

RE-STAGING MAFEKING IN MUSWELL HILL: PERFORMING PATRIOTISM AND CHARITABILITY IN LONDON'S BOER WAR CARNIVALS

Abstract:

This article examines attitudes to the Boer War – and nationhood and Empire more broadly – in London through the prism of carnivals held there in 1900 to raise money for the Daily Telegraph's fund for combatants' widows and orphans. Drawing on detailed press coverage of these events and the rhetoric surrounding them, it highlights how the carnivals and their rationale offered a point of consensus around which participating individuals and organisations with differing stances on the conflict could rally and express gendered national and imperial identities, as well as opportunities for accruing political, economic and social capital.

Shortly following the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War (hereafter referred to simply as 'the Boer War'), a series of carnival processions were held across London to raise money primarily for *The Daily Telegraph's* fund for widows and orphans of combatants killed in South Africa. Though occasionally touched upon individually in studies into attitudes to the war and empire more generally, this succession of events has not previously been examined collectively and in detail.¹ This article argues that the carnivals demonstrated the intertwining of patriotic, imperial and military identities during the conflict with philanthropic, leisure, party-political and commercial agendas. It identifies them as localised nexuses for performative exchange and investment of different forms of capital, offering a holistic approach to interpreting popular imperialism and imperial wars within their broader social, economic, political and cultural climates.

The article draws primarily upon local newspapers and the *Daily Telegraph* for source material. The former provided extensive information regarding the build-up to carnivals within their vicinities, names of carnival committee members, accounts of carnival days, lists of contributors to carnival processions and their costumes or decorated vehicles, and extensive fundraising details. The *Telegraph* included some of this information too, but also provided a wider picture of initiatives undertaken nationwide to raise money for its fund, and updates on the sum raised so far. Both local newspapers and the *Telegraph* offered running commentaries on the carnivals and their objectives, reflecting their editorial lines, but were also to a degree polyphonic, including accounts of debates and meetings, and open letters written to them, albeit while being

able to frame these diverse voices and exclude discordant ones. The article also utilises other sources, including surviving programmes sold during the carnivals, which offer additional details about these events; census data and census returns and directories, to glean information about both areas hosting carnivals in general, and more specifically about people and institutions involved in organising or contributing in some other way to the carnivals.

While surveying Boer War carnivals held throughout London more broadly, this article focuses on five in particular, selected to reflect the different types of areas that hosted these events. These were the East End Carnival, held in a heavily working-class district; the Greenwich, Deptford and Charlton Carnival, hosted by a more socially mixed vicinity; the St Pancras Carnival, which with the patronage of the area's sizeable business community, proved the most financially successful of the carnivals; the Hornsey Carnival, held in a middle-class Middlesex suburb; and the Willesden Carnival, held in a more proletarian Middlesex suburb. More in-depth details of their social compositions are given in Table 1. Reflecting the broader political leanings of Late Victorian London, these carnivals all took place in areas with Conservative or Liberal Unionist MPs, save for the East End Carnival, which covered an area comprising both Liberal and Conservative constituencies.

The remainder of the article is structured thus. It firstly summarises the direction of literature on both the Boer War specifically and popular patriotism, imperialism and militarism more broadly, identifying an analytical model for comprehending the roles and incubators of these ideologies, and interpreting the significance and symbolism of the war within this context. It then sketches out the progress of the *Telegraph* Fund, the chronology of the proliferation of carnivals across London, and the composition of the carnival movements. Thereafter, examining discourse around the carnivals, the article demonstrates how organisations and individuals with differing stances on the war rallied around, and attempted to monopolise, the cause of combatants' widows and orphans. The processions themselves, the subject of the section afterwards, also offer insight into popular attitudes to the war, the armed forces, nationhood and empire, and how these were materialised in visual, embodied symbols within the specific context of the carnival. The article then explores the social, political and economic capital invested in the carnivals, the imagery of the procession, and the rhetoric surrounding them, highlighting the ulterior motives that buttressed these displays of national identity and philanthropy. It concludes by reflecting on the insights this episode offers

in comprehending not only the domestic impact of the Boer War, but also the conflict's significance to wider trends and transitions in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

Table 1: Percentages of males aged ten and over resident in host districts of selected carnivals that were employed in different occupational groups, 1901

Occupation	East End	Greenwich, Deptford and Charlton	St Pancras	Hornsey	Willesden
Government	1.4	2.4	2.6	3.3	2.4
Defence	0.4	2.6	0.8	0.2	0.3
Professions	1.3	2.9	4.4	7.5	4.2
Domestic	1.1	1.3	2.8	1.6	1.6
Commercial	3.5	6.4	7.2	25.1	10.2
Conveyance	18.4	14.0	18.2	7.3	15.9
Agriculture	0.1	0.6	0.4	0.9	1.0
Fishing	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mines and Quarries	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3
Metals	3.8	11.8	4.7	3.2	5.7
Precious Metals Etc.	0.4	2.5	4.6	3.3	2.3
Construction	4.9	7.6	9.2	7.7	15.1
Wood	8.3	1.2	5.3	1.8	2.9
Bricks	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4
Chemicals	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9
Skins	1.5	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.5
Stationery	3.0	1.1	3.9	3.8	2.3
Textiles	1.3	0.7	1.1	2.5	1.5
Dress	7.5	1.9	4.1	3.4	3.6
Food and Board	9.3	5.5	8.7	6.6	7.1
Utilities	0.5	1.2	0.4	0.5	0.7
Other	8.3	8.4	4.8	2.3	4.6
Unoccupied	10.7	16.7	14.5	16.7	16.3

Published in 1972, Richard Price's landmark *An Imperial War and the British Working Class* disputed prior assumptions that British military action in South Africa enjoyed cross-class support, claiming instead that there was significant anti-war sentiment within working men's clubs and trade unions, that enthusiastic responses to British victories and army recruitment drives came from the lower-middle rather than working class, and that the landslide Unionist victory in the 1900 election owed to a longer-term swing away from Liberalism and Unionist candidates embracing a broader platform than just the government's war record.² Numerous scholars have followed Price in utilising the Boer War as a potential litmus test of popular attitudes to and engagement with empire at the turn of the twentieth century.³ Yet they have mostly rejected his conclusions, emphasising the extent of cross-class engagement with and endorsement of the war,

evident in voting behaviour, military volunteering and service, popular culture, philanthropic activities, and commemoration. This literature – outlined in greater detail further below – formed part of an even broader array of research into aspects of empire’s domestic social and cultural impact, following on from John M. MacKenzie’s pioneering work, and often published in the Manchester University Press *Studies in Popular Imperialism* series he edited.⁴ This historiographical school was heavily criticised by Bernard Porter in his 2004 book *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, which contended that their analyses extended the definition of ‘imperialism’ to the point of meaninglessness, and that little serious interest existed in empire beyond Britain’s elites.⁵ The following year, Andrew S. Thompson’s *The Empire Strikes Back?* offered a more nuanced argument that the level and nature of engagement with empire varied between different periods, regions and social groups.⁶

This article shares the current consensus view that the Boer War did impact deeply upon Britain. As Ian Beckett has argued, it marked a transition towards ‘total war’ in several ways. In its first engagement in large-scale combat as an industrialised, urbanised nation state, Britain sent nearly a quarter of a million men (not including colonial troops) to fight in South Africa, significantly increased state expenditure relative to GDP and accelerated armament production, and utilised new technologies and tactics in the field. Both discourse around the conflict and the conduct of the war itself centred on dehumanising a white enemy in a way previously reserved for non-white natives. The war also permeated popular culture, associational life and philanthropic initiatives.⁷ Yet this in turn raises questions as to its significance and typicality within the longer-term evolutionary trajectories of nationalism, imperialism and militarism in Britain. Answering these requires an integrative analytical framework capable of explaining the dynamic, long-term relationships between these ideologies and the developing physical, technological, institutional and commercial infrastructure that nourished them, as well as the role of armed conflict within this matrix.

This article conceptualises human relations in terms of performative investments, exchanges and accumulations of different forms of capital. Pierre Bourdieu delineated three broad categories of capital, convertible into each other: cultural capital, which could be embodied, objectified, or institutionalised; social capital – the aggregations of relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, produced and reproduced through material and symbolic exchanges, group nomenclature and instituting acts; and economic capital, which Bourdieu identified as possessing primacy over the other two.⁸ Subsequent scholars

in turn subdivided social capital into three broad categories: bonding capital, rooted in face-to-face interaction and shared identities; bridging capital, comprising less tight-knit associations formed in undertaking common endeavours; and linking capital, pertaining to connections across social strata and facilitating the reinsertion of the state into this model of social relations.⁹

Drawing on Erving Goffman's dramaturgical reading of human relations to interpret processes of capital accumulation, interchange and loss helps explain the dynamism and resilience of cultural value systems, social and political structures and distributions of wealth. Goffman argued that social interaction centres on individuals' and groups' efforts to effuse certain impressions unto others, through settings, appearance and manner, to demonstrate their possession of certain values and status and be treated accordingly. These performances might be cynical or heartfelt, and performers might move between these states or experience them simultaneously. Recipients in turn interpret performances in relation to their own past experiences and existing knowledge.¹⁰

Social structures, value systems and social identities exist through performance. Individuals display their capital to attain more, and the risk of jeopardising their capital reserves discourages misperformance. However, presentation and reception of capital are interpretive acts, and so over multiple performances, practices and valued ideals and social connections might incrementally evolve. Loss of identification with a group, or disaffection with a social structure or value system, can lead to re-evaluations of capital and performances that challenge the status quo, resulting in periods of more drastic social and cultural change. New entrants to a group who possess different quantities and types of capital to existing members might therefore be excluded for their performances not matching expectations, but alternatively, if their performances are accepted, might also engender social and cultural changes within the group. Changes in the speed and capacity of movement across space, or in the rate of capital generation, are also particularly elemental in disrupting existing orders of things. Where the possession and valuation of different forms of capital are contested between different groups, the outcome can be physical conflict – itself a performative strategy, designed to discourage dispossession or compel surrender.

