

**The Boys' Brigade and Urban Cultures, 1883 –  
1933: A Relationship Examined**

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The thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Portsmouth.

## Abstract

The lived reality of membership of the Boys' Brigade between 1883 and 1933 has been somewhat neglected in the field of youth histories. Existing histories have focused on the position of founders and headquarters of youth movements, thus neglecting the experience at the local level. Our current understanding of membership of youth movements is based on an interpretation that camping was the most appealing aspect, with historians including John Springhall and Stephen Humphries asserting that this element of the programme was the greatest attraction for *most* Boys. However, these arguments have not adequately addressed the role of camping within the broader programme of work of youth movements, have afforded insufficient attention to the relationship between the regular sessions and camp, and have overlooked participation figures. This thesis advances our existing understanding by addressing this issue within the specific context of the urban space, providing a unique insight into the lived experience of membership of a Boys' Brigade Company, whilst offering a comparative aspect often lost in prevailing histories. Through contemporary accounts, statistics from annual reports, oral testimonies, and newspaper articles, this thesis demonstrates that the practical application of the agenda set at the apex of the organisation was applied differently across varied spaces. Additionally, through a more thorough examination of the lived experience of camping, this thesis argues that previous histories have placed too much emphasis on camping as an attraction for young people to join a youth organisation, with the position maintained here that this activity was available to limited numbers from the 1880s to the 1930s, with more Boys experiencing life in this organisation at the weekly classes. This shows that the existing consensus approaches youth movements in broad homogenous terms and overlooks the regional variances in application of the agenda set from headquarters. This is significant to our understanding as it indicates that the urban space was a unique environment where youth movements adapted to local circumstances. Therefore, the Boys' Brigade is presented in this thesis as a vehicle to improve our understanding of the ways young people interacted in the urban space in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain. It offers an indication of the lived experience of membership of a youth movement that is missing from much of the existing histories and provides a clearer indication that the application of the organisation differed across space and place, thus presenting an original contribution to the field of youth histories.

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Declaration

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

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Due to the age and nature of the data drawn upon for this thesis, derived from publically accessible archives, this work has not been submitted for an ethical review.

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List of Abbreviations

BCL	Bristol Central Library
BPOHP	Bristol People's Oral History Project
CBB	Catholic Boys' Brigade
CLB	Church Lads' Brigade
DTS	Daily Telegraph Shield
EBBCR	3rd Enfield Boys' Brigade Company Records
GCA	Glasgow City Archives
GSAA	The Glasgow Stedfast Association Archives
HLI	Highland Light Infantry
JLB	Jewish Lads' Brigade
LCF	London Camp Fund
LSB	The London School Board
LRV	Lanark Rifle Volunteers
SOA	Society of Arts
WHS	Wandsworth Heritage Service
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

The words 'Officer' and 'Boy' appear capitalised throughout to mirror the conventions of the Boys' Brigade.

## Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been an incredibly rewarding process that built on a passion for historical enquiry relating to the Boys' Brigade that began during my years as an undergraduate in Portsmouth. For this, a special note of thanks must go to Brad Beaven, who identified and encouraged this interest from an early stage of my academic life, and has continued to offer excellent support since. Throughout the process of researching and writing this thesis Brad has offered valuable advice and his comments and expertise have encouraged some exciting ideas. In a similar vein, gratitude must be extended to Karl Bell for his thoughtful insight on this thesis and the feedback given on all draft chapters and to Jodi Burkett for providing comprehensive comments on the first draft. In addition, a word of thanks should be recorded for all the other members of the Port Towns and Urban Cultures Project at the University of Portsmouth who offered words of motivation along the way.

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## Introduction

In October 1883 the first meeting of the newly formed Boys' Brigade was held in the West-End of Glasgow. The approach of this organisation pioneered attitudes towards youth work through the model of uniformed youth movements, inspiring a multitude of imitators in the decades that followed. However, despite its innovative role in the field, the case of the Boys' Brigade remains largely undervalued in wider historiographical discourse. The aim of this thesis is to provide a detailed and comprehensive assessment of the lived experience of the movement at the local level, an aspect that has often been overlooked in prevailing histories where attention has centred on the perspective of founders or headquarters.<sup>1</sup> This thesis aims to demonstrate that the lived experience of membership of an individual Boys' Brigade Company has much more to offer to our understanding of urban society than the theoretical perspectives of those who founded a youth movement or decided on its higher philosophies. This thesis aims to challenge the historiographical consensus on the character of youth movements, particularly relating to their appeal and, most notably, the notion that camping was the central attraction for members.<sup>2</sup> The objective of this thesis is to contest this perspective by concentrating attention on the regular weekly sessions in order to demonstrate that most members experienced life in a youth movement during the regular weekly programme rather than at a summer camp. The Boys' Brigade is drawn upon here to act as a vehicle to improve our understanding of the core themes of Empire, militarism, and religion in the city space from the inception of the movement in the 1880s to the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the organisation in 1933. This thesis maintains that variances in the practical application of the model set by Brigade authorities differed across

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<sup>1</sup> In her examination of children in uniform during the First World War, Rosie Kennedy has argued that the experience of individual groups often differed significantly from the official position of the leadership of a youth movement. Rosie Kennedy, The Children's War. Britain, 1914 - 1918, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p.91; In his study of imperial culture in Antipodean cities from the 1880s to the 1930s, John Griffiths has argued that this focus is a consequence of available records on youth organisations, asserting that "The majority of sources left to the historian shed light on the 'official' attitudes of the higher echelons of the movements considered and it is considerably more difficult to obtain the views of those who formed the rank and file". John Griffiths, Imperial Culture in Antipodean Cities, 1880 - 1939, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p.130.

<sup>2</sup> John Springhall, Youth, Empire, and Society. British Youth Movements, 1883 - 1940, (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p.98; Stephen Humphries, Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), p.134; Bernard Porter, The Absent-Minded Imperialists. Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 208 – 211; Hugh Cunningham, The Invention of Childhood, (London: BBC Books, 2006); p.209; Pamela Horn, Pleasures and Pastimes in Victorian Britain, (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2011 [first edition 1999]), p.307; Melanie Tebbutt, Being Boys. Youth, Leisure and Identity in the Inter-War Years, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p.74.

space and place. This position works within the framework of the perspectives of John MacKenzie and the ‘four nations’ approach to the history of the British Empire and the recent study by Brad Beaven on the regional variances in attitudes to Imperial identity in the city space which emphasised the importance of locality.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, this thesis endeavours to enhance our knowledge of the socio-cultural context of the city space by presenting an illustration of the lived experience of membership of a youth movement at the local level.

This thesis deploys a city-based approach to the history of the Boys’ Brigade in order to exhibit the practical application of the theoretical perspectives set by headquarters, with a range of sources deployed in order to establish the lived reality of membership of the movement. Although this approach provides a more grounded perspective of membership of a youth movement from below the nature of the material is not without limitations. The key challenge with presenting the lived experience of membership of a youth movement is that the voices of the members themselves are often lost. Despite this difficulty, the views of former members are heard indirectly through an assessment of statistical data for attendance at different branches of Company work. These surviving records from individual Battalion and Company records provide an insight into the perspectives of members of the movement through an indication of preferences to various branches of Company work within the broader programme of activities. Direct accounts from members of the Boys’ Brigade are limited, although this thesis draws upon the finite written accounts by members. In addition, oral accounts from the Bristol People’s Oral History Project (BPOHP) are drawn upon to offer an insight into the attitudes of former members of the movement. In order to present the lived reality of membership at the local level this thesis deploys accounts from a variety of contemporary sources to deliver an indication of the practical application of the Boys’ Brigade. Articles from The Boys’ Brigade Gazette are utilised to demonstrate the lived experience of membership of a youth movement with these often written by those involved in the movement at the grassroots level. However, it is important to note that the publication came from headquarters and, as a consequence, the articles were subject to editorial approval. Accounts in national newspapers are drawn upon to

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<sup>3</sup> John M. MacKenzie, “Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English Worlds? A Four-Nation Approach to the History of the British Empire”, History Compass, 6, 5, 2006, pp. 1244 - 1263; pp. 1244 - 1245; Brad Beaven, Visions of Empire. Patriotism, Popular Culture and the City, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 208.

confer broader attitudes towards the organisation, with articles from the local press offering an indication of how the movement was applied regionally. Despite this, these sources are not without their own challenges, with press agendas an area for consideration. Finally, individual Company records are utilised to provide an insight into the practical application of the Brigade at the local level. There is a paucity of surviving Company records and drawing upon these accounts is not without difficulty, particularly if the practices of an individual Company are viewed as indicative of wider attitudes. However, the records from the 1st Glasgow and 3rd Enfield that remain for assessment offer a window into the workings of a Company at the local level and the practical application of the theoretical perspectives from above. Therefore, although the voices of former members are often hidden, their experiences at the local level are presented in this thesis through a varied range of sources that offer an indication of the practical application of the model of the Boys' Brigade.

