Communal myths and silenced memories: the unremembered experience of Italians in Scotland during World War Two

Wendy Ugolini

PhD
The University of Edinburgh
2005
**CONTENTS**

*Statement of Authorship*  
*Abstract*  
*Note on Transcription*  
*List of Abbreviations*  

Introduction  

Chapter 1.  *The Making of 'Mythistory'*  
– a review of the literature  

Chapter 2.  *Oral History, Methodology*  
and Reflexivity  

Chapter 3.  *History of the Italian Community*  
in Scotland  

Chapter 4.  *June 1940 – Restrictions, Arrests and Riots*  

Chapter 5.  *Explanatory Notes on Internment*  
1 *Internment*  
2 *Dual Nationality*  

Chapter 6.  *Forgetting the Fascisti*  

Chapter 7.  *Hostility on the Homefront*  
– women's experiences  
1 *Running Businesses*  
2 *Relocation*  

Chapter 8.  *British Forces – Service Overseas*  
1. *Facing Call Up*
II. Experiences in the Forces

Chapter Nine  British Forces – Service At Home
   I. Pioneer Corps 241
   II. Women’s Auxiliary Services and War Work 250
   III. Narratives of Freedom 265

Chapter Ten  Remembering – Commemoration within the Italian Scottish Community 270

Conclusion 300

Bibliography 314

APPENDICES

1. Respondents’ Biographies 344
2. Service Records 349
3. Interview Extract 350
4. Interview Extract 351
5. Interview Extract 356
6. Published Papers 359
Statement of Authorship

I hereby declare that I am the composer of this thesis and that the work is entirely my own.

WENDY UGOLINI
Abstract

The outbreak of war between Italy and Britain in June 1940 had devastating consequences for Italian immigrant families living in Britain, including the internment and relocation of thousands of Italian nationals. Over 400 Italian internees died when the ship deporting them to Canada, the Arandora Star, was torpedoed. This thesis explores the construction of powerful myths and stories about the war amongst the Italian population in Scotland and looks at how the dominance of a singular elite narrative has silenced or denied the memories of different groups within the community. Over time, the central internment/Arandora Star narrative has been utilised to create the ‘story’ of the war and has come to represent what it meant to be a ‘good Italian.’ This one-dimensional focus on the male experience of internment means that major aspects of Italian Scottish experience - service in the British Forces and the relocation of women and children, essentially the memories of non-internees - have been largely concealed. Commemorative and memorial activity within the community reinforces this tendency to exclude non-internees from wartime representations. Through the oral testimonies of second generation Italians in Edinburgh and access to previously unpublished documents, this thesis challenges existing accounts of the war and examines the tensions between communal myths and individual memory. It considers the ways in which the war is recalled and remembered within the narratives of Italian Scots and explores the impact of the war on the present-day construction of their personal identity. In particular, this thesis shows that, contrary to assertions made within historiography, enlistment in the British Forces does not indicate higher levels of assimilation; rather because of their
confusing and contradictory experiences, Italian Scottish veterans often emerged from their military service with a heightened sense of 'Italianness.' By exploring the narratives of women who experienced the anti-Italian riots or were relocated from their homes, this thesis also highlights the long-term emotional and psychological impact of the war which is traditionally overlooked. Overall, this thesis concludes that, contrary to the assertions of leading commentators, the war heightened a sense of 'difference' amongst second generation Italians which pre-dated the outbreak of war. It also highlights the need to address wartime antagonism towards the Italians within the broader context of domestic traditions of anti-alienism and sectarianism.
Note on Transcription

I personally transcribed all 44 interviews and then indexed them by identifying the themes which emerged from the texts. When I present an interview extract, I have removed repetition, hesitations that interrupt the flow of the narrative and removed extraneous words or phrases such as 'you know.' I have also incorporated any corrections which respondents made on viewing transcripts. Words which appear within [ ] are when the interviewee has filled in a missing or queried word. [...] indicates that a few words have been edited out; [EDIT] that a significant edit has been made and [Q] indicates where I have asked a supplementary question.

All respondents were born in Edinburgh unless otherwise indicated in the text. Whilst initially I attempted to transcribe Scots dialect, I did this inconsistently, perhaps reflecting my lack of confidence as an English woman. As some respondents objected when they saw their words written in 'slang', I have presented all interview extracts in standard English. On rare occasions, I have supplied the bibliographic reference for an extract without identifying the speaker in an attempt to provide some level of anonymity.
# List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATS</td>
<td>Auxiliary Territorial Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Edinburgh City Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EED</td>
<td>Edinburgh Evening Dispatch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEN</td>
<td>Edinburgh Evening News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLI</td>
<td>Highland Light Infantry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IiS</td>
<td>Italiani in Scozia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IWM</td>
<td>Imperial War Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSOB</td>
<td>King’s Own Scottish Borderers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>National Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAS</td>
<td>National Archives Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RASC</td>
<td>Royal Army Service Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS</td>
<td>The Scotsman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAAF</td>
<td>Women’s Auxiliary Air Force.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The wartime experiences of the Italian community in Britain have been largely excluded from and marginalised by the cultivation of a narrowly defined popular memory of World War Two. Commentators have highlighted the centrality of the war in the construction of national identity in Britain and have shown how the enduring myth of Britain having 'stood alone' to defend democratic and liberal ideals against the Nazi threat has encouraged a rather insular interpretation of the 1939-45 conflict, reflected in national commemoration. (Calder 1991; Cesarani 1997; Noakes 1998; Rose 2003; Connolly 2004) As Ashplant, Dawson and Roper note, official memory is expressed most explicitly through a calendar of anniversary ceremonies, such as Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, D-Day, and VE Day, 'which repeatedly recall key wartime events and mediate on their meaning.' (2000: 22) There is, however, increasing recognition that the ritualistic nature of commemoration in Britain succeeds in perpetuating the exclusion of those groups in British society for whom the Second World War has a whole different set of memories, in particular ethnic minorities. A group of psychogerontologists have raised concerns about the increasingly stereotypical depiction of the war, warning against the tendency in group work with older people to encourage communal reminiscence about the war 'without attention to possible differences in experience, interpretation and meaning.' (Coleman & Mills 1997: 175) Likewise, historian David Cesarani calls for greater attention to be paid to the diversity of memory of Britain's multi-stranded population, believing these 'neglected tributaries' to be important channels of ethnic consciousness. (1997: 36) A notable group currently marginalised by national
discourse of the war are Italian immigrant families who had been living in Britain for several decades when war broke out between Italy and Britain in 1940. By analysing the oral testimonies of second and third generation Italians in south-east Scotland, this thesis will show how, in contrast to the usual narrative motifs associated with domestic wartime Britain such as evacuation, air raids and rationing, remembrance within the Italian community revolves around varying manifestations of anti-Italian hostility ranging from the state-sponsored policies of internment, detention and relocation to localised incidences of verbal and physical abuse. To a remarkable degree, when asked about ‘the outbreak of the war’ the majority of respondents refer to June 1940 when Italy declared war on Britain, as opposed to September 1939, reinforcing the concept of a distinct set of memories held amongst this ethnic group.

The Outbreak of War

By 1940, the Italian community had a long established presence in Scotland and had comfortably reached its second and third generations. Italians started arriving in Scotland around the mid-nineteenth century and peaks in Italian immigration occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century, in 1913 and after the First World War in 1920-21. Wilkin estimates that prior to World War Two there were 1,219 officially documented male Italian immigrants, 985 wives and 3,243 children (an average of 3.3 children per immigrant) present in Scotland, ‘giving a total of 5,447 Italian immigrants.’ (1979: 54)

1 To paraphrase Passerini, I use the term ‘community’ in a partial and critical sense. (1992: 6)
2 Whilst this figure corresponds with Scottish Census figures reproduced by Colpi, which show an Italian born population of 5,216 in 1931, I am not convinced that all the children included in Wilkin’s calculation would necessarily have been Italian-born. (1986a: 31)
A leading expert on immigration in Britain, Colin Holmes, notes how hostility towards immigrant groups 'sleeps lightly' ready to be ignited at a time of war. (1991: 95) Kushner agrees that the outbreak of war can bring into focus the often vulnerable position of ethnic minorities in Britain with the unification of the majority under patriotism making the minority group even more vulnerable to attacks on nationalistic grounds. (1989: 8) Following Mussolini's declaration of war, anti-Italian feeling erupted onto the Scottish landscape. The anti-Italian riots which broke out across Britain were at their most vociferous in Scottish cities; the mass looting which broke out in Edinburgh was described by the local paper as 'an orgy of destruction.' (EEN 11.6.1940: 5) At a time of increasing press hysteria about a potential fifth column within Britain following Germany's sweeping invasion of the Low Countries, MI5 had compiled a list of 1500 Italians, referred to as 'desperate characters,' based largely on the membership lists of the Fasci clubs which had formed across the United Kingdom to strengthen ties between Italian immigrants and the Italian Fascist government. On 10 June 1940 Churchill ordered that all male Italians between the ages of 16 and 70 who had been resident in Britain for less than twenty years and all those listed on MI5's list should be interned. Under Defence Regulation 18B, a significant number of British subjects of Italian origin, including some women, were also detained. Internees were deported either to the Isle of Man or the Dominions and in July, one ship transporting Italian and German internees to Canada, the Arandora Star, was torpedoed killing over 400 Italian internees. Italian women living in coastal towns designated 'protected areas' such as Edinburgh were ordered to leave their homes and relocate twenty miles inland. The publication of three White Papers from July to Oct 1940 cumulatively provided internees with the
opportunity to leave internment camps. Most Italians were released under Category 22 which dealt with those who had been living in Britain since early childhood, or for at least twenty years and were friendly towards their adopted country. (Sponza 2000a: 153) Concurrently, women were able to apply to return to ‘protected areas’ and thus 1941 witnessed the beginning of a return movement by Italian immigrants back to their homes and businesses. Some detainees remained interned until Italy’s surrender in 1943 whilst an even smaller cohort chose to remain interned until the end of the conflict in 1945. Throughout this period, second generation Italians, as British subjects, had been subject to military conscription and had enlisted in the British Forces in significant numbers. Overall, the draconian policies of internment and relocation, what Fortier terms ‘the violences of the British state,’ (2000: 93) and the ferocity of the anti-Italian riots were a massive shock to Italian families as were the levels of abuse and antagonism faced in the wider community.

Communal Myths

The wartime experiences of the Italians in Scotland clearly remain relevant in illuminating the readiness of British society to identify and target the internal ‘other’ at times of national crisis.3 More interestingly, however, and of central concern to this thesis is the way in which the Italian community itself has developed powerful myths and stories about the war, forming a narrative framework through which the traumatic wartime events can be safely articulated. The underlying themes of

---

3 A more recent example is the arson attacks, stone throwing and verbal abuse suffered by Muslims in Edinburgh following the September 11 2001 terrorist attacks. See Hamilton (2001:7) and Cameron (2001:12).
community myth⁴ are that the Italians have traditionally been ‘well received’ in Scotland, the war was fundamentally an aberration in good relations between Italians and the host nation; and the vicious riots were a display of hooliganism rather than indicative of any anti-Italian feeling. A key function of communal myth is to give the impression that all Italians shared the same experiences: that ‘everyone’ was a member of the inter-war Italian Fasci clubs and therefore that ‘everyone’ was interned when in reality these were not the experiences of the majority of the Italian population. Beneath all this, crucially, are contested ideas of what it meant to ‘be Italian’ or a ‘good Italian’ in Scotland both during the war and since. There is a tendency to use a singular elite narrative, reflecting the experiences of the most commercially successful and high profile families, to make generalisations about the experiences of the Italian community as a whole. In turn, this discourse denies class, gender, generational and political difference amongst the Italians in Scotland. The sheer human tragedy of internment and the Arandora Star disaster means that these events now form the centrepiece of powerful communal myths about the war, marginalising, and perhaps silencing, the narratives of those who had different experiences. Via a narrow and one-dimensional focus on the male experience of internment, major aspects of Italian Scottish experience – service in the British Forces, life on the homefront for women and children, essentially the memories of non-internees - have been largely concealed. Yet, as Wood asserts, historical analysis ‘must embrace not only memories that achieve public articulation, but those that are denied expression or recognition, as well as those memories that are displaced or

⁴ I am employing the term communal myth to mean a widely held view of the past which amplifies the meaning of individual events into ‘a symbolic and narrative formalisation of a culture’s shared self-representations.’ (Portelli 1997: 153) Barthes’ insight that myth ‘abolishes the complexity of human acts’ and instead ‘gives them the simplicity of essences’ is also relevant. (1972: 143)
merely alluded to.’ (1999: 10) Oral history offers an invaluable way of finding out more about the diversity of experience amongst Italians in Scotland and enables the historian to recover and reconstruct the memories of non-internees, who formed the bulk of the wartime population.

Although the current literature about the war focuses almost exclusively on the experiences of first generation Italian immigrants, it is crucial to the arguments contained within this thesis to understand that, by 1940, a significant proportion of the Italian population consisted of the second generation, born and raised in Scotland. The fact that many Scots-born Italians were of dual nationality, deriving Italian citizenship from their father (jus sanguinis) and British citizenship from their place of birth (jus soli), made the outbreak of war between the two countries highly disorientating yet their specific and distinct set of experiences – duality of identity at a time of conflict - remains a largely unexplored aspect of Italian wartime remembrance. At a time of great familial anguish and distress, second generation Italians, whom I will refer to as Italian Scots, had to confront the complex question of loyalties and allegiances as Britain went to war with Italy; a dilemma which was heightened when those of military age were called up to the British Forces. Even though Italian Scots were subject to the same conscription regulations as their British peers, for them the act of joining the British armed forces was powerfully symbolic. They were placed in the paradoxical position of being called up by the very State which had labelled their parents as the ‘enemy’. The knowledge that they could
potentially end up fighting Italian cousins overseas further amplified a sense of divided loyalties.  

My own personal interest in the Italian community began when I met my Scottish husband, a third generation Italian. A long-term interest in the social and cultural impact of war on British society meant I was intrigued by the idea of finding yourself of enemy or ‘hostile’ origin at a time when your country is at war. My husband’s grandfather, a member of the Glasgow Fascio, was interned on the Isle of Man until June 1941, his grandmother and father were relocated, his uncle served in the Black Watch and the Pioneer Corps and his aunt married an Italian Prisoner of War. His great uncle was a survivor of the Arandora Star disaster but then drowned when returning from internment in Australia. My husband’s father and uncle both ‘married out’ of the community after the war in the sense of marrying non-Catholic British women. Yet when I began to read up on the subject of the war, I felt that the multiplicity of experience so evident in just one family unit was not reflected within existing publications. I decided to set out to recover and reconstruct the narratives of those whose experiences were absent from the historical record, identifying two key neglected groups: women and children and those who served in the British Forces. Having absorbed the main tenets of communal myth, I started out with the assumption that by targeting non-elite members of the community or ‘non-internees,’ I would be recovering the story of assimilation and the embracing of ‘Britishness’ amongst descendants of Italian immigrants. What I found instead, across

5 Interestingly, although Sponza’s book on the war is entitled Divided Loyalties he focuses primarily on the experiences of first generation immigrants rather than their children. (2000a)
experiences, was a very defined sense of being ‘Italian’ amongst those who lived through the war as adolescents and young adults.

“Negative Enemy Status”

Colpi has argued, in separate publications, that second-generation Italians who grew up during the war linked Italianness with “negative enemy status” (1986a: 43) and have since tried to ‘camouflage their true identity by assimilating into British society.’ (1993a: 185) [my italics] In support of this argument, she points to a number of Italian Scots who have Anglicised their names, ‘refused to speak or learn Italian’ and married Scottish girls in an attempt to integrate and assimilate into Scottish society.6 (1991a: 193) Not only is this conclusion extremely misleading in that it implies the existence of a ‘uniform way of “acting” which would express “Italianness.”’ (Fortier 2000:7), this thesis will also challenge Colpi’s hypothesis in two fundamental areas. Firstly, personal narratives reveal that many of the trends outlined by Colpi pre-date World War Two and secondly, based on the evidence gathered, I will argue that the traumatic events of 1940-45, by reinforcing a sense of ‘otherness,’ and ‘difference’ actually contributed to a heightened sense of Italianness amongst the descendants of Italian immigrants.7

---

6 Colpi also suggests that: ‘In the 1920s and 1930s, the most common practice was to place, proudly, the name of the café or restaurant proprietor above the door...After the war business names became distinctly Anglicised and ‘Criterion Café’, ‘Premier Café’ and the ‘Cosy Corner’ began to predominate.’ (1991a: 139) Yet photographs in her own 1991 books and the 1939 directory Guida Generale pp.447-474 disprove her theory showing that this trend predates the war.

7 Sponza differs from Colpi in that he does not assert that all the problems stemmed from the war. Indeed, he acknowledges that Italian immigrants had ‘been all too often at the receiving end of a long story of contempt and abuse.’ He believes that amongst their British-born children who were less prepared to accept a degree of prejudice and intolerance, ‘there could be a sense of bitter resentment.’ (1993: 141) However, his general implication that disaffection was present only amongst internees is flawed.
Although I have accessed official records, local government documents and newspaper reports, my research is primarily based upon life story interviews with 44 men and women of Italian origin, born mainly in Edinburgh but also other regions and towns in Scotland.\(^8\) I was keen to examine the range of experience amongst second generation Italians, including internment, but I was particularly interested in seeking out women and those who had served in the British Forces. By reconstructing the narratives of Italian Scots who lived through World War Two, this thesis aims to provide a fuller, more nuanced picture of Italian immigrant experience in twentieth century Scotland. In this thesis, I will argue that communal myth fails to reflect the complexity and multiplicity of personal experiences, and ignores the tensions and splits within the Italian community, both preceding, during and following World War Two. Cumulatively, oral testimonies offer an alternative perspective of Italian wartime experience which can hopefully provide useful insights for the study of other Italian communities across Scotland and the United Kingdom.

**Thesis Objectives**

This thesis explores the construction of powerful myths and stories about the war amongst the Italian population in Scotland and looks at how the dominance of a singular elite narrative has silenced or denied the memories of different groups within the community. By recovering and reconstructing the memories of non-internees, who formed the bulk of the wartime population, it aims to explore the tensions between communal discourse and individual memory. Overall, this thesis

---

\(^8\) I actually interviewed 46 Italian Scots but one was too young to be included and another failed to sign a release form. For full background see Chapter Two.
considers the ways in which the war is recalled and remembered within the narratives of Italian Scots and explores the impact of the war on the present-day construction of personal identity.

Chapter One undertakes a review of the current literature looking at the ways in which academic and popular representations have coalesced over time to provide a one-dimensional and ultimately misleading account of Italian Scottish wartime experience.

Chapter Two discusses the particular usefulness of oral history as a research methodology. It also addresses issues of reflexivity and self-censorship as well as the ethical dilemmas faced when researching a historical period where, over six decades on, a sense of pain and devastation remains raw.

Chapter Three provides a historical overview of the Italian community in Scotland, with a focus on Edinburgh, the home city of the majority of respondents. It incorporates the childhood memories of those who grew up in the inter-war period, exploring the themes of ethnicity and belonging, anti-Catholicism and, finally, the impact of the wartime discourse of Italians as the ‘enemy within.’ It aims to contextualise the experiences of the Italians in twentieth century Scotland within the wider historical traditions of domestic intolerance and prejudice.

Chapter Four moves on to address World War Two itself beginning with the events of 1940: the restrictions faced by Italian nationals, the harrowing police round-up and
the anti-Italian riots. It highlights the long-term emotional and psychological impact of these events on those who lived through them, particularly women.

Chapter Five is a short ‘explanatory’ chapter exploring current representations of internment and the ways in which the equation of the internee as the ‘good Italian’ predominates within communal discourse.

Chapter Six addresses the popularity of Italian Fascism amongst the community elite during the inter-war period and looks at how this has led to the dominance of certain myths, influencing the ways in which the war is now remembered.

Chapter Seven recovers and reconstructs the memories of women and children who bore the brunt of racist hostility on the ‘home front.’ It looks at the experiences of second generation women who took over the running of family businesses in protected areas and those who, as children, were relocated from their homes.

Chapter Eight investigates the experiences of second generation Italians who served in the British Forces and explores the impact of their service on the construction of personal identity. The focus of this chapter is male Italian Scots who served in regular army units and faced the prospect of service overseas fighting against Italian relatives.

Chapter Nine investigates the experiences of Italian Scots in the Forces who served in Britain. Firstly, it looks at the Slough-based 270 (Italian) Pioneer Corps, a mixed
unit of Italian internees and dual nationals and secondly, the experiences of Italian Scottish women who went into the auxiliary services or war work.

Chapter Ten looks at memorial activity within the Italian Scottish community and addresses how the concept of the ‘good Italian’ which predominated in the inter-war Fascisti period persists into present-day commemoration. It explores who speaks or remembers on behalf of the Italians in Scotland and for what purpose. (Smith 1998: 2)
Chapter One

The Making of ‘Mythistory’ – a review of the literature

This chapter undertakes a review of the current literature on the Italian community in Scotland looking at the ways in which academic, popular and media representations have coalesced over time to provide a one-dimensional, and ultimately misleading, account of Italian Scottish wartime experience. The Australian historian, Richard Bosworth alludes to the ‘mythistory’ which has developed within the Italian community in Australia when reconstructing wartime events. (2000: 231) Similarly, writing of representations of Italian Canadian internment, Perin laments how ‘a simplified version of complex events has become popular wisdom.’ (2000: 328) This chapter charts the ways in which a similar process has occurred within Anglo Italian discourse, where the dominance of an elite narrative means that a narrow strata of experience is generalised to represent the whole community and wartime differences and divisions are suppressed or denied. In a revealing aside, Colpi acknowledges that when war broke out between Italy and Britain, ‘the community became deeply split into the so-called “good Italians” (the Fascists) and “bad Italians” (the others)” creating a great deal of factionalism and bitterness. (1991a: 100) Yet, to a quite remarkable degree, it is the memories and experiences of the former group who are consistently represented within historiography. This chapter will look at some of the key myths and stories propagated within communal discourse, signposting some of the main areas which will be explored throughout the thesis.
Existing Accounts

Although the Italians represent the second largest migrant group in Scotland, after the Irish (Wilkin 1990: 23), their history has been largely neglected within cultural studies, allowing rather stereotypical representations to endure. A focus in the early 1970s on white ethnic groups, or 'invisible immigrants,'\(^9\) stimulated fresh interest in the Italian community in Britain but, to date, there has been no comprehensive study devoted solely to the Italians in Scotland. Marin and Colpi in their overviews of the British Italian community and Sponza, in his study of nineteenth century immigrants, address the Scottish experience to varying degrees. (Marin 1975; Colpi 1991a; Sponza 1988) There are two articles on Scotland included in an edition of the Association of Teachers of Italian Journal devoted to Italian immigration (Colpi 1979; Wilkin 1979) and in 1986 a monograph on Italian language and culture in Scotland was published. (Dutto 1986) Colpi and Wilkin have also written many journal articles addressing the origins and settlement patterns of the Italian Scottish community.\(^10\) Most recently, the Italian Institute in Edinburgh published conference proceedings, Italian Scottish Identities and Connections. (Rose & Rossini 2000) However, in light of the general paucity of material on the Italian presence in Scotland, both Colpi's work and an article by Murdoch Rodgers, Italiani in Sco\[z\]zia which first appeared in 1982\(^11\) have become highly influential.\(^12\)

---

\(^9\) A term first coined in a 1972 statistical survey on Italians, Spanish and Portuguese immigrants by MacDonald & MacDonald (Fortier 2000:21).

\(^10\) Colpi (1986a); (1986b); (1992); (1993a); (1993b) and Wilkin (1985); (1988); (1990).


\(^12\) Similarly, in Wales, a book by Hughes (1991) on the Welsh Italian presence dominates the field.
In her insightful work on representations of London Italian identity, Anne-Marie Fortier points out that although much of the literature on Italians in Britain depict a collectivity characterised by a high degree of diversity within, the very fact of producing written renditions of the Italian presence means that 'some kind of coherence is created from the disparate histories, social relations, social positions of Italian migrants' and therefore the idea of an Italian 'Community' surfaces. (2000: 37) The very act of writing the history of the Italian presence in Britain means that ultimately these texts and publications 'produce what they claim to be re-presenting and re-covering.' (Fortier 2000: 38) Following Benedict Anderson's lead, Fortier conceives these texts as 'specific instances in the creation of an imagined community.' (2000: 38)

Furthermore, Fortier notes how most of the books are produced by Italians who have, in one way or another, a personal commitment to the British Italian 'community'. (2000: 40) For example, the subject of Italian wartime experience in Britain is dominated by the work of two writers, Sponza and Colpi. The former is a professor of Italian Studies, the latter a third generation Italian who writes as 'a proud member of the Community.' (Colpi 1991a: 5) Significantly, Colpi's book, The Italian Factor was launched at the National Library of Scotland's 1991 exhibition The Italian Scots legitimising her status as an 'authority' on the community and in 1995 she received the title of Cavaliere from the Italian government for her contribution to the advancement of the community in Britain. (Fortier 2000: 41) Yet,
as Fortier points out, *The Italian Factor* stands out as a highly normative representation where the Italian ‘Community’ ‘is given as a unified “thing”, the membership of which is policed by the degree of conformity to its cultural contents.’ (Fortier 2000: 42) Indeed, Colpi’s book ‘consistently objectifies and normalises what it means to be and act Italian: from campanilismo to compadrismo, family loyalties and first communions.’ (Fortier 2000: 168) Colpi crucially admits that her book ‘is not directly concerned with those who have opted or drifted out of the Community; it is concerned with those who have an Italian way of life.’ (1991a: 16) Even the events of the war are explained ‘from the Italian point of view.’ (Colpi 1991a: 99) [my italics] Thus the book which has become the leading source for those interested in Italian Scottish history is actually representing a very narrow strata of community experience. As a result, historiography persists in presenting the community as a homogenous entity with one set of wartime experiences. (Rodgers 1982; Colpi 1991a; Sponza 1996)

**‘Being Italian’**

The tendency within historiography to promote, and even dictate, certain ways of ‘being Italian’\(^{16}\) and to set out specific forms and standards of behaviour is highly significant when looking at current representations of the war. In foregrounding the minority male experience of internment and failing to address the experiences of non-internees, the work of Colpi and Sponza contain many such value judgements. Most telling, perhaps, is the complete silence in both works on the experiences of second generation Italians in the British Forces. Over time, the central

\(^{16}\) This is most popularly represented as descendants of Italian immigrants who speak Italian, eat Italian food and visit Italy regularly. See profile of playwright Sergio Casci. (Burnside 2003:6)
internment/Arandora Star narrative has been utilised to create the ‘story’ of the war and has come to represent what it meant to ‘be Italian,’ or to be a ‘good Italian,’ during the war. Commemoration within the community, by drawing on this elite narrative, reinforces the tendency to exclude non-internees from wartime representations. Fortier writes that, ‘the British Italian community defines itself by the grief over the lives lost in the Arandora Star.’ (2000: 57) She links narratives of the war into a wider Italian émigré identity based upon motifs of alienation and suffering and notes how within Anglo-Italian historiography, stories of the war have become sources of collective empowerment. (2000: 52) I would go further and suggest that the constant emphasis on the Arandora Star tragedy within communal discourse functions essentially to distract attention away from the diversity of Italian experience. In the years leading up to the war Italian families were facing a series of complex but inter-related decisions such as whether or not to speak Italian at home, whether or not to naturalise and then, with the emergence of the Italian government’s Fasci all’estero in Britain, whether or not to become Fasci members. Thus, with the outbreak of war between Italy and Britain different choices were made by members of the community, based upon their pre-war actions and beliefs. Yet, significantly, this division is not remembered; investigation is subtly sidetracked away from the idea of dissension within the pre-war community and the tensions surrounding the different paths taken by Italian Scots in 1940 and before. Overall, in Anglo-Italian historiography, a singular elite internment narrative has been utilised to encompass the whole of the Italian community and succeeds in suppressing uncomfortable memories of discord. Above all, this discourse suppresses debate about the meaning of Fascism within the inter-war immigrant community. Historian Principe observes
similar omissions within the history of the Italian community in Canada: ‘The events of June 1940 are the most tangled in Italian-Canadian experience. Because of its complex political and ideological undertones however, the tangle is ignored and the struggle leading to it is forgotten.’ (2000: 27)

Significantly, in Edinburgh, it is those whose families were most involved in the local Fascio who have since dominated representations of the wartime period. Conversely, the men and women who were called up and enlisted in the British forces are strikingly absent from prevailing accounts of the Italian Scottish wartime experience. In all forms of representations, books, plays, media reports, the dramatic spotlight remains resolutely fixed on the internee; the character of the ‘son in the forces’ exits stage-left never to be referred to again. It would appear that the act of Scots-born Italians serving in the British forces, raising difficult questions of loyalties and allegiances, has resulted in them being excluded from representations of the community’s past. Colpi asserts that, ‘the slightly older group of men, now in their 70s, who served in the fiercely anti-Italian British Armed Forces during the war, perhaps more than any other sector of the Italian population, were forced to throw off their heritage, shake themselves adrift of their roots and pretend to be something they were not.’ (1991a: 193) [my italics] In sharp contrast, the actions of the numerically smaller group of second generation Italians who were interned, usually because of their involvement in the Fascisti, are extolled in the following terms: ‘There were...many British-born Italians who were determined to go with “the Italians” and to remain united with their roots and their Community.’ (Colpi 1991a: 111)

17 An exception is the character of Domenico Campanelli in Mackie’s 1952 Gentle Like A Dove (‘a handsome Italian in British battledress’) and, to a lesser extent, Franco Pedreschi in Di Mambro’s 1989 Tally’s Blood.
presents a similar contrast between the actions of Italian Scot Lorenzo Ogni from Paisley who refused to serve in the British Army and other British-born Italians 'who had no particular attachment; their family assimilated' again intimating that service in the Forces automatically equates with a failure to maintain Italianness. Historiography, by neglecting those who served in the British forces, makes an implicit judgement about their claim to being a 'good Italian'.

**Elite narrative**

Williams' insight that communal history often reflects the interest and preoccupations of an elite whose security and social standing depends on the formulation and projection of a favourable image of community life is highly relevant when deconstructing the dominant discourse surrounding the Italian experience in twentieth century Scotland. (1979: 43) Communal discourse functions to portray the Italian immigrant community as holding a relatively well-tolerated position in Scotland, leading to the representation of World War Two as an isolated rupture in harmonious relations between Italians and the host community. The essential contours of communal myth are that by 1939, the Italians in Britain were 'well integrated, respected and often prosperous members of British society', the war had a devastating impact but the community managed to successfully rebuild their businesses and relations with the local community in the post-war period. (Colpi 1991a: 101) Adopting a narrowly capitalistic definition of success, Colpi describes the inter-war period as 'a golden era' for the Italians in Britain 'since it was

---

18 Paper presented at Migration and Ethnicity Research Centre, University of Sheffield, June 2 1998.
19 Scottish playwright Casci reproduces each of these clichés in a recent article exploring his Italian ancestry (2004: 4)
20 This insight is provided by Fortier (2000: 46).
in this period that the Italians consolidated their Community and, most importantly, business structures.' (1991a: 21) The central motif of communal myth is encapsulated in a book about multicultural Edinburgh, which refers to the ‘well liked’ Italians as ‘an ancient and honourable Edinburgh community which has retained its character and sense of culture, but which still feels that the most important thing is for people to get along.’ (Wishart & St Clair 1984: 14) A typical summary of Italian experience appeared in the literature accompanying a Scottish Record Office exhibition, ‘The Peoples of Scotland’:

The self-employed Italian street vendors of hot chestnuts and ice-cream were popular figures in Scottish towns early this century. They later became the owners of shops, many of which developed into thriving family businesses in the 1920s and 1930s. The Second World War was a traumatic period for many immigrant Italian families when, as a result of the Aliens Act, many were interned and imprisoned as aliens when Mussolini threw in his lot with the Nazis. Later the Italian community went on to make an outstanding contribution to Scottish society in the post-war years, not only in business but in the arts and the professions. (1993: 17)

Whilst superficially correct, this extract reproduces the usual sanitised and oversimplified version of wartime events. By reinforcing the notion that the Italians were well received in Scotland, this elite narrative serves both to exclude the memories of poorer, less successful Italians and also understates the existence of hostility and prejudice in the inter-war period. Crucially, as with the majority of popular representations, it fails to acknowledge the Fascist history of the Italian immigrant community. As Calder astutely points out in The Myth of the Blitz, myths endure not only because they have some basis in truth but also because they depend ‘on the leaving out of certain things.’ (1991: 90)

---

21 This rather sentimental or celebratory approach to Italian immigrant history is not restricted to Edinburgh. See also Rea, A (1988), Hopwood, D & Dilloway, M (1996), Rinaldi (1998) for studies of Manchester, Birmingham and Dumfries respectively.
As Williams identified in his work with Jewish immigrants, communal myth promotes the idea of a ‘socially coherent and harmonious’ community, an image which is absorbed over time by the immigrants themselves and later repeated by historians (1979: 43). This perspective is highly relevant when considering popular representations of the Italians in Scotland, in particular Rodgers’ influential article which has been used uncritically as a source since its publication in 1982. The article, based on the testimony of only ten people, declares that:

In comparison with the hostility which jaundiced the experience of the Irish and the Lithuanians on their arrival in Scotland the Italians were well received. Anti-alien prejudice appears to have been suspended primarily because the Italians, in the occupations they followed, never represented a serious threat to native labour or wages. (1982:15)

The article goes on to make other misleading assertions such as the statement that Italians in Scotland experienced only ‘minor incidents’ of racial abuse. (1982: 15) Yet, to a quite remarkable degree, Rodgers’ conclusions have been adopted and reiterated over the years by historians, commentators and journalists. Both Devine and Wilkin quote from Rodgers verbatim, 22 leading the former to conclude, ‘The community was not concentrated by the 1930s in any single large Italian colony which might have attracted hostile attentions’. (1999: 515) Through an over-reliance on one article, the cycle of misinformation continues, gaining more and more authority with each repetition so that by 2000, The Sunday Times can confidently assert:

In his recently published book, The Scottish Nation, the historian Professor Tom Devine writes that when the first wave of Italian immigrants arrived in Scotland in the late 19th century, they encountered less hostility from native

22 See also Wishart & St Clair (1984: 13); Wilkin (1988: 357); Wilkin (1990: 20); Audrey (2000:37).
Scots than the East European Jews, Catholic Irish or Lithuanian immigrants. The Italians posed little economic threat, creating jobs and wealth by mostly moving into the catering trade. (Nicol 2000)

Another disturbing feature of communal representations is the way in which Anglo Italian history often appears to be ‘interpreted in a vacuum’ with pressures from the wider society ignored or underestimated. (Williams 1979: 43) As a result, dominant discourse subtly understates pre- and post-war incidences of hostility towards Italian immigrants and ignores the wider context of domestic anti-alienism and sectarianism. (Cesarani 1993; Bruce et al 2004) Fortier points out that the leading Anglo Italian texts emerged at a time of wider public discourse on the general desirability of different immigrant groups. (2000: 38) ‘In a country and continent where “immigrant” means black and foreigner’, she sensed a keenness during her participant observation work with Italian immigrants not to emphasize their marginality in British society. (2000: 119) There is a tendency, therefore, to portray the Italians as a special case, immune from the difficulties faced by other ethnic minority groups. Indeed, Colpi sees the Italian community in Scotland as being ‘in an unique and aristocratic position amongst the immigrant populations of this country’ (1986b: 1) [my italics] whilst Marin describes the Italians in Britain as ‘a privileged collectivity’ which has harmoniously integrated within British society and represents ‘a kind of Eden within the troubled emigration front.’ (1975: 104)23 The related idea of the xenophobia of the war as a ‘one-off’ event results in a failure to critically examine the multi-layered nature of prejudice faced by Italians throughout the twentieth century.