Britain was transformed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by the intensification of agricultural and industrial production, and accompanying growth of finance and commerce; the establishment of new national and transnational communication networks; urbanisation; and the widening

remit of central and local government and of franchises for choosing their leaderships. The orientation of its imperial expansion shifted towards territorial acquisitions in Asia, Africa and Oceania, amid competition with other European nations, while the British state itself was enlarged through the full integration of Ireland into the Union. These processes entailed an increased emphasis on and capacity for economic capital generation and accumulation, as well as the investment of economic capital in new territories with a view to attaining higher returns. Domestically, small rural communities marked by high volumes of bonding social capital were supplanted by an array of local, national, imperial and global institutions and networks, placing greater emphasis upon bridging and linking capital. In these contexts, new forms of personal and collective identity developed, requiring syntaxes of representation amenable to performance through contemporary media to emergent audiences, as a means of accumulating capital, and asserting legitimacy. The tripartite ideology of patriotism, imperialism and militarism fulfilled this role. Building on Benedict Anderson's conceptualisation of the nation as an 'imagined community', we can perceive emerging tropes and symbols of nationhood as offering people a way of reorienting themselves amid shifts in the composition and distribution of social capital, enabling them to maintain and express a sense of belonging within a different array of groups (e.g. local, familial, occupational, associational, national and imperial), at a time when many were also consciously engaged economically in the national-imperial project and its promotion.¹¹

Relationships between ideas of England, Britain and Empire require some unpacking. Krishnan Kumar defined Englishness as an imperial nationalism, which could celebrate its empire but not itself, in order to enable the colonised to feel the empire was theirs also, and that was based on the notion of great projects that extended beyond the nation.¹² Continuities between British and imperial identity were evident in a series of proposed schemes for a political union of 'Greater Britain' during the late nineteenth century, as highlighted by Duncan Bell.¹³ Ben Wellings, meanwhile, argued that the British state predated nationalism, but that a sense of British national identity was subsequently built upon commonalities such as Protestantism and empire, and expressed through ideas of governance, statism and imperialism, as well as national character. There were periodic tensions between a more inward-looking Englishness and outward-looking Britishness from the 1870s, although the two were inherently connected.¹⁴

Symbols and language of nation and empire incorporated these multiple and overlapping layers, and were malleable enough to carry a range of meanings. The monarchy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was celebrated as above politics, emblematic of the entire nation and symbolic of continuity, as well as at times utilised to justify imperial expansion.¹⁵ The Union Jack could signify the unity of Britain's constituent nations, or be depicted as English, as well as associated with Britain's imperial mission.¹⁶ The centrality of the countryside as an emblem of a more introspective English national identity owed to its signification of continuity, community and harmony.¹⁷ Fictional, allegorical, mythical and historic figures were also frequently useable in these ways. Britannia was often depicted as a classical matriarch representing values of justice, liberty and empire, while John Bull was a country squire figure, who came to stand for the national personality, but was also available to both radical and conservative interpretations of the national character, with this figure's associations fluctuating over time.¹⁸

The armed forces constituted a crucial bridge between the nation's domestic and imperial dimensions. The navy offered an early emblem for a developing sense of Britishness, symbolising and safeguarding the nation and its interests without jeopardising its people's liberties.¹⁹ Into the twentieth century, it offered an increasingly visible emblem of British national and imperial identity, representing the country's technological might and masculinity and connecting the 'island nation' with its far-flung colonies, but in keeping with liberal principles, as an unoppressive, non-conscripted, primarily defensive wing of national security and guarantor of free trade.²⁰ By contrast, the army was until the mid-nineteenth century comparatively unloved, kept small because of aversion to conscription, and often used to suppress popular domestic insurrections. The successful establishment of a volunteer force during the Crimean War fomented a new zeal for militarism as an organisational model, capable of remedying urban disorder and healing social rifts, and for the principle of sacrificing one's own life for the sake of the nation.²¹ Moreover, while the standing army itself was small, it played a key role in safeguarding and extending the empire, owing to Britain's capacity to swiftly transport troops into areas of conflict.²² As Adrian Gregory has noted, this enthusiasm for the army must be understood in relation to the legitimate role violence played in public life. It was only after the experience of the First World War that Britain's supposedly peaceable nature became a dominant feature of national identity – although violence remained an integral dimension of domestic and colonial administration.²³

These different symbols constituted a network of meanings whose nuanced internal disparities explain the breadth of its resonance: the nation could be imagined as relatively egalitarian and homogeneous small community writ large, or hierarchy of groups and institutions; both offered a frame of reference to comprehend human relations within and ascribe with one's own values. Within this ambiguous array of connotations, the state enjoyed a degree of hegemonic power, increased democratisation giving it greater credence as representative agent of the nation, and empire a project in which it could claim to be acting on the nation's behalf, underpinned by the framing of conquered peoples as racially inferior – albeit in which it was often post-rationalising piecemeal, uncoordinated activities of individual administrators, military units, capitalists, and settler groups.²⁴ In the army and navy, the state possessed dimensions which helpfully blurred the boundary between defence and territorial expansion and that the public – and men in particular – could identify with as representatives of the nation.

British territorial and commercial expansion in southern Africa during the late nineteenth century fuelled worsening tensions with the independent Boer South African Republic (or Transvaal) and Orange Free State, exacerbated by the discovery of diamond and then gold deposits, as well as British attempts to establish a federal union of the region's different territories. Britain annexed the Transvaal, which successfully regained independence in the first Anglo-Boer War of 1880–81. However, rapid migration of mostly British 'Uitlanders' into the South African Republic to work in its expanding goldmines, and the British government's demand they be given full rights as citizens, which the Boers feared would lead to the territory being annexed once again, caused relations to again deteriorate. After negotiations with Britain's Unionist government broke down, South African Republic president Paul Kruger demanded in October 1899 that British troops be withdrawn from the borders of the Republic and of the Orange Free State; the ultimatum was rejected, and the two republics declared war.

The Boer armies subsequently made incursions into British territory in the Cape and Natal, besieging the garrisons at Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberley, and then winning a series of battles at Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso between 10th and 17th December, killing 2,776 British troops in what was dubbed 'Black Week' back in Britain. Following the arrival of reinforcements from both Britain and its colonies, and Field Marshal Lord Roberts's succession of General Sir Redvers Buller as commander-in-

chief, the war turned in Britain's favour. Kimberley and Ladysmith were relieved in February, Orange Free State capital Bloemfontein was captured in March, Mafeking relieved in May, and South African Republic capital Pretoria captured in June. Yet once both states were formally annexed, Boer commanders shifted to waging a guerrilla war, to which the British responded with a scorched earth policy and by confining non-combatants to concentration camps. The war finally ended with the Treaty of Vereeniging in May 1902, after which Britain gave the Boers money for reconstruction and promised them limited self-government. Its four territories in the region were eventually amalgamated as the Union of South Africa in 1910.²⁵

The British government had not prepared extensively for war and thought its regular forces sufficient to attain victory. In the aftermath of Black Week, it relented to pressure from below to utilise and expand its auxiliary forces, drawing on the working-class militia and more artisanal volunteer force, as well as creating the new Imperial Yeomanry and allowing the City of London to finance its own unit of Imperial Volunteers (CIV), both of which were more solidly middle-class in their composition. Over 100,000 volunteers ultimately served in South Africa during the conflict. The government also from 1900 recruited over 72,000 men, mostly from working-class backgrounds, to the regular army.²⁶ Stephen Miller has refuted arguments that they joined for purely economic reasons, stressing their patriotic enthusiasm and desire for overseas adventure.²⁷ Within individual British cities, departing and returning combatants were feted by local newspapers, honoured in ceremonies organised by local dignitaries, and treated to more spontaneous shows of support by the wider populace.²⁸

These performances of patriotic duty were rooted in Victorian voluntary and civic culture. The auxiliary forces were but one of an array of institutions dedicated to different causes – including philanthropy, collective welfare, and leisure – that individuals *chose* to invest money, time, effort and knowledge in establishing and maintaining, accumulating different forms of capital in the process. The Victorian period was also marked by expansion and democratisation of urban government, proliferation of local newspapers, and widespread usage of public ceremonies, particularly processions, which stressed urban order and hierarchy, but also allowed participating organisations and social groups to emphasise their legitimacy and respectability. The civic identities they expressed were interwoven with ideas of nation and empire, which shaped cities' economies, coloured their politics, and were evoked in their architecture. This was especially true of London, as seat of national and imperial government, and the empire's financial and

trading hub.²⁹ At the same time, debates about the nature of citizenship became increasingly imperially focused.³⁰ Imperialism infused teaching practices, while schoolchildren were also the primary target of Empire Day, instituted in Britain in 1904.³¹ Other popular public events in late Victorian and Edwardian England, such as pageants, celebrated a more introspective, retrospective idea of nationhood, focused on educating local denizens as to the place of their hometown within the history of pre-union England.³²

