

Casualties of War? Refining the Civilian-Military Dichotomy in World War I

Eric Grube
Boston College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/mhr>

Part of the [Cultural History Commons](#), [Diplomatic History Commons](#), [European History Commons](#), [History of Gender Commons](#), [International Law Commons](#), [Military History Commons](#), [Military, War, and Peace Commons](#), [Political History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Grube, Eric () "Casualties of War? Refining the Civilian-Military Dichotomy in World War I," *Madison Historical Review*: Vol. 16 , Article 5.
Available at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/mhr/vol16/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Publications at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Madison Historical Review by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.

Casualties of War? Refining the Civilian-Military Dichotomy in World War I

Cover Page Footnote

I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Devin Pendas, for guiding me along the way as I drafted this article. I would also like to thank the helpful workers at the Schwäbisch Hall City Archive. Finally, the commentary provided to me by Boston College's Clough Center was vital for my revisions.

Casualties of War? Refining the Civilian-Military Dichotomy in World War I

Eric Grube
Boston College

Introduction: Donington Hall & Twentieth-Century Warfare

“We are a very hospitable nation.”¹

Harold Tennant, British Under-Secretary of State for War
To the House of Commons, 1 March 1915

It might seem odd that in the midst of a total war, a flurry of English-speaking newspaper articles condemned not wartime atrocities but accusations of wartime “luxury.” On 11 February 1915, the *New York Times* scoffed at a public British expenditure that amounted to \$100,000. This money went to the renovation of “Donington Hall, Leicestershire, one of the most beautiful old halls in England into a home of rest for captured German officers ...”² *The Times* in London and *The Washington Post* soon picked up the story, both suggesting British negligence by means of decadence.³ On 1 March, Harold Tennant, the Under-Secretary of State for

¹ Mr. Tennant, “Full Record: Commons Sitting of Monday, 1st March, 1915.” *House of Commons: Parliamentary Papers*, “Fifth Series, Volume 70,” 21, accessed November 23, 2015, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpp-us&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:hansard:CDS5CV0070P0-0005.

² “Captive Officers’ Luxury. Quarters for 300 Germans in an English Country House. Special Cable to *The New York Times*,” *New York Times (1857-1922)*, February 11, 1915, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times, 3, accessed November 8, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.bc.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/97667904/A386C31A589E4BD5PQ/1?accountid=9673>.

³ “House of Commons. German Prisoners in Donington Hall” *The Times*, February 25, 1915, 40787 (London: Times Newspapers Limited) 10, accessed November 23, 1915. “\$100,000 Prisoners’ Club. British Provide Luxurious Quarters for Captured German Officers,” *The Washington Post (1877-1922)*, February 28, 1915, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Washington Post, 8, accessed November 23, 2015.

War—a proxy in the House of Commons for the reigning Liberal government—responded to parliamentary criticisms of Donington Hall’s conditions by proclaiming: “We are a very hospitable nation.”⁴

Why, in the midst of a war frequently framed as an explosive boiling point of virulent nationalisms, did this prisoner of war (POW) camp in England garner so much British and American attention?⁵ The outcry stemmed from the perception that the British state afforded civilian-style comforts to captured military men.⁶ The amenities at this institution seemed to linger from an earlier era, one in which military men exuded genteel civility as integral to their supposedly heroic service.⁷ Fundamentally, this public complaint condemned Donington Hall for being an anachronistic space, the culture of which was at odds with the raised stakes of a twentieth-century global warfare. While the public saw this elitist consumption of comforts as inappropriately civilian, the inmates themselves expected Donington Hall’s conditions to be dignified. These German officers did not just live in a run-down manor on 1,000 acres of English countryside, the former estate of the Marquis of Hastings.⁸

⁴ Tennant, “Commons Sitting, 1st March, 1915.” *Parliamentary Papers*, 21.

⁵ Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2014), xxvi-xxix, 121-241, 558-559. Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I: The People’s War* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 226-241.

⁶ “Captive Officers’ Luxury,” *New York Times* (1857-1922), February 11, 1915, 3.

⁷ David Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (New York: Mariner Books, 2008), 11-51.

⁸ Brian K. Feltman, *The Stigma of Surrender: German Prisoners, British Captors, and Manhood in the Great War and Beyond* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 55. Richard B. Speed III maintains that it was 10,000 acres. See Richard B. Speed III, *Prisoners, Diplomats, and the Great War: A Study in the Diplomacy of Captivity* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 103. It seems Feltman is probably more accurate (see Feltman, *Stigma of Surrender*, 55), given George Leach’s contemporaneous exposé that describes it as “nine hundred acres.” See George Leach, “A Visit to Donington Hall,” *The Manchester Guardian* (1901-1959), July 20, 1916, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer, 4, accessed November

These officers also sought to live in-between the categories of combatants and older notions of what it meant to be civil élites. By navigating through these categories, the prisoners tried to abide by traditional notions of gentlemanly warfare. Because the British state more or less met the prisoners' expectations of proper treatment, the British public decried this space for sustaining the anachronism of aristocratic privilege in the face of national crisis.

It was exactly because the accommodations at Donington Hall were seen as exceptional that this space illuminated changing conceptualizations of "civilian" and "combatant" as cultural and legal categories. Understanding these two categories is crucial to understanding the history of total warfare. David A. Bell's *The First Total War* deals with the Napoleonic Wars, but it provides a useful theoretical framework for thinking through these issues. Bell argues that total war came about when society began to see war as a brutal aberration rather than a regular fact of life. Furthermore, he contends that before the emergence of total war, "military" and "civilian" personas had been fused as one.⁹ Élite officers conducted combat in a way that included "restraint," in addition to refining their expertise in art, dance, and literature—pursuits now associated with private citizens.¹⁰ He contends that the Napoleonic Wars bifurcated these hybrid roles into increasingly distinct military and civilian identities found in European warfare ever since.¹¹ Bell's grounded assertions are also useful for studying the twentieth century. In the First World War, the division between these modern categories had become more normalized within the British public sphere in accordance with Bell's powerful claims. Thus, sensationalist claims in the public arena framed Donington Hall's amenities as the death throes of antiquated cultural norms in need of a *coup de grâce*.¹²

23, 2015.

⁹ Bell, *First Total*, 9-10, 11 (for direct quotation).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21-49, 50 (for direct quotation), 51.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, *First Total War*, 11.

¹² Bell, *First Total War*, 11. "Adapted for 400 German Prisoners at a Cost of £13,000: Donington Hall." March 6, 1915, *Illustrated London News* (London: Illustrated London News Ltd.), 313, accessed November 23, 2015.

Within the German military as well, the military-civilian distinction was well established by the First World War. Martin Kitchen's *The German Officer Corps* argues that Prussian military officers scorned practices deemed civilian, a category that generally carried with it a middle-class connotation undeserving of the prestige that noble defenders of the *Reich* should enjoy. Kitchen even claims that the German military's "fundamental problem" stemmed from "the exclusiveness of the Officer Corps," which prohibited civilian expertise from easily entering its ranks.¹³ He suggests "the Prussian dualism between the military and civilians" kept the *Kaiserreich* in a state of arrested development by making its army dysfunctional and "anachronistic."¹⁴ However, this argumentation works only if civilian is defined in today's sense of a private citizen focused on economic relations and social life.¹⁵ However, in Bell's terms, genteel officers did fuse the military and the civilian, in that they adhered to refined combat of "restraint," propriety, and cultured education fitting for supposedly civilized European gentlemen.¹⁶ The accommodations at Donington Hall were thus seen as anachronistic because they interlaced the military with this older definition of civilian.¹⁷ Furthermore, this discussion over the military-civilian dichotomy indicates that the concept of civilian as a category was often contested.¹⁸ The British public condemned older social practices as indicative of inappropriately civilian treatment, while the German officers themselves looked down upon civilians in the modern sense of individuals strictly employed within the private sector. Donington Hall proved to be a provocative battleground over which Britons fought this discursive conflict amongst themselves and against captured German officers.¹⁹

¹³ Martin Kitchen, *The German Officer Corps 1890-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), xiii-xxviii, xxix (for direct quotation).

¹⁴ Kitchen, *German Officer Corps*, xx, xxix.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, *German Officer Corps*, xiii-xxix.

¹⁶ Bell, *First Total War*, 11-12, 21-49, 50 (for direct quotation), 51.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, *First Total War*, 11.

¹⁸ Bell, *First Total War*, 11-12, 21-51. Kitchen, *German Officer Corps*, xiii-xxix.

