reward for the professor, who had hoped to seal himself off from his weapon.

The anti-militarism seen in the writings from Gresham's reflects the continued support for the League of Nations ideals seen in the previous chapter. Calls for

---

[56] J. G. B. B, 'Nemesis', *Grasshopper*, 12–15.

intervention and disarmament demonstrate the conflicting views on how to achieve these ideals, however. H. R. A. M.'s piece is similar to the growing criticism of competition between nations as the cause of conflict. P. H. S.'s call to arms for global cooperation on intervention is a similar criticism seen in the debates over the League's response to Italy's invasion of Abyssinia. The attitudes towards war in these writings reflect the response in debates and lectures growing tensions of the late interwar period. The League lacked the decisiveness and support seen as some as necessary whilst to others it was a relic that only continued past problems. The subtle opposition from Harrow, where the focus is primarily on tradition, suggest that anti-militarist views may have been possible there, but were not a popular stance to take.

Authoritarianism

The ideological threat of authoritarianism is not constrained to militarism, and it is here that the dystopian science-fiction of the interwar period heavily influenced writings in the *Grasshopper*, and, to a lesser extent, contributions to the *Harrovian*. The politics depicted are usually similar to contemporary scenarios, and real-world settings were used. The outcomes of the stories vary from triumphant optimism to catastrophic pessimism; however, as with challenges to social culture, a cataclysmic event is seen as necessary to implement change.

Two stories in the *Grasshopper* align closely to real-world events. The first features the story of a puppet monarchy under a dictatorship, not dissimilar from Italy under Mussolini.[57] In it, the prince is set to be revealed to the people to boost the position of the dictator. However, having been isolated his whole life, the politicians are uncertain of how the prince will act. When a girl goes to kiss his hand, he assumes she is going to bite him, and he throws her from the balcony. This prompts a riot, and the prince is sealed away and told that the events were just a dream. He continues to live happily in his isolation. This story explores the potential of dictators to wield power over those who traditionally would have held absolute authority in a country. It also questions their legitimacy, with them having to rely on both popular approval

[57] P. D. I, 'Life Is A Dream', *Grasshopper*, no. 2, 1930, 21–26.

and traditional ceremony to solidify support. Whilst the dictatorship uses the tools of monarchy, the monarch's actual power has been neutered, only able to exist an ethereal dream state. The second story is set in Britain in 1952 under a dictatorship.[58] The monarchy still exists but does not feature in the story. The dictatorship is crumbling, being dependent on the press to keep people entertained and docile, but they are suffering from falling sales. A plan is concocted by the dictatorship to create a celebrity to boost newspaper sales. The big reveal is set for Waterloo Station, but on the way, the pressure became too much for the celebrity, and she throws herself from the train before it arrives. The crowds waiting in London for the celebrity become restless and when she fails to appear riots break out. These riots then spread into a revolution which overthrows the dictatorship and the monarchy. A communist junta was established, newspapers change their titles, only Russian films were shown, and a new calendar is created. Here the author has set out the conditions for the dictatorship to form, through the newspapers, as well as its alternative. The stories use of contemporary settings serve as a warning against a dictatorship, and the tools that it might use. The press, often seen as misleading people in a democracy, is given a new level of power strong enough to sustain a dictatorship. The pageantry of monarchy and celebrity is seen as a means by which a secular totalitarian ruler could legitimise themselves. These features are challenging contemporaneous political forces more subtly than previous literature or debates.

One author envisioned an English Soviet Village in 1960 in 'Elegy Written in an English Village in the year 1960' in the *Harrovian*.[59] Here the state controls all life, using a siren to order the end of the workday, with the times set from Moscow. The author says 'The state has organised work and play'. The author describes how culture has changed: everybody has aircraft and motorcars, Marxist and atheist authors are read and discussed, the church is now a cinema showing films on 'Economics, Sanitation, Sex' and rich and poor face the same ultimate fate of a quick cremation. The author sees only two blemishes on this organised, planned, Soviet

---

[58] D. M. B. B, 'Res Antiquae', *Grasshopper*, 29–30.

[59] Anonymous, 'Elegy written in an English village in the year 1960', *Harrovian*, October 1929, 133.

society: nobody smiles and the ominous presence of a mysterious asylum in the woods. The author opposed the idea of an organised society. He railed against modernism producing a monotonous life, with poor health coming from the pollution and laments the loss of the idealised English village. The only path to freedom appears to be as an inmate in the asylum, free from the control of the state inside a rural shelter, whilst for the organised state, it is a place to put those who refuse to be part of this new society.

One truly science-fiction story warned against dictatorships in the *Grasshopper*. The author imagined that the world was threatened by a meteor and saved by a supernatural being known only as the Master.[60] The Master rules like a dictator for three thousand years, living in luxury while his human servant, Damo, maintains the meteor's orbit. Growing ever more resentful of the Master's luxurious lifestyle while humanity's suffering increases Damo resolves to kill the Master by letting the meteor crash to Earth. However, having stopped its orbit, Damo goes to confront the Master only to find that he has decided to embrace death and committed suicide. The contrast between the owner of capital, in the form of the Master and labour, in Damo, give the story a Marxist tone. That Damo's only options are to wait for the Master to kill himself or take destructive action himself reinforces this idea. The author here is not only challenging social inequality and dictatorships, but there is an element of anti-religious thinking. A supernatural being that allows humanity to suffer because he has given them salvation has biblical overtones, which, along with the opposition to social inequality reinforces the Marxist tone of the story.

The shift from more standard fiction to dystopian societies is a significant development showing that boys were engaging the political culture in a whole new form. The literature that boys created was not a new feature of school publications, and some of the pieces use themes seen in previous literary contributions, letters and debates. However, the way in which they wrote and the volume of pieces created had changed. The amount of literature created significantly increased and gained a more regular place within the schools' internal publications. McKibbin's

---

[60] N. R. C. C., 'The Causeway', *Grasshopper*, no. 3, 1931, 19–22.

argument that the change in political attitudes towards being more in favour of social change and a rise in middle-brow literature certainly align with the literature created within the schools. Whilst not all of the literature being produced is related to social or political change, there is certainly an increase in the fable style story. The influence of science fiction and dystopian writings can also be clearly seen. The creation of stories which depict future societies that need a drastic overhaul and how this related to contemporary politics was a new feature of boys' writing.

3. The communist clique

A small group of Gresham's pupils went on to become significant figures in left-wing movements. They went on to gain prominence in a range of areas, including education, the arts and politics. This was not a group focused on a single cause, but a collection of individuals who developed a shared political outlook. J. R. Eccles, headmaster 1919-1935, had made a conscious effort to recruit leading liberals to send their sons to the school, and he had achieved a reasonable level of success.[61] Parents included Irish Nationalist and author Erskine Childers, Liberal M. P.s Sir Ernest Simon and Sir Donald Maclean and the media figures of C. P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, and Walter Layton, editor of the *Economist*.[62] The Simons were particularly involved with the school's associational culture, joining debates and lecturing the League of Nations Union branch. This patronage, along with the curriculum and educational ethos gave the school a reputation for being progressive. The radicalism that emerged amongst a small number of its pupils did not come from the school as an institution or the families, but in the relationships formed at the school through associational culture.

Interwar Gresham's had two masters noted for their left-wing ideas. Whilst both were there to teach French, they also exposed the boys to Marxism. First of these was A. S. Treves who taught at Gresham's 1918-1923 and was considered an unusual

---

[61] Gary McCulloch and Tom Woodin, 'Learning and Liberal Education: The Case of the Simon Family, 1912–1939', *Oxford Review of Education* 36, no. 2 (2010): 194–96.

[62] Andrews, *Shadow Man*, 18; McCulloch and Woodin, 'Learning and Liberal Education', *Oxford Review of Education*, 194–95.

teacher in that he was married and lived in a neighbouring town, whilst the majority of masters were bachelors living in Holt.[63] Treves was French, and some boys believed that he was a political exile as he was known to hold Communist views. Treves was involved in many aspects of associational culture, including the League of Nations Union, Sociological Society and English Literature Society. His most notable contribution, however, came when he led the opposition to the motion critical of direct action which was discussed in chapter seven. G. H. Diggle suggests that the popularity of Treves' argument 'perturbed' Eccles and led to a meeting of the governors.[64] Treves was certainly an exceptional figure amongst Gresham's staff, but his influence was not limited to one debate. Smart argued that Treves was important in exposing a select few boys to a wider range of political and cultural ideas than would be found at most public schools. [65] Importantly for these artistic figures, Treves was keen to share literary and left-wing political material from across Europe.[66] His tutelage covered a number of left-wing cultural figures, including John Hayward, Robert Medley and Wystan Hugh Auden. Medley and Auden participated in the Sociological Society together, and Carpenter notes that they discussed political and cultural issues, including socialism and anti-clericalism.[67] Treves provided a gateway to a new framework through which boys could discuss political philosophy with each other. Whilst boys may have engaged with these topics independently, Treves was able to supply them with reading material that could supplement their own research and discussions.