Under Benjamin Disraeli, and through the Primrose League established in his memory, imperialism conflated with local concerns became vital to the Conservatives' populist appeal.³³ Within the context of an expanded British military force's engagement in an imperial conflict, this tactic proved even more successful. At the 1900 election, Unionist candidates in London made the war the central plank of their constituency speeches, marginalising social issues, closely associating themselves with the army and national interest, and tarring all Liberals as pro-Boer. Imperialist Liberal candidates faced far smaller swings against them than anti-war ones.³⁴ By contrast, in Battersea, popular Lib-Lab MP John Burns, an ardent opponent of the conflict, came close to losing his seat to an unimpressive Unionist opponent.³⁵ Studies examining responses in other parts of Britain similarly highlight the extent to which the government's policy in South Africa, and conduct of the war, enjoyed public support, or at least consent, during the summer of 1900.³⁶

There was, nonetheless, a significant peace movement in Britain. As well as the South Africa Conciliation Committee and the Stop-the-War Committee, both established in direct response to the outbreak of the war, there existed a broader range of longstanding organisations committed to pacifism, rooted in different ideological strands, such as liberalism, radicalism, socialism and non-conformism, which appealed to different constituencies.³⁷ Female pro-Boers espoused a particular feminist critique that attacked imperial expansion, connected militarism with women's oppression, and claimed pacifism as a particularly female trait.³⁸ Though unable in its early stages to significantly influence public opinion, the war's political opponents did contest Unionist hegemony over the language of patriotism, couching their critique of the conflict in terms reflecting their own ideas of national identity. John Burns, for example, evoked an image of England as a traditional protector of peace and liberty, in contrast to Britain's current embroilment in imperial conflict, while expressing support for British soldiers themselves.³⁹ The Liberals more generally persisted in advocating policy positions on free trade and land reform with reference to

pastoral ideas of England and in racial and imperial terms, helping them win their own electoral landslide in 1906.⁴⁰

Nationalism and imperialism were also readily appropriated by Britain's emerging cultural industries. With growing disposable incomes fuelling demand and technological advancements facilitating formal innovations and speed of informational flows, they offered readily recognisable and topical figures, tropes, themes and settings with which to reach an expanding mass market, becoming ingrained by the late Victorian period in the generic conventions of newspapers, music hall, periodicals, popular literature and advertising.⁴¹ The first year of the Boer War provided a daily surfeit of up-to-date material for media interpretation and monetisation. The pro-war press successfully turned the siege of Mafeking into media saga, whipping readers into a frenzy of anxiety through their reporting upon its tense progression – although it should be noted that some major newspapers were profoundly anti-war, such as the *Manchester Guardian*, which sought to promote a more critical patriotism that eschewed blind support for imperial expansion, while others, such as the *Daily News* and *Daily Chronicle*, changed their position over the course of the conflict.⁴² Themed photographic postcards featured posed pictures of generals, individual unnamed soldiers, groups of soldiers and war machinery.⁴³ Topical films drew upon existing pictorial representations of war and patriotism, such as emblematic figures, cross-class solidarity, injured soldiers visualising home, and enemy cowardice, while utilising trick photography to advance cinema as novel form in itself.⁴⁴ Cartoons depicting the war's progress, again often using familiar emblems, were also popular and reprinted across publications and formats.⁴⁵ Simon Popple identified these various components as comprising a 'war culture', reflecting broader cultural imperatives of immediacy and knowingness and marked by recycling imagery, motifs and narratives across various formats⁴⁶. Yet these common caricatures could be invested with complex and diverse meanings and were open to different interpretations by their audiences, shaped partly by the representational medium in question – occasionally with new cultural forms emerging as a response to the war itself, as Mark Attridge has emphasised.⁴⁷

Relatively scant attention has been paid to philanthropic efforts made on behalf of British combatants in South Africa, and their dependents. This is surprising, as Andrew Thompson noted in one of the few pieces written on the subject, given the scale of fundraising undertaken, with an estimated £6 million amassed by different war relief funds over the conflict's duration.⁴⁸ Again, this must be

comprehended in relation to the vibrancy of Britain's voluntary sector, and its centrality in delivering welfare services. Philanthropic initiatives directed at combatants and their dependents operated within a wider context described by Keir Waddington as a 'a market for benevolent action and charitable giving' – not to mention people's time and effort.⁴⁹

Lloyds 'Patriotic' Fund was established during the Napoleonic wars and enabled private individuals to pay towards housing and educating naval officers' sons, complementing state assistance and demonstrating their own respectability in the process. By the late nineteenth century, eligibility criteria were widened and Britain had engaged in various imperial wars, leaving the fund oversubscribed and resulting in the Charity Organisation Society being appointed as its gatekeeper.⁵⁰ This demand reflected the paucity of state provision for serving men and their families. At the outbreak of the Boer War, a private's minimum pension offered just 1s per day, while statutory provision was not introduced for their dependents until 1901. Experienced philanthropic activists filled this gap through conducting diverse fundraising initiatives and distributing grants.⁵¹ Cultural industries also participated. Rudyard Kipling's 'The Absent-Minded Beggar' called for contributions to soldiers' relief funds, and was published in the *Daily Mail*, which raised money for combatants and their families through selling its copyright and souvenir copies and having it recited in music halls and set to music, as well as using it to stimulate donating more generally. As Simon Lee noted, the poem denounced insincere expressions of jingoism, advocating instead practical support for soldiers, which encapsulated widely held sentiments and encouraged their expression in a charitable direction.⁵²

These efforts correlated with a wider shift in philanthropy, away from top-down benevolence towards participation by wider groups in raising and contributing money for welfare services and expecting access to them when required in return. This often paved the way for greater state involvement in centralising and undertaking welfare provision, but in partnership with existing voluntary service providers.⁵³ During the First World War, the uneven and piecemeal extension of the state into civilian and economic life did not prevent levels of charitable giving hugely outstripping those witnessed in the Boer War. State involvement in coordinating philanthropic initiatives, raising and distributing funds, and delivering services was accompanied by growing grassroots mutualism and charity professionalization. Peter Grant has deemed that the buoyancy of Britain's voluntary sector during the conflict reflected high

quantities of bonding, bridging and linking social capital that facilitated a collective, cross-class war effort.⁵⁴ This trend towards popular voluntarist welfare provision for current and former servicemen, alongside collective self-help, continued into the 1920s with the establishment of the British Legion.⁵⁵

As the Boer War proceeded to a close, and in its aftermath, thoughts turned towards the commemoration of Britain's war effort and dead, largely through statuary. While existing military and civic hierarchies sought to dominate this process, they were compelled to attain local and civilian consent, owing to their reliance on public subscriptions. This was reflected in the forms and subjects of commemoration, as archetypal representations of heroic military leaders and high-profile regiments and usage of classical imagery was complemented with depictions of ordinary citizen-soldiers' collective, voluntary efforts, reaffirming their role in the war and the respectability of the middle and working-class communities they were drawn from. Statuary also championed the imperial mission and martial traditions, while avoiding issues of war aims and conduct more specifically, and keeping signification of grief and loss to a minimum.⁵⁶ This shift towards more democratic modes of participation and representation in the commemorative process continued, albeit with much greater sombreness, after the First World War.⁵⁷

The national-imperial project, far from monolithic or uncontested in implementation and interpretation, permeated diverse aspects of Britain's politics, economy, society and culture, and processes of capital accumulation with them, and helped shape social identities and their boundaries. This multi-layered investment by state and civilians in the idea and infrastructure of national community and in imperial expansion and territorial retention, in competition with other European powers, not only made conflagrations like the Boer War likely, but also accounted for the range and depth of its domestic impact. This omnipresence was expressed in an expanding web of visual imagery, rhetorical tropes, illustrative media and symbolic actions, carrying diverse meanings and fulfilling various agendas, facilitating representation of and participation in the conflict and generating new understandings of it. The value of studying London's Boer War carnivals is that focusing on a more tightly demarcated geographic area, time-period and phenomenon facilitates closer observation of how existing institutions and networks were mobilised in wartime and accessed, appropriated and adjusted existing iconographies of nationhood, empire and the armed forces to further philanthropic, patriotic, political, commercial and personal agendas.

