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## Tommy Talk: War Hospital Magazines and the Literature of Resilience and Healing

Alice Brumby

War hospital magazines are an important yet neglected part of First World War print culture, offering invaluable insight into the experiences and perceptions of wounded servicemen ('Tommys') undergoing treatment regimes. These magazines reveal soldiers' diverse responses to their wartime environment, showing that satire and humour were part of a wider, more complex emotional reaction. In contrast to other historians' findings, this chapter demonstrates that for many of the men contributing to these magazines, resilience to the war and their injuries came from a sense of genuine patriotism and achievement rather than scathing resistance. It provides an insight into the unique cultural and artistic responses of wounded patients, which show a different picture of how these patients understood and responded to their wartime experiences.

Print culture of the First World War, especially trench journals, has received substantial attention from academics in the past few decades. These journals have become an important source in understanding the experiences and attitudes of soldiers on the front line. Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau has used a variety of journals to understand how French soldiers used print culture as a means of resilience and endurance.<sup>1</sup> Further, Fuller has identified the link between discipline and trench journalism, highlighting that this culture helped relieve war time pressures, prompting others to observe that the process functioned as a 'disciplinary safety-valve.'<sup>2</sup> More recent historians have explored similar themes.<sup>3</sup> Chapman and Ellin, for instance, identify that the cartoons in these journals acted as a space for sharing concerns and complaints, and were vital for troops' morale.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, a growing body of scholarship has looked at treatment and disablement during and after the war. This work has led to an enormous collection of diverse studies, ranging from surgery, disability, orthopaedics, mental health, trauma and blindness.<sup>5</sup> Whilst this body of work offers a comprehensive insight into the treatment regimens associated with disability and hospital routines, others have studied how the patients experienced or responded to their treatments.<sup>6</sup> Michael Roper's work is an important starting point in this respect, as it seeks to understand how soldiers coped psychologically in response to war trauma.<sup>7</sup> In *The Politics of Wounds*, Ana Carden-Coyne examines the Army Medical Services through the 'lens of the personal experiences' of the wounded soldiers themselves. She concludes that the medical services did not fulfil wounded soldiers' expectations of care, and feelings of injustice and resentment simmered behind the men's silence. By listening to the narratives of these men, Carden-Coyne argues, we can understand how 'the wounded engaged in various forms of soft resistance.'<sup>8</sup>

Tying these two historiographical threads of disability studies and the analysis of wartime literature together, Reznick's work, *Healing the Nation*, provides a detailed overview of a selection of hospital magazines produced in select hospitals across England. He concludes that such magazines identify what he refers to as the soldiers' 'disillusionment with the tyranny of modern technology and with the efficiency systems with which the war time healing environment was connected.'<sup>9</sup> In this view, injured servicemen should be observed as a unique community which created its identity from difference to others, and communicated that difference through scathing satire against the healing institution. Thus, Reznick's work offers a similar analysis to those discussing trench journal magazines who have argued that a 'spiritual bond' developed between men in the trenches, leading them to believe that 'the experience of the "real war" in the trenches, marked men off from the rest of society'.<sup>10</sup> Similarly Seal has argued that there was a specific community built around all nationalities serving within the trenches that distinguished these men from civilians at home.<sup>11</sup>

Rather than piecing together a heavily edited narrative from a diverse group of hospital magazines, as Reznick does, this paper will instead provide a detailed case study of one hospital magazine which has hitherto escaped the close analysis of scholars. The magazine was founded at Huddersfield War Hospital in July 1916. The hospital, located in the north of England, was opened in October 1915 for the exclusive use of injured personnel. The magazine is interesting as a copy of every single edition ever published has survived, allowing a more in depth analysis of patient opinion to be sampled across the final years of the war, revealing in turn a surprising lack of change in either tone or content over time. Viewed as a whole, the collection at Huddersfield bears a different analysis from that which Reznick presents. Rather than bitterness or anger towards the institution, the Tommies writing within this magazine surprisingly often echo the narrative put forward in wartime propaganda. In part, this appears to be linked to the hospital's success as a healing institution – another factor underscoring the importance of looking in depth at specific hospitals, as opposed to comparing magazines from institutions that may have been quite different. Whilst there are indeed many instances of humour and satire within the Huddersfield magazine, these instances clearly served a purpose of morale boosting, and helped soldiers to reconfigure a sense of masculinity from their disabled, diseased and paralysed bodies. In contrast to previous work, this chapter will identify that in this particular magazine, instances of humour and satire were only a small fraction of the contributions and other themes such as gratitude, pride, and loyalty to comrades, doctors, nurses, the institution, and the British Army itself, predominate as the key messages promoted within the publication.

Whereas Chapman and Ellin have argued that editors and readers of trench magazines 'despised home front propaganda and the mainstream press as pedlars of unrealistic jingoism and heroism,' this analysis does not appear to extend to those writing within the *Huddersfield War Hospital*

*Magazine*.<sup>12</sup> The magazine had to find an occasionally uncomfortable balance between appealing to those on the home front and yet appeasing the soldiers who contributed to the journal. The magazine simultaneously acted as a local piece of propaganda, fitting in with the national story of bravery and heroism, and also a vehicle for healing soldiers. Through harnessing their creativity, it helped them find resilience and acceptance, often reconfiguring their masculinity to accommodate disability. This conflicting duality of purpose is a unique feature of war hospital magazines, and one which as yet has received little attention from those analysing the Tommies' literature of the First World War.

