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'A place for everyone, and everyone must find the right place': Recruitment to British Civil Defence in the Second World War

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This chapter will analyse the recruitment techniques employed by Britain's civil defence services before and during the Second World War. Recruitment depended upon a combination of national and local efforts, with formal publicity campaigns complemented by more informal methods. Using a diverse range of sources – recruitment material, local and national government records, newspaper reports, civil defence magazines and personal testimony – the chapter analyses the development of recruitment strategies alongside the motivations described by volunteers. While national and local publicity was crucial for developing an understanding of civil defence roles and duties, it was often personal persuasion or international events that pushed individuals to volunteer.

In June 1940, an editorial in *The Daily Mail* told readers that every adult in the country should adopt a new motto, 'It all depends on me', continuing: 'in air-raid precautions there will be a place for everyone, and everyone must find the right place'.[1] Civil defence – also known as Air Raid Precautions or ARP – offered a wide range of work on the home front, in the air raid warden, firewatch, rescue, first aid, ambulance, decontamination, and fire services. The success of recruitment into these roles was frequently praised. Herbert Morrison, for example, told the House of Commons in June 1941 that 'This army of civil defence people, the vast majority of whom are unpaid, volunteer, and spare-time, is extraordinarily typical of the character, the spirit, courage, and the grit of the British people, fighting at times with their backs to the wall'.[2]

There has, however, been relatively little scholarly attention paid to methods of recruitment into the service. Where recruitment is considered, the difficulty of attracting volunteers has been highlighted, as personnel were poorly paid and often inadequately equipped, and they faced public criticism as civil defence was branded an unnecessary waste of money and volunteers were accused of 'army dodging'.[3] This chapter considers the diverse methods used to attract volunteers in this context. Building on the work of Brendan Maartens, who has considered the pre-war national recruitment campaign, and Lucy Allwright, who has provided detailed analysis of events in London, we show that national and local government worked closely together and that these formal efforts were complemented by personal persuasion as well as international events.[4] Despite the language of inclusivity used by politicians, Lucy

Noakes and Susan Grayzel have shown that representation of civil defence remained deeply gendered, and Noakes has explored how recruitment material was used to maintain gender hierarchies.[5] Yet, we argue, informal recruitment methods not only served as a powerful persuasive tool, they could also cut across these divisions.

Administration

Civil defence was a response to the expectation that the bombing of civilians would be central to any future conflict. The First World War had shown the devastating impact of aerial bombardment and convinced authorities of the need to prepare. This process began in 1924 with the establishment of the Committee of Imperial Defence Sub-Committee on Air Raid Precautions, but remained secret until 1935, and recruitment did not begin until the formation of an air raid wardens service by the Home Office in March 1937. Nonetheless, the proposals put forward in these early plans established a series of principles that remained significant throughout the war. Structurally, the most important was that the responsibility for recruiting and training personnel rested with local authorities, with the government's role limited to legislation, general publicity and the provision of certain equipment. This division of responsibility was designed to reduce the financial and administrative cost of civil defence by avoiding the replication of existing emergency services. As the Home Office explained in its first circular to local authorities in 1934, it expected that schemes would make 'full use of all existing machinery'.[6]

The Air Raid Precautions Act that came into force on 1 January 1938 put this principle into law and marked the start of active, large-scale recruitment.[7] The ARP sub-committee had thought that roles could be filled by seconding local authority employees to civil defence work and making use of existing voluntary organisations like the Red Cross and St John's Ambulance. By 1935, however, it was obvious that such tactics would not produce the numbers required; the air raid wardens service alone was calculated to need no fewer than 250-350,000 recruits.[8] The tone of this campaign was set by the Home Office's ARP Department, but responsibility remained with local authorities. This can be seen clearly in the case of the Women's Voluntary Services, which was launched in June 1938 initially to encourage women to participate in ARP. The WVS was set up and supported by the Home Office, but could only work in areas with the consent of local authorities.[9]

These plans were put to the test in September 1938, when Britain's civil defence services were temporarily mobilised in response to 'the crisis' in Czechoslovakia. A review after the Munich Agreement led to a greater degree of centralisation with the appointment of Sir John Anderson as the Lord Privy Seal and de facto Minister of Civil Defence. This role gave Anderson control of the ARP Department, although it transferred partial responsibility for recruitment to the Ministry of Labour (after 1939, the Ministry of Labour and National Service). The trend towards centralisation continued after the outbreak of war, when Anderson was given the joint portfolio of Home Secretary and Minister of Security, retaining control of civil defence until his replacement by Herbert Morrison in October 1940. Yet, in line with the ARP Act, central designs always depended upon local implementation, whether by individual local authorities or, during 1939, a quasi-autonomous network of National Service Committees.

