

## ***War Trauma among Belgian Refugee Women in Scotland in the First World War***

### **Abstract:**

This article analyses the evidence for war trauma suffered by First World War Belgian female refugee civilians using a range of primary sources which describe the period of their residence in Scotland. Evidence of such war trauma is explored by analysing the descriptions of symptoms and applicant behaviour for a cohort of case studies of women (and several children and men) which have been constructed from the detailed personal information provided in Poor Law admission registers and patient case notes from psychiatric and general hospital stays. The individual case histories discussed are considered in relation to internationally recognised definitions of war trauma. The article places the original primary source findings in the context of the vast traditional historiography on 'shell shock' and the more recent writing on female civilians in war. This article sheds fresh light on historical debates about human security in the First World War, gender issues in war, understandings of war trauma, and family life on the home front.

**Key words:** Belgian refugees, First World War, war trauma, civilians, poor law, asylums

### ***Introduction***

This study provides an original and pioneering analysis of civilian war trauma by focusing on evidence of the trauma experienced by a cohort among the 19,000 Belgian refugees living in Scotland. The Scottish settlement represented around 8 per cent of the 240,000 civilian Belgian refugees, who had fled to Britain during the First World War.<sup>1</sup> This research sheds fresh light on historical debates about human security in the First World War, understandings of war trauma, gender issues in war, and family life on the home front. To set up these themes, this introduction discusses in brief key relevant secondary literature on the topics of displaced Belgian civilians, war trauma and gender, and wartime atrocities.

There is limited historiographical coverage of civilian war trauma. Proctor discusses this topic in generalised terms in her broad study of transnational civilian experiences in the

war as she addresses the question of what it meant to be a civilian in the First World War.<sup>2</sup> Poynter has looked at trauma suffered by female civilian nurses at the front as part of her thesis, which uses nurses' pension and medical tribunal records to challenge the view that 'shell shock' was a purely masculine affliction.<sup>3</sup> Grayzel has considered trauma experienced by civilians in air raids as part of her study of both World Wars which sets an 'equivalency between soldiers and civilians and between home front and front line'.<sup>4</sup> The limited references to civilian trauma in broader works are far outweighed by studies of war neurosis as experienced by male combatants.<sup>5</sup> Loughran has referred to this as a 'historical blind spot around female war trauma', which has only recently begun to be addressed by studies such as those indicated above.<sup>6</sup> It is the contention of this article that a 'blind spot' remains in the historiography which this article seeks to address by the consideration of war trauma among Belgian civilian refugees.

In terms of human security, this article explores the lives of a group of wartime civilian refugees, who fled from Belgium to Britain and were diagnosed with mental illnesses related to their traumatic wartime experience. While most came straight to Britain, others reached Britain after a period in exile in the Netherlands and France. Amara's study of the living and working conditions and local reception of the wartime diaspora of Belgians in Britain, France, and the Netherlands, touches briefly on the topic of trauma suffered by Belgian refugees. Amara points out that exile constitutes a trauma in itself for a displaced population.<sup>7</sup> While Amara notes that this displacement affected all social classes, he does not develop this point or consider how differently trauma may have affected women, men and children.<sup>8</sup> Kushner and Knox's broad study of refugees in the twentieth century considers the reception of Belgian refugees and their initial settlement in camps in Britain. Kushner also wrote an earlier article focusing on local responses to Belgian refugees in Hampshire, discussing how the enthusiastic welcome gradually dissipated.<sup>9</sup> Purseigle has explored the

reception of Belgian refugees as a symbol of Britain's stand against German aggression as part of his exploration of how the displacement of refugees changed the character of war in western Europe.<sup>10</sup> Most recently, a chapter by Amara included in Gatrell and Zvhanko's edited volume on refugees during the Great War focuses on painting a broad picture of Belgian refugee settlement, employment and eventual repatriation.<sup>11</sup> Among mainstream scholarship of the First World War, Pennell's work on popular responses to the outbreak of the war in Britain and Ireland is exceptional in its consideration of Belgian refugees. Pennell discussed the displacement of Belgians from their country and their dispersal around the United Kingdom as they found homes with a wide range of Britons who were sympathetic to their plight.<sup>12</sup>

With the exception of Kushner's 1999 article, the works mentioned have tended to discuss Belgians in Britain as one of several refugee and migrant groups.<sup>13</sup> The only full-length study of First World War Belgian refugees published in English is Cahalan's *Belgian Refugee Relief in England during the Great War* (1982). Cahalan has focussed on middle-class philanthropic assistance for refugees provided by the War Refugees Committee (WRC) rather than on the Belgian refugees themselves.<sup>14</sup> The book suggests that the work carried out by the WRC was the pinnacle of Britain's wartime humanitarian and charitable action.<sup>15</sup> Only recently has the reception and treatment of Belgian refugees in wartime Britain been given detailed consideration. A special edition of the journal *Immigrants & Minorities* (2016) has looked at local responses to refugee settlement in all four nations of the United Kingdom and the journal has also recently published an article by Ewence on Cheshire, which focuses on Belgians as a symbol of the totality of war as 'silent representatives of the trauma of displacement, exile and homelessness'.<sup>16</sup> However, these works have not considered the trauma displayed by individual refugees while in Britain.

The following analysis of Belgian civilian refugee defines the term ‘war trauma’ as the psychological impact of war. It views the trauma experienced by First World War Belgian civilian refugees via the prism of the diagnostic features of modern day post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), outlined by the European Society for Traumatic Stress Studies.<sup>17</sup> These diagnostic features are shared with and were first identified in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. These have been updated over time. In summary, key diagnostic features include: ‘The person was exposed to traumatic stressors including witnessing death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence, ‘the traumatic event is persistently re-experienced’, for example via flashbacks or nightmares; post trauma negative feelings and thoughts develop such as an ‘exaggerated sense of blame of self or others’, a ‘sense of a foreshortened future’; and emotional numbing such as feeling isolated, detached and estranged.<sup>18</sup> Other symptoms include hyper-vigilance, aggression, irritability and sleeplessness; symptoms are of long duration and can emerge years after the event.<sup>19</sup> A wartime study identified similar psychological disorders among refugees and highlighted symptoms of anxiety, fatigue, phobias and depressive states.<sup>20</sup> In the following, descriptions of applicant behaviour and symptoms in Poor Law admission registers and psychiatric hospital patient case notes will be examined in relation to the symptoms of PTSD mentioned above.

It is important to draw a distinction between civilian war trauma and the convenient catch-all term ‘shell shock’, not simply due to the latter’s association with military men on First World War battlefields. The inadequacy of the description was acknowledged at the time. For example, Reid has noted that the term ‘shell shock’ was scrupulously avoided by the Ex-Services’ Welfare Society (ESWS), set up in 1919 to help British veterans who had been confined to psychiatric hospitals.<sup>21</sup> Loughran has indicated that the expression ‘shell

shock' was an amorphous wartime medical construct applying 'timeless manifestations of trauma' to a specific wartime situation.<sup>22</sup> Further evidence of the imprecise nature of the term comes from the association of 'shell shock' with feminine weakness. This understanding of 'shell shock' is associated with Showalter's 1980s work the *Female Malady*.<sup>23</sup> Loughran states that Showalter's gendered image of shell shock was 'implicitly accepted and therefore not resisted or challenged' by historians.<sup>24</sup> For example, Binneveld, adopting a similar approach as Showalter's, has argued that 'shell shock' in the Great War reflected on gender issues only in so far as it was considered a 'hysterical' response to war.<sup>25</sup> In this traditional approach, hysteria is identified as a condition which First World War psychiatrists most associated with women.<sup>26</sup> Hence those male combatants experiencing shell shock were emasculated by displaying a form of mental disturbance associated with women. Loughran's argument is that 'this influential interpretation of shell-shock was embedded within historiographical narratives of the First World War as fundamentally transformative in its social and cultural effects, in ways which were absolutely different for women and men'.<sup>27</sup> More recent writing on women's experiences of the First World War has revised views on the ways women on the battlefield were affected by war trauma. Poynter has argued that female nurses should be included in the category of trauma sufferers from the Great War since their deployment in conflict zones meant they treated soldiers suffering from such trauma and experienced it themselves.<sup>28</sup> Acton and Potter in their study of psychological trauma among medical personnel in warzones throughout the twentieth century note the recording of 'strain' in personal accounts by nurses in the First World War.<sup>29</sup> Reid's study of the records of the post-war ESWS mentions that some 73 female ex-service nurses were in psychiatric hospitals in Britain in 1923.<sup>30</sup> Nursing historian Hallet, however, has suggested that wartime nurses had to cope with their own war stresses while treating those of their patients' and that they effectively 'contained' trauma. According to Hallet, emotional self-containment was part of

nursing work.<sup>31</sup> Accounts of UK nurses suffering from war trauma echo those of nurses elsewhere. For example, using autobiographical accounts of nurses in the Austro-Hungarian forces Hammerle has shown that these women too encountered trauma and psychological problems as result of their war service.<sup>32</sup>

