



## MOBILISING MANPOWER: AUDENSHAW TRIBUNAL IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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During the First World War 4,970,902 men were recruited for the army from a population of 46,331,548 in Great Britain and Ireland. The annual figures convey the full enormity of this process. Enlistment in 1914 reached 1,180,357 men and the figures for each year thereafter were 1,280,362 (1915); 1,190,075 (1916); 820,646 (1917); and 493,462 (1918).<sup>1</sup> The proportion of men recruited from the male population, aged 15-49 years, of England and Wales, was 46.3 per cent. Of these the number of men who died on active service was 673,375 (or 12.9 per cent) and a further 1,643,469 (31.5 per cent) were wounded. Overall, 118 men were killed for every 1,000 mobilised men, in pursuit of the defeat of Germany and other war aims finally disclosed in January 1918.<sup>2</sup> The strategy of attrition and the continuous expectation of breakthrough ensured that casualties occurred on a monumental scale, particularly during the Somme offensive of 1916 and the third Ypres campaign in the following year.<sup>3</sup> To take one example 822,000 men were killed, wounded and missing on the Western Front in 1917 and, despite Passchendaele, the military demand for men continued its insatiable course.<sup>4</sup> The General Staff calculated that 1,304,000 men were required for military service in 1918, but ultimately only one-third of this figure was secured from civilian life. In 1918 the pool of recruitable manpower was almost drained and other priorities, such as shipbuilding, coal-mining and agriculture, were asserted in the total war effort. Yet the fact remains that of all the men who served in the army during the war one in four was wounded and one in eight was killed, and while the eventual achievement of victory was sizeable the cost was far beyond any scenario drawn up in August 1914.

It remains striking that such little social upheaval accompanied the process of withdrawing men from civilian life for the army, particularly after the introduction of conscription in February 1916. The despatch of additional drafts of men to the British armies in France after each offensive action was not without political risk and, remarkably, the enlistment process continued intact, if on a diminished scale, to the end of the war. Ex-servicemen's associations expressed the grievances of the men re-examined and found fit for military service in the last year of war having been previously discharged as unfit for the army. But social stability prevailed and the national interest was apparently served to the end. Demonstrations against the conscription of increasingly older men and of men in poor medical health, who would have been found unfit in 1914-15, were few and the recruitment process never broke down. Why was the British experience different from nations which underwent far greater turmoil in responding to the emergence of total war? One wartime institution which warrants fuller investigation is the tribunal system, which hitherto has only been considered in relation to the issue of conscientious objection.<sup>5</sup>

*The photograph at the top of the page appeared in 'The War Illustrated' 3 June 1916, under the caption 'Some Facial Expressions of Fighting Men'. Ostensibly taken after a bayonet charge the men display German helmets and a revolver, "trophies of the fight".*

The Prime Minister seemed to be well aware of the value of a system which adjudicated applications for exemption from military service. In September 1919 he issued a general letter to the chairmen of 2,000 Local Tribunals. Lloyd George noted,

*The task entrusted to the Tribunals was laborious and formidable, especially to men who, as a rule, had many other claims upon their time and energies. It called in a high degree for the exercise of patience, sagacity and impartiality. The decision of cases involved grave responsibilities from which members of Tribunals might not unnaturally have shrunk if they had not placed the country's need before all other considerations. The work of the Tribunals was unostentatious; but it has played a vital part in securing the Victory and Peace which have been achieved.*<sup>6</sup>

One of the busy recipients of this letter of heart-felt thanks was Alderman James Kellett, Chairman of Audenshaw Local Tribunal throughout its existence from January 1916 to its last recorded meeting in September 1918. In his papers at Manchester Central Reference Library two boxes of material have survived which shed light on the operation of the tribunal in Audenshaw and the surrounding districts. It includes publicity information on recruiting, circulars from government departments,<sup>7</sup> tribunal correspondence, and, most importantly, detailed case-books which provide material on the occupation of applicants, frequency of attendance and results of their appeal. This collection is unusually complete and constitutes a significant source for the social historian, when supplemented by work on relevant newspapers. In most county record offices one sample collection of tribunal papers has been retained, but such was the scale of destruction of this source material by the Ministry of Health in 1922 that small collections of variable quality are the norm rather than the exception.<sup>8</sup>