Treves' was replaced by Frank McEachran, who taught at Gresham's between 1924-1933, and McEachran shared Treves' enthusiasm for extra-curricular teaching. McEachran reformed the English Literature Society into the Literature Society, with himself as president, in 1924.[68] McEachran also became involved in the League of

---

[63] Smart, *Tarantuala's Web*, 33.

[64] Geoffrey Harbour Diggle, 'Notes on Gresham's School' (n.d.), 11, Box 6 PUP Diaries etc., Gresham's School Archives.

[65] Smart, *Tarantuala's Web*, 34–37.

[66] Smart, *Tarantuala's Web*, 34–36.

[67] Carpenter, *W. H. Auden*, Chapter 2.

[68] 'Literature Society', *Gresham*, December 1924, 25.

Nations Union tours and the Debating Society.[69] McEachran's relationships with boys were particularly significant in that it clearly continued beyond the school into university life, such as through Old Greshamian dinners.[70] McEachran, as well as Treves, was also seen as an influence on Auden.[71] McEachran's most significant impact was on the ring of young communists who went to university in the 1930s. He encouraged James Klugman, future historian of the Communist Party of Great Britain, to read Marx.[72] Klugman shared his Marxist readings with Donald Maclean and others through friendships and associational culture.[73] Cecil argued that Klugman was the greatest influence on Maclean's life.[74] He argued that Maclean's commitment to communism began at Gresham's and that his espionage was based on a firm ideological belief of bringing about a better, communist world.[75] Cecil reemphasises the importance of the school's role in forming these boys' views on Marxism in his argument that they formed their own version of communism from literature, separate from the experience of the working class or Soviet Russia.[76] Maclean went on to recruit Brian Simon to the Communist Party when Simon moved up to Cambridge.[77] Like Treves, McEachran provided the boys with an introduction that enabled them to discuss political philosophy with their peers, rather than imposing a view upon them.

This was a small group within the school based on personal relationships and a shared political interest. It was not a revolutionary cell but an intellectual group.

---

[69] 'League of Nations Union tour in Italy', *Gresham*, October 1925, 119; 'League of Nations Union tour in France', *Gresham*, October 1926, 5.

[70] 'Cambridge O. G. Dinner', *Gresham*, 13, no. 08, December 1929, 148; 'London O. G. Dinner', *Gresham*, 13, no. 09, February 1930, 165; 'Oxford O. G. Letter', *Gresham*, December 1931, 149.

[71] W. H. Auden, *The Map of All My Youth. Early Works, Friends, and Influences*, ed. Katherine Bucknell and Nicholas Jenkins (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 117–19.

[72] Andrews, *Shadow Man*, 23.

[73] Andrews, *Shadow Man*, 23–26.

[74] Robert Cecil, *A Divided Life: A Personal Portrait of the Spy Donald Maclean* (Morrow, 1989), location 513-525.

[75] Robert Cecil, *Divided Life*, Locations 268-293, 488.

[76] Robert Cecil, *Divided Life*, Location 353.

[77] Robert Cecil, *Divided Life*, Location 660.

These boys were operating within a culture of elite participation in radical ideas with an outlet in the form of a literary magazine. These views and relationships did not end at the school, however. Boys and staff continued to interact with each other in later life. Treves and McEachran were important in providing the impetus to study Marx, but it was the boys' discussions that spread these ideas within their peer groups. The associational culture of the public schools was important in fostering these relationships. They allowed boys with similar interests but from different age groups and boarding houses to meet. Boys' autonomy in these societies allowed them to pursue interests not formally covered by the school. They enabled staff to teach beyond the curriculum in an informal setting. Most importantly, they created a permissive atmosphere where radical opinions could be shared, creating a space for dissent.

Conclusion

Literary culture's growth during this period reflects boys' increasing engagement with politics. Boys' greater interest in the details of contemporary politics, society and economics may have had some influence on the increase in literary works. By stepping beyond the confrontational nature of debates, boys may have had more inclination to really explore their own thoughts on contemporary issues. This does not provide, however, a full explanation of why they wrote more frequently and with more purpose.

The growth in intellectual engagement with ideologies seen in the previous chapter is clear in some of the writings seen here. Whilst explicit and unconditional praise of the U.S.S.R. is rare, the growth in the use of Marxist language and frameworks in both debates and fiction during this period is clear. The use of unbalanced social relations being the source of conflict in their narratives shows how deeply some boys had engaged with these ideas. By incorporating them into their fiction boys were envisioning a future where class conflict resulted in upheaval and social change. This use of Marxist ideas in literature demonstrates that boys understood these ideas on an intellectual level rather than just in a political context.

The criticism of excesses of capitalism were not limited to Marxist language, however. Elements of socialism were gaining increasing acceptance at Harrow as the ideas of the post-war settlement. The criticisms of inequality in fiction, coupled with a call to address these problems reflect that there was a growing acceptance of these ideas in the generations that would go on to be the post-war electorate. The fear of revolution is expressed, but writing allowed greater freedom for boys to suggest solutions to the causes of unrest. The ability of the author to control the confrontation in their work in a way not possible in debates helped foster more detailed arguments. Freedom from time constraints also allowed boys to use more nuanced examples and metaphors to create more engaging arguments.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This study demonstrates how the associational cultures of these two public schools in England provided political and citizenship training. As an educational tool, associational culture formed an integral part of the public schools' formal and informal curriculum. Associational culture followed a similar structure across schools and was used in a range of different ways and with different outcomes. Formal citizenship training was rare and often seen as being provided by other subjects and activities. However, this thesis demonstrates that citizenship education was widespread through informal and extra-curricular education. It has explored how associational culture in schools allowed pupils to express their understanding of citizenship. Whilst the specific ways boys expressed their political opinions varied between the two schools, their freedom to do so was facilitated by associational culture.

These case studies do not demonstrate that all public schools automatically provided boys with political training. However, they show how such training could be facilitated through an active participation amongst boys in associational cultures. These case studies show what could be achieved through pupils participating in associational culture. They demonstrate how effective associational culture could be in schools where boys were actively engaged in societies that covered political topics. This should not be confined to the early twentieth-century public schools either, and the lessons drawn about associational culture as a tool for political education from these two schools on encouraging political engagement could be applied to other historical examples and contemporary efforts to promote youths' participation in politics. The reliability and quality of surviving records enabled an analysis of the debates held at these schools. Other organisations did hold debates, and some records do exist but are not as well organised or accessible. It is possible to assume that political or citizenship education was taking place, and this thesis demonstrates some of the ways it may have been conducted. More modern organisations, such as Debate Mate, seek to use debating societies, alongside other tools, as part of efforts in

widening participation.[1] Debate Mate shifts the focus away from citizenship education towards providing a broader education as a means to access higher education and employment.

Studies of girls' schools and tertiary education have explored similar associational cultures.[2] This thesis provides a fuller understanding of the history of citizenship education in England through examining boys' public schools. This study demonstrates how political interests were fostered and encouraged within public schools through associational culture. Studies of vocational training rarely discuss political training; however, this thesis shows how public schools were crucial in preparing the children of the elite for a career in politics. This research contributes to the history of education by exploring learners' experiences of associational culture as a means of training politically active citizens.

Histories of the public schools as institutions have often focused on their position within the English class system. Studies of their curriculum often focus on games, such as the various works by Mangan, and the more abstract concept of character.[3] This thesis acknowledges their role as elite institutions but develops our understanding of the learners' experience of these schools. By examining the methods and purpose of the educational tools used, this thesis contributes to our understanding of the schools' role in English society. By examining how public school boys viewed politics, it also provides a more grounded understanding of how they interpreted the abstract concept of character. The popular, monolithic image of English public schools, alongside Oxford and Cambridge universities, is significant in understanding English culture. However, this thesis explores how individual pupils' experiences differed significantly between and within schools. The political leanings of individual pupils, teachers and parents demonstrate a much broader political culture than the popular image of feeder schools for the Conservative Party. Pupils'

---

[1] 'Home: Debate Mate', Debate Mate, accessed 20 August 2020.

[2] Haapala, 'That in the Opinion of This House'; Dockerill, '"Forgotten Voices"', in *Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland*; Sunderland, 'Politics in Schoolgirl Debating Cultures', *The Historical Journal*.