Battlefield trauma among military and nursing personnel of both genders was different from the experiences endured by civilians but the impact of the war was no less traumatic on civilians. Proctor's work on the effects of the First World War on civilians recorded an estimated six million civilian deaths as a direct result of the war, adding 'many more faced loss of health, mind and property in the course of the conflict'.<sup>33</sup> Grayzel has indicated that with the advent of aerial warfare, civilians suffered war neuroses after witnessing air raids. In July 1917, a *Lancet* article 'Air Raid Psychology' indicated that for certain individuals on the home front their 'state of nervous fear is not far removed from the 'shell shock' of the firing line'.<sup>34</sup> In Germany also, cases of war trauma were recorded among women and children following British bombing attacks on civilian targets in 1916, as Lerner has noted.<sup>35</sup>

In the first weeks of the war, the suffering of civilians in German-occupied Belgium was much reported in the media and official British government statements. These reports emphasised the distress of women and children, partly serving as a propaganda tool to bolster Britain's moral outrage at German war actions.<sup>36</sup> Examples of this include the emotive term the 'rape' of Belgium, used to describe the German invasion and subsequent atrocities inflicted on the civilian population, yet the vast majority of the casualties were male.<sup>37</sup> Irrespective of this fact, 'poor little Belgium' was invariably portrayed as female in war propaganda. For example, military recruiting posters, including the British Army's recruiting poster of 1915 'Remember Belgium – Enlist Today', portrayed Belgium as a defenceless

woman, escaping with her small children in tow from her burning house as German troops stood menacingly nearby.<sup>38</sup> Historians of British propaganda, including Haste and Messenger, have discussed the use of atrocity tales but their main focus has been on the apparent exaggeration of such stories as a consequence of the flawed methodology of the British government investigation into German war activity, the *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages* (more commonly known as the Bryce Report after its chairperson Viscount James Bryce).<sup>39</sup> Published in May 1915, this enquiry was based on witness testimony.<sup>40</sup> The printing of hearsay provided by some witnesses, none of whom were under oath, has been viewed as rendering the whole report unreliable. As Gullace has indicated, this evidence was soon discredited and led to the ‘erasure’ of Belgian civilian victims of the German invasion from the history of the First World War until fresh research into the Report undertaken at the beginning of the twenty-first century.<sup>41</sup> This erasure of the civilian casualties from the narrative is well illustrated in the only full-length English-language account of Belgian refugee settlement in Britain by Cahalan, who has commented that ‘the great weight of evidence’ of the Bryce Report has to be treated with a ‘healthy scepticism’ before adding: ‘It is true that many refugees died soon after reaching England as the records of local committees indicate, but these were almost invariably old people, young children, babies and nursing mothers. Few if any could be found who had been mutilated or physically abused’.<sup>42</sup> As a corrective to this previously widely accepted view that the Bryce Report suffered from gross exaggeration, Horne and Kramer in 2001 published a comprehensive investigation of the events recorded in the Report and concluded that the explanation of the ‘bigger incidents was broadly correct’ while conceding that some of the witness accounts of the killing of women and children were unsubstantiated, sliding from ‘the factual to the symbolic’.<sup>43</sup>

By focussing on the presentation of evidence for propaganda purposes in the Bryce Report, historians have masked the mass killings of civilians during the German invasion of neutral Belgium. The invading German forces killed around 5,500 Belgians and 1,000 French civilians. Most of the killings took place between 5 and 31 August 1914.<sup>44</sup> Civilian killings continued between August and October 1914, as the German offensive sought to break through Belgian military defences.<sup>45</sup> The murder of civilians left fleeing refugee families traumatised by witnessing or hearing of the violent death of, in particular, male loved ones and neighbours.<sup>46</sup>

Most Belgian civilians fled in October 1914, after a bombing campaign led to the fall and subsequent German occupation of the city of Antwerp and the occupation of Ostend. Over 1.5 million people from a population of 7.6 million fled their homes following the German invasion. About 1 million moved to the Netherlands, some 325,000 fled to France, and around 240,000, found long-term refuge in Britain.<sup>47</sup> Many had to leave in such haste that they did not even put their shoes on. Among the women arriving in Glasgow, some were still wearing the apron they had on when they left their homes.<sup>48</sup>

Despite allegations of uncritical usage of witness evidence for propaganda purposes in summarising the evidence of multiple witness accounts, the 1915 *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages* highlighted the overwrought emotional state of the interviewees, by referring to the war trauma and mental disorder they suffered. ‘Hysteria’ and ‘over stressed emotions’ were identified among the interviewees, many of them were refugees settled in Britain and who had provided eye witness accounts and case histories of events following the German invasion.<sup>49</sup> The *Report* concluded that massacres of civilians were deliberate, organised, and widespread and that children had in some cases been used as human shields. And added that ‘in the conduct of the war generally, innocent civilians, both



men and women, were murdered in large numbers, women violated, and children murdered'.<sup>50</sup>

Newspaper accounts of the period echoed the findings of the Bryce Report. The *Manchester Guardian* reported eye witness accounts of traumatic events described by refugees arriving in the city. For example, a report of 23 September 1914 provided a first-hand account of a massacre of men in Liège. Madame Beylos described a mass execution which closely matched the eyewitness accounts collated in the Bryce Report, in which men and boys of the town were lined up against a wall, while their wives and children were placed opposite. While the men were shot, the women were told not to cry. Several men were not just shot but also bayoneted. Beylos mentioned that she had seen some 37 men and boys being shot.<sup>51</sup> Horne and Kramer's investigations of atrocities by the German army in 1914 provide an almost identical account of these traumatic events: 'male victims were selected and shot in a field in front of women and children. The execution squad bayoneted the bodies to ensure that no one survived'.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile in Scotland, a local newspaper report for the Lanarkshire town of Uddingston, where 44 refugees, all women and children, were housed in the local Viewpark Home, recounted the escape stories of several inhabitants. One of these was by a woman, who 'had seen her relatives and neighbours – peaceful unoffending citizens – shot down and murdered in cold blood while she escaped by a miracle with hardly clothing enough to cover her'.<sup>53</sup>

### *Methodology and Sources*

Having outlined the key areas of historiographical debate reflecting on the subject of civilian war trauma, the remainder of this article addresses the historical 'blind spot' of war trauma among female civilian refugees. It does this by using quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore instances of war trauma among a sample of Belgian refugees in Glasgow. It

incorporates evidence on individuals provided in Poor Law and hospital records and in the Belgian refugee registers of the Glasgow Corporation Belgian Refugee Committee.

The Glasgow Corporation Belgian Refugee Committee housed and financially supported around 19,000 Belgian refugees, who came to live in Scotland. The Glasgow Corporation committee was assisted by around 150 local Scottish committees which it also financially relieved when their funds ran low. The handful of Glasgow councillors who constituted the committee became the administrators of Belgian refugee relief for Scotland as a whole. This initiative by the Glasgow Corporation was undertaken with the full agreement of the Local Government Board which from September 1914 administered central support for refugees in England and Wales.<sup>54</sup> Throughout the war years, the Glasgow Corporation committee raised money from across Scotland via fund raising schemes, such as donation cards for school children, permanent coin collection boxes at railway stations, and one-off fund raising events such as football matches. It also received regular public donations via monthly subscriptions from individuals, businesses, churches and trade unions.<sup>55</sup>

Because the Glasgow local authority administered most of the support to Belgian refugees in Scotland, extensive primary sources relating to their experiences are located in the city. These include original (and now digitised) registers of Belgian refugees in Glasgow City Archives, which detail over 8,200 of the 19,000 Belgian refugees who settled in Scotland.<sup>56</sup> Belgian refugees were also sent to neighbouring towns around Glasgow. A typical town welcoming refugees was Paisley, in Renfrewshire, where a total of 738 refugees were 'dealt with', according to the surviving minutes of the Paisley Belgian Relief Committee 1914 - 1919.<sup>57</sup> In addition to these materials, 66 individual cases of Belgian refugees, who applied for poor relief in Glasgow, have been identified in Poor Law records. Additional information on registration in Britain and on change of circumstance and address for several of the 66

refugee Poor Law case studies was obtained from records in the Central Register of War Refugees, 1914-1919 held at the National Archives of Belgium in Brussels. Together, this wide range of original, predominantly qualitative sources provide family, employment, residential, religious affiliation, and many other personal details of this exiled group.