The *Daily Telegraph* was founded in 1855, following the abolition of stamp duty on newspapers, and acquired shortly afterwards by press magnate Joseph Moses Levy.⁵⁸ Piloting a more populist style of journalism, the newspaper appended political and current affairs coverage with more sensationalist stories.⁵⁹ Its advocacy of imperialism, among other factors, meant it came to back the Unionists during the 1880s.⁶⁰ Under the increasing direction of Levy's son, Edward Levy-Lawson, who eventually became managing proprietor in 1885, the *Telegraph* also led national charitable fundraising campaigns, and sponsored overseas expeditions.⁶¹ It expended significantly on war coverage too, supplied by its celebrated and controversial correspondent Bennet Gordon Burleigh.⁶² By 1888, the *Telegraph* was selling over 300,000 copies a day, appealing especially to London's lower middle classes, although it was swiftly overtaken before the century was out by the recently launched *Daily Mail*.⁶³ When hostilities broke out in South Africa in 1899, the *Telegraph* backed military action, but Burleigh – an imperialist, but also a socialist – frequently evaded censorship in wiring reports back to Britain critical of the government and generals, and drawing military authorities' ire over issues of accuracy.⁶⁴

The *Telegraph's* decision in October 1899 to set up its 'Shilling Fund' to support Boer War combatants' widows and orphans was in keeping with its tradition of philanthropic initiatives, support for empire, investment in imperial conflict, and willingness to take a critical and independent line on war conduct and combatants' welfare. The fund raised £50,000 by the end of November 1899, £100,000 by mid-January 1900, £150,000 by the end of April, and £200,000 by the end of July.⁶⁵ This was obtained through assorted means, including individual donations sent straight to the newspaper, collections held in workplaces, schools, churches, regiments and music halls, fundraising by other newspapers such as the *Scotsman* and *Irish Times*, and entertainments put on to raise money for the cause, including the carnivals. The fund made an immediate first grant of £20 to each widow and £3 for each of her children, as well as £50 in her trust on each of their behalves.⁶⁶ Subsequently, it began to allocate selected widows annuities of £15 per year to support them in the long term, although it later had to reduce this to £10 in order to meet demand.⁶⁷ By the end of July 1900, 431 widows were in receipt of annuities, while over 1,500 were now registered with the fund.⁶⁸ Eligibility was extended beyond wives of regular serving soldiers to those of reservists and subsequently of any volunteers killed in South Africa.⁶⁹ The fund eventually raised £254,800

in total, itself a mere fraction of the more than £2.9 million procured for widows and orphans of the British war dead in total – the remainder accumulated by both local funds and the Patriotic Fund.⁷⁰

The *Telegraph* provided extensive coverage of the fund's progress from the outset, including in-depth detail of the range of initiatives undertaken on its behalf. It typically characterised the widows it helped as from humble but respectable backgrounds, as dedicated wives and mothers, and as not seeking aid but deserving of and grateful for it, and published letters from recipients that tallied with this portrayal.⁷¹ The newspaper also championed the fund's efficiency and speed in identifying and aiding worthy widows, contrasting this with the Patriotic Fund's approach of waiting until the end of the war before calculating final annuities, or the patchiness of local provision, while vigorously defending it from assertions by the Charity Organisation Society that it was not sufficiently thorough in discerning the worthiness of recipients.⁷²

Charity carnival processions of costumed individuals and decorated vehicles had become an increasingly common feature of British urban life over the final two decades of the nineteenth century, firstly with the advent of Bonfire Night processions, and then of parades organised by cycling clubs. In the wake of London's extensive suburban growth over the course of the late nineteenth century, these often annually recurring events fulfilled an important role in raising money for providing local welfare services, including the establishment and maintenance of voluntary hospitals.⁷³ Hence, when the *Telegraph* made its appeal in late 1899 for financial aid for deceased combatants' dependents, there existed a ready model for its readers to draw upon. The first carnival held in aid of the *Telegraph's* fund took place in Lewisham in suburban southeast London on 17 and 18 January 1900, raising £1,545.⁷⁴ Carnivals were then held in other nearby districts, including Brixton in March and then Greenwich, Deptford and Charlton in May, raising over £3,000 and over £2,100 respectively.⁷⁵ This pattern spread north of the Thames and, by the end of May, St Pancras and Willesden had also held their own events, the former raising over £6,000.⁷⁶ A flurry of carnivals subsequently took place across Greater London during June and July, mostly held specifically to support the Shilling Fund, although some organisers donated part of the money they raised to other funds.⁷⁷ By August, when most of the carnivals had already taken place (although affiliated fundraising was still ongoing), the *Daily Telegraph* reported that £37,259 had been raised for the fund through these events.⁷⁸ This

trend subsequently petered out, although one carnival was held in Westminster and St George's as late as November.⁷⁹

In most cases, carnival organisation commenced with a public meeting, whereby active citizens, including representatives of local government bodies, businesses and voluntary organisations of differing stripes, selected provisional committees and officials to put plans into effect. Over a period of usually around two months, these evolved into more expansive administrative structures, comprising executive committees supported by other committees established either to represent areas within the wider host district, or to undertake specific functions. They also held public meetings to broaden local awareness and participation, as well as communicating through local newspapers, and sought items for the processions. The fundraising initiatives they carried out in relation to the carnivals took diverse forms. The centrepiece was the processions and box collections held along the route, yet this was only a component of the takings, which also included donations from local notables or major businesses, a far larger number of much more small-scale subscriptions, programme sales and sales of advertising space within them, and affiliated entertainments held to swell the funds both before and after the main event.⁸⁰

The success of the carnivals owed to their genuinely cross-communal appeal and engagement, although some occupational groups and organisation types were notably predominant among carnival administrators and procession participants. On the organising committees themselves, local tradesmen were particularly well represented, as to a lesser extent were professional men, such as journalists, accountants and solicitors, especially towards their higher echelons; there were also smatterings of members in skilled and semi-skilled working-class occupations, such as postmen.⁸¹ Those who held elected positions in local government were also particularly likely to join. Women were active organisers too, but tended to be arranged separately within ladies' committees.⁸² Tradesmen were particularly heavily relied upon to contribute decorated cars, while various voluntary organisations, including cycling and other sports clubs, friendly societies, and brass bands, arranged vehicles and sent contingents to parade in processions.⁸³

The carnivals attracted support from across the political spectrum. MPs were frequently appointed as carnival presidents and vice presidents, fulfilling roles such as speaking at public meetings held to raise support, and making often relatively large personal contributions to the funds. Most were Unionists, but then Unionists held a clear majority of seats in London and its suburbs, while some Liberal MPs did publicly

back their local carnivals, with W. C. Steadman (MP for Stepney) and Sydney Buxton (MP for Poplar) serving as vice-presidents of the East End and Bromley, Bow and Poplar Carnivals respectively. Moreover, several Progressive London County Council (LCC) members actively promoted their local carnivals, frequently speaking on behalf of the cause at public meetings in St Pancras and in the East End; B. S. Straus, who represented Tower Hamlets on the LCC, was also involved in the East End Carnival's organisation.

Carnivals attracted support from politically-linked organisations on both sides of the party divide too. The Lewisham Carnival movement originated within Catford Conservative Club, with three of its members becoming honorary secretaries, while its chairman, T. W. Williams, was a Moderate LCC member for Lewisham.⁸⁴ Officials from local Conservative clubs also served on the Camberwell, Peckham and Dulwich Carnival's executive, with local controversy arising over the holding of committee elections within these institutions.⁸⁵ Yet both Greenwich Progressive Club and Hatcham Liberal Club offered their premises to the Greenwich, Deptford and Charlton Carnival committee as venue for supplementary entertainments, while public meetings of the movement were attended by the representatives of the Greenwich Women's Liberal Association.⁸⁶ Hackney Reform Club contributed a car to its local carnival, and held a garden party to aid its fundraising, while Manor Park Liberal Club and Plashet Radical Club gave their backing to the Manor Park Carnival.⁸⁷ Organised labour played its part too. Representatives of the Railway Servants Amalgamated Society attended the first public meeting of the Willesden Carnival movement, while trade unions were invited to put delegates forward for the Greenwich, Deptford and Charlton committees. The East End and Greenwich, Deptford and Charlton Carnival processions, furthermore, included contingents sent by unions representing costermongers, railwaymen, carmen, local government workers, smiths and painters.

Finally, it is worth noting the significant involvement of former and current military men. Some Unionist MPs who supported the carnivals had army backgrounds, such as Captain H. M. Jessel, MP for St Pancras South, and Colonel Henry Bowles, MP for Enfield and vice president of the Hornsey, Harringay and Wood Green Carnival. The St Pancras Carnival also numbered several locally resident colonels among its vice presidents, some of whom served as procession marshals, while General Major William Evans Gordon was vice chairman of the East End Carnival executive committee. Processions also included a military presence, with numerous volunteer battalions based in London and its suburbs sending contingents

of men, including cycling corps and bands, while local yeomanry and cadet corps also sometimes participated – reflecting their own heightened prestige arising from the direct involvement of auxiliary troops in the conflict.