¹⁹ See "Adapted for 400 German Prisoners at a Cost of £13,000: Donington

Regarding the historiography on total warfare, it is often assumed that when the military sector did impose itself onto the civilian sector, it inherently meant atrocities, brutal reprisals, and mass violence.²⁰ While this historiography is extremely useful for understanding mass violence in modern conflicts, Donington Hall flips this assumption on its head: what if a state applied the same treatment to enemy combatants that it showed to its own civilians, or in fact even funded nicer accommodation to these combatants than it did for its own citizens? This question reverses the typical flow between these categories by examining the civilian treatment of combatants. Regarding the historiography on POWs in the First World War, it is commonplace to naturalize the categorical divide between civilian prisoners and captured soldiers.²¹ However, there are a few works that examine this dichotomy with more scrutiny. Heather Jones's *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War* demonstrates that the British public could push for heightened violence against German POWs and for limitations on reprisals, thus revealing civilian-imposed restrictions on the

Hall." March 6, 1915, *Illustrated London News* (London: Illustrated London News Ltd.), 313, accessed November 23, 2015. See also Gunther Plüschow, *My Escape from Donington Hall* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2015), 96. I had originally used an online edition, Gunther Plüschow, *My escape from Donington Hall, preceded by an account of the siege of Kiao-Chow in 1915, by kapitänleutnant Gunther Plüschow*, trans. Pauline De Chary (London: John Lane, 1922), accessed October 5, 2015, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027.njp.32101073207027>, but unfortunately, the margins on critical pages are cut off on this original scanned edition. All of my page references for this source are from the 2015 edition.

²⁰ Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper: Breaking and Making International Law during the Great War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 47, 52-57. Brian K. Feltman, "Tolerance As a Crime? The British Treatment of German Prisoners of War on the Western Front, 1914-1918," *War in History* 17 (2010): 457-458, accessed November 1, 2015, wih.sagepub.com.

²¹ See Panikos Panayi, *Prisoners of Britain: German civilian and combatant internees during the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 298-300. For more literature on the civilian-military divide, see Robert Jackson, *The Prisoners, 1914-18* (London: Routledge, 1989), 55-61 and John Yarnall, *Barbed Wire Disease: British & German Prisoners of War, 1914-19* (Stroud: The History Press, 2011), 13-25.

military's jurisdiction.²² However, she is more concerned with the "blurring of the distinction between the prisoner of war, a non-combatant category, and the enemy combatant soldier."²³ Furthermore, Brian K. Feltman's monograph, *The Stigma of Surrender*, rightly asserts that the "civilian and military notions of proper male conduct were not mutually exclusive," but his overall intervention is that captivity was a psychological affront to the honor of the *captive* for prioritizing survival above the homeland.²⁴ However, the German officers' fusion of military and older civilian identities made captivity an opportunity for assessing the honor of the *captor* as well.

Feltman's monograph suggests that a discussion about the clash between officers' desire to be treated as élites and public perceptions of appropriate twentieth-century war policy is about class.²⁵ Kitchen also maintains that the German army tried imprudently to cling to a "rigidly aristocratic" composition, which threatened "military efficiency" and "inflamed the antagonisms of the civilians."²⁶ While class is a vital category of analysis, Donington Hall was not simply a case of upper-class solidarity transcending the nationalist antagonisms of the war.²⁷ Donington Hall was much more nuanced than that. Indeed, the bulk of parliamentary opposition to its conditions came from the

²² Heather Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War: Britain, France and Germany, 1914-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 373.

²³ Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 372. She also only mentions Donington Hall once in her epilogue. Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 361.

²⁴ Feltman, *Stigma of Surrender*, 1-2, 17 (for direct quotation).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁶ Kitchen, *German Officer Corps*, xxi, xxix.

²⁷ At the end of her work, Jones opines that perhaps class solidarity proved more potent than national belligerency, at least for Europe's aristocrats who could afford each other preferential treatment. She claims that class trumped international agreements. See Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 372. I contend that international agreements had inbuilt class protections, but such a class-based bias was clearly not outside the scrutiny of the public eye. Aristocratic notions of combat would prove shockingly resilient, but they were presented with a serious challenge.

Conservative Party, complicating any assumptions of clear-cut class loyalties. The resilience of this discourse suggested that there was something else at play: a clash of belligerent mentalities over the civilian and military categories.

Part I: “A ‘Temporary Lieutenant’” and “A ‘Temporary Gentleman’”²⁸

During its time as a neutral power, the United States monitored the conditions in British POW camps. John B. Jackson came from the office of the American Embassy in Germany and visited Donington Hall on 16 February 1915. He then sent his report to Ambassador James W. Gerard eleven days later.²⁹ He described Donington Hall’s opening days starting from 10 February, and it is telling that Jackson used scare quotes around the word “camp.” Of the 174 spots available at this camp, there were “only about twenty officers ... although at least forty more were expected to arrive.”³⁰ Not only was the camp far from full

²⁸ Plüschow, *My Escape*, 97. For the use applying to Donington Hall, see Plüschow, *My Escape*, 108.

²⁹ John B. Jackson, To “His Excellency Honorable James W. Gerard, American Ambassador, Berlin,” February 27, 1915, *Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929*, The National Archives, M367, 59, 763.72114/377, “fold3 by ancestry,” 9, accessed December 14, 2015, <http://www.fold3.com/image/56387486>. In the National Archives’ digital collection, Jackson’s report is found as a copy within an official dispatch from Ambassador Gerard to the US Secretary of State. Jackson was apparently the “ex-American Minister to Cuba and Roumania” and was “no longer in the service.” He apparently had “volunteered” to help in the review of Donington Hall. See James W. Gerard, “To the Honorable The Secretary of State, Washington, D.C.” March 19, 1915, *Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929*, The National Archives, M367, 59, 763.72114/377, “fold3 by ancestry,” accessed November 23, 2015, 1, <http://www.fold3.com/image/56387410> (for direct quotations), 2, <http://www.fold3.com/image/56387414> (for direct quotation), and 3, <https://www.fold3.com/image/56387418>. Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats, and the Great War*, 103. Feltman, *Stigma of Surrender*, 51.

³⁰ Jackson, To “His Excellency,” 27 February 1915, The National Archives, M367, 59, 763.72114/377, 9, (for direct quotation). Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats, and the Great War*, 103. Feltman, *Stigma of Surrender*, 55.

occupancy, it also had “hot and cold water” and was “well heated and lighted by electricity.” The British state also included expansive outdoor “grounds” for sport within the barbed wire perimeter. There was a “store” for purchasing “practically anything” and a “well stocked wine cellar (wines, beer, champagne, whiskey, etc.)” The only other German and Austrian citizens there were the officers’ chefs and the servants, who were “formerly employed in English hotels.” To be sure, the German officers had been captured on the brutal Western Front, but their internment as officers clearly entitled them to a relatively decent level of comfort. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they “were much pleased by their transfer to this place.”³¹

While located on a semi-isolated estate in Derbyshire, this camp attracted immediate public attention for its perceived excess. The complaints caught public eye because of the state’s expenditure. Just the renovation of this previously dilapidated estate cost the British war effort a hefty sum. Various newspapers accused the government of spending a large sum on this camp. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* claimed \$100,000 (~£21,000), while the *Times* printed a parliamentary debate over the value—Mr. Tennant of the government claimed only £13,000, but Lord C. Beresford of the Conservative Party suggested £20,000.³² The *Illustrated London News* bolstered the £13,000

³¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

³² “Captive Officers’ Luxury,” *New York Times*, February 11, 1915, 3. “\$100,000 Prisoners’ Club. British Provide Luxurious Quarters for Captured German Officers.” *The Washington Post*, February 28, 1915, 8. For the conversion from dollars to pounds, see Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats, and the Great War*, 206. “German Prisoners in Donington Hall,” *The Times*, February 25, 1915, 102. This article from 25 February 1915 reported a transcription of the parliamentary debate from the previous day, 24 February. On the same day as the *Times* released this article (25 February), Tennant again had to refute accusations of spending £17,000, this time from a Sir J. D. Rees. See Sir J. D. Rees and Mr. Tennant, “Full Record: Commons Sitting of Thursday, 25th February, 1915.” *House of Commons: Parliamentary Papers*, “Fifth Series, Volume 70,” 15, accessed November 23, 2015, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpp-us&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:hansard:CDS_5CV0070P0-0004.

claim.³³ Either way, it was where the money went that caught the most attention, especially since Tennant twice tried to justify the budget by stating only “£4,000 was for furniture.”³⁴

The accusations “as to the money spent” were intimately tied to sardonic writings meant to heap scorn on the government.³⁵ This sarcasm immediately got at the very essence of this camp’s controversial existence. Just one day after the opening of Donington Hall, the *New York Times*’s “special cable” of *The Daily Mail* labeled this camp as inappropriate for breaching the civilian-combatant divide. The *New York Times* attacked perceived notions of aristocratic privilege by claiming “The Daily Mail says cynically: ‘One must suppose that the War Office has really at heart the idea of reforming the Prussian officer, and, by letting him soak in the suggestion of beauty and peace, showing him the difference between the ‘kultur’ that watched Louvain burn and the kultur inspired by a sunset in the valley of the Trent.’” This British report on overindulgence was a direct attack on the perception that officers could both embody military personas and enjoy civilian pleasures. The news suggested that Britain planned to overpower enemy military officers not by superior military might but by cultured civilian refinement.³⁶ Other accusations claimed that Donington Hall was a “luxury” and “a clubhouse,” an inappropriate bleeding of civilian comforts onto the military arena

³³ “Adapted for 400 German Prisoners.” March 6, 1915, *Illustrated London News*, 313.

³⁴ “House of Commons: German Prisoners in Donington Hall,” *The Times*, February 25, 1915, 10. Also, see Rees and Tennant, “Commons Sitting, 25th February, 1915.” *Parliamentary Papers*, 15.