Many of the Belgian refugees who applied for Poor Law assistance, particularly female refugees, were traumatised by their war experiences. This will be demonstrated using the combined evidence of hospital and asylum admission and case notes for refugees, the detailed description of their circumstances set out in Poor Law applications, plus information from the Glasgow Corporation Belgian refugee registers.<sup>58</sup> It is especially from Poor Law applications that the main qualitative information on Belgian refugee war trauma has been obtained. Belgian applicants during the war years were identified via a searchable computerised index of individual Glasgow Poor Law claimants, which can be searched by name, year of application and place of birth. A search of 'Belgium' as birthplace led to the identification of 66 Belgian civilian refugees who claimed poor relief in Glasgow in the war years (some on more than one occasion).<sup>59</sup> Belgians of long-term residence, who were not wartime refugees were excluded, such as needle worker Cecilia Lambert, aged 42, who applied for poor relief in 1922 but had come to Britain in 1885 with her family when she was aged 5.<sup>60</sup>

The detailed applications found in the bound Poor Law volumes are an ideal source for tracing evidence of war trauma among Belgian refugees. The applications (some running to several pages) list the nature of medical complaint and symptoms (or in other cases, reason for destitution or circumstances of desertion) as well as details of the applicant's personal circumstances, including occupation, age, religion, marital status, place of birth, arrival date, current address, health and ability, names and occupations of spouse and parents, (whether

living or dead), children's ages and their place of birth and occupations, ending with how the applicant was 'disposed of' and date of that action. Applications from Belgian refugees were marked with red ink at the top of the page and 'insane' was also usually written in capital letters at the top of the first page of the application in cases where applicants were diagnosed with psychiatric illness. Additional information was provided on second and subsequent pages, including any notes from certifying doctors. Later insertions were made to each individual's record for changes in circumstances, such as a transfer from observation wards in general hospitals to psychiatric hospitals. All payments made by the family towards the costs of the individual's upkeep were also entered as were date of, and condition on, exit from the institution, or date of death.

Admission and case history records from various general and psychiatric hospitals in Glasgow and its surrounding area, including Poor Law medical institutions, have also been linked to individual Poor Law applicants to uncover evidence as to how far those diagnosed as 'insane' among this cohort of Belgian refugees had symptoms associated with war trauma. The relevant records for the following hospitals have been consulted: Glasgow's Western District hospital, Gartloch asylum (the city of Glasgow district asylum for 'pauper lunatics'), Woodilee asylum (the Glasgow Barony district asylum), and Hawkhead asylum (Govan district asylum).<sup>61</sup> In cases where no hospital records survive, the Poor Law records have provided some insights into trauma because of the medical diagnosis and particulars of the personal history at the time of application as well as updated information discussed above. This is helpful in particular for the nine cases of 'insanity' among Belgian refugee Poor Law applicants, who were sent to Glasgow's Eastern District hospital, since the records of this local authority hospital have not survived for the period of the First World War.

*War trauma as evidenced through Belgian refugee Poor Relief applications and asylum case notes*

Belgian refugee applicants for Poor Relief ranged in age, background and circumstance. Reasons given for application for relief by Belgian refugees included common non-medical causes, such as desertion. There were five such cases of desertion among Belgian refugee applications, with women and children, (and sometimes children on their own following death of the mother) left unsupported. Chronic illness prompted eight applications. Illnesses included bronchitis, tuberculosis and rheumatism. The minutes of the Paisley Committee for Belgian Refugees similarly noted that ‘most of the refugees find our climate exceedingly trying and many of them suffer very much from rheumatism, bronchitis and similar ailments’.<sup>62</sup>

In cases where refugees were certified ‘insane’ and sent to a psychiatric hospital or admitted to a parish hospital, or where they were admitted to clinics following a diagnosis with tuberculosis, local authorities paid for their upkeep, re-claiming this money from the Local Government Board for Scotland, which in turn was refunded all such costs by the central Local Government Board in London.<sup>63</sup> However, in cases where family members earned steady wages, the Poor Law authorities sought weekly payment for the upkeep of those refugees admitted to general or psychiatric hospital care.

A notable difference among Belgian refugee and local British applicants for poor relief was the limited numbers of refugees described as ‘destitute’. Three of the Belgian refugees (4.5 per cent) were described as destitute compared to nine cases of destitution of a control sample of 90 Glasgow poor law applications (10 per cent). This may well have been due to the ongoing support, both financial and in-kind, provided by the Glasgow Corporation Belgian Refugee Committee. The control sample for this study was created by selecting every

tenth application for random months in each of the war years, (each volume of poor law applications covers approximately 150 applicants), plus a sample month for the district of Govan (which although by then part of Glasgow still maintained its own poor law system in this period). The control sample included 46 female and 44 males, and of these 7 were children.<sup>64</sup>

Glasgow Poor Law applications from Belgian refugees provide individual examples of war trauma suffered by the refugees drawn from the cohort of 66 applications for assistance during the wartime period (two of the applicants sought assistance on two separate occasions). Of this group, 37 were females and 29 males, and 8 of the applicants were children. Diagnosed mental disorder among Belgian refugee poor law applicants was virtually double that of the control group of local British applicants. Some 23 of the 66 Belgian refugee applicants, (34.8 per cent), 16 females and seven males, were diagnosed with psychiatric disorders. The control sample of wartime Glasgow Poor Law applicants showed that among 90 applicants, 16 (nine women and seven men) were identified as having a psychiatric disorder, 17.8 per cent of the sample.<sup>65</sup>

That there were more female than male refugees diagnosed as 'insane' in the Poor Law records of Glasgow, both among Belgian refugees and among the more general population, is not surprising since women were the major recipients of poor relief. Thane has shown that there were more female poor law applicants than male throughout its history from the creation of the New Poor Law in England in 1834.<sup>66</sup> Thane additionally used a 1914 multi-agency report which demonstrated that women were more prone to chronic illness and took longer to recover than men.<sup>67</sup> Moreover 'insanity' diagnoses among paupers were on the increase and by the end of the nineteenth century, 91 per cent of psychiatric hospital patients were paupers.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, Showalter has shown that by the mid-nineteenth century, there

were more women than men in psychiatric hospitals and this remained the case as the psychiatric hospital population itself grew in the Victorian period.<sup>69</sup>

The individual case histories considered in this article point to war trauma suffered among Belgian refugees. While there is no mention of violence against the applicants by German invasion forces or of their witnessing direct violence against others, the Poor Law ‘particulars of settlement’, which describe the context of the applicant’s circumstances in detail, when added to psychiatric hospital case notes, often link their diagnosed mental disorders explicitly or implicitly to their war experience. They also show that many of the Belgian refugees in this sample diagnosed as ‘insane’, demonstrated symptoms that match the criteria used to identify PTSD, including nightmares, flashbacks, self-blame or blaming others for their depression; isolation, aggression, sleeplessness, emotional numbing, hyper-vigilance and a sense of a foreshortened future. Finally, symptoms were of long duration.

A comment to note at this point is that the following medical diagnoses may not have been wholly accurate. It is worth considering whether those recorded as ‘paranoid’ and ‘delusional’ in the case studies that follow may have been neither and it may be the case that their understandable grief, fear and trauma were compounded by indifference or hostility among the local population, who may have marginalised them or even on hearing them speaking Dutch may have misidentified them as ‘German’. In support of this point Amara has suggested that refugees were ‘regularly arrested by policemen who thought they were speaking German’.<sup>70</sup> However, in the absence of alternative evidence, the case histories which follow are analysed based on how they were recorded in Poor law and hospital records.