In *The Nature of Prejudice*, Gordon W Allport suggests that negative attitudes towards ethnic groups may be expressed with different degrees of intensity and classifies these ‘gradations of rejection’ into five stages. (1955: 49) First is antilocution, the expression of prejudice in language such as derisive jokes or name calling, secondly avoidance where the prejudiced individual avoids members of the disliked group. Next is discrimination, whereby an individual more actively seeks to exclude members of the group in question from employment, housing and other social privileges. The fourth category of physical attack recognises that under conditions of heightened emotion prejudice may lead to acts of violence or semi-violence such as riots. The final and most extreme category is extermination, the Holocaust marking the ultimate degree of violent expression of prejudice. (1955: 14) Allport was keen to stress the enormous range of activities that may issue from prejudiced attitudes and beliefs, and in particular, to emphasise how ‘activity on one level makes transition to a more intense level easier.’ (1955: 15) His emphasis on ‘the interconnectedness of different expressions of prejudice’ is highly relevant when addressing the experiences of Italian Scots and will help to illustrate the extent to which current Anglo Italian historiography has failed to critically examine the multifaceted nature of anti-Italian prejudice in the twentieth century.

As this thesis will show, the reality of Italian experience in twentieth century Scotland is far more complex than traditionally represented. The Italian community evolved in a period of domestic intolerance towards ethnic minorities and, in Scotland, of divisive sectarianism. Thus, the narratives of second and third

---

24 Term used by Finn to describe Allport’s work (2000: 61)
generation Italians who grew up in the inter-war period are often dominated by a sense of difference and of growing up in a culture and environment in which they felt ‘alien’ and ‘foreign.’ Evidence from life story narratives show that rather than being the first expression of hostility towards the Italian population, the war saw a dramatic heightening of already existing prejudice. It was ‘before, during and after’, as one narrator stated wearily. (SA1998.27 Miss A) As Holmes writes about anti-Semitism during World War One, wartime hostility ‘was not divorced from what had gone before, nor was it without its significance for the future’. (1979: 137)

Within existing accounts there is no sense of the long-term devastation that war brought or an acknowledgment that any form of prejudice, in particular anti-Catholic sentiment, endures. Rodgers is typical in stressing post-war harmony, writing that ‘within a few years the community was functioning once again on normal lines.’ (1982: 19) Similarly, Colpi is keen to stress that ‘the trauma and difficulties of the Second World War and its aftermath are now well in the past.’ (1991a: 255) Even Sponza25 succumbs to the desire to re-package the past in terms of post-war achievement, writing of the aftermath of the riots: ‘self-pity was outweighed in the Italian community by the pride in what was achieved in terms of respect and well being when the storm was over.’ (1996: 147) It could be argued that this tendency not to dwell on the more negative aspects of the war is some form of defence mechanism; a way of avoiding unpleasant memories. Wilton, in her work with Chinese-Australians, has shown how immigrant groups often feel that experiences of racism belong to the past: ‘rather than concentrating on how badly they were treated,

---

25 Whilst Sponza has produced groundbreaking work on the prejudice faced by nineteenth century Italian immigrants (1988) his work on World War Two contains some flawed arguments, particularly in relation to the riots, his silence on army veterans and his failure to address fascism critically.
they point to their successes.’ (1994: 98) Yet there is arguably something more subtle at work here. It has perhaps been in the interest of the more successful, commercially based members of the Italian community to reconstruct the past to suit the needs of the present where they, in Colpi’s phrase, ‘trade on their ethnicity.’ (1991a: 196) Colpi notes that in the post-war period many of those who had been actively involved in the Fasci were devastated by the defeat of Fascist Italy and felt ‘shame, confusion and also embarrassment’ at having wholeheartedly endorsed Mussolini. (1991a: 195) Yet perversely those most closely involved in the Fasci, the elite, have become the guardians of the community’s history in the sense that their experiences and perspectives most often prevail within academic and media representations.26 In Williams’ words, they have taken on the ‘self-appointed task of mediating’ between their community and non-Italians. (1979: 43) There is a vested interest in downplaying the more negative and controversial aspects of the past and in re-packaging the past in a sanitised and ‘palatable’ way.

**Representations of Internment**

Not only is internment at the centre of communal myth, a distorted version predominates. As noted above, a key function of communal discourse is to play down communal tensions and division and instead to give the impression that all Italians in Scotland shared the same experiences. For example, the almost universal reference to Churchill’s famous edict ‘Collar the Lot!’ to describe internment policy results in the erroneous and misleading impression that all Italians were interned. Colpi refers to Churchill’s edict to “Collar the lot!” and then writes of ‘across the

26 Gardiner, for example, reproduces the testimony of fasci members regarding internment so that they remain unchallenged representatives of the community (2004: 224-228).
board internment’ (1991a: 105) Similarly, Farrell asserts that ‘Perhaps as many as 95% of the Italian men in Scotland were interned.’ (1983) In fact, Sponza acknowledges that internment affected ‘roughly one in four of the Italian community’ and estimates that in the United Kingdom around 4,500 out of an Italian population of 18,000 were interned. (2000: 154) Six hundred British-born or naturalised Italians were arrested under defence regulation 18B. (Simpson 1992: 194) In Edinburgh, around 100 Italians were arrested out of a total immigrant population of 350. Effectively, most Italian adults in Britain were not interned, yet Anglo-Italian historiography persists in representing the experience of internment as the majority experience of Italians in Britain during World War Two. Significantly, published oral accounts of the wartime experiences of Edinburgh Italians focus on second generation men who were involved in the local Fascio club and therefore interned or detained under Regulation 18B, rather than men and women who went into the British Forces. Internment amongst this second generation was atypical; numbering no more than 200 detainees in Scotland overall (Simpson 1992:194) but within historiography is presented as the norm.

There is a related failure to address differing internment experiences amongst the Italians in Scotland. It would appear that the largest proportion of Italian internees

27 Unfortunately, there are no specific statistics available for Scotland. Internment record cards held at the National Archives suggest 1074 Italians were interned in Scotland, out of an immigrant population of over 5,000. HO 396/284-294 Italians Interned in UK 1939
28 EEN gives the figure of 160 arrests, alien and British-born. (11.6.1940: 5) I found record cards for 85 Italians living in Edinburgh but this is probably an underestimate. HO 396/284-294 Italians Interned in UK 1939
29 See ‘Dominic Crolla’ and ‘Joseph Pia’, in MacDougall (1995); ‘Toni: “The Trouble Was We Were Behind Barbed Wire’” in Edensor, T & Kelly, M. (eds.) (1989); ‘Collar the Lot!’ in Robertson, S and Wilson, L (eds.) (1995); Rodgers, M. (1982), ‘Italiani in Scozia’ in Kay, B (ed.). Also The Herald’s obituary of Victor Crolla. (Patience 2005) I am not arguing that these were overtly political individuals but rather that it is their perspective which predominates.
were released within seventeen months of their initial arrest. Indeed, Sponza confirms that between autumn 1940-Jan 42 the total number of internees was halved from over 4000 to around 2000. (2000b: 264) Yet communal myth promotes 1944, the year after Italy’s surrender, as the turning point. Rodgers’ statement ‘Most of the Scottish Italians had returned home by 1944’ (1982: 19) has been frequently repeated. (Farell 1983; Steel 1988: 1231) By setting the average release date of internees at 1944, dominant discourse reflects the experiences of pro-Fascist internees rather than the reality of bulk early releases in 1940/41, a substantial proportion of internees opting to be released as ‘opponents of the Fascist system.’ (Sponza 2000a: 113) Again, the elite narrative prevails obscuring a far more intriguing reality. Similarly, whilst only a minority of Italians in Scotland were Fasci members – in 1933 less than half (44.2 per cent) of Italian male ‘heads of family’ (Wilkin 1979: 54)30 the impression is given in literature that ‘everyone’ was a member. One of the aims of this thesis is to examine why this blurring of distinctions has occurred and with what consequences.

**Media Representations**

The popular construction of the history of the Italian community within the Scottish media over the last four decades highlights the success of an elite in suppressing the more complicated and tangled aspects of communal history. There exists a tendency to romanticise the presence of the Italians in Scotland and to avoid addressing the more painful reality of how Italian families were often treated. In a recent article, the Italian Scottish journalist Simon Pia acknowledged that the stereotypical image of

---

30 Wilkin has recalculated the figure quoted in his 1979 article from 42.2% to 44.2% following email correspondence with author 22/3/2000.
Italian immigrants as ‘jolly peasants from Sunny Italy giving a rendition of O Sole Mio as they dished out the ice cream or chips across the counter’ is one which Italians themselves have often colluded in and promoted. (2001: 24) The academic Eileen A Millar declares that ‘Scotland has long had a tradition of ‘simpatia’ for Italians’ (1988: 340) and newspaper accounts readily draw upon this traditional idea of good relations between Italy and Scotland. They stress ongoing links between the two countries and contain the inevitable roll call of Italian Scottish ‘celebrities’ who have ‘made it’; the Edinburgh variant invariably includes the artist Eduardo Paolozzi, impresario Richard Demarco and the proprietors of the Valvona & Crolla delicatessen. Importantly, many of these newspaper articles are heavily dependent on well-established ‘names’ for information with the same few people telling the readers ‘how it was’ for the community and being depicted in the accompanying photographic images.31 The wealth of clichés contained in an Edinburgh Evening News feature on the local Italian community, is characteristic of many: ‘They bought us restaurants, ice cream sold from street vending vans...“They” are the Italians whose humour is as rich as their wine and whose charm is as warm as the sun in any vineyard. They are a gregarious race, who, since arriving in Scotland, have become as closely entwined with Scots society as spaghetti lengths in a bowl.’ (Hurley 1973: 87) A common motif running through these articles is the idea of the Italians bringing the warmth and vibrancy of the Mediterranean to the austere Scottish landscape.32 In these interpretations everything is, quite literally, sweetness and light. Formal institutions are not immune from accentuating the positive: at a recent conference, the Director of the Italian Institute of Edinburgh eulogised how the

31 See Kemp (1969); Farrell (1983); Ross (1993); Nicol (2000); Deveney (2001).
Italian immigrants in Scotland ‘enriched the way of life of their host community by introducing, into what was still a puritan country, the delights of Mediterranean cuisine.’ (Marianaccio 2000: 5). At the 2004 celebrations of Italian National Day in Edinburgh, the Italian consul general, ‘spoke of the warm welcome Italians have received over the last century.’ (Pia 2004: 24) Yet, as Bosworth caustically notes about similar ceremonies taking place in Australia celebrating the ‘amity’ between Australia and Italy, something manipulative occurs on these occasions: ‘the past is being homogenized and pasteurised...It is being given a simple binary nature, in which being Australian and being Italian are defined as straightforward and immutable matters. In this cosy mood of dolcezza, some of the actual tyrannies, selfishness, ignorance and self-importance of the past are being disguised.’ (2000: 248)

Within this populist framework of cordial relations, hostility towards Italians is not only underplayed but practically denied. In a 1983 article, academic Joseph Farrell employs the term ‘Tallies’ to describe the Italians, claiming that this abbreviated form of the name ‘carried no overtones of animosity or racial suspicion.’ (Farrell 1983) Journalist Jack McLean repeats this platitude: ‘For some reason the Italian community has never been as sensitive as the Asian immigrants and while calling your corner store ‘The Pakki’s’ is often demurred at...Even Tallies call their shops by that name.’ (McLean 1990) In 1996 Scottish TV even broadcast a programme on Italian Scottish history entitled Tartan Tallies and more recently the BBC’s World War Two website posted a contribution from Kirriemuir Library entitled ‘The Lazy
Tallies' highlighting the extent to which this term is still common currency. Yet as this thesis will show, oral testimony repeatedly highlights how, for narrators, this was a loathed term of abuse in childhood.

Conclusion

As I have argued, academic and popular representations of the Italian presence in Scotland have coalesced over time to create a powerful but misleading view of the past. As Portelli, in his work on the 1944 massacre at the Fosse Ardeatine, writes: 'When an incorrect reconstruction of history becomes popular belief, we are not called on only to rectify the facts but also to interrogate ourselves on how and why this commonsense took shape and on its meanings and uses.' (2003: 16) For the Italians in Scotland, communal myth masks a more complex reality. By marginalising the experiences of those who do not form part of the community elite, it acts as a control on memory within the community, silencing those whose do not share the same experiences. In the following chapters, I aim to recover a fuller account of the wartime period which reflects the diversity and multiplicity of personal experience and offers an alternative perspective. Overall, this thesis will show how the use of oral testimony provides a more 'variegated' and necessary understanding of wartime events. (Doumanis 1997: 163)

Why oral history?
The paucity of documentary evidence regarding the Italian presence in Edinburgh – including a missing aliens register, mislaid police records and destroyed Fascio files - reinforces the importance of oral testimonies in recovering Italian Scottish wartime experience. Yet beyond that, the use of personal narratives ‘obliges the historian to look afresh at standard historical themes and issues, to question the credibility of established discourses and explore exciting, though neglected, dimensions of social history.’ (Doumanis 1997: 6) Life histories contain not simply the particular events of the life of a single individual but also the picture of a community, society, historical situation filtered through the texture of an individual life. (Niedermuller 1987: 470) When I became interested in the Italian community’s wartime history, I found that very little had been written about the 1939-45 period and secondly, I discovered that what I read didn’t correspond with what I had been told about the experiences of my husband’s family. For example, I could find information about the experiences of those Italian Scots who were interned during the war but very little about those, like my husband’s uncle, who had been called up and served in the British Forces. I felt oral history offered an invaluable way of achieving a fuller account of Italian Scottish wartime experience.
Subjectivity

The guiding principle behind much of the earliest and well known oral history publications in the mid-1970s (Chamberlain 1975; Thompson 1975; McCrindle & Rowbotham 1977) rested on a political commitment to recover the lives of those who were traditionally ‘hidden from history’ such as women and the working classes - ‘to give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place.’ (Thompson 1988: 2) However, a ‘methodological defensiveness’ (Summerfield 1998: 17) persisted amongst oral historians in the face of ongoing criticisms from documentary historians that memory is unreliable as a historical source because it is distorted ‘by the deterioration of age, by personal bias and nostalgia, and by the influence of other, subsequent versions of the past.’ (Thomson 1995: 227) However, insightful and thought-provoking work by Italian and American historians (Passerini 1979; Portelli 1981; Grele 1991) identified the process of remembering as the key to exploring the subjective meanings of lived experience and the nature of individual and collective memory. (Thomson 1994: 33) This led to a new understanding of oral history as a powerful tool for exploring ‘how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them.’ (Frisch 1990: 188) US historian Ronald J Grele was instrumental in arguing that historians who use personal testimony need to grasp ‘the underlying structure of consciousness which both governs and informs oral history interviews’ and to look at the dominant themes which emerge from an interview, how people organise their lives into historical narratives and to have an awareness of the ‘deeper meaning’ of personal narratives.
Defining subjectivity as ‘that area of symbolic activity which includes cognitive, cultural and psychological aspects’ (1979:85), Passerini stressed the need to pay particular attention to the ‘cultural and symbolic import’ of people’s stories as well as their factual content. (1987: 4) Portelli emphasised the ways in which ‘oral history is intrinsically different, and therefore specifically useful’ (1981: 97):

the unique and precious element which oral sources force upon the historian and which no other sources possess in equal measure is the speaker’s subjectivity and therefore if the research is broad and articulated enough, a cross section of the subjectivity of a social group or class. They tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did. (1981: 99)

An example of this fresh approach to oral history was Ronald Fraser’s Blood of Spain, in which his stated aim was not to write another history of the Spanish civil war but to obtain subjective understandings of what war ‘felt like’ for those who participated in events (1994: 29):

‘It was their truth I wished to record. And what people thought – or what they thought they thought – also constitutes an historical fact.’ (1994: 32)

Thus, well as providing rich empirical date, personal narratives are now recognised as ‘important cultural constructions in themselves.’ (Chamberlain 1997: 10) As the Personal Narratives Group assert, ‘Rather than labelling any story as true or untrue, interpreters need to look for the reasons why narrators tell their stories.’ (1989: 203)

The Popular Memory Group, a group of academics who collaborated in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the early Thatcherite era, were influential in highlighting the role of ‘dominant memory’ and the interaction between public and private senses of the past. (1982) The Group persuasively argue that ‘the field of
public representations of history' – for example, TV and film productions; museums, books, official war monuments and ceremonies (Dawson and West 1984: 10) - affect individual or group conceptions of the past. Whilst dominant memory is always open to contestation, they argue, private memories cannot be readily unscrambled from the effects of these dominant historical discourses. (Popular Memory Group 1982: 211)

The Group most significantly emphasised the ways in which ‘popular memories are constructed and reconstructed as part of a contemporary consciousness.’ (1982: 219).

Thomson’s work with Anzac veterans was also important in highlighting the interplay between individual subjectivity and public myth (1995: 211) He showed how public representations of Anzac in ceremony, history or film, with its emphasis on the bold and cheerful larrikin ‘diggers’ who scorned military rank and etiquette but were the best fighters of the war, tended to support the recollection of certain memories whilst silencing others (1995: 204):

The life histories I was told were richly revealing about the war and its impact, but they were also profoundly shaped by the men’s post-war lives, by their role as storytellers, and by their relationships with me and with the legend of their lives. (Thomson 1994: 33)

Addressing World War Two, Summerfield similarly argues that personal narratives are the products of a relationship between discourse and subjectivity in memories of the war. She stresses the need to encompass within oral history analysis and interpretation, ‘not only the voice that speaks for itself, but also the voices that speak to it, the discursive formulations from which understandings are selected and within
which accounts are made.’ (1998: 15) However, Michael Roper warns against this tendency to focus exclusively on collective meanings and functions when addressing personal narratives arguing that the individual memory of war is not only produced through the ‘overlay’ of social codes on experience but also has an ‘underlay.’ The latter is structured through the nature of the war experience itself so that the remembering of war ‘needs to be seen as a psychically-orientated process, and one which operates forward from the event as well as backwards through the impact of public representations.’ (2000: 184). Both these perspectives are relevant when addressing Italian Scottish experience because whilst sections of the Italian population are silenced by both national and communal memories of the war, personal narratives reveal the powerful emotional and psychological impact of wartime events, reflecting how ‘Some silences originate from the very beginning.’ (Roper 2000: 199)

In conjunction with my fieldwork, I accessed official records, documentation and newspapers held at the National Archives, National Archives Scotland, the British Library, the Imperial War Museum, Edinburgh City Archives and the National Library of Scotland. I also consulted oral recordings held in the School of Celtic and Scottish Studies archive and viewed the interview transcripts from BBC Radio Scotland’s 1981 programme Italiani in Scozia. As Portelli remarks, oral historians tend to take seriously both the oral narratives and the archival record and ‘look for meaning in both, and in the space in between.’ (Portelli 1997: 64) He defines oral history as ‘the genre of discourse which orality and writing have developed jointly in order to speak to each other about the past.’ (Portelli 1997: 5) Ultimately I share the
views of the American oral historian and broadcaster, Studs Terkel who said of his interviewees:

It's their truth. So if it's their truth it's got to be my truth, it's their experience. Somebody lived through that time with a certain something he remembers: that scar left on him; the memory is true. It's there.' (Grele 1991: 13)

Indeed, as Summerfield neatly summarises: 'no one’s story is wrong, but we need more than the story itself to understand what it may mean.' (1998: 286)

**Working in the Field: Non-compliance and Silences**

The wartime demarcation of Italian immigrants, and by extension their families, as 'enemy aliens' was hugely painful and distressing and there are many Italian Scots who are still unwilling to talk about this period in their lives. Colpi has commented that the war had such a devastating impact on the Italian community that older members are reluctant to dwell on or remember this period. (1991a:100) She writes that Italians who lived through the distress of the war ‘do not like to talk about their experiences...The old Italians have over the years tried to put the war behind them and to forget about it.’ (1991a: 99) In his comprehensive work on British citizens detained under defence Regulation 18B, Brian Simpson concurs that ‘Anglo-Italians...seem to have wished to forget the whole awful affair.’ (1992: 194) During my fieldwork, I also discovered a deep reluctance - a level of subtle resistance or non-compliance - to the idea of discussing the war and its impact on Italian families, particularly amongst the older members of the community. I received a negligible response from adverts placed in the media and many people simply refused to talk
with me. Again, this indicates the long-term nature of the traumatic impact of the war on this ethnic group.

Leydesdorff et al point out that a life story approach provides an opportunity to explore the relation between personal and collective experience, by focusing on remembering and forgetting as cultural processes. (1999: 12) A major factor in my research has been the veil of silence which appears to have been drawn over wartime events. Organisers of Una Storia Segreta (A Secret History), a recent exhibition highlighting the experiences of Italian Americans during the war, acknowledge that the story remained hidden for decades because silence had been ‘adopted as protective cover by those affected.’ [my italics] (Distasi 1994: 2) It would appear that, like the rural dwellers encountered by Smith, Perks and Smith during their fieldwork in Ukraine, individuals were afraid of speaking openly about their experiences and were reluctant ‘to disrupt a close-knit community which had come uneasily to terms with its past.’ (1998: 5) I have found many survivors of the period, particularly women, either unwilling to be interviewed or apprehensive about making a public account of something which has remained largely private.

Practicalities

In England, which has a sizeable number of post-war immigrant Italians, there are organisations such as the Association of Italian Pensioners which provide an infrastructure and support network for elderly Italians but there are no parallel organisations in Scotland. (Colpi 1992:15) However, whilst this lack of formal associations for older Italians in Scotland made it more difficult to locate
interviewees at the outset, it possibly had long-term advantages. As Bertaux-Wiame notes, migrant societies often give access to the most visible of migrants only; those who have succeeded in life. (1982) As I felt that the existing literature already reflected the experiences of the community elite, I was keen to target less well-known people and to avoid the big ‘names’ in the community. Whilst still contacting organisations such as the Italian Consulate, the Italian Cultural Institute and Ciao Italia, all based in Edinburgh, I decided that placing adverts in newspapers was a particularly useful way of reaching those members of the community who might not readily engage in organised ‘community’ activities. I initially advertised my project in two local free newspapers (the Edinburgh Herald and Post and the Portobello Reporter) and a Leith parish newsletter, specifically targeting the age group of Italian Scots who would have been adolescents or adults at the outbreak of the Second World War. Unfortunately, the response to these adverts was extremely disappointing, attracting only three interviewees. Letters sent to the wardens of sheltered accommodation and old people’s homes in the Edinburgh area also proved unsuccessful and I interviewed three women in this setting. When I extended my fieldwork to Fife an advert was circulated throughout that region’s library service, eliciting just one response. In an attempt to reach those who served in the British forces during the war, I also contacted veteran organisations such as the Royal Pioneer Corps Association, the British Legion, the Women’s Land Army and the Scots At War Trust but unfortunately, I found no respondents through these channels.

34 An international association of restaurateurs which has a committee in Scotland and organises social functions for the Italian community. It also acts as an umbrella for the regional association, Laziali in Scozia.
Thus, as I started my fieldwork I found it quite difficult to break away from interviewing what can perhaps be termed ‘professional informants’ within the community, those who are automatically pushed forward to speak and who tend to be male, well-established and articulate. I found myself going down a well-trodden path interviewing people whose stories I had already read in various publications or heard on radio and TV broadcasts. At least five of my respondents had been interviewed before and it is significant that those who had been interviewed repeatedly were the male internees. They were also the ones that seemed to put in polished or ‘fixed’ public performances (1995: 210) reminiscent of Thomson’s Anzac interviewee who told the stories he wanted to tell, regardless of Thomson’s questions. (1995: 14) Both former internees I interviewed recounted with pride the number of TV and radio programmes they had participated in as well as visits from other postgraduate students. Whilst raising the important questions of who speaks on behalf of a community and why, this frustrating sense of revisiting the same stories made me redouble my efforts to try and contact women and the other neglected groups I had identified.

Unfortunately, locating female respondents proved to be a particularly painstaking and laborious process. In order to attract more women, I placed gender-specific adverts in the national publications People’s Friend and The Scots Magazine but even with this level of national exposure, I received only two responses from the latter publication and none from the former. By far the most effective method of finding women was via personal recommendation where one interviewee would put me in touch with another. Interestingly, this supports research undertaken in America
on mental health amongst different ethnic groups, which found a greater reluctance amongst Italian, as opposed to Jewish and Slavic women, to be interviewed, with ‘the traditional Italian reserve and sense of family loyalty’ quite frequently winning out. (Colecchia 1978: 253) These researchers acknowledged the importance of using personal intermediaries to gain access, noting that ‘Italian women did not respond to the concept of “research” or “history”, but did respond to a personal contact. Most of the Jewish and Slavic women were located through organisations or institutions, while most of the Italian women were friends of a friend, or relatives of someone the co-ordinator knew.’ (Krause 1978: 263)

One downside of this reliance on personal recommendation was that relatives and friends could also act as gatekeepers and turn down or refuse interviews on behalf of someone else. For example, I was unable to interview any surviving members of the women’s section of the Edinburgh Fascio. One woman who was detained in Saughton Prison because she was a member of the Ladies Committee was still alive but her family felt she would be unwilling to talk about the war. Indeed, even within her own family, few had been aware of her wartime detention until recently. More surprisingly, a couple of women who had been in the British Services also turned down interviews. One Land Army veteran who cancelled an arranged interview at the last minute was apprehensive about ‘saying the wrong thing’, underlining the power of dominant discourse in controlling memory within the community. In order to find more respondents, I decided to extend my fieldwork beyond Edinburgh to other parts of south-east Scotland such as Fife and Stirling, and also travelled to other Scottish towns and cities if contacted by a respondent who fell into one of my target
categories. An early intention to set up a reminiscence group as part of my fieldwork also floundered in the face of an apparent reluctance to discuss the past in a public forum. As I formulated contacts amongst the Italian presence in Edinburgh, I discovered that two Italian Scottish women had made separate attempts to set up reminiscence groups amongst older women but had abandoned the idea in the face of disinterest. However, during the course of my fieldwork I heard about a privately run language class hosted by the Italian consul where women attendees had felt able to discuss the war together. I occasionally felt that my desire, as a researcher, to make a public account of wartime Italian Scottish experience conflicted with a private desire for things to remain unsaid.

Who Came Forward

However, as Portelli notes, individuals can be ‘internally divided between the desire to be silent and forget and the need to speak’. (1997: 158) Over a five year period I was able to interview forty four people of Italian origin, thirty five found via both personal networks and the ‘snowballing’ effect of personal recommendations. Twenty five people were interviewed alone, six married couples were interviewed jointly, two sets of sisters and one set of brothers were interviewed together and one woman was interviewed in the presence of a niece who had been recorded on an earlier occasion. I adopted a semi-structured life history approach to interviews, following a “biographical chronology” which extended from the respondents’ childhood to their post-war lives, although usually with less focus on the latter. (Perks & Thomson 1998:102) Although I had a questionnaire prepared, I was keen to follow Passerini’s maxim that ‘To respect memory also means letting it organise the
story according to the subject’s order of priorities.’ (1987: 8) Respondents were encouraged to relate their story and place emphasis on those areas which were important to them. As the Personal Narratives Group stress:

Personal narratives illuminate the course of a life over time and allow for its interpretation in its historical and cultural context. The very act of giving form to a whole life – or a considerable portion of it – requires, at least implicitly, considering the meaning of the individual and social dynamics which seem to have been most significant in shaping the life. (1989: 4)

Most importantly, the Group emphasise how the ordering of a life history can sometimes follow a logic ‘suggested by the emotional resonance in the narrator’s memory.’ (1989: 99) However, as Summerfield acknowledges, ‘the oral historian’s research frame influences the path through the past which the narrator takes, and requires the narrator to remember where they have been.’ (2000: 95) The very process of finding interviewees outlined above meant that many were aware of my specific interest in the Second World War and responded to that. Yet, ultimately, the tendency of most respondents to accelerate to and dwell on the wartime period when being interviewed serves to underline the profound impact of the war on the narratives of Italian Scots. To a remarkable degree, when asked about ‘the outbreak of the war’ the majority of respondents would refer to the events of June 1940, as opposed to September 1939, reinforcing the concept of a distinct set of memories held amongst this ethnic group.

The forty four respondents were born between 1906 and 1940. Whilst this age range effectively encompasses two generations of Italian Scots, the bulk (23) of respondents were born in the decade 1920-29. The average age of male interviewees in 1940 was 18, the women slightly younger at 13. This reflects my frustrated
attempts to reach the oldest surviving members of the community and the rather convoluted nature of finding informants outlined above. Thirty eight respondents were second generation Italians, five were third generation and one was first generation.\textsuperscript{35} Nearly all respondents were British-born with English as their first language. About half said that they did not speak ‘Italian’ although most retained a basic understanding of their parents’ regional dialect. Twenty four of the interviewees were born in Edinburgh, five in Fife, four in Italy and three in West Lothian. The remainder were born in other cities including Glasgow, Stirling and London. The overwhelming majority of respondents were the children of shop owners. Thirty eight said their father had either an ice cream or fish and chip shop and often both. Some fathers owned several properties. Amongst the fathers who did not have their own business, one worked for an Italian restaurant, another worked in hotel kitchens, one died when the narrator was a baby, another had ‘abandoned’ his family and another’s occupation remained unspecified. Significantly, the majority (thirty three) went into the family business immediately on leaving school and most of them remained in the trade all their working lives. However, some respondents made a career switch in later life.\textsuperscript{36}

The six married couples I met preferred to be interviewed together. Whilst I initially had reservations about this - bearing in mind Thompson’s comment that the presence of another person at an interview ‘not only inhibits candour, but subtly pressurises towards a socially acceptable testimony’ (1988: 205) - I found that these ‘dual’ testimonies could also have a positive outcome. Couples reminiscing together often

\textsuperscript{35} Within my definition of second generation I include children of Italian parents born in Italy or elsewhere but who were raised from infancy in Scotland.

\textsuperscript{36} See Appendix 1 for biographies of all respondents.
discussed rather sensitive issues such as Fascio membership in the inter-war period, allowing a glimpse of communal tensions and splits which would normally have remained closed to an outsider. Interestingly, three of the married couples I interviewed had experienced diametrically opposed wartime experiences – for example, one daughter of an Arandora Star victim was married to an ex-serviceman – and in a way their lives together had been spent negotiating past communal differences and learning to accommodate them. Like Schrager, I was an ‘intervener’ in a process that was already highly developed, providing a new context for the telling of pre-existent narratives. (1998:284-5)

On average the interviews lasted around ninety minutes. As my research was entirely self-funded, financial necessities meant that I was rarely able to conduct a second interview with the same narrator. However I would often spend many hours in the company of respondents after the interview had ‘officially’ ended sharing in their hospitality and often meeting members of their families. I would also occasionally return to visit respondents either to discuss their transcripts or to request permission to use interview extracts for publication. Thus beyond the remit of the actual interviews themselves I gradually built up a series of relationships with my respondents which I will discuss in more detail below.
Popular Culture

Oral history is a particularly useful way to observe the ways in which people retrospectively construct their sense of personal identity. The recounting of one's life history is a simultaneous process of both identity-formation and the manifestation of identity. (Eros & Kovacs 1988: 349) As Thomson writes,

In our storytelling we identify what we think we have been, who we think we are now and what we want to become. The stories that we remember will not be exact representations of our past, but will draw upon aspects of that past and mould them to fit current identities and aspirations. Thus our identities shape remembering; who we think we are now and what we want to become affects what we think we have been. (1995: 10)

The fluidity of ethnic identity, and its dependence upon the categorisation of Others (Jenkins 1997: 169), also means that Italian Scots will express themselves differently at different times in their lives. As Mary Chamberlain has written, memory is 'engaged in essentially a dialectical process of recall and recounting, where, depending on which way the folds swirl and flow, at any one point one detail or another is revealed or concealed, and where all experience and articulations contribute and continue to contribute to a constant revision of self and subjectivity'. Chamberlain's work is important in emphasising how the forms in which we remember will shift over time, responding to generational change and fashion, including representations of the past. (2000: 158)

Whilst personal narratives reveal that many respondents had been subject to various manifestations of anti-Italian hostility since their childhoods, they were composing their life stories at a time when the Italian presence in Scotland is not only widely celebrated but also highly romanticised. In the course of my writing this thesis there
has been an ‘Italy Celebration’ in Jenners department store; a Marks and Spencer’s ‘Italian Fashion Fortnight’ (September 2004); and a ‘Viva Italia’ week in my local Safeway. (June 2001) Most recently, a food manufacturer published a poll of the ‘most influential British Italians’ headed by Scottish singer Sharleen Spiteri (Hainey 2005: 3) A significant factor in my research is that I approached respondents at a time when the Italians’ wartime experience has been portrayed in a variety of different media, including stage plays, poetry and television documentaries. A poetry collection by Vettese (1995) and plays such as Mackie’s Grey Like a Dove (1952), Di Mambro’s Tally’s Blood (1989), and the Fringe production Scars of War (2002) have all addressed the wartime experiences of Italians in Scotland. As Portelli comments, many informants read books and newspapers and listen to the radio and TV: ‘if many written sources are based on orality, modern orality itself is saturated with writing. (1998:69) Many of the people I interviewed are deeply interested in both their family and community history and at least one respondent mentioned that a grandchild had recorded her war memories as part of a school project. Some had copies of Colpi’s The Italian Factor or other books on Italian history and had read newspaper features or watched documentary programmes about the war. One daughter of an Arandora Star victim even had her own ear-worn copy of Lafitte’s wartime polemic The Internment of Aliens. Within this context, the most significant cultural event was the high profile exhibition ‘The Italian Scots: A century of the Italian community in Scotland’ held at the National Library in Edinburgh in 1991. Some of the respondents had attended the exhibition whilst a couple were actively

37 Produced by ‘Italian-Scottish Connections.’ Written by C. Iacucci, M. Rose and W. Stark.
38 Other authors mentioned included Zorza and Barzini.
39 Programmes mentioned were STV’s Tartan Tallies (1996); Channel 4’s The Dunera Boys (1985) and BBC Scotland’s St Anthony’s Day Off (1997)
involved in providing background information and memorabilia. Whilst I would argue that this exhibition adhered to the contours of the communal myth by focusing on the experiences of the elite,\(^\text{40}\) it was undoubtedly important in highlighting the painful events of World War II for the first time within an affirmative national setting. Cumulatively, all these cultural developments have been instrumental in encouraging more people to discuss the past than might have been the case over a decade or two ago. Most of my interviewees were in their seventies and had, as Wilton notes, 'a willingness to talk about things which in earlier years would have remained unsaid.' (1994: 94)

Another factor that needs to be taken into account is the matter of 'visibility' and the way in which my interview partners perceive themselves as an immigrant group, both past and present. Most of my interview partners voluntarily raised the idea of being part of a less 'visible' community, contrasting their experiences with those of the post-war arrival of Asian immigrants in Scotland. Although some felt that the Italians had faced a 'bigger struggle,' (SA2002.065 Diana Corrieri) most shared the opinion expressed by Pieri: 'we were the Pakistani immigrants of our day, tolerated but not quite accepted by our neighbours.' (1997:5) In her work on European Volunteer Workers in Britain, Webster suggests that in the post-war era, 'The idea of British society as homogenous was invoked to cast all 'immigrants' as outside the boundaries of nation, but the notion of 'suitability' also signalled the idea of a hierarchy of belonging.' (2000: 260) She highlights how hostility towards post-war Eastern European immigrants could be tempered by some measure of agreement

\(^{40}\) One respondent who attended comments, 'Paolozzi, he was involved and De Marco of course. So, you know, what do they want with a wee tuppence happeny wifie from Kelty?' (SA1998.25)
between official and popular discourses about a hierarchy of belonging in Britain, noting how the new influx of black and Asian immigrants enabled earlier groups to be forgotten. (2000: 261) It is perhaps only now, with domestic hostility focusing on more ‘visible’ immigrant groups and with Italian culture universally celebrated that Italianness can be more safely articulated and foregrounded in the construction of personal identity.