The thesis opens with a review of existing literature relating to the core themes of militarism, imperialism, and religion through the prism of youth organisations that run through the chapters. The literature review in chapter one offers an assessment of the ways in which youth movements have been drawn upon in previous histories and how the Boys' Brigade has been overlooked within our existing understanding of the key themes of this thesis. The chapter maintains that the organisation acts as a vehicle to enhance our knowledge of civic identities in the city. The city space is the focus of the second chapter that places the Boys' Brigade firmly within the context of the urban setting. The chapter provides a frame of reference for three case studies of this thesis of the application of the movement in Glasgow, London, and Bristol. These cities have been selected not only for the standing of the Boys' Brigade in these locations but as major industrial cities that are representative of the challenges faced in the urban space in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The third chapter presents the first of the three case studies where attention focuses on the lived experience of membership of the Boys' Brigade in Glasgow. Through a closer examination of the organisation in Scotland's largest city it is evident that the movement in this area became a reflection of a broader sense of growing Scottish national pride, with pipe music a crucial element to the activities undertaken. The city of London is contrasted to Glasgow in the fourth chapter where the programme of activities was dominated by drill-based pursuits. The third case study of Bristol is the basis of chapter five,

with an assessment of Stephen Humphries' BPOHP presented in order to challenge the prevailing historiographical consensus on wider attitudes towards youth movements and the motivation for those who became members. These individual case studies will include comparative analysis across all three chapters, and the shifts from city to city studies are used to highlight particular distinctions rather than sustained thematic comparisons. The sixth and seventh chapters of this thesis examine the role of camping within the Boys' Brigade as an illustration of changing attitudes to youth work between 1886 and 1933. These chapters provide a dual role in offering comparative analysis of the lived experience of the three cities at the centre of this thesis and an assessment of how camping fared in practice, rather than from a theoretical outlook that dominates existing histories. Through these chapters this thesis aims to offer an alternative perspective to the history of British youth movements by embracing regional variances in approach that are often lost in broader narratives.

## Chapter 1

### Urban Society and the Character of the Boys' Brigade: A Review of Existing Historiographical Perspectives

When the first meeting of the Boys' Brigade was held in October 1883 it pioneered a new approach to addressing the challenges faced by urban youths. Despite its position as an innovator of youth movements, historical enquiry relating to young people during the early twentieth century has been dominated by the Scouts, formed in 1908 by the patriotic hero of Empire, Robert Baden-Powell. This organisation has caught the imagination of historians due to its numerical size, the celebrity character of its founder, and texts such as Scouting for Boys that afford a special insight into the workings and theoretical perspectives behind youth organisations. Therefore, the Scouts provide historians with an accessible case to explore the role of young people within wider concepts such as militarism and imperialism in early twentieth century Britain. In contrast, detailed examination of the Boys' Brigade as an alternative case for examination has a tremendous capacity to enhance our understanding of contemporary issues and challenge the domination of the Scouts in existing historiography. Moreover, as the movement pre-dates its successor by twenty five years, it has the ability to act as a vehicle to explore issues relating to militarisation of youth and imperial identities in a time pre-dating the inception of the Scouts. Furthermore, as an organisation with a clear religious ethos, the Boys' Brigade presents a contrasting perspective to the Scouts as a largely secular movement. Existing approaches by historians to the Boys' Brigade have been predominantly restricted to passing references, often grouped together with similar organisations, with few publications dedicated entirely to an assessment of the function and role of this youth movement. Analysis of this kind indicates that the Boys' Brigade is viewed as a movement with a degree of influence in society but has been overshadowed by other actors in the urban space. This chapter opens with an examination of existing histories dedicated to the Boys' Brigade, presenting an assessment of the way historians have drawn on this movement to explore wider areas of concern. The chapter then progresses into a thematic examination of the development of historiographical perspectives in the fields of militarism in society, imperial identities, and a crisis of faith through the prism of youth. Within each of these concepts the ability for the Boys' Brigade to advance our understanding is provided. It is demonstrated here

that the Boys' Brigade has a unique ability to enhance our understanding in key areas of historical enquiry by offering a fresh case for the progression of debates.

### **Literature on the Boys' Brigade**

In The Victorian Town Child, published in 1997, Pamela Horn asserted that the leisure pursuits of young people fell into three broad categories; “those undertaken in and around the home; those involving events away from home, such as visits to a circus, fair, holiday resort... and those concerned with formal organisations”.<sup>1</sup> The Boys' Brigade was one of these organisations, providing a mode of leisure for Boys in the urban space. It is within this frame of reference that the literature below is considered, offering an examination of our current understanding of this formal organisation concerned with leisure pursuits for children. Sure and Stedfast, published in 1983, is the official history of the Boys' Brigade and was commissioned by the organisation to mark the centenary of the movement. Written by John Springhall, Brian Fraser, and Michael Hoare, the book records one hundred years of the history of the movement from 1883 to 1983, drawing upon official Brigade records including letters, annual reports, and roll books. For the purposes of this chapter attention is focused on the opening four chapters of the book, the introduction, and conclusion as the remaining chapters fall outside the period of concern of this thesis. The chapters in Sure and Stedfast are ordered chronologically, interspersed with a reflection of the movement overseas. The overriding narrative is concerned with the growth of the Boys' Brigade and the expansion of the movement from the first Company in Glasgow. In terms of historiographical considerations, the book is overwhelmingly focused with debates relating to militarism that surround the Boys' Brigade and wider society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To a large extent these debates focus on contemporary perspectives from groups such as the Peace Society, who campaigned against the ‘jingoism’ of the Brigade during the early years of the movement.<sup>2</sup> However, few references are made to historiographical debates that were prevalent at its time of publication. The text offers a challenge to the perspective of H. J. Hanham that the Boys' Brigade was intensely militaristic, brought values of the armed forces to

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<sup>1</sup> Pamela Horn, The Victorian Town Child, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), p.155.

<sup>2</sup> John Springhall, Brian Fraser, and Michael Hoare, Sure and Stedfast. A History of The Boys' Brigade. 1883 - 1983, (London: Collins, 1983), p.98.

young non-conformists, and “prepared the way for the recruiting drives of the First World War”.<sup>3</sup> The counterclaim in Sure and Stedfast is that:

The Boys’ Brigade may have helped to popularize the idea of military service among the population generally, although one cannot necessarily infer from this that The Boys’ Brigade helped pave the way for the recruiting drives of the First World War.<sup>4</sup>

The principal historiographical argument presented in the opening chapters is that the Boys’ Brigade is misunderstood and has been misrepresented as militaristic and fostering support for the armed forces, with the views of William Alexander Smith as the founder and other contemporaries used as evidence to support its assertions. The perspective is held that the military styled elements of the organisation - that were an attraction to Boys - were tools utilised to reach the end goal of encouraging religious practices and retain attendance of young men within the church after they passed Sunday school age.<sup>5</sup>

Direct references to the remaining historiographical themes of imperialism and crisis of faith which this thesis examines are more difficult to ascertain in Sure and Stedfast. The brief references to these themes within the recording of this history of the Boys’ Brigade indicates that more detailed research on the movement has much to offer in wider historiographical debates. Connections between the organisation and religion are limited within the context of militarism debates. These present the religious aims of the movement as an indication that it was not fostering a war-like spirit and are drawn upon in defence of charges of militarism, with the militaristic aspects viewed as being tailored to suit the needs of a particular audience.<sup>6</sup> There are, however, fascinating passages which present the connections between non-conformist churches and the Boys’ Brigade, although only brief references are made to the connections between G. A. Henty, the popular children’s writer, and his role as an honorary Vice-President of the Boys’

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<sup>3</sup> H. J. Hanham, “Religion and Nationality in the Mid-Victorian Army”, in M. R. D. Foot (ed.), War and Society, (London: Paul Elek, 1973), pp. 159 - 181; p.173.

<sup>4</sup> John Springhall, Brian Fraser, and Michael Hoare, Sure and Stedfast, p.107.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pp. 97 - 98.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.249.

Brigade.<sup>7</sup> Given the standing of this individual as a prolific author of children’s adventure stories, the ways in which his works have been utilised in debates regarding attitudes towards imperialism, and his views on drill, it is discernible that further investigation into the relationship between Henty and the Boys’ Brigade has the ability to improve our understanding in this area. With regards to the historiography of imperialism, the authors of Sure and Stedfast make few references to the interaction between the Boys’ Brigade and Empire. Many supporters of the early Brigade are presented as viewing the movement as part of a desire to better behaviours of the next generation for the preservation of moral standards and defence of the Empire.<sup>8</sup> Greater research in this field can offer much to our understanding of the ways urban cultures were influenced by imperialism. In the second chapter, the authors portray how the character of the town was important to the success of the movement in its early years. For example, it states that the success of the movement in Bristol, which was “more akin to Glasgow in character”, had “the best company survival rate in England during the early years”.<sup>9</sup> However, detailed examination of the differences in success in varied spaces and places is afforded little attention elsewhere. This thesis advances this theory by providing an assessment of the lived experience of membership of the Boys’ Brigade at the local level, highlighting how the urban environment affected the experience of the movement geographically.

