

**Bard GC NYC
British Propaganda Textiles of WW2**

London Squares

**first draft
with
illustrations
bibliography and endnotes**

April 2004

Paul Rennie

p@rennart.co.uk

00 44 (0)20 7405 0220

The story of British WW2 propaganda textiles has, hitherto, been overlooked in the developing social history of the Home-Front.¹ This brief essay is an attempt to contextualise the propaganda textiles of WW2 by reference to the social context of “Fortress Britain” and to the cultural antecedents of the square scarf.² These two trajectories of development identify the scarf as a powerful signifier of female emancipation during the war and as an object replete with both populist and fraternal meaning. Furthermore, the scarves give powerful expression, through these meanings, of the radical potential within ordinary people identified by George Orwell and described in his “Lion and the Unicorn” of 1941.³ By accounting for these narratives and their convergence, during 1941-43, we may begin to understand something of the symbolic power of these artefacts.

It should be emphasised that the propaganda textiles of WW2, within their British context, survive almost exclusively as silk and rayon squares although more substantial garments do exist. These were used as headscarves and neckerchiefs. With longer lengths of propaganda print it was possible to make a blouse or top. The style was endorsed by advertisements in the fashion press and modelled by celebrities.⁴



British Women at War (the look)

Advertisement drawing from **Vogue** 1941 (6) p73

Kingston, University of Kingston Library



MISS VIVIEN LEIGH, now Mrs. Dehobart
at the Haymarket, wears '66 Gossams,'
printed with things rare and refined

British Women at War (the look)

Photograph of Miss Vivien Leigh from **Propaganda Prints** in **Vogue** 1942(4) pp28-29 and 82

Kingston, University of Kingston Library

The British propaganda textiles of WW2 are especially interesting for the absence of any direct political intervention in their creation.⁵ Elsewhere in Europe state sponsored propaganda had been widely used to promote the emerging ideologies of Communism and Fascism throughout the 1930s.⁶ Indeed, the German Propaganda Ministry (established 1933) had recognised the effectiveness of British WW1 “Atrocity” propaganda and begun a ceaseless campaign of ideological sniping against British Imperial interests. This prompted the creation of the British Council to promote British cultural values abroad as an ally of the Board of Trade. Elsewhere in Britain there were propaganda efforts directed at recasting Imperial relations and of healing the tribal divisions that marked out the peoples of the industrial north, metropolitan south and rural heartlands.⁷ Most of this effort took the form of literary excursions to the North or into “deep England.” The peacetime propagandising of Britain was limited, in the main, to the production of Royal commemoratives and to banal messages, projected by the Party administrations, directed at their provincial membership.⁸

The rejection of a more engaged and obviously party-political, or ideologically driven, propaganda in Britain has been described by Orwell through two different narratives. The first is of the

prevailing tolerance and peaceable good-humour of the population which would necessarily reject any obvious propagandising.⁹ The second was through the recognition of the duplicity of war propaganda. The revelations, throughout the 1920s, that things had not been as they seemed during WW1, was recognised as a moral failing of the Establishment class and of its ethical projection of “Fair Play” as fraudulent.¹⁰ Perhaps as a consequence of this realisation the 1930s was a decade of political consciousness-raising in Britain. The progress of the Spanish Civil War during 1936 and 1937 was marked by the manifestation of class solidarity in Britain and across Europe. Political colours became increasingly visible during the process by which Europe was drawn inevitably towards war.



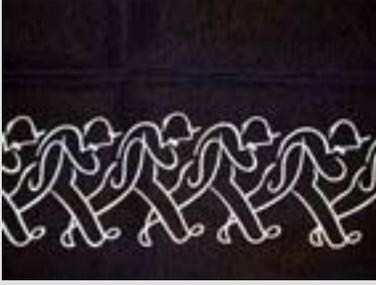
Political Scarf (Spain)

Help Spain (1937) silk

London, Paul and Karen Rennie

An early example of the silk square as politically loaded artefact

It is obvious that, within these circumstances, any cultural cynicism towards overt propagandising would limit its potential effectiveness. It is necessary, therefore, to indicate the developing narrative of the war, from a British perspective, so as to provide an effective backdrop to these efforts and to account for the emergence of propaganda textiles as a cultural phenomenon reflecting the circumstances of Britain at war.



