

PART II: 1914-1950



Fig. 60 Fredrick Cayley Robinson, *Summer: A Day in the Country*, c.1923-24

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PhD. Thesis:**

Fashioning Social Aspiration: Lower-middle-class rational recreational leisure participation and the evolution of popular rational recreational leisure clothing, c.1880-1950

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PART II: 1914-1950

3.1 Introduction: Re-Examining the Inter-War Lower Middle Class

Historical accounts of social relations in Britain between the wars have, unsurprisingly, largely focussed on the political dimensions of the post-War settlement: a Europe struggling to come to terms with the effects of total war and attempts at reparation, and the threats posed by both socialist revolution and right-wing extremism. Across the political spectrum, Britain itself has been seen as a divided nation separated by plenty and want, and as a society riven by both economic depression and the decline of the old social order. The 1920s saw the worst economic crisis in history and a general strike. Images of gaunt, hungry men on the National Hunger Marches were a feature of the 1930s and the 'Jarrow Crusade' of October 1936 has come to represent this period of political unrest and social inequality in the collective memory.¹ Counteracting this is the stereotypical vision of a 'flapping' aristocracy in the 1920s, a generation of 'Bright Young People' decimated by the war that supposedly faced cultural and political decline with gay abandon (and abdication) rather than application.²

In party political terms feelings were equally polarized; after 1918 it became a clear-cut contest between the Labour and the Conservative parties. Financed by the growing trade union movement, Labour put forward a vision of society divided along distinctly antagonistic class lines to express a new sense of working-class solidarity and many turned to socialism and unionism in an attempt to benefit in the post-war settlement.³ Labour attempted to appeal to the middle ground by drawing

¹ See for example Hattersley, R. (2007), *Borrowed Time: the Story of Britain between the Wars*, London: Little, Brown: 174.

² Most recently, Taylor, D.J. (2009), *Bright Young People: The Lost Generation of London's Jazz Age*, New York: Farrar Strauss & Giroux. Taylor gives a detailed account of the hedonism and excesses of alcoholism and addiction of an elite mix of aristocratic socialites, bohemian party givers and a coterie of glittering artistic and literary talent. Taylor's main argument is that beneath the veneer of such glitter a post-World War I generation of 'Bright Young People' was tormented by an irreconcilable combination of guilt and glamour.

³ There had been a considerable shift towards the left and increased radicalisation in the early years of the twentieth century. Trade union membership had doubled from a figure of four million in 1913 to over eight million by 1920. The first volume of *Capital* and *The Communist Manifesto* were

on traditional Fabian socialist concerns some of whom such as Beatrice Webb who were active on a number of committees demonstrated their essential repudiation of the idea of class-conflict.⁴ But this could not offset the equation of the increasing rise of the trade unions with Bolshevism - particularly in certain sections of the popular press. Large sections of the post-World War I middle class saw themselves as the 'New Poor' and as a class, one that had suffered more than others' both in the war and now afterwards.⁵ Ex-officers were unable to find work, or were forced to work in menial jobs, and many of their widows and orphans faced extreme financial hardship and struggled to survive on dwindling savings and pensions. Ross McKibbin argues, 'For the middle classes, the real problems which many of them faced both during the war and immediately after it were directly proportional to the gains made (as they supposed) by the working classes'.⁶ Those that could work saw themselves as unfairly burdened. They were faced with increased taxation imposed by the government to meet the needs, they believed, of an increasingly militant working class whose interests were now also served by trade unionism at home and the inflamed culture of Bolshevism abroad.

The language of populist resentment was a widespread feature in the British press media of the 1920s and 30s. It largely targeted a middle- and lower-middle-class audience for whom 'beneath the heated expressions of nationalism were strong currents for collective disillusionment'.⁷ Addressing its core readership the *Daily Mail* for example conjured up a vision of a powerless and apathetic middle class at the mercy of both rampant trade unionism and a profligate plutocracy.⁸ Many within a wide constituency of the salaried population 'enrolled in the anti-socialist notion

translated and published in English in the late 1880s, but in the 1920s Marxist philosophy was becoming more widely known and circulated see Samuel, R. (1987), 'Class Politics: The Lost World of British communism (Part III)', in *New Left Review*, September-October 1987. Labour's share of the vote increased from less than 8 per cent before the war to almost 24 per cent in 1918, Cannadine 1983: 111.

⁴ Abrahms, P. (1963). 'The failure of Social Reform: 1918-1920' in *Past & Present*, 24 (1), 43-64.

⁵ Jeffery, T. and MacClelland, K. (1987), 'A World Fit to Live In: the *Daily Mail* and the Middle Classes, 1918-39' in J. Curran, A. Smith and P. Wingate (eds.), *Impacts and Influences: Essays on Media Power in the Twentieth Century*, London: Routledge: 41.

⁶ McKibbin 1990: 298-299.

⁷ Kosher, R. 'On the Politics of the Splintered Classes: An Introductory Essay' in R. Kosher (ed.) (1990), *Splintered Classes. Politics and the Lower Middle Classes in Interwar Europe*, London and New York: Holmes & Meier: 20.

⁸ Jeffery and MacClelland 1987: 44.

that emerged'.⁹ At the height of its readership in the early 1920s the *Daily Mail's* nationalistic, anti-socialist rhetoric of populist resentment directly addressed an 'imagined and idealized version of the middle class' that clearly included a significant proportion of an aspiring lower middle class. 'Illegitimate' working-class activity was linked with 'Communist Plots' and the 'Reds' but the government was also lambasted as being insufficiently 'National', and the paper called for the demise of the 'Old Gang' politicians who ran it. A modernised party political system was promoted with reference to the developments in Germany and Italy where it was reported fascism was much more forcefully dealing with the threat of Bolshevism and seeing a 'gigantic revival of national strength'.¹⁰

Different understandings of 'them' and 'us' came to incorporate different social groupings and consolidate particular social identities around different versions and visions of the inequalities of the post-World War I settlement. What is of significance to this thesis is the position of the lower middle class within this discourse of conflicting social relations - particularly as this is a class frequently historically understood in terms of the politics of disappointment and a culture of self-interest. It is also a collection of social groupings whose political consciousness and sense of identity was one driven by 'an obsessive pursuit of status and respectability'.¹¹ Fear of 'falling' and a perceived lack of statutory support, combined with a focus on status-consciousness continued to dominate ambiguous and often conflicting popular and intellectual discussion of the lower-middle-class. Political economists viewed the lower middle-class workforce in particular as politically volatile; and social commentators such as George Orwell spoke of a 'wretched shivering army of clerks and shop walkers'.¹² Lower-middle-class status anxiety and its criticism is familiar territory - but it is one that inevitably takes on a more sinister turn in relation to its supposed expression in new forms of nationalistic, right-wing politics that emerged in continental Europe in this period. Escalating fascist

⁹ Jeffery, T. (1990), 'A Place in the Nation: The Lower Middle Class in England' in S. Koshar (ed.), *Splintered Classes: Politics and the Lower Middle Classes in Interwar Europe*, New York and London: Holmes and Meier: 78.

¹⁰ Jeffery and MacClelland 1987: 47-48.

¹¹ Bailey 1999.

¹² Orwell, G., *The Lion and the Unicorn*, cited in Cannadine 1983: 130.

extremism, it is argued was rooted in such fears and the politics of bitterness and envy that sustained them.¹³

However, recent shifts in historical accounts of Britain between the wars are of some significance here. Quite drastic revisionist versions have sought to counter an overwhelming picture of industrial decline and unrest, deprivation and unemployment in Northern England, South Wales and Central Scotland in the 1920s and early 1930s with relative prosperity and job security elsewhere in the country for a significant proportion of the working population in regular employment, particularly after 1931.¹⁴ Martin Pugh's detailed social history for example outlines how the immediate post-war period was marked by deteriorating class relations, industrial strife and global economic collapse. He also evidences how in the 1930s social tensions in Britain were to a large extent diffused by the rise in both real incomes and mass consumerism.¹⁵ Moreover, both Labour and Conservative adopted a cautious party political line, more or less endorsing the same traditional values that resulted in an increasing fatalistic attitude on the part of the electorate that Pugh argues, effectively frustrated class antagonism and radical socio-political unrest.¹⁶ Roy Hattersley's re-assessment of a turbulent social and political landscape offers a more circumspect evaluation of a period of ambiguous socio-economic improvement and deprivation, particularly in terms of labour relations and the failure of inter-war housing and welfare reform. Nevertheless, the capitulation of a radical socialist agenda, hunger marches, and a growing international crisis are all situated by him as the context in which an inter-war artistic and literary avant garde also flourished. Equally significantly for this research it was also a time when motor cycles, wireless

¹³ Lipset, S.M. (1983), "'Fascism' - Left, Right and Centre', in S.M. Lipset, *Political Man*, London: Heinemann: 135.

¹⁴ See in particular Pugh, M. (2008), *We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain Between the Wars*, London: Vintage.

¹⁵ Pugh, in line with other more optimistic revisionist views, suggests that Britain's slow economic recovery and painful period of readjustment 'implies a redefinition of interwar depression as essentially a regional problem' arising out of the concentration of heavy industry in particular areas in the North of England, South Wales and Central Scotland at the time of the original Industrial Revolution. But 'mass' unemployment as a result was confined to particular regions and specific industrial communities rather than uniformly experienced by the majority of the workforce nationally - most of who even at the height of the depression kept their jobs, nor was the economic slump continuous or comprehensively experienced by all industry.

¹⁶ Pugh 2008: 90-91.

sets, new types of domestic appliances, and new forms of leisure and entertainment became part of everyday life for much of the working population.¹⁷

Rather than an era of unremitting social deprivation and disappointment, there was a transformation in some sections of mass manufacturing through new innovations in product design and technology, as well as advances in communications, distribution and retailing. This created both new employment opportunities in an expanding technical and service sector and a consumer boom. The real value of incomes increased as prices fell and new consumers benefited from a period of virtually continuous deflation. The benefits of economic change were therefore more widely distributed than traditional accounts of this period would imply.¹⁸ What emerges is a picture of the 1920s and 1930s as an era of fluctuating periods of slump *and* recovery reflected in the shifting fortunes of different sections of the economy in different parts of the country. This is clearly of some significance to this thesis because the idea of a prosperous and thriving intermediary group of lower-middle incomers tends to undermine any easy assumptions being made about either a lack of collective political consciousness on the one hand, or an inherently right wing or even fascistic one on the other. This perspective is supported by a small body of work looking specifically at lower middle-class political activism that similarly puts forward a much more ambiguous framework of both political heterogeneity and socio-economic advance.

Political Dimensions

Tom Jeffery argues that the identification and often somewhat contemptuous image of an inchoate, lower-middle-class Tory is not just intellectually inconsistent. It is also reliant on an unproblematic equation between structural factors dictating political beliefs and cultural patterns unmediated by other contradictory understandings and expressions of a marginalised but also sometimes politically radical lower middle class.¹⁹ Fascism in interwar Britain was never rooted in one-specific social class; it was more a complex of ideas that resonated with a wide

¹⁷ Hattersley 2008.

¹⁸ Pugh 2008: 93.

¹⁹ Jeffery 1990: 72-73.

variety of individuals and experiences that cannot be simplistically organised in terms of socio-economic status.²⁰ Moreover, Susan Pennybacker suggests that *anti-fascism* was uncomfortably weak in *all* levels of British society between the wars.²¹ The rhetoric of populist resentment exploited by, for example, the *Daily Mail* immediately after the First World War certainly very much flowed in the direction of a significant number of its lower-middle-class readers' experience of social change and a widespread climate of disillusion. Nonetheless, a survey of newspaper readership evidences a shifting and much more ideologically diverse lower-middle-class response after 1931 - and which the paper failed to keep pace with. The *Mail*, it is argued, was out of step with the gradual and progressive economic improvement and stability experienced by much of its readership. Crucially, it also failed to take account of a growing awareness amongst its readers of the increasingly volatile political situation in Europe and its implications for democratic society.²²

Unlike its rival publications, the *Daily Mail* misunderstood the shifting political mood *and* consumerist consciousness of large sections of both the British public and its own readership. While the *Mail* offered free tickets to the BUF Rally in Olympia to readers who sent in letters describing 'Why I Like the Blackshirts', its rival publications' attentions were directed towards a 'give away war' that used (now familiar) promotional tactics to boost circulation.²³ The *Daily Express* over the course of a decade progressively and substantially overtook the *Mail* certainly as the middle-class paper of choice, but the *News Chronicle* which although nationally was largely read by the working class was also taken by a wide social constituency in London. The *Express* offered upbeat mix of news and consumerism while the *News Chronicle* offered an increasingly appealing alternative pragmatic appraisal of the

²⁰ See Linehan, Thomas P. (1983), *British Fascism, 1918-1939: Parties, ideology and culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 7; 150-153. Linehan's examination of membership profiles demonstrates how fascism attracted a diverse range of social classes and occupational types motivated by an equally diverse range of reasons. It was, therefore, more a case of a conglomerate of ideas culled from a number of sources, a complex of resentment and often justified feelings of being let down by the promise of a post-war new deal that merged into a particular set of ideas.

²¹ Pennybacker, S.D. (1990), *A Vision for London, 1889-1914: Labour, Everyday Life and the L.C.C. Experiment*, London: Routledge: 114.

²² Jeffery and MacClelland 1987: 47-48.

²³ Hattersley 2007: 373. The *Daily Herald* offered coupons for Box Brownie cameras and cuckoo clocks, and goods to the value of one pound to everyone who bought the paper for six weeks; in 1938 it was reported that 'a whole Welsh family could be clothed, from head to foot, for the price of eight weeks' reading of the *Daily Express*'. Both papers offered the Complete Works of Charles Dickens, the *Herald* for the presentation of ninety-six coupons, the *Express* in outraged response for the price of 10/- (and sold 124,000).

contemporary political climate. Both contrasted with the doom-laden prophecies of social collapse and the advocacy of drastic social action put forward in the pages of the *Mail*; the external threat to security was identified as growing fascism rather than Bolshevism, and the internal threat was recognized as that posed by 'fascism's active friends and the appeasers'.²⁴

Robert Johnston emphasizes how there is a tendency to overlook both how much middle-class politics and culture throughout the twentieth century is closely connected with the prospects of the working class, and significantly for this research, the central role that a politically-constituted lower middle class has played in politics and social life. A desire for egalitarianism was consistently nourished by an 'always potentially subversive middling-class consciousness' to work and rework both traditional working- and middle-class identities.²⁵ Although Johnston's discussion is situated in a North American social context, comparisons can be made with the progressive rise of a modern lower middle class in Britain in the twentieth century. Within institutions such as the London County Council (LCC) for example, the weight of argument continued to be driven by issues of pay, recruitment and promotion. There was nevertheless a perceptible change of emphasis from internal battles over pay and conditions towards a broader and more left-wing desire for social reform. A branch of the League of Nations Union for example was formed at County Hall; female LCC staff participated in a Peacemakers' Pilgrimage in Hyde Park, where groups of workers from all over Britain rallied and where an LCC typist was one of the platform speakers.²⁶ In the late 1930s Jeffery argues, the London suburbs 'hummed' with the activity of new and congenial forms of political involvement distinct from traditional party politics. Mass Observation reported that lower middle class contributors contained a strong 'low-church pacifist element', read widely and were keenly 'internationalist'. It noted that their reports recorded opinions that demonstrated 'a remarkable unanimity of language, tone, and reference' and thus indicated the presence of their significant political intelligence and involvement as another war approached.²⁷ The audience for Penguin and non-fiction Pelican books

²⁴ Jeffery and McClelland 1987: 47.

²⁵ Johnston, R.D. (2003), *The Radical Middle Class: Populist Democracy and the Question of Capitalism in Progressive Era Portland, Oregon*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

²⁶ Pennybacker 1990: 106.

²⁷ cited in Jeffery 1990: 87.

was largely 'middlebrow' and lower middle class and over a thousand Left Book Clubs were established, many in the suburbs or in the clerical workplace such as the LCC.²⁸ The Left Book Club at the LCC was a focus of staff activism, met twice a week and discussed a number of left wing radical texts from Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier* to Leo Huberman's *Worldly Goods*.²⁹

Pennybacker's wider study of the LCC and Jeffery's schematic account of lower-middle-class politics in the interwar years both give a picture of longstanding elements of political activism, and the development of a wider political confidence in their consolidation as part of a better educated and more secure modern workforce. Propagandists and organisers who spent their precious leisure hours campaigning or collecting for Spain formed a small but nevertheless important layer of lower-middle class political life in the period. Many members had left school at 16 and debates and discussions in an era of political instability created an atmosphere of involvement and a sense of political participation they felt denied them by traditional party politics, particularly in the aftermath of Munich.³⁰ Formal membership and participation was always somewhat limited, but a range of politically-motivated activities were nevertheless characteristic of the mix of liberal and Left wing political activism that was developing in the lower middle class nationally in the 1930s. This was inflected by a sense of internationalism that cut across party lines but which was integral to the dynamics of British politics in the period, widely shared economic circumstances, and growing crises in continental Europe.³¹

The *Daily Mail* gave the British Union of Fascists and the Blackshirts a media presence and profile it would otherwise not have got and its support clearly gave the party and its followers a credibility that widened its popular appeal. But the idea of a monolithic right-wing lower middle class is as illusory and intellectually inconsistent

²⁸ Jeffery 1990: 86, contends that even in the 1920s fascist groups were minimal in numbers and largely drawn from an eccentric right wing; membership of the British Union of Fascists at its high point in 1934 reached approximately half a million supporters across the social scale but declined very rapidly as war approached and the support that was once provided in the pages of the *Daily Mail* was withdrawn after the well-publicised violence of the mass rally held at Olympia.

²⁹ Pennybacker 1990: 108. Educational histories and the novels of modern authors such as George Orwell were extremely popular. Each Pelican title sold on average 40,000 copies over a year and sales of Penguin Specials frequently exceeded 100,000.

³⁰ Jeffery 1990: 86-87.

³¹ Pennybacker 1990: 106.

as it is for any other class.³² The rhetoric of anti-Semitism and racialism promulgated by for example the *Daily Mail* spoke to and for only one section of the class, 'it did not speak for white-collar trade unionists in the years immediately following the First World War; it did not speak for the pacifist, low-church middle class; still less did it do so for those involved in the anti-fascist campaigns in the crisis of the coming of war.'³³ The lower middle class might indeed be 'politically splintered' but they were also capable of 'collective action whose rhetorical conventions and expectations gave brief meaning to a deeply fissured political world'.³⁴ Social aspiration and its successful fulfilment for many, as much as the 'humming' of a few left wing political activists suggests the need to re-evaluate the political dimensions and ideological context of an expanding 'new' lower-middle class and a complex and often problematic process of shifting class identification and adaptation to changing social, economic and political circumstances.

³² For example, in the 1930s Labour failed to gain even 50 per cent of the working-class vote, a third of who voted Conservative including many trade unionists, Addison, P. (1975), *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War*, London:24. The Labour Party itself was seen by the British Communist Party as irredeemably petit bourgeois and made of bureaucratic trade union officials and ambitious lower middle and middle class parliamentarians. On the other hand the Communists themselves were led by an old labour aristocracy of the engineers who constituted half of its representatives in 1921 and from which its early leaders were drawn; and the party focussed its appeal on the studious 'serious minded worker' in 'good working class areas' see Samuel 1987.

³³ Jeffery and MacClelland 1987: 40.

³⁴ Koshar 1990: 4.

3.2 *Nouveaux Riches*: The Expansion of the Inter-War Lower Middle Class

In the early 1920s, an author describing himself as a 'middle-aged present-day nonentity,' wrote a short political pamphlet calling for the founding of a lower-middle-class union as a way of overcoming social divisions, arguing that 'the various professional classes of the 'L.M.C. ...formed a bridge between the two wings of capital and labour'.¹ What is interesting is how the 'L.M.C.' was defined by one of its own as a 'great clerk class' that consisted of 'shop assistants, commercial travellers, school-teachers, checkers, designers, small firms' managers, foremen (not actually manual workers), marine captains, engineers, stevedores, stewards, telegraphs, signalers, mine deputies, supervisors in cotton and other mills, overseers, working chemists in factories, artists, testers, draughtsmen and 101 other more or less specialized workers'. In its breadth and diversity, this occupational assessment of the lower middle class virtually mirrored that of the first post-war Census of 1921.² The Census attempted to align status with a more detailed assessment of individual employment to be understood within various industrial contexts; social class was now allocated according to 989 potential separate occupational designations and subdivisions of different industrial and commercial groups distributed according to the five-tiered Social Classes (I to V) established in 1911.³ The Census therefore, reflected a growing consciousness of the highly stratified nature of a class that included a traditional petite bourgeoisie, a broad white-collar stratum that had emerged in the later nineteenth century, a transformed traditional industrial and entrepreneurial artisan class, and a new technical sector that had grown up as a result

¹ Anon (1923) "Villadom" or *Lower Middle-Class Snobs by "One of Them" - A Plea for a Middle-Class Trade Union*, London: E.J. Larby Ltd.

² See Woods, R. (2000), *The Demography of Victorian England and Wales*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 35. Britain was the first country to introduce an explicit class hierarchy to organize occupational census data when the Registrar General prepared a summary of occupations designed to represent 'social grades' in the Annual Report for 1911 [published in 1913] and used for the data presented in the *Census Tables on the Fertility of Marriage Census*. For a discussion of how these graded groups came to be referred to as 'social classes' organized around an occupational classification ranging from Class I 'Professionals' to Class V 'Unskilled' see Marwick, A (1980) *Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA since 1930*, London: Fontana Collins. See also Nichols 1979: 65 who suggests that the 1921 Census attempted to revise the basic five-class occupational scheme developed in 1911 in order to achieve greater categorical precision.

³ Armstrong, W.A. (1972) 'The use of information about occupation' in E.A. Wrigley (ed.) *Nineteenth-Century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 204.

of the massive technical innovation generated by modern industrial capitalism and warfare.

During the First World War, London had seen a massive surge in manufacturing industry, clearly in munitions but also in transport and communications, the garment trade, cabinet making, electrical and rubber goods, chemicals etc.⁴ Engineers and other skilled workers were, as a result in great demand and could 'virtually name their price'.⁵ After the war there was a dramatic collapse of demand for the products of Britain's heavy industries but this was in certain areas of the country to some extent compensated for by greater opportunities for industrial employment in new types of factories and industrial complexes.⁶ The production and manufacture of chemicals, electrical goods and consumer durables all offered opportunities for skilled and semi-skilled employment and inter-generational occupational 'advance' through the increased need for managers, supervisors, technicians, draughtsman, chemists, and industrial engineers.⁷ Reflecting on the inter-war years George Orwell observed that one of the most important developments in the first half of the twentieth century had been the upward and downward extension of the middle class through shifts in employment and the posts created by 'modern industry'.⁸

Investment in research and development was an important characteristic of this sector and many large firms established their own research laboratories.⁹ The 1920s witnessed a number of mergers and consolidations that created giant new business corporations such as 'the big four' railways and ICI, and an unprecedented growth in new industries such as car and motor cycle production.¹⁰ The creation of the National Grid, for example, facilitated the relocation of new industrial operations away from

⁴ See Whiteside, N. 'The British Population at War' in J. Turner (ed.), *Britain and the First World War I*, London: Routledge.

⁵ White, J. (2008), *London in the 20th Century*, London: Vintage Books.

⁶ Coal mining and other types of heavy industry were badly hit by the rapid technological advance necessitated by total war. Nationalized during the war there was little investment in new plant and machinery in for example the mining industry that a post-war collapse in demand and the return of the mines' to private ownership only further exacerbated see Hattersley 2007.

⁷ See White 2008: 185: of the net increase of 644 factories employing twenty-five or more persons between 1932 and 1937, 532 or 83 per cent were located in Greater London.

⁸ Orwell, G. (1941), *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*, London: Harmondsworth: 66.

⁹ Glucksman, M. (1990), *Women Assemble: Women Workers and the New Industries in Inter-War Britain*, London: Routledge: 74.

¹⁰ Cannadine, D. (1983), *The Invention of Tradition*: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 131.

traditional manufacturing centres, and light industrial plants and factories were established in the Midlands, and in London and the South East.¹¹ Between 1921 and 1931, 20,000 new factories were registered with the Factory Inspectorate and most of these were established on the outskirts of town or on new specially-built trading estates.¹² London in particular saw a significant rise in industrial development especially westwards: 60 per cent of those factories producing electrical goods were employing over 1,000 workers; there were for example eighteen factories in Park Royal in 1918 but by 1939 this had grown to some 250; fifty-three factories in a two-mile stretch along the Great West Road were employing 11,000 people in the 1930s.¹³ Certainly, there was a decline in traditional skilled work as a result of new production lines but there was also a rise in supervisory and foreman, and management and administration posts. Opportunities to open garages supplying petrol, small workshops servicing the huge increase in cars and motor cycles also arose; shops selling records, sheet music, gramophones, radios, and workshops to service and repair them were also a key feature in the continued development of lower-middle-class enterprise and experience.¹⁴ In 1933, *The New Survey of London Life and Labour* noted the growth of new types of retailing:

... the wireless shops - usually combined with music shops - the camping and scout shops ... and shops dealing in motor accessories ... Speciality shops which sell nothing but stockings, or lingerie, or inexpensive frocks - the shops which are termed by the trade "Madam shops" - are increasing in numbers in response to the prevailing fashions.¹⁵

A boom in popular leisure as it had in the previous century also directly benefited the light manufacturing, transport and communication industries; small specialist retail outlets that still provided major occupational and entrepreneurial opportunities for the class. The British film industry experienced considerable growth and investment and can be seen as one of the 'expanding areas and modernizing influences' of the inter-war economy: the number of studios rose and by 1936 more than 640

¹¹ Pugh 2008: 97-98.

¹² Glucksman 1990: 74.

¹³ White 2008: 189. Firms producing vacuum cleaners, gramophone records and players, cosmetics, cleaning products, tyres, convenience foods, sweets and confectionary, cameras and film stock, whose products became household names (Heinz, Hoover, Kodak, Birds, Plessey, Coty, Lyons etc.) all had factories on or around the major roads out of London.

¹⁴ White: 2008: 190. In Islington for instance, the number of registered workshops increased from 1,316 in 1913 to 1,860 in 1937.

¹⁵ Smith (ed.), (1933), *The New Survey of London Life and Labour*, Vol.V: 192-193.

companies were registered, and significant increases in profits were recorded by the major concerns such as the British Gaumont Picture Company.¹⁶ In most districts in London small drapers' shops and outfitters were beginning to stock cycling and hiking 'kit' to meet the demand created by the growth of new cycling clubs and other formal and informal recreational activities.¹⁷ Tom Stephenson, a leading writer on outdoor leisure wrote an extensive piece outlining the prosperity rambling and hiking had brought to a number of industries, arguing that 'there are few sports or pastimes which are so helpful in keeping money in effective circulation'. The number of people discovering the joys of the countryside was according to Stephenson about half a million people of all ages who spend odd days, week-ends, and holidays on foot. The illustrated piece then went on to aggregate every possible opportunity that outdoor recreational leisure might offer to entrepreneurs and industrialists from the largest equipment firms, to railways, to motor coach firms, from clothing and footwear manufacturers to camping shops, camera shops as well as inns, hostels and cafes.¹⁸

The white-collar lower middle class did not escape unscathed by the depression of the 1920s and the immediate economic aftermath of the war. But for those in work salary levels were at least maintained if not increased; some cuts were imposed in the crises of 1931-1932, but these were reinstated by the middle of the decade and were to a great extent offset by falling prices.¹⁹ The Staff Associations of civil servants, teachers and railway clerks and white collar unions negotiated better pay scales and conditions that assured relatively stable conditions for their workers throughout the interwar period.²⁰ Around 5 per cent of the white-collar lower middle class were unemployed in 1931 but this compared to 14 per cent of skilled and semi skilled workers, and 30 per cent of those who were unskilled. In the 1930s the number of salaried workers increased by 50 per cent and by 1939 about 15 percent of workers were included in this category. Most of these earned in excess of £250 pa a figure which was still assumed to represent the threshold of middle-class status.²¹

¹⁶ Jones, S.G. (1987), *The British Labour Movement and Film 1918-1939*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul: 14-15.

¹⁷ Smith 1933: 61.

¹⁸ Stephenson, T., 'Walking to Prosperity' in *The Passing Show*, 19 May 1934.

¹⁹ Jeffery 1990: 83.

²⁰ Jeffery 1990: 77.

²¹ White 2008: 189

Women's Work

One aspect of inter-war employment that needs to be addressed is the effect that wartime production, and the expansion of new types of manufacturing processes after the First World War, had on lower-middle-class women's working lives. At the end of the war the total female workforce stood at just under five million or 37.67 per cent of the overall total. But it is argued that the widening opportunities offered to women by war-time service in factories, shops and offices and other jobs such as bus driving or light engineering work previously undertaken by men, were all short-lived. There was little long-term change both in the number of working women and the types of work they were engaged in.²² Demobilisation radically impacted on the gender hierarchy of the clerical workplace in organisations like the Civil Service where progress on longstanding issues of inequality of pay and promotion were further retarded. Meta Zimmeck argues, therefore, it was 'not so much a relaxation into "normalcy" as an attempt to recreate it by main force'.²³ The 'plight' of ex-servicemen was injected into a pre-war struggle that had been waged between elite male clerical grades and an aspirant well-educated female workforce. Across the board, women workers were attacked in the popular press for attempting to 'hang on' to jobs thereby denying them to some four million ex-servicemen - often depicted as damaged physically and emotionally - desperately seeking to return to employment.²⁴ However, if revisionist accounts of Britain between the wars imply the need to reassess the very variable nature of employment patterns according to regional and localized industrial circumstance, then this also needs to be differentially extended to the female workforce. Factories manufacturing electrical goods and components, the automotive industries and allied distributive and communication trades, as well as the utility industries that expanded alongside a booming building trade all

²² Holloway, G. (2005), *Women and Work in Britain since 1940*, London: Taylor & Francis: 144.

²³ Zimmeck, M. (1986), ' "Get Out and Get Under": The Impact of Demobilisation on the Civil Service, 1918-32' in Anderson 1986. After the war there was some improvement in pay and but the marriage bar remained and there was no increase in the number and range of posts available for women, both of which effectively blocked promotion and maintained the low-grade 'manipulative' status of female clerical work.

²⁴ Pugh, M. (2000), *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914-1999*, Basingstoke: Macmillan. The expulsion of women from the workplace was a direct result of the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act, but never exclusively and both newly set up and radically reorganized existing establishments after the war were taken up by men whether they had seen active service or not.

experienced what was described as a 'super normal' level of job opportunities.²⁵ Central to the social and industrial transformation of suburban life was the 'outstanding growth' of white-collar male and female workers in such industries and the municipal and corporate culture that also expanded and grew up around their governance and regulation.²⁶

The use of modern office machinery (duplicators, typewriters, accounting machines, telephones) contributed to the continued degradation and by implication feminisation of certain aspects of clerical work but resulted in a gradual and continuous expansion of the female clerical workforce throughout the first half of the twentieth century.²⁷ Miriam Glucksman's study of women workers between the wars argues that shifting patterns of female employment were 'inextricably linked with the restructuring of the economy and the emergence of new industries'.²⁸ Newly-built factories using modern systems of manufacture, (but also some old ones that had introduced new forms of mechanized production either during or immediately after the war) created concentrated centres of labour and production employing huge numbers of suburban workers. Differently-organized types of factory work involving mass assembly production lines often created monotonous, unskilled and relatively low paid jobs, but also the need for a huge labour force - a considerable number of whom were young girls and married women. The sectors that expanded between the wars, Glucksman argues, were those frequently occupied by upper-working and lower-middle class women. New concentrations of suburban employment marked an increasing trend towards women working either full or part-time on the shop floor and in a vast network of offices, shops and warehouses.

Martin Pugh has observed that whilst the inter-war period was a bad time for producers (worldwide) in heavy industry and agriculture it 'was a good one for consumers because of the steady fall in prices'.²⁹ But this effectively meant that it was also a good time for the small-scale independent petit bourgeois heartland that

²⁵ Compton and Bott (1940: 208) cited in Glucksman 1990: 74

²⁶ Pollard, S. (1970), *The Development of the British Economy 1914-1980*, London: Edward Arnold

²⁷ According to the census the number of women clerical workers increased from 591,741 (46% of all clerks employed) to over a million and half by 1941 (59.6% of the total) see Lewis, J. (1984), *Women in England 1870-1950*, Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books.

²⁸ Glucksman 1990.

²⁹ Pugh 2008: viii.

continued to constitute an elemental part of lower-middle-class experience and aspiration. The suburban retail sector in many small towns in London and the Home Counties saw a rapid expansion of their customer base and consumer demand as the suburbs and suburban industry spread. Many new products generated the development of other products. For example the revolutionary invention of artificial silk (rayon) and its use in a whole new range of now affordable fashionable clothing and underwear necessitated the development of special soap flakes to wash the delicate fabric; but both original and tangential products increased the commercial viability of and created new entrepreneurial opportunities within this sector.³⁰ The ladies' clothing firm Etam for instance opened in 1936 in order to sell rayon stockings to a new army of young, female clerical workers.³¹ The First World War had witnessed a radical shift in fashions in women's hair styling to shorter cuts such as the bob and innovations in curling and 'permanent' waving that required professional cutting and supervision rather than as previously styles that could be simply 'dressed' at home. This instigated a massive explosion of small ladies' hair salons which became an integral part of both department stores and virtually every local shopping centre or suburban parade.³² The 'modern woman' was targeted as part of a new commercial culture of feminine consumption and consumer desire for a whole range of toiletries and cosmetics.³³ Shampoo, talcum powder, new cough remedies, as well as cigarettes, chocolates and sweets, gramophone records and sheet music were not just integral to the small town over-the-counter trade, but many were manufactured or processed in the new suburban factories.³⁴ Commercial entrepreneurship accompanied the establishment of the Milk Marketing Board in 1932 which regulated price and quality and heavily promoted the drinking of milk and 'Milk bars' became a feature of many suburban High Streets and Parades that still boasted 80,000 grocers, 40,000 butchers, 30,000 bakers and 30,000 greengrocers. Most families did not possess refrigerators and therefore still shopped

³⁰ Glucksman 1990: 89-91

³¹ Winship, J. (2000), 'New disciplines for women and the rise of the chain store in the 1930s', in M. Andrews and M.A. Talbot (eds.) (2000), *All the World and Her Husband: Women in Twentieth-Century Consumer Culture*, London and New York: Cassell: 35

³² Smith, K. (2008), 'From Style to Place: The Emergence of the Ladies' Hair Salon in the Twentieth Century' in G. Biddle-Perry and S. Cheang (2008) *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion*, London: Berg

³³ Al-Khalidi, A. (2000), ' "The greatest invention of the century": menstruation in visual and material culture' in M. Andrews and M.M. Talbot (eds.) (2000), *All the World and Her Husband: Women in Twentieth-Century Consumer Culture*, London and New York: Cassell

³⁴ Alexander, S. (1994), *Becoming a Woman and Other Essays in 19th and 20th Century Feminist History*, London: Virago

locally or had local tradesmen deliver often every day. Small traditional and modern shops existed alongside larger, independent family-run department stores and suburban 'multiples' such as Timothy Whites, Woolworths, Boots, Marks and Spencers and David Greig.³⁵ The number of multiple grocery shops doubled between 1920 and 1939 and several large firms merged; Co-operative societies expanded again especially in the Midlands and South East and some 24,000 shops served 8.5 million members.³⁶

Enjoying the fruits of one's labour

Many men and women who could be considered as part of a historically consistent lower-middle-class profited from new opportunities in the expanding technical, managerial and retail sector and new forms of mass consumerism. These middle-income strata were in many ways also the major beneficiaries of the post-World War One settlement because it was they who could best take advantage of the albeit limited programs of housing, welfare and educational reform including improved opportunities for adult education and vocational training. The 1920s witnessed a steady growth in the low- to middle-income bracket; income tax was slashed in the 1920s and by 1929 a married man with two children earning £400 pa paid no tax at all, and one on £500 only £8; in fact those earning between £250 and £1,000 paid a lower proportion of their income in taxes than those both below and above them on the social scale. Rising wages and improved financial security allowed an expanding lower middle class to also enjoy the fruits of their labour as they became not just producers and retailers but also new consumers of all kinds of household appliances, fancy 'novelties', home furnishings, magazines, sweets and chocolates, new forms of entertainment, tinned and processed foods, fashionable clothing, toiletries and cosmetics.³⁷ Improved reception and a reduction in the cost of receivers created an explosion of radio listeners: in 1930-1931 licenses were issued at a rate of one thousand a day and a typical set cost twenty-eight guineas, by 1938 there were eight million license holders and a typical radio set cost five guineas. Cinema was a regular feature of every day leisure and even small suburban High Streets often

³⁵ Pugh 2008: 25, 32,33

³⁶ Smith, A. and Randall, G. (1999), *The Grocers: The Rise and Rise of the Supermarket Chain*, London: Kogan Page: 15, 16

³⁷ Pugh 2008: 95

contained two or three newly built 'picture palaces' decorated inside and out in mock Moorish or art deco style.³⁸ By the Second World War the cinema audience stood at twenty-three million men, women and children of all classes except the very poor who regularly attended once, twice and even three times a week.³⁹

In August 1919, many people enjoyed their first holiday in five years and 50,000 people went to Yarmouth from London alone.⁴⁰ After World War I the political influence of the church and Sabbatarianism declined; the 1930s saw a revolution in Sunday law with the passing of the Sunday Entertainments Act allowing cinemas, galleries, museums and zoos to open and concerts, lectures and other activities to take place.⁴¹ However, despite the perceived threats of 'idle' amusement and the continuing lure of 'Tripper-towns' like Margate and Blackpool, 'healthy' recreational leisure also took on a new scale and scope. The sale of bicycles increased massively after the War, rising from 385,000 in 1920 to 1.6 million by 1935.⁴² In 1923, the London Underground published two guidebooks to north and south of the Thames that contained twenty-three photographs of 'typical beauty spots and twenty-three specially-drawn maps, which will simplify the rambler's journey by field path from point to point'.⁴³ Cheaper rail and bus fares contributed to a significant rise in the number of particularly young people heading for the countryside; suddenly 'educated working men were espousing the kind of romantic anti-urbanism that had first captured the hearts of the middle classes at the end of the nineteenth century'.⁴⁴ Most leisure excursions were taken in the form of day or weekend trips out of the city but the traditional influx into the countryside underwent a transformation. Car ownership among the middle classes and those of middle income rose as a result of a 50% fall in nominal prices between 1924 and 1936 and a parallel 500% increase in vehicle production⁴⁵ - although ownership was still limited to less than five per cent of the population.⁴⁶ What came to be known as 'hiking' - the word came into popular usage

³⁸ Approximately 1,000 new plush 'super cinemas' were built between 1925 and 1931, Jones 1987: 7.

³⁹ Hattersley 2005: 244.

⁴⁰ Graves, R. (1940), *The Long Weekend: A Social History of Great Britain 1918-1939*, London: Faber and Faber: 21.

⁴¹ Hattersley, 2007, see especially Chapter, Twelve, 'Private Daydreams'.

⁴² Jones 1986: 12.

⁴³ Graves 1940: 785.

⁴⁴ Holt 1989: 198.

⁴⁵ Matless 1998: 63.

⁴⁶ Joad, C.E.M., 'In Defence of the Footpath' in *The Listener*, 28 February 1946.

in about 1927 - saw a 'boom' that in terms of popularity and mass participation can be seen to rival that of the bicycle boom in the late nineteenth century (discussed in more detail in Section 3.3).⁴⁷ It was the most popular of the inter-war health movements and coincided with a 'cult' of sunbathing and outdoor living that gained ground particularly after the heat wave of 1928 and remained popular throughout the 1930s despite less favourable weather.⁴⁸ Based on the idea of a German teacher Richard Shurman, the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) was established in 1929 offering basic accommodation at 1/- a night.⁴⁹ In 1932 the organisation registered the use of 76,867 'bed nights' which by the following year had risen to 152,000.⁵⁰ By 1939 there were some one hundred and fifty YHA hostels catering for over 20,000 hikers, ramblers and walkers.⁵¹

Perhaps, most significantly, home ownership was brought within the reach of thousands of working families. The 1923 Housing Act ended the system of controlled rents which had begun in the war and there was an immediate housing boom. Speculative private enterprise was priced out of the private rental sector but capitalized on the emergence of a mass private housing market of new and aspiring owner-occupiers.⁵² The growth of the suburbs was considerably accelerated. Interest rates were cut after the financial crash of 1931, building societies eased their terms by lending on the payment of a small deposit (as little as £25) and extending the repayment period to 25 years, and the prices of houses fell alongside the cost of building materials. Cheap plots along the new arterial roads, no longer suitable for cultivation, sold for as little as £40; a small bungalow could be purchased for £225 and a three bedroom semi in a London suburb for as little as £450 with a mortgage

⁴⁷ Holt 1989: 200 notes the important distinction between 'ramblers' and 'hikers'. Rambler saw themselves as an elite with an interest in topography and natural history and tended to be drawn from the liberal professions. Hikers were 'fair-weather' walkers that scandalized the old guard.

⁴⁸ Graves 1940: 179, 214.

⁴⁹ For a full outline of the early development of the movement see Coburn, O. (1950) *Youth Hostel Story*, Aylesbury: Hunt, Barnard and Company Ltd, with an introduction by Prof. G. M. Trevelyan, first President of YHA. The introduction stated, "There is the will to walk, the will to cycle. But for so many there is not the means. In so many districts, on so many routes, the accommodation for the night is not available save for the relatively well-to-do. Our Youth Hostel movement aims at the remedy of this want. Our object is that the young should walk or cycle. Our method is to supply them with simple accommodation."

⁵⁰ Stephenson *The Passing Show*, 19 May 1934.

⁵¹ Lowerson, J. (1980), 'Battles for the Countryside' in F. Gloversmith (ed.) *Class, Culture and Social Change, A New View of the 1930s*, Sussex: The Harvester Press and, New Jersey: Humanities Press: 180.

⁵² Benson, J. (2003), *The Working Class in Britain*, London: I.B. Taurus: 77-79.

repayment of under £1 a week. The number of families paying mortgages reached just over a half a million in 1920 but by 1937 the figure stood at 1.4 million.⁵³ Four million new houses were eventually built between 1919 and 1939, one and a half million of which by local authorities but the vast majority for private owner occupation. Many developments took place through the sale of old surviving estate lands and farms which were nominally incorporated into the new 'estates' of lower-middle-class aspiration and which only further added to their desirability and status. By far the greatest increases occurred in Greater London with the outer ring of the city growing from three million to nearly four million in the nineteen twenties and rising steeply even in the worst years of the Depression, reaching a peak in 1936.⁵⁴

Rather than an era of disappointment and resentment evidence suggests that for much of the lower middle class the 1920s and 1930s were years of first survival, then consolidation and then improvement; as a result many of its constituents can arguably be seen not as embattled victims, but enthusiastic protagonists in an emerging modern Britain. The novelist J B Priestley famously undertook an *English Journey* in 1934 in order to try to understand the nature of this 'new' Britain.⁵⁵ Starting out on the first leg of this voyage of cultural discovery Priestley described the Great West Road out of London as looking as if he had 'suddenly rolled in to California'; 'pretty' new factories lined the route producing 'potato crisps, scent, tooth-pastes, bathing-costumes, and fire-extinguishers' that seemed 'to belong to an England of little luxury trades...'. Priestley describes his meeting with a typical post-war entrepreneur on the coach to Camberley in Surrey. The man tells Priestley of his constant search for 'an opening' and the next 'gold mine' whether it be a [failed] tea room in Kent, selling cheap raincoats in Newcastle, opening a ladies' hair salon, or establishing a wireless shop in 'the right district'.⁵⁶ A perceived Americanisation of Britain heavily inflects Priestley's commentary and captures the prevailing mood of

⁵³ Pugh 2008: 68.

⁵⁴ Oliver, P, Davis, I. and Bentley, I. (1994), *Dunroamin: The Suburban Semi and Its Enemies*, London: Pimlico Press.