[3] Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*; Mangan, *Athleticism*; Mangan, 'Education of an Elite Imperial Administration', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*.

expressions of political opinions show that boys were keen to explore new ideas and form independent views. The established social status of the schools and their clientele empowered the pupils to believe in their political authority, but boys were also willing to challenge the status quo.

A wider curriculum

The public schools have and continue to focus on education to provide good character, and historians have often framed their research within this context. The abstract nature of character allows for it to be applied to a wide range of areas. This thesis has argued that character and citizenship were closely linked, and provided an outlet for boys to define what they views as good character. Character education has often emphasised religion, sports and the cult of games. Pupils were also using associational culture to explore themes often seen as part of character education. What good character was understood to mean is seen by focusing on the learners' experience. Boys took advantage of opportunities to discuss their own views on political citizenship, with debates on suffrage attracting a high number of voters. This research expands the understanding of how pupils conducted their own character education in public schools.

Associational culture was one of the most significant aspects of the public school curriculum but institutional histories have often overlooked it. The rigidity of the classical curriculum in the older public schools, whilst no longer legally required, was still restrictive through their institutional culture. Further weaknesses of public school education were seen in the lack of experienced staff and equipment to deliver a modern curriculum. However, the vibrant associational culture seen in this thesis demonstrates a curriculum beyond the classroom, providing a broader education embraced by enthusiastic pupils and teachers. Through this enthusiasm, public schools were able to prepare their pupils in a range of new subjects, whilst imparting good character more effectively than the traditional methods of classroom learning.

Associational culture often focused on the more vocational aspects of subjects than traditional education. All societies gave their members a chance to conduct research. Debating societies were imparting knowledge of parliamentary procedure as well as

training boys in public speaking. At Gresham's, the Sociological Society introduced boys to workplace structures alongside providing an education in class dynamics. The League of Nations Union gave boys a chance to practise their organisational skills. Guest lecturers, primarily through the '27 Club at Harrow, introduced potential career options. The flourishing literary culture seen in the 1930s at both schools gave the pupils a chance to explore their creative sides in ways not usually seen in English lessons. All these aspects gave the pupils at both schools studied here, as well as those at other public schools, vocational training in political skills.

Boys' responsibility for their learning was another important aspect seen in this study. Participation in these school societies was not compulsory. The schools and masters supported them, but they were dependent on the pupils to function. This dependence is partly true from an organisational perspective; staff involvement in the management of societies varied between both schools and individual societies. More important was boys' active participation through preparing and engaging with the programme of each society. Reports in the school magazines noted when a lack of knowledge amongst the speakers resulted in poorly conducted debates. However, in other debates, pupils' preparation, from accumulating statistics to citing press reports, demonstrates that boys saw these as an opportunity to manage their education. This self-governance is most apparent with the League of Nations Union at Gresham's where pupils moved from relying on guest lecturers with the occasional paper from a pupil to hosting themed symposiums on particular themes. These symposiums featured papers by boys and active discussion of issues. Boys' management of their associational culture and education led to an active learning environment that could operate even without staff involvement.

This responsibility also facilitated pupils' transition into adulthood. Whilst public school boys came from inherently privileged backgrounds, and there were still power structures within the schools. Masters' role in maintaining discipline amongst the boys, as well as power dynamics between the boys through age and rank, such as the prefectoral system, could be used to enforce a rigid social structure between members of the school. However, associational culture allowed pupils an opportunity to disregard these structures. Debates over issues, not just within the debating

society but other societies with political elements, gave boys a level of authority to challenge the opinions of both pupils and staff. This authority was not confined to members of the school, either. Guest speakers' and parents' opinions were also open to criticism within societies if boys held opposing views. By giving the boys' opinions equal legitimacy to adults', they were being prepared to participate in adult society in a way not easily replicable in a traditional classroom.

The flexibility of the associational culture seen in this thesis shows its importance in expanding the school's educational offering. Debating societies by their nature were responsive to changes in interests; the contribution pupils made in deciding the motions for discussion shows how they remained relevant. The change in the way that the nature of absolute power was discussed is a clear example of how debating societies adapted to contemporary events. At the start of the twentieth-century absolute power was seen as something wielded by monarchs. The political dynamic in Europe changed after the First World War as civil and military figures began to assume absolute power over various countries. Debating societies continued to have debates on absolute power, but the terms changed from monarchs to dictators. By being able to adapt the themes of debates without having to change the structure debating societies were able to provide a contemporary education throughout this period.

Societies' greatest flexibility came from the fact that pupil involvement was crucial for associational culture. New societies were able to form because pupils wished to learn about a subject. Whilst a school may not have been able to recruit a new teacher or clear space in the timetable for formal education on, for example, international affairs, a society could be created and develop a unique means of providing education within a term. Societies were capable of continually changing how they functioned. New activities, such as trips, could be added to a society's offering more easily than to the formal curriculum. This flexibility was beneficial to the boys, in that it gave them access to a broader curriculum, but also the schools. It enabled schools to promote themselves as offering a broad education without having to continually adjust their curriculum, staff and schedules to adapt to changing tastes and trends.

Harrow and Gresham's both demonstrated vibrant associational and political cultures. This associational culture was not exclusive to these two schools. However, they show two contrasting examples of the forms associational culture could take. They also show a range of political outcomes. Both schools showed a strong belief in imperialism at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, by the late 1930s, Harrow was beginning to consider the ideas that would form the post-war settlement whilst Gresham's had produced a small cadre of Marxists. Boys' participation in associational culture actively engaged them with politics without a predetermined outcome or reinforcement of political leanings. Associational culture is widespread across the English education system. Where an associational culture has been or is currently present in an educational setting it is worth exploring both by historians and contemporary educational researchers.

These two cases studies are not indicative of how all public schools had or used associational culture. However, when examining public schools, as well as other educational institutions, and their associational culture these two examples provide important insights into how it could provide a space in which youths could explore areas not typically covered by the formal curriculum. They provide important examples of how associational culture could be used as an educational tool. When examining other public schools, researchers should be aware that there was an education taking place beyond the classroom and even without staff intervention. This thesis highlights two schools in which this was evident, with noticeably different ways and results.

Political culture and school life

Political culture provided boys with opportunities for entertainment and self-governance as well as being part of their education. At both schools, politics was not confined to the debating or political societies but permeated various aspects of school life. The school magazine offered ample opportunities to conduct political discussions. Other societies also allowed boys to tie politics into their education. Literature societies combined politics and writing, producing works of fiction for print

by the school. Control over school policy was another area where boys were particularly keen to flex their political muscles. Not only was it of immediate concern to them, but they also believed they had a real element of power over school governance.

The school magazine served as a hub for this. It provided training in journalism in addition to offering boys a chance to practise politics. Reports could contain an editorial angle, as was seen in a few rare occasions on reports on the debating societies' activities. The correspondence section allowed boys a chance to campaign on issues relating to the school. Whilst complaints raised in the school magazine were often trivial, usually relating to sports or dress codes, these were areas where boys could achieve real change. School politics gave boys a sense of authority that not only encouraged them to partake in campaigning but also instilled a sense of legitimacy in their political rights. The debate over which type of football to play at Harrow is the most significant example of this authority. The school magazine, and even the national press, covered an issue where the boys held exclusive voting rights. However, the smaller campaigns, both victorious and defeated, would have given boys' political rights authenticity at a young age.

School boys' production of literature also helped them build confidence in their authority. Whilst schools could develop literary skills through traditional classroom learning, the boys' personal creations and subsequent publications provided a different form of education. It legitimised their confidence in their own voices. These were not compulsory essays, and nor were they written for a school prize. Instead, boys produced stories that they felt were worth writing. This sense of purpose was given legitimacy through publication in separate magazines and supplements. Having magazines dedicated to fiction at Gresham's and poetry at Harrow, as well as a fiction supplement at Harrow, legitimised their literature as independent creative works rather than schoolwork. Those who wrote more political stories would have increased their sense of value as commentators as well as authors.

Boys' political knowledge also affected their experience of travel. Associational culture enabled national and international trips which appealed to those seeking

leisure opportunities, but with the addition of political elements. Visits to local workplaces saw added political context, particularly at Gresham's under the Sociological Society but also at Harrow with the school workshop. These trips were occasionally framed against the industrial unrest of the General Strike, but more regularly there was a general commentary on working styles and conditions. International travel opened a greater scope to study different political systems. At Harrow, this was used to study the workings of the League of Nations General Assembly. At Gresham's, the League of Nations Union used international travel to meet people from a wide range of political cultures. Travel also included links to other schools, particularly through sports. Gresham's' links with Kurt Hahn's schools at Salem and Gordonstoun came with an exposure to the dangers of Nazism. Even boys on private vacations were perceptive of the political climate of their destination. Despite participating in what could be viewed as a leisure activity, boys saw politics as something pervasive, even inescapable. Public school boys had enviable access to travel and used it to expand their political understanding.