Speakers at meetings organising to promote the carnivals were often at pains to stress their movement's non-partisan nature. Progressive LCC member Nathan Robinson told the St Pancras Carnival movement's first meeting in April that he was not there 'to talk politics in any shape and form, or to discuss the origins of the war'.⁸⁸ Speaking at Muswell Hill two months later, Hornsey Carnival chairman W. P. Wood moved a resolution that the meeting pledged to do all it could to support the carnival, and in doing so contended that the cause it supported appealed to them whether they were pro-Boer or anti-Boer.⁸⁹ Speakers often eschewed discussions of the conflict's justifiability to concentrate on the charitable cause at hand. Local Unionist MP H. S. Samuel told attendees at a public meeting of the East End Carnival movement that there might be some in the audience who opposed the government's policy in South Africa, but that 'now that the war was proceeding, and as much suffering must be entailed by it, they must do all in their power to mitigate the suffering, and smooth the paths for those who had lost their husbands and fathers'.⁹⁰

Yet alongside this stress on the practicalities of supporting widows and orphans, the language of philanthropy often elided with that of patriotism. South London newspaper *The Kentish Mercury* – whose editor G. Willis was general secretary and treasurer for the Greenwich, Deptford and Charlton Carnival – remarked shortly after that event that it would be 'utterly unworthy of an Englishman' to let their soldiers suffer 'the additional and racking torture of thinking that their dear ones at home may be left to the beggar's crust or the cold hand of charity...we trust that the flow of *patriotic benevolence* will be equal to the most just demands of the case' [My italics].⁹¹ Similarly, Nathan Robinson told a meeting of the St Pancras Carnival movement that the district 'could not afford to come second in the patriotic race', stating that they owed Britain's soldiers 'a vast debt of gratitude, and the only way they could pay them was to show a practical interest in the welfare of their wives and families'.⁹² Within this line of reasoning, widows and orphans' welfare was of concern because of their husbands' and fathers' sacrifices for their country. The case against charitable support for soldiers was rarely made publicly, illustrating their potency as unifying patriotic symbols, who could be championed as national defenders out of the context of where or why they were

fighting. One exception occurred in a meeting of Battersea Vestry, when a request for assistance from the local carnival's organisers prompted a furious argument. Some vestrymen deemed the carnival's object 'a deserving one', whereas others were loath to 'support the men who were fighting for the money-mongers of this country and other countries'.⁹³ The latter argument appears to be one few others were willing to make openly in response to the carnivals.

Despite claims of apoliticism, speakers at related public events often broadened the debate beyond the issue of helping soldiers and their dependents, using the platform to assert the hegemony of more contentious arguments. In June, at a public meeting held in Mile End to promote the East End Carnival, executive committee chair Dalby Williams, a former Moderate member of the LCC, expressed hopes of accumulating £5,000 for the *Daily Telegraph* fund as a way of showing appreciation of the capture of Pretoria, to the cheers of those present.⁹⁴ Pro-war speakers at carnival meetings also depicted the war in South Africa as bearing upon Britain's standing in Europe. Reverend W. S. Coghlan, a leading figure in the Haringay, Hornsey and Wood Green carnival's administration, told a meeting at Wood Green that 'They were able to show Frenchmen, Germans, and Boers too, that, whatever their party differences might be, in times of national emergency they stood shoulder to shoulder like the boys of the old brigade and looked after the widows.'⁹⁵ Such comments revealed a sense of embattlement within Europe that heightened the value of success in colonial conflicts.

On the other hand, some speakers used the platform to criticise the government's lack of provision for widows and orphans, evolving the patriotic and philanthropic argument into one for expanding state welfare. At a public meeting held in Stepney in late May in relation to the East End Carnival, Progressive LCC member B. S. Straus said he thought it the duty of the government to look after soldiers' widows and orphans, but that as they were unlikely to do so, it was the responsibility of those gathered there that day to support them instead – a comment that met with the approval of those gathered.⁹⁶ This was no mere party line: Joseph Hall Richardson, *Daily Telegraph* journalist and Shilling Fund manager, made a similar argument at meetings of local carnival movements in Bromley and Wood Green.⁹⁷

Patriotic sentiments and public elation at the war turning in Britain's favour also fuelled enthusiasm in London for holding carnivals more generally. Plans for the Lewisham Carnival commenced during the first phase of the war, and persisted through 'Black Week'. However, it was only once reinforcements had

arrived and Kimberley and Ladysmith been relieved, that planning began from March of a new wave of carnivals, held across the city in May. Following the relief of Mafeking in mid-May, plans got underway for another wave of carnivals, taking place in June and July. Sometimes the connection between the war's progress and the organisation of carnivals was explicit: a 'patriotic committee' established in Chiswick that had decorated local streets following the relief of Mafeking subsequently organised a procession to mark the entry of British troops into Pretoria, during which a collection was held on behalf of the *Telegraph* Fund.⁹⁸ Other carnivals were also deliberately scheduled for dates of national significance. A number were held on 24 May to also mark the Queen's birthday, while the Chislehurst Carnival was held on 18 June to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo.⁹⁹

This still leaves the question, however, as to why most of these events were arranged specifically to aid the *Daily Telegraph* Fund. It might be partly attributed to their following the example first set by the Lewisham Carnival. Indeed, holding carnivals in general was partly a response to local example, with both local newspapers and speakers at public meetings of nascent carnival movements frequently citing examples of what other districts had already achieved.¹⁰⁰ In this way, organising, participating in or contributing financially to a local carnival offered a pre-existing model for expressing a sense of pride at Britain's successes in South Africa, and admiration for the armed forces.

Yet patriotism alone remains an inadequate explanation. The carnivals also occurred at a time when the *Daily Telegraph* was giving increased emphasis to the large numbers of war widows in London in need of financial aid. Having stressed from the outset its eagerness to ensure money was spent as far as possible in the vicinity where it was raised, the *Telegraph* also took to publishing lists of new London annuitants, who it reiterated received their allocations from their local carnival fund. Speakers at public meetings held to promote carnival movements, and local newspaper coverage with the same intention, frequently stressed the extent to which the families of locally based soldiers would be the beneficiaries of funds raised; they also frequently praised the *Telegraph's* efficiency and speed in granting its aid.¹⁰¹ It is worth noting too that St Pancras, holder of London's most lucrative carnival, apparently had more war widows than any other district in the capital, with 25, when it submitted its final takings to the fund.¹⁰² Combined with feelings of national pride was a concern for dependents of local men who had headed to South Africa as reservists or

volunteers, illustrating the tangible connections between locality, nation and empire underpinning interest in the war.

A final point needs to be made on the issue of gender. Speakers at public meetings promoting carnival movements were almost uniformly male, shaping the rhetoric surrounding these events accordingly. It is therefore unsurprising that discussions around the carnivals centred on expressing admiration for and empathy with soldiers risking their lives; widows were occasionally objects of pity, but almost never identified with. Yet women were heavily active on the organisational side, possession of a strong ladies' committee often seen as integral to a carnival's success. In the case of St Pancras, they undertook vital work such as going from house to house obtaining subscriptions. There is little evidence as to what drove women's participation in carnivals specifically, although in several cases they were wives of male organisers. It is, however, quite possible that their take on the carnivals' rationale and the war more generally differed from that of male speakers at public meetings, given what we already know about the prominence of women in the anti-war movement; perhaps their sympathies were rather more fixed on the plights of the local widows themselves, some of whom they may have even known.

Before analysing the processions' contents, it is important to recognise the power structures underpinning their systems of representation. Firstly, carnival organising committees functioned as gatekeepers as to what could be depicted within processions. In Hornsey, for example, chairman W. P. Wood urged the various ward committees not to include 'insulting effigies or reference to their foes' in their procession contingents, in order to ensure the carnival was 'worthy of the sacred cause of charity'.¹⁰³ Secondly, putting together complex, eye-catching items, as with some of the themed decorated cars, required access to sufficient equipment, materials and personnel; it was for this reason that these tended to be disproportionately contributed by businesses and voluntary or public sector organisations, while individual contributors tended to be male. Women were more plentiful among individual costumed processionists and collectors, though this group did not have the same gestural wherewithal.

Within the processions, symbols of Britain were ubiquitous. Representations of Britannia, John Bull and the Union flag were common, while many premises along carnival routes were draped in red, white and blue.¹⁰⁴ Some carnival items also portrayed the Royal Family, including the Paragon Theatre's car from

the East End Carnival depicting Victoria's coronation, and a car that Peppercorn & Co (which ran a grocery and provision store, ironmonger's, and furnishing business) entered in the Greenwich, Deptford and Charlton procession showing the Royal Family in their drawing room.¹⁰⁵ Among the decorations of the procession routes, meanwhile, the Queen was ubiquitous: countless householders and residents put up portraits of her, along with banners and illuminations spelling out the letters 'V.R.'. This reflected a broader cult of the monarch previously evident in Victoria's 1887 and 1897 Jubilee celebrations, and subsequently in the commemoration following her death in 1901.¹⁰⁶

Such representations coexisted with celebration of Britain's constituent nations. There were numerous cars featuring four costumed individuals representing England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, as well as individual cars representing each of them (such as the 'Welsh Industries and Peasants' car in the East End carnival, or the ubiquitous 'Irish Jaunting Car').¹⁰⁷ This may partly reflect the fact that a large proportion of Londoners during this period were born in Scotland, Wales and Ireland, while many more were of Scottish, Welsh and Irish descent, helping to explain this strong level of identification with the other members of the Union.¹⁰⁸ During the Willesden Carnival, the crowds along Kilburn High Road – an area with a history of Irish settlement – sang a mixture of songs including 'Rule Britannia', 'What Do You Think of the Irish Now', and 'Soldiers of the Queen', illustrating a fusion of British and diasporic Irish identities.¹⁰⁹

