

How did British voluntary organisations concerned with the environment balance their
commitment to protect it with supporting
the Second World War effort?

By

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Year Two MRes, Historical Research

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September 2017

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following individuals, institutions and organisations:

Oliver Hilliam, Senior Communications Officer at the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England for his unstinting cooperation, interest and support.

Penny Gane and Hannah James at Fish Legal for letting me be the first person to look at their newly rediscovered and catalogued Pure Rivers Society archive.

Sophie Houlton, Archives and Records Adviser at the National Trust, for allowing me access to the organisation's archives on repeated occasions.

Special Collections, Wellcome Library for access to the National Smoke Abatement Society archive.

The staff at Special Collections and Archives, University of Liverpool, for access to Professor Patrick Abercrombie's personal papers.

The Reading Room staff at the Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading, for providing access to a large number of Council for the Preservation of Rural England files.

Staff at the British Library for access to numerous books and journals and to the Newsroom staff for access to press articles.

Florin Feneru at the Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity, The Natural History Museum.

Jeff Howarth, Academic Liaison Librarian at Trades Union Congress Library Collections, London Metropolitan University.

Bridget Escolme, for her love, support, dinners, and occasional loan of her office chair.

Abbreviations

CPRE:	Council for the Preservation of Rural England / Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
EC:	Executive Committee
FL:	Fish Legal
MERL:	Museum of English Rural Life
MOI:	Ministry of Information
NA:	National Archives
NSAS:	National Smoke Abatement Society
NT / the Trust:	National Trust
PRS:	Pure Rivers Society
WEC:	War Emergency Committee
WL:	Wellcome Library

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as each new field was invaded by crushing machines, as each new hedgerow was smashed and uprooted and shattered, as each great oak succumbed before axe and dynamite and bulldozer, we felt a pang. For there is nothing quite as final, quite as levelling, as an aerodrome...it was as if a flood had risen and hidden a beautiful landscape, and then subsided, leaving a desolate wasteland where there was no life and no motion (Robert Arbib, US Airforce)¹

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction, Methodology, Historiography and Chapter Overview

This dissertation examines the principles, aims and achievements during the Second World War of four voluntary organisations committed to protecting Britain's environment and landscape, at a time when they were being significantly damaged and transformed by the State's preparations and support for its war effort in mainland Europe and other parts of the world. In what follows, I consider how these organisations balanced that commitment with their support for the war effort, and analyse their *modus operandi* as they negotiated the tensions and contradictions that emerged in this period, between the shared imperative to prepare and fight for war, and the desire to protect and preserve the country being fought for. As I will observe later in this chapter (p.22) this issue has never to my knowledge been considered before, and there is an extremely limited historiography both of the role of these organisations during the war, and of the domestic impact on the environment and landscape of preparation for war to be waged in other territories. Furthermore, the two of these

¹ S. Edwards, 'Ruins, Relics and Restoration: the afterlife of World War Two, American airfields in England, 1945-2005,' pp. 209-228, in C. Pearson, P. Coates, T. Cole, (eds.), *Militarized landscapes: from Gettysburg to Salisbury Plain* (Continuum UK, 2010), p.211

organisations that still exist are now both cornerstones of Britain's conservation culture, yet their role in the Second World War has remained virtually unexplored.

This introductory chapter describes and quantifies the nature and level of environmental damage and change to the rural landscape caused by the British State's war effort and introduces the organisations under examination: The Council for the Preservation of Rural England, the National Trust, the National Smoke Abatement Society, and the Pure Rivers Society. The chapter will then outline the dissertation's research methodology, most significantly a qualitative analysis of documents from the four organisations' archives. It will contextualise the research historiographically, engaging with the limited amount of existing scholarship on the organisations themselves, with wider historiographies of the environment and the Second World War, and with research on war's impact on the environment more broadly.

In investigating how these four organisations balanced their commitment to their aims and objectives with support for the war effort, both environmental pollution and changes to the rural landscape will be considered. It should be noted that some pollution and changes to the rural landscape were relatively short-term or long-lasting; for example, some requisitioned land was returned to its original use before the end of the war;² other land has remained in use by the military, never to be returned to civilian use, and even land that was returned to pre-war use still bears the scars of pillboxes, as a ramble in the countryside will often attest. Further, the identity and values attached to landscapes and buildings can change over time: those which at first were regarded as scarred and diminished by the Second World War are now with the passage of time seen as having been additionally characterised by and

² W. Foot, 'The Impact of the Military on the Agricultural Landscape of England and Wales in the Second World War,' pp.132-142, in B. Short, C. Watkins, J. Martin, (eds.), *The Front Line of Freedom* (British Agricultural History Society, 2007), p.142

sometimes even enriched by the war, as evidenced by the National Trust's focus on some of its properties that played a particular role during it.³

For Jacob D Hamblin, the Second World War was a case study in: “the transformation of the natural environment under sudden, relatively uncontested, seizure by state power.”⁴

It is this transformation of the natural environment, and the response of organisations that had established themselves to protect it, that is the heart of this dissertation. The prospect faced by Britain when it declared war on Nazi Germany on 3rd September 1939 was not that of a five-year war after which the nation would emerge on the victorious side. The reality at the time was that the war would be of indeterminate length, with victory far from assured, and the very land that the British people were to be rallied by the State to defend would become a resource of the war effort, to be used as needed. 270,687 members of the British armed forces and 63,635 British civilians were killed by the Second World War,⁵ but beyond this loss of life, and the material damage by enemy bombing to the built environment in predominantly urban areas of Britain, the nation's war effort in defence of its own shores and in support of the defeat of Western European fascism would pose an existential threat to its own natural environment. Three of the four organisations in this dissertation developed war-time policies for these uncertain times, unclear as to what extent they'd be able to implement them before either invasion by Nazi Germany or Allied victory. What they knew however was that damage and change had been, was being and would continue to be caused to the environment and landscape as a result of the war effort, for an indeterminate period of time and with no known ceiling as to how much the environment and the rural landscape would

³ National Trust, ‘*Places With Second World War Connections*’ (National Trust website)

⁴ Jacob D. Hamblin, ‘Environmental Dimensions of World War II’; pp. 698-716 in Thomas W. Zeiler, Daniel M. DuBois, (eds.), *A Companion to World War II* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2013), p.700

⁵ P. Howlett, *Fighting With Figures: a statistical digest of the Second World War* (Central Statistical Office, 1995), p.vi

need to be changed in support of the war effort. It is on this basis that the dissertation undertakes its analysis.

1.1 The Impact of Preparations For War and the War Effort on the Environment and Landscape

From 1936 onwards, with an increasing probability of a war with Nazi Germany, the armed services, particularly the Air Ministry, developed a voracious appetite for land, the latter serving 62,000 land requisition notices during the war;⁶ between 1939 and 1945 landholdings of the services increased from 140,000 to 903,000 acres,⁷ and included 450 new airfields,⁸ most requiring hedges and trees to be cut down, ditches and ponds filled in, public footpaths severed by new fences, and farm buildings and cottages demolished.

[redacted illustration/photograph due to permission issue
use citation to locate the publication]

Fig. 1 Map of aerodromes in the East of England during the Second World War (the numbers indicate the approximate location and density of the airfields)⁹

⁶ *CPRE Quarterly Report*, June 1945, Vol. XIV No.4, (MERL SR CPRE B/2/13), p.4

⁷ Short, *Freedom*, p.39

⁸ *Ibid*, p.134

⁹ S.D. Davis, 'Britain An Island Again: nature, the military and popular views of the British countryside, c.1930–1965,' (G. Kinsey, *Aviation: flight over the eastern counties since 1937* (Terrance Dalton Ltd, 1977), Fig. 21, inside cover), p.90

The vast majority of these airfields were concreted to accommodate heavy bombers, located on flat, well-drained land at a low altitude, which very often equated to prime agricultural land:¹⁰ 160 million sq. yards under concrete,¹¹ six inches thick;¹² yet many of the airfields these aircraft flew from would have an operational life of only 15 to 18 months.¹³

The coast, mainly around the East and South of England, was hastily protected at the outset of war by a “coastal crust”¹⁴ of defences which extended several miles inland, including 28,000 concrete pillboxes and anti-tank emplacements, and hundreds of miles of anti-tank ditches, much in farming land.¹⁵ By 1944, including land needed for D-Day preparations, over 11 million acres, or about 20% of the United Kingdom’s land area, was under some form of military control,¹⁶ with approximately 9.77 million acres used for battle training, of which 4%¹⁷ was exclusively occupied by the military and civilian presence was removed.¹⁸ The Minister of Agriculture disclosed in 1945 that 800,000 acres of agricultural land had been requisitioned during the war for military purposes.¹⁹ “The most flourishing crop seemed to be barbed wire,” wrote J.B. Priestley.²⁰

In the drive to reduce its dependence on overseas timber, by 1946 two-thirds of timber standing in British woodlands in 1939 had been felled to meet war-time needs,²¹ with few

¹⁰ Foot, *Impact*, p.135

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.134

¹² D. Hart-Davis: *Our Land At War: A Portrait of Rural Britain 1939-45* (William Collins, 2015), p.237

¹³ Edwards, *Ruins*, p.211

¹⁴ F. Pryor, *The Making of the British Landscape: how we have transformed the land, from prehistory to today*, (Allen Lane, 2010) p.581

¹⁵ Foot, *Impact*, p.133

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.132

¹⁷ A. Howkins, *The Death of Rural England: a social history of the countryside since 1900*, (Routledge, 2003), p.124

¹⁸ *Ibid*. (A.W. Foot, ‘The Impact of the Military on the British Farming Landscape in the Second World War,’ p.138)

¹⁹ *CPRE Quarterly Report*, March 1945 Vol XIV, No.3, (MERL SR CPRE B/2/13), p.6

²⁰ Foot, *Impact*, (Norman Longmate (ed.) *The Home Front: an anthology of personal experience, 1938-1945*, Chatto & Windus, 1981, p.57), p.134

²¹ E.G.Richards, *British Forestry in the 20th Century: policy and achievements* (Brill, 2003), p.9

mature oaks surviving the war, due to the numerous war-related uses to which they could be put.²² Between 1939 and 1945 agricultural land not requisitioned for military use was fundamentally and irrevocably transformed in the drive to make Britain more self-sustaining in food, with the amount of land farmed for arable purposes in 1939 increasing from 11,810 thousand acres to 17,866 thousand acres by 1945, and the amount of permanent grassland correspondingly falling from 17,638 thousand acres in 1939 to 10,892 by 1945,²³ with a resulting impact on different types of flora and fauna.

Britain's industrial war effort produced, amongst many items of war material and military hardware: two million rifles,²⁴ 8.8 billion rounds of ammunition for guns, 20-mm artillery and small arms,²⁵ and 119,479 military aircraft of all types;²⁶ the vast majority had a very limited life-span, were designed and manufactured in order to be rapidly expended, with much of what was produced not surviving the end of the conflict it was produced for. The war did not however have a monopoly on the industrial production of material with limited life-cycles; as Jacob D. Hamblin observes: "war should not be seen as an aberration from practices that began before and continued long afterward,"²⁷ but it is a vivid example of how natural resources can be rapidly utilised and the natural environment be correspondingly diminished when a state embarks on a period of armed conflict with other states.

David Edgerton estimates that perhaps half of all armaments were produced in newly built, government owned arms plants or on specialist machines supplied by government,²⁸ requiring

²² H.L. Edlin, *Trees, Woods and Man*, (Collins, 1966, Second Edition), p.172

²³ E.M. Collingham, *Taste of War: World War Two and the battle for food*, (Penguin, 2013), p.67

²⁴ D. Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine: weapons, resources and experts in the Second World War*, (Penguin, 2012), p.61

²⁵ Ministry of Information, *What Britain Has Done 1939-1945: a selection of outstanding facts and figures*, (Atlantic Books 2007) , p.107

²⁶ Howlett, *Fighting*, p.170

²⁷ Hamblin, *Environmental*, p.712

²⁸ D. Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.77

a significant number of green or brownfield sites in areas generally outside the range of Luftwaffe bombers, predominantly in the North of England and Wales.²⁹ This rapid war-time industrialisation in new geographical locations led to instances of increased atmospheric pollution,³⁰ as well as increased pollution of waterways³¹ and the rapid movement of people due to evacuation and the establishment of new camps for armed forces strained under-developed rural and semi-rural sanitation and water supply infrastructure, polluting streams and rivers.³²

The *Manchester Guardian* editorialised as early as 1937: “what is the fatal fascination which draws our Defence Departments, when they are in search of sites for new depots, nearly always to scenes of great beauty or historic interest?”³³ and J.B. Priestley wrote: ‘the War Office and Air Ministry may need more and more space for encampments, landing grounds, ranges and the like, but there is no reason why time after time they should single out some of the few unspoilt regions in the country, to ruin them for ever,’³⁴ whilst, most fittingly perhaps, it was left to a young soldier writing home from France to the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, to articulate most pointedly the dilemma felt most keenly by those concerned with the environment: ‘whatever damage might be done by enemy action, he and others in the rural conservation movement do not wish to return and find a wilderness of our own creating.’³⁵

²⁹ Howlett, *Fighting*, p.86

³⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, ‘Polluted Air: More Smoke in War Time,’ 3/4/1940, p.12

³¹ W. Hornby, *History of the Second World War: factories and plant*, (HMSO/Longmans/ Green & Co., 1958), p.115

³² *The Times*, ‘River Pollution in War-time’ 2/10/1939; *The Times*, ‘Pollution of Rivers’ 10/9/1943; ‘Pure Rivers Society statement,’ March 1943 (MERL SR CPRE C /1/54/23)

³³ *Manchester Guardian*, Editorial: ‘Beauty and the Beast,’ 6/5/1937, p.10

³⁴ J.B. Priestley, *Our Nation’s Heritage* (ed.), (J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1939), p.168

³⁵ CPRE Wartime Progress Report, 1939, in CPRE Countryside Campaigner, Autumn 1989, Pt. 1

Some voluntary organisations became adept at couching their aims and objectives in a visual imagery and rhetoric associated with an idealised rural existence, as part of a trend in art and commerce which reached an apogee during the inter-war period. Yet with the onset of war these organisations accepted that at least some damage to this rural idyll was a necessity for the war effort and the protection of that very identity. This acceptance of the State's 'transformation of the natural environment' (p.11 above) in support of the war effort appears to have been without hesitation, but these organisations' support did not however amount to a filing away of their mission statements for the duration of the war. For the most part their support did not equate to a lack of analysis of the impact on the environment and landscape of the war effort, but the extent to which they challenged the war-time Coalition Government's proposals depended on how central the issue was felt to be to the organisations' concerns (i.e. their "red line" issues), and also differed depending on whether they were plans for the conduct of the war or war-time plans for post-war reconstruction; the relative capacities of the organisations during war-time was also, inevitably, a significant factor. Moreover, although it was little-recognised or at least inappropriate to acknowledge it at the time, for these organisations the war was in some respects organisationally advantageous, helping them to achieve certain pre-war objectives which would have stood little chance of immediate success without the Second World War; namely, the recognition of agricultural land as a strategic utility, and the acquisition and protection of property and landscapes of historical and national importance.

This dissertation will inhabit these ironies, paradoxes and contradictions, and answer the central research question primarily through exploring the archives of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (now most commonly known as 'CPRE', and during the period in question the Council for the Preservation of Rural England), the National Trust (NT), the

National Smoke Abatement Society (NSAS), and the Pure Rivers Society (PRS). I have chosen these four organisations because between them they were responsible for addressing key environmental issues that Britain's war effort had an impact on: namely the rural environment and landscape, and air and water pollution. The dissertation will focus on environmental impact that was brought about by Britain's domestic war effort, which as noted earlier in this chapter (from p.12) was substantial and widespread. This dissertation will not therefore consider, except in passing, environmental initiatives and concerns that existed prior to the war, and were not resolved or achieved until after it, such as the work that CPRE and NT were involved in from 1929 onwards to lobby successive governments to create national parks. Further, in deciding to focus on the requisition of land for military purposes in the round, and on land which was most prized because of its potential for inclusion in national parks, this dissertation will not consider what is, it has to be acknowledged, the *cause célèbre* of land requisitioned by the military, that of the village of Tyneham, Dorset, which remained under military control at the end of the war. Although hugely controversial, mainly because the village's inhabitants had been evicted at the time of requisition and never allowed back, the EC papers of both CPRE and NT show that it was not a major ongoing issue for either organisation at national level when compared to other individual cases they were involved in, nor the wider issue of policy in respect of the return of requisitioned land to its original owners and for its original use.

1.2 Methodology

The central research question will be answered through a qualitative analysis of key internal and public documents of the afore-mentioned four organisations, particularly Committee and Council minutes and private correspondence between 1926 and 1949, and most notably the

period 1936 to 1946. This dissertation proposes defining the period 1936 to 1946 as the “long” Second World War, as from 1936 onwards significant requisitioning of rural areas by Britain’s Defence Departments (Air Ministry, Army, Admiralty, War Office, Ministry of Aircraft Production) took place, and the issue of requisitioned land being returned, or not, to its original owners remained a significant issue in the immediate post-war period, and indeed for some years after that.

Three of the four organisations were founded between 1926 and 1930: NSAS as a result of a merger in 1929, between the Coal Smoke Abatement Society and the Smoke Abatement League of Great Britain, with NT being founded thirty years previously in 1895. The dissertation’s methodology will be to identify the environmental threats that led to the formation of the organisations, the respective organisations’ founding aims, objectives and priorities, and to contrast these with their war-time policies and activities. The central research question is about the balance these organisations struck between their commitment to their mission statements and their support for the war effort: the analysis is therefore about the *who* and the *why* and the *what*, gauging intentions and actions. There were no public campaigns by these or many other organisations independent of government during the war, only those run by the State and its agencies; these organisations operated behind the scenes, in private, largely, the primary material would suggest, by letter and in person. The dissertation will therefore be sensitive to the content and style of communications, noting language and discourse; it will recognise the importance of key actors, and assess the value of links between these individuals and organisations and indeed between these actors and individuals operating the levers of government.

Primarily, EC-level minutes and press articles will be analysed to identify the different types of threat to the environment from 1936 until the outbreak of war as a result of the increasing territorial demands being made by Defence Departments during this peace-time period, and the evolution of CPRE and NT's response to these demands, at a time when the prospect of war was for much of this time still not assured. The dissertation will then consider in summary war-time emergency legislation that was enacted at the outbreak of war, as this provides the operating context for the four organisations during the war, and their respective EC papers and public statements will be analysed to identify their war-time policies and programmes of work. The dissertation will, within the 1939-1945 long series of archival material, seek to identify several different patterns of behaviour: firstly, support for the war-effort where there was a convergence of interests, most notably CPRE and NT's support for the 'Recording Britain' project. Secondly, the area of acquiescence, such as PRS and the issue of inland water pollution, and CPRE and NT in the case of open-cast coal mining and the felling of the country's woodlands for timber. Thirdly, the dissertation will identify what issues the organisations were unequivocally opposed to the Coalition Government on, such as in CPRE's case the location of industry in rural areas which were earmarked for national park status, and the conditions attached to the return of requisitioned land to its original owners and usage; further, for NSAS, the Ministry of Home Security's decision in 1940 to instruct selected industrial sites around Britain to deliberately produce more smoke from their industrial processes in order to obscure targets from Luftwaffe bombing raids.

Having explored the validity of the qualitative approach that the dissertation will be using, it is also important to consider why an alternative, quantitative approach is not appropriate. Looking at the subject quantitatively would, I argue, be more suited to addressing the organisations' success in limiting environmental damage during the war. This approach

would in any case be problematic and necessarily partial, given that discussions and outcomes within the CPRE and NT about specific sites required by Defence Departments occurred *in-camera* and were not minuted by them. Such a quantitative approach would also be problematic because it is not possible to consider the four organisations to an equal depth for several reasons (indeed, even for a qualitative approach this provides challenges, although not insurmountable ones). Firstly, there are significant gaps in the material available; whilst EC-level papers, showing agenda items, key contextual information, and decisions, survive across the organisations, no supporting documentation that the committees would have considered in their meetings has survived, and in the case of NSAS and PRS, no sub-committee papers have survived at all (most frustratingly the PRS' Pollution Sub-Committee reports to its EC), probably because these two organisations merged or amalgamated with other organisations, with inevitably a corresponding filtering process being undertaken at some point as to the future relevance of historical material. Secondly, in the case of PRS specifically, at its EC meeting of 20th April 1939, in a measure destined to make future archivists weep, the Secretary reported that:

...the filing cabinets were choked with correspondence since the inception of the Society and there was an immense mass of other out-of-date papers which were in almost inextricable confusion...it was resolved...to go through the papers...and destroy all not required. There was a general consensus of opinion that excepting possibly in special cases there was no need to keep anything more than two or three years old.³⁶

³⁶ PRS EC Minutes 20/4/1939, (FL PRS1/1/1), p.108

Thirdly, governance structures, decision making, and minute-taking were to a considerable extent streamlined across all four organisations in the war-time period, due to a combination of a lack of available committee members and supporting staff as a result of them serving directly in support of the war effort, the lack of safe meeting places in London and logistical problems with travelling to alternative temporary headquarters in the Home Counties, and a lack of paper.

That said, a substantial body of archival material survives. In the case of CPRE at its headquarters in South London, and at the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL), University of Reading; the National Trust's archives are held at its Headquarters in Swindon, and selected surviving NSAS documents and publications are held in The Wellcome Library's Archives and Manuscripts Department in London, with the remaining PRS archive at its (twice-removed) successor organisation, Fish Legal, in Leominster, Herefordshire. I am complementing this documentation with a consideration of a number of British press articles from the 1936 to 1946 period, and a wide range of secondary sources.

The concluding chapters will touch on legacy issues (using CPRE as an illustration) namely how organisations' "long" war-time activities influenced their post-war development, and what status this activity has within the institutional history of the organisation, and beyond that, the resonance of this study beyond the specific historical period that it is analysing.

Primary sources used for this will be an interview conducted by the dissertation author with a senior member of CPRE staff and unpublished transcripts of senior CPRE honorary officers and staff from the post-war period.