Review articles of Sure and Stedfast provide an indication of how the book was received and areas where the text was subject to criticism. The first review article of the book was written by Victor Bailey in 1984 where his main challenge of the authors, particularly Springhall, was for altering perspectives from previous publications, most notably his position in Youth, Empire, and Society. Bailey noted that “Springhall seems to have adjusted his own interpretation of the movement. He now feels that the Brigade has been misleadingly portrayed as a militaristic organisation, feeding the fires of working-class jingoism”.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Stephen Humphries was critical of the book in his review, published in 1984, for reasons akin to Bailey. Humphries noted that “Springhall seems to have retreated somewhat from the highly critical view of the brigades that he expressed... in

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.25.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.68.

<sup>9</sup> John Springhall, Brian Fraser, and Michael Hoare, Sure and Stedfast, p.52.

<sup>10</sup> Victor Bailey, “Review, John Springhall, Brian Fraser, and Michael Hoare, Sure & Stedfast: A History of the Boys’ Brigade 1883 - 1983”, History Today, 30, 1, 1984, p.54.

Youth Empire and Society”.<sup>11</sup> The altered perspective of Springhall is arguably indicative of a historian assigned the task of writing an official history of the movement and wishing to avoid controversy by distancing his assessment away from contentious areas of investigation. In addition, Bailey and Humphries were critical of Sure and Stedfast for its lack of local level examples. Bailey noted that the early chapters would have benefited from a regional case study<sup>12</sup> with Humphries criticising the authors for applying “only a sprinkling of oral history” with the book failing to provide “a more grounded history ‘from below’” and focusing attention on the recollections of those at the apex of the organisation.<sup>13</sup> Through the city based approach adopted in this thesis, the chapters here endeavour to present an investigation of the local level experience and, as a consequence, address some of the concerns raised by reviewers of Sure and Stedfast. Through this perspective, this thesis offers an indication of the lived reality of membership of the Boys’ Brigade at the regional level rather than the theoretical outlook of the organisation in isolation as presented in Sure and Stedfast. By assessing the lived experience of membership of the Boys’ Brigade in Bristol, London, and Glasgow, this thesis presents a demonstration of life in a local Company rather than the theoretical perspectives of those who Humphries viewed as “B.B. grandees” that dominated Sure and Stedfast.<sup>14</sup> By returning to Humphries’ own BPOHP, chapter five of this thesis offers recollections through oral testimonies on the Boys’ Brigade in order to provide a more grounded history of membership of the movement at the grassroots level. Finally, John Galbraith noted in his review from 1987 that the narrative was “dense in detail”, leaving the book “pedestrian” in style although he conceded that the book is worthy of attention within the field of nineteenth-century British and Empire studies.<sup>15</sup> These reviews offer a clear illustration that the Boys’ Brigade has much to offer as an actor in contemporary society to enhance our current understanding. What is patently evident from these reviews is that the history provided in Sure and Stedfast neglected the lived reality of membership of the organisation at the local level and instead focused attention on Brigade authorities. Through the case study approach of this thesis the aim here is to address some of the concerns raised in the reviews listed above. In doing

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen Humphries, “Review, John Springhall, Brian Fraser, and Michael Hoare, *Sure & Stedfast: A History of the Boys’ Brigade 1883 - 1983*”, Oral History, 12, 2, 1984, p.77.

<sup>12</sup> Victor Bailey, “Review, John Springhall”, p.54.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Humphries, “Review, John Springhall”, p.77.

<sup>15</sup> John Galbraith, “Review, John Springhall, Brian Fraser, and Michael Hoare, *Sure and Stedfast: A History of the Boys’ Brigade 1883 - 1983*”, Victorian Studies, 30, 2, 1987, pp. 295 - 297; pp. 296 - 297.

so, an alternative perspective to the example of the Boys' Brigade as an actor in the urban space is offered by presenting the practical application of the model outlined in the official history.

“Bibles and Dummy Rifles” by Bailey is the second publication from 1983 dedicated to an assessment of the Boys' Brigade. It was published to coincide with the centenary of the Boys' Brigade and recounted the origins and early years of the movement. In terms of historiography the article is primarily concerned with debates regarding the militarisation of young adolescent men in the late Victorian and Edwardian era. For Bailey, the Boys' Brigade was not necessarily a militaristic organisation *per se* but utilised the ethos of muscular Christianity to instil religious values and discipline at the heart of the aims of the movement.<sup>16</sup> “Bibles and Dummy Rifles” introduces a small number of themes that warrant further investigation. Most notably, the article makes reference to occasions when the movement experienced “surges in membership” with the Boer War and attention to “the youth problem in 1907-8” considered to be times when the Boys' Brigade grew rapidly.<sup>17</sup> However, these two aspects are only touched upon briefly. This thesis differs from the approach of Bailey by providing an examination of the variances in membership levels at the local level. It is argued in this thesis that a multitude of factors contributed to the growth of the Boys' Brigade in the years prior to the First World War and that circumstances were not uniform across the country. This brings into question approaches to youth movements that view these groups in broad homogenous terms. In sum, the article from Bailey introduces the Boys' Brigade into wider historiographical debates but is limited in scope due to its attempts to cover over seventy years of the history of the movement.

Since the early 1980s the Boys' Brigade has appeared sparingly in historiographical discourse. However, the movement has found a place in recent debates through the publications of Richard Kyle. The 2009 chapter by Kyle in Essays in the History of Youth and Community Work was an attempt to “deepen and enliven” previous histories relating to the sense of a “BB atmosphere” in the Boys' Brigade recreation hut in Rouen during the First World War.<sup>18</sup> Through the use of

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<sup>16</sup> Victor Bailey, “Bibles and Dummy Rifles. The Boys' Brigade”, History Today, 33, 10, 1983, pp. 5 - 9; p.8.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Richard G. Kyle, “Familiar Rooms in Foreign Fields: Placing the ‘BB Atmosphere’ in The Boys' Brigades Recreation Hut, Rouen, France, 1915 - 1919”, in Ruth Gilchrist, Tony Jeffs, Jean Spence, and Joyce Walker (eds.), Essays in the History of Youth and Community Work, (Lyme Regis: Russell House, 2009), pp. 176 - 191; p.179.

articles from The Boys' Brigade Gazette and annual reports from the Brigade Executive, the chapter argues that club rooms were important in instilling the 'BB atmosphere' in the Hut that was grounded in the activities of the club rooms.<sup>19</sup> Despite this, the chapter largely considers the movement in broad homogenous terms. Furthermore, statistics to support claims such as club rooms quickly becoming an important, and popular, feature of the movement's work require context as this thesis maintains that other branches of Company work were far more widely undertaken. However, what makes the chapter particularly significant is the way in which it brings aspects of the regular weekly sessions to the fore of the debates. Kyle's second chapter on the movement, published in the 2014 Informal Education, Childhood and Youth, also considers the role of the regular programme of activities to the character of the movement. In his chapter, Kyle considers the relationship between camp and the indoor activities of the organisation through the metaphor of a cocoon and chrysalis.<sup>20</sup> Although this is a crucial concept, his analysis is largely placed within the context of contemporary cultural geographies, with analysis focused on interviews of Officers in the Boys' Brigade from the 2000s.<sup>21</sup> Despite this, the relationship between the regular weekly sessions and camp is critical to our understanding of late nineteenth and early twentieth century youth movements, particularly as the historiographical consensus maintains that camp was the greatest attraction available to youth movements; an aspect explored in greater detail in chapters six and seven of this thesis. Therefore, in terms of works which place the Boys' Brigade within historiographical debates, there is a real paucity, to which these articles amount to the extent of dedicated academic peer reviewed literature.

### **Militarism and the Scouts**

In terms of debates relating to militarism in late nineteenth and early twentieth century British society, the Boys' Brigade is often mentioned in passing and has rarely received attention at any great length. Furthermore, little has been written to bring to the fore the role of the Boys' Brigade as an organisation encompassing the spirit and ethos of the age, particularly as an agent carrying a

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, pp. 187 - 188.

<sup>20</sup> Richard G. Kyle, "Inside-out: Connecting Indoor and Outdoor Spaces of Informal Education Through the Extraordinary Geographies of The Boys' Brigade Camp", in Sarah Mills and Peter Kraftl (eds.), Informal Education, Childhood and Youth. Geographies, Histories, Practices, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 21 - 35; p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.25.

number of physical and ideological militaristic characteristics. Despite this, of the three core historiographical themes carried throughout this thesis it is debates on militarism where reference to the Boys' Brigade is most often found. However, existing narratives in this area have largely focused on the Scouts as an example of a youth movement in the context of militarism debates. Within this, the Boys' Brigade is often referenced but deserves its own attention particularly when taking into account its role as the pioneer organisation within the field of uniformed youth movements. The Scouts have provided a more fruitful ground for historians when considering its impact on young people and have been more widely drawn upon by historians. This is evident in discourse surrounding the formation of the Scouts. Within these wider discussions, the role of the Boys' Brigade is regularly attributed attention. It is referred to either as "paramilitary"<sup>22</sup>, a "semi-uniformed Brigade"<sup>23</sup>, or "quasi-military"<sup>24</sup>. In each instance the Boys' Brigade is grouped together with other youth organisations such as the Church Lads' Brigade (CLB) or Jewish Lads' Brigade (JLB). As a result, the unique characteristics of each of these movements are severely neglected. In historiographical debates on the Scouts the factors leading to the founding of the movement have been presented with militarism taken into consideration. The classical interpretation for Baden-Powell founding the Scouts has drawn reference to a moment of inspiration occurring during conversations held between the hero of Mafeking and the founder of the Boys' Brigade. This popular interpretation was largely disseminated from official histories within the Scouts and was most widely supported from the 1920s to the 1960s. In his history of English youth movements between 1908 and 1930, published in 1969, Paul Wilkinson recounts that Baden-Powell, then a Vice President of the Boys' Brigade, was "clearly impressed by the potentialities of training Boys through a well-led movement" when presiding over the 1903 Royal Albert Hall display of the London Boys' Brigade.<sup>25</sup> A similar account is recalled by Michael Rosenthal in his 1980 article where he argues that Baden-Powell experienced "a classical moment of inspiration" on attending a drill inspection of the Boys' Brigade, this time in Glasgow in the spring of 1904.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Michael Blanch, "British Society and the War", in Peter Warwick (ed.), *The South African War. The Anglo-Boer War 1899 - 1902*, (Harlow: Longman, 1980), pp. 210 - 238; p.230.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Penn, *Targeting Schools. Drill, Militarism and Imperialism*, (London: Woburn, 1999), p.9.