³⁵ Tennant, “Commons Sitting, 25th February, 1915,” *Parliamentary Papers*, 15. “Captive Officers’ Luxury,” *New York Times*, February 11, 1915, 3.

³⁶ “Captive Officers’ Luxury,” *New York Times*, February 11, 1915, 3. In addition to attacking British policy, the writers of this article also mocked the German perception that the Romantic “German *Kultur*” was superior to the “soulless materialism” of British culture. For a discussion on nationalistic ideas of culture, see Andrew D. Evans, *Anthropology at War: World War I and the Science of Race in Germany* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 10 (for direct quotation).

that ought to be more stereotypically Prussian in its simplicity.³⁷ The *Illustrated London News* printed a picture of the grand country estate on 6 March, which linked the estate's lineages "to Tudor times" and described "the provision of billiard-tables, bath-rooms, and so on." The newspaper featured a critique from a Labour Member of Parliament, Mr. W. Thorne, who said, "'Will any of those gentlemen ever want to go back to Germany again?'" It was suggested that men who should have been treated as military captives were experiencing internment as the ultimate civilian type of recreation: a vacation.³⁸ This criticism, which Thorne had made just five days earlier in the House of Commons, elicited the "hospitable nation" response from Tennant.³⁹ He seemed unable to offer a retort to Thorne's claims, and instead, he went with a proud embrace of them.⁴⁰

The theme of sarcasm meshed with the more serious theme of reciprocal treatment. In Parliament as early as 24 February, Tennant faced the question of whether German officers received rides to the camp's grounds, "whereas the National Reservists who were guarding them had to walk?" Mr. Tennant could only reply, "I am not aware."⁴¹ To be sure, the 1907 Hague Conference made it clear to the signing nations that a POW "must be treated with due regard to his rank and age," a clause that provided an inbuilt

³⁷ "Captive Officers' Luxury," *New York Times*, February 11, 1915, 3. "\$100,000 Prisoners' Club. British Provide Luxurious Quarters for Captured German Officers." *The Washington Post*, February 28, 1915, 8.

³⁸ "Adapted for 400 German Prisoners." *Illustrated London News*, March 6, 1915, 313.

³⁹ "Adapted for 400 German Prisoners." *Illustrated London News*, March 6, 1915, 313. Mr. W. Thorne and Tennant, "Commons Sitting, 1st March, 1915." *Parliamentary Papers*, 21 (for direct quotation).

⁴⁰ Thorne and Tennant, "Commons Sitting, 1st March, 1915." *Parliamentary Papers*, 21.

⁴¹ Mr. Ronald M'Neill and Mr. Tennant, "Full Record: Commons Sitting of Thursday, 24th February, 1915." *House of Commons: Parliamentary Papers*, "Fifth Series, Volume 70," 6, accessed November 23, 2015, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpps-us&rft_dat=xri:hcpps:hansard:CDS5 CV0070P0-0003. See also "House of Commons: German Prisoners in Donington Hall," *The Times*, February 25, 1915, 10.

preference for the officer clique amongst belligerents.⁴² But these attacks both in the newspapers and in Parliament made such an international agreement seem anachronistic for legitimizing privileged treatment within the hardships of a modernized total war.⁴³ Six days after the initial inquiry over drivers, Ronald M'Neill again brought up the issue, but this time he used it to get at the question of reciprocity across national borders.⁴⁴ He asked whether "British officers imprisoned in Germany are receiving similar treatment?" Tennant replied in the affirmative, but in doing so he created a distinction between "soldier prisoners" and "officers," bolstering the notion that officers were not totally underneath the military label but instead were something else.⁴⁵ Lord C. Beresford further pressed the issue of German reciprocity, which *The Times* printed on 4 March. He attacked British leniency by condemning German policy that saw "British prisoners ... treated as convicts," juxtaposed to how "German prisoners in this country were treated as if they were an honourable foe." Because Beresford himself was a Lord, he might seem to be an ardent defender of aristocratic privilege, but he dubbed as inappropriate the older notion of restricted and gentlemanly combat when the enemy did not reciprocate. Since he was a member of the Conservative Party, it also might seem odd that he would criticize elite privilege. But since the Conservatives were in opposition, his rhetoric was surely meant to present the government as unable to lead the nation in wartime. Was Donington Hall thus only a convenient means of mudslinging? The longevity of these attacks suggests that these conditions were perceived as inappropriate

⁴² Jackson, *The Prisoners, 1914-18*, 5.

⁴³ M'Neill and Tennant, "Commons Sitting, 24th February, 1915." *Parliamentary Papers*, 6. "House of Commons: German Prisoners in Donington Hall," *The Times*, 25 February 1915, 10.

⁴⁴ M'Neill and Tennant, "Commons Sitting, 24th February, 1915." *Parliamentary Papers*, 6. Mr. Ronald M'Neill, "Commons Sitting, 1st March, 1915." *Parliamentary Papers*, 21.

⁴⁵ M'Neill and Tennant, "Commons Sitting, 1st March, 1915." *Parliamentary Papers*, 21.

enough to offer a reliable tactic for conducting discursive offensives against the government.⁴⁶

The day after printing Beresford's statement, *The Times* printed new transcriptions of parliamentary debate over the issue of reciprocity. Conservative Party member Mr. Butcher pointed out that Donington Hall's "modern appliances and comforts" surpassed those offered to Britain's war wounded. He used this point to suggest using Donington Hall for Britain's own troops. If the British government insisted on imposing the civilian sphere onto the military arena, it at least ought to be for its own men rather than for the enemy, regardless of rank or class.⁴⁷ Debate over reciprocity then came to a head three days later on 8 March over electric lighting. The issue at hand was the comparison between the new electric system for officers at Donington Hall and the lack of such an improvement for the British troops stationed at Hyde Park.⁴⁸ In the House of Commons on 8 March 1915, Conservative Party member Mr. Hume-Williams brought up the issue once again to attack Tennant as a representative of the reigning Liberal government. Tennant justified the accused luxury by invoking none other than military necessity. He claimed that "electricity was chosen as being the best and safest illuminant, having regard to the necessity of external powerful lighting in connection with the fencing round the house, of which the hon. Gentleman may perhaps realize the necessity."⁴⁹ The fact that the

⁴⁶ "Parliament. House of Commons. German Prisoners." *The Times*, March 4, 1915, 40793 (London: Times Newspapers Limited), 12, accessed November 23, 2015.

⁴⁷ "Parliament. House of Commons. Donington Hall and British Wounded. The Retaliation Measures." *The Times*, March 5, 1915, 40794 (London: Times Newspapers Limited), 12, accessed November 23, 2015.

⁴⁸ Mr. Hume-Williams and Mr. Tennant, "Full Record: Commons Sitting of Monday, 8th March, 1915." *House of Commons: Parliamentary Papers*, "Fifth Series, Volume 70," 15, accessed November 23, 2015, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpps&rft_dat=xri:hcpps:hansard:CDS5 CV0070P0-0009. "Life at Donington Hall." *The Times*, March 6, 1915, 5.

⁴⁹ Hume-Williams and Tennant, "Commons Sitting, 8th March, 1915." *Parliamentary Papers*, 15.

installation of electricity for the fence was then extended to the house for the comfort of the internees, as Jackson's initial report to Berlin detailed, was apparently a convenient outgrowth of the project initiated for security concerns.⁵⁰ This appeal to necessity was a longstanding rhetorical technique of Tennant. He had already relied on it as early as 24 February to justify the camp's existence when he stated, "There was no other accommodation available."⁵¹ The irony in invoking the trope of necessity was that Germany often used "military necessity" as justification for committing violence against civilians. The representatives of the British state clearly had no problem in appropriating just such rhetoric but for the opposite ends: the creation of inappropriately civilian accommodations for enemy military personnel, as opposed to the German use of military punishments for civilians in occupied territories.⁵²

All of this broad-based discussion of the camp's conditions demonstrates the extent of public complaint, but what about the German experiences within the camp itself?⁵³ Individuals kept at the camp in 1915 showed the use of older civilian norms for military personnel. The first was "the well-known German lawn tennis player, Herr Froitzheim." On 17 April 1915, *The Times* published a report from the Berlin-based *Zeitung am Mittag*. The report included a letter from a friend of Froitzheim, who had checked up on him during his internment at Donington Hall. The friend relayed the accommodating conditions available for

⁵⁰ Hume-Williams and Tennant, "Commons Sitting, 8th March, 1915." *Parliamentary Papers*, 15. Jackson, To "His Excellency," February 27, 1915, The National Archives, M367, 59, 763.72114/377.

⁵¹ Tennant, "Commons Sitting, 24th February, 1915." *Parliamentary Papers*, 6.

⁵² Tennant, "Commons Sitting, 24th February, 1915." *Parliamentary Papers*, 6. Hume-Williams and Tennant, "Commons Sitting, 8th March, 1915."

Parliamentary Papers, 15. For the "military necessity" quotation, see Hull, *A Scrap of Paper*, 55. For a more in-depth look "military necessity" and violence against civilians, see the introduction and the tenth chapter, "Civilians as Objects of Military Necessity," of Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 4, 226-262.

⁵³ "Captive Officers' Luxury," *New York Times*, February 11, 1915, 3.