1.3 Historiography

Firstly, the historiography of terminology: P. Mandler argues the term “environment” did not come into “non-technical currency” until the early 1960s,³⁷ but for the purposes of this dissertation this term will be retrospectively applied to the four organisations considered by this dissertation, partly for convenience, but also because the organisations displayed a degree of environmental awareness in the inter-war period which would not be out of place in the period Mandler addresses. For example, NSAS refers to promoting and supporting legislation “for preventing the pollution of the atmosphere” in its Objects, as stated in its First Annual Report of 1930,³⁸ even though the issue of smoke abatement was mostly associated with public health during this period, and at the height of the Second World War, the NSAS again, thundered that the period may be judged to be “a barbarous age...[one of]...reckless squandering of limited natural resources;”³⁹ a rhetorical flourish that could easily have been made by Friends of the Earth or Greenpeace in the 1970s.

This dissertation’s consideration of the historiography associated with the central research question covers two linked but distinct areas: firstly, the historiography associated with the four organisations that are the focus of this dissertation, particularly during the long Second World War period, and secondly, the historiography of the environment and war. Looking at Britain’s Second World War through the prism of Environmental History both enables the utilisation of previously unconsidered sources and attaches a significance to facts which previously have been ignored. For example, the analysis of Neville Chamberlain’s place in history, either by the political biographer or the military historian, is so dominated by the so-called Munich Agreement, his “peace for our time”⁴⁰ reassurance to the nation, and being misled by Hitler as to the latter’s imperialist intentions, that Chamberlain as appeaser-dupe,

³⁷ P. Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*, (Yale University Press, 1997), p.390

³⁸ NSAS First Annual Report 1930, (WL SA/EPU/E/1/1), p.4

³⁹ NSAS Twelfth Annual Report 1942, (WL SA/EPU/E/1/1), p.10

⁴⁰ Britannia Historical Documents: sources of British History (online resource)

together with the heroic retreat from Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain's glorious few, and Churchill as the nation's saviour, have entered English folklore as the cornerstones of understanding Britain's Second World War experience until the United States and Soviet Union joined the war. This dissertation, in investigating an aspect of the environmental history of the Second World War, has through interrogating the archives of CPRE and press reports on domestic environmental issues, unearthed material not found by the majority of conventional political biographies of Chamberlain and histories of the war, or at least utilised it where other historical works have found it but not judged it relevant to refer to it. In what I would hope is a representative cross-section of Chamberlain biographies exploring his life, political career and role in the Second World War, by N. Smart,⁴¹ William R. Rock,⁴² H. Montgomery Hyde,⁴³ K. Feiling,⁴⁴ and R. Self,⁴⁵ none make any reference whatsoever to CPRE or the Government department-wide consultative mechanism Chamberlain set up in early 1938 (unparalleled then and possibly since between a government on a war footing and civil society) to provide CPRE with a means through which to engage with war-effort related Government departments over their needs for land. This when Chamberlain had so many demands on his time with international efforts to avoid war and domestic political turbulence. Quoting from Self: "after he returned to London...[after Parliament's winter recess]...he almost immediately found himself in 'the thick of a tangle of problems.'⁴⁶ This dissertation broadens the understanding of Chamberlain's political contribution during these last years of the inter-war period, beyond the parameters of the above biographies.

⁴¹ N. Smart, *Neville Chamberlain*, (Routledge, 2010)

⁴² W.R. Rock, *Neville Chamberlain*, (Twayne Publishers, 1969)

⁴³ H.M. Hyde, *Neville Chamberlain*, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976)

⁴⁴ K. Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, (Macmillan, 1970)

⁴⁵ R. Self, *Neville Chamberlain: a biography*, (Ashgate, 2006)

⁴⁶ *Ibid*; (Chamberlain to Hilda, 9 January 1938; to Lord Weir, 15 January 1938, Weir MSS DC96/22/2; Sumner Welles, *The Time for Decision* (New York, 1944, pp. 64-6), p.280-81

Further, this dissertation's consideration of the historical record from an environmental history perspective, in looking at the increasing amounts of land that was being requisitioned by the Defence Departments in the three years prior to Britain declaring war, shows that Chamberlain was as Prime Minister presiding over significant degrees of preparation for war despite still doing all in his power to seek a reasonable peace. More detailed investigations of this issue, beyond the scope of this dissertation, could shed further light on the extent to which Chamberlain's administration was preparing for war, and could potentially lead to an at least partial reappraisal of Chamberlain's place in Second World War historiography.

With regard to the organisations that this dissertation will be focusing on, there is an almost complete historiographical deficit in relation to the policies and activities of British voluntary organisations concerned with the environment and the rural landscape during the Second World War, most notably, where this dissertation is concerned, CPRE, NT, NSAS and PRS. The closest any book or journal article comes to a consideration of these organisations' roles is the 'A Countryside Worth Fighting For' chapter in CPRE's own '22 Ideas That Saved the English Countryside,'⁴⁷ although with due respect to the authors, a former CPRE Chairman and the current Senior Communications and Information Officer at CPRE, from an academic standpoint this cannot count as an independent, objective analysis. The only published assessment I have to date found on the level of war-time activity of the above four organisations has been a passing reference by A.F. Wilt in *Food For War: Agriculture and Rearmament in Britain Before the Second World War*, who states that CPRE 'continued to comment on the government's acquisition of land for military installations, but...[was]... less active during the war than before it.'⁴⁸ This dissertation will show this assertion to be so

⁴⁷ P.Waine and O. Hilliam, *22 Ideas That Saved the English Countryside; the Campaign to Protect Rural England*, (Frances Lincoln, 2016), pp.130-139

⁴⁸ A.F.Wilt, *Food For War: agriculture and rearmament in Britain before the Second World War*, (Oxford University Press, 2001), p.209

blunt and lacking in context as to be misleading, and further, it assumes that the only action CPRE took was of a public nature, whereas correspondence held in CPRE archives at MERL, which will be referred to throughout Chapters Three and Four below, show that CPRE made extensive use of its private back-channels to Government Ministries throughout the war, utilising the informal mechanisms and goodwill provided by its supporters in the Commons, Lords and senior figures in the civil service.

With regard to the other three organisations that this dissertation covers, only the National Trust is served with biographies, in particular by P. Weideger,⁴⁹ J. Gaze,⁵⁰ and M. Waterson,⁵¹ although in the case of the latter two, the Trust was involved as publisher, so they must be regarded somewhat as “authorised” biographies. NSAS war-time activities are examined briefly by P. Thorsheim,⁵² and indeed this is the only academic text that, albeit briefly, considers the war-time position and programme of work of any of the four organisations, with reference to the NSAS’ publications and meetings. Lastly, there is no trace of PRS at all in academic texts, except for J. Hassan’s reference to the organisation as ‘elusive;’⁵³ this may be because its archive was believed to be lost, until my research for this dissertation uncovered it recently catalogued, located at its twice-removed successor organisation, Fish Legal.

This dissertation disputes the critical assessments of CPRE that exist within the limited historiography of voluntary sector organisations concerned with environmental issues in the inter-war period. In favourably contrasting British nature conservation of the 1960s with

⁴⁹ P. Weideger, *Gilding the Acorn: behind the façade of the National Trust*,

⁵⁰ J. Gaze, *Figures in a landscape: a History of the National Trust*

⁵¹ M. Waterson, *The National Trust: the first hundred years*

⁵² P. Thorsheim, *Inventing Pollution: coal, smoke and culture in Britain since 1800* (Ohio University Press, 2006), pp. 159-163

⁵³ J. Hassan, *A History of Water in Modern England and Wales*, ((Manchester University Press, 1998), p.82

that of the inter-war period, Hassan asserts that the pre-1940 years were characterised by “preservationism”⁵⁴ and “backward-looking environmentalism,”⁵⁵ yet in the case of CPRE (they and the National Trust being the key inter-war period nature conservation bodies), from CPRE’s outset a major plank of its philosophy and policy embraced change and perceived development with Professor Patrick Abercrombie, one of its founders and major influences, writing on the eve of CPRE being founded, that:

new, more advanced or more intensive methods of farming...[are]...to be encouraged...[and]...it may become more economical to work fields in larger units, entailing the removal of hedges and trees.⁵⁶

This would be a factor of fundamental importance in the CPRE’s war-time policy, both with regard to the transformation of agricultural land from pastoral to arable use, and with regard to the requisitioning of land with an agricultural use by the military.

Elsewhere, P. Mandler considers that “even in the 1930s...[CPRE]...was still regarded by most politicians and civil servants as a gang of cranks beneath notice.”⁵⁷ Yet CPRE was well-connected to the political establishment. As noted above (p.23) Neville Chamberlain, as Prime Minister, in response to lobbying by CPRE in February 1938, required his government departments to establish mechanisms to liaise with CPRE on an ongoing basis regarding its concerns over the requisitioning of land, by the Defence Departments in particular.⁵⁸ Further, in CPRE’s 1938 Annual Report, issued in 1939, the CPRE reported that it used the

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.81

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ P. Abercrombie, *The Preservation of Rural England: the control of development by means of rural planning*, (University Press of Liverpool/ Hodder & Stoughton, 1926), p.7

⁵⁷ P. Mandler, ‘Against “Englishness”: English culture and the limits to rural nostalgia 1850-1940,’ *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol.7, Series 6, (1997), p.174

⁵⁸ *The Times*, ‘Defence Sites,’ 2/2/1938, p. 12.

“Parliamentary Amenities Group to raise issues relating to housing, coastal amenities, land acquisition and use by Defence Departments;⁵⁹ Furthermore, in 1939 correspondence, the Amenities Group had actually approached both CPRE and NT for suggestions regarding Private Members Bills that the Group could initiate;⁶⁰ the Group consisted, CPRE assessed, of 18 active MPs and five lords, and a further 11 MPs and six lords who could be called on to act.⁶¹ Lastly, G.L. Pepler was a senior civil servant in the Ministry of Health and a member of CPRE’s EC from its inception, and H.G. Strauss, an associate member of CPRE, would become Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Town and Country Planning in 1943 when the new Ministry was created.⁶²

Hilton and McKay,⁶³ and Hilton, Crewson, Mouhot and McKay,⁶⁴ identify key features of the voluntary organisations that emerged in Britain in the Twentieth Century, and therefore help establish CPRE, NT, NSAS and PRS within wider British civil society, particularly with regard to the organisational size and socio-economic background of their members and supporters, compared to other voluntary organisations in the inter-war period. P. Grant’s ‘Voluntarism and the Impact of the First World War,’ in *The Ages of Voluntarism*⁶⁵ identifies two particular organisational phenomena; firstly mutual aid organisations for working people, such as trade unions and the developing labour movement had increased from under two million in 1900 to four million by 1914 and would reach eight million by 1920;⁶⁶ and secondly the increasing presence of the ‘respectable’ working class in voluntary

⁵⁹ CPRE Twelfth Annual Report, 1938, (MERL SR CPRE B/2/12), p.8

⁶⁰ 1939 Legal and Parliamentary correspondence, (MERL SR CPRE C/1/53/2)

⁶¹ CPRE List of ‘The Parliamentary Amenities Committee,’ 22/7/39, (MERL SR CPRE C/1/53/2)

⁶² CPRE War-time progress report September 1942-1943 Vol. XIV No.1, (MERL SR CPRE B/2/13), p.8

⁶³ M. Hilton, and J. McKay, (eds.), *The Ages of Voluntarism: how we got to the Big Society*, (Oxford University Press, 2011)

⁶⁴ M. Hilton, N. Crewson, J. Mouhot, J. McKay, (eds.), *Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain: charities, civil society and the voluntary sector since 1945*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)

⁶⁵ P. Grant, ‘Voluntarism and the Impact of the First World War,’ pp.27-46, in M. Hilton and J. McKay, (eds.), *The Ages of Voluntarism: how we got to the big society*, (Oxford University Press, 2011)

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.27

organisations, particularly women,⁶⁷ most notably in organisations concerned with poverty and philanthropy.⁶⁸ This is emphasised by the numbers involved, with the Mothers' Union having a membership of 538,000, and the National Federation of Women's Institute 238,000 by the 1930s.⁶⁹

J. Sheail's *Nature in Trust*,⁷⁰ *Rural Conservation in Inter-War Britain*⁷¹ and *Nature Conservation in Britain*⁷² help create a sense of place for CPRE, National Trust, NSAS and PRS, in relation to the sub-set of "amenity societies,"⁷³ that is to say voluntary organisations which demonstrated their direct appreciation of the countryside through their members' engagement in outdoor activities. Sheail records that the Federation of Rambling Clubs had 40,000 members by 1931,⁷⁴ and the Youth Hostel Association 83,000 members by the outbreak of the Second World War.⁷⁵

In comparison to these amenity societies and other civil society organisations, the memberships of CPRE, NT, NSAS and PRS were tiny, and this larger amenity-focused potential constituency of support was a key reason why the CPRE and the Trust in particular started to associate themselves with the amenity societies from the late 1920s onwards.⁷⁶ NT membership was just 2,000 in 1930 and only reached just under 8,000 by 1939;⁷⁷ available archive material from NSAS and PRS refer to subscription income rather than members, but in both cases individual membership was extremely small, with NSAS recording just £1,200

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.28

⁶⁸ K. Bradley, *Poverty, Philanthropy and the State: charities and the working classes in London, 1918-1979*, (Manchester University Press, 2009), p.36

⁶⁹ Hilton, Crewson, *Historical*, p.17

⁷⁰ J. Sheail, *Nature in Trust: the history of nature conservation in Britain*, (Blackie & Son, 1976)

⁷¹ J. Sheail, *Rural Conservation in Inter-War Britain*, (Clarendon Press, 1981)

⁷² J. Sheail, *Nature Conservation in Britain – the formative years* (The Stationery Office, 1998)

⁷³ Mandler, *Fall*, p.276

⁷⁴ Sheail, *Nature in Trust*, p.69

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Mandler, *Fall*, p.276, and Ibid.

⁷⁷ Mandler, *Fall*, p.239

p.a. at the outbreak of war,⁷⁸ and PRS' cash statement for the year ended 1938 recorded subscriptions and donations of just £139 pounds, 6 shillings, and 6 pence.⁷⁹ CPRE's Twelfth Annual Report of 1938 recorded that it had 38 country branches and county committees, 44 constituent bodies, 152 affiliated bodies, and an 'ever increasing' associate membership.⁸⁰ Looking at membership numbers does however provide only a very partial understanding of the significance of these organisations, as in contrast to many of the afore-mentioned elements of civil and amenity society, these four organisations were dominated by well-connected well-educated middle-to-upper-class men, many professionally qualified in the issues which formed the basis of their organisations' concerns. CPRE's support manifested itself mainly in the inter-war period through its structure of affiliated organisations, amongst these, and also as individual members, was 'the articulate support of a body of intellectuals who wrote vigorously in defence of the countryside.'⁸¹ Similarly in NSAS' case their success could not be measured by its individual membership, but the extent of the Society's inroads into the network of local authority medical officers around the country. The NT would only slowly modernise during the inter-war period, but for much of this time the Trust was what Simon Thurley describes as a "posh pressure group...[run by]...a small number of establishment figures with the wealth and connections that allowed them to press their case...[meeting in]... the Palace of Westminster, the Inns of Court, and in aristocratic town houses."⁸²

Another relevant historiography is that of landscape and national identity; a key text that explores this relationship, particularly with regard to voluntary organisations concerned with

⁷⁸ *The National Smoke Abatement Society Comes of Age 1929-1950* (WL SA/EPU/H/4/1), p.5

⁷⁹ PRS Cash Statement for the Year Ending 31/12/38, (FL PRS1/1/1), p.114

⁸⁰ CPRE Twelfth Annual Report, 1938, p.6

⁸¹ D.N. Jeans, 'Planning and Myth of the English Countryside in the Inter-War Period,' *Rural History, economy, society, culture*, (Vol.1 No.2; pp.249-264), p.251

⁸² S. Thurley, *Men From The Ministry: how Britain saved its heritage*, (Yale University Press, 2013), p.59

the environment, is D. Matless' *Landscape and Englishness*, in which he describes the appropriation, by a range of vested interests, including civil society, of land, particularly rural land, as, a 'national symbol.'⁸³ This idealisation, or I would suggest, *nation*-alisation of land, was a product firstly of disillusion with industrialisation and urbanisation, and then as the aforementioned 'national symbol,' a motivational tool which could be used to generate support for civil society objectives and be appropriated by the State to generate support for the war effort. The issue is also explored across works by Loweson,⁸⁴ Weight,⁸⁵ Weiner,⁸⁶ and Mandler (above, pages 22 and 26). A. Carey observes: 'propaganda material from both the First and Second World Wars mobilised this ideal to inspire the patriotism required to save the nation it stood for...the topographical and nationalistic meanings of the word "country" collapsed into one another.'⁸⁷ Chapter Two, below, engages with this issue through exploring some of CPRE's communications work between its inception in 1926 and the outbreak of the war.

Although the war-time positions and work programmes of the four organisations at the centre of this dissertation have not to date therefore been addressed comprehensively nor necessarily fairly by academic inquiry, it must not be assumed from this that there is no war-time historiography of other elements of Britain's voluntary sector concerned with environmental issues. It is ironic that possibly the best war-time assessment is of an organisation that did not actually exist; Phillip Cornford's examination⁸⁸ of the organic movement's origins provides a comprehensive analysis of the movement's total failure to influence the

⁸³ D. Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, (Reaktion Books Ltd., 2016, 2nd Edition), p.173

⁸⁴ J. Loweson, 'Battles for the Countryside,' pp.258-280, in F. Gloversmith, (ed.), *Class Culture and Social Change: a new view of the 1930s* (Harvester Press, 1980)

⁸⁵ R. Weight, 'State, Intelligentsia and the Promotion of National Culture in Britain 1939-45,' *Historical Research*, (Vol. 69, 168, Feb. 1996), pp.83-101

⁸⁶ M.J. Weiner, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980*, (Cambridge University Press, 1982)

⁸⁷ A. Carey; 'This Land,' in '*Creating the Countryside: The Rural Idyll Past and Present*;' V. Elson and R. Shirley (eds.), (Paul Holberton Publishing, 2017), p.80

⁸⁸ P. Cornford, *The Origins Of The Organic Movement* (Floris Books, 2001)

Government's war-time agricultural policy, although there was not an actual organisation promoting organic values and opposing the industrialisation of agriculture until the Soil Association was founded in 1946.

With the exception of Thorsheim's few pages on smoke during war-time Britain [see above page reference], there is also a lack of a historiography relating to air and water pollution in Britain during the Second World War, and the loss of land to war-time industrialisation, although there is a significant amount of material on military airfields, such as Patrick Otter's books on Lincolnshire and Yorkshire Second World War airfields,⁸⁹ and Graham Smith's books on Norfolk and Suffolk airfields,⁹⁰ albeit from a military rather than environmental perspective. More recently there has been a move towards exploring other aspects of the war, more on what could be referred to as the "Home Front," by Laura Dawes,⁹¹ the aforementioned *Britain's War Machine*,⁹² examining the resources Britain had at its disposal to wage the Second World War, and a number of books on aspects of war-time agriculture, by the afore-mentioned Collingham⁹³ (p.14) and Wilt⁹⁴ (p.24).

The historiography of the environment and war is generally not conclusive about when the subject came of academic interest. C.D, Stone, writing in 2000, suggests that environmental damage from all causes in the post-war period, together with environmentalism, 'have forced us to reconsider our posture towards the environment in wartime.'⁹⁵ J.H. Hamblin, writing in

⁸⁹ P. Otter, *Lincolnshire Airfields in the Second World War*, (Countryside Books, 1996) and *Yorkshire Airfields in the Second World War*, (Countryside Books, 1998)

⁹⁰ G. Smith, *Norfolk Airfields in the Second World War*, (Countryside Books, 1994) and *Suffolk Airfields in the Second World War*, (Countryside Books, 1995)

⁹¹ L. Dawes, *Fighting Fit: the wartime battle for Britain's health*, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2016)

⁹² Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine*

⁹³ Collingham, *Taste*

⁹⁴ Wilt, *Food*

⁹⁵ C.D. Stone, 'The environment in wartime: an overview,' in J.E. Austin and C.E. Bruch, (eds.), *The environmental consequences of war: legal economic, and scientific perspectives*, (Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.17

2013, acknowledges that ‘World War II...entailed the mobilisation of natural resources on an unprecedented scale’⁹⁶ and raises the prospect of finding the roots of contemporary environmental science and social thought during the war itself as opposed to the more commonly identified period as the 1960s, but then, having whet our appetite, states that ‘...the present chapter attempts no comprehensive answer to these questions...’⁹⁷ and goes on to provide a compendium of other academics’ work which also does not answer the tantalising question Hamblin poses. In contrast, Jennifer Leaning, writing in 1993, observes: ‘the effect of war on the environment, as a general topic, has not received equivalent attention, and what notice it has attracted has arisen only recently,’⁹⁸ and she attaches a point in time to this as after the Gulf War of 1991,⁹⁹ predominantly because of the war being ‘remarkable for the extent of the environmental damage wrought in such a brief time frame.’¹⁰⁰ Perhaps this is true for academia, but the United Nations Environment Programme was already addressing the subject: in 1988 A.H. Westing recognised that whilst: ‘natural resources are consumed in large quantities in the preparation and pursuit of wars,’¹⁰¹ ‘...methods and means of warfare did not really place the doing of such damage to the natural environment within the reach of belligerents until World War II...’¹⁰² ...[and] ‘...the making of war before 1945 did not find the effects of war on the natural environment to constitute an urgent problem.’¹⁰³ Clearly, by specific reference to “belligerents” the emphasis is on the territories that are battlegrounds, and in “before 1945,” Westing seeks to draw a dividing line

⁹⁶ Hamblin, *Environmental*, p.698

⁹⁷ Ibid. p.27

⁹⁸ J. Leaning, ‘War and the Environment: human health consequences of the environmental damage of war,’ in E. Chivian, M. McCally, H. Hu, H. Haines, (eds.), *Critical Condition: human health and the environment – a report by physicians for social responsibility*, (MIT Press, 1993), p.123

⁹⁹ Ibid, p.134

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p.128

¹⁰¹ A.H. Westing, (ed.), *Cultural norms, war and the environment*, (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute/United Nations Environment Programme/Oxford University Press, 1988), p.3

¹⁰² G. Best, ‘The Historical Evolution Of Cultural Norms Relating To War And The Environment,’ in A.H. Westing, (ed.), *Cultural Norms, War and the Environment*, (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute/United Nations Environment Programme/Oxford University Press, 1988), p.18

¹⁰³ Ibid,

between environmental damage in the pre and post-atomic ages. That there would also appear to have been no “urgent problem” for the natural environment as a result of pre-1945 warfare would suggest a very limited consideration of the impact of war caused by a country’s own war effort.