In the preface to a special Christmas edition, the editor noted that for the wounded patients who had submitted work, the magazine was a source of 'pride, pleasure and profit.' He said of the 43 wounded 'boys' who had contributed to this particular edition that their works displayed 'great thought, seriousness in outlook, but never sorrow!'<sup>13</sup> Clearly the use of satire and humour in these magazines could maintain morale and resilience amongst disabled and seriously wounded men. The patients' collective experiences of medicine, hospitals and surgery led to a sense of identity amongst those wearing the 'hospital blues' during and immediately after the First World War in Britain. However, it must not be assumed that these narratives were necessarily bitter, or resentful towards the healing institution. Whilst many historians have hitherto highlighted an enormous sense of dissatisfaction amongst disabled and seriously wounded men, this chapter serves as a reminder that these feelings were not universal. Certainly, the evidence from these magazines suggests another narrative. For many of these men, resilience to the war and their injuries came from a sense of genuine patriotism and achievement rather than scathing resistance. Overall, the hospital magazines provide an insight into the unique cultural and artistic responses of wounded patients and show a different picture of how these patients understood and responded to their experience of wartime Britain.

### **Origins of the Hospital and Magazine**

Located in the industrial heartlands of the North of England, Huddersfield War Hospital was built during the war to meet the desperate need to create more accommodation for wounded soldiers. It was built entirely from subscription money invested by the local community for the purpose of setting up a new War Hospital for those who came back from the front lines wounded and sick. The hospital cost a total of £30,000, of which nearly £20,000 was raised in just a few days; the local press reported that even small children were contributing their pocket money to the fund.<sup>14</sup> Local churches got behind the project, raising extra money for Service Books and Penny Testaments for the soldiers.<sup>15</sup> The hospital opened on 4 October 1915 and became one of the most important Military Hospitals in the North of England. The officer commanding the Hospital was Lt. Col W.L.W Marshall, R.A.M.C. Other staff included three R.A.M.C., officers, a Chaplain, Lieutenant/Quartermaster, eight surgeons and

other doctors, a matron, about 50 NCOs, a body of nurses and a radiographer. The hospital boasted over 600 beds with an extra 80 beds added just one year later. By 1917 a series of huts and outdoor extensions had increased its bed capacity to nearly 2,000. It was noted that over 22,360 patients had passed through its doors by the time of its closure in October 1918.<sup>16</sup> These patients consisted of nearly every regiment of the UK and soldiers from many different parts of the Empire and Allied world, including Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, France, Belgium and the British West Indies.<sup>17</sup>

As the central hospital, which received patients directly from the front lines, Huddersfield had an important role in categorising and sorting the patients. After brief periods convalescent or less urgent cases were sent to local Auxiliary Hospitals in order to maintain a constant supply of vacant beds for new arrivals.<sup>18</sup> Patients were admitted in a variety of conditions ranging in severity. During the Battle of the Somme, it was noted that patients admitted to Huddersfield War Hospital were suffering from injuries chiefly caused 'from shrapnel and high explosive shells and machine gun bullets.'<sup>19</sup> One soldier was noted as having 17 machine gun bullet wounds in his body.<sup>20</sup> In another instance, two brothers were admitted to the hospital in December 1916: they had enlisted together and served together and had been wounded by the same shell. One having his right arm shattered, the other the left, both had to have the respective arm amputated.<sup>21</sup>

Whilst the vast majority of the hospital's patients recovered and were returned to duty, for others Huddersfield War Hospital was the beginning of a new chapter; one which signalled a beginning on the journey to a very slow recovery, or else permanent illness, sometimes disability, and the start of the process of discharge to an often painful and uncertain civilian life. The last known figures correspond to the work undertaken at the hospital from its opening to 31 July 1918, three months before it closed. During this period it was noted that 15,106 patients had passed through its doors. Of these patients 10,264 or 67.9% were discharged back to either duty or light duty, 76 had died, and 719 patients or 4.8% were discharged as permanently unfit, many of them severely disabled. For these 719 patients, the war had ended, but would never really be over.

**Table 1: Work done in Hospital from 9 October 1915- 31 July 1918<sup>22</sup>**

No. of beds equipped	2027
Total No. admitted both by convoy and locally	15,106
Sent to convalescent hospitals	11,422
Transferred to other hospitals	3073
Deaths	76
Discharged as permanently unfit	719
Discharged to duty or light duty	10,264
At present in hospital	974

Within this context, the decision was made to create a magazine, celebrating the success of the hospital and acting as a local piece of propaganda. The *Huddersfield War Hospital Magazine* was a monthly magazine available locally to patients and civilians alike. Major E.G. Coward R.A.M.C. was the editor and the sub-editor was the Chaplain, Rev Harwood. The magazine offered a space for its patients to publish stories, diaries, poems, reflections, recollections and also cartoons about their lives, both at the trenches, and in hospital blues. The tone of the magazine ranges from the serious to the humorous and topics include homesickness, life in the trenches, and soldiers' experiences of wounding and hospitals. These fragmented stories offer a real insight into the soldiers' relationships with those around them, including other soldiers, doctors, nurses, and civilians.