Kellett's papers are important for two reasons. Firstly, an understanding of the impact of war, as a catalyst of economic and social change, on a locality can be gained. Audenshaw was an area of mixed manufacturing activity and as a small Urban District tentative conclusions can be drawn about the life of this community during the war years.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, for the historian of the manpower problem in the First World War local evidence is limited, yet the possibility here emerges of observing the relationship between the needs of country and community. Kitchener's slogan 'Your country needs You', underwent some modification as the needs of localities were increasingly asserted by institutions originally established to service the national interest of obtaining more men for the army. Consequently, through tribunal records it is possible to observe the friction which arose between the state and the local decision-making process for manpower supply. Thus, through the case study of Audenshaw at war larger questions arise which might be offered as a starting point for future work. This article will consider the war work of Alderman Kellett, the organisation of local tribunals, the composition of the Audenshaw Tribunal, its impact on the local economy and the contrast in its decision-making between 1916 and 1918.

James Kellett's wartime career was a striking example of the government's dependence on local organisation and voluntary effort. Effective local responses to the successive administrative demands of war required district councils which were capable of undertaking



*Alderman James Kellett.*

additional statutory and voluntary responsibilities. As Chairman of Audenshaw Urban District Council Alderman Kellett, a yarn salesman, was at the centre of the community's *ad hoc* agencies which he led with enthusiasm and vigour, in addition to his deputy chairmanship of Ashton District Education Committee. In December 1915 he appealed for funds for the Belgian refugees who had settled in Audenshaw and found employment in the hat trade. At the same time he organised the canvassing of men of military age in the district under Lord Derby's scheme. As Chairman of the District Council his leadership of the Local Tribunal, National Service Committee (March 1917) and Food Committee (September 1917) inevitably ensued. In all these functions he was no mere figurehead and his patriotic involvement also extended to the Prince of Wales Relief Fund, Special Constabulary and War Savings Association. It was little wonder that in June 1917 he became a J.P.,<sup>10</sup> a role he was still performing in 1939.

Kellett's most innovatory contribution to local war work was the formation of a Recognition Committee. Within the Ashton recruiting area this initiative was unique and it highlighted the capacity of smaller communities to retain contact with *their* enlisted men. From his membership of the Red Hall United Methodist Church and Sunday School, Kellett was well aware of the pride that religious and secular institutions, such as the Audenshaw Liberal Club or football teams, took in news of their men at the front. At a moment's notice these institutions would know how many of their members were at the front, who was on leave at home and any recent notable military exploits. The Recognition Committee was a natural expression of this continuing contact between the district — itself undergoing change — and the local men abroad. On the Committee Kellett collected representatives from the council, every major firm, churches and Sunday schools. It presented a gift to men who had achieved military or naval distinction. In August 1918 a watch was presented to Corporal Cheetham DCM.<sup>11</sup> Unlike the celebration of local heroes for the purpose of increased recruiting in 1915, the presentation to Corporal Cheetham had no wider 'national' message.



*Wounded soldiers and nurses at Ryecroft Hall, 1916.*

By 1918 war weariness ensured that there was no mileage in the manipulation of patriotic occasions in pursuit of manpower for the army.

The award to Corporal Cheetham was a far more agreeable occasion than the process of reviewing applications of exemption from military service. Indeed, such 'arduous public work' led him to spend three weeks on holiday in Bispham in July 1918. A large factor in Kellett's need to have a break was the chairmanship and administration of forty tribunal sittings in Audenshaw commencing in January 1916. Local Tribunals were first established in October 1915 as an appeal authority for men who had attested under Lord Derby's scheme and wanted to postpone their call up for military service. Lord Derby's scheme was a house to house canvass of all 2,250,000 men between the ages of eighteen and forty who remained in civilian life.<sup>12</sup> It marked the final phase of the voluntary enlistment procedure. Consequently, tribunals first came into existence as an integral part of the recruiting effort and were far from independent. The local Military Representative reviewed all the decisions made, on behalf of the War Office, and many tribunals were discouraged from disputing the judgment of the recruiting authorities because they were so conscious of military manpower needs. This first phase of subservience to the War Office was not ideal preparation for the altered position tribunals occupied when conscription was introduced for single men between the ages of 18 and 41 in February 1916. It was extended to married men in June 1916.

Regulations were quickly issued for the reconstitution of the tribunal system to operate as an independent judicial procedure to consider applications of exemption from military service. Each unit of local government was required to appoint a tribunal of at least five members and not more than twenty five. There was much continuity of membership between the tribunals of October 1915 and their statutory successors, but in February 1916 it was firmly indicated that each district "shall provide for the adequate representation of labour".<sup>13</sup> Audenshaw Local Tribunal had seven members, being one of the smaller in existence, two of whom were members of the district Trades and Labour Council. For obvious reasons all members were over forty years of age and four of the seven tribunal members in Audenshaw were councillors.