The objective of the recruitment drive was to appoint a core of full-time paid staff supported by a much larger pool of unpaid, part-time volunteers. While roles in the warden's service required only introductory training, other jobs were highly skilled; the rescue service was primarily staffed by builders who understood how to safely remove rubble without causing it to collapse and crush any survivors, while the fire service provided lengthy training. The services required different levels of fitness and a much larger age range was accepted within the warden's service. Women were ineligible for many roles and the language used to describe the work was gendered: within first aid, for example, an advertising flyer called for 'Men who are willing to go out into the street in conditions of danger' for parties, while sheltered posts were staffed by women, who 'have always bourn the main burden of caring for the sick and the wounded'.[10]

The complex division of responsibility for recruitment makes it difficult to determine the number of people actually involved in civil defence. Recruitment figures were calculated using self-reported returns from local authorities, which were liable to hide both those who had dropped out of the service and those who participated in less formal ways. Despite limited central auditing, the official history of civil defence determined that the size of the service peaked in December 1943 with 1.85 million members, over eighty per cent of whom served part time.[11] However, the wartime Ministry of Information claimed that 1941 was the peak year, with 1.93 million members, while the National ARP Committee suggested that there were up to 3.25 million engaged in 1942.[12] Local authority statistics suggest that the greatest growth occurred before the war, with 1,208,720 tallied on 31 March 1939.[13] By September 1939, with

an estimated 1.6 million enrolments, the Government was confident that it would reach its objective of some 1.8 million members. However, it also understood that this figure hid serious problems of maldistribution between different localities and different services, with vulnerable urban areas often reporting the largest shortfalls.[14]

In the debate on the ARP Act, Samuel Hoare (the Home Secretary) had described civil defence as the beginning of a 'new chapter in which the Government and the local authorities and the citizens in this country will all co-operate'.[15] Nonetheless, while the principle of civic voluntarism remained important until civil defence was stood down in May 1945, wartime labour shortages challenged the way it worked in practice. The introduction of 'freezing orders' from June 1940 and the potential for conscription for fire-watching under the National Service Act of April 1941 introduced new elements of compulsion, while the inclusion of civil defence in the 1941 Manpower Budget allowed the Ministry of Labour to direct people to take up part-time civil defence duties.[16] Coupled with a wartime focus on the retention and deployment of existing volunteers, these changes marked the end of official recruitment drives. The recruitment effort can therefore be regarded in two parts: the first, during 1938-39, focused on mass enrolment and the second, from 1939 onwards, concerned with specific needs.

National Campaign

The initial challenge facing civil defence recruiters was to explain what ARP measures the government had planned and the role that civilians would play in them. On 14 March 1938, three months after the ARP Act came into force, Samuel Hoare addressed the nation after the BBC's 9pm news. His broadcast, 'The Citizen and Air Raids', came three days after Anschluss and was widely reported in the press. It was the first time that the provisions included in the ARP Act had been shared directly with the public.[17] Hoare trod an awkward line, reassuring listeners that war was not inevitable, while attempting to counter criticism that the government had not done enough. Appealing for one million volunteers to come forward, he argued that strong preparations made war less likely, while stressing that service was a civic duty akin to helping a pedestrian struck by a car. More practically, the broadcast briefly introduced the various services that would make up Britain's passive defences. 'There was', said Hoare, 'a place for everyone who is willing and reasonably fit … Each of you must think tonight how you can best help your country in a moment of need'.[18]

