**GCSE History Controlled Assessment: The impact of war on Britain c1914-50.**

**Sources**

***Evacuation***

1. *Evacuation did change social attitudes because it highlighted levels of poverty and a lack of social skills = therefore war had a significant (huge and lasting) impact on social attitudes.*

*(2)Evacuation did not change social attitudes because class distinction continued = therefore war did not have a significant (huge and lasting) impact on social attitudes.*

**William Boyd, *Evacuation in Scotland: A Record of Events and Experiments,*  (Bickley:, 1944) p. 30**

William Boyd has noted that, although in terms of achieving what had been hoped, the first evacuation was a failure, the quickening of ‘a realisation of social ills’ strengthened the argument for social reform.

However, more recently revisionist historians such as James Hinton have stressed that the evacuation revealed divisive ‘rifts and chasms’ in British society between town and country and further entrenched attitudes towards urban poverty.

On arrival, the envisaged ‘social problems’, ‘at the other end’ alluded to in the Anderson Report, quickly began to materialise.

**Andrew Marr The Making of Modern Britain p. 360 -1**

‘Because they had bottled themselves up in the train, or because they were upset at being parted from their parents or because they thought the country darkness must harbour ghosts… from Aberdeenshire to Devon, countless numbers of children wet the bed.

They did more than that. Very many, from the poorest districts of Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester east London, had fleas or head lice, skin diseases such as impetigo and little education in cleanliness. They were used to not bathing, brushing their teeth or using a modern lavatory. Some simply defecated inside, or weed in the corner of the bedroom. Others had never sat down at a table to eat before and had never slept in a bed. Their language by the standards of polite Britain was foul. So was that of many evacuated mothers who, with their cigarettes, liking for drink and relaxed attitude to parental discipline, seemed sluts of slovens to the vicars’ wives, shopkeepers or teachers on whom they might have been billeted. Many children had only think plimsolls as shoes, others had been sewn into their clothes for winter; many had no change of clothes, and no underclothes, nor ever had had. Thus, with a mixture of horror, revulsion and compassion, middle-class Britain had its powered nose rubbed in the stinking reality of slum life for the first time. Some families reacted with Christian kindness and coped so well that the evacuated children did not want to go home. They grew fatter, saw with awe their first sheep, cow or apple tree and tasted food so cre4amy and fresh it might have come from another world. Other families blamed ignorant , immoral parents in the cities, and demanded that their evacuees be taken away again. A minority were cruel and abusive.

Though the extent of the most extreme squalor of evacuees was exaggerated, and the folk-tales spread by village gossip, the truths uncovered by evacuation shocked many conservative, perhaps rather smug parts of Britain…Britain in the thirties had become was radically divided, with some areas becoming prosperous while others rooted. With evacuation, the two touched. It was a physical touch, involving smells and sounds, it was more powerful than mere words. We cannot measure such things. But the vivid memories half a century on, and the ferment of press comment at the time, never mind anguished debate among politicians, suggest that evacuation was a nationwide social shock…evacuation had already begun to shift the politics of the British.’

**Richard Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy,* ( London, 1950), p.139**

Reception arrangements often went badly, the indiscriminate distribution of evacuees resulted in ‘every conceivable kind of social and psychological misfit all thrown into intimate daily contact.’ The settling of evacuees in the countryside involved the negotiation of profound cultural differences, when these were unsatisfactory; the chaotic, often mismatched allocations fostered hostilities which led to a break down of human relationships a major hindrance to the scheme.

**Macnicol, John, ‘The Evacuation of Schoolchildren’ in H. Smith, (ed.) *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester, 1986)**

The problems incurred during the planning and billeting stages were insignificant compared with the outcry over the alleged deplorable medical condition and anti social behaviour of the evacuees. Almost immediately after the first wave of evacuees had been haphazardly billeted, a stream of protests which proliferated into to an unforgettable ‘chorus of complaint from the hosts’ began to make headlines, regarding the allegedly deplorable condition of the evacuees: both physically and morally.[[1]](#footnote-1) An evacuee stereotype emerged and quickly crystallised of dirty, verminous, lice ridden children ignorant of the basic rules of civilisation. Most deplorable and exasperating of all for the hosts was ‘their lack of toilet training extended way beyond mere bedwetting’.[[2]](#footnote-2)

It was unfortunately, the minority of cases, where the enuresis problem was deep seated, that merged with the majority and fostered the malevolent evacuee typecast. Over exaggeration of the occurrence of enuresis was common, irresponsible hosts occasionally invented cases in order to ‘claim the extra 3s 6d billeting allowance for additional laundry costs.’[[3]](#footnote-3) However, once the government proceeded to conduct an official enquiry into the actual incidences of enuresis, the reported case numbers fell dramatically, a clear indication of exaggeration of case numbers. Thus many accounts of the conditions of the evacuees represent problematic sources that need to be treated with caution.

