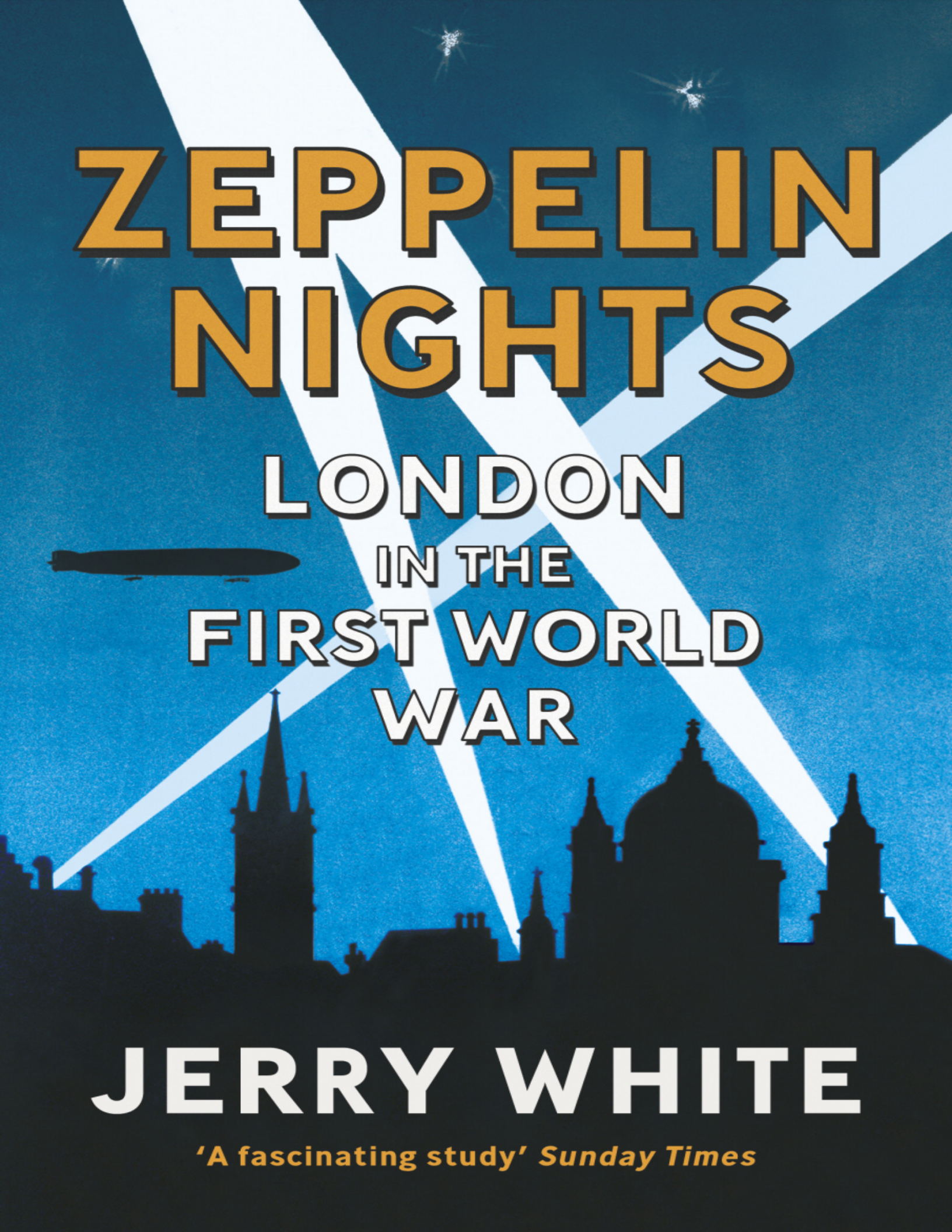
ZEPPELIN NIGHTS
LONDON IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR
JERRY WHITE
'A fascinating study' Sunday Times

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11pm, Tuesday 4 August 1914: with the declaration of war London becomes one of the greatest killing machines in human history. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers pass through the capital on their way to the front; wounded men are brought back to be treated in London’s hospitals; and millions of shells are produced in its factories.

The war changes London life for ever. Women escape the drudgery of domestic service to work as munitionettes. Full employment puts money into the pockets of the London poor for the first time. Self-appointed moral guardians seize the chance to clamp down on drink, frivolous entertainment and licentious behaviour. As the war drags on, gloom often descends on the capital. And at night London is plunged into darkness for fear of German bombers and Zeppelins that continue to raid the city.