These lines of argument would become hallmarks of the national recruitment drive, which sought to both explain the range of jobs that were available and emphasise that all had a responsibility to be 'active citizens' in wartime.[19] As Noakes has shown, propaganda material urged individuals to put collective needs above individual ones, and 'be willing to risk their life in defence of their family, their community and their nation'.[20] In 1939, the National Service campaign amplified this message. John Anderson explained that he regarded civil defence as a 'service to the community in which all had a part to play', while advertisements stressed that in modern war 'There is no such thing as "they" … On "you" rests the safety of yourself and your family'.[21] The message was repeated again in April 1940, when a reduction in funding for full-time staff led to calls for more part-time volunteers: 'It is for the people of the community to provide their own protection … for every member of the community who can possibly do so to offer himself for training'.[22] The success of this rhetoric is demonstrated by its frequent repetition by civil defence personnel. In the victory edition of a Lewisham civil defence magazine, for example, the chief warden argued that going into peacetime 'every one of us will be a better citizen, and find happiness in giving service and help to our neighbours'.[23]

'The Citizen and Air Raids' also established a mixed media approach to the recruitment campaign. The appeal was followed by other broadcasts, with Hoare appearing again on 23 May when he encouraged listeners to imagine what an air raid would look like in their own area.[24] It was also accompanied by a press release and a leaflet providing further information about the different services and requirements for enrolment.[25] These activities were initially organised by C.W.G. Eady, the civil servant in charge of the ARP Department, but by summer 1938 the department had set up a small public relations division to oversee a renewed campaign planned for the autumn. While this plan was disrupted by the Munich Crisis, John Anderson's appointment ultimately strengthened the government's capacity to undertake publicity work.[26] Indeed, one of Anderson's first acts was to approach Ernest Crutchley, an old colleague and former public relations officer at the General Post Office, to become his director of publicity. Crutchley, in turn, drafted Alexander Highet, the director of the GPO film unit, as his deputy. Their experience working with the media and commercial advertisers played a crucial role in the development of the recruitment campaign.[27]

The use of different media reached its apogee during the National Service campaign. This centred on a forty-eight page handbook that provided information designed to allow people to decide how they could best serve in the event of war. Although not exclusively concerned with

civil defence, the guide was deliberately focused on civilian services and positioned as a continuation of earlier appeals.[28] The Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain launched the handbook during a broadcast appeal for volunteers on 23 January 1939. The first of twenty million copies were delivered the following morning, with almost every household receiving one by the end of the week.[29] A recruitment rally at the Royal Albert Hall provided further publicity, and a panel of speakers including cabinet ministers and prominent figures from local government was formed for similar activities outside London. A fortnight later, Crutchley commissioned the advertising agency W.S. Crawford, which had previously worked with the GPO, to undertake a newspaper advertising campaign from 15 February to the end of March.[30] This was supported by a separate poster campaign and the release of a twenty-minute film, 'The Warning', which ended with a call to service from Anderson. The combination of media was deliberate, reflecting Crutchley and Highet's belief that each would be mutually reinforcing.[31]

The sheer quantity of material produced during the National Service campaign remains striking. Alongside the twenty million handbooks posted to householders, four million recruitment leaflets and around 800,000 posters were printed for distribution by local authorities. These sat alongside millions more leaflets on practical ARP measures.[32] The scale of these activities overshadowed other similar efforts. The newspaper advertising during February and March, for instance, consisted of 118 separate insertions in twenty-five newspapers and cost just under £18,000. To put this in context, the War Office spent £24,000 on army recruitment advertising during the whole of 1938, which had made it the second largest government spender on publicity after the GPO.[33] We have found only one other example of a campaign for voluntary civil defence service that used national newspaper advertising. It took place at the height of the Blitz, when the Ministry of Home Security sought to bolster the number of people working in demolition squads, and consisted of just three advertisements at the cost of £1,100.[34]

Unlike in previous campaigns, there was also an attempt to gauge the impact of the National Service publicity. In April 1939, Dr. A. E. Morgan, a retired academic working with the Ministry of Labour, convinced his superiors to commission the research group Mass Observation to investigate people's motivations for joining civil defence. Its study of volunteers in Fulham found that the majority of people attributed their decision to one of the forms of publicity included in the campaign, even though their reasons were often imprecise.[35]