⁵⁵ Priestley, J.B. (1934). *English Journey*, Leipzig: Tauchnitz: 9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*: 12: Priestley describes the man thus: 'Like so many men in business, he was at heart a pure romantic. The type has always been with us, and more or less fantastic specimens of it have found their way into literature as Micawber or Mr. Polly. He was the kind of man who comes into a few hundred pounds in his early twenties, begins to lose money readily, but contrives to marry another few hundreds, then begins to lose them, but is rescued by the death of an aunt who leaves him another few hundreds ... Even in these days, there re still a few thousand like him up and down the country, especially in growing towns and new suburbs....'

much social commentary and literary perspectives in the early 1930s. The new industries seemed to Priestly far less substantial than the old industries they replaced. The opportunity to enjoy the good things in life - or a mass produced version of them - were increasingly available to many more working people. But for Priestly their enjoyment only served to further underline a deeper sense of a brittle facade of prosperity underwritten by the horrors of one world war and a growing international crisis that indicated the prospect of another. Although basically sympathetic to the desires of the mainstream, Priestley's tone is nevertheless one of a stereotypical cultural despondency underwritten by anti-commercialism that sees mass consumption and the social ambition to enjoy it in terms of 'sham' and a lack of authenticity.⁵⁷

However, an alternative view is offered by the lower middle class themselves in a Mass Observation directive undertaken in the 1930s undertaken to explore the nature of class in Priestley's rapidly changing social landscape. Low- to middle-grade white collar workers, managers, supervisors and highly trained specialists all benefiting from shifts in manufacturing and retailing as well as the expansion and improvement of secondary and technical education were seen by Mass Observation as a strata of respondents who were rapidly growing social group. The progeny of the old 'skilled artisan' class, they chose to categorize themselves as lower middle class because it matched their circumstances in terms of their work, their incomes, their homes in the suburbs and their educational histories. Some were clearly conscious of their marginal status, but the directive concluded that they were far more wary of the social consequences of rising up rather than fearful of falling down the social scale; there was little resentment of the working class, rather the dislike of the 'yak yaks' as one respondent termed them, 'the type of person who ... goes on talking about 'when I was at Varsity' was far more typical of the majority of responses.⁵⁸ This 'alternative' vision of a class aware of its place in the social hierarchy suggests a wider and equally ambivalent 'alternative' set of values and desires through which lower-middle-class subjectivities might be successfully realized and the material means

⁵⁷ *Ibid*: 13: the man smokes a 'loathsome little pipe', of a new design with a bowl not made of wood but a 'new composition'.

⁵⁸ Jeffery 1990: 71.

through which these acknowledged economic and social status differentials were articulated: housing, clothing, and more specifically, leisure.

3.3 The Development of Rational Recreational Leisure between the Wars

Leisure Fit for Heroes

The ideological power of rational recreational leisure had always ensured it being situated firmly within a class context and a rhetorical discourse of differently politically-motivated understandings of social and economic 'improvement'. However, the previous section has shown how in the inter-war years such concepts take on a much more ambiguous set of meanings according to the fluctuating fortunes of diverse communities and particular regionalized and local circumstances. The differently-experienced economic crises of Britain's industrial heartland in the 1920s and the relative prosperity experienced by other social groupings from the 1930s meant that the term 'leisure' became ambiguously loaded with social significance in relation to different areas of the country - and which directly impacted on an emerging physical and psychological 'landscape' of interwar rational and outdoor recreational leisure. The King addressing the House of Commons in 1919 made clear how leisure was pivotal to improving the mental, spiritual and physical condition of the industrial working classes and urban poor, and served as a measure of both a national and individual prosperity that the war had demanded should be more equitably shared.¹ Lloyd George's vision of a 'land fit for heroes' was seen as a two-way process that demanded both organised labour and more leisure. He argued 'The war has changed the worker's ideas of values. No longer will he be content to be a wage slave, existing to produce only that which others may enjoy ... Leisure is required to enable the worker to live up to the obligation that citizenship imposes'.²

¹ *Official Report Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates House of Commons*, 11 February 1919: 49, 50. He emphasised the point, 'That the gifts of leisure and prosperity may be more generally shared throughout the community is My ardent desire. It is your duty, while firmly maintaining security for property and person, to spare no effort in healing the causes of existing unrest, and I earnestly appeal to you to do all that in you lies to revive and foster a happier and more harmonious spirit in our national industrial life.'

² David Lloyd George cited in Jones 1986: 23.

Within this dynamic the benefits of leisure were seen as both a 'right' and a duty on the part of the state and on the individual and this is particularly significant in understanding the transformation of old ideals of rational recreation in the 1920s and 1930s. The promised post-World-War I settlement compelled legislative action to extend and develop the benefits of leisure to the working population, but there was increased emphasis placed on the need for a conscious effort on the part of the individual citizen in making the 'right' choices around what to do with this extra leisure time when they got it. What was considered 'good' or 'bad' leisure forms were articulated in a moral tone that now much more explicitly equated class-based characteristics and preferences to individual responses to the opportunities provided by new forms of leisure and mass consumerism. Across the political spectrum, if leisure was seen as crucially beneficent to the nation, then its perceived ill-use was understood as symptomatic of a collective sense of national physical and psychological 'degeneracy' that the war had both revealed and its' effects worsened.³

Closely following the King's Speech in 1919, the 'Leisure of the People' Conference was held in London; it focused on the need to examine people's leisure activities to ensure that the best possible use was made of any future benefits in leisure time and provision - not just for an individual's health and well being, but for that of society and the nation as a whole.⁴ The introduction to the conference proceedings emphasized how the younger generation were of particular concern. The encouragement of the right sort of leisure activities would build character and create intelligent workers and useful citizens; if leisure hours were 'aimlessly aimlessly idled awayor should they be wholly given up to pleasure, little will have been done to mould his character for the battle of life'⁵ One contributor, speaking on the relationship between work and leisure, and offering perhaps one of the earliest analogies of the now-familiar 'couch potato', highlighted the problem of the working

³ 'C-3ism' was a term that gained a lot of ground at this time and referred to the lowest rating of physical fitness applied to military recruits, ie as opposed to A1 which was the highest. It came into popular linguistic currency with the high rate of rejections witnessed in recruitment for the Boer War and the poor physical condition of a large proportion of the male working-class population most of whom were also less than 5'3". It was now extended to incorporate what was thought was an equally pernicious 'C-3 morality' amongst the working-class that would seriously undermine attempts at physical and moral improvement through educational, health and welfare reform, see Searle, G.R. (1971), *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁴ *The Leisure of the People, Handbook of the National Conference held in Manchester, November 17th-20th 1919.*

⁵ *Ibid*: 45, Third Session 'Juvenile Organisations'.

man who sits passively having ‘... happiness pumped into him in some way or other...They leave work, pay their money, go into a place of entertainment and sit as passive as a sack of potatoes, saying, “Now, I have paid my money. Amuse me.”’⁶ The traditional ideology of Victorian rational recreation was reworked and transformed in response to a new environment of expanding mass consumption and the rapidly increasing accessibility of new forms of popular entertainment and leisure to all but the very poorest. An abstract concept of beneficent leisure and leisure provision was bound up in a much wider socio-economic discourse of state intervention, commercialism and anti-commercialism in which the autonomous actions of the individual ‘citizen’ and consumer him or her self were pivotal. The Chairman observed:

It is with leisure as with wealth. The art of wise consumption is more difficult than the art of production... It is in leisure that the real spontaneous self is set free. In our work we are all more or less under restraint, we all more or less conform to type. But in leisure we are masters of our own action, we have free choice, we find ourselves. That is why its possibilities, both upward and downward are so infinite. *A man’s choice is the index of his character* (my italics).⁷

However, the high moral overtones and coercive subtext of such proclamations belie how a desire for ‘health’ and wellbeing was arguably already an innate part of the post-World War One psyche. There was more at stake in demanding appropriate leisure provision for ‘the people’ than mere amusement, idle or otherwise. In the aftermath of total war, the death of millions of young healthy men and the return of hundreds of thousands of others’ broken both mentally and physically, it is unsurprising that a desire for youthful healthy bodies and hedonistic enjoyment dominated the contemporary imagination.⁸ A ‘cult of the sun’ and an associated European *bodykultur* emerged in the 1920s and was taken up enthusiastically by a small group of health fanatacists who incorporated it into regimes of fitness and ‘systems’ of healthy living based on nudism and eating ‘whole’ grains, and an upper-

⁶ Clutton Brock, W. (1919) ‘Introduction’ to Second Session, *ibid*: 33.

⁷ Paton, J.L., ‘Foreword’ to Third Session, *ibid*: 47

⁸ Wilcox, T., *A Day in the Sun: Outdoor Pursuits in Art in the 1930s*, Nottingham: Philip Wilson Publishers.

class counter-culture of spiritual hedonism and moral decadence.⁹ Old concepts of the freedom of outdoor life and rustic simplicity were extended to include new ideals of both wider democratic and sexual freedom that also functioned as a way of drawing a line between the 'old' pre-war world of a war and pre-war generation and a new 'modern' world that had emerged out of the wreckage.

Across the political spectrum, idealized concepts of wider socialist interests were allied in using a philosophical focus, coupled with the traditional highly moral rhetoric of improvement, to generate a working-class culture outside of popular commercial interests and capitalist exploitation.¹⁰ Leisure and enhanced leisure provision was seen as a universal palliative to social unrest and conflict. For example, the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, in 1926 suggested 'the greater the facilities for recreation, the better will be the health and happiness of the people, and the closer will be the spirit of unity between all classes' Within a few years, fifteen local education authorities were running summer camps for children.¹¹ Board of Education pamphlets stressed the 'marvellous' affects of two weeks spent in sunshine and fresh air, regular meals and sensible hours, strict cleanliness and good fellowship. Boys from an inner city school were weighed before and after the camp and had on average gained 2lbs in weight. However, the social advantages of camping went beyond the merely physical. If camping promoted physical fitness, it also provided for 'what, for the loss of a better phrase, may be termed moral development. Camp is a great test: it finds you out.' The intimate aspects of camp, the need for adaptation and initiative and unselfishness 'quickly shows up the shoddy in character, and as quickly discovers unsuspected virtues... shirkers are a dead weight in camp'.¹² It was widely believed that with the right attitude even the problems of unemployment might be addressed through the open air and outdoor living. In 1933 four parties of unemployed men drawn from 'Occupation Centres'

⁹ See Green, M. (1977), *Children of the Sun: A Narrative of 'Decadence' in England after 1918*, London: Constable, also (1986) *Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins*, Hanover NH: University of New England Press.

¹⁰ Hill, J (2002) *Sport, Leisure & Culture in Twentieth-Century Britain*, Basingstoke: Palgrave: 167-68.

¹¹ McIntosh 1952: 201.

¹² 'The Value of Camp' in Board of Education Pamphlet *Notes on Camping*, Educational Pamphlets No. 39, 1923, HMSO.

were organised to improve the Pilgrims' Way in Kent.¹³ 'Grith Fyrd' was established as 'an experiment in natural living' by The Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, part of the socialist Co-operative movement, a pacifist, anti-militaristic youth organisation established after the First World War.¹⁴ The Order felt very clearly 'that the unemployment problem was fundamentally not so much an economic as a psychological problem, and two camping settlements in Surrey (Godshill) and Derbyshire were set up for 'about 40 young unemployed men of all classes'. Men signed on for a period of 18 months and underwent a period of training in three stages, learning 'to do things for themselves' and how to give creative expression to 'idle hands' whilst living a communal life.¹⁵

Traditional forms of disciplinary physical education were also still considered a major force in health prevention and over the course of the late 1920s and 1930s a nation-wide campaign for physical fitness gathered momentum alongside a widespread mass popular upsurge of interest around health and fitness. The incorporation of greater opportunities for physical training and 'games' into state education for both adults and children was encouraged as a way of supposedly breaking down class barriers and as a means of mitigating the implicit class bitterness caused by recession and industrial strife. There were increasing calls for the establishment of new types of evening institutes and 'cultural and recreational centres' to be provided by Local Education Authorities, particularly for women. Developments in these institutes sought to make full use of the facilities by being available for use in the morning and afternoon and six nights a week as well; juvenile organisations – guides, scouts, and various brigades – were 'attending for physical training, country dancing and other activities at the rate of 1,200 a week,

¹³ Hannington, W.A. (1937), *The Problem of the Distressed Areas*, London: Odhams. All men who enrolled for these, what some termed 'slave camps' had to undergo special training to fit them for this unaccustomed physical exertion; they also had to pay 1/-7d per day from their dole money for their meals because this was thought of as advisable to avoid the stigma of charity.

¹⁴ See Westlake, A. (1979), *An Outline History of the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, 1916-1976*, London: BM/OWC, see also Edgell, D. (1993), *The Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, 1916-1949, as a New Age Alternative to the Boy Scouts*, Edwin Mellen Press.

¹⁵ Westlake, Aubrey (1934), 'Grith Fyrd: An Experiment in Natural Living' in *The YHA Rucksack*, September. Firstly, the men were taught to fell trees, build shelters, make roads and raise livestock. In their spare time they learnt weaving, and become physically fit through 'games, athletics, swimming and folk dancing'. After this initial period of training, small groups then set out to hike around the countryside to learn '... citizenship at first hand... Last summer two parties of eight hiked continuously for two months, covering in all about 500 miles'. Finally the participants would be given the opportunity for voluntary work in the community.

each receiving one hour of exercises followed by a hot or cold shower bath'.¹⁶ Large sums of government money and donations from philanthropists such as William Carnegie were earmarked for both capital and current expenditure.¹⁷ Considerable sums were invested in swimming-baths, gyms, camp-sites and playing fields, as well as in improving the coaching of games and sports, teacher training schemes, physiognomic research and the dissemination of new ideas.¹⁸ Culminating in the Physical Training and Recreation Act of 1937, the Statute Book witnessed a number of legislative acts in the 1930s concerning the use of leisure that were very much a response to the physical needs and shifting aspirations of inter-war society including the Holidays with Pay Act implemented in 1938.¹⁹ The 1937 Act sought to embrace the whole field of physical culture and in the following three years the government approved plans for local education authorities to spend some £3 million.²⁰ A pamphlet emphasized the ideas behind the legislation:

Physical fitness is not an end in itself but one of the means to a fuller life. It is not achieved by exercise alone - hygiene, nutrition and the avoidance of disease must play their part; but the training and exercise of physical powers are as necessary as the training of the mind, A development of all such opportunities together with the growth of *desire* for greater fitness, is the object in view [my emphasis].²¹

¹⁶ Missen, Leslie R., Director of Education, Wigan, (1936), 'The Problem of Leisure' in W. Boyd and V. Ogilvie, (eds.), *The Challenge of Leisure*, A record of papers presented at a conference held at St Andrews, August 1935: 188-189.

¹⁷ Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) was a successful Scottish American industrialist who epitomised the phrase 'Captain of Industry' he was also one of the major philanthropists of the late-nineteenth century giving most of his money to establish public libraries schools and universities in North America and Great Britain. In 1913 he gave \$10million to endow the Carnegie UK Trust, a ground-making foundation that was a pioneering advocate of rural development and urban renewal, see Adams, T. (ed.)(2004), *Philanthropy, Patronage and Civil Society Experiences from Germany, Great Britain and North America*, Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.

¹⁸ See Bower, A. (1996), 'Parks and baths: Sport, Recreation and Municipal Government in Ashton-Under-Lyne Between the Wars' in R. Holt (ed.), *Sport and the Working Class in Britain*, Manchester: Manchester University Press. Andrew Bowker, in his discussion of a particular example of such a programme at a local level, argues that recreation was prioritised over sports at this time as a form of civic regulation. Barker describes it as a policy of control favouring 'park over pitch' in the national interest and promoting a notion of social harmony through civic pride and the provision of new facilities aimed at families with children and young people.

¹⁹ See Dawson, S. (2007), 'Working-Class Consumers and the Campaign for Holidays with Pay' in *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 18, No.3: 277-305. The 1938 Act marked the end of a twenty year campaign. It re-defined working-class concepts of leisure and allowed extended rather than mere day trips and thus re-defined the commercial sites and possibilities of mass popular leisure and pleasure.

²⁰ Jones 1987: 165-166.

²¹ *The National Fitness Campaign*, report issued by the National Fitness Council 1939: 4

In the illustrated propaganda pamphlet that accompanied the introduction of the 1937 Act, 'Women in a Keep Fit Class' are pictured in disciplined rows in the typical 'knees bend' pose and taking part in progressive forms of modern dance; young men undertaking 'Gymnastics' work on apparatus are similarly regimented in a synchronised display of physical prowess.²² These images contrast with that of 'Morning Exercise' at home, or those constituting examples of 'Walking' alone or in groups in the countryside, or 'Camping', or the activities of the 'Youth Hostel' which are all inflected with a much greater spirit of independence [Figs. 54-59].

The cultural geographer David Matless' extensive studies of this period outline how a new 'landscape' of leisure had since the 1920s been 'choreographed' through an influential and growing preservationist discourse, wider statutory concerns about the nation's fitness, and the rapidly expanding commercialisation of what was swiftly becoming a huge mass consumer market for health and outdoor leisure.²³ As a geographer, Matless is concerned with 'mapping' the changing meanings of the English countryside through the shifting ideological perspectives of those who attempted to plan, protect, and preserve it for and from those who sought to merely participate in its enjoyment in the early to mid twentieth century. What Matless' work essentially charts is a series of cultural historical moments where ideals of landscape and 'Englishness' were aligned in the body of the individual citizen. Competing formulations of English regionalism and the English countryside as symbolic of a wider national identity were reshaped aesthetically, culturally and legislatively in relation to a new landscape of modernity and new concepts of 'the modern'.

A new 'Outdoor Movement' emerged in the 1920s central to which was an aggressive and assertive discourse of 'preservationism' that set out a new and progressive vision of the countryside as a conduit for the moral and physical

²² the trajectory of men's physical education is very different from women's, firstly because of the dominance of Ling in professional training, and secondly because of the continued relationship between men's physical training and military discipline - which followed a 'German' system from the 19th century in particular that developed by Archibald MacLaren which was hugely influential in military training. Gymnasias were built at Woolwich, Skegness, Chatham etc. where training included exercises with ropes, poles, 'masts', parallel bars, trapeze, rings and ladders etc. see McIntosh 1952: 61-95 for a detailed account

²³ Matless, D. (1998), *Landscape and Englishness*, London: Reaktion.

‘improvement’ of ‘the people’, and the British nation.²⁴ Its ideological rhetoric was articulated in quasi-religious terms and generated a new vocabulary of spiritual

Fig.s 54-59 *The National Fitness Campaign*, report issued by the National Fitness Council 1939



²⁴ See Taylor, H. (1997) *A Claim on the Countryside: A History of the British Outdoor Movement*, Keele: Keele University Press. Taylor provides a comprehensive history of the movement and a landscape culture of activism. See also Stephenson, T., (1989), *Forbidden Land*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

regeneration; its leading lights such as Cyril Joad and Vaughn Cornish spoke of the making of 'whole' men and women and the breeding of a 'new race' through a trinity of mental, spiritual and physical transformation bestowed by vigorous exercise in the open air.²⁵ Cornish even described himself as a 'Pilgrim of Scenery' and historian Prof. G.M. Trevelyan (president of a fledgling YHA), spoke of walking as containing the possibility of a 'higher joy' through the inducement of a 'state of ecstasy'.²⁶ However, these and others' attempts at an improving agenda of physical and moral development should not be seen as the work of 'cranks' nor as socially isolated political or religious groups. They rather highlight an interventionist ideological attitude that was widespread across the political and ideological spectrum that was also disseminated in popular culture and the press media. When the uninitiated did participate either through choice or coercion, it was still seen as necessary to combine this with some other form of education. This occupied the minds of a large Conference in 1936 convened to now discuss not the leisure of the people as they had in 1919 but 'The Problem of Leisure' and 'The Challenge' posed by the wrong sort of attitude. The Conference proceedings emphasized how 'good leisure, to provide real compensation for the one-sidedness of work and social requirements, must include not merely the diversions that enable people to relax but serious occupations of one's own choice and interest.'²⁷ One contributor speaking on the role of leisure in education reflected on the need for 'training' the working classes even when on holiday:

[M]any campers went out with a tent and a store, just loafed about for a time and came back thinking they had had a good holiday. But they had missed something of real value...Camping was a means to an end. If, for example, the campers had set out to study geology or natural history or had camped in places where the scenery was specially attractive and had sketched some of the fine bits, they would have gained not only health but interests and permanent profit'.²⁸

²⁵ Cyril Joad in a chapter entitled 'The Making of Whole Men and Women' saw the solution to the threat posed by the degeneration of England and the English countryside as particular forms of participation in outdoor leisure activities - walking, climbing, orienteering - that combined three different 'cultures': the mental, the spiritual and the physical. Joad, C.E.M. (1934), *A Charter for Ramblers*: 150. Similarly Vaughn Cornish outlined the three 'disciplines' inherent in the cult of scenery - contemplation, acquisition of scientific knowledge, and athleticism, and described followers like himself as 'Pilgrims of Scenery', see Cornish, V. (1935), 'Preface' to *Scenery and the Sense of Sight, with illustrations by the author*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: ix.

²⁶ Trevelyan, G.M., (1930), 'Walking' in G.M. Trevelyan, *Clio, A Muse* cited in Matless 1998: 302.

²⁷ Boyd, W. and Ogilvie, V. (eds.) (1936) 'The Problem of Leisure' in *The Challenge of Leisure*, A record of papers presented at a conference held at St Andrews, August 1935: 14.

²⁸ *ibid.*

Cyril Joad, and others like him - largely middle- and upper-middle-class men with a rather inflated sense of their own evangelical authority - actually saw themselves as the pioneers of egalitarian outdoor leisure, and as 'prophets' rather than priggish killjoys. However, in spite or because of their efforts, a new geography of preservation *and* prosperity was ambiguously mapped out through a unifying ideology of 'England' ('the' people, 'the' countryside) and 'progress'. This belied the competing and conflicting visions of what this actually *meant* and the inherent antagonism that continued to inflect a class-based dialectic of 'improvement'. Cyril Joad's often quoted description of the impact of better pay and more free-time on week-end recreational leisure activity ironically serves as a useful context for understanding the new landscape of popular recreational leisure as a contentious cultural arena. Improvements in working conditions he argued:

... enabled young people with good hearts, high spirits and comparatively empty pockets to leave the towns and for the first time to sample the joys of the country ... hiking has replaced beer as the shortest cut out of Manchester, as turning their backs upon the cities which their fathers made, armies of young people make sorties at any and every opportunity into the countryside'.²⁹

However, this was not a rational recreationalist's dream – rather it was an evocation of Joad's preservationist nightmare: an invading hoard of thousands of ignorant town-dwellers with little or no understanding of the countryside, how to behave in it or what to wear when they got there. The Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) was set up in 1926 and was distinctive in seeking to co-ordinate the efforts of a range of groups concerned with issues around architecture, planning, and the population of a rural landscape that included its wildlife, and the interests of particular groups of people seen as its traditional custodians - farmers and experts like themselves - in the face of ever-increasing numbers of permanent and temporary new residents, suburbanites, holiday-makers and tourists. Within this discourse a dichotomy of leisure activities and participants were situated within a *moral landscape* in which the land itself, its settlement and its recreational enjoyment were organised around a range of moral principles and an inherent sense

²⁹ Joad, C. (1934) *A Charter for Ramblers or The Future of the Countryside*, London: Hutchinson & Co (Publishers) Ltd : 12.

of 'belonging' possessed by some but lacking in the majority of the working population, 'the masses'.³⁰ Supposedly well-meaning preservationists devoted much time to travelling round the post-war countryside ruminating on its new inhabitants, as one of them recalled:

[T]here dashed into the hamlet, in a gleam of sunshine, six undersized but noticeably alert youths, in running shorts and various sorts of coats, who jumped, flushed and dusty, from four bicycles and one motor-cycle. Nobody knew them. The reason was that they were "furriners". They were members of the Oxford and Bermondsey Boys' Club, where, I remembered, I had been lately. Nobody could understand them. Who could, when they shouted and chattered and chaffed one another and every one of us in their South London patois? They looked surprisingly like boys you see at public schools, only they were smaller for their ages.³¹

These 'furriners' (foreigners) were clearly out of place in the countryside. But with supposedly more money in their pockets, and more leisure time in which to idle it away, they were now perceived as posing an even greater danger than their nineteenth-century counterparts. It was no longer a case of encouraging access to and the provision of recreational leisure facilities but controlling and containing its rapid escalation in a social constituency seen as incapable of any moral or tasteful discrimination. Joad for example advocated that every child should pass an examination in country lore and country manners before he left school; and further that there was much to be said for requiring every townsman who had not succeeded in learning these 'to wear an "L" upon his back when he walked abroad in the country'.³² An un-differentiated 'mass' of working-class - i.e. everyone not middle class - were defined as a 'Social Problem Group' whose behaviour and lack of education would literally 'contaminate' the countryside with loud music, petrol fumes, and litter.³³ Joad in his reflections on 'The Misuse of Leisure' cites a business man who has 'made his pile', an Italian ice-cream merchant and a cafe proprietor who came in for £300,000 in a Grand National sweepstake, as examples of the

³⁰ See Matless, D. (1996), 'Visual culture and geographical citizenship: England in the 1940s' in *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 22, V.: 424-439.

³¹ Scott, J. Robertson, (1931), 'Queer Goings On' in J Robertson Scott (ed.) *England's Green and Pleasant Land*, London: Odhams Press: 149.

³² Joad 1934: 79-80.

³³ Jones 1986: 87-93.

undesirable type of people who were now 'occupying' the countryside but who had no understanding of the proper use of their leisure time.³⁴

Outdoor leisure and the countryside more and more provided a moral, spiritual and physical benchmark against which healthy citizenship was measured. Some achieved it naturally because such attributes were inherited - or in the language of the time were 'organic' - others needed to be trained and educated even to be able to *see* the beauty of the landscape in the first place, let alone have a clue as to how to behave in it.³⁵ Polemical pamphlets, popular and special interest books and exhibitions all aided in creating a visual and literary dichotomy of the countryside and outdoor leisure articulated in images and examples designated good and evil, before and after, order and disorder, desirable and undesirable, beautiful and ugly. This took on a new and more explicitly politicized dimension as preservationists became a highly influential voice in envisioning a new social order by claiming 'a clear and absolute authority over landscape' and those who were increasingly enjoying its advantages.³⁶ Encouraging participation in recreational leisure was not so much a case of coercion and proscription but, as in the nineteenth century, a site of contention *and* negotiation and a cultural arena in which different and disparate social groupings used leisure to distinguish and differentiate classed and gendered identities. David Matless argues:

One person's day in the sun could be another's sign of a nation going to the dogs. The story of outdoor pursuits in the 1930s is a complex one of the negotiation of the innovative and the traditional, the urban and the rural, the conventional and the outlandish. What it was to be modern outdoors often involved moving through such polarities, with terms such as "moral", "vulgar", "new" and "natural" acting as signposts for commentary on leisure.³⁷

The pursuit of physical 'Health and Beauty' that characterized the 1920s was swiftly allied with a culture of open air leisure which took on a new scale and scope in the 1930s as an elemental part of a "modern" Britain and a British people advancing

³⁴ Joad, C.E.M. (1939), *Guide to Modern Wickedness*, London: Faber and Faber: 249-250.

³⁵ See Matless, D. (1992), 'Regional Surveys and Local Knowledge: The Geographical Imagination in Britain, 1918-39', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, xxvii: 464-80.

³⁶ Matless 1998: 26.

³⁷ Matless, D. (2006), 'The New Outdoors', in T. Wilcox, *A Day in the Sun: Outdoor Pursuits in Art in the 1930s*, London: Phillip Wilson Publishers.

morally, spiritually and physically.³⁸ The Women's League of Health and Beauty established in the 1930s exemplifies a widespread interest in new forms of popular, mass 'physical culture'.³⁹ The League supposedly modeled itself on freedom of movement - 'Movement is Life' was its motto - it is best known for its demonstrations and mass troopings down Oxford Street, in Hyde Park or at Wembley. Members were distinctive in their new outdoor uniform of short black velvet skirts and capes. By the early 1930s membership had reached 30,000.⁴⁰ However, while the highly influential outdoor movement is often cited as the context within which large numbers of suburban recreationalists sought their 'day in the sun', the nature of their participation and its motivation at a symbolic and material level - rather than its mere castigation and proscription - has rarely been interrogated. The National Fitness Campaign propaganda shows how, by the outbreak of the Second World War the mainstream majority was also 'choreographing' its own version of rational recreational leisure enjoyment in a new suburban landscape of relative prosperity

Leisure and leisure clothing clearly remained an important conduit through which wider and more deep-seated anxieties about a perceived decline of social structures and aesthetic and moral standards were expressed, *and* the means through which social aspiration and status were both confirmed and challenged. The next section examines how outdoor leisure clothing underwent radical and far-reaching changes in response to the shifting wider social and geographical landscape of inter-war leisure that has been 'mapped out' in this chapter and the class-based power relations outlined in the previous chapter. As in the nineteenth century it is possible to unpack the cumulative development of a new wardrobe of fashionable recreational leisure clothing that was utilized to symbolically and materially embody different and distinctive class-based understandings of social status realized through popular consumption.

³⁸ Matless 1998: 90-91.

³⁹ The WHLB was founded by Mollie Stack in 1930 and ran classes in halls across London, charging 2s 6d. Membership and 6d per class see Stack, P. (1988), *Zest for Life: Mary Bagot Stack and the League of Health and Beauty*, London: Peter Owen. Mollie Stack's *Building the Body Beautiful* (1931), London: Chapman and Hall, suggested 'le those filmy dreams of yours take definite shape... Imagination plus *enthusiastic* action.' *op cit*: 116.

⁴⁰ For a full if somewhat gushing description of the League and its history see Matthews, J. J. (1990), "'They Had Such A Lot Of Fun": the Women's League of Health and Beauty between the Wars' in *History Workshop Journal*, XXX: 22-54.

3.4 Post-World War I Trends in Popular Recreational and Outdoor Leisure Clothing

'The Military Influence on Affairs Sartorial'¹

A triptych was commissioned by London Transport in the early 1920s to promote outdoor leisure travel to a growing suburban market. It wistfully depicts a groups of young men dressed in khaki knickerbocker suits gathered around camp fires, leaning against trees, or lighting pipes, joined by young women and girls in long white robes holding flowers [Fig. 60]. The painting was just one of the images brought together in the exhibition *A Day in the Sun* held at the Djanogly Art Gallery in Nottingham exploring the phenomenon of outdoor leisure through its widespread representation in Britain between the wars.² The accompanying exhibition catalogue describes how artist, Fredrick Cayley Robinson draws directly on the French symbolist tradition to render his picnicking figures 'sombre and statuesque': the artist portrays 'the very idea of a day out ... as an unfamiliar ritual... but one that in a few years' time will be transformed by the sunlight and agile movement that flooded in with the 1930s'.³ However, this research would argue that the style of the men's costume offers compelling evidence for seeing such an evocation, at least in sartorial terms, as a darker and more sombre prelude to the boom in interwar leisure outlined in the previous chapter. The design of the Norfolk jacket, the pre-war cut of the knickerbockers, their khaki-colour, together with the gestural poses of the figures themselves and the dream-like quality of the sylvan scene, all combine to create a feeling of watching spectres at a feast and a now-lost world of leisure for a whole generation of its young participants.

It is interesting to situate Cayley Robinson's evocation of outdoor recreation after the First World War with two especially poignant photographs from 1919 held in the

¹ 'After-War Dress. Will There Be Startling Changes in Men's Fashions? The Military Influence on Affairs Sartorial' in *Men's Wear*, 2 June 1917

² *A Day in the Sun: Outdoor Pursuits in Art in the 1930s*, Djanogly Art Gallery, Lakeside Arts Centre Nottingham, 18 February - 9 April, 2006 and *The Lowry, Salford Quays*, 29 April - 25 June 2006.

³ Wilcox, T. (2006), 'Introduction', *A Day in the Sun: Outdoor Pursuits in Art in the 1930s*, Nottingham: Philip Wilson: 23.

archives of the Catford Cycling Club (CCC) [Figs. 61, 62].⁴ The first shows CCC members cycling along Whitehall, one man with a large wreath in the shape of a wheel (the Club's logo) strapped to his back; the second is of them and their President laying the wreath at the Cenotaph. The men are all dressed in tweed knickerbockers or breeches with matching jackets, knitted socks, or gaiters, some with shirts and some with sweaters, some are wearing caps although others are 'hatless'. Whitehall seems empty of other traffic and while the focus is on the man with the wreath the line of cyclists seems to stretch back into the distance with an open top bus following on behind.⁵



Fig. 61
Catford Cycling Club, Whitehall, London, c.1919

⁴ The actual date of these photographs is unrecorded. However, their presence in the archive and the men's dress and demeanour indicates that it is in the years immediately following the end of the War.

⁵ It seems unlikely that these are all CCC members but rather indicates that there was some sort of 'cycle parade', which had been a vital part of both municipal and club life and a form of modern carnival since the 1890s celebrating various National celebrations such as Mafekin and Seasonal events. There are numerous photographs and press clippings in the CCC Archive of Christmas bicycle parades. Display was always a fundamental element in various forms of popular and rational recreational leisure both before and after the First World War. Civic spectacles were so widespread in the first decades of the twentieth century that they have been described as part of a mood of 'Pageantitis' that took over as scenes from British history were performed through costume. Lasting up to four hours the pageants combined dramatic sketches, dances and song with minimal dialogues and were performed by members of the general public (sometimes as many as 5,000) known as 'pagaanteers', see Ryan, D. (2007), ' "Pageantitis": Frank Lascelles' 1907 Oxford Historical Pageant, Visual Spectacle and Popular Memory': in *Visual Culture in Britain*, Vol. 8, No.2, (Winter): 63-82: 65



Fig. 62
Catford Cycling Club at the Cenotaph, London, c.1919

These CCC photographs very much evoke the sense of spontaneous emotion that greeted the unveiling of the original Cenotaph. The men are pictured laying their wreath with a sombre informal crowd of people gathered around - an act of commemoration that Jay Winter argues in itself functioned as an act of citizenship and an affirmation of community.⁶ This sense of community is certainly embodied in the men's mass approach along Whitehall, the close proximity of their bicycles and their clothing; but the unregulated, 'unofficial' nature of the act in some ways is also signalled in subtle comparative changes that seem to have taken place in the CCC's 'uniform' since the turn of the century. The ubiquitous knickerbockers are still evident but there is far less uniformity; dress codes seem less rigid and more informal, evidenced in a lack of caps and other forms of headwear, an increase in 'sweaters' and 'sports' jackets and a decline in traditional 'Norfolks'. Within a few years the demise would be almost complete, as by the late 1920s the popular wearing of Norfolk and knickerbocker combinations for recreational cycling and walking - at

⁶ The original Cenotaph monument was initially seen as a temporary structure erected in 1919 as part of ceremonies marking the first anniversary of the Armistice. But on its unveiling it was spontaneously covered in wreaths. Such was the public reception that it was then rebuilt through public subscription with Portland stone and unveiled the following year as a permanent and lasting memorial to the war dead, see Winter, J. (1995), *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 104. Winter explores of the relationship between the war and its memorial, the war dead and its survivors through forms of commemoration that functioned to 'assert its moral character, and to exclude from it those values, groups, or individuals that placed it under threat.': 104.

least for men - was far less in evidence - although the factors that arguably contributed to this are perhaps easier to evaluate than the exact pinpointing of when this transition occurred.

Firstly, it is important to stress that post-World-War One trends in recreational leisure clothing cannot be seen as somehow outside the widespread anti-militaristic mood of Britain in the early 1920s.⁷ Secondly, how the mix of far-reaching and extensive technological and social change brought about by the war radically impacted on the design, material fabrication, manufacture and promotion of new forms of clothing for an expanding range of male and female leisure consumers. Thirdly, to understand the continued inter-relationship between leisure and wider social change and leisure clothing's equally consistent role as a response and a stimulus to changes in mainstream fashionable trends.⁸ Reflecting on how men might respond to return to life back home and the extent to which militarism would affect 'affairs sartorial' the trade journal *Men's Wear* concluded:

There is always the probability that they will be so extremely thankful to be rid of military garb and discipline that they will consider it heavenly to be back once again in "civvies." So far as can be gathered, the very many thousands who have received their discharge papers have taken kindly to the clothes they left behind when joining up, and, generally, a greater demand for soft collars instead of starched neckwear seems to be the only difference.⁹

On the surface, the potential of a large number of men once more adopting their tweed knickerbockers would seem to herald the triumph of pre-war recreational leisurewear in form and fabric and the democratic ideals embodied within it. However, the sartorial return to 'civvy street' for those involved in suburban recreational leisure wishing to take up where they left off in 1914 was not as unproblematic as the piece in *Men's Wear* would suggest. The historically

⁷ See Liddle, P.H. (1977), 'The Distinctive Nature of the Gallipoli Experience' in *The Royal United Services Institute Journal*, Vol. 122, Issue 2: 51-56; also Seal, G. (2004), *Inventing Anzac: the digger and national mythology*, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press: 13-14, 145, who explores the ways in which certain physical attributes, youth and a mix of anti-authoritarianism and the distinctive uniform of the troops created the image of the archetypal 'digger'.

⁸ See Wilson and Taylor 1989 *ibid*, in particular Chapter 3 'Health and Beauty Off the Peg' which links the politics of the immediate post-World War I period with a new emphasis on health and beauty and a growing physical culture.

⁹ 'After-War Dress. Will There Be Startling Changes in Men's Fashions? The Military Influence on Affairs Sartorial' in *Men's Wear*, 2 June 1917.

consistent relationship between military uniform and outdoor leisure clothing established prior to 1914 was arguably the basis of quite far-reaching anti-militaristic direction after the War. Manufacturers of outdoor clothing such as Burberry or Jaeger had always produced clothing to serve both the expeditionary, colonial and domestic market; these companies' promotional rhetoric traditionally always negotiated this dualism visually and textually through ideas of 'pioneering' and Empire [Fig. 63].¹⁰

Fig. 63
Advertisement for
Burberry Gabardine,
in Holding 1908,
Camper's Handbook



More specifically, cycling clubs were an important factor in the development of 'Volunteer' regiments through the formation of Cyclist Volunteer battalions and many members belonged to both types of club.¹¹ The widespread adoption of the Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers, outlined in Chapter 2, developed alongside changes in military clothing since the late 1880s, generated by growing concerns that

¹⁰ For a discussion around the popular ideology of Empire and the discourse of pioneering see Mackenzie, J. (1987), 'The imperial pioneer and hunter and the British masculine stereotype in late Victorian and Edwardian Times', in J. A. Mangan and J. Walvin, *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

¹¹ The Volunteer Force was a part-time military body established originally to meet the supposed threat of a French invasion in the early nineteenth century but which survived and grew until 1908 when it was renamed the Territorial Force. Many middle class men who formed the battalions appointed their own officers and saw it as a form of social control; the rank and file working and lower middle class viewed enrolment primarily as a form of recreation. A London Cyclist Volunteer speaking in the 1890s stated that he thought the majority of men were motivated principally by a desire for sport, Cunningham H. (1975), *The Volunteer force: A Social and Political History 1859-1908*, London: Taylor Francis : 94, 109.

the traditional tight-fitting and conspicuously coloured uniforms of the British army placed its troops at a serious disadvantage.¹²

In 1881, the Right Honorable Colonel Barne addressed the House of Commons citing experiments carried out by the Emperor Napoleon. Colonel Barne recommended that in future the infantry of the British Army in his opinion should be clothed in 'Norfolk jackets, loose round the chest and tight round the waist, with breeches which would allow plenty of play for the knees, and a pair of gaiters'.¹³ A year later Colonel Barne again raised the issue and stressed the advantages particularly with regards to the mobility allowed by a freer tunic for men ascending hills and for those engaged in hard work: breeches 'loose at the knee' would overcome the problems of trousers which when wet gave an 'immense drag at the knee'.¹⁴ In response Lord Elcho also advocated 'easy clothing' and suggested the army note the loose clothing of 'hardworking navvies' who wore a strap under the knee to prevent such dragging. Lord Elcho believed that it was a fact that men dressed in either knickerbockers or kilts would considerably outwalk those dressed in the present uniform.¹⁵ Not everyone was so enthusiastic, particularly with regard to the colour of such uniforms; the loss of 'the red' would leave nothing 'but that miserable rabbit colour ... now worn by the Devonshire Volunteers'.¹⁶ Nevertheless, 'certain trials were being made with respect to 'kharkee' (sic) and it was hoped that fears about the demise of the 'national colour' were overcome by the need to recognize the changing conditions brought about by advances in modern weaponry.¹⁷ Three eminent Generals had conducted experiments under varying conditions of weather and geography over the course of three days in winter, spring and summer

¹² Pegler, M. and Chappell, M., *The British Tommy 1914-18*, Oxford: Osprey: 10.

¹³ Rt.Hon. Colonel Barne, 'Government Manufacturing Establishments - Resolution', *Parliamentary Debates*, 17 March 1881, Volume 259: 1252

¹⁴ Rt.Hon. Colonel Barne 'Government Manufacturing Establishments - Observations', *Parliamentary Debates*, 13 March 1882, Volume 267: 781.

¹⁵ Rt.Hon. Lord Elcho, 'Government Manufacturing Establishments', House of Commons Debates, 13 March 1882, Volume 267: 78.

¹⁶ Rt.Hon. Sir Walter Barttelot, 'Supply - Army Estimates', *Parliamentary Debates*, 28 June 1883, Volume 280: 1756.

¹⁷ Rt.Hon. Mr Brand, 'Supply - Army Estimates', *Parliamentary Debates*, 28 June 1883, Volume 280: 1759.

and recommended that the uniform of the 3rd Devon Volunteers 'should be adopted as the service dress of the British Army'.¹⁸

The influence of Volunteer forces on Army clothing is important to acknowledge because of its close links with outdoor leisure and its participants. Volunteer battalions took an increasingly prominent part in the war in South Africa at the turn of the century and in growing schemes for home defence which thousands of men enrolled in.¹⁹ The funding of their uniforms and clothing remained an issue for the War Office because of the rising costs. Nevertheless it was noted that:

[T]he military authorities had taken many lessons from the Volunteers in the early days in the matter of uniform...when they found their own uniforms ... many of the regiments were clothed in a Norfolk jacket, knickerbockers and gaiters. Did we not see now that the clothing in which our troops had gone out to South Africa, also that in which they went to Egypt, was largely due to the lessons the Volunteers taught us as to useful clothing?²⁰

The resulting khaki standard service jacket adopted by the British Army in 1902 was effectively a version of the standard leisure wear of many suburban men: a tunic 'cut as a lounge coat to the waist, very loose at the chest and shoulders but fitted at the waist with a two and one quarter inch expanding pleat down the centre of the back to below the waistband for ease of movement'.²¹ The jacket was cut low in front of the neck and fitted with a turn-down Prussian collar and two expanding pockets were incorporated below the waist nine and one quarter inches at the top, ten and one half inches at the bottom, and fastened with a small button flap. This design and its characteristic khaki colour contributed to what swiftly became the iconic figure of the British 'Tommy'.²² Arguably, therefore, the clothing the majority of men had

¹⁸ Colonel Alexander, 'Supply - Army Estimates', *Parliamentary Debates*, 28 June 1883, Volume 280: 1763.

¹⁹ Cunningham 1975.

²⁰ Rt. Hon. Sir Henry Fletcher, 'Army Estimates, 1900-1901', *Parliamentary Debates*, 16 March 1900, Volume 80: 1118.

²¹ *Army Dress Regulations* (1911). It should be noted that in a Debate on Lord Haldane's proposals for reform of the Army and its supplies, Viscount Castlereagh reiterated the idea that many volunteers joined because it was considered a good thing to do, but they also had 'uniforms in which it was possible for them to walk out when not engaged in military duties', Cunningham 1975: 110.

²² See 'Prologue', in Holmes, R. (2004), *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front, 1914-1918*, London: Harper Collins. Holmes situates the origins of the name in a War Office publication of 1815 showing how the *Soldier's Pocket Book* should be filled in and which gave as an example, one Private Thomas Atkins. It has come to be a term for a common soldier in the British army but it has come to be associated with World War I.

worn for leisure activities *before* the First World War was in many ways the same as what they had then worn as soldiers *during* the war. It is unsurprising that Norfolk Jackets, knickerbockers, putties and boots were not necessarily the first choice of attire for those returning from war, for grieving relatives - or for a new generation of young men and women wanting to forget the war. Catherine Moriarty evidences how the sculpted representation of the standard army greatcoat for example was a particularly important element in many of the commissioned memorials to the war dead because at a collective and personal level the greatcoat was somehow representative of the conflict as a whole and its widespread experience.²³ The greatcoat was indicative of military service and common to all soldiers and, she argues, was therefore both immediately identifiable and redolent with associative meaning. However, the greatcoat was rarely worn at the front, whereas knickerbockers, putties and service jackets have come to dominate the collective imagination as evocative of life in the mud of the trenches and a very different understanding of life in the 'open air'.

There was a massive sale of surplus war clothing and equipment organised by the Disposal Board, under the auspices of the Ministry of Munitions that was very swiftly established (almost within a few days of the armistice) to attempt to tackle the vast amounts of plant and material that existed in depots all over the country.²⁴ The Board first met in November 1918 and continued to meet five days a week for the next four and a half years attempting to deal with the storage, sale and distribution of materials, plant, clothing, medical and military equipment, stores, and ordnance.²⁵ The Ministry of Munitions published a weekly catalogue, *Surplus* that listed the enormous mass of material on offer, its location in various military clothing depots all over the country and prices.²⁶ This brings us to a further contentious point, and one that warrants much more detailed interrogation than space allows here, that is the role of Army surplus and the significance of khaki shorts in

²³ Moriarty, C. (2004), ' "Remnants of Patriotism": The Commemorative Representation of the Greatcoat after the First World War' in *Oxford Art Journal*: Vol. 27, No. 3: 291-309.

²⁴ Rt.Hon. Major Sir Henry Havelock-Allan, 'Surplus Government Stores', *Parliamentary Debates*, 29 October 1918, Volume 110: 1284.

²⁵ Ministry of Munitions, *Surplus*, No. 1, 2 June 1919. The pamphlet noted, 'When the Armistice was declared every workshop in Britain was throbbing with activity, producing colossal quantities of war material which would have been required in connection with the 1919 Spring Offensive had the War continued.'