Both Leaning and Westing limit their overall consideration of environmental damage to that generated by military forces in the conflict zone, and the environmental price that the vanquished may pay for an aggressor waging war on its own territory; this represents a militarily and geographically defined interpretation of environmental history and this dissertation will depart from it. In doing so it will establish common cause with a small but significant body of work which: ‘extends understanding of military environments beyond battlefields to home territories,’¹⁰⁴ in particular work by Peter Coates and Marianna Dudley of the Environmental Humanities cluster within the Department of History at the University of Bristol; mention should in this context also be made of the already cited Hart-Davis’ *Our Land At War* (above, p.13), which explores the impact of the war on British rural life as well as on aspects of the environment and landscape. This dissertation builds on their work, looking at a broader range of historical environmental impact on these “home territories” as a result of the Second World War effort; the dissertation also adds to the “Home Front” literature referred to above (p.31). There are in the same respect several other significant historiographical themes where the dissertation adds to existing material: this study expands on the understanding generated by Edgerton’s focus on Britain’s industrial capacity in the previously mentioned *Warfare State* (above, p.15) and *Britain’s War Machine*, (already cited above, p.14) by bringing an environmental sensibility to the subject of war-time industry, and similarly to the books on Second World War airfields (p.31 above). Lastly, this study

¹⁰⁴ ‘Research Information’, Marianna Dudley, University of Bristol

complements and adds to the existing work done on those elements of civil society with environmental interests done by Cornfield and Thorsheim on the organic movement (p.58 below) and NSAS (p.25 above), together with the various biographies of the National Trust (p.25 above) and CPRE's own informal autobiography, (p.24 above).

All of the above represents a substantial contextual historiographical hinterland to this dissertation's central research question, but there is almost no specific description or analysis of the war-time attitudes and policies of organisations concerned with the environment. Ultimately, therefore, this dissertation explores new academic territory, centred around environmental organisations' support for a war-effort which in some instances caused permanent or at least long-lasting damage to Britain's environment and landscape, but which also, paradoxically, proved organisationally beneficial for at least some of the same organisations.

The question must be asked therefore, why historians have not written to any significant extent about the work of environmental organisations during the Second World War? Possibly, if some have taken Wilt's line in respect of CPRE (above p.24) then they would have felt there was little of substance to interrogate, or if they had paid undue importance to Mandler's "cranks" assertion (p.26 above), that the organisations lacked the necessary influence to be historically important. Or perhaps a feeling prevailed amongst some that the war-time role of civil society organisations and their engagement with Defence Departments was in some way the preserve of military historians? Or perhaps the incomplete archives of some of the organisations has been off-putting (p.20 above)? Another reason could be that there is no easily accessible source of material; the four organisations worked increasingly privately in the run up to and during the war, using back-channels, and referring only in

passing fashion to agenda items which must have been discussed at length but for reasons of security were not minuted; not obvious territory for an historian perhaps. All of these possible explanations are of course not mutually exclusive. This dissertation will hopefully fill the void that exists both in relation to the historiography of these environmental organisations and the 'Home Front' during the Second World War. There is also a significant amount of information available which whilst not directly relevant to answering the central research question, nevertheless deserves to see the light of day. Perhaps this dissertation may serve to open up the war-time history of these organisations to further serious inquiry.

1.4 Chapter Overview

Following this initial chapter which introduces the central research question, defines the subject of war-time environmental damage and change to the rural landscape, and establishes the historiography surrounding the dissertation and the methodology it will follow. Chapter Two discusses the inter-war environmental context for the establishment of the organisations under examination here. It considers the main threats to the environment and rural landscape between 1919 and 1936, and establishes the aims and objectives of the organisations and their underpinning social and ideological motivations.

Chapter Three introduces the concept of the 'Long Second World War' covering the period 1936 to 1946, recognising that the impact on the environment and landscape pre-dated the formal outbreak of war and reflects the activities of the Government's Defence Departments and the response of CPRE and NT in particular. As a consequence this chapter will show that these organisations' respective positions towards the war effort were to a great extent determined before the actual outbreak of war, and that during the initial 1936 to 1938 period a key consultative mechanism was established with the Government which would provide a

working framework for dialogue between CPRE, NT and the Government for much of the duration of the war.

Chapter Four will focus on the decisions and activities of CPRE, NT, NSAS and PRS with regard to how they responded to the impact of the war-time war effort; it will identify what their attitudes were to the war, look at the decision making processes that the respective organisations undertook regarding continuing their work during war-time, and what their priorities were, and were not, how they perceived their own roles and what mechanisms they chose, or were available to them, to engage with the State. The analysis will be framed in terms of where there was a convergence of interests between any of the organisations and the Coalition Government, where there was acquiescence by the organisations in the face of known environmental damage and enforced change to the landscape, and where there was outright or at least significant degrees of opposition to State intentions regarding how to conduct the war effort.

In the next, fifth chapter, the issue of “legacy” will be addressed briefly, using the example of CPRE to explore to what extent an organisation’s war-time policies and activities may have had influence on the organisation’s further and future development and therefore represented a particularly distinct or notable part of its institutional history, or indeed to the broader field of environmental history.

The final chapter will identify the conclusions that can be drawn from addressing the central research question, and identify the potential for further historical inquiry.

The public life of England...was sustained by a great army of busybodies, and anyone could enlist in this army who felt inclined to...these were the active people of England and provided the ground swell of her history.¹

CHAPTER TWO

The Inter-War Period: issues and organisations

This chapter discusses the inter-war context for the establishment of the organisations under examination here. It considers the main threats to the environment from 1919 to 1936 when, as I have argued (p.18 above), Britain's "long" Second World War began, and the absence of action by the State to address these threats. The chapter offers a historical context for the organisations' efforts to balance their commitment to protect the environment with their support for the Second World War effort, and it establishes their aims and objectives and motivations.

¹ A.J.P. Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945*, (Pelican 1979), p.230

2.1 The Legacy of the First World War Effort and the State of the Environment in Inter-War Britain

To bolster the general public's support for the war, the British Government disseminated visual propaganda such as this Parliamentary Recruiting Committee's 1915 poster:

[redacted illustration/photograph due to permission issue
use citation to locate the publication]

Fig. 2 © IWM (Art.IWM PST 0320); unknown artist

Putting aside the incongruity of a kilt-wearing soldier standing guard over English thatched cottages, presumably aimed at encouraging a Scottish audience to fight for an English countryside, the merging of nationalistic and topographical meanings of the word “country”² encouraged the general public to identify with this post-enclosure rural landscape as something that was part of their own identity, even if the reality at the time was that they

² Carey, *This Land*, p.80

might only rarely visit it and for practical or financial reasons could not hope to live in it. This propaganda was to create a hostage to fortune in the inter-war period, as new or re-energised voluntary organisations, opinion formers and the media came to recognise that the State and private sector seemed to have none of the special regard for the country's landscape in the post-First World War period that the public had been implored to identify with. S. Davis observes:

First World War propaganda had positioned the rural landscape as the essential England: the England being fought for. There emerged afterwards an unprecedented interest in the English countryside, which different groups fought for their rights to use and view.³

This “unprecedented interest” could also deploy visual propaganda in support of its cause, for example the Punch cartoon, on the next page, reproduced in Clough Williams-Ellis’ (a senior figure in CPRE Wales) propagandist pro-environment *England and the Octopus* in 1928:

[redacted illustration/photograph due to permission issue
use citation to locate the publication]

Fig. 3⁴

This sense of post-First World War disappointment, and even perhaps betrayal, would in due course make the four organisations in this dissertation particularly sensitive to the issue of post-war reconstruction during the Second World War, and would have a significant influence on the extent to which they would oppose the State during the war with regard to the terms under which the war-effort damaged environment and landscape was restored once the war was over.

³ Davis, *Britain*, p.184

⁴ Matless, *Landscape*, p.44

The next part of this chapter will identify the significant environmental problems that existed in the inter-war period and the inadequate response from the State, both of which led to the founding of CPRE, NSAS and PRS. The National Trust, the only one of the four organisations founded before the inter-war period, is considered in relation to CPRE, as a founding and constituent member of that organisation.

2.2 Air Pollution and the National Smoke Abatement Society

In 1921 a Departmental Committee report of the Ministry of Health, which held what we would understand to be the environmental brief for the government, estimated that there was an annual discharge of three million tons of soot from the burning of coal. The Royal Commission on the Coal Industry in 1926 estimated that this was the equivalent in weight to nearly three days' output of all the then collieries in Britain, or to put it another way, 'the work of over one million men for three days every year is devoted to providing soot which pollutes our atmosphere.'⁵ As a response to Britain's air pollution problem the NSAS was formed in 1929 out of the amalgamation of the Coal Smoke Abatement Society and the Smoke Abatement League of Great Britain. Its objectives were to create informed public opinion 'on the evils of air pollution,'⁶ to contribute to the abolition of industrially and domestically produced smoke through the popularisation of smokeless methods of heat and power production, and to promote and support legislation for preventing the pollution of the atmosphere.⁷ Local council Medical Officers made a ready constituency for NSAS and its predecessor bodies.

⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, 'Wasted in Smoke,' 12/5/1942, p. 4.

⁶ NSAS First Annual Report, 1930, p.4

⁷ *Ibid.*

2.3 Water Pollution and the Pure Rivers Society

During the inter-war period, industrial and agricultural processes and domestic sewage were all factors in the pollution of Britain's inland waters; H.D Turing comments that '...the cumulative consequences of industrialisation imposed great strain on rivers...as river bacteria deals with factory wastes less effectively than with domestic effluent.'⁸ In 1936 the Trent Fishery Board found that out of 550 miles of the River Trent and its tributaries, a quarter of its length was lethal to all animal and plant life, and for 30 miles in and below the Potteries it was a dead river.⁹ Hassan observes however that trends were not uniform, as rivers recovered in between industrialised towns and in some regions river quality did improve;¹⁰ in the round however, he concludes that: 'the inter-war years were not positive ones for the condition of the country's inland waters...the economic depression of the early 1930s were years when sewage treatment and river conservation received the lowest priority.'¹¹

In response to this combination of factors, in October 1926 an inaugural meeting of parties interested in taking action was held, and the first annual meeting of PRS occurred in 1928.¹² Given there is scant surviving documentation of PRS, the organisation's first Annual Report rather unhelpfully states that "it is unnecessary to enter into any justification for the existence of the Pure Rivers Society,"¹³ although subsequently it was more forthcoming, stating that its aims included checking and reducing: 'the most serious and ever steadily increasing pollution of our rivers and seas from sewage, factory effluents,' and its objectives included setting up a

⁸ Hassan, *History* (H.D. Turing; River Pollution; Edward Arnold, p.40), p.69

⁹ B.W. Clapp, *An Environmental History of Britain Since the Industrial Revolution* (Longman 1994), p.89

¹⁰ Hassan, *History*, p.66

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² The First Annual of the Pure Rivers Society 1930, (FL PRS 2/1/1), p.3

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.2

central and advisory body to bring together all anti-pollution forces, and to ‘agitate steadily and consistently for effective legislation for the prevention and cure of pollution.’¹⁴

PRS would remain in the years after its inception a small organisation compared with the other three organisations considered here; for example, the EC minutes of 17th June 1937 record that: ‘owing to the absence on vacation of the Pollution Sub-Committee there were no Pollution Reports for confirmation by the meeting.’¹⁵ However, PRS did potentially have a sizeable constituency of support to call on in the context of the health of fisheries, which concerned the 600,000 members of the National Working Mens’ Anglers Association¹⁶ and landowners who had a strong commercial interest in maintaining healthy freshwater fisheries.¹⁷

2.4 The Rural Environment, Landscape, CPRE and the National Trust

Land ownership was subject to a severe state of flux after the First World War; one quarter of Britain’s land surface changed hands between 1918 and 1922,¹⁸ as a result of new forms of taxation breaking up country estates and the loss of officer-class sons of the gentry during the First World War who might otherwise have resisted their estates’ demise. H. Newby considers that this transfer of property ownership was greater than ‘at any time since the dissolution of the monasteries.’¹⁹ A lack of planning controls meant that almost any land suitable for building could be sold, no matter its agricultural quality and the use to which it was to be put.²⁰ This would prove highly significant with the onset of the inter-war economic

¹⁴ PRS Annual Report 1937, (FL PRS 1/2/1-10), p.12

¹⁵ PRS EC Minutes, 17/6/1937, (FL PRS1/1/1), p.63

¹⁶ Hassan, *History*, (M. Shortland (ed.), Science and Nature: Essays in the History of the environmental Sciences; (Alden Press for the British Society for the History of Sciences), p.43), p.82

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ C. Bailey, ‘Progress and Preservation: the role of rural industries in the making of the modern image of the countryside,’ *Journal of Design History*, (Vol.9, No.1 (1996), pp. 35-53), p.36

¹⁹ Ibid, (H. Newby, *Country Life: A social history of rural England*, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987), p.153)

²⁰ Sheail, *Rural Conservation*, p.25

depression, which brought a decline in farm prices of over one-third,²¹ and a move by farmers to less costly forms of agriculture, from arable to pasture, or the sale of their land; between 1918 and 1939 the amount of arable farming declined by four million acres,²² and over a million acres passed out of agricultural use across Britain completely.²³ Between 1927 and 1934 farmers sold 64,800 acres to the Air Ministry,²⁴ but the greatest loss of land in rural areas was to housebuilding. J. Sheail advises that no precise record was kept of the amount of land converted to residential use, but refers to estimates of about 38,000 acres of land being developed each year for housing between 1927/8 and 1933/4, rising to 50,000 acres p.a. 1934/5 to 1938/9.²⁵ L. Dudley Stamp, the noted British geographer, drily observed of the inter-war period that “for many farmers, the only profitable crop was a crop of bungalows.”²⁶

It was in this context that an inaugural meeting convened by the President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, was held on the 2nd March 1926, for those ‘interested in the Preservation of Rural England.’²⁷ Within the year, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England was formed, with the aim of seeking to coordinate the activities of a number of previously disparate and distinct voluntary bodies and societies. Its objects, reported in its first Annual Report of 1927,²⁸ were to: ‘...organise concerted action to secure the protection of rural scenery...act either directly or through its members ...[and] ...arouse, form and educate public opinion.’²⁹

²¹ S. Ward, *War in the Countryside 1939-45*, (David & Charles, 1988), p.10

²² Sheail, *Rural Conservation*, p.23

²³ L. D. Stamp, *The Land of Britain: its use and misuse*; Longmans (1962 edition), p.439

²⁴ I.G. Simmons, *An Environmental History of Great Britain: from 10,000 years ago to the present*, Edinburgh University Press, 2001), p.218

²⁵ Sheail, *Rural Conservation*, p.9

²⁶ Stamp, *The Land*, p.404

²⁷ CPRE Session 1925-26, (MERL SR CPRE A/1), p.1

²⁸ CPRE Annual Report 1927, (MERL SR CPRE B/1/1)

²⁹ Ibid.

A range of organisations became constituent members of CPRE's governing Council, including NT. In recognition of the rationale for CPRE's creation, *The Times* summed up the current fractured nature of the response to the environmental threat when it noted on the eve of the organisation's formation:

...patchwork protection, the saving of a hill here and a lake there, of a handful of places of exceptional natural beauty. That is admirable work, whether done by local authorities, private owners, or by the National Trust, to all of whom we owe a good deal of it. But it is not enough. It does not cover more than a fraction of the ground.³⁰

The formation of CPRE was ranked as one of the top ten news stories of the year by the *Manchester Guardian's* "Century" archive project, in a year that included the General Strike, the first transatlantic phone conversation, and the first demonstration of television by John Logie Baird.³¹

It is important to note that the word "preservation" in CPRE's name (changed later in the Twentieth Century to "protection") was not to be taken too literally; its 1927 Aims and Objectives clearly stated that 'it is not intended to object to the reasonable use and development of rural areas: it is the abuse and bad development of such areas that require restrictions.'³² Professor Patrick Abercrombie, founding member and one of the key influences behind CPRE's policy development over the following twenty years, was more forthcoming in the book he had published shortly before CPRE's formal foundation in 1926. As noted in Chapter One (p.26), in it he stated quite bluntly that 'it may become more

³⁰ *The Times*, 'The Saving of Rural England' 24/11/1926, p. 15

³¹ Waine, *22 Ideas*, p.48

³² CPRE Aims and Objectives 1927, (CPRE HQ Archive), p.1

economical to work fields in larger units, entailing the removal of hedges and trees.³³ By 1934 Abercrombie had added an aesthetic justification to his previous economical one:

there are certainly parts of England whose landscape will be improved by a greater display of sweeps of open, highly cropped fields: a new scale may be added to what in some places is a monotonous iteration of hedge and hedgerow tree. Everywhere, where this agricultural change occurs, the quality of landscape fitness and beauty is to be super-added.³⁴

These positions would be hugely significant in determining CPRE's position during the long Second World War, and shows that at this time the organisation's focus was very much on creating a rural identity through what it judged to be appropriate rural development. An appreciation of the impact of agricultural change on flora and fauna would only come later in the Twentieth Century, otherwise CPRE may have appreciated that the low commercial value attached to agriculture and forestry in the inter-war period meant that many important sites for wildlife survived free from human intervention.³⁵

The National Trust, or to give it its full name, the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty,³⁶ was originally incorporated as a charitable body in 1895. It was subsequently dissolved and reconstituted as a statutory body by the National Trust Act of 1907, a measure designed to empower the Trust through enabling it to own land and property inalienably, making it a 'quasi-public body independent of direct State control' in the words

³³ Abercrombie, *Preservation*, p.7

³⁴ Matless, *Landscape*, (Abercrombie, *Country Planning and Landscape Design*, (University Press of Liverpool / Hodder & Stoughton, 1934, p.12), p.72

³⁵ Sheail, *Nature in Trust*, p.56

³⁶ National Trust Act 1907 (National Trust website)

of its Governing Council;³⁷ furthermore, the Act protected Trust property from compulsory acquisition except by a subsequent Act of Parliament.³⁸ The Trust's 1938/39 Annual Report stated: 'it is the primary duty of the Trust to promote the natural beauty of its properties,'³⁹ although in 1937 the Trust only owned approximately 60,000 acres of land,⁴⁰ a relatively modest accumulation of property given it had at that time been in existence forty years.

This primary duty had the effect on the one hand of limiting what the Trust could and would do to defend and protect the interests of land and property that it did not own, whilst resisting as effectively as it could threats to that which it did. In response to a request from the Trust Secretary to his Finance Committee as to the guidance he should give to Trust officials asked to give support to other amenity bodies, the response was 'where NT's property rights were in danger it should offer stout-hearted opposition. Where this was not the case there could be no clear cut policy which would meet every case.'⁴¹ Although this guidance was given in 1946, the Trust's previous behaviour reflected this position; this would be an important factor in its approach towards the threats to the landscape and environment posed by the long Second World War, and help to define its relationship with CPRE.

As an organisation with constituent members CPRE was at the point at which the four organisations met and overlapped. NT was a founding affiliate member of the CPRE and PRS joined in June 1927.⁴² By 1944 CPRE and NSAS would have two honorary officers in common, most notably Sir Lawrence Chubb, one of the founders of CPRE. Similarly, Abercrombie, a key member of CPRE's EC and to be Chairman from mid-1938, was on the

³⁷ NT Annual Report, 1941-42, (NT HQ archive), p.7

³⁸ Waterson, *The National Trust*, pp.52-4

³⁹ NT Annual Report, 1938-39, (NT HQ archive), p.5

⁴⁰ E M Forster, *Havoc*, pp.44-47, in C. Williams-Ellis, *Britain and the Beast* (ed.), (J.M. Dent and Sons 1937), p.46

⁴¹ NT Finance Committee Minutes 15/3/1946, (NT HQ archive), p..2185

⁴² letter from PRS to CPRE, 17/6/1927, (MERL SR CPRE C /1/54/23)

Trust's EC from at least 1936, and on its Council from 1938. These two organisations had the potential to take on certain defined roles in order to achieve shared goals. For example, CPRE EC minutes of 11th January 1938 report that the Trust had approached the War Office regarding the latter's desire to acquire a Trust site near Blakeney Point in Norfolk but that it: 'had received no satisfaction and had therefore asked the CPRE to arrange for publicity,'⁴³ a role that the Trust assigned to CPRE as it regarded them as 'protagonists in propaganda.'⁴⁴ This reflected the Trust's more conservative and private approach to representing its interests, and CPRE's more direct, public one. There was also however warmth and cooperation at an individual level, as illustrated by a note from the NT Secretary to his CPRE counterpart: 'Dear Griffin, have you as yet any idea when and where your 1940 conference will be? We are planning one at Bath for May or thereabouts and don't want to clash with you.'⁴⁵

C. Bailey characterises the individuals who populated these emerging organisations as part of a "new professionalism,"⁴⁶ replacing the "*noblesse oblige*"⁴⁷ pushed into decline by the First World War and the inter-war economic depression. I would argue that the foundation of the CPRE, NSAS and PRS in the second half of 1920s was not a coincidence, and represented a desire by these "new professionals" to create more focused and effective methods of working to protect the environment and rural landscape, given what they perceived to be worsening air and water pollution and change to the rural landscape as a result of the factors discussed above. PRS brought a technical approach to the issue of water pollution, which previously had been dominated by the amenity-focused angling and fisheries constituency; CPRE represented a coordinated method of working through the formation of a broad rural-interest coalition, and NSAS, in amalgamating two existing and overlapping smoke abatement

⁴³ CPRE EC Minutes 11/1/1938, (MERL SR CPRE A/3), 'Defence departments and acquisition of land'

⁴⁴ NT Finance Committee Minutes 15/3/46, p.2185

⁴⁵ Letter from NT Secretary to CPRE counterpart, 4/7/1939, (MERL SR CPRE C/1/49/107)

⁴⁶ Bailey, *Progress*, p.35

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

organisations, sought to harness the assets of both and achieve greater effectiveness through creating a single unitary entity.