Yet despite daily casualty lists, food shortages and enemy bombing, Londoners are determined to get on with their lives and flock to cinemas and theatres, dance halls and shebeens, firmly resolved not to let Germans or puritans spoil their enjoyment.

Peopled with patriots and pacifists, clergymen and thieves, bluestockings and prostitutes, Jerry White’s magnificent panorama reveals a struggling yet flourishing city.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Jerry White teaches London history at Birkbeck, University of London. His acclaimed trilogy on London, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, is an unparalleled narrative of the capital, and *London in the Twentieth Century: A City and Its People* won the Wolfson History Prize in 2001. His most recent book was *London in the Eighteenth Century: A Great and Monstrous Thing*, first published in 2012. He was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature by the University of London in 2005 and is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

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For Rosie

Zeppelin Nights

London in the First World War

Jerry White

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

PREFACE: LONDON AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

For most of us the very thought of ‘London at war’ means just one thing – the Blitz. That extraordinary drama so dominates the idea of wartime London that it is hard to imagine the city and its people affected in any special way by the war of 1914 to 1918. Of course, the Londoners must have shared in the misery and sacrifice of that greatest of all British wars. Many will know there was some bombing of a kindergarten nature and that the tremendous bombardments on the Western Front were at times audible in the capital. But these would seem to rank as sideshows, a puppeteer’s dress rehearsal for 1939 to 1945, especially the cataclysm of 1940–41.

The truth is much more interesting. From the moment war was declared at 11 p.m. on Tuesday 4 August 1914, London became the hub of an ever-enlarging leviathan of total war. Londoners almost without exception were caught up body and soul in its maw. The war utterly dominated the city’s life. It changed everything – not just for those four and a quarter years of the most destructive war that human history had ever witnessed but for generations after. Even in the twenty-first century Londoners still live with many of the consequences of the First World War.

The war had this impact because London occupied a far more dominating place in both nation and empire in 1914 than it did even twenty-five years later. The national and imperial war effort was directed from London in almost every theatre of operations. A large part of the nation’s munitions were manufactured there. Almost every British

soldier on his way to active service moved through it and most spent some time there. Soldiers in their hundreds of thousands from Australia and New Zealand, Canada and the USA saw something of the sights of London, from St Paul's to the Alhambra Theatre, from the Houses of Parliament to the brothels of the Waterloo Road. It was to London that the wounded were brought bleeding from France and Belgium, even from Gallipoli and Mesopotamia, and to London that refugees from the war-torn territories came seeking respite and perhaps to start a new life. And it was London that epitomised the wholehearted commitment – and from time to time the fearful stresses and disturbances – of a nation under nerve-breaking strain, daily affected by the shifting fortunes of total war. Small wonder that this strategic centre of the British and imperial war effort was considered a legitimate target for military aggression; and small wonder too that the very notion of 'civilian' should be blurred when so many adult Londoners were effectively mechanics in this great machine of war.

I have tried to tell the story of this astonishing time, a protean moment in the history of London in the twentieth century, by focusing on the daily life of the Londoners. Leading politicians, senior officials, high-ranking army officers, society celebrities have some place in this story and the royal family from time to time makes an important appearance. All these, of course, were Londoners too. But I have tried to capture most of all the daily experience of the mass of Londoners: the diarists, men and women, who recognised from the moment of war's declaration or a few days before that they were living in momentous times; the memoirists of all classes who recorded their experiences after the event; the individuals running some of London's public and private institutions as the fortunes of war impacted on their working lives – something, in short, of the lives of patriots and pacifists, wounded soldiers and nurses, businessmen and 'munitionettes', clergymen and thieves,

bluestockings and prostitutes. In doing so, and despite so much misery coming the way of so many, I have tried to bear in mind the food writer Hallie Eustace Miles's hope when she came to publish her wartime diary a dozen years after the Armistice that it might 'help to remind people of what a *wonderful* place London was in War-time'.[1]

1

AN IMMENSE SENSE OF WAITING

MAY DAY, LONDON, 1914. Thousands of workers took a holiday on this warm sunny Friday and marched from all corners of the city, as for some years past, to a great demonstration in Hyde Park. The day was notable this year for the large numbers of foreign workers present. They were given their own ‘international platform, where several languages were spoken’, French and German prominent among them. The London building workers, embroiled in an ill-tempered lockout, had two platforms to themselves, and *The Times*’s good-natured report noted specially the ‘Juvenile Socialists’ around the stage of the London Socialist Sunday School Union, whose meeting opened with a hymn. ‘The demonstration passed off very quietly,’ the paper thought.[1]