Protests resulted in castigation of the School Medical Service for negligence during the interwar period and also the planning of the evacuation scheme came under criticism as the Government had failed to incorporate a systematic medical examination into the first wave. The absence of medical inspections created a void in which the allegations regarding the children’s condition thrived and could be exaggerated. Middle class complacency was shocked at the deficiencies in the city evacuees' clothing and footwear, reports on the matter confronted them with uncomfortable statistics: ‘in Newcastle… of 31,000 children registered for evacuation, thirteen per cent were found to be deficient in footwear and twenty one percent deficient in clothing.’[[4]](#footnote-4)

Macnicol has argued that the evacuation merely reinforced differences between competing analyses of poverty concluding ‘the ideological consensus of wartime, so stressed by Titmuss and some historians, was something of a myth.’

**Waugh, Evelyn, *Put Out More Flags,* (Great Britain, 1942)**

The problem of enuresis loomed large over the evacuation scheme, a major component of the evacuee stereotype as espoused in Evelyn Waugh’s satiric novel of the Phoney War period: ‘ the little ‘un, she’s a dirty girl… It’s not only her wetting the bed; she’s wetted everywhere, chairs, floor and not only wetting’.[[5]](#footnote-5) Enuresis proved one of the major menaces to the comfortable disposition of evacuees.

In the thousands of complaints aired in the autumn of 1939, venomous criticisms and culpability for the shocking state of city children was directed wholly at the parents. They were seen as the deplorable root cause of low standards of cleanliness and insufficient provision of clothing, with the most damning vilifications reserved for the mothers: ‘To this woman the war had come as a God-sent release. She had taken her dependents to the railway station, propelled them into the crowd… and hastily covered her tracks by decamping from home.’

**Richard Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy,* ( London, 1950), p.139**

Enuresis was initially a widespread problem for recently billeted evacuees. As a psychological expression of protest it represented ‘primarily a symptom of emotional disturbance… caused by an acute sense of insecurity’.

In a similar vein, grievances over the prevalence of head lice and skin diseases such as impetigo and the complaints regarding the inadequate clothing the city children possessed, attributed to the further entrenchment of the evacuee typecast: ‘heads of some of the children could be seen as crawling with vermin.’[[6]](#footnote-6)

**John Welshman, ‘Evacuation and Social Policy During the Second World War: Myth and Reality’, *Twentieth Century British History,* 9, (1998), pp.28-51**

In the majority of cases, enuresis cleared up rapidly as the evacuees settled into their new environments; however this did not stop the issue from accruing rancorous debate and occupying superfluous newspaper column inches. Most complaints came from those predisposed to parochial snobbery and therefore ready to blame the problem on ‘low social standards’ and ‘a reflection of inferior maternal care’.

Jose Harris argues that evacuation ‘confirmed middle-class stereotypes about the urban poor… [and] did not reduce but increased class conflicts between social classes.’

**James Hinton** *Women, Social Leadership, and the Second World War, New York, 2002*

Famously, WVS leader Lily Boys propagated contemptuous characterisations of working class mothers. She considered them simply impossible, rude and ungrateful: ‘the low slum type… dirty … idle and unwilling to work or pull their weight’. She employed a Social Darwinian rhetoric, suggesting as a group they be put into camps where they could live dirtily and happily together. Thus, the parents, many of whom were overburdened with poverty and sent their precious children away in the best they could afford, were highly sensitive to such myopic criticism. It undoubtedly contributed directly to the retreat back to the cities.

**Sonya Rose, *Which People’s War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain, 1939-1945,* (Oxford, 2003), p.56**

The evacuation of urban children was disproportionately from the most impoverished families; it thus forced ‘a national spotlight on the lives of city children and their mothers’ and facilitated a rediscovery of abject poverty as dire as the Victorian model.Despite its origins as a life saving emergency measure, evacuation quickly revealed a burgeoning and uncomfortable social question. The extent of the problem was deemed to be of nineteenth-century proportions; therefore, often the Victorian rhetoric of pauperism was applied: the poor were morally responsible through thriftlessness for their own condition.