Ultimately, I have to recognise that those who responded to my adverts or agreed via intermediaries to be interviewed had already selected themselves as ‘Italian’ to some degree. However the adverts were worded deliberately to attract those less ‘involved’ members of the community invoking the more traditional images of the ‘British’ at war such as conscriptees and war workers. Whilst this thesis will present evidence which challenges Colpi’s hypothesis of a post-war “negative enemy status” (1986a: 43) it is likely that the reinforced sense of Italianness which emerges from narratives has only found true expression in the last decade or so.41

Reflexivity

Joanna Bornat points out that, ‘Oral history turns the historian into an interviewer and changes the practice of the historian into a personal interaction with the past within living memory.’ (1989: 16) As Portelli notes,

oral history is a dialogic discourse, created not only by what the interviewees say, but also by what we as historians do – by the historian’s presence in the field, and by the historian’s presentation of the material. The expression oral history therefore contains an ambivalence...it refers both to what the historians hear (the oral sources) and to what the historians say or write. On a

41 In Colpi’s opinion it is ‘only in very recent times’ that the second generation is, ‘proudly rediscovering its italianità’ (1991a: 100) reflecting a rather judgemental view of those she believes denied their Italianness. (1991a: 193)
more cogent plane, it refers what the source and the historian do together at the moment of their encounter in the interview.’ (1997: 3)

My links to the Italian Scottish community through marriage undoubtedly influenced the way that I was viewed by respondents and had methodological implications for my research. Summerfield highlights the importance of the ‘interpersonal dynamics’ at work in an oral history interview, noting how factors such as the interviewer’s accent, demeanour and spoken and unspoken attitudes can give clues to the interviewee about ‘whether narrator and interviewer hold shared values.’ (2000: 102)

The question of ‘passing’ as an Italian, first raised by Anne-Marie Fortier in her study of institutional representations of London Italian identity, was also relevant. (2000: 6) Numerous interviewees commented on how with my physical characteristics of dark hair and dark eyes, I appeared to ‘be Italian’ as in the following exchange with respondent Angelo Valente of Fife:

AV: Backhanders – that’s how they do it over there [Italy]. I’m sorry, you belong to the Italian origin yourself.
WU: I don’t actually.
AV: You don’t? Well, that’s a funny name you’ve got.
WU: It’s my husband’s.
AV: You look Italian. (SA2002.055)

The Ugolini family is one of the smaller Italian families in south-east Scotland with its nucleus in West Lothian and is not particularly well-known in Edinburgh. My husband’s paternal grandparents emigrated from Lucca in Tuscany around the time of the First World War and settled in the small village of Armadale. However, a few respondents recognised my surname because my father-in-law was a professional footballer in the immediate post-war years. One respondent had been interned with my husband’s grandfather; another had served with my husband’s uncle in the
Pioneer Corps. Being viewed as a representative of my husband’s family undoubtedly conferred upon me some degree of ‘Italian affiliation.’ (Fortier 1996: 310) Furthermore, although I would be explicit at the outset of interviews that it was my husband who had the Italian ‘connection’, in interviews this distinction would often become blurred. Respondents would ask after my family or seek reassurance that I had had similar experiences. At the close of one interview, one respondent commented, ‘I don’t know how you feel in your heart about what you are,’ before going on to re-state her identification with Italy. This sense of a shared familial past, however tenuous, validated me in the eyes of many respondents. It also enabled me build up a relationship of trust with those I interviewed which was crucial as many were recalling traumatic and upsetting memories.

**Traumatic Memories**

The sociologists Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame when conducting fieldwork amongst bakers in France realised as they carried out their interviews that a process was taking shape with every new life story confirming what the preceding ones had shown. They define this as ‘a process of saturation’ and conclude that several life stories taken from the same set of sociostructural relations support each other and make up, all together, a strong body of evidence. (Bertaux & Bertaux-Wiame 1981: 187) Schrager similarly notes how ‘congruences’ in the accounts of different tellers convey commonalities in the events being described, underlining how the single account ‘belongs to an entire narrative environment.’ (1998: 288-9) As I carried out my fieldwork I found that the same themes of difference, not belonging and prejudice were emerging from the interviews.
When I embarked on this research, I was steeped in somewhat ‘glamorous’ notions of what it meant to live in wartime Britain that in retrospect, in light of the suffering and pain exposed in some interviews, appears horribly naïve. Dawson links the ‘intense fascination and excitement generated for men and boys by the military side of the war’ reflected in the popularity of war adventure stories, comics and films to the idea of a popular masculine ‘pleasure-culture’ of war. (1994: 4) I would also suggest that amongst many women (including me), there is an enduring fascination for this period in modern history. This is perhaps most visibly reflected in the contemporary phenomenon of the 1940’s dance revival, ATS re-enactment associations and the ongoing popularity of nostalgic TV depictions of the homefront such as We’ll Meet Again (1982) or Foyle’s War (2002-05). Thus, when I started out, I did not anticipate the sense of the personal devastation and loss wrought by the war and in particular the long-term nature of the emotional upheaval and distress. As psychologist Steve Davies astutely notes, whilst some people feel comfortable with the celebratory nature of war remembrance in this country, ‘for others it may be proving a time of great emotional pain as the dust is disturbed on their memories of terrible sights, of long separations or of tragic losses.’ (1997: 191) One interview which has always remained in my mind was with two elderly, rather shy sisters who had lost their father on the Arandora Star closely followed by the death of their mother from, they said, ‘a broken heart.’ The interview took place in the house where they had lived with their grandmother since the war, neither of them had married and a sense of loss was still tangible. As with the families of victims of Fosse Ardeatine 42 See also Wright on ‘the fascination of remembered war’ (1991: 23).
massacre encountered by Portelli, they appeared frozen to ‘the moment of grief.’ (2003: 222) Although I saw these two sisters on many subsequent occasions and was happily able to revise my initial perception, the interview undoubtedly made a profound impression upon me and now I often find myself, when I am writing about the war, thinking, ‘What would they say if they read this? Would it upset them?’ As Sheehan discovered when she studied the intellectual elite in Dublin, some level of ‘self-censorship’ begins to occur in the writing process when you anticipate the reaction of your informants. (1993: 77)

Dawson identifies the dual process of composure which occurs when people are recounting personal narratives. At one level, people tell, or compose, stories but at the same time, people also aim to achieve ‘subjective composure’ through their storytelling: the telling creates a perspective for the self within which it endeavours to ‘manage’ or contain the more troubling, disturbing aspects of the past. (1994: 22-3) A few female respondents broke down in tears during the interviews and at times like this I would immediately stop the recording until they had regained their ‘composure.’ Only one interviewee was ever too distraught to continue but, after a tea break, I continued the ‘joint’ interview with her husband in her presence. At other times people would ask me to turn off the tape recorder whilst they told me information of a particularly confidential nature (usually involving other people) and these requests were always respected. However whilst I am confident that I never left anyone distressed after an interview I occasionally went away deeply impressed by the level of unresolved pain and anguish revealed in the interviews. At times I felt inadequately trained to pursue certain issues which were raised such as mental ill
health and depression. Anderson admits that often in her interviews with rural farming women her interview strategies ‘were bound to some extent by the conventions of social discourse:’

My fear of forcing or manipulating individuals into discussing topics they did not want to talk about sometimes prevented me from giving women the space and the permission to explore some of the deeper, more conflicted parts of their stories. I feared, for good reasons, that I lacked the training to respond appropriately to some of the issues that might be raised or uncovered. (1991: 13)

Ultimately the oral historian has to tread carefully when probing areas of memory surrounding personal trauma because as Thomson succinctly puts it, ‘Unlike the therapist, oral historians may not be around to put together the pieces of memories that have been deconstructed and are no longer safe.’ (1994: 34)

The time period in which I carried out my fieldwork – 1996-2001 - was also significant and had a bearing on the shape of the narrators’ life stories. Louis Crocq, a psychiatrist specialising in post-traumatic stress disorder arising from experiences of the Second World War, notes that television, radio and newspaper reporting of present day wars and of other violent events can still have a destabilising impact on some older people who lived through the 1939-45 conflict: ‘The realism of the television images...bring memories flooding back and with the memories comes identification with the victims.’ When the first round of interviews took place in 1996, the Bosnian War was still fresh in people’s minds and provided a useful frame of reference. One narrator employed the concept of ethnic groups who had lived peaceably side by side for decades suddenly turning against each other, to explain his own experience. A later set of interviews took place during the Kosovan crisis in
1999 when television news programmes were saturated with images of columns of Albanian refugees fleeing from their homes. Interestingly one respondent who was relocated during the war identified with these stark images of dispossession even though the eviction from her home occurred on an individual and private basis. Another female respondent became deeply anxious that the interview transcript, by identifying her children as being of Italian origin could, in the event of another world war, expose them to the same indignities and abuse that her family had suffered during World War Two. Whilst neither logical nor rational this was a very real fear, one which both highlights the long-term impact of wartime events on older Italian Scots and the importance of being sensitive and ethical regarding issues of informed consent, anonymity and publication. In many cases repeat visits to interviewees have been essential to establish a relationship where people feel confident enough either to share their memories, to recommend me to other friends and ultimately to allow me to publish extracts from their interviews in academic journals and publications.

**Friendship**

Grele points out that oral history ‘allows us to enter people’s lives in the most extraordinarily intimate ways.’ (1991: Preface) My interviews often took place at night in people’s homes and I suspect that the dynamic of an oral history interview, with a younger woman appearing and taking an interest in your life, can be seductive and encourage confidences. Summerfield argues that when entering ‘an oral history contract’ most narrators nowadays are familiar with the genre of the narrative interview via various modes of popular culture such as TV documentaries and mass
release films. (2000: 93) However, I'm not convinced that all interviewees fully anticipate or appreciate the ways in which their contributions will ultimately appear, in particular, ‘the historian's interpretation and reconstruction in the public form of print of intimate aspects of their lives.’ (Summerfield 1998: 26) Yet of all the people I have interviewed only four have expressed interest in the general themes or direction of my research and only one explicitly asked questions about how her words would be presented within my final publication.

Sociologist Janet Finch has raised concerns over the ‘extreme ease’ with which a woman researcher can elicit material from other women, believing that the ability to get women to talk in an interview situation depends not so much on one’s interviewing skills but upon one’s identity as a woman. (1984: 78) She believes that a female researcher interviewing other women is conducive to an easy flow of information making women ‘especially vulnerable as subjects of research’. (1984: 81) I share many of Finch’s concerns. I, too, was occasionally overwhelmed by the readiness with which some women related harrowing details of their past and this increased my sense of responsibility and also my anxieties about the ways in which the material could be used. When I went through the School’s deposit agreement at the end of each interview, I found that because they were placing their trust in me as an individual, many female respondents were quite blasé about signing the form. I felt I had a responsibility to ensure that they were fully aware of the different ways in which the material could be used in the future. Thus, I always recommended that they go for the option of requiring further permission if any material was to be published and I also offered the option of anonymity which a sizeable number took.
In an attempt to keep lines of communication open, I ensure that all respondents have my contact details and send them all Christmas cards each year. At the start of my fieldwork, I did not automatically return transcripts to interviewees but I soon rectified this omission and the final thirty four respondents were all sent their transcripts and asked to check spellings, factual accuracy and to restrict any sections if necessary. Sometimes problems would arise at this stage as husbands, children, and even in one case a nephew, read the transcripts and raised their own concerns, usually about potential ‘repercussions’ if the material was published.

**Ethical dilemmas**

Sangster refers to the uncomfortable ethical issues involved in using living people as a source for our research. (1998: 92) As I was publishing material from a relatively early stage in my fieldwork, I found myself constantly wrestling with my doubts and anxieties over analysing and interpreting the life stories of those from whom I had accepted hospitality and formed a relationship. Working with living people can both inspire and inhibit when you reach the point of ‘taking up the intellectual’s task of interpretation.’ (Portelli 1997: 65) Folklorist Katherine Borland addresses one of the most crucial issues in oral history scholarship – the question of who controls the text? (1991: 70) In an absorbing case study discussing the angry response of her grandmother to a text analysing her experiences and (mis)representing her as a feminist, Borland identifies the key tension:

---

43 On one occasion a respondent phoned me in a state of distress. She had granted permission to quote an interview extract but, on re-reading it months later, had changed her mind. I was able to edit the extract to her satisfaction and go ahead with publication.

44 Interestingly a couple of male narrators also spoke of the possible ‘repercussions’ of being interviewed, one more concerned about his daughter than himself.
Presumably, the patterns upon which we base our interpretations can be shown to inhere in the 'original' narrative, but our aims in pointing out certain features, or in making connections between the narrative and larger cultural formations, may at times differ from the original narrator’s intentions. This is where issues of our responsibility to our living sources become most acute. (1991: 64)

One of the main arguments of this thesis will be that the function of inter-war Fascist groups amongst Italian immigrant communities and communal representations of the Arandora Star disaster (where hundreds of Italian men lost their lives) needs to be looked at more critically. Fascism was not something I asked many direct questions about, and as I approached people as a person interested in the events of the war, it is not something perhaps that they will have anticipated me bringing into the public domain. As I began the writing-up phase of this thesis, two parallel calls for an apology for internment and the *Arandora Star* disaster emerged from key figures within the Italian community in Scotland and the *Arandora Star* has become far more of a ‘political’ issue. A book about the disaster has been published in Italy and some of my respondents have phoned me excitedly to say they’d been interviewed by Italian TV or seen a TV programme about the *Arandora Star*. At times I have worried about becoming entangled in a campaign over an issue which was never the central concern of my thesis. Indeed, when I carried out my fieldwork from 1996 to 2001, less than half of the people I interviewed mentioned the disaster suggesting that is not as central to Italian Scottish wartime experience as it is now presented. However, a couple of daughters of *Arandora Star* victims did raise the question of compensation and an apology to me when I interviewed them and it clearly matters to them. Ethnographer Fortier points out that fieldworkers can be caught up in a web of demands that come from different directions at once including the interests of the
subjects who may be hoping for public visibility or looking for an advocate of their ‘cause’ (2000: 9) In retrospect, I wonder whether the women who agreed to talk to me who lost their fathers did so because they believed I would raise awareness about the Arandora Star and draw a spotlight on the tragic fate of their forefathers. Throughout my fieldwork I had a strong sense that people were trusting me, or entrusting me, with their memories and I worry that I may betray this trust. Sheehan refers to the specific dilemma, particularly for someone of junior academic status, of ‘deciding what is safe to write.’ (1993: 79) By publicly calling for a more critical analysis of the ways in which the disaster has been represented I fear I will offend a significant number of people I have interviewed, especially those who lost dearly loved relatives, thus potentially jeopardising any future work or publications which rely heavily on some level of consent and co-operation from my respondents.

The assumption underlying much of the literature on oral history methodology is still the ideal of empowering cultural minorities (see Frisch 1990:xxi) yet there is less discussion about what happens when one ultimately offers an interpretation which some will find challenging, uncomfortable and even unwelcome. Thomson has confronted the tensions arising when a more critical analysis of a historical topic ‘collides with powerful emotional investments in the past.’ (1995: 5) As he eloquently summarises, ‘On the one hand, oral historians may feel that they have no right to use people’s memories to make histories which are challenging or critical towards their narrators, that this involves a breach of trust and confidence. On the other hand, oral historians may feel that they have another duty to society and history, a responsibility to challenge historical myths which empower some people at
the expense of others. Perhaps all researchers live with this dilemma, but for oral historians it is particularly acute because we have personal relationships with our sources.' (1994: 35)

Formulating a Defence

Perhaps I need to accept the fact that, as Thomson notes, 'narrators and researchers often have contradictory aims.' (1994: 34). Furthermore, Diamond reminds oral historians wrestling with the ethical dilemmas of power imbalances, 'not to underestimate the power of the informant who creates the life story as s/he organises and tells it' and points out that the informant always has the option of placing restrictions on their narrative. (1997:65) Ultimately, the final interpretation and analysis of life stories rests with the historian and not with those who have shared their life stories. Sangster also argues that we need to be realistic that there will always be an inherent imbalance of power within the researcher/subject relationship as we gain access to people's memories not as a friend, but as a professional historian.

We can honour feminist ethical obligations to make our material accessible to the women interviewed, never to reveal confidences spoken out of the interview, never to purposely distort or ridicule their lives, but in the last resort, it is our privilege that allows us to interpret. (1998:93)

Ultimately, as the anthropologist Anthony Cohen remarks reflecting on years of fieldwork with the islanders of Whalsay, I can only offer my 'version' of the past, an interpretation which is neither more nor less 'privileged' than those already current. (1987: 4)
Chapter Three

History of the Italian community in Scotland

Through the analysis of oral testimonies, this chapter highlights the extent to which Italian Scots in Edinburgh grew up in a pre-war environment of domestic anti-alienism and sectarianism. A significant feature which emerges from narratives is the sense of growing up in a culture and environment in which Italian Scots felt, or were made to feel, ‘different’ and ‘foreign’. This childhood sense of difference, which is crucial to a deeper understanding of the impact of the war on the Italian population in Scotland, has been either ignored or understated in existing accounts. For example, when Colpi writes of World War Two, ‘In Scotland, particularly, children who had grown up without their fathers and had to live with their “tally bastard” status as the former enemy were often tainted for life by their experience,’ (1991a: 192) she implies that the war was wholly responsible for fostering a sense of difference amongst second generation Italians. This chapter will show how, due to the existence of anti-Italian prejudice in inter-war Scotland, the war served to dramatically reinforce a sense of ‘otherness’ and not ‘belonging’ already prevalent amongst the children of Italian immigrants.

Beginning with a brief overview of the ‘the deep roots of anti-alienism and racism’ which exist in British culture (Kushner 1995:8), this chapter sets Italian experience within the wider historical context of traditions of hostility and intolerance towards immigrant and minority groups in Britain in the last two centuries. (Holmes 1988;
This chapter outlines the images and representations of Italians from the early days of settlement in the nineteenth century, culminating in the outright xenophobia of wartime discourse. It provides a historical overview of the Italian community in Scotland, covering origins, settlement and occupational structure and then looks in more depth at the Edinburgh Italian community. It will then address the childhood memories of Italian Scots who grew up in the inter-war period which cumulatively highlight their outsider status.

The Alien 'Other'

Linda Colley believes the success of Britishness should be viewed as being closely dependent on the proximity, real or imagined, of the Other. (1992: 327) She argues that a series of massive wars between 1689 and 1815 allowed the diverse inhabitants of Great Britain to focus on their common Protestantism as contrasted with the Catholicism of Continental Europe: ‘They defined themselves, in short...in conscious opposition to the Other beyond their shore.’ (1992: 316) Holmes has highlighted the long history of intolerance and prejudice towards immigrant communities in Britain and has shown how groups, such as the Irish, Jews and Chinese, have all experienced ‘expressions of hostility’ at varying degrees throughout their lives in Britain. (1991:100) During the last two decades of the nineteenth century people from various parts of the British Isles and from Europe flocked to central Scotland in search of employment, mainly in the pits and ironworks (Millar 1998: 3) These different groups - impoverished Catholic immigrants from Ireland, Lithuanians and Jewish refugees escaping from political and religious persecution - have all endured periods of hostility. (Devine 2000;
Patrick Reilly concedes that evidence from these ethnic communities increasingly demonstrates 'the unpalatable truth' that Scotland 'is far from being the warm, welcoming, accommodating haven that it flatters itself on being.' (2000: 29) Rather, as an expert on the Lithuanian community insists, the history of immigration into Scotland 'is a history of bigotry, prejudice, intolerance, discrimination, fear, hostility, verbal abuse and even hatred.' (Millar 1998: 4)

Referring to World War One, Cesarani argues that the roots of anti-alienism, wartime regulations and the harsh treatment of various minority groups, are to be found in the construction of the alien in British political culture and society in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. From the 1860s onwards, anti-alienism forms part of socio-biological discourse in Britain, with aliens constructed as a degenerate, threatening presence. (1993: 25) As Cesarani stresses in an article with Tony Kushner, anti-alien discourse was a seamless web: 'the same stereotypes of the alien Other encompassed groups such as Jews, Germans, Blacks, Chinese and Gypsies. Anxieties concerning class, public health, moral codes and above all, national identity were projected onto immigrants and minorities.' (1993: 12) The Italians as an immigrant group would have been affected by the anti-alien discourse of the period. Indeed, Webster points out that before 1945, it was mainly against white groups that racisms were articulated in relation to internal others. (2000: 259) McClintock also shows how, in imperial Britain, 'where skin colour as a marker of power was imprecise and inadequate,' the English drew heavily on the iconography of 'domestic degeneracy' to differentiate themselves from "white negroes" such as the "simianized" Irish, Jews, prostitutes,
the working-class and so on. (1995: 53) It is therefore crucial, as Fortier writes, to acknowledge ‘the conditions of continuing racism’ in which the Italian project of identity has developed in Britain. (2000: 168)

Views of Italians

Sponza studying the period from the beginning of the nineteenth century until 1914 characterises the Italians in Britain as ‘a singular, flexible and diversified ethnic minority, without inherent cohesion, but sufficiently homogeneous to be regarded as a compact colony – even a threatening presence – by outsiders.’ (1988: 6) Fortier highlights the use of dirt as ‘the key metaphor in substantiating the boundaries of inclusion/exclusion’ for immigrant groups (2000: 20) and notes how public debate about hygiene, street noise and the degeneracy of the city in nineteenth century Britain was often ethnicized by figuring Italians as sources of that degeneracy. (2000: 31) For example, an 1892 article by commentator W H Wilkins underlines the tendency to represent the Italians in terms of dirt and insanitariness:

The Italians mostly come from Naples and the vicinity where they live in pauperism, filth and vice, with no other ambition than to get cheap food enough to keep them alive...They are ineradicably bad...The degraded habits of this class of immigrants, innate and lasting as they are, stamp them as a most undesirable set. (Quoted in Sponza 1988: 235) 45

Sponza points out that representations of Italians stretching back to sixteenth century Britain have traditionally been based on a ‘mixture of fascination and disgust’ with

45 The metaphor of dirt persisted into the twentieth century. During the June 1940 riots Glasgow crowds surrounded one Italian shop shouting “Down with the dirty Italians.” (TS 5.6. 1941: 3)
the split image of ‘Italy’ as a country of beauty and culture conflicting with the view of ‘the Italians’ as ‘an ingenious but corrupt, untrustworthy and licentious race.’ (1988: 119) A romanticised vision of Italians propagated by the British intelligentsia meant that these contemptuous and condescending views ‘converged into one ambivalent and unstable image.’ (1996: 141) Sponza believes that attitudes towards Italian immigrants in Britain crystallized in the nineteenth century, identifying four major issues. Firstly, concern over the exploitation of children working in street trades as organ boys and secondly, a growing annoyance with street music. There was also the fear and obsession expressed in connection with overcrowding in the Italian Quarter and the ensuing alleged health and sanitary hazard. Furthermore, writes Sponza, ice-cream making by Italians – a thriving family industry by the mid-1890s – gave ground for suspicion ‘because the hygienic conditions in the rooms where ice-cream was manufactured were far from satisfactory.’ (1988: 223) The crusade against ice-cream makers reached a peak when the death of a child was attributed to the poisonous effects of ice cream eating. (1988: 228). Finally, concern and suspicion was voiced against illegal, violent and immoral practices by the Italians, including begging. (1988: 140) Essentially however, the common stereotyping of the Italians was based on the ‘partial and prejudiced knowledge of them’ as immigrants to Britain when the early nineteenth century elite of Italian musicians and skilled craftsmen was succeeded by all kinds of street performers - itinerant musicians and organ grinders, terrazzo workers, peddlers of plaster statuettes and street vendors of chestnuts and milk ices. (Sponza 1988: 62) A subsequent shift by Italian immigrants into the catering trade did little to alter these negative perceptions. As Sponza writes, ‘If itinerant music and street selling were

64
regarded as a disguised form of begging, equally inferior and servile was considered
the nature of the subsequent occupations in food dealing and catering. That was not
the stuff of an imperial race.’ Italian immigrants were thus exposed to an array of
derogatory stereotypes - ‘Wop’, ‘Dago’, ‘Monkey’ and ‘Macaroni’ - as they worked
to establish themselves and their families in Britain. (Sponza 1996: 141)

Historical Overview

It is difficult to present an accurate statistical overview of the Italian community in
Scotland because the British census only enumerates those Italian immigrants who
were born in Italy and excludes their descendants born in the United Kingdom. This
is particularly problematic when dealing with the Italian community in Scotland,
which has a long established presence and has already reached its fourth and fifth
generations. However, by using a combination of British and Italian consular
records, Colpi estimates that there are around 23,000 Italians resident in Scotland,
representing just under 10 per cent of the whole Italian population in Britain. This
includes Italians born in Italy, dual nationals born in Britain and people of Italian
origin ‘who consider themselves to be at least partly Italian.’ (1993b: 153)

Since 1861 over twenty five million Italians have emigrated from Italy, with their
descendants around the world numbering something like forty million. Most Italian
emigrants were driven out by the deepening agrarian crisis and rural poverty. A
census of Italians compiled in 1933 by the Italian consular authorities confirms that
60 per cent of all male Italian migrants to Scotland at the close of the nineteenth
century were farmers (agricoltori). From 1876 to 1900 between 60 per cent and 75
per cent left Italy on their own (Wilkin 1988: 350) and the majority were under 30
years of age. (Wilkin 1979: 53) The nineteenth century witnessed a gradual build up of the Italian presence in Britain but the number of Italians in Scotland remained low until the turn of the century; the 1861 Scottish census records only 119 Italians. (Sponza 1988: 18) Peaks in immigration to Scotland occurred at the turn of the century, in 1913, and again after the First World War in 1920-21. (Wilkin 1979: 54.) The decade 1891-1901 witnessed a dramatic threefold increase in the number of Italians in Scotland, from 1,025 to 4,051. (Colpi 1979: 71) In 1931, the Italian community in Scotland constituted over 20 per cent of the total British community. (Colpi 1991a: 136) The concentration of Italians in family catering businesses in Scotland led to increasing numbers of women immigrants and by 1911, women made up 32.5 per cent of the total Italian population and 10 per cent of the Italian population in paid employment. (Sponza 1988: 58)

Following these peaks in immigration, the number of Italians in Scotland remained steady with a total of 5,447 Italian immigrants present prior to World War II. (Wilkin 1979: 54) This was due to Britain’s increasingly restrictive immigration policy, in particular the 1920 Aliens Order which required that immigrants had a work permit, and the Italian Fascist regime’s ideological opposition to emigration. As a result of these patterns of immigration, Colpi points out, ‘the Scottish Italian community is not only historically old, but it is also sociologically old in type and form.’ (1992: 3) It also differs greatly, she believes, from other old communities in England and Wales which have been supplemented and changed in the post-war era by Italian workers recruited specifically for government-sponsored labour schemes. Generally, old Italians in Scotland today are people who were either born in Italy in the early part of the twentieth century and arrived during the main phase of
immigration or whose parents arrived at the turn of the century and who were born in Scotland. Most old Italians in Scotland in their 70s and 80s are already second generation. (Colpi 1992: 4)

**Patterns of migration and spatial development**

Italian immigrants in Scotland primarily settled as part of a process of chain migration whereby the earliest immigrants who had established themselves would send back for relatives and neighbours in their village to work in their businesses. This particular mechanism of chain migration enabled a system of patronage, ‘padronismo’, to flourish within the Italian communities in Scotland. The most successful immigrants, padroni, would recruit young men from their villages to serve as shop-boys, under a contract lasting two or three years. By offering travelling costs, accommodation and employment on arrival, ‘the control of these men over the migratory process was considerable’ (Colpi 1992: 6) and could often end in exploitation, as exemplified by the ‘Italian Boy Trade’ in early Victorian Britain. (Wise 2004) Padronismo further heightened links between Scottish areas of settlement and specific source regions in Italy as well as concentrating power and influence in the hands of some of the earliest immigrant families. (Colpi 1992: 5)

The earliest emigrants to Scotland originated from two clearly defined zones in Italy no more than 250 miles apart: Barga, in the northern province of Lucca and Picinisco in the more southerly province of Frosinone. (Wilkin 1979: 53) A third distinct zone of origin, the province of Pordenone, has also been identified by Wilkin but relates to a smaller and much later group of Italian terrazzo workers. (1988: 350) Although both Lucca and Frosinone are geographically and administratively in central Italy,
considerable social and cultural differences exist amongst the immigrants and their descendants, what King terms the 'omnipresent antipathy between northerners and southerners.' (1979: 11) At the peak of immigration to Scotland, the concept of Italy as a nation was still fragile and local allegiances predominated over any feelings of national identity.

The most common route to Scotland at the turn of the century was via London, where vast numbers of Italian immigrants had settled in the nineteenth century. Itinerant Italians who had once migrated on a seasonal basis began to settle permanently in London, and then the rest of England and Scotland. As well as emigrants from Lucca and Frosinone, those from Emilia, Parmigiani, travelled from London to Scotland, settling in Perth, Dundee and more particularly Aberdeen and the north east of Scotland. Another group of Italians in Scotland were the Spezzini from the Val di Vara who settled primarily in the 1920s in Gourock, Port Glasgow, Greenock and the Clyde estuary islands. (Colpi 1991a: 79) Although the majority of Italians in Scotland settled in large cities, with the largest Italian population in Glasgow, there was also a geographic dispersion into smaller provinces and towns. Sponza identifies three underlying factors behind this arterial process of dispersion: the perennial effort to avoid strong competition from fellow-Italians, the multiplying mechanism inherent to the Italians' recruitment system and the growing demand for outdoor refreshment and food, especially in popular seaside resorts. (1988:110)
Edinburgh

In 1933, over two thirds of Italians (70.1%) in Edinburgh originated from the province of Frosinone in the region of Lazio. (Colpi 1986a: 36) The close links between Edinburgh and the province are reflected within my research sample where twenty three respondents gave Frosinone as their family’s area of origin. In 1861, there were only 38 Italian immigrants living in Edinburgh but the Edinburgh Register of Aliens shows 350 Italians were registered in the city at the end of 1939: 211 males and 139 females. (EEN 19.4.1940:3) The Third Statistical Account of Scotland records that, in Edinburgh, the Italians who arrived at the turn of the twentieth century lived in or near the Grassmarket which soon became known as “Little Italy.”

It also comments that the location of their “businesses” were governed not only by economic but by geographical laws: ‘First and foremost, it is well known that Italian hotels and restraints flourish mostly in maritime towns. In Edinburgh, therefore, there has been a tendency to concentrate not only in Leith and the streets leading to Leith but in Portobello and in Musselburgh, both coastal districts.’ (Keir 1966: 124)

The presence of Italians in the Grassmarket area was noted in 1911 by local journalist Walter MacPhail in a revealing report for the Edinburgh Street Studies series:

If you want to run an Italian ice-cream shop, you must advertise it with the carmine paint pot and the mirror, if not the gramophone. If you want to live by organ-grinding, you must be prominent and noisy. Down in the Grassmarket I find that the Italians are on the average a quiet, law-abiding people. They rarely give trouble... Occasionally the hot blood of the Southern surges through the Italian veins, and when there is a quarrel the sequel is sometimes the knife, and the affair is serious. But, generally speaking, rioting, as apart from drunken disorder, is not much in evidence in the Grassmarket now. (Quoted in Gallagher 1987: 36)
The other significant area of settlement was Leith, with a concentration of businesses in Leith Walk. Oral testimonies indicate that whilst the poorer members of the community - those who worked for other Italians or had no male heads of household - remained in the Grassmarket, the wealthier Italians who could afford their own businesses and expand congregated in Leith.

Wilkin, using his analysis of the 1933 census data collected by the Italian authorities in Scotland, has compiled a chronological list of male migrants from Italy to Scotland covering the period 1877-1899. Within this timescale he identifies 14 arrivals in Edinburgh, the earliest being Pelosi from Picinisco in 1886, followed in quick succession by Valente, Delplacido, two Marandolas, Zaccardelli, Mauri, Gargaro, Brattesani, Tartaglia, Petricco, and in 1899 Cimorelli and Janetta. The vast majority of these immigrants originate from the Province of Frosinone. (1985: 117) Interestingly, these are not the names which emerge from existing accounts which discuss the earliest settlers; rather those who established themselves most successfully are most frequently recalled. For example, The Third Statistical Account remarks that with the transition from street performing to shop-based catering ‘before the end of the 19th century, the De Marco, D’Agostino and Crolla interests had come along.’ (1966: 124) Similarly Joseph Pia in an interview with Ian MacDougall remarks on ‘the leadership of families like the Dagostinos [sic], the Crollas, Di Marcos and Tartaglias’ which he acknowledges was ‘based on a kind of mixture of personality, strength of character and also financial strength.’ (1996: 302) The Census for 1881 shows a cluster of Italian organ grinders from the ‘Pielly’ and ‘Donaeli’ families residing at 79 Grassmarket but they are absent from future
accounts. (Scottish Record Office 1993: 18) Thus we can detect a class dimension to representations of the Italians in Edinburgh with historiography reflecting the stories of those who were commercially successful.