Froitzheim, saying it was “just as in a hotel” with “very large” quarters, “a splendid bar,” and “a very fine view” to accompany the meals. The grounds allowed for the men to play “squash ... football, hockey and lawn tennis.” Clearly, there were comforts afforded to these inmates that provided the foundation for public rumor of a supposedly inappropriate civilian breach of military severity.⁵⁴

Another source of information about daily camp life came from a visit by the US State Department on 29 July, which resulted in a communiqué dispatched on 9 August from Mr. Buckler to the American Ambassador to Britain, Walter Hines Page.⁵⁵ In addition to listing the “sleeping accommodations” and “sanitary arrangements,” this diplomatic progress report included the options for daily meals.⁵⁶ The embodiment of civilian style living was the “Army & Navy Stores Canteen” that had on offer: numerous brands of cigarettes and a multitude of other tobacco options; an extensive alcohol list that also included lemon water; penholders in a stationary section; cologne and pears scented soaps as available toiletries; purses, pocket knives, scarf pins, and deck chairs under a broad category called “sundries;” and a myriad of athletic equipment for purchase in a sports section. Indeed, the fact that

⁵⁴ “Through German Eyes. Life at Donington Hall.” *The Times*, April 17, 1915, 40831 (London: Times Newspaper Limited), 6, accessed November 23, 2015.

⁵⁵ Mr. Buckler, To “Sir ... His Excellency The Honorable Walter Hines Page, American Ambassador, London,” August 9, 1915, *Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929*, The National Archives, M367, 59, 763.72114/734, “fold3 by ancestry,” accessed November 23, 2015, 1, <https://www.fold3.com/image/56613041>. Again, this source was packaged in an official dispatch from Ambassador Page to the US Secretary of State, see Walter Hines Page, To “The Honorable The Secretary of State, Washington, August 20, 1915,” *Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 1914-1929*, The National Archives, M367, 59, 763.72114/734, “fold3 by ancestry,” accessed November 23, 2015, 1, <https://www.fold3.com/image/56613014>, 2, <https://www.fold3.com/image/56613029>.

⁵⁶ Buckler, To “His Excellency,” August 9, 1915, The National Archives, M367, 59, 763.72114/734, 2, <http://www.fold3.com/image/56613053> (for direct quotation), 3, <https://www.fold3.com/image/56613068> (for direct quotation), and 4, <https://www.fold3.com/image/56613078>.

these amenities were available for purchase was itself a practice in the military arena normally relegated to the civilian exchange of currency for upscale products.⁵⁷ Perhaps more interesting is the report's delineation of who was at this camp. It detailed that while space was being made for a total of 300 inmates, there were "only 118 officer and 3 civilian prisoners, all of whom slept in the Mansion." Thus, this document reified the military-civilian dichotomy by suggesting such distinctions were made in context. However, by specifying that they had integrated sleeping arrangements, this report suggested a meshing of these two realms.⁵⁸

The most detailed individual case study for 1915 was Gunther Plüschow, a German naval aviation officer stationed in China, arrested for impersonating a Swiss man traveling from America to Italy during the war, and then interned at Donington Hall.⁵⁹ Most of the literature that examines Plüschow focuses on his flight from England back to Germany.⁶⁰ However, his quotidian description of his experiences at Donington Hall sheds light on why it was so controversial. As a naval officer, Plüschow's credentials as a true member of the aristocratic élite were suspect.⁶¹ The absence of a *von* from his name served as another strike against his genteel background. However, it was

⁵⁷ Buckler, To "His Excellency," August 9, 1915, The National Archives, M367, 59, 763.72114/734, <https://www.fold3.com/image/56613165> (for direct quotation), <https://www.fold3.com/image/56613172> (for direct quotation), <https://www.fold3.com/image/56613182> (for direct quotation).

⁵⁸ Buckler, To "His Excellency," August 9, 1915, The National Archives, M367, 59, 763.72114/734, 1.

⁵⁹ Plüschow, *My Escape*, 1-115.

⁶⁰ Jackson, *The Prisoners, 1914-18*, 143-146. Feltman, *Stigma of Surrender*, 93-94. Plüschow, *My Escape*, 111-150.

⁶¹ Plüschow, *My Escape*, 1-3, 78-110. Ute Frevert contends that the German navy had a larger proportion of middle class officers in its apparatus. Perhaps fittingly for my study about parliamentary discourse, Frevert discusses how the German naval officer clique was viewed as the "House of Commons," while the German army officers were depicted as the "House of Lords." Ute Frevert, *Men of Honour: A Social and Cultural History of the Duel*, trans. Anthony Williams (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 75.

because of his ambiguous class standing that he expected such aristocratic privilege. His anxiety over his social position pushed him to identify as a soldier and as a civil *élite*, all while living in a world of increasing divide between the two.⁶²

Because he overcompensated to embody both sectors, he felt it as his duty to judge those who only inhabited one arena. While Feltman argues that captivity attacked the honor and manhood of the *captive*, Plüschow's writing demonstrated that it was also a moment when the honor of the *captor* could be evaluated.⁶³ Plüschow cast scorn against the "civilian" on board the Italian ship who exposed him to the British, but he also made it clear that it was an English military officer who admirably offered to let him speak with the Swiss government (even though he would never get the chance to accept that offer).⁶⁴ Furthermore, while interned aboard a British ship, Plüschow repeatedly butted heads with his Commandant. Plüschow judged him for having "a civilian" background and for simply using his new money "to buy a commission."⁶⁵ In Plüschow's mind, this man did not have the *élite* fabric necessary to fuse military identities with older notions of civil grace. While Plüschow probably did not either, that is exactly why his judgment was so harsh, as he wanted to feel a part of the aristocratic *milieu*. His condemnation reached its apex when Plüschow penned "a very energetic letter" to his Commandant claiming Plüschow's "hope that he [the Commandant] was only a 'temporary lieutenant,' not a 'temporary gentleman.'" Plüschow's critique was very telling. First, a letter of complaint demonstrated an attempt to use aristocratic composure to express dissatisfaction. Second, in claiming the Commandant "was only a 'temporary lieutenant,'" Plüschow indicated that the Commandant would probably cower back to the civilian sector after the war and could thus never be the ideal officer. Finally, in professing "a hope that he was ... not a 'temporary gentleman,'" Plüschow suggested that

⁶² Plüschow, *My Escape*, 1-3, 78-110. Frevert, *Men of Honour*, 75.

⁶³ Plüschow, *My Escape*, 84-110. Feltman, *Stigma of Surrender*, 2.

⁶⁴ Plüschow, *My Escape*, 80-83, 84 (for direct quotation).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

the Commandant ought to always exude gentlemanly qualities, even though his military identity would probably be compromised after the war. The bottom line, however, was that an ideal Commandant would be both a permanent lieutenant and a permanent gentleman, embodying both identities simultaneously throughout his lifetime.⁶⁶ To Plüschow, there was a prescribed protocol of etiquette for captivity that this captor failed to uphold, presenting an attack on the captor's honor because his background was unchangeably that of "a civilian."⁶⁷

More importantly, Plüschow referenced the "'temporary lieutenant'... 'temporary gentleman'" critique when attacking an English military representative at Donington Hall. Plüschow made sure to indicate that the English colonel in charge of the camp "was reasonable, and, although he often grumbled, and was at times rather inclined to make us feel his authority, he was a distinguished, intelligent man, and a perfect soldier, and that was the principal thing." To Plüschow, the main leader had the right composition—the proper mix of military discipline and civil decorum. However, his toady, the "obnoxious substitute" and "the interpreter," again deserved the scorn of "not only 'temporary lieutenant,' but also 'temporary gentleman.'" Again, it was a lower ranking official with a suspect background as "a motorist" from the civilian sector that served as the lightning rod for gentlemanly criticism. This man even served as an instigator of transnational solidarity. Not only did Plüschow despise him, but so did the proper English officers, "who begged us to believe that all English officers were not like this Mr. M—[sic]." Again, Plüschow attacked the honor of a lower-ranking man whose civilian background discredited his capability to embody both civilian and military identities.⁶⁸

From the perspective of the German captive, the bleeding of the civilian onto the military arena was inappropriate when it took the form of a true civilian masquerading his way through the

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

military arena, instead of being reared to embody both sectors simultaneously and flawlessly.⁶⁹ Ironically, amenities perceived as civilian by the public sector were more than welcome. However, Plüschow discredited the public accusations from Parliament and the British newspapers, claiming that “none of this was true ... its [Donington Hall’s] rooms were completely bare, and its accommodation as primitive and scanty as possible.” To him, the public’s perception of excess was nothing more than rumor. But perhaps Plüschow’s view of roughing it was the common man’s view of the high life.⁷⁰ Plüschow detailed the “beautiful park” that afforded “liberty of movement” and made it so they “could indulge in more sport.”⁷¹ The park even allowed the captives to acquire a temporary mascot: “a darling little fawn” that had “wriggled through the defences into the camp.”⁷² While effeminate by today’s standards, the officers’ affection for this baby deer tapped into a longstanding notion of dancing and literary finesse previously gendered as masculine.⁷³ It also suggested the aristocratic tradition of the hunt; although some officers “petted” the deer, “the huntsmen growled” at it in a repetition of upper class predatory practice. To be sure, the love for the baby deer was probably an ironic symbol of defiance. Plüschow described sardonically how upset the British were at this inappropriate breach of camp security, “and—this is no joke—twenty men from the guard with fixed bayonets were sent for” to escort the fawn back out. The officers also used the deer as a way to make a “laughing stock” out of the hated lower ranking officer. However, this intrusion was a literal instance of effeminate innocence breaching the military confines, even though the culture of total war increasingly dictated that these two realms should have been hermetically separated.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Ibid., 96-97, 101.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 107.