The celebration of a specifically English identity was also present, in the evocation of a rurally and historically based identity. While some items depicted the more recent past, most historical representations in the carnivals harked back to before the Act of Union. Tudor and Stuart England were commonly portrayed: to name but a few examples, the Willesden Carnival included one car bearing individuals dressed as Charles I, Henry VIII and Cardinal Wolsey; the Greenwich, Deptford and Charlton procession contained a four-horse coach, submitted by a local provision merchant, emblematic of 'Old England' and ridden by 'Good old English gentlemen, all of the olden time'; and Elizabeth I and the Earl of Leicester were featured in the St Pancras Carnival.¹¹⁰ Medieval England was also prominent. Wat Tyler, leader of the Peasants' Revolt, made an appearance in the Willesden Carnival, while Richard the Lionheart and a band of crusaders figured in the St Pancras procession, as did Robin Hood and his Merry Men, who also featured in the East End Carnival.¹¹¹

These manifestations of national identity characterised England as an old and essentially pastoral country, and can therefore be linked with the rurally-themed items that were also significant in number. There were a multitude of floral cars in each carnival, as well as representations of the seasons, and cars containing Maypoles and May Queens, evoking a uniquely English tradition. Others specifically connected rurality with Englishness: for example, drapery and millinery firm Charles Coleing and Son's 'Old England's Emblem is the Rose' car in the St Pancras Carnival, which featured the Queen of Roses with attendants and surrounded by characters representative of 'English rural life and sport'.¹¹² Yet the Englishness of these rural and historical figures and settings was more frequently not explicitly stated. Even as the uniqueness of Scotland, Wales and Ireland and their equal standing as parts of Britain were acknowledged, the lines between English and British national identity were still to an extent blurred, and Englishness presented as normative.

The notion of a composite Britain was expanded upon in the systems of representation used to depict the Empire. Numerous cars featured collectives of individuals representing constituent colonies and dominions, often surrounding the figure of Britannia. One entitled 'Imperial Federation', entered in the Greenwich, Deptford and Charlton procession by furniture dealers Pyne Brothers, included Britannia, John Bull, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Australia, the Cape, India and Canada.¹¹³ The Hornsey Carnival, meanwhile, included a 'Greater Britain' car, which featured Britannia attended by representatives of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, India, Canada, the Cape Colony and New Zealand.¹¹⁴ The absence of a specifically designated representative of England in these cars is telling: in the first instance, John Bull, who could stand for either England or Britain, here probably represented England; in the second, the line between England and Britain was blurred within the figure of Britannia. Both demonstrate a notion of Empire as expansion of English/British state to include loyal home nations and overseas possessions, especially (although not exclusively) the dominions.

Soldiers were by far the most commonly depicted figures in the carnival processions themselves. As noted above, this included contingents of locally based auxiliaries, but far more abundant were civilian men, and sometimes boys, marching or cycling in khaki. The soldier was also often heavily personalised through cars and tableaux that staged scenes from the lives of individual 'Tommys'. Closely informed by the carnivals' philanthropic *raison-d'être*, these representations encouraged empathy with the soldier while

connecting Britain and its empire through him. Mock-ups of hospital camps with nurses treating wounded men were common, as were representations of 'The Absent-Minded Beggar' and its frequently accompanying illustration, 'A Gentleman in Kharki' [sic]. Leading military figures such as General French, Colonel Baden-Powell, Lord Roberts and even Redvers Buller were frequently represented, with Roberts becoming particularly iconic. This was mirrored in the decorations of homes and business premises lining carnival routes, with portraits of these individuals and slogans such as 'Bravo Bobs' extremely commonplace. Furthermore, elaborate large-scale models of maxim and naval guns, naval ships and armoured trains were built for and paraded in the carnivals.¹¹⁵ Britain was being celebrated as a martial and technologically advanced power, reflected in the figures and machinery it deployed in distant arenas.

Contributions of soldiers from other British nations were frequently celebrated in the carnival processions, through representations of Welsh regiments, Scottish Highlanders, and the Dublin Fusiliers in the Battle of Glencoe, including the St Pancras Reform Club's car showing John Bull thanking 'Pat' for Irish soldiers' efforts.¹¹⁶ This suggests that, at a time of imperial conflict and perceived isolation within Europe, the concept of British unity was doubtless a reassuring one, with demonstrations of Irish loyalty particularly welcome (and for Liberals, vindicating) amid the development of the Home Rule movement. Each carnival also included substantial representations of soldiers drawn from different parts of the Empire, with the New South Wales Lancers being particularly popular, while there were a few cars entitled 'Sons of the Empire' depicting troops from Britain's various imperial possessions.¹¹⁷ The exact composition of these is unclear, but representations of the Empire's military forces were certainly not solely drawn from the white dominions: the St Pancras Carnival featured a Lieutenant Colonel from the Indian cavalry, while the East End carnival also included a contingent of soldiers 'from our Eastern Empire'.¹¹⁸

Representations of soldiers' dependents also featured frequently. The St Pancras Carnival alone incorporated cars and tableaux with the titles 'Arrival of News from Tommy at Home', 'Pets Tommy Left behind Him', 'How He Fed Those Tommy Left behind Him', 'Fatherless', 'What Tommy's Left Behind Him', and 'Goodbye Daddy'.¹¹⁹ The Greenwich, Deptford and Charlton Carnival included an emblematic car, submitted by local theatre proprietor Arthur Carlton, displaying a wounded Highlander on the South African veldt on one side of the car, while on the other was his Highlands cottage, where his wife and child awaited news.¹²⁰ These were among an array of items that eliminated physical distance between Metropole

and Empire by reconstituting scenery from South Africa in London's urban and suburban spaces. Already famous battlefronts from the war – Mafeking, Ladysmith, Spion Kop, Glencoe – were reproduced in tableau form and paraded around the city's various districts. While existing literature has explored characterisations of colonial spaces as feminine, wild and exotic, in the carnivals the empire was identified as in reassuringly close proximity and as a space where British masculinity could be realised.¹²¹ Within this bifurcated worldview, empire formed a duality with domestic space, meaning both homeland – usually represented by the countryside – and personal home, associated with family and femininity. In this way, two seemingly divergent ideas of nationhood, an inward-looking England and outward-looking Britain, were inherently connected in a vision of separate-but-joined spheres writ globally.

This gendering of nationhood, and the prominence of the military element within it, reflected the overwhelming male dominance of representation within the processions. This is emphasised by examining the minority of female-contributed procession items. In the St Pancras Carnival, for example, just seven of 305 items listed in the procession programme were contributed by women: among these were cars depicting the nation in feminine terms, including a car representing 'The British Isles', with Britannia surrounded by costumed ladies symbolising Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and vehicles depicting women's non-combatant roles in the Boer War, such as a decorated trap carrying 'Ladies for the Front', as well as the pastorally themed 'The Seasons and the Queen of the Lilies'.¹²² This emphasises the ways in which gender shaped and constrained expressions of patriotism and identity within the processions, where male dominance, rooted in broader gender inequalities, determined interpretations of nationhood in militaristic terms.

There was a further duality in the projection of national and imperial identities, between the establishmentarian and the populist. On the one hand, some procession items – especially larger ones contributed by businesses and other organisations – evoked an official, elite idea of the nation, closely bound up with the state and its institutions, celebrating royalty (contemporary and historical), leading military figures, the flag, and the political structures of Britain and Empire. Yet a far more democratic vision of nationhood was embodied in the ubiquitous common soldier, bearing as he did a strong element of everyman classlessness. This was evident in the items personifying the individual soldier, highlighting his suffering and role as family man, rendering him a highly empathetic and equally accessible alternative to the elite symbols of the nation. Larger contingents of soldiers and sailors, meanwhile, symbolised Britain's

military might, but also rendered the nation as a *mass* of men, united by their love for and service to their country. More democratic readings of nationhood were also evident in idealised depictions of rural community life.

In comprehending these representations, it is vital to bear the carnival context in mind. It was essential to its fundraising success that these events provided an impressive spectacle, aside from ideological considerations, and therefore models of heavy duty weaponry or imperial scenes, or contingents of men marching in uniform, were valuable for their visual impact too. In keeping with this entertainment function, countless processionists also dressed as ostensibly apolitical figures such as pierrots, jesters and clowns, while decorated vehicles took sporting or literary themes.¹²³ The Greenwich, Deptford and Charlton procession even included forty members of Maze Hill Football Club wearing comic costumes, riding donkeys and carrying brooms, under the moniker of 'Household Cavalry'.¹²⁴ With the processions lacking much real internal structure, these items were interspersed with more earnest centrepieces, potentially subverting the patriotic, imperial, militarist or philanthropic messages the carnival was intended to communicate. Their presence also problematises reading more earnest procession items as straight projections of identity. Men who paraded dressed as ordinary soldiers, or as famous generals, may have identified with or idolised these figures and held in high regard the values they symbolised, yet their embodiment of them was ephemeral: temporarily, perhaps playfully, adopting the façade of military men while concealing their own real identities and occupations, only to later abandon this impersonation. The carnival atmosphere also encouraged irreverence from spectators. During the Hornsey Carnival, a variety of items other than money were inserted into collection boxes, including tram and rail tickets, buttons and pieces of broken glass.¹²⁵ This was a feature of carnivals more broadly during this period: a form of inversionary activity that entailed sending up charity itself, although placing glass in collecting boxes seems more transgressive and may have constituted a form of anti-war protest.¹²⁶

Moreover, the repetitiveness and derivativeness of much procession content is a reminder of their place within broader, durable networks of representation. They replicated existing models of visualising the Boer War and imagery circulating through cultural industries; this was directly visible with caricatures of the 'Absent Minded Beggar', as well as theatre-submitted decorated cars depicting scenes from the war and soldiers' lives, which would have drawn upon their existing stock of costumes and props, and from the

popular genre of militarily themed melodrama. However, as a burgeoning cultural form, the carnival processions also included patriotic representational motifs visible in carnivals from earlier and later years.¹²⁷ People who decorated their homes and premises for processions would also have been at least partially dependent on what was commercially available or already in their possession. Carnival processions, therefore, entailed performances or displays of participants' embodied and objectified cultural capital, which functioned as commonly recognisable visually communicative forms. Yet we cannot know the intricate array of sentiments individuals invested in these simplistic symbols, nor assume they placed the same meanings upon them as the cultural industries they borrowed them from, nor take for granted that watching crowds did not interpret them differently themselves. As with the carnivals' rationales, however, this ambiguity no doubt ensured these symbols' popularity of these symbols, helping them appeal across ideological spectrums.