²⁶ *The Evening Standard*, 13 June 1919 wrote, 'It is possible to realise for the first time the colossal quantity of War material left on the hands of the Government. The whole story is plainly read in "Surplus," surely the most extraordinary catalogue ever published... Nothing appears too small and nothing too large for the Government to sell'.

fashioning of outdoor leisure between the wars. The use of Army Surplus clothing in the late twentieth century by young men in the aftermath of war (WWII, Korea, and Vietnam) as a form of political and cultural subversion has some historical precedence, but arguably this manifestation of the process predates it by some twenty-five to thirty years.²⁷ The trade press from 1919 contains numerous examples of auctions of surplus clothing all over the country of both new and part-worn garments of all kinds for men and women as well as hats, caps, gloves, boots and shoes [Fig. 64].

G R

MINISTRY OF MUNITIONS.
BY DIRECTION OF THE DISPOSAL BOARD
(TEXTILES, LEATHER, AND EQUIPMENT SECTION).
IMPORTANT
SALE BY AUCTION OF

NEW ARMY CLOTHING

AT THE "ACADEMY OF ARTS," BLACKETT STREET,
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.
On WEDNESDAY, 4th FEBRUARY, at 11 o'clock prompt
(and the day following if necessary).

The Sale will include—

The following Articles of NEW CLOTHING in quantities to suit
the Requirements of Buyers:—

- 3,000 Oilskin Coats.
- 1,000 Oilskin Jackets.
- 1,500 pairs Oilskin Trousers, lined.
- 1,000 pairs of Oilskin Leggings.
- 5,000 Oilskin Sweaters.
- 4,166 pairs Trousers, overall, Waterproof, Women's Motor Cycle Pattern, to strap under instep.
- 1,276 Jackets, Waterproof, Women's Motor Cycle Pattern.
- 2,515 pairs Knickerbockers, Women's, Waterproof.
- 2,320 pairs Crochet Knickerbockers.
- 1,358 White Rubber Tunicos, Women's.
- 8,363 pairs Trousers, Women's, Khaki Serge.
- 5,926 Breeches, Serge Drab.
- 1,940 Coats, Serge Drab.
- 2,346 Jackets, Black, lasting, Men's.
- 1,127 pairs Trousers, Black, lasting, Men's.
- 1,246 pairs Breeches, Bedford Cord or Whipcord.
- 27,750 Flannel Body Bands.
- 1,000 Suits, overall, Khaki, Waterproof.

There is also a number of WOMEN'S WATERPROOFS, HATS, LEGGINGS, MEN'S CAPS, BONNETS, TAM O SHANTERS, MOON, FLANNEL TROUSERS, WAISTCOATS, CAPES, FUR UNDER COATS (various skins) GLOVES (barbed wire).

The bulk may be inspected at the various Depôts where the articles are lying any day except Saturday, between 10 a.m. and 12 noon, and 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. on production of a Catalogue which may be obtained FREE, on application to the Auctioneers Messrs. F. & W. MACK.

Blackett Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne. Telephone, 1623 Central.

Samples of the above Clothing will also be on view, between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. each day from January 28th up to time of Sale, in Auctioneers' Sale Rooms, "The Academy of Arts," Blackett Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

NOTE.—For particulars of other Government Property for sale see "SURPLUS," price 5d. at all bookstalls, or by quarterly subscription of 1s. post free, payable in advance to the Director of Publicity, Ministry of Munitions, Whitehall Place, London S.W.1.

Fig. 64
The Outfitter, 24 January 1920

²⁷ Men's clothing in 1918 had seen a 94% increase in prices since 1914, and women's a 90%. For example the average price of men's suits aimed at the working class market had risen from 28s 6d in 1914 to 60s. in 1918; women's costumes from 44s to 80s 3d.; shirts, underwear, stockings, hosiery and other miscellaneous accessories such as collars, hats and aprons had all virtually doubled in price see Ewing 1974: 89-90.

Some clothing firms clearly attempted to adapt military fabrics to a peacetime leisure environment in order to overcome both shortages and massively inflated prices for men's clothing immediately following the war.²⁸ One advertisement for 'Cotton Suits' in bleached and khaki drill suggested that a number of City men 'stockbrokers, bankers, and lawyers' were following trends in the USA for men to wear dungarees and overalls [Fig. 65].²⁹



Fig. 65
The Outfitter, 24 January 1920

On 1st November 1919, *Surplus* for the first time advertises 'Shorts, khaki drill', packed in bales and lying at depots in Leeds and Watford to be sold by private treaty at a minimum quantity of 100 pairs.³⁰ There is no evidence to support the idea that hikers bought such items and further detailed investigation is needed to research just who did buy or stock them. However, there is a further subversive element that lends

'Average Prices of Clothing Ordinarily Purchased by the Working Classes in 1914 and 1918' in Pike, E. Royston, (1972), *Human Documents of the Lloyd George Era*, London: George Allen & Unwin: 236.

²⁹ *The Outfitter*, 13 May 1920. Interestingly, Rebecca Arnold's discussion of sportswear in the 1930s references such a suit as an example of early exercise wear, citing a 'blue cotton drill suit with white double stitching to reinforce the seams' dating from the 1920s and contained in the collection of the Museum of American History, Arnold 2001: 114.

³⁰ Ministry of Munitions, *Surplus*, 1 November 1919: 108

some weight to the argument that the rise of shorts after the First World War was both anti-militaristic and symbolic of a desire for new forms of de-regulated, democratic freedoms. Khaki drill shorts had been issued to the British Army in India since the 1870s and continued to be an essential part of different forms of civil and military 'kit' for service in the Empire, but they were never part of the regulation service uniform, and certainly not for those serving in the Western Front.³¹ Nevertheless, evidence does suggest that 'shorts' were quite commonly worn in hot weather on the Western Front.³² [Fig. 66].



Fig. 66

7th Northamptonshire Regiment (18th Division), photo taken 9th August 1917 near Dickebush, showing cut down Service Dress trousers

<http://members.fortunecity.com>

A specialist website on military uniform shows a picture of men on the Western Front wearing improvised 'shorts' and suggests, noting the double button arrangement, that these were cut-down versions of Service Dress trousers, which the men had adapted and sewn themselves, and quoting how the practice was outlawed by General Routine Order (GRO) 1850 of 5th October 1916 [Fig. 67].³³ This indicates that prohibition does not seem to have had a lasting impact and for

³¹ These were known as 'Bombay Bloomers' and were issued to the Indian Army and those serving in the tropics.

³² Pegler and Chappell (1999) *ibid*: 12, state 'An official but popular summer modification to the trousers was to cut the legs off to make shorts.' The standard issue of long drawers, long-sleeved vest and heavy flannel shirt was found to be unbearably hot in summer and there were many incidents of men fainting on long marches. This practice is usually traced back to the influence of the ANZACS who wore shorts in Gallipoli and purportedly had a much 'freer' attitude to what constituted 'suitable' clothing, particularly in hot conditions, that was then exported to the trenches.

³³ See <http://members.fortunecity.com>

example, **Fig. 68** shows a Tank Corps officer in 1917 in full service dress tunic, shirt and tie, leather equipment set, and service cap with knee length shorts and puttees.³⁴



Fig. 67

ANZAC
Officer
Western Front
1916
www.iwmcollections.org.uk



Fig. 68

Tank
Corps
Officer
Western
Front
1917,
from
Windrow

Anti-militarism and a desire for a new inclusive sense of nationalism was behind Baden Powell's decision to adopt khaki for the Boy Scouts which saw a huge rise in membership after the War and, as a result a growth in the number of adults involved in running Scout and Guide troops.³⁵ The first advertisement this research has found of an adult Boy Scout leader in shorts is by *Bukta* (H. Buck & Sons) who was the chief supplier from 1919, and the Scouter is represented alongside the promotion for a range of men's specialist sporting requirements including footballing 'knickers' in cotton and serge.³⁶ It is open to question what part Army surplus clothing played in the development of outdoor leisure after the First World War, or the level of subversion implicit within any decision to wear such clothing. However, whatever the motivations for the rise of shorts, the days of the Norfolk and knickerbocker combination for popular participation were numbered, certainly for hiking and

³⁴ Windrow, M. (1979), *Tank and AFV Crew Uniforms since 1916*, Cambridge: Stephens.

³⁵ For a detailed history of Scouting in Britain see Springhall, J.O. (1977), *Youth, Empire and Society. British Youth Movements, 1883-1940*, London: Croom Helm, particularly chapter 7. The movement attracted some 128,397 boys to its ranks in 1912, by the 1930s this had risen to a figure of just under half a million. See also Wilkinson, P. (1969), 'English Youth Movements, 1908-30' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 4, No. 2: 16-17.

³⁶ This is the earliest advertising image found by this research of an *adult* scout wearing shorts.

rambling in Southern England. The contemporaneous 'cult of the sun' which swept through British - and European culture - at this time fundamentally changed concepts of the 'modern' youthful body that physically and psychologically drew a line between the war and its 'cost'. David Matless observes:

For many commentators existing youth movements, particularly the Boy Scouts, provided a model of outdoor citizenship, applicable to both men and women ... Youth movements wore uniform, and a uniform was ascribed to the Rambler. Efficiently and healthily attired in shorts and stout shoes, and carrying appropriate equipment, the Rambler was, in the architectural language of the time, fit for his or her purpose.³⁷

'Shorts' became the anchor in a whole chain of sartorial signification around the post-war rational modern leisured body, its self-conscious fashioning and attempts to both free it and control and proscribe it. Just as the British countryside assumed a huge cultural potency in negotiating the war and the peace, different visions of what the countryside or rather its access represented were articulated spatially *and* materially. Richard Holt in emphasizing the difference between 'ramblers' and 'hikers' argues that the former, who saw themselves as a superior breed of walkers and thinkers and were largely drawn from the liberal professions wore 'knee-breeches, long woolen socks and tailored jackets', hikers on the other hand were 'clad in a unisex outfit of ex-army shorts, aertex shirts', and boots that scandalized the purists.³⁸

Leisure for all; leisure clothing for all occasions

In her introduction to interpretation of middle-class clothing between the wars, Catherine Horwood utilizes a cartoon from *Punch* of 1921 to illustrate how clothing functioned as a way of expressing disquiet about the breakdown of old pre-war social systems and the symbols of status that visibly reinforced them. Two well-dressed women are walking down the street and recognize a friend's maid servant walking the other way. Questioning why the maid's dress is smarter than that of her mistress the woman remarks to her companion, 'they can't *both* afford to dress like

³⁷ Matless, (1995), ' "The Art of Right Living", Landscape and Citizenship, 1918-1939' in S. Pile and N. Thrift (eds.), *Mapping the Subject, Geographies of Cultural Transformation*, London and New York: Routledge.

³⁸ Holt 1989: 200.

that'.³⁹ In the past it would have been highly likely that the maid was wearing a cast-off from her mistress.⁴⁰ But in the 1920s the expansion of a wide range of mass produced goods, but particularly clothing, meant that the middle classes 'were unsettled by a new world in which, according to the press, every man could look good in a "fifty-shilling" suit or a woman in a "guinea" gown'.⁴¹ Promotional advertising, satirical cartoons, and the popular and fashion media all promulgated the idea that class or rather the old markers of social status that defined it could no longer be easily differentiated through appearance. At the same time, various vested interests, particularly in the fashion and garment trade had to tread a fine line between appealing to middle-class readers and consumers feeling the pinch, while at the same time effectively opening up the field to a much wider class of customer. Horwood argues, '[A]s the mythical mill girl gained access to better quality clothing, so the middle-class shopper had to find other ways to distinguish him - or herself visually'.⁴² As the explicit spectacular and sartorial differentiation between classes was perceived as having been eroded, then so the idea of a range of implicit markers of 'good taste' in relation to social status that some inherently possessed and others did not was discursively shored up and widely circulated. Fashion always occupies an ambiguous position at times of social unrest in that it offers evidence of a new and desirable social levelling while at the same time signalling potentially dangerous opportunities for class conflict. Clear parallels can be made between this wider popular cultural and fashion-centred arena and the equally complex and shifting inter-war landscape of recreational leisure and its clothing.

The effects of the war in the immediate aftermath and the economic crises of the early 1920s clearly impacted on virtually every aspect of life, including leisure and

³⁹ Horwood, C. (2003), *Keeping Up Appearances: Fashion and Class Between the Wars*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing.

⁴⁰ See Fine, B. and Leopold, E. (1993), *The World of Consumption*, London: Routledge: 125-126.

⁴¹ Horwood 2003: 161; Costume historian Cyril Cunnington, although idiosyncratic in much of his opinions on fashionable clothing suggested in the 1930s that it was 'almost impossible to place a woman in the social scale from the appearance of her costume'. An expensive dress might be worn by a duchess, or a film star, or by a titled woman running a dress shop and wearing the stock, and a similar confusion arose in distinguishing between the middle and lower middle classes: 'even those versed in the subject cannot define a woman beyond saying she looks Bourne & Hollingsworth, or not quite Marshall & Snelgrove', Cunnington, C.W. (1937), *English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century*, London: Faber: 59

⁴² Horwood 2003: 8.

its clothing.⁴³ Khaki knickers and belted Norfolks were no longer popular, however their fall from favour was almost the final chapter in a wider trend in leisure clothing that had been evolving since the turn of the century - and which the social, political and cultural climate of Britain in the immediate post-war period *consolidated* rather than challenged. In the late spring of 1914 the trade journal *Men's Wear* had reported on the contemporary vogue for sports garments and clothes 'of a semi-sporting character'. It noted, 'Pleated coats do not seem to be so popular as formerly, and a large number of coats are now being made with ordinary lounge back, without belt or pleats but with a seam and vent. A good model to carry is a jacket with two side pockets, with flaps to button, no outside breast pockets, half belt at back and no pleats'.⁴⁴ 'Leisure' clothing had over the course of the previous two decades become more multi-functional as it, and the occasions on which to wear it, had increased and become more affordable for the working population as 'sports' clothing had become progressively more 'uniform' and more codified in terms of rules and regulations, and more identifiable in terms of professional and amateur teams, and highly regimented colours, equipment and clothing.⁴⁵ This was the origins of a gradual movement away from the activity-specific uniformity of Norfolk suits and knickerbockers adopted to a more ambiguous 'sporting' look suitable for a variety of leisure pursuits and a much broader concept of 'leisure'. The potential of 'leisure for all' created a demand for leisure clothing if not for all then for many, to visibly articulate a new-found prosperity. The *Drapers' Record* in 1920 once more proclaimed a 'new idea in men's fashion plates'. A graded continuum of leisure choices that previously mapped out the idealized experiences of upper class consumers in town or involved in country in the nineteenth century was moving towards a compartmentalised life of work and leisure [Fig. 69].⁴⁶

⁴³ Guaranteed demand encouraged technical innovation in large-scale production methods and created a chain of provision which contributed to war and post war demand and also a degree of technology transfer as products designed for warfare or improvements to existing demands initiated through wartime service were incorporated into the domestic market. National transportation and distribution networks also began to emerge after the First World War which facilitated new patterns of consumption, see Fine and Leopold 1993: 301-302; 106.

⁴⁴ 'Summer Wear. The Vogue of Sports Garments-Flannels Booming-Semi-Sports Attire a Big Feature', in *Men's Wear* 30 May 1914.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of the progressive regulation of football see Holt, R. (1986), 'Working-Class Football and the City: The Problem of Continuity' in *British Journal of Sports History*, Vol. 3: 5-17; for information on for example the development of football club colours see Bickerton, B. (1998), *Club Colours: An Illustrated History of Football Clubs and their Kits*, London: Hamlyn.

⁴⁶ *The Outfitter*, 19 June 1920.

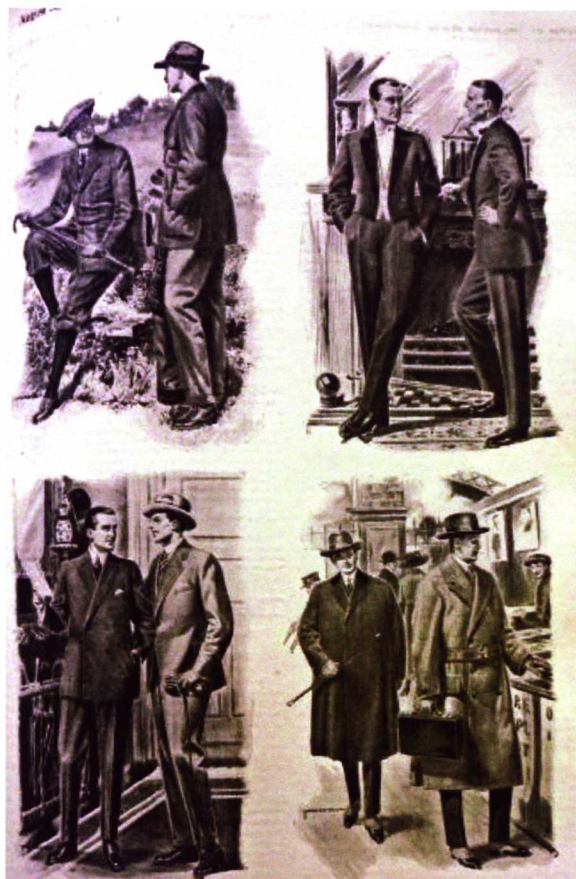


Fig. 69

‘A New Idea
in Men’s
Fashion
Plates’,
The Outfitter,
19 June 1920

The trade responded to a rapidly expanding consumer demand, particularly among the lower-middle and ‘respectable’ working classes, as it did in the 19th century, by offering flexibility in style, cut, design, and fabric as well as the potential to incorporate different elements of both functional and fashionable clothing of variable prices to be worn in the town or the country, working, travelling, socialising, shopping, playing golf and walking. A feature in *The Outfitter* after the war detailed the cut and design of the new ‘sports’ jacket and is illustrated with a photograph of different views of what is in effect a combination of elements of the traditional Norfolk jacket and army tunic with an ordinary lounge suit. The top of the back of the jacket is yoked and tailored to the waist with a stitched waistband replacing the old belt, the skirt remains but is vented. The front of the jacket is of the lounge variety with three buttons, lapels and three large pockets that distinguish it as a sporting jacket, the breast pocket is angled and the large patch pockets are flapped. (Fig.. 70]⁴⁷

⁴⁷ *The Outfitter*, 21 February 1920.



Fig. 70

The 'New Sports Jacket', *The Outfitter*, 21 February 1920

In 1920, with the benefit of hindsight, the trade journal *The Outfitter* itself usefully traced this historical evolution in terms of a trade adapting the costly cut, design and cloth of the original Norfolk with its pleats and pockets to the pocket of a mass consumer by '...doing away with the front straps, by cutting the fronts with a rolled pleat, running from the shoulder seams right through the fronts and finishing at the bottom of the coat.'⁴⁸ By 1934 the trade magazine was asking 'Should "Sports Jackets" Title be Dropped Now?'. The trade in informal ready-to-wear clothing, 'what has become known as "leisure wear"... has been both problem and profit' for the trade. There would continue to be a continued increase in consumer desire in this sector, but the widespread popularity of single breasted, three-buttoned semi-lounge models in tweed and other lighter weight knitted fabrics - but whether clothing that was worn everyday could be considered 'sports' jackets was now open to question.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ 'What a Sports Coat Should Be' in *The Outfitter*, 19 June 1920.

⁴⁹ 'Should "Sports Jackets" Title Be Dropped Now? Tweed Coats Everyday Wear', *The Outfitter*, 29 September 1934.

The impact of the war on the direction that post-World War I women's fashionable and recreational leisure clothing took was also considerable and the factors that brought about such change comparable, and frequently the same, as those affecting the manufacture, fabrication, design and dissemination of trends in men's wear towards multi-functionality, new fabrics. Again however, these radical shifts should not be seen in terms of a schismatic pre-war/post-war divide, but rather understood in terms of the consolidation of the constant and historically consistent developmental imperatives of the expansion of mass consumerism and the inter-relationship between technological and social change. The progressive move towards mass manufacturing, the trend towards greater accessorization, innovations in fabric technology, manufacture, retail and promotion and the opening up of wider channels of dissemination that took place *before* the war were as much a catalyst for as a reaction to more radical social changes brought about for both men *and* women as an effect of the war. During the war, large numbers of working-class women had abandoned domestic service to work in munitions factories; the numbers of lower-middle and middle-class women working in clerical and administrative occupations increased; opportunities arose to work in sectors such as engineering, manufacturing and transportation previously undertaken solely by men.⁵⁰ Many women now did jobs but also wore uniforms and forms of practical clothing such as overalls and breeches once seen as unthinkable.⁵¹

Features and editorials appearing in *Home Chat*, a weekly journal aimed at better-off working and lower-middle-class women are representative of a 'journalistic formula' which structured temporal and spatial shifts in women's experiences of work and home through the ambiguities of fashionable dress.⁵² Aristocratically-styled fashion editors Camilla' and 'Lady Betty' offered suggestions on 'Easy to Make Fashions' and featured advice on how to make a 'smart little suit' of 'simple Magyar cut' and a 'Bettermost Blouse'.⁵³ Shortened tailor-made skirts, 'simple' blouses worn with

⁵⁰ Pugh 2000.

⁵¹ For example the FANY's the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry was formed to attend to soldiers in the field on horseback and were the first women to drive for the British Army. Their uniform consisted of khaki officer-type military jackets, khaki shirts, collars and ties; see Ewing, E. (1975), *Women in Uniform: through the centuries*, London: Batsford: 83-85.

⁵² Buckley, C. 'De-Humanized Females and Amazonians': British Wartime Fashion and its Representation in *Home Chat*, 1914-1918, in B. Burman and C. Tobin (eds.) (2003), *Material Strategies: Dress and Gender in Historical Perspective*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing: 147.

⁵³ *Home Chat*, 10 October 1914 cited in Buckley 2003: 155.

feminine ties, plain serge costumes in grey and navy with three-quarter length coats that had been adopted by the lower-middle-class female clerical workforce before the war were seen as appropriately practical and akin to other forms of uniform now being worn by nurses, ‘clippies’, VAD’s, land girls, and munitions workers during the war. A romantic novel written in 1915 about a young typist compares the ‘giddy’ excesses of some working girls to the quiet sensible wardrobe of the leading character, Betty. Her dresses ‘were few and of the simplest. A grey tweed tailor-made, and a black voile with lace neck and sleeves... Hanging on the peg was a navy blue serge coat and skirt much the worse for London dust and London mud’.⁵⁴ The connections between the London dust and London mud and that of the men at or returning from the Front might be more easily made retrospectively. Nevertheless, Alison Matthews David argues that war resulted in many women having to live and work in new social and physical environments and adapt their clothing to unfamiliar activities and spaces. The evolution of a more practical working wardrobe for women can thus be seen as operating as a form of social and physical camouflage on the home front.⁵⁵ A *Punch* cartoon from early 1919 shows how women’s wartime service visibly displayed through the wearing of trousers and uniform functioned as an expression of patriotic duty to be rewarded [Fig. 71].



Fig. 71
Punch,
‘The Favoured
Uniform’, 1919

Indignant Lady: “*I suppose I’d have had a chance if I’d had breeches on!*”

Royston Pike 1972: 341

Cheryl Buckley’s analysis of such representations of new forms of practical clothing shows how the appropriateness of their wearing was always highly contingent on

⁵⁴ “Rita” (pseud.), (1915), *Betty Brent: Typist*, London: T.Wermer Laurie: 4.

⁵⁵ Matthews David, A. (2007), ‘Fashion’s Chameleons: Camouflage, “Conspicuousness,” and Gendered Display during World War I’ in J. Potvin (ed.), *The Places and Spaces of Fashion, 1800-2007*, London and New York: Routledge.

location and occupational situation. The wearing of ‘masculine’ clothing styles and colours were always couched in the ‘feminine’ language of fashion to create an ambiguous gendered discourse around their wearing which was described in terms of both fashion and anti-fashion.⁵⁶ Significantly, Alison Matthews David contends that the wearing of khaki as a fashionable colour was not considered appropriate for women in the First World War. Khaki was too symbolic of the fighting man to be ‘trivialized’, and could not therefore operate as a form of appropriate female civilian ‘camouflage’ because it could not ‘blend’ in with the gendered spaces of women’s work and leisure that were just as subject to the public reception of dress as cut, design, and colour.⁵⁷

The fashionable practicality of an evolving pre-war wardrobe outlined in Chapter Two was transformed rather than created through the massive changes in the scope and scale of the design, fabrication, and manufacture of ready-to wear-clothing that total war and war production necessitated. Chic, more loosely-structured women’s ‘sports’ jackets in a range of fabrics were now teamed with blouses, new types of knitwear and shorter, narrower skirts to created a ‘modern’ look that was easily adaptable to a variety of different locations and social occasions.



Fig. 72
Advertisements for Jumper Coats and Blouses, Marshall & Snelgrove, Harvey Nichols, *Drapers Record*, 20 February 1919

⁵⁶ For example in mainstream publications such as *Home Chat* cited in Buckley 'De-Humanized Females and Amazonians' *op cit*; and in higher end fashion magazines such as *The Queen*, 10 February 1917 which featured the 'The Indispensable Tailor Suit' - military inspired, and in 'fashionably subdued' navy blue serge, cited A. Matthews David 2007: 107.
⁵⁷ Matthews David 2007: 101

This boxier, pared-down look was easy to cut and size on a mass scale and the introduction of lightweight fabrics such as rayon (artificial silk) and jersey knit made them easy to construct and cheap to produce.⁵⁸ After the First World War the textiles industry was 'highly capitalized, highly concentrated and operated large-scale production units' and produced huge quantities of rayon which could be produced with minimum labour and design costs and which facilitated the 'quantum leap' to mass produced women's wear. However boxier designs and lightweight fabric also facilitated the home dressmaking sector which continued to be an important point of dissemination for the mainstream lower-middle class and upper working-class female consumer.⁵⁹ The national press and women's journals addressed this market with regular columns and features offering tips and suggestions as well as paper patterns.⁶⁰

Knitted jumpers and 'cardigans' that formed part of standard wartime military issue evolved into an essential element of men's and women's informal and 'leisure' wardrobe. Women's knitted 'separates' were as influential as the lounge and Norfolk jacket had been to the development of mainstream menswear in the nineteenth century. Knitted costumes in the form of dresses, two piece sweater dresses or three piece knickerbocker outfits by 1922 marked a new informality and demonstrated the potential for innovation offered by sports wear.⁶¹ A *Harvey Nichols'* sports wear catalogue illustrates a whole range of outdoor and social activities for which different combinations of knitted 'ensembles' in wool and jersey weaves - suits, cardigans, 'V-necked' jumpers, with matching berets and caps were all equally practical and suitable. It asks 'Do you need a cardigan for golf?... a knitted suit for country walking? ... a graceful gown for afternoon wear?' [Figs. 73, 74,] Just as the development of standardised and graded patterns facilitated their sale through retail shops and their publication in fashion magazines such as *Vogue*, then so knitting patterns became a way of disseminating new styles in knitwear and 'separates' to a lower-middle and working-class consumer. The British Library holds examples

⁵⁸ de la Haye, A.(1993), 'The Dissemination of Design from Haute Couture to Fashionable Ready-to-Wear during the 1920s' in *Textile History*, 24 (1): 30-40.

⁵⁹ Fine and Leopold 1993: 117.

⁶⁰ Ehrman 2005: 91.

⁶¹ Marquis, Julia, 'Fashion and the Outdoor Woman' in *Golf Illustrated*, February 1922.

[Figs. 73 - 76] of those aimed at meeting the need of both young men and women for fashionable knitted sportswear.

Contemporaneous with the Harvey Nichols' catalogue these cheaply produced publications provide a useful comparison of how the same types of garments were offered to different consumers. The new 'Coat-Jumper' possessed 'all the precision of a tailored garment' and narrow 'tight-fitting' coats and 'coatees' with matching berets, or 'the new fez, cravats and 'pussy' bows are featured that could all be made up in new types of 'tweed-effect' wool rather than the traditional heavy cloth. These patterns and designs provided a much more diverse consumer constituency with the opportunity to wear new types of highly-fashionable women's sports wear. New innovations in wool, needles and patterns aimed at the domestic market meant that 'No longer need "home-knitted" look "home-made!"⁶² Those knitted for their men-folk could make them look 'professional' rather than an 'amateur' [Fig. 77].

Rebecca Arnold has outlined how the Depression-era in America was central to sportswear's emergence as a key form of affordable mass-produced clothing comprised of simple interchangeable garments that could be worn in a variety of settings. The need to promote sportswear to a wide range of consumers resulted in a new emphasis on the idea that such clothing was not just appropriate for particular activities, nor for a high- end leisured clientele, but could easily be adapted for daywear and both active and passive pursuits and participants.⁶³ This key period Arnold argues crystallized the New York design aesthetic that was to dominate the post war ready-to-wear market; the emergence of modern leisure and sportswear provided an aesthetic response to economic and social pressures whilst at the same time formulating an ideal of a distinctly 'American' national identity. Such trends were not confined to the upper classes but part of a constant diffusion of stylistic trends that emphasized versatility and multi-functionality as the criterion of modern femininity.⁶⁴ Leisure and sport increasingly provided an expanding range of

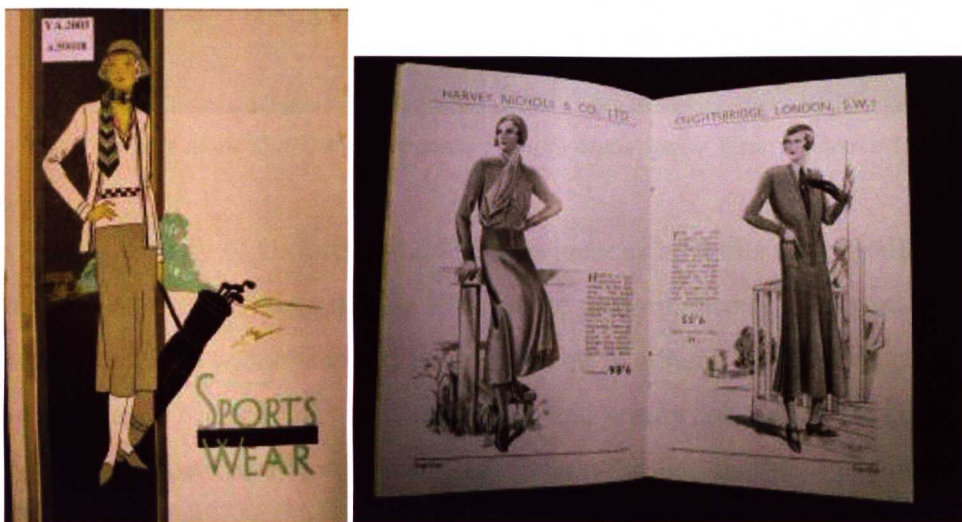
⁶² *Easily Made Sports Wear for Ladies*, (c.1931)

⁶³ Arnold, R. (2001), 'Modern Fashions for Modern Women: The Evolution of New York Sportswear in the 1930s' in *Costume*, Vol. 41: 111-125.

⁶⁴ Arnold, R. (2009), *The American Look: Fashion, Sportswear and the Image of Women in 1930s and 1940s New York*, Oxford: Berg.

fashionable choices and opportunities to self-consciously fashion shifting concepts of new classed and gendered 'modern' identities.

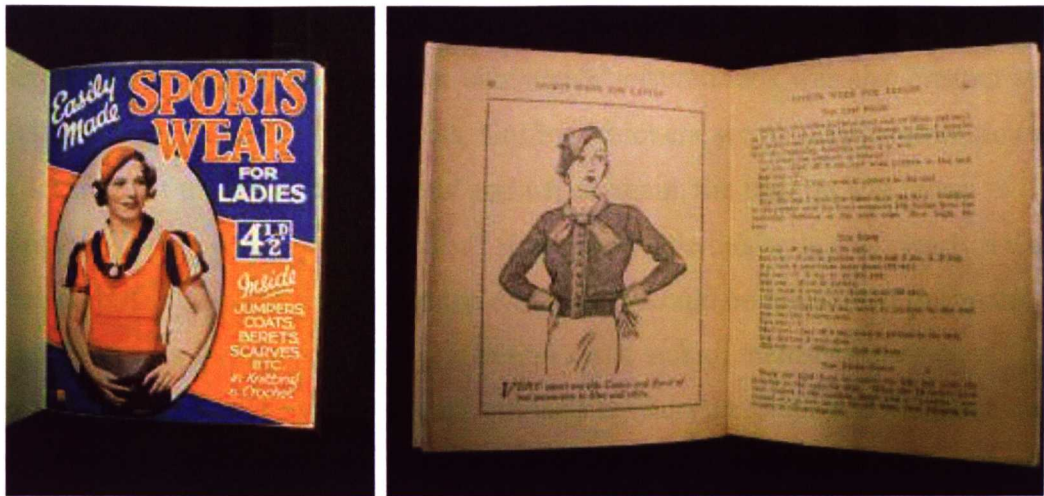
Popular suburban leisure and outdoor recreational clothing occupied an ambiguous position within an evolving inter-war fashion system that the wearing of 'plus fours' and their decline in many ways symbolizes. Catherine Horwood examines how in the 1920s, 'Plus-fours' became the most featured garment of the upper-class male in the late nineteen twenties particularly after they were enthusiastically adopted by Edward, Prince of Wales along with caps, socks and sweaters of patterns and colour-ways that even by the standards of the time were extreme.⁶⁵ Golf had always been seen as a game for the upper classes and club membership was extremely restrictive, excluding all but those of the highest professional and social status. But in the 1930s, Horwood argues, the game's sartorial codes equally became progressively more complex ruled by a mix of latent tradition and contemporary fads and fancies. In both cut and style, the plus fours were nevertheless very different from their pre-war and wartime configuration: '[I]nstead of tucking the knickerbocker neatly into the fancy top of the woollen stocking, it was given a voluminous bagginess which hung down well below the calf. With exaggerated fullness went exaggerated checks, and these checked tweeds became rougher and more hairy.'⁶⁶



Figs.73, 74 *Harvey Nichols Sports' Catalogue* c. 1931

⁶⁵ Horwood 2005: 87.

⁶⁶ Adburgham 1961: 283



Figs. 75, 76 *Easily Made Sportswear for Ladies*, c. 1931



Fig. 77 *Easily Made Out-Door Sportswear; Easily Made Sports Wear for Men* c.1931

Laura Ugolini's study of Oxford in the 1930s evidences how this style similarly became emblematic of undergraduate life and the performance of an instantly recognizable style to which students were expected to adhere. She argues, clothing marked allegiance to particular male groupings and reinforced class differences. The social divide of 'Town and Gown' was made visible through the highly contrived wearing of tweeds, plus fours, silk shirts and bags by the Oxford set, in contrast to the more mundane democratic respectability of the ready-made suits and jackets of Oxford car workers.⁶⁷ The University's elitist and self-regulating aesthetic and

⁶⁷ Ugolini, L. (2000), 'Clothes and the Modern Man in 1930s Oxford' in *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 4, Issue 4: 427-440

intellectual culture was reproduced elsewhere, for example in Princeton in the USA where a similarly carefully contrived 'subversive' leisured look was also created with knickerbockers, sweaters and brogues. Golfing 'knickers' were a key 'contribution to the aesthetic of the Princeton campus' and where again, the fashion was never popular with the non-collegiate locals.⁶⁸ However, while this style was clearly a way of reinforcing class differences through clothing, it would be misguided to situate such differences in terms of elitist innovation and a lack of mainstream agency. Oxford undergraduates sought to mark out their territory in relation to the town, and it must be noted also establish a pecking order within college grounds, those who lived in the town equally negotiated their own understandings of appropriate suburban masculine modernity. When upper-class men featured in popular culture they were frequently depicted wearing plus fours - but it was often to portray them as brainless socialites and symbolic of the War's destruction of the best of the aristocracy - more generously popularized through the novels of P.G. Wodehouse and the naively slavish fashion-victim Bertie Wooster who sported 'plus-sixes'. These chinless 'types' were lampooned in *Punch* along with their characterization of members of the Men's Dress Reform Party who gained a brief but nevertheless high profile in the 1920s and 30s.⁶⁹ The fact that the lower-middle class of both genders were wearing shorts by this time is indicative not, as has been argued, of the radical impact of the MDRP's advocacy of shorts, but of the individual agency of popular consumers.⁷⁰ Characterized as fops or cranks or signifying the exclusionary codes of the suburban middle-class golfing hierarchy it is unsurprising that this style was not one wholeheartedly embraced by lower-middle-class men. Less attractive still to the suburban market, this look was also associated with the archetypal figures such as the 'Northerner' and the 'Newly Rich' squandering the gains made by wartime profiteering.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Clemente, D. (2008), 'Caps, Canes, and Coonskins: Princeton and the Evolution of Collegiate Clothing, 1900-1930' in *Journal of American Culture*, Vol. 31, No.1: 20-34: 27.

⁶⁹ See Burman, B.(1995), 'Better and Brighter Clothes: The Men's Dress Reform Party, 1929-1940', *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 8, No.4: 275-290; also Bourke, J., (1996), 'The Great Male Renunciation: Men's Dress Reform in Inter-War Britain' in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 9, No.1: 23-33

⁷⁰ Both Burman and Bourke make arguments around the radical and subversive potential of the MDRP's attempts to challenge the norms of masculine dress - but these are much more easily sustained in relation to questions of gendered consumption and sexuality which is the main foundation of their informative and detailed discussion.

⁷¹ Adburgham 1961: 284.

3.5 Diffusion and Delight: Recreational Leisure Clothing For All

The Long Weekend

Britain between the wars has frequently been presented in terms of the sudden democratization of fashion as a result of the rapid technological advance in manufacturing and production processes and the expansion of new opportunities for promotion offered by broadcasting, cinema and mass circulation periodicals and press media. Within traditional fashion historical accounts of this period there is a corresponding tendency to represent the 1920s as a decade characterized by the over-glamourized image of the upper-class female 'flapper' as depicted in high-end magazines such as *Vogue*: 'swathed in Chanel, sunburnt on the tennis court, reclining on the liner...'.¹ However, Chris Breward suggests that after the First World War a growing lower to mid-range market for women's magazines and journals offers a more humdrum but nevertheless important perspective on modern fashionable femininity. New titles, including *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman and Home*, *Woman's Own* and *Woman* targeted the 'New Rich', the suburban white-collar and entrepreneurial lower middle class outlined in the previous Sections. A new relationship with readers was established through reassuring editorials and a high degree of reader identification. A number of magazines set up consumer panels that researched and tested various products - food, cosmetics, home decorating, fashion and dressmaking - and built up readership circulation data. Breward argues:

The very ordinariness that these journals embody can in fact be used as evidence to suggest that British editors, illustrators and advertisers were responding to a particular sense of reactionary or "conservative" modernity that stands in opposition to the more commonly held reading of feminine culture at the time as revolving around ideals of aspirational glamour, the Joan Crawford film and the department store window.²

This research would suggest however, that the two are not mutually exclusive, certainly within the context of suburban leisure and fashionable leisure clothing. Images of suburban recreation and trips to the seaside or hikes and rambles promoted in the press, high and low end fashion magazines, and on posters for railway and

¹ Breward, C. (1995), *The Culture of Fashion*, Manchester: Manchester University Press: 199.

² *Ibid* 2000-201.

coach companies were all highly stylized and glamorously *moderne*.³ Sport was an important influence on women's fashions at this time particularly through figures such as tennis star Suzanne Lenglen who was dressed on and off the court by Paris designer Jean Patou. Shorter skirts, straight simplified silhouettes, shorter sleeves and plain necklines were part of a fashion aesthetic that along with shingled hair, lipstick, and a suntan came to represent social and physical freedom for many women relative to all but the poorest classes. New fashion was still beyond the reach of many but it was now available to many more whose lives did improve between the wars.⁴ The introduction of new artificial silks such as Rayon revolutionized the mass market and allowed suburban consumers to enjoy the slim-line 'garçon' look of the privileged cosmopolitan elite, particularly through the widespread dissemination of dress patterns in magazines and small High Street shops.⁵ Robert Graves in his memoirs of life in Britain between the wars remarked that the most remarkable visible expression of social change was that displayed in the bodies and fashions of suburban women, who no longer looked prematurely aged and evidenced a new-found feminine prosperity.⁶ New patterns of retailing developed by mainstream department stores such as Marks and Spencer, C&A, and Derry & Toms made fashionable clothing more accessible to its suburban clientele.

In the mid 1920s Marks & Spencer undertook a major rationalization of the goods being sold and the growth of textiles became the biggest single section of the company's business. Perhaps significantly for developments in fashionable mainstream leisure clothing Marks & Spencer established its own in-house textile laboratory subjecting fabrics to tests of washability and durability and researching the production of textiles by modern mass-production processes.⁷ In its company magazine, the store intimated to its customers that it 'introduced the girl who makes

³ See Wilcox 2006:33-47: images of lidos and young women in swimsuits were particularly evocative. By the mid-1920s public facilities for sunbathers were appearing all over the country as part of a government-backed scheme to provide outdoor pools. There were over 60 such pools in Greater London alone.

⁴ See Wilson and Taylor 1989: 76; 82-85.

⁵ Breward 1995: 188-

⁶ Graves 1940: 175.

⁷ Worth, R. (2007), *Fashion for the People: A History of Clothing at Marks & Spencer*, Oxford: Berg: 32-34; 42-43. The monitoring of sales also became a vital factor in determining buying policy which led to the abandonment of haberdashery and a concentration on hosiery, knitted goods, dresses, tailored shirts, pyjamas, nightwear and socks:

the stockings to the girl who wears them'.⁸ The standardization of goods and social and physical mobility came together in the figure of the young, lower-middle-class working woman, 'materially produced by Taylorism at work and in the consumption practices of "free time"'.⁹ Janice Winship uses Siegfried Kracauer's concept of the 'mass ornament' to explore the rise of the inter-war lower middle class and the emerging cultural form of the department store. She argues that routine, repetition and the consumption of standardized commodities were all pivotal to their attainment and maintenance of a new social space. However, this bears some comparison with David Matless' arguments around the 'choreography' of modern leisure at this time discussed in the previous Section. Kracauer's tap, tapping of dancing feet, typewriters and production lines, were mirrored in Keep Fit classes and the marching feet of suburban hikers and rambles; Winship's orderly modern bodies produced and consumed by and for a growing lower middle-class created both a sense of regulated uniformity but also a new sense of democracy - and arguably a more risky sense of mobility in every sense. Catherine Horwood's detailed examination of the inter-war middle class through Mass Observation records illustrates the growing importance of leisure with photographs of two young shorthand typists from Manchester, wearing brightly patterned, two-piece 'beach pyjamas' they had made themselves in one and teaming the tops with cycling shorts in another - although Horwood emphasizes the locational contingency of such garments (i.e. strictly for the seaside or for leisure).¹⁰

Over the course of the twentieth century 'Leisure' became a more abstract temporal and spatial concept in line with wider changes in the availability, multiplicity and affordability of leisure itself for the working population. Legislative changes in working hours resulted in shorter days and now much more frequently, a five day week for many workers who were also beginning to benefit from paid holidays for the first time and allowed a new class of people to go further afield, more often, for

⁸ *Marks & Spencer Magazine*, Summer 1932 cited in Winship, J. (2000), 'New disciplines for women and the rise of the chain store in the 1930s', in M. Andrews and M.M. Talbot, *All the World and Her Husband: Women in Twentieth-Century Consumer Culture*, London: Cassell: 29.

⁹ Winship 2000: 31 cites Siegfried Kracauer for whom the popular female dancing troupe The Tiller Girls was the vivid symbol of Fordism - 'they tapped their feet in fast tempo... business, business ; when they kicked their legs high with mathematical precision, they joyously affirmed the progress of rationalisation', for an analysis of this see Witte, K. (1975) 'Introduction to Siegfried Kracauer's "The Mass Ornament"', *New German Critique*, Spring: 59-66: 63-64.

¹⁰ Horwood 2000: 79.

longer. A 'continuum' of working, sporting and leisure occasions experienced in a variety of locations - at home on 'the weekend', at work, on holiday, in the garden, going to the cinema, playing or watching sport, or participating in the 'cult' of outdoor leisure that emerged in the 1920s - was now available to a significant number of consumers who required a parallel range of clothing choice in which to participate in such activities. Radically altered mainstream understandings of what leisure meant were then embodied in new forms of leisure clothing. Young men *and* women could wear a combination of different sports coats, jackets, cardigans, sweaters, jumpers, blouses, and waistcoats in different types and weights of fabrics, teamed with shorts, or trousers, or knickerbockers or skirts for gardening, for holiday wear, for picnics, for walking in the countryside, for walking the dog, for cycling on bicycles and on motorcycles. In 1932 the trade journal *Women's Wear* wrote:

Fashion in sports wear garments are a comparatively new feature in ladies' outdoor outfits, and the outcome of the modern vogue for open air sports and pastimes. Until quite recent years sports clothing was confined principally to the fortunate few who could afford to indulge in such diversions and pursuits as riding, yachting, etc., and the garments worn on these occasions were of necessity, made to measure by the bespoke tailor... Nowadays, however, sports clothing of all kinds may be obtained ready-to wear in a variety of styles, materials and colours to meet all needs, tastes and inclinations, and what is all equally important at all prices... In fact, in many instances, it is difficult to differentiate between garments for sports wear and ordinary wear, and indeed there is often no strict line of demarcation between the two.¹¹

Advances in political reform and the extension of the vote were clearly influential in wider social changes in women's relationship with public life that extended to clothing. Whilst the wearing of trousers, shorts and knickerbockers in locations and environments outside of sports and specific leisure activities was still socially unacceptable, they were now a familiar and normal part of women's participation in such activities, bifurcated garments and shorter hemlines were also part of women's everyday informal wardrobe.