The tribunals were directed to consider applications for certificates of exemption on six grounds. The largest category emphasised that a man could be retained in his usual work if it was "in the national interest". Two variations of this theme were that he could be placed in other work rather than military service or continue to be educated or trained rather than conscripted. The fourth ground embraced the question of hardship if called up "owing to his exceptional financial or business obligations or domestic position". The remaining categories were "ill health or infirmity" or "of a conscientious objection to the undertaking of combatant service".<sup>14</sup> Three forms of exemption were available — absolute (which was rarely used), conditional and temporary. Absolute exemption was not available for the categories of being educated or

hardship, and the award of conditional exemption required the reason to be clearly stated on the certificate. In the case of conscientious objection, exemption could be granted from combatant service only or be conditional on undertaking work of national importance, for example, farm work.

Applicants needed to have been medically examined before their cases were heard. Men from Audenshaw were usually examined at Ashton barracks. Tribunal hearings ensued when the Military Representative wished to challenge the written application for exemption which was either made by the individual or, in the case of the essential war work category, his firm.<sup>15</sup> At the Audenshaw tribunal as many appeals were made by firms as were made by individuals within the other five grounds of appeal. In the case of work "in the national interest", a director, the company secretary or the works manager was invited to present the firm's case and the individual concerned played little part in the proceedings. On rare occasions he did not even attend. Initially, tribunals dealt with all occupations except coal-miners, who were subject to Colliery Courts supervised by the Ministry of Munitions. Consequently, it has to be noted that there are no references to the New Moss Colliery in the Kellett papers. Later in the war, munitions work in government controlled establishments and railways employees were placed on a similar footing through the issue of MARO (Munitions Area Recruiting Office) protection cards. This blackcard system by-passed the tribunals, who only became involved if the cards were withdrawn from men fit for general service for whom substitutes could be found. The tribunal could then receive an appeal if the firm was sited within its jurisdiction.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, of 2,741,988 exempted men in civilian life in April 1917, 779,936 men were subject to this system as a result of appearing at tribunal sittings, often repeatedly in the case of those awarded certificates of temporary exemption.<sup>17</sup> This system was supplemented by appeal tribunals at county level to receive cases needing further review or requiring a more judicial opinion on an unprecedented problem. The Tribunal for Lancashire was the Salford Appeal Tribunal, chaired by Judge Mellows, a county court judge.

For the smooth working of this system, much depended on the composition of the tribunal. By March 1916 the Audenshaw Local Tribunal comprised seven members, Councillors James Kellett, Albert Spafford, William Nuttal (until his death in 1917), and William Richardson, and Messrs James Frater, James Leech, and D. Higgie. The military representative was B.C. Sellars. The two employers were Nuttal, who owned a dye works, and Spafford, a leather dresser. Neither business dominated employment opportunities in Audenshaw. Richardson was a retired hat manufacturer and district councillor since 1886. At Audenshaw the employers' interest was not overpowering which was a criticism made of the Droylsden Tribunal where two members were the largest employers in the town. The Regulations stipulated that a tribunal member should not participate in a vote 'relating to an applicant in the decision of which he is personally interested'.<sup>18</sup> There was no evidence of this situation occurring in Audenshaw but it did represent a problem in the wider area. In the *Ashton-under-Lyne Herald* on 12 February 1916, one critic was reported as stating:

*He hardly thought it fair that certain employers with large cotton establishments should be allowed to have such power on the Tribunal as they had when their employees came before them for exemption.*<sup>19</sup>

At an early stage in their deliberations, attention was drawn to the discrepancy between the proportion of men exempted in cotton trades as compared to other trades, although accurate figures were not available.