The first issue was published in July 1916. The Editor explained that the magazine was to be 'a source of pleasure and instruction to our patients, our staff and the public generally.'<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the magazine claimed that from its columns the public could hope to 'glean stories from the front which would otherwise have laid dormant.'<sup>24</sup> However, it was clear that as much as a fundraising and propaganda exercise, it was intended that the magazine should have some therapeutic qualities for the patients who contributed their work.<sup>25</sup> Initially 1000 copies were printed, but after high demand this was increased to 3000, and then 4000 by the third issue.<sup>26</sup> The magazine was sold locally, to soldiers within the hospital and the local Auxiliary Hospitals, but also to the public. Copies could be obtained initially for the price of just two pence, at a host of local stores, which continued to increase with the magazine's growing popularity. Any profit made from the journal was added to the Colonel's Fund, which helped to raise money for military hospitals.<sup>27</sup>

### **Appealing to the Public, Healing the Soldiers**

The War Office paid grants to hospitals for every patient they looked after. At the highest rate, the government paid £1 4s 6d per week, or £63 14s 0d per annum, for each patient. This covered full hospital treatment and food.<sup>28</sup> However, as the hospital was built entirely from public subscription funds, and these funds continued to pay for many of the other costs associated with a soldiers' residence, the magazine had to appeal to the public and give them pride in an institution created at their expense. There was a clear interaction between the magazine and its readership, and the monthly column 'To Our Readers' was an important feature in every issue. Clearly the editors intended the magazine to be an outward-looking publication. It is also clear that the core readership was the local civilian public, rather than the more transient hospital population. This is evidenced by the fact that 4000 copies of the magazine were published despite there being, on average, only around 600 patients at the Hospital, plus those at surrounding auxiliary hospitals at any given time.

Accordingly, a prominent feature of the editorials and editors' content included publicising the good work done at the hospital or local auxiliary hospitals under its remit. Indeed, the creation of the Official Press Bureau in November 1916 did little to change either the tone or content of the magazine.<sup>29</sup> Frequently the editor would publish news of current and former patients receiving military awards. These columns appeared monthly, with a short extract explaining the patient's achievements, often alongside a picture of the newly decorated soldier. Furthermore, news was often given of former patients. One such example was that of James Marsden, former Corporal of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment. After volunteering in August 1914, Marsden had been severely wounded in the right elbow and left leg on the first day of the Somme. He was admitted two months later to Huddersfield War Hospital and remained there, undergoing several operations to save his arm, until December 1916. Whilst his wounds were so severe that he had to be discharged from the Army, the magazine informed the public that he had subsequently graduated with a BA Honours from the University of Sheffield. The editor noted that the care Marsden had received had 'materially aided his success.'<sup>30</sup> Another volume gave news of the longest resident of the war hospital, Private Johnson, who was admitted in October 1915, as part of the second convoy of patients. Suffering from a severe fracture of the left thigh, the only course of action available was amputation.<sup>31</sup> After remaining in the hospital for three years, the magazine reported he was now in good health and soon to receive his artificial leg.<sup>32</sup> It is clear that these 'good news' stories were intended to boost the morale of patients and civilians alike, suggesting that war wounds did not stop men leading fulfilling lives afterwards and achieving success in civilian occupations.

In a further effort to maintain morale and perhaps also to remain under the censor's radar, the Editorial was invariably jingoistic and upbeat in nature. Whilst the editor was clearly sympathetic to the suffering within his hospital, his writings insist that the war was just, fair and winnable. His Editorial of the Christmas Edition in 1916 repeated many popular propaganda myths in looking for the 'silver lining to this dark tragedy'.<sup>33</sup> He stated that the 'boys who went out in their teens' have returned 'splendid men. Brave men, men who have looked death in the face and [who are] therefore men to the core.'<sup>34</sup> The editor noted the 'refining influence' of the war on the wounded men in his hospital, and offers his sympathy to those readers who had lost relatives in the 'supreme sacrifice.'<sup>35</sup> Again, this was to maintain morale, and perhaps more importantly, financial support from the public. The magazine was forthright about appealing to its readership and the wider public for finance, resources, or other assistance. Whilst Cyril Pearce has described Huddersfield as a 'hotbed' of anti-war feeling, 'little moved by the wilder demands of wartime jingoism' this feeling never manifested itself as hostility to the war hospital or its staff and patients: appeals for public assistance, financial or otherwise, to aid wounded soldiers were always responded to generously by the local public.<sup>36</sup>

Although the public were the primary audience, the magazine was also clearly aimed at the recovering Tommy, who was encouraged to contribute to the magazine as a form of healing and recreation. The C.O. of the hospital was firmly behind the magazine venture and two prizes of 10/- monthly were awarded for the best article, poem or prose and also the best work of art reproduced within the magazine. Prize winners were announced in the following month's issue.<sup>37</sup> The competition encouraged patient participation, and there is ample evidence to suggest that the wounded soldiers who contributed took much pride in their work and the hospital magazine.<sup>38</sup>