Home-Front Scarves (Churchill)

Let Us Go Forward Together

London, Paul and Karen Rennie

A popular celebration of Churchill as war leader Churchill became leader of the War cabinet in May 1940.

The beginnings of the European war were provoked by Germany's invasion of Poland in September 1939. The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was dispatched to help the French. The German "Blitzkrieg" deployment against the Anglo-French forces split their defences and forced the retreat of the BEF to Dunkirk. In May 1940 the decision was taken to evacuate the British army from Dunkirk. In July, August and September of 1940 the Germans attempted to establish air superiority. They were unsuccessful and the invasion of Britain was postponed. In September 1940 the Germans launched the first bombing raids against metropolitan Britain. The "Blitz" was an attempt to break the spirit of the civilian population. The strategy failed, if anything the resolve of ordinary people hardened as a consequence of these actions. By the end of 1940 "Fortress Britain" had become the bulwark against the German domination of Europe. Accordingly, London welcomed a richly varied band of partisans, fighters and refugees. Amongst the many groups in London were the Free French, the Poles, Czechs, Dutch and Norwegians.¹¹ The years 1942 and 1943 are therefore years of transition between defensive and offensive strategies. This shift necessarily required an increase in productive effort and planning which demanded a more complete mobilisation of women into the war effort.



British Women at War (work)

Painting **Ruby Loftus Screwing a Breech Ring** (1943) by Dame Laura Knight

London, Imperial War Museum

Ruby Loftus was a real life worker at the Royal Ordnance Factory. She became a “story” for the Ministries of Information and of Labour and National Service. Ruby Loftus came to represent “every woman” in the factories.

In addition, the mobilisation of Imperial forces created communities of Canadian, South African, Indian, Australian and New Zealander combatants along with others from the furthest reaches of Empire. The American presence in London became very much more noticeable in the course of 1942 after the entry of the USA into the war during December 1941.

Between the military retreat from Dunkirk and the beginnings of offensive action in North Africa, marked by the battle of El Alamein in October 1942, the most significant social developments of the war were the large scale mobilisation of women into the war effort along with the rapidly developing multi-culturalism of the London social scene. The economy of the war was austere with rationing of food and clothing and the constant demand for scrap and production. It is against this background that the emergence of the square scarf and propaganda print should be judged.



Home-Front Scarves (scrap)

Save (1943) synthetic

London, Paul and Karen Rennie

One of a more populist series of scarves aimed at the mass market

It is not altogether surprising that the silk scarf should emerge as an object with symbolic, patriotic and propagandistic meanings during a time of war. The obvious practicality of scarves in relation to keeping hair clean and tidy was crucially in their favour amongst women. The scarf was quickly recognised as an accessory that could transform an outfit. Notwithstanding the circumstances of war the British textile industry remained active. Jacqmar advertised its products as “British designed and British made” and the Cotton Board organised export trade exhibitions in 1941 and in 1944. The USA was the single most important export market with South Africa and even South America also contributing.



Advertisement

Jacqmar 1942 Season

Reproduced from Vogue 1941(6) p26

The antecedents of the modern silk scarf are complex. The clearest origins are in the wearing of military favours. More recently, the tradition of military colours was revived during the Napoleonic wars.¹² These printed cotton squares were neckerchiefs printed by copperplate and depicting the victories and personalities of the campaigns. The tradition of commemorative printed neckerchiefs continued throughout the 19th century with sporting events and political campaigns amongst the themes recorded.¹³ It should be remembered that, at this point, the cotton neckerchief was, if anything, a male gendered object.

The repositioning of the printed textile square as an object replete with positive associations and emblematic of female emancipation begins at the end of the 19th century. The progressive “new woman” embraced a radical lifestyle through education, fashion and an advanced taste for “Orientalism.” The taste for the art and culture of the East was especially important through its implicit promotion of exoticism, sexuality, sensuous movement and of a kind of wisdom independent and separate from European rationalism. The emancipatory potential of these characteristics was given expressive form through the exotic dancing of Loie Fuller during the 1890s. Fuller’s dancing rediscovered a tradition of sensuous movement that made an appealing and dangerous contrast to the prevailing sense of emotional repression. Loie Fuller used lighting effects and veil-type textiles to enhance the erotic potential of her dancing and to present her show as an Orientalist discovery. The show gave perfect expression to the emerging sense of female sexuality that was described by Sigmund Freud.¹⁴ The female liberation implicit in this exoticism was given further expression in Serge Diaghilev’s “Ballets Russes” from 1909-1929 and by the transformations of women’s silhouettes and fashion in the designs of Coco Chanel and Paul Poiret.¹⁵