Those responsible for the campaign had already concluded that the film 'The Warning', which used a mixture of documentary and staged footage to depict a fictional raid on Nottingham, had been the most effective item of publicity. Indeed, anecdotal reports suggested that around 60 per cent of screenings led to an increase in recruitment in the area the film was shown.[36] It would be wrong, however, to view the campaign as an unequivocal success. Practical difficulties affecting the distribution of publicity material led to complaints from local authorities, and recruiters were left frustrated by what they regarded as a lack of interest from the BBC and newsreel companies. In some cases, the publicity campaign also exacerbated long-standing complaints from recruits about inefficient organisation and the haphazard quality of training available. There were similar problems during the first weeks of the war, when a series of appeals were cancelled after delays caused by printing difficulties and a lack of certainty about recruitment needs.[37]

The decision to hold a second large-scale recruitment rally in the final stages of the National Service campaign was partly a response to the difficulties encountered with print and broadcast media. The event, held in London's Hyde Park, was designed to build an *esprit de corps* among existing recruits, while providing a focal point for further recruitment. It culminated with a parade of 20,000 volunteers, who were saluted from a platform by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.[38] Tens of thousands more civilians turned out to watch the procession, which featured military and civil defence equipment, as well as music from the Brigade of Guards. The organisers estimated that 15,000 attendees enquired about voluntary service, with 500 confirmed civil defence enrolments on the day.[39] A similar technique was revived in 1942, when the government declared 15 November Civil Defence Day. The commemorations centred on St Paul's Cathedral, where the King and Queen attended another parade, this time comprised civil defence workers from each area of the country that had been bombed.[40] In both cases, the national events were designed to galvanise local activity.

Local Campaign

The emphasis placed on local experience reflected the importance of local campaigns to civil defence recruitment. At the time of Hoare's 1938 broadcast, the Treasury had warned that it should not set a precedent that would relieve local authorities of their responsibilities under the ARP Act.[41] Although able to provide some additional funding, the planners of the National Service campaign agreed that they should remain in the background: 'The main feature …

should be the localisation of recruiting energy'.[42] It was for this reason that the campaign was devolved to a network of quasi-autonomous National Service committees, with the Ministry of Labour appointing special officers to liaise between the committees, local authorities and Whitehall. The emphasis on localisation was even evident in the newspaper advertising campaign, which involved a mixture of national and regional dailies, centred on urban areas with the greatest need for recruits. In Glasgow, where the advertisements were carried by three papers, the campaign was delayed slightly so that it would coincide with a National Service Week held in the city.[43] This approach continued during the war. In September 1939, for instance, the Ministry of Home Security distributed 2.6 million copies of a leaflet purporting to be 'A Message from Your Council', which included blank spaces where local appeals could be overprinted and were sent alongside municipal gas and electricity bills.[44]

This relationship was not one directional. Local initiatives could influence national policy, while national efforts were frequently criticised from the regions. As early as July 1938, the *ARP News*, a commercial magazine established to promote civil defence, reported on complaints from local authorities about red tape and a 'Home Office Lag' in preparations.[45] In London, where the shortfall of volunteers was particularly acute, the London County Council sought to force the government into action. In February 1939, Herbert Morrison (then leader of the council) complained to Anderson that the early momentum of the campaign had been lost. Morrison's intervention appears to have tipped the balance in favour of the newspaper advertising campaign, which was formally agreed on the day Anderson responded to his letter.[46] In return, the London County Council agreed to spend £3,000 on a bespoke advertising campaign for the capital, working with W.S. Crawford to ensure a consistent message.[47] The London campaign focused primarily on the Auxiliary Fire Service, reflecting the Home Office's awareness that local authorities were usually best placed to respond to the specific needs in their area. This approach continued during the war, and in summer 1940 it was reported that 'Manchester, Edinburgh, Leeds, Nottingham, Birmingham and Oxford … made strenuous appeals for recruits', while Sheffield was 'engaging in special efforts to enrol women'.[48]