Many of the soldiers' contributions echoed similar themes to the messages promoted by the editor, showing that the message of hope and glory still resonated amongst many of the patients. This contrasts starkly with the satirical tone of 'ironic anti-heroism' highlighted by historians of trench journals.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, there are numerous examples, within this magazine at least, which contradict the thesis of 'ironic anti-heroism'. A poem entitled '1917', written by the patient Ernest Clarkson, appealed to all the familiar tropes of heroism, courage, and righteousness, concluding 'the valiant dead must not have died in vain.'<sup>40</sup> A poem entitled 'Wounded' signed by 'An Old Patient' echoed these themes of duty and honour. Instead of the brave dead, the author praises the brave wounded Tommy, who has done his bit for his country:

Back, back, to my home  
Wounded and broken, no more to roam  
Out of the Horrors of the Hell...  
But we're not downhearted; we've given our best  
And we leave to our comrades to finish the rest.<sup>41</sup>

The column entitled "Heard in the wards from those who have been and seen" attempted to enlighten the public about the realities of the front line. However, once again there is no sign of sarcasm, satire or despair in it. Rather, its author – Private John Stewart of the Royal Defence Corps – writes of the same ideas of bravery and courage. He noted, 'Here in the War Hospital of Huddersfield, one is brought face to face with all that war means, or can mean to a nation engaged in the titanic world struggle for freedom against military despotism and the greed of conquest.'<sup>42</sup> Another patient, Robert Middlemas, wrote 'In times of such awful suffering for these boys, it is well to think that they have such real homes to go to when stricken on the battlefields.'<sup>43</sup> His letter expresses his pleasure at being treated within the institution, claiming there was 'no red tape in the management there, nothing but real humanity.'<sup>44</sup> Similar feelings were expressed in the poem 'Bravo War Hospital,' and again in another letter entitled 'Expressions of Gratitude' written by Sergt. Jack Custer of the 12<sup>th</sup> Manchester Regiment.<sup>45</sup> These are just a few examples of the magazine's many stories and poems which epitomize many of the soldiers' perspectives relating to the grandeur and glory of war and their satisfaction with their individual treatment regimes.

There is no sense of any 'hidden irony' behind the pieces, nor would it be justifiable to read into these specific pieces any of the resentment that Reznick and Ana Carden-Coyne find in their sources.<sup>46</sup> Instead, these pieces serve as a reminder that for some soldiers, the fact that they had served and been wounded in a 'great war of great principles' was important to their narrative, and gave meaning to their injuries. The magazine offered a sense of community and comradeship amongst the men in hospital blues. It is clear from the letters published in the magazine, that many ex-patients were fond of the hospital and grateful to its staff for aiding them in their recoveries.

### **Soldiers and the Institution**

Although the soldiers were often extremely positive about their experiences, there were still occasions where satire prevailed and patients would air frustration on the pages of the hospital magazine, often by ridiculing aspects of institutional life. This was especially true in the cases of artworks and poetry. Whilst there is often a tone of humorous defiance and stubbornness amongst the patients, these feelings were often disavowed as exaggeration, either at the end of the piece, or in other writings. This suggests that some of the sarcasm and satire was merely banter, the men making a community of playful resistance for themselves, which appeared to be endorsed by the editors who not only published, but awarded many of these poems and images with prize money. Aspects of institutional life were frequently used as subjects of satire. Describing hospital life, one patient explained:

It is easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle than for a Patient to get into Bed. On arrival the Patient is supplied with a shoehorn and a corkscrew to enable him to get in and out of bed respectively. To disarrange a Bed is a criminal offence. It is far, far better to have a Tidy Bed than a comfortable patient.

Similarly the staff at the institution were frequently prone to becoming objects of humour and amusement. Corporal Brook's work, 'A Tale of a Stitch' ends with a note: 'With Apologies to the Staff of the H.W.H and the Surgeon at Poperinghe.'<sup>47</sup> His humorous tale narrates the experience of a Tommy having stitches removed after undergoing abdominal surgery. The doctors and nurses in the poem are 'baffled' by the case which appears to have been 'tied up with string.' After weeks of trying, the poem concludes:

As a last resort, the wiseheads thought,  
Of a consultation solemn.  
The X-rays showed, what the patient had knowed [sic]:  
It was fast to his spinal column!<sup>48</sup>

Whilst there are no corresponding hospital records to suggest whether the poem was based on any form of reality, the final note offering his apologies suggests a light-hearted banter existed between patients and staff. Rather than a critical satire, it appears to be a good-humoured anecdote. This humour was exemplified in an article entitled 'Hospital Definitions,' written by an anonymous patient. He writes, 'A Doctor is a member of the medical profession who is usually to be found at the other end of a stethoscope. His greatest joy is to push a shoehorn down your throat, coupled with a request to say "ah!" He is quite satisfied if you do.'<sup>49</sup> This light-hearted banter appears to give way in the more serious articles however, which appear to offer a more harmonious and respectful relationship between patients and hospital staff. One Canadian soldier explained his feelings of admiration for the doctors. His left leg had been amputated from below the knee and he explained the work of the doctors in trying to avoid amputation. He identified that Colonel Marshall had 'fought with it for over four months' explaining 'it has gone now – but I wish it hadn't, for his sake.'<sup>50</sup> Whilst this could clearly be read in a sarcastic undertone, the rest of the article suggests a loyalty between patient and doctor which exemplifies the so-called 'stiff upper lip.'