The extension, within Britain, of the franchise to female voters in 1918 created the conditions under which the class interests of the Establishment were projected to a new audience through the developing mass media. The illustrated magazine and the projection of female role models

combined to create the cult of celebrity. Amongst the most famous scarf wearing female celebrities was the dancer Isadora Duncan whose untimely death, in 1927, by strangulation assured her notoriety (Duncan's scarf had become entangled in the wheels of the car she was riding in). The circumstances of Duncan's death and her celebrity status combined in the public imagination to associate the scarf with the expression of emancipatory independence in women. This association was further emphasised during the 1930s as a succession of female travellers and aviatrix defied the conventional norms of womanly behaviour. By the advent of war the scarf was firmly entrenched, within the public imagination, as a powerful signifier of female independence, emancipation and glamour.

The response of the British establishment class to the question of female emancipation had been fitful at best. The acknowledgement of equal voting rights was not extended to the right enjoyed by women in either the workplace or at home. Indeed, women remained a gender whose identities were configured largely around notions of duty and responsibility rather than of equality of opportunity. The circumstances of Britain at war changed this irrevocably.

The female experience of WW1 (1914-18) had been, for the most part, a passive one. Some women, it is true, had entered the workforce and some had volunteered for service in the caring of wounded soldiers. The proper role for women, projected by the Establishment, remained one of encouraging their men folk to certain death at the Front. The experience of women during WW2 was very different. The advent of mechanised war implied changes in military strategy and also in the productive support of industrial production to military effort. The characteristic of "total war" was the complete mobilisation of capital, plant and personnel in the service of military objectives. Accordingly, women were from the very beginning of the war encouraged to play a dynamic and active role in the circumstances of national emergency. Their participation in the war effort took many forms; they entered the services and became part of the expanding

administrative structure that supported the various military objectives of the war and especially those concerned with co-ordinating the efforts of all participants in “combined operations.”



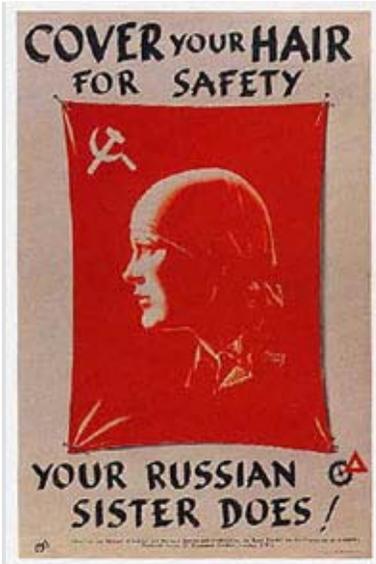
British Women at War (work)

Film Still from **Millions Like Us** (Patricia Roc and Meg Jenkins) (1943)

by Sidney Launder and Frank Gilliat

London, British Film Institute

The mobilisation of women as part of the industrial workforce was especially important in both Britain and America. Both countries mythologised the female productive effort of industrial production. Naturally, women were expected to balance the extra responsibilities of production with those already existing in relation to family, home and community. The story of these changes in social responsibilities and of their impact on the family unit is told from a British perspective in Launder and Gilliat’s film “Millions Like Us” from 1943.¹⁶ American female productive labour was represented through the figure of “Rosie the Riveter” who became, amongst other things, a Norman Rockwell cover for “The Saturday Evening Post” during 1943. The exemplar of British women’s successful entry in the factory was the real-life figure of Ruby Loftus. Ruby’s story was promoted by both the Ministry of Information and by Ernest Bevin’s Ministry of Labour. Both Ministries hoped to promote the active participation of women in war work by appeal to Ruby’s example.