Occupational Structure

The massive influx of unskilled rural Italians into Britain, and particularly into Scotland, in the late nineteenth century, transformed the occupational structure of the community. (Sponza 1988:57) In less than twenty years, there was a remarkable transition from nomadic street hawking to the establishment of small family-based shops, with the first permanent business set up in the 1890s. (Colpi 1991a: 60) When the Aliens Act of 1905 effectively removed the possibility of itinerancy for Italian immigrants,46 the transition to a more formal economy was accelerated. Setting up a small shop selling ice-cream or fish and chips required little investment and was ‘an easy if laborious job.’ (Keir 1966: 123) Another factor which eased the Italians’ transition from street vendors to shopkeepers was the relatively cheap price which could be negotiated with Scottish owners who were emigrating to the colonies. (Sponza 1988: 288) This occupational concentration of Italians in the catering industry provides one of the most distinctive features of Italian settlement in Scotland. According to Sponza, the beginning of the twentieth century saw a ‘virtual explosion’ in food making and catering as the primary occupation for the Italian population, with hairdressing the second largest. (1988: 57) By the end of World War One, R E Foerster reports, over one thousand shops existed across Scotland selling drinks, candy, Bovril and ice cream and ‘finding their mainstay in evening and

46 Under the Act, aliens who lacked means of support could be refused leave to land by immigration officials at designated ports. (Cesarani 1993: 30)
holiday business.’ (1919: 204) In 1903, the Italian Consul in Glasgow reported on the Italian settlers in Scotland: ‘Many who live here own individually three or four shops, for the selling of ice cream, and several of them own up to 10-15 shops.’ (Sponza 1988: 109) Keir states that the number of confectionery shops and fish restaurants expanded steadily because Italians would buy shops for their sons. (1966: 124) The Edinburgh Post Office Directory of 1935-6 reflects the dominance of Italian names in the catering trades: 19 out of 22 ice cream makers were Italian and 26 out of 46 fish restaurant owners. (1935-6:1173; 1155)

The success of Italian shopowners in this period was largely due to the range of items sold, Sunday opening and long working hours. All members of the family would be expected to help in the running of the business and staff generally worked from 15 to 17 hours a day, seven days a week, with only five or six hours off per week. (Sponza 1988: 113) Certainly, the overwhelming sense from all those interviewed is the sheer hard work and grind involved in running a family business. Of those who took part in my research, thirty eight said their father ran either an ice cream or fish and chip shop. Many bemoaned the long working day from around eight in the morning until midnight. All family life was centred round the business, with meals taken in the back shop and usually children would be expected to help out in some capacity, whether serving or cleaning. There were numerous health and safety hazards with the dangers of over-heating from coal fires, hours spent standing on damp muddy floors, gutting fish and cleaning potatoes and lots of heavy lifting, of boxes, fat and sacks. One female respondent said she once broke two fingers in the potato machine (SA1999.27 Elizabeth Di Ponio), whilst two male respondents likened conditions in
Italian shops to slavery. (SA2002.054 Angelo Valente; SA 1998.35 Renzo Serafini)

Many of the early Italian immigrants in Scotland, working as hotel porters, waiters or shop assistants, never set up their own businesses and remained in poverty. Undoubtedly, however, many Italian businesses began to prosper in the early twentieth century. Compared to England and Wales, the fish and chip trade in Scotland was viewed as ‘unique in the scale of activity and the extent of Italian domination.’ By the early 1930s, one commentator asserted that 80 per cent of all Scotland’s fish friers were of Italian origin. (Walton 1991: 37) Whilst a journalist recently enthused that Irvine Welsh’s book celebrating Edinburgh chip shops: ‘will serve as a homage to the institution which helped an entire generation of Italian immigrants to integrate,’ (Boztas 2003) the reality is rather more complex. Italian shop owners, particularly in the ice cream trade, faced a lot of antagonism as they worked to establish themselves, firstly from the authorities and secondly from their own custom base. A trade newspaper in 1914 explained the monopolisation by Italians of fish and chip shops in Edinburgh in the following terms: ‘The wily Italians found out that there was much more money in this class of shop than in the ice-cream variety, and so they have gradually wormed their way into the business, and ousted the Britishers.’ (Walton 1991: 38) At the beginning of the twentieth century, church and temperance groups, the police and trade unions, joined together in opposition to Italian businesses. Ostensibly objections were raised on the grounds of late opening and Sunday opening but they were generated by suspicion of the Italians as ‘foreigners.’ Drawing from the reports of the 1906 Joint Select Committee on Sunday Trading, Sponza says that ice-cream shops were ‘singled out as a social evil’
because they had become a meeting place for boys and girls, because they exposed these young people to the ‘not always sober’ customers from public houses, because gambling machines were installed there and because the owners did not bother to prevent ‘bad language and objectionable conduct’, which often resulted in violent quarrels amongst customers. (1988: 114) One Glasgow detective asserted that the ‘kissing, smoking and cuddling’ he had witnessed in ice cream shops was undoubtedly linked to the ‘downfall’ of many girls now working as prostitutes. (McKee 2003) AJ Cronin’s 1931 novel *Hatter’s Castle* highlights the prejudices surrounding Italian shopowners: when the heroine Mary Brodie enters Bertorelli’s Café in Dunbartonshire, she feels as if ‘she had finally passed the limits of respectability, that the depth of her dissipation had now been reached.’ The jovial proprietor Bertorelli appears as an ‘archangel of iniquity’ although she is soon reassured by her companion that “Although he’s Italian he’s a human being.” (1987:85)

Oddly, Sponza appears reluctant to acknowledge the depth of xenophobia amongst the Italians’ opponents concluding that xenophobic attitudes were ‘possibly’ behind the campaign. (1988: 115) Yet he also cites James Ballantine, spokesman for the Sunday Traders’ Defence Association solicitors, who testified before the parliamentary committee that the antagonism towards ice cream shops ‘arises largely from prejudice against foreigners.’ (1988: 289) Members of the United Free Church were quite explicit in their opposition declaring that ‘Those engaged in the trade were all foreigners, and were not influenced by the same social and moral restraints of our own people.’ as were the British Women’s Temperance Association who fumed at ‘the extended operations of the foreign shopkeeper’. (McKee 2003)
Significantly, there was no overtly moralistic campaign against ice cream or fish and chip shops in England and Walton suggests that the Italian influence in Scotland ‘may have made the trade seem particularly suspect there.’ (1991: 85)\(^{47}\)

This anti-Italian crusade provided a backdrop of antipathy in the period when most respondents were growing up although only two referred to it specifically. What is rarely addressed in the existing literature, but which pours out from narratives is the antagonism and aggression faced from customers during their daily business. Indeed, the abusive and aggressive drunk entering the shop was a common figure of narratives. Sponza acknowledges that ‘Harassment motivated by deep-seated racial and religious prejudices’ had been a traditional feature in the life of the Italian community, particularly in Scotland. (1996: 143) In the words of one Italian settler, ‘The first English word the Barghigiani learned soon after their arrival in Scotland was “fight”! The Saturday night fight was inevitable. It usually started as an argument among the Scots themselves which quickly degenerated into a free-for-all.’ (Sereni 1974: 10) A glance at Burgh court records testifies to the violence faced by Italian shopkeepers even before war broke out. For example, in the first week of June 1940 there were two separate incidences of men conducting themselves ‘in a disorderly manner’ and ‘maliciously’ smashing the premises of Italian shops.\(^{48}\) The memoirs of Eugenio D’Agostino who ran the Royal Café in Leith relate numerous incidences of drunken violence from his customers, including just after the First World War when a crowd of sailors appeared outside his cafe: ‘They were all armed

\(^{47}\) Eventually the Burgh Police (Scotland) Amendment Act 1912 introduced a new category of ‘places of public refreshment’ which required shopowners who were open on Sunday or after 8 p.m. on weekdays to apply for registration with the Town Council, effectively targeting Italian businesses.

\(^{48}\) ECA D136 Burgh Court files 1-6 June 1940.
with sticks, stones, bottles and some with bricks... a hostile crowd had also gathered, and by midnight twenty four policemen stood lined up in front of the shop, in a double row, with drawn batons.' (1938: 250) Narrator Renzo Serafini, who lived in both Hawick and Inverness, refers to ‘the hammerings that our fathers had before the war when we had fish and chip shops and people used to come in and knock hell out of you.’ (SA1998.34) Romeo Ugolini recalls how in his father’s fish and chip shop in Armadale ‘drunks would sometimes come in and try to start fights, calling me an Italian bastard.’ This aggression was to increase tenfold exploding into outright violence in June 1940 with the outbreak of war but it is essential to acknowledge the depth of anti-Italian feeling already prevalent in the inter-war period.

**Childhood ethnicity**

It is now widely accepted that ethnic identity is a two-way process, the outcome of social interaction between different groups. As social interaction inevitably involves categorizations of ‘us’ by ‘them’ and of ‘them’ by us, ethnic identity ‘can be constrained or shaped by its necessary dependence upon the categorization of Others’ (Jenkins 1997: 169). Barth makes the crucial point that ethnic groups become most aware of their cultural identity at the boundaries where they engage and interact with others. (1969:16) Relations between members of different groups will vary according to the attitudes and needs of the individual people involved, as well as the specific circumstances in which interaction takes place (Nocon 1996: 84). The tendency of individuals and communities to define self against the ‘other’ becomes particularly

---

49 This quote is taken from an interview this respondent gave to The Times. (Collins & Hazeldine 2002)
acute at times of conflict and is particularly relevant when considering the life stories of second and third generation Italians.

Davin, in her study of poor London 1870 - 1914 points out that whilst the children of immigrants shared the social conditions of other children: ‘at the same time they were different, on the one hand in their sense of identity, created in home, community and perhaps religion and on the other in being perceived and treated as different by some of their peers and by their school.’ (1996: 200) As Richard Jenkins eloquently explains: ‘Entering into ethnic identification during childhood is definitively a matter of categorization: we learn who we are because, in the first instance, other people – whether they be co-members or Others – tell us. Socialization is categorization. It cannot be otherwise.’ (1997: 166) A strong sense of displacement emerges from the narratives of childhood amongst Italian Scot narrators and is particularly apparent in relation to religion, language, appearance and education.

Anti-Catholicism

Growing up as part of a Catholic minority in Scotland has undoubtedly influenced and shaped the life stories of second and third generation Italians in Scotland and the construction of personal identity. The first half of the twentieth century was a period of deep antagonism and hostility towards the predominately Irish Catholic minority in Scotland. In 1935 Catholics comprised only nine per cent of Edinburgh’s population, making them a relatively small and marginalized group. (Gallagher 1987: 1) Records show that only 13 out of the 104 Edinburgh schools were Roman
Catholic. (Edinburgh and Leith Post Office Directory 1930). Whilst religion in the sense of religious practices or church attendance was rarely introduced into personal narratives, the theme of anti-Catholicism was predominant.  

Linda Colley has stressed the historical importance of anti-Catholicism in constructions of British identity, pointing out that even though the Catholic community on the British mainland was a small one, ‘Catholics as a category remained in popular mythology an omnipresent menace.’ (1992: 317) She believes that this kind of intolerance deepened in the nineteenth century and was particularly pronounced in Scotland because of the substantial Catholic presence in the Highlands and the Ulster connection. (1992: 318) Essentially, ‘Catholics were beyond the boundaries, always on the outside even if they were British-born: they did not and could not belong.’ (1992: 320) A great body of work exists testifying to the nature and extent of bigotry and anti-Catholicism in nineteenth and twentieth century Scotland. (Devine 2000; Bruce et al 2004) Whilst Sponza writes of the nineteenth century that anti-Catholic sentiment ‘never became a dominant and persistent facet in the British attitude to the Italians as it was in that to the Irish’ (1988: 139), it is clear that from narratives that, in Scotland in particular, the Italian population were highly sensitive to the dominant discourse of anti-Catholicism.

The inter-war years in Scotland were marred by significant sectarian tensions. In Edinburgh, the decade preceding World War Two witnessed the growth of militant

---

50 It has been argued that, in Scotland in the inter-war period, the dominance of the Catholic Church by Irish priests discouraged high levels of Italian involvement in church activities and resulted in a considerable loss of cultural identity for the Italian population. (Colpi 1992:13; McBrierty, 2000)

78
Protestantism with orator John Cormack and his Protestant Action Society (PAS) involved in ‘organised harassment and vilification’ against the city’s Catholic community. (Gallagher 1987: 1) This hostility culminated in large-scale rioting when the Catholic Eucharist Congress was held in Morningside in 1935. Although most of Cormack’s rhetoric and abuse was directed at Irish immigrants, the Italians’ identification as Roman Catholics undoubtedly pushed them further to the boundaries of acceptance. Cormack’s PAS was also concentrated in the area where many Italian families lived, scoring seven out of its ten electoral victories in Leith. (Bruce et al 2004: 53) Gallagher acknowledges that ‘there had been no love lost’ between Cormack and members of the Italian community, stating that the practice of some Italian Fasci members of wearing blackshirts on commemorative occasions ‘was a gesture calculated to anger members of Protestant Action.’ (1987: 151) In a newspaper editorial in November 1938 Cormack relates a fracas with ‘a horrible-looking Italian’ outside St Mary’s Catholic Cathedral, concluding ‘that is just how those Italians love us as Protestants, so treat them accordingly and KEEP OUT OF THEIR SHOPS, boycott them and force them to go back to their BELOVED ITALY AND DUCE.’ (Gallagher 1987: 152)

For two narrators at least, Cormack was the personification of anti-Catholic sentiment:

You knew that you had to sort of keep away from going up to the Mound where, what was his name, Cormack always spoke anti-Catholic propaganda...He used to stand there and throw his fists and your mum always said "Now you walk away from the Mound, go up by the art gallery". (Interview with Gloria Bee)
Flora Gallo recalls Cormack coming into their fish and chip shop and calling her father an Italian Pape. (SA1999.31) Remo Catignani offers the following perspective on his childhood: 'I had more problem being a Catholic in Edinburgh as a boy than I did being Italian. Italian was synonymous with Catholicism, if you like. So we got more hassle, at least I did as a young boy, because we had to pass three schools to go to St. Thomas' and they were all Protestant schools.' (SA1997.108) Overall, narrators echoed the view put forward by an Italian Scot interviewed for the 1998 Peopling of Lanarkshire Exhibition: 'we were doubly disadvantaged being Italian and Catholics.'

**Street and school**

As I explained in the previous chapter, I did not set out with the remit to unearth evidence of anti-Italian prejudice and adhered to an open questionnaire. However, unsolicited memories of abuse would pour forth following simple questions such as "Which school did you go to?" Although I was aware from my husband, who still faced taunts of 'Wop' in the school playground of the 1970s, that the prejudice existed, I hadn’t anticipated the high levels of disaffection, and often anger, which emerged from life story narratives. Colpi pinpoints the morning of 11 June as a time when children of Italian origin 'faced agonising taunting at school.' She mentions one boy who was regularly beaten at school and picked upon as a 'Tally Bastard', 'Wog' and 'Ay-tie' concluding, 'It was in this way a generation of British Italians learned that it was not a good thing to be Italian and how it was better to "assimilate" or de-Italianise themselves.' (1991a: 111) Yet oral evidence, by revealing the extent

---

51 Angelo Valente of Coatbridge, also one of my respondents.
of pre-war prejudice towards Italians, highlights her fundamental error in presenting the war as the primary expression of anti-Italian hostility.

Although many interviewees shrugged off incidences of name calling and taunts - what Millar refers to as the ‘ever-present thorns’ of abuse (1998: 83) - to an astonishing degree respondents present similar pictures of a childhood blighted by feelings of difference and repeated exposure to harassment. Narrators recalled a catalogue of insults, ‘Macaroni’, ‘Tally’, ‘Eye-tie’ or ‘You eat worms’ (spaghetti) faced in the street and playground. In her fascinating study of childhood, Davin says there can be no doubt that ‘children whose physical appearance suggested foreign parentage were sometimes made to feel different or even inferior, whether (at best) by being patronized, or by being ridiculed, teased, insulted and bullied.’ (1996: 207)

A notable gender difference within narratives was the tendency of female respondents to focus on physical appearance as a key indicator of racial difference. References to their own skin or hair colour abounded within women’s narratives – ‘dark’, ‘sallow skinned’, ‘honey blond’ or ‘foreign looking;’ an emphasis summed up most explicitly by Carmen Demarco: ‘I was a fair-skinned, grey-eyed Italian so I didn’t stand out like a sore thumb. But the frizzy-haired, brown-eyed ones with the sallow skins they got really a lot of stick because they were obviously foreign.’ (SOE 65)

Another source of conflict for children of Italian origin was language. Farrell notes that amongst many immigrant families in Scotland, the Italian language ‘stopped being used at home very quickly.’ (1986: 48) Life story research with second
generation Italians in Edinburgh confirms that most Italian immigrants did not transmit their native language to their children, although many Italian Scots retain a basic understanding of regional dialect. This lack of transmission can be attributed to a number of inter-linked factors. Firstly I would argue there is a class distinction. Although the more successful immigrants could afford to send their children to Italy on regular holidays and were keen for their children to speak Italian, this was less of a priority for many immigrants simply struggling to survive. The only concerted attempts to encourage children to learn the Italian language were undertaken by the Fascio clubs in the inter-war period as part of their political remit to heighten the immigrants' identification with Italy and again, elite members of community were more likely to send their children to these classes. Essentially, however, an exacerbated sense of difference encouraged a desire to conform and speak the majority language. Elizabeth Di Ponio who grew up in the West Lothian mining community Whitburn explained: 'you daren't...you know, be a foreigner. Now it's a different thing with people going abroad but then, you weren't allowed to talk.' (SA1999.27) One narrator stressed how it was strictly 'taboo' to speak Italian in the public arena of the shop where Italian families spent most of their time, a feeling heightened during the xenophobic atmosphere of World War Two. (SA1997.101
Lawrence Boni.)

Davin points out that hostility towards children of different ethnic backgrounds could occur in school as well as out and could come from adults – 'teachers included' – as well as from children. (1996: 207) This chilling point is reflected within my research sample. Narratives reveal prejudicial views held not just amongst children but also
their parents, and even more remarkably, their teachers. Referring to her sample of London Board schools Davin points out that teachers had generally been raised to believe in British superiority with text books regularly presenting anglocentric images and information. She highlights how even ‘lightweight education material’ whilst ostensibly sympathetic ‘implied white and British superiority by trivializing and patronizing other peoples.’ (1996: 203) The Empire Day movement of the 1900s further encouraged schools to celebrate Britain’s imperial achievements. (1996: 201-2) Narratives which reveal a significant degree of hostility from their teachers are often framed around the idea of individual academic achievement being thwarted or resented by the teaching establishment. Alex Margiotta was born to Italian parents in 1921. His recollections of his schooldays are worth quoting extensively as they touch upon many issues raised by other respondents: a sense of second-class citizenship, of not belonging and, remarkably, of hostility from teaching staff:

I didn’t go to a Roman Catholic school but I was at Leith Academy. Leith Academy in those days was a fee-paying school. [...] It wasn’t a big fee-paying school but you had to buy your books and you had to pay per term. And I even felt...you could feel it there. Now a lot of the lads their fathers were in the civil service and they all had good jobs and here’s me - I’m an ice-cream man’s son. I think there was a big resentment amongst the teachers even and the only teachers who were understanding were the French teacher - Jenny Jamieson - she was mad over me. She was just absolutely daft over me. You know how teachers have favourites. I never invited any favouritism but I was good at French for instance. And the Geography teacher, he was very realistic and I think I’ve got a feeling that sometimes he maybe leaned over backwards to try and make me feel part of the - you know he might have gone over the edge just to make me feel sure that I was amongst the crowd sort of thing. But the rest of the teachers had a very veiled - sometimes it wasn’t veiled - hostility because you were out of kilter being there. You were an embarrassment to them from the point of view that: here’s somebody whose father hasn’t been to the school and his sisters haven’t been and his brother’s not been. So you got stuck into St Andrew’s House. St Andrew’s House where all the dribs and drabs got stuck in. [...] And I was put into St Andrew’s House. We had the worse rugby team, we had the worst cricket team! [laughs] But it was there, even at that early age, I could discern it. They were definitely not pro-Italian. (SA1999.29)
Carmen Demarco, born in 1930, also mentions a perceived hostility from her teachers at an Edinburgh convent school:

Things were quite difficult there because the nuns really didn’t like the Italians and there were quite a few because Italians like to send their kids to a convent school. So they made things quite difficult for us and unfortunately, I was quite bright and I won every single prize that was going. And they used to give a book for everything. You’d come out with mountains of books. But they grudged giving me those prizes, it really hurt them that I had these prizes. So that by 1938, ’39 I was really unhappy at school and I got to the stage that I didn’t want to go. (SOE 63)

Dora, born in 1920 recalls her teacher Miss Barnett at St Ignatius school:

I was scared o’ her like mad. Well, we had all gone to the same school, all the sisters... “Oh she’s another Valente”...[WU] This is how it went, you see. [...] They just used to hammer you. She used to say, “Come out Tally-Anne.” She used to do this [mimics being pulled by the ear].

WU: The teacher?

Two narrators chose the annual school Burns competition, arguably the cultural embodiment of Scottish identity, to highlight their alienation both within the classroom and, arguably, the wider community. Margiotta attended St Margaret’s junior school:

Every year they used to have a Burns competition...it was a privately sponsored thing by the Burns Association. [...] Anyway I went in for this Burns competition and...I was off with the measles when the results came through...And I won the Burns competition you know...and the teacher had the class on their feet and she said, “You should be ashamed of yourself allowing a young Italian boy to beat you at your own national poet.” [...] It was the lads that told me when I went back to school. In their own way they put it over to me that the teacher wasn’t very happy that I had won the Burns competition. (SA1999.29)

Even Elizabeth Di Ponio, born in 1918 in Whitburn, one of the few narrators who dwelt almost universally on positive memories, recalls:
I was very good at Rabbie Burns when I was at school and one of the committee came in and said to my father - they used to have a competition every year - and they said, “Betty’s very good at the poetry and Rabbie Burns’ things. You’ll let her come?” And my father wouldn’t allow it. He said, “No”. He said, “If she won it it’d cause a lot of animosity.” In the wee village. So I wasn’t allowed. (SA1999.27)

Narrators also addressed memories of abuse from fellow school pupils in their life stories. Significantly male narrators tended not to dwell on this aspect of their childhood, presenting fights in the playground as part of their everyday reality and therefore unremarkable. Romeo Ugolini, who grew up in Armadale states, ‘We were always fighting. Had to fight all the time’ (SA1997.109) whilst Alex Margiotta remembers, ‘When I was at school it was always two blokes I had to fight, I never had to fight one bloke. It was always two.’ (SA1999.29) In contrast, women’s narratives were often detailed accounts imbued, in the present-day context of telling, with a sense of anger and defiance. For example, Miss P, born in 1923, recalls her unhappiness when she went to St Thomas’ school and suffered constant bullying from a group of girls:

There was a crowd that used to call me names because I was Italian...but then I beat them up! I was a wild cat at times. I couldn’t stand anybody calling me names, an Italian - I just couldn’t take it. That was as a child. I just hated it. They used to pull my hair but they were bullying everyone. There were a gang of them and I thought, “Well, I can’t fight the whole lot of them but I’ll wait.” I locked myself in the cloakroom and I knew that the head one, the girl that always pulled my hair and spat at me sometimes and things like that. I thought, “I’ve got to get her.” So I locked myself in. [...] I crouched there, waited until the door opened, the janitor went away and when she came in, I jumped out on her. I said, “Go on. Call me Italiani Macaroni now.” I said like this, “Go on!” She wouldn’t. “It’s not me, it’s the rest,” you know. “No, it’s you”. And I kept pushing her. I said, “Go on, hit me, hit me, hit me!” Because I wanted her to hit me first, you see. So she went to put her hand out to hit me and that was it! I tore her gym [slip] off...I pulled her hair, I scratched her, I kicked her. Really I was a wildcat. All my temper came out and I thought, “You’ll never do that to me again.” (SA1999.25)
Agnes Gillespie, who had an Italian father and was born in Alloa in 1925, presents a similar tale of physical retaliation from her school days in the early 1930s:

While I was at school I would get called, “Away you Italian so-and-sos. Away this and that.” But that never bothered, that’s never upset me. Then, because [laughs] I had really auburn hair – “Away you carrot-headed Tally something.” So, one day these lads came from the school on the left-hand side because their school was down there. We came down the left-hand side from our school, St. Mungo’s. So, I was coming down with my brother Francis who was very quiet and I have always really been an extrovert. [...] Well, this day going down from school, there were three of them. So, “Away wee Tally, carrot-headed, Papish, B-.” And I went, “Francis, hold my case a minute.” Took my blazer off and I really, honest to goodness, I don’t know where my strength came from but I leathered this lad. The other two ran away. (SA2002.058)

Yet female respondents were also more likely to dwell on the anxieties they felt as children of Italian origin. Mrs M, born in 1919, said that ‘you’d always that fear.’ She recalls her sister returning from school in tears after a friend announced, “My mummy said that I’m not to take your hand because you’re an Italian.” (SA1999.24)

The testimony of Dina Togneri, born in Irvine in 1928, by recalling her sense of ‘difference’ represents a common emphasis within women’s narratives of childhood:

When I was a little girl, I remember one time I was in hospital with diphtheria. I must have been about five or six and the matron, meaning it kindly, coming round with the doctor in the morning. “This is our little Italian girl” she said.

“I’m not Italian; I’m not Italian.” Children don’t want to be different. “Look at me, I’ve got tartan ribbons in my hair.” I made my mother bring the tartan ribbons in. I didn’t want to be Italian at all, no. (SA2002.064)

Other themes introduced in narratives were the sense of being second-class citizens and of being looked down on as ‘ice-cream people.’ A sense of exclusion could often be expressed in quite literal term as in not being invited into peoples’ homes. (Gloria
Bee; SA 1998.35 Renzo Serafini)52 Irene Politi who grew up during the war in the ‘one horse town’ of Loanhead on the outskirts of Edinburgh felt, as a third generation Italian, that ‘you weren’t brought into the community.’ Her narrative testifies to the resilience of the stereotypical and degrading views of Italians identified by Sponza:

Mum always used to give me a birthday party and it was to try and encourage the children to play with me because their parents had put thoughts into their heads that we were bad people. And they were dirty. That was another one that used to offend my mother, that the Italians were dirty. And you had to live that down. (SA2002.057)

Thus, overall, narratives reveal the extent of alienation and marginalisation experienced by Italian Scots growing up in the inter-war period, the ‘golden era’ of myth. (Colpi 1991a: 21) The pervading sense of displacement displayed in the narratives of Italian Scottish respondents is encapsulated in Mackie’s post-war play Gentle Like A Dove, when the Edinburgh-born Domenico declares:

I’ve been a’ my life amang Scotch folk. My pals are a’ Scotch frae the day I first toddled oot on the Leith Walk pavement...But when it comes to the bit I’m still an Italian, a Wop, a Tally, an ice-a-da-cream-a, chips no’ ready, come back eight o’ clock. I’ve had that flung in my teeth till I was seek-tired since I was that high. These things leave their mark. Ye canna help it. (1952: 12)

**The Abyssinian War**

In the years approaching World War Two there was increasing hostility towards Italians immigrant communities due to the Abyssinia War. Graves and Hodge note how feeling in Britain ran high against Italy at this time: ‘Atrocity stories were printed: the use of poison gas and the deliberate bombing of hospitals and ambulances...The Left in England held protest meetings and formed committees to

52 See also Pieri (1997:4)
organise bazaars in aid of the Abyssinians.' (1971: 322) Italian Scot Pieri, who grew up in Glasgow, acknowledges that Italy’s invasion of Abyssinia and intervention in the Spanish Civil War ‘had created a wave of ill feeling against Italy in the general population. The childhood taunts of “dirty wee Tally” had given way to more frequent, forceful and insulting remarks about my nationality from some of the more drunken and belligerent types who made up a good percentage of our night-time clientele.’ (1997: 8) Alex Margiotta identified Abyssinia as the time when ‘things started going bad for the Italians’ in Edinburgh with the boycotting of Italian businesses, including his father’s shop in the deprived district of Abbeyhill:

the papers had a lot of adverse articles about the Italians and all this and what they were doing in Abyssinia. Of course the people were “Oh aye” and they reacted in that manner and consequently things were pretty bad. When we’re talking about a happeney cone and a penny cone and a tuppenny packet of Woodbines. You can’t keep a family going if you don’t sell something...So my dad got rid of the shop and he was out with the tricycle, selling ice-cream with a tricycle. (SA1999.29)

Carmen Demarco also identifies the Abyssinian crisis as the first occasion of explicit hostility towards her, linking this to a pre-existent sense of not belonging:

In 1937 it must have been - '37, '38 I'm not sure about the date - one of the girls in my class had a birthday party and everybody in the class was invited, except me. It was because I was an Italian and the parents didn't approve of what was happening in [Abyssinia]...so I never went to the party. That was the first time that it suddenly dawned on me that there was something different about me. Also, we used to have pasta on a Sunday and my mother always used to say, "You didn't have pasta today. When anybody asks you at school what you had for your Sunday dinner, you had roast beef and Yorkshire pudding or roast chicken or something. You must never tell people that you eat macaroni.

Life story testimonies undeniably show how wartime events occurred within a context of subtle racism and hostility towards Italian immigrants in Edinburgh and prevalent anti-alien prejudice. However, after years of intermittent, low level
hostility, Italians in Scotland were still largely unprepared for the onslaught of violence and aggression which broke out following Mussolini’s declaration of war.

**Wartime Discourse – Cowards and Fifth Columnists**

The outbreak of war between Italy and Britain led to two separate but related developments which converged to further heighten a sense of ‘not belonging’ amongst Italian Scots. The wartime stereotyping of the Italians as racially inferior combined with the rhetoric of national unity fostered both a sense of marginalisation and, perhaps more significantly, a sense of disaffection amongst the children of Italian immigrants. The organisers of a US exhibition, *Una Storia Segreta* exploring the wartime experiences of the Italian American community point out that the prejudice which had long attached to Italian-ness ‘concentrated its venom’ during the war. (Distasi 1994:3) In the UK the identification of Italians as enemy aliens led to similar problems, with ‘intense Italophobia pervading public discourse during the 1939-45 war years.’ (Fortier 2000: 23)

The construction and articulation of a strong sense of national identity and belonging was central in the war years – it was a time when Britain pulled together to defeat the Nazi enemy; its ‘Finest Hour’. (Calder 1991; Noakes 1998; Rose 2003). As Rose states, ‘The idea that the British were one people fighting a people’s war dominated popular culture.’ (2003: 21) World War Two was a time when the idea of “we” and “them” was most powerfully defined but ‘the articulation of a unitary British national identity inevitably raised the question of who was included and who was excluded. (Rose 2003: 2) The wartime rhetoric of being ‘in it together’ held little resonance for Italian Scots many of whom, as we will see in the following chapters, witnessed their
parents being appallingly treated by the State. Indeed, personal narratives indicate significant levels of disaffection and detachment from wartime constructions of nationhood, even amongst veterans.

Traditional stereotypes of Italians as dark, dirty and servile were now joined by accusations of treachery, cowardice and martial inadequacy, coalescing to form a dominant image of Italians as racially inferior. As Sponza records, when Italy officially became an enemy, ‘the plugs on any restraint in belittling the Italians were pulled...most popular papers resorted to the ‘monkey’ and ‘Wop’ labels with reference to Italians partly because ridiculing the enemy is morale-boosting, and partly because those were conventional expressions to connote the Italians. A battery of old mocking stereotypes was there to be used.’ (1996: 140) A prime example is the ditty coined by right-wing author A P Herbert when Italian planes were first spotted over London during the blitz:

    SOCK THE WOPS, and knock their blocks
    Sock the Wop, until he crocks;
    Slosh the Wop because he’s mean;
    WASH the Wop – he isn’t clean. (Quoted in Calder 1996: 489)

Articles from the Scottish press at that time expose the high levels of jingoism and racial stereotyping prevalent at the outset of the war; The Scotsman referring to captured Bersaglieri troops in Athens as ‘chattering amongst themselves like monkeys.’ (TS 14.11.1940: 5) Even comic strips of the time pilloried the Italian enemy, ‘Musso the Wop’ being a figure of fun for the Beano comic. (Willan 2002)
As Sponza points out, ‘Drumming on about the poor fighting qualities of Italians was naturally the commonest reaction to Italy’s entrance into the war.’ (1996: 142) Mass-Observation carried out an investigation on the attitudes to the Italians just before Italy entered into the war and received responses such as ‘yellow’ or ‘rotten fighters’. (Sponza 1996: 141) Most famously, the Minister of Information, Duff Cooper made a provocative radio broadcast on 10 June utilising the Caporetto myth of Italian cowardice and incompetence:

Germany is no more likely to win the war with the assistance of Italy than she was without it. On the contrary, it is more than likely that Italy will prove a liability rather than an asset: as indeed she proved to her Allies in the last war when, after the disgraceful flight of the Italian Army at Caporetto, the British and French had to dispatch troops at great inconvenience to themselves in order to restore the position in Italy and put back some courage in the hearts of the Italians. (TS 11.6.1940:5)

Longmate refers to the popular wartime dance step The Tuscanella ‘supposedly based on the Italians’ way of fighting, i.e. one step forward, two steps back.’ (2002: 422) Films produced two years later still played to this preconception of the Italians as inept fighters. Noel Coward’s 1942 epic In Which We Serve opens with two British sailors watching their enemy counterparts jumping from a torpedoed ship. One comments to the other:

- ‘I’ll lay you 10-1 they’re our Germans. Never get the Macaronis to tackle a dangerous job like that. Not for love nor money.
- Go on, the Eyeties’ll do anything for money.
- Anything but fight. That’s why they were so lousy in the last war.

In the same year, Went the Day Well? directed by Alberto Cavalcanti, presents the Lady of the Manor asking a young boy in her care:

- Do you know what morale is?
- Yes. Something what the Wops ain’t got.
The idea of a ‘stab in the back’ from Mussolini was also widely picked up upon and fed into prejudices about the treachery of Italians. Duff Cooper saw it as ‘one of the vilest acts in history’; on the other side of the political fence, George Orwell recorded in his ‘War Diary’ for 12 June 1940, ‘the low-down, cold-blooded meanness of Mussolini’s declaration of war’ (1970: 394) arguing that it possibly turned even apolitical people against Italian residents in Britain. Ultimately, as Rose notes in relation to wartime anti-Semitism, stereotypes of the cowardly and ‘unmanly’ Jews (which were also employed about the Italians) were ‘feminising conceptions’ utilised to reinforce their inherent alienness and to reaffirm ‘the idea of the British as a manly nation, facing the enemy bravely and with a “stiff upper lip.”’ (2003: 98)

The period of the phoney war had been a difficult time for Italians living in Britain but the Fall of France in May 1940 and the emerging discourse of the ‘enemy within’ had devastating and far reaching consequences for the community. The Nazi’s ruthlessly efficient occupation of Norway and Denmark and the launch of its attack across the frontiers of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg alarmed the British government. The Joint Intelligence Committee which met on 2 May, concluded that German success in Norway and Denmark had been due to the subversive activities of a well-organised ‘fifth column’ and identified enemy aliens as a possible source of recruits for such activity in Britain. (Calder 1994: 77) Calls for the internment of all enemy aliens became more frequent; the Daily Mail and The Times systematically fostering anti-foreign feeling with inflammatory articles and misleading news items. (Lafitte 1988: 27) Calder notes how the evidence of a strong Fifth Column was taken
for granted in the very highest circles, pointing to Churchill’s speech on Dunkirk in which he spoke of ‘this malignancy in our midst.’ (1996: 134)

Italians were increasingly perceived as potential fifth columnists, the internal enemy. An article in the Edinburgh Evening News in May 1940, highlighting the existence of the Fasci abroad describes the Italians as the ‘biggest “Fifth Column” in the world. (Hopkins 1940) An edition of The War Illustrated breathlessly reports that ‘Italian medallions and other emblems which were recently scattered over London during air-raids appear to have been thrown by Italian pilots as an encouragement to the Italian Fifth Column!’ (27.9.1940: iii) On April 27 the Daily Mirror had launched the following diatribe against Italian immigrants in Britain:

The boats unloaded all kinds of brown-eyed Francescas and Marias, beetle-browed Ginos, Titos and Marios...Now every Italian colony in Great Britain and America is a seething cauldron of smoking Italian politics. Black Fascism. Hot as hell. Even the peaceful, law-abiding proprietor of the back-street coffee shop bounces into a fine patriotic frenzy at the sound of Mussolini’s name...We are nicely honeycombed with little cells of potential betrayal. A storm is brewing in the Mediterranean. And we, in our droning, silly tolerance are helping it to gather force. (Cited in Gilman (1980: 149)

As Irene Politi summarises: ‘We were Italians and the war was on and we were sort of like traitors.’ Others referred sourly to their mothers being relocated ‘in case she was a spy’ or because ‘she could have sent messages over the Forth.’ (SA1998.45 Gerald Cozzi; SA1999.24 Mrs M) Diana Corrieri recalls working in the family shop in the dark days of 1940, stating that ‘people that were frightened to associate with you […] in case they thought you were a fifth columnist.’ (SA2002.065)
At a War Cabinet Meeting on 15 May to discuss the fifth column danger, ‘Italians and British subjects of Italian origin’ were at the top of a list of potential fifth columnists. (Sponza 2000a: 95) Historian Gianfranco Cresciani makes the interesting point that in Australia, the population were more concerned about the activities of the Italian community than those carried out by German migrants because of ‘the suspicion, intolerance and even animosity’ that had characterised their behaviour towards Italians in the inter-war period. (1992: 12)

**Conclusion**

In Mackie’s neglected play *Gentle Like A Dove*, set in Edinburgh, the character Domenico declares, ‘I ken fine I was born here in this very stair, and a’ my life I’ve been here and a’ the rest of it. But I’m never really accepted.’ (1952: 12) This sense of ‘difference’ articulated in Mackie’s script was a key feature of the personal reminiscences quoted above and is crucial to a deeper understanding of the impact of the war on second and third generation Italians in Scotland. Narratives reveal that the hostility faced by Italian Scots during the war built upon a sense of not ‘belonging’ which had already been well-forged in childhood. Essentially, as Mass Observation records, the scorn poured on the Italians by various opinion makers on 10th of June 1940, ‘put a stamp of official approval upon already existing prejudice and contempt.’ (Quoted in Sponza 1996: 143)

Of course, as Brewster notes, ‘history is a fluid story…it changes with the age in which it is told.’ (1999: 4) Inevitably, those interviewed were viewing their childhood through the prism of ferocious wartime antagonism. Whilst analysing the
interview texts, I have often asked myself whether narrators conferred incidences of racism retrospectively into accounts of their childhood in light of what happened during the war. However, whilst the war undoubtedly influences recall, even those respondents I would categorise as having more positive wartime memories (for example, those who remembered the war as a time of courtship) included childhood incidences of hostility in their narratives. It is, however, worth acknowledging that the interviews took place at a time when the discourse of racial discrimination was widely understood and there was a general understanding of the historic mistreatment of immigrant groups in Britain. This increased awareness of racism possibly gave respondents the confidence to relate incidences of verbal and physical abuse in their childhood which in an earlier era they may have suppressed.
Chapter Four

June 1940 – Restrictions, Arrests and Riots

As Kushner crucially notes, ‘the attitude of the State is perhaps the most vital factor affecting the well being of a religious or racial minority.’ (1989: 134) Unfortunately, World War Two would see, in Fortier’s words, ‘the uneven process through which Italians encountered the violences of the British state.’ (2000: 93) During the war, the national discourse of defending Britain’s freedom was fundamentally undermined by Britain’s heavy-handed actions against Italian citizens in its midst. Even before Italy declared war, Italian nationals were subject to a barrage of alien restrictions and regulations controlling their movements. Once war was declared between the two countries, the government began to implement its policy of internment, deportation and relocation of Italian nationals and the detention of some British-born Italians. Coinciding with the rolling out of internment policy was the outbreak of anti-Italian riots across Britain which, due to their ferocity, are remembered as ‘signalling the beginning of a distinct period in Italian historicity.’ (Fortier 2000: 55) Whilst as a researcher I was keen to explore all six years of the war from the Italian Scottish perspective, I realise on analysis of interview texts that in fact many respondents remained rigidly fixed on the events of the summer of 1940. This period is remembered with such intensity because Italian Scottish families were left in no doubt as to where they stood.
Kushner argues that the key factors determining the scale and nature of the riots were the parameters set by the government and state. He believes that the immediate rolling out of an internment policy, by fomenting anti-Italian sentiment, undoubtedly ‘gave a sense of legitimacy and even respectability to the rioters.’ (2004: 183) Curiously, however, dominant discourse glides over full discussion of the riots and their impact on Italian immigrant families. Relying exclusively on newspaper sources, Sponza asserts that, ‘The nasty experience some shopkeepers had on 10 and 11 June left only few traces on the collective memory of the Italians in Britain, and virtually all – understandably – in Scotland. This is partly because that memory was overshadowed by the more widespread and dislocating trauma of internment, and the connected tragedy of the sinking of the Arandora Star.’ (1996: 147) This conclusion, following the usual emphasis of communal myth, is flawed on a number of counts. Most fundamentally, it misinterprets the true nature of the riots and downplays their long-term impact on the lives of those who witnessed them. Oral testimony enables us to recover a more in-depth depiction of the rioting, its impact on those who lived through it and more importantly, its long-term psychological repercussions. As one Italian Scot correspondent made clear to the Scottish Home and Health Department at the time: ‘it was one big blow on top of another.’53 This chapter will look at the restrictions faced by Italian nationals in Edinburgh, memories of the arrests of June 1940 and the violent anti-Italian riots. Narratives not only expose the fear, terror and anxiety of those days but also uncover a previously unexpressed sense of anger and outrage.