But not quite. Earlier in the day, some 600 marchers from west London, including a section from the National League of the Blind, were crossing the Edgware Road at Church Street, Marylebone, close to the slum district of Lisson Grove. At the front of a queue of traffic waiting in her car for the procession to cross was Mrs Hilda Beatrice Hewlett, a famous flyer, the first British woman to hold a pilot’s licence. According to the police, Mrs Hewlett waited about three minutes and then drove on, ‘scattering the processionists in all directions’. ‘She stopped after being called to three times, and when her name and address had been taken, she remarked, “Now move them (*i.e.*, the

crowd) out of the way or I will drive over them."' The crowd 'was incensed, and but for the intervention of the police would have overturned the car'. In her defence at the magistrates' court in early June, Mrs Hewlett claimed she had driven off only when the marchers had passed and left a space, when she 'at once sounded her hooter and crossed the road'. But she too confirmed the mood of the crowd as ugly. 'Immediately a large crowd of very rough people collected round and mounted the car, yelling "Suffragette! We will teach you how to behave to the working classes." As a matter of fact, she herself belonged to the working class' – Mrs Hewlett stretched a point here: she was a Church of England vicar's daughter – 'and was not a suffragette. Had she not had her big dog with her in the car she believed that they would have attacked her.' The magistrate accepted that her words to the police were not a threat but merely concern for the crowd's safety and fined her 40s for dangerous driving with 2s costs.[2]

This was an incident small but telling. For London in that early summer of 1914 was a divided city where the divisions were not held in check by politeness or reserve. The widest fracture had opened along the fault line of class and Mrs Hewlett and the May Day workers' march had exposed an open wound of mutual mistrust and loathing in which violent language, even violent actions, were never far from the surface. The outbreak of war, less than two months away though utterly unthought of when Mrs Hewlett received comeuppance of a sort, would heal some divisions. But the festering class divide in London would prove the most difficult of all to paper over.

If London in the last few months before the outbreak of war in 1914 was in many ways at war with itself, it remained a city of unparalleled greatness, like nothing else the modern world had ever seen. With a population of 7.25 million, Greater London was nearly twice the size of Greater Berlin and larger than the municipalities of Paris, Vienna and

St Petersburg combined. If it overshadowed its European competitors, London dwarfed the major provincial centres of Great Britain. It was home to more people than all that Edinburgh, Dublin, Belfast, Cardiff, Manchester, Salford, Liverpool, Birmingham, Glasgow, Bristol, Portsmouth, Southampton, Nottingham, Bradford, Leeds and Sheffield could together muster.[3] The growth of London that had staggered the nation and the world throughout the nineteenth century was now slowing in the first decade or so of the twentieth, but even so Greater London had added a net 67,000 people (more than the population of Blackpool, for instance) every single year between 1901 and 1911. And to accommodate them, some 140,000 houses and flats had been built in the decade after 1901, though these numbers too were slowing before 1914. Almost all these new houses were in the London suburbs, and most were designed for middle-class occupation.[4]

A significant part of London's population growth was made up by immigration. London's draw on young people of working age had never abated in the countries of Britain and the provinces of England. But for thirty years and more, London had attracted increasing numbers from continental Europe too. The largest of these minorities was made up of Russians and Russian Poles, mainly Jews, who clustered most of all in the East End of London. In 1911 they totalled some 68,000, not counting those born in Britain since their great emigration had begun thirty years before. The next largest migrant group by far was the German-born, over 30,000 in the County of London and 5,000 or more in the outer suburbs, two-thirds of them men; another 10,000 or so Austro-Hungarians, mostly Austrians with a significant number of Jews living with their co-religionists in the East End, might be added to the German-speaking minority in London. They all far outnumbered the French, London's oldest-established European minority, 14,000 of them in the County of London in 1911, and the Italians, around 12,000.