British Women at War (work)

Accident Prevention Poster **Cover Your Hair for Safety Your Russian Sister Does**

(1943) by F Kenwood Giles

Ministry of Labour and National Service and

the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

London, Imperial War Museum

The influx of women into the industrial workplace provoked the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) to address the issue of safety in relation to women workers. RoSPA had been involved, in its various guises, with the production of industrial safety propaganda since the end of WW1. Its address before WW2 was, in the main, directed at the workforce in heavy industry. The outbreak of war and the significance of industrial production in relation to military objectives focussed political attention on the industrial safety activities of RoSPA.¹⁷ Ernest Bevin co-opted the propaganda efforts of RoSPA's Industrial Service within the Welfare Division of his Ministry of Labour for the duration. Under his patronage RoSPA produced a steady supply of industrial safety propaganda in the form of posters and publications. In the material aimed specifically at women the emphasis is directed at tidiness and discipline in the factory along with the fostering of an appropriate dress-sense. Chief amongst their proposals was that women should keep their hair up. The powered and machine tools used in war production were especially

dangerous in relation to long hair and RoSPA recognised that injuries resulting from trapped hair were especially traumatic in the workplace. The scarf became, in the context of war work, an important element in safety awareness and part of the proper uniform of the female industrial workforce. These fashion notes were further emphasised through a discourse of make-do-and-mend and also in the pages of the fashion press. The pages of “Vogue” championed the active participation of women in the war effort and ran features on work wear and propaganda textiles.¹⁸



Home-Front Scarves (work)

Music While You Work by Jacqmar (rayon)

London, Paul and Karen Rennie

It is therefore possible to discern, in the narratives sketched out above, the emergence of the scarf as a powerful signifier of patriotism, economic independence, effort and glamour. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that various enterprises attempted to capitalise on this phenomenon. Chief amongst these firms were Jacqmar and Ascher. Both of these firms adopted very different approaches to the production and marketing of square scarves.

The firm of Jacqmar began as the textile house of J H Lyons in 1932. The firm was established by Joseph “Jack” Lyons with his wife Mary. The company had offices and a showroom at 16 Grosvenor Street in London’s Mayfair. The founders had, typically, Frenchified their names, from Jack and Mary, to create a sense of glamour suited to high class Mayfair fashion house.¹⁹ An advertisement for Jacqmar from Vogue announces their “Spring 1942 Collection” and places their silk and tweed products as an alternative to the French designs that were no longer

internationally available. It is evident that, whatever the circumstances of war, Jacqmar were actively involved in the export market. The company secured a very large order from the USA for some 10,000 yards of fabric and this allowed them exemption from the usual rules of military requisition of stocks. The company designer Arnold Lever joined the RAF and spent some of the war in South Africa where he continued to act on the company's behalf.



Service Scarves (Army)

Into Battle by Jacqmar (rayon)

London, Paul and Karen Rennie

A design made of the Regimental cap badges of the British Army.



Service Scarves (Royal Navy)

England Expects by Jacqmar (silk)

London, Paul and Karen Rennie

A scarf with the signal flags of Nelson's Trafalgar message



Service Scarves (Royal Air Force)

Happy Landings by Jacqmar (rayon)

London, Paul and Karen Rennie



Service Scarves (Army, Navy and Air Force)

Combined Operations by Jacqmar (rayon)

London, Paul and Karen Rennie



Service Scarves (military secrets)

Keep it Under Your Hat by Reid and Taylor for Jacqmar (rayon)

London, Paul and Karen Rennie

Jacqmar produced a variety of propaganda textiles aimed at the export and home markets. The designs fall into three main thematic groups: service, friends and victory. The Jacqmar

propaganda prints are unusually unsigned. However, there are one or two designs that have the name of Arnold Lever on them. The Jacqmar style perfected by Lever and the studio was for a dynamic and expressive line drawing. The inexact registration of colour blocks over the line give a pleasing looseness to the design and hint at “cubist” influences. Lever established his own design studio in 1947. The continuing circumstances of austerity in Britain allowed Lever to continue producing designs based on the prints he had made during the war.



Home-Front Scarves (Jacqmar)

Once Upon a Time by Arnold Lever for Jacqmar (1947) silk

London, Paul and Karen Rennie

A post-war design by Arnold Lever that refers explicitly to the exchange of scarves between prince and princess.



Home-Front Scarves (Ascher)

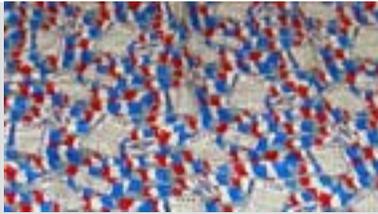
London 1944 (streetscene) by Feliks Topolski (1944) rayon

London, Paul and Karen Rennie

A London street with an international cast of personnel and uniforms.