Angele Vrebos, aged 24, fled to Britain with her sister Gabrielle from Kortenbergh, some 13 kilometres from the Catholic university town of Leuven (Louvain) where 248 civilians were killed and over 2,000 buildings destroyed during the German invasion.<sup>71</sup>

Vreboš was recommended to the Poor Law authorities for a medical assessment by Alexander Walker, Treasurer of Glasgow Corporation Belgian Refugee Committee on 20 September 1915. This set a pattern for the intervention of Glasgow committee officials acting to secure welfare and medical assistance to refugees, who came under their protection. Vreboš was admitted to Eastern District hospital mental observation ward on 29 September 1915 and remained there till released on 29 February 1916. She was returned to hospital 3 days later on 3 March 1916 and on 7 March was transferred to Gartloch asylum.<sup>72</sup> Her transfer notes include an assessment of her time in Eastern District hospital, which indicate symptoms of war trauma:

When came to England from Belgium two years ago felt very lonely and would not take an interest in anything. Slept very badly at night and frequently had nightmares. Did not seem able to concentrate her attention on anything. Got much worse when came to Glasgow. Father and mother dead. [Illeg.].<sup>73</sup>

Vreboš' early case notes also describe her as appearing to listen to voices, and note she always spoke with the bedclothes covering her mouth. Over time, Vreboš was often sedated due to her 'troublesome' nature and moved around the wards. Later notes were shorter though it was recorded that she often complained that her heart felt weak.<sup>74</sup> Vreboš was never released and died aged 26 in July 1918. The register of deaths gave cause of death as exhaustion from chronic mania and sudden cardiac failure. She had been at Gartloch asylum for 2 years and 4 months.<sup>75</sup>

Celine Debroven a widow aged 51, was born and had resided in Dendermonde (Termonde), a city badly burnt out by German invasion forces in September 1914.<sup>76</sup> Following her certification as insane, Debroven's form of mental disorder was recorded as 'war anxiety'.<sup>77</sup> Debroven was a widow, whose husband had died in 1913. She came to



Glasgow in February 1915 with one of her daughters, Maria Heyndricx, 16, who was later employed as a clerk with the Catholic *Glasgow Observer* newspaper.<sup>78</sup> Like Vrebos, Debroven was brought to the attention of the Poor Law authorities by the Glasgow Corporation Belgian Refugee Committee. Following observation at the Eastern District Poor Law hospital she was sent to Woodilee asylum on 8 May 1916.<sup>79</sup> Her psychiatric hospital case notes indicated that she had been ill for months and had attempted suicide three times. She also thought a man was trying to kill her and that he had already killed someone. Although she had three children, only her daughter Maria had accompanied her from Dendermonde. Throughout her stay, her case notes recorded a pattern of 'delusional' behaviour characterised by the belief that she could hear and see her daughter. The last entry report on her condition in October 1918 noted that 'her delusions remain'.<sup>80</sup> Her daughter Maria also spent a short time in hospital in Lanark in a hospital operated by the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in 1917 although there is no record of what she was treated for.<sup>81</sup> On 7 May 1919, Debroven was removed from Woodilee asylum and taken under the authority of the Belgian Medical Mission (Commandement de Groupement Régional du Service de Santé).<sup>82</sup>

Debroven's period of care in Glasgow was terminated as British responsibility and support for Belgian refugees was brought to an end in the months after the Armistice. Post-war repatriation arrangements for Belgian refugees were swiftly executed by the Local Government Board for most of Britain in late 1918 and early 1919, utilising plans in place since 1917. The Glasgow Committee's remit over Belgian refugees in Scotland extended to repatriation.<sup>83</sup> Following the end of the war, repatriation of Belgian refugees was soon put into operation. The first contingent of repatriated Belgians left Glasgow on 1 December and there were another two sailings in December and January, amounting to 2,846 people.<sup>84</sup> A further group left in March and in April 1919 Glasgow Corporation Belgian Refugee

Committee reported that of close to 20,000 refugees who spent time in Scotland only 480 remained.<sup>85</sup>

In Paisley, Aldegonda Johanna Kroot, aged 36, was removed to Paisley District asylum following a diagnosis of insanity on 2 December 1918. Her illness prevented her husband, Pierre De Boeck attending his work as a foundry labourer. They had two children, Pierre, aged 6, and born in Belgium (with no record of the town) and Leonard, aged 3, born in Paisley. Aldegonda was subsequently discharged on 4 January 1919. Paisley Poor Law records do not contain the same details as Glasgow records and no reason for discharge is given in this instance, but it is likely, given the date, that her release was to allow for her repatriation to Belgium.<sup>86</sup>

Annie Dauw was diagnosed with paranoia brought on by ‘worry and stress’ and was admitted to Govan district asylum in March 1917. Comments on her mental state on admission note that she was suicidal and included: ‘says people make fun of her in the shops... she has had a lot of trouble about the house and clothes, etc. She appears to be in reduced circumstances compared with her life at home in Belgium, and it has taken its toll on her’.<sup>87</sup> Dauw came from Leuven (Louvain) which, as has been noted, had witnessed mass shootings of civilians and widespread destruction by German invasion forces. The *Committee on German Outrages* of 1915 recorded that: ‘On the 26<sup>th</sup> [August 1914] (Wednesday) in the city of Louvain, massacres, fire and destruction went on. The University, with its library, the church of St. Peter, and many houses were set on fire and burnt to the ground. Citizens were shot and others taken prisoner and compelled to go with troops’.<sup>88</sup> Dauw’s case notes mention she was afraid and recorded that ‘her husband says that on Sunday she rushed home from church fearing that someone was murdering him’.<sup>89</sup> A few days later it was noted that she was constantly praying ‘as if her last day had come’ and that she spoke of ‘some man as

her enemy'. A later entry on 2 April recorded that she was depressed 'by ideas that her husband and children were dead'.<sup>90</sup> These symptoms and behaviour patterns indicate that Dauw was suffering from war trauma. Dauw was discharged on 28 April 1917 as her condition had stabilised.

Dauw's state of ill health was identified in 1917 and it may be her trauma emerged years after the event, a common feature of PTSD. Similarly, Roselina Van Engelgom, aged 22, had been in Britain for three years before her diagnosis of 'insanity'. Her case notes describe her as depressed and delusional, restless and sensitive, foolish and insane: 'She has delusions of persecution and imagines that people say she is a German'. A servant in Brussels, she was employed in a chocolate factory at the time of certification but had worked in a munitions factory until six months before her admission to Gartloch asylum. Her notes record continued 'delusions' throughout summer 1917, although by early autumn she was 'much brighter' and was discharged recovered on 10 October 1917.<sup>91</sup>

Jeanette Bastiansen, aged 24, had been pregnant on arrival following her flight from the village Arendonk in October 1914 and had given birth to a boy, Albert, in Glasgow's Maternity hospital in December 1914. Bastiansen's husband, Frans Verholen, was a soldier in the Belgian army. Bastiansen was originally brought to the attention of the parish by Glasgow Corporation's Belgian Refugee Committee in February 1915, at a time when both her children, baby Albert and two-year-old Leon, were living with her. After observation, she was released to the care of representatives of the Belgian Refugee Committee. However, the following month, Bastiansen was certified insane when she threatened to kill the children of two other Belgian families, after saying these children had given her son Leon measles, which had a high mortality rate and as a notifiable disease with potential for an epidemic outbreak may have led to his being sent back from Glasgow to Belgium. The refugee families

involved were staying together in Glasgow Corporation's family home in St Andrews Street in the city. Bastiansen was sent to Eastern District hospital's psychiatric observation ward.<sup>92</sup> The aggression and blaming of others evident in her case notes also indicate that Bastiansen was suffering from war trauma.

Bastiansen's trauma included separation from her child, following childbirth in Britain. Hers was by no means an isolated occurrence of loss of children and childbirth in Britain. On 20 February 1915, the *Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette* reported that among its latest 150 refugee arrivals: 'six of the little ones have died from diseases contracted in concentration depots in Holland and London. There have been four births among the Belgians during the last fortnight'.<sup>93</sup> Meanwhile, the *Blackpool Times* in January 1915 reported the birth of a baby to an unidentified Belgian refugee mother in one of the town's Belgian homes adding that:

The mother had passed through some cruel and trying experiences on account of the war. She was first of all driven from home, and sailed from Ostend to Calais on the refugee steamer that was torpedoed and sunk – On arriving in England she had to leave one little child in London for health reasons, but it is satisfactory to know that this child, as well as the more recent arrival is now doing well.<sup>94</sup>

Among Belgians fleeing German violence demonstrations of war trauma were varied. An extreme, but not uncommon reaction based on the case studies included in this study, was suicide and attempted suicide. Suicide by drowning was recorded both in Belgium and among exiled Belgians in Scotland. It should be noted that attempted suicide was not illegal in Scotland, unlike England and Wales where attempted suicide remained an offence (albeit prosecuted in a small number of cases each year) until 1961.<sup>95</sup> The majority of Belgian refugees were Roman Catholics and in the Church's teaching, 'self murder' alongside the

taking of any life, is a sin. However, if a person was mentally disturbed at the time of the suicide or attempted suicide then this was not regarded as a 'mortal sin'.<sup>96</sup> In the examples which follow it appears that psychiatric disturbance as a result of wartime trauma was in evidence.