⁷¹ Ibid., 107-108.

⁷² Ibid., 108-109.

⁷³ Plüschow, *My Escape*, 109-109. Bell, *First Total War*, 11-51. Feltman, *Stigma of Surrender*, 17-19.

⁷⁴ Plüschow, *My Escape*, 109.

Part II: “Dainties and Comestibles”⁷⁵

By the end of 1915 and the start of 1916, the discourse of comfort fused with another discourse: the perceived role of women at Donington Hall. Scholars tend to gloss over women in their narratives of POW camps, which makes some sense given that the captives were men. Unfortunately, women’s voices have therefore been marginalized in the existing historical literature.⁷⁶ Women did, however, have experiences with the camp, and their experiences revealed two important facets of this anachronistic wartime space. First, it showed that female visitors to the camp received scorn from the gentlemanly captives for venturing outside of their supposed station, while the gentlemanly captives simultaneously embraced attributes often coded as effeminate in the twentieth century.⁷⁷ Second, this discourse demonstrated that Donington Hall was also the fulcrum upon which rested the reputation of a high-profile British woman—Margaret (Margot) Asquith, wife of Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith of the Liberal Party. Like the captives at this estate, Margot thus aspired to assert herself and defend her honor, all while exuding grace.⁷⁸

Plüschow’s time at Dorchester, however, revealed the more feminine side of the older gentlemanly civil code that included music, especially when describing direct interaction with women. He noted that the commendable English officers at this camp brought their wives so as to demonstrate the cultured nature of the German inmates.⁷⁹ With the misogyny of his gentlemanly rearing, Plüschow claimed that “naturally, at first the ladies fainted away.” But the German chorus “warbled forth its finest songs,” which

⁷⁵ Margot Asquith, *Margot Asquith’s Great War Diary 1914-1916: The View from Downing Street*, ed. Michael and Eleanor Brock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 247.

⁷⁶ Feltman, *Stigma of Surrender*, 128-132.

⁷⁷ Plüschow, *My Escape*, 100-101, 105, 107.

⁷⁸ “Mrs. Asquith Wins Suit. London Paper Settles Libel Action for \$5,000.” *New York Times (1857-1922)*, March 22, 1916, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times, 2, accessed November 23, 2015.

⁷⁹ Plüschow, *My Escape*, 100-101.

Plüschow said won over the women's emotional sensibilities, and thereafter they "showed much kindness."⁸⁰ With such pride in the singing sensibilities of his captive comrades, Plüschow demonstrated his fondness for older masculine notions of enculturation mixed military honor with civil grace.⁸¹

Plüschow's account also demonstrated a serious resentment of feminine behavior. He gendered the harsh public outcry against Donington Hall as feminine so as to discredit it. He asserted that "as usually happens, the strongest attacks were launched by women, and they even turned our ejection from Donington Hall into a feminist issue."⁸² His revulsion to women in the public sphere had also revealed itself when he described his transit to Donington Hall. During the march, he disgustingly reported that "sometimes an old woman, probably a suffragette, put out her unlovely tongue at us," and that "the women and the girls, belonging to the lower classes, behaved like savages." To him, the notion of women acting on their own with "few men" around was completely at odds with this male-dominated rearing that emphasized being a gentleman.⁸³ And women did voice criticisms of Donington Hall's conditions. A 28 February 1915 letter "To the Editor of The Times" from "the wife of an interned officer" specifically called for "the authorities" to make public the exact details of Donington Hall's accommodations. Based on the public outcry from this month, she had reason to suspect Donington Hall demonstrated an inappropriately excessive level of civility in the face of her husband's difficulties in German captivity.⁸⁴ However, Plüschow's account viewed this role of women in military matters as simply inappropriate.⁸⁵

The culminating discourse surrounding women and Donington Hall occurred at the end of November 1915, when *The*

⁸⁰ Ibid., 101.

⁸¹ Ibid., 100-101.

⁸² Ibid., 107.

⁸³ Ibid., 105.

⁸⁴ "Prisoners' Diet. The Wife of an Interned Officer." *The Times*, March 2, 1915, 40791 (London: Times Newspapers Limited), 9, accessed November 23, 2015.

⁸⁵ Plüschow, *My Escape*, 107.

Globe newspaper insinuated that Margot Asquith had offered the inmates of Donington Hall inappropriately expensive food parcels, specifically “dainties and comestibles.”⁸⁶ *The Globe*’s initial accusations of “comestibles” came from an anonymous letter written by “A Patriot” that was sent to the editor and attacked “the wife of a prominent Cabinet Minister.” This rumor spurred an additional set of letters that *The Globe* published, in which it was claimed this woman “thinks more of the Boches [slur for Germans] than the men who are out at the front,” and she was labeled as “unpatriotic.” While Margot was not named explicitly, by 18 December 1915 she set out to stop *The Globe* from “libeling her as Pro-German.”⁸⁷ On 22 December, *The New York Times* reported that Margot had succeeded in getting an “injunction” so that the paper could no longer print such letters, and she even got a formal apology from the paper. She successfully convinced the court that she had never visited nor sent gifts to Donington Hall.⁸⁸ But that was not enough for Margot. The affront to her honor necessitated restitution in the form of a lawsuit for damages—in essence, a pitched legal “duel” between Margot and *The Globe*. On 22 March

⁸⁶ “Mrs. Asquith Sues The London Globe. Premier’s Wife Seeks to Restrain It from Libeling Her as Pro-German. Paper Didn’t Name Her. But Her Counsel Says References to ‘a Cabinet Minister’s Wife’ Were Aimed at Her.” *New York Times (1857-1922)*, December 18, 1915, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times, 2, accessed November 23, 2015. Asquith, *Great War Diary*, 247. Asquith’s autobiography summarizes the accusations in her diary by stating “... I ‘feed Prussian prisoners with every dainty and comestible’...” See Margot Asquith, *Margot Asquith: An Autobiography: Volumes Three and Four: With Twenty-Three Illustrations and Numerous Reproductions of Letters and Drawings*, vol. 4 (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922), 110.

⁸⁷ “Mrs. Asquith Sues the London Globe.” *New York Times*, December 18, 1915, 2.

⁸⁸ “Mrs. Asquith Wins Libel Injunction. Wife of Premier Successful in Suit Against The London Globe—Paper’s Counsel Apologizes.” *New York Times (1857-1922)*, December 22, 1915, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times, 3, accessed November 23, 2015. Later, her diary entry for July 31, 1916, maintained “Donington Hall (a place whose very whereabouts I don’t know!)” See Asquith, *Great War Diary*, 273. Likewise, her autobiographical summary of her diary described Donington Hall as “‘a place whose very whereabouts is unknown to me.’” See Asquith, *An Autobiography*, 110.

1916, both *The Manchester Guardian* and the *New York Times* published articles detailing Margot's suit.⁸⁹ Hoping to avoid a publicity nightmare, *The Globe* settled for £1,000 (~\$5,000) in personal damages.⁹⁰

Margot occupied a tenuous class position between upper-middle class and the aristocracy.⁹¹ Both Margot and her husband came from wealthy merchant families, which were very well off financially but were not of the longstanding aristocratic genealogies that marked the noble élites.⁹² This couple's less-than-genteel standing led to the public perception that Margot tried too hard to present herself as aristocratic—the classic criticism of the *nouveaux riches*. There was an ongoing sense that during the war, Margot flashed her wealth in public and thus failed to limit her spending in an exemplarily patriotic way.⁹³ Indeed, apparently any “war work” that she did undertake “smacked more of the grand world and the officers’ mess than of the private soldiers’ welfare.”⁹⁴ From this classist perspective, the sustainability of the rumor made sense. It could have seemed believable that this public women had given “dainties and comestibles” to German officers in

⁸⁹ “The ‘Globe’s’ Apology to Mrs. Asquith: Donington Hall Myth. False Statements About German Prisoners.” *The Manchester Guardian* (1901-1959), March 22, 1916, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer, 10, accessed November 23, 2015. “Mrs. Asquith Wins Suit. London Paper Settles Libel Action for \$5,000.” *New York Times* (1857-1922), March 22, 1916, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times, 2, accessed November 23, 2015.

⁹⁰ “Mrs. Asquith Wins Suit.” *New York Times*, March 22, 1916, 2.

⁹¹ Michael Brock, introduction to *Great War Diary*, by Margot Asquith, xxxi.

⁹² Brock, introduction to *Great War Diary*, by Margot Asquith, xxxi. While the government would later bestow a noble title on Herbert Henry, it was not until after his term as Prime Minister when he entered the House of Lords in 1925. For more on Herbert's familial background, see “History: Past Prime Ministers: Herbert Henry Asquith: Liberal 1908 to 1916,” Government Digital Service, *GOV.UK*, accessed November 23, 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/herbert-henry-asquith>.