Similar contradictory and oxymoronic depictions of both humour and respect (or courteous ridicule) appear throughout the magazine's many editions. Nurses were frequently lampooned. Witty lines such as 'who wakened a patient when he was sound asleep to give him a sleeping draft?' and 'Which night nurse woke a patient up and asked him if he was having a good sleep?' appeared in the monthly column "We Wonder."<sup>51</sup> Private Hamilton's contribution portrayed his daily routine of being awoken by the nurses, an experience which he clearly did not enjoy. He wrote, 'You called me at the break of day/ And made my spirit groan/ As struggling from dreams I cried/ And just repressed a curse/ I woke then smiled a sleepy smile and said "Good Morning Nurse!"'<sup>52</sup> Just as in the case above however, these comments were also diluted in the very next poem. Clearly intended as a pair, to be published together, and written by the same author, 'Those Who Watch Over Us' reflects the belief that the nurses were the 'greatest pals' of the wounded Tommy. The poem concludes, 'Who has the gratitude we pour? Who will we love for evermore? The Nurses.'<sup>53</sup>

The orderlies too were prone to good-natured ridicule, and were often chastized by the patients for their perceived 'laziness'. The most prominent example of this was a prize-winning sketch of an R.A.M.C. orderly 'doing his bit' by reading a copy of *The Sporting Times* and smoking a cigarette, whilst propping up a ward sweeping brush.<sup>54</sup> Again, the fact that such an illustration was not only published, but also won prize money, suggests the sketch's intention was light-hearted. Even if the author felt any antagonism or resentment towards the orderly he sketched, the editors clearly found it innocuous enough for publication.

Food was another common theme throughout the magazine. Like the staff, it was contradictorily a topic for compliment and ridicule alike. In many of the soldiers' vulnerability, these two things – the staff and the food – were interrelated. Short stories and satirical anecdotes include how little there was of certain foodstuffs or the orderlies' ineptitude at making it. One short story recounted how a soldier took a particular fancy to fried eggs, only to find that when he asked for fat to cook them in, he was given soap.<sup>55</sup> Another wrote, if the sister is the one to butter the bread, who took it off again?<sup>56</sup> Describing a meal, one patient explained, 'a meal is about three inches in diameter and about two hours long... [it] arrives in instalments and after the salt and pepper are cold, the rest arrives.'<sup>57</sup> The patient concludes 'when meal times arrive he understands why he is called Patient.'<sup>58</sup> Food was a point of banter, and a collective experience to the boys in blue, no matter what their nationality, rank or illness.

Nevertheless, once again, this was apparently more jest than complaint. In the more serious articles, soldiers frequently wrote of their appreciation towards the food. In a moving article entitled "How I survived fifteen days wounded with practically no food," one soldier relates his experience of being wounded at the Somme on 1 July 1916. He describes how after 'going over the lid' he was shot in the chest and the arm by machine gun fire and remained in and out of consciousness in a shell-hole for 15 days until he was rescued. The upbeat conclusion identifies his gratitude towards the staff and says he should soon put weight back on again, 'I am fed here by everything that is nourishing and good.'<sup>59</sup> It is clear that however the food was described by the soldiers, hospital rations were, at the very least, regular and predictable.

Certainly the low death rate at the hospital would suggest that foodstuffs and patients' diets were adequate within the hospital, a situation which, as J.L. Crammer has identified, was not universally applicable to other wartime institutions.<sup>60</sup> The hospital, supplied by a vast army of volunteers and public subscription money, was able to boast that it was the only hospital in Britain which could supply all of its patients with eggs on a weekly basis. Thanks to a special egg collecting scheme, between the years 1915-1917, a remarkable 405,585 eggs were collected for consumption within the hospital.<sup>61</sup> This was an extraordinary feat, given rationing and the huge price increases of such foodstuffs. Once again, this suggests that the occasional gripes about food expressed in the magazine were perhaps more expressions of disgruntlement with wartime economizing, than a legitimate dissatisfaction with the food on offer at the institution. The magazine editors evidently saw neither truth nor threat in these writings, and clearly expected the public to read them as humorous anecdotes rather than serious grievances.