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans*, p. 134.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Wilkinson, "English Youth Movements 1908 - 1930", *Contemporary History*, 4, 2, 1969, pp. 3 - 24; p.12.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Rosenthal, "Knights and Retainers: The Earliest Version of Baden-Powell's Boy Scout Scheme", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 15, 1980, pp. 603 - 617; p.603.

Revisions of this have moved on from a romanticised picture of Baden-Powell inspired by the pioneer of uniformed youth movements, and have instead focused on the character and writings of the future founder of Scouting. This change in perspective introduced new historical debates surrounding the Scouts, particularly with regards to its perceived alignment with militarism and imperialism. With this, any reference to the Boys' Brigade in the recording of the origins of the Scouts was lost which, in turn, has resulted in a history largely void of debate surrounding the reasons why Baden-Powell left the Boys' Brigade and formed his own organisation. We therefore have a historiography that has moved to analyse contemporary themes in relation to the Scouts. This was displayed in the work of Warren and Springhall during the 1980s who presented the inspiration for the movement from the writings of Baden-Powell, albeit, with vastly differing conclusions. For Warren, the personal writings of Baden-Powell indicate that the organisation he founded was subject to the influence of enthusiasm for an improvement to health and combating decadence as well as concerned with domestic and external challenges.<sup>27</sup> In his chapter, "Citizens of Empire", in MacKenzie's Imperialism and Popular Culture, the ideas of militarism are masked by rhetoric of "defensive domestic imperialism" which was to be found in the early writings of Baden-Powell in relation to his plans on scouting.<sup>28</sup> The concept of militarism was prominent in Warren's 1986 article in English Historical Review. In this, he criticised historians for placing the Scouts within the context of military values and challenged the "sombre intonings of those historians who present a picture of an anxious and insecure Edwardian upper and middle class" who were "desperately trying to reassert authority over the young".<sup>29</sup> It was, therefore, not just a challenge to claims of the Scouts as a militaristic organisation but a critique of the idea of British society holding deep-set militarist sentiments. In the article the lack of a religious or spiritual purpose underpinning the Scouts is considered to account for the charges of militarism it faced in its early years.<sup>30</sup> The article is critical of Springhall in particular, who responded in the same journal the following year. In his response, Springhall endeavours to "reassert the earlier historical interpretation that when Baden-Powell organized his Scout movement he did so with one primary motive – to prepare the next generation of British soldiers for war and the defence of the

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<sup>27</sup> Allen Warren, "Citizens of Empire. Baden-Powell, Scouts and Guides and an Imperial Idea, 1900 - 1940", in John M. MacKenzie (ed.), Imperialism and Popular Culture, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 232 - 256; p.238.

<sup>28</sup> Allen Warren, "Citizens of Empire", p.235.

<sup>29</sup> Allen Warren, "Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain, 1900 - 1920", English Historical Review, 101, 1986, pp. 376 - 398; pp. 376 - 377.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p.388.

Empire”.<sup>31</sup> In his riposte, Springhall maintains that the Scouts need to be considered within the context of the prevailing social and political climate that was one of “insecurity and anxiety”.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the concept of citizen training, which Warren considered to be primary to the purpose of Scouting, should be considered as “peripheral... to Scouting’s central concern with the threat of national decadence and inadequate military preparation”.<sup>33</sup> In the same issue of this journal Anne Summers entered the debate. For Summers it was not possible for the Scouts to escape the “pervasive militaristic influence” and to do so would be to consider the organisation within a cultural vacuum.<sup>34</sup> In response, Warren wrote a “final comment” in which he questioned Summers’ opinion that Edwardian society was “comprehensively militaristic”.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Warren challenged the evidence Springhall and Summers used in presenting individuals with a military background as associating the Scouts with militarism. For Warren, such relationships were not significant, concluding that “there is no hint of a military underpinning to their commitment to the organisation”.<sup>36</sup>

In the late 1990s two articles of note were published on the Scouts that re-assessed from a chronological distance the debates that interested Warren, Springhall, and Summers. For Sam Pryke, in an article from 1998, the history of the Scouts should be considered from the angle of nationalism and how this shaped activities.<sup>37</sup> According to Pryke this was an element overlooked in the militarism versus citizenship debates between Warren and Springhall.<sup>38</sup> In terms of progression of the militarism debate, Pryke is quick to present the perspective that the main motivation behind the Scouts was not “an effort to capture British youth through sugar coating a militarist core”.<sup>39</sup> Tammy Proctor also argued against claims of militarism within the Scouts in an article published in 1998, this time through a consideration of the uniform the organisation

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<sup>31</sup> John Springhall, “Baden-Powell and the Scout Movement before 1920: Citizen Training or Soldiers of the Future?”, English Historical Review, 102, 1987, pp. 934 - 942; p.935.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p.938.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p.941.

<sup>34</sup> Anne Summers, “Scouts, Guides and VADs: a Note in Reply to Allen Warren”, English Historical Review, 102, 1987, pp. 943 - 947; p.943.

<sup>35</sup> Allen Warren, “Baden-Powell a Final Comment”, English Historical Review, 102, 1987, pp. 948 - 950; p.948.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p.950.

<sup>37</sup> Sam Pryke, “The Popularity of Nationalism in the early British Boy Scout Movement”, Social History, 23, 3, 1998, pp. 309 - 324; p.310.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*.

adopted. For Proctor the uniform worn by the Scouts was not something utilised for any militaristic purpose and drew on Scout literature, memoirs, and diaries to contest that it was functional and displayed the rejection of class divisions that were significant to the work of the movement.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the uniform was integral to the social improvement aims of the organisation to make citizens clean, healthy, and well presented.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, the uniform of the Boys' Brigade is considered by Proctor to be of a military style for an organisation that attracted the lower-classes.<sup>42</sup> More recent revisions of the militarism debates relating to the early years of the Scouts have progressed into deliberation on citizen training of a largely non-militaristic nature. Recent histories have focused on specific elements of the character and activities of the organisation within the context of wider discussion on imperialism, nationalism, and class. There is an increasing move which reasons that it was possible that the Scouts held militaristic values to an extent whilst still maintaining ambitions for citizen training. Brad Beaven has considered the Scouts within the undercurrents of Edwardian society which feared for the condition of the Empire. In Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, published in 2005, Beaven commented that historians have considered the movement to be one of either militarism or citizenship, with the argument presented that the organisation was “part of a broader shift in ideals of citizenship that emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries”.<sup>43</sup>

A further article presenting a protective perspective of Scouting through analysis of a specific element of the movement is the 2007 article by Christopher Love on the role of swimming within the organisation. In his article Love utilises Scouting for Boys and Scout Association records to argue that the activities of the Scouts, in this case, swimming, are considered for their humanitarian value to enable the Scout to fulfil his civic “duty”.<sup>44</sup> Although the article provides an interesting account of swimming within the programme of activities of the Scouts, it misses the case that the Boys' Brigade drew upon swimming before the inception of the Scouts, with chapter three of this thesis providing an assessment of how this item was undertaken by Companies in

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<sup>40</sup> Tammy Proctor, “(Uni)forming Youth: Girl Guides and Boy Scouts in Britain, 1909 - 1939”, History Workshop Journal, 45, 1998, pp. 103 - 134; p.104.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p.117.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Brad Beaven, Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850 - 1945, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.95.

<sup>44</sup> Christopher Love, “Swimming, Service to Empire and Baden-Powell's Youth Movements”, The International Journal of the History of Sport, 24, 5, 2007, pp. 682 - 692; p.683.