⁹³ Brock, introduction to *Great War Diary*, by Margot Asquith, xcvi-xcvii.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, xcvi.

an effort to exude an aristocratic identity.⁹⁵ Margot's own writings indicated additional class-based accusations against her, such as the rumor that she supposedly would "play lawn tennis with them [Prussian prisoners] at Donington Hall."⁹⁶ She revealed her desire to be in the elite strata, for she condemned the public accusations as lowbrow rabble rousing, with "a floating fabric of evil playing perpetually over crowds."⁹⁷ Her desire to be upper class also manifested itself in her desire to prove her honor by winning definitive restitution from a besmirching opponent. In her diary entry from March 1916, she claimed that "No one shall ever lie about me," pointing to the extent to which she perceived her own honor was on the line.⁹⁸ Indeed, *The Manchester Guardian* reported that she "felt bound to go into the witness-box ... not for the satisfaction of the defendants, not for the satisfaction of decent-minded people, but because calumnies of this kind are very difficult to suppress, because there are people—not merely of the lower class—people of no responsibility, who think themselves justified in referring to these matters as if they were true." From *The Manchester Guardian's* perspective, Margot hoped to set the record straight so as to recover from a public affront to her honor, which could be damaging to her standing or to that of her husband. The paper suggested the lie had gained traction in numerous strata of society, inciting Margot to initiate a formulaic challenge.⁹⁹

However, since she was a woman, Margot's route to restitution was a legal "duel" instead of a physical one. From a gendered perspective, the rumor was also "not only circulated but believed" probably because it exemplified the trope of a duplicitous woman mingling with men from the enemy.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the *New York Times* reported that the libel had labeled her "a disgrace to her sex," whose proper place was to bolster the British

⁹⁵ Asquith, *Great War Diary*, 247.

⁹⁶ Asquith summarizing her diary in Asquith, *An Autobiography*, 110.

⁹⁷ Asquith, *An Autobiography*, 107.

⁹⁸ Asquith, *Great War Diary*, 247 (underline in original).

⁹⁹ "The 'Globe's' Apology to Mrs. Asquith." *The Manchester Guardian*, March 22, 1916, 10.

¹⁰⁰ Asquith summarizing her diary in Asquith, *An Autobiography*, 110.

troops beyond question.¹⁰¹ However, the gendered attack was the reverse of the gendered criticism of Plüschow. He scorned English women for their gratuitously impassioned hostility, but here was *The Globe* accusing a prominent English woman for her gratuitously gracious hospitality.¹⁰² By suing *The Globe*, Margot worked within the limitations imposed on her gender to exact restitution for an affront to her honor. She also used this moment to attack other women, as her March 1916 diary entries also include a vitriolic attack against:

“The Dss. of Wellington (a vile, vulgar mischievous woman who, instead of giving up her time to help the wounded, goes spy-hunting like a truffle dog, to hunt up poor people of German name and hunt down all her political enemies by pretending they are pro-Germans—Terrible Profession!) told everyone in London that both Elizabeth [Margot’s daughter] & I harboured German spies in Downing St., etc. etc. E. [Elizabeth] of course engaged to Tirpitz’s son, and every sort of rubbish. Darling Elizabeth enjoyed it all, but I confess it made me furiosus.”¹⁰³

While the issue of Donington Hall and the pro-German rumors started as an attack against Margot as a woman, it allowed her to reveal what she perceived to be proper and improper women’s work in wartime. The rumor that her daughter was betrothed to a high-profile German man again demonstrated a public perception that Asquith’s daughter fulfilled the archetypal role of a duplicitous woman.¹⁰⁴ The logic of “like mother like daughter” might have given further credence to these accusations.

¹⁰¹ “Mrs. Asquith Wins Libel Injunction.” *New York Times*, December 22, 1915, 3.

¹⁰² Plüschow, *My Escape*, 105, 107. “Mrs. Asquith Sues the London Globe.” *New York Times*, December 18, 1915, 2.

¹⁰³ Underline in original. Asquith, *Great War Diary*, 247-248.

¹⁰⁴ Asquith, *Great War Diary*, 247-248. Her autobiography summarizes the accusations in her diary as “‘Elizabeth is in turn engaged to a German Admiral, or a German General...’” See Asquith, *An Autobiography*, 110.

From a nationalist perspective, the rumor also caught traction because of the raised nationalist stakes of the conflict that depicted the German enemy as “Huns” and “Boches.”¹⁰⁵ The running perception that she was a Germanophile had been ongoing even before this legal contest.¹⁰⁶ While *The Globe*’s insinuations were a public attack on Margot, they ironically presented her with the definitive moment to counter these insinuations and clear her name publicly. Her lawyer maintained that she “has never been in Donington Hall ... or had any communication whatever with any of its inmates,” and thus she used the momentum of her attacker against these defamations.¹⁰⁷ However, according to her own analysis, vicious attacks such as these ultimately brought down her husband’s government. Surely this belief was a bit of self-victimization in an attempt to relegate the blame elsewhere. But it demonstrated the dual nature of her duel against the libelers. While she asserted her agency in regards to Donington Hall, the damages from the rumors might have tarnished the couple’s public reputation.¹⁰⁸

Another small detail probably lent credibility to her attackers’ claims. Upon her marriage to Herbert Henry, Margot became Margaret Asquith. But her maiden name had been none other than Tennant.¹⁰⁹ The Under-Secretary for War, Mr. Tennant, the same man who received so much flak in the House of Commons for Donington Hall’s conditions, was in fact her younger brother Harold, who went by John.¹¹⁰ Perhaps public circles found unpalatable this family’s influence in politics, which would have made Margot the obvious target of accusations about

¹⁰⁵ “Mrs. Asquith Sues the London Globe.” *New York Times*, December 18, 1915, 2.

¹⁰⁶ “Ever since she had stayed in Dresden as a girl she had made no secret of her liking for German people...” Brock, introduction to *Great War Diary*, xciii.

¹⁰⁷ “Mrs. Asquith Wins Libel Injunction.” *New York Times*, December 22, 1915, 3.

¹⁰⁸ Asquith, *An Autobiography*, 106-107, 110-111.

¹⁰⁹ Brock, introduction to *Great War Diary*, xxxi-xli.

¹¹⁰ Tennant, “Commons Sitting, 1st March, 1915.” *Parliamentary Papers*, 21.

“Asquith and Tennant Family Trees,” appendices of *Great War Diary*, 329.

“Biographical Notes,” appendices of *Great War Diary*, 367.

Donington Hall while her brother endured constant criticism for it in Parliament. The allegations against Margot made sense from classist, gendered, and nationalist perspectives, but perhaps her familial background encapsulated all of these angles of criticism. She was surely associated with the policies of her husband Herbert and her brother Harold. Because she was a woman, the opposition probably saw her as a convenient alternate front by which to attack Herbert and Harold. Margot, however, flipped her opponent's intent on its head by asserting some agency in a legal duel.¹¹¹ Thus, similar to the German captives she supposedly cared for at Donington Hall, Margot tried to blend aspects of civil grace with legal belligerence. In doing so, she received serious flak in the public sphere for supposedly sustaining an anachronistically ostentatious lifestyle during a total war.

Part III: Donington Hall and the “Country of Occupation”¹¹²

Two significant political developments occurred at the end of 1916 and the start of 1917, both of which had implications for the discourse surrounding Donington Hall. The first was the official resignation of Herbert Asquith's government on 5 December 1916 and its replacement by David Lloyd George's government two days later.¹¹³ While this government still had a Liberal at the helm, the Conservative and Labour Parties found Lloyd George's premiership to be much more palatable.¹¹⁴ The second was the entrance of the United States into the war on 6

¹¹¹ Mrs. Asquith Sues the London Globe.” *New York Times*, December 18, 1915, 2. Brock, introduction to *Great War Diary*, xxxi-xli. “Tennant Family,” appendices of *Great War Diary*, 329. “Biographical Notes,” appendices of *Great War Diary*, 367.

¹¹² Underline in original. Wilhelm Crönert to Mrs. Privy Councilor Crönert, September 20, 1919, Donington Hall (England) by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel (Germany), fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall, Germany. I am grateful to the archivists there for their abundant assistance over the summer of 2015.

¹¹³ “Chronology,” appendices to *Great War Diary*, 339.

¹¹⁴ “David Lloyd George (1863-1945),” *History: Historic Figures*, BBC, 2014, accessed December 14, 2015, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/george_david_lloyd.shtml. See John Keegan, *Winston Churchill: A Life* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 71-94.

April 1917, thereby ending its role as moderator between the German and British states.¹¹⁵ That responsibility shifted to the government of the neutral Netherlands.¹¹⁶ Despite these structural and geopolitical changes, the members of Parliament still debated the conditions of Donington Hall throughout 1917 and 1918.¹¹⁷

The main topic that emerged from these discussions was that of food allotments as a sign of military-civilian reciprocity. The opposition accused the British government of permitting the officers at Donington Hall to buy more food than British citizens were allowed to buy within the confines of wartime rationing. The main foodstuffs of concern were “bread, meat, and sugar,” and the opposition was particularly peeved that the officer inmates could “purchase unlimited rations” that trumped the stipulations of Britain’s own “Food Controller.”¹¹⁸ Here, again, we can see a similar pattern of parliamentary accusations.¹¹⁹ It was unacceptable that anachronistic aristocratic privileges could trump national confrontations in a global war of national survival.