Referencing other districts' carnivals in organising new ones, copying familiar tropes in surrounding rhetoric, and repetition of stock figures or scenes in processions – reflecting the impact of expanding communication networks and their proximity in London to sources of much of this symbolism – constituted exhibitions of patriotic capital, with expected returns. The ostensible primary objective was raising money for soldiers' widows and orphans. Yet public expressions of patriotic sentiment held additional value in connoting the esteem of the person or institution responsible, with potential individual or organisational gains, and fitted within a broader culture of voluntary action. Many individuals involved in organising the Boer War carnivals had backgrounds and futures in charity fundraising: A. T. Green, organising secretary of the Harringay, Hornsey and Wood Green Carnival, for example, was also organiser of the pre-existing Wood Green Cycling Carnival in aid of the local hospital, while William Maxfield-Mead, treasurer for the Bow, Bromley and Poplar Carnival, would later become involved in organising the Ilford Hospital Carnival.¹²⁸

The Boer War carnivals offered multiple avenues for accumulating social capital. Lower middle-class members of organising committees could associate with individuals of similar or slightly higher social standing, sometimes in more convivial settings at connected dinners and concerts. Contributions of organisers, donors and procession participants were publicised in local newspapers, and on occasion in the

Telegraph; local newspapers also often printed apologies for omissions or misspellings of names, suggesting some contributors actively sought this public recognition and contacted the newspaper in the event they did not properly receive it. Carnival organisers too bestowed recognition in the shape of prizes, both for the best procession items, and on occasion for individuals who had played particularly prominent organisational and fundraising roles.¹²⁹ Opportunities to make new friends and attain greater local notability were likely to have been particularly valuable in London's fast-growing suburbs, where public spheres and social networks remained in a relatively embryonic state.¹³⁰ In this milieu, appropriate and familiar performances of patriotism and charitability carried particularly valuable common currency.

It was also particularly important to those individuals with seats in or ambitions of being elected to parliament. Making a large donation or speaking publicly on behalf of the carnival provided them with political capital they could subsequently draw upon at the next election. T. Skewes-Cox, Unionist MP for Kingston-upon-Thames – a seat he retained unopposed later that year – even rode in his carriage close to the front of the Barnes and Mortlake Carnival procession. The case of the East End, where there were several marginal seats, was particularly illustrative of how carnivals could become embroiled in political manoeuvring. Among its organising committee, Major Evans Gordon was Unionist candidate for Stepney, while B. S. Straus was Liberal candidate for Tower Hamlets, St George, while the carnival's vice presidents included D. H. Kyd, Unionist candidate for Whitechapel. Controversy arose when Stepney MP W. C. Steadman was omitted from the carnival's organising committee, with local Unionist electoral agent Geoffrey Powell writing into the *East London Advertiser* to strongly deny claims Evans Gordon was behind the ejection.¹³¹

For Liberal politicians, meanwhile, support for soldiers' widows and orphans fitted into their broader efforts to redefine patriotism in their own terms and shift political debates onto territory where they felt more comfortable. In September, Steadman told an electoral meeting in Stepney that he held colonial secretary Joseph Chamberlain responsible for the war, and 'for the 2,000 widows and 2,500 orphans who were left behind to struggle on as best they could, or go into the workhouse'.¹³² The following night, Straus told a meeting in St George's that the Unionists had no monopoly on patriotism, and that 'The real patriot was the man who realised in its fullness the terrible horrors of war, who declared against war excepting as the very last resource of the nation, who looked after and protected the widows and orphans of those who

died, and properly maintained those who were maimed in the service of their country'.¹³³ Such language reflected a wider contestation of ideas of patriotism by opponents of the war, as discussed earlier. Neither Steadman nor Straus won the seats they contested, however: the former was particularly badly routed by Evans Gordon, while Straus was defeated more narrowly by Unionist T. R. Dewar, who also advocated state provision for soldiers' widows and orphans.¹³⁴

Businesses too were eager to exploit the commercial opportunities and good publicity involvement in carnivals offered. Many contributed procession items celebrating their trade, with some explicitly linking their commercial activities with the war, and the ordinary soldier. In St Pancras, the North-West District Post Office contributed several postal-themed cars, including 'Animated Mail Bags from NW to South Africa', and 'A Field Post Office at the Front'; Baker George Cash sent a car entitled 'What Tommy Needs and what We Knead for Tommy' to the same procession, and the Singer sewing machine company sent a car called 'How We Clothe Tommy at the Front', featuring representatives of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland sewing khaki clothes.¹³⁵ Businesses also attained product placements in newspaper reports on the carnivals and their preparations, often appended with references to their patriotic and philanthropic credentials. The *St Pancras Gazette* told readers ahead of the local carnival that Messrs Dunhill 'have produced some beautiful flags for the procession...and there should be huge demand for these, and the other splendid flags on sale at Dunhill's', noting as well that the firm had donated ten guineas to the carnival fund.¹³⁶ Ahead of the Hampstead, Kilburn and Cricklewood Carnival, an item in the *Willesden Chronicle's* 'Local News' section told parents they could acquire regulation khaki uniform for their children from 'Alexander the Great' tailors in Kilburn and that the store would deal 'liberally' with participants in the procession.¹³⁷

There were also negative consequences to being seen to not participate in this display. During Mafeking Night celebrations on 18 May, a crowd of 2,000 people gathered outside Messrs Tyrell's grocery shop in Harlesden, with some throwing missiles; two days later, an even larger crowd gathered outside the store and called for its owners before being moved on by the police. One of the Tyrell brothers was rumoured to be a pro-Boer and to have refused to decorate the premises both for the Willesden Carnival and the relief of Mafeking, as well as to have discharged three employees who took part in the carnival. The Tyrells quickly moved to refute the allegations, pointing out that they had contributed £5 5s to the carnival

fund, and that one of them had participated with two employees in the procession. A representative of the firm also appeared at the court case for the men accused of vandalising the store, stating that if they had genuinely considered the Tyrells to be pro-Boers, then this partly justified their actions and they should therefore be treated mercifully.¹³⁸

This article began by arguing that Britain at the onset of the twentieth century was both a society deeply and multifacetedly engaged in an imperial conflict, and that had long been readying for and pre-enacting it. Nationalism, imperialism and militarism were projects Britons had become directly or emotionally involved in, and whose icons functioned as cultural capital exchangeable for social, economic and political capital. The outbreak of war in South Africa in 1899 accelerated and intensified these processes across diverse spheres, stimulating supply of and demand for new imagery, idols, narratives and representative modes that could be traded in this way. The wave of carnivals that took place across London in 1900 typified this process, and shed light on aspects of its workings. Firstly, the war provoked a plurality of responses from different sections of society, yet there also emanated from it needs and symbols that provided scope for a degree of consensus. The carnivals' arrangements and the surrounding discourses illustrated cross-class interest in and enthusiasm for the war, as well as support for British soldiers. The processions themselves evinced deep pride in the nation and armed forces, as well as in the project of empire. Yet the carnivals' appeal extended beyond jingoists and ardent imperialists, finding more common ground in eliciting support for ordinary soldiers and their dependents, although at times discourse around carnivals veered into the more partisan territories of the righteousness of the war, or the need for better state provision for soldiers' widows and orphans. Underpinning these discursive and representational matrices was male hegemony over expression in processions and public meetings alike, ensuring they were permeated by masculine affinity with the soldier, whose patriotic self-sacrifice determined the deservingness of his dependents, treated by contrast as objects for aid but not subjects for identification with. Women, by contrast, were silent but active partners within the carnival movements, raising the possibility of hidden further dimensions to the motivations behind them.