In Aarschot, 156 civilians were executed between 19 August and 2 September 1914.<sup>97</sup> Later, a woman whose husband was among those murdered, tried to kill herself and her four children by drowning. She threw her baby in the river but the older children prevented her from taking any further actions.<sup>98</sup> A similar pattern of attempted suicide (by drowning) was evident among Belgian refugee poor relief applicants in Glasgow. It has already been noted that Annie Dauw had attempted suicide three times, although no mention was made of the method she had employed.

Marie Mols, from bombed-out Antwerp, had arrived in Scotland in July 1915 accompanied by her three children Jacobus, 10, Frans, 3 and Marie, 2. She was sent to stay in the Argyllshire coastal village of Tighnabruaich with a local resident, Mrs Millar. Mols, aged 32, was married to a Belgian soldier who was stationed in France, Pierre Fret. By September, Mrs Millar returned the family to the care of Glasgow Corporation Belgian Refugee Committee due to Mols's repeated attempts to drown herself. Mols was sent for observation to the Eastern District hospital psychiatric ward on 3 September and was allowed to keep her children with her. Her doctor reported to the Poor Law authorities that she would be 'alright in a week's time' and she left for London on 14 September 1915.<sup>99</sup>

In August 1917, Theresa Van Gael, aged 41, jumped into the river Kelvin with her eight-week-old son Andrew John, who had been born in Glasgow. The family also consisted of husband Louis Flurackers, a woodcarver employed by the Belgian consul, and three other children aged 15, 12 and 8. They had fled Mechelen and come to Glasgow in 1916.

Diagnosed with ‘mental confusion’, Van Gael was admitted to the psychiatric observation ward of Eastern District hospital on 4 August 1917, where she stayed only four days before she left ‘cured’, removed by friends who came to take the family to Nottingham with them.<sup>100</sup>

Another case of attempted suicide by drowning was recorded in the press in October 1916. Marie Vauden Bressincke, aged 49, had a sick ‘little boy’ in hospital. Two older sons were in the Belgian army. She had recently received a postcard from one son saying he had been taken prisoner by the Germans and was in a prisoner of war camp. Marie was reported missing to the Cambuslang police by her husband. She had been missing for three days by the time of the press report, which noted ominously that she was ‘in a very serious state of health believing that her son had been shot. A woman was seen to jump into the Clyde at the time she disappeared’.<sup>101</sup> The newspaper account noted that Marie and her son were among the earliest arrivals to the district of Cambuslang in 1915 (8 miles outside Glasgow). Indeed ‘Maria Bressinck’ with a recorded age of 48 was noted in the Glasgow Refugee Register as coming from Antwerp with her 9 year old son Renee. Her address was given as 121 Main Street, Cambuslang, at the home of local resident James Butler. The illness of her young son and the incarceration of one of her older soldier sons help explain her ‘very serious state of health’ identified in the press account. No follow up story on her attempted suicide has been discovered.

The individual instances discussed thus far from among Belgian refugees with symptoms of war trauma have been women. Showalter has suggested that historically women have been ‘believed to be more vulnerable to insanity than men, to experience it in specifically feminine ways, and to be differently affected by it in the conduct of their lives’.<sup>102</sup> Looking at medical diagnosis descriptions for female Belgian refugees, their illnesses were primarily recorded using the term ‘insanity’, which was used for 11 of the 16

cases of individual women with a diagnosed psychiatric disorder admitted to hospital care. Two others were ‘mentally affected’, another was recorded as suffering neurasthenia, and there was one case each of ‘nervous debility’ and of ‘senile decay’. The youngest female ‘insane’ admission was aged 23, the oldest 51, with the average age being 33.

In contrast, among the seven Belgian refugee males identified as suffering from psychiatric illnesses, only three were diagnosed ‘insane’. Two others were diagnosed with ‘mental depression’, another was admitted ‘acting strangely’. Two of the three males certified as ‘insane’ were young – Jean Witmeur aged 13, and Antoine Tousset, a labourer was 15; however the third, Hubert Ruymen, was aged 53. Both Tousset and Ruymen were diagnosed as ‘insane/epileptic’. During the early nineteenth century epilepsy was closely related with psychiatric disorders and when epilepsy was re-defined as a neurological disorder by the late nineteenth century patients remained under the care of psychiatrists in hospitals.<sup>103</sup>

Jean Witmeur, a 13 year-old school boy, was the youngest person who presented with symptoms of war trauma. His was another case of attempted suicide by drowning. The family included Jean’s parents, Hubert and Celestine, an older brother Christophe, aged 26 (who was soon called in to the Belgian army) ,and Jean’s cousin Hubert, aged 9. They had come to Britain in March 1915, arriving at Folkestone from Jupille, nowadays part of the city of Liège, where 67 civilian were killed and many houses were burned out over several days from August 20 1914.<sup>104</sup> Witmeur and his family were moved to Baltic Street, Glasgow in August 1915 and his father was employed in the Armstrong Whitworth munitions factory as a machine operator. A few weeks into their stay on 15 September 1915, Witmeur was given one pound by his mother to buy medicine but instead used the money to buy a half fare train ticket to London ‘with the aim of returning to the Continent’. He was not permitted to board the train since he appeared older than the 14 year age limit for a half fare. After he was turned

away, Witmeur walked to the nearby river Clyde and attempted to drown himself. He was pulled to safety downstream at Glasgow Green by the crew of a Humane Society boat. Following his attempted suicide, his parents applied to the Poor Law for his medical care and after a few days of observation in hospital he was certified insane on 23 September and sent to Gartloch asylum. According to his case notes, he was ‘very stubborn and refuses to answer questions (despite his ‘remarkable English’ recorded elsewhere in his notes) or give any account of himself. He admits having recently attempted suicide for no cause whatever’.<sup>105</sup> Witmeur spent over two months in Gartloch asylum before he was released into the care of his mother, following her personal request to the Glasgow Poor Law board.<sup>106</sup> On his release the family moved away from Glasgow to Richmond and then Walthamstow in London where in March 1918 Jean was recorded as ‘working’.<sup>107</sup>

The emotional numbing mentioned in Witmeur’s case notes is symptomatic of war trauma as diagnosed today. This feeling was experienced by other Belgian refugees living in Glasgow. For example, Mary E. Boyle’s wartime diary included an account of her time working with the Glasgow Corporation Belgian Refugee Committee. Initially she and a friend took in a Belgian family, who had fled Leuven (Louvain). Boyle notes that the younger members of the family ‘suffered more from the shock of their experiences’. She describes how ‘in toneless voices they told how the mother and little girl were shut up for two days and nights in a school without food or drink whilst Louvain burned outside and they expected the flames to devour them at any minute’. Meanwhile the men of the family – the husband, brother-in-law and grandfather – were all taken to Germany before being deported back to Belgium after several weeks. The family was reunited in Ostend as they fled to the Belgian coast and escape.<sup>108</sup>



### *Child refugees*

While Jean Witmeur's symptoms of war trauma led to psychiatric hospital admission, there were other child victims of the German invasion among Belgian civilian refugees, whose trauma was not formally diagnosed but whose circumstances clearly show they paid a price for their exile as refugees. For example, it was reported that an unnamed girl aged 13 had died upon her arrival in Paisley 'apparently from the sufferings and hardships she had been exposed to when forced to flee from home by the horrors of the war'.<sup>109</sup> This suffering is further evidenced by the history of the Laureys children. The Laureys family consisted of mother Marie Kestiment, 28; father Alphonsus Laureys, 34, a dock worker; and the children Jeanne, 8, Louisa, 2, and their brothers, Josef, 7 and Frans, 4. The family fled from Antwerp, during the German siege of the heavily garrisoned city and arrived in Britain on 6 October 1914.<sup>110</sup> They were sent to Glasgow on 18 October and placed in temporary accommodation in the Poplar hotel on Holm Street. On 20 October, they were shipped to Ireland, sent to stay with Mrs McCusker in County Tyrone. Marie Kestiment died in Ireland on 30 June 1915. The family returned to Glasgow in August 1915 but was soon fragmented. Alphonsus Laureys got a job as a labourer in Harland and Wolff shipyard in Govan. He lived in the London hotel on Buchanan Street, while his daughters lived a mile away on South York Street. His sons resided at Crosspark House, Crow Road, Partick, some five miles away. The family was supported by the Glasgow Corporation Belgian Refugee Committee during their time in Glasgow. For instance, Nurse Green of the committee applied for Jeanne's admission to hospital when she suffered from swollen glands. Nine-year-old Jeanne was admitted to Govan poorhouse infirmary on 22 October and stayed there until returned to her father on 6 December.<sup>111</sup> The next application to the Poor Law was made on their behalf by the Glasgow Corporation refugee committee in February 1916. Acting on a recommendation from the Glasgow sanitary authority, the committee asked for the removal of both boys, Josef and