## **Soldiers and Civilians**

Where any anger could be said to exist amongst the soldiers, it seemed to be directed towards the general public, and the naivety of civilians was often a target for humour in the magazine. This anger often manifested itself in satirical images or sarcastic comments. A sketch entitled 'Somme Bite,' for instance, depicts a lady on a bench asking an amputee soldier if he had been wounded. The soldier retorts 'No Matron's dog bit my leg off.'<sup>62</sup> However, it appears that this satire was used as a more important device than that of a simple 'safety valve' allowing soldiers to release their frustrations about civilians.<sup>63</sup> Instead, the drawings, cartoons and letters within these magazines seem to constitute an assertion of resilience and survival from wounded soldiers, who collectively used the magazine as an outlet to make fun of themselves in an act of morale boosting which also reasserted their masculinities. One short anecdote recounted: 'A few days ago a lady and a little girl came into one of the wards and the lady started chatting with a couple of the bed patients. After a minute or two, the little girl started crying.' When asked why she was crying the little girl replied, 'Oh Mummy, I wanted to see some soldiers.'<sup>64</sup> Another illustration showing two wounded soldiers on a park bench conversing with an attractive young lady was entitled 'What we do not see in the park.'<sup>65</sup> Civilians were frequently represented as being at best naïve and at worst entirely oblivious to the soldiers' sacrifices. One cartoon entitled "When will England realise the War" depicts two ladies gossiping on a train about the terrible conditions of war. After a long conversation, the pair decide that the worst thing about the current war had to be the increase in the price of butter.<sup>66</sup>

Whilst the identification of civilians as targets for amusement might seem detrimental to the primary readership of the magazine, clearly the editors thought that it was good humoured and necessary to the men's recuperation and healing. Indeed, prizes were often given to many of the cartoons or stories which were satirical in outlook. The editor even echoed the patients' tone in recounting some anecdotes of civilians visiting. One tale began: 'Here's a story of the great pluck and brightness of our wounded boys'. When pointed out by a visitor three wounded soldiers described themselves as 'three men with two legs between them and two heads.' The editor then explained that 'two of these lads had had both their legs shot away and one a large part of his head.'<sup>67</sup> Such blunt, matter of fact language mirrored that which was often used by the soldiers themselves to describe their disabilities.

Publishing cartoons and stories which criticized civilians might seem risky, given that the hospital was built from public subscriptions, that civilian volunteers were indispensable in running it, and that the magazine itself sold to a predominantly civilian readership. But the editors created the implication that the civilians buying the magazine, and thus contributing towards the hospital's upkeep and the patients' treatment, were doing 'their bit' for the boys in blue – and were thus distinct

from the indifferent, oblivious civilians mocked by the soldiers. The magazine positioned civilian readers as being 'in on the jokes' of the soldiers, and thus implicitly part of a healing community that defined itself against the 'naïve' civilian ill-informed about the war. Whether the soldiers themselves believed in any such associate membership of their community remains unknown.

### **Restrictions in Liberty**

Restrictions in their liberty appear to have been one of the most frustrating concerns for the recovering Tommy in hospital. It appears that many were frustrated by the military discipline which characterized their treatments, by the daily routine of the hospital, and by excessively disciplinarian staff. Above all else, many soldiers were deeply frustrated by hospital rules which dictated how much time they were allowed to spend outside the hospital. In the very first issue, Drummer Dowling's cartoon portrayed this perfectly. The cartoon was captioned 'Drummer Dowling's Idea of Duty and Inclination,' and shows a soldier wondering whether it was worth breaking hospital curfews to spend time with an attractive lady. The soldier muses, 'It is 10 minutes to 7! If I go with her I lose my pass and get seven days C.B. And if I go back to hospital I lose her! Is she worth it?'<sup>68</sup>

In Issue 6 of the magazine, the editor took note of a new Command Order that would likely be very unpopular with the wounded soldiers. Rather than appeal to the soldiers, the editor chose instead to appeal to the magazine's reading public. 'The public will feel the new restriction placed on our wounded by the Command Order that all wounded must be in by four in the afternoon.'<sup>69</sup> In response, the hospital was determined that 'every effort will be made to see our boys have entertainment concerts, whist drives etc. so that their evenings do not drag.'<sup>70</sup> The editor appealed to the public to invite the soldiers out, explaining that extensions might be given if the right invitation came up.<sup>71</sup> Such a lenient policy was at direct variance with other hospitals, which seemed to focus much more intently on discipline and rules, especially regarding curfews. In Worcester Infirmary, for example, the regulations were much stricter. Whilst the hospital only provided 50 beds for servicemen during the war, its disciplinarian style caused dissatisfaction amongst patients who were troubled by the strict regime of the hospital and the restrictions imposed upon leaving the hospital grounds. An inquiry into these complaints found that they were 'of a trivial nature' and the soldiers were curtly reminded that the regulations had to be obeyed.<sup>72</sup>

Whilst the conditions may have been better at Huddersfield War Hospital, soldiers remained discontented with the rules throughout the war years. In a much later edition to the cartoon noted above, a sketch entitled "Late Again!" depicted the predicament of a young convalescent soldier, who stopped to ask a policeman the time. On hearing that it was half past ten, the soldier is depicted as stating, 'Lord, won't nurse strangle me for this; I shall be gassed and murdered entirely!'<sup>73</sup> These

sketches identify that soldiers were frustrated by regimes imposed by hospitals and other healing institutions. Hence the magazine was clearly used as a mouthpiece to vent that frustration to each other and the wider public. However, once again, the editors of the magazine used these cartoons and pictures to their advantage; they appealed to the public to help circumvent the earlier curfews for their soldiers, once again placing doctors, patients and civilians as all on the same side. Unlike the magazines that Reznick analysed, then, it would appear that there was less antagonism between soldiers and staff at Huddersfield War Hospital.