¹¹ 'Sports Clothing', *Women's Wear*, 3 June 1932.



Fig. 78
Mr. and Mrs. Hann, Ramsgate c. mid-1930s

By the early 1930s trousers, culottes and 'sports frocks' were popular for the beach and for on holiday. In May details for the making of a 'Trouser-skirt' for hiking, golf and general sports wear was provided in *Women's Wear*, 'In wear it resembles an ordinary skirt in appearance, the deep pleats at centre front and back effectively disguising the fact that the garment is divided.' Derry and Toms offered inexpensive clothes for 'Fun in the Summer Sun' that included white twill tailored shorts for 10/- matched with a 'jaunty' sweater for 12/-11, as well as flannel sacks and dresses featuring gored pleats.¹² A personal photograph shows the author's great aunt and uncle promenading in what looks like the French Riviera but is in fact Ramsgate, in matching all-white outfits including shoes, he with flannels and open-necked shirt, she with culottes, open necked shirt and matching three-quarter length coat [Fig. 78]. An exhibition of 'Fashions and Women's Wear' in March 1933 displayed new innovations in cut, design and technology with 'waistcoat jumpers' and trousers with 'zipp fasteners at the sides', two piece suits, and different types of gored skirts, as well as sports suits, coats, costumes etc., that were all available in the latest styles and in a range of shades.¹³ An article in *The Outfitter* noted the effect of the import of the English 'craze for hiking' on Paris with new designs for sports trousers, shirts, jackets and shorts. The shirt featured diagonal patch pockets, the jacket was 'all

¹² *Daily Mirror*, 26 June 1932.

¹³ 'Fashions and Woman's Wear Exhibition', *Women's Wear*, 24 March 1933: 189.

curves' and bright blue, and the shorts were available made up in a diverse range of materials, even glove silk, with a rubber waistband.¹⁴



Fig. 79 'A Fashionable Sports Jacket', *Women's Wear*, 10 May 1929

Designs in journals such as *Women's Wear* offered patterns for domestic and professional dress makers that included a much more progressive range of clothing for active young women that extended to all types of formal and informal sporting and leisure occasions. While the men's Norfolk jacket had virtually disappeared other than for upper-class rural sports, it was still very much *en vogue* for ladies' sporting and leisure pursuits. A pattern for a 'Fashionable Sports Coat' is promoted in the journal in January 1929 and shows how the original design has been adapted and integrated into fashionable trends and the longer, leaner look of the 1920s. The jacket is long and narrow, with two buttons at waist length and is fastened with a narrow belt in the same fabric. There are two flapped patch side pockets and a small diagonally-shaped breast pocket. It is worn with an equally narrow short skirt with buttons up one side. It is shown worn with a shirt and tie, golf brogues and a tight-fitting cloche hat [Fig. 79].

¹⁴ 'French Designers Are Not Afraid of New Ideas', *The Outfitter*, 4 August 1934: 87.

While ladies' sports coats for the golf course are pictured with a skirt, patterns and designs for bi-cyclists, hikers and motor-cyclists feature breeches, knickerbockers and tailored shorts teamed with various shirts and ties, thick socks, and three-quarter length jackets. In April 1929 an outfit for a lady motorcyclist is offered with belted breeches, thick diamond-patterned socks, a shirt and tie and a belted three-quarter length tweed overcoat [Fig. 80]. In the same issue a version for lady cyclists is also offered. Here the model is wearing a herringbone wool suit, comprised of plus-fours with a wide two-buttoned waistband, tucked into diamond-patterned socks, and a matching tailored three-quarter length coat with fitted waist and single button, with buttoned patch pockets, and button sleeve details, teamed with a shirt and tie, a beret, and a small slim handbag [Fig. 81].



Figs. 80, 81.
 'Motor Cycling
 and Cycling
 Wear',
Women's Wear,
 28 February
 1930

Hiking is given prominence with a variety of options. In February 1930 a pattern for a ladies blazer is provided - narrow, hip length, with two buttons - teamed with a short-length wide-pleated skirt, an open neck shirt, a beret, and knapsack. In July of the same year three style options are offered for the fashionable young hiking and leisure enthusiast: 'Oxford' bags with turn-ups, a tailored waistband and three button

side fastening, tailored shorts teamed with pattern-top woollen socks, and plus-fours. These are shown worn with a loose fitting sports blouse with concealed buttons, a floppy 'pussy' bow tie and a highly fashionable 'Anglo-Basque' beret [Fig. 82].¹⁵

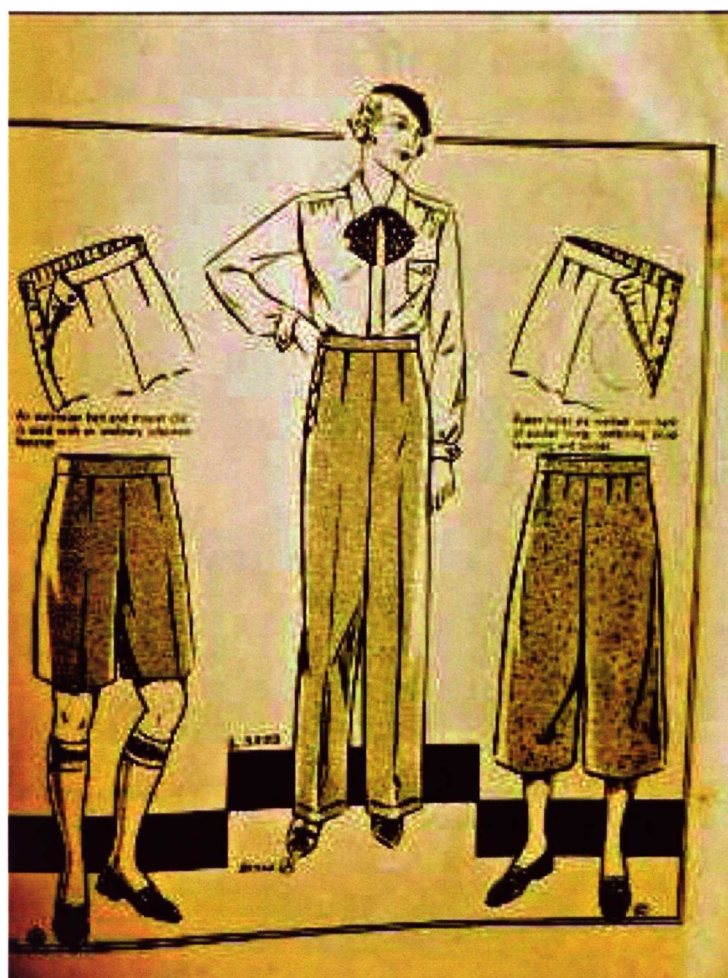


Fig. 82
'For the modern hikestress', *Women's Wear*, 31 July 1930

The Road to Modernity

The image of an archetypal young men and women wearing shorts dominates various characterisations of healthy modernity in all types of media in the 1930s. A young couple stride out energetically into the countryside, side by side in profile, looking steadfastly ahead swinging their arms, the background figure's arm raised in the motion, to give a sense of vigour and purpose. The images are frequently cropped

¹⁵ Elizabeth Ewing 1974: 112 notes how the Anglo-Basque beret 'worn slantwise' was hugely popular at this time.

so that parts of the head and feet are missing in a way that emphasises the forward-sweeping movement of the two figures. It is this movement and the sense of purpose that unites all the images. [Figs. 83, 84, 85].

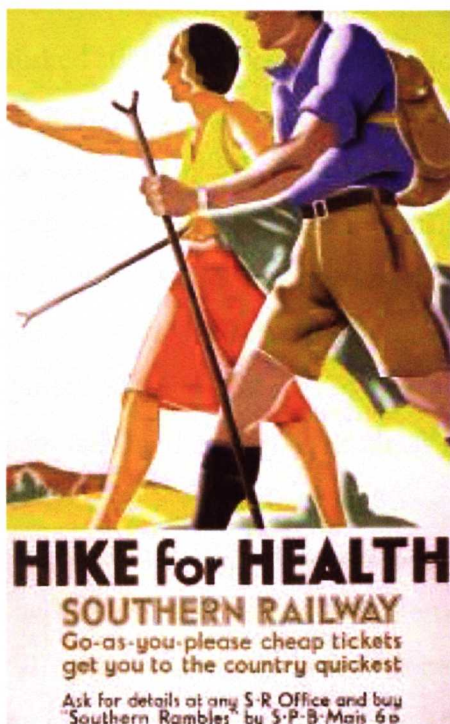


Fig. 83 Anon. *Hike for Health*, 1931
Southern Railway Poster

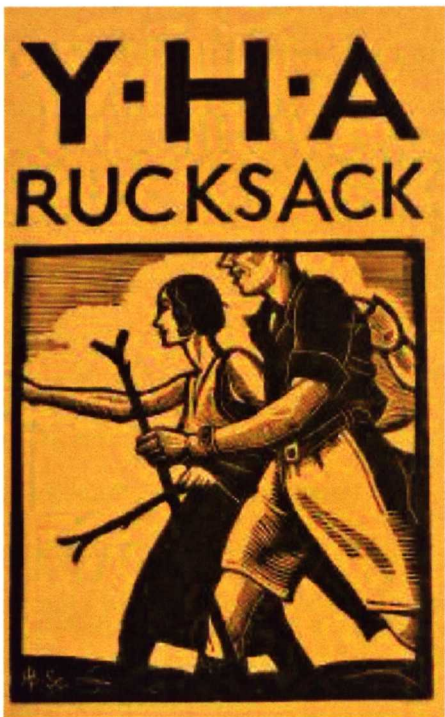


Fig. 84
YHA Rucksack , April 1933



Fig. 85 Advertisement from *YHA Rucksack*, May 1934

In some representations the woman wears a beret, and both figures wear shorts and short-sleeved tops, although the men's forward leg sometimes expediently intersects with those of his female companion in a way that makes her legwear more ambiguous (shorts or divided skirt?). Both always carry a rucksack and usually forked sticks - one usually held aloft to emphasise the diagonal thrust of the striding, forward momentum, the other anchoring the figures to the ground they walk on. The version used by the 'Hike for Health' poster for Southern Railway for example employs a Neo-Romantic style using modernist solid colours and strong almost monolithic pared-down silhouettes. The same figures are closely reproduced by the winner of the YHA Cover Competition this time in heavy woodcut - a medium that gained popularity as part of a neo-romantic shift to older, more ancient forms of craft and their modernist interpretation or are pictured sucking 'Kwench-its'. Robert Graves has notably described how hikers became almost an 'army' of young men and women uniformly wearing open-necked shirts and shorts in khaki.¹⁶ However, the very ubiquity of this depiction of a young hiking couple tends to conceal how different leisure participants adopted, adapted and appropriated what were new, quite radical forms of leisure clothing after the First World War. It was never just a case of shifting concepts of what was seen as appropriate for people to wear, but why they wore such clothing or viewed particular forms of clothing as suitable in relation to a whole network of meaning. The 'rise' of shorts as the 'uniform' of recreational outdoor leisure, like their counterparts the Norfolk and knickerbocker suit of the late-nineteenth century, was one that gradually and progressively emerged in response to the shift desires and aspirations of their wearers and the socio-economic and political context in which these were both motivated and fulfilled. In comparing the social *milieux* of the tennis club and golf course to that of rambling and hiking, Catherine Horwood suggests that there were obvious class differentials, the former activities predominantly being confined to the middle class, the latter to the lower-middle-class.¹⁷ Perhaps more significantly, she argues that 'unlike tennis, activities such as hiking, cycling and rambling were not seen as opportunities for sartorial statements or social advancement'. Khaki because of its associations with 'democracy' of recent

¹⁶ Graves 1940: 49. Again, see particularly Chapter 16, 'Pacifism, Nudism, Hiking' for Graves' contemporary perspective on the centrality of outdoor leisure to the culture and mood of the inter-war period.

¹⁷ Horwood 2005: 86-95.

military service, and as a consequence its adoption by Baden Powell and the Scouting movement acted as a form of 'camouflage' obscuring not just the wearer 'but the wearer's background'.¹⁸ This is clearly an argument with some strength. However the idea that somehow khaki shorts were not seen as a form of sartorial statement is not sustainable and indeed Horwood's own analysis is intellectually consistent. She cites the growing influence of the cinema and the appeal of young hikers wearing versions of their heroes' costumes and an American 'sporting look' so that even for a few hours hiking over the South Downs they could 'live the celluloid dream'. Furthermore, Horwood emphasizes how supposedly 'minor alterations' to what were at the time rigid dress codes were extremely significant.

The move towards informality and its close inter-relationship with leisure and leisure clothing after the First World War was an important expression of a younger generation seeking to make very clear the differences in attitude and lifestyle to that of their parents' and an older pre-war generation.¹⁹ An advertisement in the Co-operative company's magazine *Women's Outlook* advertises the Co-op's own brand of bicycle through the image of the 'modern girl' - although again using the inverted 'V' as a means of negotiating the ambiguities of appropriate legwear - and arguably using a Russian-constructivist aesthetic in its colours and simple blocked colours to implicitly suggest the political dimensions inherent in certain forms of cycling club membership and the fashioning of modern femininity [Fig. 86].

A photograph in the *Daily Herald* of 1934 shows such styles 'in action' as it were but more importantly demonstrates the widespread diffusion of what might be considered as more subversive masculine fashions by their now being adopted by suburban lower-middle and working-class female hikers and cyclists. The young women from a 'South London Cycling Club' sport various cuts of different coloured shorts, plus fours, teamed with thick socks, long and short sleeved shirts mostly open-necked but sometimes with tie, and numerous berets [Fig. 87].

¹⁸ *Ibid*: 93.

¹⁹ *ibid*: 163, 164.

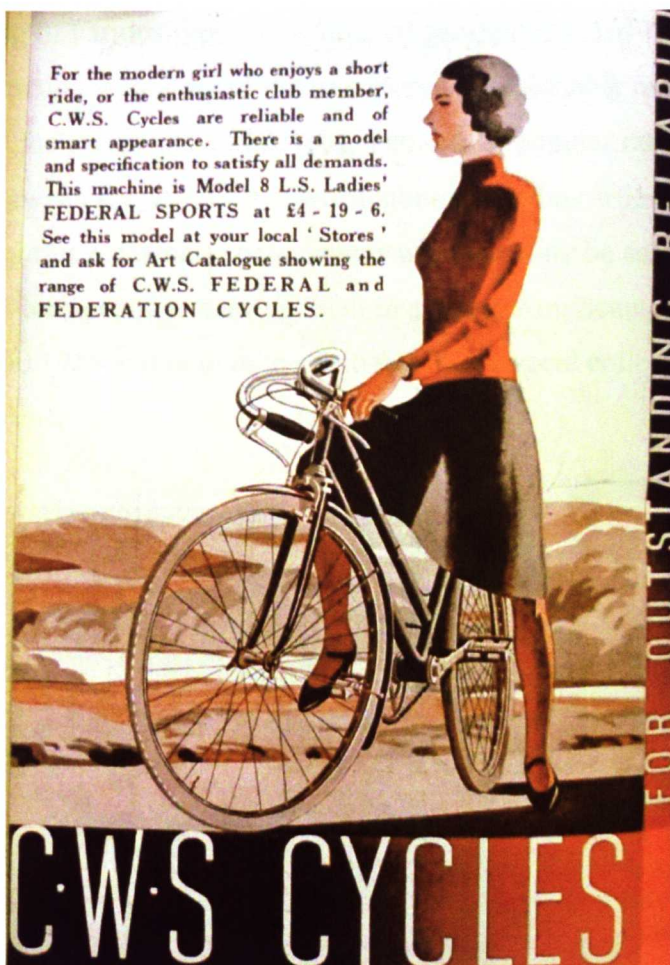


Fig. 86

'For the modern girl...' CWS Cycles, *Women's Outlook*, 18 April 1936



Fig. 87

'A South London Cycling Club', *Daily Herald*, April 1934, from exhibition 'A Day in the Sun' at *The Lowry*, Salford Quays, 29 April - 25 June 2006

Women's wearing of various types of bifurcated garment is clearly not without significance for an understanding of the trajectory of fashionable mainstream consumption and the expansion and development of the popular rational recreational leisure market between the wars.²⁰ It is worth noting that the earliest popular image of shorts found by this research to date depicts what can only be assumed are a young man and woman shown wearing them in a North American popular song sheet dated around 1915 and held in the British Library vocal collection[Fig. 88].²¹



Fig. 88

*Dominion of
Canada,*
M. Hill, (1915),
Song Sheet,
British Library
Collection

The rendition of the figures in an amorous embrace is both fairly suggestive for the time and highly ambiguous as there is little to differentiate between the two figures

²⁰ For a discussion of the importance of ambiguity as a strategy for acceptance of women's wearing of trousers see Tickner, L. (1977), 'Women and trousers: unisex clothing and sex role changes in the twentieth century' in *Leisure in the Twentieth Century: Fourteen Papers given at the Second Conference on Twentieth Century Design History*, London: Design Council Publications.

²¹ Hill, May Olivette, (c.1915), *Dominion of Canada: march and two steps*, Chicago: Roger Graham

in terms of gendered physical or sartorial characteristics. The right-hand figure depicted in profile is clearly female, distinguished by the length and style of hair and silhouette but the face of the left-hand figure is hidden by the brim of their Canadian Mounties' hat, and his or her chest is obscured by the strategic joining of hands. The 'fork' of His/her shorts lacks flies and the shape of the 'fork' at the crotch is rendered in tailoring terms as a 'hollow' i.e. female; both figures are very slim and their legs are equally long and slender and similarly clad in woolen socks and gaiters, and narrow heeled shoes.

Visual ambiguity was a common feature of outdoor leisure imagery and often used a strategically placed pleat in the fabric covering the forward-striding leg to make it unclear whether shorts, culottes or a short skirt were being worn.²² By 1930 the wearing of shorts by mainstream consumers of *both* genders was deemed appropriate and acceptable to the collective sartorial consciousness. What constituted appropriate clothing dominated the discourse of outdoor leisure for clearly practical reasons but a focus on supposedly 'functional' concerns often belied the huge significance accorded to the form 'appropriate' clothing should take by authors who saw themselves as the arbiters not just of useful knowledge but inherent 'good taste'. Cyril Joad in a chapter entitled 'Hikers ... and Sunburn' described in detail the clothing of a new breed of walker 'the hiker' spoiling the countryside and its enjoyment for real country-lovers like himself as they marched in the shadow of their cars 'to the tune of horns and the smell of petrol'. He warned of emancipated women who demanded freedom from the hampering skirt but whose form 'tended to stumpiness'; worse still were the groups whose numbers sometimes run to a dozen or even more, and the 'inevitable couples' all in shorts, 'the girls being only distinguishable from the men by their more generous curves and plumper posteriors'. He exhorted the female hiker, '... short skirts, plaids and kilts, yes; in kilts, emphatically yes. But in shorts, no' and warned of the dangers of their arms becoming 'red and beefy' through exposure to the sun.²³

²² Culottes were particularly popular and offered a useful compromise between more masculine shorts and more feminine skirts. In 1936 an article in *Woman's Outlook* noted, '...when it comes to scrambling up hills in a rough country walk or negotiating walls or styles, then the culotte is most graceful and comfortable wear.' Editorial, *Woman's Outlook*, 13 June 1936.

²³ Joad 1934: 167-168

Perhaps reflecting a comparative degree of conservatism early Youth Hostellers seemed to favour a more formal combination of a lightweight woollen blazer teamed with shorts, a shirt and tie, decorated knit socks and brogues. The blazer is a typical sporting club blazer of this time and similar to one held in the collection at the Fashion Museum in Bath made by Ryder & Aimes of Cambridge for the Queens College Rowing club dated 1932 [Figs. 89, 90].²⁴



Fig 89

'Wooler Hostel', *YHA Rucksack*, April 1933

²⁴ By permission of Fashion Museum of Bath, Object Ref No: BAT MC 11.21.93. The blazer dates from the 1930s and is made of light white/cream wool flannel with green silk braiding and bears the club badge on the breast pocket. It seemed to be quite long (32") in proportion to the chest (40") although the owner, as a rower, might have been particularly tall and the blazer was almost certainly made to measure.



Fig. 90 Wool Blazer c. 1930s, Museum of Bath,
Object Ref No: BAT MC 11.21.93, by permission of Museum of Bath

The editors of the *Red Wheelers* the cycling association of the British Communist Party described themselves as ‘not just a band of bike pushers but an organisation of virile young and enthusiastic fighters against the ‘snobocracy’ and corruption of capitalist sport’. In a series of letters and editorials in the first issues of the magazine, of the comparative worlds of leisure cycling in its capitalist guise and their own socialist version is usefully characterized with reference to clothing. The anonymous “Red Sport” argued:

There are cyclists and cyclists.

But the cyclist, the regular out and out clubman, is the last word. He is as exclusive as the golfer, as unapproachable as a Cabinet Minister ... and appears at the start dressed in tights from head to foot. In deference to the early Sunday church-goers, no naked knee must be displayed ... You dare not turn up to race against him in long trousers, and shorts are against the rules...²⁵

²⁵ “Red Sport”, ‘Formalism, The Curse of the Orthodox Clubman’, in *Red Wheelers*, No. 1, October 1930: 4.

The anti-militaristic organisation the Woodcraft Folk (an offshoot of the earlier Order of Woodcraft Chivalry) was started in South London in 1925.²⁶ The movement did not have an official 'uniform' but rather advocated that followers created their own 'costume' an adaptation of the tunics, hoods and shorts which were seen as both healthy and co-educational and derivative of the practical garb of the 'woodsman' and native American Indian.²⁷ What distinguished the Woodcraft Folk's shorts however was their shortness, or what their biographer terms their 'abbreviated' style that was seen as reflecting an ethos of youth and political, social and spiritual freedom. Girls bought men's shorts, machined up the flies, added side buttons and used to fake a little tuck in the front to give a crease and both men's and women's were often embellished with badges and embroidery to match tunics and shirts made of cheap green riverina (a kind of calico) sold by the Co-op.²⁸ One enthusiast recalled: 'The shorts got so short at one time that one of the office holders went round measuring the length of the girls' shorts from the ground to make sure that they weren't too short.'



Fig. 91

Women member of the Woodcraft Folk, c.1930s
from Salt and Wilson, 1985, *We are of One Blood*

²⁶ Prynn, D. (1983), 'The Woodcraft Folk and the Labour Movement, 1925-1970', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 8, No. 1: 79-95.

²⁷ Salt, C. and Wilson, M. (1985), "*We are of One Blood*": *Memories of the First 60 Years of the Woodcraft Folk 1925-1985*, Gateshead: CWS Printers.

²⁸ *ibid*: 13.

Tom Stephenson writing on suitable hiking clothes for the *Daily Herald* in 1934 was not however referring to the Woodcraft folk or the communist cyclists when he described ‘the “flaming hiker” one sometimes meets attired in vermilion beret, a shrieking pullover, shorts nicely creased, stockings of the ugliest design available, and shoes suited for nothing more strenuous than a parade in Hyde Park!’.²⁹

Stephenson was rather implicitly referencing the rapid expansion of popular and highly fashionable participation by large groups of men and women. A more lyrical depiction of female hikers is offered in James Walker Tucker’s painting *Hiking* (1936) that shows three young women in different coloured shorts and short-sleeved shirt combinations, short socks and sensible shoes, each with coordinated beret, and all carrying rucsacs [Fig. 92].³⁰



Fig. 92

James Walker Tucker, *Hiking*, 1936, exhibition ‘A Day in the Sun’
at *The Lowry, Salford Quays*, 29 April - 25 June 2006

Over a period of three weeks discussions famously raged in *The Times* over what was deemed suitable for ‘hikers’ to wear. One W. Russell Flint of Campden Hill, W.8, in a letter entitled ‘Homely Cheeks and Skinny Legs’ first wrote of his desire to see far more colourful clothing for ‘hikers’ as a change from the ugly potato

²⁹ Tom Stephenson, ‘Clothes that Comfort - on the Tramp’, *Daily Herald*, 19 May 1934.

³⁰ See ‘The Countryside’ in Wilcox 2006.

coloured, and khaki shorts they seemed to favour. He asked 'Is hiking so stern a business that only the ugliest shades of war-time habiliments are considered appropriate?' Suggesting the shades of lemon or pale blue increasingly worn by cyclists, Mr Flint argued that these would flatter the plain and less shapely female participant, while a dazzling pullover, 'coloured breechlets, gayer upper works, brighter socklets' would take the eye away from the skinny legs of her male companion.³¹ Two days' later Mr Flint's plea was met with dismay by a contributor from 'somewhere in Kent' going under the pseudonym 'Just Grey Flannel' who abhorred the detachments of hikers who passed along country lanes dressed like clowns and pirates in grotesque 'get-ups'.³² A third response a day later from Nina Cohen of Shoreham agreed, saying that bright colours would only further mar the beautiful countryside on her doorstep: 'Anyone who has seen a party of "hikers" will agree that shapeliness of contour and sylphness and elegance of limb are not its characteristic. Bright hues accentuate fat legs and broad hips. Modestly let them remain concealed in khaki.' Finally, the Bishop of Exeter stepped up to arbitrate, advocating tolerance on the part of those such as himself and the other letter writers who could afford to holiday in Switzerland or Italy. Those less fortunate souls working in ill-lit offices taking the crowded trams to their dreary homes were less lucky. Their attempts to bring colour into their lives with strange clothes, eccentric behaviour, 'fancied adventure and amusing experiences' should stifle in us any tendency to criticism. He added: 'They "are dressing their part" and if their dress and demeanour raise in us a smile it should also be a smile of welcome and encouragement. In Devon at least they will receive such.'

In the early 1930s the range of popular clothing and equipment being offered for sale to hikers and campers was extended and heavily promoted by H.R. Buck producers of the *Bukta* range in a new leisure catalogue *Campedia* [Fig. 93]. Men's shorts were offered at a range of prices from the 'K4 Special Low-priced Pattern Khaki Drill' at 2/3 or 2/6 according to size, to the more expensive 'Grenfell' range at 12/9 and 14/3 and were described as tailored 'to allow a full and easy fit while retaining a neat and smart appearance, with pleated waist'. Ladies' shorts - 'smart and serviceable' and

³¹ Letter from W. Russell Flint, P.A., *The Times*, 8 October 1934, titled "Hiker's" Dress. Plea for Gayer Garments. Homely Cheeks and Skinny Legs'.

³² Letter from Just Grey Flannel (pseud.) to *The Times*, 10 October 1934.

‘neat and comfortable’ - were offered with concealed buttons at the side and a half-belt adjustment at the back. The accompanying illustration shows a sturdy young female hiker in khaki shorts teamed with a hand-knitted sleeveless pullover, matching socks and stout shoes with a knapsack or haversack over one shoulder that rapidly became *de rigueur* for hikers and the object of much discussion in the 1930s [Fig. 94].³³



Fig. 93 ‘Men’s Shorts’, Bukta (H. Buck & Sons), *Campedia* 1932



Fig. 94 ‘Ladies’ Shorts’, Bukta (H. Buck & Sons), *Campedia* 1932

Outdoor leisure between the wars swiftly generated its own systems of distinction that separated some superior beings who saw themselves as an inherent part of the countryside and thus different from others who were transitory and merely wanted some fun or a cheap holiday. Cyril Joad argued that the sunshine brought out ‘amateur campers ... like gnats in their thousands’; these ‘fair weather’ hikers and

³³ 14 different kinds of rucksack were offered by Bukta, including the ‘Bergan “Meris” knapsack and ‘Berg Heil Rucsac’ with have an ominous ring from a contemporary vantage point in the wider context of right wing political ideology at this time and German attitudes to the body and ‘health’ that were integral to it.

campers could be distinguished by their noisy behaviour and rowdiness but equally by their bodies, their clothes and of increasing significance in the discourse of inter-war leisure, their footwear.³⁴

Many of the diverse politically and ideologically motivated outdoor/recreational leisure organisations that emerged in the 1920s and 30s were inflected with a sense of 'fitness of purpose' articulated through a spectacular social and open-air cultural hierarchy that visibly identifiable through clothing. Joad in an essay 'The people's claim' held forth on the claim of the English people on the countryside but was nevertheless keen to elaborate the ways in which townspeople 'outraged' such a claim in the way they behaved, 'cackling insanely in the woods, or singing raucous songs', and the inelegant squalor of 'fat girls in shorts, youths in gaudy ties and plus fours'.³⁵ John E Walsh, editor of *Hiking and Camping* distinguished between different types of walkers by the ruggedness of their route, their ability to read and understand a map, *and* their choice of suitable footwear:

The real hiker scorns the highways (he can read an ordnance map) and if his footwear is right, he doesn't worry about twisting trails, and awkward screes, about wet and muddy bridle paths and the chalk slopes that climb over the hillside, but the footwear must be right *and weatherproof*.³⁶

Mr. Wash clearly had a vested interest in promulgating the desirability of specialist footwear, but he was not alone in making a connection between the 'right' type of boots and the 'right' type of hiker. A Pathé news film from 1937 tells the story of a group of ramblers arriving in Surrey for a walk in the surrounding hills and offers tips on what to wear and how to behave. When the group reaches open ground the film shows them all lying face down on the ground in order to have the soles of their boots and rucksacks inspected for suitability [Figs. 95, 96].³⁷

³⁴ Joad 1934: 168.

³⁵ Joad, C. (1938), 'The people's claim' in C. Williams-Ellis (ed.), *England and the Beast*, London: Readers' Union and J. Dent & Sons: 74.

³⁶ John E Walsh, 'Footwear for Happy Hikers. Great Chance for the Shoe Trade' in *The Shoe & Leather News*, 3 September 1935; see also 'Keeping Fit on Foot. What the Hiker Requires from the Shoe Manufacturer' in *The Shoe & Leather Record*, 4 September 1935.

³⁷ *Pathé News*, *Rambling With Reason*, 7th August 1937



Figs. 95, 96 'Rambling with Reason', *Pathé Films* newsreel, 7 June 1937

Even Tom Stephenson the key figure in the journalism of the inter-war outdoor movement would have found this excessive. Insecure heels and spurious leather he suggested were dangerous on the 'bogs of Grain Grill' and the 'screes of Little Hell Gate', but cumbersome-looking boots, with massive soles girt with iron, are unnecessary, vainglorious junk on the South Downs³⁸ Seemingly offering examples of both suitable and unsuitable footwear two young women hikers are featured in the *Daily Herald*, both wearing the now ubiquitous shorts and matching shirts with open collars, but with the left hand figure nonchalantly striding out in what looks like high heels [Fig. 97].³⁹

³⁸ Stephenson, T., 'Put Your Feet First', *Daily Herald*, 12 May 1934

³⁹ 'WALK - that's the Way to Health', *Daily Herald*, 17 April 1937



Fig. 97

'The sense of freedom only to be gained on foot' in 'WALK - that's the Way to Health', *Daily Herald*, 17 April 1937

What Tom Stephenson's remarks and this photograph from the *Herald* demonstrate however is the constantly overlapping landscapes of popular leisure in which different levels of ideological commitment to various diverse 'movements' and differently motivated informal levels of participation including the 'merely' fashionable were *all* embodied in and through clothing and the self-conscious fashioning of particular leisured identities ranging from purists to tourists. The growing popularity of rucksacks and lightweight waterproof jackets for both men and women are a useful example of the constant crossover that progressively developed between different sectors of a rapidly expanding market for both specialist and popular outdoor clothing. After the First War, companies such as Sigmund Eisner & Co of New York (Du Pont) and in Britain, the firm of Thomas Haythornthwaite & Son, shifted their attention to the post-war leisure and specialist

outdoor market. Eisner/Du Pont refined the production of a fabric that was absolutely waterproof but strong and flexible enough to be used in an all-weather suit for golfers.⁴⁰

Haythornthwaite's mills had rapidly expanded production to meet wartime demand for cloth and invested in both new premises and innovations in production and fabric technology. Working closely with Sir Wilfred Grenfell a prominent figure in the mountaineering world, the company perfected a highly technical finishing process that resulted in an almost flawless, closely woven cloth that was extremely light and wind and weatherproof even in high altitudes.⁴¹ The rapid rise in popularity for what became 'Grenfell cloth' was due to the combination of Haythornthwaite's high-performance fabric and its use in an innovative type of climbing suit designed by Eric Taylor that incorporated other innovations such as a detachable hood, a zipped jacket, and elasticated cuffs. Grenfell swiftly became market leaders, overtaking Burberry who had made the 'Shackleton' suit and tailor-made climbing suits which were popular with mountaineers in the 1920s.⁴²

A new type of climber had emerged who required clothing suited to extreme climatic conditions and which incorporated what was then cutting-edge technology and design innovation. The relatively high cost of these garments put them out of the reach of many, and Parsons and Rose who outline the development of specialist equipment and clothing in the twentieth century argue that the manufacture of high performance gear had 'virtually no impact for the majority who walked, climbed or cycled in this period'. However, they do note that popular consumers bought cheaper items or prioritized spending on essential items such as boots and rucksacks.⁴³ From the perspective of this thesis however, put quite simply Parsons and Rose are looking at this through the wrong end of the telescope from the mountain top downwards, rather than from the ground upwards. Arguably the development of popular outdoor

⁴⁰ 'A New Sports-Cloth', *Golf Illustrated*, May 1921.

⁴¹ 'History of Grenfell Cloth', available at <http://www.haythornthwaite.com>, accessed 24 April 2009.

⁴² Parsons, M. and Rose, M.B. (eds.) (2003), *Invisible on Everest: Innovation and the Gear Makers*, Philadelphia PA: Northern Liberties Press: 131. The 'Shackleton suit' was developed by the expeditionary Ernest Shackleton with Burberry and consisted of the 'Shackleton smock' and overalls, with helmet and mitts.

⁴³ *ibid*: 22. Parsons and Rose note that Black's the specialist camping and outdoor leisure retailer offered 'Grenfell' jackets for hiking at a cost of 31s 6d compared to a standard gabardine version for a little over half the price at 18s 0d..

clothing was closely linked with innovations in specialist clothing and equipment as manufacturers faced with high production costs and increased competition from cheaper alternatives brought prices down and incorporated high-end technical innovations into jackets and other equipment aimed at the popular outdoor market.



Fig. 98 ‘Pelwear’ Golfing Jacket, and zipped and elasticated details, c.1935, Fashion Museum of Bath, Object Ref No: BAT MC 11.21.96

The trade journal *Women's Wear* reported that 'the most popular outfit consists of suede, or suede finished jerkin, with woollen knitted collar, cuffs and basque, and zip fastener front, and khaki drill shorts which may be readily washed'.⁴⁴ The Bath Museum holds an example of a waterproof golfing jacket made by the popular brand *Pelwear* in closely-woven, biscuit-coloured waterproof cloth with elastic shirring to the cuffs and waistband and dates from 1935 [Fig. 98].⁴⁵ *Bukta*, key producers and retailers of camping and leisure goods also offered these new types of informal leisure jackets in a range of fabric options, including Grenfell cloth, aimed at different participants with different levels of commitment and priority, for example for 'holiday wear' [Fig. 99].



Fig. 99 Advertisement for *Bukta* , *Drapers Record* 24 April 1933

⁴⁴ 'Sports Clothing', *Women's Wear*, 3 June 1932.

⁴⁵ by kind permission of Fashion Museum of Bath, Object Ref No: BAT MC 11.21.96.

Advertised as ‘Light-Easy-Comfortable’, the collar-less jacket with its ‘invisible zipp’ and elastic cuffs and waistband was the both highly practical *and* fashionable [Fig 100]. The “Buxtyle” Zipp version is typical of jacket that became hugely popular with young walkers, and climbers such as the young man with his centre parting who is modeling it in 1932. The ladies’ version is offered in the same fabric options but in a greater variety of colours - green, black, royal and crimson rather than the ‘leather brown’ offered to their brethren - and is more closely tailored with a belted waist and with two front seams either side of the ‘invisible’ zipp [Fig. 101]. A combination of ‘utility and smartness’ there were no buttons or buttonholes to give an untidy appearance and no rubber ‘to condense and hold moisture’.

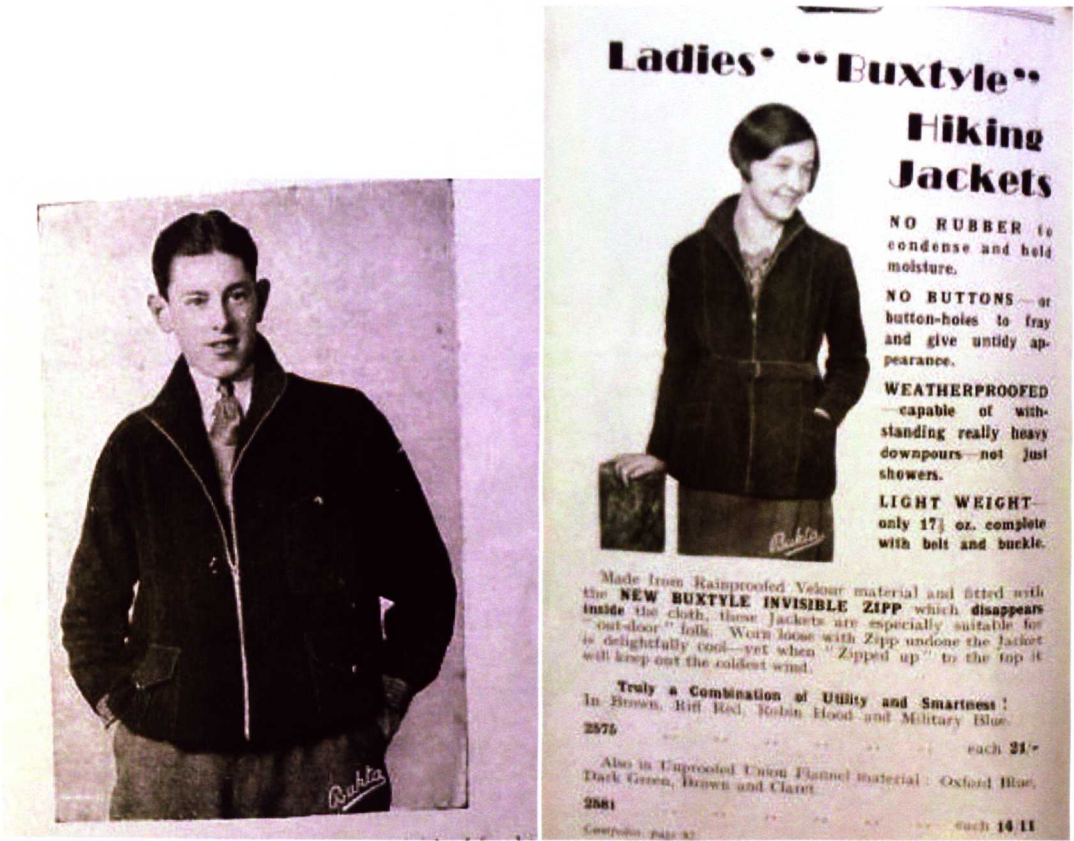


Fig. 100 Buxta (H.R. Buck), Men’s ‘Buxtyle’ Zipp Jacket, *Campedia* 1932

Fig. 101 Buxta (H.R. Buck), Ladies’ Hiking Jacket, *Campedia* 1932

The North American influence was also becoming prevalent in Britain in the 1930s; blanket cloth ‘Camp Coats’ and woolen ‘Mackinaw Coats’ worn by hunters became hugely popular [Figs. 102, 103]. Again these checked woolen blanket cloth coats and

jackets were popular from low to high end across the sporting and leisure market. The Bath Museum again holds an example of a ski-ing jacket by Lilywhites of London dated between 1930 and 1933 in very good condition.⁴⁶ Of cream wool with a pale blue check it is of short, square design, fastened by 3 buttons, with a fourth and fifth buttons concealed beneath the large lapels that when buttoned forms a high-necked collar. The jacket is given form by hidden elastic gatherings at the waistband, and a chrome fastening at the sides that allowed the waist to be further tightened [Fig. 104].



Fig. 102 Camp Coat, Bukta (H.R. Buck), *Campedia* 1932

Fig. 103 Mackinaw Coat, *ibid*

⁴⁶ Fashion Museum of Bath, Object Ref No: BAT MC 11.21.91



Fig. 104 Cream and Blue Wool Ski Jacket, *Lilywhites of London*, Fashion Museum of Bath, Object Ref No: BAT MC 11.21.91, by permission of Fashion Museum of Bath

Bukta

“Wanderlust” Hiker’s Jacket



Fig. 105 *Bukta* (H.R. Buck), Men’s “Wanderlust” Hiker’s Jacket, *Campedia* 1932

Bukta however also differentially targeted the *popular* specialist market with its 'Wanderlust' range which was promoted as aimed at the more serious hiking enthusiast and 'all hikers who desire to acquire a really satisfactory jacket'.⁴⁷ The Wanderlust Hiker's Jacket was three-quarter length and made of double-thickness wind cloth and featured a double-fold front buttoning to make the closing 'wind and rain-proof' (like a tent) [Fig. 105]. The Wanderlust brand was the brainchild of Robert Burns a prominent figure in the history of outdoor clothing and equipment who was a designer for *Bukta* but also a semi-independent producer of specialist sleeping bags, tents and rucksacks. Burns fully exploited the fact that his sleeping bags and equipment by the major Himalayan expeditions and high profile expeditions to Everest at this time but he never lost sight of his mainstream market and always linked his products with the Access Movement, claiming he was 'The Man who made sleeping out Safe for Democracy'.⁴⁸ The Wanderlust rucksack in particular was a huge bestseller - although this was just one amongst many as the choice of rucksack in itself became a crucial part of a whole 'typology' of outdoor leisure participation.⁴⁹

Clear parallels can be drawn with the popular decline of the Norfolk jacket for the outdoor leisure market and its demise with a more specialist clientele. The idea of the gentleman - or lady - amateur setting out to climb the Matterhorn dressed, apart from the type of nailed boots being worn, for a shooting party on the estate persisted right through the 1920s. George Bernard Shaw for example described the appearance of the 1921 Reconnaissance Expedition to Everest as 'A Connemara picnic surprised by a snow storm'.⁵⁰ Expeditionary photographs functioned to sustain the mythology of participation in particular forms of outdoor leisure activity, especially mountaineering, and the figure of the upper-class public school hero - and which such obviously 'British' clothing, its visible 'battering' and the *bricolage* of

⁴⁷ *Bukta* (H.R. Buck), *Campedia* 1934

⁴⁸ Parsons and Rose 2003: 129. Burns was an enthusiastic climber and fell walker but fully exploited the use of his sleeping bags and equipment by the major Himalayan expeditions including one to Everest that were extremely high profile and the subject of much media attention at the time. But Burns never lost sight of his mainstream market and always linked his products with the Access Movement claiming that he was 'The Man who made sleeping out safe for Democracy'.

⁴⁹ Burns was experimenting with various innovations in down sleeping bags, as well as small, practical tents and rucksacks which he supplied to a number of major expeditions, Parsons and Rose 2003: 199

⁵⁰ Parsons and Rose 2003: 177.

individual and idiosyncratic adaptation all embodied. Parsons and Rose argue, the tragic failure of Mallory’s 1924 expedition marked a turning point in expeditionary and ‘high-end’ clothing by signaling the end of the ‘gifted amateur’ and the end of the Norfolk jacket. However, the popular and specialist markets should not be seen as separate or unrelated, but rather as part of a whole network of interconnected innovations in fabric technology, mass production processes, wider social change and competing sporting and leisure interests. More people were involved in outdoor leisure, and more people were traveling further and higher in more extreme climactic and geographical conditions, added to which differently motivated participants continued to desire different types of clothing to stake out their leisure territories in different ways. The *fashionable* as well as sporting diffusion of a wide range of leisure clothing between the wars is far more complex than a focus on a highly specialized market for high end mountaineering and expeditionary equipment would suggest, particularly in terms of the *symbolic* dimensions of popular consumption. British expeditions were big news and their leaders such as Shackleton, and Mallory extremely high profile figures in the popular cultural media of the 1920s and 1930s; this was not only exploited by manufacturers in their promotional rhetoric but drew on a visual and textual repertoire going back to the nineteenth century to advertise the versatility of a range of clothing suitable for golf, everyday rainwear and trips to Everest for all levels of consumers [Fig. 106].