School activities' early boost to their confidence in their abilities as well as their right to partake in politics goes some way into explaining boys' belief in their right to citizenship during this period. Boys entered adulthood confident in their ability to participate in politics thanks to this early encouragement at school. They had been able to exert influence on their institutions. They had been able to challenge authority, at least within the confines of accepted behaviour. They had been encouraged to express their opinions in a variety of formats. Their campaigns had received national attention in some cases. These early opportunities enabled them to see politics as something in which they could participate. Alongside the obvious advantages of their social station, the belief in their rights and abilities provided public school boys with the training to become active citizens on a national level.

Schools of Empire

Throughout the period covered by this thesis, boys used imperialism to frame international issues. The public schools have been referred to as schools of the British Empire rather than national or local schools. Studies of imperialism often refer

to the schools and elite culture as the basis for British imperial administrative and military culture.[4] In both schools, imperialism and the British Empire were prevalent. Imperialism and the Empire were used not just as political models, but also to understand race, economics and morality. The Empire was used to frame travel and career opportunities, as well as adventure fiction. Imperial political issues were entwined with national politics. The Empire was described as the model for other empires and organisations to emulate. However, it also developed into a target of resistance for those wanting to challenge the status quo. Boys' changing understanding of the Empire during this period reflected the changing status of the British Empire from its high point through its gradual decline. Whilst the middle and upper classes generally supported the Empire and imperialism, dissent was not absent and ranged from support for reform to rejection of imperialism entirely.

Both schools saw a shift in attitudes towards the British Empire during the period covered by this thesis. At the beginning of the twentieth century, most boys at both schools could be described as supportive of the Empire. Criticisms of imperialism were limited to foreign empires, and they were compared unfavourably with British efforts. Following the First World War, however, boys could use their freedom of dissent to raise criticisms of British imperialism.

Harrow, which remained more pro-Empire, was willing to question the right of Britain to involve itself in the Russian Civil War. A comparison of Harrovians' attitudes towards Irish nationalism seen in chapter four and Indian nationalism in chapter seven shows how declining imperial power had softened their imperialist fervour. Irish Home Rule met with significant opposition from Harrovians, with some even supporting armed resistance to it. Indian self-governance, however, saw Indian campaigners invited to express their views to the boys. The softening views reflected a realisation of the weakened position of the British Empire, as well as some acknowledgement of criticisms aimed at it. The majority of Harrovians saw the League of Nations as superfluous to the world's needs, as they saw its role as already being fulfilled by the British Empire.

---

[4] This is particularly prominent in the Studies in Imperialism series from Manchester University Press.

At Gresham's, there was a more radical turn against imperialism. A minority of boys and guest speakers openly called for the dismantling of all imperial systems. Gresham's boys' support for the League of Nations may have contributed to some of this opposition. However, the League's work and pupils' support was in tandem to, if not collaborative with, imperialism rather than in opposition. In the 1920s many of the supporters of the League saw the British Empire as providing the model that the League should follow for ensuring world peace. In the 1930s the League of Nations Union at Gresham's began to hear from more radical speakers. However, support for the League, as an institution or for its stated aims, was still framed within the context of imperialism. All forms of imperialism, including the British Empire, were seen by some as exploitative and illegitimate power structures. Boys at Gresham's had become willing to reject the use of force to maintain the Empire in much more radical ways than at Harrow.

At both schools, imperialism was fundamental to how boys understood the global political landscape. Imperialism framed both support for and opposition to British international policy. The League of Nations' supporters saw it as a chance for the British Empire to be more effective in policing the world. Its opponents saw it as reinforcing the unjustified power of empires. For the Marxists at Gresham's the League and the Empire were also seen as tools of capitalism. The pervasiveness of imperialism ensured that it entered all aspects of political discussion in public schools. This study demonstrates just how long-lasting and the deep impact of imperialism was politics amongst the elite of British society.

Future Research

Harrow and Gresham's were selected for this research due to the contrasting political views and social backgrounds of their pupils. They provide two examples of how associational culture fostered a political education amongst boys from elite backgrounds. Whilst this study provides an insight into associational culture and education in public schools, this only applies to a small percentage of boys educated in England. Sunderland's work on girls' schools' debating societies demonstrates

that associational culture was not limited to boys' public schools.[5] Further studies could take advantage of less well-publicised historical records from a range of schools. Other forms of education within the various British systems, as well as internationally, could further enhance understanding of how youths receive political training.

Future research could shed light on early motivations of politicians and campaigners. The Sutton Trust's prosopographical studies of each parliamentary intake demonstrate the social and institutional backgrounds of politicians. A further study could reveal the importance of early engagement in politics. The over-representation of public school alumni in politics is a constant source of discussion in contemporary Britain. This study has demonstrated that it is not just a class background that has enabled elites to gain access to positions of power. This thesis argues that boys' confidence in their right to participate in politics was, in part, instilled by associational culture. They were encouraged to express their views through various platforms. Associational culture is not exclusive to public schools and does not require specialist teacher training or expensive facilities. This research helps provide an understanding of how associational cultures function and, more importantly, how it contributed to boys' sense of political worth.

This thesis has focused on how learners' experienced education through associational culture. The learners' experience has become increasingly important in histories of education. Previous histories of the public schools have focused on institution building, privilege, class and power over an examination of the pupils' experiences. This study should show not only that there were other educational factors at play in reinforcing social divisions in England, but also that there are valuable lessons to be learned from the public schools. Pupils were receiving an education that is worth studying. This thesis should help those interested in the lives of individuals who attended these schools. More importantly, it enhances our understanding of the pedagogical tools used to provide them with an advantageous start in life. The advantages public school pupils received from informal pedagogy

[5] Sunderland, 'Politics in Schoolgirl Debating Cultures', *The Historical Journal*.

through associational culture should not be overshadowed by the other privileges from which they benefited.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Gresham's School Archive

The Gresham, 1900-1939

The Grasshopper

Anonymous. 'Fourth Class'. *The Grasshopper*, 1929.
Anonymous. 'Pomp and Circumstance'. *The Grasshopper*, 1937.
A. R. W. 'Bird's Eye View'. *The Grasshopper*, 1933.
D. D. M. 'The Sandwichmen'. *The Grasshopper*, 1931.
D. M. B. B. 'Res Antiquae'. *The Grasshopper*, 1931.
'Editorial'. *The Grasshopper*, 1929.
H. R. A. M. 'Games: A Criticism'. *The Grasshopper*, 1937.
J. G. B. B. 'Monkeys'. *The Grasshopper*, 1929.
———. 'Nemesis'. *The Grasshopper*, 1930.
N. R. C. C. 'The Causeway'. *The Grasshopper*, 1931.
P. C. Floud. 'A Comparison'. *The Grasshopper*, 1929.
P. D. I. 'Life Is A Dream'. *The Grasshopper*, 1930.
P. H. S. 'Pacifism'. *The Grasshopper*, 1937.
R. H. B. M. 'While of Unsound Mind'. *The Grasshopper*, 1933.
R. H. S. 'Chorus of Adolescents'. *The Grasshopper*, 1937.

Archival Material

'Farfield Debating Society Book', n.d. GSA 32.2 (a), Box 28. Gresham's School Archive.

'Library Minute Book', n.d. GSA 2010.33, Build 2.3, Box 65. Gresham's School Archive.

‘Library Suggestions Book’, n.d. GSA 2014.9, Build 2/3, Box 65. Gresham’s School Archive.

‘Prospectus’, 1938. Box 37 Man 5. Gresham’s School Archive.

Books and memoirs

Diggle, Geoffrey Harbour. ‘Notes on Gresham’s School’, n.d. Box 6 PUP Diaries etc. Gresham’s School Archives.

Douglas, Andrew B., and Charles L. S. Linnell. *Gresham’s School History and Register, 1555-1954*. Ipswich: W. S. Cowell Ltd., 1955.

Howson, George W. S. *Sermons by a Lay Headmaster G. W. S. Howson. Preached at Gresham’s School, 1900-1918, Etc. [With a Portrait.]*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920.

Wilson, Wynne. ‘Cheerful Yesterdays’. Box 36, n.d.