53 NAS HH055/5. Letter from Mrs Frances Valente 4 June 1943.
Restrictions

Even before the outbreak of war between Italy and Britain, Italian nationals, as aliens, were faced with a barrage of restrictions and regulations. From May 12 1940, under Article 11 of the Aliens Order 1920, all male aliens were subject to a curfew, had to report daily to the police and could not make use of any private motor vehicle or bicycle. (EEN 13.5.1940: 1) As the local newspaper noted: ‘The “curfew” will no doubt affect a number of Italian shopkeepers in the city and elsewhere, and it is stated by the police that such shopkeepers will require to be at their homes between the curfew hours – eight at night and six in the morning. It does not mean that they can close at eight and then go home for any alien seen in the street after that hour will be arrested.’ (EEN 13.5.1940: 4) For the 13 year old Miss A, the imposition of the curfew and other restrictions were the first signs that something ominous was about to happen to her family:

We weren’t allowed to have a radio in the house…And my father had to be in, there was a curfew for him. He had to be in the house at eight o’clock. So, bits and pieces, you know that you…a few bits and pieces leading up to it, you realised there was something…something up. (SA1998.27)

When Italian nationals graduated from alien to ‘enemy alien’ status, the Edinburgh Evening News of 12 June helpfully reminded them that: ‘They should report immediately to the nearest police station of the district in which they are registered.’ The extant Aliens Order 1920 covered numerous transgressions such as failure to produce an Aliens Registration certificate or failure to notify of a change of address with additional regulations introduced such as the Aliens (Wireless Apparatus Restriction) Order 1940 which made it illegal for aliens to have a wireless.54 There

54 As wirelesses contained valve amplifiers it was felt that the equipment could be used to transmit information to ‘the enemy’. (Cocozza 1987: 237)
was even a Home Office Order requiring aliens of all nationalities to surrender all maps and guidebooks by 9 July 1940. (EEN 9.7.1940: 5) Under the Aliens (Protected Areas) (No.5) Order 1940, Scotland was divided into five geographic Protected Areas, Edinburgh and Fife coming under the jurisdiction of the Firth of Forth. The effect of these orders was that ‘no foreigner can enter into, or reside in, any area declared to be a Protected Area without the written permission of the Chief Constable.’ Italian nationals who had not been arrested in the police round up, mainly women and older Italians, were issued with relocation notices abruptly ordering them to remove themselves and their families beyond Edinburgh’s borders within 72 hours. Italians were now literally, as well as figuratively, pushed to the boundaries of belonging. One respondent has kept the letter sent to her Edinburgh-born mother from the Edinburgh Police Aliens Department. Dated 28 June 1940 it states that she was ‘required to take immediate steps to remove from this area, and that if you are found in this area after the expiry of three days from the date of this notice, steps will be taken to enforce the Order against you.’ The rhetoric of The Scotsman encapsulates this new mood of intimidation with its declaration that all protected areas were to be ‘cleared’ of enemy aliens. (TS 14.6.1940: 4) Significantly, in interviews, respondents adopted this vocabulary of exclusion, remembering their parents being ‘bunged out’ or having ‘to clear out’ of Edinburgh. (SOE 63 Carmen Demarco; SA1998.30 John Costa) A significant number of respondents said that the authorities ‘took’ their mothers. Alex Margiotta, who served in the British Army, refers to his elderly parents’ relocation to Carfin as them being ‘shunted out of the town.’

55 National Archives HO 213/1750. The other areas were Tay, Clyde, North Scotland, Orkney and Shetland.
56 On marriage to an Italian, she acquired Italian nationality.
they were given summary notice to quit the town within a certain time. It wasn’t a very fair thing they did to them but again it just bears out what I’ve been saying to you about the anti-Italian feeling that there was. (SA1999.29)

Remembering the arrests

MI5 had compiled a list of 1,500 Italians, referred to as ‘desperate characters’ or ‘professing Fascists’, based largely on the membership lists of the Fasci clubs which had formed across the United Kingdom to strengthen ties between Italian immigrants and the Italian Fascist government. As an indication of ‘hostile’ intent towards Britain, this list was deeply flawed. Sponza writes that a war cabinet meeting on 11 June, ‘hammered out’ a policy on Italians, agreeing to the immediate seizure of 1,500 Italians identified by MI5 as desperate characters and, subsequently, all male Italians aged between 16 and 70 with less than 20 years’ residence in Britain. (1993: 126)57

There is a suggestion by Colpi that arrests were proportionately higher in Scotland and in small towns. Although she does not provide any statistical information, she writes that ‘Outside London the ‘round-up’ was a very much more detailed and thorough operation. This was particularly true for small towns with only a few Italian families where local police knew them and where to find them.’ (1993a: 174) She also points out that the Home Office commissioner sent to Canada to review internees’ cases found that ‘many of the internees had strong Scottish accents and concluded that the Scottish police had interpreted their instructions more vigorously than in England.’ (1991a: 124) Sponza agrees that the rounding up of male Italians ‘was carried out fairly swiftly, but with unequal zeal and some confusion throughout

57 See Chapter Five for more information on internment.
the country.' (1993: 127) In Edinburgh, as the Evening News records: 'As soon as instructions for the round up were received at Edinburgh Police Headquarters nearly 100 motor cars were brought into service and over 200 police officers combed the city.' (EEN 11.6.1940: 5) According to Gallagher 'one well known delicatessen owner' felt that the Edinburgh police had handled the round up of Italians badly, with their rigid interpretation of Home Office instructions resulting in Italians being removed from their homes just as feelings against them were reaching fever pitch. (1987: 151) This viewpoint appears to be supported by local government records and personal testimony. In personal recollections, traumatic accounts of fathers being removed by the police are intertwined with memories of their shops and businesses being under attack. The fathers of twenty five respondents were interned and many, especially women, gave vivid first-hand accounts of their arrests.

One of the ways in which female narrators transmitted their sense of shock at the arrests was to focus on the humiliating treatment meted out by the arresting CID officers, in particular their search for arms, underlining their parents' status as potential traitors and spies. As Mrs D recalls:

I remember they came to lift my father and my father had a bronchial cough – which my mother said was to blame because of the open air in the rain in Italy. I remember he used to suck these Victory lozenges and I remember filling a little tin with them and handing them to my father to take away with him and I spoke to him in Italian which was a habit. And I remember the detective saying, “Speak English if you don’t mind!” I said, “Good God, I’m only telling him that I’m giving him his cough sweets.” But, very officious, you know and these were detectives in plain clothes. (SA1998.061)

Miss P broke down into tears when recalling the arrest of her father and the interview had to be temporarily suspended. She became upset when she remembered that ‘the
CID came for him with the revolver in their hand. And of course, I was screaming you know.' Later on in the interview, she returned to the arrest and, in particular, the behaviour of the police:

It wasn’t that they beat me up or anything or that. They just...I didn’t want to leave my father. I threw myself at my dad and of course naturally they pointed the gun at me and told me to move back. But I don’t think they would have used it on me. At the time I maybe thought they would but now when I think about it, they had to do their job. (SA1999.25)

Narratives of absence

Within my sample, the fathers of six women drowned on the _Arandora Star_ and another drowned when his boat returning from internment in Australia was torpedoed. The last time many of these respondents saw their fathers was when they were taken away during the riots. Many would employ the poignant image of their father disappearing down stairs or out of their shop to symbolise their irrevocable loss. For example, Diana Corrieri of Uphall recalls:

I was in my second year of High School when my father was arrested. They just came. He was in the chip shop frying fish and chips and they took him away in the dirty clothes he had on. The police came into the house; they searched the house, they even went under the linoleum. Lifted the linoleum to see if there was anything. They probably were looking for...thinking he was a spy or something, you know. Anyway, we didn’t see him again after that night. We just saw him going down the stairs in our house and that was the last we saw of him. (SA2002.065)

As Kate Darian-Smith has noted in her work on Australian women during the Second World War, despite their physical displacement, it was men who ‘provided the emotional focus for the women’s memories, and men’s actions during the war usually served as the catalyst and rationale for, as well as the resolution to, women’s behaviour and psychological dilemmas.’ (1996: 159) This was borne out to some
degree in my research sample, with narratives of absence particularly strong amongst those women whose fathers never returned. A frequent and poignant refrain throughout the narratives of those who lost fathers is that they ‘never saw him again.’ Rena Valente’s father drowned on the *Arandora Star*. Her recall of the night of his arrest emphasizes the permanency of her father’s absence:

What I remember distinctly about that night, you see, the men had to be in. There was a curfew. The men had to be in their homes by a certain time and in those days the shops were open quite late at night. So, I remember being in the shop in Lochend and the policemen came there to arrest my father. Of course, my mother says, “He’s at home.” And my aunt used to help, she was in the shop. So the police brought my mother home and my aunt locked up the shop and we walked down. So that, by the time I got home, of course, my father had gone. I didn’t even see him. (SA1998.63)

Eventually one respondent, Carmen, discovered that her father had been taken to a tented camp at Woodhouse Lea, Penicuik, guarded by soldiers. The sense of ‘vanishing’ which pervades many accounts is encapsulated in this extract from Carmen’s interview, reinforced by the fact that those she mentions died on the *Arandora Star*:

We were allowed to go out – I think it was every Sunday – to visit father and my mother used to bake ham and egg pie and this that and the other and we’d get the bus at St Andrew’s Square because she couldn’t drive and out we would go to the Woodhouse Lea, to visit father. And that bus was full of Italian women going out because you only had, I think it was an hour and then you had to get back again... And then, not long afterwards, we went out this Sunday and the place was deserted. The camp was empty; the tents were empty, there was no one about. Oh my God, I’ll never forget it. She went absolutely frantic. There was nobody even to ask. So all the women came back home and you were frightened to use the phone. My mother used to be very scared to use the phone because she thought they could be listening in to what we were saying. And so we, Aunt Connie – of course her husband had been very high up in the Fascisti thing in Edinburgh so he’d gone off very early. She was frantic because she hadn’t heard from him for weeks and he hadn’t been at Woodhouse Lea. He had disappeared totally. And Alfonso had disappeared. My uncle Zio Lorenzo Demarco had disappeared, another lovely man and nobody knew where they were. (SOE 63)
The filmmaker Enrico Cocozza, who grew up in Wishaw, makes the astute observation that whilst the tragedy of the *Arandora Star* made widows of many Italian women, it was difficult for them to be reconciled to their loss ‘in the strangely embarrassing atmosphere of subjection in which they found themselves as enemy aliens.’ (1987: 238) It was the same for their children. Indeed, the devastation caused by these swift arrests, the *Arandora Star* deaths and the need to internalise their grief had a particularly traumatic effect on this age cohort. (Colpi 1991a: 110) Responding to questions at the close of the twentieth century, some female interviewees were still unable or unwilling to discuss these events in any depth. Their recollections would often become stilted or monosyllabic and it was sometimes too painful for respondents to address the removal of their fathers in any detail:

WU: Can I ask you about 1940? And the 10th of June...can you remember what happened that night?
MA: [Pause] Yes, I remember two detectives came up and took my father away.
WU: Really?
MA: Yes. Never, never saw him again...
WU: Because, Y[-] told me you lost him on the *Arandora Star*?
MA: Yes. (SA1998.27)

Benedetta Matrundola was reluctant to talk about her father’s internment on the Isle of Man and repeatedly skimmed over it. The following is a typical exchange:

WU: Can you remember him actually going away?
BM: Going away? Well, I was only about five years old at the time. I know there were plenty tears shed for him anyway... It was a sad time really. They took them all to the Isle of Man. He said, I don’t think we’ll ever go back there for our holidays. Fancy it! And that’s it. Bad memories for them. It was sad. Well, I better have my cup of tea if you don’t mind. (SA1999.33)
Remembering the Riots

On the night of June 10 1940, the intermittent prejudice faced by Italian immigrant families in Scotland erupted into outright hostility. Panayi highlights the history of racial violence in modern Britain, pointing out that during the period 1840-1950, ‘no immigrant grouping in Britain has escaped attacks upon its persons and property.’ (1993: Preface) World War One, for example, witnessed two of the most widespread occurrences of racial violence: the attacks against Germans in May 1915 and the anti-black riots of 1919. Undoubtedly, however, the violence and ‘hatred’ that was unleashed overwhelmed Italian families who had lived in Britain for decades. (Colpi 1991a: 105) Sponza agrees that the anti-Italian riots which broke out across the UK were ‘particularly vicious’ in Scotland, with Edinburgh and Glasgow as the two main epicentres. (1996: 131)58 ‘Religious bigotry’, essentially the anti-Catholic sentiment stirred up by Cormack’s Protestant Action Society, is acknowledged as being partly responsible for the particular viciousness of the attacks in Edinburgh (Colpi 1991a: 105; Sponza 2000a: 86-7) Indeed, Gallagher reveals that the city’s Archbishop McDonald wrote to the Secretary of State of Scotland on June 25 1940, accusing Cormack of being behind the attacks stating, “A deliberate attempt to resuscitate the sectarian trouble, which caused such serious difficulties some years ago, is being again made in Edinburgh.”59 (1987: 152) Most attacks were concentrated in Leith where the Italian presence was most visible.60 The Edinburgh Evening News reports ‘an orgy of destruction’ in Leith Walk and Leith Street which:

58 Other areas affected were Greenock, Port Glasgow and Gourock (Colpi 1991a: 107)
59 In July the CID reported to the Scottish Office that no definite information could be obtained to support the Archbishop’s accusations. (Gallagher 1987: 152)
60 Edinburgh City Archives (ECA) D136. Anti-Italian Demonstrations 1940. Businesses in Granton, Tollcross, Fountainbridge, Stockbridge, Dalry, Abbeyhill, Gorgie, Niddrie and Portobello were also targets.
looked in places as if a series of heavy bombs had fallen. In Italian premises not a scrap of glass remaining in single or double windows: furniture broken; window frames and dressings destroyed and, in a number of cases, the cigarette machines at the entrances damaged beyond repair. (EEN 11.6.1940: 5)

In the immediate aftermath of the riots, the Chief Constable reported that 103 shops and two houses were damaged and at least eighteen shops looted.\(^6^1\) In Leith, hostile crowds of up to 2000 people gathered. (EEN 11.6.1940: 5) The press highlighted the extensive looting of goods as well as the destruction of fixtures and fittings – in one fish restaurant, the counter was overturned and ‘the frying stove considerably damaged.’ One attack of arson at Antigua Street was recorded whilst a car and two Morris Cowley ice cream vans were destroyed in a Granton garage.\(^6^2\) Around sixteen people were treated in hospital for minor injuries sustained during the demonstrations, including three women who received treatment for head injuries caused by stones. (TS 11.6.1940: 6) Eighteen men appeared at Edinburgh Burgh Court the following day charged with offences relating to the anti-Italian disturbances; the most serious offenders, charged with behaving in a disorderly manner and assaulting policemen, received £2 fines with the option of 20 days imprisonment. Five juveniles were also ordered to appear before the Juvenile Court. (EEN 11.6.1940: 5)\(^6^3\)

*The Scotsman* was keen to point out that, ‘The occupants of some of the shops were British subjects. The proprietor of one well-known restaurant whose premises were among the most seriously damaged in the city, fought throughout the last war in the

---

\(^6^1\) ECA D136. Letter to the Lord Provost from the Chief Constable of Edinburgh 11 June 1940

\(^6^2\) ECA D136. Letter to Town Clerk from Sterling Craig Solicitors on behalf of Michael Gallo 30 August 1940.

\(^6^3\) See also ECA Burgh Court Records June 1940
ranks of a Scottish regiment. Another man, whose premises were subjected to considerable damage, is understood to have two sons at present on active service in the Black Watch.' (12.6.1940: 5) The apparently indiscriminate nature of the attacks is confirmed by legal correspondence with Edinburgh Corporation which show that a number of claimants with targeted shops were naturalised64 and some British-born.65 However, as Rose stresses in relation to wartime anti-Semitism and attitudes towards Jews, at a time of crisis, formal citizenship matters far less than national identity: ‘In World War II Jews, regardless of their status as citizens or refugees, were aliens. At least during this period of British history, race signalled by visual signs meant unalterable, unassimilable cultural difference.’ (2003: 103) When war with Italy broke out, Italians in Edinburgh, regardless of their status and years of residency, were shown to be irrevocably the ‘other.’

Edinburgh City Archives hold a significant number of documents relating to the riots, mainly in the form of legal writs served against the Town Clerk of Edinburgh Corporation. They provide a revealing insight into the terror of that night. A typical scenario of 10 June is recorded in a Condescendence issued on behalf of Paul Coppola and Sons of 73 Leith Street:

In the enforced absence of other partners Miss Yolanda Coppola who was in charge was unable to do anything to resist the threatening attitude of the crowd. She sent for Police protection but in reply only one Constable could be sent as others were engaged on special duty throughout the City. This officer apparently recognising the hopelessness of resisting the crowd was

64 ECA D136. For example, in a letter to the Town Clerk, G Campanile of Broughton Street states that he had been a British subject since 1913 and was an ex-solider of the 4th Dragoon Guards. 23 April 1942
65 ECA D136. Comillon, Craig & Thomas, acting for the Pompa Trustees, state that both Albert and George Pompa of Leith whose shops were attacked ‘are British-born subjects and served in the British Army throughout the last War. Their Father came over to this country about 1880.’ Letter to the Town Clerk, 26 June 1940.
unable to do anything to stop it and sent the said Miss Coppola home in a taxi to prevent physical violence to her person. The crowd displayed a violence calculated to cause alarm. The said crowd smashed the windows, door, illuminated signs, fittings and fixtures and stole Stock.  

Under Section 10 of the Riotous Assemblies (Scotland) Act 1822 local authorities were liable for loss and damages caused by the acts of ‘any unlawful, riotous or tumultuous assembly of persons’ and individual claimants could raise actions against the Town Clerk. However, applicants had to claim within one month of the date of the damage, as prescribed under sec.15 of the Act. As civil servants at the Scottish Home and Health Department acknowledged, ‘the probability is that most of the claims will fail because of this provision’ and indeed, due to this loophole, Edinburgh Corporation was able to dismiss many genuine claims. Due to the devastating nature of successive events surrounding the night of 10 June, numerous people were either too traumatised to sort out their business affairs in time or were physically absent from Edinburgh and unable to institute proceedings against the Town Clerk. Following the police round-up, the remaining Italian nationals were ordered to remove themselves from the ‘protected area’ of Edinburgh. Circumstances were further complicated by the Arandora Star disaster; the legal process becoming stalled as grieving widows attempted to establish proof of death.  

Ultimately, although the police reported 125 cases of attacks on Italian shops in Edinburgh, just 77 claims were intimated to the Town Clerk and only 55 actions raised. The total sum claimed reached £9883 with one of the highest individual settlements granted to

---

66 ECA D136 Paul Coppola & Sons Condescendence
67 NAS HH055/5. 'Riots': Representations and general papers concerning the operation of the Riotous Assemblies Act (S), 1822, particularly compensation claims arising from Anti-Italian disturbances 1940-1943.
69 ECA D136.
Pompa’s Trustees, of Leith, who received £1150.\textsuperscript{70} It would appear from correspondence held in Edinburgh City Archives that those families who had financial access to legal assistance made the most successful claims; others clearly struggled to process their claims. Records held at National Archives Scotland contain extensive correspondence from one Edinburgh-born woman, Mrs Frances Valente, who found herself in dire financial straits due to the destruction of her shop during the riots, her relocation and her Italian husband’s death on the Arandora Star:

My grievance is that goods which were destroyed and stolen are being paid off the estate. My solicitor tells me that there will be very little left for me and my children. Apart from all this my shop which was left all smashed up never opened again, and as things went I received no compensation.... With payments, rates, taxes all still running liable on the shop, but with no income, I am somewhat in a dilemma as to what to do.\textsuperscript{71}

This highlights another neglected aspect of the riots – the differing experiences within the Italian community depending on class and wealth. Whilst those with financial access to lawyers were more likely to gain compensation, many others went under.

\textbf{The Myth of the Mob}

The destruction of Italian shops was a terrifying experience for Italian families. Many of those I interviewed witnessed the riots at first hand as they usually lived above or next door to their business premises. In many cases the shops were vandalised beyond recognition with premises soiled and stock looted or destroyed.

\textsuperscript{70} ECA D136 Correspondence from Cormillon, Craig & Thomas, acting for the Pompa Trustees 3 September 1942. As way of comparison, Hamilton Town Council paid out £4070. Daily Record (13.5 1942)

\textsuperscript{71} NAS HH055/5. Copy of letter to Ernest Brown MP 11 September 1941.
What emerges most strikingly from narratives is the sheer terror of events—the fact that women were often left alone to face the rioters, their husbands or fathers having been arrested and taken away. Yet amazingly these riots have been downplayed in Anglo-Italian historiography and dealt with rather summarily. For example, Farrell implies that the anti-Italian riots in Greenock were just one of the wartime’s ‘unpleasant incidents’. (1983) In similar vein, former internee Monsignor Rossi makes the spectacular claim in his memoirs, ‘the number of shops attacked was not anything like what could have been if the Italians had been really unpopular; there were cases of smashing windows, but as usual in this event the rowdy elements took advantage of the situation, not because they were really anti-Italian, but as a good opportunity to give vent to their vandalistic and unsocial feelings.’ (1992: 67) Both Sponza and Colpi’s accounts rely heavily on contemporary Scottish newspaper reports, leading to a detached, and somewhat flawed, interpretation of the riots. This misinterpretation functions on three key levels: it asserts that the riots did not actually reflect anti-Italian xenophobia; that they were carried out by a hooligan ‘mob’; and that they were usually of only one or two night’s duration. Sponza argues that the rioting was primarily carried out by youths in socially deprived areas, pointing out that the worst area for severe unemployment in Edinburgh was Leith where Italian shopkeepers bore the brunt of the violence. This line of argument leads him to deduce that ‘the intensity of the violence was less related to the number of Italian shops, and Italian presence generally, than it was to the economic and socially depressed conditions.’ (1996: 138) Overall, he stresses, the anti-Italian disturbances

72 The possibility of a political dimension to riots, with the identification of some Italians as blackshirt fascisti has never been addressed and is certainly worthy of further study. Limited anecdotal evidence suggests this was the case in Aberdeen where the local communist party was apparently involved in the attacks. Personal communication with Dr Graham Smith, University of Sheffield.
should be viewed as part of the ‘serious social difficulties’ experienced by wartime Britain such as black market racketeering and post-air raid looting and thus draws the surprising conclusion that, ‘the anti-Italian disturbances were not an exceptional phenomenon and its xenophobic connotations appear to have been rather restrained.’ (1996: 146) This conclusion fundamentally misses the point, made by Allport in his classic work on ethnic prejudice, that riots are rarely isolated events but are invariably preceded by a period of prolonged and verbal hostility. Essentially, to precipitate one of the most violent expressions of ethnic prejudice, ‘There must also be a prepared ground of previous hostility and well-formed ideas concerning the “menace” of the particular group that is attacked.’ (1955: 60) Cesarani makes a similar point when discussing the 1919 anti-black riots in Cardiff and Liverpool arguing that while each incident ‘had its own aetiology’, it would be wrong to localize these occurrences and thus foreclose an understanding of the riots as a part of the universal phenomenon of anti-alienism. (1993: 38) Thus the anti-Italian riots need to be viewed firmly within the wider tradition of anti-alienism in Britain and seriously addressed as an expression of British racism.

This desire to downplay or understate the xenophobia of the rioters within Anglo Italian historiography is a crucial failure, leading to a tendency to misinterpret the cultural significance of the riots and to negate the long-term personal and psychological impact on those who lived through them. Twenty two respondents referred to the riots, of whom ten had direct eyewitness experience of intense.

---

73 This rather bizarre statement is not repeated in his book (2000a).
74 Colpi does, at least, emphasise the terrifying nature of the attacks. (1991a:107)
Oral evidence offers a fresh and more challenging insider perspective on the riots with personal narratives, exposing one of the most suppressed or neglected aspects – the fact that it was often customers, neighbours, and even friends involved in the attacks.

One of the most enduring aspects of communal myth is that the riots were carried out by a faceless ‘hooligan’ mob. MP Thomas Johnston, the Regional Commissioner for Civil Defence in Scotland, issued a statement in which he strongly deprecated the ‘mob violence’ witnessed in Edinburgh. (TS 12.6.1940:5) This phraseology has been absorbed and repeated both in contemporary press reports and subsequently in historiography. Even Sponza, who has produced excellent work on anti-Italian prejudice in nineteenth century Britain (1988), employs the term ‘mob rage’ when analysing the 1940 riots. (1996: 144) Although Colpi acknowledges that it was ‘not always the case’ that the rioters comprised ‘the local hooligan element’, she persists in employing the term ‘mobsters and looters’ to describe those involved (1991a: 108). In his interview with MacDougall, Pia stresses, ‘It was not patriotism or anti-Italianism. It was – pinch what you can: hooligans and looters, but nothing national about it.’ (MacDougall 1995: 337) Ultimately, these continual references to hooligans and thugs serve to depersonalise the events of June 1940 by portraying the Italians as victims of an indefinable ‘mob’. Here the myth functions to offer a reassuring interpretation of events, negating the personal and profoundly unsettling nature of the attacks. Personal testimony, such as the following extract from an interview with Mrs M, is crucial in exposing the most chilling aspect of the attacks:

25 Other respondents mentioned more minor incidences such as broken windows or shop blackout curtains being knifed.
the fact that it was often customers, neighbours and even friends involved in the rioting as opposed to the faceless 'mob' of communal discourse:

One night I was in the shop and I heard an awful noise - people shouting and bawling. I thought, 'What the Dickens is going on?'...I went to the front shop and stood there and the next minute all these people surrounded the shop. Italy had declared war. And the next minute, there was a brick through my window...and my best friend with a clothes basket, taking all the sweeties out my window. Yes! And a week previous to that she'd borrowed a dress from me for a dance. I always remember that dress - I know it to this day.

At a later stage in the interview, Mrs M returns again to this memory:

It was awful, an awful experience. I mean I went to school with these girls, I went to church with them, they were my friends! And yet, in a crisis like that, they stood and took all my sweeties and cigarettes out of the window. I couldn't understand it and to this day, I can see them... (SA1999.24)

One of the most terrifying and destabilising aspects of the riots for respondents was that their families were being attacked by those with whom they interacted on a daily basis, had built up relations over decades and upon whom they depended for their livelihood. As Darian Smith points out in relation to Australia, the high level of Italians who were self employed in catering or commercial ventures meant that many were economically dependent on the local community as customers and were therefore ‘particularly vulnerable to anti-alien sentiment after Italy sided with Germany in June 1940.’ (Darian Smith 1990: 74) One respondent who experienced the riots in Irvine76 recalled the shock she felt hearing her neighbours ‘rampaging downstairs’ in the family shop. The hugely dislocating impact of the riots, which reverberate long after the night itself, was evident as she recalled an incident that occurred when she returned to the family shop after a year’s relocation:

76 At least ten Italian shops in Irvine were attacked and looted. NAS HH055/5 Letter from the Chief Constable of Ayrshire 13 November 1940.
I remember a wee girl coming into the shop to buy fish and chips and she was wearing a jumper of mine... I knew it was mine because my mother made up her own patterns and it was green and white. It was pale green and white with a wee green collar, a hand knitted jumper. I just thought to myself, that child is wearing my jumper. Up until then, I'd never realised that maybe it had been her father or her brother or something that was one of the [looters]. Because when they smashed the shop, we had some living quarters in the back. The house where we slept and everything was upstairs but we had a sort of second room, our kitchen, downstairs and this jumper had been in the washing obviously and had been among the things that they had broken into and stolen. And I knew that that was my jumper. That really was something else. It wasn’t the child’s fault because the child didn’t know where the jumper had come from but I knew it was mine because it had been hand knitted and made to my mother’s own pattern [...] That was quite disturbing. (SA2002.064)

The sense of trauma and bewilderment evident in Dina’s testimony is a common feature amongst narratives. Another female respondent reluctantly confirmed that customers had been involved in looting her father’s shop, destroying sacks of foodstuffs and doing ‘dreadful things’ on the premises. (SA1998.63 Rena Valente) These testimonies cumulatively challenge the idea that it was a hooligan mob involved in the attacks; a perspective confirmed in recent autobiographical writings.

Film-maker Cocozza’s account of his childhood in Wishaw records his father’s shock that a man to whom he ‘had done many good deeds, often lending him money when he was in need’ was the ringleader in the attack on their shop shouting, “Whit are ye _waitin’ fur? Smash the _windaes. That shop is stowed wi’fags.” (Cocozza 1987: 236) Similarly, an eyewitness of the anti-Italian attacks in Ayr recalls how he ‘stared in horror as large jars of sweets and bulky packs of cigarettes were handed out to accomplices, who made off with guilty haste. My heart was sick as I saw onetime neighbours, and even friends, sneaking off into the growing darkness of a

---

77 It is worth noting the way in which both women structure their stories around an item of clothing (the dress, the jumper), using them to symbolise the extremely personal nature of the assaults upon their own sense of being or belonging.
summer night.’ (Tognini 1990: 17) In Andrew O’Hagan’s novel *Personality*, an Italian café owner makes a death-bed confession to his son Alfredo about his café being destroyed during the riots in Rothesay:

“No until you’ve lived through something like that can you know what the world is all about,” he said to me... “Did you forgive them?” I asked. And my father coughed and creased his mouth and shook his head. “No,” he said. “None of them.” (2003:83)

**Narratives of Terror**

Colpi and Sponza’s insistence that the anti-Italian violence was focused against property rather than individuals (1991: 108; 1996: 137) is another example of the tendency to understate the alarming nature of the attacks and the fundamental point that many Italian families were trapped in their homes above or next to the shop under attack.⁷⁸ Indeed, the key to understanding the riots and how they are remembered within narratives is Portelli’s work stressing how oral history ‘offers less a grid of standard experiences than a horizon of shared possibilities, real or imagined.’ (1997: 88) He believes that the representative quality of life histories and their content ‘is measured less by the reconstruction of the average experience, than by the subjective projection of imaginable experience: less by what materially happens to people, than by what people imagine or know might happen.’ (1997: 86) Adopting his argument, personal narratives reveal how, during the riots, respondents lived with the terrifying possibility of attacks on their homes, families or businesses. For example, whilst Flora states that her father’s shop was deliberately not attacked,

⁷⁸ Sponza notes that ‘Rumours circulated within the Italian-Scottish community that there had been at least one fatal casualty among the shopkeepers.’ (2000a: 79) A non-Italian source informed me that one shopkeeper was strung up from a lamppost in Dalry, whilst in a newspaper interview, Richard De Marco states that in Portobello, ‘a chip-shop owner was shot dead behind his own counter.’ (Morrison 1999: 21) I have found no evidence to support these statements.
her narrative is still suffused with the terror she felt that night: ‘It was devastating and it was very frightening. [...] Because I thought they were going to take my mother and kill her there and then, you know. Put her out in the street and kill her.’

She continues:

My mother and I were hanging out because the house was above the shop: noise, screaming, shouting coming along Junction Street. Mobs of people coming along. I thought, my mother of course, panic stations: ‘We’re going to get killed, they’re going to kill us’. Anyway, they got to our shop and my father’s shop in Leith was the only one that hadn’t been broken into and stripped of everything. Even telephones and jars of [sweets] - Junction Street was just a mass of goods, cigarettes, everything you could imagine coming out the ice-cream shops and the chippy like grease, chips, everything, everywhere. Potatoes. That’s what they did. And broke every window they could get their hands on. (SA1999.30)

Another significant feature of personal testimonies reconstructing the riots at the end of the twentieth century - as with women recalling childhood incidences of racial abuse - was the way in which some respondents foregrounded a sense of anger and defiance. This could reflect the fact that memories were being told in the present-day when the discourse of race relations is more widely understood, possibly giving narrators the confidence to address these issues and articulate their feelings of outrage. For example, John Costa:

My brother who was seventeen at the time, he was in the shop. He was busy because during the war fish and chips were a valuable food and we heard a - my mother was upstairs. She put me to bed, we were near the window and I heard a howl going up and a crash of glass and that. And they started smashing up the shop. My brother was very lucky. He managed to shut the doors so they didn’t get in although someone threw a dart at him and just missed him. He still kept it as a souvenir and we kept the stones that came through the windows. He, and all the customers, managed to get out of the back window and climb up a drainpipe and into the house and that’s where they stayed.