The autonomy enjoyed by the National Service committees also provided an opportunity to explore alternative channels for publicity. Some councils had already used public meetings, parades and practical demonstrations to promote civil defence in their areas. The National Service drive encouraged others to follow suit. In London, the LCC incorporated recruitment

events into its jubilee celebration, including an ARP display in an exhibition at County Hall and a procession of civil defence workers along the Thames. In Cheltenham, a parade of new civil defence equipment was 'watched by dense crowds' and was reported to have led to a large number of enrolments.[49] While ceremonial occasions like these invoked civic identity, other recruitment techniques drew on informal local allegiances. A particularly high-profile example occurred over the Easter weekend with a series of co-ordinated appeals at football grounds: players and managers encouraged spectators to enrol, and an appeal from Arsenal was broadcast live on the BBC. County cricket clubs followed suit once the summer season had started.[50]

Local events could also increase the visibility of civil defence by disrupting normal patterns of life. This was most obvious in the use of training exercises as a means of recruitment.[51] The largest of these, like the mock bombing of Nottingham featured in the film 'The Warning', dramatically introduced civil defence to potential volunteers by showing how it would work in practice. The recruitment value of such exercises was explicitly understood. In May 1938, for instance, the London Fire Brigade granted permission for a vacant building on Kensington High Street to be blown up and set alight specifically 'to encourage ARP volunteers'.[52] Thirteen months later, Anderson attended an exercise in Chelsea, where around 7,500 people took part in the largest pre-war test of civil defence. Although sometimes treated light-heartedly by participants and observers, these events drew people onto the streets and were regarded as a valuable means of recruitment by publicity specialists and personnel alike.[53] Writing for Mass-Observation, one ARP Assistant from Trowbridge, Wiltshire, commented on the response to two demonstrations. The first took place in January 1940, when 'a large percentage of the population of the town turned out' but 'the whole thing [was treated] as being rather a joke'. Two months later aeroplanes were used, resulting in a markedly different response: 'People came out of their homes to watch – to watch with seriousness and a realisation that it might have been real and that the planes may be going to machine-gun them'.[54]

These parts of the campaign, which were not run on commercial lines, echoed the military recruitment strategies used in Britain at the beginning of the First World War. During that conflict, the War Office recognised the importance of local connections for recruitment and the maintenance of morale at the front. It was for these reasons that it attempted to preserve the regional identities of regiments, and promoted the establishment of locally-raised Pals Battalions.[55] As Jay Winter has argued, these strategies 'tapped powerful sentiments of loyalty

felt by men, whatever the occupation, to town, county or community'.[56] Local attachment could also be used to promote a connection to the national war effort in the Second World War, as John Hodsoll (Inspector General of Civil Defence) explained to Bristol wardens in January 1940: 'I want them all to feel not only that they are helping to defend their own city, but that they are playing also a most important part in the defence of the country against hostile air attack'.[57]

As at the national level, however, the success of local recruitment campaigns should not be overstated. In August 1940, as local authorities renewed their appeals for volunteers, the *ARP News* lamented that recruitment had been 'left to local councillors who had only the faintest conception of what was wanted'.[58] On their part, many councillors had been left frustrated by the limited impact of their appeals and the LCC expressed profound disappointment about its newspaper advertising when calculating enrolments in March 1939.[59] Significantly, this led to a further innovation, as the LCC worked with the National Service committee and the ARP Department to organise a house-to-house canvass in various London boroughs during May and June 1939. Canvassers were given copies of the National Service handbook, enrolment forms and specific information about the recruitment needs of local areas. With almost 31,000 enrolments, the canvass was described as 'more effective than anything that had been tried yet'.[60] Those responsible believed that 'the personal approach was the material factor'.[61]

Canvassing could offer solutions to local issues. The *ARP News* reported on problems faced in Poplar, London, over the summer of 1938:

> Poplar Borough Council are taking Air Raid Precautions very seriously, but, unfortunately, the people of Poplar are not … There is a strong pacifist movement in Poplar and it is felt by the authorities that this is probably the cause of the lack of enthusiasm.[62]