Harrow School Archive

The Harrovian, 1898-1944

Archival Material

Billy. ‘Note 1’. N4/13, n.d.
———. ‘Note 2’. N4/13, n.d.
———. ‘Note 3’. N4/13, n.d.

E. I. Wigman. ‘Typed Debate Preparation: Press Freedom’. N4/13, 1945.

———. ‘Typed Debate Preparation: State Control vs Free Enterprise’. N4/13, 1945.

‘Harrow School Debating Society Member’s Book, 1850-1871’, 1850. A2001/16/1, N4/13. Harrow School Archive.

‘The Harrow School Debating Society Minute Book, 1901-1947’, 1901. A2011/14/2, N4/13. Harrow School Archive.

‘Harrow School Debating Society Member’s Book, 1944-1945’, 1944. N4/13. Harrow School Archive.

‘Harrow School Debating Society Minute Book, 1933-47’, 1933. A2011/14/3 N4/13. Harrow School Archive.

Secretary of the Harrow School Debating Society. ‘Report for the Harrovian’, 11 November 1944. N 4/13. Harrow School Archive.

Books and memoirs

Somervell, Robert, David C. Somervell, and Donald B. Somervell. *Robert Somervell: For Thirty-Three Years Assistant Master and Bursar at Harrow School : Chapters of Autobiography*. Faber & Faber, 1935.

Hewlett, William Meyrick. *Diary of the Siege of the Peking Legations. June to August, 1900*. [London : Pub. for the editors of the ‘Harrovian,’ by F.W. Provost], 1900. http://archive.org/details/cu31924023151123.

Laborde, Edward Dalrymple. *Great and Greater Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930.

———. *Harrow School, Yesterday and Today*. Winchester Publications, 1948.

Westminster School Archive

‘Westminster School Debating Society Minute Book 1894-1918’, n.d. WS/ECA/1/2. Westminster School Archives.

‘Westminster School Debating Society Minute Book 1919-1927’, n.d. WS/ECA/1/3. Westminster School Archives.

‘Westminster School Debating Society Minute Book 1927-1947’, n.d. WS/ECA/1/4. Westminster School Archives.

‘Westminster School Political and Literary Society Minute Book 1931-1946’, n.d. WS/ECA/5/1. Westminster School Archives.

UCL Institute of Education Archive

Simon, Brian. ‘History Essays from 1931’, 1931. DC/SIM/5/2/1. UCL Institute of Education Archives.

———. ‘History Essays from 1932’, 1932. DC/SIM/5/2/2. UCL Institute of Education Archives.

———. ‘My Education as I Wish It Had Been: Essays from the Institute of Education’, 1937. DC/SIM/5/2/5. UCL Institute of Education Archives.

Newspaper Articles

‘Mr Haldane on Irish Affairs’. *The Times*. 10 January 1908, 38539 edition.

‘The Third Home Rule Bill’. *The Times*. 11 April 1912, 39870 edition, sec. Editorial.

Special Correspondent. ‘Ireland and South Africa’. *The Times*. 12 April 1912, 39871 edition, sec. Articles.

‘The Home Rule Bill’. *The Times*. 12 April 1912, 39871 edition, sec. Editorial.

Special Correspondent. ‘XIV.-Notable Year at Cheltenham’. *The Times*. 5 August 1920, 42481 edition.

‘Compared with the Picturesqueness of the European Communist, One Finds His English Comrade a Little Disappointing’. *Punch*, 13 January 1926.

‘Harrow Football’. *The Times*. 11 December 1926, 44452 edition, sec. Personal.

‘Harrow Football: A Change to Rugby Rules’. *The Times*. 11 December 1926, 44452 edition, sec. Arts and Sports.

Jackson, Colonel F. S. ‘Football at Harrow: Colonel F. S. Jackson on Proposed Change’. *The Times*. 13 December 1926, 44453 edition.

Norwood, Cyril. ‘Harrow Football: To the Editor of The Times’. *The Times*. 13 December 1926, 44453 edition.

Holdsworth, R. L. ‘To the Editor of The Times’. *The Times*. 14 December 1926, 44454 edition, sec. Opinion and Editorial.

Pope, G. C. ‘Points from Letters’. *The Times*. 15 December 1926, 44455 edition, sec. Opinion and Editorial.

R. W. E. Wilmot. ‘Public-School Spirit’. *The Times*. 9 May 1927, 44576 edition.

Hodge, Margaret. ‘We Need Our Public Schools’. *New Statesman*, 1997.

Barwick, Sandra. ‘Harrow Masters Upset by Tale of Bullying and Wife-Swapping’. *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 December 2000. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1377007/Harrow-masters-upset-by-tale-of-bullying-and-wife-swapping.html.

Hansard and HMSO

Viscount Middleton. ‘Imperial Defence’. House of Lords, 4 April 1911.

Asquith, Herbert. ‘Settlement of an Old Controversy’. House of Commons, 11 April 1912.

Fleming Committee. ‘The Public Schools and the General Education System’. London: HMSO, 1944.

Norwood, Cyril. ‘Report of the Committee of the Secondary School Examinations Council Appointed by the President of the Board of Education in 1941’. London: HMSO, 1943.

Published works and memoirs

Arnold, Thomas. *Passages from the Sermons of Dr. Arnold*. BiblioBazaar, 2009.

Auden, W. H. *The Map of All My Youth. Early Works, Friends, and Influences*. Edited by Katherine Bucknell and Nicholas Jenkins. Oxford: Clarendon, 1990.

Gollancz, Victor, and David Churchill Somervell. *Political Education at a Public School*. London: W. Collins, 1918.

Gallie, W. B. *An English School*. London: The Crescent Press, 1949.

Golding, William. *Lord of the Flies*. Educational ed. London: Faber and Faber, 1954.

Hughes, Thomas. *Tom Brown’s Schooldays, and, Tom Brown at Oxford*. Tom Brown at Oxford. Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2007.

Norwood, Cyril. *The English Tradition of Education*. London: John Murray, 1929.

Simpson, J. H. *Howson of Holt: A Study in School Life*. Sidgwick & Jackson, 1925.

Secondary Sources

Books

Adams, Ralph James Q., and Philip P. Poirier. *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900–1918*. Springer, 1987.

Altick, Richard D. *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Andrews, Geoff. *The Shadow Man: At the Heart of the Cambridge Spy Circle*. London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2015.

Annan, Noel. *The Dons: Mentors, Eccentrics, and Geniuses*. London: Harper Collins, 1999.

Archer, R. L. *Secondary Education in the Nineteenth Century*. 2nd ed. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1966.

Arnold, Guy. *Held Fast for England: GA Henty, Imperialist Boys' Writer*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980.

Arnold, Thomas, and T. W. Bamford. *Thomas Arnold on Education: A Selection from His Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Bamford, T. W. *Rise of the Public Schools: A Study of Boys' Public Boarding Schools in England and Wales from 1837 to the Present Day*. London: Nelson, 1967.

Birn, Donald S. *The League of Nations Union, 1918-45*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Stanford University Press, 1998.

Boyd, Kelly. *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper in Britain: A Cultural History, 1855-1940*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Bradley, Ian, and Simon Simon, eds. *The Victorian Public School: Studies in the Development of an Educational Institution*. Gill and Macmillan, 1975.

Brewis, Georgina. *A Social History of Student Volunteering: Britain and Beyond, 1880-1980*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Bruley, Sue. *The Women and Men of 1926: A Gender and Social History of the General Strike and Miners' Lockout in South Wales*. University of Wales Press, 2010.

Cannadine, David. *Ornamentalism : How the British Saw Their Empire*. Oxford: Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2001.

Carpenter, Humphrey. *W. H. Auden: A Biography*. Faber & Faber, 2011.

Castle, Kathryn. *Britannia's Children: Reading Colonialism through Children's Books and Magazines*. Studies in Imperialism. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996.

Catterall, Peter, Wolfram Kaiser, and Ulrike Walton-Jordan. *Reforming the Constitution: Debates in Twentieth-Century Britain*. Routledge, 2014.

Cecil, Robert. *A Divided Life: A Personal Portrait of the Spy Donald Maclean*. Morrow, 1989.

Claeys, Gregory. *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850–1920*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Clarke, Peter Frederick. *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990*. Vol. 9. Penguin (Non-Classics), 1996.

Copley, Terence. *Black Tom: Arnold of Rugby: The Myth and the Man*. A&C Black, 2002.

Copsey, Nigel. *Anti-Fascism in Britain*. Second edition. Routledge Studies in Fascism and the Far Right. London: Routledge, 2017.

Curtis, S. J. *Education in Britain Since 1900*. A. Dakers, 1952.

Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941.