Now, they tried to get in the shop, they smashed all the front, couldn’t get in. Then they tried to come upstairs to get us because they knew we were upstairs and, I must admit, I – it’s a funny thing to say for a child of nine years old – I was not all that frightened. I was very angry. In fact all I wanted
to do – I’ve told you about the gun for the ghosts – I wanted to have a gun. I’d have sorted them with a gun. (SA1998.30)

Mrs D, following her father’s arrest in their shop, also adopts this theme of defiance:

They started yelling at me, ‘Get inside there or I’ll throw something at you.’ I was so angry I couldn’t feel even any fear. I was so angry... And I’m glaring at them, you know? Glaring back at them. To the point that the person we employed just dived into the shop. And one woman picked up a shoe and hurled it at the window. She hadn’t the courage to hurl it at me... And the two nice policemen, proper policemen not the CID, insisted on me locking up and walking me home. They walked me up Lauristion Street to my door... because mother was in there crying her eyes out. So...[...] anyway they accompanied me up the road. I remember, later on, one of the priests, Father Warneken saying he had heard that I had been very brave and stood up to the crowd. “Father,” I says, “all I could feel was rage!” (SA1998.061)

Ongoing Attacks

The riots were also devastating because, again contrary to the received view, the attacks on Italian businesses, certainly in Edinburgh, endured beyond the one or two nights of intense rioting which forms the centrepiece of communal discourse. Colpi, for example, presents 10 June as ‘a night of terror’ (1991a: 105) and asserts that ‘Only in the Greenock Telegraph is evidence found of a second night of rioting against the Italians.’ (1991a: 107) Sponza concludes, ‘In a way, it is surprising that, for all the accumulated prejudice and contempt, together with the climate created by the outrageous decision taken by Mussolini...the riots only lasted for two nights and that only a relatively small amount of blood was spilt’ (2000: 92) Oral evidence provides an alternative perspective with three respondents testifying to the long-term nature of anti-Italian attacks. Two sisters said their father’s business had to be permanently closed down when their shop was repeatedly vandalised over an extended period of time. Whilst members of their mother’s family tried to help her
clear up the mess caused by the rioters, they never re-opened because ‘it kept on being damaged. This just was a continuous process for a good couple of months. (SA1998.63 Miss A) The shop was even broken into a couple of times after it was boarded up. Some shops were damaged beyond repair, in Rena Valente’s words, ‘what they couldn’t take they just destroyed.’ (SA1998.27) The long-time duration of attacks on Italian shops was confirmed by another respondent:

My aunt in Leith, she was working behind the counter minding her own business and they came in, they smashed all the shop up and they smashed the till, they took the money out of the till and they made such a mess of their shops and left a poor old lady standing crying in the middle of this rubbish. [...] They used to come in with bars. Big iron bars and smash all the shop window and come in and smash the till and took the money out of the till. That was cruel, absolutely cruel and it just didn’t happen once. It happened – oh! – many times to a lot of people. They used to get them up, get themselves organised again, go in and start all over again. (SA2002.057 Irene Politi)

Arguably, the repeated emphasis in existing accounts to the short timescale of riots serves to imply that the riots has no long-term impact, negating the pain and suffering of those caught up in events. Yet as Linda Hunt emphasises, a traumatic event can turn a person’s world into ‘a much more insecure and unpredictable place than before the traumatising experience’, one where they are left nursing ‘a secret pain’. (1997:5) This is deeply relevant when considering the experiences of those who endured the anti-Italian onslaught in their home towns. One female respondent, for example, hasn’t stepped inside the family shop since June 1940. Indeed, contrary to Colpi’s hypothesis on “negative enemy status”, one of the most significant features of narratives is the extent to which respondents articulated a heightened sense of being Italian. For Dina Togneri of Irvine, wartime events led to an increased identification of her self as Italian:
It was a great trauma for me because when the war broke out they did smash up our shop and we had nothing. Absolutely nothing. I remember the morning after it. We were upstairs in the house, locked in the house with some very good Scottish neighbours that were looking after us but the other ones were rampaging downstairs, bashing, crashing and bashing about and knocking the shop and stealing all the stuff, the stuff that was there. It was a terrible trauma. I mean I had, first of all I hadn’t yet got over my father dying and then this thing happening... But, prior to that, I had never wanted to be Italian. (SA2002.064)

Economic Devastation

Another important factor neglected in Anglo-Italian historiography but graphically revealed in oral testimony is the extent of financial, and ultimately personal, devastation wrought by the events of 1940. The riots, combined with concurrent interment and relocation meant that the livelihoods of many Italian families were effectively destroyed. As well as enduring loss and deep emotional distress, many women faced severe deprivation as a result of the government’s actions and popular hostility. Many families faced liability for rent and rates on businesses which were forced to close down whilst others were forced into paying extra rent for temporary lodgings in relocation areas. Documentation held at the National Archives Scotland includes letters from victims of the riots seeking help or compensation from the local authorities and the Scottish Home Department. Frances Valente, who lost her husband on the Arandora Star and was relocated, writes in despair that although their shop was ‘looted to the ground’ she was still expected to pay rates and taxes on the abandoned property.79 Another correspondent refused to pay rates for a shop ‘which she was forced to leave’.80 For some of these women their problems were

79 NAS HH055/5 Letter from Mrs F Valente, 4 June 1943
80 ECA D136 Letter to Town Clerk from J Sinclair Lawrie, Solicitor for Mrs B P Lanni, 10 March 1941.
compounded by the loss of their husbands on the *Arandora Star*. Valente’s correspondence over two years, for example, tracks her crescendo of despair and desperation. By 1943 she is declaring, ‘I am absolutely ruined through losing my business my only livelihood and also losing my husband through no fault of my own, I am sure we didn’t want war...I got the biggest smash up in all of Edinburgh, the police estimated the damage at £2,500. The shop has been closed ever since, and yet there’s no compensation. I was told my husband should have put in a claim within that month, how could he do it, when he didn’t get a chance to live?’\(^81\) Antonietta Delicato wrote poignantly to the Town Clerk about the damage done to her shop: ‘I have no one to fight for me now as my husband went down in the *Arandora Star*.’\(^82\)

**Conclusion**

As Angelo Principe points out in relation to Canada, the categorisation of all Italian nationals as ‘enemy aliens’ in the highly charged atmosphere of war meant that ‘the finger of suspicion’ was pointed at an entire ethnic group, obliterating any differences which existed within the community. (2000: 43) Alien regulations which cumulatively restricted freedom of movement and effectively placed Italian nationals under police supervision pushed Italian families to the boundaries of belonging; the riots of June 1940 rammed this message home. However, as Allport stresses, the origins of a riot lie in the prior existence of prejudice ‘strengthened and released’ by a particular chain of circumstances. (1955: 60) Kushner agrees that the speed with which the animosity against the Italians gathered revealed ‘a tradition of antipathy in

\(^81\) HH055/5. Letter dated 4 June 1943.

\(^82\) ECA DI36 Correspondence from Mrs A Delicato 11 November 1941.

120
which even those born in Britain of Italian origin were, through a process of racialisation, treated as suspect and deemed not to be "one of us." (2004: 35)

Whilst there is a tendency within communal discourse to focus on internment – Sponza, typically, refers to 'the more systematic and profound trauma of internment' (2000: 93) – personal narratives reveal how the attacks of June 1940 are equally important in revealing both the multi-layered nature of prejudice faced by Italian families and the traumatic impact of the riots on Italian Scots. As Fryer eloquently writes in relation to Britain's black community, the race riots of 1919 'illuminated reality like a flash of lightning' with the lessons of the riots 'etched into the consciousness of an entire generation.' (1984: 316) Linda Hunt defines an incident as traumatic when it 'alters our experience of reality suddenly and against our will.' (1997: 3) For second generation Italians in Scotland, the events of 1940 were a watershed in reinforcing their status as outsiders and making the world feel like a less safe place.
Chapter Five

Explanatory Notes on Internment and Detention

This chapter does not attempt to address the experience of internment in depth or discuss the questionable actions of the government in interning and detaining thousands of members of the community without trial. In relation to the Italians, Colpi (1991a; 1993a), Sponza (1993; 2000), Gillman & Gillman (1980), and Lafitte (1980) have covered this topic extensively. Instead, what I hope to achieve in this chapter is to highlight how, within Anglo Italian historiography, powerful communal myths have functioned essentially to misrepresent internment - for example, the idea that 'everyone' was interned and remained interned until after Italy's Armistice in 1943 and switch to co-belligerent status. Then, by focusing on the detention of dual nationals, this chapter will explore the contested terrain of loyalties and allegiances, examining why the voices which pre-dominate within current representations are often those of the internees who formed a small, and unrepresentative, proportion of second generation Italians. As part of my fieldwork, I interviewed three male internees, one male detainee, twenty six children of internees and two children of detainees. Overall I hope to point to future ways of addressing the subject in a more balanced way.
I. INTERNATIONAL

Internment Policy

The decision to start interning Italian nationals was part of a wider tradition of alien internment in twentieth century Britain. (Holmes 1991; Cesarani & Kushner 1993) In World War One, for example, so many Germans were either interned or repatriated that the German population in Britain declined from around 60,000 to 22,254 during the conflict. (Panayi 1991:97) At the outbreak of World War Two the government interned aliens from Germany and Austria, including many Jewish refugees. Thus, as Cesarani and Kushner argue, the mass internment of aliens cannot be disregarded as aberrant or something confined to the conditions in Britain in 1939-40, but should be seen as close to the core of political culture in Britain. (1993:11) In contrast with German Jewish refugees who, on entry into Britain, were being classified by tribunals into A, B or C categories depending on their estimated danger to national security,83 no comparative screening process was inaugurated for the Italians, who had been settled in Britain for many decades. (Colpi 1991a: 103) As the Home Secretary Anderson later acknowledged, in the absence of any effective ‘sifting’ of the Italians resident in Britain, the Home Office had no alternative ‘but to rely on the opinion of the Security Services,’84 who were given the task of compiling a list of ‘known suspects’ amongst the immigrant population. (Colpi 1993a: 171) Simpson characterises the world of MI5 as one ‘where unchecked assertions and reports from agents and informers built up a file, where suspicion served as a

83 Cat. A, considered highly dangerous – to be interned; cat. B, not so dangerous – only subjected to some restrictions; cat. C, friendly – exempt from both internment and restrictions. (Sponza 2000a: 98)
substitute for proof of guilt, and where the object of suspicion was normally never even interviewed before the case against him was acted upon.' (1992: 67) As Stent notes, some senior officers in the Security Services genuinely believed that the unrestricted presence of some 76,000 enemy aliens in Britain presented a real danger but they were also steeped in prejudice: 'prejudices against foreigners in general, laced with a good dose of bias against "dagos" and Jews in particular.' (1980: 260)

Stereotypical views of the Italians permeated the security services, as reflected in the communication of MI5 head, Brigadier Harker to the Foreign Office:

we have reason to suppose that the first act of war on the part of Italy might be an attempt to use the Italian Fascist Organisation for attacks on key individuals and key points in the country by the employment of gangster methods. We are therefore anxious that our arrangements should be made so as to forestall such attempts if possible.85

MI5 essentially viewed the Fasci as a dangerous hotbed of potential saboteurs. Whilst acknowledging that the Fasci were 'run on less methodical lines' than their German counterpart, the security authorities felt that they provided the Italian Government 'with ready made machinery for dangerous action in British countries in any emergency.'86 In Simpson’s opinion, MI5 fately managed to give the ‘quite false’ impression that it was well informed on the Italian communities, and knew who had joined the Fascio. (1992: 193) Thus, in advance of the war, as well as a failure to review and classify Italian residents by tribunal, there was also a crucial failure on behalf of the authorities to differentiate between nominal members of the Fasci in Britain and the elite who had enthusiastically taken up leadership roles. Instead all those who had signed up to membership of the Fasci were classified by MI5 as ‘desperate characters’ and said to number 1,500.

85 NA. FO 371/25193. Letter to Jebb 27 May 1940.
86 NA. HO144/21079 (1936: 29)
The ‘desperate characters’

The basis upon which MI5 had arrived at the figure of 1,500 was the number of Italians they knew to be members of the Italian Fascist Party, or other Fascist organisations based in Britain. (Sponza 1993: 127) Captain Stevens of MI5 also indicated that he could identify ‘the names of 350 “bad hats”’ within the list. (Gillman & Gillman 1980: 166) However, following the declaration of war by Italy and the decision to intern certain categories of Italians MI5 managed to trace less than 750 of the notorious 1,500 ‘desperate characters’ who had been so prominent in the internment plans. (Gillman & Gillman 1980: 181) It became increasingly apparent that MI5 list was ‘fundamentally flawed.’ (Colpi 1993a: 171) As the month of June progressed there was growing scepticism within the Foreign Office over MI5’s competence, as revealed by a Foreign Office Memo of 22 June 1940:

MI5’s criterion for judging whether or not a person was a “desperate character” more often than not resolved itself into mere membership of the Fascio...As the discussion with MI5 proceeded there grew up a strong suspicion that in actual fact they had little or no information, let alone evidence, in regard to more than a fraction of the persons they had led the Home Secretary to describe to the Cabinet as “desperate characters.”

By the end of 1940, MI5’s incompetence had been thoroughly exposed. A report by Lord Snell into the Arandora Star sinking criticised the fact that, for the Italian internees, membership of the Fascist Party was ‘the only evidence against many of these persons.’ Moreover, he noted the fundamental error of the ‘security authorities’: ‘Apparently the view was taken that those who had been only nominal

---

87 NA. FO 371/25193 Disposal of Italians on the outbreak of war.
members of the Fascist Party and those who were ardently Fascist were equally dangerous.' (Hickey & Smith 1989: 223)

Towards the end of April 1940, the Aliens Department of the Home Office sent instructions to all police stations to get ready to arrest at short notice all Italian males aged between 16 and 70, who had been resident in Britain for less than 20 years, in addition to the 1, 500 Fascist Party members identified by MI5. (Sponza 2000a: 95) Throughout the month of May, the War Cabinet met to deliberate over what to do if Italy entered the war against Britain but as the Gillmans note, their deliberations 'were shot through with ambiguities.' (1980: 152) A meeting of 29 May acknowledged that 'Italians in large numbers would have to be interned; but at the moment there could be no question of wholesale internment of Italians.' At a War Cabinet meeting the following day, it was agreed that 'a suitable ship' should be made available for the deportation of all Italians in Britain in exchange for British subjects in Italy 'as soon as practicable.' (2000a: 96) The Home Secretary, Sir John Anderson, also confirmed that the number of 'desperate characters' whom he would wish to intern was 1, 500 Italians plus 300 British subjects connected with Italian institutions in Britain. The question of when this group should be 'seized' would be reviewed from day to day. These careful deliberations were largely subsumed by events following Italy's declaration of war on 10 June. At the crucial War Cabinet

---

88 Within the current literature there is a subtle contradiction regarding the government's original position on Italian internment. Colpi states that in May 1940 'The Home Secretary Sir John Anderson favoured... the selective internment of males' between 17 and 60 years of age who had been resident in Britain for less than 20 years. (1991a: 104) However Sponza suggests that by April 1940 the arrest of all this age bracket was intended. (2000b: 259) [my italics]

89 NA. FO 371/25193. Extract from War Cabinet Conclusions 29 May 1940.

90 NA. FO 371/25193. Extract from War Cabinet Conclusions 30 May 1940
meeting of 11 June, Churchill announced that on the previous day, he had instructed the Home Secretary to arrange for ‘a general internment of male Italians.’

Collar the Lot!

A Foreign Office memorandum on the ‘Disposal of Italians on the outbreak of war’ written on 22 June 1940 states that ‘A few hours after the declaration of war the Prime Minister in person issued instructions to the Ministry of Home Security to “collar the lot” and the following morning informed the War Cabinet that he had given orders for a general internment of male Italians.’ This phrase, ‘Collar the Lot’, immortalised in the eponymous book by Peter and Leni Gillman (1980), has been used exhaustively within historiography to imply that all Italian nationals shared the same fate. Zorza’s 1985 publication manages to give the impression that ‘everyone’ was interned by reiterating that Churchill: ‘seized everyone without distinction, issuing the brutal instruction: “Collar the Lot!”’ (‘li prese tutti senza distinzione, emanando quell’ istruzione brutale: “Collar the Lot!”’) (1985: 14) The recent Arandora Star website similarly follows suit declaring, ‘In early June 1940... all Italian male civilians between the ages of 18 and 70 years were arrested by the police and military.’ More worryingly, in an insightful volume challenging the myths surrounding internment in Canada, a historian (using Sponza’s article in the same volume as his source) mistakenly asserts that in Britain, ‘all Italians were rounded up and either interned or deported, regardless of whether or not they were Fascists, anti-Fascists or apolitical.’ (Bruti Liberati 2000: 83) Thus, over time, a strong trend has developed which presents a highly misleading impression of both

91 NA. FO 371/25193 Disposal of Italians on the outbreak of war. See also (Sponza 2000a: 98).
the numbers and the composition of those interned. By placing emphasis on Churchill’s infamous edict, the impression is give that all Italians were interned. Colpi typifies this, stating ‘Churchill didn’t bother about the complicated detail that the Cabinet had been considering for over a month, and previous government vacillation now coupled with panic produced the circumstances for this across-the-board internment.’ (1991: 104) This phrase ‘across-the-board’ internment, which she repeats four pages later, again suggests a level of ‘inclusivity,’ implying that all Italians were interned.

A closer analysis of War Cabinet papers illustrates that, although Churchill’s issued his famous edict on the night of 10 June, the next day the government was, as Sponza confirms, essentially implementing ‘the measures indicated in April to police stations.’ (2000a: 97) At the War Cabinet meeting of 11 June, Home Secretary Anderson confirmed that ‘steps were being taken, in the first instance, to take into custody the desperate characters on the special list. As soon as this had been done, steps were being taken to take into custody all male Italians between the ages of 16 and 70 who had been resident in this country less than 20 years.’ The Prime Minister ‘agreed with the policy outlined, but thought that, as a general principle, we should endeavour to round up all enemy aliens as quickly as possible, so as to place them out of harm’s way.’ It was also announced that Canada had undertaken to receive 4,000 internees, which would absorb ‘the most dangerous characters among the German (2,500) and the Italians (1,500).’

---

93 NA. FO 371/25193. Extract from War Cabinet Conclusions 11 June 1940
Thus, in spite of the injunction to ‘Collar the Lot!’, the two distinct groups previously identified by the War Cabinet were, in fact, the ones arrested (however flawed the thinking behind the policy may have been). Following the first night of arrests the local Edinburgh paper reports that ‘only those who have been resident in Scotland for a comparatively limited period have so far been detained. They conform to a certain category specified by the Home Office.’ (EEN 11.6. 1940:5) In relation to the MI5’s Fascist list, the Italian Scot filmmaker Cocozza recalls how when his father asked why he was not being taken away, ‘the inspector told him they knew he was not a member of the Fascist Party.’ (Cocozza 1987: 236) One of my interviewees also acknowledges in her testimony that those ‘high up in Fascisti’ were arrested first. (SOE 63 Carmen Demarco)

In fact, around 4, 200 British Italians were ultimately arrested, 600 of whom were British-born. (Colpi 1993a: 176) This was out of an Italian immigrant population of some 18, 000 registered with the police (approximately 11, 000 men and 7, 000 women). (Sponza 2000b: 259) Sponza also points out that, if the children of Italian nationals are taken into account, the Italian community at this time possibly numbered around 30, 000. (2000b: 276) Thus roughly around 1 in 4 of the Italian national population was arrested or less than half (41 per cent) of Italian male nationals. From an analysis of files held in the National Archives, it would appear that 1, 074 Italian nationals (nearly all male) were arrested in Scotland out of an immigrant population of over five thousand. (Wilkin 1979: 54)\textsuperscript{94} Thus the crucial

\textsuperscript{94} NA. HO 396/284-294 List of Italians Interned in UK 1939 is a record card index of all those interned. As some of the cards are incomplete, it is impossible to ascertain where every internee listed was arrested. These cards suggest that 85 Italians were arrested in Edinburgh, 381 in Glasgow, 38 from Fife and 570 from other parts of Scotland.
point, often overlooked but conceded by the Gillmans, is that the number of Italians interned was ‘fewer than some had predicted’ (1980: 156) and certainly far lower than the ‘10, 000 expected.’ (1980: 181) Simpson, referring to the general policy of mass internment of enemy aliens also concedes, ‘When Italy entered the war Anglo-Italians fell within the new policy, which was mercifully never fully implemented.’ (1992: 163) [my italics] In effect, therefore, ‘the Lot’ were not ‘collared.’

**Releases**

In the wake of the *Arandora Star* disaster, policy and procedure for the release of internees were laid down and began to be implemented with the publication of a White Paper (Command Paper No.6217, July 1940) in which 18 categories for release were envisaged, applying only to German and Austrian (mostly Jewish) refugees. Two More White Papers followed (Command Paper No.6223 August 1940; Command Paper no.6233 October 1940) which added new categories for release and extended their application to Italians. (Sponza 2000a: 113) According to Sponza, ‘Italians were mainly released under Category 3, which dealt with the ‘invalid and infirm’; Category 12, applying to those who were accepted into the Pioneer Corps; and – above all – Category 22, referring to those who had been living in Britain “since [their] early childhood, or for at least twenty years” and were friendly towards their adopted country.’ (2000a: 153) On 24 August the Home Defence (Security) Executive also took a policy decision to release without a hearing all Anglo Italian internees aged under eighteen, of whom there were sixty seven. (Simpson 1992: 287)

As well as giving the misleading impression that all Italians were interned, within historiography the differing experiences amongst internees are also ignored. Most
significantly, the fact that many of the Italians were released early is largely forgotten. It would appear both from oral testimony and official records that a substantial proportion of Italian internees were released within seventeen months, corresponding with Cesarani and Kushner’s point that alien internment was, for the majority, ‘a short-lived experience.’ (1993: 5) Yet, strangely, this is not reflected in communal discourse where instead the idea of a 1944 release date predominates. The flawed concept of substantial post 1943 Italian Armistice releases began with Rodgers’ Odyssey article in which he states, ‘Most of the Scottish Italians had returned home by 1944.’ (1982: 19) The next year the academic Joseph Farrell wrote of one internee from Glasgow, Fazzi, ‘In 1944, like many others, he was offered release.’ (1983). A Sunday Mail article on Italian internment similarly concludes, ‘By 1944...most were allowed to return to Scotland and set about rebuilding their businesses. (Steel 1988: 1231) I would argue that by setting the average release date of internees at 1944, historiography reflects the experience of the pro-Fascist elite rather than the bulk of Italians who were, in fact, released within the first seventeen months. For instance, taking Edinburgh Italians as an example, 26 out of the 85 listed internees had been released by November 1941.95 These releases occurred primarily under Categories 3 and 22, the latter allowing for the release of those who were essentially well disposed towards Britain, or ‘opponents of the Fascist system.’ (Sponza 2000a: 113) This reflects the wider trend amongst Italian internees: between the autumn of 1940 and January 1942, the total number of those interned halved from over 4,000 to around 2,000. (Sponza 2000a: 120) The silence surrounding the early releases amongst Italian internees highlights the inherent tensions within the

95 24 died on the Arandora Star and 24 were refused release.
community at this period which persist to the present day. It could be argued that the experiences of those who were willing to express loyalty to Britain have since been written out of the story because they do not fit in with the concept of the ‘good Italian’ which predominates within elite memory. Monsignor Rossi’s memoirs for example, promote the idea that the ‘largest number’ of the internees chose to remain interned:

[The internees] were asked if they were prepared to collaborate with the British authorities. Some of them agreed, but they did not say so openly because such a declaration could have caused problems for them in the camp; many internees were not disposed to go against their own country to help Britain. It was not a question of being Fascist or anti-Fascist, it was a question that we were Italians. (1992:59)

Colpi appears to collude in this idea of the good Italian when she defines the tribunals as providing the opportunity ‘to assess the willingness of the internees to disown Italy and help the British war effort.’ (1991a: 126) [my italics] However, she also acknowledges how ‘Group pressure amongst the internees encouraged the individual to remain a “good Italian” which meant stay in’ and notes how ‘among this generation of the Italian Community, factions formed in these difficult times, some of which exist to this day.’ (1991a: 126) I would argue that this equation of being a long-term internee with being a ‘good Italian’ has been steadily absorbed and promoted within existing literature.
II. DUAL NATIONALITY.

Fascism and Declarations of alienage

In August 1939 the government passed the Emergency Powers Act and on 1 September issued its Defence Regulations by order of council. By November 1939 the basic text of Defence Regulation 18B read as follows:

If the Secretary of State has reasonable cause to believe any person to be of hostile origin or associations or to have been recently concerned in acts prejudicial to the public safety or the defence of the realm or in the preparation or instigation of such acts and that by reason thereof it is necessary to exercise control over him, he may make an order against that person directing that he be detained. (Quoted in Simpson 1992: 65)

When Italy entered the war, around 600 Anglo-Italians were detained under Defence Regulation 18B as being ‘of hostile origin or associations.’ Simpson estimates that a considerable number, about 200, were detained in Scotland. (1992: 194) MI5 were principally suspicious of dual nationals or British-born subjects of ‘Italian origin.’ As we will see in the chapter on Fascism, the security services were particularly agitated by the practice of sending adolescents to Balilla camps in Italy: ‘It must be assumed that in the event of war these British born Italians would be expected to remain here in many cases in order to serve Italy by espionage and sabotage. (1937: 3)

96 Simpson includes Italians who had naturalised in this figure although the majority would have been British-subjects of Italian origin. Email correspondence with author, 29 Nov. 1999.

97 NA. HO 45/25755 shows that by July 1940 149 appeals had been made against detention to the Scottish committee.

98 NA. HO 144/21079. See Chapter Six on Fascism.
The detention of Italians Scots in 1940 turns the spotlight on and raises important questions about the loyalties and allegiances amongst the children of immigrants in Britain. Whilst the impression is often given that everyone was interned, in fact amongst the second generation, this was decidedly not the case. Rather, as Sponza admits, internment amongst the second generation was usually a result of them having either opted for Italian citizenship or belonging to a Fascist organisation. (1993: 127). In an interview with MacDougall, internee Joseph Pia comments that, ‘Now many chaps like me were of dual nationality. Quite a few renounced their British nationality, so as not to be called up.’ (1995: 308) Files held at the National Archives address the question of declarations of alienage under the 1914 British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act made by dual nationals before hostilities with Italy commenced.99 A minute of 20 June 1940 notes that ‘the persons who have made these declarations are obviously of Fascist sympathies.’100 Interestingly, information on Italian internees in Edinburgh held at the National Archives confirms that most of those listed were born in Italy. However, within the card index I found three internees who appear to have been British-born subjects who had opted for Italian citizenship.101 In the 1960s, the Home Office was addressing the question of whether to grant naturalisation to dual nationals who renounced British nationality during or immediately before the war. Whilst there appears to be an almost conciliatory tone adopted towards former Fascists (‘I should be inclined to approach them with a bias towards wiping the slate clean’), dual nationals are criticised for having ‘deliberately

99 A declaration of alienage would involve dual nationals renouncing their British nationality before a JP or a Commissioner of Oaths.
100 NA. HO 213/1662 Alienage: Declarations By Dual Nationals
101 These were Giuseppe De Marco, born in 1913, Enrico Carmine Rossi, born in 1902 and Giovanni Battista Vettese, a radio and electrical engineer and dance band pianist born in 1916. All were listed as having been born in Edinburgh but having Italian nationality. N.A. HO396/284-294.
cast off British nationality' in 1940: 'They took positive steps to establish their disloyalty at the very moment when this country was in great peril'. The author recommends that these men should not be allowed to regain British nationality: 'if loyalty has any meaning at all, I do not see how any confidence can be placed in the loyalty of those who threw off an existing allegiance to this country at a time of supreme crisis.'

Significantly published oral accounts of the wartime experiences of second generation Italians focus on those with some level of involvement in the Italian Fascist Party and therefore interned or detained under Defence Regulation 18B, rather than men and women who went into the British Forces. For example, looking at the Edinburgh Italian community those who are now at the heart of collective remembrance are those who were interned during the war. Joseph Pia, who has been repeatedly interviewed about his wartime experiences, was in charge of the Dopolavaro (after work activities) for the Edinburgh Fascio. Two other Edinburgh Italians, Dominic Crolla and Toni Capaldi have been interviewed about their detention in an internment camp in Canada. The former was the son of the Fascio Secretary, the latter the son of the Propaganda Secretary. If you look at their published testimonies they do not mention their familial involvement in the Fascio. Indeed Toni Capaldi, whose mother, father and brother were also interned fails to

102 NA. HO 213/2559 Naturalisation. Policy & Practice. Policy with regard to a) Former Italian Fascists b) Dual Nationals who made a declaration of alienage during the war
104 Pia’s recollections have been published in Robertson and Wilson (1995) and MacDougall (1995). He has also been interviewed by numerous doctoral students, myself included.
105 Both men were born in Italy but raised from infancy in Scotland.
mention the Fascio club at all in ten pages of testimony. (Edensor & Kelly 1989: 187-197) There is a similar omission in Dominic Crolla’s recollections published in MacDougall’s *Voices from War*. (1995: 291-3) Within the published testimonies of all three men there is a trend towards depoliticising the past, where their internment is primarily projected as a result of ethnicity.\(^{106}\) Furthermore, the fact that this narrow group of internees are repeatedly interviewed perpetuates the idea that ‘everyone’ was interned and allows the voices of internees to dominate. A typical example is a recent obituary of Victor Crolla, the son of the Fascio Secretary which mentions the internment of the two Crolla sons in the following way: ‘Like thousands of other UK-born men of Italian descent, Dominic was sent to Canada while Victor was dispatched to camp on the Isle of Man.’ (Patience 2005: 1) Internment amongst this second generation was atypical, numbering around 200 detainees in Scotland overall, but within historiography is consistently presented as the norm.

**Allegiances and Loyalties\(^{107}\)**

In his autobiography, businessman Charles Forte, writes of his internment on the Isle of Man, ‘Although close members of my family were still living in Italy, I knew perfectly well whom I wanted to win the war’. (1997:43) Yet an analysis of texts addressing Italian internment reveals that this assertion of pro-British feeling is quite rare. Sponza highlights the existence of a Memorandum written by an Italian refugee, Livio Zeno-Zencovich, who had been released from internment in Canada and returned to Britain to work for the BBC. He claimed that amongst those interned in Canada, only thirty out of the 400 were openly pro-British. The remaining 370 were

\(^{106}\) Crolla and Capaldi were both born in Italy whereas Pia held a position in the Edinburgh Fascio.

\(^{107}\) This section addresses 18B detainees who were placed in internment camps as opposed to those initially detained in local prisons and quickly released.
in his opinion 'either Fascist or silent sympathisers with them.' (Sponza 1993: 139)

In his ‘Brief Report’ Zeno-Zencovich writes:

It is hard to say how painful an impression it produced to hear these people cursing Britain and everything British in that very language they had learnt in a country which had offered them hospitality, opportunity to earn and a standard of life absolutely unknown in their poor regions of Italy they or their fathers have left to seek fortune abroad... Only a few, when questioned about their hatred against the only country they had ever known answered that ‘they felt to be Italians.’ (HO/215/28/1B. Quoted in Sponza 1993: 141)

This pro-Italian sentiment amongst second-generation internees is also identified in the memoirs of an Italian priest who was interned on the Isle of Man, Gaetano Rossi. Referring to the ‘old’ Italians in Scotland he identifies two main groups: those who came to Scotland in large numbers just between 1900 and 1924 and those who arrived between 1924 and 1938 or were children of the first generation. Interestingly he describes the latter group in the following way:

They were conscious of another thing, they realised that they had an identity, and therefore they were not ashamed to be known as “Italians.” They were no longer simply the “Tallies” or “Dagos” of the past years, now they were Italians and proud of being so. (1992: 9)

Whilst Rossi’s memoirs are often cited as a source on internment, in fact through his personal friendship with Renzo Serafini, the leader of the Banda Nera, which is clearly signposted throughout the book, he is identifying himself with and reflecting a particular strand of experience and belief. Significantly Rossi lists a series of acts of defiance by his fellow internees which he presents in a humorous light but which


109 Rather disingenuously, Rossi suggests that this ethnic identification with Italy was due to Italy’s success in the arena of international sports rather than the rise of Fascism.
have a more serious undertow. These include a concert in the main hall of the Palace Camp where ‘At the end of it the British officer in charge had a brilliant idea of asking the Italian group to play “God save the King”; the members of the group looked at each other and at once they began playing “Giovinezza” (one of the Fascist songs) and those present began to sing the words. There was a moment of overreaction, the officer shouted: “Fascists,” and some soldiers charged and it finished up with some chairs flying around.’ (1992: 58) He also mentions a threatened assault on an internee who drew a caricature of Mussolini because ‘Some of the internees interpreted it as an expression of disloyalty towards Italy’ and finally he refers to one quick-witted internee ‘who managed to approach the delivery van of a farmer on which was written “Farm Produce.” So he had an idea, he put a little dividing line between “Farm” and “Produce;” so that the sign read “Farm – pro – duce” (the farm of the Duce)!’ (1992: 60) However these acts of defiance as detailed by Rossi may not be as innocent as he appears to suggest. Canadian historian Gabriele Scardellato has analysed the iconography and images surrounding the internment of Italians in Canada, including photographic images of internees displaying Fascist slogans such as ‘Ne me frego’ (What do I care?). She argues that rather than all being innocent and naïve victims as they are nowadays promoted, ‘The evidence of Fascist mottos and other paraphernalia’ in the camps ‘suggests that some of the internees were less than naïve in their embrace and support of the political ideology of the Fascist homeland.’ (2000: 351) Most seriously, Rossi also presents the forming of the ‘Banda Nera’ (Black Gang) group by British-born internee Serafini and Italian-born Doddoli as expressing ‘a feeling of loyalty to Italy’: ‘To be a member of the band or not was not a sign of any special feeling except that we were Italians and we wanted to be
acknowledged and respected as Italians, who had feelings for their land; we were not ashamed of being Italians.’ (1992: 59) Even Sponza disputes this rather innocent interpretation, stating that Serafini was ‘the leader of the ‘Fascist’ group at Metropole Camp.’ (2000a: 128)

I interviewed three internees, one Italian national, Orazio Caira and two British-born, Joseph Pia and Renzo Serafini. Pia was born in Edinburgh in 1910 and although he was head of the Edinburgh Fascio’s Dopolavaro, he attributes his arrest to the fact that in 1937 he had accompanied a group of Balilla to a camp in Cattolica. Although born in Hawick in 1915, respondent Renzo Serafini had renounced his British nationality two years before the war. Interned on the Isle of Man he grew a beard as a gesture of defiance: ‘I didn’t shave until Italy capitulated.’ During the interview he proudly showed me his ‘honorary tessera’, an Italian Fascist Party membership card that he had received during a trip to Italy. He was candid about his internment, stating, ‘I felt that I should have been in there’ and he chose to remain interned until 1945.

Oral evidence reveals the extent to which Italian Scots, both in the lead-up to and during the war were continually faced with a series of difficult and potentially divisive decisions: whether to be involved in the Fascio or not, whether to respond to military call-up or make a declaration of alienage; if arrested, whether to opt for release and join the Pioneer Corps or to remain in detention, whether to remain in internment after the political climate changed with Italy’s 1943 surrender, whether to stay in an Anglo-Italian camp or go into Italian camp. These differences and different
choices are largely neglected within existing accounts. Yet Simpson believes that
‘Probably after December 1940 MI5 did not oppose the release of many Anglo-
Italians’ (1992: 287) highlighting the extent to which those who were interned until
1943 and beyond chose to remain interned. Rossi exposes the motivations of the
hard-core of Anglo-Italians who remained in internment until 1945: ‘That largest
number of those who were left behind were young people who could not entertain
the idea of collaborating with the British authorities. It was not simply a question of
them being anti-British; many of them were born and brought up in Britain, but they
knew only too well (it had happened before) that the occasion might come when they
would have to fight people of their own land.’ (1992: 64) [my italics] In his
interview with MacDougall, Pia explains that his brother Gerard and his cousin
Victor Crolla applied to transfer to one of the Italian camps (MacDougall 1995:
334),110 a trend confirmed in Home Office records which report in July 1943 that a
number of Anglo-Italians ‘have been transferred to the Alien Camps.’111 Two years
later, the Home Secretary Morrison stated that of the 45 British subjects still detained
in the Isle of Man, ‘many of them at their own request have for a long time been
accommodated in the camps set apart for aliens of enemy nationality.’112 Thus a
small group of second generation internees made the deliberate decision to identify
themselves with Italy rather than their country of birth.