## **Conclusion**

Works which are satirical, humorous or rebellious in nature will always be of interest to historians of the First World War. The words of the dissenting Tommy show us a different picture to the jingoistic, chivalrous, 'manly' soldier depicted within wartime propaganda. Perhaps this is why the study of trench journalism is so popular. Nevertheless, these dissenting and satirical voices need to be seen in context. By providing detailed analysis of just one hospital magazine, the localized context of these dissenting voices reveals that these instances of humour and satire were only a small fraction of the contributions. Other themes such as gratitude, pride and loyalty predominate as the key messages promoted within the publication. Moreover, these dissenting voices were not marginalized; far from it. In fact, they were published to an audience of nearly 4000 readers, and awarded prize money for their efforts.

Of course, there are two conflicting explanations for the fact that there were significantly more jingoistic and contented contributions than satirical ones. The most obvious explanation would be to advance the argument that the journal was edited and may well have restricted the publication of various pieces through either direct or indirect censorship. Whilst this is clearly a distinct possibility, that doesn't explain why the magazine published some critical pieces and even awarded them prize money. Another explanation might link to the success rates of the hospital – the vast majority of its patients were treated successfully by the hospital and were discharged to convalescent homes or else back to duty. Less than 5% ended up discharged from the army on health grounds. That so many men recovered might explain the relative satisfaction with hospital treatment. Unlike other scholarship on trench journalism, which has identified a rift between serving soldiers and the rest of society, the magazine positioned the doctors, nurses, and even readership of the magazine as part of the soldiers' healing community.

The aspects of humour and satire appear to encapsulate that great stereotype of the British 'stiff upper lip'. Even works which at first glance appear to be quite scathing towards the institution are measured responses and were often qualified with words or phrases which suggested that the

patient felt the opposite. Where sarcasm and satire exist, they appear to have helped maintain morale, and helped the troops' efforts to reassert their masculinities from within their newly paralysed or disfigured bodies. Even the most vituperative pieces in the magazine, targeting the naivety of civilians and the restrictions on patients' liberty, were co-opted by the editors, who tried to circumvent what they too felt were inappropriately disciplinarian military command orders.

It seems clear that for this particular magazine, putting too much emphasis on the satirical pieces distorts reality and ignores the fact that the majority of the pieces in this magazine are positive, patriotic and pro-war. The resistance which has been found in other sources relating to military medicine is far less forthcoming in these pages. That this lack of resistance might seem surprising to a historian suggests, perhaps, that we in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been conditioned to expect it from the literature of the First World War, and have overlooked a mainstream of stories which conform to propaganda stereotypes, in order to analyse instead the voices that dissent from the crowd. The *Huddersfield War Hospital Magazine* is an important reminder of why and how the British Tommy 'stuck it out': for these men their belief that the war was just and winnable was intrinsic to their resilience and desire to see it through.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War: National Sentiment, and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War*, trans. Helen McPhail (Oxford: Berg, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> J.G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 13; Jeffrey S. Reznick, *Healing the Nation: Soldiers and the Culture of Caregiving in Britain during the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 66.

<sup>3</sup> Graham Seal, "'We're Here Because We're Here': Trench Culture of the Great War," *Folklore* 124, no. 2 (2013): 178–199. See also Graham Seal, *The Soldiers' Press: Trench Journals in the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Jane Chapman and Dan Ellin, "Dominion Cartoon Satire as Trench Culture Narratives: Complaints, Endurance and Stoicism," *The Round Table* 103, no.2, (2014): 175-192, DOI:10.1080/00358533.2014.898500.

<sup>5</sup> Julie Anderson, *War, Disability and Rehabilitation in Britain: 'Soul of a Nation'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Leo van Bergen, *Before my Helpless Sight: Suffering, Dying and Military Medicine on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Peter Barham, *Forgotten Lunatics of the Great War* (London: Yale University Press, 2007); Fiona Reid, *Broken Men: Shell Shock, Treatment and Recovery in Britain, 1914-1930* (London: Continuum, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Alice Brumby, "'A Painful and Disagreeable Position': Rediscovering Patient Narratives and Evaluating the Difference between Policy and Experience for Institutionalised Veterans with Mental Disabilities, 1924-1931", *First World War Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 37-55, DOI: 10.1080/19475020.2015.1047891.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Ana Carden-Coyne, *The Politics of Wounds: Military Patients and Medical Power in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Reznick, *Healing the Nation*, 83.

<sup>10</sup> Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), 232, 230, 229.

<sup>11</sup> Seal, "'We're Here Because We're Here,'" 178.

<sup>12</sup> Chapman and Ellin, "Dominion Cartoon Satire," 189.