All of these foreign-born communities had increased in number since 1901 and in all likelihood continued to do so in the few years immediately before 1914.[5]

That year London was a more cosmopolitan city than it had been for centuries past. The Germans, who will concern us most, were long-established in both the East End (especially Whitechapel) and the West End (especially Soho and St Pancras north of Oxford Street), with suburban communities at all points of the London compass. Charlotte Street, west of Tottenham Court Road, was the main West End artery, known as 'Charlottenstrasse' and famous for its German restaurants and clubs. In the rest of London there were a dozen German churches, a Salvation Army German Corps, a German Hospital at Dalston, two German-language newspapers, a great German Gymnasium at King's Cross, and associations for every interest group, from amateur theatricals to chess players, cyclists to military men. German merchants, traders, stockbrokers and bankers had carved out an important niche in the City; the German governess had become a necessity in many upper-class homes; and the German waiter among proletarian migrants, and bakers and barbers among tradesmen, had become what seemed like irreplaceable fixtures in London's economic life. With their high rates of intermarriage with English women and their readiness to stay in London rather than return 'home', no foreign community was more integrated than the Germans. August 1914 would change all that. The painful fracture between the London Germans and their hosts would be a new and dramatic feature of the years to come.[6]

The greatest division in London life of course – enduring and unbridgeable – was between rich and poor. This was the fundament of class difference and of class loathing. The gap was probably widening in material terms – there was little improvement in the living standards of the London poor in the years after the death of Queen Victoria and the London

rich got richer, certainly if measured by the growing numbers of metropolitan millionaires.[7] It seems too that the gap widened culturally. Much commentary comes to us in the aftermath of the war, when a nation's sacrifice cast a glare both lurid and jaundiced on the excesses of the insouciant London rich before 1914, but perhaps only hindsight could do the times proper justice. Stephen McKenna, the civil servant nephew of a Liberal Cabinet minister and wealthy banker, saw it by 1921 in apocalyptic terms:

> Those who remained in London and those who periodically returned thither in the five years before the war alike discovered that they were in a new imperial Rome in a new silver age. All who had waited for the passing of Victorianism were rewarded for their patience by finding a vacuum which they were free to fill in what way soever they chose; and to the task they brought unbounded energy, almost unbounded wealth, a vigorous dislike of restraint and an ingenuous ignorance of tradition. Never, in the recorded history of England, has the social power of money been greater; never has the pursuit of pleasure been more wide-spread and successful; never has the daily round . . . been brought nearer to the feverishness, the superficiality and the recklessness . . . of the French in the years immediately before the first revolution.[8]

McKenna is borne out by the sycophantic attention paid by the London press to the trivial daily preoccupations of aristocrats and plutocrats in Mayfair and Belgravia and Kensington during the London Season from May 1914. The comings of Lord and Lady St Levan to Belgrave Square or Lady Beaumont's entourage to Eaton Square or Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman to Claridge's Hotel; the goings of Lord and Lady Wellesley from London to the Hôtel Lotti, Paris, or Lady Alice Shaw-Stewart, leaving for Scotland; and the doings of the Hon. Mrs Devereux at the Ritz, where she gave a dinner-dance for her daughter Blanche, or of the Brunners, who hosted a dance at 43 Harrington Square, where the various rooms boasted yellow and white irises, pink carnations and crimson ramblers and where Corelli Windeatt's band played for the dancers, all filled scores of

column inches of tiny print and endless lists of names and titles.[9] It was said of these last pre-war Seasons that ‘the entertainments grew in number and magnificence. One band in a house was no longer enough, there must be two, three even.’[10]

On these nights of the Season the London poor would stare and wonder from the pavement, kept back from the carriages, cars and red carpets by obliging police constables. The poor could be an unwelcome sight. A regular ‘lady’ diner in these years at the Café Royal in Regent Street ‘always ordered a wing of chicken in browned butter sauce’ for her Pekinese, for which ‘an expensive cushion and chair were kept specially’. When it was suggested to her that the remainder of the chicken might ‘be given to some of the poor people who used to come to the back door’, she ‘turned round, and with a look as cold as marble said: “I hate poor people, they depress me.”’[11]

Well they might. There were, for one thing, so many of them. And they were, for another, so very poor. The social investigator and shipping magnate Charles Booth had reckoned in the early 1890s that of some 4.2 million people living in the County of London, about 3.5 million (82 per cent) were working class (working with their hands in some way) and of these 1.3 million could be classed as living below the poverty line. That was 30.7 per cent of all Londoners in the inner area, split between the 400,000 or so ‘“very poor”’ – ‘at all times more or less “in want”’, ‘ill-nourished and poorly clad’ – and ‘the “poor”’, not in want but whose lives nonetheless were comfortless and ‘an unending struggle’, readily cast into the ranks of the very poor by accidents of sickness, bereavement or industrial dislocation.[12]