Information on second-generation Italian internees is often generalised from the
limited information available on two dual nationals, Nicodemo Vannucci and
Lorenzo Ogni, born in Northern Ireland and Scotland respectively, who appear to

110 In contrast, Pia was released in December 1943.
111 NA. HO 215/2. Release of persons detained under DR 18B.
112 NA. HO 215/495 Enquiry from the Duke of Bedford
have been most explicit in their support for Fascist Italy.\textsuperscript{113} They were detained in August 1942 after attempting to escape to occupied France from Folkestone in an open boat and remained interned until April 1945 and November 1944 respectively. As with my respondent Serafini, Vannucci and Ogni had spent a considerable amount of their lives in Italy and identified strongly with Italy. It is therefore important not to judge all dual nationals by their actions. By October 1944, there was also a recognition by MI5 that ‘The Anglo-Italian section are all young and do not wish for release purely because they wish to avoid helping the war effort. In my opinion they would be no danger at large.’\textsuperscript{114} Significantly, whilst the majority of dual nationals went into the armed forces, essentially asserting their primary allegiance to Britain, it is the views of internees like Serafini which have predominated.\textsuperscript{115}

\textbf{Gendering Internment}

In sharp contrast to the willingness of some Italian Scottish internees to take centre-stage in later life, there is a conspicuous silence surrounding the internment of Italian women in Scotland, including a handful of second generation women detained under Defence Regulation 18B. Italian Canadian historians make the astute comment that in relation to contemporary redress campaigns, ‘Given the potential emotional appeal of their stories, the lack of attention to the women detained or interned is surprising. (Iacovetta & Ventresca 2000: 389) Whilst dominant discourse emphasises internment as a male experience, records at the National Archives reveal that a number of Italian

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{113} NA. HO 45/25760 VANUCCI: Nicodemo & HO 45/25761 OJNI
\item \textsuperscript{114} HO 45/25761 OJNI.
\item \textsuperscript{115} See \textit{Italiani in Scozia} 1990 (No. 26:1); Robertson & Wilson (1995:50-51); STV \textit{Tartan Tallies} (1996); Morrison (1999: 21). Pieri (1997) is rare in offering an alternative perspective.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
women were interned on the Isle of Man. According to Sponza the highest recorded number of interned women was nineteen, a figure which included those who volunteered to be with their interned husbands (2000a: 146) It would seem that for decades silence has been adopted by many within the community as a form of ‘protective cover,’ especially amongst this small group of women for whom imprisonment was a source of deep shame.116

The 1939 Guida Generale records that the women’s section of the Edinburgh Fascio had 62 members. (1939: 445) The Fascio femminile was headed by Yolanda Coppola (who also taught at the language school) who was assisted by a committee comprising of Ersilia Mancini (Vice inspectress); Carmela Coppola, Pasqua Capaldi and Elvira Scappaticcio. These women were arrested and detained as part of the police round-up in June 1940. In a published interview with oral historian Ian MacDougall, Pia mentions three Edinburgh women who were detained in Saughton prison corresponding closely to those listed as committee members of the women’s section of the Fascio: Coppola, Scappaticci and Mancini. (1995: 310) He also mentions two married Italian women who ‘went with their husbands to a place called Port St Mary on the Isle of Man’ (1995: 314) which corresponds with Carmela Coppola and Pasqua Capaldi. According to Home Office files, Carmela Coppola, an Italian national aged 45 at time of arrest, was interned on the Isle of Man. Listed as ‘housewife’ of 17 Broughton Place Edinburgh, it appears that she was released in November 1943.117 Her husband, Achille Coppola, was also interned on Isle of

116 Phrase used by Distasi (1994:2).
117 HO 396/213-15 Italian Internees Released in UK. Women.
In a published interview internee Toni Capaldi mentions that his mother was first detained in Saughton Prison and then interned on the Isle of Man (Edensor & Kelly 1989: 193) She is likely to be Pasqua Capaldi. Unfortunately, there is little documentary evidence currently available on Italian Scottish women who were arrested. Of the three female 18B detainees from Edinburgh it is possible to find information about the head of the Committee, Yolanda Coppola, contained within files on another female detainee. It appears that Coppola remained imprisoned in Saughton until at least 1943, correspondence within government files suggesting that a key factor concerning her release was Italy’s surrender and transition to ‘co-belligerent’ status. Gilda Camillo, a detainee from Glasgow, whose file is available, was accused of inciting dual nationals to evade military service due to her ‘pro-Italian’ sympathies. In July 1943, Camillo’s file records that as the [Scottish] Advisory Committee has refused to re-examine the case of M Y Coppola – ‘a much less strong case for detention,’ it seems a waste of time to refer Camillo’s case to the Committee. However, a later minute of 7 September 1943 when Italy was about to surrender, states that:

On the 7 August, Mr J L Clyde wrote in reply to Sir Frank Newsam’s letter of 4 August in the case of Yolanda Maria Coppola…”I may say, however, that the events of the last week or two have very materially altered the situation, and you may take it that my Committee’s attitude is now very considerably modified. Under present conditions we should not resist her release.”

As I indicated above, I was unable to interview any of the surviving members of the Edinburgh Fascio ladies committee. A sense of silence, and shame, pervades, as

118 HO 396/285-6 Italians Interned In UK.
119 HO 45/25759 CAMILLO. See also Simpson (1992: 247)
120 HO 45/25759 CAMILLO. Camillo, a hairdresser, was born in Glasgow in 1916 to Italian parents. She was detained in April 1942 under DR 18B.
121 HO 45/25759 CAMILLO. 1943 Minutes.
suggested by Pia when discussing the imprisonment of his sister’s friend Ercilia Mancini:

I remember my sister was walking along Princes Street once long afterwards with Ercilia and a woman passing said, “Oh, hallo, Ercilia.” And Ercilia says, “Oh, the shame, the disgust! She was a prostitute in prison. Oh, to think of it!” Well, quite a few of the prostitutes knew Ercilia, having seen her in prison, you see. But Ercilia was mortified, to think of a prostitute recognising her in the street. (MacDougall 1995: 314)

In contrast to the high profile British Union of Fascists female detainees, personified by the controversial figure of Diana Mosley, there is comparatively little attention paid to Anglo Italian female detainees. Far more work needs to be done to recover the experiences of second generation women who were detained in 1940 before they are lost forever.

**Conclusion**

Australian historian, Richard Bosworth, stresses the importance of a more ‘textured’ analysis of wartime events such as internment. (2000: 230) Iacovetta and Ventresca express concern that, in Canada, the ‘story’ of political innocents hurt by a vindictive wartime state has effectively became the ‘story’ of all Italian internees. (2000: 379) They stress the need to perform ‘the difficult but important task of differentiation’ arguing that distinctions must be made between ‘ordinary immigrants wrongly interned,’ those who held prominent positions in satellite Fascist organisations and those had been moderately involved in Fascist activities. (2000: 403) By analysing popular representations of the war, this chapter has highlighted the ways in which misleading and distorted accounts of internment have predominated within communal discourse. Firstly, the almost ritualistic use of the term ‘Collar the Lot!’
provides the erroneous impression that all Italians shared the same fate. Secondly, the tendency to suggest that Italian internees were not released until after the 1943 Italian Armistice means that the stance of the Fascist internees – the ‘good Italians’ – has been generalised to encompass all internees. The desire to suppress memories of inter-war Fascism means that any differences amongst the internees have been denied or ignored. The recovery of oral testimony is crucial in introducing fresh perspectives which can contest and challenge existing accounts.
Chapter Six

Forgetting the Fascisti

In the insightful publication, *Enemies Within*, exploring wartime internment in Canada, historians identify a critical failure within the Italian community, in particular its leadership, to address fully their Fascist past. (Iacovetta & Ventresca 2000: 398) They argue that recent attempts by community leaders to gain an apology for internment, as part of a redress campaign, has led to the ‘glossing over’ of the Fascist history of Italian immigrant communities. (Iacovetta & Perin 2000: 6)¹²² Principe, specifically, argues that the behaviour of the Italian Fascists in the pre-war period was highly significant in that the ‘years of Italian Canadian Fascist propaganda and reckless activities inspired by it’ contributed to the way Italians were perceived in 1940 and was a contributory factor in their subsequent internment. (2000: 27) Yet, in Anglo Italian historiography there is an apparent reluctance to critically explore the nature of Fascist support amongst immigrant communities and a related failure to conceptualise Fasci activities in Britain within a political context. However, as my research progressed it became apparent that an analysis of Italian Scottish wartime experience would be incomplete without addressing the inter-war popularity of Italian Fascism amongst the community elite and its impact on how the war is now remembered and represented within communal discourse.

¹²² For discussion of apology campaigns in Scotland, see Chapter Ten.
Interestingly, those who have emerged as the guardians of communal history are often more likely to have been actively involved in the inter-war Fasci and have a vested interest in portraying them in a politically neutral way. Thus, dominant discourse asserts that the Fasci in Britain were, in Colpi’s words, ‘primarily social clubs, and they formed the hearts and centres of the increasingly thriving Italian Communities.’ (1991a: 89) An impression is given that ‘everyone’ joined the Fasci so that any idea of difference within the pre-war community is suppressed. Here we see an elite-led discourse operating at its most effective. By promoting the idea of the Fasci as merely social clubs, it gains acceptance amongst all those who attended who are perhaps keen to forget any political connotations surrounding membership. Colpi concedes that the post-war Italian community took a long time to recover from the ‘shame, confusion and also embarrassment at so whole-heartedly endorsing Mussolini.’ (1991a: 195) There is also great sensitivity surrounding MI5’s contemporaneous, and flawed, assessment of all Fasci members as ‘dangerous characters’ and a threat to national security.\footnote{This negative perception is still being publicly rehearsed. When the National Archives recently released intelligence documents, the media contained headlines such as ‘Soho children sent to serve fascism’ (Purcell 1999) and ‘Mussolini’s fascists recruited in Soho coffee shops’. (Travis 1999)} In this chapter I will look at the emergence of the Fasci all’estero, providing a case study of the Edinburgh Fascio and exploring the ways in which memories of the inter-war Italian Fasci have become sanitised.

Referring to her interviews with people who lived under the Fascist regime in Italy, Passerini underlines how the identification of Fascism with evil and a source of national shame encourage ‘the consequent desire to keep quiet about it, even among those not actually responsible.’ (1987: 67) Colpi comments that in Britain, ‘it is
difficult to find people in the old generation who are prepared to talk openly and sensibly about Fascism' stating that no one will express a view either totally for or totally against the Fascist period. (1991a: 195) This chapter will attempt to address the silences and gaps within communal discourse over the popularity of Italian Fascism amongst a small section of the inter-war community, making use of both personal testimony and documentary evidence. There is relatively little written documentation concerning the Fascio in Edinburgh because no records appear to have survived.¹²⁴ Of the 44 respondents in my research sample, 19 said that parents or siblings attended (four referred to Glasgow; fifteen to Edinburgh). Of these, nine said that they themselves attended. From the overall sample group, seven said they attended the language school but some did not connect this to the Fascio. Of those respondents who attended, all but three were children at the time and within narratives there is often an ambiguity surrounding reasons for familial or parental membership. As with the former members of the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana interviewed by Kathleen Blee, there was perhaps ‘a self-consciousness’ about Fascist membership that did not exist at the time. (1998: 335) I did not ask detailed questions about the Edinburgh Fascio because it was not the original focus of my research and I was also wary of putting interviewees on the defensive. However, I did ensure that I ascertained any familial involvement in the Fascio if the narrator had not introduced the topic themselves. Whilst this chapter does not purport to provide a comprehensive and detailed study of the Edinburgh Fascio, oral evidence does highlight the existence of competing versions over the meaning of Fascism within

¹²⁴ Local newspaper reports state that at the fascio headquarters in Edinburgh on 10 June 1940, “A number of Italians arrested here were busy burning papers when the police arrived, and a slight outbreak of fire was caused.” (EEN 11.6. 1940:5) I was not able to visit archives in Rome or consult copies of the fascist newspaper in Britain, L’Italia Nostra both of which may contain more specific information on the Edinburgh fascio.
the inter-war community, illuminating elements of dissension and division amongst Italians rarely acknowledged within dominant discourse. This chapter also includes the ‘bystander’ memories of those who did not attend and their perceptions of the Edinburgh Fascio which throw interesting light on inter-war community dynamics. Whilst there does not appear to have been an active anti-Fascist presence in Edinburgh, narratives uncover the views of those who remained unconvinced by the Fascists, viewing them as a ‘clique’ or dismissing them as ‘daft Italians.’ Any conclusions drawn in this chapter are tentative but can hopefully point to important areas for future research.

Background

Figures collated by the Italian Foreign Ministry in 1927 registered 9.2 million Italians living abroad. The 1920s witnessed the development of a Fascist organisation abroad which, in De Caprariis words, ‘sought to regiment Italian emigrants and, ultimately, hoped to disseminate Fascist ideology beyond Italy’s borders.’ The earliest Fasci all’Estero appeared even before the March on Rome – the London Fascio, for example, being established in June 1921. The spread of Fasci abroad was achieved essentially from below with war veterans, intellectuals and journalists organising the first local branches. (De Caprariis 2000: 152) Mack Smith notes how a traditionally laissez-faire approach to emigration evolved under Fascism so that every emigrant came to be considered a potential source of manpower lost to the country: ‘Mussolini substituted for the word emigrant a more patriotic title of “Italian abroad” and developed the new doctrine that these émigrés did not reflect the poverty of his country but rather the superabundant energy of a young people with a
mission to civilise the world.' (1997: 216) These 'Italians abroad' were to remain loyal to Italy and avoid integration into the country where they were living. (Mastellone 1992: 118)

The principal functions of the Fasci all’estero were to counteract overseas anti-Fascist activity and to disseminate Fascist ideology and propaganda in foreign countries. In 1927, Mussolini brought the Fasci firmly under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the creation of General Bureau of Italians Abroad (Direzione Generale degli Italiani all’Estero) with Piero Parini as its head. In a revealing speech on March 31 1927, Grandi, under secretary of Foreign Affairs, declared:

Emigration tends to diminish the strength of our race... Those of our citizens, especially those of the lower classes, who are forced to live among other races are inevitably and violently assimilated with them. Why must our race continue to be a sort of human reservoir at the disposal of the other countries of the world? Why must our mothers continue to furnish soldiers for other nations? (Quoted in Diggins 1972: 101)

From this point onwards each Fascio was directly subordinated to the centre, with membership cards distributed and local secretaries appointed directly by the General Secretary in Rome. Following centralisation, the political role of the Italian consuls also assumed major importance within the Italian communities abroad. (Cannistraro & Rosoli 1979: 687) Throughout 1928 and 1929 Mussolini appointed 120 Fascist consuls heralding the era of ‘consular Fascism’ in English-speaking countries with a sizeable Italian immigrant presence. (Pennacchio 2000: 67) In Jan 1928, Mussolini issued the Constitution of Fascists Abroad (Statuto dei Fasci All’Estero) which explained the dominance of the diplomats within Italian communities and outlined
the relationship between consular officials and the Italians in their jurisdictions. (Pennacchio: 2000:67) Under Article I of the new laws, members ‘must respect the official representatives of Italy abroad, obey their direction and follow their instructions.’ Fasci members also had to swear the following oath of allegiance to Mussolini, a fact which rang alarm bells amongst the British security authorities:

In the name of God and of Italy, I swear to carry out the orders of my Duce and to serve with all my strength, and if necessary with my blood, the cause of the Fascist revolution.

The secretary of each Fascio had to keep in touch with the official representative of the Fascist State, cooperate with him in all measures and make an annual report to the General Secretary in Rome. (Salvemini 1977: 57)

It is generally agreed that the attraction of organised social activities, provision of language schools and free holidays and welfare assistance from Italy did prove popular amongst a section of the Italian immigrant population. (Salvemini 1977; Sponza 2000) Commentators also agree that the Fasci were successful in restoring a sense of self-respect to Italian immigrants often on the receiving end of racial abuse and negative stereotypes in their host nations. (Diggins 1972; Salvemini 1977; Colpi 1991a; Sponza 2000a; Iacovetta 2000) Both Salvemini and Diggins refer to the ‘inferiority complex’ of Italian immigrants in America as being important in guiding their response to Fascist overtures (1977:xxvii; 1972: 79) Ultimately, however, as Mastellone in his study of Fasci in inter-war France argues, the aims of Fasci all’estero, ‘were political.’ (1992: 121) Whilst accepting that the establishment of language schools and the provision of social and medical assistance were ‘very useful’ for Italian immigrants, he points out that these institutions and initiatives also
imposed ideological consent: ‘it was not enough to be Italian, it was necessary to be Fascist!’ (1992: 123)

**Historiography**

Unlike in other English-speaking countries where Italian Fascist organisations existed such as Australia and Canada, (Cresciani 1980; Zucchi 1988; Salvatore 1998) there have been no studies published specifically on Italian Fasci in the UK. Historiography essentially asserts that the Fasci were social clubs which simply attracted members who were patriotic and nostalgic for their motherland. Colpi’s statement that ‘Fascism for the average British Italian person was about patriotism’ typifies the general emphasis in communal discourse. (1991a: 101) The idea of the Fasci as social and recreational clubs, which pre-dominates in Anglo Italian historiography, appears to have been accepted at face value and never challenged. The normally astute observer, Fortier, reiterates how the Fasci were ‘social clubs’ established in different parts of the world (2000: 67) whilst the Gillmans present the Fascio as ‘a social club where expatriates could express nostalgia for their former home.’ (1980: 148) Hickey & Smith’s depiction of the London Fascio with its ‘bubbling coffee machines and busy dance floor’ is the most extreme example of attempts to present the Fasci in the most innocuous light. (1989: 72) Significantly, the foregrounding of the social aspects of the Fascio is one of the most distinctive features of personal narratives. Here, it could be argued, the omissions inherent in communal myth operate with the *acquiescence* of those involved. Within the narratives of those whose parents attended the Fascio in Edinburgh, it was variously described as a ‘golf club’ (Gloria Bee) or ‘like having ceilidhs.’ (SA1997.100 Anita
Boni) All those interviewed who had some level of involvement in the Edinburgh Fascio were adamant that it was not Fascist and that those who attended were not Fascists. Yet, as Iacovetta and Ventresca eloquently conclude, ‘well-intentioned desires to exonerate ordinary men and women from unfair accusations as Fascists or fifth columnists do not absolve us, or them, from the responsibility of trying to understand how movements such as Fascism came to enjoy popular appeal in communities across the globe.’ (2000: 399)

Linked to the projection of Fasci as social clubs is the assertion that most Italian immigrants were members. Phrases such as ‘the vast majority of the Italian Community in Britain embraced Fascism in a whole-hearted manner’ (Colpi 1991a: 88) or Sponza’s statement that ‘the bulk of the immigrants’ looked upon Fascism ‘with grateful sympathy and enthusiastic support’ (2000a: 35) are common. In reality, involvement in the Italian Fasci in Britain was a minority experience, a fact even acknowledged by MI5. An intelligence report from 1936 concedes that membership levels were proportionately low so that, the Fasci in Britain ‘have not the control over all Italian nationals resident in this country which they claim to possess.’125 Indeed when MI5 were called upon to supply the names of those included on their notorious list of ‘desperate characters’, out of a population of 18,000 they could find only 750 names. (Sponza 1993: 126) This reflected wider international trends. By October 1925 membership stood at the ‘unimpressive’ figure 65,000, representing only a tiny fraction of the nine million Italian nationals residing abroad (De Caprariis 2000: 159) and had reached only 150,000 by 1939.

125 National Archives HO144/21079 (1936: 9)
A singular elite narrative has therefore been generalised to encompass the whole of the Italian community; conveying the false impression that ‘everyone’ joined. A typical example is Colpi’s photographic collection, *Italians Forward*, which includes a picture of ‘Young Fascio Members’ depicting three girls and two boys from Edinburgh, the latter dressed in blackshirts and fez. In the caption below, Colpi asserts ‘these young people were typical of the British-born second generation in their attitude to Fascism. For them it meant identification with the land of their forefathers and, at the same time, an acceptable means of socialisation.’ (1991b: 76) Historiography promotes an inclusivity or commonality when representing an elite led- movement, made up largely of the more successful members of the community. In 1933, when a census of Italians in Scotland was compiled by the Italian consular authorities, less than half (44.2 per cent) of Italian male ‘heads of family’ were registered members of the Italian Fascist Party. (Wilkin 1979: 54) Dominant discourse thus denies the existence of a substantial number – around 50% - of Italians in Scotland who did not attend, most likely poorer Italians or those who did not run their own businesses. Oral evidence also suggests that there were lower levels of Fasci participation in areas such as Fife which were some distance away from the Edinburgh centre. Indeed, Colpi confirms that ‘geographically isolated families were ‘more socially isolated’ from Fasci activity.’ (1991a: 101) Communal myth, by promoting a homogeneous account in respect to membership and support of the Fascio, fails to address the motivations of a significant number of Italians who did not attend. Furthermore, the net result of this tendency to exaggerate levels of support for the Fasci, is that, as Perin identifies with

---

126 In ‘certain designated local fasci’ there were higher levels of Fascist Party membership. Email correspondence from Cav. Andrew Wilkin, University of Strathclyde 22/3/2000.
Montreal Italians: ‘Since all sheep are painted black, the black sheep in the herd cannot be distinguished.’ (2000: 327) Overall, there has been a critical failure within Anglo Italian historiography to address the elite Fasci leadership and to explore possible links between high profile Fasci activities or ceremonial and internment.

Findings

In Great Britain there were at least sixteen Fasci, the London Fascio, established in June 1921, providing the ‘springboard’ for all the other clubs. (Sponza 2000a: 25) In Scotland, the first Fascio was established in Glasgow in 1922 with sections in Stirling, Ayr and Buckhaven and district representatives appointed in Coatbridge, Motherwell and Paisley. The Edinburgh Fascio was set up in 1923 with Fasci also established in Aberdeen, Dundee and Greenock. As with other Fasci, the Edinburgh Fascio appears to have been based initially on the local ex combattenti groups. Alfonso Crolla, who became Secretary in 1926, had been a sergeant major in the Italian army during the First World War and was well known through his ex-soldiers’ association in Edinburgh. Typically those involved in the Fasci in Britain would be the ‘successful small entrepreneurs’ as identified by Sponza in relation to the London Fascio. These men, who ‘represented the tip of the immigrant community,’ were joined by established restaurant owners, hotel managers and shopkeepers. (2000a: 27)

127 There were also fasci in Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle, Carlisle, Sheffield, Middlesborough, Cardiff and Swansea. In Ireland there were fasci in Belfast, Dublin & Londonderry. HO 144 /21079 (1937)
128 HO 144 /21079 (1937: 12)
Consuls and vice-consuls played a key role in propagating Fascist ideology amongst immigrant communities, taking control of existing community organisations. (Iacovetta & Perin 2000: 10) Initially, in Edinburgh the Italian vice consul in the 1920s was a Scottish lawyer A Nicol Bruce residing at 15 Rutland Square. He was later replaced by Italian Consular Agents Cavaliere Mario Olivieri, and Dott. Mario Trudu and by 1937 the Italian Consulate was sharing premises with the Fascio in Picardy Place. The self-styled Edinburgh Italian Fascisti appears in the 1929/30 edition of the local post office directory at 20 Picardy Place. Joseph Pia recalls that ‘they used to have a thing above the wall: “Respect the country which has given you hospitality”. (1996: 303) There was a billiard saloon on the ground floor and on the floor above that was an office and a big hall with seating for around 60 to 100 people. (1996: 305) As dictated by Art III of Mussolini’s 1928 Statute, the Edinburgh Fascio established a youth section, le Organizzazioni Giovanili, a women’s section, il Fascio Femminile and the Dopolavoro running sporting activities. (Guida Generale 1939: 445) In 1937, the membership of the Edinburgh Fascio was reported at 180. According to MI5 there were 143 children in the youth organisations.

The first committee comprised of Luigi Perella as Secretary, Alfonso Crolla as administrator and Giovanni Cimorelli and Federico D’Agostino as advisors. Perella was succeeded in 1926 by Crolla, a shopowner, (Guida Generale 1939: 445) who

---

135 Often these clubs would have portraits of Mussolini on the wall (Bottignolo 1985:16).
136 HO144/21079 (1937: 12)
was joined on the executive by Pietro Cavaroli, Vice Commander of GILE (the Fascist Party youth organisation overseas), Giuseppe di Rollo, Administrative Secretary and Achille Crolla, responsible for Sport. They even had their own Propaganda Secretary, Serafino Capaldi. Thus it was, in Colpi’s words, ‘the leaders and important people of the Community’ and the ‘well-known family names’ (1991a: 93) who played a central role in setting up the relevant committees, organising events and actively encouraging other members of the community to join. That there was support for Mussolini within the Edinburgh elite at this time is reflected in the memoir of Eugenio D’Agostino, a successful Italian immigrant who ran the Royal Café in Leith Street.137

He has lifted Italy out of the gutter and raised it to a first-class nation. Italy and the whole of the Italians should thank God for having sent a man like him - ‘Long live Mussolini and Fascismo.’ (1938: 144)

Indeed, analysing the limited documentation available, it is striking how the same few ‘names’ appear over and over again, reflecting the relatively narrow band of Edinburgh families involved in prominent positions. For example, Yolanda Coppola, head of the Fascio femminile, was the daughter138 of Paolo Coppola who sat on the executive of the Fascio’s Italian Association for Light Refreshments. (Guida Generale 1939: 445) Joseph Pia who was in charge of after-work activities (dopolavoro) was Alfonso Crolla’s nephew. (SA1998.32)

Depoliticising the Fasci

The representation of the Fasci in Britain as both devoid of political function and detached from Italian Fascist regime reinforces the idea of them as politically neutral

137 Additional information from his grandson, Leonard. Email communication 29/6/05.
bodies. For example, the Fasci all’estero are presented by Colpi in the following way:

The work of the Fasci – Fascist clubs – established in this era was to attempt to reduce the distance between the expatriates and Roma by encouraging full participation by the Italians in the Communities.’ (1991a: 87)

Historians studying Italian communities in other English-speaking countries have identified a similar amnesia regarding any political aspects of Fascio events. Italian Canadians historians note how in redress campaigns, while it is acknowledged that many Italians had joined groups with ‘Fascist affiliations’ such as the Sons of Italy, these are described as ‘social groups’ that were ‘not actively involved in politics’. (Iacovetta & Ventresca 2000: 394) Similarly, Michael Bosworth who undertook oral history research on the Fremantle Fascio in Australia comments on, ‘the failure of anyone to volunteer information about the political aspects of the meetings.’ (1992: 79) Colpi makes the astute observation that in many cases those who express the view “I had nothing to do with Fascism” or “My father had nothing to do with Fascism” are the sons of Fasci leaders, often men who were lost on the Arandora Star. (1991a: 195) Interestingly, Mary Contini of the Valvona & Crolla delicatessen in Edinburgh has recently published a family memoir which includes a portrait of the Fascio Secretary, Alfonso Crolla. Whilst Crolla was awarded the Italian honour Cavaliere in 1934, followed by Cavaliere Ufficiale della Corona d’Italia in 1939 for ‘the work he carried out’ (le attività svolte) (Guida Generale 1939: 445), Contini presents him without once mentioning the Fascio

Alfonso Crolla was charismatic. He had a natural affinity for people and was a great socialiser. He became an important leader in the immigrant Italian community...He supported community clubs and helped the young Italians settle in their new country. He acted as the link between the old and the new, forging friends in the local Scottish community as well. Alfonso enjoyed
every minute of his new role. He travelled round Scotland keeping in touch with his compatriots and selling them provisions. His house was always full of business acquaintances, friends, family and priests. (2002: 146)139

The desire to de-politicise the role of the Edinburgh Fascio was also apparent in interviews typified by Joseph Pia:

Mussolini called it the Fascist Party so we called it the Fascist Party. If Mussolini had called it the Communist Party, we would have said we were a member of the Communist Party. We were not political in the least. (SA1998.32)

Linked to this projection of the Fascio as a social club is denial within personal narratives over whether relations were members at all. The following interchange occurred when I interviewed one married couple:

WU: And what about when you were kids did you go to the Fascio club?
OP: No!
MP: No.
WU: No?
MP: My father and mother participated in that. And his mother.
OP: My mother never went to any Fascio club! (SA1998.31)

Undoubtedly, as recalled by respondents, the Edinburgh Fascio functioned as a public space where Italians could socialise and engage. Yet as Hughes points out in his book on the Italian Welsh community, ‘some who took advantage of these measures may not have been fully aware of the political aims behind them, or may not have cared.’ (1991: 89) Oral narratives suggest that there was a political dimension to the Fasci, in particular the exposure to Italian Fascist propaganda via language schools, film shorts and subsided ‘Balilla’ trips to Italy, which I will now address.

139 Interestingly, intelligence files record that Crolla had received an application from a member of the Glasgow fascio asking to be registered at the Edinburgh Fascio: ‘Crolla referred the matter to the General Bureau of Italians Abroad in Rome asking for approval and stating at the same time that the applicant had a good Fascist character.’ HO144/21079 (1936:9)
Propaganda

In his Preface to *Italian Fascist Activities in the US*, Salvemini wrote that "since the advent of Fascism in Italy citizens and residents of Italian extraction in this country have been subjected to a vast and relentless barrage of propaganda." (1977: ii) By October 1926, the Secretary General of the Fasci Abroad had established a comprehensive network of newspapers and magazines, publishing 50 newspapers and magazines and over 600,000 copies of propaganda material. (De Caprariis 2000: 172) By 1928 the sole Italian newspaper printed in Britain was *L'Italia Nostra*, the official organ of the Fasci so that all forms of representations to Italians in Britain were under the Fascists. (Sponza 2000b: 258) The radio was another important medium of communication for the regime to reach Italians overseas with propaganda broadcasts increasing during the late 1930s. (Diggins 1972: 96)

The Italian Ministry of Popular Culture also supplied Fasci overseas with films that extolled the grandeur of Fascist Italy and were shown in club premises, church halls and theatres within the Italian community. (Pennacchio 2000: 57) In a press interview, Edinburgh impresario, Richard Demarco recalls: "I can remember going to a special film show for the Italian community in Scotland organised by the Young Fascists at the La Scala cinema in Leith Walk, which consisted of films of the Abyssinian campaign. I remember being ill at ease even though I was only seven." (Kemp 1969) Similarly, respondent John Costa remembers his father taking him to see films at La Scala:

I think it must have been once a month and I remember seeing war films, well, obviously propaganda films of - I think it was the war in Spain. Because
Italy participated in that. I don’t think I’d go back as far as the war in Abyssinia, I’m not sure. I don’t remember that. [Q] It was a normal commercial cinema. It was just hired for the Sunday and they showed these films. There were quite a lot of people there I remember. I don’t remember ever going to clubs or anything or being a member of the Young Fascists or anything because some of them were. (SA1998.30)

Language Schools

For Parini, one of the main roles of the Fasci all’Estero was to ‘strengthen the moral, national and Fascist education of the younger generation.’ (cited in De Caprariis 2000: 183) The General Bureau of Italians Abroad created a worldwide school system, which supplied overseas language schools with a curriculum and textbooks specifically designed for immigrant students. Pennacchio points out that as well as offering lessons in Italian grammar, history and geography, textbooks ‘contained patriotic illustrations and slogans that instructed the readers that they were simply Italians who resided abroad. As such, they were to “obey, believe and fight” for Mussolini, Italy and Fascism’. (2000:60) In a recorded interview Domenico Crolla of Edinburgh remembered that Mussolini ‘sent over books and things for schools.’140

Whilst historians from North America concur in their view of the Italian language schools as vehicles for Fascist ‘indoctrination’, (Diggins 1972: 343) Anglo Italian historiography remains strangely silent on this aspect of their activities. Colpi presents the language schools in the following way: ‘Both the Italian authorities and the first generation of immigrants realised the importance of keeping the mother tongue and culture alive within their British-born offspring’ (1991a: 95) Sponza presents them in a similarly neutral fashion: ‘New classes for the teaching of Italian

were opened throughout Britain, normally in association with Catholic churches in the various Italian communities’ (2000a: 46) This general reticence or ambiguity is again reflected in oral testimonies.

According to the 1939 *Guida Generale*, each week the Edinburgh Fascio’s Italian School held 5 classes with the consular agent Trudu, assisted by Yolanda Coppola, giving lessons. Of all the respondents, six said they had attended a language school in Edinburgh and one at the Casa d’ltalia in Glasgow. Some acknowledged that it was run by the Fascio and that they took place at their Picardy Place premises. Others did not make any direct connection between the language school and the Fascio. Indeed, recollections about the school were vague and were often introduced when we were discussing language prowess rather than the Fascio itself. Thus, within the narratives of those who attended the school, the social rather than the propaganda aspects are privileged, the following extract being typical:

We had a teacher, a lady who came once a week and gave us lessons. In reading and writing. Not any other thing: we got the rest of it, we got our proper schooling at the other school but we were taught to read and write [in Italian] [...] you went every week, for years. Auch it was just a game! I mean you certainly got reading and writing but I think the teacher was just playing herself as well! You know: it was a social club. (SA1998.061 Mrs D)

One respondent who attended the language school in Glasgow, recalls that they received books and sang what ‘could have been Fascisti songs.’ (SA2002.065 Diana Corrieri) Miss. P was rare in making an explicit link, saying that her father wouldn’t let her attend the language school ‘because it was really Fascist’:

My father wasn’t a Fascist. My uncle was. My uncle was a Fascist. But my father used to say, “No, this is the country that gives me my bread and butter and you’ll obey by the rules of here. I’ll teach you anything you want to know.” (SA1999.25)
Balilla

The Balilla, established in Italy in 1926, sought to provide 'moral and physical education for the young according to the principles and ideals sponsored by Fascism.' (Piccoli 1936: 9) Incorporating children aged 6 to 18, boys were divided according to age into groups known as 'Balilla' and 'Avanguardisti'; girls into 'Piccole Italiane' and 'Giovani Italiane'. Pieri writes that the Balilla was 'essentially a youth organisation run along military lines, with the boys dressed in black uniforms and drilling with toy guns' (2005: 66) and Pennacchio concurs that these youth organisations were 'structured in a manner which reinforced the concept that its members were a part of militaristic Fascist Italy.' (2000: 61) According to intelligence reports, there were 44 Avanguardisti; 29 Giovani Italiane; 28 Balilla and 42 Piccole Italiane in the Edinburgh Fascio, totalling 143 youths.141 As part of the Balilla initiative, in 1928 the Fascist government began to organize summer vacations in Italy for children of Italian parentage living abroad. (Salvemini 1977: 132) The Italian Government bore most of the cost of these trips so that parents paid only £5, a fact mentioned frequently by respondents.

MI5 routinely monitored the embarkation of children to Italian Summer Camps and the National Archives hold embarkation lists including the names, ages and addresses of the children involved. In 1936 six children from Edinburgh attended Summer Camps in Italy.142 In August 1937, the embarkation of 'a party of 218

141 HO144/21079 (1937: 12)
142 HO144/21079 (1937:12)
children' from across the UK for Italy was recorded leaving Newhaven port. Included in this group were 17 children from Edinburgh with an average age of 13. This was followed by the departure of a further 96 'Italian juveniles' later in the month which included 13 youths from Edinburgh with an average age of 18.143 Accompanying the party were five adults including Trudu, the consular agent in Edinburgh. Colpi states that 'Many of these children had never been to Italy and the opportunity was considered by their parents to be generous beyond belief. Indeed, much jockeying for the limited places took place in the various Italian Communities'. (1991: 89) In fact, many of those who travelled from Edinburgh appear to have been from the same narrow pool of 'important' families – Crolla, Coppola, Capaldi - suggesting a low uptake amongst 'ordinary' Italians.144

Respondent Mrs M travelled to Italy as a Balilla when she was 18 and presents an essentially comic account of her Balilla trip, reflecting her youthful excitement. She was made a caposquadra because she could speak Italian and wore a uniform incorporating 'a black skirt, a white T-shirt, a cravat, a black beret, black shoes, black stockings.' During the trip, her group received visits from Fascist officials such as Parini and Ciano ('He was beautiful! He had a white flying suit on') but overall, Mrs M remained underwhelmed:

It was just a school where we were all together and they would take us to the zoo. We were in Rome and there's so much to see but we didn't see it all. Just Signor Parini [sighs] and that was it. And on the ship going out, of course, the boys were one side and the girls were another and there was a big rope across that we weren't to fraternise – auch! It was the same on the train! That was life. (SA1999.24)

143 HO 144/21079 Immigration Officers' reports from Newhaven on 'Parties of Italian fascist Children' 20/8/1937.
144 HO 144/21079 Immigration Officers' reports from Newhaven on 'Parties of Italian fascist Children' 6/8/1937 + 20/8/1937.
Carmen Demarco recalls her elder brother and sister going on a Balilla trip:

They pestered my father rotten until he said yes. However, unbeknown to them, what it meant was a fortnight under canvas at Anzio with daily processions, goose-stepping and 'Heil Mussolini!' or whatever, up to Rome and all the rest of it. It was extremely political and they got uniforms, [...] brownshirts and cravats and armbands. The young Balilla. So of course, they had a good enough time, they had some fun and all the rest of it but they didn't take much to the political bit at all. When they came home, they were kind of disappointed about the whole thing. (SOE 63)

There was much concern expressed by the security services about 'boys born in UK of Italian parents' being sent to Italy for these holidays, the entry of dual nationals into Balilla camps being viewed as a 'sinister development'.\(^{145}\) In a communication to Home Office official Frank Newsam in August 1936, MI5 admitted, 'Whilst the object of this scheme is to maintain the Italianità of these British born children it is not possible to say to what extent they are affected by the Fascist propaganda to which they are obviously subjected or how far this will be counteracted by their subsequent experiences in this country. There can, however, be little doubt that, combined with the pressure which we know is exerted through the Fascist organisation, the result is to cause a large number of nominally British subjects to retain another allegiance.'\(^{146}\) They were particularly concerned about boys on reaching military age: 'It must be assumed that in the event of war these British born Italians would be expected to remain here in many cases in order to serve Italy by espionage and sabotage.'\(^{147}\)

\(^{145}\) HO 144/21079 Notes on file 24/6/1936.
\(^{146}\) HO 144/21079 Letter to Frank Newsam 20 August 1936.
\(^{147}\) HO 144/21079 (1937: 3)
Indeed, involvement in the Balilla did have massive consequences for those who participated. Many of the younger Italian Scots arrested in Edinburgh in June 1940 and detained in Saughton Prison under Regulation 18B had attended the summer camps as Balilla. Carmen Demarco refers to ‘that balilla outing that cost us so dear’ and links were frequently made within narratives between Balilla membership and subsequent detention. It is important to recognise the different mechanisms used by the Italian Fascist regime and their representatives in Britain to draw Italian immigrant families into their net with devastating consequences—a fact which has not been adequately acknowledged in existing accounts.