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- <sup>13</sup> Editorial, *Huddersfield War Hospital Magazine* (hereafter *HWHM*), Souvenir Edition. No page numbers to this edition.
- <sup>14</sup> Anon, *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 9 October 1915.
- <sup>15</sup> Anon, *Huddersfield Parish Magazine*, November 1915, 2.
- <sup>16</sup> F.G. Coward, "Correspondence," *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 6 September 1919.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> Major-General Sir W.G. MacPherson, *History of the Great War Medical Services: vol. 1, Medical Services in the United Kingdom, 1914-1918* (London: HMSO, 1923), 96.
- <sup>19</sup> Anon, *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 7 July 1916.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> Anon, "Hospital Jottings," *HWHM*, Dec 1916, 12.
- <sup>22</sup> Table, *HWHM*, July 1918, 12.
- <sup>23</sup> Editorial, *HWHM*, July 1916, 1.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.
- <sup>25</sup> Editor, "To Our Readers," *HWHM*, November 1917, 2.
- <sup>26</sup> Editor, "To Our Readers," *HWHM*, September 1916, 2.
- <sup>27</sup> Editorial, *HWHM*, July 1916, 1.
- <sup>28</sup> British Red Cross, "Auxiliary Hospitals". Last modified 2017. <http://www.redcross.org.uk/About-us/Who-we-are/History-and-origin/First-World-War/Auxiliary-Hospitals>
- <sup>29</sup> Anon, "To Our Readers," *HWHM*, November 1916, 2.
- <sup>30</sup> Anon, "News of an Old Patient," *HWHM*, April 1917, 2.
- <sup>31</sup> Anon, "Our Oldest Patient," *HWHM*, March 1918, 8.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.
- <sup>33</sup> Editorial, *HWHM*, December 1916, 1.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup> Editorial, *HWHM*, December 1916, 2.
- <sup>36</sup> Cyril Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience: The Story of an English Community's Opposition to the Great War* (London: Francis Boutle Publishers, 2001), 21 and 28.
- <sup>37</sup> Editorial, *HWHM*, July 1916, 2.
- <sup>38</sup> See F. Garland, "Sonnet on Looking at our Hospital Magazine," *HWHM*, Souvenir Edition.
- <sup>39</sup> Chapman and Ellin, "Dominion Cartoon Satire," 180.
- <sup>40</sup> Ernest Clarkson, "1917," *HWHM*, Souvenir Edition.
- <sup>41</sup> An Old Patient, "Wounded," *HWHM*, Souvenir Edition.
- <sup>42</sup> Private John Stewart, "Heard in the Wards," *HWHM*, August 1916, 8.
- <sup>43</sup> Robert Middlemas, "Letter," *HWHM*, June 1917, 8.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>45</sup> C. Elder, "Bravo Huddersfield War Hospital," *HWHM*, Souvenir Edition; Jack Custer, "Letter," *HWHM*, June 1917, 8.
- <sup>46</sup> Carden-Coyne, *Politics of Wounds*, 2; Reznick, *Healing the Nation*, 83.
- <sup>47</sup> Corporal Brook, "A Tale of a Stitch," *HWHM*, Souvenir Edition.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>49</sup> A Patient, "Hospital Definitions," *HWHM*, April 1918, 11.
- <sup>50</sup> Quoted from *Yorkshire Daily Observer* in *HWHM*, August 1916, 9.
- <sup>51</sup> Anon, "We Wonder," *HWHM*, September 1916, 4.
- <sup>52</sup> J. Hamilton, "A Patient Says 'Good Morning' to the Nurse," *HWHM*, Souvenir Edition.
- <sup>53</sup> J. Hamilton, "Those Who Watch Over Us," *HWHM*, Souvenir Edition.
- <sup>54</sup> Corporal Thomas, "R.A.M.C. Orderly, Doing His Bit," *HWHM*, Souvenir Edition.
- <sup>55</sup> Anon, *HWHM*, September 1916, 3.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>57</sup> A Patient, "Hospital Definitions," *HWHM*, April 1918, 11.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>59</sup> A.C. Stagg, "How I survived fifteen days wounded with practically no food," *HWHM*, September 1916, 2.
- <sup>60</sup> J.L. Crammer, "Extraordinary deaths of asylum inpatients during the 1914-1918 war," *Medical History* 36, no. 4 (1992): 430-441.
- <sup>61</sup> Editor, *HWHM*, February 1918, 2.
- <sup>62</sup> Corporal Thomas, "Somme Bite," *HWHM*, Souvenir Edition.
- <sup>63</sup> Fuller, *Troop Morale*, 13; Reznick, *Healing the Nation*, 66.

- <sup>64</sup> Anon, *HWHM*, November 1916, 3.
- <sup>65</sup> Drummer Dowling, "What We Do Not See in the Park," *HWHM*, Souvenir Edition.
- <sup>66</sup> Anon, "When Will England Realise the War," *HWHM*, November 1917, 3.
- <sup>67</sup> Anon, *HWHM*, August 1916, 3.
- <sup>68</sup> Drummer Dowling, "Drummer Dowling's Idea of Duty and Inclination," *HWHM*, June 1916, 3.
- <sup>69</sup> Anon, "To Our Readers," *HWHM*, December 1916, 2.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>72</sup> *The Hive*, 5161, B010:16, 6, Worcester Infirmary, Weekly Minute Books, 1912-1920, 416.
- <sup>73</sup> Anon, "Late Again!" *HWHM*, September 1917, 3.

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