This attitude was not universal; the Socialist Lord Provost of Glasgow for example was willing to accept an environmental explanation of the poor condition of the evacuee children they were: ‘ denied the amenities of modern civilisation…the victims of an environment that would have been impossible if in bygone years men had thought of homes and families than of profits and dividends.’

Sonya Rose has argued that the issue of class inequality was central to the wartime nation and the public controversy roused over the evacuation represented a dangerous challenge to British national identity depicting ‘a Britain riven in two rather than a unitary nation’.

**Rationing**

Look for evidence to support and suggest that:

(1)Rationing did change social attitudes because everyone in theory had access to the same amount of food and the poor were given cod liver oil for example. In many cases their health actually improved = therefore war had a significant (huge and lasting) impact on social attitudes.

1. Rationing did not change social attitudes, for example the black market still continued, the rich were able to get luxury items e.g. perfume and chocolate, there was forgery and stealing of ration coupons = therefore war did not have a significant (huge and lasting) impact on social attitudes.

**Andrew Marr The Making of Modern Britain p. 391-2**

‘Through 1940-41, when for most of the time Britain ‘stood alone’- though with the Commonwealth and empire alongside her- life became rapidly drabber, harder, more equal. Rationing, which later became widely detested, was initially popular. Churchill warned Lord Woolton, the food minister, during the Battle of Britain that he should be aware of faddists: ‘The way to lose the war is to try to force the British people into a diet of milk, oatmeal, potatoes etc., washed down on gala occasions with a little lime juice.’ This was a reaction to extreme plans for the ‘basal diet’ which would keep people healthy if worst came to the worst. Woolton himself, who became very popular, knew rather more about these maters than Churchill did… he had become interested in diet when living in Liverpool’s slums: his next door neighbour had died of malnutrition. He set himself the task of ensuring that everyone would now have enough to eat, even if it was dull food. The ‘Woolton Pie’ invented by the Savoy Hotel’s chef was perhaps the most famous example. It consisted of mixed vegetables and oatmeal with a wholemeal crust. Yet Woolton’s reputation survived even the pie. His technique was to combine education about food with strict fairness. Among the results would be a huge expansion of free school meals, free milk for children and free juice for under twos. The poorer British grew stronger and healthier during this siege.’

**Andrew Marr The Making of Modern Britain p. 392- 3**

‘In the autumn of 1940 food was still reasonably easy to get, particularly meat. The fair and easily understood points system was first used for sugar, bacon, margarine and tea. The U- boat fleet was still small, and only just beginning to relocate to the French ports from where it would wreak its worst effects. By 1942, less than half the 55 million tons food brought in each year before the war was getting through. Rationing had been steadily extended- tinned meats and vegetables, tinned salmon, dried fruit, condensed milk, canned peas, breakfast cereals, biscuits syrup and oatflakes. This was popular because of the widespread and justified suspicion that the rich were avoiding their share of the pain, eating game and tinned luxuries out of reach for the common family… Diaries of the war years show that many of the better off did manage to speak to drink and dine remarkably well for a long time. Churchill’s private secretary Jock Colville, who certainly managed to, noted in a Censorship Report on ‘home opinion’ in February 1941 ‘ a general expectation that this war bring the end of class distinction and the abolition of inequalities of wealth… the fact that rationing and shortages affect the rich very little, since they can pay the extra price and feed in well- stocked restaurants, is causing some bitterness.’ Beer, bread, potatoes and tobacco were never rationed during the war but a grey diet of pies, hotpots, fake sweets and cakes …. Eventually drove people mad… A black market economy began to flourish… This found acceptance not oly because it seemed to reduce class divisios when the besieged country needed to feel united, but because it was self-evidently necessary. More than 40,000 merchant seamen were drowned, blown up or burned to death keeping the sea lanes to British open.’

**Women**

Look for evidence to support and suggest that:

1. Social attitudes towards women did change as women went to work during the Second World War, the government controlled nurseries = therefore war had a significant (huge and lasting) impact on social attitudes.
2. Social attitudes towards women did not change as women were paid less than men and many were forced to give up their new jobs after the war once men had returned = therefore, war did not have a significant impact on society or social attitudes.