Furthermore, the carnivals exhibited a shift in the direction of voluntary welfare provision that the Boer War helped accelerate. While successful in attracting the largesse of wealthy patrons, they relied more

on the initiative and administrative capabilities of the local middle and lower-middle classes and on the contributions of wider communities. This typified a broader move away from a hierarchical model of philanthropy towards a more democratic version in which a broader citizenry provided for peers at moments of distress, facilitated by economic changes that resulted in more equitable distribution of resources and increased quantities of disposable income among a greater share of the population, as well as by technological and industrial advancements that widened access to and capacity to disseminate information. With some of the carnivals' supporters and the *Daily Telegraph* itself advocating introduction of state pensions for soldiers' dependents, eventually enacted the following year, this case study provides an early example of how the Boer War heightened awareness of the benefits of more effective and extensive peer-to-peer redistribution according to need. In this and other instances, the war exposed the shortcomings of localised, fragmented welfare provision relative to a more systematic, national system (as the *Telegraph* characterised its own fund), paving the way for the eventual identification of the state as optimal mechanism for providing necessary assistance in a broadening range of instances. Yet conversely, the eagerness of the local response within London, and the emphasis both the *Telegraph* and the carnivals' organisers and supporters placed upon funds raised locally being redistributed locally, also helps to illustrate how the agency charitable initiatives granted to individuals and institutions involved in fundraising reinforced persistence of voluntarism in welfare provision, despite growing recognition of its inefficiencies.

The carnivals also pointed up the performative and reproductive elements of national identities and iconographies. Diverse symbols of nationhood could be replicated in word and image with differing emphases, for purposes of mobilising cross-sectional audiences in rallying behind this common agenda, frequently with the ulterior intention of communicating the agent's qualities to a desired audience for personal gain. This is not to downplay the genuineness of the patriotic and philanthropic sentiments expressed in and around the processions, but rather to highlight how existing models of voluntary action and the need to acquire different forms of capital within the heavily populated metropolis and its burgeoning suburbs reinforced adherence to and avowal of these values. It also entailed replication of existing popular imagery and representational models from the world of commercial leisure with a track record of monetising their subject matter, whether by appropriation, or via direct insertion by cultural industrial institutions themselves.

Drawing these strands together permits a reconceptualisation of the trajectory of British politics and culture during this period. Imperial military action and its domestic reception and sustenance between 1899 and 1902 comprised a multitude of overlapping performances, designed to further varying agendas and secure the acquiescence of diverse audiences, but these were not discrete from ‘peacetime’ nor pacifist performances. Instead, they marked an historic stage (or rather, cycle of stages) of representational specialisation and innovation, during which existing and emergent war-centric tropes held greater immediate purchase, favouring some performers and agendas over others, yet more pacifistic and less contemporaneous patriotic symbols and ideals retained recognisability and resonance and had to be incorporated into dominant narratives, as much as dissenting narratives had to reach accommodations with wartime imagery and values. Carnival specifically and popular culture more generally also offered space for less earnest performances, components of accelerated cultural capital production, which could parasitically, promiscuously and playfully oscillate across the broad matrix of simulacra of nationhood, concerned more with acts and fruits of representation than meanings of the represented, but which nonetheless perpetuated and hybridised these sets of imagery, facilitating their reinterpretation and reprojection by those who witnessed them. Performers and audiences alike expended money, time, effort, knowledge and emotion within this web of signifiers and significations, substituting them in to stand for their personal and collective networks, and encouraging reformulation and mobilisation of these networks through adapted performative strategies – as with the case of fundraising initiatives for war charities.

Six years after the Unionists’ wartime electoral landslide, the Liberals’ peacetime one saw them win a majority of London constituencies for the first time since wholesale seat redistribution in 1885.¹³⁹ The 1906 election has been examined in detail elsewhere and the causes of its outcome are too diverse to discuss here. Yet what the Boer War carnivals emphasise is that concerns with matters of welfare and reform, and more introspective, rural-focused conceptions of nationhood – which were so effectively fused together by the Liberals in their appeal to the electorate in 1906 – were far from absent in 1900, even in imperial London, nor merely momentarily forgotten in a pique of war fever. Rather, the economic, social, cultural and political capital endowed within the conceived national community and systems for ensuring its collective wellbeing – exemplified in the Boer War carnival processions, the rhetoric around them, and the funds they raised – were simultaneously invested by extension in the imperial project and seen at the turn

of the twentieth century as at stake in the war in South Africa, where the rights and lives of fellow Britons were represented as under threat. This interpretation helps reconcile the non-aggressive, domesticated ideas of nation and the philanthropic concerns and actions, with the apparently militaristic and triumphalist sentiments expressed as the war turned in Britain's favour, for at points like this Britain's accumulated capital appeared to have been saved and augmented. That same capital was also invested in and staked upon the consequentially revered ordinary serviceman, and by association in the maintenance of his wife and children.

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the Hornsey, East End, Willesden and St Pancras Carnivals, all of which could then be crosschecked against the 1901 Census via *Findmypast.co.uk* (Accessed November – December 2011) to identify their occupations.

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⁸³ *Kentish Mercury* (4 May 1900); *Willessden Chronicle* (18 May 1900); ‘Official Programme. Borough of St. Pancras Grand Patriotic Carnival’ in Camden Archives; *East London Advertiser* (30 Jun. 1900); *Hornsey Journal* (14 Jul. 1900).

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¹¹² ‘Official Programme. Borough of St. Pancras Grand Patriotic Carnival’.

¹¹³ *Kentish Mercury* (4 May 1900).

¹¹⁴ *Hornsey Journal* (14 Jul. 1900).

¹¹⁵ *Kentish Mercury* (4 May 1900); *Willessden Chronicle* (18 May 1900); ‘Official Programme. Borough of St. Pancras Grand Patriotic Carnival’; *East London Advertiser* (30 Jun. 1900); *Hornsey Journal* (14 Jul. 1900).

¹¹⁶ ‘Official Programme. Borough of St. Pancras Grand Patriotic Carnival’.

¹¹⁷ *Kentish Mercury* (4 May 1900); *Willessden Chronicle* (18 May 1900); ‘Official Programme. Borough of St. Pancras Grand Patriotic Carnival’; *East London Advertiser* (30 Jun. 1900); *Hornsey Journal* (14 Jul. 1900).

¹¹⁸ ‘Official Programme. Borough of St. Pancras Grand Patriotic Carnival’; *East London Advertiser* (30 Jun. 1900).

¹¹⁹ ‘Official Programme. Borough of St. Pancras Grand Patriotic Carnival’.

¹²⁰ *Kentish Mercury* (4 May 1900).

¹²¹ For references to feminised colonial spaces (and their reconstitution in London), see A. Hassam, ‘Portable iron structures and uncertain colonial spaces at the Sydenham Crystal Palace’, in *Imperial Cities*, ed. Driver and Gilbert, pp. 174–93 (p. 186); R. Preston, ‘The scenery of the torrid zone’: imagined travels and the culture of exotics in nineteenth century British gardens’, in *Imperial Cities*, ed. Driver and Gilbert, pp. 194–211 (p. 200).

¹²² ‘Official Programme. Borough of St. Pancras Grand Patriotic Carnival’.

¹²³ *Kentish Mercury* (4 May 1900); *Willessden Chronicle* (18 May 1900); ‘Official Programme. Borough of St. Pancras Grand Patriotic Carnival’; *East London Advertiser* (30 Jun. 1900); *Hornsey Journal* (14 Jul. 1900).

¹²⁴ *Kentish Mercury* (4 May 1900).

¹²⁵ *Hornsey Journal* (25 Aug. 1900).

¹²⁶ For example, among the items found in collectors' boxes after the 1908 Ilford Hospital Carnival were safety pins, buttons, steel washers, a bone disc, advertisement discs, ancient tokens, a post office time plate, and several foreign coins. *Ilford Guardian* (17 July 1908).

¹²⁷ See, by way of later comparison, D. Georgiou 'The drab suburban streets were metamorphosed into a veritable fairyland': spectacle and festivity in the Ilford hospital carnival, 1905–1914', *The London Journal*, 39 (2014), 227–48.

¹²⁸ *Daily Telegraph* (6 May 1900); *East London Advertiser* (2 June 1900); *Ilford Guardian* (12 May 1905).

¹²⁹ *Kentish Mercury* (15 June 1900); *East London Advertiser* (23 June 1900); *St Pancras Gazette* (7 July 1900).

¹³⁰ Among suburban districts hosting carnivals in aid of the *Daily Telegraph* Fund, Ilford experienced a 277.6% rise in its population between 1891 and 1901, East Ham a 193.6% rise, and Willesden an 87.4% rise. General Register Office, *Census of England and Wales. 1911. Area, Families or Separate Occupiers, and Population. Vol. I. Administrative Areas. Counties, Urban and Rural Districts, &c.* (1912), pp. 647–648.

¹³¹ *East London Advertiser* (14 Sep. 1900; 28 Sep. 1900).

¹³² *East London Advertiser* (28 Sep. 1900).

¹³³ *East London Advertiser* (28 Sep. 1900).

¹³⁴ *East London Advertiser* (15 Sep. 1900); *The Times* (5 Oct. 1900).

¹³⁵ 'Official Programme. Borough of St. Pancras Grand Patriotic Carnival'.

¹³⁶ *St Pancras Gazette* (19 May 1900).

¹³⁷ *Willesden Chronicle* (25 May 1900).

¹³⁸ *Willesden Chronicle* (25 May 1900).

¹³⁹ Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism in Imperial London*, p. 36.