The local press did not give any 'help or sympathy' and it was thought that a demonstration 'would only obtain ridicule from the people'. But following the employment of two canvassers 480 personnel were recruited in the space of two months.[63] Other local problems were, however, more difficult to overcome. Competition for recruits only intensified during the war as manpower shortages became more acute and working hours lengthened and, *The ARP News* complained, 'more remunerative employment under better conditions is available in civil life'[64]

The financial restrictions on civil defence meant that Local Authorities were not in a position to improve wages and conditions in order to 'attract a sufficient number of recruits of the right type'.[65]

Personal Persuasion

The problems that faced national and local recruitment campaigns before and during the war also led recruiters towards informal methods to counter shortcomings. In addition to the personal approach of canvassers, the power of persuasion by a friend, neighbour or family member was recognised by officials. In June 1940, when the Battle of Britain had just begun, William Mabane (Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Home Security) asked existing personnel to use their public spirit to convince friends and neighbours to join up.[66] The previous year women had been the target audience, and were requested to assist in recruitment across Britain by asking their friends to join up, a strategy *The Brechin Advertiser* attributed to their 'reputation for volubility'.[67] Sometimes this method was used within a larger publicity campaign, as was the case in Hartlepool in October 1938 when each volunteer was asked to find at least one new recruit.[68] An additional motivation was given to air raid wardens in Fulham in July 1940, when the Borough Council prompted a 'friendly rivalry by offering Savings Certificates as prizes'. In response, one warden designed a poster to display on the post door, which read: 'Don't wait. Come right in and sign on for civil defence'.[69] These strategies brought in significant numbers of recruits across class, gender and generation divides, and given the limited financial support for civil defence it is unsurprising that they were popular methods.

Social events were essential for creating community within civil defence and for retaining volunteers, and they could also be used as a recruitment tool. An early campaign in Tottenham included 'an interesting and unusual departure from current practice … a dance for A.R.P. workers and their friends', which 1,500 people attended.[70] When Turton, near Bolton, reached full capacity in December 1938 this success was said to be 'because the social side, the lighter side, has not been neglected'.[71] And, in Plymouth, both during and after the Blitz wardens were encouraged to invite their friends to social events to aid recruitment and wished 'good hunting'.[72] One respondent to Mass-Observation's Fulham Survey (May-June 1939) noted the draw of social activities when he gave his reasons for volunteering: 'Well the young man next

door is an A.R.P. warden and he thought, he and myself being single, we thought it would be rather interesting. He asked me to join'.[73]

Volunteers were also enrolled through their place of work, and employers as well as trade union leaders were asked to support recruitment. Sometimes this was targeted, with medical professionals asked to volunteer for first aid or ambulance work, and construction workers directed to rescue. This was mentioned by Fulham Survey respondents: a woman said 'My job is nursing. I have to do it anyway'; while a builder responded that 'I tell you one reason, the guvner you see he was in the engineers and he was telling me all about demolition and that and I thought I would prefer it'.[74] For less specialised work factory bosses were asked to help. At the height of the Blitz in January 1940 Anderson asked employers in Birmingham to support closer co-operation to protect factories from air raids: 'In supporting this development' Anderson argued 'they would not only be making an important contribution to the general efficiency of their defences but they would also be helping to secure considerable financial economy'.[75] The *ARP News* reported in August 1938 that 'several large industrial undertakings' in Liverpool were helping recruit and train volunteers, with 700 enrolled through the Tate and Lyle factory.[76]

Even without official direction, the persuasion of existing personnel was crucial for motivating friends, family and neighbours to volunteer. The Fulham Survey includes many accounts of personal influence, including: a labourer whose 'children told me to fill in the form'; a bank clerk who enrolled 'Simply on the request of the air-raid warden. He suggested that they were short'; and a young man who responded 'Actually I didn't have any intention of volunteering. My brother-in-law he volunteered and he said they were very interesting and I went along out of interest and they sort of wangled me into it'. Other respondents volunteered with friends. A factory hand answered that 'my friend at work she wanted to join and she didn't want to join alone', while another young woman said 'I don't like to go on my own. Joined up with friend and would go if she did'.[77] Word-of-mouth continued to play a significant role once the war began, and the *ARP News* reported on the success of recruitment in Portsmouth in mid-1941: 'While no detailed record of the sources from which recruits have been obtained has been kept, repeatedly men and women have come to volunteer because they have been told about the Service by a friend who had just joined and been through the [new casualty training] school'.[78]