**War and the Transformation of British Society 1931-1951 Steve Waugh and John Wright p. 71- 76**

Source F : From the memoirs of Kay Ekevall, who worked in a shipbuilding yard during the Second World War.

‘By the end of my time we had managed to get wages similar to those of the male workers. On the whole men didn’t seem to resent the women, and the skilled men were friendly and helpful to the female trainees. As it was an essential war industry… I suppose they weren’t afraid for their jobs.’

**Edexcel GCSE History Controlled Assessment CA10 The impact of war on Britain c. 1914-50 Steve Waugh, Victoria Payne and Kirsty Taylor p. 38**

‘Many men , especially employers and politicians were impressed with the work done by women. The trade unions accepted women workers much more readily than they had done in the First World War. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) campaigned to make sure women were treated the same as men. For example the TUC successfully campaigned about the fact that women were paid 25 per cent less and received lower accident compensation than men I the Rolls- Royce armament factories. Moreover, the government even began to help women with child-care commitments. They provided nurseries and encouraged employers to allow women with children to job share. By 1944 there were 1,450 nurseries, compared to 104 before the war. Most closed when the war was over.’

**Juliet Gardiner Wartime Britain 1939-1945 p.587-589**

‘More than 2 million women had been without their husbands for the duration of the war. Magazines and newspapers were ready with advice on how to cope with the changes that peace would bring to mothers who had learned to be single parents. Thousands of women who had yearned for the return of a husband now began to realise how independent they had become, how years of separation could deepen ties – or turn couples into strangers. The number of people getting married rose throughout the war; the birth rate fell until 1941 and then rose steadily until 1947. Divorce rose too, from just under 10,000 in 1938 to 25,000 in 1945, of which 70 per cent were on the grounds of adultery. Children who had dutifully kissed a photograph ‘good night’ for as long as they could remember now had to adjust to someone who took mummy’s attention, shared her bed and maintained that he and the photograph on the mantelpiece were the same man: daddy.

Younger women who had doe long hours of menial work in war-production factories, or felt regimented and drilled to death in the Forces, were delighted with the opportunity to resume studies, careers and comfortable home lives, with marriage prospects. Others regretted the loss of freedom, the independence and the camaraderie. Joan Wyndham in the WAAF felt ‘the strangest mix of elation and terror’ when she heard that the war was over. ‘It was as if five years of my who world had suddenly come to an end. Five years of security and happy comradeship, the feeling of being needed- and ahead a kind of unchartered wilderness, lonely and frightening. .. It’s hard to explain but there has been a rather depressed feeling in the Mess… not at all like people who have just won a war.’

‘Whatever will we do when WVS work is over?’ a friend asked Nella Last. ‘I said I felt the same, but surely something would crop up for those of us who were eager to work for peace as we did for war’. But exhaustion as the ‘double shift’ involved in running a home and ‘going to it’ for war work meant that many married women were eager to return to being full- time housewives again. Zekma Kati, who had worked as a ‘clippie’ on the Sheffield trams, ‘was glad I have done this sort of war work… like millions of men and women in uniform I cannot pretend I am liking it. Perhaps the sacrifice and hardship are giving us a strength which will enrich us in the future and toughen us for the struggle that lies ahead. I will confess, I am not only thinking of a future humanity but a future for myself. I want to lie in bed until 8 o’clock, to eat a meal slowly, to sweep floors when they are dirty, to sit in front of the fire, to walk on the hills, to go shopping of an afternoon, to gossip at odd minutes.’

For others the chance of work had been a taste of freedom. ‘It’s such a change after your own house… the old home you know too well. It makes you feel younger and it makes you look younger, going out to a job each day. I ca do my housework and shopping in the morning…. I wish part time had come to stay,’ a forty-five- year-old woman told a Mass Observation investigator in 1944. And not all married women drawn into the labour force by the exigencies of war were anxious to leave it. By 1947 probably around 22 per cent of all married women were doing paid work; a quarter of working women were doing part time and most of these were married women.