Glasgow from the 1890s onwards. This aspect was lost in Love's assessment, where the Boys' Brigade was listed amongst other similar organisations that had swimming as part of their programme of activities.<sup>45</sup> In the article Love presents a new approach to militarism debates in relation to youth movements by considering specific aspects of the organisation. In his assessment, Love does not view the Scouts as fostering militaristic sentiments, but instead presents the movement as aiming to improve the condition of youth in the Edwardian years through practical training. More recently, Rosie Kennedy has considered the role of uniformed youth organisations within the context of the First World War. In her 2014 book, The Children's War. Britain, 1914 - 1918, the Boys' Brigade is afforded attention where the use of military training to instil Christian values was noted as being received with criticism from some quarters.<sup>46</sup> The Scouts are prominent in her assessment, where it was noted that Scouting appealed to some urban working-class Boys who had little opportunity for outdoor adventure in their everyday lives.<sup>47</sup> Kennedy raises some crucial points in her assessment of youth movements within the context of the First World War. First, Kennedy is critical of histories that have focused on the prescriptive strategies of youth movements rather than the practical realities and the experience of young members.<sup>48</sup> By examining the Boys' Brigade from a city based approach this thesis offers a method to address this issue that is prevalent in existing historiographical perspectives. Kennedy challenges the existing preoccupation with militarism in relation to youth movements as follows:

The question of militarism, which is central to the discussion of the involvement of British youth movements in the war effort, has dogged these movements since their creation and continues to preoccupy historians today. Were groups like the Boy Scouts or the Boys' Brigade paramilitary organisations masquerading as peace-loving troops teaching nothing but moral fortitude and Christian Manliness? Or were they in fact cover attempts... to produce young men ready to serve as soldiers in the Regular Army or Reserves?<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p.689.

<sup>46</sup> Rosie Kennedy, The Children's, p.88.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p.90.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, pp. 90 - 91.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p.91.

In her assessment Kennedy notes that the evidence, drawn from articles from official Scout and Boys' Brigade publications, is conflicting. Moreover, crucially, for the progression of debates relating to militarism, it is argued that the experience of individual groups could be quite different to the official position and that uniformity of experience could not be achieved.<sup>50</sup> Through an examination of the lived experience of membership of the Boys' Brigade at the local level this thesis embraces this theory, and advances the ethos by arguing that the practical application of membership of a youth movement varied across space and place and was greatly influenced by the prevailing social climate of a city. In addition, through a comparison between the experience in England and Scotland, this thesis presents the notion that national variances in approach were noticeable and were crucial in the formation of national identities. Therefore, although historians have tended to focus on the Scouts, there are good reasons to focus on an alternative example.

### **Militarism in British Society**

In terms of the progression of militarism debates in wider British society around the turn of the twentieth century, an important starting place is the article by Summers appearing in History Workshop Journal from 1976. This article presents Britain before the First World War as inherently militaristic, with "militaristic modes of thinking" developing "over a long period" and being all pervasive throughout society.<sup>51</sup> For Summers, there was a "tremendous upsurge of interest in things military in Edwardian Britain" coming as a product of reactions to the Boer War.<sup>52</sup> The Boys' Brigade is considered within this context, as a religious organisation representing the merging of military discipline with Christianity.<sup>53</sup> It was a movement that adopted military discipline in association with moral and religious qualities of the Edwardian period. This militarism was not "Blood-thirsty" or "particularly martial" but enthusiastically adopted militaristic virtues.<sup>54</sup> The tone of the article was supported in a letter to the same journal from 1977 by Michael Blanch who reiterated that "There was indeed a strong and pervasive militarism at large in Edwardian England", continuing by commenting that "its various movements cultivated

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, pp. 91 - 96.

<sup>51</sup> Anne Summers, "Militarism in Britain Before the Great War", History Workshop, 2, 1976, pp. 104 - 123; p.105.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p.111.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, pp. 119 - 120.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

considerable working class support”.<sup>55</sup> Blanch protracted the sentiments of Summers in his own work, with a chapter in Peter Warwick’s collection of essays on the Anglo-Boer War, published in 1980. In his chapter, Blanch mentions in passing the Boys’ Brigade, as a “paramilitary boys’ movement” which acted as propaganda of war.<sup>56</sup> It is presented alongside books, comics, and other forms of popular youth culture as methods of inculcating militaristic virtues.<sup>57</sup> The sentiment of the chapter is that;

Popular society, on the eve of war, was already imbued with a degree of nationalism and militarism. The roots of this are to be found in the style and content of teaching in the schools, and in popular involvement at all levels with militarist organizations in the period between 1880-1899.<sup>58</sup>

The years in question are ones when the Boys’ Brigade was beginning to grow. For this reason it is crucial for our understanding of broader attitudes to militarism in society that the organisation receives greater attention in order to establish the character of the social climate that enabled a uniformed organisation for Boys, with a focus on drill, to grow. In sum, these scholars present British society as entrenched with militarist sentiment. It was interpretations of such an ethos in society that shaped the way debates on militarism progressed from the 1980s onwards.

The class based theories and debates on militarism assessed by Blanch were continued by Stephen Humphries in his oral history of working-class youth. In *Hooligans or Rebels*, published in 1981, militaristic values present at school and in uniformed youth organisations are claimed to have been strongly opposed by young working-class people.<sup>59</sup> Through the use of oral testimonies, Humphries argues that acts of opposition towards uniformed youth movements were expressions of class struggle.<sup>60</sup> The Boys’ Brigade is mentioned within these debates as a “quasi-military movement” with the “recruiting officers” possessing tools of propaganda, such as drilling and the

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<sup>55</sup> Michael Blanch, “Militarism in Britain Before the Great War - Letters to the Editor”, *History Workshop*, 3, 1, 1977, pp. 199- 200; pp. 199 - 200.

<sup>56</sup> Michael Blanch, “British Society”, p.230.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p.211.

<sup>59</sup> Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans*, pp. 22 - 23.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

uniform “in order to dupe unruly youths into submission”.<sup>61</sup> Through the careful selection of oral testimonies from the BPOHP, which he organised, Humphries presents the argument that young people joined organisations such as the Boys’ Brigade for the sporting activities and the camp.<sup>62</sup> Drill and military manoeuvres were considered “tiresome concessions to authority, to be avoided wherever possible” but necessary in order to attend camps or take part in sports.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, the Boys’ Brigade is presented as an organisation that acted as a reminder that “many working-class army recruits were forced to join up either by economic necessity or by legal compulsion, and their primary aim was personal survival, not the patriotic self-sacrifice encouraged by youth movements.”<sup>64</sup> This thesis contests the position of Humphries and argues that an alternative perspective of the lived experience of the Boys’ Brigade is perceptible through a more thorough assessment of the accounts from the BPOHP.

The conclusions of Humphries on the Boys’ Brigade were challenged by Springhall who, in a chapter in Manliness and Morality, published in 1987, questioned the selective nature of the testimonies used. Springhall comments that:

it is one of the temptations of oral history, as of any other kind of history, to make selective use of evidence to corroborate a particular interpretation, but where the historian is himself, through taped interviews, engaged in creating raw data as well as in making sense of it, the temptation that has to be resisted is all that much greater.<sup>65</sup>

Such observations were the result of Springhall’s experience with the BPOHP, with “a slightly less detached working-class attitude and, in one particular case, a positive enthusiasm for the physical training classes the Boys’ Brigade offered”.<sup>66</sup> However, the challenge by Springhall is limited to a couple of paragraphs towards the end of a piece on the wider context of building character. Moreover, as will be explored in greater detail in chapter five, the methodological approach of

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p.134.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, pp. 134 - 135.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p.134.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p.135.

<sup>65</sup> John Springhall, “Building Character in the British Boy: the Attempt to Extend Christian Manliness to Working-Class Adolescents, 1880 - 1914”, in J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (eds.), Manliness and Morality. Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America 1800 -1940, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 52 - 74; p.61.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, pp. 60 - 61.

Humphries and Springhall was selective, with a more comprehensive assessment of the material required in order to present a clearer perspective of what the BPOHP tells us about youth in society in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Bristol.

The earlier perspective of Blanch was revisited by Glenn Wilkinson in 1998 through his work on the depiction of the armed forces and war in newspaper articles in Edwardian Britain. Through analysis of accounts of war in the press, Wilkinson declared that “the prevailing perception of the use of military force in Edwardian Britain was that war was both beneficial and desirable to the societies engaged in it”.<sup>67</sup> Wilkinson utilises newspaper articles as a tool to advance the theories of Blanch of a society that was increasingly militaristic and was conveyed through the introduction of military discipline and instruction fostered in schools.<sup>68</sup> Wilkinson progresses the debate by introducing the notion of military activities as a “desirable form of education”.<sup>69</sup> In his article there are a number of extracts taken from The Glasgow Herald. It is therefore surprising that Wilkinson did not reference the Boys’ Brigade, for this organisation of distinctly Glaswegian origins clearly provides an example of an educational tool for young people, utilising the concepts of military discipline. Therefore, the Boys’ Brigade has the ability to act as a vehicle to progress this line of debate and enhance our understanding. In sum, through a varied selection of newspaper articles, Wilkinson presents a society where warfare was seen as “natural, beneficial and desirable” and “was not merely a minority view”.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, this is presented as a concept held by all social classes, with these views expressed in a range of newspapers “indicating that readers from a myriad of social backgrounds perceived warfare in similar ways”.<sup>71</sup>