At Audenshaw two tribunal members had sons in the army. William Nuttal had three sons in the army and a fourth son, a foreman dyer and colour mixer, was allowed to maintain the family business after his father's death in 1917. James Frater also had sons serving in the army, one of whom was killed in action in January 1918. The tribunal noted:

*Those losses unfortunately kept occurring, and would do so until the terrible war was over. The only thing they could do was to get as many men at the front as they could, and get the war over as soon as possible.*<sup>20</sup>

This reaffirmation of the tribunal's task was at odds with the practical problems of combing out men in the fourth year of war. It was a note of comforting intent rather than actual purpose. In April 1918 James Frater's second son was wounded on service in France. An important voice on the tribunal throughout the war was James Leech, of the Clerk's Union, from the district Trades and Labour Council. He was a joint organiser of the Derby canvass in Audenshaw and in 1917 a member of its National Service Committee. Neither he nor other members stood in awe of the military representative, as was frequently the case in less industrial districts. Sellars increasingly complained about the tribunal's failure to highlight the military demand for manpower. At the conclusion of the sitting on 19 January 1918 he asked, humorously:

*Where is my lot*

*The Chairman: I think you knew what you would get tonight.*

*Councillor Richardson: An empty bag this time.*

*Another member: You will have to get your lot out of the munition workers.*<sup>21</sup>

The membership did not convey a collective determination to represent the apparent national interest — that of raising men for the army — to the locality, but of securing delicate acts of judgment which impinged on the industrial life of the district. Having gained some detachment from both the army's needs and specific employing interests, the Audenshaw Local Tribunal was aware that diverse production processes were to some extent dependent on its decisions.

An examination of the tribunal's records reveals the progressive impact of war on the wide variety of well established engineering and textile firms in Audenshaw and the surrounding towns. Employment in the production of stoves, sewing machines, builders' castings, coal, linoleum, cotton wadding, hat, fur and rubber goods, and jam preserves were foremost amongst the range of wage-earning activity pursued by the 8,000 inhabitants of Hooley Hill, Audenshaw, Little Moss, Waterhouses and Woodhouses. Consequently, the impact of war varied considerably according to the wartime significance of the product and the ability of the firm to secure war work. The appeals for exemption by employers on behalf of pivotal men at their works provided evidence of the local conflict between military and industrial priorities for manpower.

On 7 March 1916 Adam Ashworth Ltd., hat manufacturers of Hooley Hill, represented by its owner, claimed exemption for his son Gilbert Ashworth, works manager and chemist, and Walter Roberts, a foreman felt hat finisher. Adam Ashworth claimed that neither could

be replaced and drew attention to the impact of voluntary enlistment on his firm. Both factors formed vital elements in appeals presented by most firms. One third of his male workforce had enlisted and three-quarters of his remaining staff had attested under Lord Derby's scheme. Hat manufacturing was a staple industry in Audenshaw, Hyde and Denton<sup>22</sup> but enjoyed no special dispensation from the impact of the recruiting process. However, while trade had declined, Gilbert Ashworth had spent time in Austria prior to 1914 and as a result contracts had been captured which depended on his knowledge of market conditions. Both men were granted temporary exemption for three months.<sup>23</sup> However, the clothing of Kitchener's 'New Armies' was far advanced and an application for the exemption of William Schofield, finisher at Adam Ashworth's, received less sympathy. James Leech, of the trades council, asked whether the men were on short-time and noted that hat finishing was less important than body-making. Schofield's appeal was dismissed.

This situation was an example of the gap in the MARO system. The firm was not a government controlled establishment, yet it was engaged in vital war work. The factory was therefore dependent on the tribunal's willingness to protect its barely sufficient manning levels through the issue of certificates of temporary exemption. The Audenshaw Local Tribunal was well informed in this matter and treated the firm favourably, as it did the Planet Foundry Co. Ltd. of Guide Bridge which produced shell, bomb and hand grenade castings for the government. Furthermore, the dilution of labour was well advanced at Planet's for by April 1916 the 15 fitters, of 26 at the outbreak of war, had been joined by six women.<sup>25</sup> Unusually, James Leech, as labour representative on the tribunal, argued strongly that if the applicant's job was one women could do, the appeal should be dismissed. In practice, it was difficult for the tribunal to insist on substitution schemes because the employers and trade unions often refused to co-operate in the widespread



*Jones Sewing Machine Co., loading bay.*

By mid 1916 hatters and furriers were unable to secure exempted status as the situation at Robert Appleby Ltd. confirmed. On 23 May Councillor Appleby appealed for the retention of his son at the firm, having another son in the army. Eleven furriers had enlisted for military service leaving only four and although they were supplemented by Belgian workers they too were being called up for the army.<sup>24</sup> The tribunal disagreed with the claim of certified occupation status, but granted the manager applicant temporary exemption which was renewed into 1917. Overall, however, none of the hat manufacturers nor Peter Blyth Ltd., Hat Box makers, could claim to be undertaking work of national importance whereas the engineering firms rapidly obtained a more secure basis for their appeals for exemption.