The war had made Gwendoline Saunders ‘more impatient with some aspects of life, having to do all the things I’d done in the WAAF and all the different people I’d met. I was more confident, I could talk to anyone. When Boots [Circulating Library] offered me my job back, they offered me £1 more than I’d been getting in 1939, but after six years in the WAAF none of us had the attitude to bow to anyone by this time. So the personnel officer had to take it from us all, and when I eventually did go back, I got quite a substantial pay rise.’ B bn

But there were still obstacles. For those with children under school age, State aided nursery provision was dramatically cut after the war ended, and there was always the reproach that working women were really only an expediency ‘for the duration’ and men were entitled to claim their jobs again when peace came.

Margaret Cornish’s wartime work had been ‘an opportunity to do something I would never have been able to do if it hadn’t been for the war’. She would have liked to continue working on the canals but the government had withdrawn its wartime sponsorship and the ‘Grand Union Canal Company wasn’t keen to employ women… We thought that perhaps it wasn’t fair to compete with the men when they came back. It was their living after all- al realistically we wouldn’t have been able to compete with the men…’

**Juliet Gardiner Wartime Britain 1939-1945 p. 428-9**

‘ there was an even more revolutionary solution: the conscription and direction of women for the first time Britain’s history. A total of 1.5 million would have to be drawn into the war effort. Women would have to provide half the numbers needed in munitions, while another 750,000 would be needed in other industries to replace men who had been called up into the Forces or transferred to munitions, in addition to the women needed for the auxiliary forces.’

**Juliet Gardiner Wartime Britain 1939-1945 p. 210-11**

‘ Although large numbers of young women had voluntarily enlisted in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), the Women’s Royal Navy Service (WRNS) and the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), the Home Guard resisted them.

Churchill always accepted that ‘even women, must, if they wish, be enrolled as combatants’ in the Home Guard. Indeed, in his speeches the Prime Minister frequently elided ‘home’ as ‘Home Front’ to connote both country and the place where a person lives, and these two uses might have been expected to position women in the front line of defending both since home (dwelling) was seen as primarily women’s sphere. By November 1940, some MPs were beginning to ask where women were in the total mobilisation of the people in the defence fo the homeland. Some of course were used in an informal auxiliary capacity – wives asked to type out letters, provide teas and buns, deliver notices and so on – but without formal recognition of their contribution. Indeed in June 1940, the War Office had announced ‘women cannot be enrolled in the LDV’ – though some local Home Guard commanders made women welcome in their units in contravention of the edict. The most vociferous proponent of women being allowed to be full members of the Home Guard- and that meant bearing arms- was the Labour MP Edith Summerskill, with the support of Mavis Tate, a Conservative MP, and the social reformer Eleanor Rathbone, who sat as an Independent. But their lobbying got nowhere. They were fobbed off with the excuse that there weren’t enough uniforms and equipment for the men, and when during a debate in November 1940 the Minister for War recited a list of male military heroes, Summerskill’s interjection ‘ What about Boadicea?’ was ignored. In July a War Office memo had reiterated ‘ Under no circumstances should women be enrolled into the Home Guard… it is undesirable for women to bear arms in the Home Guard’… The War Office was not alone. The US correspondent Ed Murrow reported the reaction of an English friend of his to the idea in May 1940: ‘ a few million women with rifles was the most frightening prospect a man could face.’ … some male MPs had come round to the view that since both sexes were in danger from invasion, it made no sense to deny women the means of defence. ‘Why should women not be taught the use of hand grenadges and revolvers?’ demanded one.

There were organisations dedicated to precisely this. One of these was Women’s Home Defence… formed in June 1940… Its intention was to prepare ‘every woman in the country to be of maximum use in the event of an invasion’ and it offered training in musketry, bombing, how to use a timmy gun and the rudiments of unarmed combat. Technically it was an illegal organisation- a private army- since it was a uniformed force providing training in the use of rifles, but the War Office declined to prosecute, recognising the outcry this would cause amoung women if they did. By December 1942 there were alleged to be 250 units. But no prosecution did not mean o criticism: one MP railed against it: ‘ a woman’s duty is to give life ot to take it, and the training your movement gies… is abhorrent…’+

**Social attitudes towards race: black American G.I.s**

Look for evidence to support and suggest that:

1. Social attitudes did change as the white British were very shocked at the treatment and segregation of black soldiers in the US army = therefore war had a significant (huge and lasting) impact on social attitudes.
2. Social attitudes did not change as white women were ostracised (strongly disliked) by white men if they were seen spending time and dancing with black soldiers = therefore, war did not have a significant impact on society or social attitudes.