Supplementary to the views of Wilkinson is Targeting Schools by Alan Penn, which was published in 1999 and expressed a similar ethos. Where Wilkinson’s article considers militarism debates relating to education within the context of wider societal moves, the monograph by Penn is concerned entirely with militarism and youth. For Penn, the practice of military style drill was not for the encouragement of militarism but for the well-being and physical improvement of school

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<sup>67</sup> Glenn R. Wilkinson, “The Blessings of War: The Depiction of Military Force in Edwardian Newspapers”, Journal of Contemporary History, 33, 1, 1998, pp. 97 - 115; p.98.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p.108.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p.115.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*.

children.<sup>72</sup> In addition, Penn notes that few alternative forms of exercise existed at the time, thus reiterating the physical advantages of teaching military style drill.<sup>73</sup> Despite focusing on drill in schools, the author finds time to consider youth movements and organisations for young people within debates on the impact of the military on civilian life. The Boys' Brigade is presented here alongside the Salvation Army, and the CLB, as an organisation representing the military spirit of the age extending into religion.<sup>74</sup> In his conclusion, Penn is clear in the way militarism existed in society, using local school board records to emphasise the role of drill in elementary schools to argue that "although Britons in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were reluctant to admit that their country was a militarist nation, the evidence for it being so is strong".<sup>75</sup> These scholars have developed on themes relating to militarism that Blanch and Summers began in the 1970s and early 1980s. However, as has been displayed here, references to the Boys' Brigade remain limited, with the movement wholly absent from the work of Wilkinson, despite scope for utilising the organisation, and mentioned only in passing by Penn.

The same experience is apparent in Warrior Nation where Michael Paris presents late nineteenth century Britain as fostering a "pleasure culture of war" through toys and war games that suggested to young people that war was a normal part of everyday life.<sup>76</sup> In his book, published in 2000, Paris comments that:

By the early twentieth century, the pleasure culture of war had imbued the youth of Britain with the martial spirit and convinced them that war was natural, honourable and romantic; that on the battlefield, fighting to further the nation's cause, they would achieve their destiny.<sup>77</sup>

Within this context the Boys' Brigade is mentioned as providing the model for paramilitary movements which took the drill of the school curriculum from the classroom and into a form of popular leisure.<sup>78</sup> However, the majority of the chapter devoted to "The Little Wars of Empire" is

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<sup>72</sup> Alan Penn, Targeting, p.40.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p.44.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, pp. 165 - 166.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p.173.

<sup>76</sup> Michael Paris, Warrior Nation. Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850 - 2000, (London: Reaktion, 2000), p.73.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p.82.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p.81.

dedicated to drawing upon contemporary sources of popular literature as providing a vehicle for inculcating a militaristic spirit in popular culture. Paris comments that youth literature convinced young men that a great war was on the horizon.<sup>79</sup> This is not to say that he overlooks other agencies, noting that alternative methods were required in order to prepare them physically for the conflict to come.<sup>80</sup> Rather than returning to the case of the Boys' Brigade he mentioned earlier in the chapter, Paris relies on the Scouts as an example of a movement preparing for war. Paris comments that "the Boy Scouts have been subjected to considerable academic scrutiny".<sup>81</sup> This poses questions as to why Paris did not utilise an alternative example within the debates of the 'pleasure culture of war'. As an organisation that has not been subjected to "considerable academic scrutiny" it is discernible that the case of the Boys' Brigade has much more to offer within this context, particularly considering the militaristic predisposition of the organisation. This thesis, whilst embracing the notion of a 'pleasure culture of war', presents the case of the Boys' Brigade as an alternative organisation to the Scouts as a movement broadly preparing for war in a theoretical sense, and advances the notion by offering local level examples to support the theory.

The Boys' Brigade receives closer attention in the work of Stephen Miller on the influence of the military in popular culture and in particular, popular youth cultures. In a 2005 article in The Journal of Military History, Miller draws upon existing histories of the Boys' Brigade to present youths who "felt increasingly displaced and isolated".<sup>82</sup> Within this climate, the Boys' Brigade is portrayed as an organisation "tinged with elements of muscular Christianity and militarism" which was alluring to displaced youth.<sup>83</sup> In addition, Miller asserts that "William Alexander Smith's Boys' Brigade... numbered fifty thousand at the outbreak of the war and grew by six thousand more in the 'euphoria' of the war's first year".<sup>84</sup> However, although the 'euphoria' of the war was important in the growth of the Boys' Brigade, this thesis argues that the increases in membership were the consequence of a more complex combination of factors that enabled the development of a youth movement for Boys based on militarised principles. In sum, the article presented a society

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p.103.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p.106.

<sup>82</sup> Stephen M. Miller, "In Support of the Imperial Mission? Volunteering for the South African War, 1899 - 1902", The Journal of Military History, 69, 3, 2005, pp. 691 - 711; p.702.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, pp. 701 - 702.

where Boys' clubs and other forms of popular culture helped to disseminate militarism to young people of all social classes.<sup>85</sup> In addition, and more broadly, Miller adds politicians, the press and interest groups to this list in a 2006 article on the same conflict, as cultivating a British public that responded passionately in support of the Second Boer War.<sup>86</sup> Further, in his 2007 monograph, Volunteers on the Veld, a reiteration of the perspective that British society was "cultivating and developing a heightened martial ethos among its citizens" is presented.<sup>87</sup> Within this "martial ethos" the Boys' Brigade is listed as a "paramilitary organisation" alongside the Church Brigade and the JLB as promoting the imperial mission of a more militaristic late-Victorian society.<sup>88</sup> For Miller, militarism was a tool utilised in order to manipulate people on issues relating to the British Empire.<sup>89</sup> Organisations such as the Boys Brigade, with its use of dummy rifles and military styled uniform, were instruments which heightened a sense of military spirit among young people.<sup>90</sup> Such an ethos provides a setting for Miller to offer an understanding for the reasons why Britons responded enthusiastically for the call to volunteers for this conflict.<sup>91</sup> This thesis argues that enhancing our knowledge of the Boys' Brigade at this time can develop on the theories of Miller in improving our understanding of the reactions to the South African War in 1899 and can aid in the progression of militarism debates, particularly as this conflict pre-dates the Scouts. The Second Boer War is an important conflict for assessment, providing a connection between the close of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth century. In this thesis, the Boys' Brigade is drawn upon to offer crucial interjections on the cultural and social impact of the war at home, particularly for young people.

## Imperialism Debates

Imperialism is another area of broader historical interest where the Boys' Brigade as a case study can enhance our knowledge. There are two areas through which more detailed analysis of this

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p.709.

<sup>86</sup> Stephen M. Miller, "Slogging Across the Veldt: British Volunteers and the Guerrilla Phase of the South Africa War, 1899 - 1902", Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research, 84, 338, 2006, pp. 158 - 174; p.159.

<sup>87</sup> Stephen M. Miller, Volunteers on the Veldt: Britain's Citizen-Soldiers and the South African War, 1899 - 1902, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), p.22.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p.29.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, pp.32 - 33.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, p.37.

organisation has the ability to improve our understanding. First, such enquiry can offer much to theories of ‘Four Nation Imperialism’. MacKenzie has asserted that the history of the British Empire requires greater analysis and understanding in terms of the four separate constituent regions of the British Isles.<sup>92</sup> The case of the Boys’ Brigade has a considerable amount to offer within these debates particularly as a movement born in Glasgow, the second city of the Empire.<sup>93</sup> There is a paucity of investigation into the link between the Brigade and its origins in a city deemed to be of such Imperial character and, moreover, the national variances in approach. Although focusing attention on two of the four constituent parts of Britain, this thesis works within the framework of the four nation approach by offering a comparative examination of the movement in England and Scotland. This thesis has opted to exclude examples from Welsh or Irish cities due to limitations of extant data when compared to London, Glasgow, and Bristol. By focusing on the capital, and two great provincial cities, this thesis is able to provide a comparative assessment within the British Isles, thus encouraging further discussion in the field. The second trend in imperial historical discourse where the Boys’ Brigade can enhance our knowledge is on new imperial histories. The literature reviewed here contemplates the implications of imperialism on society and the cultural concerns. James Thompson commented in an article from 2007 that “lively disagreement” surrounds debates regarding the cultural significance of Empire for Britain.<sup>94</sup> By presenting the Boys’ Brigade more prominently within these debates it is possible to improve our understanding through a fresh case study offering insight into the cultural implications of imperialism for Britain and its constituent parts. The review of the literature on imperialism here also assesses the work of and responses to Bernard Porter, arguably the most ardent sceptic of ‘new imperialism’ and a scholar who has dominated debates in the last decade.

The idea of a four nations approach to the history of the British Empire can be attributed first to J. G. A. Pocock in his ‘plea for a new subject’, published in 1975. In this the idea of historical national identity is significant, with Pocock arguing that histories of Britain are primarily histories of the English, with the narratives of Welsh, Irish, and Scottish peoples deemed to have been

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<sup>92</sup> John M. MacKenzie, “Irish, Scottish”, pp. 1244 - 1245.

<sup>93</sup> John M. MacKenzie, “The Second City of the Empire. Glasgow - Municipal City”, in Felix Driver and David Gilbert (eds.), *Imperial Cities. Landscape, Display and Identity*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 215- 237; p.216.