Events

A final motivating factor which officials had no control over was the tempo of the war, the importance of which was illustrated even before war was declared. The 'crisis' of September 1938 saw frantic air raid preparations with civil defence personnel distributing gas masks and digging trenches, and prompted a spike in volunteer numbers. Mass-Observation's Fulham Survey calculated that the number of civil defence enrolments jumped from around 25 per month in early summer 1938 to a peak of over 330 in September, before falling back that autumn. The number of enrolments grew to around 70 a month during the National Service campaign, but it seems that a large proportion of Fulham volunteers joined when war felt imminent, even if there was only limited recruitment publicity.[79] This trend was not limited to the capital; writing in the *ARP News*, one local official wrote about his 'crisis week' experience in a North Yorkshire village:

> I don't know how they got the crowd together but at 8pm that village hall was packed! Not even standing room! They even opened the windows to let the "overflow" gathering in the playground to hear a word or two. And yet when I addressed a meeting there a fortnight before, there wouldn't be thirty![80]

Indeed, while their figures need to be treated with caution, the Home Office believed that across the United Kingdom around 500,000 people joined civil defence at this time.[81]

After the lull of the Phoney War, the experience of aerial bombardment encouraged more volunteers to come forward. Witnessing a female warden working during an alert was the push one man needed to volunteer in Sheffield; he responded 'Well, this is all right – me, and able-bodied man under a shelter, and that woman walking the streets at this time of night to ask if I and many more like me are all right'.[82] The *ARP News* reported in the summer of 1940 that 'air raids have been followed by a rush of volunteers' for civil defence services, although officers warned that 'it is essential to have men and women who trained in advance for their jobs'.[83] Local air raids still had an effect as late in the war as July 1944, when an incident in Handcross, Sussex, 'caused fresh enrolments to come in where previously they had been rather apathetic'.[84] This trend reflects First World War military recruitment, when 'far from signing up in an initial burst of enthusiasm, the largest single component of volunteers enlisted at *exactly* the moment that the war turned serious'.[85] It also pre-empted one of the biggest

challenges facing Cold War civil defence, which Matthew Grant has argued struggled to meet recruitment targets because British society did not envisage the immediate threat of war.[86]

Conclusion

Civil defence recruitment in Second World War Britain was encouraged by a combination of national, local and personal pressures. Although historians have tended to focus on national government, its publicity was designed to work in combination with local messages, providing a general framework for more targeted appeals. The recruitment publicity produced by these bodies helped to raise awareness of ARP measures and the specific roles involved in civil defence, encouraging people to think about the roles they might fill. It is clear, however, that many volunteers required an extra push – whether from an external event, the visibility of civil defence measures or personal persuasion. These factors were particularly significant because they cut across barriers of class, gender and age. Where propaganda material reinforced gender divisions, these informal prompts attracted a diverse group of volunteers. Those responsible recognised this and used demonstrations, rallies and canvassing to formalise such influences within the recruitment drive.

The existence of these different pressures makes it difficult to determine the success of recruitment publicity with any real accuracy. Indeed, the decision to volunteer was usually the result of a mixture of factors, which cannot easily be disentangled. This was certainly the case for one air raid warden who entered an essay competition on 'Why I became an Air Raid Warden' in a Bristol civil defence magazine. He noted that, although the 'call of National Service' had caused him to '[run] over in my mind what I would like to do', it was a visit from a warden that spurred him on to enrol: 'he was busy, so busy, and like many another at that time was doing the work of a dozen. How then could I defer any longer to at least offer to do what he was doing?'[87] Given that this warden joined at the time of Munich, a full two months before the call for National Service began, his response unconsciously showed one of the most significant impacts of recruitment publicity: it provided a language of active citizenship that chimed with the realities of modern war.

Endnotes

[1] *The Daily Mail*, 'Your Duty – Do It', 7 June 1940, 4.
[2] Hansard, HC Debate, 11 June 1941, 372, 281.

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