The lack of adequate intervention by the State across the inter-war period both contributed to the perceived need for these organisations and subsequently vindicated their existence. Inter-war British politics was dominated by the inter-war economic depression and the predominance of a laissez-faire economic policy by successive governments.⁴⁸ Whilst Ramsey Macdonald and Neville Chamberlain, as leaders of their Labour and Conservative parties respectively, gave personal support to organisations concerned with rural preservation and amenities, this did not translate into government funds for conservation,⁴⁹ as ‘bureaucratic opinion...[was]...determinedly hostile to the expenditure of public monies on anything...[as]...aesthetic as environmental protection.’^{50 51} Similarly, the other major inter-war political figure and Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, eulogised about rural landscapes and its habitats, but as Mandler observes pithily: ‘one speech by Stanley Baldwin evoking the sounds of scythes and corncrakes – more often quoted in the 1980s than in the 1920s – does not signify a policy.’⁵² As a consequence, a modest stream of underpowered, compromised legislation purporting to address concerns over air and water pollution and threats to rural landscapes resulted during the inter-war period. Commenting in 1930, PRS would view the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act of 1923 as having: ‘inadequate pollution clauses which could too easily be circumvented by polluters;’⁵³ NSAS would charitably view the Public Health (Smoke Abatement) Act of 1926 as representing the best efforts of its predecessor

⁴⁸ Mandler, *Fall*, p.238

⁴⁹ Sheail, *Nature Conservation*, p.7

⁵⁰ P. Mandler, ‘Politics and the English Landscape Since the First World War,’ *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, (Vol. 55, (1992) , pp. 459-76), (J. Minihan, *The Nationalisation of Culture* (London 1977) pp.138-41 and pp.161-67) , p.463

⁵¹ Mandler, *Against*, p.173

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ First Annual, PRS, 1930, p.2

bodies, but that ultimately its effectiveness was frustrated by industry and government,⁵⁴ and therefore only offered ‘fragmentary provisions.’⁵⁵ The Town and Country Planning Act, 1932, did give local authorities the power to take measures for the preservation of scenic amenity,⁵⁶ such as in Section 34, where planning authorities could make agreements with landowners to restrict development of land,⁵⁷ but as J. Loweson observes, both the 1932 Act and the Restriction of Ribbon Development Act of 1935 were generally toothless gestures towards conservation and preservation, ‘more expressive of a Victorian conception of permissive restriction than of the emergent doctrine of progressive control.’⁵⁸

Even the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, R.S Hudson, speaking to CPRE’s Annual General Meeting in December 1944, conceded that agriculture had only been mentioned in the 1932 Planning Act: ‘for the purpose of excluding it as a factor which should count in planning.’⁵⁹ In a similar obfuscatory vein, the Public Health Act of 1936 seemed to offer an effective remedy to polluted rivers, but any hope raised was short lived as the Act was modified by the Public Health (Drainage of Trade Premises) Act (1937),⁶⁰ which made the provisions “arguably both inflexible and complex.”⁶¹

2.5 Protecting the Rural Idyll As Patriotic Duty

In conclusion, I will explore the use and generation of patriotic sentiment by CPRE as a campaigning device in support of the defence of environment and landscape in the inter-war

⁵⁴ NSAS *Comes of Age*, p.2

⁵⁵ J.B. Sanderson, ‘The National Smoke Abatement Society and the Clean Air Act (1956),’ *Political Studies, Journal of the Political Studies Association of the United Kingdom*, (Vol. 9, 3, October 1961, pp. 236 – 253), p.236

⁵⁶ V. Cornish, *The Preservation of Our Scenery: essays and addresses*, (Cambridge University Press 1937), p.27

⁵⁷ Sheail, *Nature in Trust*, p.88

⁵⁸ Loweson, *Battles*, p.266

⁵⁹ CPRE Report, March 1945, p.11

⁶⁰ R. Bate, *Saving Our Streams: the role of the Anglers’ Conservation Association in protecting English and Welsh rivers*, (The Institute of Economic Affairs, 2001), p.35

⁶¹ Hassan, *History*, p.67

period. This patriotic identification with the countryside, I argue, explains the organisation's subsequent unequivocal support for Britain's war effort and therefore its preparedness to countenance significant degrees of environmental damage and change to the rural landscape as part of that effort, whilst nevertheless, also as a patriotic duty, preserving and restoring that same landscape where and whenever possible.

The notion of the rural idyll was not an inter-war phenomenon, although the spike in its popularity during this time may have made it appear so. It could be dated back to Theocritus, Ancient Greek creator of pastoral, or at least to the eighteenth century and William Gilpin's "picturesque" concept which popularised the appreciation of the British landscape according to the aesthetics of painting,⁶² and James Thomson's fusion of landscape and national identity in his poem 'The Seasons.'⁶³ Mandler makes a case for the "new professional" organisations representing a break from the past, and the desire to create, for example in CPRE's embracing of agricultural development: 'broad acres of well-cultivated and well-tended countryside presented a refreshingly modern, efficient and ordered contrast to the backward muddle that was "Old England",'⁶⁴ and in so doing this might represent 'a new idea of heritage'⁶⁵ However, CPRE in particular chose to communicate its principles through "cultural representations of the countryside"⁶⁶ that continued to tap into these long-standing tropes of the rural idyll. In only its second full year of operation, 1928, CPRE produced the "Saint George for Rural England" postcard (see following page):

⁶² V. Elson, *Creating*, p.13

⁶³ Groom, N. 'Let's Discuss Over Country Supper Soon: rural realities and rustic representations,' pp.48-60, in V.Elson, *Creating*, p.53

⁶⁴ Mandler, *Fall*, p.267

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ J. Burchardt, 'The Rural Idyll: A Critique,' pp. 64-73, in V.Elson, *Creating*, p.70

[redacted illustration/photograph due to permission issue

use citation to locate the publication]

Fig. 4 ⁶⁷

In D. Matless' view, this image linked the 'fundamental patriotic authority' of the saint against 'a dragon of laissez-faire commercial culture'⁶⁸ such as industry and its pollution, petrol stations, road-side advertising and litter. Ten years later, in 1938, when needing to "instil national pride"⁶⁹ in the countryside and thereby maintain its campaigning pressure on the creation of national parks, CPRE produced the film *Rural England: the case for the defence*. The opening frame (see page below) brought a return to the 1928 postcard typography, as can be seen in Fig. 4 below: the letters 'C' 'P' 'R' 'E' positioned clockwise around a Saint George cross, framed by dislocated phrases from Act Two, Scene One of Shakespeare's *Richard II*,⁷⁰ in faux Anglo-Saxon lettering.

⁶⁷ Matless, *Landscape*, p.47

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Interview with Oliver Hilliam, CPRE Senior Communications Officer, 23/6/ 2017

⁷⁰ 2.i.50,43



Fig 5⁷¹

The film goes on to ask cinema-goers:

are you going to allow such scenic loveliness to be despoiled because you won't fight to preserve it?...the road to freedom; freedom of England's country. That is the case for the defence of our right to the beauty of our land⁷²

In addition to being shown in nearly a thousand cinemas in Britain in 1939, the British Council chose it to represent 'the best of England' in the New York World Fair of 1939.⁷³ The quoting of these particular words of Shakespeare's, when it was recognised in 1938-39 that the nation was again on the eve of war, cannot, I argue, have been coincidental; Shakespeare's creation of John of Gaunt's dying lament in 1595's *Richard II* had dutifully been helping to promote the Elizabethan agenda of national unification with the country's topography in a supporting role. As R. Williams ruefully observes: 'a landscape is never so

⁷¹ CPRE; 'Rural England: The Case for the Defence,' 1939

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Waine, *22 Ideas*, p.104

valuable as when it is under threat, and the English rural countryside has been the subject of alarm for centuries,⁷⁴

CPRE also used literature to communicate its propaganda messages, most notably *The Scenery of England*, published by CPRE in 1932⁷⁵ and the previously cited *Britain and the Beast* (p.48 above) in 1937; the latter was edited by Clough Williams Ellis, the CPRE Wales representative on CPRE's EC, and was subsequently endorsed by both CPRE and NT, featuring short advertorial chapters on each. In such cases rhetorical flourishes championing a rural idyll contrasted with this new professionalism, such as E.M. Forster's contribution to *Britain and the Beast* referring to 'the England which we love and are losing'⁷⁶ and prophesying that the Defence Departments requisitioning of land would make them become 'serious enemies of what is left of England;⁷⁷ what Matless describes as 'preservationist angry writing,'⁷⁸ As this dissertation will show in the next chapter, this campaigning literature was not representative of the emerging CPRE policy regarding Defence Department land requisitioning in the long Second World War; of this period CPRE now says unapologetically and without a hint of false modesty:

nowadays we take it for granted that we're stewards of the English countryside and have a moral duty to protect it, but that perception didn't appear by magic – it was nurtured over two World Wars by our artists and film makers, Government propaganda, and in no small part by the CPRE⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Jeans, 'Planning', p.249, (R. Williams, *The Country and the City*, (Chatto & Windus, 1973).

⁷⁵ V. Cornish, *The Scenery of England*, (CPRE, 1932)

⁷⁶ Forster, *Havoc*, p.44

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.45

⁷⁸ Matless, *Landscape*, p.58

⁷⁹ Waine, *22 Ideas*, p.91

This chapter has outlined a number of practical motivations for the founding of the organisations under consideration. The notion of protecting the countryside as a patriotic duty was an important rhetorical tool for the government during the First World War, yet as we have seen, much of the legislation passed during the inter-war period that purported to protect it was weak and compromised, and together with the scale of the problems facing the environment and rural landscape, led to the foundation of three of the four organisations considered in this dissertation. In the case of CPRE, despite the professional background of many of its key individuals, it could engage in similar patriotic rhetoric in order to generate public support for its campaign aims and objectives.

The next chapter will explore the initial years of the long Second World War, during which initial war preparations began to take their toll of the environment and landscape, and challenged CPRE and the National Trust to develop effective and appropriate responses to direct challenges to their aims and objectives.

‘members of the executive, local branches and fiery individual enthusiasts make this Rural movement...an arena of glorious work’¹

CHAPTER THREE

The Long Second World War, 1936 to 1939

The British Government’s Defence Departments began their preparations for war between 1936 and 1939. The environmental impact of these preparations was primarily on land and landscape and this chapter on the early years of the Long Second World War will therefore focus on CPRE and NT. As we will see, for all four organisations, support for the war effort was a given, and for CPRE and NT their positions on how to respond to the impact on the rural environment and landscape of the war effort were to a large extent determined before the outbreak of war; they reached these positions with little apparent significant internal discussion, and prior to issuing public statements on the subject. The beginning (and indeed the end) of the war passed almost unobserved in the minutes of the four organisations, yet particularly in the case of CPRE and the Trust, preparation for war propelled them to engage at a heightened level with the State apparatus several years before war was declared. What follows in this chapter is an analysis of how the organisations responded to the challenges to their interests posed by State preparation for war: its requisition of land and the consequent loss of rural landscape. During this period the organisations needed to develop communication channels through which their interests could be successfully represented to a range of government departments concerned with the war effort (particularly the Air Ministry), in a collaborative and relatively non-adversarial manner. Although general

¹ P. Abercrombie, Unpublished account, No. 20, Part VI 18 Months of Activities 1938 to August 1939; II: “Voluntary work” (i) re CPRE, (SCA D439/11/4/8 /19-22) , pp.3-4

knowledge of these channels was in the public domain at the time, the details remained largely private and unrecorded for reasons of national security. Their existence is significant for two reasons: firstly, it provided them with a level of influence over the implementation of policies related to the war effort (although not the development of policy) out of all proportion to their relatively small size (p.28 above). Secondly, these were “establishment” voluntary organisations (above, pages 26 and 29 manned (and I use the word advisedly) by relatively conventional members of the upper and middle classes, who were squarely behind the war effort when war was declared. This contrasted with the more esoteric and individualistic free-thinkers of the loosely formed organic movement, who were singularly unsuccessful in securing influence during the war because relatively few of them were supportive of the war effort; as Philip Cornford writes, ‘organicism’ was entangled with a range of ‘eccentric and unstable, disreputable and hated ideas.’² Although there is no evidence that support for the war effort amongst CPRE, NT, NSAS and PRS was in any sense less than sincere, clearly this loyalty would prove tactically beneficial in any engagement with the State.

3.1 Response to the Initial Impact of War Preparations on the Rural Landscape

In 1934/35 the loss of agricultural land in England and Wales to the Air Ministry was 3,000 acres, and by 1938/1939 had risen to 24,500 acres.³ How the CPRE and NT dealt with initial land requisitioning proposals established some key operating principles for subsequent years. What appears to be CPRE’s first engagement in the issue is to be found in its EC Minutes of 29th October 1935⁴ regarding an Air Ministry proposal to establish an aerodrome near the Dorset village of Woodsford:

² Cornford, *Origins*, p.12

³ Stamp, *Land*, p.432

⁴ CPRE EC Minutes, 29/10/1935, (MERL SR CPRE A/3), ‘Woodsford Aerodrome’

the CPRE objection might be on the grounds that the proposed site was in the middle of what was known as the “Hardy Country” and this was the only ground upon which objection could be taken from the public standpoint...it was decided that the CPRE could take no action on the matter ⁵

A month later the item was again on the agenda and CPRE agreed to associate itself with the local County Council’s opposition to it,⁶ but by January 1936 the Air Ministry had turned down an alternative site proposal, and said that if necessary, it would take steps to acquire the site compulsorily;⁷ CPRE withdrew its objection. A few months later, faced with an outbreak of Air Ministry demands for aerodromes in Gloucestershire, CPRE identified the wider issue of plans being initiated without prior consultation with County Council or Planning Authorities, and wrote to the Air Ministry.⁸ By October it was faced with further instances in Lancashire, Wiltshire and Wales; the issue of Defence Department land acquisitions would now be a virtually ever-present agenda item at the CPRE’s monthly EC meetings in this long war. That month CPRE’s Secretary, H.G. Griffin wrote to W.F. Ascroft of CPRE’s Lancashire Branch that opposition without the suggestion of viable alternatives was unlikely to succeed, and that ‘Defence Departments would be much more vulnerable...from the point of view of the uses to which land acquired by them was put after they had finished with it,’⁹ because currently there were insufficient safeguards on to what use the land could be put once the Defence Departments no longer needed the site.¹⁰ CPRE’s hope was that Defence Departments would consult with local councils and planning authorities prior to purchase, or

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ CPRE EC Minutes 26/11/1935, (MERL SR CPRE A/3)

⁷ CPRE EC Minutes 29/1/1936, (MERL SR CPRE A/3)

⁸ CPRE EC Minutes 28/4/1936, (MERL SR CPRE A/3)

⁹ H.G. Griffin letter to W.F. Ascroft, 28/10/1936, (MERL SR CPRE C/1/137/1)

¹⁰ Ibid.

if this was too much to ask given the ‘present state of national urgency and emergency,’¹¹ then the matter should be the subject of inter-departmental consultation, particularly with the Ministry of Health given its brief (p.42 above). In the same year (1936), NT’s EC decided to resist the Air Ministry’s plans to establish bombing and machine gun practice areas near Farne Islands, on the grounds that they were being ‘detrimental to the purposes for which these islands had been acquired by the Trust.’¹²

The examples above illustrate a number of important points regarding the development of CPRE’s decision making criteria for dealing with land requisition issues. Firstly, that CPRE was not confident defending a proposed site against requisition purely on the basis of its amenity or cultural value in a rural area of no particular special significance; secondly, it was wary of being the sole body in opposition against government; thirdly, that a viable alternative site was essential if a position of opposition was chosen; fourthly, that it was aiming to establish some form of mechanism through which elements of the State concerned with planning and the environment could have influence over the requisitioning process, and lastly, that even three-to-four years before the Second World War would begin, CPRE was already taking into account the post-war period when determining what their policy should be. In the case of NT, the key point to observe is the phrase ‘acquired by the Trust’ a few lines above, as it illustrates that a significant determining factor in the Trust’s actions was whether it owned land or property which was affected by Defence Department intentions; this is directly associated with the way the Trust was established, as we have seen (p.47 above).

Throughout 1936 to 1937 there were instances of intransigence, subterfuge, veiled threats of troublesome political lobbying, and the attempts of press and literature to fan flames of

¹¹ CPRE Monthly Report December 1936, (Vol. VIII, No.2), (MERL SR CPRE B/2/8), p.21

¹² NT EC Minutes 13/1/1936, (NT HQ Archive), ‘Reports of Sub-Committees’

righteous indignation over the land requisition issue. *The Times* reported in December 1936 that the Secretary of State for War had refused to enter into an agreement with the Gloucestershire local authorities to the effect that when the War Department had finished with the land it was requisitioning, it would be subject to planning regulations.¹³ In May the *Manchester Guardian* editorialised, in a manner that bore an uncanny resemblance to J.B. Priestley's polemics (pages 13 and 15 above):

what is the fatal fascination which draws our Defence Departments, when they are in search of sites for new depots, nearly always to scenes of great beauty or historic interest...[several instances are then cited]...but what is the policy which directs so many similar descents on quiet centres of interest and beauty, and why has it to be fought again and again?¹⁴

In a letter of May 1937 from Griffin at CPRE to a J.C.Wrigley at the Ministry of Health Griffin notes a further four instances of Defence Departments seeking to acquire sites with:

the apparent reluctance of the Defence Departments to consider any interests other than their own...we cannot ascertain that there has been any consultation between your Department and the War Office or the Air Ministry about what is taking place there...[followed the political threat]...I believe that it will be in the interests of [your] Department...to try and meet this criticism, which to our certain knowledge is increasing rapidly all over the country and will undoubtedly give rise to innumerable questions in the House and Parliamentary action once more, if something is not done¹⁵

¹³ *The Times*, 'Land for Defence Factories: Selection of Rural Sites,' 17/12/1936, p.11

¹⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 'Beauty and the Beast,' 6/5/1937, p.10

¹⁵ Griffin letter to J. C. Wrigley at Ministry of Health 7/5/1937, (MERL SR CPRE C/1/137/1)

The National Trust also weighed in with calls for consultation; in a letter from Griffin's Secretary counterpart at NT, D.M. Matheson, to the Minister for Coordination of Defence, Sir Thomas Inskip, in May 1937, he offered helpfully that:

however anxious those responsible may be to avoid places of especial historic or scientific interest or national beauty, there is in many areas no easily available record to guide them...[but help was at hand, albeit one carrying a stick]...the National Trust therefore strongly urge that, before such schemes are put into operation, there should be private and preliminary consultation with some persons or body with special knowledge of areas the selection of which would be likely to arouse strong public protest because of their outstanding interest.¹⁶

This was the kind of work NT concentrated on: private, political diplomacy; a CPRE EC note from January 1938 illuminates the division of responsibilities that the two organisations had developed, as noted above [page reference]. Regarding Defence Departments' intentions for NT's Blakeney Point, in Norfolk, the minutes record that: 'the National Trust had approached the War Office privately and had received no satisfaction and had therefore asked the CPRE to arrange for publicity.'¹⁷

There was a new dimension to CPRE's argument by July 1937, invoking the importance of agriculture in the requisition equation; whilst CPRE had since its inception been a strong advocate for agricultural development, this was the first time, as far as their archives show, that it was linked with their attempt to influence initial Defence Department preferences for sites. That month Griffin wrote to the Air Ministry Secretary in aid of a site for a depot at

¹⁶ Matheson letter to Inskip, 13/5/1937, (MERL SR CPRE C/1/137/1)

¹⁷ NT EC Minutes, 11/1/1938, (MERL SR CPRE A/3), 'Defence Departments and Acquisition of Land'

Bishops Cleeve in Gloucestershire, asking if was possible to acquire a site less valued for its aesthetic and agricultural value. Griffin sought to placate the Air Ministry Secretary by accepting that CPRE was of course not trying to question the military advantages of the proposed site, and then did just that, by adding that ‘doubtless the authorities have noted that it is very well marked by the race course in close proximity,’¹⁸ thereby intimating that if plans went ahead then in due course the Luftwaffe would be able to get their bearings easily enough for a bombing run on the depot. By the end of 1937 the documents considered above suggest that CPRE had a working, if not formally agreed, policy stance consisting of four main tenets: that in the final resort national defence must take precedence, but that other national interests, especially those of agriculture, should receive due consideration before final decisions were made about sites were finally selected; and thirdly and fourthly, that there should be Defence Department consultation with local authorities under Section 33 of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1932, and also inter-departmental consultation between the Defence Departments and those ministries concerned with agriculture and the environment.¹⁹

By the time of its 1938 Annual Report CPRE’s policy stance was more formalised. One of its principal objectives was now ‘the establishment of inter-consultative machinery between the Defence Departments and other Departments of State representing other national interests e.g. health, agriculture (etc.).’²⁰ The organisation had already written to the Ministry of Health in February 1937 on this subject, and was awaiting a detailed response, but during the second half of 1937 Griffin worked with the Wiltshire CPRE branch, which was particularly severely hit by Defence Department requisition orders,²¹ on a draft letter to Neville

¹⁸ Griffin to The Secretary, Air Ministry 5/7/37, (MERL SR CPRE C/1/137/1)

¹⁹ CPRE Eleventh Annual Report 1937, (MERL SR CPRE B/2/11), p.7

²⁰ CPRE Twelfth Annual Report 1938, p.3

²¹ CPRE Annual General Meeting, 2/5/39, (MERL SR CPRE B/2/12), p.32

Chamberlain, Prime Minister since May 1937. The letter and memorandum, ostensibly from Lord Herbert, the Chair of Wiltshire CPRE, included the Lord Lieutenant of the county and a number of other signatories from Wiltshire's landed community, and covered the main tenets of CPRE's argument. It asked for the Prime Minister's interjection in the issue; CPRE awaited a response for several months. It had been a demanding year: CPRE had been involved in a total of 20 major cases during the previous twelve months, of which three, according to CPRE, were dropped due to 'parliamentary criticism' and some others did not go ahead for other reasons or in amended form as a result of CPRE and NT intervention.²²

CPRE were aided and abetted in the development of their methodology and tactics by invaluable informal and sometimes private and confidential communications from civil servants, referring to each other on first name (or rather last name) terms illustrating a familiarity as a result of inhabiting the same social, cultural and educational milieu. For example, there are several pieces of "Dear Griffin" / "Dear Sheepshanks" correspondence between H.G. Griffin and T.H. Sheepshanks in the 1937 to 1938 period, such as the letter from Griffin to Sheepshanks of 2/2/1937.²³ Sheepshanks was at this time Assistant Secretary in the Town and Country Planning Division of the Ministry of Health, so a key contact. An EC minute of that month records that CPRE and others met with Sheepshanks and another civil servant who provided valuable intelligence as to how government departments should be lobbied:

in connection with factory sites they were consulted through the Ministry of Labour, but that in connection with operational stations like Munition Dumps, Aerodromes, the Defence Departments were paramount...the Ministry of Health think the CPRE

²² CPRE Eleventh Annual Report 1937, (MERL SR CPRE B/2/11), p.7

²³ Griffin letter to Sheepshanks 2/2/37, (MERL SR CPRE C/1/137/1)

should continue their practice of making representations direct and informing the Ministry accordingly.²⁴

Further, it was to be Sheepshanks that same month who rang Griffin in the strictest confidence to advise CPRE that it would be in its and the National Trust's interests to work in close cooperation vis-à-vis the Defence Departments and their land acquisition proposals, as he had become aware that the Trust was in bilateral discussions with these departments, and there was the potential for the existing discussions not just to be limited to NT properties, therefore possibly prejudicing CPRE interests. Griffin promptly informed Abercrombie, who was on the EC of both organisations, asking him to entreaty the Trust Secretary Matheson to be clear in the Trust's dealings with the Defence Departments that it was confining its views to their own property interests and if they did act independently, to make it quite clear that they did so without prejudice to any CPRE representations.²⁵

Thus in this period CPRE had established: its key priorities for engaging with the Government on the issue of land requisitions, vital back-channels with influential civil servants, a working co-operative relationship with its main ally in land requisition issues, the National Trust, with regard to challenging land requisitions, and a track record in successfully influencing the outcome of Defence Department requisition proposals. It had not yet, however, secured the inter-departmental consultative process that it sought to have installed, whereby Defence Departments would have to engage with the Town and Country Planning Division within the Ministry of Health and relevant local authorities. The next section of this chapter will explore to what extent it achieved this, as the settlement reached provided CPRE

²⁴ CPRE EC Minutes 13/7/1937, (MERL SR CPRE A/3)

²⁵ "private and confidential" letter, Griffin to Abercrombie 15/7/1937, (MERL SR CPRE C/1/137/1)

and NT with their operating framework for addressing requisitioning grievances during the Second World War.