**Andrew Marr The Making of Modern Britain p. 415-6**

‘Three thousand American soldiers, or GIs arrived in Belfast in January 1942 almost immediately after the US entered the war… The GIs accounted for more than a million of the 1.4 million foreign troops crowding into Britain by spring 1944, joinging Poles, Free French, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans, Dutch, Czech and even a few Russians and Chinese… Yet from the first it was the Americans who stood out. They were taller, louder, better dressed and richer. They had chocolate bars and cigarettes and plenty of money to spend in pubs and clubs. With them they brought millions of condoms as well as razor blades, nylons and other hard to get commodities…Not surprisingly, all this wet dow badly with British men, including soldiers with their baggier, dowdier uniforms and their sparse pay packets as wives and girlfriends ogled something better. ‘Over-paid, over-sexed and over here,’ went the British jibe. ‘Under-sexed, under-paid and under Eisenhower,’ the GIs replied. It is estimated that around 20,000 children were born from relationships between British women and American servicemen. More than `100,000 ‘GI brides’ would emigrate to the US from Britain after the war.

There was one particular issue which became a public talking point ad certainly provided a foretaste of post-war Britain. More than a tenth of the GIs, some 130,000 me were black. To understand what a shock this must have been, the total black population of Britain before the war was estimated at just 8,000. The US authorities tried to retain the ‘colour bar’ or Jim Crow’ regulations which at home kept black and white men from drinking or socialising together. In Britain some expressed horror. The War Cabinet decided that the Americans should not expect British civil or military authorities to help segregation: ‘ So far as concerned admission to canteens, public houses, theatres, cinemas and so forth, there would and must be no restriction of the facilities hitherto extended, to coloured persons. A public opinion poll in 1943showed strong British hostility to segregation. Yet Britain too was a racist society. It was markedly anti – Semitic… So it is hardly surprising that there were references to ‘jungle behaviour’ in the papers after reports of black American GIs ad white women fraternising, or that British men too found the idea of black Americans in nightclubs threatening. If they were to be treated equally, what about Indians and Africans from the Commonwealth? Here the ‘new attitudes’ of a more liberal and leftish country taking stock in the middle of war clashed with the old attitude of an imperial power in which the white man was the top dog’.

<http://ww2history.com/experts/Juliet_Gardiner/Americans_in_Britain>

**Americans in Britain**

**LAURENCE REES**: How do you think we should see the significance of the Americans arriving in Britain.  
  
**JULIET GARDINER**: ………….  
  
There was of course a great deal of tension. On the whole women welcomed Americans. Because the people of America were very reluctant to send their boys over here, to get into another war, never get our war debts paid back, etcetera, a great deal was made to make the Americans feel at home and have a good time over here. So they had a great deal of good living and all this sort of thing. They had wonderful dances and they had a lot of social activities and things. British civilian women tended to benefit from that. Men on the whole didn’t, they just saw them as sort of competition.  
  
  
**LAURENCE REES**: And there was clearly a great deal of fraternisation with British women.  
  
**JULIET GARDINER**: Oh, huge. I mean there were something like 60,000 GI brides, but on the whole the American commanding officers did not want their boys to marry British women, because then there would be the idea that the Americans at home would say, well, hang on, we’ve sent our flower of youth and of manhood over to Britain, okay, they don’t get killed, they don’t get injured, they get married, and what happens to our girls back home? If they took up with a British girl and they got her pregnant, the British girl would go and see the commanding officer and the commanding officer would say, no, I’ve never heard of him. You know, the man would have been posted off somewhere else. It was very hard, you had to be pretty intrepid and pretty persistent to get married. And, of course, there was a percentage of the army who could never marry because they were black and they came from the States where mixed marriages were illegal.  
  