Of 100 men in the moulding shop of Jones Sewing Machine Company 23 skilled plate moulders had joined the army by April 1916. Yet there was a great shortage of castings for Admiralty and War Office work and it was with difficulty that the firm's machinery was kept running.

replacement of male supervisory and skilled workers by women.<sup>26</sup> The representative of Amos Davies Ltd, leather dye works, told the tribunal on 27 May 1916 that it had "tried women cutters and one man can do as much in one week as six women". One month earlier, it was assumed by the Central Laundry, Audenshaw, and accepted by the tribunal, that while women could be employed on most tasks, a washerman remained necessary to maintain the boilers, engines and warehouse. It was a measure of the manpower crisis after the long battles of attrition on the Somme that he was eventually combed out for the army in March 1917.

While access to information on production processes and the vital trades was usually good, the tribunal's understanding of New Shepley Co., linoleum manufacturers, was less sure. During 1916 it was under contract for carpets and material for army boots and aeroplane components. On 9 May 1916 the tribunal attempted to adjudicate on the indispensability of the firm's five applicants by examining their level of wages.

No differentiation was found between them through this indication of skill level and they all received certificates of temporary exemption.<sup>27</sup> On this occasion the firm's case was well made by the Company Secretary, but, equally, non-essential or troublesome employees could be discharged by firms simply by not challenging the individual's call up for the army. Occasionally, the tribunal had little alternative but to cede the decision-making process to the employer if the military demand for men was particularly pressing, by allowing them to choose between the relative merits of two employees. Mr. Shelmerdine, owner of a leather works, was asked on 9 May 1916 to choose between the retention of his works manager or a seasoner/nailer. He chose the manager. On 23 May George Hough appealed on behalf of three of his employees, ten of his workforce of eighteen having already enlisted. Kellett informed him that two should go "and asked him to make the choice". He retained his bookkeeper/cashier.<sup>28</sup>

In comparison, appeals on grounds of hardship were subject to great scrutiny. The manager of the grocery and provisions shop at Hooley Hill owned by Maypole Dairy Company presented the case in May 1916 that four of his brothers were in the army and another was rejected as medically unfit. W.H. Ainsworth lived with his sister and seventy-year-old father. This situation was by no means unusual, in the context of early twentieth-century demographic trends, and the award of temporary exemption for three months was only extended once.<sup>29</sup> In 1918 the War Office belatedly recognised that men should not be conscripted from families where three or four brothers had died on military service, but this statement is not to be found in circulars issued to the local tribunals that year. Nonetheless, this issue became an important element of local interest which emerged in the third and fourth year of the war. During 1916 the replenishment of the depleted battalions on the Western Front was the commonly agreed first duty of local tribunals. It did not include questioning the strategy which gave rise to calculations of manpower 'wastage'. Subsequently, a wider context had to be adopted which allowed the vital equation of the war to work, namely, that soldiers and war material equalled victory through the 'total' mobilisation of resources. This equation was predicated on the assumption of social stability through the maintenance of local services. However, mobilising manpower damaged the infrastructure of communities. During 1917 a point was reached where tribunals had to redress the delicate balance between waging war abroad and maintaining a semblance of civilian life at home by retaining men who were essential in their normal occupation yet not engaged on vital war work. Such men were carters, gravediggers, boot and clog repairers, chemists, collectors of waste and schoolmasters, none of whom were in the schedules of protected occupations.<sup>30</sup>

One example from Audenshaw will suffice. On 12 June 1917 Gilbert Humphreys, schoolmaster at Hooley Hill Wesleyan School, appeared before the tribunal. He was 36 years old, married and in the highest category of medical fitness (A1)<sup>31</sup>. His appeal for conditional exemption was supported by Rev. J. Hoyle, minister of the Wesleyan church, who argued that securing a substitute would be difficult and his retention was necessary for the maintenance of the 'social fabric'. Humphrey's situation was clearly well known to the tribunal who used the occasion to express its appreciation of his services. He was granted exemption on the condition that he continued his secretaryship of the two

newly formed local campaigns of mid 1917 — War Savings and Food Economy. Both campaigns originated in Whitehall but depended on *ad hoc* voluntary agencies in towns and villages to promote the mobilisation of personal finance and an anti-waste approach to food at the height of German U-boat activity. Without his important, but non-statutory, war work the schoolmaster would have been despatched without much debate to Ashton barracks. In the decision to retain him in Audenshaw the existence of a total war effort, beyond purely military scope and definition, was revealed.