3.2 The Achievement of Influence and Its Consequences: 1938 to 1939

When the Prime Minister's response to Lord Herbert and Wiltshire CPRE's letter was received in January 1938 it fundamentally transformed the nature of the relationship between CPRE, NT, the Defence Departments and other government departments that had a stake in the rural environment and landscape. Now they would be acknowledged stakeholders, on the inside of a communications loop, albeit certainly not equal partners. Chamberlain responded clearly and directly to what he termed 'non-defence interests when sites are being selected for Government establishments';²⁶ whilst he made it clear that the needs of the Defence Departments were bound ultimately to receive priority, that it was not possible to avoid all of the issues which concerned CPRE and that in the interests of national defence he was against an 'over-elaboration of consultative machinery,' he had nevertheless instructed the Defence and other departments concerned to consider the contents of CPRE's letter, and required each Defence Department to establish a procedure:

which will ensure that other interests of national importance shall receive adequate consideration when the selection and development of sites are being carried out and that that consideration shall take place in time to enable due weight to be given to the results by the Departments concerned, before decisions as to acquisition are taken.²⁷

²⁶ CPRE Monthly Report February 1938, (Vol. X, No.4), (MERL SR CPRE B/2/10), pp.12-13

²⁷ Ibid.

The Minister for the Coordination of Defence, Sir Thomas Inskip, in a written statement to Parliament, said the actual consultative procedure which each Department would take would probably differ according to the particular requirements of the Department concerned.²⁸

Chamberlain's concession to organisations concerned with the environment represents a quite exceptional demonstration of support by a Prime Minister who, whilst investing considerably more hope in efforts for peace (ultimately to his detriment) than some of his fellow politicians, was nevertheless at the time presiding over a government that was slowly and steadily preparing for war. It was not however totally surprising, as Chamberlain was a long-standing appreciator of nature and supporter of civil society efforts to protect Britain's landscape. Just a month before the letter from Herbert was sent to him, he had attended the Tenth National Conference For The Preservation Of The Countryside, and commented of CPRE that 'for many years I have been a supporter of the Council and have watched their work with keen interest.'²⁹ He also allowed 10 Downing Street to be used to host CPRE's fundraising 'England Ball Committee,'³⁰ and as Minister of Health in December 1926 he had attended CPRE's inaugural meeting, at which he declared that he was 'most heartily to give my support and approval to the objects of this new Council...[and was]...deeply concerned at the persistent and rapid defacement of the countryside.'³¹

The Air Ministry's approach to Chamberlain's requirement was almost immediate; on 1st March 1938 its Secretary of State announced the appointment of Abercrombie as a consultant to the acquisition of sites demanded by the expansion of the RAF.³² CPRE regarded it as "the first fruits of the announcement made on behalf of the Prime Minister and embodied in his

²⁸ *The Times*, 'Defence Sites,' 2/2/1938, p. 12

²⁹ CPRE Monthly Report November 1937, (Vol. X, No.2), (MERL SR CPRE B/2/10), p.4

³⁰ *The Times*, 'Preserving Rural England,' 2/5/1939, p. 11

³¹ Record of Inaugural meeting of CPRE, 7/12/26,(CPRE HQ Archive), p.9

³² CPRE EC Minutes, 8/3/1938, (MERL CPRE SR A/3), 'Defence Departments'

letter to Lord Herbert.’³³ At CPRE’s EC meeting on 8th March Abercrombie stated that ‘members might rest assured that as far as he possibly could, their interests would receive every possible consideration.’³⁴

These mechanisms and understandings were put in place during the course of 1938 and gave CPRE and NT a degree of consultation and influence unparalleled in their albeit relatively brief histories. For Abercrombie, who was at the apex of the consultation process, working for the Air Ministry and on the Executive Committees of both CPRE and NT, it was ‘the best of a job that would satisfy no one,’³⁵ as he recalls CPRE’s President, Lord Crawford, saying of his new appointment; Abercrombie himself found the work both ‘troublesome and upsetting.’³⁶

The attempt, in a report, to decide what weight to attach to objections by Local Authorities, the local branch of the CPRE, the Farmers’ Union, the landowner or villagers affected: on the other hand to consider whether the Ministry were justified, whether speed...must prevail or whether a rash and unconsidered choice should be abandoned – these attempts were no light tasks...I don’t think I have once been thanked for saving a man from having an aerodrome on the other side of his garden fence³⁷

In its Monthly Report of April/May 1939 CPRE reflected on the previous year:

³³ CPRE Monthly Report December 1936, pp.16-17

³⁴ CPRE EC Minutes 8/3/1938, (MERL SR CPRE A/3)

³⁵ P. Abercrombie, Unpublished account, No.20; ‘Part VI, 18 Months of Activities 1938 to August 1939, III Professional, (SCA D439/11/4/8 /19-22), p.16

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

The CPRE had hoped that, with the appointment of Professor Abercrombie as adviser on sites to the Air Ministry...and the arrangements made by the other Departments... the acquisition of land for defence and kindred objects would proceed with less friction than in the past. With one or two noted exceptions this has on the whole been the case³⁸

This chapter has focused on the initial scale and impact of war preparations on the rural landscape, and the organisational response of CPRE in particular; CPRE developed working criteria for balancing the achievement of its aims and objectives with the demands of war preparations. It has shown that, following an initial period of poor communications and frustration, CPRE and NT were able to develop channels of communications with government in order to further their aims and objectives during the initial phase of the long Second World War. It has also drawn attention to Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's role in the development of these channels, and concluded that CPRE and the National Trust were strengthened at a time when their interests might have seemed most seriously challenged. Although Chamberlain's response had not given CPRE the formal inter-departmental consultative machinery it had wanted, it gave it, and NT, a mechanism through which they could expect to be consulted before decisions relating to land requisition were taken.

The next chapter examines the war-time activities of the four organisations, looking at the decision making processes that determined their priorities during this period, and through interrogating a range of war-effort related issues that impacted on the environment and landscape, assesses to what extent they were able to balance their key aims and objectives with their support for the war effort.

³⁸ CPRE Monthly Report, April/May 1939, (Vol. XII, No.4), (MERL SR CPRE B/2/12), p.25

‘war shook up the geography of England, unsettling people and their objects, transforming landscapes, moving things to where they weren’t before’¹

CHAPTER FOUR

The Long Second World War: the Outbreak of War, Its Impact and the Response of CPRE,

National Trust, NSAS and PRS, 1939 to 1946

This chapter will focus on the decisions and activities of the above four organisations with regard to how they responded to the impact of the war-time war effort on the issues that they were established to address. It will look at the decision making processes that the respective organisations undertook regarding continuing their work during war-time, and what their priorities were, and were not. All of the organisations were clear and unequivocal in their support for the war-effort, but careful not to give the State a blank cheque to do what it wanted in the name of protecting Britain against Nazi Germany. I will analyse the balance these organisations performed with regard to impacts that they acquiesced to, those that they were active in opposing, and identify instances where there was a convergence of interests between the State and the organisations.

4.1 CPRE, the National Trust, NSAS and PRS: War-time Policies and Priorities

As noted above (p.11), when war was declared on 3rd September 1939, CPRE, NT, NSAS and PRS could have no idea what was ahead of them; one gets a sense from the archives of all four organisations that whilst they pledged to continue their work, they really had no idea how this might be possible. Across all four organisations normal committee structures were

¹ Matless, *Landscape*, p.239

abandoned and streamlined because of the difficulty of getting to meetings, and the loss of some staff and honorary officers to war-related duties; some sub-committees would not meet at all during the war, and some internal and external communications were reduced to save paper. Headquarters were moved out to the Home Counties as London was not deemed safe, then moved back when it was deemed safer; this was a realistic concern, as during the course of the war the London headquarters of two of the organisations would be damaged by Luftwaffe bombing raids.

Further, the legal framework within which the organisations were accustomed to operating disappeared with the outbreak of war. War-time legislation had a cross-cutting impact that in principle affected all four organisations equally. The Emergency Powers (Defence) Act, 1939 was an enabling Act of Parliament passed ten days before the outbreak of the war; it enabled the Government, or to be precise, the King in Council, to devise and apply whatever Defence Regulations as were necessary ‘for securing the public safety, the defence of the realm, the maintenance of public order, and the efficient prosecution of the war.’² It was in force for one year and then its powers expanded by the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act of 1940, which provided for annual extensions by parliamentary resolution. The powers would be in force until February 1946. The Defence Regulations were Orders in Council and as such could amend any primary or secondary legislation within the limits set by the Emergency Powers Acts. CPRE observed: ‘it will be seen that it confers absolute control over all persons and all property;’³ this proved to be no exaggeration. In the year after the 1940 Act, 2,000 separate orders were issued.⁴ Much to NSAS’ chagrin, the powers given to

² W.I. Jennings, ‘The Emergency Powers (Defence) (No. 2) Act, 1940,’ *Modern Law Review*, (Vol. 4, 2, October 1940, pp.132-136), p.132

³ CPRE War-time Progress Report and Annual Report 1939, (Vol. XIII No.1), (MERL SR CPRE B/2/13), p.7

⁴ U. Buchan, *A Green and Pleasant Land: how England's gardeners fought the Second World War*, (Hutchinson, 2013), p.25

local authorities to control excessive smoke emissions were rescinded⁵ and as we shall see, industry was soon expressly required by the State to produce more smoke (p.19 above and p.94 below). Whilst there was no power for the compulsory acquisition through ownership of land, there was compulsory requisition over the course of the war of 14.5 million acres of land, 25 million square feet of industrial and storage premises, and 113,350 non-industrial premises.⁶ The consultation processes initiated by Chamberlain as noted above (p.66) were thus not something that the Defence Departments were legally obliged to undertake, particularly given they were the result of an initiative undertaken by a previous Prime Minister during peace-time.

4.1.1 CPRE

Nine days after the British Government's declaration of war on Germany, CPRE's EC met. The minutes of the meeting record no discussion as to whether the organisation should keep going, or whether it was supportive of the war effort, or against it because of the damage to the rural environment which would result. Indeed, it would perhaps have been surprising if there had been any such discussion; as noted above (p.53) there was a strong strand of patriotism in CPRE's work and as we saw in Chapter Three (p.58) the organisation's aims and objectives had been become accustomed to war-related demands since early 1936, the beginning of the long war. Its main decision at this meeting was to pass an "Emergency Committee" resolution, which invested control and administration of CPRE in a 'War Emergency Committee' (WEC), 'for the period of hostilities and for not more than for six months thereafter.'⁷ It was reported at the meeting that branches were 'definitely waiting for

⁵ NSAS 14th Annual Report 1944, (WL SA/EPU/E/1/1), p.6

⁶ National Archives, *The Legislative Framework for Requisitioning* (online resource)

⁷ CPRE WEC Minutes 12/9/1939, (MERL SR CPRE A/1/5)

a lead from Headquarters as to procedure in time of war'⁸ and it was agreed that the Secretary should circulate a letter to all branches to the effect that:

the Executive Committee at HQ were unanimously of the opinion that the work of the Council should be carried on during war on however small a scale as they think it would contribute to the morale of the country.⁹

Regrettably no copy of this letter survives, at least not in CPRE's HQ archives, but the organisation published its war-time position and priorities in July 1940; it was patriotic but combative:

the threats to rural England that have arisen owing to the national crisis and the war have of course been greatly intensified. It is inevitable that while the very existence of the nation is at stake, all else must take second place. Nevertheless it is the considered opinion of the CPRE that the importance of safeguarding the English countryside has been increased rather than diminished in time of war. The Council's work is therefore of increasing importance.¹⁰

Frustratingly for the historian, but understandably for the period, and to protect its privileged position and reputation as a confidante, CPRE was publically circumspect about the detail of its work; it is clear from looking at the long archival series of EC minutes that it was being actively consulted on a large number of defence and other government department proposals through, for example, the Air Ministry/Abercrombie conduit and consultative mechanisms with the Ministry of Works and Buildings with regard to the siting of Royal Ordnance

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ CPRE War-time Progress Report and Annual Report 1939, pp. 30-31

Factories. These back-channel mechanisms held up for some time into the war, even though the architect of them, Chamberlain, was no longer Prime Minister by May 1940, and was dead by the end of that year. In 1945, in a letter to *The Times*, the CPRE Secretary H.G. Griffin reflected that ‘as the urgency and volume of the country’s war needs developed, however, this procedure tended to fall into abeyance.’¹¹ As CPRE was keen to state during the war, whenever these mechanisms were not always initially adhered to, ‘the undertaking was precise and has never been revoked.’¹² CPRE also had a policy platform for engaging with the military and civil servants in these departments. ‘CPRE Policy in War-time’¹³ consisted of a five-point plan encompassing, in the order in which CPRE stipulated them: agricultural development, the facilitation of Service (Defence and defence-related government) Departments’ needs, rural industries, social amenities for rural populations, and national parks. As such they were an accurate representation of what CPRE would be actively engaged on for the next five years. With agricultural development CPRE’s major pre-occupation, it would seem to have done (or been able to do in the war-time circumstances) little to encourage “*bona fide*”¹⁴ rural industries, other than by resisting industrial ventures which it judged to be trying to inveigle their way into rural areas under cover of the war. Its priority of ‘constant vigilance in potential national parks’¹⁵ would be two-fold: firstly, as an implacable opponent of any Defence Department intention to site themselves in proposed national park areas, and secondly, it was a determined advocate of national parks as part of the post-war settlement. Related to this, and not articulated by the organisation, was the cross-cutting theme that ran through all its work from a relatively early stage: that of post-war reconstruction, particularly in relation to the restitution and restoration of requisitioned land when the war was over.

¹¹ *The Times*, ‘Military Use Of Land,’ 8/8/1945, p. 5

¹² CPRE War-time Progress Report and Annual Report 1939 (Vol. XIII No.1), (MERL SR CPRE B/2/13), p.7

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.6

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

4.1.2 The National Trust

The Trust's EC anticipated the forthcoming war by a couple of months, determining at its July 1939 meeting that if war broke out there would be a concentration of powers, and in October the Trust's governing Council (to which the EC was accountable) agreed by letter that a fixed group of people should serve as the EC for the duration of the war;¹⁶ further, sub-committees would meet with fewer people and less regularly.

In mid-1940, around the same time as CPRE issued its policy, the Trust issued 'The Trust in War-Time', an eight-page pamphlet in response to 'so many members...[having]...inquired what we are doing and how we are getting on that this small leaflet has been printed for circulation.'¹⁷ Similarly to CPRE, it struck a balance between patriotism and a combative awareness of being taken advantage of in the fog of the war effort:

war needs have brought new uses for properties which cannot reasonably be resisted...anti-aircraft batteries, searchlight companies and balloon barrages want sites; billets are wanted for troops and homes for evacuated children...demands are put forward that farmland and downland should be ploughed and that timber should be felled for war purposes... [but] ...there are, moreover, those who would use war as a pretext or cover for arbitrary, bureaucratic or unnecessary action which would in normal times meet with an outcry...against action of this kind the Trust must be ever on the watch, determined to meet it with vigorous opposition. This is being done, though it is obviously undesirable to give particulars in this leaflet.¹⁸

¹⁶ NT Council Minutes, 10/1939, NT HQ archive

¹⁷ 'The Trust in War-time,' (MERL SR CPRE C/1/49/107), p.1

¹⁸ Ibid. p.3

In the Trust's 1939/1940 Annual Report, issued around the same time, it was more to the point:

The Trust's foremost aim in wartime must be to survive the war with its buildings in sound repair, with its farms productive and in good order, with the beauty of its woodlands and open spaces unspoiled.¹⁹

Two years later, in its 1941-1942 Annual Report, the Trust made a short statement which established some clear blue water between it and CPRE:

the primary object of the Trust in the case of lands held for the benefit of the nation ... must always be preservation of natural beauty. Agricultural use must remain a secondary though important consideration.²⁰

This did not however lead to any discernible public (or private) disagreements or problems between the two organisations. The reality was that CPRE had a wider brief, whereas the Trust was constrained by its founding legislation to protect that property (buildings and land) that it owned, rather than seek to hold the whole of rural England close to its breast. Further, as previously observed (p.16) the war represented good business for the Trust; this was due to the cumulative effects of increases in war-time taxation and death duties, the lack of funds for capital investment in property to enable existing owners to continue living in their properties, and as in the First World War due to conscription, a lack of sons to oversee the management of properties, and a lack of staff to keep estates well maintained. The *Manchester Guardian* reported in July 1941 that the Trust had acquired so much land since the beginning of the war

¹⁹ NT Annual Report 1940/41, (NT HQ archive), p.4

²⁰ NT Annual Report 1941/42, (NT HQ archive), pp.8-9

that by the end of 1941 it would own or protect 100,000 acres,²¹ compared with 60,000 acres in 1937, as noted above (p.48).

From 1943 onwards the Trust's Country House Scheme, introduced in 1937 and met at the time with little immediate enthusiasm by that fragment of the population with country houses, began to prove an attractive mechanism through which to dispose tax-efficiently of buildings of cultural significance. As a result, the Trust's EC minutes increasingly focused on its property acquisitions; EC minutes of 1942 onwards barely mention issues relating to the war, and the Trust's 1944-1945 Annual Report does not mention the war at all. Even before this time the more mundane would regularly sit surreally in the minutes next to a consideration of a Defence Department's interest in a Trust land or property holdings: "Mr Sanderson's offer of a gate-legged table, a console table and a writing table was accepted subject to steps being taken to treat the worm in them."²²

We can see from the above that the Trust's activities in addressing the impact of war on the rural landscape were constrained by its legal requirement to focus its activities on that property that it owned. This limited its capacity to cooperate with CPRE, and restricted its views on war-time agricultural development to matters which directly affected its own properties. It also became increasingly preoccupied with receiving bequests of properties from owners hard-pressed by war-time strictures.

4.1.3 National Smoke Abatement Society

In 1941 NSAS confided to its affiliates in its Eleventh Annual Report that it had at first feared at the outbreak of war that it might need to suspend its activities, but 'the unexpected

²¹ *Manchester Guardian*, 'Saving Historic Country Houses: the National Trust's scheme in action,' 29/7/1941, p.6

²² NT EC Minutes 12/2/1940, (NT HQ archive), p.2223

continuation of comparatively normal conditions during the early months of the war' (the so-called "phoney war") made it possible to carry out some useful work, with the expectation that the organisation would work almost entirely by post and through publications and other writing.²³

Based on the available archival material of all four organisations, NSAS' decision making regarding continuing its activities during the war differed in two significant ways to its three counterparts in this dissertation. Firstly, it recognised explicitly in its publications that the outbreak of war could impact on how the organisation worked; in its Winter 1939-1940 *Smokeless Air* journal it recognised that:

although the war in many ways limits our progress as a propaganda organisation, it should be possible for us to work more actively on the lines of a scientific society that is concerned with the study of one specific subject.²⁴

Secondly, NSAS included a degree of democratic discussion amongst its members as to the direction the organisation should take. On 2nd April 1940 the Council met in Manchester with a conference session open to members, with the principal subject of discussion being smoke abatement during the war; about sixty people attended, a figure 'higher than had been thought likely at the present time.'²⁵ Dr Jervis, as noted above [page reference] proposed (possibly one suspects for the purposes of debate and as a devil's advocate service on behalf of the governing Council) three possible responses for NSAS:

²³ NSAS, Eleventh Annual Report 1941, (WL SA/EPU/E/1/1), p.13

²⁴ NSAS *Smokeless Air*, No.2 Winter 1939-40, (Vol. X, No.40), (WL SA/EPU/H/1/2/1/2), p.3 'War and Peace Aims'

²⁵ NSAS *Smokeless Air*, No.3, Spring 1940, (Vol XI, No.41), (WL SA/EPU/H/1/2/2), p.8

- a) ...close the doors and conserve the Society's resources so that they will be intact and available at the end of the war;
- b) continue the work but with a modified programme...confining our efforts to "ticking over" with an occasional "rev up" just to prove ...that the Society is still alive; and;
- c) carry on as if nothing had happened, indeed if possible with more intensity, particularly in the direction of industrial smoke, which is likely to get worse rather than better as the war proceeds.²⁶

Jervis favoured what he felt was the third, and boldest policy, and this carried the day. A resolution was adopted by the Council at its 18th April meeting focusing on: 'the gross and expensive waste causing and caused by the smoke nuisance...[and]...the waste of fuel and power of which smoke is the direct consequence';²⁷ the resolution went on to voice NSAS' anxiety over the deterioration in atmospheric conditions that had in its view already occurred since the war began, and as a result the EC declared that NSAS would no longer restrict its activities.²⁸ However, the EC did not then meet for nearly three years, from May 1940 until April 1943.