  
**LAURENCE REES**: And then we talked a little bit about the black GIs. Did their arrival bring problems?  
 **JULIET GARDINER**: That brought huge problems. The British government comes out of this badly; they didn’t really want black troops to come. What they did for this is they came in at about the same percentage as they were in the army or in the population of the troops, about one in ten, and in fact the black troops were some of the people who arrived first and they were the ones that stayed longest. Most of those who came were not combatants. It wasn’t until part way through the Normandy campaign when the attrition rate was so high that then of course blacks could be cannon fodder, but until then on the whole they weren’t combatants. They were technicians, they were stores men, they were building the airfields, that’s what most of the early blacks came to do, they just came because the great big liberators and B17s would just sink into the mud on British airfields so they had to build these concrete runways, and that’s what the black GIs came for. It was a Jim Crow army, it was a segregated army and to the shame of the British government they went along with this. So, for example, black GIs would have different leave towns so if you were stationed somewhere that one town would be for the whites, one town would be for the blacks. If that wasn’t possible you would have different leave nights, so whites would have say Monday, Wednesdays, Fridays, something like that, and the blacks would go out the other nights. You would have different pubs, blacks would be served in one pub, whites in another and this happened even in the cinema sometimes, and of course the Americans, unlike all the other forces, had their own legal system.  
  
There would be a trial by an American system and of course the penalty for rape in America was death, and the percentage of black GIs who were [executed]…we still don’t know what that number is. And again the British didn’t like it, but they connived with it, the British needed American help and they were prepared to buy that help fairly dear.  
  
**LAURENCE REES**: What happened when a British girl wanted to have a relationship with a black GI?  
  
**JULIET GARDINER**: On the whole the British population were fairly tolerant to blacks, they tended to think they were all Americans, and it wasn’t after all like post-war emigration when they was fear for jobs, they were soldiers that were coming in to fight a war, when the war was over they’d go, and people used to say things like, well, you know, black GIs bleed and die just like white ones. All that was on the whole, you know, fairly good. And people in pubs resented being told who they could serve and who they couldn’t, and they said if their money’s okay and they behave themselves, it doesn’t matter to me what colour their skin is. We mustn’t overdo this though, of course there was racial prejudice and most people had never seen a black man before and it was only places like Liverpool and Cardiff and London where there was a very small black population at that time. When it came to miscegenation and when it became men and women that was a very different matter. People did not like English women dancing with black men or consorting with black men.  
  
A lot of women found that if they danced with a black man then they would be shunned by all the white Americans and British, as people did not like that. And a lot of women braved this out and they had this same attitude that they would dance with who they liked and whatever, but some of them did pay a price. And of course they could never marry a black GI because on the whole they came from states where such marriages were illegal and they were going home, after all, to a segregated society and the civil rights movement didn’t get going until sometime after this.  
  
There were a number of black illegitimate babies and I think they did suffer because British society was still prejudiced against these brown babies. There were some very, very sad stories about that, girls who had babies by black GIs, and there was violence. There was the Battle of Bamber Bridge, you know. It was usually inter-American. The 'snowdrops, the military police, would come out with their truncheons and they’d find the blacks in a place where they shouldn’t be or something like that, or sitting in a cinema seat where they shouldn’t be or something like that, and there were deaths. It is a very, very unappealing seemy side of war.  
  
**LAURENCE REES**: And in a sense it’s the Americans exporting their own prejudice here and seeing it grow here.  
  
**JULIET GARDINER**: They were seeing it, importing it here, and the British government wasn’t standing up to it.

**Juliet Gardiner Wartime Britain 1939-1945 p. 481-484 See photocopies**

[**http://www.flickr.com/photos/brizzlebornandbred/5043912691/**](http://www.flickr.com/photos/brizzlebornandbred/5043912691/)

During the Second World War, a large number of American troops were stationed in or near Bristol. They included black soldiers, who were based in Muller’s Orphanage on Ashley Down in Bristol. Bristol people were on the whole friendly towards the American soldiers, including the black soldiers. The white American soldiers were horrified to see white women dancing with black men. But there was no racism in Bristol’s institutions at that time.

An actress working at Bristol’s Little Theatre during the war met a black American soldier in one of the city parks. He came up to talk to her and her friends. ‘He wasn’t trying to pick us up or anything. He explained that he was desperately lonely and how lovely it would be to talk to some women… So we invited him to tea.’

At least one Bristol woman met and married a black American soldier. Patricia Edmead, who married Louis Edmead, remembered that the black Americans were ‘…so full of life… In spite of everything they had to put up with, they were so cheerful.’ And the black soldiers did have a lot to put up with. The white soldiers were used to an America where blacks and whites did not mix, and found it hard to cope with the different attitude towards black people in Britain.

The American Military Police dealt with all American army problems in Britain.