That things were little different twenty years on was revealed by the Fabian Women’s Group’s study of North Lambeth published in 1913. Their business was not with ‘the poorest people of the district. Far from it!’, but with those

where the breadwinner was in fairly regular work and receiving a wage of 18s to 26s a week, average earnings for the labouring poor. The never-ending struggle of these families to maintain decent levels of nourishment, cleanliness and respectability in home and person, their vulnerability to sudden impoverishment, the constant nagging worry over the health and well-being of children, and the interminable vexations of worn-out housing and overcrowded homes, were unsentimentally laid before London's reading public, though to little apparent effect on the conscience of the rich.[13]

The fundamental causes of family poverty in London were twofold: low wages and irregularity of employment. Most working-class families suffered during the course of their lives from both, especially when the breadwinner did not possess a special skill of high value in the labour market. For the 'unskilled', competition from the huge agglomeration of workers in London kept wages low and hours irregular, long hours alternating with slack times. These pressures affected in particular 'general labourers' among men – the poor condition of the casual dock workers in the Port of London had long been notorious – and seamstresses and cleaners among women.

It was among the tailoring workers, women and men, that 'sweating', the extreme subdivision of labour, the production of a garment broken down to its smallest components and given to low-skilled workers at the very cheapest wage rates, had become a byword for exploitation in the years before the war.[14] Not all manufacturing industries treated their workers this badly, but poor working conditions in elderly workshops, often filthily kept, were pretty general among the 800,000 and more employed in manufacturing in the County of London in 1911, men and women both. Something similar was true for the nearly quarter of a million men employed in transport and goods handling and many of the 130,000 in building, both

industries especially subject to work stoppages due to the vagaries of the weather. And while regularity of employment characterised the working lives of most of the 200,000 live-in female domestic servants in the County, their careers were dogged by poor wages, long hours and petty restrictions, especially for the majority employed as skivvies or all-purpose maids in one-servant households.[15]

The privations of London's workers in 1914 did not end at poverty and economic exploitation. The London housing problem was perhaps the city's most grievous nuisance, on a scale not seen elsewhere. Low wages, long hours, poverty, these were evils besetting the whole of the British working class at the time – indeed, wages were generally higher in London than outside (though the price of provisions was higher too). But the exorbitant cost of London housing, and the cramped space and battered accommodation it bought, combined in a problem of monumental scale and intransigence. Working-class suburbs, especially in outer east London, had done something to ease overcrowding in London by 1911. Even so, three-quarters of a million people lived at a density of two persons per room or more.[16]

There were, though, consolations. Charles Booth had recorded of the London poor twenty years before that 'Their lives are an unending struggle, and lack comfort, but I do not know that they lack happiness.'[17] Many London pleasures cost nothing – the parks, the heaths and commons were within walking distance, the excitements of the streets and markets were available during both day and night. And most could afford the occasional treat. Money could be scrimped together or garnered from a windfall or, very often, borrowed from the pawnbroker, that ubiquitous banker to the poor.

There was also more to spend it on. The quality and quantity of entertainments open to the London working class improved greatly in the years after Victoria. There were some fifty-three theatres in inner London, some in

working-class districts like Kennington, Whitechapel, Hoxton, Bethnal Green and Poplar, and a further fifty-one music halls and variety theatres catering largely to a popular trade. Entrance to the halls cost 2d to 2s and was even free some nights to soldiers and Territorials in uniform (or it was in south London in 1911).[18] Here the jokes and songs that were the currency of collective life gained a universal circulation. At Christmas 1913, for instance, Chris Massie, a wayfaring casual labourer lodging in Hoxton with ‘an old lady’ and her two sons, one a boxer and the other a pickpocket, played unendingly ‘It’s a Long Way to Tipperary’ on the family gramophone: ‘That Christmas we danced and sang and drank beer to the melody’, already made famous in the halls.[19] And another London entertainment, the cinema, though a relative newcomer was quickly becoming popular. Some forty-nine ‘cinematograph theatres’ were licensed in 1911 but in 1913 there were 363, with many other places also licensed to show films.[20]

All these entertainments provoked the disgust, and even anger, of those who took it upon themselves to police the morals of the London worker. Chief among them were the churches, especially the established church. Church membership and attendance in London were generally a middle-class habit, and a minority one at that.[21] Frustration at the churches’ lack of progress in involving working people in organised religion had long been a source of class tension, if not enmity. It was the churches’ lay members who made up the great bulk of voluntary ‘social workers’ and ‘missionaries’. Among many, priggishness, censoriousness and superiority knew no bounds. For those who claimed to have the interests of the poor at heart the dominant tone was of pity tempered by contempt. In this worldview fun was never innocent but involved some infraction of a standard that few would have presumed to set for themselves. Here is Alexander Paterson, a south London

social worker and by no means the sternest censor, contemplating working lads and their enjoyments in 1911:

> Attendance at a music-hall as a weekly practice is commonly held to denote a careless and irreligious life; and though there may be in all districts some good men and steady lads who are not ashamed to frequent these places, it is still a safe rule that the worst boys are the *habitués*, and the best boys do not go at all. At the best it is a poor entertainment, at the worst it is the gate to every temptation, and no man who is trying to help a boy can view with anything but apprehension his return to the gallery door.[22]

By far the most obnoxious pleasure of the London working class was drink. That was the view, anyhow, of all those whose work or hobby it was to amend the workers' behaviour. In 1913 there were 6,566 licensed premises in which 'liquor' – the word itself shivered many tender spines – might be consumed, and only 400 of those were hotels and restaurants. The pubs and beer houses of the metropolis seemed to many the very domain of the devil. They undermined not only goodness but usefulness to employer and to society at large. That drink was, unsurprisingly given the living conditions of so many, a mainstay in making the best of things, the numbers of arrests for drunkenness on the streets of London might stand as testament. In 1911 the Metropolitan and City Police arrested and prosecuted some 62,700 persons for being drunk, two-thirds of them for aggravated offences.[23] At its worst, drunkenness exacerbated the miseries of poverty and fuelled domestic terror and violence, especially against women and children. It was these ill effects of drink in London before 1914 that made many working people firm advocates of one of the several branches of the temperance movement.

For many reasons, then, the London working class – outnumbering the rest by four to one in inner London – proved suspect, distasteful, even loathsome to those with power in the metropolis. And the politics and practice of

class struggle in these years made everything more tense, even warlike. Working-class resentment at the condition of the many found expression in two main ways. The more powerful was industrial organisation. There were growing numbers of union members with well-stocked ‘war-chests’ and a truculent determination to improve the unionists’ lot despite the resistance of employers. The second was a widening allegiance to socialism as a political movement. London socialism was fractured and fissiparous, but there were common messages that workers could readily agree with: shared ownership of land and industry, a society organised to better the lot of the many not the few, loyalty among workers that transcended national boundaries so that it seemed a worker in Berlin had more in common with the ordinary Londoner than a Mayfair aristocrat or industrialist. These ideas had powerful resonance. A ‘new spirit of dissatisfaction with economic conditions’ was plainly apparent to David Lloyd George, a radical Liberal politician whose roots and sympathies lay close to the respectable God-fearing working man and who was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Liberal government of 1908 to 1915.

> Workers were agitating for a higher standard of life and a more dignified status than they had enjoyed in the past. From 1911 onwards there was a steady development of strike action, and in the summer of 1914 there was every sign that the autumn would witness a series of industrial disturbances without precedent.[24]

That was especially true of the mining and heavy industrial districts of the country, but there was turbulence in London too. Throughout 1914 the London building workers had been in dispute with the master builders over union recognition. Walkouts on building sites because unionists refused to work with non-union men had provoked a backlash among the employers at a time when house construction and other building had been unusually flat.

After many such ‘lightning strikes’ a walkout at the Pearl Assurance offices site in Holborn at the end of 1913 had proved the final straw and from 24 January 1914 a general lockout by the masters laid off some 30,000–40,000 men and shut every big site in the capital, including County Hall, the London County Council’s new home on the South Bank.[25]

The masters presented the men with ‘The Document’, a personal agreement requiring them to sign a pledge to work with any employee, unionist or not, before they would be taken on again. Surprisingly, in an industry where collective solidarity had long been undermined by traditions of casual labour and self-employment, the men held firm, indeed firmer than their leaders. The dispute gripped the trade union world – hence two of the ten platforms that May Day in Hyde Park were devoted to the building workers and their cause. Later that month it seemed that the dispute might spread to the provinces, with the masters talking of a national lockout to bring the London men to heel.[26] By June, after nearly six months out of work, only the stonemasons had voted to accept a compromise offered by the employers and their members returned to work in early July. But the other building unions rejected a similar agreement after numerous ballots, despite their leaders urging a settlement. As late as Wednesday 29 July there was an ‘ultimatum’ from the master builders threatening once more a lockout nationwide.[27]