All of this democracy may possibly have been a mechanism for mobilising the membership, as NSAS had already published its *Smoke Abatement in Wartime: A Statement by the National Smoke Abatement Society* nine-page pamphlet three months previously; in so doing it was in advance of CPRE and the National Trust by some months. Over the course of the war NSAS wore its heart on its sleeve, with its views on its own usefulness seemingly ebbing

²⁶ Ibid, p.10

²⁷ NSAS EC Minutes 18/4/1940, (WL SA/EPU/A/3), 'Resolution on Policy'

²⁸ Ibid.

and flowing with the tide of the war. In the Autumn 1939 edition of its journal it assessed that:

some progressive bodies will find their work vastly increased as a result of the war; others will have to mark time until peace returns. Smoke abatement, at first sight, seemed to be one of the unfortunates...[but]...new lines of useful and necessary activity are already becoming apparent²⁹

Its 1939 to 1940 Annual Report continued to be resolute and optimistic: ‘whatever it is feasible and useful to do will therefore be done,’³⁰ but just six months later, when Britain had been under almost daily aerial attack for some months, it stated: ‘it is a pity that the conditions of war should relegate smoke abatement to a comparative, though only temporary, obscurity.’³¹

In a similar way to CPRE using the importance of agricultural land to the war effort as a means to seek to fend off Defence Department requisitioning of such land for airfields and other purposes, the NSAS sought to further its cause for smoke emission reduction by promoting the need for fuel efficiency during the war, positioning itself as a resource for the Government, offering technical advice at national and regional level as well as promoting the services of local smoke inspectors, rationalising that since smoke was an indication of the partial, and therefore wasteful, combustion of bituminous coal, smoke abatement was of direct assistance to the war effort as it would conserve coal stocks.³² Further, it used the war to argue for one of its pre-war policies, that of a National Fuel Policy to coordinate the

²⁹ NSAS *Smokeless Air*, No.1 Autumn 1939, (WL SA/EPU/H/1/2/1/2), p.1,

³⁰ NSAS Tenth Annual Report 1939-1940, (WL SA/EPU/E/1/1), p.2

³¹ NSAS *Smokeless Air*, No.6, Winter 1940-1941, (Vol XI, No.44), (WL SA/EPU/H/1/2/1/2), p.74

³² ‘Smoke Abatement in Wartime: a statement by the National Smoke Abatement Society,’ (WL SA/EPU/H/4/1), p.4

development and uses of different fuels and plan the utilisation of all fuel resources and productive capacity, ‘the desirability...[of which]...is made still more marked as a result of conditions arising out of the war.’³³ NSAS would, however, be less successful in employing this tactic than CPRE, for as shall be explored in detail below (p.94), Ministry of Home Security policy would take the issue of smoke emissions in the entirely opposite direction between 1940 and 1943, much to NSAS’ frustration and opposition.

NSAS’ fluctuating views of its potential to be active during the war illustrate the uncertainty of the time, and its attempts to promote an issue such as fuel efficiency indicate how it sought to make progress on issues which were at least in principle compatible with the successful conduct of the war effort.

4.1.4 Pure Rivers Society

Although PRS’ archive is deficient in many respects when compared with those of its counterparts in this dissertation, unlike CPRE and NT, the minutes of its first EC meeting after war was declared record a degree of discussion about what the organisation should do in war-time, rather than just record decisions, or imply that there was no discussion at all:

the subject of what should be the Society’s attitude during the war was discussed. A letter was read from Mr Wells...saying that he thought the Society should close down. Mrs Lemon had also written...expressing satisfaction that the Society was still functioning...after some discussion it was unanimously decided to carry on and to hold the usual monthly meetings.³⁴

³³ Ibid, p.9

³⁴ PRS EC Minutes, 21/9/1939, (FL PRS1/1/1), p.122

Unlike the other three organisations, there is no indication that PRS produced any kind of war-time policy statement; this could be because of its smaller capacity, or because one was produced but has not survived. Whichever, it is clear from material that does survive (p.122 below) that it felt war-time water pollution was inevitable and impractical to contest, so all of PRS' focus should be on securing a place for addressing inland water pollution as part of the post-war reconstruction settlement. Clearly the lack of organisational capacity was much more keenly felt at PRS than any of the other three organisations. It is logical to surmise that this was instrumental in determining to what extent inland water pollution related to the war effort could be addressed during war-time.

The corollary of what organisations said they were going to do, was what they said they would no longer do; NT and NSAS both gave some indication as to what they would be de-prioritising. NSAS acknowledged that the issue of domestic smoke abatement would have to wait until the post-war period, as it was 'inevitably overshadowed by the urgent problems arising out of the war';³⁵ for NT the change was a very practical one and not all bad, as it redirected its efforts from raising funds in order to purchase properties and land on a proactive basis, to receiving bequests.³⁶

Thus support for the war effort by all four organisations was a given, or at least if there was any discussion as to their respective positions, then it was decided not to minute them. The stated war-time positions are important, but do not necessarily reflect what the organisations were subsequently able to focus on; this was a period of great uncertainty and volatility, and it could not even be foreseen for the initial years of the war that Britain would not be

³⁵ 'Smoke Abatement in Wartime', p.6

³⁶ NT Annual Report 1940/41, (NT HQ archive), p.4

conquered by Nazi Germany. Interestingly there is not the slightest mention of what invasion and defeat would mean for the organisations' respective missions.

The next part of this chapter will focus on those impacts on the environment and landscape that these organisations acquiesced to, which they were active in opposition to, and a smaller number of instances where the interests of the war-time Coalition Government converged with the missions of the organisations.

4.2 Convergence of Interest, Acquiescence and Opposition

The setting and implementation of policy during the long war period by the CPRE, NT, NSAS and PRS in support of their mission statements was an exercise in the art of the possible, and led to relative acquiescence in some areas and tangible, consistent opposition in others. Here I identify four areas where there was significant acquiescence at least for a certain period of the war, and five areas where there was at least some degree of opposition by the organisations during the long war period; as evidenced by these caveats, the issue of acquiescence or opposition was rarely a black and white issue. As I intend to show, the difference between the two approaches was due to external war-related factors, i.e. the state of the conduct of the war, the perceived centrality of the issue to the war-time effort vis-à-vis what would now be called “red line” issues for the organisations, and on a more practical, organisational level, the very real obstacles to activity of reduced staff and financial resources, and the absence of usual routes of influence, firstly via advocacy through political contacts in Parliament due to war-time restrictions on public debate, and secondly due to press interest being primarily focused on the conduct of the war.

In 1943 CPRE declared that it ‘sought to have a reputation with government for “competent and reasonable representations”,³⁷ which suggests an approach with a realistic and balanced appraisal of any given potential issue CPRE might take up; this represents a continuation and formalisation of its position at the start of the long war period (p.65 above). As if to underline this, in the same report, under a section rather euphemistically called ‘Changes in the Countryside,’ it summarised the impact of the war across a range of environmental dimensions: the loss of previously unspoilt farm land as a result of the dispersal of existing industry and the establishment of new industry, together with the necessary accommodation buildings for the workers, and the construction of airfields, camps and defence works; the wholesale alteration of extensive coastal areas and their hinterlands due to the designation of Defence Areas; the breaking up of woodlands and private parklands in the search for all types of timber; a (dramatic) increase in open-cast mining; and lastly, an increase in the pollution of rivers and streams.³⁸ In contrast to all the bad news, with CPRE an advocate of agricultural development since its inception (p.26 above), the organisation was able to state that: ‘the effects of the war upon the countryside have not, however, been wholly bad’³⁹ as a result of the ‘great stimulation’⁴⁰ given to agriculture.

In between acquiescence and opposition was a narrow band of cultural and educational activity where the agenda of the war-time Coalition Government was compatible with CPRE and the National Trust; this chapter looks at this convergence first.

³⁷ CPRE War-time Progress Report September 1942-1943, p.15

³⁸ Ibid, p.4

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

4.2.1 Convergence of Interest

In the winter of 1939-40 Sir Kenneth Clark, both Director of the National Gallery and Head of the MOI's Film Division, initiated the 'Scheme for Recording the Changing Face of Britain' (known more succinctly as 'Recording Britain'). Gill Saunders considers that the scheme 'was constructed as an account of "Englishness",' as out of the resulting 1,549 topographical water-colour drawings and painting of places and buildings characteristic of national interest and potentially under threat by the war, the vast majority were of England.⁴¹ CPRE and NT were both asked for lists of places suitable for drawing and painting.⁴² The project's immediate priorities were determined by the threat of invasion particularly around Southern England; where possible, artists were despatched 'before the county was occupied by the British, or the German, Army,'⁴³ and one artist was urgently sent 'to record an avenue of beech trees...about to be cut down to make way for an aerodrome.'⁴⁴ The project ended in 1943 with the threat of invasion having declined.

4.2.2 Acquiescence

I now consider four areas where between them CPRE, NT and PRS decided to largely acquiesce to State activities in support of the war effort, despite their impact on the environment and landscape: coastal defences, inland water pollution, open-cast mining, and the felling of woodlands.

4.2.2.1 The Coast and Defence Works

As noted in Chapter One, the coast, mainly around the East and South of England, was hastily protected at the outset of war by a "coastal crust" (p.13 above) of defences which

⁴¹ . G. Saunders, *Recording Britain*, (V&A Publishing, 2011), p.9

⁴² Ibid,p.10 and 14

⁴³ Pilgrim Trust, *Recording Britain*, Vol. 2, (Oxford University Press/Pilgrim Trust, 1946), p.1

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.72

extended several miles inland; in effect however, the entire coastline of Britain was requisitioned by the armed forces and to various extents defensive measures installed. Despite a tactical rethink in 1941, which caused these measures to be more tailored to the topography and likely routes of attempted penetration by an invading force, the vulnerability of Britain's coastal areas was both so obvious and emblematic of Britain's need to defend itself that I could find no evidence in CPRE or NT archives that these measures were in any way contested. Again though, this acquiescence did not reflect ignorance, as in its War-time Progress Report for July 1940-July 1941, CPRE recognised that:

of all the problems facing those engaged in preparations for post-war reconstruction, the coast will present one of the most difficult. No other part of the country has suffered so much from the construction of Defence Works of all kinds.⁴⁵

By the following year, mid-1942, CPRE was clear that:

the occupation of coastal lands by government departments under Defence Regulations for purposes of national defence must be terminated at the earliest possible date after the war...[and]...buildings and other structures erected in connection therewith removed and the land restored to its former condition.⁴⁶

This indicates that the post-war settlement in respect of redressing the damage done to environment and landscape was very much on the minds of CPRE, even before the point at which Allied victory was assured.

⁴⁵ CPRE War-time Progress Report July, 1940-July 1941, Vol. XIII, No.2, (MERL SR CPRE B/2/13), p.12

⁴⁶ CPRE War-time Progress Report August 1941-August 1942, Vol. XIII, No.3, (MERL SR CPRE B/2/13), p.16

4.2.2.2 Water Pollution and Industry

Cordite was fundamental to the whole ammunition programme,⁴⁷ and huge quantities of water were required so drainage and water supply were of great importance; cordite factories were located near inland waterways so the effluent could be discharged into them ‘without elaborate treatment...so it had no effect on taste or fitness for consumption.’⁴⁸ This was known to PRS; in a fundraising letter sent out to other organisations in June 1940 (so it is fair to say they would not have wanted to under-state the situation), PRS set out its analytical stall for how water pollution in war-time Britain would get worse. It is further indicative of the shadow that the First World War cast over these organisations:

during the war of 1914-1918 there was an enormous increase of pollution which it has taken years of hard and persistent work to reduce and already there are many signs that we are threatened by a similar disaster during the present war. Mine owners, manufacturers and others are seeking to make the war an excuse for fresh pollutions or for failing to purify their effluents and trade wastes before discharging them into rivers and streams, while sewage pollution is increasing owing to the stopping of construction or improvement of disposal plants.⁴⁹

As noted above (p.82) the capacity of the organisation and its constituencies of support to address inland water pollution was a key issue, together with the problems in undertaking Parliamentary advocacy work. PRS’ Council discussed at length on 16th November 1939 the possibility of utilising Anglers Societies to campaign against water pollution, but it was noted

⁴⁷ W.J. Reader, *Imperial Chemical Industries: a history, Vol. II the first quarter century 1926-1952*, (Oxford University Press 1975), p.260

⁴⁸ Hornby, *History*, p.115

⁴⁹ Council Minutes, 16/5/1940, (FL PRS1/1/1), p.134

that many such clubs and societies were ‘at a standstill’⁵⁰ due to the war. At a further Council meeting in March 1940 Parliamentary lobbying was discussed, and the Secretary was instructed to approach Members of Parliament interested in pollution to ask them to ask questions in the House regarding the anti-pollution efforts of the Ministry of Health and local authorities, and what precautions were being taken by munitions factories to prevent the pollution of rivers and streams they were sited next to.⁵¹ By May the PRS Secretary had identified MPs willing to ask these questions, but finding a suitable opportunity in Parliament proved problematic.⁵² Hansard does not show that any of these questions were subsequently asked.

PRS received Pollution Reports from its diminished network of members and supporters around Britain into 1941 and possibly for the duration of the war, although regrettably none have survived the subsequent filleting of the organisation’s archives. Its Council meeting in February 1941 noted the contents of the latest Pollution Reports but: ‘agreed that no action should be taken other than recording them for reconsideration and appropriate action after the war.’⁵³

4.2.2.3 Open-Cast Coal Mining

Deep-mine coal mining was the main-stay of Britain’s energy production prior to the war, and as such its continuation during the war, albeit to power war-time rather than peace-time industry, means that its environmental impact during the war is not a factor for consideration in this dissertation; this is certainly not to say however that it was environmentally benign. What was a direct consequence of war-time imperatives for new sources of energy was the

⁵⁰ PRS Council Minutes, 16/11/1939, (FL PRS1/1/1), p.127

⁵¹ PRS Council Minutes, 21/3/1940 (FL PRS1/1/1), p.131

⁵² PRS Council Minutes, 16/5/1940, p.133

⁵³ PRS Council Minutes, 20/2/1941, (FL PRS1/1/1), p.142

introduction and then rapid development of open-cast mining; with mining manpower at a premium given the demands of the armed forces, one ton of open-cast coal could be quarried with only one quarter of the labour force needed for a ton of coal from a deep-mine colliery.⁵⁴ The war-time Coalition Government assumed total responsibility for open-cast coal mining, and production rose from 1,311 thousand tons in 1942 to 8,115 thousand tons by 1945,⁵⁵ accounting for roughly 5% of Britain's total coal output.⁵⁶ By the War's end open-cast mining cut swathes across West and South-West Wales, and in England across the Midlands, North-West and North-East.⁵⁷

Open-cast mining only required temporary use of the land from which coal was extracted, but the restoration of land was not a compulsory requirement for the Government until 1943.⁵⁸ According to R.T Arguile, until this time the view regarding open-cast mining was that Britain was in '...a life and death struggle...with the Axis Powers and meeting the demand for fuel had first priority. The refinements of land restoration were yet to be considered.'⁵⁹ CPRE's original and general position was one of acquiescence, even when CPRE's Secretary was prompted by a tip-off from a supportive civil servant at the Ministry of Town and Country Planning:

My dear Griffin, I hear from an official source that there is some danger of damage to amenities by open-cast coal mining at two Lancashire places – Winstanley Hall...and

⁵⁴ Simmons, *Environmental*, p.195

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.87

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.195

⁵⁷ P. Tomlinson, 'The Environmental Impact of Open Cast Coal Mining,' *Town Planning Review*, (53, 1982), pp. 5-28, p.8

⁵⁸ Simmons, *Environmental*, p.195

⁵⁹ R.T Arguile, 'Open-cast Mining in Britain – the first 32 years,' *Colliery Guardian*, (Vol. 223, No.2, 1975), pp.42-52, p.46

Standish Hall...you may like to set discrete enquiries on foot...don't mention me!

Yours ever, John.⁶⁰

CPRE Lancashire branch duly took the matter up with the Ministry of Fuel and Power,⁶¹ but the lack of evidence in the archives suggests that this was an isolated intervention.

Commenting in early 1944, with restoration now compulsory, CPRE felt open-cast mining was: 'understood to be free from criticism on agricultural grounds' due to the restoration provisions.⁶² Only as the war was ending did CPRE become more engaged on the environmental implications of open-cast mining when the slow and inadequate restoration of land became apparent. CPRE found that some sites had not been restored satisfactorily, although it felt that in many cases land had been improved as better drainage had resulted, therefore making the land better suited to agriculture. However, out of a total area used for open-cast mining during the war of 19,370 acres, less than 10% of this had been restored by war's end.⁶³ With the Ministry of Agriculture still struggling to identify improved methods of restoration, by 1947 CPRE's position would harden as some of its constituencies of support became increasingly dissatisfied.⁶⁴

4.2.2.4 Woodlands and Timber Production

Wooden pit props were essential for coal mines, sleepers for the railway network, and for the rapid construction of buildings and engineering works; the Air Force needed certain types of wood for plane construction, the Admiralty wood for boat and harbour construction, and the

⁶⁰ letter from "John," Ministry of Town and Country Planning to Griffin, CPRE, 20/1/1943, (MERL SR CPRE C/1/34/20)

⁶¹ letter from CPRE Lancashire Branch Secretary to Ministry of Fuel & Power, 27/1/1944 (MERL SR CPRE C 1/34/20)

⁶² CPRE War-time Progress Report October 1943- October 1944, (Vol. XIV, No.2), (MERL SR CPRE B/2/13), p.23

⁶³; CPRE Quarterly Report, June 1945, p.10

⁶⁴ CPRE Annual Report 1947, (Vol. XV, No.2), (MERL SR CPRE B/2/14), p.27

Army wood for rifle butts and gun carriage wheels.⁶⁵ With supplies cut off from Norway once the country fell to the Nazis, and with timber so bulky to transport in comparison with other much needed war materials, it was necessary for Britain to become as self-sufficient as possible in its timber supplies; yet in 1939 only 4% of the timber that Britain used was domestically produced.⁶⁶ Sourcing timber from domestic woodlands enabled Britain to provide 60% of its needs across the war's duration,⁶⁷ with domestic production increasing from an average of 450,000 tons p.a. in the 1935-38 period to a peak of 3,821,000 tons in 1943.⁶⁸

England would contribute two-thirds of total British production of timber during the war.⁶⁹ The burden fell on privately owned woodland, which accounted for around 92% of fellings,⁷⁰ predominantly beech, oak and elm. In 1942 1,800 acres of woods were being felled every week.⁷¹ By 1946 two-thirds of timber standing in British woodlands in 1939 had been felled to meet war-time needs.⁷²

The official policy of the Coalition Government's specially created Home Timber Production Department of the Ministry of Supply was to reserve stands of timber and individual trees which were of special public amenity, providing the nation's essential war-time needs could be met. This was difficult to implement, as the information on the felling licences issued gave no indication of the amenity value of trees proposed to be felled, so staff were unlikely to know unless they happened to have local knowledge. According to Meiggs, in the absence

⁶⁵ R. Meiggs, *Home Timber Production (1939-1945)*, (Crosby Lockwood & Son Ltd 1949), p.124-6

⁶⁶ Stamp, *Land*, p.174

⁶⁷ Meiggs, *Home*, p.246

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ CPRE Quarterly Report, June 1946, (Vol XIV, No.6), (MERL SR CPRE B/2/13), p.33

⁷⁰ Simmons, *Environmental*, p.200

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.199

⁷² S. Reimer and P. Pinch, 'Geographies of the British Government's Wartime Utility Furniture Scheme, 1940-1945,' *Journal of Historical Geography*, (Vol. 39, (2013), pp. 99-112, p.102

of a working mechanism CPRE ‘often filled the void,’⁷³ but my study of CPRE’s archives does not indicate a sustained engagement with the issue, and there was generally more acquiescence and resignation to the inevitability of the gradual degrading of Britain’s woodlands. In 1939 CPRE stated sombrely: ‘since the invasion of Norway, it seems inevitable that practically all available timber will be felled...sacrifices will be necessary,’⁷⁴ and ‘there is no doubt if felling is continued at the present rate the country will be to all intents and purposes denuded of timber.’⁷⁵ CPRE’s War Emergency Committee did however state that there should be strict insistence on replanting, and the saving, if possible, of a certain number of trees in order to facilitate natural regeneration,⁷⁶ but there is no further evidence in the archives of regular activity on this issue until later in the war, when the balance between war-time timber production and the amenity value of woodland was brought into sharper focus as the war dragged on, and with a corresponding diminution of timber. In May 1944 the *Manchester Guardian* lamented the imminent loss of a beech wood on Lathkill Dale, Derbyshire⁷⁷ but later in the month the paper was able to report triumphantly that the beech trees had won a permanent reprieve thanks to representations made by CPRE’s HQ and its Sheffield and Peak District Branch.⁷⁸ By 1944 NT was adopting a similarly stern line to the further exploitation of woods on its properties, with its Estates Committee deciding that January not to recommend handing over the management of any NT woodlands to the Forestry Commission. ‘Grave doubts were expressed...[by several committee members]...and the Committee decided not to advise the dedication of any woods without further consideration.’⁷⁹

⁷³ Meiggs, *Home*, p.33

⁷⁴ CPRE War-time Progress Report and Annual Report 1939, p.19

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.18

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.19

⁷⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, ‘Lathkill Dale: War-Time Sacrifice of Trees,’ 6/5/1944, p.7

⁷⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, ‘Lathkill Dale’s Timber: Ministry and Felling,’ 30/5/1944, p.3

⁷⁹ NT Estates Committee Minutes 11/1/1944,(NT HQ archive), p.1273

It can be seen from the above that organisations did not challenge actions by the State where the direct defence of the nation was at stake (in the case of coastal defences), and in relation to activities in direct support of the war effort, namely munitions factories, the generation of sufficient timber, and labour-efficient means of coal production. With the prolonged duration of the war however the positions of both CPRE and NT hardened in respect of the latter two issues: CPRE when the failure to restore open-cast mining sites prejudiced agriculture, and both CPRE and the Trust when the continued diminution of Britain's woodland reached limits that they felt demanded an end to their acquiescence.