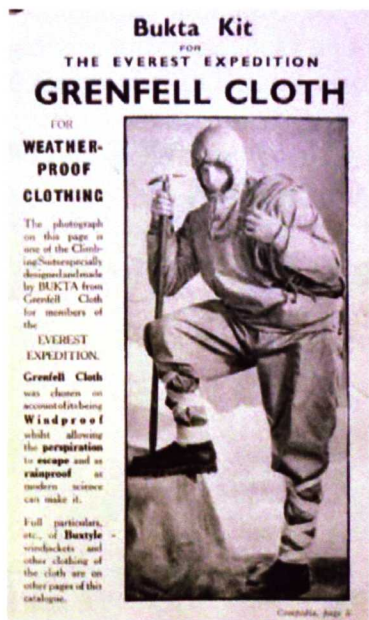


Fig. 106 Bukta, Campedia 1934

Advising the suburban readership on suitable clothing for winter cycling for example Ann Jeffery correspondent for the *Daily Mirror* suggested ski-trousers but told her readers not to run away with the idea that they would be prohibitively expensive. She recommended 'grand ones for 25s 9d and they last for ever and a day. You can get the whole ski-ing outfit of short, high-buttoned jackets and trousers from 59s 6d and there's nothing more practical or more attractive for cycling than this type of suit, including the close-fitting cap that couples it'.⁵¹

Virtually on the outbreak of the Second World War, the popular illustrated magazine *Picture Post* highlighted the continued popularity of cycling in Britain in the late 1930s by featuring an attractive young female cyclist on its front cover.⁵² Her hair is fashionably waved; she wears dark shorts rolled up very short, a matching shirt and a pale-coloured tie [Fig. 107]. The feature inside, entitled 'A Day Ahweel' the piece charts the journey in pictures of the Dulwich Paragon Cycling Club from South London on a day out to Ditchling in Sussex [Fig. 108]. The club is described as being made up of young men and women who like thousands of others all over Britain 'leave behind the workaday streets and make for the open country'. The article paid particular attention to dress and allied this with new attitudes to leisure:

Their costume is simple, light and inexpensive. Good stout shoes. Shorts are favoured by both men and women. They cost 5s a pair. An open-necked shirt or blouse is about the same price. A white or blue cotton dust jacket (left unbuttoned) ... can be bought for around 7s 6d.' Couples on tandems, young men in horn-rimmed glasses and thick socks and sturdy young female cyclists are part of the 100,000 enthusiasts in Britain who take part in the 'national hobby of cycling'. Bicycles have become lighter because built of special alloys developed by the aerospace industry, they have also become cheaper and more accessibly with easy hire purchase. It is not that such people do not have cars, many do and use them for business, it is that they do not use them at the weekend but rather seek 'health, fresh air and good companionship'.⁵³

⁵¹ Ann Jeffery, 'Looking Your Best on a Bicycle', *Daily Mirror*, 4 November 1935.

⁵² 'A Day Awheel', *Picture Post*, 10 June 1939.

⁵³ 'A Day Awheel', *op cit.*

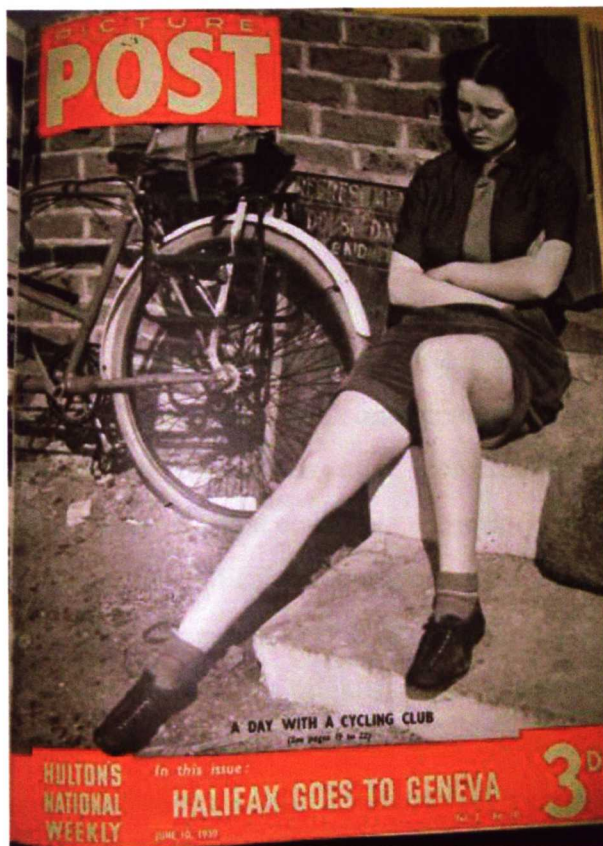


Fig. 107 *Picture Post*, 10 June 1939

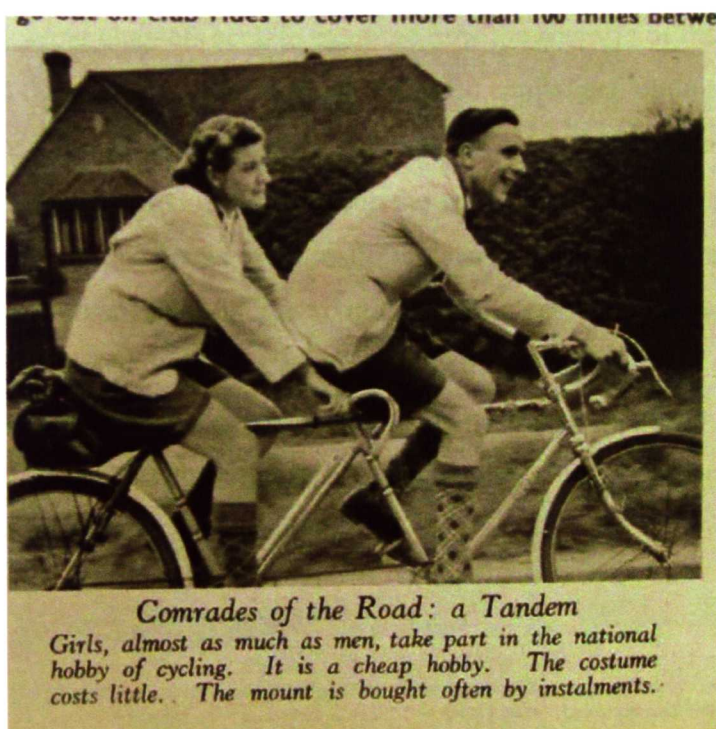


Fig. 108 'Comrades of the Road'

Recreational leisure was no longer a 'right' nor a 'duty', but a lifestyle 'choice'. It would be easy to see this illustrated popular feature as an ideal conclusion to the previous Section rather than a precursor to Section 4 looking at the Second World War and the years of austerity immediately following. There is no mention of impending war in the article, and no hint of it in the photographs of healthy and prosperous young men and women enjoying their leisure. In this sense it would clearly serve as a useful historical and fashion historical 'cut-off' point. Yet, as the previous sections arguably demonstrate (and contemporary critical understandings of the discourse of history and its linguistic narrative 'construction' underline) the complex of inter-related discourses that constitute the past do not necessarily always sit comfortably with clear-cut analytical compartmentalism. Furthermore, arguments that constitute the basis of this research, i.e. the interrogation of the constant inter-relationship between lower-middle-class social aspiration, recreational leisure and fashionable consumption that the article so expediently encapsulates might be seen as difficult to sustain in relation to a period frequently understood as characterized by proscription and lack - rationing, bombing, austerity, military service. Using oral history interview data as part of the interpretive mix that is central to the aims of this project, the following chapters seek to examine how the rhetoric of the Second World War and the period of austerity that followed capitalised upon and continued a rational recreational dialogue between duty and desire that was established in the nineteenth century and transformed between the wars. The interviewees' experiences of participation in various forms of recreational leisure before during and after the war offer a unique perspective on leisure in the middle years of the twentieth century. More specifically their narratives evidence how the ideology of rational recreation continued to inform everyday life and experience for the lower middle class because of its pivotal place in this social grouping's understanding of social, economic and educational 'improvement'.

4.1 Interlude: Fashioning Leisure on the Home Front

Within less than a year after *Picture Post's* jolly images of young Dulwich cyclists 'awheel' in a pre-war world of leisure and fashionable sub-urbanity, the magazine again focuses on cycling and its clothing - but this time *in wartime*.¹ This feature sought to emphasise how cycling - described as a 'pre-war cult' - would now be both fashionably patriotic and practical, especially for women. Car tax had been raised, petrol rationing introduced, and many thousands of people had garaged their cars 'for the duration'. The article however focused on the ways in which women's fashions were registering the change; pre-war leisure clothing trends were clearly influencing the models shown in the spring collection of London designers.² Of interest was a 'zipped "all-slacks" suit of camel hair and wool, with a jacket fronted with the same material and a 'novelty' knitted back and sleeves; the outfit is completed with a hood and mimosa yellow socks and gloves for a 'touch of spring' [Fig. 110]. The caption beneath the illustration describes the design as having 'a hint of the St Moritz holiday-maker ... A hint of the Finnish soldier' about it. In another design, 'the very newest blue tweed model', a traditional Norfolk-style jacket buttoned high in front with short lapels and large pockets, is teamed with knee-length breeches, and matching honey-coloured knitted stockings, jumper and turban [Fig. 111]. Soon, the article suggested, 'the roads may be vivid with cycling lovelies wearing the most striking cycling kit ever seen' but noted the influence of cycling clubs on the designs on offer. The practicality of split skirts, slacks and shorts had all left their mark - the West End designers' well-cut chic added a variety and sophistication that was more suitable to the greater variety of occasions on which women would be cycling during wartime.

¹ *Picture Post*, 25 February 1940

² In terms of restrictions the first year of the war saw relatively moderate intervention. By 1941 there were not only shortages and rationing but also detailed centralized directives controlling the appearance of most consumer goods and the Utility Apparel Order came into force in early 1941. However this article in *Picture Post* demonstrates how, as Peter McNeil argues, despite the propagandist tone of the equitable effects of rationing and a romantic vision of egalitarianism *all* British citizens were not necessarily troubled by coupons and restrictions in the same way. High end designs in cut and quality meant that 'in no way was a uniformity of dress imposed across classes'. In many ways advertisements and features in the press reinforced existing class distinctions: the same number of coupons could be used for a plain utility coat or one trimmed with mink - but for a vastly different price. See McNeil, P. (1993), 'Put Your Best Face Forward': The Impact of the Second World War on British Dress' in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No.4: 283-299.

It was not only on country roads that bicycles were increasing, the article reported:

The other day a smart girl rode up to the Ritz for lunch, parked at the curb and walked straight in. Unconcerned? Yes, of course. Why not? She was as chic as anyone else, with her tailored dress of grey-striped light-weight wool. The divided skirt cut so that it fell in symmetry with the stripes, indistinguishable from an ordinary suit... If we must pedal our way through life until the war is over, there's no reason why we shouldn't be smart.³



Fig. 109 'A hint of the Finnish soldier', *Picture Post*, 17 February 1940

Fig. 110 'the very newest blue tweed model', *ibid*

As has been noted in the previous Section, sports and leisure clothing in the 1930s allowed their wearers a greater degree of freedom to negotiate different social and physical landscapes and their sartorial codes and conventions. Comfortable, practical clothing was always a particularly important consideration for the fashionable suburban consumer economic, but economic constraints necessitated clothing that was stylish enough to wear both in town and for more informal occasions.⁴ Outdoor leisure had always offered an ambiguous facility for the articulation of a range of different 'looks' that expressed a diversity of ideological, practical, aesthetic and

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Arnold 2001; 2009.

economic motivations. In 1942 the Spring/Summer display of the British Colour Council was patriotically entitled 'Colours of the English Countryside' and featured fibro utility fabrics in a 'Bluish-green caravan green', shoes in 'harness tan' and gloves in 'mellow gold'. Patriotism even extended to dress fabrics and one firm produced a 'Country Life' print of 'happy little evacuees among cottages and animals'.⁵ Recreational and outdoor leisure and leisure clothing provided a way of negotiating the ideological conflict that inflected women's relationship with wartime service and domestic duty on the 'home front'; it offered a means of navigating an ambiguous desire for fashionable clothing and pre-war leisure time and space and the conflicting progressive constraints of wartime restrictions.

Such ambiguity, Lisa Tickner argues was central to the ways in which many women's adoption of trousers during wartime was presented and represented as appropriate. Visual references to trousers were allied with war work or domestic chores at home and gardening and often juxtaposed with features and editorials on women's dual roles as munitions workers and mothers, or an air raid warden and a show girl. These highly ambivalent spaces of working femininity were figured through clothing but in a way that avoided sites of potential conflict.⁶ During the war morality was a powerful political and ideological strategy, but the historically consistent rhetoric of recreational leisure participation and its clothing was always already well-rehearsed in the need to embody multiple and ambiguous meanings around class and gender and shifting understandings of contemporary fashionability. It was in the context of doing one's best to maintain *not* abandon 'standards' of pre-war feminine fashionable style and beauty that the make do and mend campaign discursively circulated an idealized image of virtuous wartime femininity.⁷

Recreational leisure activities such as walking and cycling, and functional, practical recreational leisure clothing brokered the deal between the loss of a pre-war world of consumer aspiration and its relative fulfilment, and the burden of wartime austerity. Choice and coercion might differentially govern their pre-war and wartime

⁵ McNeil 1993: 292.

⁶ Tickner, L. (1977), 'Women and trousers: unisex clothing and sex role changes in the twentieth century', in *Leisure in the Twentieth Century: Fourteen Papers given at the Second Conference on Twentieth Century Design History*, London: Design Council Publications.

⁷ McNeil 1993: 289.

participation and consumption, but they were equally underpinned by a discursive rhetoric of anti-commercialism and an emphasis on concepts of wider democratic freedom bound up in an idealized vision of the British countryside. 'Hard-wearing' patched tweeds, thick-soled walking shoes and boots, hand-knitted hats, gloves, socks, sweaters, and cardigans that were an integral part of outdoor leisure activities were swiftly incorporated into the 'make do and mend' of wartime home front propaganda.⁸ Women's trousers, military-inspired belted woollen jackets, snoods and headscarves that had become a feature of pre-war trends in leisurewear equally rapidly assumed a new dominance in wartime fashion trends. The appeal of turbans snoods and glamour bands (scarves worn twisted around and tied in a knot at the front to completely cover the hair apart from a rolled up curl at the front) have become a ubiquitous symbol of women's contribution to the war effort [Fig. 111].⁹



Fig. 111 *Drapers Record*, 18 March 1940

However the fact that they were becoming highly fashionable leisure accessories *before* the outbreak of war serves as a useful example of the influence of shifts in pre-war recreational leisure clothing on the development of a wartime aesthetic. In

⁸ Wilson and Taylor 1989: 127-128.

⁹ Paul Rennie argues that the scarf was an important element in safety awareness campaign and came to represent the 'proper' uniform of the female industrial workforce, Rennie, P. (2005), 'London Squares, The Scarves of Wartime Britain', in J. Atkins (ed.), *Wearing Propaganda: Textiles on the Home Front in Japan, Britain and the United States, 1931-1945*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press. See also in the same volume, Beverley Gordon's discussion of the symbolic figure of 'Rosie the Riveter' in the USA who appeared on the front cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*, 29 May 1943, created by Norman Rockwell and depicted in a 'colorful printed headscarf, wrapped tightly around the hair with the ends knotted on the forehead', and which were then taken up by WOW [Women Ordnance Worker]. This iconic image, as in Britain, linked the headscarf with patriotic and sacrifice and became associated with a 'sort of down-to-earth classlessness', Gordon, B. (2005), 'Showing the Colors: America', in Atkins *op cit*.

1939 an advertisement for the old 'rational' clothing manufacturer and retailer Jaeger, now a high end producer of women's wear and woollen separates, appeared in *Vogue* and promoted their 'man-tailored trousers'. The fashion illustration featured a line up of five women wearing 'plain flannels' in a range of colour- and pattern-ways with short-sleeved leisure jumpers and shirts, and with three of the figures teaming theirs with turbans or knotted scarves [Fig. 112]. A feature in the trade journal *Women's Wear* in the first year of the war shows a model holding a golf club behind her back sporting a two-piece, tweed costume consisting of short, closely-tailored Norfolk-style jacket with four patch pockets in front and a yoked half-belt at the back, a gored knee-length skirt, and a buttoned shirt, all teamed with a mesh snood [Fig. 113].



Fig. 112 *Vogue*, 17 May 1939



Fig. 113 'Stylish Sports Jacket'
Women's Wear, 31 May 1940

A later report on trends in women's wear describes how high-end designer Victor Stiebel (who would serve on the Utility Board) favoured a new 'serviceable long jacket' which he named the 'lumber' coat and which he made 'fingertip length'. The jacket is not illustrated in this report but sounds very reminiscent of those that had

become increasingly popular with young hikers and cyclists in the late 1930s (discussed in the previous Section). The report noted:

All the fullness (and it is ample) is belted into the back. He [Stiebel] has a whole range of them in his collection in soft blanket cloths, and they suggest the freedom of a country coat with the smartness of a town one... We come back to the point that many women are looking for practical clothes... straight, slim skirts and neat jackets.¹⁰

Noting the popularity of women's trousers and anticipating their continued demand, a spread in the Drapers' Record demonstrates how fashionable trends and wartime utility combine in a discussion of what the '1940's Outdoor Girl' will be wearing:

During recent years there has been a growing tendency for each kind of outdoor sport to develop a "uniform". Admittedly the attire in no way reflected the wearers' prowess – the veriest "rabbits" usually appeared in the snappiest outfits – but the designed-for-one-purpose-idea had become very marked. The war has halted this. Demand is now for essentially practical garments, preferably dual or even quadruple purpose...¹¹

Without being too over-deterministic, this feature is significant in that it highlights the influence of trends in pre-war recreational leisure clothes and their capacity to serve a range of purposes for women combining a variety of roles. Women's 'slacks' became an indispensable part of the everyday wardrobe and were usually made of corduroy velveteen - a traditional fabric in outdoor and country leisure clothing - and worn with more masculine double-breasted jackets. One of the oral history interviewees, Phill, who was around 16 when this photograph was taken in 1943, is wearing dark velvet corduroy knickerbockers [Fig. 114]. She recalls:

O Crikey! Corduroys they were my favourite. I think they were a fawny colour... They were sort of later on. What do you call those people, the Wardens; they had sort of felt-type navy blue trousers. Well that was my first pair. I thought that was "it" - they looked terrible I expect, but I liked them. That and shorts that was all I wore ...¹²

¹⁰ 'Fashion Notes of Interest', *Women's Wear*, 1 November 1940.

¹¹ 'Here's How the 1940 Open Air Girl Will Dress', *Drapers' Record*, 9 March 1940.

¹² Interview Phill M.:GBP, 15 June 2008.



Fig. 114 Phill M., c.1943, by kind permission of Phill M.

What were by now familiar garments in women's recreational leisure wardrobe were easily adapted to the heightened patriotic atmosphere of the Second World War and an ideology of English-ness - a highly romanticized idea of an unchanging English countryside that dominated popular culture and the popular imagination.¹³ Sonya Rose outlines how 'rural village life and landscape symbolized historical continuity, simplicity, and spiritual renewal. Thus it is not surprising that during the war the Government, the news media, and public figures not to mention motion pictures rendered their national celebratory images as vistas of a rural landscape'.¹⁴ In the film *A Canterbury Tale* for example, Alison Smith (Sheila Sim) a young land army girl, arrives in the Kentish village of Chillingbourne which is still run along almost feudal lines under the control of local squire and magistrate Thomas Colpeper (Eric

¹³ Images of rural England were frequently employed as a visual contrast with events in Germany, For example in *Picture Post* in the summer of 1940 a sleepy English village on a Sunday afternoon and a nearby pastoral scene is compared with that of a small German town where masses of soldiers are marching through, Rose, S. (2003), *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Britain 1930-1945*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 211. Whilst it is a little simplistic to make a connection between the two, it is worth noting how the popularity of folk music was both revived and rejuvenated in the war as the BBC put out weekly broadcasts of folk tunes and traditional songs that became a regular part of mainstream entertainment and radio listening, Ichihasi, H. (1994), *Working Class Leisure in English Towns 1945 to 1960 with Special Reference to Coventry and Bolton*, unpublished PhD. thesis in Social History, University of Warwick. Rose 2003 *op cit* similarly discusses the introduction of 'Country Magazine' on the radio as a way of bringing 'the country into the front parlours of city dwellings', 216.

¹⁴ Rose 2003: 27.

Portman).¹⁵ The nominal reference to the seventeenth-century herbalist is intentional and significant, and Colpeper's attempts to make time and progress stand still - or at least to proceed according to his almost eco-messianic authority - becomes a somewhat heavy-handed cinematic allegory of pre-war preservationist dogma. Colpeper is depicted as a mystical figure mowing his corn by hand with a scythe, drinking cider, and giving lectures and lantern slides on the ancient Kentish countryside and its heritage to soldiers awaiting mobilisation. In his home, the beautiful local manor house that Alison dreams of living in after the war, Colpeper's trusty mountaineering boots are lined up alongside his muddy Wellingtons. London is considered by Colpeper as 'just a day's walk from Chillingbourne' because '50 miles is not a long walk if you like walking'. The clash between Alison and Colpeper is essentially one between the natural, i.e. traditional world, and the commercial, modern world that Alison's past life as a high-end shop assistant 'selling picnic baskets and all that sort of thing', represents.¹⁶ Alison's longing for a more 'authentic' life in the countryside is implicitly allied with a wartime version of a more authentic femininity (which is very much the underlying misogynistic drive of the film's narrative).¹⁷ Crucially, this is embodied in the fashionable morality of her clothing - her Land girl uniform of shapely breeches, dungarees, aertex shirt and sweater - and the ubiquitous tightly bound scarf knotted in front covering up her hair which has been attacked by the mysterious 'glueman' (Colpeper) stalking the village.¹⁸ As Paul

¹⁵ Dir. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, 1944. See Moor 2005.

¹⁶ The contrast between country people and city-reared 'Land Girls' was the topic of some contemporary debate as Land Girls were seen as both more knowledgeable about some things (fashion, make-up, sex,) but ignorant of other more practical skills. One article in 1940 suggested 'since she comes from the town 'she probably uses the make-up... more effectively than the locals. She probably wears breeches on a figure that shows them off to an advantage not common in country working clothes. 25 May 1940 cited in Rose 2003: 214.

¹⁷ The need to attend to the requirements of fashionable dress and 'beauty' was promulgated as the duty of British women of all ages in a way that sought to preserve pre-war standards of fashionable femininity while at the same time establishing how these might be re-formulated by the modern woman in wartime, see Kirkham (1995) 'Beauty and Duty' in P. Kirkham and D. Thoms, *War Culture: Social Change and Changing Experience in World War Two*, p 17; see also Tickner, 1977: 62.

¹⁸ An exhibition, *The Land Girls: Cinderellas of the Soil* was held at Brighton Museum Art Gallery, 3 October 2009 - 14 March 2010. Curator, Amy de la Haye notes how the personal and public perception of the land girls was and continues to be inextricably entwined with their uniformed bodies, and in particular the breeches they wore. Breeches were made from imported cotton, or when cotton was unavailable from good quality dull green wool gabardine or whipcord. The quality of the uniform was considered very good - one Land Girl described 'the beautiful shirts' - although the reality of khaki breeches, a 'bum freezer coat' and gumboots often didn't match up to the idealized expectations of recruits, de la Haye, A. (2009), *Land Girls: Cinderellas of the Soil*, Brighton: The Royal Pavilion & Museums: 45-57; 49. See also Adie, K. (2003), *Corsets to Camouflage: Women and War*, London: Hodder & Staughton: 187 - 195. One contributor, an ex-Land Girl observed that she

Rennie has argued, 'The scarf became an important element in safety awareness in the context of war work and part of the proper uniform of the female industrial workforce'. However, unlike posters and official propaganda, the production and consumption of many types of these accessories were more 'market-driven rather than government-sponsored'.¹⁹ Against the backdrop of traditional farm buildings or riding on a farm wagon Alison figuratively references the archetypal image of the Land-girl featured in propaganda literature and the popular media.²⁰ Potentially antagonistic issues of class conflict are addressed through the clash between tradition and modernity and complex class relations are problematized through gender and given material form in clothing. The latent antagonism between the anti-fashionable, functional clothing of traditional country leisure and concepts of modern citizenship are consistently arbitrated in the film through Alison's *natural* affinity for hard work and country ways that then comes to serve as a wider message about the future of the countryside and the nation itself [Fig. 115].



Fig. 115
A Canterbury Tale, (dirs. Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger, 1944)

Throughout *A Canterbury Tale*, different historical and contemporary visions of the ancient Pilgrim's Way to the Cathedral beyond are overlaid one upon the other, until the final scene when Colpeper confronts Alison with his own portentous vision of

and her comrades never worked in cords because they were reserved for 'best wear' and rather worked in smocks and slacks of a 'heavy black material': 192.

¹⁹ Rennie, 2005: 231, suggests that headscarves, particularly those printed with wartime propaganda such as those produced by Jacquemar lacked direct political intervention in the creation and were generated by consumer desire for a less intense, ideologically driven types of propaganda.

²⁰ Sackville-West, V. (1944) *The Woman's Land Army*, London: HMSO.

the countryside after the war, once more flooded with soldiers - this time as holidaymakers. The vehicle for this temporal shift is ultimately, both literally and metaphorically, Alison's caravan. Before the war she had spent 'thirteen perfect days' in it with her archaeologist fiancé digging on the Pilgrim's Way. Propped up on blocks, its tyres requisitioned by the Government, the caravan is now stored away under a tarpaulin, its fittings gradually being eaten away by moths. As Colpeper says, 'Everything on wheels must be on the move sooner or later'. This can be seen as a dominant image in the rhetoric of the very immediate post-war period and a nation and its people poised, like Colpeper's Kentish countryside and Alison's caravan, on the cusp of austerity and affluence. The caravan with its implications of pre-war leisure becomes a symbol of post-war reconstruction and repair. Stored in a garage in the shadow of Canterbury Cathedral it too emerges amongst the bombed out city streets as simultaneously a relic of an ancient feudalism *and* a symbolic marker of future prosperity and well-being.

When the war is over ...

From early on in the war plans were being drafted for a reconstructed world in terms of social welfare and educational reform, within which healthy active leisure and access to the countryside was seen as a crucial part. Writing in 1941 in a special reconstruction issue of *Picture Post*, the writer (and broadcaster) J. B. Priestley famously outlined his vision of leisure after the war, '... in the new Britain we want to build'.²¹ 'When work is over', what was wanted was real holidays for all, facilities for studying the Arts, and civic centres of music, drama, films and talk. But what was *needed* to achieve this was a return to the rational recreational ideals of a former age. Leisure, Priestley argued, to be fulfilling needed to be active:

Not, I hope an orgy of silliness and passive mechanical enjoyment. We do not want greyhound racing and dirt track performances to be given at all hours of the day and night, pin table establishments doing a roaring trade from dawn to midnight, and idiotic films being shown down every street. We do not want a terrifying extension of that "Why Move From Your Armchair?" spirit, which persuades the average citizen that he is really an invalid in one of the final stages of heart disease.²²

²¹ Priestley, J.B., 'When Work Is Over' in *Picture Post*, 4 January 1941.

²² *ibid.*

Priestley's discussion of leisure and its role in the 'new Britain' mapped out a world of active, eager citizens who, seeking enjoyment, would be given the opportunity to meet both the needs of the soul in artistic and creative endeavour, and the demands of the body in healthy exercise. The core of Priestley's concept of the future 'quality' of leisure essentially rested on people making active decisions and *taking control* as 'a spontaneous expression of themselves'. Once again, it was not just leisure that was being discussed, but the nature of a self-motivated *desire* to participate on the part of the individual citizen rather than merely a response to state coercion. 'Do we want a lot of leisure? Is leisure the goal?' Priestley asked, 'I think not'.²³

Keep Fit ... For Service



Fig. 116 'The Mac' Sisters, [l.-r. Doff, Phill, Ruby, Pat,] c.1944

The four Mac sisters (shown here on their way to play tennis) [Fig. 116], particularly the younger sisters, see their evacuation in the early part of the War as something which effectively put a stop to all their pre-war leisure activities, particularly swimming.²⁴ However, the influence of class on the form and nature of educational and physical education provision during the war is significant here. The eldest Mac

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ Many swimming pools were closed for the duration of the War and requisitioned as emergency dressing stations and temporary accommodation for civilian casualties of the Blitz, McIntosh 1952: 141.

sister, Pat M., attended the local grammar school with Sheila J. and Win P., and it seems that grammar school pupils were evacuated *en masse* and accommodated in other public and county High schools in the surrounding countryside.²⁵ Pat M.'s, Sheila J.' and Win P.'s education was therefore not disrupted in the same way as the twins', Phill and Ruby, and younger sister Doff's were. To provide the grammar school girls with extra curricular activities a young sports mistress established gymnastic and national dancing classes that were very popular, particularly with Sheila J. who was a gifted athlete. Sheila told of the influence these classes had on her and later her (lifelong) commitment to the Keep Fit Association:

Miss Burrows, Enid Burrows became our gym teacher...I think it was Miss Burrows who started me off... she had a group of us who she taught very nice national dances. But she was lovely, and eventually she started a little club in Southborough [where the school was evacuated], let's say on a Monday night for those of us doing Keep Fit. And in fact, she actually started me on the road to movement to music. She taught me to skip and my first solo was to "The Teddy Bear's Picnic"!... then from that there was, the Central Council for Physical Recreation.²⁶

The National Fitness Campaign had been disbanded in the war and replaced by the Directorate for Physical Training and Recreation. The Directorate's aim was to train young workers between 14 and 18 years of age through release time for physical education and exercise and whilst the move was couched in very modest terms it still drew accusations that the Department was introducing 'the Hitler system for Youth'.²⁷ However, wider developments within physical education and training that were gaining momentum before the war continued apace. Sheila Fletcher argues 'dance was the mirror reflecting a significant generation gap'.²⁸ Rudolf Laban the highly influential figure within twentieth century modern dance and rhythmic movement came to England in 1938. His socio-economic circumstances as a refugee

²⁵ The type of school attended seems to have had a radical educational and emotional impact on evacuees that is rarely acknowledged. Grammar school pupils' education was not disrupted in the way that those attending elementary and central schools were; nor were the networks of friends and implicitly the wider community of parents. Prendergast Grammar School from Catford S.E. London was evacuated to Tonbridge School - and similarly the author's father's South London boys' grammar school Shooter's Hill G.S. was moved to nearby Kippington Grange in Sevenoaks. Children from other schools seem to have been much more widely dispersed.

²⁶ Interview Sheila J: GBP, 22 February 2008. Sheila J. taught Keep Fit classes until she was 75, and was first Secretary and then Chairwoman of the Kent Keep Fit Association, and organized the regional displays at the Albert Hall for a number of years.

²⁷ Baker 2001: 152-153; Birley 1995: 302-3

²⁸ Fletcher 1984: 105

coincided with a philosophical turning away from a focus on dance as performing art to an interest in its educational potential. In 1941 the Ling Association, finally succumbing to pressure to incorporate dance and music, held a special conference at which Laban was the star speaker. Laban next approached the Board of Education for assistance in developing dance and movement work in schools and offered courses for teachers to train in Laban principles. In 1947 at the invitation of the Ministry of Education a one-year course for teachers was started and Laban's book *Modern Educational Dance* appeared the following year.²⁹

These developments might seem peripheral to much wider and more radical shifts in social reform, but in conjunction with the massive changes brought about by the 1944 Education Act these had very far-reaching effects both on the teaching and teacher training of physical education in the state sector and a rapid expansion of adult education after the war.³⁰ Part time evening and day classes in a huge range of vocational and recreational subjects was a feature of post-war auto-didacticism; they were also a response to a massive upsurge of interest in what effectively came to be seen as physical recreation, particularly for women. 'Keep Fit' classes held in local schools and the eventual formal establishment of the Keep Fit Association in the early 1950s came to dominate women's popular recreational leisure participation. The shift towards a mix of gymnastics and music and the incorporation of country dancing had evolved within state education since the turn of the century in opposition in many ways to followers of Ling who had been slow to relinquish the systematic and scientific regimes that were its foundation.³¹ In the spirit typical of the traditional physical education establishment the niece of the founder of the Ling system in Madame Osterberg's had written in the late 1930s:

This "Keep fit" movement may have very far-reaching results... We must, indeed, we shall be forced to make it sound. It is you gymnasts, you educationally-trained gymnasts, who can save this reckless and uneducated enthusiasm for something real, something genuine, something fine. If you desert your own training ... to run with the pack, you will be no better than the pack.³²

²⁹ Fletcher 1984: 92-99

³⁰ Civil Service Council for Further Education, *Handbook for Session 1946-47*, London: Fosh Cross

³¹ McCrone 1988: 140

³² Fletcher 1984: 91

Reckless and uneducated enthusiasm is a good way of describing the attitudes of some of the oral history interviewees when in 1944 they returned home from Tonbridge where they had been evacuated. The four Mac sisters' memories from this time and the years following the war demonstrate how various forms of recreational leisure activities did not just suddenly stop because of the war or austerity restrictions in fact they suggest that there were quite a number of classes being run within a small radius. Their experiences of attempting to take up where they left off before the war also reflected the wider changes that were occurring in physical education when they enrolled in a variety of state-run adult education classes that were beginning to be established. Doff M. recalls:

It was Keep Fit. And the last half sort of thing used to be apparatus when we used to throw ourselves into it like a load of elephants! And it was done to music which I used to like. We had music, because that was coming in then and that was much nicer...So that was wonderful doing P.E. to music...It was the horse, and going over the box and climbing the ropes. We used to troop off to the P.E. classes as we called them...They were in a place in Downham which we used to walk to and we went there for quite a while. And various schools we used to go to until we got a bit fed up with them, perhaps it was a bit tame, and then we'd find another one.³³

Phill M. too similarly described both her picking up of school sports and physical education and taking part in extra-curricular classes:

I never really left it [physical education] because I was at school until I was 16 or 17 and we used to do it there - gym - and I was Sports Captain and I had to get up the rope and that kind of thing. And that followed on when I joined evening classes when I finished school. And I used to go twice a week. It was the only activity you had. I didn't do swimming so much and, I enjoyed especially what they used to call the apparatus or gymnastics. There was nothing finesse about what I did, I threw myself over and would land the other side, somersaults and things like that.³⁴

When asked about the Women's League of Health and Beauty, Doff M. observed:

Yes, we used to know of it. I always used to think in a way it was a bit 'prissy' somehow it was for those who were elegant and dainty. And I was never like

³³ Interview Doff M. GBP, 4 July 2008.

³⁴ Interview Phill M.: GBP, 15 June 2008.

that [Ha!]; I liked all the banging and crashing around sort of thing. I like doing exercises to music a well and we used to have the gym bit at the end.³⁵

Phill M. too when asked the same question replied:

Well I think at that time, because I was quite young, I thought they were an older group from my point of view although the League of Health and Beauty covered all ages...the founder of it I think she was getting on. But it was too regimented, you know, it was in, up and you know it was all done to that timing. Well with the Laban kind of Keep Fit it was all more graceful. All I wanted to be in life was graceful. I never achieved it!³⁶

These views very much support evidence of the wider history of women's physical education at this time. Teachers at Ling-based colleges such as Bedford also saw themselves or rather their method as being suddenly 'out of date'. Tables and regimentation no longer seemed relevant and were being rapidly displaced by Laban's principles and the blurring of the line between gymnastics and dance. Fletcher argues, 'it was not "Keep Fit" which undermined Ling but the remarkable developments in dance... [which] destroyed Ling in the 1950s'.³⁷

An overlapping socialist discourse of statutory intervention versus market forces, proscription and populism was part of a perennial dialogue around the nature of collective benefits and individual agency that was now incorporated into wartime discussions around reconstruction and ideas of both a 'better Britain' and 'better' people.³⁸ A belief in the positive benefits to be accrued through statutory intervention in workers' leisure were consolidated through the opportunities provided by a wartime Coalition government which fuelled ambitions for the building of a new socialism. 'Leisure' through its historical discursive strategies of control and restraint continued to function as the 'moral compass' through which to navigate the landscape of austerity *and* the promise of affluence. This mix of socialist belief, articulated in the rhetoric of the nineteenth century rational recreational movement, expressed in

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ Interview Phill M: GBP, 15 June 2008.

³⁷ Fletcher 1984: 91.

³⁸ Hill, 2001: 240, suggests that this is best understood in terms of a two-pronged approach: 'substitutionist' and 'statist'. A substitutionist approach proposed a range of alternative cultural forms that would emerge from within the Labour movement itself; a statist approach looked to the agencies of state and municipal mechanisms to provide leisure and recreation facilities better than those offered by commercial interests.

the context of wartime nationalism provided a heady ideological brew that in many ways crossed political boundaries. While on the one hand 'the people' needed rest and recreation it still had to be of the 'right' kind. But here was the dilemma faced across the political and ideological spectrum: mass state leisure provision smacked of fascism that could be and was countered with an emphasis on voluntarism, but this led to the historical problem of letting 'the people' choose for themselves - often not wisely, usually preferring crass commercial passive spectatorship at the cinema, at dog, horse and speedway tracks to healthy active participation..³⁹ What emerged was a familiar moral landscape, premised on pre-war attitudes to leisure cultivated in wartime, reworked in the language of post-war social democracy.

³⁹ Report by Tom Harrison, CEMA Midlands Regional Officer October 1944, cited in Hill 2001:227.

4.2 *Let us face the future...: Leisure in Austerity*

In Labour's 1945 election manifesto *Let Us Face the Future* – 'leisure' received barely a mention. John Hill argues, '[I]n spite of the undoubted interest in reconstruction and the building of a new society after the war, the issue of leisure figured in it only marginally. If 1945 represented any kind of revolution in British society, there were certainly no signs of one in the field of leisure and recreation.'¹ The subject merited little more than a footnote which suggested:

National and local authorities should co-operate to enable people to enjoy their leisure to the full, to have opportunities for healthy recreation. By the provision of concert halls, modern libraries, theatres and suitable civic centres, we desire to assure to our people full access to the great heritage of culture in this nation.²

Leisure in 1945, at least legislatively, was not a top priority amidst continuing shortages, rationing and a wartime economy. People would still have to 'make do and mend' for the foreseeable future. Clothes, petrol and basic foodstuffs remained available (on ration), but the massive deficit in the balance of payments placed a higher priority on goods for export so that un-rationed commodities were extremely scarce. Thus, sales of furniture, crockery and clothing might be strictly restricted but a licence was needed before a firm could manufacture even so much as a cricket ball.³ This was the age of 'austerity'. However, the title of Labour's manifesto itself offers a way of understanding how leisure can be seen as a conduit for the complex process of 'balancing the books', not necessarily economically but symbolically: between what was available and what was desired; between a return of pre-war conditions both good and bad, and post war fears and aspirations of their possible future erosion or acquisition. Britain in the immediate aftermath of World War Two was ideologically ambivalent, torn between 'plain thinking and high living'.⁴ Implicitly referencing the title of Labour's manifesto, 'Let us face the future', a cartoon by Lowe entitled *Make Way* shows a pale-suited young man striding ahead into a mountainous landscape signposted, 'To the Socialist Era', scattering a

¹ Hill 2001: 258-59.

² *Let Us Face The Future: A Declaration of Labour Policy For The Consideration of the Nation*, Labour Party Manifesto 1945, available at www.labour-party.org.uk, accessed 3 April 2007.

³ Addison 1985: 28.

⁴ Hopkins 1963: 97.

bureaucratic clutch of bald headed, black-suited old men in his wake [Fig. 117].⁵ 'Leisure' was the frame of reference for a future that many hoped would be better and brighter and the term, if not the reality, was a key part of the post-war rhetoric of popular culture and advertising. Ascot water heaters for example promised 'Release from drudgery ... for the intelligent housewife ...contentment, liberty to devote time to family and friends, leisure to enjoy a richer and fuller life ...' [Figs. 118, 119]⁶



Fig. 117 'Make Way', cartoon by Lowe in *Evening Standard*, 27 July 1945



Fig. 118 'Release from Drudgery' *Town & Country Planning* July 1946

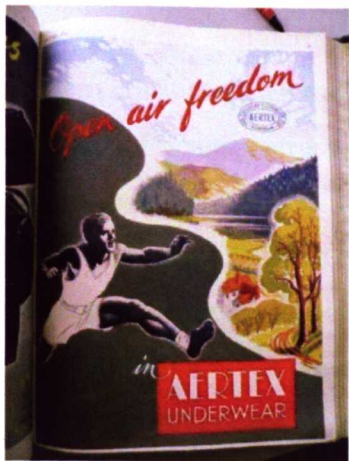
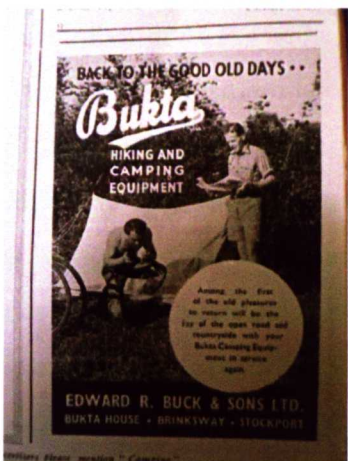


Fig. 119 'Aertex Underwear' *Outfitter Export*, October 1946

Fig. 120 'Back to the Good Old Days', *Bukta Camping equipment, Camping and Outdoor Life*,



However, 'Leisure' is an emotive 'coverall' term implicit within which is the premise of 'other' things - work and the health and financial security that allowed the time and money to afford its enjoyment - which, for a significant proportion of working

⁵ *Evening Standard*, 27 July 1945.
⁶ *Town and Country Planning*, Vol. XIII No 50, Summer 1945.

people in 1945, was still not necessarily the case. Leisure in 1945 represented, on the one hand, a pre-war past that some sought to recreate and others to overcome, and on the other hand, a post-war future that promised much but struggled to deliver.

'Bukta' Hiking and Camping equipment assured a return to 'the good old days' and the old pleasures of the 'joy of the open road and countryside' [Fig. 120].⁷ The concept, if not always the reality of leisure in all its forms came to operate as a barometer of wider attitudes to consumption and thereby as the bedrock of post-war reconstruction: fair shares for all in the good things in life *as well as* the basic necessities. 'Leisure' then can be seen as a crucial conduit through which the immediate post war settlement was frequently negotiated, imagined and imaged both politically and culturally.

On the surface, the Labour Party in 1945 was not preoccupied with popular culture and leisure activities. However all of its major activists, many of its MPs, prominent left wing intellectuals and Labour ministers had at one time or another confronted the issue – and were almost overwhelmingly dissatisfied with how the majority of Britons spent their leisure time.⁸ Hugh Dalton, Chancellor of the Exchequer, was President of the Ramblers' Association, (James) Chuter Ede, Home Secretary, was President of the Southern Ramblers Association, and a number of M.P.s with northern constituencies such as Barbara Castle were keen hikers. Attitudes across the socialist political spectrum still shared an 'improving agenda' with other more middle-class conservative elements (particularly the BBC), as well as those on the far left who saw leisure as a crucial part of educational enlightenment and hence, a pre-requisite to socialist activism. Deep-seated attitudes to leisure were brought together by a common philosophical rational recreational tradition consolidated through the opportunities provided by a wartime Coalition government which had fuelled socialist ambitions for the post-war reconstruction.

In May 1945, Lewis Silkin established a National Parks Committee that included preservationist Clough Williams-Ellis and writer Julian Huxley; the resulting report

⁷ *Camping and Outdoor Life*, June/July 1946 [note: this image of two men and their bicycles also appeared in a popular pre-war guide to the countryside with chapters by various leading Preservationists, 'Camping and Caravanning' from T Stephenson (ed.) (1939), *The Countryside Companion*, London: Odhams Press: 371.

⁸ See S. Fielding, P. Thompson and N. Tiaratsoo (eds.) (1995), *England Arise The Labour Party and Popular Politics in 1940s Britain*, Manchester: Manchester University Press: 135-137.

published in 1947 formed the basis of the consequent National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act that finally came into force in 1949.⁹ The London *Evening Standard* proclaimed:

Millions of people can enjoy the luxury of our lovely countryside – at a cost to the State of £10,000,000! That is the message of the Conference on National Parks. It proposes to create twelve such Parks in three years and, in addition, to set up fifty-two Conservation Areas. These Parks and Areas would preserve natural beauty for ever. They would also make it possible to solve the urgent problem of organising mass holidays for the people during the next few years. This proposal requires no lavish spending of public money. All it requires is energy at Whitehall – energy which would ease austerity in our drab towns and pay big profits in health and happiness.¹⁰

In contrast, Cyril Joad was similarly anticipating the post-war leisure boom with less enthusiasm. He warned:

After the war what was first a trickle and then a stream will swell to a flood. People will have been penned up in the towns for five or, it may be, six years... They have had no petrol. After the war there will be leisure and holidays with pay; the railways will promise all the old facilities, cheap fares, week-end fares and cheap day excursions; there will be Green Line buses and char-a-bancs... a flood of fighting men back from the war, agog for England, home and country, will ask nothing better of life than the chance to take the wife or the girl for a day's outing in woods and green fields.'¹¹

Hundreds of thousands of 'disinherited' town dwellers could not be expected to understand how to treat the countryside or know how to behave in it. In a radio talk broadcast on the BBC Home Service in 1946 Joad continued the point: '... people cannot be let loose upon the countryside until they are educated, yet it is only by being let loose in it that they will become educated'.¹² In this broadcast, Joad was not only advocating the necessity of the soon to be realised National Parks Bill but also the need to preserve existing footpaths and reinstate others that had been lost to the wartime lifting of agricultural restrictions that allowed some paths to be ploughed up.