The designs produced by Jacqmar are unashamedly aimed at an economy of exchange between wartime sweethearts in London. The existence of designs aimed at American personnel, the Free

French and Poles in London serve as a reminder that, whatever the official line, fraternisation between these different groups was popular.²⁰ The existence of these textiles is evidence of a social transformation in London during WW2.²¹ The pursuit of an export market as a national priority during and after the war placed a premium of these products at home. The company office in Mayfair identified the products and brand as high class, as did the relatively expensive price point of the products.



Friendship Scarves (France)

Free France by Jacqmar (silk)

London, Paul and Karen Rennie



Friendship Scarves (France)

From Jacqmar London (post) (rayon)

London, Paul and Karen Rennie



Home-Front Scarf (pub)

Time Gentlemen Please by **Arnold Lever** for **Jacqmar** (1942) rayon

London. Paul and Karen Rennie



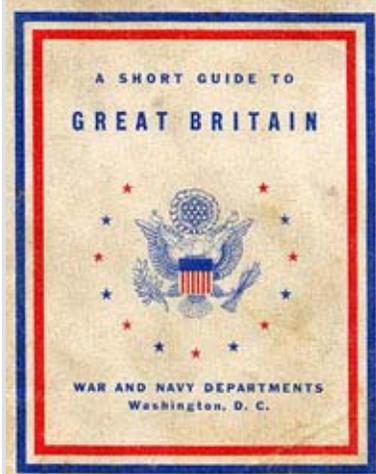
Americans in London Scarf

London by **Kaystyle 1942** (1942) rayon

London, Paul and Karen Rennie

The mythology of the Home-Front has tended to obscure the contribution of these “others” to Britain’s war effort. The characteristics of American service men in Britain were summarised by British commentators as “over paid, over sexed and over here” but there is little evidence of any real hostility. Relations between British civilians and American service personnel have usually been described in terms that mirror the perceived decline of Britain as a world power (Britain being helped by a younger, fitter and wealthier sibling) but this is a retrospective reading of events within a greater narrative. In fact ordinary people welcomed the Americans and understood instinctively that the job was beyond Britain’s own capabilities. The Army and Navy Departments in Washington issued unequivocal instructions to its personnel in Britain to “be

friendly". The fraternal greetings projected through Jacqmar's propaganda prints reflect an alliance between people based on respect and co-operation.



Americans in London

Printed Booklet

A Short Guide to Great Britain (1942) published by the War and Navy Desprtmnts,

Washington DC

London, Paul and Karen Rennie



Friendship Scarves (Franco American)

George Washington 1783 America and France United Forever

designed by Edward McKnight Kauffer (silk)

London, Paul and Karen Rennie

A similar design exists for Anglo French friendship and shows Britannia and Marianne with the caption "**Vive la France Long Live England – Together for Victory**" It is possible that these scarves are liberation scarves from 1944. The American Edward McKnight Kauffer was poster designer who worked in Britain between the wars. His designs for London Transport and Shell are amongst the most distinguished and powerful posters produced in Britain. Kauffer was the partner of the textile designer Marion Dorn and they had returned to America in 1939.

The Ascher textiles were aimed at the export market and at an even more cultured clientele at home. Zika and Lida Ascher had established a small textile company upon their arrival in London from Prague, via a skiing honeymoon in Norway. The firm became an incorporated company in 1942 and began to follow a plan to bring the worlds of fashion and art more closely together. Zika Ascher had had the idea of commissioning leading artists of the day to make screen-print designs which would then be produced as limited edition artists' textiles.²² The scheme began in 1944 with the production of Feliks Topolski's "London 1944", a street scene complete with London bus and peopled with service personnel of every nationality. Further designs by Toploski show a naval dockyard and Polish members of Scottish regiments.

By far the most significant of Ascher's artist designers was the sculptor Henry Moore. Moore had produced a series of remarkable drawings of ordinary people sheltering in the deep tunnels of London Underground during the Blitz of 1940-41. The authorities responsible for Civil Defence had been tardy in the provision of shelters to ordinary Londoners. This failure had been a consequence of a desire to avoid panic by obviously preparing for the effects of large scale bombing. There was also a feeling, amongst the Establishment and Whitehall class, that ordinary Londoners lacked the moral fibre to resist bombing.²³ A further anxiety was that the provision of deep shelters would simply give ordinary Londoners a refuge from which they might not emerge. This misrepresentation of ordinary people was shown to be spectacularly wrong. They did, however, commandeer the London Underground's deeper station platforms so as to sleep safely through the bombs. Moore's drawings were immediately recognised as moving evidence of the strength of family and community bonds in war and of a desire amongst ordinary people to help each other and to "see it through". Moore used the family group as a symbol for a belief in humanism and for the values behind the project of post-war reconstruction and welfare provision.