4.2.3 Opposition

I now consider four areas where between them NSAS, CPRE and NT determined to oppose to varying degrees State activities in support of the war effort because of the impact the activities had on issues which were of concern to the respective organisations: atmospheric pollution, elements of general land use, rural locations of special value, and war-time preparations for the post-war period.

4.2.3.1 Atmospheric Pollution From Industrial Smoke Emissions

The overall assessment of levels of atmospheric pollution was not clear during the war, to NSAS' frustration. In the immediate pre-war period the nationwide network of measuring devices overseen by the Government's Department of Scientific and Industrial Research showed the condition of Britain's atmosphere was improving,⁸⁰ but the full results to which NSAS had become accustomed in the inter-war period were not issued during the war, and the number of measuring instruments being maintained and monitored decreased in war-

⁸⁰ NSAS *Smokeless Air*, Autumn 1941, (Vol. XII, No.47), (WL SA/EPU/H/1/2/1/2), p.61

time⁸¹ as well. Those summary results that were issued showed modest upward and downward fluctuations in certain pollutants^{82 83} over the course of the war, and one senses, although the NSAS was too diplomatic to state it, that the organisation was doubtful of the accuracy of the summary results due to the reduced measuring capacity, and also because some NSAS supporters gave their own anecdotal evidence of increased atmospheric pollution as a result of war-effort related industry, most notably speakers from Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester and Halifax at NSAS' conference in April 1940.⁸⁴

Whilst being aware of at least regional increases in atmospheric pollution from the outbreak of war, NSAS was still hopeful in the early stage of the war in arguing to government that it was in the interests of the war effort to use coal-burning boilers and furnaces more efficiently, and thereby achieve a reduction in smoke emissions. However, NSAS' aspirations received a significant blow in June 1940 when Home Security Circular "Production of extra smoke from industrial works" No.139/1940 was issued by the Smoke Production Division of the Ministry of Home Security to local authorities, requiring that:

as a matter of urgency, arrangements should be made for all industrial works in your area to produce as much extra smoke as is feasible as a normal procedure, without incurring too much waste...but it is regarded as imperative in the national interests that any measures which may render industrial targets less readily definable from the air should be taken forthwith....as much dark smoke as is feasible...[should be produced]...without, as far as practicable, emitting noxious gases.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Ibid, p.77

⁸² NSAS *Smokeless Air*, Spring 1944, (Vol. XIV, No.54), (WL SA/EPU/H/1/2/1/3), p.44

⁸³ NSAS *Smokeless Air*, Summer 1945, (Vol. XVI, No.58) (WL SA/EPU/H/1/2/1/3), p.5

⁸⁴ NSAS *Smokeless Air*, No.3, Spring 1940, p.8

⁸⁵ Home Security Circular No.139/1940, 'Production of Extra Smoke From Industrial Works,' 20/6/1940, (NA/HO 208/3)

This was followed less than a month later informing the same local authorities that:

it has been decided to provide, as a matter of extreme urgency, special smoke protection during periods of moonlight for a number of industrial undertakings in different parts of the country. Smoke protection schemes, which will involve the emission of smoke from a large number of smoke-producing units, will be devised and put into operation for a large number of areas as quickly as possible...during the next period of moonlight, commencing on July 14th.⁸⁶

This was further followed by a circular in August requiring that smoke emissions be increased in certain key areas by non-industrial premises, but not private homes.⁸⁷ The issuing of the circulars caused great consternation at NSAS; it was a backward step which both used up fuel inefficiently in order to create extra smoke, *and* increased atmospheric pollution. As a result perhaps, it crossed the line that usually held amongst the four organisations, that of not being critical of Government departments on military grounds; its view was that a pall of smoke would be more likely to endanger a densely populated or industrial area by advertising its presence, rather than obscure it from the Luftwaffe's bombing sights, and one smoke plume might betray the presence of an isolated factory that might otherwise be unnoticed.⁸⁸

Regrettably no material has survived in NSAS' archive of the representations it made to the Government, but its Summer 1943 journal NSAS commented tantalisingly that:

⁸⁶ Home Security Circular No.152/1940, 'Smoke Protection of Industrial Undertakings,' 2/7/1940, (NA/HO 208/3)

⁸⁷ Home Security Circular No. 211/1940, 13/8/1940, (NA/HO 208/3)

⁸⁸ NSAS *Smokeless Air*, No.1, Autumn 1939, (WL SA/EPU/H/1/2/1/2), p.2

We have been very reticent, as we were asked to be, in discussing this peculiar and difficult problem, and no report has been made of the Society's representations to the Government in 1940 and again this year⁸⁹

NSAS would not be completely silent however, and pursued a modest commercial route to counter the State-encouraged increased smoke emissions, running adverts for 'Coalite' in its journal, making the not unreasonable point that palls of smoke would make it as difficult for the RAF to find enemy bombers and fighters as it would the latter to find their targets.

[redacted illustration/photograph due to permission issue
use citation to locate the publication]

Fig.6 ⁹⁰

⁸⁹ NSAS *Smokeless Air*, Summer 1943, (Vol. XIV, No.52), (WL SA/EPU/H/1/2/1/3), p.3

⁹⁰ NSAS *Smokeless Air*, Spring 1941, (Vol XII, No.45), (WL SA/EPU/H/1/2/1/2), p.30

The Ministry's measures remained in place for nearly three years, until February 1943, at which point the previous circulars were revoked as fuel efficiency was now a greater imperative, whilst the Ministry held to its original assertion that the generation of more smoke had been an effective tactic against enemy bombers.⁹¹

4.2.3.2 Land Use: agricultural, industrial, military

On the eve of war in 1938-1939, due to factors explored in Chapter Two above, Britain had two million fewer acres of arable land being cultivated than it did at the outbreak of the First World War,⁹² from which British farmers produced only 30% of Britain's food needs, compared with 80% in Nazi Germany.⁹³ Britain would therefore be extremely vulnerable to the consequences of a curtailment in imported food supplies during any protracted war if it did not become more self-sufficient in food. As a result the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act offered farmers £2 per acre to plough up fields that had been pasture for at least seven years; this brought into cultivation some of Britain's most established pasture land.⁹⁴ As noted above (p.14), in 1939 Britain had 11,870 thousand acres of land under arable cultivation, and 17,331 thousand acres was permanent grassland; in 1945 it had 17,866 thousand acres arable to 10,892 grassland – practically a complete reversal.⁹⁵ Consequently by 1944/45 food production had risen 91% and Britain was able to feed itself 160 days of the year rather than 120 when war broke out.⁹⁶

CPRE had a nuanced approach to the issue of land use which makes the categorisation of its position problematic for the purposes of dissertation structure. On the one hand it was

⁹¹ Home Security Circular No.27/1943; 'Production of Extra Smoke,' 15/2/1943, (NA/HO 208/6)

⁹² Hart-Davis, *Our Land*, p.10

⁹³ Ward, *War*, p.8

⁹⁴ J. Gardiner, J., *Wartime: Britain 1939-1945* (Headline, 2004), p.140

⁹⁵ Collingham, *Taste*, p.67

⁹⁶ Gardiner, *Wartime*, p.14

supportive of government in its drive to bring an optimum amount of land under cultivation, so one could describe this as a convergence of interests. On the other hand it opposed government if it sought to use agricultural land for other purposes. CPRE thought that the use of unused land for agriculture, and the change in agricultural use from pasture to more valued arable production, were very positive developments, as they both protected the land against other forms of use, such as housing or industry, and developed the rural economy and society: ‘the constructive effect the war has had on agriculture is all to the good,’ it declared.⁹⁷

There was, however, a significant tension between different war-effort demands, and CPRE policy positioned the organisation on the fault line. By 1944 over 11.5 million acres, or about 20% of the surface area of England and Wales, was under military control.⁹⁸ Whilst some of the land requisitioned by the military and other service departments was land only good for pasture, as noted in Chapter One above, airfields required flat, well-drained soil in specific locations, predominantly in the South-East and East Anglia, England’s arable heartland. In keeping with its approach at the start of the long war (p.59), unless CPRE could suggest an alternative site to the Defence Departments then it would acquiesce to the loss of agricultural land, and focus on the restoration of that land to a rural purpose as part of the post-war settlement (p.59).

As in peace-time, CPRE remained consistent throughout the long war in its opposition to and disdain for piecemeal, opportunistic industrial development in rural areas, opposing private firms moving into rural areas if suitable sites were available in more urban industrial zones; further, it was deeply suspicious of arguments for war-time industrial relocation which it

⁹⁷ CPRE War-time Progress Report July 1940-July 1941, p.7

⁹⁸ Howkins, *Death*, p.124

regarded as a Trojan horse for inappropriate economic development in rural areas. On 13th August 1940 *The Times* reported on CPRE's war-time policy statement:

The Council intends to concentrate its activities so far as agricultural development is concerned to the safeguarding of all potentially productive land by the permanent restriction or prohibition of building on such land except in cases where building is urgently required in the national interests...the invasion of agricultural areas by industrial undertakings of a sporadic and speculative nature will be resisted.⁹⁹

There were sporadic incidents during the war that only served to validate CPRE's position. In 1941 for example, in a case toxically mixing military imperative with business acumen, CPRE and other bodies opposed a development in the Lake District proposed by Butlin's, which would have involved the holiday camp company building a camp for the Admiralty and then taking it over for leisure purposes at the end of the war.¹⁰⁰ Utilising its "Chamberlain" mechanism with the Admiralty and its political contacts, CPRE was able to persuade the Admiralty to choose another less contentious site.

Where it had a direct property interest NT was also prepared to intercede in Defence Department plans, and, with a narrower mandate than CPRE, stick tenaciously to protecting particular sites over the course of the war, taking 'all possible steps to avoid the use by the Air Ministry of parts of Burwell and Wicken Fens in such a way as might for a long time seriously interfere with the scientific interest of the land.'¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ *The Times*, 'The Countryside In War-Time. 13/8/1940, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ CPRE War Emergency Committee Minutes, 10/2/1941, (MERL SR CPRE A/1/5), 'Defence departments and land acquisition'

¹⁰¹ NT Finance & General Purposes Committee Minutes, 11/11/1940, (NT HQ archive), p.988

4.2.3.3 War Effort Impact on England's Finest Landscapes – Proposed “National Park”

Territories

For CPRE areas proposed during the inter-war period for national park status were red lines that could not be crossed both with regard to military requisitions and industrialisation:

“some areas, like the Lake District, the Peak District and Snowdonia should be preserved inviolate,” it was to state categorically in mid-1941.¹⁰² The ‘CPRE Policy in War-time’ statement (p.74 above) committed the organisation to ‘continued cooperation’¹⁰³ with regard to the Service Departments and the use of land, but also under ‘Rural Industries’ the ‘encouragement of bona-fide rural industries...with adequate safeguards for their proper location, siting and design’ and most significantly under its fifth objective of National Parks: ‘constant vigilance in potential national park areas.’¹⁰⁴ The proposal, therefore, by the Ministry of Aircraft Production in 1940-1941 to site a seaplane production factory on the shores of Lake Windermere at Calgarth in the Lake District was the point at which these three CPRE war-time policies intersected, and it showed the organisation willing to test its relationship with the Government to the limit. It was a fight that CPRE was, in terms of the involvement of national organisations, on its own. CPRE sought to enlist the support of NT but in a letter from Matheson to Griffin in December 1940, the Trust Secretary admitted that:

no National Trust properties are affected directly, though the proposal does of course involve a possible spoiling of the view from Wray Castle...[and]... as I dare say you appreciate...our hands are pretty full with things which affect us still more directly¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² CPRE War-time Progress Report, July 1940-July 1941, p.9

¹⁰³ CPRE War-time Progress Report and Annual Report 1939., p.6

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ NT Secretary letter to Griffin, 17/12/1940, (MERL SR CPRE C1/36/4)

The NT was however active in the Lake District where it had property, undertaking political lobbying and legal action to protect Ullswater from discharges of polluting sediments from the Glenridding Lead Mine, run by a private company with a Ministry of Supply contract¹⁰⁶

This lack of support did not deter CPRE, which sought to use its full array of arguments and political and press contacts. There was a rapid-fire exchange of letters between CPRE and various figures on the Government side and in the press, and they are quoted from generously below because within CPRE's archives they stand out uniquely for the quantity of correspondence on one subject and the intense amount of effort that CPRE put into this single issue; whilst a more limited use of these arguments and connections occurred in other instances, on no other subject were they so comprehensively deployed.

To Squadron Leader Keeling MP, who had a role in the War Cabinet Office and was a leading member of the supportive Parliamentary Amenities Group, Griffin wrote:

my dear Keeling...as you know the CPRE have no desire to hinder any essential war effort but...presumably they would want to run the railway line from Windermere as far as...(the Ambleside end)...and this is a project which we have been against all our lives¹⁰⁷

On Griffin being advised that it was the Ministry of Aircraft Production that is responsible for the project:

¹⁰⁶ NT 1941-42 Annual Report, (NT HQ archive), pp. 8-9

¹⁰⁷ CPRE Secretary (Griffin) letter to Squadron Leader Keeling MP; 29/11/40 re Calgarth sea plane factory, (MERL SR CPRE C1/36/4)

I am astonished, in view of the late Prime Minister's pledge to us which has never been abrogated, that we have not been consulted officially about this business at Windermere¹⁰⁸

This was followed, four days later, by:

if I were in the House of Commons I would not hesitate to say that the proposal is a thoroughly bad one from a national point of view...to put a factory of this kind on a lake like Windermere is sheer madness, as, owing to the very peculiar shape of the lake, the site can be so very easily identified from the air and I prophecy that it will be bombed unmercifully and probably from great heights because of the difficult flying conditions...[next to another pre-war example]...it is probably the worst choice strategically that has yet been made...this one...is open to so much criticism from so many angles¹⁰⁹

A member of Ministry of Aircraft Production staff who had been lobbied by Keeling retorted:

it would be madness to erect further buildings there...[at Rochester in Kent]...which had already been bombed...the product is a flying boat. A site on the edge of deep water is essential...[and] ...we had a very thorough search made¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Griffin to Keeling 3/12/1940, (MERL SR CPRE C1/36/4)

¹⁰⁹ Griffin "private and personal" letter to Keeling, 10/12/1940, (MERL SR CPRE C1/36/4)

¹¹⁰ "Secret" letter, Llewellyn to Keeling, 12/1940-1/1941 period, (MERL SR CPRE C1/36/4)

Griffin also sought to enlist the Editor of *The Times*:

...I should be very much obliged to you if you could make enquiries about it, and, if possible, give the matter some publicity in the Times. I imagine you would be allowed discretion in so important a case as this...I do hope...you will find some way of using your great influence to bring pressure to bear on Lord Beaverbrook¹¹¹

In response the News Editor replied that an article was pending, 'provided of course that we can get his message past the Censor.'¹¹² Griffin also enlisted Abercrombie to lobby the Minister for Aircraft Production, Lord Beaverbook, both in his capacity as consultant to the Air Ministry and as CPRE Chairman¹¹³ and warned in a letter to G.L. Pepler, a senior civil servant at the Ministry of Health, who had been a member of CPRE's EC more or less since its inception:

...really the Ministry of Aircraft Production or the Ministry of Supply or whoever it is, ought not to put inviting targets of this kind in...the Lake District. Surely there should be some place where people from the bombed urban districts can have comparative sanctuary...plenty of people, both outside and inside Parliament, are prepared to handle this matter...[Griffin then namedrops the local MP, the Archbishop of York and other Lords] ...we are prepared to make a fine fuss...even in our present national emergency...after all, if we must fight, let us have something left to fight for¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Griffin "private and confidential" letter to G.G. Dawson, Editor of The Times, 12/12/1940 (MERL SR CPRE C1/36/4)

¹¹² Letter from News Editor/The Times to Griffin, 16/12/1940, (MERL SR CPRE C1/36/4)

¹¹³ Griffin letter to Abercrombie, 3/11/1940, (MERL SR CPRE C1/36/4)

¹¹⁴ "private" letter from Griffin to G.L. Pepler / Min of Health, 3/12/1940, (MERL SR CPRE C1/36/4)

This would prove something of a hollow threat as no question specifically about Calgarth would be allowed to be asked in either the House of Commons or Lords lest it gave away the position of the future seaplane factory to the enemy. All of this pressure did however elicit a response to CPRE from Lord Beaverbrook at the end of 1940:

it is with extraordinary reluctance that we contemplate such a project...but it is essential for us to find a new site for a seaplane factory and conditions at Windermere seems to be so much more favourable than any we are likely to find elsewhere that our course seems to be imposed on us...we are concerned to provide the aircraft which will bring nearer the day of victory. Then peace and tranquillity will be restored to Lake Windermere and its temporary association with the aircraft industry will, happily, be at an end¹¹⁵

The project went ahead.

[redacted illustration/photograph due to permission issue
use citation to locate the publication]

Fig 7 DP176 seaplane ready to launch at the Windermere factory (courtesy of Allan King); (note Lake District hills to the left)¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Lord Beaverbrook letter to Griffin, 28/12/1940, (MERL SR CPRE C1/36/4)

¹¹⁶ Windermere Sunderland Flying Boats online resource

[redacted illustration/photograph due to permission issue
use citation to locate the publication]

Fig. 8 Aerial Photograph of Calgarth Estate, circa 1943 (courtesy of Lorna Pogson) ¹¹⁷

Beaverbrook's inference that the factory and temporary accommodation for workers would be taken away at the end of the war was seized on by CPRE and became a major plank of its efforts to ensure that requisitioned land tainted by war-time military or industrial activity was returned to its original use at the end of the war, as part of the post-war settlement. CPRE may have tested its political allegiance and reputation for 'competent and reasonable representations' (p.84 above) to the point of destruction, but there was a logic to its actions. In September 1945 CPRE stated that it and others saw Calgarth as:

a test case in the process of restoring rural England after the impact of war conditions... [and]... the Dower Report...[published May 1945] ...'placed the Lake District among the first and essential areas to be recommended as a National Park'¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ 'From Calgarth to Windermere' online resource

¹¹⁸ CPRE Quarterly Report, September 1945, (Vol. XIV, No.5), (MERL SR CPRE B/2/13), p.6

The issue of what elements of the factory would be allowed to remain at Calgarth would feature regularly in CPRE EC minutes into the 1950s. Such was the opposition of CPRE to the factory ever having been located in National Park-status territory that it continued to oppose the retention of the factory and housing estate even when immediately after the war there was local opinion in favour of retaining both.

4.2.3.4 Lobbying for Influence Over The Post-War Settlement During War-time

Mindful that First World War history did not repeat itself, settlement [reference Chapter One/Two pages], both CPRE and NT were extremely wary of requisitioned land not being restored to its pre-war use, and were appropriately active in their dealings with the Government, and specifically its Defence Departments. The *Manchester Guardian*, reporting on NT's 1941 Annual General Meeting, said that there were a number of speakers on the subject of the need to plan now for post-war reconstruction, and quoted Sir Lawrence Chubb (also active at a senior level in CPRE and NSAS) as saying: 'while so much of the beauty of the country and town is being destroyed by Huns, we must be careful that its reconstruction shall not be conducted by vandals.'¹¹⁹ This translated primarily into seeking to obtain back into its custody those buildings and lands which had been requisitioned during the war, as it subsequently stated in its 1946-1947 Annual Report:

The National Trust holds but a small part of the nation's rapidly dwindling store of places of natural beauty and historic interest, and the Council is determined to resist all attempts to encroach upon that precious store... during the war the National Trust obviously had to subordinate its own interests to the needs of the war, but the Council

¹¹⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 'Saving Historic Country Houses: the National Trust's scheme in action,' 29/7/1941 p.6

feel that the time has now come when National Trust properties must be returned to their proper use¹²⁰

Similarly, CPRE, having by mid-1942 spent six years in the long war already, was looking forwards as much as it was operating in the present. In customary forthright tone it had enunciated its position in 1942:

...let it be emphasised that while the first preoccupation of the British people is to win the war and remove the menace created by the Axis powers, some thought must be spared for peace when victory has been won...if we are to be ready for peace it is of paramount importance that we should be ready with plans and the machinery for converting those plans into reality. The building of new houses, the rebuilding of our cities, the establishment of national parks...and the needs of agriculture, afforestation and industry all require some portion of our England. No longer must our best agricultural land be filched from us by industry, housing and public works.¹²¹

For CPRE, with a wider remit potentially covering any rural landscape, particularly that with an agricultural value, its concern grew parallel to the successful prosecution of the war and the prospect of requisitioned land no longer being needed for its war-time purpose. By early 1944 CPRE was aware that the President of the Board of Trade was interviewing possible purchasers of war-time factories;¹²² it feared that bargains might be made between the Board of Trade and employers without proper consultation with the still relatively new Ministry of Town and Country Planning, and it was CPRE's view that the Ministry and local planning

¹²⁰ NT Annual Report 1946-47,(NT HQ archive), 'Service Training Areas and Trust Properties Still Under Requisition'

¹²¹ CPRE War-time Progress Report, August 1941-August 1942, p.5

¹²² CPRE EC Minutes, 11/1/1944, (MERL SR CPRE A/1/6), 'Reinstatement of requisitioned land and disposal of factories, buildings etc'

authorities should be consulted in every case. Such was the significance of the issue that it established a monthly sub-committee just to focus on the reinstatement of requisitioned land. CPRE estimated that the Government would have approximately 1,000 modern factories, the majority in rural areas, to potentially turn over to industry at the end of the war (and perhaps some sooner),¹²³ in addition to military sites.