Another way of depicting the process whereby Audenshaw Local Tribunal became more critical of the 'military manpower first' principle is shown in Figure 1. Using material gathered from Kellett's case-books a comparison can be attempted of tribunal decisions across three years using a sample of cases, representing approximately eight per cent of the annual case-load. The month of March has been chosen because it was the last month each year during which recruits were obtained in time for the early phases of summer offensive activity, on the assumption of an intervening three month training period. Of the three years the largest number of recruits were obtained in 1916 despite the administrative delays so early in the procedure and the fact that conscription was not extended to married men until June 1916. A greater number of men received temporary exemption for one month in 1916 than in the following years, which suggested that, initially, cases were reviewed with greater frequency than later in the war. In March 1916 the tribunal more closely resembled its 'Derby' recruiting function than that of an independent judicial agency. In March 1917 the proportion of men obtained for military service was slightly less than in 1916, but from a markedly lower number of cases. Of 39 applicants who appeared at the tribunal meetings, 23 were already known and 16 men would return on a future occasion, few of whom were fit for military service.

This trend is deepened greatly in the evidence for March 1918, despite the onset of the German spring offensive during that crisis month. With four months' heavy fighting expected, 'wastage' was calculated at 84,000 men per month. Some 282,000 men were urgently needed.<sup>32</sup> Tribunals were expected to respond positively to the emergency conditions, but at Audenshaw 20 of 24 cases were carried through to later meetings as a result of procedural delays and the power of temporary exemption. Only two men became available for military service. The reduction of recruitable manpower levels in 1918 is substantiated in Figure 2. This table was circulated from the headquarters of the 63rd (Ashton) recruiting area so that 'chairmen may form some idea of the work which is being carried on by the Tribunals sitting within this Area'.<sup>33</sup> At Audenshaw the number of outstanding cases was small but its position in the 'league table' was cause for concern among adherents of the purely military definition of the war effort. In the same circular of 15 August 1918, chairmen were advised that more sittings should be held where necessary. They were also warned that the anticipated decertification orders of less vital occupations would lead to an increase of appeals on grounds of hardship, instead of essential war work. These circulars were designed to encourage 'improved' performances of local tribunals low down in the league table at a time when unfit men over forty years of age constituted the main source of recruits. However, the fact that three-quarters of the listed tribunals were obtaining under 20 per cent of applicants for the army suggested

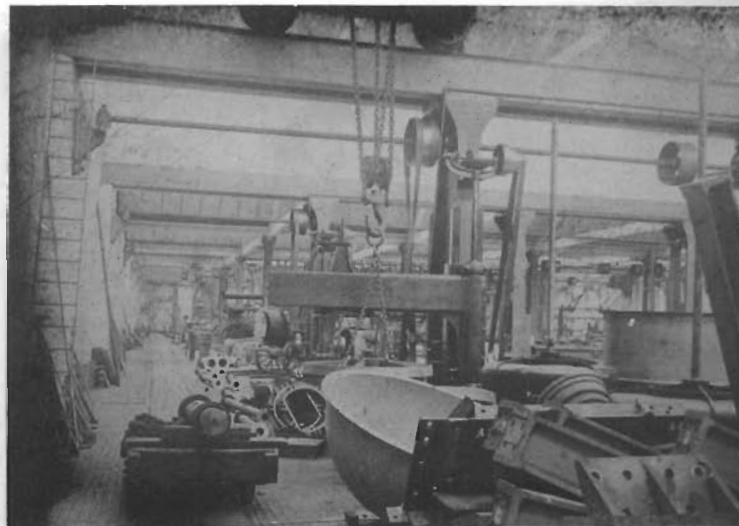
that the decision-making process in Audenshaw, which emphasised local needs, was part of a wider trend. Of 3,280,000 men who were not yet mobilised in Britain in May 1918, 30 per cent were of 'inferior physique', remained engaged on vital war work and were at the upper end of the extended military age range, which was set at 50 years in April 1918.<sup>34</sup>

Surprisingly, the age of applicants at Audenshaw Local Tribunal was not systematically noted by Alderman Kellett until March 1918. Figure 3 suggests that the recruitable age cohorts changed substantially during the existence of the tribunal. On the tribunal's last sitting on 3 September 1918, 17 of 28 applicants were aged forty years and over and would not have appeared as applicants during 1916. Moreover, most of the applicants were in the lowest category of medical health, being unfit men available for non-combatant military service or sedentary work only. Such men in terms of health alone would not have been hauled before the tribunal in 1916 or 1917. But during the final Allied offensive of the war fewer questions were asked of the ability of the potential recruits to march.<sup>35</sup> The attempts to recruit men in the 40-50 years' age range was deeply unpopular and the interests of individuals and manufacturing activity was defended more noticeably in Audenshaw in 1918.