Just one day shy of a year later, Mr. Faber asked whether the men at Donington Hall “still have a fairly free hand to purchase

¹¹⁵ Watson, *Ring of Steel*, 417. Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 207.

¹¹⁶ Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 207. While the Dutch government surely produced interesting reports, my project is limited both logistically and linguistically to the reports from America. Further investigation of the Dutch reports would shed even more light onto Donington Hall’s role in international discourse.

¹¹⁷ Mr. Faber and Mr. Hope, “Full Record: Commons Sitting of Tuesday, 20th February, 1917.” *House of Commons: Parliamentary Papers*, “Fifth Series, Volume 90,” 12, accessed November 24, 2015, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpp-us&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:hansard:CDS5CV0090P0-0008. Mr. George Faber and Mr. MacPherson, “Full Record: Commons Sitting of Tuesday, 26th February, 1918.” *House of Commons: Parliamentary Papers*, “Fifth Series, Volume 103,” 11-12, accessed November 24, 2015, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpp-us&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:hansard:CDS5CV0103P0-0009.

¹¹⁸ Faber, “Commons Sitting of 20th February, 1917.” *Parliamentary Papers*, 12.

¹¹⁹ Faber, “Commons Sitting of 20th February, 1917.” *Parliamentary Papers*, 12. M’Neill and Tennant, “Commons Sitting, 24th February, 1915.” *Parliamentary Papers*, 6.

outside the dietary scale.” He used Donington Hall as an example of his larger point that “German prisoners of war will not be better off in this respect [the new scale of dietary] than our own women?” Mr. Faber hoped to cast scorn in gendered terms by presenting the image of indulging elite German officers at the expense of British women, the epitome of civilian innocence in need of defense during wartime. To Mr. Faber, Donington Hall exemplified the inappropriately civilian nature of Britain’s POW policies, and British anxiety that Donington Hall was a space that blended military and civilian aspects proved to be a resilient source of criticism.¹²⁰

Criticism continued even after the armistice of 11 November 1918. On 7 July 1919, Winston Churchill had to defend the state’s use of Donington Hall in the face of questions from Mr. Hurd of the Conservative Party.¹²¹ At this time, Churchill had already “crossed the floor” from the Conservative to the Liberal Party.¹²² The topic of the attack against Churchill was what to do with Rear-Admiral von Reuter, the ringleader of the German Navy’s self-scuttling demonstration meant as a last statement of defiance in the face of British victory. The German Imperial Fleet had been taken captive as per the stipulations of the armistice, to ensure that Germany could not re-launch an attack and that Germany would comply with the impending peace terms. Mr. Hurd condemned von Reuter, “who broke his nation’s vows in respect of the Armistice” by sacrificing the fleet.¹²³ However, von Reuter’s personal honor mandated that he prevent his prized

¹²⁰ Faber and MacPherson, “Commons Sitting, 26th February, 1918.” *Parliamentary Papers*, 11.

¹²¹ Mr. Hurd and Mr. Churchill, “Full Record: Common Sitting of Monday, 7th July, 1919.” *House of Commons: Parliamentary Papers*, “Fifth Series, Volume 117,” 24, accessed November 24, 2015, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpp-us&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:hansard:CDS5CV0117P0-0010.

¹²² Keegan, *Winston Churchill*, 63 (for direct quotation), 71-101. Churchill would later switch back to the Conservative Party. See Keegan, *Winston Churchill*, 102-103.

¹²³ Hurd and Churchill, “Common Sitting, 7th July, 1919.” *Parliamentary Papers*, 24.

vessels from ending up in British hands, where they could be converted into an instrument against his fatherland.¹²⁴ With the *von* in his name, he was a true aristocratic commander whose honor trumped any international legal agreement the German government had signed. This issue represented not just a political duel over military affairs, but it was also a duel over conflicting notions of what exactly honor meant. To Mr. Hurd, honor entailed abiding by the agreements of one's country, but to von Reuter, it meant abiding by a personal code of military leadership that favored self-sacrifice over surrender.¹²⁵ This high profile case demonstrated an intriguing tension between civilian notions of legal honor and aristocratic notions of personal honor.¹²⁶

Hurd suggested he should be moved from Donington Hall to "solitary confinement in a military detention barracks pending trial." By claiming "a military detention barracks" would be more appropriate, Hurd suggested that Donington Hall's was *not* a space of military internment. Instead, it mixed military-civilian lifestyles in a way that was excessively kind for von Reuter. Churchill dismissed Hurd's claims in saying "they do not appear to call for any special inquiry." To Churchill, an aristocratic German admiral was still worthy of gentlemanly respect.¹²⁷

While this parliamentary discourse was ongoing, officers continued to live at Donington Hall until at least the end of 1919. Allied POWs in Germany went home following the 18 November Armistice, but the Allies held onto the German POWs for collateral and for labor to rebuild France.¹²⁸ Throughout 1919, First Lieutenant of the Reserves Wilhelm Crönert wrote letters to

¹²⁴ For a brief background narrative, see Jackson, *The Prisoners, 1914-18*, 148-150.

¹²⁵ Hurd and Churchill, "Common Sitting, 7th July, 1919." *Parliamentary Papers*, 24.

¹²⁶ Hurd and Churchill, "Common Sitting, 7th July, 1919." *Parliamentary Papers*, 24. Frevert, *Men of Honour*, 37-68.

¹²⁷ Hurd and Churchill, "Common Sitting, 7th July, 1919." *Parliamentary Papers*, 24.

¹²⁸ Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 255-314.

his parents in Traben an der Mosel, a town in the Rhineland.¹²⁹ The Schwäbisch Hall City Archive's finding aid claims he lived from 1874 until 1942, which would have made him forty-five at the time of penning these letters.¹³⁰ Like Plüschow's and Margot's backgrounds, Crönert's exact class standing was probably less-than-properly aristocratic, however well off and prominent his family may have been.¹³¹ There was no *von* in his name, and he was also from the reserves, which tended to imply a more middle-class background.¹³² The archival finding aid further claims he had two esteemed titles, being a professor and a doctor. While high-status occupations by today's standards, the fact that he worked in some sort of trade in any capacity implied his family was probably upper-middle class, on the cusp of aristocracy but not definitively there.¹³³ He addressed his parents as "Mr. Privy Councilor Crönert" and "Mrs. Privy Councilor Crönert," indicating his family held some political sway back home. However, they were by no means the landed gentry of the East Prussian Junker variety.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Wilhelm Crönert to Mrs. Crönert, September 20, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall. Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Privy Councilor Crönert and Wife, July 13, 1919, Donington Hall (England) by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel (Germany), fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall, Germany.

¹³⁰ "War Letters and Diary of Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Crönert (1872-1942) from Traben an der Mosel, First Lieutenant of the Reserves in Infantry Regiment 126 and in the *Landsturm*-Infantry Regiment 13," *City Archive Schwäbisch Hall – Research for User*, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall, fol. S24/111, June 3, 1915, 21.

¹³¹ Brock, introduction to *Great War Diary*, by Margot Asquith, xxxi. Plüschow, *My Escape*, 1-3. "War Letters and Diary of Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Crönert," *Research for User*, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall, fol. S24/111, 21.

¹³² "War Letters and Diary of Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Crönert," *Research for User*, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall, fol. S24/111, 21. Frevert, *Men of Honour*, 68-84. Feltman, *Stigma of Surrender*, 17.

¹³³ "War Letters and Diary of Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Crönert," *Research for User*, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall, fol. S24/111, 21.

¹³⁴ Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Privy Councilor Crönert, June 3, 1919, Donington Hall (England) by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel (Germany), fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall, Germany. Wilhelm Crönert to Mrs. Crönert, September 20, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall.

Crönert wrote these letters on the official POW stationary given to the men. The paper indicated the power dynamic between captive and captor. Each letter was one sided with a strict limit on the number of lines provided. The instructions delineated exactly where Crönert was allowed to write, with the space “between the lines” specifically off limits.¹³⁵ To counter this stipulation, Crönert asserted his agency by writing in the margins at the top of the page.¹³⁶ More tellingly, in addressing his letters, Crönert had to write out Germany and Rhineland followed by “country of occupation,” “country of occupation,” or “occupied country.” The underlines indicate that the British had him re-inscribe his defeat each time he wrote a letter to his parents, literally underscoring his failure to defend his home that was now controlled by the Allies.¹³⁷ The script itself bolsters Feltman’s claim that captivity was an affront to the masculinity of the captive.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Privy Councilor Crönert and Wife, July 13, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall.

¹³⁶ Wilhelm Crönert to Mrs. Crönert, September 20, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall.

¹³⁷ Wilhelm Crönert to Mrs. Crönert, September 20, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall. Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Crönert, June 3, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall. Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Privy Councilor Crönert, October 22, 1919, Donington Hall (England) by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel (Germany), fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall, Germany.