Home-Front Scarves (family)

Family Group by Harry Moore for Ascher (1946) (rayon)

London, Paul and Karen Rennie

After the war, Ascher continued this project and attempted to recast the artist's textile as an appropriate decoration for the nascent architecture of the welfare state and social democracy generally. The Ascher textiles were exhibited at the Lefevre Gallery in 1947 where they were presented as part of a concerted export effort.

Obviously, in addition to these relatively refined attempts at textile production during the war there are other, more opportunistic and popular, efforts. Mostly, these are commemorative designs produced for VE Day and the German surrender. The graphic quality of these images and the textiles on which they are printed are not aimed the refined and prosperous "officer class" market addressed by Jacqmar and Ascher.²⁴



Victory Scarves (1945)

Lauriers de la Victoire by Jacqmar (rayon)

London, Paul and Karen Rennie



Victory Scarves (1945)

Flags VE Day

London, Paul and Karen Rennie

The British propaganda textiles and scarves of WW2 offer compelling evidence of important social changes that occurred as a consequence of the war effort. The scarf itself became a signifier of female emancipation, economic independence, commitment and glamour as well as giving visual expression to a significant evolution of multi-culturalism in London. These narratives have usually been understood as belonging to the long, slow trajectory of national decline. By tracing out the formative influences behind the scarf and explaining its special status during the war I hope that these bright, colourful designs may be understood to belong to an altogether more positive story.

In the main I have written of the square scarf and of propaganda textiles as female gendered artefacts. However the scarf need not necessarily be female gendered. It is quite possible to imagine army officers and fighter pilots wearing these textiles. Anyone who doubts that this would have been possible should examine the “dandy” tendency prevailing amongst General Montgomery’s staff. Montgomery was himself a famous dandy who affected to wear battle dress but took the precaution of having it tailored on Saville Row. The taste for adding an idiosyncratic twist to a uniform was probably derived from public school traditions. Whatever, in the army it manifest its self in a variety of ways. The cartoonist Jon lampooned the eccentricities of the officer class in his “Two Types” prepared for the British Army Newspaper Unit.²⁵ The same sort of elite disregard for petty regulation was evident in the fighter squadrons of the RAF and in the nascent

Special Operations Executive of Commando warfare. The “Two Types” are always shown extravagantly scarved.



Cartoon

Two Types by Jon

“She Says She IS Lili Marlene”

published by the British Army Newspaper Unit 1943

Paul Rennie

London March 2004

Paul Rennie is a graphic design collector and historian working in London. He and his wife Karen have a collection of vintage silk squares including some propaganda prints.

Bibliography and notes

Briggs A (2000) **Go To It – Working for Victory on the Home-Front 1939-1945**

London, Mitchell Beazley

Calder A (1969) **The People's War** London, Jonathan Cape

Calder A (1991) **The Myth of the Blitz** London, Jonathan Cape

Chapman J (1998) **The British at War** London, I B Tauris

Constantine S (1986) **Buy and Build** London, HMSO

Florence LS (1944) **America and Britain – Our Private Lives**

London, George G Harrap & Company Ltd

Galloway F (2002) **Post-War British Textiles** London, Francesca Galloway

Harris C (2000) **Women at War** Stroud, Sutton Publishing

Institute of Contemporary Art (1953) *Painting into Textiles*

London, The Ambassador, the British Export Magazine

Jennings ML (1982) **Humphrey Jennings – Film-Maker, Painter, Poet**

London, British Film Institute

Jon (1944) **The Two Types** Italy, British Army Newspaper Unit

Jon (1944) **Jon's Two Types in Italy** Italy, British Army Newspaper Unit

Lewis F, Mellor JH and Entwistle EA (1955)

A Century of British Textiles Leigh-on-Sea, F Lewis Publishers Ltd

Lewitt J and Him G (1940) **Informator dla Polaków w Anglii**

(Handbook for Poles in London) London, Kolin Publishers Ltd

Lovell A and Hillier J (1972) **Studies in Documentary** London, Secker and Warburg