That spring and summer in London were marked by industrial strife in every direction. In May the militant London and Provincial Union of Vehicle Workers threatened a ‘general strike’ on the buses over hours, wages and paid holidays, and there was trouble on the trams over the employment of boys in men’s jobs in late July.[28] A strike in May at Pink’s jam factory in Southwark saw attacks on carmen driving wagons from the yard, the warehousemen demanding higher wages and an end to boy labour; the

works closed pending negotiations.[29] A public campaign by shop assistants for shorter working hours tried to win over London churches and metropolitan borough councils in May.[30] And on Friday 3 July a strike at the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, the nation's premier armaments factory, brought out 1,500 men, members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. One of their number had refused to erect a machine on a concrete bed laid by non-union labour and had been sacked, bringing the Royal Gun Carriage Department to a halt. A day later and some 8,000 were out seeking 100 per cent trade union membership – 97 per cent were thought already to be members – and almost all the Arsenal's 10,000 workers were on strike by Monday. Mass-picketing round the Arsenal gates led to some violent scenes, though these were quickly quelled by the strike committee, anxious to get public opinion on the workers' side. Even Prime Minister Herbert Asquith was involved in settling the dispute. After four days the sacked worker was reinstated pending a Court of Inquiry into the dispute, and the Arsenal returned to normal working on 9 July.[31]

This truculent mood spread to unlikely terrain. Also in July the West Ham Board of Guardians refused to administer poor relief in protest at interference by the District Auditor – *The Times* promptly labelled the row 'The Guardians' Strike'; and a dispute on the Great Western Railway (GWR) at Paddington briefly brought the dining-car service to a halt on West Country trains.[32]

Most worrying of all was the threat of a Triple Alliance – the phrase borrowed from European diplomacy, the partnership of Austria, Germany and Italy from 1882 – involving the miners', railwaymen's and transport workers' unions. Negotiations began in late May to establish that a strike by one union would mean a strike by all, London railwaymen prominent among the militants. The threat of a coalfields dispute in remote Durham or Ebbw Vale bringing the national rail network to a halt and closing the Port of

London took on nightmarish possibilities for government and business. The unions debated and endorsed the Alliance through June, with sympathy strikes becoming the biggest guns in the workers' industrial armoury, ready-primed for that autumn's negotiations over pay and conditions. The prospect provoked both fear and wrath. In July the Reverend William Inge, Dean of St Paul's, denounced trade unions as 'criminal combinations whose leaders deserved to be executed as rebels against society'.[33]

London workers, then, had played their part in the 'new spirit of dissatisfaction' that was such a feature of the time, and so ominous for the times ahead. But it was a different sort of struggle that truly enlivened the streets and public life of the metropolis that spring and summer. The suffragette campaign of votes for women had entered a uniquely violent phase. By the very nature of political power – as the seat of government and home to both Parliament and (for much of the time) the royal family – London was the militant suffragettes' main battlefield. When those marchers in the Edgware Road on May Day saw Mrs Hewlett drive into the crowd they thought they were seeing yet another violent suffragette stunt, and who could blame them for leaping to conclusions? For the suffragettes, with astonishing energy, organisation, physical courage and reckless unconcern for the consequences, were bringing their cause into London's streets and public buildings and were the subject of conversation at every breakfast table of the well-to-do and every proletarian taproom in the metropolis.

Throughout May, June and July there were suffragette attacks on London art galleries, with pictures slashed at the Royal Academy, the National Gallery and the Tate; a mummy case was smashed at the British Museum; there were violent demonstrations, with assaults on police lines outside Buckingham Palace, at Bow Street magistrates' court and in Victoria Park; there was organised window-

breaking in West End shopping and residential streets; home-made bombs exploded at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Elephant and Castle, and at Westminster Abbey; bombs were discovered at St George's, Hanover Square, and St John's, Smith Square, and bomb-making equipment was found at Lauderdale Mansions, Maida Vale; church services were disturbed by suffragette demonstrations at Brompton Oratory, Westminster Cathedral, the Abbey and St Paul's. In June a possible plot to disrupt London's drinking-water supply required police protection of the Metropolitan Water Board's reservoirs. In the background was continuous news of hunger strikes and the operation of the 'Cat and Mouse Act' – women released from prison when too weak to be detained further were rearrested when their health recovered – and of women chaining themselves to railings and inside public buildings. Everywhere 'Votes for Women' resounded in the parks and stared out from posters.[34]