¹³⁸ Wilhelm Crönert to Mrs. Crönert, September 20, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall. Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Crönert, June 3, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall. The translations are my own. I admit they are rudimentary, but the handwriting on these notes was quite difficult to decipher, and some words were simply illegible to me. However, these letters had the best handwriting I could find in the archive, given the structured nature of the stationary. I would welcome any criticism and assistance in piecing together the details. Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Crönert, October 22, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall. Feltman, *Stigma of Surrender*, 2.

Besides the author being an upper-middle class German reserve officer in captivity, there was an additional systemic bias to these letters: POWs were not allowed to complain about any of the conditions, making this source perhaps overly optimistic.¹³⁹ Regardless, these letters are our best chance at reconstructing the camp experience from Crönert's perspective. Most of the letters started off by listing his last communication with his parents and his extended family, delineating the importance of his private relationships.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, his letters denoted a dominance of civilian mentalities within this military man's thinking. The first letter from 3 June 1919 thanked his father for the "pants" his father had sent him, and it offered his "congratulations ... on the new grandchild." Crönert revealed his desire to come across as learned and literary when he wrote, "But physically we live better and better, our Sunday meals are more and more delicious, and thereon the weather outside is always prettier, the cuckoo birds sing in the morning and the nightingale in the evening, and the grazing cattle enliven the beautiful meadow of the hollow..."¹⁴¹ He still yearned for "our lovely, dear fatherland," but all things considered, his time in England seemed to be refining him to the "kultur inspired by a sunset in the valley of the Trent" as the newspaper had commented sardonically four years earlier.¹⁴² Indeed, his letter from 20 September indicated the joys of "another beautiful walk," and on 13 October, he wrote of his meal in "a small garden" and his "studies in Greek" while at Donington Hall.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Panayi, *Prisoners of Britain*, 147-148.

¹⁴⁰ Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Crönert, June 3, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall. Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Crönert and Wife, July 13, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall.

¹⁴¹ Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Crönert, June 3, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall.

¹⁴² Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Crönert, June 3, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall. "Captive Officers' Luxury," *New York Times*, February 11, 1915, 3.

¹⁴³ Wilhelm Crönert to Mrs. Crönert, September 20, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch

Furthermore, Donington Hall's relative isolation seemed to be his saving grace, for he reported on 3 June that "only our site remains spared" of "the flu," a reference to the horrific Spanish influenza sweeping Europe at this time.¹⁴⁴ His letter on 13 July 1919 expressed another unexpected benefit of captivity. In selling some of his parents' assets, he conceded that because "the cabling" had been down, his parents could not assent to a previous "offer of 69,000." Instead, the broken communications let the family hold out for "a higher bid of 73,000." This positive outcome from Donington Hall's remote location indicated Crönert's concern with civilian-style acquisition of funds in upper-bourgeois business exchanges.¹⁴⁵ His letters were laced with such concerns over business-related transactions. His letter from 3 June expressed excitement in asking if "the middle apartment" was "indeed rented out to the 1st of July," in addition to his regret for not paying back the "annuity due" to both his parents for previous investments.¹⁴⁶ On 13 October 1919, he discussed taking out a third mortgage "for our Göttingen house" in addition to his concern over "whether or not our German money will fall again." He was able to express remorse for Germany's condition, but not over his own.¹⁴⁷ At least within the confines of these letters, Crönert's military identity as an officer and his socioeconomic identity as an upper-middle class son trying to make the most profit seemed inseparable.¹⁴⁸

Hall. Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Privy Councilor Crönert, October 13, 1919, Donington Hall (England) by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel (Germany), fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall, Germany.

¹⁴⁴ Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Crönert, June 3, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall.

¹⁴⁵ Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Crönert and Wife, July 13, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall.

¹⁴⁶ Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Crönert, June 3, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall.

¹⁴⁷ Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Crönert, October 13, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall. Panayi, *Prisoners of Britain*, 147-148.

¹⁴⁸ Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Crönert and Wife, July 13, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch

Ending his story on a happy note, Crönert wrote to his father on 22 October 1919 for two purposes. The secondary reason was to tell his father “Happy Birthday.” But the primary reason was to assert that “tomorrow morning,” he and his comrades were “going on a ship, and the day after tomorrow we should be in Germany!” His excitement boiled over in claiming he might even beat this letter home, even though there was a purgatory period in which “we must remain in a transit camp,” probably for epidemiological purposes.¹⁴⁹ Given that he lived until 1942, he most likely was able to see his parents back in Germany.¹⁵⁰ Jones argues that the last German POWs left Britain by 1 November 1919, but Panayi argues that as of 11 December 1919, there were still prisoners at Donington Hall.¹⁵¹ He even says that some POWs remained in British captivity as late as 1921.¹⁵² Either way, for these men, the war extended far beyond the much celebrated Armistice Day.¹⁵³

Concluding Reflections

Donington Hall could simply be seen as a place where class solidarity crosscut national divides, which was in many ways true.¹⁵⁴ It could also be seen as a site that politicians used to discredit their rivals in Parliament, which was also true. But investigating the discourse surrounding Donington Hall also

Hall.

¹⁴⁹ Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Crönert, October 22, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall.

¹⁵⁰ “War Letters and Diary of Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Crönert,” *Research for User*, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall, fol. S24/111, 21. Wilhelm Crönert to Mr.

Crönert, October 22, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall.

¹⁵¹ Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 301. Panayi, *Prisoners of Britain*, 277.

¹⁵² Panayi, *Prisoners of Britain*, 277.

¹⁵³ Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 301. Panayi, *Prisoners of Britain*, 277. Wilhelm Crönert to Mr. Crönert, October 22, 1919, Donington Hall by way of Treves to Traben an der Mosel, fol. S24/111, City Archive Schwäbisch Hall.

¹⁵⁴ “Captive Officers’ Luxury,” *New York Times*, February 11, 1915, 3. See Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 372.

reveals much more. It was a highly contested space over which competing sides debated appropriate conduct and culture in a total war. On one side were parliamentary critiques that posited the civilian and the military arenas ought to be tidily separate, and thus POWs should receive only militaristic treatment.¹⁵⁵ On the other was the state itself that allowed many amenities in this military camp, which caused consternation specifically because these conditions were perceived as civilian luxuries.¹⁵⁶ This genteel prison did outlast the war, but it did not go unchallenged.¹⁵⁷ If the use of military force in the civilian sector caused public outcry in total warfare, it seems the opposite was true as well. Any breach between those realms, regardless of in which direction, resulted in outcries of violence or decadence.¹⁵⁸

Furthermore, the men at Donington Hall sought to navigate an amorphous space between these civilian and military identities, even as wartime culture increasingly demanded their complete separation. Their position as officers meant that they prized military discipline and civil decorum concurrently. These men did not fit a distinct military mold, but they were also not clean-cut civilians. In a sense, they tried to be both.¹⁵⁹ They aspired to exude a gentlemanly form of limited conflict even though they acted in an arena of mechanized total war. The British state catered to these officers by providing what was seen as a blended military-civilian environment, which elicited public anger for being at odds with the very war that had created their prisoner status.¹⁶⁰ Captivity also provided a chance to evaluate the honor of the captor, and while

¹⁵⁵ “Adapted for 400 German Prisoners.” *Illustrated London News*, March 6, 1915, 313.

¹⁵⁶ Mr. Tennant and Mr. W. Thorne, “Commons Sitting, 1st March, 1915.” *Parliamentary Papers*, 20-21. “Adapted for 400 German Prisoners.” *Illustrated London News*, March 6, 1915, 313.

¹⁵⁷ Hurd and Churchill, “Common Sitting, 7th July, 1919.” *Parliamentary Papers*, 24.

¹⁵⁸ Hull, *Scrap of Paper*, 47, 52-57. “Adapted for 400 German Prisoners.” *Illustrated London News*, March 6, 1915, 313.

¹⁵⁹ Bell, *First Total War*, 11.

¹⁶⁰ “Adapted for 400 German Prisoners.” *Illustrated London News*, March 6, 1915, 313.

women were not interned at this estate, it was not isolated from a gendered discourse. German men criticized women for being overly hostile to the men of the camp, while British gossipers criticized one of the most public female figures for allegedly being overly generous to the captives.¹⁶¹

The obvious call for future study would be of Donington Hall's use in the Second World War. However, as Jones's work cautions, any comparison between the World Wars requires great nuance to avoid reading the first as a simple run up to the second.¹⁶² Furthermore, the First World War might have had much in common with previous European confrontations. Jones claims that "a romantic view of the prisoner of war ... marked pre-1914 attitudes across Europe."¹⁶³ She clarifies that this perception was a myth, which made the First World War a moment of disillusionment in regards to POW treatment.¹⁶⁴ While Jones would probably suggest that any commonalities between the First World War and earlier conflicts would be based around similarly "catastrophic living conditions" found in the Franco-Prussian War, it would be appropriate to compare certain instances of interment from the First World War with POW treatment from earlier conflicts.¹⁶⁵ The civilian-style amenities at Donington Hall in the First World War point toward just such an analytical shift.

¹⁶¹ Plüschow, *My Escape*, 105, 107. "Mrs. Asquith Sues the London Globe." *New York Times*, December 18, 1915, 2.

¹⁶² Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 356-370.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 33-38.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.