⁹ Abrahams, H. (ed.) (1959), *Britain's National Parks*, London: Country Life Ltd.: 7.

¹⁰ *Evening Standard*, 21 July 1947.

¹¹ Joad, C.E.M. (1945), *The Untutored Townsman's Invasion of the Country*, London, Faber and Faber: 19-20.

¹² Joad, C.E.M., 'In Defence of the Footpath', *The Listener*, 28 February 1946.

However, there is always a sense that Joad is in fact preaching to the converted, to some extent reinforced by the illustration that accompanied the piece. A bunch of ramblers dressed predominantly in khaki shorts, at least the men - fortunately, because Joad could not abide women wearing shorts and other types of clothing 'which enlarge without enhancing their charms' - make their innocuous way across the Somerset countryside evidencing little in the way of such loutish behaviour. Much of the language of popular hiking and other forms of outdoor leisure organisations was equally inflected with disdain and explicit exclusionary systems of visual identification. In a 1946 publication 'The Way to Camp' the author (who was allied with the Co-Operative Woodcraft movement and known as Tatonka-Wamblee) illustrates different types of 'right' and 'wrong' ways of camping and campers. The wrong kind of campers are shown amidst a mess of debris - spilt food, empty bottles, tin cans, odd boots - up a tree, or swigging at a lemonade bottle, or desperately trying to light a smoky fire. Meanwhile, the decidedly smug figure of the 'right kind of camper' is shown strolling down to have a 'bathe' amidst the ordered serenity of his neatly pitched tent, folded blankets and 'camp-crafted' mug tree.¹³

Hugh Dalton, a keen Rambler and president of the Ramblers Association clearly had a personal interest in matters pertaining to recreational leisure. But both right-wing preservationist dogma and left-wing demands for democratic freedom had dominated discussion of access to moor and mountain before the war. However, the idea of access to wide areas of the British countryside whilst always *politicised* had not previously been the object of party political interest. For example, the Kinder occupation in 1932 had generated widespread publicity and calls for a 'Pennine Way' running from the Peak of Derbyshire to the Cheviots had first been mooted in 1935 but parliamentary action was largely confined to private members' bills dating back to the late nineteenth century. It is open to question how much calls for the introduction of 'National' Parks were an opportunity to broker the introduction of much more problematic forms of nationalisation - the mines, the railways, and the health service - that brought together highly conflicting political and cultural perspectives within a new spirit of British nationalism. Outdoor leisure was incorporated into a post-war socialist vision of healthy citizenship and the continued

¹³ Walker, S.H. (1948), *The Way to Camp*, Manchester: The Pilot Press.

discourse of preservationists that was transformed in the highly charged atmosphere of social reconstruction and widespread radical reform. 'Leisure' might not be on the legislative agenda of the Welfare State but it was nevertheless a key element in the Labour Party's ideological nation-building.

Summer 1947: Looking Forward, Looking Back

In May 1947 Len P., aged 24 from Deptford in South London returned home following demobilisation from the Navy, in which he had served since being called up in 1942. That summer Len met up with his boyhood friends, similarly just demobbed, at what Len describes as a 'Reunion Camp' - although not everyone returned, two friends and Len's older brother (Charlie) were killed in action. The hot summers of 1946 and 1947 encouraged many young people like Len and his friends to go camping or hostelling either on their own or as part of organised groups and mirrored a pattern of growth established during the war when participation in outdoor recreational leisure activities had seen a revival. Some YHA hostels in coastal or other strategic areas were closed but membership actually saw a gradual and quite substantial growth over the course of the war: after a decline in the late 1930s, reaching an all time low of 50,000 in 1940, by 1943 this had climbed to 100,000, increased to 150,000 at the end of the war and reached 230,000 by 1948.¹⁴



Fig. 121 'Reunion Camp' 1947

¹⁴ Coburn 1950: 47.

Len's photograph of the camp shows a group of lean and physically fit young men whose lives were clearly irrevocably changed by the war but were brought back together through pre-war ties of community and friendship [Fig 121]. As Len insightfully put it, 'We left as boys. We came back as men'. But it is the boyhood experience in the Boys Brigade and above all camping that is situated in Len's recollections of this time as the pivotal glue which joined their collective past to their aspirations for the future. Len described how their collective links to the Brigade, although not necessarily continued formal membership of it, provided a way of negotiating the transition between 'the War' and 'after'. He observed:

When we came back we weren't all that welcome in a way. .. So there became a very strong old boys' association which we went into ... It was a very strange period. .. All of us came back to Deptford. All came to Boys Brigade to meet up again, finding it was different.¹⁵

For Len, pre-war leisure and post-war aspiration were bound together through the ideals fostered in childhood through membership of the Brigade, its ideals of fellowship, its emphasis on physical fitness and the pleasures of outdoor life that were then tested and transformed in the war. Youth organisations such as the Boys' Brigade clearly have their ideological and philosophical roots firmly planted in the ideals and reformist agenda of the mid-Victorian rational recreation movement. Sport and 'healthy' recreational exercise went hand in hand with Christian moral and physical discipline as a way of not only emphasising appropriate behaviour but also of restraining the unruly passions of working men and boys in urban areas.¹⁶ In 1932 Len, then aged nine, followed his brother into the 29th South London Boys Brigade by joining the 'Life Boys' the junior section. Len, the son of a shoe maker and owner of small shoe repair shop, can be seen as representative of the ideal type of boy from the skilled artisan class that the Boys Brigade sought to recruit.¹⁷ Len joined a local troop very narrowly geographically and demographically defined. Boys - like Len

¹⁵ Interview Len P.: GBP, 18 September 2007.

¹⁶ See Springhall, J. (1987), 'Building character in the British boy: the attempt to extend Christian manliness to working-class adolescents, 1860-1940' in J.A. Mangan and J. Walvin (eds.), *op cit*; for a discussion of subversion and more ambivalent relationship between participants and ideology see Huggins, M. and Mangan, J.A. (2004), *Disreputable Pleasures: Less Virtuous Victorians at Play*, London: Routledge.

¹⁷ The uniform itself as well as the weekly subs, and annual camping trips requiring at least a minimal range of clothing would have precluded many working class children

who were the sons of small shopkeepers, tradesmen, or men who worked for the Gas Board and the Railway were 'recruited' from a small residential catchment area of about half a dozen streets close to St John's Church which was the centre of Brigade life. This defined who they were in ways that were quite evident to the boys themselves and of the ways in which their membership reflected their and their parents' social status within an acknowledged local hierarchy.¹⁸ John Springhall argues, 'For the socially ambitious, hard-working apprentice, a youth movement became an intermediary, providing a *rite de passage* between and within classes.'¹⁹ Boys were 'vetted' for their suitability and their acceptance to the Life Boys secured their entry not only into the Brigade but the approbation that went along with it. Len recalled:

This was a very strong, a very strong company and they were quite an elite in the area. The BB in that area - if you were in that you were sort of *something*... Because the Life Boys were well trained to be top Brigade blokes you know - and they were a slick crowd. There was no doubt about it...When we went to each other's houses, the parents would admire us, you know, "Hello young Len. How are you doing?" You were *somebody*. And my parents would say the same. "Nice to see you Gordon" You were *so* appreciated, and we were looked up upon and respected in the area as a nice little group of blokes.²⁰

Brigade life dominated these boys' lives which became a round of almost constant activities: band practice, drill, football, gymnastics, Wayfaring classes ('learning about birds and flowers and all that'), inter-Brigade competitions and displays, and handicrafts during the week, a social club with billiards and table tennis on Saturday, church attendance and Bible class on Sunday [Fig]. Len's parents were not religious but Len's testimony emphasises how the teaching of the Church was a fundamental part of membership of the Boys Brigade, as he put it, 'You went to church - or you were chucked out'. But it was camping, above all, that Len saw as at the heart of the Brigade and the benefits and advantages that membership could bring in terms of his

¹⁸ See Springhall, J. (1977), *Youth, Empire and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883-1940*, London: Taylor and Francis. Springhall argues that the allure of organizations such as the Boys Brigade from the boys' point of view is often overlooked. Belonging to this type of localized youth movement encouraged self-esteem through the wearing of uniforms and the acquisition of badges: 121

¹⁹ *ibid*: 121-122.

²⁰ Interview Len P.: GBP, 18 September 2007.

own spiritual and practical development. He possesses a number of wonderful photographs of his camping trips at Puttenham, in Surrey with the Brigade in the early 1930s that bear witness both to the fun and camaraderie and the more ideological dimensions of discipline and Christian moral duty that the Boys Brigade sought to foster [Figs 122-126].

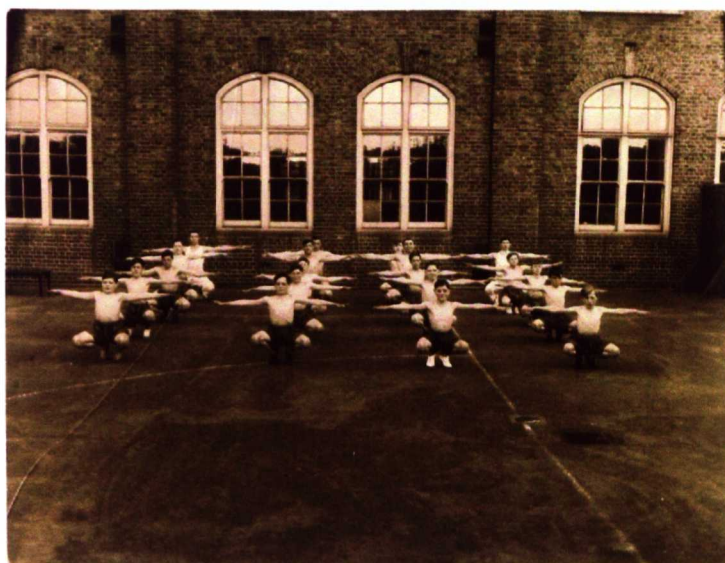


Fig. 122 29th South London Boys' Brigade c.1933



Fig. 123, Life Boys, Puttenham Cap 1932



Figs. 124 126 BB Puttenham Camp c. 1932

Climbing trees, playing cricket, fording streams, living outdoors in huts provided a wonderful holiday for young boys, but they were also taught to look after themselves, wash up, prepare food and value team spirit. Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects Len's story reveals in terms of class identity is the way in which this group of boys set up 'firms'. Bearing in mind the entrepreneurial nature of the traditional lower middle and upper working class artisan and shopkeeper, it is interesting to not how these young boys all aged between 9 and 12 imbued their games with similar concepts of enterprise. In one photograph a group of boys is seen

'manning' a 5-bar gate and in another, Len is shown having his hair combed by a group of boys, he is sat on a box with a white cloth over him as if in a barber's [Fig. 127]. When asked what was going on he replied:

Well, these were wonderful camps. We used to set up "firms" you see. We all set up little firms and if you wanted to come you came and joined "the firm". A cricket firm, like, and there were all sorts of things that we set up and that (photograph) would have been a mob that you would have to join. "No you're not in this gang.", "You can't climb that tree"... Well that would have been setting up a game. Setting up a 'firm' actually like they would have set up some things, sort of like pitching, like a cocoanut shy...So you used to come in and it would cost you a sweet or something like that, to enter. So they were getting ready to set up that firm, you see. They were great times.²¹

Fig. 127

Setting up a
'Firm',
Puttenham
Camp c.1932



Len's memories of the Brigade are nostalgic but they are not overly sentimental. Throughout Len's testimony a clear philosophical balancing act is constantly performed. On the one hand, the authority and proscriptive regulations of Church and state and the political dimensions of class and culture are gently satirized. But on the other hand, recollections of Brigade values instilled in childhood serve throughout the narrative as an ideological yardstick of social duty and a positive attitude to endeavour that governed and continues to govern Len's actions and moral

²¹ Interview Len P.:GBP, 18 September 2007.

philosophy to life. The opportunities that Brigade membership provided in the form of comradeship and a wide range of sporting and recreational activities not otherwise available to him were seen by Len then, as now, as just that - an opportunity for enjoyment *and* advance conditional on playing by society's rules *for one's own* and society's benefit.²² This inter-relationship was made clear in the advantageous connections Len made between the Brigade, war time service, and life after the war:

The impact of the Boys Brigade on our life was tremendous. You see you had very little interest in your home life at all really, when I think back on the thirties. The whole of your life was getting out, meeting your mates, going to Boys Brigade and you were quite...*very* self sufficient... So, therefore, you were *particularly* ready when you were called up. You felt *very* prepared for that sort of life, disciplined and quite happy with orders. You could keep yourself smart and obviously clean. I mean you had a good home connection but you were very much independent... and this is what it done to the boys. Every one of those lads who went into the forces did fairly well.²³

The years following the cessation of the conflict are frequently defined in terms of gloomy resignation and a sense of utter dreariness brought about by continuing shortages and the rationing of clothes, certain foodstuffs, and petrol. The massive deficit in the balance of payments placed a higher priority on goods for export so that un-rationed commodities were extremely scarce: sales of furniture, crockery and clothing might be strictly restricted but a licence was needed before a firm could manufacture even so much as a cricket ball.²⁴ Despite this, Len's view of this time is one of excitement and anticipation; as he said, one has to remember that for this generation of young people after 'five years of nothing' it was finally all starting to happen. People were looking for any opportunity for a good time so that, despite rationing, huge parties were held for people's twenty-first birthdays, engagements and weddings. Len said:

I can't think of a better time. Everything was so new. We'd been through this period of nothing. And the whole future was going to be new and better and we were going to be part of that. There was that feeling on the ground. Being in the lift trade you were part of the reconstruction. And the atmosphere on

²² Church-going habits and what was known as the 'Boys Brigade method' was recognized by local firms and influenced recruitment policies because it was seen as a recommendation of employee reliability, Springhall 1977: 121.

²³ Interview Len P.: GBP, 18 September 2007.

²⁴ Addison 1985: 27.

the building site was tremendous. They were earning money and they were going to do things you know. And again it was discipline and the whole of the building labour were ex-servicemen. They'd fought a war and you'd meet guys that were spitfire pilots or something like this taking measurements or working in the drawing office. And they'd shot down about eight Germans, this guy you know, you'd meet them, and prisoners of war... these were the men that built this new thing.²⁵

A Mass Observation survey on sport just after the war found that 77% of the population took no part in any kind of sporting activity.²⁶ On the front cover of the Bureau of Current Affairs report on 'The Importance of Leisure' a cartoon depicts three 'spivs' smoking and playing on an amusement machine bearing the slogan 'Roll-em-In'. After working through different perspectives on people's relationship with leisure, the report concluded 'Leisure ... is a special problem of an industrial civilization in which traditional ways of spending leisure have been destroyed, leaving a gap into which catchpenny amusements have flowed'.²⁷ Most people after the war, as they had done throughout the war, like Len and his friends, attempted to enjoy what they could when they could, as best they could.

In 1947, with life beginning to return to normal, a series of hikes were organized by the church to which the Boys Brigade was affiliated, for 'the young people'. It was here that Len P. and his group of friends met up with the wider group of female interviewees through a mutual acquaintance. One of the Mac sisters Phill M. is shown sitting on Len's back (bottom right of picture), her younger sister Doff M. recalls: 'They were devils then [the twins]. They used to roll down all the hills and all that sort of thing.'²⁸ The hikes initially organised by the Church were followed by more regular informal cycle rides and hikes to Westerham in Kent organised by the young people themselves [Figs. 128, 129].

²⁵ Interview Len P.: GBP, 18 September 2007.

²⁶ Mass Observation, File Report No. 3045 October 1948 'A Report on British Sport'.

²⁷ Thompson, D. (1949), 'The Importance of Leisure' in *Current Affairs*, No.72, London: The Bureau of Current Affairs.

²⁸ Interview Doff M.: GBP, 4 July 2008.



Fig. 128 First 'St John's Hike' 1947



Fig. 129 'Hike' to Westerham c.1947

The atmosphere conveyed in the magazine of the Croydon YHA group was also one of conviviality and a growing membership. By 1948 there was a full social calendar of rambles, camping trips, lantern slides, quiz nights, beetle drives and musical evenings. There were also lots of reports of trips abroad, for example a skiing holiday in Norway, and of visits from hostellers from other parts of Europe. One of the members wrote: 'I had last seen the Hook of Holland in August 1945, from the deck of an Army leave-boat, now here were Peggy and I, in August 1948, waiting to

disembark for a cycle tour of Holland.²⁹ The winter of 1948 was one of the coldest on record but the club doggedly still met up for group rambles when the temperature was still below zero and the roads blocked by snow. One such party from the Croydon YHA set out from Addington (South Croydon) at about 10.30 in the morning in about 18 inches of snow and wrote in the magazine:

Snow in quantity is apt to produce an exhilarating effect on even the normally sedate - and this ramble was no exception! We lunched in a cafe at Biggin Hill while blobs of melting snow dripped from our rucksacks, and outside men were shovelling solid frozen blocks from the main Westerham Road.³⁰

The Polytechnic Rambling Club too, continued to enjoy weekly excursions into the countryside. Their archive held at the University of Westminster contains numerous photos of hikes in the hills surrounding London in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The club's archive bears witness to the popularity of weekend camps and 'youth hostelling' at this time. In the period between 1948 and 1949 the club devoted most weekends to Youth Hostel fixtures so that keen members who could only ramble on Sunday were to some extent excluded. These members, however, clubbed together to organise their own 'Pirate' rambles and formed the 'Pirate Poly Rambling Club' organising Sunday rambles until they were once more restored to the official club programme in 1950.³¹ Photos of this era of the 'pirates' and the following full Club meets demonstrate the continued popularity of rambling after the war and the influence of organised coaches in taking them further afield [Figs. 130, 131]. Hiking, and cycling enjoyed a brief and forgotten renaissance in the years of austerity, although neither activities reached the previous heights of populist interest achieved in their respective 'boom' years; hiking certainly had declined since around 1935 from its 'cult' status in the early 1930s. But both seem to witness a post-war revival as a result of continued rationing and petrol shortages and a desire for cheap amusement by a young generation who had gone to war and returned wanting to make up for 'lost' time.

²⁹ Evans, D.G., 'Ten Days Below Sea Level', *Viewpoint: The Magazine of the Croydon Group YHA*, October 1948.

³⁰ 'Antarctic Ramblings', *Viewpoint: The Magazine of the Croydon Group YHA*, March 1948.

³¹ Note from Bernard Chapman in Polytechnic Rambling Club Archive, University of Westminster.



Fig. 130 Polytechnic Rambling Club 'Pirate Ramble' c.1948-9



Fig. 131 Polytechnic Rambling Club 'Pirate Ramble' c.1948-9

The wartime coalition and the moral dialectic of citizenship and anti-citizenship that dominated pre-war attitudes to leisure was one very fruitfully exploited by wartime and post-war austerity government literature and propaganda. Outdoor leisure provided an ideal vehicle through which to broker the proscriptive conditions of constraint. The ideology of patriotic duty, and the supposedly uniquely 'British' characteristics of personality such as stoicism, individualism, and 'grit' were allied to the British countryside and its 'enjoyment' to become somehow representative of the identity of the nation as a whole and a people under threat. However, it would be misguided to see all outdoor leisure participants and the many young people who

cycled and hiked in the summers after the war as somehow entirely caught up in the earnest pursuit of 'healthy' recreations because they were healthy, or be seen as unwilling dupes unable to recognize or resist the propagandist message. After years of being bombarded with such messages in fact many in the population were suffering cliché fatigue. Describing the ethos of the Boys Brigade and its influence on his life, Len P offers an interesting perspective on the often ambivalent relationship individuals have with collective ideals. Speaking of his return to civilian life and his decision only to get involved with the Boys Brigade informally he said:

The last thing I wanted to at this time was ever put on another uniform...It was very strongly reinforced that you built your life on the Christian teaching. But we were completely independent after the war. I mean as soon as we started meeting these other girls this was our new interest. Brigade had left us. We were all doing our thing at work, getting promotion at work. And then we'd all got a girlfriend.³²

One of the twins Phill M. demonstrates an equally pragmatic view:

We weren't interested in the church side, we were only interested in the activities like the hikes or we went camping with them, that was quite good fun. I mean they [some of the boys] used to go to church on Sunday, and take the kids on Sunday School and I used to go along with him, but I was just sort of there, you know, I didn't really.. I didn't get involved with that...³³

Some members of church-based clubs and others that were ideologically affiliated with political or philanthropic organisations were clearly motivated by a commitment to which rational recreational leisure as an adjunct, albeit a significant one. In contrast there were a great number of ideologically committed walkers and hikers and cyclists who belonged to specialist clubs and associations, or were involved in more extreme ie physically demanding levels of activity, or for example in the case of cycling allied with more officially regulated forms of sporting competition. Some however, like the interviewees were more ambivalent about what physical and outdoor recreation *meant* beyond the opportunity it provided for weekend leisure and holidays. Whatever participants' motivation activities such as hiking, cycling and camping cannot be seen in themselves as oppositional

³² Interview Len P.: GBP, 18 September 2007.

³³ Interview Phill M.: GBP, 15 June 2008.

alternatives to commercial leisure or mass consumption. Rather it is important to recognize how at a symbolic level, connotations of anti-commercialism and an ethos of restraint discursively function as a form of class-based status differential in the context of wider socio-economic and cultural imperatives. Necessity and restraint - economic, social, political, and philosophical - can also be a fundamental part of the motivational forces of consumer desire that drives the mechanisms of consumption and leisure and fashion and fashion change, particularly at times of national crises.

A Mass Observation report and illustrated publication in 1949 provided a whimsical sketch of Britain on Sunday that included several references to hiking and cycling that emphasize its widespread popularity. In the winter outside a snack bar 'a cluster of cycles are propped against the wall'; in summer on the village green, '[P]ropped against the railings is a tandem cycle; the man dressed in khaki shorts and white shirt sits on a seat absorbed ...'. The report noted the flow of leisure traffic abroad in the countryside of a Sunday evening and evidenced the growth of membership of leisure organizations:

At 7.30 it is much cooler. The direction of traffic is now reversed, four-fifths of it going back to London. Cyclists pour through the village in squads of bare legs, white shirts and shorts; the local residents stand or sit in their gardens... watching the traffic which is going steadily; private and hired cars, coaches, cyclists, motorbikes... For youth, at least there are ways of getting out into the country more or less for nothing Membership of the London region of the Youth Hostel Association, for instance, has more than doubled ... Their expressed aim is to encourage "care and love the countryside"; but there are plenty of other cycling clubs whose purpose is, quite simply, to go cycling. Any of them can be seen speeding out of town, almost any Sunday - swarms of cyclists in a stream of main road traffic.³⁴

People's relationship with outdoor leisure like any other cultural form is a complex one. If not all participants in 1949 were explicitly ideologically committed through formal membership it would nevertheless be misguided to see them as necessarily indifferent or hostile to the enduring rhetoric of rational recreational 'improvement'. This is perhaps most clearly evidenced in the ways in which the commercial leisure industry sought to capitalise upon and commodify the inherent ambiguity between conspicuous consumption and, what is in effect, conspicuous restraint. As has been

³⁴ Mass Observation, (1949), *Meet Yourself on Sunday*: 26; 28; 49.

demonstrated in the discussion of wartime fashion trends, visible thrift rather than excessive display was what underpinned a discourse of wartime fashionable morality. The figure of the 'spiv' was a key part of wartime propaganda around profiteering and the unpatriotic currency of the black market.³⁵ With the continuation and even further constraints imposed by rationing after the war 'Spivdom' continued to dominate popular cultural expression in a climate of continued deprivation and a new spirit of egalitarianism. Chris Waters has outlined how in the nineteenth century the language of middle-class social reform and the ideology of rational recreation had become so universal that entrepreneurs were compelled to appropriate it themselves as way of demonstrating the respectability of their own offerings.³⁶ They swiftly became adept at describing a wide and diverse range of products and entertainments within this discursive framework. Waters argues:

The idea that moral improvement – a central demand of rational recreation – could coexist with *laissez-faire* principles in the provision of entertainment was seized upon by numerous entrepreneurs, eager to gain the support of those who would readily condemn all forms of commercial recreation. By carefully studying, and then deploying, the language of the enemy, entrepreneurs hoped to disarm many of their critics³⁷

Walking and cycling was an 'appropriate' and acceptable activity but more than this, it was also affordable and *available*. Like everything that was in short supply in austerity, leisure and leisure clothing became part of a wider landscape of post-war desire that was then swiftly incorporated into the political, commercial and popular cultural repertoire of aspirational endeavour. As political and cultural discourse exploited leisure's capacity to provide a useful rhetoric of morality and constraint and a visual iconography of aspiration, then so the outdoor leisure industry reciprocated with its own vision of post-war leisure that worked and re-worked many of the same themes.

³⁵ Osbert Lancaster's cartoons characterized the spiv in a 'soft hat, whip-striped suit and burnt-cork moustache'. A notable real-life example was Stanley Setty, a second-hand car salesman with garage in a 'dead end mews off Albany Street' who dressed in 'silk shirts, a range of fifty-guinea suits and that sleek air of prosperity', see Hughes, D. (1963), 'The Spivs' in M. Sissons and P. French, *Age of Austerity 1945-51*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Although it should also be noted that in 1947, 18,863 people in England and Wales were found guilty of offences under the regulations governing the black market, Addison 1985: 45.

³⁶ Waters, C. (1990), *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture, 1884-1914*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

³⁷ *ibid.*: 23; 24.

4.3 'Selling' Austerity through Aspiration

In the film *A Canterbury Tale*, ideals of post-war citizenship and morality are brought together in a geographical metaphor consistently played in the narrative by means of a visual repertoire of surveillance. The "old road" (the Pilgrims Way) is called in to service to point the direction to the new road ahead and 'the concept of "Pilgrimage" ... stands for the pursuit of the war effort itself'.¹ The act of looking outwards towards an identifiable goal is exploited as a metaphor of aspiration and desire as throughout the film the Kentish countryside is laid out before both protagonists and cinema viewer alike. This rural idyll is shot from a variety of angles and from a range of different points of view – Chaucer's original pilgrims', the British Army's, the local squire Colpeper's, Alison's as the representative female 'good egg', the two soldiers' American and British, and the indigenous Kentish villagers'. From the spiritual and geographical vantage point of the symbolic "bend" in the old Pilgrim's Road the viewer implicitly contemplates England on the threshold of victory as they and their cinematic protagonists look outwards and onwards to the Cathedral beyond.

The visual rhetoric of an open road to leisure and affluence became fundamental in 1945 to imaging a symbolic landscape of post-war idealism. After the First World War the figure of the soldier returning home and surveying the changed landscape ahead of him became a well-used conduit for expressing wider cultural anxieties around the decline of tradition and the threats posed by modernity.² Now, after the Second World War this iconography of duty and reward again functioned as a way of negotiating the tension between expectations for a better life and the reality of a Britain still in many ways operating under wartime conditions. Advertisement for all kinds of leisure goods and clothing from underpants to hats utilized the figurative conventions of surveying the scene, planning the way ahead, striding out, or weathering the storm as a way of both anticipating and promoting a new post-war affluence. Those promoting outdoor clothing such as mackintoshes drew upon an historically consistent repertoire of both the traditional metaphors provided by the British weather and the aesthetic codes of what David Matless has termed 'future

¹ Moor, A. (2005), *Powell & Pressburger: A Cinema of Magic Spaces*, London: IB Taurus: 94

² See Fussell, P, (1975), *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

gazing' that had evolved in the literature of outdoor recreation before the Second World War [Figs 132-134].³



Fig. 132
'Artwac Rayon',
Outfitter Export Jan.
1945



Fig. 133
'Cawthrayne Open
Air', Outfitter Export
May 1945



Fig. 134'Grenfell',
Outfitter Export Feb.
1945

³ Matless 1998: 75.

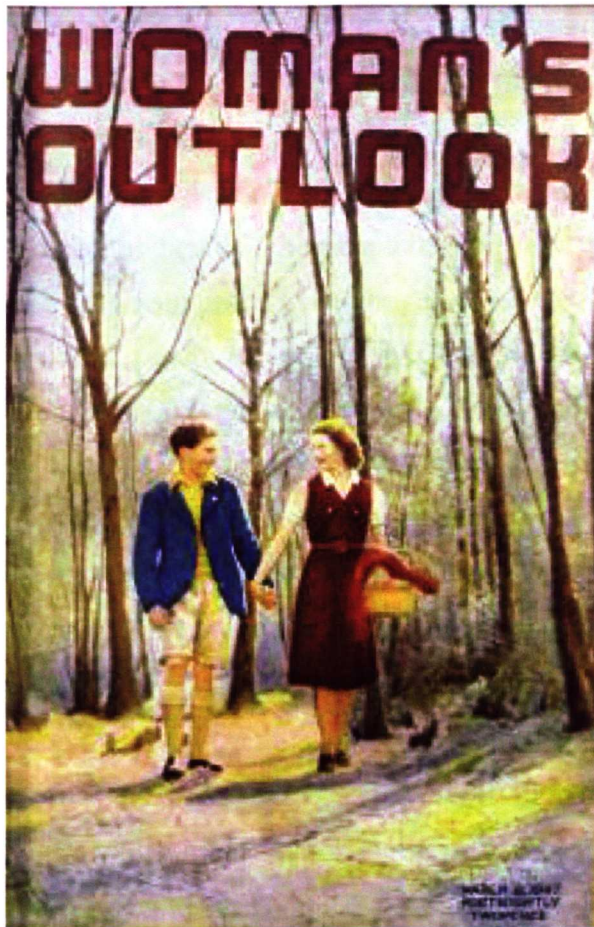


Fig. 135 Front Cover, *Woman's Outlook*, 9 March 1947

The front cover of the Co-operative in-house journal *Woman's Outlook* shows a young couple, he dressed in the now ubiquitous 'uniform' of the rambler, she demure in walking dress and brogues, walking hand-in-hand along a sylvan path towards some unknown future [Fig.135]. Manufacturers and retailers of sports and leisure equipment positioned their products within the context of austerity, and capitalised on the fact that the historical analogies of its promotional rhetoric were being widely utilized elsewhere in popular culture.

The film, *A Boy, a Girl and a Bike* (1948 dir. Ralph Smart, Gainsborough Pictures) is on the surface the story of a Northern cycling club, the 'Wakeford Wheelers', told through the relationships of various young couples and the problems experienced by them in attempting to establish 'normal' life after the war. Megs Jenkins plays a war widow who works in a café alongside Wakeford Club Captain, Steve. Her son (a young Anthony Newley), missing a father figure is fast becoming a juvenile delinquent but is saved by Steve's down to earth honesty and the devotion

of the virtuous, but plain, young teenage admirer. In contrast, a young Diana Dors is shown as precociously sexual and exploiting her obvious physical attraction by consorting with the local spivs. A mysterious young couple with a baby, clearly struggling financially, join the Wheelers only for the husband to be revealed as a deserter. However, the central theme of the narrative is the love triangle that develops between the film's main protagonists: engaged couple Sam (Patrick Holt) and Susie (Honor Blackman), and upper-class David Howarth (John McCallum) who they meet on a club run when David's Bentley breaks down in the opening minutes of the film. The Bates family, with whom Susie's boyfriend Sam (Patrick Holt) also lodges, is portrayed as an idealized version of the post-war 'respectable' working-class family. They live in overcrowded confusion but the establishing scene in the cramped back-kitchen family life is one characterized by domestic industry: Mrs Bates (Thora Hird) is mending, Mr Bates (Hal Osmond) painfully reads his gardening book (although he has no garden, only a potting shed in the backyard), Susie's younger sister sits with a pile of books studiously doing her homework while her younger brother plays with a Meccano set, meanwhile Susie's older sister enjoys the privacy of the front room with her highly stylised 'studious' fiancé that, judging by a feature in a contemporary magazine represented a particular post-war 'type', as do many of the characters within the film [Figs. 136, 137].

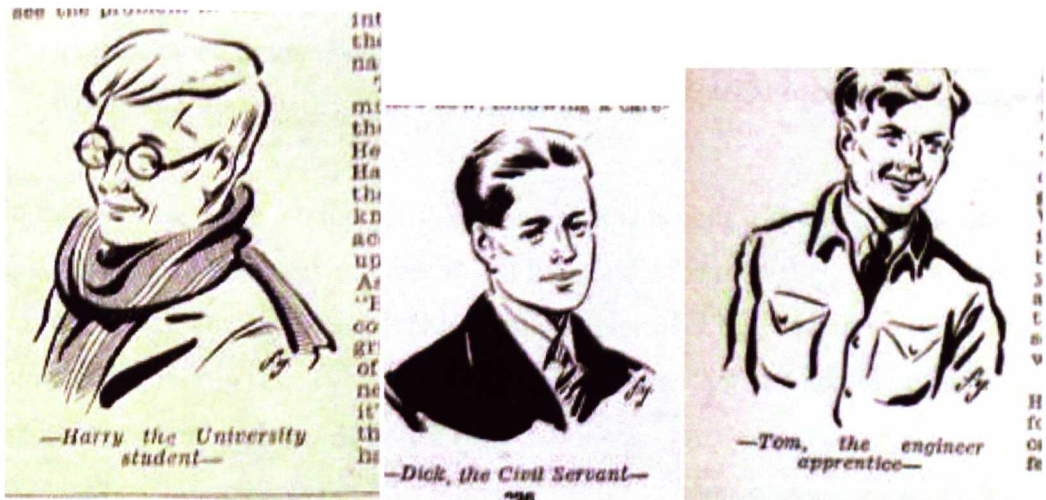


Fig. 136 ‘Conscription as Youth Sees It’, *Women’s Outlook*, 5 April 1947

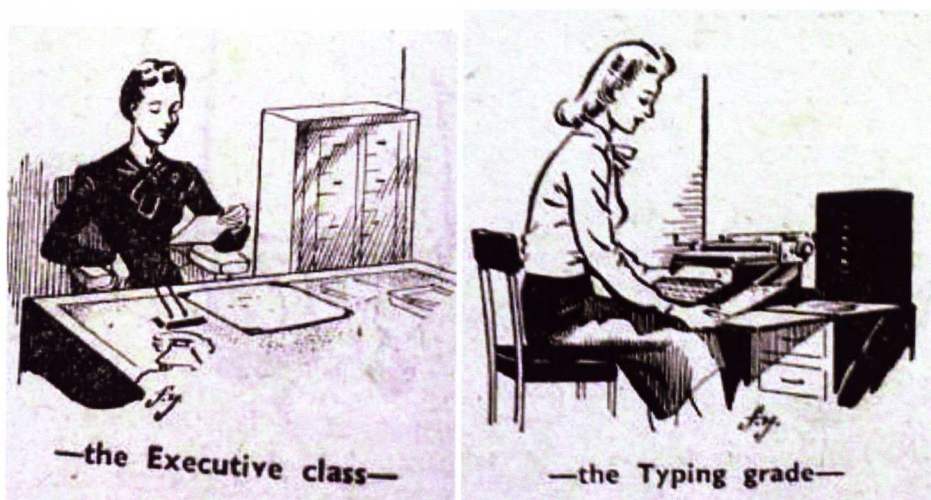


Fig. 137 'A Career in the Post-War Civil Service', *Women's Outlook*, 4 October 1947

The rivalry between Sam and David for Susie's affections serves as a way of working through issues of class and social status in relation to both work *and* leisure played out through cycling *and* the cultural discourse of healthy leisure and post-war citizenship. The atmosphere of a Britain on the very cusp of a new era while still in the throes of austerity inflects the class and gendered relations played out in the conflict faced by Susie in having to choose between what she might want, what she can have, and what she might settle for - in terms of her leisure, her domestic and working life, and her future husband. *A Boy, A Girl and A Bike* functions as a post-war allegory of class identification and the reinforcement of conformist attitudes to life that sustained them, and the status quo through the cycling metaphors that constantly and literally drive the film's narrative.

In the opening scene a large group of young cyclists appear in the distance and gradually make their way at speed down the winding stonewalled moorland road with first the Fells and then the chimneys of a Northern mill town providing the dramatic backdrop. The cycling industry in particular targeted the niche young single and young couple market of which the interviewees are a prime example. *A Boy, a Girl and a Bike* presents not only a unique vision of popular cycling and leisure clothing after the war but how this vision was an integral part of politically 'selling austerity' to a popular, and arguably predominantly young and aspirational audience.



Fig. 138 *A Boy, A Girl and A Bike*, 1948)



Fig. 139 'a nice looking outfit',

The film openly references the use of BSA bicycles and the figures of Sam and Susie and the other members of the Wakeford Wheelers are portrayed as young, energetic and modern - and virtually identical to the illustrated young couples featured by BSA in their advertisements at this time as they cycle their way through the film against a rural and urban Northern landscape [Fig. 138]. The camera lingers on a smiling couple on a tandem, and when the club arrives back at the Cafe [club's headquarters] Susie and Sam note a bicycle with a miniature sidecar attached, 'It's a right nice looking outfit that...' [Fig. 139].



Fig. 140 Advertisements for BSA Cycles in *Cycling*, May 1948

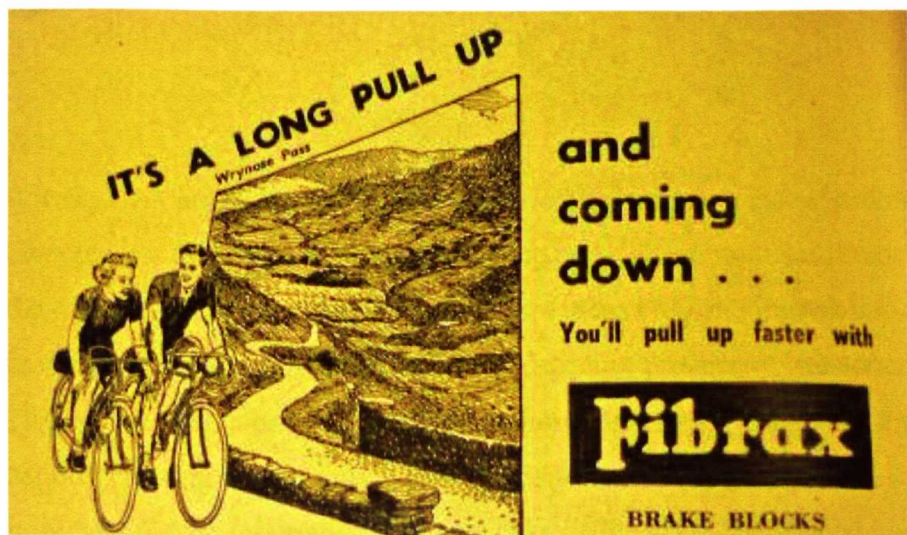



Fig. 141 'It's a Long Pull Up', Advertisement for Fibrax Brakes, *Cycling*, May 1948



TO YOU-FROM ME

*A young camping husband named Moore
Said, "My dear, it's no end of a bore
To carry this bed
When a LI-LO instead
Would give us just as much comfort and
all that, old thing!"*

SORRY, NO LI-LO'S. Don't blame the shop that cannot supply you with a LI-LO Air Bed. They aren't to be had at the moment for love or money. But, soon now we hope, post-war production will be in full swing and your patience will be rewarded.



LI-LO

12, HAY HILL, BERKELY SQUARE, LONDON, W.1

Fig. 142 'To You-From Me', Adv. for Lilo, *Cycling*, April 1948

It was not so much, therefore, that new products or new ways of promoting them emerged but that pre-war products and the pre-war promotional rhetoric that sold them were invested with new meaning as a means of bridging the gap between the past and the future, aspiration and the prospect of prosperity. An advertisement for Fibrax cycle brake pads declared 'It's a Long Pull Up...' and shows a young couple happily chatting as they bowl along the plateau of a circuitous route across the ironically named moorland 'Wrynose Pass' [Fig. 141]. The air-bed company producing Li-Lo's similarly show a young couple in full outdoor kit complete with rucksacks slogging along carrying an old iron-frame double-bed [Fig. 142].

However, they must wait a little longer for their Li-Lo because as the ad makes clear ‘Sorry, No Li-lo’s. They aren’t to be had for love or money. But, soon now we hope, post-war production will be in full swing and your patience will be rewarded.’

Post-war advertisements in *Camping and Outdoor Life* for Dunlop bicycle tyres suggested seeing Britain by cycle and were particularly aimed at the young adult market. In one featured in the June/July 1946 issue a young couple with their bicycles pause to consult their map, while in the background in the shadow of an old long barn another young couple perch on a village bench their tandem parked up beside them [Fig. 143]. Writing on the preservationist agenda in the film *A Canterbury Tale*, Andrew Moor highlights this inherent ambiguity in Emeric Pressburger’s concept of the film’s message as a ‘crusade against materialism’. Moor observes that the cinematography presents ‘the Kentish scenery as a glorious spectacle, and through the eager eyes of the Americans Bob and his buddy Mickey, Canterbury’s “sights” and “things to see” are fetishized acquisitions.’ This cinematic celebration of the Kent countryside therefore also served as an advertisement for its beauty, presenting a package of consumable attractions through the commodification of the landscape and Canterbury’s historical landmarks.⁴

Firms like Dunlop swiftly incorporated Canterbury and its cathedral into its advertisement in a way that clearly references the Powell and Pressburger film in its rhetorical use of a virtually defunct form of title referencing the River Stour and Chaucer’s pilgrims. A photograph shows a young man leaning on his bicycle looking into the distance. Above him is a pen and ink drawing of the Cathedral yard where a young couple and their bicycles similarly pause to take in the view [Fig. 144]. Clear parallels can be drawn between this commercial vision of post-war leisure and the photograph of the young interviewees from South London as they too pause in the Kent countryside for a group snap with their bicycles leant against the hedge behind [Fig 145].

⁴ Moor 2205: 93.

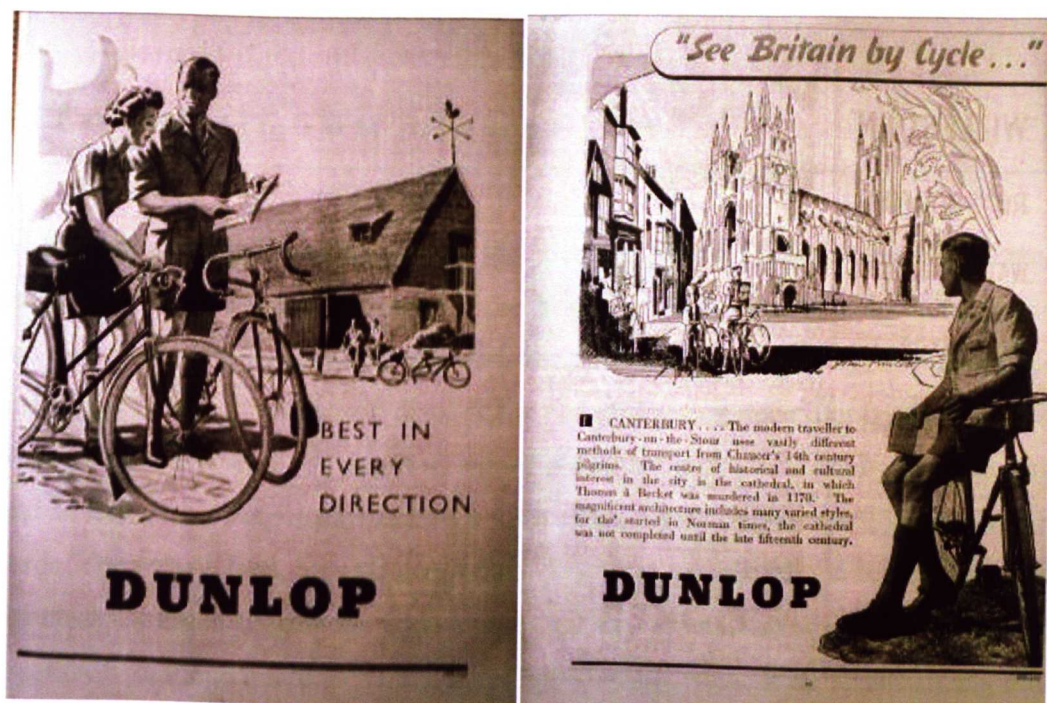


Fig. 144, 143 *Camping & Outdoor Life*, April 1946



Fig. 145

Len P. and friends, Cycle ride to Westerham, c.1947/48

4.4 Fashioning Post-War Aspiration

As detailed in the previous Section, in the opening shot of *A Boy, A Girl and A Bike*, the audience is given a 'bird's eye view' of the 'Wakeford Wheelers' coming home from a run through the Fells virtually every variety of pre-war fashions in cycling shorts, shirt and jacket combinations are on display. One of the leading male protagonists Sam is wearing the latest style in rainproof, zipped blousons, with elasticated waist and cuffs and an innovative diagonally- zipped pocket arranged for easy access to maps or score cards. The female lead, Susie Bates, wears very short and closely- tailored shorts with matching cardigan bearing the Club badge, and an open necked shirt. The reliable, but essentially dull and unattractive stalwart Club Captain, Steve Hall, is shown in a much more dated club cycling uniform reminiscent of the late 1920s and 1930s referencing as it were his long association with the club. Steve wears longer, heavier, dark serge shorts, a short, boxy white cotton 3-button blazer emblazoned with the Club badge, and very thick long socks with a striped turn over [Figs. 145, 146, 147, 148].