In agriculture local needs again accorded more closely with the total war effort than with the demands of the War Office. Two farmer's sons, Samuel and Thomas Clayton of Denton Road, Hooley Hill, both 'A' men, appeared at twelve sittings between them during 1916-17. The importance of home food production guaranteed their retention on the land until after the 1917 harvest, long after most 'A' men had been conscripted. Temporary exemption was granted, not as a benign favour to an increasingly marginalised sector of employment in Audenshaw, but to ensure continuing local supplies of milk products.<sup>36</sup> When they eventually left for military service in December 1917 it was not at the hands of the tribunal but as part of the quota of men required from the land by the Lancashire Executive Agriculture Committee. In 1917 the tribunal was very supportive of the land cultivation movement. It attached as much significance to growing vegetables part-time as war work, as it did to membership of the Special Constabulary. In January 1917 land was released by the Stamford estate adjacent to Shepley Mills for 30 allotments.<sup>37</sup> One year later the tribunal avoided the removal of men in food distribution by the issue of certificates of temporary exemption, which was a trend later reinforced by directives issued by the Ministry of Food.

The majority of applicants to the tribunal during the war referred to the significance that a man's employment assumed in conditions of total war. The prolongation of the conflict and the realisation that the importance of civilian war work had to be recognised and asserted led the Audenshaw tribunal to adopt a more cautious attitude to the demand for military manpower. Consequently, in 1918 the tribunal decisions effectively dismantled the hitherto dominant perception of the war as a struggle for breakthrough on the battlefields of France and Flanders. In this regard the War Office complained that tribunals were failing in their 'duty' to provide men,<sup>38</sup> not realising that the war effort had been transformed from a condition of patriotic enthusiasm for enlistment and 'business as usual' to conscription, conditioned by age and occupation, and a protected war economy.

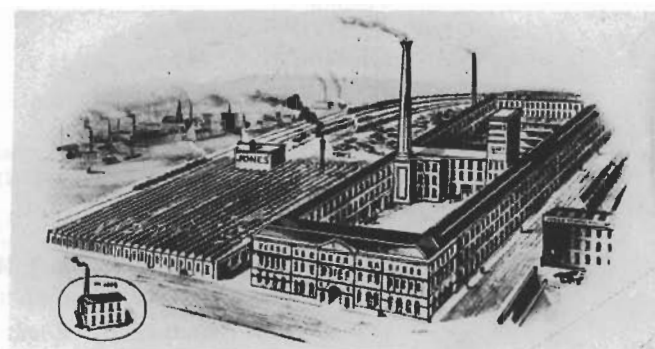
In March 1916 Beatrice Webb had noted: "The most biased judge on the bench could not have equalled in



*Planet Foundry, Guide Bridge, Audenshaw.*

malicious bias, the old gentlemen who are now sitting on the claims for exemption".<sup>39</sup> Similarly, accounts by such conscientious objectors as Clifford Allen and Bertrand Russell have depicted tribunals as malicious, illiberal, jingoistic agencies and this view has prevailed as the dominant influence on the historiography of the system.<sup>40</sup> But at Audenshaw there were no colonels eagerly presiding over the despatch of young men to the front and the tribunal was not a callous instrument of national policy. While the moral issues of war remained beyond the purview of the system, the operation of a 'temporary exemption' response, a sensitivity towards the industrial sector and the quest for social stability suggested that the tribunal in Audenshaw was not the local arm of the War Office. As it defended the interests of community and business, the tribunal sought to respond constructively to an unprecedented war effort more 'total' than previous conflicts.

The surviving records of Audenshaw Local Tribunal reveal that the relationship of this *ad hoc* agency to the government's war effort was more complex than stereotypical perceptions of the system have allowed us to believe. For the historian of the First World War the interest in tribunals lies in identifying the variety of local responses which characterised the war effort, rather than the monolithic picture which emerges from histories based on legislative change. For the historian of Audenshaw a period of rapid economic and social change in the district unfolds. Much work needs to be done on this theme in a vast number of localities and it is hoped that detailed studies will allow a fuller understanding of this aspect of the war to emerge. It is an important issue for it is clear that while the Audenshaw Local Tribunal helped to secure victory, it also maintained the social fabric of the locality at a time of great stress.