The suffragettes were by no means all middle-class women – an active, vociferous and persuasive East London Federation of the Suffragettes had many working-class supporters and local leaders supporting Sylvia Pankhurst from their headquarters at Old Ford Road, Bow. But the overwhelming tone of the suffragettes' national leaders, including their most audacious militants, had much arrogant class hauteur about it. During these same spring and summer months, an increasingly violent backlash developed among Londoners against the suffragettes' more extreme antics, and while much of this was plainly gender-based – middle-class medical students frequently threw themselves into the anti-suffragist fray – some just as plainly originated in that class feeling we glimpsed against Mrs Hewlett in the Edgware Road. So, for instance, women speakers were assaulted by crowds in Hyde Park and Clapham Common, and suffragettes were more than once rescued by police from a potential ducking on Hampstead Heath;[35] and at the Lyons Corner House in Coventry Street, Piccadilly Circus,

haunt of the West End shop assistant, two suffragettes distributing leaflets ‘were pelted with cutlery, sugar, bread and cake’ – the trouble continued when they took refuge in the lift, which then stuck between floors, ‘missiles being thrown at them through the cage’.[36]

We might leave the last word to poor Miss Marguerite Fedden, writing to *The Times* from the Halcyon Club, Cork Street, Mayfair, on 25 June:

> On Sunday last I was walking through Hyde Park on my way to an ‘At home’ in Kensington, and I stood for a few minutes by a suffragette platform to listen to one of the speakers. I was standing perfectly quietly when some man recognised me as having been one of the speakers at the previous Thursday’s Religious League’s demonstration. At a hint from him a huge horde of hooligans gathered round me and began to hurl opprobrious epithets at me, and because I stood silent and did not reply they grew unruly and obscene. (It was impossible for me to get away.)
>
> Suddenly there was a stampede with me in the middle to the Serpentine, my hat and veil were torn to ribbons, my haircombs stolen, my umbrella smashed, my dress bespattered with eggs and torn, and my foot badly crushed. I should have been trampled to death if it had not been for the bravery of a police inspector, who, with the help of a few men and at the risk of his life, rescued me and took me for safety to the police-station.
>
> What is our country coming to when such scenes can be enacted in the pleasure-parks of our great Metropolis? . . . As a member of the public who helps to pay for Hyde Park, I claim protection from assault when I choose to walk in it on any future Sunday.[37]

There were, fortunately, other preoccupations in London that summer besides strike threats, picket lines and the excitements provided by the militant suffragette campaign. Most of all, the weather was generally lovely from the end of May to early September, far drier and warmer than average and especially sunny in June. The Londoners made the best of it, despite the closure of many art galleries for fear of further suffragette ‘outrages’. Whit Monday, 1 June, saw the start of the Anglo-American Exhibition at the White City, Shepherd’s Bush, where 100,000 turned up to see a cowboy ranch and ‘Real Wild West’ with ‘reproductions’ of New York and its skyscrapers and the recently opened Panama Canal.

The Anglo-Spanish Exhibition opened at Earls Court Exhibition, there was the usual Whitsun flying display at Hendon Aerodrome, and thousands of picnickers flocked to the Crystal Palace and stayed for the fireworks after dark. The Zoo was packed with some 50,000 visitors, there in part to see the fake mountains of the Mappin Terraces, opened for the first time that very day. Outside, in Regent's Park, the annual carthorse parade had a 'stream of gaily-decked animals and newly-painted carts, stretching as far as the eye could see'. Day-tripping to the seaside or country filled the railway stations, with 110,000 travelling to Brighton alone over the holiday weekend and a record number of passengers leaving Paddington for the West Country. And back in London heaths, commons and parks were turned over to music and dancing as dusk settled – this year the waltz held sway, few attempting the '"new-fangled" creations like the Tango and the Maxixe'. There had, in short, never been such a Whitsun and many looked forward to something like a return bout at the August Bank Holiday, just two months away.[38]

In the meantime, July saw the climax of the year's London Season. The Henley Regatta opened on the 1st and a fortnight's summer sales on the 6th; Gentlemen and Players met at cricket at both the Oval and Lord's, sharing the honours over the two matches; the air race from London to Paris and back aroused great interest at Hendon once more and a fortnight's shooting took place at Bisley. There were extraordinary scenes at the Eton v. Harrow two-day cricket match at Lord's when Eton triumphed in a nail-biting finish to a 'tremendous' ovation and pitch invasion by thousands of spectators in top hats and tails, 'a black sea, over which light and dark blue handkerchiefs waved tempestuously from walking sticks'. Celebrations continued that night at Olympia with Edward Prince of Wales and a first team of aristocrats joining in the fun.[39] It was at Olympia too, a few days later, that the most eagerly anticipated heavyweight