McCall C (1943) **Women's Institutes** London, Collins

McLaine I (1979) **Ministry of Morale** London, George Allen and Unwin

Marwick A (1968) **Britain in the Century of Total War** Boston, Little Brown and Co

Marwick A (1976) **The Home-Front – The British and the Second World War**

London, Thames and Hudson

Marwick A, Emsley C and Simpson W (2001)

Total War and Historical Change Buckingham, Open University Press

Mendes VD and Hinchliffe FM (1987)

Ascher: Fabric, Art, Fashion London, The Victoria and Albert Museum

Musée national des châteaux de Malmaison et Bois-Préau (1995-96)

De Londres à Moscou: les mouchoirs de cou napoléonais

(Collection Madame Jean Lasaffre)

Nicolson H (1967) **Diaries and Letters 1939 – 45** London, Collins

Orwell G (1941) **The Lion and the Unicorn – Socialism and the English Genius**

London, Secker and Warburg

Orwell G (1947) **The English People** London, Collins

Rayner G, Chamberlain R and Stapleton A (2003)

Artists' Textiles in Britain 1945-1970: A Democratic Art

Woodbridge, Antique Collectors' Club

Reeves N (1999) **The Power of Film Propaganda** London, Cassell

Rennie P (1994) *Siren Flags* Woodbridge, Antique Collectors' Club

Rowbotham S (1997) **A Century of Women** London, Viking

Schoser M (1988) **Printed Handkerchiefs** London, Museum of London

Steinberg S (1945) **All in Line** Harmondsworth, Penguin Books

Summerfield P (1984) **Women Workers in the Second World War**

Beckenham, Croom Helm Ltd

US Army (1942) **A Short Guide to Great Britain**

Washington DC, War and Navy Departments

Condé Nast Ltd (1939-1945) **Vogue Magazine** London

Williams G (1945) **The New Democracy – Women and Work**

London, Nicholson and Watson

Zeigler P (1995) **London at War** London, Sinclair-Stevenson

¹ The bibliography of the Home-Front in Britain is extensive. The defining account of the popular experience of the war in Britain is Calder (1969). The processes by which the experience of the war was fed back into a “mythologizing” loop of collective experience has been further described in Calder (1991). Marwick (1968) describes the link between war and social change. The link between social change and the experience of the Home-Front is described in detail in Marwick (1976). A popular illustrated account is Briggs (2000).

The bibliography of British women’s experience during WW2 is equally extensive. The major study is Summerfield (1984) and there are many more popular histories of the transformations in women’s lives that resulted from the war. Harris (2000), McCall (1943) and Rowbotham (1997) provide good general introductions.

None of these texts refer to the propaganda prints as material evidence of these narratives.

² The square scarf was a staple of mid 20th century women’s wear. Its popularity was based on the practical considerations of keeping big hair in place rather than any modest covering of the head. The increasingly active role of women in modern society, reflected in wash-and-go hairstyles, has made the scarf less obviously relevant to modern western women. Rennie (1994) has sketched out the general history of the scarf as fashion staple.

The recent bibliography of artists’ designs for textiles has ignored wartime propaganda prints, Neither Rayner (2003) nor Golloway (2002) make any mention of these prints.

³ George Orwell (1903-1950), English novelist, essayist and polemicist argued passionately for an alignment between military war aims and post-war social justice. Orwell’s essay makes a powerful and necessary connection between the need for change in Britain and the prospects of victory. Orwell had recognised the moral decline of the pre-war establishment class and placed his hope in ordinary people and a developing meritocracy. His is amongst the first writing to recognise the radical potential of ordinary people. Orwell’s themes are revisited, in abridged form, in “The English People” from 1947.

⁴ See “Vogue” 1942 (4) p28-29 & 82. Miss Leigh was recognised as the most glamorous of British actresses of the period. The blouse worn by Miss Leigh is made from “66 Coupons” a design by Arnold Lever that uses the graphic substitution of images for words often found in 19th century educational primers. These substitutions are called a rebus.

The article in “Vogue” mentions the following textiles for Jacqmar designed by Arnold Lever

- London Wall
- Air Raid
- Dig for Victory
- 66 Coupons
- The Navy’s Here
- Home Guard
- Free France
- Firebomb Fighters
- Happy Landings

Page 82 shows a photograph of Arnold Lever in RAF uniform alongside Bianca Mosca the Jacqmar stylist.