Frans, now aged 8 and 7. The boys were diagnosed with ringworm, a contagious skin disease caused by sharing contaminated clothing or towels. The Laureys boys were in the poorhouse infirmary for 6 months and costs were claimed from their father.<sup>112</sup> While the boys were in the poorhouse in August 1916, the Laureys girls were moved to other accommodation in Queens Park, Glasgow.<sup>113</sup> The third application for Poor Law intervention was for Frans, now aged 8, in June 1917. Mr McInnes of the refugee committee applied for Frans' removal to a home. Frans, alongside Josef who was now 12, stayed with, presumably fellow Belgian, Madame Menarsis at 465 St Vincent Street in Glasgow, – the same street as the offices of the Glasgow Corporation Belgian Refugee Committee.<sup>114</sup> She refused to keep Frans any longer because he had stolen one shilling per day from her for the previous three weeks. Father Alphonsus had gone to sea in March 1916 and was by 1917 in Canada, 'deserting' his children. Frans was 'punished' by being sent initially and inappropriately to the Magdalene Institution for the Repression of Vice and for the Reformation of Penitent Females, Lochburn House, Maryhill in June 1917. Eventually he was transferred to the Stevenson Home, Rothesay.<sup>115</sup> The Stevenson Home was a Roman Catholic residential home for disadvantaged children on the Isle of Bute.<sup>116</sup> The bereavement, desertion, illnesses and pattern of poor behaviour identified among the Laureys children suggests that they were victims of the war, traumatised and left orphaned in the aftermath of their forced departure from Belgium. The cases of the Laureys children and Jean Witmeur demonstrate that wartime trauma among Belgian civilians, who had fled in the wake of the German invasion affected the whole family and that children paid a heavy price following the family's departure from war-torn Belgium.

### *Conclusion*

This article is the first to explore evidence of war trauma among individual Belgian exiles in Britain. In doing so, it has drawn on recent historiography exploring the impact of the Great

War on civilians and female nurses, including work by Grayzel and Proctor and has also followed Loughran's lead in adopting a gendered approach to war trauma, all of which have opened up this subject area, as have the overviews on twentieth century refugee movement by Gatrell and Kushner and Knox. The foregoing has explored the psychological impact of the First World War on the predominantly female Belgian civilian refugee claimants for medical care to the Glasgow Poor Law, using applicant case histories combined with their psychiatric hospital patient records. It has demonstrated that Belgian civilians, who had fled their homeland during the German invasion, carried their trauma with them. The sights they had personally witnessed or been told about affecting their families, friends and neighbours were played out in psychological trauma which meant they were twice as likely as locals to be diagnosed with mental illness and admitted to psychiatric hospitals. Their hospital records indicate symptoms and behaviour patterns, such as attempted suicide, emotional numbing and flashbacks, associated with war trauma (which in the present day would be diagnosed as PTSD).

Based on the sample of 66 cases used in this study, more refugee women than men were admitted to Glasgow Poor Law care. The findings also indicate different diagnoses for female and male refugees suffering from war trauma, with medical health professionals more likely to diagnose female applicants as 'insane'. Children such as the Laureys family and Jean Witmeur emerge from the Poor Law and psychiatric hospital records to show that war trauma was experienced among both genders and all ages of refugees. The civilian Belgian refugees form a group, excluded from contemporary accounts of 'shell shock' and from recent investigations by historians of war trauma experienced by civilians and medical personnel in combat zones. This study of Poor Law and psychiatric hospital care records in Glasgow has placed the traumatic wartime experiences Belgian refugees, mainly women, on record and opened up the field for further research using analysis of similar records elsewhere in Britain.

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The authors report that there is no conflict of interest associated with this article.

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<sup>1</sup>. Belgian refugees were registered from October 1914, some would have been double counted as they moved from location to location, while independent travellers could escape registration altogether. The end of war report on Britain's reception of refugees noted 'altogether some 240,000 refugees have been registered'. Ministry of Health, *Report on the work undertaken by the British Government in the reception and care of the Belgian refugees* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1920), 5.

<sup>2</sup>. Tammy Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War, 1914-1918* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

<sup>3</sup>. Denise J. Poynter, "'The report on her transfer was shell shock': a study of the psychological disorders of nurses and female V.A.D.s who served alongside the Allied Expeditionary Forces during the First World War, 1914-1918" (PhD diss., University of Northampton, 2008), 235.

<sup>4</sup>. Susan R. Grayzel, *At Home and under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4.

<sup>5</sup>. See for example Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996); Hans Binneveld, *From Shellshock to Combat Stress: A Comparative History of Military Psychiatry* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997); Peter Leese, *Shellshock: Traumatic Neurosis and British Soldiers of the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

<sup>6</sup>. Tracey Loughran, "A Crisis of Masculinity? Re-writing the history of shell-shock and gender in First World War Britain" *History Compass* 11, no. 9 (2013): 731.

<sup>7</sup>. Michaël Amara, *Des Belges à l'épreuve de l'Exil: Les réfugiés de la Première Guerre mondiale; France, Grande-Bretagne, Pays-Bas* (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2014 [2008]).

<sup>8</sup>. Amara, *Des Belges à l'épreuve de l'Exil*, 56.

<sup>9</sup>. Tony Kushner and Katherine Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives during the Twentieth Century*. (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 6; Kushner, "Belgian Refugees in Britain during the First World War" *Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora* 18, no. 1 (1999): 1–28.

<sup>10</sup>. Pierre Purseigle, "'A Wave on Our Shores': The Exile and Resettlement of Refugees from the Western Front" *Contemporary European History* 16, no. 4 (2007): 433.

<sup>11</sup>. Michaël Amara, "Belgian refugees during the First World War" in *Europe on the Move: Refugees in the era of the Great War* ed. Peter Gatrell and Liobov Zhvanko, (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2017), 197-211. Gatrell has also considered Belgian refugees in two sole authored general works on refugee movement and settlement in the twentieth century: Peter Gatrell, "Refugees and

Forced Migrants during the First World War" *Immigrants & Minorities* 26, nos. 1/2 (2008): 82–84 and Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>12</sup>. Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United? Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 136.

<sup>13</sup>. For further discussion of the secondary literature on First World War refugee movement see Jacqueline Jenkinson, "Soon Gone, Long Forgotten: Uncovering British responses to Belgian refugees during the First World War", *Immigrants & Minorities* 34, no. 2 (2016): 101–112.

<sup>14</sup>. Peter Cahalan, *Belgian Refugee Relief in England during the Great War* (New York: Garland, 1982).

<sup>15</sup>. Cahalan, *Belgian refugee relief in England*, 500.

<sup>16</sup>. Jacqueline Jenkinson ed., "British Responses to Belgian Refugees during the First World War: Special Issue" *Immigrants & Minorities* 34, no. 2 (2016) and Hannah Ewence, "Belgian Refugees in Cheshire: 'Place' and the invisibility of the displaced" *Immigrants & Minorities* 36, no. 3 (2018): 232–257, quote on page 252.

<sup>17</sup>. See European Society for Traumatic Stress Studies PTSD diagnostic features at <https://www.estss.org/learn-about-trauma/dsm-iv-ptsd-diagnostic-features/> (accessed August 21, 2018). See also, Mark S. Micale and Paul Lerner eds., *Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry and Trauma in the Modern Age 1870–1930* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001).

<sup>18</sup>. The US Department for Veterans Affairs has a useful summary of criteria for PTSD [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/PTSD-overview/dsm5\\_criteria\\_ptsd.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/PTSD-overview/dsm5_criteria_ptsd.asp) (accessed August 7, 2018).

<sup>19</sup>. Summary of criteria for PTSD [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/PTSD-overview/dsm5\\_criteria\\_ptsd.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/PTSD-overview/dsm5_criteria_ptsd.asp) (accessed August 21, 2018).