The issue of the post-war fate of requisitioned land came to a head in the form of the Requisitioned Land and War Works Bill, which became an Act of Parliament in 1945 'to authorise the acquisition of certain land used or dealt with for war purposes.'¹²⁴ Neither CPRE nor NT felt the original bill provided for sufficient safeguards, as it allowed the Government to retain requisitioned land which had been damaged by war usage where reinstatement would be hazardous and costly, and as there was very little requisitioned land that had not been damaged or on which some buildings had not been erected, the Bill effectively allowed the Government to retain whatever land it wanted.¹²⁵ As befitting its preferred *modus operandi*, senior representatives of NT had undertaken confidential negotiations with the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer about the issue in 1943, before the drafting of the bill, but without much to show for their efforts.

CPRE was not so constrained, and went public in January 1945 with its concerns through its press ally, *The Times*, complaining that the Bill lacked the facility for sufficient parliamentary oversight over the actions of Ministers operating the proposed powers.¹²⁶ Abercrombie, newly knighted in the New Year Honours list, weighed in a few weeks later via the same mechanism, criticising the complete lack of reference to town and country planning, and

¹²³ CPRE War-time progress report, October 1943- October 1944, p.8

¹²⁴ Legislation Gov. UK online resource

¹²⁵ J. Childs, *The Military Use Of Land: a history of the defence estate*, (Peter Lang 1998), p.195

¹²⁶ *The Times*, 'Requisitioned Land,' 19/1/1945, p. 5

raising the spectre of the 800,000 acres of agricultural land that had been requisitioned for non-farming use in war-time being sold off for non-agricultural use because it would fetch a higher price, thereby allowing industrial spread into rural areas.¹²⁷

A period of intense lobbying followed in the first half of 1945, with CPRE using its supportive MPs on the Parliamentary Amenities Group to table a number of amendments, and by June CPRE was able to report that the Bill had been ‘substantially amended...and much improved from the CPRE point of view and is as good as could be expected in the circumstances which prevailed.’¹²⁸ Sir Lawrence Chubb added at the Executive Committee’s meeting that month that CPRE had also secured ‘a definite locus for... [itself]...and other bodies to appear before the War Works Commission in support of any opposition.’¹²⁹ This was a further step for CPRE in the direction of becoming an acknowledged stakeholder within Whitehall, and illustrative of the war-time period as representing a particular phase in CPRE’s existence (Chapter Five, p.114, below).

The above consideration of areas of opposition to certain consequences of the State’s war effort shows us two key inter-related features of the organisations’ relationship with the State. Firstly, that there was a preparedness to oppose the Government on issues that organisations felt were central to their concerns; secondly, that when these organisations set themselves in direct opposition to the war-time Coalition Government they did not secure any significant concessions; in both the cases of NSAS’ opposition to the policy of deliberate smoke production, and CPRE’s opposition to the seaplane factory at Calgarth, the two organisations invested a considerable amount of lobbying capital in opposing the State’s intentions, but the issues were felt by the State to be centrally supportive to their conduct the war. However,

¹²⁷ *The Times*, ‘Requisitioned Land,’ 31/1/1945, p. 5

¹²⁸ CPRE Quarterly Report, June 1945, p.4

¹²⁹ CPRE EC Minutes, 12/6/1945, (MERL SR CPRE A/1/6), ‘Requisitioned Land & War Works Bill’

CPRE's standing in government was not harmed by its expenditure of a great deal of political capital over this issue for much of the war, together with its thorny opposition to the post-war settlement initially proposed by the Coalition Government with regard to the ownership and compensation package for war-time land requisitions. I would argue that this was because support for it was so strong with public and private supporters within politics and the civil service that this insulated it from falling out of favour at times when it was most oppositional.

In its 1946 Annual Report CPRE summarised retrospectively the impact of the war on Britain's environment and landscape; it was however taken almost word-for-word from its 1942-1943 War-time Progress Report (p.84 above), suggesting that its original war-time analysis remained an accurate assessment of the loss and profit account as it affected the environment and landscape. Whether new or recycled words, Britain's rural environment and landscape had been transformed over the long war period of 1936 to 1946.

This chapter has demonstrated that organisations acquiesced to significant levels of environmental damage and changes to landscape if it was felt that this was an inevitable and necessary consequence of the war effort, although capacity issues were also significant, particularly for PRS. This acquiescence was rarely unequivocal however, as CPRE's resistance to continued tree-felling in prime amenity areas in the latter stages of the war, and the inadequacies of restoration of land after its use for open-cast mining, show. As noted above [page reference] when organisations undertook outright opposition they did not secure any significant concessions. Organisations were more successful where they could make suggestions about alternative sites, as CPRE did on numerous occasions where agricultural land was in danger of being requisitioned by Defence Departments, or industry and business sought to consolidate their temporary locations in rural areas beyond the war-time period.

The war also had a transforming impact on the future direction of both CPRE and NT. War, or specifically, the need to be more self-sufficient in food, attached a strategic importance and economic value to land which had been absent since the First World War, which was entirely consistent with CPRE's aspirations for the development of rural areas. All four organisations instinctively and expressly supported the war effort, although for those with a capacity to do otherwise (i.e. all except PRS), not unquestioningly where war-related activities ran up against certain "red lines." The loss of land to the Defence Departments was to be opposed to a certain extent by CPRE if it led to the loss of agricultural land, opposed without hesitation by CPRE if it was in an area which had likely "national park" status, and opposed by NT if it affected their growing portfolio of land and buildings, itself an unplanned consequence of the war. Indeed, this war-time accumulation of property was the Trust's greatest war-time achievement, albeit an inadvertent one, and one that caused the Trust severe growing pains in the post-war period as it sought to reinvent itself as a more populist visitor-oriented amenity organisation. The CPRE grew in influence during the war, to the point, as we shall see in Chapter Five, where it was enlisted by government to act as a conduit between the State and civil society over the Defence Departments' ongoing needs for land in the emerging Cold War period.

NSAS and PRS did not have the same good war as CPRE and NT. NSAS did not succeed in its three-year opposition to the deliberate air pollution promoted by the Ministry for Home Security, but it was very quick to recognise the potential for achieving its aims and objectives through post-war reconstruction, and its standing increased both during and after the war amongst local government officers concerned with health and air quality. PRS was overwhelmed and exhausted by the war, filing all its evidence relating to war-related

pollution of rivers and streams until after it had finished, and when the war finished, narrowly avoided being folded up when both the Secretary and President expressed their wish to resign.¹³⁰

The next chapter will look briefly at the legacy of organisations' war-time policies and activities, using the example of CPRE to explore how war-time roles influenced post-war organisational development, and its relevance both in terms of the institutional history of the organisation and environmental history more generally.

¹³⁰ PRS EC Minutes 18/4/1946, (FL PRS1/1/1), p.162

CHAPTER FIVE

Legacy: The Historical Significance of Organisations' War-time Activity in the Post-War Period

This chapter will briefly consider several inter-related aspects of the issue of “legacy”: firstly, to what extent an organisation’s war-time policies and activities may have had an influence on its future development; secondly, whether this period of work can represent a particularly distinct or notable part of an organisation’s institutional history; thirdly, whether these activities exist in isolation, as an historical snapshot, or whether there is a degree of continuity between what the organisation thought then and now; and lastly, whether any issues arise from this consideration which could be of interest in the broader field of environmental history inquiry. In exploring this issue I will look solely at CPRE, due to the wealth of primary material that exists, including an interview that I conducted with Oliver Hilliam, CPRE’s current Senior Communications Officer, a member of staff of the organisation for the past 16 years. It is also, I have to acknowledge, beyond the scale of this dissertation to consider the remaining three organisations.

CPRE’s stock would appear to have been very high within the Defence Departments in the immediate post-war period, as a result of its engagement with these various government ministries over the course of the long war. In November 1946 CPRE was invited to arrange for the coordination and presentation to the Inter-Departmental Committee on Service Land Requirements all of the evidence which voluntary organisations throughout the country might wish to give regarding the effects of the Services’ post-war land proposals from the point of

view of amenity, archaeology, natural history and other scientific interests.¹ This led to CPRE having under review 433 cases in England covering 646,598 acres and CPRE Wales 55 cases, covering 111,742 acres, using confidential material supplied by the Defence Departments.² CPRE described it as having to work on: ‘an unprecedented scale and it is no exaggeration to say that it is at once the largest and the most formidable single subject with which, during this period, the Council has had to deal,³ and ‘a considerable number of proposals to which the CPRE or its branches took strong objection have been withdrawn.⁴

For CPRE, the long war period represented a significant degree of interest-convergence with the State, and its standing in government circles benefitted from the generally constructive dialogue which existed between CPRE and Defence Departments and other government ministries with land requisition needs. I would argue that this mid-to-late 1940s period represents a high water mark in the history of CPRE. The point to which CPRE had come, as a trusted intermediary between government and civil society, should be seen together with the passing of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act and in 1949 the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, which Janet C. Dwyer and Ian D. Hodge describe as the first and second major pieces of rural conservation legislation in Britain;⁵ both were major elements of CPRE policy, which coincided with the relative enthusiasm in political quarters for greater state intervention in industry, agriculture, housing, energy, transport, education and amenities as part of the post-war settlement; an enthusiasm that CPRE had been active in underpinning throughout the war. Further, if honours to individuals are at least to a certain

¹ CPRE Annual Report 1947, (Vol. XV, No.2), (MERL SR CPRE B/2/14), p.6

² Ibid, p.8

³ Ibid, p.6

⁴ Ibid, p.12

⁵ J.C. Dwyer and I.D. Hodge, *Countryside in Trust: land management by conservation, recreation and amenity organisations*, (John Wiley & Sons, 1996), pp.8-9

extent a reflection on the organisations with which they are most closely associated, Professor Abercrombie was knighted in the 1945 New Year Honours.⁶

Hilliam's considered view, as CPRE's senior member of staff responsible for the organisation's communications, is that 1937 to 1938 was a period of particular strength for CPRE because 'we were at full strength in terms of the Founder members being around,' and that the war accelerated the pace of change in CPRE's favour, with CPRE:

...necessarily...[having to]...be quite opportunistic because they hadn't quite reached their early goals of a fully democratic town and country planning system, national parks and green belts, so in 1937 and at the start of the war the founders saw the war as an opportunity to implement all those things as part of the reconstruction process...I think it showed quite a nimble organisation that could switch focus and be quite opportunistic to explore the potential for achieving our aims⁷

Given this, CPRE's war-time activities deliberately and directly contributed to the achieving of its mission in a period when change was much more on the agenda than in the inter-war period. The war, and the immediate post-war years, are now seen within the organisation today as representing a specific phase in the life of the organisation, after which the infra-structural needs of aspects of post-war reconstruction actually had a negative effect on the organisation from the late 1940s onwards; a case of the organisation being a victim of some of its own success. The resulting success, by the late 1940s, Hilliam feels, presented CPRE with the challenge to devise a new focus:

⁶ CPRE EC Minutes, 9/1/1945, (CPRE HQ archive)

⁷ Interview with Oliver Hilliam, CPRE Senior Communications Officer, 23 June 2017

it was no longer a visionary organisation...it became much more of a watchdog body which would oversee how the things that it had fought for were being implemented and being protected...1949 to 1990 is the more defensive phase in terms of getting the technicalities of the planning system right, and finessing the legislation that was being put in place, improving the quality, trying to stop the gains from being watered down⁸

The irony of this is that professional planners were required to service the machinery of the 1947 Act onwards, and a significant number came from CPRE's own ranks, to the apparent detriment of the organisation. In an interview given in 1989 by Max Nicholson, the former head of the Nature Conservancy during the 1950s, commented:

the whole planning profession was set up in...[the]...1947 Act and put an enormous burden on that handful of people to create the profession. All that was a loss to CPRE...it really almost cut the backbone out of CPRE⁹

The damage of this siphoning off of intellectual invention¹⁰ was compounded by, as Hilliam acknowledges, a definite dip in CPRE as the Founders died off,¹¹ something that Nicholson refers to rather bluntly in terms of the number of obituaries in CPRE's reports of the late 1950s.¹²

This increasing rural planning focus, with a regenerated agriculture at its core, is indicative of the convergence of interests that CPRE enjoyed with the State during the war-time period over the war-time investment in agriculture and re-orientation from pasture to arable farming. This convergence was dependent for its existence on the policy of CPRE at the time. Stephen

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Max Nicholson, interview, recorded 1989, (CPRE HQ archive)

¹⁰ Ibid, p.14

¹¹ Email from Oliver Hilliam/CPRE to the author, 20/6/2017

¹² Nicholson, p.14

Bocking asserts that ‘by the early 1940s, ecologists had concluded that most British plant and animal communities had been affected by human activities,’¹³ however, if there were ecologists amongst CPRE’s senior influential ranks who might have been troubled by the impact on bio-diversity of the radical transformation of agriculture during the war, then there is no evidence in the CPRE archives of their concern. CPRE would not have its own epiphany regarding the threat to bio-diversity by agriculture until the late 1960s, after Rachel Carson’s seminal *Silent Spring*¹⁴ saw ‘agriculture...restyled as an enemy of landscape and nature.’¹⁵

Would CPRE policy during war-time have been any different if it had possessed a greater appreciation of the impact of the agricultural development it was championing, on biodiversity and flora and fauna habitats more generally? Could it have led to the organisation being more in opposition to the State than it was? Hilliam suspects that his organisation’s agricultural policy during the war would not have been that much different even given the organisation’s campaigns on the importance of biodiversity and habitat in the present day:

I think that’s mainly because CPRE has such a strong focus on the national interest, so I suspect we would have conceded the overwhelming need to increase food production given the dire consequences if we hadn’t done that...[but] we [did not]... want to end up with Canadian-style prairie farming with huge machinery, huge fields, monocultures, so I think we would have tried to put in some kind of safeguards to prevent things spiralling...[out of control]... as we now know they did...we probably

¹³ S. Bocking, ‘Conserving Nature and Building a Science: British ecologists and the origins of the Nature Conservancy,’ *Science and nature: essays in the history of the environmental sciences* (1993), pp.89-114, p.98

¹⁴ R. Carson, *Silent Spring*, (Houghton Mifflin, 1962)

¹⁵ Matless, *Landscape*, p.378

would have insisted on hedgerow protection...we might have insisted on some protection for meadows and ponds...as unique characteristics of the countryside...and we might have...[proposed] field margins to protect wildlife.¹⁶

From this we can deduce that CPRE would have been more questioning and demanding during the long war with regard to some of the consequences of the agricultural transformation that occurred, but because of its patriotic association with the national interest there would not have been a major opposition to it. This suggests that whilst CPRE's specific policies have developed significantly over time, the organisation that produced the Saint George campaigning postcard in 1928 (p.53 above) is still readily identifiable today as the same organisation, its depth of patriotism still capable of accepting the importance of an overwhelming national interest over and above that of its founding aims and objectives; this latter point, reflecting on the extent of compromise by environmental organisations in response to broader national factors, is I would suggest of broader interest and relevance to the environmental history discipline.

It would be unwise to extrapolate from this whether the war-time policies and activities of the remaining three organisations in this dissertation represent a distinct phase in their institutional histories, or whether the consequences of their actions during the war had a subsequent impact on their post-war development, but the brief consideration of CPRE above indicates the potential value of such an investigation.

¹⁶ Hilliam, interview.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions

Whilst the academic discipline of environmental history is a growing one, the role of British civil society organisations concerned with the environment and rural landscape in the Twentieth Century has not been well served, either in scale or by the degree of rigorous academic analysis. This is particularly true with regard to the role of these organisations during the Second World War, a time when the environment and rural landscape within Britain were transformed by the State's preparations for and conduct of the war.

This dissertation argues that the organisations founded in the inter-war period owed their existence to the heightened sense of identification with the countryside that the First World War had generated, the subsequent disappointment in the inadequate role of the State in defending the rural environment against pollution and changes in land use, characterised by weak and compromised legislation that successive governments passed, and the need, borne out of a new-found professionalism that was characteristic of the period, to form more effective and collaborative methods of working. CPRE's policy in this inter-war period was characterised by a growth-focused approach to rural society centred around agricultural development, and its campaigning activity reflected a patriotic under-current. Both characteristics would be significant factors in the balance the organisation struck between supporting the subsequent Coalition Government's war effort and undertaking work in support of its aims and objectives.

The above work has documented the increasing levels of war preparations by the Government's Defence Departments and assessed that these placed sudden demands on both CPRE and NT, beginning in 1936 and lasting through into the immediate post-war period; what the dissertation terms "the long war". CPRE developed a set of criteria for dealing with Defence Department land requisitions requests which acted as a template for how it would respond to war-effort related demands on landscape throughout the forthcoming year. The dissertation has identified that central to CPRE's approach was a recognition of both the validity and necessity of the need for Defence Department war-time preparations, and the centrality of a rapid agricultural transformation to underpin the war effort; CPRE was able to accept the former because of its underlying patriotism, and the latter represented a very close convergence of interests. Furthermore, the dissertation has exposed, for the first time in an academic text, as far as I am aware, that through its lobbying efforts, crucially aided by a sympathetic and supportive Prime Minister Chamberlain, CPRE achieved for itself and NT a vital consultative mechanism for discussing government department land needs related to the war. This proved extremely resilient considering the pressures that war-time government was under. Thus we can see that CPRE and NT were strengthened at a time when their interests might have seemed most seriously challenged. Additionally, this discovery regarding Chamberlain's role has the potential to broaden our understanding of a major historical figure from the Twentieth Century.

The State's war effort demanded that all four organisations take positions on what environmental damage and changes to the rural landscape they had to acquiesce to, and what they were obliged to oppose. This work has shown that judgements across the organisations were made according to the centrality of the particular issue to the war effort, the centrality of the issue to the respective organisations' aims and objectives, whether there were viable

alternatives, and whether the organisations had the resources to oppose if they so wished.

The organisations did not challenge actions by the State where the direct defence of the nation was at stake, in the case of coastal defences, nor activities in direct support of the war effort such as munitions factories, the generation of sufficient timber, and open-cast mining, although exceptions were made with the prolonged duration of the war, in the case of the felling of woodland, and if agricultural development was diminished, in the case of open-cast mining land restoration.

The examination of issues that the four organisations opposed the State on identifies two key inter-related features of the organisations' relationship with the State. Firstly, a preparedness to oppose the Government on issues that organisations felt were "red line" issues, and secondly, that when these organisations set themselves in direct opposition to government they did not secure any significant concessions, as the issues were felt by the State to be centrally supportive to their conduct the war. Organisations were more successful where they could make alternative suggestions; this was most practically achievable on the subject of land use, suggesting other sites for consideration.

All four organisations showed a great concern for the development and implementation of post-war reconstruction plans from the earliest points at which they were actively discussed during the war, borne out of civil society's bitter experience of the post-First World War settlement. CPRE became a recognised stakeholder by government, although this did not prevent it from being ignored by government if the issue at stake was felt to be central to the war effort. The NT's activity was severely restricted given its legal and constitutional obligation to focus on property it owned, but it was nevertheless active in their defence, and arguably just as successfully as CPRE, but in a less public manner. NSAS sought to

ameliorate the impact of war-time industry on the atmosphere, particularly where it was done deliberately in the name of defence, but invested at least as much effort in seeking to position fuel efficiency as an integral part of the post-war reconstruction agenda. The consideration of PRS demonstrates it for the most part paralysed by a lack of capacity, but in principle judging that war-time inland water pollution issues could only be addressed in the post-war period.

Out of the four organisations, only CPRE could point to the war proving advantageous in terms of helping it to achieve its aims and objectives; war-time agricultural development transformed the value attached to land and provided what CPRE perceived to be a progressive force within the rural economy and society; furthermore, the political commitment to far-reaching post-war reconstruction delivered a network of national parks and a systematic approach to urban and rural land use planning, both also major planks of CPRE policy. It is also proposed that NT benefitted from the war too, not at a policy level, but instead inadvertently, through increasing its property holdings as a result of the deleterious effect of the war on the land and property-owning class.

This work concludes by disclosing that CPRE's long war activities are now seen by the organisation as representing a particularly successful phase of its institutional history; it also exposes that this proved problematic for CPRE as it sought to transition into a different post-war role, compounded by a loss of key honorary officers and members to the civil service, and a lack of succession planning. The dissertation concludes by arguing that there is a continuity of values between the CPRE of the war-time period and the CPRE of the Twenty-First Century.

Through its extensive and comprehensive use of manuscript sources this piece of work emphatically contradicts the unsubstantiated comments respectively made by Mandler and Wilt as to the status of CPRE in the 1930s and the level of activity of the organisation in the war-time period. More positively and progressively, the material in this dissertation has engaged with a large number of existing historiographies and contributes to their further development and expansion: the Second World War as a whole, inter-war and war-time civil society and the institutional histories of the four organisations focused on, the “Home Front,” the relationship between environment and war, the impact on domestic territory of a State waging war on and over foreign soil and seas, and the relationship between the notion of the rural idyll, patriotism and institutional duty.

Generally speaking, the popular historical narrative of the British Home Front during the Second World War is one of dogged resilience in the face of the fascist threat, and acquiescence in the name of patriotism to every aspect of the Government’s war effort.

Looking at the Second World War through the lens of environmental history has demonstrated that there were organisations that supported the war effort but also found ways of upholding their own interests in the face of it. The research is significant not only in establishing what kinds of activities were being undertaken in time of war, by organisations that we would now call “environmental”, but in its consideration of how both patriotic ideologies and pragmatic interests worked together to steer these organisations through the Second World War.

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