Dudley, Robert. *Harrow: Portrait of an English School*. Third Millennium, 2004.

Edwards, Sian. *Youth Movements, Citizenship and the English Countryside Creating Good Citizens, 1930-1960*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Evers, C. R. *Rugby*. Glasgow: Blackie & Son, Ltd., 1939.

Ferrall, Charles, and Dougal McNeill. *Writing the 1926 General Strike: Literature, Culture, Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Garau, Salvatore. *Fascism and Ideology: Italy, Britain, and Norway*. Routledge, 2015.

Gardner, Brian. *The Public Schools: An Historical Survey*. Hamish Hamilton, 1973.

Gellner, Ernest. *Nationalism*. London: Phoenix, 1998.

Gorman, Daniel. *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Grant, Peter. *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action in the First World War: Mobilizing Charity*. Routledge, 2014.

Gregory, Adrian. *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Hamlett, Jane. *At Home in the Institution: Material Life in Asylums, Lodging Houses and Schools in Victorian and Edwardian England*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Hilliard, Christopher. *To Exercise Our Talents: The Democratization of Writing in Britain*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Hope-Simpson, John Barclay. *Rugby Since Arnold: A History of Rugby School from 1842*. St. Martin's Press, 1967.

Leinster-Mackay, Donald P. *The Educational World of Edward Thring: A Centenary Study*. Falmer Press, 1987.

Lorimer, Douglas A. *Science, Race Relations and Resistance: Britain, 1870-1914*. Studies in Imperialism. Manchester University Press, 2013.

Luebbert, Gregory M. *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy: Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 1991.

Macdonald Fraser, George. *The World of the Public School*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977.

MacKenzie, John M. *Imperialism and Popular Culture*. Studies in Imperialism. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986.

———. *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950*. Studies in Imperialism. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992.

———. *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960*. Studies in Imperialism. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.

Mangan, James Anthony. *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

McCarthy, Helen. *The British People and the League of Nations: Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism, c. 1918-45*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011.

McCulloch, Gary. *Cyril Norwood and the Ideal of Secondary Education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

———. *Documentary Research in Education, History, and the Social Sciences*. RoutledgeFalmer, 2004.

———. *Philosophers and Kings: Education for Leadership in Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

McKibbin, Ross. *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-1951*. Oxford: Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1998.

Merriman, John. *A History of Modern Europe: From the Renaissance to the Present*. 2nd ed. London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2004.

Mills, Sarah, and Peter Kraftl. *Informal Education, Childhood and Youth: Geographies, Histories, Practices*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Morris, Margaret. *The General Strike*. Penguin Books, 1976.

Olsen, Stephanie. *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen, 1880-1914*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014.

Paris, Michael. *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000*. London: Reaktion Books, 2000.

Peatling, Gary K. *British Opinion and Irish Self Government, 1865-1925: From Unionism to Liberal Commonwealth*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2001.

Pedersen, Susan. *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Phillips, Gordon Ashton. *The General Strike: The Politics of Industrial Conflict*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson London, 1976.

Porter, Bernard. *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Proctor, Tammy M. *On My Honour : Guides and Scouts in Interwar Britain*. Vol. 92. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2002.

Renshaw, Patrick. *The General Strike*. Eyre Methuen London, 1975.

Rich, Paul J. *Chains of Empire: English Public Schools, Masonic Cabalism, Historical Causality and Imperial Clubdom*. London: Regency press, 1991.

———. *Elixir of Empire: The English Public Schools, Ritualism, Freemasonry, and Imperialism*. Regency, 1989.

Richards, Jeffrey, ed. *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*. Studies in Imperialism. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989.

Saltzman, Rachelle Hope. *'A Lark for the Sake of Their Country': The 1926 General Strike Volunteers in Folklore and Memory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012.

Scotland, Nigel. *Squires in the Slums: Settlements and Missions in Late-Victorian London*. London: IB Tauris, 2007.

Seldon, Anthony, and David Walsh. *Public Schools and The Great War*. Pen and Sword, 2013.

Skelley, Jeffrey. *The General Strike, 1926*. Lawrence and Wishart London, 1976.

Smart, John. *Tarantuala's Web*. Norwich: Michael Russell Ltd., 2013.

Smart, Sue. *When Heroes Die: A Forgotten Archive Reveals the Last Days of the School Friends Who Died for Britain*. Breedon, 2001.

Spencer, Stephanie, and Nancy Rosoff. *British and American School Stories, 1910–1960: Fiction, Femininity, and Friendship*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Springhall, John. *Youth, Empire, and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883-1940*. Taylor & Francis, 1977.

———. *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta Rap, 1830-1996*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999.

Stewart, W. A. C. *The Educational Innovators: Progressive Schools 1881-1967*. Vol. 4. London: MacMillan, 1968.

Streets, Heather. *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004.

Tapper, Ted. *Fee-Paying Schools and Educational Change in Great Britain: Between the State and the Marketplace*. London: The Woburn Press, 1997.

Thompson, Andrew Stuart. *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Longman, 2005.

Thorpe, Andrew. *A History of the British Labour Party*. London: Macmillan Education UK, 2015.

Todd, Selina. *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class, 1910-2010*. Hachette UK, 2014.

Tosh, John. *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*. New Haven, Connecticut ; London: Yale University Press, 2007.

Turner, David. *The Old Boys: The Decline and Rise of the Public School*. Yale University Press, 2015.

Tyerman, Christopher. *A History of Harrow School, 1324-1991*. Oxford University Press, 2000.

Walston, Catherine. *With a Fine Disregard*. Third Millennium, 2006.

Weinberg, Ian. *The English Public Schools: The Sociology of Elite Education*. New York: Atherton Press, 1967.

Whitridge, Arnold. *Dr. Arnold of Rugby*. Kessinger Publishing, 2004.

Wilkinson, Rupert. *The Prefects: British Leadership and the Public School Tradition*. Oxford University Press, 1964.

Wilson, John. *Public Schools and Private Practice*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1962.

Woodley, Daniel. *Fascism and Political Theory: Critical Perspectives on Fascist Ideology*. Routledge Issues in Contemporary Political Theory 2. London ; New York: Routledge, 2010.

Woodward, Frances J. *The Doctor's Disciples*. Oxford University Press, 1954.

Wymer, Norman. *Dr. Arnold of Rugby*. R. Hale, 1953.

Articles

Allender, Tim, and Stephanie Spencer. 'Travelling across National, Paradigmatic and Archival Divides: New Work for the Historian of Education'. *History of Education* 38, no. 6 (2009): 721–24.

Bailey, V. 'Scouting for the Empire: The Boy-Scouts in Edwardian England'. *History Today* 32 (July 1982): 5–9.

Banner, Lois W. 'Biography as History'. *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 (2009): 579–86.

Benson, John. '"Get a Blue and You Will See Your Money Back Again": Staffing and Marketing the English Prep School, 1890-1912'. *History of Education* 43, no. 43 (2014): 355-67

Bourdieu, Pierre. 'The Economics of Linguistic Exchanges'. *Information (International Social Science Council)* 16, no. 6 (1977): 645–68.

Brown, Kenneth D. 'Modelling for War? Toy Soldiers in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain'. *Journal of Social History* 24, no. 2 (1990): 237–54.

Briggs, Asa. 'The Study of the History of Education'. *History of Education* 1, no. 1 (January 1972): 5–22.

Britton, Sarah. '"Come and See the Empire by the All Red Route!": Anti-Imperialism and Exhibitions in Interwar Britain'. *History Workshop Journal* 69, no. 1 (2010): 68–89.

Bueltmann, Tanja, and Lesley C. Robinson. 'Making Home in a Sojourner World: Organised Ethnicity and British Associationalism in Singapore, C1880s–1930s'. *Britain and the World* 9, no. 2 (2016): 167–96.

Burke, Catherine, Peter Cunningham, and Ian Grosvenor. '"Putting Education in Its Place": Space, Place and Materialities in the History of Education'. *History of Education* 39, no. 6 (2010): 677–80.

Ceadel, Martin. 'The "King and Country" Debate, 1933: Student Politics, Pacifism and the Dictators'. *The Historical Journal* 22, no. 02 (1979): 397–422.

Claeys, Anna. 'Britannia's Children Grow up: English Education at Empire's End'. *History of Education*, (August 2018), 1–17.

Collini, Stefan. 'The Idea of "Character" in Victorian Political Thought'. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Fifth Series)* 35 (1985): 29–50.

Collins, Tony. 'Return to Manhood: The Cult of Masculinity and the British Union of Fascists'. *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 16, no. 4 (December 1999): 145–62.