<sup>20</sup>. E. Sellers, 'On entertaining refugees', *The Nineteenth Century and After* 460 (June 1915): 1371–1373, referred to in Amara, *Des Belges à l'épreuve de l'Exil*, 57.

<sup>21</sup>. Fiona Reid, *Broken Men: Shell Shock, Treatment and Recovery in Britain 1914–1930* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 95. See also *Shell Shock and its Lessons* published in 1917 in which its medical authors identified 'shell shock' as "a popular but inadequate title for all those mental effects of war experience which are sufficient to incapacitate a man from the performance of his military duties." Elliot Grafton Smith and Tom Hatherley Pear, *Shell Shock and Its Lessons* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1917), 1–3. This documentary extract appears in Grayzel, *The First World War: a brief history with documents* (Boston: Bedford series in History and Culture, 2013), 121–2.

<sup>22</sup>. Tracey Loughran 'Shell shock, Trauma and the First World War: the making of a diagnosis and its histories' *Journal of Medical and Allied Sciences* 67, no. 1 (2012): 94.

<sup>23</sup>. Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture* (London: Virago, 1987).

<sup>24</sup>. Loughran, 'A Crisis of Masculinity?', 727.

<sup>25</sup>. For the traditional approach to this topic see Hans Binneveld, *From Shellshock to Combat Stress*. Binneveld's work contains no indexed reference to women and he passes over the findings of a 1990 study of US war veterans which showed 15.2 per cent of male and 8 percent of women among all US veterans suffered from PTSD without comment, see page 193 and for the other see Tracey Loughran 'Shell shock, Trauma and the First World War', 107.

<sup>26</sup>. Leese *Shellshock: Traumatic Neurosis*, 17.

<sup>27</sup>. Loughran, 'A Crisis of Masculinity?', 728.

<sup>28</sup>. Poynter, 'The report on her transfer was shell shock', 235.

<sup>29</sup>. Carol Acton and Jane Potter, *Working in a World of Hurt: trauma and resilience in the narratives of medical personnel in warzones* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 31, 35.

<sup>30</sup>. Reid, *Broken Men*, 123.

<sup>31</sup>. Christine E. Hallet, *Containing Trauma: Nursing Work in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 195.

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- <sup>32</sup>. Christa Hämmerle, "Mentally broken, psychologically a wreck' Violence in war accounts of nurses in Austro-Hungarian service," in *Gender and the First World War*, ed. Christa Hämmerle et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 90.
- <sup>33</sup>. Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War*, 110.
- <sup>34</sup>. 'Air Raid Psychology,' *Lancet*, July 14 1917, n.p., cited in Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire*, 77.
- <sup>35</sup>. Paul Lerner, 'From Traumatic Neurosis to Male Hysteria: the decline and fall of Herman Oppenheim 1889-1919' in *Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870-1930*, ed. Mark S. Micale and Paul Lerner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 160-161.
- <sup>36</sup>. John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven: Connecticut: Yale University Press 2001), 231-234.
- <sup>37</sup>. Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914*, 234.
- <sup>38</sup>. This poster can be viewed via the Ministry of Information First World War Miscellaneous Collection, Imperial War Museum, London, IWM (Q 33161) <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205132732> (accessed April 5, 2018).
- <sup>39</sup>. Cate Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), 93 and Gary S. Messenger, *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 73, 76.
- <sup>40</sup>. Committee on Alleged German Outrages (Bryce Committee), *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1915).
- <sup>41</sup>. Nicoletta F. Gullace, 'Allied Propaganda and World War One: Interwar Legacies, Media Studies and the Politics of War Guilt' *History Compass* 9, no. 9 (2011): 693.
- <sup>42</sup>. Cahalan, *Belgian Refugee Relief in England*, 113-4.
- <sup>43</sup>. Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914*, 234.
- <sup>44</sup>. Horne and Kramer *German Atrocities, 1914*, 74; Catriona Pennell *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012), 119.
- <sup>45</sup>. Tony Kushner and Katherine Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives during the Twentieth Century* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 48.
- <sup>46</sup>. Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914*, 313.
- <sup>47</sup>. Michaël Amara, 'Refugees (Belgium)', 1914-1918 online, [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/refugees\\_belgium](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/refugees_belgium) (accessed April 12, 2018).
- <sup>48</sup>. 'Scotland's debt to Belgium – 1915', from a speech by Bailie James Stewart, no place or date available, cited in Amara, *Des Belges à l'épreuve de l'Exil*, 56.
- <sup>49</sup>. Committee on Alleged German Outrages, *Report of the Committee* (1915), 5.
- <sup>50</sup>. Committee on Alleged German Outrages, *Report of the Committee* (1915), 38.
- <sup>51</sup>. 'Manchester and the War – Belgian refugees and their experiences of German cruelty', *Manchester Guardian* September 23 1914, 7.
- <sup>52</sup>. Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914*, 15.
- <sup>53</sup>. 'The Belgian Refugees - What Uddingston has done' *Bellshill Speaker and North-East Lanark Gazette* September 24, 1915, 1.
- <sup>54</sup>. In the case of Ireland the Irish Local Government Board held a similar responsibility.
- <sup>55</sup>. For a discussion of this support see Jacqueline Jenkinson, 'Administering Relief: Glasgow Corporation's support for Scotland's c. 20,000 Belgian refugees' *Immigrants & Minorities* 34, no. 2 (July 2016): 171-191.
- <sup>56</sup>. Note no-one is recorded with an arrival date after 1915 hence the bulk of the Scottish-based refugees are not there recorded. Corporation of Glasgow Offices for Belgian Refugees, *List prepared by the city assessor Glasgow, of Belgian refugees sent to Scotland, 1914-15*, in three volumes, hereafter 'Glasgow Register of Belgian refugees' 1914/5, Glasgow City Archives, (hereafter GCA), Glasgow, D-CA12/2-4.

<sup>57</sup>. William Dickie, 'Final Report', *Paisley Belgian Relief Committee Summary of Activities, 1914-1919*, 170, Heritage Centre, Paisley Central Library (hereafter PCL), 361 PA/PC21342.

<sup>58</sup>. Note the various Glasgow records might not have provided the full picture of each individual's situation due to language barriers, since most refugees did not speak English well and few local officials spoke French or particularly Dutch.

<sup>59</sup>. The 1925 applicant, Martha Augustinus, aged 29, had come to Glasgow as a nineteen year-old dressmaker with her parents, three brothers and one sister in October 1914 from Leuven. She had stayed on in Glasgow after the war, marrying local man Andrew McSkimming, aged 40 in August 1919. As an iron turner McSkimming was likely a friend of her father's since he too was as an iron turner as recorded in the *Glasgow Belgian Refugees Register* on arrival from Belgium. Augustinus successfully applied for 14 shillings per week outdoor relief for her and her three children aged under 5 on account of her husband suffering from tuberculosis which had led to his being sent to East Fortune Sanatorium outside Edinburgh in June 1925. Glasgow Poor Law application number 283391, Martha Augustinus, July 2 1925, GCA, D-HEW 17/1025, and 'Glasgow Register of Belgian refugees' 1914/5, register number 2131, GCA, D-CA12/2-4.

<sup>60</sup>. Glasgow Poor law application number 80559, Cecilia Lambert, March 20 1922, GCA, D-HEW 16/13/537.

<sup>61</sup>. Govan, dominated by its world-leading shipyards, had been an independent burgh until its amalgamation into Glasgow under the passage of the Glasgow Boundaries Act of 1912. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-19168940> (accessed August 21, 2018).

<sup>62</sup>. Dickie, *Paisley Belgian Relief Committee Summary of Activities*, 157, PCL, 361, PA/PC21342.

<sup>63</sup>. *Local Government Board for Scotland Annual Report 1915*, (Edinburgh: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1916), xxxii.

<sup>64</sup>. A one in 10 sample of poor law applications was taken for the following months: November 1914 (Glasgow Poor Law applications, GCA, D-HEW 16/13/331); September 1915 (D-HEW 16/13/352); July 1916 (D-HEW 16/13/370); February 1917 (D-HEW 16/13/383); January 1918 (D-HEW 16/13/400) and a sample month was taken for the Govan district (which continued to have its own poor law arrangements at this time despite its inclusion within the city of Glasgow boundary in 1912), Govan Poor law applications October 1915, (D-HEW 17/778). When selecting the control sample, in cases where the tenth Poor Law applicant in a sample month was a Belgian refugee the next applicant was chosen in order to avoid double counting.