The Military Police were white and tended to deal more harshly with black soldiers than with white. In one case in Bristol, a local woman was prosecuted for trying to stop a Military Policeman from beating up a black American soldier. Black soldiers were also dealt with more harshly by the American system. American soldiers were under American law, even when stationed on British soil. Under American law, the sentence for rape was death. In British law rape had not been punishable by death since 1861. In Shepton Mallet jail in Somerset 29 American soldiers were hanged for rape, by the American Military Police.

Out of this number, 25 were black. Yet less than 10% of the men in the American forces in Britain were black. Accusations of rape against black soldiers were common, and they were more likely to be hanged for it than their white companions. In the American army, black troops were in segregated or separate units. Black and white rarely mixed, which was not surprising since racial separation was still legal in many American states.

Most of the black troops were used to do menial tasks, not as fighting troops. The 92nd Infantry Division were black frontline troops, who fought in the American Civil War, the Spanish American War and in the First and Second World Wars.

Black Americans joined the fighting troops in the Second World War because they hoped it would help to change attitudes and gain civil rights for black Americans. What happened was that, after the war, the part played by black soldiers was ignored by their country and by history. Black soldiers were not allowed to march in victory parades when they got home. African-Americans had to wait longer for their civil rights

Juliet Gardiner Wartime Britain 1939-1945

A disturbing aspect of US Law enforcement in Britain was the number of racial crimes between US troops themselves. It also became clear that more black GIs were prosecuted than white and that, if found guilty, they received longer and harsher sentences…. The thread that ran through all these incidents was resentment at segregation on the part of the black GIs, and objections from US troops to the blacks consorting with local girls.

Previous convictions had led to disquiet in Parliament about whether rape was a capital offence only when committed by black GIs. The notorious Leroy Henry rape case brought the issue centre stage in ‘arguably the most widely publicised and discussed single incident during the whole American presence in Britain’ On May 5 1944, a thirty- three year old woman from Combe Down, a suburb of Bath claimed that a GI had come to the house asking for directions, while she was in bed with her husband; as she walked along the road allegedly pointing out the way he should take, he pulled out a knife and threaded to kill her if he didn’t have sex with him. The police were called, and some half a mile from where the incident had occurred Leroy Henry, a black truck driver from Missouri, was apprehended- without a knife. He was handed over to the US authorities, and, after having been kept in custody for more than fifteen hours, confessed to the assault.

When Henry stood in the dock, he claimed that his confession had been extracted under duress (force or threat) and that he had in fact met the woman twice before and had sex with her on both occasions and paid her £1 each time. He claimed that on the night in question, he had gone to her house by arrangement, but this time the woman had demanded £2 which Henry refused to pay. The woman denied his version of events, but even the American officer who was prosecuting counsel found her actions in getting out of bed and walking of with ‘a dark stranger’ rather odd.’ Nevertheless, the American colonel who was presiding over the trial found Henry guilty, and sentenced him ‘by the unanimous vote of every member present to be hanged by the neck till dead’.

There was immediate public outcry. Led by the Mayor, 33,000 citizens of Bath called for a reprieve ( pardon, to take back or take away) since it seemed that a gross miscarriage of justice had occurred. Letter appeared in the press expressing unease about Henry’s guilt and concern that his ‘crime’ was the colour of his skin. Aware of the controversy of the case and petitioned by various organisations, Eisenhower promised to investigate. On 19 June 1944, it was announced that the US commander in chief considered the verdict unsafe due to lack of evidence, and Henry was sent back to his unit.

**Poverty : the attack on ‘want’**

Look for evidence to support and suggest that:

1. Social attitudes did change, the Second World War had been the ‘people’s war’ and the government felt a duty to protect them socially afterwards. Many people were shocked by the poverty that have been revealed by all classes of people working together e.g. during evacuation. The Beveridge Report was drawn up, the NHS was formed afterwards, the NHS had a huge impact = therefore war had a significant (huge and lasting) impact on social attitudes.
2. Social attitudes did not change, some people especially in the medical profession opposed the NHS, in addition the idea of providing a health service for ordinary people was nothing new or revolutionary = therefore war did not have a significant (huge and lasting) impact on social attitudes.

**War and the Transformation of British Society 1931-1951 Steve Waugh and John Wright p. 92 – 111including the Beveridge report and NHS.**

**Edexcel GCSE History Controlled Assessment CA10 The impact of war on Britain c. 1914-50 Steve Waugh, Victoria Payne and Kirsty Taylor**

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1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
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