Dedman, Martin. 'Baden-Powell, Militarism, and the "Invisible Contributors" to the Boy Scout Scheme, 1904–1920'. *Twentieth Century British History* 4, no. 3 (1993): 201–23.

Dunae, Patrick A. 'Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870-1914'. *Victorian Studies*, (1980), 105–21.

———. 'Penny Dreadfuls: Late Nineteenth-Century Boys' Literature and Crime'. *Victorian Studies*, (1979), 133–50.

Ellis, Heather. ‘Knowledge, Character and Professionalisation in Nineteenth-Century British Science’. *History of Education* 43, no. 6 (2014): 777–92.

———. ‘Thomas Arnold, Christian manliness and the problem of boyhood’. *Journal of Victorian Culture* 19, no. 4 (2014): 425-441.

English, Jim. ‘Empire Day in Britain, 1904–1958’. *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 1 (2006): 247–76.

Foy, Michael. ‘Ulster Unionist Propaganda against Home Rule 1912-14’. *History Ireland* 4, no. 1 (1996): 49–53.

Freathy, Rob. ‘Three Perspectives on Religious Education and Education for Citizenship in English Schools, 1934–1944: Cyril Norwood, Ernest Simon and William Temple’. *British Journal of Religious Education* 30, no. 2 (2008): 103–12.

Gardner, Philip. ‘The Educational Afterlife of Greater Britain, 1903–1914’. *Paedagogica Historica* 48, no. 5 (2012): 770–91.

Glendenning, F. J. ‘Attitudes to Colonialism and Race in British and French History Schoolbooks’. *History of Education* 3, no. 2 (1974): 57–72.

Gronn, Peter C. ‘An Experiment in Political Education:“VG”,‘Slimy’and the Repton Sixth, 1916-1918’. *History of Education* 19, no. 1 (1990): 1–21.

Hamlett, Jane, ‘“Rotten Effeminate Stuff”: Patriarchy, Domesticity and Home in Victorian and Edwardian English Public Schools’. *Journal of British Studies*, 58, no. 1 (2019): 79-108

Harmon, Mark D. ‘A War of Words: The British Gazette and British Worker during the 1926 General Strike’. *Labor History* 60, no. 3 (May 2019): 193–202.

Hayman, Mark. ‘Labour and the Monarchy: Patriotism and Republicanism during the Great War’. *First World War Studies* 5, no. 2 (2014): 163–79.

Hillman, Nicholas. ‘Public Schools and the Fleming Report of 1944: Shunting the First-Class Carriage on to an Immense Siding?’ *History of Education* 41, no. 2 (2012): 235–55.

Jacobs, Andrea, Camilla Leach, and Stephanie Spencer. ‘Learning Lives and Alumni Voices’. *Oxford Review of Education* 36, no. 2 (April 2010): 219–32.

John, Brian. ‘Thomas Arnold as Educator of the Liberal Conscience’. *The Journal of General Education* 19, no. 2 (1967): 132–40.

Levi, Margaret. ‘The Institution of Conscription’. *Social Science History* 20, no. 1 (1996): 133–67.

Lowe, Roy. ‘The Charitable Status of Elite Schools: The Origins of a National Scandal’. *History of Education* 49, no. 1 (January 2020): 4–17.

MacDonald, Robert H. ‘Signs from the Imperial Quarter: Illustrations in Chums, 1892-1914’. *Children’s Literature* 16, no. 1 (1988): 31–55.

MacKenzie, John M. ‘“Comfort” and Conviction: A Response to Bernard Porter’. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no. 4 (December 2008): 659–68.

Mangan, James Anthony. ‘The Education of an Elite Imperial Administration: The Sudan Political Service and the British and the British Public School System’. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15, no. 4 (1982): 671–99.

Mansell, Tony. ‘Flying Start: Educational and Social Factors in the Recruitment of Pilots of the Royal Air Force in the Interwar Years’. *History of Education* 26, no. 1 (March 1997): 71–90.

Marsden, William E. ‘“Poisoned History”: A Comparative Study of Nationalism, Propaganda and the Treatment of War and Peace in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century School Curriculum’. *History of Education* 29, no. 1 (2000): 29–47.

———. ‘Rooting Racism into the Educational Experience of Childhood and Youth in the Nineteenth-and Twentieth-centuries’. *History of Education* 19, no. 4 (1990): 333–53.

Matin, A. Michael. ‘The Creativity of War Planners: Armed Forces Professionals and the Pre-1914 British Invasion-Scare Genre’. *English Literary History* 78, no. 4 (2011): 801–31.

McCarthy, Helen. ‘Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain’. *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 4 (2007): 891–912.

———. ‘Whose Democracy? Histories of British Political Culture between the Wars’. *The Historical Journal* 55, no. 1 (March 2012): 221–38.

McCulloch, Gary. ‘British Labour Party Education Policy and Comprehensive Education: From Learning to Live to Circular 10/65’. *History of Education* 45, no. 2 (March 2016): 225–45.

———. ‘Education and the Middle Classes: The Case of the English Grammar Schools, 1868–1944’. *History of Education* 35, no. 6 (2006): 689–704.

———. ‘Sensing the Realities of English Middle-Class Education: James Bryce and the Schools Inquiry Commission, 1865–1868’. *History of Education* 40, no. 5 (2011): 599–613.

McCulloch, Gary, and Tom Woodin. ‘Learning and Liberal Education: The Case of the Simon Family, 1912–1939’. *Oxford Review of Education* 36, no. 2 (2010): 187–201.

———. ‘Towards a Social History of Learners and Learning’. *Oxford Review of Education* 36, no. 2 (April 2010): 133–40.

Medway, Peter, and Patrick Kingwell. ‘A Curriculum in Its Place: English Teaching in One School 1946–1963’. *History of Education* 39, no. 6 (November 2010): 749–65.

Mitcham, John C. ‘The 1924 Empire Cruise and the Imagining of an Imperial Community’. *Britain and the World* 12, no. 1 (2019): 21.

Naidis, Mark. ‘G.A. Henty’s Idea of India’. *Victorian Studies* 8, no. 1 (1964): 49–58.

Nicholls, David. ‘The Totalitarianism of Thomas Arnold’. *The Review of Politics* 29, no. 4 (1967): 518–25.

Paris, Michael. ‘Red Menace! Russia and British Juvenile Fiction’. *Contemporary British History* 19, no. 2 (2005): 117–32.

Pooley, Siân. ‘Children’s Writing and the Popular Press in England 1876–1914’. *History Workshop Journal* 80, no. 1 (September 2015): 75–98.

Porter, Bernard. ‘Further Thoughts on Imperial Absent-Mindedness’. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no. 1 (March 2008): 101–17.

———. ‘Popular Imperialism: Broadening the Context’. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 39, no. 5 (December 2011): 833–45.

Price, Richard. ‘One Big Thing: Britain, Its Empire, and Their Imperial Culture’. *The Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 03 (2006): 602–27.

Roberts, Nathan. ‘Character in the Mind: Citizenship, Education and Psychology in Britain, 1880–1914’. *History of Education* 33, no. 2 (2004): 177–97.

Scott, Peter. 'Women, Other "Fresh" Workers, and the New Manufacturing Workforce of Interwar Britain'. *International Review of Social History* 45, no. 3 (2000): 449–74.

Simon, Brian. 'The Student Movement in England and Wales during the 1930s'. *History of Education* 16, no. 3 (1987): 189–203.

Sloan, Catherine. '"Periodicals of an Objectionable Character": Peers and Periodicals at Croydon Friends' School, 1826–1875'. *Victorian Periodicals Review* 50, no. 4 (2017): 769–86.

Smith, Jeremy. 'Bluff, Bluster and Brinkmanship: Andrew Bonar Law and the Third Home Rule Bill'. *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 1 (1993): 161–78.

Snape, Robert. 'The New Leisure, Voluntarism and Social Reconstruction in Interwar Britain'. *Contemporary British History* 29, no. 1 (2015): 51–83.

Spencer, Stephanie. 'Advice and Ambition in a Girls' Public Day School: The Case of Sutton High School, 1884–1924'. *Women's History Review* 9, no. 1 (March 2000): 75–94.

———. 'Boarding School Fictions: Schoolgirls' Own Communities of Learning'. *Women's History Review* 22, no. 3 (June 2013): 386–402.

Springhall, John. 'The Boy Scouts, Class and Militarism in Relation to British Youth Movements 1908–1930'. *International Review of Social History* 16, no. 02 (1971): 125–58.

Streets, Heather. 'Military Influence in Late Victorian and Edwardian Popular Media: The Case of Frederick Roberts'. *Journal of Victorian Culture* 8, no. 2 (2003): 231–56.