<sup>65</sup>. All figures based on the sample listed in the previous footnote.

<sup>66</sup>. Pat Thane, 'Women and the Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England', *History Workshop Journal* 6 (1978): 29.

<sup>67</sup>. Thane, 'Women and the Poor Law', 34.

<sup>68</sup>. Showalter, *Female Malady*, 27.

<sup>69</sup>. Showalter, *Female Malady*, 52.

<sup>70</sup>. Amara, 'Belgian refugees during the First World War', 210.

<sup>71</sup>. Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914*, appendix 1, 435-439.

<sup>72</sup>. Glasgow Poor Law application number 52730, Angele Vrebos, September 20 1915, with later added entries up to 21 July 1918, GCA, D-HEW 16/13/352 and Central Register of War Refugees, 1914-1919, Corporation of Glasgow Office for Belgian Refugees, List of Removals of Refugees, March 7 1916, National Archives of Belgium Brussels (NAB), I 420 793.

<sup>73</sup>. Gartloch asylum case books, Female case book 26, Angele Vrebos case notes, March 7 1916-July 21 1918, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board archives, (GGCHBA), GCA, HB 1/13/26.

<sup>74</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup>. Gartloch Asylum Register of Deaths, July 21 1918, Angele Vrebos, GGCHBA, HB 1/5/12.

<sup>76</sup>. Committee on Alleged German Outrages, *Report of the Committee*, 23.

<sup>77</sup>. Woodilee Asylum Case books (female), Celine Debroyen Heyndricx, case notes, May 8 1916, GGCHBA, HB 24/5/41.

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- <sup>78</sup>. The *Glasgow Observer* was founded in 1885 and remains Scotland's only national Catholic newspaper. It now goes by the title the *Scottish Catholic Observer*.
- <sup>79</sup>. Glasgow Poor Law application number 54891, Celine Debroven Heyndricx, May 5 1916, GCA, D-HEW 16/13/366.
- <sup>80</sup>. Woodilee Asylum Case books (female), Celine Debroven case notes, May 8 1916 - October 20 1918.
- <sup>81</sup>. Corporation of Glasgow Office for Belgian Refugees List of Removals of Refugees, August 25 and 3 September 1917, NAB, I 420 347.
- <sup>82</sup>. Glasgow Poor Law application number 54891, Celine Debroven Heyndricx, May 5 1916, later entry, May 7 1919, GCA, D-HEW 16/13/366.
- <sup>83</sup>. 'Repatriation of Belgian Refugees', *Glasgow Herald*, January 1 1919, 3.
- <sup>84</sup>. Minutes of Glasgow Corporation magistrates' committee, January 27 1919, GCA, volume C1 3.60, November 1918-April 1919.
- <sup>85</sup>. 'Belgian Refugee Fund', *Glasgow Herald*, April 2 1919, 10.
- <sup>86</sup>. Paisley Register of Poor Law 1918-19, application number 17248, Pierre de Boeck, December 12 1918, PCL 8/23.
- <sup>87</sup>. Annie Dauw Lefevre case notes, March 16, 1917, Leverndale/Govan District Asylum Case notes male and female, GGCHB HB 24/5/41.
- <sup>88</sup>. Committee of Alleged German Outrages, *Report of the Committee*, 20.
- <sup>89</sup>. Annie Dauw Lefevre case notes, Leverndale/Govan District Asylum Case notes, March 16 1917, GGCHBA, HB 24/5/41.
- <sup>90</sup>. Annie Dauw Lefevre case notes, March 24 and April 2 1917.
- <sup>91</sup>. Roselina van Engelmom, Gartloch asylum case notes, August 17 1917, GGCHBA, HB 1/3/28.
- <sup>92</sup>. Glasgow Poor Law application number 50640, Jeanette Bastiansen, February 11 1915, GCA D-HEW 16/13/338 and application number 50977, March 10 1915, September 3 1915, GCA D-HEW 16/13/340
- <sup>93</sup>. 'Belgian Refugees' *Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette*, February 20 1915, n.p.
- <sup>94</sup>. 'Refugee Born' *Blackpool Times*, January 13 1915, n.p.
- <sup>95</sup>. Gerry Holt, 'When Suicide was Illegal' BBC news (online) magazine August 3 2011, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-14374296> (accessed 8 January 2019).
- <sup>96</sup>. 'Does the Catholic Church teach that anyone who commits suicide goes to hell?' <http://catholicbridge.com/catholic/suicide-hell-catholic-teaching.php> (accessed 8 January 2019).
- <sup>97</sup>. Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 1914, 30.
- <sup>98</sup>. Parish reports, Deanery of Aarschot, parish of Saint-Martinus Tielt, Archiepiscopal Archives, Mechelen Belgium, Par XIV, 10-11, 13. This is an unsigned, undated anonymous report, most probably written by the parish priest in 1919, on the basis of notes taken shortly after the events (in this case, 1914). I am grateful for Professor Sophie De Schaepdrijver for this reference supplied in personal e-mail correspondence on April 21 2017.
- <sup>99</sup>. Glasgow Poor Law application number 52606, Marie Mols, September 3 1915, GCA, D-HEW 16/13/351.
- <sup>100</sup>. Glasgow Poor Law application number 58755, Theresa Van Gael, August 4 1917, GCA D-HEW 16/13/392
- <sup>101</sup>. 'Belgian Refugee Missing' (Dundee) *Evening Telegraph and Post*, October 31 1916, 2.
- <sup>102</sup>. Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 7.
- <sup>103</sup>. German E. Berrios, 'Epilepsy and insanity during the early 19th century. A conceptual history' *Archives of Neurology* 41 no.9 (1984): 978. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/6383300> (accessed 21 August 2018).
- <sup>104</sup>. Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities* 1914, 38, 76.
- <sup>105</sup>. Gartloch asylum case notes of Jean Witmeur, September 29 1915, GGCHBA, HB 1/3/27.



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<sup>106</sup>. Glasgow Poor Law application number 52694, Jean Witmeur, September 15 1915, further comments added to record November 27 1915, GCA, D-HEW 16/13/352.

<sup>107</sup>. Information on addresses for the Witmeur family obtained from Central Register of War Refugees, 1914-1919, Aliens Restriction Order notices of removal of a Belgian Refugee to a new address, March 13 1916, October 3 1916, March 18 1918 and October 16 1918, NAB, I 420 807.

<sup>108</sup>. [Mary E. Bell diary] 'The Actual Account. Glasgow Belgian Refugee Committee. Belgium', 3-4, n.d., MS Women, War and Society, 1914-1918: The Women at Work Collection, Imperial War Museum, London BEL 6 100/5, *Archives Unbound*, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5rEx94> (Accessed May 22 2018).

<sup>109</sup> William W. Kelso, *Sanitation in Paisley: A Record of Progress 1488-1920* (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1922), 353.

<sup>110</sup>. The heavy artillery bombardment of Antwerp began on 28 September and ended with the surrender of the Belgian military garrison on 10 October 1914, *The Great War 1914-1918*, <http://www.greatwar.co.uk/battles/yser/antwerp-siege.htm> (accessed April 1 2018).

<sup>111</sup>. Govan Poor Law application number 173898, Jeanne Laureys, October 22 1915, GCA, D-HEW 17/778 and Glasgow Register of Belgian refugees 1914/5, register entries 300-305, the Laureys family, GCA, D-CA12/2-4.

<sup>112</sup>. Govan Poor Law application number 176151, Joseph Laureys and application number 176152 Frans Laureys, both February 4 1916, GCA, D-HEW 17/782.

<sup>113</sup>. Handwritten note regarding Alphonsus Laureys, May 19 1917, Central Register of War Refugees 1917, NAB, I 420 413.

<sup>114</sup>. Nothing else is known of this individual, for example, no Madame Menarsis was recorded in the Glasgow Corporation Belgian Refugee Register.

<sup>115</sup>. Corporation of Glasgow Offices for Belgian Refugees, List of Removals of Refugees, Frans Laureys, June 28 1917 and December 20 1917, NAB, I 420 413.

<sup>116</sup>. The Stevenson Residential School complex was established in 1900 by Bute philanthropist Agnes Patrick Stevenson to provide 'fresh-air fortnight' holidays for under-privileged children from Glasgow. Boys were housed in the Stevenson Home and girls in the Agnes Patrick Home. Canmore National Record of the Historic Environment, <https://canmore.org.uk/site/233431/bute-rothesay-ascog-agnes-patrick-stevenson-residential-school> (accessed August 4 2018).