⁵ The scarves are not produced under the state-sponsored “Utility” scheme although they were sanctioned by subsidy. The participation of Jacqmar and Cresta Silks in export trade fairs assured them of materials at a difficult time. See “Vogue” 1941(6) pp46-47 for illustrations of export silks including “Careless Talk” by Jacqmar after Fougasse and also “London Squares” by

Dr Holden Stone, creative director at "Vogue". Cresta designs include "Island Story" and "Go To It" illustrated in "Vogue" 1941(6)p3.

⁶ The "Constructivist" work of Soviet designers during the 1920s is probably the best known of these propagandistic efforts especially as it includes textile designs.

⁷ Constantine (1986) tells the story of the poster propaganda produced for the Empire Marketing Board in the 1930s. The developing idea of "deep England" is described in Calder (1991).

⁸ The earliest political headscarf in our collection is for a "Help Spain" campaign in Britain from 1937.

⁹ Orwell (1947) pp8-12 describes a "national culture".

¹⁰ Orwell (1941) pp70-71 describes the moral decline of the ruling elite.

¹¹ Zeigler (1995) touches upon the developing multi-culturalism of London at war although he concentrates on aspects of Anglo American exchange and the experience of black American GIs in London. Aspects of Anglo American exchange are described in Florence (1944) and in the US Army (1942) notes. There is a class of interesting ephemera relating to overseas nationals in London during WW2. Lewitt-Him (1940) is a guide to London prepared for Polish soldiers and airmen.

¹² Musée national des châteaux de Malmaison et Bois-Préau (1995-96) illustrates the tradition of neckerchiefs and scarves in France.

¹³ Schoser (1988) illustrates the 19th century commemorative neckerchief by reference to those held by the Museum of London.

¹⁴ Freud had begun describing female sexuality in 1901. "Dora" was published in 1906.

¹⁵ Paul Poiret and Coco Chanel are credited with inventing the modern fashion system. Poiret used designers such as Raoul Dufy to design textiles for both fashion and the home. In consequence he developed the beginning of "lifestyle" marketing in fashion. Chanel is credited with developing a more contemporary silhouette in women's wear that reflected an increasing dynamism of women in modern society.

¹⁶ Chapman (1998) pp213-215 offers a summary of the film. See also Jennings (1982), Lovell and Hillier (1972) and Reeves (1999) for a more detailed contextualisation of this film in relation to the British Documentary movement.

¹⁷ RoSPA had three main areas of activity. Its origins were as an organisation promoting road safety. During the 1930s it began to address issues of home safety and industrial safety. In addition to poster and pamphlet propaganda it produced educational films and touring exhibitions. The advent of war obliged RoSPA to prioritise its work in industrial safety. The voluntary status of the organisation was suspended during the war as it was co-opted under Ernest Bevin. The appropriation by Bevin of worker welfare propaganda reveals a political strategy already looking beyond the successful outcome of the war.

¹⁸ See "Vogue" 1942(4) pp28-29 and also 1941(6) pp46-47.

¹⁹ Jacqmar were part of a fashion system where ready-to-wear was still in its infancy. The London social scene was still dominated by "the season" which culminated, every year, in the "coming out" of society debutantes. The photographers Norman Parkinson and Cecil Beaton were associated with the relatively aristocratic projection of this fashion system. The Jacqmar propaganda prints were part of this London system.

²⁰ The Mayfair district of London (W1) is the preferred address for foreign national embassies. The district was therefore commandeered for the duration by military communities from America and Europe. Jacqmar's showroom was ideally placed to benefit from this new clientele.

²¹ The economy of exchange of which scarves were a part is referred to in one of Arnold Lever's post-war designs. The scarf is a text story with rebus images replacing certain key words. The text reads

"Once upon a time there was a beautiful princess...

she went out into the sunshine...and saw a handsome prince riding towards her in his jeep with one of "those scarves" in his knapsack so now she can go anywhere at anytime..."

²² For a complete account of the Ascher project see Mendes (1987) which also includes a description of some of the technical difficulties of screen printing on fabric.

²³ Both McLaine (1979) and Nicolson (1967) offer compelling accounts of this anxiety.

²⁴ If anything the more populist VE Day prints are more ephemeral and scarce than their finer Jacqmar and Ascher counterparts.

²⁵ See Jon (1944) or for an American perspective see Steinberg (1945).