Summers, Anne. 'Militarism in Britain before the Great War'. *History Workshop Journal*, no. 2 (1976): 104–23.

Sunderland, Helen. ‘Politics in Schoolgirl Debating Cultures in England, 1886-1914’. *The Historical Journal* 63, no. 4, 2019, 1–23.

Tumblin, Jesse. ‘‘Grey Dawn’ in the British Pacific: Race, Security and Colonial Sovereignty on the Eve of World War I’. *Britain and the World* 9, no. 1 (2016): 32–54.

Wagner, Kim A. ‘Savage Warfare: Violence and the Rule of Colonial Difference in Early British Counterinsurgency’. *History Workshop Journal*, 2018.

Watkins, Christopher. ‘Inventing International Citizenship: Badminton School and the Progressive Tradition between the Wars’. *History of Education* 36, no. 3 (2007): 315–38.

Weil, Benjamin. ‘Conservation, Exploitation, and Cultural Change in the Indian Forest Service, 1875-1927’. *Environmental History* 11, no. 2 (April 2006): 319–43.

Whyte, William. ‘Building a Public School Community 1860–1910’. *History of Education* 32, no. 6 (2003): 601–26.

———. ‘The Intellectual Aristocracy Revisited’. *Journal of Victorian Culture* 10, no. 1 (2005): 15–45.

Wiggins, Sarah. ‘Gendered Spaces and Political Identity: Debating Societies in English Women’s Colleges, 1890–1914’. *Women’s History Review* 18, no. 5 (2009): 737–52.

Wright, Susannah. ‘Creating Liberal-Internationalist World Citizens: League of Nations Union Junior Branches in English Secondary Schools, 1919–1939’. *Paedagogica Historica*, 2018, 321–40.

Chapters in edited collections

Bentley, Michael. 'The Evolution and Dissemination of Historical Knowledge'. In *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain*, edited by Martin Daunton, 173–98. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Bland, Lucy, and Lesley Hall. 'Eugenics in Britain: The View from the Metropole'. In *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*. Oxford Handbooks Online, 2010.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 'The Forms of Capital'. In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John Richardson, 241-258. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986.

Cameron, Donald. 'Chamberlain's Ambassadors'. In *Diplomacy and World Power: Studies in British Foreign Policy, 1890–1951*, edited by Brian J. C. McKercher and Michael L. Dockrill, 136–70. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Claeys, Gregory. 'The Origins of Dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell'. In *Utopian Literature*, edited by Gregory Claeys, 107–32. Cambridge Companions to Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

De Conti, Manuele. 'Debate as an Educational Tool: Is Polarization a Debate Side Effect?' In *What Do We Know About the World?: Rhetorical and Argumentative Perspectives*, edited by Gabrijela Kišiček and Igor Ž Žagar, 321–53. Windsor Studies in Argumentation. University of Windsor, 2013.

Dockerill, Bertie. '"Forgotten Voices": The Debating Societies of Durham and Liverpool, 1900–1939'. In *Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland*, edited by Jodie Burkett 101–28. Springer, 2018.

Fitting, Peter. ‘Utopia, Dystopia and Science Fiction’. In *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, edited by Gregory Claeys, 135–53. Cambridge Companions to Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.French, David. ‘Officer Education and Training in the British Regular Army’. In *Military Education: Past, Present and Future*, edited by Gregory C. Kennedy and Keith Neilson, 105–27. London: Praeger, 2002.

Goodson, Ivor. ‘The Rise of the Life Narrative’. In *The Routledge International Handbook on Narrative and Life History*, edited by Ivor Goodson, Ari Antikainen, Pat Sikes, and Molly Andrews. Routledge Handbooks Online, 2016.

Harper, Douglas. ‘Small N’s and Community Case Studies’. In *What Is a Case? : Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, edited by Charles C. Ragin and Howard S. Becker, 12th ed., 139–58. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Hattendorf, John B. ‘The Conundrum of Military Education in Historical Perspectives’. In *Military Education: Past, Present and Future*, edited by Gregory C. Kennedy and Keith Neilson, 1–11. London: Praeger, 2002.

Kenway, Jane, Johannah Fahey, and Aaron Koh. ‘The Libidinal Economy of the Globalising Elite School Market’. In *Privilege, Agency and Affect: Understanding the Production and Effects of Action*, edited by Claire Maxwell and Peter Aggleton, 15–31. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013.

Mason, Philip. ‘Teaching and Learning, 1900-1945’. In *Sedbergh School, 1900-200: A Celebration*, edited by John Stacpool. The Old Sedberghian Club, 2000.

Stephenson, Kate. ‘Uniform Adoption in English Public Schools, 1830–1930’. In *Uniform : Clothing and Discipline in the Modern World*, edited by Jane Tynan and Lisa Godson, 1st ed., 67–86. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019.

Williamson, Philip. 'The Conservative Party, Fascism and Anti-Fascism 1918–1939'. In *Varieties of Anti-Fascism : Britain in the Inter-War Period*, edited by Nigel Copsey and Andrzej Olechnowicz, 73–97. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Zimmer, Oliver. 'Nationalism in Europe, 1918-1945'. In *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, edited by John Breuilly, 414–34. 21. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Dictionary entries

Able, Deryck, and Marc Brodie. 'Benn, Sir Ernest John Pickstone, Second Baronet'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004. https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30704.

Grimsditch, H. B., and A. J. A Morris. 'Fyfe, (Henry) Hamilton'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004. https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/33302.

Hodges, Sheila. 'Gollancz, Sir Victor'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 23 September 2004. https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/33446.

Pound, Reginald, and A. J. A Morris. 'Gibbs, Sir Philip Armand Hamilton'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 23 November 2004. https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/33387.

'Price, John Playfair'. In *Who's Who and Who Was Who*. Oxford University Press, 1 December 2007. https://doi.org/10.1093/ww/9780199540884.013.U168262.

'Somervell, David Churchill'. In *Who's Who and Who Was Who*. Oxford University Press, 1 December 2007. https://doi.org/10.1093/ww/9780199540884.013.U58314.

Suranjan, Das. ‘Jackson, Sir (Francis) Stanley (1870–1947), Cricketer and Politician’. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 6 January 2011. https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34129.

Tomes, Jason. ‘Jerrold, Douglas Francis (1893–1964), Publisher and Author’. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34185.

Wade-Gery, Robert. ‘Hodson, Henry Vincent [Harry] (1906–1999), Journalist’. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 25 June 2006. https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/72081.

Reports

Kirby, Philip. ‘Leading People 2016: The Educational Backgrounds of the UK Professional Elite’. Sutton Trust, 2016. https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/leading-people-2016-education-background/.

The Sutton Trust. ‘The Educational Backgrounds of the Nation’s Leading People’. The Sutton Trust, 2012. https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/educational-backgrounds-of-the-nations-leading-people.

University of Cambridge. ‘Undergraduate Admissions Statistics, 2018 Cycle’, June 2019. https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/files/publications/ug_admissions_statistics_2018_cycle.pdf.

University of Oxford. ‘Annual Admissions Statistical Report’, May 2019. https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/Admissions%20Report%202019.pdf.

Radio and film

Moore, Dave. *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. Film. ITV, Company Pictures, 2005.

Tom Brown's School Days. Radio, Radio. BBC Radio 4 Extra, 2008.

Unpublished theses

Haapala, Taru. '"That in the Opinion of This House": The Parliamentary Culture of Debate in the Nineteenth-Century Cambridge and Oxford Union Societies'. PhD Thesis, University of Jyväskylä, 2012.

Kirke, Alice. 'Education in Interwar Rural England: Community, Schooling and Voluntarism'. PhD Thesis, University College London, 2017.

Mahoney, Ross Wayne. 'The Forgotten Career of Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, 1892-1937: A Social and Cultural History of Leadership Development in the Interwar Royal Air Force'. PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2015.

Unpublished papers

Gamsu, Sol. 'Maintaining the South-Eastern Skew: The Contemporary Geography of Educational Power and the Structural History of English Elite Education'. Presented at the EERA History of Education Summer School, University of Groningen, 2016.

Quartermain, Jeremy. 'Erskine Hamilton Childers, 1905-1974'. Presented at Gresham's School, 2009.

Websites

Department for Education, and Edward Timpson M. P. 'Funding Boost for Schools Helping Pupils Develop Character', 26 May 2016. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-boost-for-schools-helping-pupils-develop-character.F

Debate Mates. 01 May 2021 https://debatemate.org/

Profile Editions. 'What Our Clients Say'. 10 May 2020. https://profileeditions.com/what-our-clients-say.