Fig. 145

Sam and Susie,
*A Boy A Girl
and A Bike* (dir.
Ralph Smart,
1948)



Figs. 146, 147 detail of Sam's Jacket, *A Boy A Girl and A Bike* 1948



Fig. 148 Steve, the club stalwart,

The underlying ideological impetus and the narrative of post-war social relations is powerfully articulated through dress throughout the film. Wider class conflicts are both problematized and resolved in the 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' adoption of appropriate forms of cycling costume allied with particular stereotypical characterizations. When we first see David he is wearing an immaculate sports jacket, flannels and a shirt and tie of the type that can be seen as representative of the upper-class leisure ideal, for example used in a contemporary advertisement for 'a modern sports jacket' by Joseph May & Son of Regent Street. The wearing of the *Maenson* brand revealed 'the Master Touch' and the accompanying copy somewhat pertinently added 'Competition is back': a good quality jacket 'more than ever emphasizes the Difference in the Make and Fit' [Figs. 149, 150].¹ Immediately following the war there had been suggestions in the trade of a brief revival of the Norfolk-style as a men's 'sports' ie informal leisure jacket, and top-end men's outfitters Austin Reed, Selfridges and Peter Robinson all brought out different versions in various colour-, pattern-ways and cloths.² The revival seems to have been short-lived and the popularity of the three-button sports jacket or 'hacking jacket' as the multi-purpose garment suitable for all informal occasions continued its ascent. However, it is important to recognize how much quite strict sartorial coded conventions continued to operate in the late 1940s. Later in the film, when Susie goes to the dancehall and meets up with David, she reprimands him for wearing such an informal ensemble to a formal occasion and accuses him of not bothering to dress up because it was 'beneath him'. Yet David's lack of awareness of the dress codes of the dance hall is also compared with that of the over-dressed 'spivs' who enter en masse. David's upper-class indifference and the spivs' over-dressed showiness are *both* implicitly revealed as superficial as the narrative cuts back to Sam in his open-necked twill shirt and sports jacket in the back room of the Cafe working away 'after hours' sorting out cycling club finances.

¹ *Men's Wear*, 26 June 1948.

² Review of 'The London Shows' in *The Outfitter Export*, January 1946.



Fig. 149 'Competition is Back', Adv. for Maensson Sports Coat

Fig. 150 First shot of David, *A Boy, A Girl and a Bike* ...

However it is David's transformation from an upper-class cad in a Bentley into a northern club cyclist that carries the most significant message of what is essentially a propagandist film. David's integration into the Wakeford cycling community is shown as rapid and seamless founded not on technical skill or 'know how', nor on hard work and loyalty, but on his charm and an ability to quickly assimilate the styles and mores of the club fraternity when he buys an expensive state-of-the-art bike. As David's family pulls up outside the ivy-clad country house in their limousine David meets them on the drive astride his new acquisition now in full cycling kit: tailored shorts, short socks and cycling shoes, and a cotton drill hiking shirt with patch pockets and with the sleeves rolled up [Fig 151]. His parents look askance and his sister asks 'What on earth have you got on?' David replies 'Just off for a spin, cheerio'. His mother exclaims, 'In front of everyone!' and his sister retorts 'In those clothes?' Seemingly already effortlessly fit without the need for training and now instantaneously kitted out, David's acceptance into the Wakeford Wheelers is rubber-stamped by his immediate inclusion as part of the racing team led by Sam - marked by the wearing of the club colours and full racing kit [Fig. 152]



Fig. 151 'What on earth have you got on?' *A Boy A Girl and A Bike ...*



Fig. 152 Team Strategy, *A Boy A Girl and A Bike ...*

David's commitment - to cycling and to Susie - is ultimately revealed as untrustworthy because not based on any fundamental belief or firm foundation. He 'dressed' the part but he could not live the part - at least according the heavy-handed symbolism of the post-war British 'social problem' film. David's character is not that of a charlatan or a dangerous anti-social type like the spiv, rather he is shown as an upper-class man whose talent has been marred by good looks and privilege. He is charming and athletic but he, unlike the other Wakeford Wheelers, has no direction in life and he has no skills *other* than charm. David's amorous advances and gradual sheepish retreat in the face of his family's disapproval, and Susie's eventual rejection of him, are expressed not in terms of hope and disappointment but rather as an amusing and misguided detour. David knocks Susie off her bike as it were but her commitment to the solidly reliable engineer, Sam, merely 'wobbles'. Susie's trim figure and figure-hugging cycling suit in the club colours is similarly contrasted with that of the more voluptuous Ada (Diana Dors) who displays an overt sexuality with tight sweaters and matching side buttoned shorts that are clearly not club issue. Both women are portrayed as equally self-confident but it is again a question of commitment to the ideals not just the enjoyment that recreational leisure represents.

A picture of the oral history interviewee Len P. on a weekend cycle ride taken very soon after being demobbed in 1947, shows him in a polo-neck sweater tucked into belted flannel trousers [Fig. 153]. His hair is carefully styled and he holds a pipe. When asked about this very stylised 'look' Len recalled the importance of the pipe:

It was a lot of old swank. I never enjoyed the pipe. But it was the thing to have. I mean, we all had pipes goodness knows why. And we used to say "Puff, puff. What have you got? I've got "Nosegay" "Have You? So try this one" [referring to different types of pipe tobacco]. That sort of set it off [the look]. You know... And I think we probably tried to impress the women as well.... And that's how you were. And I think you were recognized as that sort of bloke.³

³ Interview Len P.:GBP, 18 September 2007.



Fig. 153

Len P., with pipe
Cycle Trip, c.
1948

Being 'that sort of bloke' for Len was important and he described his intent as wanting to model himself on the archetypal spitfire pilot, which he visibly demonstrated by turning his collar up and recalling his fondness for cravats. But what Len's recollections reinforce is the fact that being recognized 'as that sort of bloke' *after* the war was clearly bound up with being recognized as having been that 'sort of bloke' *during* the war. An Adastra advertisement emphasizes 'Officer'-class appeal and is aimed at the 'Man of Action', '[T]here's a zipp about these "Adastra" Golf Jackets... Styled for *future* delivery alas, but they will have everything an active man can wish for...' ⁴ [Fig. 154]. In August 1946 every man and woman demobilized from the services would receive an extra 26 coupons, in addition new coupon rates were announced that arguably added to the popularity of corduroy and velvet and velveteen fabrics. The points needed to purchase

⁴ Advertisement for *Adastra*, Adastra (Glenney & Hartley) Limited, London in *The Outfitter* August 1946.

pile fabrics such as these and other knitted wool cloth (although not socks and stockings) was reduced; for clothing made out of such fabrics this meant a cut of one-third in the coupon rate.⁵ As with the aftermath of World War I, it is difficult to pinpoint the scale of influence of Army surplus clothing itself but there is some evidence to support the idea that it did play a part in the immediate post war fashion system, particularly in the provision of leisure and informal clothing. An advertisement for Gamages the popular London low- to mid-range sports store promoted 'No Coupon' ladies' Civil Defense tailored jackets and navy blue melton coats. Priced at 15/-9, the jackets were described as suitable for hiking and cycling, 'All new and in perfect condition' [Fig. 155].⁶



Fig. 154

Adv. for Adastra Golf Jackets 'For Men of Action', *Outfitter Export* August 1946

⁵ 'Details of Clothing Rationing Changes' in *Drapers' Record*, 31 July 1946.

⁶ *Daily Mirror*, 13 October 1947.



Fig. 15 *Daily Mirror* 13 October 1947

Parsons and Rose argue that after World War Two, a 'new breed' of climbers emerged in Britain: 'It was almost as though a whole new variant of *Homo Sapiens Britannicus* had been mutated. This new breed came from the factories, the shipyards, the steel furnaces and called a spade, a shovel'.⁷ This seems a rather reductive understanding of what the authors also describe as the changing 'mentality and aspirations' of Britain's working-class population and tends to romanticize the extent of change and emphasize some sort of schismatic before and after when the working class somehow rose up, and in this case, began to plod up the mountains. However, what Parsons and Rose carefully researched and detailed history of outdoor leisure equipment, and to a lesser extent clothing, does evidence is the impact of a new emphasis on technological skill and a climate of scientific and industrial innovation in Britain after the war. They note how this 'new breed' with a craft background in heavy and light engineering made numerous adaptations and advances in mountain hardware - axes, nuts, picks, pitons etc. -that revolutionized climbing and popular outdoor leisure.⁸

⁷ Parsons and Rose 2003: 164.

⁸ Parsons and Rose 2003: 165- 174.

This shift is incorporated into the central themes of *A Boy, A Girl and A Bike* where work and leisure constantly intersect. Susie and Sam the film's main protagonists are shown working in the mill but their obvious capability is demonstrated in Susie's management of her own machine and Sam's engineering skills - signified in his wearing of overalls and wiping his hands on a rag - that function to indicate their position as skilled workers in the hierarchy of the mill and working-class life [Fig. 157]. David's lack of any real occupation other than the implicit suggestion of his family's standing as wealthy local industrialists, only reinforces his lack of purpose and technical ability in comparison to both Sam *and* Susie. When Susie and David are in the bike repair shop Susie comments on the latest model on show: 'I like the chain set. I don't think I've seen fluted cranks like that before' demonstrating her technical knowledge and familiarity with machines [Fig. 158]. Later, when her bike has a puncture she repairs it herself at the side of the road, unlike David who cannot even tighten a nut on his front wheel and relies on Sam to do it for him. David's original choice of bicycle, one borrowed from 'the gardener', is sneered at by Susie and she urges him to keep it out of sight because, 'I've got a reputation to consider' [Fig. 159].

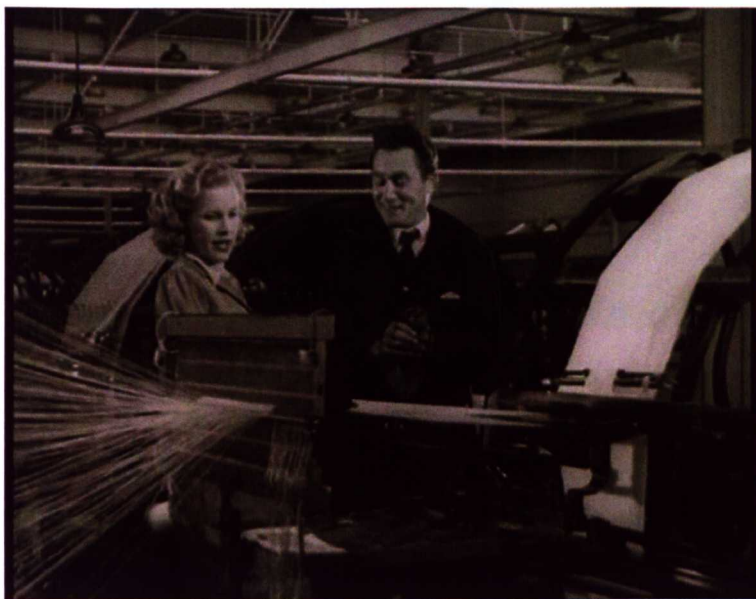


Fig. 157 Sam and Susie at the mill,



Fig. 158

'I don't think I've seen fluted cranks like that before', *A Boy, A Girl and A Bike...*



Fig. 159

'I've got a reputation to consider', *A Boy, A Girl and A Bike ...*

In his discussion of the 'making' of new middle-class identities in the period between 1939 and 1949, Mike Savage argues that the figure of the 'technocrat' provided a way of negotiating the new social landscape of post-war Britain. Based on his detailed analysis of Mass Observation directives during this period, Savage suggests that the development of a new technocratic identity offered a middle course to those on the one hand

challenged by the improved position of the working class, while on the other hand struggling to express sentiments at odds with post-war democratic values. The emerging alternative identity of the skilled manager, planner or 'architect' and 'engineer' of reconstruction provided the middle class with a new sense of themselves as active scientists, social scientists, draughtsmen, economists, technicians, and doers as well as thinkers. This distinctly modern and technical version/vision of the middle class was one that was legitimate to claim without recourse to old understandings of 'status'. Savage concludes, 'Rather than early forbears of affluence and the rise of welfare marking the end of class identities, we can see their reworking around different motifs and values'.⁹

Throughout the 1940s, specific forms of activities and clothing were not just seen as 'healthy' or representative of historical concepts of 'rational recreation'. They were also highly fashionable and served as a dynamic answer to the problems of both wartime restriction and post-war austerity. Clearly, because of the constraints of war and the manufacture of civilian clothing, cycling and recreational leisure clothing immediately after the war is virtually identical in design to that reaching popularity in the late 1930s. However, what is significant is how the two come together as a way of negotiating the ambiguities of austerity: a war and sometimes pre-war past coloured by want of one form and another, and a post-war future premised on desire for 'something better'. Leisure, as always, is both a powerful conduit for such desire and a pivotal mechanism in the wider ideological and political machinery of social control and the power relations of class and gender implicit within it. Those actively participating in recreational leisure wore the same forms of clothing and these continued to be quite frequently worn in different ways to visibly mark out on the one hand a shared understanding of the discursive potential of outdoor leisure participation and its clothing *per se*, and on the other hand the possibilities of marking differences within such participation through clothing - something which a more superficial affiliation with such activities, and a progressive movement towards a more generic concept of 'leisurewear' equally

⁹ Savage, M. (2008), 'Affluence and Social Change in the Making of Technocratic Middle-Class Identities: Britain, 1939-55 in *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 22, No. 4, December 1008: 457-476: 473.

demonstrates. It is not that such differences no longer mattered. It is more a case that such differences were expressed by the many and the minority in a new way.

Particular activities once participated in by many were now limited to a committed minority, particular forms of clothing once worn by a minority were now worn by many. The two markets should not be seen as entirely separate, but rather as part of a whole network of interconnections between technical innovation and wider social change. The *material consumption* of highly specialized high altitude clothing equipment did not really impact the mainstream market until the 1950s, or as Parsons and Rose figure it the 1960s, but the development of new forms manufacturing processes and new forms of cloth, particularly the use of synthetic polymers,¹⁰ was inseparable from wider developments in clothing production. In terms of the *symbolic consumption* of such clothing the inter-discursive relationship between different understandings of 'expeditions' and 'pioneers' meant that since the early nineteenth-century the specialist and mainstream recreational leisure industry were to use a clothing metaphor inextricably 'interwoven'.

However, it is of some significance to this research how these two 'threads' come together with increased potency in the social historical context of Britain in the 1950s where social and geographical 'climbing' assume a heightened significance. The carrying of the right type of rucksack, and even the correctly packed rucksack for campers and hikers seems to assume a new cultural potency after the war, perhaps referencing wartime military service and the soldier's infantry pack and an allied rhetoric of 'fitness'. For example, tips on the 'right way to camp' are accompanied by illustrations showing 'the wrong way to go to camp'. A rather supercilious looking boy in immaculate shorts, socks and shirt with a neatly packed rucksack and bedroll looks on at another boy with socks falling down around his boots whose laces are coming down, weighed down with a fancy jacket and carrying everything but the kitchen sink [Fig. 160].¹¹

¹⁰ The scientific knowledge to first understand and then exploit synthetic polymers was rapidly developing and expanding in the 1920s and 1930s and key patents were taken out just before the outbreak of the Second World War, Parsons and Rose 2003: 204.

¹¹ Walker 1946: 19, 'A Camping Outfit'.

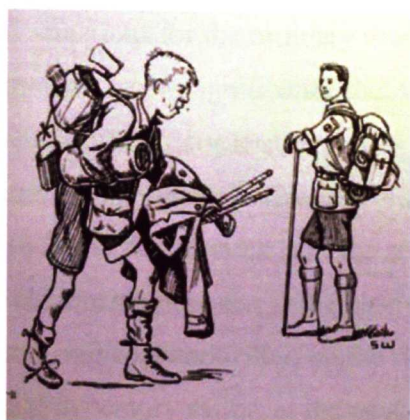


Fig. 160

'The wrong way
to go to camp'
in S. Walker
1946

The carrying of a rucksack still symbolized distinction and difference as evidenced in a letter published in the Croydon YHA monthly magazine:

'... why in this modern-thinking world, should a person carrying one of these be regarded with looks of definite suspicion and indeed even contempt? I have discovered that on walking thus bedecked through the centre of London, one immediately encounters two main categories of human nature:-
(a) the 'poor thing, I suppose he/she can't help it' attitude - and
(b) the embarrassed look of the individual who decides that the best course is to ignore this unseemly object and to make out he has been reading the front page of his newspaper (usually upside-down) all the time. These of course are apart from possible encounters with small boys who are liable to greet one with a familiar "Cor, orf to the Norf pole, Chum?" or the jocund type of bus-conductor who may grin and burst into an untuneful rendering of "I'm 'appy when I'm 'iking.". My plea therefore, is for the poor hosteller enforced to traverse the great Metropolis. Even regarding the rest of the population as 'unconverted laymen' - a walk with one's "rucksack" down Piccadilly is no picnic ...
Yours, etc., DUM SPIRO, SPERO¹²

After the Second World War many people's 'horizons' had been altered in many different ways: the prospect of full employment and the economic and social advantages this brought for leisure and consumerist acquisitions once thought available only for the wealthy; and the prospect of new democratic freedoms. The world too had become a smaller place brought about by the extended geographical horizons of wartime service overseas for hundreds of thousands of men and their families. Access to new forms of transport and travel opened up the possibility of first European and then long haul

¹² *Viewpoint, The Magazine of the Croydon group YHA*, Vol. I. No. 3, June 1947.

destinations for the ordinary tourist. As a result concepts of 'pioneering' and 'exploration' took on a new significance that was swiftly incorporated into the rhetoric of popular and specialist outdoor leisure and its clothing. In 1948, popular short zipped jackets for men and women made in Grenfell cloth were advertised as suitable for 'Alps or Links' [Fig. 161].¹³ A few months later the same advertisement is organized in a triangular relationship between at the base on the left is a figure of a typical suburban worker in suit, raincoat and trilby; on the right is an old advertisement for Grenfell cloth depicting a 19th century sailor; at the peak and given prominence is the figure of the mountaineer 'On top of the World' [Fig. 162].



Fig. 161 'For Alps or Links', Adv.for Grenfell Cloth, *Outfitter Export* February 1947

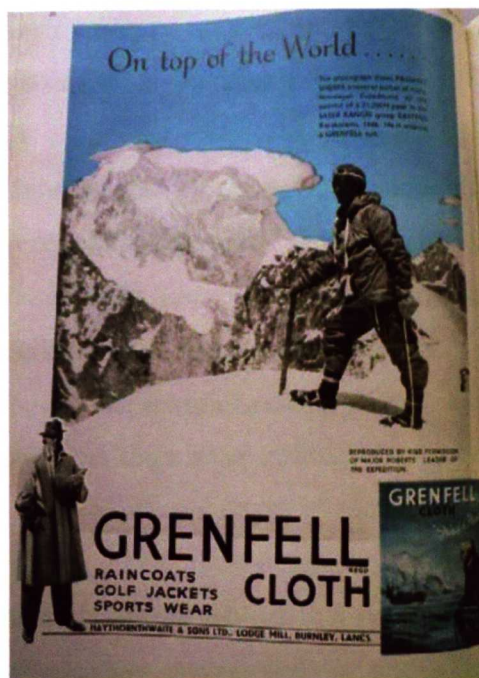


Fig. 162 'On top of the World', Adv. for Grenfell Cloth, *Outfitter Export* July 1947

In 1948 the Policy Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party published *The Enjoyment of Leisure* as part of Labour's strategy for the next general election. It was very much in line with the interventionist patrician attitude that was a fundamental part

¹³ Thomas Haythornthwaite & Sons Ltd., advertisement for Grenfell Cloth in *Outfitter Export*, February 1947.

of the implementation of the welfare state. However the PLP also sought to move away from what was considered a wartime approach of keeping people 'out of mischief' and propounded the concept of the full enjoyment of a diverse range of leisure forms as a necessary incentive to industrial output.¹⁴ Outdoor leisure nevertheless still occupied a predominant position in the hierarchy of the 'new Britain'. The 1944 Butler Education Act is seen as a landmark in educational reform, and one of the pillars of post-war democratic change. But whilst much has been written about the impact of the Act on children's, particularly secondary, education, its impact on adult education is somewhat overlooked. The provision and expansion of vocational and recreational activities for adult workers and for young adults entering the workforce was a crucial part of the Act's reformist agenda. Classes were also specially arranged for civil servants and other clerical workers such as the LCC and the Post Office, but also technical qualifications linked to large engineering firms. The LCC organized a whole range of classes from music appreciation, to shorthand, from 'Light woodwork (women)' to contemporary literature and classes were set out in various handbooks and *Floodlight*. The Handbook laying out Civil Service classes, titled *Education for Living* proclaimed 'Further Education is concerned not only with the education of the classroom or the correspondence course... but with education in the sense of putting people in the way of making their own entertainment and bringing out their latent abilities for the better use of life outside of working hours'.¹⁵

Reconstruction was in many ways an 'inherently spatial project' that operated across a wide discursive framework with architects, planners, writers and educationalists landscaping different versions and visions of both the urban and the rural. David Matless compares the iconography of maps and outdoor leisure with that of the cult of planning and its visual rhetoric that was a pivotal part of envisioning post-war Britain. In the 1940s environmental and social visions were *necessarily* combined because both were

¹⁴ *The Enjoyment of Leisure*, 24 March 1947, MSS 292.812.21 cited in Hayes and Hill (eds.) 2001: 256. See also Black, L. (2001), ' "Sheep May Safely Graze": Socialists, Television and the People in Britain, 1949-64', in L.Black, M. Dawswell, Z. Doye, J. Drake, A. Homer, J. Jenkins, M. Minion, G. Powell and L. Tracey, (eds.), *Consensus or Coercion? The State, the People and Social Cohesion in Post-war Britain*.

¹⁵ Civil Service Council for Further Education, *Handbook for the Session 1947-48, Education for Living*, London: Fosh & Cross.

part of a cultural movement seeking a design for modern life.¹⁶ For example, plans were laid out for both old towns and cities destroyed by bombing such as London, Coventry, and Liverpool, and what were referred to as 'New Towns' on the edge of urban conurbations such as Stevenage in Hertfordshire and Crawley in Surrey. Leisure facilities such as recreation grounds, parks and swimming pools were included as an essential part of this 'new Britain'.¹⁷ The idea of a cultural geography of post-war consensus politics allows a way of 'mapping' different senses of selfhood and new concepts of modern citizenship. Outdoor leisure, he argues became synonymous with democracy expressed in terms of the British countryside as the symbol of individual freedom and the affirmation of 'liberty' - a common possession that broke through class and social boundaries.¹⁸

In May 1948, Hugh Dalton with six other Parliamentary colleagues had taken part in a three-day tramp across the Derbyshire peaks.¹⁹ They had set off on a Saturday morning from Upper Teasdale with Arthur Blenkinsop (Ministry of Pensions), 'speeding ahead like a greyhound' and Barbara Castle presenting a diminutive figure alongside her male companions plodding along 'beneath a great rucksack' [Fig. 163].²⁰ The following summer (1949) Hugh Dalton again led a party of parliamentarians '[U]p hill and down dale, through bogs and streams' this time over the Lake District [Fig. 164].²¹ During the visit the intrepid M.P.s talked with farmers and their wives, with shepherds, schoolmasters, climbers and ramblers and attempted to counter local fears about the effect on the countryside of the public 'being allowed to walk anywhere'. However, support was not entirely positive, 'One person excited by political prejudice, bawled at them they had no right to walk on private land', although the farmer across whose land they were walking gave them a cheery good morning. At the end of the trip Dalton explained that full farming use would be maintained under the scheme and said: 'I look forward to the creation within the next year of one of our first national parks in the Lake

¹⁶ Matless 1996: 436.

¹⁷ Matless, D. (1997), 'Moral Geographies of English Landscape, in *Landscape Research*, Vol. 22, No.2.

¹⁸ Matless 1998: 202.

¹⁹ Arthur Blenkinsop (Ministry of Pensions), Capt. Julian Snow (Lord of the Treasury), Fred Willey (M.P. Sunderland), G.R. Chetwynd (M.P. Stockton-on-Tees), Barbara Castle (M.P. Blackburn), E.C. Castle.

²⁰ Stephenson, T. 'M.P.s Led Way in Pennine Hustle', *Daily Herald*, 24 May 1948.

²¹ 'Hugh Dalton sees "Our National Park"', *Daily Herald*, 13 June 1949.

District'.²² Finally introducing the second reading of the National Parks Bill in 1949, Lewis Silkin argued 'This is not just a Bill. It is a people's charter... a people's charter for the open air'.²³



Fig. 163 P
ennine Pilgrims',
Daily Herald,
24 May 1948



Fig. 164
'*Daily Herald*,
13 June 1949

[THIS picture of Mr. Hugh Dalton with some of the members of his party was taken almost immediately after crossing the private farmland near Blea Tarn, Westmorland.]

**HUGH DALTON SEES
OUR NATIONAL PARK**

²² 'Hugh Dalton sees "Our National Park"', *Daily Herald*, 13 June 1949.

²³ Cited in Matless 1998: 250.

In December 1949 the government finally passed the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act setting up the Countryside Commission, the Nature Conservancy Council and establishing 10 designated 'National Parks'. As soon as it was feasible to get together 'a few hundred ramblers to celebrate at 3,560 feet' the Ramblers Association Grand Celebration Meet was held on Mount Snowdon. Heavy cloud, a gale and a snowstorm did not deter 500 ramblers from their mission to 'storm the summit' at about 4 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon in April 1950. Parties were bussed in from all over Britain and gathered at various points to queue for the ascent via eight different routes. The most popular route was the Pyg track ['not too soft, not too touch'], that *Picture Post* in its feature on the options of ascent described as either 'the easy way' [a steady grassy slope], or 'the hard way' - rough going right from the start. Queuing epitomized the experience of a nation at war and the austerity of its aftermath - it was only fitting that a new era of leisure should begin with it [Fig. 165, 166].²⁴ It wasn't just a 'new breed' of climbers that was emerging, it was a 'new breed' of consumers. The 'specialist', particularly female, consumer in the 1950s was no longer confined to mountaineering, ski-ing in the Alps or holidaying in the French Riviera because their or rather 'her' aspirations for leisure, clothing and the acquisition of all kinds of consumer goods was considerably broadened, the sky was now the limit.



Figs. 165, 166

'They queued to climb ..' in *Picture Post* 22 April 1950

²⁴ 'They Queued Up to Climb Snowdon', *Picture Post*, 22 April 1950.

Dior's 'New Look' introduced in 1947, casts a long shadow over any discussion of popular consumption, fashionable clothing and the symbolic shift from austerity to affluence.²⁵ But as Angela Partington points out, more accurately, its introduction signalled the emergence of a new form of consumer capitalism through a style that targeted a range of high fashion commodities at a new mass market, *specifically* working-class women increasingly seen as essential to the success of post war capitalism.²⁶

Partington's focus is on working-class women, but the arguments she makes are of some significance to this thesis and a concept of a much more ambiguous reading of mainstream fashionable consumption. Partington challenges ideas of both the demise of a sense of 'working-classness' brought about through increased affluence, and the reductive idea that it somehow brought about a 'democracy of style' and the eradication of class differences. Both perspectives assume that class differences are unimportant and can somehow be erased like an over-the counter exchange of goods or money.

Partington's work counters such an easy equation by suggesting that, 'consumerism provided new opportunities for the expression and celebration of class and gender differences, and of oppositional values and beliefs'. The working class did not need to be persuaded to consume, or educated in how to consume, rather the mass market provided new opportunities for working-class expression. New goods and services and the progressive acquisition of new consumer skills created a fashionable dynamic in which marketing industries responded and stimulated the consumer's *own* capacity for symbolic investment.²⁷

²⁵ For example, it constituted the title of Harry Hopkins' evocation of post-war life (1963); more recently Andrew Marr includes a section describing the impact of Dior's 'revolutionary' design as 'the sound of petticoats' heralded the fact that the war was over, 2007: 84-85.

²⁶ Partington, A. (1992), 'Popular Fashion and Working-Class Affluence' in J. Ash and E. Wilson (eds.), *Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader*, London: Pandora; (1995) 'The Days of the New Look: Consumer Culture and Working Class Affluence' in J Fryth (ed.), *Labour's Promised Land? Culture and Society in Labour Britain 1945-51*, London: Lawrence & Wishart.

²⁷ *ibid*: 253.

Mass manufacture, new marketing strategies and the simultaneous adoption of new and different styles *across* socio-economic groups was integral to the formulation of a repertoire of styles based around different market segments. Partington argues:

The mass-market fashion system enables the consumer to appropriate fashionable style by altering and transforming them, in the process of "copying" them... A mass-market fashion system ensures that the diffusion of styles takes place *within* groups (rather than across class distinctions), so styles need not be adopted in the same way by different consumer groups. Indeed, the system itself encourages different forms of adoption... differences in price, make, and retailer ensures this. But this does not mean that the popular versions are merely cheaper or lower-quality copies of design-originals.²⁸

In a Bukta advertisement in 1950 two figures dressed in virtually identical hiking outfits, carrying rucksacks, stride out confidently - a post-war version of the iconic hikers of the inter-war years [Fig. 167]. But in many ways 1950 and the ascent of Snowdon by the rambles represents not just the end of a decade but the end of a particular relationship between particular forms of recreational leisure activities and specific forms of recreational leisure clothing. Popular publications on hiking, camping or cycling such as the once-famous *Bukta Campedia* catalogue that in the 1930s devoted whole chapters to clothing now barely gave it a mention. Features in popular magazines still advised men and women on 'what to wear' but outdoor recreational activities such as hiking or cycling were now seen as just part of a whole range of potential leisure activities for which a multi-functional leisure wardrobe consisting of a combination of a variety of different jackets, cardigans, shorts, slacks, shirts and sweaters could cater for. Such a wardrobe however was no longer confined to the prosperous few but with new advances in manufacture and retail, it was now available to a mass mainstream consumer. Highly specialized equipment developed for highly specific outdoor activities such as climbing as well as broader concepts of mainstream leisure destinations that went beyond British shores changed the wardrobe and the aspirations of popular recreational leisure and shaped the nature of the post-war 'affluent' leisured body. The conquest of Everest was just a few years' away but setting out on the road to a New Britain, and climbing

²⁸ *ibid*: 158.

physically, socially and economically can be seen as part of a whole discursive network of meanings through which the post-war settlement was imagined and imaged. As Doff M one of the oral history interviewees observed, 'We were all anxious to climb the old ladder to the top'.



Fig. 167
Drapers Record,
13 May 1950

4.5 Onwards and Upwards: The Post-War Lower Middle Class

The post-war lower middle class were the principal beneficiaries of much of the post-war settlement. The major reforms in health, social security, education and employment that were the hallmarks of the Welfare State welfare were ostensibly aimed at the poorest in society, but their effects were experienced most tangibly by that proportion of the working population that was already relatively comfortable if not necessarily prosperous.¹ The lower-middle class were also an advantageously positioned stratum of the post-war workforce.² The historian Peter Hennessy cautions against the danger of falling too much under the spell of an idea of this period in British industrial history as either a 'glorious dawn', or - with the value of hindsight - succumbing to a mood of overwhelming gloom and future decline. Hennessy's own summary of industrial relations after the war is that 'Britain's sunrise industries outshone its sunsets and its twilights ...our industrial and financial platform represented a base ... for growth as a manufacturer and trader'. Skilled technicians and engineers, and a relatively well-educated expanding clerical class were well placed to profit from the job opportunities that war and 'the reconstruction' both brought in its wake.³ The resurrection of London's clerical and administrative sector after the war reshaped London and its economy; there was also a corresponding gender shift with women providing an increased share in the workforce.⁴ The growth of government bureaucracy and its continuing expansion as the Welfare State required hundreds of white-collar workers to administer and operate new national insurance contributions, a massive programme of reconstruction and the rebuilding of a modern education system and health service.⁵ The Atlee government's policies were not explicitly supportive of the idea of women workers. They nevertheless benefited from welfare reform; they were now included in

¹ Marr, A. (2007), *A History of Modern Britain*, Basingstoke: Macmillan: 44-45.

² Hennessy, P. (1992), *Never Again: Britain 1945-51*, London: Jonathan Cape: 116-117.

³ 'Reconstruction' was one of the three-fold initiatives identified by the new Labour Cabinet and involved repairing war damage, rebuilding export trade and recapturing markets lost in 1938, *ibid*.

⁴ Bombing had destroyed about one-third of predominantly warehousing and retail floor space but by the early 1960s office floor space constituted over 60 per cent of usage and accounted for an additional 56,000 jobs in central London. In 1931 for every 1,000 men at work in London there had been 520 women by 1966 this stood at 615; in office employment, now London's main sector, 62 per cent of clerical workers were women, see White 2008: 201.

⁵ See Hennessy 1992 particularly Chapter 4 'Building Jerusalem'.

comprehensive insurance schemes and the welfare state provided for a big increase in women's employment, especially in health and education. They were also encouraged to work because of labour shortages and the export drive.⁶ The idea that most women after the war did not work is misguided. There was a shortage of secretaries and typists, and a dire shortage of nurses and midwives. More and more married women were drawn into the workforce (although it was often in part-time and poorly paid jobs that fitted in around childcare).⁷

A survey looking at the condition of the post-war middle class conducted by sociologists Roy Lewis and Angus Maude in 1949 argued that the war had brought about a very great increase in the number and responsibilities of existing public servants but also a significant rise in new groupings joining the service, 'giving rise to new loyalties and ways of life'.⁸ By the 1st January 1948, some 691,651 men and women were occupying 'non industrial' posts in the Civil Service of which Lewis and Maude reckoned, a total of between only 400,000 and 500,000 men and women could be considered middle class.⁹ But for Lewis and Maude that left a disconcerting almost 200,000 workers on the 'borderline' whose numbers could only be further increased with the decision to lower the educational standards for entry to the Executive and Clerical Classes, 'a decision from which nothing but harm is likely to result'.¹⁰ These were the conditions that led David Lockwood to theorise that low- to mid-grade white-collar workers were experiencing the occupational routinization and systemised anonymity that blue-collar workers had earlier underwent with the growth of the modern factory system.¹¹ The post-war era saw the expansion of large corporate and bureaucratic environments

⁶ Tomlinson, J. (1997), 'Reconstructing Britain: Labour in Power 1945-1951' in N. Tiratsoo (ed.), *From Blitz to Blair: A New History of Britain Since 1939*, London: Weidenfield & Nicolson: 95-96.

⁷ Wilson, E. (1980), *Only Halfway to Paradise: Women in Postwar Britain, 1945-1968*, London: Tavistock: 44-47.

⁸ Lewis, R., and Maude, A. (1949), *The English Middle Classes*, London: Phoenix House: 25.

⁹ *Ibid*: 111-113.

¹⁰ *Ibid*: 118.

¹¹ Lockwood, D. (1958), *The Blackcoated Worker – A Study in Class Consciousness*, London: George Allen & Unwin. Lockwood sought to empirically explore the social structure of modern Britain while at the same time critically engaging with Marxist concepts (which were largely absent from the early post-war sociological canon) in a new way. Lockwood suggested that: "Class", like any other sociological concept, is a device by which social facts are to be understood, and, in the last analysis, the definition of class that is adopted can be justified only by its usefulness in the explanation of particular and concrete events': 213.

employing large numbers of administrative and clerical staff that both encouraged the development of white-collar unions and evidenced some de-valuation of status of certain types of clerical work. The clerical class was more diverse and thus was seen by some as a stratum that no longer belonged to the middle class. However, as Lockwood points out, the differences in terms of market situation and greater opportunities for promotion were significant and effectively maintained the prestige differentials between manual and non-manual labour. In terms of social background, education, working conditions, proximity to authority and opportunity of upward mobility, clerks could still claim a higher status than working-class manual workers to present for certain social groupings an opportunity for economic and social advance.¹²

New forms of service industries also re-established themselves and a large-scale retail sector began to emerge to meet the post-austerity demands of a growing consumer base that wanted and increasingly could afford to purchase a new range of products. There was a massive refurbishment of the retail sector after the war and millions of pounds were spent on High Street shops in war-damaged towns and cities and the building of new 'shopping centres' in the 1950s.¹³ Smaller shops and workshops had witnessed a period of stability during the war with bankruptcies falling from a pre-war average of nearly six thousand a year to one hundred and thirty six between July 1945 and 1947. For example, in spite of the problems posed by the abolition of petrol rationing and severe supply difficulties, the motor trade regarded 1947 as 'the most prosperous' it had ever experienced. Regardless of a shortage of building materials and licensing restrictions, as well as the difficulty of finding skilled craftsmen, the small builder also enjoyed 'unexampled prosperity'.¹⁴ Demand for small businesses grew, particularly for those with accommodation attached or those doing a standard trade in rationed goods such as

¹² *Ibid*: 125-126.

¹³ Hopkins, H. (1964), *The New Look. A Social History of the Forties and Fifties in Britain*, London: Secker & Warburg: 314-5

¹⁴ Lewis and Maude 1949: 192. Prosperity was reflected in the purchase prices of those businesses being sold at auction or by private treaty.

drapery. A number of ex-servicemen with a small amount of capital sought to buy going concerns even in unrestricted trades such as motor repair or pharmacy.¹⁵

Perhaps most significantly, the lower middle class can be seen as a key element in the continued rise of the 'technocrat', an occupational stratum that had gradually gained prominence alongside the new interwar industrial expansion outlined in Section 3. This skilled technical and managerial class now assumed a new status within idealized visions of a postwar 'meritocracy' such as that portrayed in *A Boy, A Girl and a Bike* discussed in Section 4. J B Priestley's summary of an England at war in 1941 argued that the old world of deference and an aristocratic 'Old England' portrayed in films was gone. It was, he argued, a war of machines and of the men who make and drive those machines. He railed: 'They do not manufacture fifteen-inch guns or Spitfires down at the old family place in Devon. It is industrial England that is fighting this war ... ' It was this vision of democratic industrial Britain that was seen as largely organising the reconstruction, typified by a new breed that emerged: 'the policy-makers, the planners, the intelligentsia, the readers of Penguin Specials, everyone with an emotional stake in 'the condition of the people'.¹⁶ These people were the physical manifestation of George Orwell's ideas about who would be the 'directing brains' of a new England, 'a new indeterminate class of skilled workers, technical experts, airmen, scientists, architects and journalists, the people who feel at home in the radio and ferro-concrete age'.¹⁷

There had been a significant expansion of the technical ranks of the Civil Service as a consequence of the growth in engineering and scientific research generated by the war and the demands of wartime production. The expansion of this sector was integral to a distinct and modern 'technical' vision that was the basis of the ideology of 'reconstruction'. In his discussion of the 'making' of new middle-class identities in the period between 1939 and 1949, Mike Savage argues that the figure of the 'technocrat'

¹⁵ *Ibid*: 198, 192. Lewis and Maude cite for example, a drapery business which according to leading firm of valuers could have been bought for £10,000 in 1943, would have cost more than £25,000 in 1948 (and this represented a slight easing from prices at the peak).

¹⁶ Kynaston 2007: 20

¹⁷ George Orwell (1941) cited in Savage, M. (2008), 'Affluence and Social Change in the Making of Technocratic Middle-Class Identities: Britain, 1939-55' in *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 22, No. 4, December: 457-476: 470.

provided a way of negotiating the new social landscape of post-war Britain. Based on his detailed analysis of Mass Observation directives during this period, Savage suggests that the development of a new technocratic identity offered a middle course to those on the one hand challenged by the improved position of the working class, while on the other hand struggling to express sentiments at odds with post-war democratic values. The emerging alternative identity of the skilled manager, planner or 'architect' and 'engineer' of reconstruction provided the middle class with a new sense of themselves as active scientists, social scientists, draughtsmen, economists, technicians, and 'doers', as well as thinkers. Male survey respondents placed considerable emphasis on the idea of such a 'technical' identity and resisted the idea of being thought of as 'intellectuals' or 'arty' by describing themselves as 'hard boiled'. Both male and female respondents attached great importance to the role of the managerial middle class and commercial and technical occupations in terms of 'function' - a legitimate classification but one without recourse to old understandings of 'status'. Savage concludes, 'Rather than early forbears of affluence and the rise of welfare marking the end of class identities, we can see their reworking around different motifs and values'.¹⁸

The rhetoric of the restrained dignity of high skilled manual workers, as well as the expertise of professional managers and technicians was a vital part of Britain's post-war production drive. Martin Francis argues:

The monumental task of economic and social reconstruction post-1945 stipulated quiet efficiency rather than anti-social aggression of showiness ... The rebuilding of Britain required a disciplined and purposeful workforce... Those who failed to appreciate the serious task at hand – the feckless, the work shy, the plutocratic "parasite", the black marketer and the "good time girl" received short shrift.¹⁹

This equation between socialism and science became an important element in the post-war Labour party, particularly with politicians such as Morrison and Cripps (and later

¹⁸ Savage, M. (2008), 'Affluence and Social Change in the Making of Technocratic Middle-Class Identities: Britain, 1939-55 in *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 22, No. 4: 457-476: 473.

¹⁹ Francis, M. (1999), 'The Labour Party: Modernisation and the Politics of Restraint' in B Conekin, F Mort and C Waters (eds.), *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945-1964*, Chicago: Rivers Oram Press: 156.

Harold Wilson) who sought to make very clear socialism's association with a new 'rational technocracy' and a new band of restrained technocrats - level headed and well educated – with the expertise to put it into action. Self-discipline and restraint were key components of Labour's project of modernity, its vision of a new meritocracy and a vital requirement for effective public service.²⁰ The Special Reconstruction Issue of the *Picture Post* some five years earlier had argued that this was what would separate the post-Second World War settlement from the First. The article argued, 'the plan was not there' in 1918, but this time the government and industry would be ready with a 'blueprint' for 'The New Britain'.²¹

The 'cult of planning' offered a new version of social democracy rephrased in the supposedly class-less rationale of scientific and sociological enquiry and analysis.²² This raises the fundamental issues at stake in understanding the nature of the lower middle class in a British social context. While the rhetoric of consensus politics was a powerful conduit for post-war egalitarianism, it masked underlying cultural anxieties about status boundaries and classed identification. This generated numerous government commissioned and independently-financed surveys, studies, and enquiries in the social sciences in which the interrogation of 'class', social status and later mobility were key elements that mirrored widespread debates in the press and wider popular culture about the supposed decline of the old order.

Class Identification in a New Democracy

A discussion pamphlet published in 1947 by the Fabian Society debated the problems involved in defining what was meant by 'class':

The landowner or capitalist with a large unearned income, educated at Eton and New College, causes little difficulty; neither does the ex-elementary school labourer with his £4 weekly pay packet. But the intervening groups are not so

²⁰ *Ibid*: 153.

²¹ Howard, A. 'We are the Masters Now' in M. Sissons and P. French (eds.) (1963), *The Age of Austerity 1945-1951*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 3.

²² Matless 1998, Chapter 7 'Citizens in Reconstruction': 234-267.

straightforward. The manager of a factory who left school at 14 and worked his way up from the bench, with a reasonable salary, ample savings invested in stocks and shares, and a broad Lancashire accent, begins to cause confusion. The bookie or black marketer with a Rolls Royce car and a large bank balance is still more of a problem. Ernest Bevin, Gracie Fields, Bruce Woodcock and many other well-known figures, do not fit easily into any preconceived pattern.²³

Land ownership and a public-school education supposedly anchored the social prestige of the upper class, while minimal educational achievement and a weekly pay packet [rather than a salary] constrained the social parameters of the working class. The professional middle class is conspicuous by its absence, implicitly eradicated by what apparently remained of the social mix: an essentially entrepreneurial lower middle class who are the focus of the author's classificatory dilemma. Black marketers, popular entertainers, hard-working business men, politicians all defy collective definition in terms of education, income, occupation, accent, lifestyle, and consumption patterns, but are brought together through individual achievement of money and/or social prestige. This brief extract succinctly encapsulates both the difficulties and the underlying cultural anxieties of post-war attempts to define class: a prevailing fear that the traditional middle class were not just under threat but actually in danger of becoming extinct, while at the same time arguing that such definitions were anachronistic and out of touch with the supposed 'classless-ness' of post-war Britain. The need to address social inequality, and the continuation of traditional forms of class recognition on the one hand, and the idea of social change underwritten by what was referred to as 'chain store democracy' on the other hand, came to define, not a new understanding of 'class' after the Second World War but a shift in how it was debated, surveyed, analysed and interpreted.²⁴

The period between the end of the war and the 1950s was a time of transformation/ Middle-class values and the old markers of status differentiation were seen as being eroded by greater opportunities for white-collar and non-manual employment, and more threateningly greater access by an even greater number of working people to goods and

²³ Hughes, H.D., (1947), *Towards a Classless Society. A Discussion Pamphlet*, London: Fabian Publications Ltd.: 27.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

services once enjoyed only by the privileged. At the same time, traditional working-class life and the old industrial value system upon which it was based was seen as having been replaced with middle-class aspirations and new forms of consumerism.²⁵ It was argued that many working people who in the past would have described themselves as 'poor', no longer did so; some 'even claimed not to belong to any class at all' and others said in effect that 'they were working class at work but middle class at home'.²⁶ Poorer families did not identify themselves as working class and in Gallup polls conducted in 1948 and 1949 over half of those sampled saw themselves as middle class.²⁷ Richard Hoggart in his classic reflection on the loss of an older traditional working-class consciousness situated the dislocation of working-class life after the war in terms of both a gradual separation from the established social, economic and political bases of classed identity (poverty, the Labour party, unemployment) and new ways of expressing and articulating the material benefits of post war social reform and affluence. Working-class life and culture, he argued was being destroyed by 'hedonistic-group-individualism', 'modernist knick-knacks' and a rootless tackiness.²⁸

Comparable studies of post-war mobility carried out in North America were highly influential on British sociological thought. Eli Chinoy's pioneering work on the abstract idea of the 'American Dream' attempted to measure the concrete reality of the ideology of success experienced within the post-war automotive industry through the detailed investigation of the lives and attitudes of its workers.²⁹ Chinoy's findings showed that the well-paid workers in the US car industry adapted the reality of monotonous and routine factory life to traditional middle and lower middle class ideals of opportunity

²⁵ See Hoggart 1957. Hoggart's argument was that 'affluence' had made it more difficult to criticize capitalism, but questions arose about the quality of working-class cultural life. Material progress had brought with it new kinds of cultural exploitation. A shared but distinctive urban culture of 'the people' involving speech, family life, streets, clubs, pubs was being eroded and replaced by a new, heavily Americanized and homogenized mass culture.

