

**Michael Reeve**, *Bombardment, Public Safety and Resilience in English Coastal Communities during the First World War*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. viii + 390pp. 16 figures. 10 tables. Bibliography. £89.99 hbk.

Michael Reeve's book is part of a growing historiography of air raids in Britain in the First World War that addresses how the arrival of airpower challenged the boundaries between military and civilian. Reeve sheds new light on how a variety of actors, including national and local authorities, police and military officials, and individual civilians and volunteers responded to the anticipation and experience of bombing. Urban histories of the First World War have gravitated to the major European capitals, but Reeve focuses instead on coastal towns in the North-East of England, principally Hull, Scarborough, Whitby, and 'the Hartlepoons' (Hartlepool and West Hartlepool). This attention to what he calls the 'coastal-urban sphere' (p. 7) reflects its position as a home front front-line, with the prospect of a coastal invasion making these towns highly significant strategically.

After a lengthy introduction, the book contains three parts, each with two chapters. The first part focuses on 'wartime resilience', an idea used as 'a way of understanding the wartime strategies and practices of coping and planning for potential attacks' (p. 9). Greater reflection on the more recent proliferation of 'resilience' in urban studies and sociology (in the context of terrorism and climate change in particular) might have been worthwhile, but the future-oriented 'resilience' discussed here will certainly interest urban and planning historians. Chapter three analyses the landmark Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) (1914) and the creation of the Authorised Competent Military Authorities tasked with implementing and enforcing central policies and regulations on a local level. As Reeve shows, these apparently 'military' authorities were in fact 'a shifting coalition of both military and civil partners' (p. 102), which arguably deserve more scholarly attention as an example of the blurring of lines between civilian and military during wartime.

Part two delves more deeply into the local case studies and provides perhaps the book's most interesting material. With DORA providing the legislative framework, chapter four examines how home and civil defence measures were developed in practice, including the re-making of coastal

landscapes with trenches and barbed wire, much-contested lighting regulations, and public information campaigns. Concise case studies, often drawing on rich material from local newspapers, provide a real sense of how these measures were understood by, and often grated with, local populations. These vignettes often highlight apparently quotidian complaints, such as the letter to the Scarborough Town Clerk from a local business owner requesting that the 'barbed wire barricade' outside his shop be removed as it was, unsurprisingly, bad for business (p. 167). But these seemingly mundane frustrations were compounded by more serious concern about the apparent lack of effective defence against air raids. This absence is reflected in the flurry of letters local papers received after the July 1915 Zeppelin raids in Hull, which offered to fill the gap with proposals for a range of anti-air measures as well as shelter designs. It was only after a second Zeppelin raid in March 1916, which killed 17 and injured 52, that searchlights and mobile anti-air guns were installed (pp. 137-139). Chapter five focuses on the enforcement of regulations with court records and local newspaper reports. A key question was the state's right to intervene inside a private home, and Reeve helpfully shows how emergent home defence often drew on established nineteenth century concepts of public safety and risk management. The chapter highlights notable contestations of blackout regulations, with the uncertain role of volunteer Special Constables aptly reflecting the wider vagueness around the regulations and their enforcement.

The final part of the book focuses on the representations of bombing and urban destruction, with chapter 6 analysing the creation and reception of photographs and postcards. The postcards in particular highlight the complex resonance of images which were simultaneously a rallying cry, a commemoration, and a more complex articulation of local identity. The importance of images of urban destruction is well-known for the Second World War, and this chapter provides a useful comparison and precedent. In the final chapter, Reeve looks at wartime and post-war legacies and commemorations. The importance of the local comes through again here, but the story of immediate post-war commemorations gradually fading and then being firmly supplanted by the bombing of the Second World War will likely be recognisable across the country.

Reeve has produced a comprehensive and well-researched book on a topic that has achieved limited scholarly attention. The local case studies add to our understanding of how the state's interventions in the lives of civilians were mediated, and often resented, and will be of interest to a range of historians of modern Britain. It spends perhaps a little too much time setting out its approach and can get a touch bogged down in the conceptual and theoretical framing, but the detail of the case studies provides an effective historical focus and some revealing insights.

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