<sup>94</sup> James Thompson, “Modern Britain and the New Imperial History”, *History Compass*, 5, 2, 2007, pp. 455 - 462; pp. 457 - 458.

peripheral or recorded as separate entities entirely.<sup>95</sup> For Pocock, “it is evident that we are studying three, and in some ways more than three, interacting histories”.<sup>96</sup> Therefore, it is difficult to study the British Empire as one single entity, given the distinctive nature of the constituent nations. This thesis presents the Boys’ Brigade as offering a clear example of this, with the application of the model implemented differently in Scotland and England. The issues in question were progressed by Linda Colley in an article in the Journal of British Studies published in 1992 as part of a series that considered ‘who are the British anyway?’. Colley has regarded a four nation approach to British studies as too simplistic and urged caution on such a method.<sup>97</sup> Her perspective on this methodology can be summarised as follows:

I would argue that the Four Nations approach, if pushed too hard or too exclusively, is an incomplete and anachronistic way to view the British past and, also, a potentially parochial one. It conceals...the fact that the four parts of the United Kingdom have been connected in markedly different ways and with sharply varying degrees of success.<sup>98</sup>

Another historian whose work has progressed the four nations approach is MacKenzie. This historian is one of the most vehement advocates of this methodology, asserting the view that the four nations had their own relationship with the Empire and the ways people in the four nations interacted with the Empire was differing.<sup>99</sup> For MacKenzie, the construction of the United Kingdom was so loose at this time that it enabled the various ethnicities within the four nations to flourish and, as a result of the enterprise of Empire, their identities were enhanced.<sup>100</sup> MacKenzie has utilised this methodology to enhance the status of Scottish nationalism and identity within British studies. In a 1993 article on Scotland and the Empire, MacKenzie claims that the Empire was “a means whereby Scotland asserted her distinctiveness in relation to England” through the dissemination of evidence from existing histories of Scotland and the Empire.<sup>101</sup> He mentions

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<sup>95</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, “British History: A Plea for a New Subject”, The Journal of Modern History, 47, 4, 1975, pp. 601 - 621; pp. 603 - 604.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p.605.

<sup>97</sup> Linda Colley, “Britishness and Otherness: An Argument”, Journal of British Studies, 31, 4, 1992, pp.309 - 329; p.315.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p.314.

<sup>99</sup> John M. MacKenzie, “Irish, Scottish”, p.1252.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, pp.1254 - 1255.

<sup>101</sup> John M. MacKenzie, “Essay and Reflection: on Scotland and the Empire”, The International History Review, 15, 4, 1993, pp. 714 - 739; p.738.

examples of the suffusing of Empire with Scottishness, thus strengthening Scottish identity, but the case of the Boys' Brigade is a notable absentee from his discussion despite providing an unequivocal case to support his notion, as this thesis highlights. In a later article on Empire and national identities the theory is presented that the British Empire "enabled the sub-nationalisms of the United Kingdom to survive and flourish".<sup>102</sup> This time the case of the Boys' Brigade is present in his assessment:

The Boys' Brigade, founded by William Alexander Smith in Glasgow in 1883 and destined to expand throughout Britain and the Empire, as well as to spawn many imitations among other denominations and religions, had a distinctly imperial tone and inevitably venerated the Scots imperial heroes.<sup>103</sup>

However, despite this rhetoric, this is the extent to which the Boys' Brigade is utilised by MacKenzie in the three articles listed here on the four nation methodology. The above quote is indicative of the way the Boys' Brigade case is utilised by academics, with the tone providing the impression that knowledge of the organisation is limited to names and dates. This is a significant oversight, particularly considering the "distinctly imperial tone" of the movement. Attention therefore should be given to the ways in which it carried this imperial tone and also, on considering the four nations methodology, the way such an organisation was "imperial" at a national, sub-national, or regional level. Through the case studies of this thesis it is argued that the application of the Brigade model was applied differently across varied spaces and places and therefore in the different nations of the United Kingdom.

Bernard Porter has questioned the extent to which the British Empire shaped the history of Britain and has challenged the perspectives of 'new imperial history'. Porter argued in 2012 that displays of loyalty to the Empire, such as 'mafficking' of the Boer War, or the "ceremonial puffery" of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee were "nervous reactions" to an Empire that was

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<sup>102</sup> John M. MacKenzie, "Empire and National Identities: The Case of Scotland", Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 8, 1998, pp. 215 - 231; p.230.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p.224.

“coming to seem under threat”.<sup>104</sup> In The Absent-Minded Imperialists, published in 2004, Porter offered a response to historians who he felt “simplified and exaggerated the impact of ‘imperialism’ on Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries”.<sup>105</sup> In his book imperialism is offered as a concept that did not need to have deep roots in British society in order to acquire and rule, and did not have to influence culture in order to succeed.<sup>106</sup> Within his book, Porter assesses the influence of Empire on young people and utilises the case of uniformed youth organisations to support his assertions. Through analysis of the Scouts, Porter argues that working-class children were attracted to the movement, not because of a conviction for any ideological values, but for the activities they offered, with the most appealing of these being camping.<sup>107</sup> It was, as he puts it, “for the sugar.. not the pill”.<sup>108</sup> Porter draws upon the memoir of Battersea Boy Edward Ezard as an example to support his theory. However, his selective use of this material is deployed in isolation to support his notion that young people joined youth movements for outdoor activities, especially camping.<sup>109</sup> As chapters six and seven of this thesis emphasise, outdoor pursuits and camping were available to few members of the Boys’ Brigade. Therefore, to overstate its appeal in attracting young people to youth movements is to miss the role of this within the lived experience of membership at the local level.

The Absent-Minded Imperialists received a vibrant response from supporters of the ‘new imperialist’ school. Antoinette Burton was one scholar who was critical in her review of the text from 2005. She writes that Porter had a “determination to prove that the British Empire had a negligible effect on Britons at home” adding that Porter's assessment was that “Britons rarely saw empire: when they did they scarcely took notice of it”.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, Burton asserts that “*The Absent-Minded Imperialists* is trapped in a cul-de-sac, unable to challenge the new imperial history”.<sup>111</sup> Richard Price is another historian who highlighted difficulties with the book. In particular, Price is critical of Porter because “the evidence for empire’s presence in culture is more

<sup>104</sup> Bernard Porter, “Cutting the British Empire Down to Size”, History Today, 62, 10, 2012, pp. 22 - 29; p.24.

<sup>105</sup> Bernard Porter, “Further Thoughts on Imperial Absent-Mindedness”, The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 36, 1, 2008, pp. 101 - 117; p.101.

<sup>106</sup> Bernard Porter, The Absent, p.24.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, pp. 208 - 211.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 208.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p.211.

<sup>110</sup> Antoinette Burton, “Review . Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain*”, Victorian Studies, 47, 4, 2005, pp. 626 - 628; p.628.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

mixed than he allows”.<sup>112</sup> In addition, Price points out that “one gets the sense that his hammering of the new imperial history left him with no energy to explain how he might envisage the linkages”.<sup>113</sup> One further scholar who has challenged the perspective of Porter is MacKenzie. For MacKenzie, it “is a book which is powerfully argued, superbly sourced, and very well presented. That should not delude the reader into thinking that it is right, for in many respects it is profoundly wrong.”<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, MacKenzie notes that “his book contains many silences” particularly in areas which MacKenzie considers he has already shown the bonds between imperialism and culture, such as in working men’s clubs and the music hall.<sup>115</sup> By utilising the case of the Boys’ Brigade this thesis casts doubt on Porter’s key concept of the ‘sugar not the pill’, emphasising the difficulties in approaching youth movements in broad homogenous terms.

Troy Boone provides a further instance of a historian who has considered the role of the Scouts within the context of the British Empire. In his analysis of the relationship between sport and the ideas of “hegemonic imperialism”, published in Youth of Darkest England in 2005, Boone discusses the ways through which the Boys’ Brigade was founded on the principles of *esprit de corps* and how the movement was a vehicle for training working-class Boys in middle-class values through soldiering and sports.<sup>116</sup> However, rather than expanding on this case, Boone analyses the Scouts in order to consider the ideas of elementary school style activities of youth movements as a method to improve class friction. This is in addition to a whole chapter devoted in his monograph to Baden-Powell’s creation in relation to “hegemonic imperialism”, a notion that “English people of all classes identify with one another as members of an imperial nation”.<sup>117</sup> Much in the same way as Porter, Boone approaches youth movements in broad, homogenous terms, thus overlooking the national and regional variances that are perceptible in the lived experience of membership of a youth movement as shown through the three case studies of this thesis.

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<sup>112</sup> Richard Price, “One Big Thing: Britain, Its Empire, and Their Imperial Culture”, Journal of British Studies, 45, 3, 2006, pp. 602 - 627; p.619.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p.620.

<sup>114</sup> John M. MacKenzie, “Review. Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain*”, The Round Table, 94, 2005, pp. 280 - 283; p.281.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, p.282

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p.136.