²⁶ Zweig, G. (1961), *The Worker in an Affluent Society: Family Life and Industry*, New York: Free Press of Glencoe: 136.

²⁷ Gallup, G.H. (1976), *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls Great Britain 1937-1975*, Volume One, New York: Gallup: 172

²⁸ Hoggart 1957: 173.

²⁹ Chinoy, E. (1955), *Automobile Workers and the American Dream*, New York: Doubleday. Chinoy conducted 78 long interviews with 62 male workers of varying seniority, most of them aged over 30. These were analysed alongside statistical data about the plant, discussion with the management and union officials around issues of aspiration and opportunities for advance within the plant.

and improvement in a new way. They were not without ambition, but such ambition was expressed in a new vocabulary of success that included the search for security, the pursuit of small goals in the informal hierarchy of the factory floor, and the constant accumulation of personal possessions. These all became equated with 'advancement', Chinoy observed:

In their efforts to reconcile their own ambitions and achievements with the tradition of opportunity, workers have also transformed what was once a symbol of economic success into a significant form of personal progress in itself. Advancement has come to mean the progressive accumulation of things as well as the increasing capacity to consume... If one manages to buy a new car, if each year sees a major addition to the household - a washing machine, a refrigerator, a new living-room suite, now probably a television set - then one is also getting ahead.³⁰

However, the goals of consumerism were also frequently extended to incorporate dreams of independence, of setting up a small business or farm. Many workers expressed their desire to open garages, grocery stores, bakeries, and tool-and-die shops or talked of starting up 'a tourist place up north' or planned even to become farmers. Chinoy argued therefore that the tradition of self-improvement was still firmly located in the idea of overcoming obstacles such as a lack of education or money by 'having what it takes' and stressing the role of 'character' and 'determination' as key elements in occupational and economic advance.

After the Second World War, powerful and pervasive ideas about class identity created a new paradigm of 'classification' where social groupings might be understood not just in terms of occupation and income but market situation, culture, lifestyle and consumption. The focus of sociological enquiry was no longer limited to the working class and the poor but now much more explicitly directed to probe of the nature of the middle class.³¹ Newspaper readership, carpets and carpeting, and 'attitudes' to everything from sex before marriage to voting behaviour were systematically investigated during the post-

³⁰ *Ibid.* 126.

³¹ Savage, M. (2007), 'Changing Social Class Identities in Post-War Britain: Perspectives from Mass Observation'; in Sociological Research Online, Vol.12 Issue 3, available at <<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/12/3/6.html>, accessed 15 December 2009.

war period in terms of class-based characteristics and diverse criteria of identification. Mass Observation Surveys in December 1948/January 1949 looked at what they described as 'The Class Riddle' and asked their panel of predominantly middle- and lower-middle class Observers (68 women and 107 men) to state what class they considered they belonged to and reflect on the reasons for their answers.³² The report on the survey included a table of comparative incomes showing the economic degeneration of the traditional middle class. But its findings also suggested that in terms of prestige rather than hard economic facts, the middle class was actually expanding because of the growing number of people who now considered themselves as belonging to it. The indecisive and amorphous character of the middle-class groupings that were the object of the study indicated that it was both larger and more diverse than before the war. Many respondents felt that class distinctions were 'far less marked than they used to be'; citing one of the respondents the report stated, 'Today ... we are *all* mixed up: the poor, the well-to-do, the vulgar, the refined are everywhere'.

³²Mass Observation, File Report 3073, December 1948/January 1949, *Middle Class - Why?*. MO posed the following questions: Do you think of yourself as belonging to any particular social class? If so which? Why would you say you belong to this class? Over three quarters of women respondents (76%) and just under three quarters of men (70%) claimed to be middle class, roughly 10 per cent of men and women understood themselves as belonging to the working class, and 22 per cent and 13 percent of men and women respectively claimed to be upper class.

5. Conclusion

We are effectively back where we started in the Introduction to this thesis: 1950 and David Kynaston's evocation of a symbolic threshold between an old and new Britain. The former is understood in terms of economic austerity and national decline, the latter - an embryonic 'modern' (and post modern) Britain, is envisaged as a meritocracy governed through new forms of popular leisure and consumption. This thesis, however establishes an innovatory critical interpretive framework within which to explore a social grouping that does not sit comfortably with an either/or, before and after categorisation that traditional *and* revisionist fashion historical accounts of working- and middle-class, fashionable consumption and diffusion implicitly demand. Kynaston's idea of there being 'no leisurewear' before the 1950s, as the preceding historical account of over a hundred years of popular leisure clothing demonstrates, is clearly misguided. However, what this thesis seeks to challenge is what popular, or rather working-class 'sub-cultural', leisurewear in the 1950s comes to mean within fashion historiography which somehow renders its pre-history, not just irrelevant but somehow *unrelated*. The contestation of a polarized framework of bourgeois hegemony on the one hand and 'authentic' working-class or aesthetic avant garde resistance on the other is a crucial critical impetus to the aims and objectives of this thesis.

Section I therefore reviews a wide-ranging body of scholarly work theorising the previous classification and lack of historical account of the historical lower middle class before the First World War. This Section interrogates the existing literature on virtually every aspect of lower-middle-class life: work and the socio-economics of shifting market situations and its political dimensions, leisure, domesticity, social relations, and popular cultural representations, although significantly *not clothing*. The objective was to bring these different perspectives together in a cohesive historical account - a task not in itself without critical import. This is a class whose supposed essential diversity and heterogeneity generates an classificatory uncertainty and a consequent lack of historical

account. But this oft-repeated justification for previous academic neglect is exacerbated when even such research and writing that has previously been undertaken into examining the lower middle class in Britain is characterized by a tendency towards critical and historiographical isolationism. The establishment of a unifying interpretive framework was clearly a significant part in the foundation of this thesis, particularly in putting forward a concept of the lower middle class as an essentially fluid but nevertheless discrete category for class-based critical enquiry. However, this in itself was not the main purpose of Section 1's detailed overview. The aim was rather to establish a critical springboard for the exploration of the power of leisure as a conduit for the negotiation of classed and gendered identities in modernity. Fashion and dress can be understood as a complex of embodied social practices. This thesis argues this was differentially and distinctively expressed in and through participation in new forms of leisure by new and emerging social groupings, including the lower middle class, from the late nineteenth century.

The nineteenth century witnessed the cumulative development of very specific forms of working and leisure and sporting clothing. These were governed by a whole range of location, occasion and activity specific dress codes and conventions across a gendered *and* classed divide. What this thesis has sought to emphasize and assert in Section 2 is how, for an aspirational lower middle class, leisure clothing and its oppositional relationship with work and working clothing *together* created a radical social dynamic which in many ways cut across the boundaries imposed by birth and prior socio-economic circumstance. Leisure and the self-conscious fashioning of a distinctively leisured body was a powerful subjective vehicle of gender and class relations in modernity because it, *as much as work*, visibly displayed what it was to *be* modern. The progressive development of the rational recreational leisured body assumes a particular significance, because in charting its evolution one can identify a trajectory of middle-class prescription and working and lower middle class negotiation and 'resistance' that extends right through not just to the 1950s, but to the present day. The popular leisured body, like the popular working body, evolved in response to the changing conditions of modern life. The parallel development of new forms of recreational clothing was

appropriated by different groupings to articulate a diverse range of ideological motivations, including the simply fashionable. The two should be seen as neither entirely separate, nor completely the result of a reductive socio-economic cause and effect, but rather as a complex dynamic interchange pivotal to the symbolic and material fashioning of a 'modern' urbanity and progressively sub-urbanity. In the context of western modernity, rational recreational leisure functioned like work as a means of expressing particular classed subjectivities, but also as a means of actively *negotiating* structures of class difference. Rational Recreational leisure was not the opposite to work; it was its *visible by-product*. Thus, rather than understanding this in traditional fashion historiographical terms as an oppositional framework of work and leisure and allied repertoires of clothing behaviour, this thesis establishes a new way of looking at a 'hard-working' rational leisured body for whom work and leisure in modernity are neither separate *nor separately fashionably embodied*.

Aspirational Leisure

This thesis uniquely interrogates the aspirational rhetoric of the mainstream suburban classed and gendered leisured body through their appropriation of new forms of rational recreational leisure clothing. It describes how from the mid-nineteenth century popular rational recreational leisure created a whole moral universe, integral to which was the self-conscious fashioning of 'healthy citizenship'. Participation in a range of 'rational' leisure activities, and crucially, its spectacular affirmation through clothing, effectively mapped out the ideological boundaries of a bourgeois imagination that was realized spatially and embodied sartorially. However, what this thesis demonstrates is how an historical lower middle class in Britain, as much as any other class, negotiated an evolving symbolic and material 'landscape' of modern work and modern leisure through new forms of popular consumption. In this, the thesis disputes the easy assumption of this particular social grouping's lack of social and sartorial agency and an allied system of 'emulation' and imitation that continues to define prejudicial class-based judgements of mainstream clothing behaviour and their stereotypical representation.

This thesis has sought to emphasize how an idealized, middle-class rhetoric of anti-commercialism belied the centrality of bourgeois economic interests to the discourse of rational recreation and the production and reproduction of healthy citizens, workers, mothers and soldiers. It exposes how the scale and scope of such a discourse also functioned to reveal wider cultural anxieties about the threats posed by social and status incursion. The misguided ambition of an aspiring and prosperous working and lower middle class was constantly under attack. Accusations of shoddy imitation functioned as the pivotal conceptual catch-all of an anti-consumerist rhetoric that controlled and contained not the new-found prosperity of an expanding *nouveaux riches* class, but the idea that these lower-middle-class upstarts could somehow 'buy' social status through new forms of consumption. Within such rhetoric, inherent or 'authentic' middle-class good taste was understood as above monetary value to provide a reassuring emotional and cultural bulwark against the threat of social incursion. What this thesis demonstrates is how the lower middle class *themselves* came to formulate their own rhetoric of rational recreational leisure that also produced and reproduced its own particular moral, aesthetic and socio-economic value system since the nineteenth century.

There is a tendency within the social historical discourse of class relations in Britain to see any social constituency below the middle class as a vast homogenous group – 'the' working class - in a way that avoids or fails to recognize the need to see them in terms of diverse and highly-tuned and subtle social hierarchies that shift over time. Such accounts expediently avoid addressing the lower middle class but more importantly rarely question, for example, what distinguishes the cultures of skilled from unskilled workers, or what separates the respectable from the dissolute, or a pre-industrial artisan class from a post industrial labour aristocracy, their shared differentiation from a 'labouring class' and moreover what differentiates the numerous hierarchies of retail and manufacturing trades that made up the petite bourgeoisie from those of the expanding clerical and professional class? A rigid theoretical orthodoxy of particular classed identities often implies periods of unchanging stability, or a set of fixed *a priori* commensurable conditions, or an inherent set of cultural characteristics or political and ideological affiliations. This is equally problematic for any understanding of class

history.¹ However, the ways in which the lower middle class in Britain continue to be defined and described in terms of absence or at best, 'petty-ness' - literally and with regard to political consciousness, aesthetic and moral sensibilities and even physical stature, suggests to this research not how accurate these concepts are but how powerful the insecurities that motivate such attacks and omissions remain.

'Routes'

In tracing the geographical growth of the suburbs since the last decades of the nineteenth century one can trace the physical *and* psychic routes of lower-middle-class desire and aspiration again as a dynamic social and sartorial interchange. C. Duncan Lewis in describing 'Cycling London' at the turn of the century gets to the suburban heart of the matter: 'The daily exchange of workers is in progress, London gives to the suburbs and the suburbs gives to London'.² This route to enhanced social status which contained within it the very core of lower-middle-class 'respectability' and independence, created its own system of symbolic exchange through its inter-relationship with the greener outskirts and the still rural countryside that lay beyond the neat terraced villas and the suburban 'semis'. The distance commuted inwards to the city was roughly comparable to the distance travelled outwards to the surrounding countryside in trains and buses and/or on foot, on bicycle - similarly organised to fit around the working week and the temporal and physical constraints of the social and economic geography of suburban aspiration. Guide books and maps literally and metaphorically charted the ambiguous negotiation of the suburbanite's particular relationship with recreational 'escape' and allied concepts of 'mobility' that were integral to lower-middle-class subjective identification and its collective classed imagination.

¹ For example Ian Procter has problematized the idea of the progressive privatization of the working class in the twentieth century. He is not suggesting that working-class life has remained unchanged but that the whole concept of a 'traditional working class' is a millstone around the understanding of working-class history because 'It implies a period of unchanging stability... suddenly ruptured by sudden change, usually the Second World War, followed by something completely different, embourgeoisement, privatisation, mass culture or whatever'.

² Duncan Lewis 1903: 253.

People (shoppers, workers), goods and services became part of a circulatory system opened up by the railway network that Wolfgang Schivelbusch argues transformed people's relationship with their environment. The landscaped was changed into a compartmentalised and commodified experience of nineteenth-century industrialization that could be *moved through* and viewed as a panorama of potential consumption.³ New forms of social interaction and perception emerged that defined modernity as part of this developing consciousness and a growing awareness of the possibilities that modern urban life was able to offer, to both men and women. The popular media disseminated widespread anxieties around the degenerating effects and moral void of the modern city. However, newspapers, club and other organizational literature, and numerous special interest magazines all promoted tours that were always within bicycling range of large towns and suburban conurbations. Bourgeois and petit-bourgeois ideals of a great 'escape' from the city and a return to nature were thus always undertaken on roads that were not too rough, in areas that were not inhospitable and via routes where there was little chance of getting lost. Numerous maps and guides were published detailing the best roads and routes out of the suburban often semi-rural hinterland that most consumers inhabited and frequently indicating where railroad stations were accessible for longer journeys. As Tobin observes describing 'bicycle fever' in the USA in the late nineteenth century:

On the surface, the tenor of this vast literature suggested that the urbanite was seemingly driven by a dislike for the city to escape to nature. But a much more subtle phenomenon was occurring than some overt expression of anti-urbanism. In fact, the bicycle tourist demonstrated an overt pro-urban predilection... They cyclist wished to view nature, not wander off into its inhospitable uncertainty.⁴

Section 2.5 in this thesis emphasizes the centrality of lower-middle-class aspiration to the expanding commodification *and* commercial exploitation of such desire. Small shops and parades grew up to service the needs of those who sought to 'escape' out along the sub-urban, semi-rural routes of lower-middle-class recreational leisure. Larger

³ Schivelbusch, W. (1980), *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford: Blackwell.

⁴ Tobin, G. (1974), 'The Bicycle Boom of the 1890s: The Development of Private Transportation and the Birth of the Modern Tourist' in *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. VII, Issue 4: 75.

shops and department stores such as Gamages of London equally exploited advances in transportation and the advent of a cheap, reliable, and universal postal service to meet the demands of the suburban recreationist. Both large and small suppliers and retailers opened up a direct line of communication between producers and consumers of both large and small items, at home and abroad. The Gamage's Catalogue of 1913 spelt it out: 'You may be 30 to 35 miles distant from London; and yet within the radius of our Free Motor Delivery Service... Goods Delivered DIRECT FROM OUR DOOR TO YOURS...' Gamage's success lay in their ability to extend the facility for entertaining and informative consumption, and the contemplative pleasure of 'just looking' to those consumers unable to visit the shop in person as well as their regular week-day customers in their leisure hours - although many of the clerks who frequented the store in the week did return at the weekend to shop with their families. On the eve of the Easter Holiday break in 1907, an advertisement noted: 'With Thursday at 6pm hundreds of thousands - you among them we trust - will get out into the country: forget the cares of the business, the workshop and the office - and rest. The best rest thousands of you have is plenty of outdoor exercise. Get in touch with Nature...'.⁵

A range of urban 'types' were discursively formulated and disseminated, not least in the visual and textual rhetoric of the trade and specialist press. What this thesis describes is how recreational leisure clothing and accessories were promoted in a way that *specifically targeted* a distinctive body of suburban lower-middle class consumers but equally acknowledged the diversity of different and disparate leisure enthusiasts that progressively existed *within* this broad social grouping. The trade and popular media created a trope of popular rational recreational discourse through their descriptions of a diverse repertoire of sartorially and socially aspirational clothing choices for both men *and* women beyond mere socio-economic circumstance. In situating lower-middle-class rational recreational leisure consumption in the context of wider socio-economic imperatives this thesis has sought to evidence the generative power of mainstream popular consumption in bringing about fashion change.

⁵ *Daily Mail*, 27 March 1907.

This thesis argues that the aspirational lower middle class in Britain were integral to the mechanisms of technological and social change that shaped a 'modern' classed and gendered identity. Increasing innovations in mass manufacturing processes, retail, and promotion broke up the wardrobe into an almost infinite number of *affordable* fashionable and functional elements. This allowed new consumers to *negotiate* at a material and symbolic level the highly complex coded boundaries of both gender and class in a way previously confined to the privileged and wealthy. What emerges is the idea of a self-consciously fashioned, *specifically* leisured body - but one that could be adapted and appropriated in different ways by both men and women to articulate differences within and between different social groupings and various leisure activities. This should be seen as neither completely an act of autonomous agency nor entirely constrained by social convention. It does however illustrate the distinctive relationship of the lower-middle class to the production *and* consumption of such a body within a landscape of suburban aspiration understood as a contested space, open to constant negotiation and acts of both conformity and challenge.

Mobility: The Rhetoric of Lower-Middle-Class Modernity

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century the expansion of mass popular leisure and leisure clothing provided opportunities for socio-economic advance as well as its spectacular display through innovations in industrial production, manufacturing processes, new forms of technology, promotion and retailing. These all in H.G. Wells' phrase functioned as 'wheels of chance' for lower-middle-class entrepreneurship, petit-bourgeois expansion, and widening job opportunities in shops, garages, workshops and offices. The ideology of improvement and advance was the historical cog in the wheel of lower-middle-class opportunism across gender boundaries. This is evidenced in the encouragement of daughters into certain forms of employment before marriage and the centrality of companionate marriage to lower-middle-class advance, often through work in family shops and businesses after marriage. Cast in the form of a personal epistle, Thomas Crosland's most vituperative comments attacking *The Suburbans* were reserved

for lower-middle-class wives and mothers as the principal agent in the degeneration of English modern manhood. It was money that 'made the mare go' but also rendered the suburban male redundant as they found a new independence in the home and in the workplace. In Crosland's view it was the suburban female who was the principal agent in bringing about such a change; the idea of girls earning their own living had its rise in Suburbia 'as surely as Providence made little apples'. The extent and scope of such attacks, of which Crosland's is typical rather than extreme, demonstrates not how derisory but how dangerous such aspirations were to the middle-class status quo.

The ways in which diverse groups within the lower middle class used both recreational leisure, and assuredly adapted and appropriated various forms of its clothing and its sartorial codes and conventions, demonstrates how popular participation and consumption was the site of much more contradictory and conflicting meanings in relation to issues of class and gender. Susan Pennybaker, a key source in the exploration in this thesis of the stereotypical image of lower-middle-class sub-urbanity, argues:

[M]ixed imagery obligingly supports the case for a variegated "lower middle class". Certainly the diversity and the heterogeneity of those who may have identified themselves as such wrought havoc on the utility of the category as sociology. A single individual inhabited multiple, fluctuating social identities, or tried to do so ... Still, this very contradictory discursive presence of the "lower middle class" gave it a kind of "real" existence and reflected the palpable tensions of the metropolitan environment.⁶

All classes, but *including* those social groupings that constituted the historical lower middle class, negotiated an evolving symbolic and material 'landscape' of modern leisure by using similar clothes to articulate a diverse range of ideological motivations, including the simply fashionable. However, this thesis would argue, and the cumulative visual evidence presented here would suggest, that the expanding lower middle class had a specific and particular relationship with the spectacular production and consumption of a progressively commodified recreational leisured body in a way that was different and distinctive from other classes. For the lower-middle class, perhaps

⁶ Pennybaker 1999: 42-44.

uniquely, images of men and women on bicycles or rambling in the countryside were always both creational and re-creational. The commodified leisured body and its fashionable consumption visibly signalled ideological and social partisanship, *but it was always also* one that was manufactured, stocked and sold *by* the lower middle class *to* the lower middle class.

For an aspirant entrepreneurial lower middle class, recreational leisure provided opportunities not only to indulge their own individual leisure interests but also to service the needs of others'. Every part of the recreational leisured body was commodified and broken up into accessible, affordable elements in a whole package of aspirational opportunities through which *everyone, both men and women*, might be able to self-consciously fashion an idealized modern gendered and classed leisured identity. Accessorization and the cut and design of boxier, looser jackets, skirts and trousers that could be mixed and matched were, and remain, the fundamental basis of modern systems of mass manufacture and fashionable diffusion. What this thesis specifically interrogates, using a wide range of primary sources, is the extent to which lower-middle-class aspiration and consumption was its engine *not its mere imitator*. It argues that new forms of popular leisure clothing both conformed to *and* challenged middle-class conceptions of appropriate behaviour and dress as a direct response and stimulus to rapid technological innovation and wider social change.

The role of lower-middle-class women was an extremely significant generative force in the development of practical, functional affordable ready-made clothing for both work *and* leisure that is rarely acknowledged. The spectacular and controversial actions of a relative minority of independently wealthy dress reformists and an aesthetic and literary avant garde tend to overshadow the ways in which ready-to-wear serge costumes, shorter skirts, blouses and ties worn by typists, secretaries and shop assistants were also in their own way radical. There is a need to address an implicit hierarchical value system that inflects feminist approaches to women's work and fashionable dress that whilst it purportedly critiques the limitations that the oppressive conditions of patriarchy still

tends to focus on particular examples of feminine resistance outside of and 'against the grain' of mainstream 'High Street' consumption.

The research undertaken in this thesis, therefore, evidences how, historically, rational recreational leisure participation was always part of wider understandings of lower-middle-class social aspiration because both were inextricably bound up in a circuit of desire for 'something better' that was inseparable from the economic conditions of its achievement and its spectacular display. The purpose is not a revisionist valorisation of the lower middle class as some kind of heroic and overlooked social grouping striking a blow in the class struggle. Clearly, *like any other class*, many of the lower middle class were driven by envy, acquisitiveness and self-interest. The problem comes in the ways in which such attributes have come to be seen as wholly representative of 'the' lower middle class rather than sections within it, and more significantly, to the exclusion of other classes by virtue of equally monolithic classificatory systems of identification. Stanislaw Ossowski in his critical analysis of the structuration of social classes maintains, 'As we know, facts are powerless against stereotypes supported by emotional motivations'.⁷

Participation in rational recreational leisure and rational recreational clothing functioned as the spectacular demonstration of lower middle class social aspiration because it incorporated both superficial and more deep-seated expressions of classed subjectivities. For the lower middle class the conditions of such participation were always integral rather than secondary to the traditional avenues of social, educational and cultural 'improvement'. Thus, this thesis argues, lower-middle class leisure activities and their self-conscious fabrication and fashionable embodiment could never exist outside of the equally powerful generative concepts of economic or social 'advance' that were both *their end and their means*. If, at an intellectual level, rational recreational participation and the British countryside functioned in opposition to commerce - at least symbolically - for the historical lower middle class such concepts were always much more closely

⁷ Ossowski 1963: 38, also see particularly Chapter III 'The Scheme of Gradation'.

inter-related through the ideology of socio-economic and cultural opportunism that lay at the very heart of what it was to *be* lower middle class.

‘Battles’ for the Countryside

The ‘geography’ of rational recreational leisure is explored in detail in Section 3 in relation to the complex socio-economic and politically divisive conditions of Britain in the aftermath of the First World War. The thesis sought to demonstrate how the ‘landscape’ of inter-war leisure did not develop as an impartial, neutral and egalitarian space, but was always inherently connected to the production, legitimization and reproduction of existing and emerging class-based perspectives and their power relations. In Phillip Abrahms’ critique of the post-1918 settlement, the failure of the inter-war coalition to address the housing needs of millions of inner-city slum-dwellers functions as a political parable of wider vacillation and abandonment, and the power of what would now be termed nationalistic ‘spin’.⁸ Although from a very different perspective, for this research the effects of the inter-war housing policy and a socio-economic climate of relative prosperity also provided a crucial interpretive context for understanding the inter-connected development and expansion of both suburban recreational leisure activities, and the parallel evolution of new forms of popular recreational leisure clothing. Abrahm’s idea of an increasingly politicized climate of class conflict and antagonism on the one hand, and an expedient idealistic rhetorical vocabulary of social transformation on the other, usefully serves as a way of understanding the discourse of class and class relations in the interwar period and the ambiguous position of the lower middle class within it. Inter-war monetary policies aimed at boosting house building and home ownership in the suburban private sector relied on the rhetoric of ‘aspiration’ and encouraged and promoted the idea of widening participation. This was clearly a message that was enthusiastically received by many within a lower middle class that this thesis has sought to emphasize can now be understood as enjoying some social and economic success. But the dream of owning a new suburban home and enjoying a lower-middle-class suburban lifestyle was one that

⁸ Abrahms, P. (1963), ‘The Failure of Social Reform: 1918-1920’, in *Past & Present*, 24 (1), 43-64.

continued to be bound up in conflicted and highly contentious concepts of 'Englishness', and equally discordant idealized visions of rurality upon which these were frequently based. Middle-class status anxiety and the threat of incursion are clearly very familiar terms when looking at accounts of the rise of the lower middle class since the early nineteenth century, but in the 1920s and 1930s these concepts and their political dimensions assume not just an acute cultural potency in a time of economic despair and a climate of perceived decline, but one that takes on a particular physical form in relation to the English countryside.

As in the nineteenth century, in Britain between the wars an idealized 'class-less' rhetoric of an equitable ladder of social opportunity and leisure access and provision had little foundation in reality. The physiological and psychological boundaries of participation in new forms of rational recreational leisure and the codes and conventions of partisanship were reworked and redrawn through the discursive rhetoric of deep-seated and implicitly class-based judgements on the nature of 'preservation'. What was being preserved and what was under attack took on new meanings in the face of the massive and rapid escalation of 'mass' consumerism and popular leisure that found expression in a particular vision of the British countryside. At a time of heightened insecurity and unrest, a persuasive populist vision of stability and calm was offered by evoking an older timeless and consensual version of British society in terms of a traditional tiered vision of a benign social hierarchy.⁹ The language of 'class' this vision of society promulgated was more concerned with emotive imagery and descriptive metaphors of a polarized but undefined society articulated as the rich or the poor, the few and the many, peers and the people, or with increasing political potency in the 1920s, labour and capital. But such terms were only homogenous in rhetorical terms and

⁹ This idea of the eradication of class divisions in the first half of the twentieth century is usually associated with the work of Carr-Saunders and Caradog Jones and various surveys that were undertaken. They thought class conflict was a 'figment of the imagination' and class-based systems of stratification as 'a theoretical imposition of doubtful value' and inferior to what they defined as the 'social facts' of cultural rather than measurable statistical differences, see Carr-Saunders, A.M. and Caradog Jones, D. (1927), *A Survey of the Social Structure of England and Wales: As Illustrated by Statistics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 115.

largely created by the machinery of political propaganda of various shades rather than being rooted in a society organised into two monolithic classes.¹⁰

Drawing on a nostalgic repertoire of 'classless' allusions, a simple system of ordered individuals comfortably knowing their place was reworked in terms of the contemporary environment and re-invented in a new language of 'the people' - a virtuous majority that could somehow be accommodated by all sides of the political spectrum..¹¹ The concept of 'Nationhood' and, in particular, the symbolism of the English countryside offered all the main political parties a far more ideologically comfortable way of containing the threats posed by the demise of the old social order on the one hand, and the failure to bring this about on the other. Across the so-called political and rhetorical social 'divide' the idea of a two party, two class nation in reality created an amorphous and expedient fudge that could once more be poured into the elastic definitions of the left, right and centre ground - but which frequently found expression in an anti-consumerist attack on a 'vocal' working and a prosperous lower middle class perceived to be 'on the up'.

The work of cultural geographer David Matless is an important source for this thesis. Matless problematizes romanticized versions of a timeless 'traditional' English landscape in the twentieth century. He argues that the concept of a 'rural idyll' might be representative of an anti-modern conservatism, but it was also an essential part of envisioning and re-visioning a landscape of English modernity. Hence, the rural always 'needs to be understood in terms relative to those of the city and suburb, and approached as a heterogeneous field'.¹² For Matless, nostalgic and historic concepts of the English countryside and idylls of rurality therefore, are not at odds with modernity and historic concepts of 'the modern', but are rather two faces of the same coin. This is clearly of some importance to this thesis and its analysis of a comparable evolving 'landscape' of suburban lower-middle-class social aspiration. By looking at those who were frequently the object of elitist critiques and attempts to control and define both the British countryside and those who peopled it, the evidence of this thesis suggests the need to

¹⁰ Cannadine 1983: 113.

¹¹ McKibbin 1990: 25-26.

¹² Matless 1998: 17.

now understand such a landscape on its own terms, ie as integral to new but equally important mainstream aesthetic visions of modernity. Section 3 outlines how the rural tradition and expressions of idealized ruralism that preservationists attempted to safeguard were also inseparable from the suburban dream that so many working people 'bought into' in the 1930s. Paradoxically, preservationist *and* suburban understandings of such a landscape arguably became a shared vision of modernity through a unifying ideology of 'England' and 'Englishness' borne out of socio- political and economic crises. This was equally realized *spatially* through the continued growth of the suburbs as the object of both lower-middle-class desire *and* middle- and upper-middle-class disdain and disgust. For the aspirational lower middle class the symbolic and the economic together found meaningful material expression in the very act of living in 'modern' suburbs rooted in the rural heritage of *their* version of 'Tudorbethan' England. Suburban participation in rational recreational leisure cycling and hiking out into the green belt beyond the boundaries of outer London or Manchester becomes part of a distributive network of modernity and the suburbanites' understanding and adaptation of the liminal space between town and country on *their* terms and to *their own* purpose.

In historical accounts of interwar outdoor recreation, 'access' is predominantly understood in terms of the rhetoric of 'preservation' closely linked with the escalation of a long-standing 'battle' for the right of 'the people' to freely roam the mountains, moorland and huge expanses of countryside owned by a privileged minority.¹³ This thesis has sought to argue that, on a number of levels, access to the countryside was a class 'battle' that can be seen to have been much more comprehensively waged when the concept of social 'trespass' and the geography of improvement is extended to the expansion of the suburban lower middle class between the wars. A disparate range of competing and conflicting vested interests constituted a forum for constant ideological and political conflict about what was seen as 'appropriate' behaviour, clothing and access for the 'masses', and the masses' own ideas of what they wanted do, where they wanted to go, and how they wanted to get there and, significantly for this research, what

¹³ Taylor, H. (1997), *A Claim on the Countryside: A History of the British Outdoor Movement*, Edinburgh, Keele University Press.

they wanted to wear in order to do it. Certain 'urban types' were distinguished by their rowdiness: walking arm in arm playing ukuleles, wearing inappropriate clothing.

Outdoor and recreational leisure activities, integral to which were shifting concepts of the British countryside and access to it, continued to be understood as symbolic of wider democratic freedoms. The clash of the commercial and the 'natural' came to define the modern condition from the nineteenth century. But in the twentieth century the countryside and the *desire* to participate in particular kinds of recreational activities together functioned as a way of promulgating class-based myths around what were seen as 'inherent' aesthetic and cultural qualities that were somehow 'beyond' monetary value - and thus the reach of those lower down the social scale. What this thesis questions is not the validity of such an idea, but how such a concept was equally incorporated into the alternative visions of modern life created in the actions and beliefs of the various social groupings that make up the aspirational suburban lower middle class in Britain.

Dressing Up, Moving On

In the nineteenth century the adoption of new forms of rational recreational leisure activities functioned as a yardstick of bourgeois modernity because it was emblematic of a wider understanding of a new order of economic and social advance. Between the Wars, a sense of 'partisanship' was evidenced in an inherent sense of understanding the countryside and its ways reinforced through a differential discourse of 'preservation' and 'protection' that was projected on to the English countryside. The advantages experienced by the lower middle class in shifts in the inter-war economy that impacted on their perception of the attainability of a more affluent quality of life had important implications for leisure and what leisure *meant*. The politicized nature of wider cultural anxieties around the continued growth of the suburbs were transposed on to an English landscape that was the means by which such fears were supposedly rendered but which also demonstrates the key role that rational recreational leisure once more played in the

historical momentum of lower-middle-class ‘improvement’ in the face of middle-class attempts to control and contain it.

The late 1920s and 1930s marked a turning point in the design, manufacture and consumption of rational recreational leisure clothing for both men and women. Sections 3 and 4 in this thesis evidence the evolution of new types of practical, comfortable and swiftly highly fashionable multi-functional jackets as a staple of outdoor and recreational leisure clothing. These jackets incorporated advances in synthetic yarns and fabric and new forms of fastening technology stimulated by the war and the demands of large-scale production on the wartime chemical and textile industries. In the 1930s, the practical lightweight waterproof jacket offered the mainstream consumer what the Norfolk jacket once had: a fashionable practicality at a price they could afford, and clothing suitable to a range of different social occasions and geographical situations. Both before and after the Second World War, mainstream consumers benefited from advances in fabric technology and innovations in fastenings such as zips and elasticated cuffs that were once the experimental designs of the high-end performance market. They also bought expensive ‘high visibility’ specialist items such as boots and rucksacks that produced maximum functional *or* fashionable effect for a relatively small investment. Even in a time of austerity brought about by wartime conditions, new avenues of fashionable agency opened up that support the much more ambiguous reading of mainstream consumption and its relationship with class-based processes of social and sartorial identification put forward in this thesis. The emergence of new forms of consumer capitalism after the Second World War, it argues, once more provided new opportunities for the expression and celebration of lower-middle-class values and beliefs.

Perhaps the visual evidence presented in this research offers the most compelling case for recognizing firstly, the significance of the complex relationship that exists between the power ideology and generative force of lower-middle-class social aspiration and rational and outdoor recreational leisure participation; secondly, a way of understanding its embodiment through the production and consumption of new forms of leisure

clothing as a self-conscious strategy in realising lower-middle-class ideals of improvement and advance. From the 1880s, the popular cultural image of the suburban man and woman 'awheel' came to symbolize mainstream modernity itself in the promotion of every possible consumable from boot polish to cocoa, and from cigarettes to absinthe. However, representation of the lower-middle class continues to be dominated by their characterization as physically, politically and culturally diminutive, narrow-minded and ruled by a grey conformity of spirit. This is only further reinforced by a belief in a lack of collective political organisation and thus class consciousness incubated in the inward-looking and isolating conditions of the suburbs themselves. However, this arguably reveals as much about traditional middle-class status anxiety as it does about lower-middle-class ambition generated by bitterness and envy, or a supposed paucity of aesthetic judgement. This thesis has sought to evidence the spectacular success of the lower middle class that, in its most literal form, made clear the threats posed by their potential to overcome educational and social disadvantages to mobility and professional advance, and other equally powerful but more implicit strategies of middle-class socio-cultural exclusion.

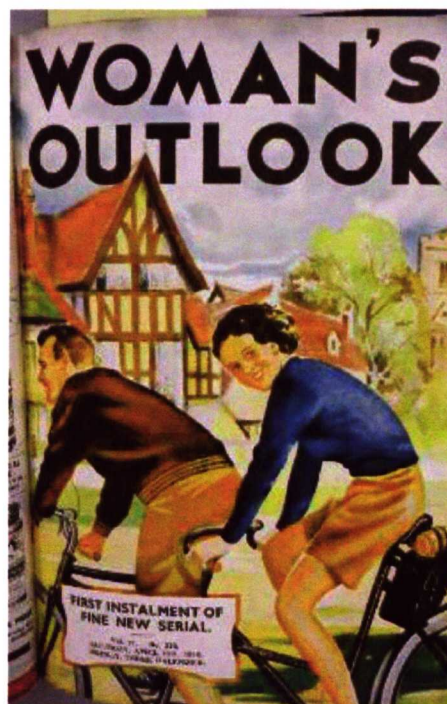


Fig. 169 *Woman's Outlook*, 11 April 1936

This thesis challenges a stereotypical view promulgated in popular and critical literature of such consumers and their aesthetic judgements as ones characterized by superficiality, or physically degenerative urban ‘types’, or indeed of narrow-minded isolated inverts. It argues that it was rather the very opposite: suburban popular leisure participation and its representation since the nineteenth century is dominated by images of young, good looking and fit men, and pro-active independent young women, cycling or walking usually in pairs and increasingly after the First World War in large groups. In fact it is the rhetoric of middle-class exclusivity and the ideology of ‘preservation’ that extols the values of ‘lone’ communion with nature. It is the traditional middle class that promoted the imagery of the single ‘pilgrim of scenery’ amongst the wilderness to counter the ‘hordes’ of suburban hikers that flooded out to the countryside every weekend, effectively individuals from the social groupings that are the focus of this thesis. The rapid expansion of recreational leisure and its equally swift co-option into popular representation, manufacturing, retailing and promotion arguably posed an additional threat because its ideology remained the essential bulwark of the comfortable stoicism of the middle-class Protestant imaginary. The suburban lower middle class who participated in such activities evidenced in personal and club photographs their ability to enjoy the opportunities offered through new forms of consumption and leisure once the exclusive domain of the privileged. The promotional rhetoric of trade and popular media equally offer an alternative iconography of suburban mainstream modernity through a visual and textual rhetoric of aspiration and accessibility.

The extensive primary research undertaken has sought to demonstrate how the ideology of rational recreation was an elemental factor in the shifting ideology of lower middle class social aspiration in modernity. The fashionable embodiment of a widespread rhetoric of healthy citizenship is evidenced in this social grouping’s adoption *and appropriation* of particular forms of clothing as a self-conscious act of self-realisation. The ambiguous discourse of lower-middle-class socio-economic ‘improvement brought together the symbolic and the material in a way that cuts across the boundaries of gender. For the men and women who constituted the social grouping who are the focus

of this thesis, social status allied to participation in such activities, never operated solely according to a simple trickle-down hierarchy of middle-class good taste, nor was it necessarily divided along a prescriptive gender divide. This thesis argues that motivated by lower-middle-class ideals of *mobility*, both individual and collective participation implied a spectacular fashioning of different levels of ideological partisanship grounded in a particular, but equally 'authentic' vision of mainstream modernity.

A major aim of this thesis is to evidence how longstanding lower-middle-class ideals such as thrift, temperance and respectability did not merely rubber-stamp middle-class values but equally generated their own systems of interpretation based on their independent religious and social convictions.¹⁴ 'Respectability' was a fundamental part of a pre-industrial artisan class but it was also an evolving and reactionary response to a particular social reality including the coercive structures of mid-Victorian capitalism.¹⁵ The ideals might have been intrinsically linked to a middle-class value system, but a mix of romantic idealism and rational utilitarian aspiration were the product of 'a cultural inheritance common to all classes.. [that] embodied elements derived from a common culture inherited from the past'.¹⁶ If lower-middle-class formal and informal participation in rational recreational activities visibly displayed acquiescence to middle-class conformity and ideological authority, then so it also very visibly displayed distinctive class-based differentials that disrupted any easy equations being made about either imitative systems of emulation or ideological motivation. The various social groupings that made up the modern lower middle class did not automatically disguise their social origins but frequently made abundantly clear the socio-economic and cultural conditions of their distinctive participation. Membership of autodidactic institutes, trade and staff associations, local suburban clubs, non-conformist churches, and political organisations was visibly displayed in the very action of taking part.

¹⁴ For example, the temperance movement was a pan-class movement and had moral and spiritual foundation that was grounded in working-class radicalism and thus served as the basis for the formulation of a political platform for social change, see Harrison, B.(1968), 'Temperance Societies' in *Local Historian*, No.8: 135-138 see also Harrison, B. (1968), 'Religion and Recreation in Nineteenth Century England' in *Past and Present*, No.38(1): 98-125.

¹⁵ Bailey 1998: 31.

¹⁶ See Tholfsen, T.R. (1976), *Working-Class Radicalism in Mid-Victorian England*, London: Croom Helm Ltd: 16

Cycling runs, rallies and matches, rambles and other club events self-evidently expressed a collective sense of participants' own particular place in the social hierarchy through a shared occupational, religious, residential, and educational affiliation that was then proudly displayed in the badges, sashes and uniforms of lower-middle class suburban fellowship.

This thesis has sought to evidence textually and visually the ways in which this alternative class-based understanding of modernity and its fashionable embodiment has from the late nineteenth-century been presented and represented, produced and reproduced. Popular cultural ideals of modernity, and a contemporary *mainstream* sense of popular fashionability both generated and was a response to a distinctive visual typology and textual rhetoric of lower-middle-class aspiration. Improvement and advance in the widest sense was differentially and distinctively conceptualized in terms of *mobility*: the forward motion of both men *and* women on bikes, or on foot, singly, and in pairs, but predominantly as couples facing the future, weathering the storms, looking outwards, and more importantly upwards, to a better future. This thesis has demonstrated how such aspiration has been historically mapped out in modernity according to an autonomous and very specific understanding of the nature and possible 'routes' of lower-middle-class socio-economic success – but, more crucially, one always visualized *as inseparable from its aesthetic realization and fashionable embodiment*.

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All photographs of the Polytechnic Rambling Club (PCR), and Polytechnic Cycling Club (PCC) are by kind permission of the University of Westminster Archive

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The Land Girls: Cinderellas of the Soil held at Brighton Museum Art Gallery, 3 October
2009 - 14 March 2010. Curator, Amy de la Haye

"What About Us?" Oral Historical Approaches to Fashion Dress and Textiles, held at
University of the Arts London, London College of Fashion, 14 September 2007.

A Day in the Sun: Outdoor Pursuits in Art in the 1930s, Djanogly Art Gallery, Lakeside
Arts Centre Nottingham, 18 February - 9 April, 2006 and The Lowry, Salford Quays, 29
April - 25 June 2006

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

Parliamentary Debates, 17 March 1881, Volume 259.

Parliamentary Debates, 13 March 1882, Volume 267.

Parliamentary Debates, 28 June 1883, Volume 280.

Parliamentary Debates, 16 March 1900, Volume 80.

Parliamentary Debates, 29 October 1918, Volume 110.

House of Commons, Official Report Fifth Series, 11 February 1919

Ministry of Munitions, *Surplus*,

2 June 1919.

1 November 1919.

PhD. THESIS

Ichihasi, H. (1994), *Working Class Leisure in English Towns 1945 to 1960 with Special
Reference to Coventry and Bolton*, unpublished PhD. thesis in Social History,
University of Warwick.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Interviews were carried out over a 14 month period between August 2007 and September 2008 with seven participants, six women and one man individually and as a group, as follows:

Len P., Aged 85, born in Deptford, South London, Father's Occupation: Shoe repairer in own shop in Friendly Street, Deptford, Mother: ex-seamstress, 1 older sister Connie, and one older brother Charlie who was killed in Italy in the last months of World War II.
Date of Interview: 18 September 2007

Win (Winifred) P. Aged 83, born in Lewisham South London, Father's Occupation: Master Locksmith (shopkeeper), Mother: ex-cook
[did not wish to be interviewed directly but present at interviews of Len, and the female participants]

Sheila J., Aged 83, born in Grove Park, South London, Father's Occupation: Clerk
Date of Interview: 22 February 2008

'The Macs' [four sisters]:

Introductory Joint Interview, Pat M., Phyll M. and Doff M.: 20 August 2007 (Transcript Appendix C)

Pat (Patricia) M., Aged 85 born in Charlton, South London, Father's Occupation: Thames Lighterman, married Derek c. 1948
Date of Interview: 16 April 2008

Phill (Phillis) M., Aged 82 [twin] Aged 80 details as Pat's, married Ken M.
Date of Interview: 15 June 2008

Ruby M. Aged 82, [twin] details as Pat's, married Eric P.
Date of Interview: 6 September 2008

Doff (Dorothy) M., details as Pat's, Aged, 80 married Alan P. [Eric's brother]
Date of Interview: 4 July 2008