*Jones Sewing Machine Factory, Guide Bridge.*

**Figure 1****Audenshaw Local Tribunal****Categories of decisions**

	<b>March 1916</b> (3 meetings)	<b>Cases heard in</b> <b>March 1917</b> (2 meetings)	<b>April/May 1918</b> (2 meetings)
<b>Temporary exemption</b>			
to April 1 .....	7		
May 1 .....	10	3 (2 no further appeal)	
June 1 .....	11	7	9 (8 occupation 1 serious hardship)
July 1 .....	4		5 (occupation)
<b>Conditional exemption</b> .....	14	10	
(remain in present occupation)			
<b>Case postponed to next meeting</b> .....		4	6
for medical exam. ....		3	
employers appeal .....		1	
<b>Munitions card of exemption produced</b> .....			2
<b>Badged workers</b> .....		3	
<b>Enlisted</b> .....	1	3	
<b>Not assent to (applicants' case) — available to be called up</b>	18	5	2
<b>Exempt from combatant service</b> .....	2		
<b>Medically unfit</b> .....	1		
<b>Available for military service</b> .....	19	10	2
<b>Not available for military service</b> .....	49	29	22
<b>Total</b>	68	39	24
 <b>Medical grades of applicants</b>			
Grade I .....	no	5	3
II .....	information	5	6
III .....	given	8	15
(or equivalent) .....		(rest unknown)	
<b>Appeared before, at the tribunal at least once</b> .....	—	23	12

Source: Based on an analysis of the Audenshaw Tribunal case-books, Kellett mss M138/67.

**Figure 2 Comparison of case load and men secured by the army, in the 9 weeks to 15 August 1918**

Name of Tribunal	No. of cases heard	No. of men obtained for the army	Percentage of Col. 2 to Col. 1	No. of cases outstanding	Population (1911)
Crompton	68	19	28.0	9	14,758
Royton	133	36	27.0	26	17,069
Limehurst	58	14	24.1	8	10,567
Chadderton	162	27	16.6	17	28,305
Droylsden	126	18	14.0	14	13,259
Failsworth	97	13	13.3	44	16,000
Hurst	51	6	11.9	9	7,858
Ashton-under-Lyne	296	35	11.8	74	45,179
Oldham	982	114	11.6	349	147,495
Audenshaw	29	3	10.3	3	7,978
Lees	22	2	9.1	8	3,650
Denton	154	14	9.0	65	16,880
Totals	2180	301	13.8	664	

Sources: Kellett mss M138/67, W. Craven Ellis, *Town Hall, Ashton to J. Kellett, 15 August 1918* and *Census of England and Wales, 1911, Preliminary Report LXXI, Cd. 5705, 479*

**Figure 3 The age structure of cases heard at the Audenshaw Local Tribunal**

Age	9 Jan. 1917	23 July 1918	3 Sept. 1918
19 .....	1		
20-24 .....	1		
25-29 .....	2	1	3
30-34 .....	3		3
35-39 .....	4		5
40-44 .....	3	6	9
45-49 .....		3	7
50 .....		1	1
Total .....	14	11	28

Source: compiled from the Audenshaw Tribunal case-books, Kellett mss. M138/67.

#### NOTES

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3. B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War* (London, 1972 Ed.) pp.231-253 & 314-336.
4. PRO CAB 27/14 Cabinet Committee on Manpower, 17 Dec 1917.
5. J. Rae, *Conscience and Politics. The British Government and the Conscientious Objector to Military Service* (London, 1970) pp.94-133; A. Mor-O'Brien, "Conchie": Emrys Hughes and the First World War', *Welsh History Review*, Vol.13 (1987) p.339.
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12. See D. French, *British Strategy and War Aims 1914-16* (London, 1986) p.169.
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17. *General Annual Reports for the British Army for the period from 1 Oct 1913 to 30 Sept 1919*. 1921. Cmd. 1193, xx, 469.
18. *Military Service Tribunals, Regulations* 1916, xvii 588.
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21. *Loc. cit.*
22. H.C. Caffrey 'Hating in Denton' in A. Lock (Ed.), *Looking Back at Denton* (Tameside, 1985) pp.27-39.
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28. Tribunal case-book, 23 May 1916; *Ashton-under-Lyne Herald*, 27 May 1916.
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30. On the schedules of protected occupations see C.J. Wrigley, *David Lloyd George and the Labour Movement* (Hassocks, 1976) pp.223-229.
31. Tribunal case-book, 12 June 1917.
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