<sup>117</sup> Troy Boone, Youth of Darkest England. Working-Class Children at the Heart of Victorian Empire, (London: Routledge, 2005), p.117.

In contrast to the perspective of Boone, Jim English has opted to utilise the example of Empire Day in Britain as observed in working-class autobiographies, to illustrate the prevailing nature of “an imperial consciousness in the minds of working-class children”.<sup>118</sup> In an article from 2006, English considers historians’ approaches to Empire Day in a very similar way to which this thesis believes the case of the Boys’ Brigade has been treated by academics; “Although often referenced or mentioned in passing, Empire Day rarely occupies historians for more than a paragraph”.<sup>119</sup> What the research of English illustrates is that there is scope for progression of debates in this area through the utilisation of groups, movements, and individuals who have previously been mentioned regularly but to a limited extent. More recently, Beaven has drawn upon Empire Day as a case to emphasise the difficulties in approaching attitudes to Empire in homogenous terms. Through an examination of the application of Empire Day celebrations in Portsmouth, Coventry, and Leeds, Beaven highlighted - through a dissemination of articles in the local press - the complexities of a uniform experience of celebrations across the country in his 2012 book Visions of Empire.<sup>120</sup> This thesis draws on Beaven’s notion of regional variances and, through the case of the Boys’ Brigade in Glasgow *vis a vis* the English cities of Bristol and London, emphasises the national differences perceptible in the lived experience of membership of a youth movement.

### **Religiosity and Secularisation Debates**

The final historiographical area of concern this research considers is the role of the Boys’ Brigade within wider debates relating to secularisation. The aim of this research is to introduce the example of youth movements into discussion regarding secularisation and different modes of expression of faith. While the previous two areas of historical interest mentioned above have utilised the case of uniformed youth movements, this particular debate on religion and secularisation has not been concerned with uniformed youth as a case study to the same extent. There has been a tendency by historians examining organisations in this period to focus on aspects such as militarism which have resulted in religious characteristics of such organisations being neglected. For example, Boone largely overlooks the religious aspects of the Salvation Army

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<sup>118</sup> Jim English, “Empire Day in Britain, 1904 - 1958”, The Historical Journal, 49, 1, 2006, pp. 247 - 276; p.248.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Brad Beaven, Visions, pp. 174 - 175.

in a chapter on the movement in his study, mentioning religious rhetoric only six times.<sup>121</sup> This is despite the organisation being one strongly Christian in outlook and purpose. The religious aspects of the Boys' Brigade have also been neglected to an extent, with issues relating to militarism coming to the fore within discussion on the movement. Therefore, this research brings to prominence issues relating to religiosity debates at this time and, in particular, theories relating to secularisation. This research can assist in redressing the balance and return religious discourse to debates relating to organised youth movements. As a Christian organisation, the Boys' Brigade can be viewed in two contrasting ways, leading to questions regarding the strength of religion during the Victorian and Edwardian period. On the one hand, the movement can be seen as an expression of the pomp and strength of religion; a bold and powerful expression of the role of Christianity in society. However, the alternative view may be to see the organisation as a reaction to a decline in faith, with the movement a response to declining interest in religion, particularly with young men. This thesis maintains that the Boys' Brigade illustrated changing attitudes to religion from the late nineteenth century onwards, with the organisation offering an example of an alternative mode of expression of faith that was applied in different ways by Officers of the movement across varied spaces and places.

The work of Callum Brown in the last few decades has altered approaches to secularisation theories in Britain and has led many to question perspectives within this field of research. Brown has asserted that there existed a "buoyancy of Christian culture" which continued "largely unabated until the outbreak of war in 1914".<sup>122</sup> However, Brown later comments that "The Edwardian religious horizon was...confused – outwardly optimistic, but inwardly clouded with doubts and confusions".<sup>123</sup> This poses questions as to how a buoyant Christian culture could exist alongside confusion and doubt. The Boys' Brigade, as an organisation that was an expression of Christian culture, has the ability to offer clarity to this contradiction. In his monograph, Brown makes reference to the Boys' Brigade. However, within his chapter on faith in society between 1900 and 1914, the movement is considered within the context of "the BBs", being regarded in the same bracket as the JLB an organisation which, when considered within religiosity debates, is a

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<sup>121</sup> Troy Boone, *Youth of Darkest*, pp. 86 - 105.

<sup>122</sup> Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth Century Britain*, (Harlow: Longman, 2006), p.40.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, p.48.

very different group altogether. Strangely, the case of the Boys' Brigade is also neglected in his article on faith in the city of Glasgow. Brown asserts that from the 1850s onwards church attendances were on the rise in the city and utilises the case of Glasgow and its all-time high levels of Sunday school attendances as illustrative of thriving Christianity.<sup>124</sup> However, by passing over the case of the Boys' Brigade, Brown misses an opportunity to assess a group which is intrinsically Glaswegian in its origins and can act as an expression of thriving Christianity in this city.

The Boys' Brigade can therefore progress the arguments made by Brown. It also acts as an instrument to improve our understanding of the wider discourse relating to secularisation and a 'crisis of faith' in the late Victorian and Edwardian era. In a 2011 article "reassessing" these theories, David Nash commented that "In the past decade, the implications of historiographies that uphold the victory of the secular have been subject to considerable critique."<sup>125</sup> In his reassessment of the historiographical consensus, Nash comments on conclusions that religious beliefs could, and did, exist outside the traditional church base. In his article, Nash offers an assessment of the work of Grace Davie and Sarah Williams to support his claim of religion thriving outside of "conventional religious outlets".<sup>126</sup> The Boys' Brigade is clearly an expression of religious convictions outside the parameters of the conventional, and greater analysis of this organisation offers much to our understanding of the ways in which religion was experienced outside the traditional church setting. With regards to secularisation theories, Nash is of the opinion that there was a "sense of moral uncertainty that afflicted late Victorian England" and that the historiography of a 'crisis of faith' versus a 'crisis of doubt' limits our understanding.<sup>127</sup> Another historian who has reassessed the secularisation debates is Jeremy Morris. In his 2003 article Morris was critical of the approach of Brown in shifting the chronology of secularisation debates:

He has simultaneously rejected more strenuously...the long tradition of British historiography that sought to apply the concept of secularization to the late nineteenth and early twentieth

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<sup>124</sup> Callum Brown, "Faith in the City?" *History Today*, 40, 5, 1990, pp. 41 - 47; p.44.

<sup>125</sup> David Nash, "Reassessing the 'Crisis of Faith' in the Victorian Age: Eclecticism and the Spirit of Moral Enquiry", *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 16, 1, 2011, pp. 65 - 82; p.65.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, p.66.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, p.82.

centuries, and at once reapplied the concept exclusively and dramatically to the last forty years.<sup>128</sup>

Morris is critical of the ways in which a number of historians have “grossly oversimplified” secularisation in Britain, with this complex discourse being incomplete.<sup>129</sup> Introducing the Boys’ Brigade within these debates assists in this discourse through considering the role of religion in popular culture and in outlets outside of the traditional church setting.

## Conclusion

The historiographical themes considered in the review of existing literature above will inform the chapters to follow. The concepts of militarism in British society, imperial identities, and discourse relating to a decline in faith have often been considered in separate spheres. However, it is evident that the Boys’ Brigade can act as a vehicle to improve our understanding, with its unique characteristics providing a distinctive link between these three core thematic areas that shaped British society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Discourse on militarism has been to the fore of existing debates on the role of youth movements in British society, with Kennedy asserting that this question is central to discussion of the involvement of uniformed youth groups in the First World War.<sup>130</sup> The succeeding chapters of this thesis embrace these debates as a frame of reference. However, where this chapter differs from the literature above is by relating the notion of militarism in society at the local level and applying existing discourse to the regional context in order to maintain that experience was not uniform geographically. Linked to this is Beaven’s assertion that imperial cultures were not generic and were a representation of local circumstances.<sup>131</sup> Beaven’s model of three case studies that place the city space at the centre of discussion is a structure that is embraced in the chapters to follow, with this thesis drawing upon the examples of Glasgow, London, and Bristol. Moreover, by considering the experience in Scottish cities *vis a vis* English cities, the chapters of this thesis offer the Boys’ Brigade as a vehicle

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<sup>128</sup> Jeremy Morris, “The Strange Death of Christian Britain: Another Look at the Sectarianism Debate”, *The Historical Journal*, 46, 4, 2003, pp. 963 - 976; p.964.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, p.975.

<sup>130</sup> Rosie Kennedy, *The Children’s*, p.91.

<sup>131</sup> Brad Beaven, *Visions*, p.208.

to improve our understanding of the national variances in approach to the themes considered above. Finally, notions of a decline in faith and secularisation are an important frame of reference in the chapters to follow. The Boys' Brigade is drawn upon in this thesis to offer a regional example in the city space to support Nash's conclusions that religious beliefs thrived outside of the conventional space of the church.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, it is evident that closer examination of the Boys' Brigade has the ability to improve our understanding of notions of militarism, imperialism, and religion within the city. In addition, by applying the lived experience of the movement at the grassroots level, the chapters of this thesis offer a case for exploring the practical application of these themes.

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<sup>132</sup> David Nash, "Reassessing", p.66.