**Public Displays of Presence**

In his influential article, Rodgers states, ‘Unlike Mosley’s ‘black-shirts’, the Italian Fascists made little impact and there is a conspicuous lack of evidence of antagonism towards the Italians in the 1930s.’ (1982: 18). Oral evidence comprehensively undermines this argument. In her work looking at the sociological aspects of contemporary Italian community life, Fortier employs the term ‘public displays of presence.’ (2000:134) This concept is highly relevant when analysing the impact and perception of inter-war Fascio activity amongst the Italian community in Edinburgh. The years following the establishment of the Fascio in Edinburgh witnessed an increasingly public and confident display of ‘italianità’ by members of the Fascio club. As well as the annual picnics and sporting events, there were parades by the Italian Blackshirts on municipal and commemorative occasions. The local press report on the 1929 Armistice ceremony notes the presence of ‘a small band of Edinburgh Fascisti’ led by a standard-bearer ‘holding aloft the large flag of the
Fascist colours.’ (EEN 11.11.1929: 9) In his recollection of attendance at one remembrance ceremony, Joseph Pia insists that the Italian Fasci members were invited ‘because we were Italian’ yet his anecdote highlights their external identification as Fascists:

There were about twenty of us all in blackshirts and white gloves. We were the Italian Fascist Party, and then there were the British Legion from Bathgate, from Armadale. They all had their wee clubs you see and there was about thirty or forty little groups behind us. Now some women came and shouted, “Hey it’s not fair. Ladies before gentlemen. We should get in front”. [EDIT] So we started moving out but the man in charge of the whole lot, a man called Colonel Robertson VC, came running across, “What’s wrong? What’s this?” So my uncle said to him, “These ladies are objecting to us being there so I’ve told the boys, come out, we’ll go away to the back”. And this officer, Colonel Robertson, said to the women, “Have you no sense of manners? Don’t you know that you give pride of place to the guest? These Fascists here are our guests. So we’ll put them at the top of our procession.”

Significantly, he also acknowledges:

We were spectacular looking. A dozen to twenty of us in blackshirts. And we used to always get at the head of the procession because we were guests, you see. But anyhow, they used to get us because it was attractive. A change. Something to look at away from the usual. That’s all. (SA1998.32)

The imposing physical presence of the Edinburgh Italian ‘Blackshirts’ was also remembered by Dora Harris, who grew up in the Grassmarket in the 1920s and witnessed their attendance at the funeral of her friend’s grandfather. Her narrative is also significant in illuminating both the class divisions, usually overlooked when discussing the Italian community, and the equation of the Fascists as the ‘rich Italians’:

I was very young when this happened but I remember it as clear as yesterday. When he died the whole street was in...well, Victor's dad [Crolla], he was the head of the Italians. All the rich Italians that dinnae want to know us, they all crowded into the Grassmarket. This was for, Mr. Leonardo had died, this was his funeral. And do you know: he was the last survivor of the Garibaldi army? So he had a state funeral, like he was royalty! [Q] We were
just kids. You know how you watch a funeral when you're kids. And, this [Cavaliere] Crolla and all the Italians what we'd never clapped eyes on before! We'd never seen them before! We didn't even know about them. But all the posh Italians that used to...look down on us because we lived in the poor quarters. (SA1997.105)

Interestingly the three respondents I interviewed from the poorer Grassmarket area all referred to Fascio members as 'blackshirts'; displaying a significant detachment from the Fascists as if they were a separate entity, removed from their own experience. As Fraser points out, this is where oral history is so useful, in enabling us to recapture 'contemporary perceptions.' (1994: 31)

During the course of my fieldwork I was given a video of cine film capturing interwar events organised by the Edinburgh Fascio. It reveals a self-confident community, playing football, running races and having picnics and closes with participants giving the Fascist salute as they accept prizes. In conjunction with the oral evidence, this cine film reflects, to paraphrase an American observer, a willingness to be seen at public manifestations of Fascist organisations. (Quoted in Salvemini 1977:xxxiii) Arguably, the main consequence of this inter-war activity, as has been suggested by Australian historians, was that the most public face of the Italian immigrant presence became Fascist. (Bosworth 2000: 233) It is also important to contextualise the activities of the Italian Fascisti in Edinburgh in the highly politicised decade of the 1930s. This was a time of acute social conflicts which the dichotomy of fascism and anti-fascism most starkly expressed. (Kirk & McElligott 1999: 3) The rise of the Nazis in Germany, the 1936-9 Spanish Civil War and the growth of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists all contributed to a sharp

148 Colpi acknowledges Italian children 'singing Giovinezza, the fascist youth song, whilst saluting at special rallies.' (1991a: 91)
polarity between the right and left. When Mosley spoke at the Scottish BUF headquarters in December 1935 he was ‘received by a guard of honour of uniformed Blackshirts drawn up at the headquarters who gave the Fascist salute.’ (EEN 17.12.1935: 19) Thus the Italians’ black shirted presence occurred within a highly charged context where they would have been identified as political actors.\(^{149}\) Indeed, the lobby correspondent of the Edinburgh Evening News was reporting in June 1940 that ‘for a number of years back the Italian population has been very much under the influence of Fascist propaganda.’ (EEN 12.6.1940: 3) Kate Darian Smith in her book on wartime Melbourne notes that in Australia greater animosity was directed towards Italian rather than German nationals. She believes that this was not only because Italians had particularly low status as southern European immigrants but also because ‘Italian patriotism was linked with Fascist organisations.’ (1990:29) This external identification of Italians as Fascists is a factor which has been completely overlooked in Anglo Italian historiography.

Whilst it is important not to overstate the sinister nature of Italian Fascism in Scotland during this period,\(^{150}\) personal narratives do suggest that there were individuals who actively supported Fascism. Dina, who grew up in Irvine remembers one man who was ‘a rabid Fascist:’

He had an ice-cream van on the way down to the beach and he would say things like, “Come and get a cone. I’ll put some Abyssinian blood on it.” This was the [raspberry syrup]. I was really so ashamed. And I was only wee but I was terrified that anybody would think that I was thinking along the same lines as this man was thinking. (SA2002.064)

\(^{149}\) Significantly, elderly non-Italians whom I have interviewed for other projects do differentiate between Fascist and non-Fascist Italians in their localities.

\(^{150}\) In the 1920s and 1930s there had been support for Mussolini amongst the Conservative press and right-wing politicians including Churchill. See Graves & Hodge (1971:244) Lamb (1997:76) and Hibbert (1962: 74)
Angelo Valente named one man in Fife that he remembered ‘had the uniform all ready to be worn as the head of the Fascisti in this area of Fife if it ever came to be that Great Britain had to surrender under German rule.’ (SA2002.055) As Principe has noted in reference to internment of Italian Canadians in 1940, the behaviour of the Fascists was significant because ‘The militaristic rhetoric that had deluged the Italian community and spilled into the community at large for ten long years’ alarmed Canadian security services. (2000: 36) As we have seen in the chapter on internment, the existence of the Italian Fasci clubs fuelled MI5’s prejudice and xenophobic suspicion of Italian immigrant communities. (Kushner 1993) Bosworth, writing of the Fremantle Italians identifies the root of the tragedy: ‘Earnestly, men who had attended Fascist ceremonials for years told Australian authorities that they were loyal to the British crown and just as carefully the authorities looked at those activities and decided not to believe them.’ (1992: 87)

**Collections for Abyssinia**

The collection of money by the Fasci in Britain, following Mussolini’s invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935, was arguably the greatest indication of their more political function. Mack Smith writes that although the commencement of war was greeted with surprisingly little enthusiasm in Italy, the unanimous condemnation by fifty members of the League of Nations and the imposition of economic sanctions eventually roused popular excitement: ‘at once all good patriots rallied to the cause.’ (1987: 229) It is generally accepted that the Abyssinian invasion led to a great deal of popularity for Mussolini’s regime, particularly amongst emigrant communities. (Principe 2000: 32) As Mussolini had spent nearly an entire year’s national revenue
(Mack Smith 1987: 233) a campaign began to collect money and gold for the cause including the donation of gold wedding rings. In Britain a general fund for contributions was opened and £18, 480 eventually collected from local Fasci (Guida Generale 1939: 119). The Guida printed a letter from Mussolini praising the Italians of Great Britain for their contributions to this ‘noble initiative’ (nobile iniziativa) and their ‘indestructible Fascist faith’ (loro incrollabile fede Fascista) (1939: 118).

Although Colpi says money was contributed in ‘a frenzy of patriotism,’ (1991a: 97) Diggins regards the collection of funds for Mussolini as yet another example of the Fasci’s ‘brazen activities.’ (1972: 104) Indeed, the collection of gold could be viewed as an intrinsically political act, in the sense of being actively anti-British, rather than simply a patriotic act. Significantly Sponza acknowledges that Fasci leaders regarded Italians in Britain as ‘the vanguard troops’ in the economic and diplomatic war engaged with the host country. (2000a: 48)

When discussing the enthusiastic donation of wedding rings in Italy, Sponza asserts that ‘Most Italians in Britain shared the same sentiments’ (2000a: 48) [my italics]

Again we see a singular elite narrative being generalised to encompass the whole of the Italian community. An interview with Maria Smith and Dora Harris, who lived in the Grassmarket, provides an alternative perspective on this activity:

MS: I mind my granny being really angry because one of the Crolla girls had come round and asked her if - my family was poor!

DH: They were taking the rings off them!

MS: Asked them if they wanted gold and she pointed at my granny's wedding ring. My granny had been widowed for a number of years by then. I must've been about nine at the time.

DH: Aye but [---]'s wife handed hers over.

MS: She pointed to my granny's wedding ring. She says "That ring was put on by my husband and that's where that ring stays!"...Imagine asking.
DH: But they were taking the wedding rings off. To help Mussolini to...fight a losing battle! Eh? (SA1997.105)

A rare glimpse of lingering differences over Fascism is also available in an issue of the trade magazine, Ice Cream Topics dating from 1964 which refers to the Abyssinian collections:

Being in a charitable mood... we shall again refrain from publishing the names of those traders who subscribed so heavily - and the amounts of their subscriptions or donations - to the Casa d'Italia, the Fascist funds and to the collection of money, wedding rings, gold ornaments etc 'against the sanctions', i.e. against England which was accused of instigating the sanctions against Fascist Italy. The scandal connected with the huge sums collected throughout the world is too well known to be reviewed here: as are many others. (1964: 27)

It is also significant that at the time of the Abyssinian crisis, a high number of Italians became naturalised British citizens, with 517 naturalisations in 1936, compared to 145 the following year, (Sponza 2000a: 55) suggesting that a substantial section of the community were not caught up in Colpi's 'frenzy of patriotism.' This indicates the existence of 'dissension' within the inter-war community over Fascism which I will now address.

Narratives of Dissension

Within current accounts, the desire to project the idea that 'everyone' was the same means there has been a complete failure to explore the attitudes and beliefs of those who chose not to become involved in the Italian Fasci. Oral history, therefore, becomes even more important in recovering the myriad of attitudes and responses to the Italian Fasci which I have grouped under the narrative themes of dissension, coercion and resentment. The recent memoirs of Pieri are rare in acknowledging the
tensions arising from the emergence of Fascism. Referring to the pre-war Italian community in Glasgow, he crucially identifies the ways in which the concept of the ‘good Italian’ was monopolised by the Fascists:

Many of the older generation were intensely socialistic and individualistic in their outlook and had never looked favourably on the founding of La Casa Del Fascio and refused to have anything to do with its activities. Those who criticised the actions of Mussolini, and there were many, were labelled as anti-Italian by their fellows. (2005: 67)

Whilst I did not undertake detailed or lengthy questions about Fascism, personal narratives suggest a range of reasons for non-involvement in the Fasci. One respondent said his father didn’t like the Fascists because he was ‘very pro-British’ (SA2002.052 Mr Mac); another said her father ‘just didn’t believe in Mussolini’. (SA2002.056 Maria Angelosanto) Mary Ambrose dates her second generation father’s detachment from the Italian community to the uprising of Fascism, saying he would have been against any ‘pseudo-military approach.’ (SA2002.062) Two respondents whose parents did not attend referred to the Edinburgh Fascio as a ‘clique.’ (SA1999.29 Alex Margiotta; SA 2002.052 Mr Mac) Two brothers from Auchtermuchty remember their father’s response to ‘one prominent Edinburgh person at the head of the Fascist group’ who travelled around the region selling Italian wares:

MV: [...] he used to come once a month.
AV: Selling us Italian goods, wine and salami and all that sort of stuff.
MV: And he wanted him to become a member of the Fascist Party. Dad says, “If you want to come, you can come and stay here but don’t mention the Fascists to me because if you’re going to do that, stay out of my house.” (SA2002.055)

The narrative of Alex Margiotta provides another intriguing insight into the dynamics of community Fascio activity:
Dissension can also express itself in different, more light-hearted ways so that, on occasion, the Fascists are dismissed as figures of ridicule. Geraldo Cozzi put it succinctly, ‘The Fascists? Oh well, the daft Italians here, they were giving their rings and all that.’ (SA1998.45) To Margiotta they were ‘silly men who were dressed in blackshirts... They didnae take the trouble to find out what it was all about. They just joined the gang, the red, green and white flag and get in amongst it.’ (SA1999.29) In this way, respondents provide what Doumanis terms, ‘a subtextual commentary’ on communal social life, revealing aspects of tension and division rarely acknowledged. (1997: 171)
Narratives of Coercion, Resentment and Fear

Another important aspect of the Italian Fasci movement which has never been addressed is the existence of coercion and the possibility that commercial or economic pressure was exerted on people to join. Diggins describes the Italian consuls in America as the main ‘agents of intimidation’ in attempt to regiment Americans of Italian origin and persuade them to join the Fasci. (1972:102) For Britain, the Southampton Fascio provides a useful case study. Here the ‘energetic’ Vice Consul Signor D’Anneo, who arrived in 1934, was said to have ‘forced’ people to join the local Fascio by ‘lecturing, continuously, insisting’ so that local Italians were ‘roped in’. In light of the paucity of material, it is impossible to ascertain the ‘authoritarian’ nature of the Edinburgh Fascio. However, there are indications that other factors were at work beside the simple desire to join a social club. For example, in June 1940, an Italian Nicolo Ferrito of Lauriston Gardens appeared in court charged with offences under the 1920 Aliens Order. Under the headline ‘Fear of Fascisti’ a press report states that Ferrito had returned to Scotland in 1933 for ‘political reasons.’ His agent explained that he was ‘frightened of a statement in open court because of what might happen to him from the Italian community here and in Italy if he was deported.’ (EEN 10.6. 1940) [my italics]

Two narrators allude to the fact that the Fascio controlled an ‘unofficial’ boycott of businesses so that some Italians joined for reasons of commercial expediency. Carmen DeMarco recalls:

father was having problems because the Fascisti movement had started up in Edinburgh quite strongly and everybody was being urged to join. But my

151 HO 45/25088 BOTTACHI: Orazio. Transcript of H.O Advisory Committee p.8
father was not keen because he wasn't a joiner. You know some people are? He wasn't interested in clubs and things so, he didn't want to join anyway. [...] However, by this time, the factory was well established but in order to make money he had to sell to the Italians, his wafers and cones. And, it was made quite clear to them that either he joined the party or he'd lose business. (SOE 63)

Her view was confirmed by Margiotta, whose father broke away from the Edinburgh Fascio:

My father had money when the rest of them had nothing. But he went down when the rest of them went up because he wasn’t in the Fascio. If you wanted to get on - it was like being in the Freemasons - if you wanted to get on you were in the Fascist club. You joined the Fascist Party and you got on a bit better because you would find co-operation in a lot of things. Even to the extent of if you wanted to borrow a wee bit of money it came out the funds and those who knew what to do got away with it. It was quite corrupt. It was quite a corrupt set-up. (SA1999.29)

Another important factor which emerges from personal narratives is a sense of resentment of the Fasci and its inter-war activities. One Edinburgh respondent, who lost her father on the Arandora Star, states:

See there was definitely a movement here that got a lot of people who had never thought about anything to join and got them into trouble. It was as simple as that...And they were, some of them at the time they were quite forceful. (SA1998.63 Miss A)

Irene Politi, a third generation Italian who lost five relatives on the Arandora Star provides a similar insight:

They just followed everything like sheep in those days. If you couldn’t read and write and a friend came up and says, “Oh this is a very good idea, join this club” the Italian club, they didnae know it was a Fascist club...They were sucked in. (SA2002.057)

As I carried out my fieldwork I became aware of the fact that, for some, there remains a deep-rooted fear of being 'signed up' to something which could have
appalling consequences. Indeed, the long-term effects of Fasci involvement can manifest itself in the most intriguing ways, most specifically in a tangible reluctance amongst older Italians to sign lists. At an Italian Scottish charity event, I once witnessed a respondent refuse to sign a visitor’s book. Another respondent, when discussing the Visitors’ Book held at the 1991 National Library of Scotland exhibition, The Italian Scots comments:

I remember thinking, “Do I want my name linked with the Fascist movement? How do I know it’s not a Fascist movement that’s at the back of it?” I’m always very wary of things you know. (SA1998.26)

These deep-rooted fears stemming from pre-war period were also acknowledged in two letters which appeared in the community newspaper Italiani in Scozia at the time of voting for the 1986 Italian Emigration Committees. One correspondent was puzzled by the number of old Italians in Aberdeen who were ‘suspicous’ of signing the forms from the Italian government until one eventually confided, ‘the last time they made us sign they then sent us to the internment camps or on the Arandora Star.’ A correspondent from Falkirk reported that when he asked an old lady to sign the forms:

As soon as she saw them she was frightened...She managed, with some difficulty, to tell me the reason for her being upset. She told me that the last time the Italian government made her family sign some forms it was before the war. The result of her having put her faith in the people then was that, due to that signature, on 10th June 1940, some policeman arrived in her house and carried her away to work in an internment camp. 152

152 ‘Fear of Signing’ (Paura di firmare) and ‘Will it be like 1940?’ (Non sarà come nel 1940?) Italiani in Scozia Settembre 1986 (No.12:2)
Another overlooked aspect of the inter-war period is the existence of women’s groups within the Italian Fasci. The first Fascio Femminile (FF) was founded in Italy in 1920 and by 1932 the new PNF regulations stipulated that one should exist in every single Fascio di Combattimento. (Willson 2002: 22) As Perry Willson has shown the FF in Italy were assigned an essentially subordinate position to the male organisation, with women confined to support roles, welfare and propaganda. (2002: 21) Luigi Pautasso on the Fascio femminile in Toronto confirms that that the male section administratively controlled the activities of the women’s section with the latter primarily involved in fund raising activities. (1979: 182) Even MI5’s report on the women’s section of the London Fascio acknowledges that its activities appeared to be ‘less strictly political than those of the men’, limited to hospital visiting.\(^{153}\) The Guida Generale records that the women’s section of the Edinburgh Fascio had 62 members. (1939: 445) The Fascio femminile was headed by Yolanda Coppola (who also taught at language schools) who was assisted by a committee comprising of Ersilia Mancini (Vice inspectress); Carmela Coppola, Pasqua Capaldi and Elvira Scappaticcio. These women were arrested and detained as part of the police round up in June 1940. Yet within historiography there is a complete silence over women’s involvement in Fasci femminili and their related detention in 1940. Here, I would argue, dominant discourse provides a ‘protective cover’ for women for whom arrest was a source of shame.\(^{154}\)

\(^{153}\) HO 144/21079 (1936:14)
\(^{154}\) See Chapter Five.
Conclusion

As stated at the outset of this chapter, I did not ask detailed questions about inter-war Fascism and personal or familial membership of the Fasci. However, from this limited sample, I believe that some tentative conclusions can be made. The Fascio as remembered in personal narratives – introducing the themes of propaganda, dissension and coercion – is somewhat removed from the ‘social club’ of communal myth. However, the tendency of both historiography and personal narratives to understate the propaganda and political aspects of the Fasci possibly reflects a reluctance to address the role and influence of the clubs in light of Fascism’s uncomfortable present-day associations. As Iacovetta & Ventresca insightfully point out, the silences regarding the Fascist past could in part be provoked by collective embarrassment over disturbing events associated, however tenuously, with some of the worst crimes known to humanity – the equation so deeply embedded in post-war popular memory that Fascism equals Nazism equals Auschwitz. They stress that equating Italian immigrants in Canada who joined Fascist organised parades or sports with Nazis would be ‘absurd’ but argue therefore that clear distinctions will only be made when the subject, and its critical study, are placed firmly on the community agenda. (2000: 399)

Within communal discourse, World War Two is often addressed without reference to inter-war Italian Fascism. Yet the high profile ‘public displays of presence’ which were undertaken by the Fasci elite in the inter-war period arguably led to an external identification of the Italians in Scotland as political actors. This challenges the pervasive elite representation which denies, or downplays, the links between
internment and Fasci membership. Most of those I interviewed were categorical that their parents were not Fascists or even members of the Edinburgh Fascio but would then say that they had attended the language schools provided by the Fascio. Through the provision of language schools and subsidised trips to Italy, the Italian Fascist Party effectively managed to draw large numbers of ‘ordinary’ Italian overseas into Fascism’s web – with devastating consequences. (Pennacchio 2000: 66) One of the biggest problems in attempting to address inter-war Fascism is the fact that MI5 crudely defined all members of the Fasci as dangerous, thus destroying the lives of many who were put onto the Arandora Star. This tragedy has effectively forestalled any critical debate on Fascism in the pre-war community and smothered expressions or articulations of difference. This chapter highlights the need to differentiate amongst members of the community and shows how the emergence of Fascism within Italian immigrant communities is a more contested terrain than previously acknowledged.

I acknowledge that my interpretation, as a historian, diverges from that of respondents who attended the Fascio. As Malcolm Chase notes in his study of a land colonization scheme for unemployed miners in Cleveland, few of those who participated would have been aware of the motivations and beliefs of the founders of the scheme, in particular their interest in replicating the rural reconstruction work of the German youth movement. Chase observes that his interpretation of the scheme, by highlighting its links with inter-war Nazism, advances a history that few participants ‘would have recognised in its entirety’. (2000: 41) He also believes there is a danger of reading back into the Cleveland work camps a dimension of Nazism
which was not evident at the time' (2000:37) This is a dynamic I am conscious of in putting forward my new interpretation about the role of the interwar Fasci in Scotland, an interpretation which will be challenging to many of those I interviewed.
To date, the focus on the male experience of internment within Anglo Italian historiography means that the memories of Italian Scottish women have been largely marginalised and silenced. Fortier points out that generally within Italian immigration historiography ‘women migrants are consistently relocated within the family setting, represented as wives and mothers.’ (2000: 50) This gender bias pervades into published accounts of the war. Although the subtitle of Sponza’s recent book is ‘Italians in Britain during the Second World War’, the text focuses almost exclusively on the male experience, either of internees or Italian Prisoners of War. Similarly, a twenty-page paper by Terri Colpi entitled ‘The Impact of the Second World War on the British Italian Community’ devotes only one paragraph to the experience of women, again represented as ‘the wives, mothers and sisters of the internees.’ (1993a: 183) In their work on the Home Guard, Summerfield and Peniston-Bird note how the relative invisibility of women amongst cultural representations of wartime home defence meant that there was a dearth of constructions available to women upon which they could draw in the 1990s, in composing narratives of their own experiences. (2000: 245) This dilemma appears to be magnified tenfold when addressing the wartime experiences of the female ethnic ‘Other.’ Bosworth, who interviewed elderly Italians in Fremantle in the 1980s about their wartime experiences, argues that because questions on women’s experiences are non-threatening you receive more detailed information on this subject area than on

155 The chapter on the war in The Italian Factor contains only two pages on women’s experiences.
internment. (1992: 86) This dynamic was not apparent within my research sample. Indeed, it could be argued that whilst to some degree the ‘story’ of internment has become processed and can now be safely told, in contrast, the experiences of those dark and ‘terrible’ days on the domestic front remain largely undigested. For this cohort of women, there is no readily available framework through which to filter their more troubling and disquieting memories.

The women I have interviewed fall into three main categories: those who took over the running of family businesses in the absence of parents or husbands, those who were relocated as children and those who were called up to the Services (these categories are very fluid – for example, a woman in the Land Army could still work in the family shop in the evening). Life story narratives provide fascinating, and often disturbing, insights into the human cost of the combined impact of the government’s policies of internment and relocation and local hostility, causing a permanent rupture in a familiar and secure world. For second-generation women who remained in Edinburgh to run family businesses, this was a time of great isolation and distress as they faced the antagonism and abuse of the wider community. For the women and men who were relocated as children (some of whom suffered the absence of a father through internment or death on the Arandora Star) the shock of being removed from their homes and placed in entirely unfamiliar, and somewhat hostile, surroundings reverberates through the years. These children learnt in the most dramatic fashion that they did not belong.
Exploring the experiences of different generations of women on the home front offers a fresh perspective on the different ways in which Italians were perceived as the 'other' within Scottish society, a form of subtle racism which dramatically heightened with the outbreak of war. This chapter will address the experiences of Italian Scottish women who ran family businesses in 'protected areas', often at a very young age and will then look at the both women and men who, as children, were relocated with their mothers – I will categorise these as 'home front narratives'.

I. RUNNING BUSINESSES

'It was just hard work and survival'

Overall, I have interviewed twenty five women representing over half of my research sample. For the purposes of this chapter, I have split them into two main age cohorts: 'adults' born between 1917-1923 and aged seventeen or older when Italy declared war and 'children/adolescents' born between 1924-1940. There were eight respondents in the first category and seventeen in the second. Of the latter, nine were relocated, one spent the war in Italy and seven remained in their home towns (five were third generation Italians making them less intimately affected by state measures). By 1911, women made up 10 per cent of the Italian population in paid employment in Scotland. (Sponza 1988: 58) and more informally, it was common within Italian immigrant families in Scotland for women to help out in the family business from a very early age, by helping to prepare food or to serve customers. The

156 The experiences of war workers are addressed in Chapter Nine.
war, however, necessitated a far more prominent and public role for the female members of Italian families. The government’s policy of relocation of Italian nationals from ‘protected areas,’ lasting on average for around twelve months from June 1940, meant that only second and third generation Italians, as British subjects, were permitted to stay in their homes and run the family business.

Whilst I had been keen to recover what I perceived as the neglected perspective of women’s wartime experiences, analysis of the life stories presented to me by female narrators underlines the difficulties involved in attempting to recover female experience. Although some women could provide vivid and powerful vignettes of certain incidences which occurred during this period, overall there was an inability to provide much detailed information about day-to-day life working in the shops. The desire to blank out memories of this period appears quite widespread amongst this group. There was a frequent tendency to condense the year long period into one sentence. Perhaps here we are witnessing the ‘wounds in the tissue of memory’ identified by Passerini in her work on Fascist Italy. (1992: 13) Significantly, the tone of women’s narratives contrasts sharply with the male narratives of internment which predominate within communal discourse. Internment narratives of second generation Italians tend to foreground positive memories so that, as Fortier points out, the internment camps are primarily remembered ‘as unique terrains of encounter between diverse sections of the Italian population.’ (2000: 53) Although possibly overstating the ‘rather fond memories’ of internment, Fortier quotes an Isle of Man internee who viewed the period of internment as rather comfortable: “we had everything we wanted: sports grounds, canteen, swimming, walks, pictures once a
week at the local cinema.’” (2000: 56) This emphasis was also present in the narratives of two second generation internees I interviewed with a tendency to focus on friendships forged, sporting activities and the opportunities for educational advancement through classes and lectures.157

According to Anderson and Jack, ‘Anthropologists have observed how the expression of women’s unique experience as women is often muted...Where experience does not “fit” dominant meanings, alternative concepts may not be readily available. Hence, inadvertently, women often mute their own thoughts and feelings when they try to describe their lives in the familiar and publicly acceptable terms of prevailing concepts and conventions.’ (1991: 11) For women, the months immediately following June 1940 are remembered primarily as a time of hard work, great anxiety and isolation. In the words of one respondent, reluctant to provide any detail about her year running the family business, ‘it was just hard work and survival.’ (SA1999.25 Miss P) This reluctance to dwell on the months following June 1940 was particularly pronounced within Bennedetta Matrundola’s narrative:

It was the time when you were...classified as being, because you were Italian or of Italian, people they took it out on us. Oh dear. It was horrible during the war...auch aye. So, that’s it dear. (SA1999.34)

As most second generation men of military age were called up to in the British Forces (or interned), this effectively meant that women often took on the burden of familial responsibilities, running shops and cafes and attempting to keep businesses operating as viable concerns, at a time when many premises had been severely damaged during the riots. A female presence entered traditionally male spheres as

157 The narrative of the third internee – who was first generation, older and married, was far less positive, emphasising his loss of liberty.
young women found themselves dealing with suppliers, coping with the rationing of vital foodstuffs or attending the fish market in the mornings to buy their stock. The multiple layers of conflicting demands and responsibilities faced by second generation women are apparent in Flora Gallo’s account. She lost her father on the Arandora Star and, on return to Edinburgh following relocation, was expected to help run the family business whilst still attending school:

I would go down the market in the morning for my mother with a bicycle, get my fish - you got it delivered - make sure that nobody was pinching it off you. I was ‘E Gallo’ because we still kept my father’s name. E Gallo, Emilio Gallo - we used to have tickets to stick on the fish boxes. We used to have to bid for them. And at that time things were so scarce at the time – we were on rations at the time – and we served every kind of fish we could get out hands on. And we worked, and we worked and we worked and it was purely hard work. Standing up to here [indicates] in dirty, muddy water, doing fish and chips. It was not funny and it was not easy. But - my mother kept saying, “It’s a family business. Dad would like you to do this, you’ll have to help”. My mother was not well, she took sugar diabetes and she only lasted seven years after my Dad. She died of a stroke. She took a cerebral haemorrhage. So it was all due to stress... anxiety perhaps. (SA1999.30)

Eighteen-year-old Maria Angelosanto remained in Edinburgh when her father was interned and her mother relocated to Glasgow. She found taking on new tasks such as going to the fish market by herself ‘really traumatic.’ Her mother’s friend helped her in the shop but her recollection of this ‘terrible’ time remains stilted:

We had to manage the shop, open it. We just barely kept it open and that was it. The business wasn’t very good at that time because this girl who looked after the shop for us she wasn’t very good either and I was too young, so…(SA2002.056)

Narratives of fear

As well as struggling with the vagaries of rationing and the day-to-day affairs of their business, second generation women were also constantly exposed to xenophobic
comment and abuse in the public arena of the street and shop. Colpi acknowledges that many Italian women faced 'a good deal of on-going racism': 'Most where shunned by locals as "enemy aliens" and, where good relations had previously existed, all pretence at tolerance disappeared. Most of the businesses that folded did so because local people refused to use the service they provided.' (1991a: 127)

Female respondents repeatedly refer to being 'frightened' or 'terrified' during this intense period of their lives. In the immediate aftermath of the arrests and riots and before relocation, those who were children recalled being too scared to leave their homes or open their mouths at school. As one respondent understates, 'we were rather frightened to go out because people were shouting at you in the street'. (SA1998 Rena Valente) Irene Politi, a third generation Italian, uses a wartime act of aggression towards her family to open a narrative dominated by the idea of herself as an outsider in the community of Loanhead where she grew up:

My mother, poor soul, she and I suffered. Sometimes we had to pick up our bags and go down and stay in Portsmouth where she originally came from. I remember once she’d washed all her sheets [...] We had a washhouse and she did all the washing in the washhouse. She was absolutely spotless; white sheets putting them up on the line. This old lady, very Catholic, holy, religious old lady - my dad had just been interned and we had the shop and she just hated [us] because we were Italians - she hated us, really. It was Mussolini in those days and there was the war was going on. Poor mum went to hang out her washing and I can still see it happening. I went down, I said, “Where’s all the washing Mum?” It was all lying on the floor. This old biddy had taken the stretcher out and [the washing] was all lying in the mud. She was a wicked old so-and-so. She did some terrible things to my mum and to myself. (SA2002.057)

For second-generation women who remained in Edinburgh, their employment in the catering trade made them particularly vulnerable to attack and abuse, especially from drunken and aggressive customers. As Flora recalls:
the abuse that we had to stand off some of the people in Leith, it was unbelievable. Unbelievable!...The verbal abuse that they called you, they swore at you, they made you feel as if you were nothing.

The same respondent expanded upon this theme in a revealing anecdote, touching upon the themes of identity and not belonging:

At the time the blackout was on, we were frightened to go out at night but I was never accosted once in the streets. Where we got an awful lot of abuse was standing at the back of the counter. One night in particular, a man came in. He was a wicked man; he had one leg. He asked for a fish supper but he got it in the face by the time I was finished. I think I told you, I had a tartan skirt on. He called me all the Italian so-and-sos: “Get back to Italy, take that tartan skirt off. You’re not entitled to put a British skirt on. You’re not a Scots person”. He went on till I could stand it no longer. My mother said, “Flora, please. Don’t start”. She was frightened; she was scared. But I lost my temper and he got the supper in his eye. (SA1999.30)

Female respondents recall incidences of being hit by stones, being spat at or simply being shunned in communal areas on account of their national origin. The following extract is typical of many women’s narratives in recalling a deep sense of isolation:

I had to do the washing and things like that. I used to get up at six o’clock in the morning. The washhouse opened up and I would go to the washhouse and nobody would help me and tell me what to do or anything. They all kept away from me because I was Italian. I even burnt all my arm because I didn’t know that the steam was coming out the boiler...But I learnt the hard way. (SA1999.25 Miss P)

Many women respondents were relatively young when left alone to run family shops and their narratives reflect both a sense of shock and of deep isolation at being left to confront both the racist abuse and any potential business problems alone. Miss P’s whole life story was punctuated with recollections of personal assaults or the threat of physical violence, a trend which was accentuated when recalling the wartime period. The following extract exposes her profound sense of aloneness:

189
MP: I was sixteen and my brother was twelve and I had to take him away from school. For one thing he would have got beaten up if he’d have stayed at school. And I had to be a mother to him. I had to look after him, I had to do everything for him. And I kept the business going. I was the only girl in Edinburgh that was on her own, that had no parents behind her, that kept the shop open...And I had to work there. I couldn’t get any money that my father had in the bank, it was all...frozen they called it then. With him being an alien and all that, I couldn’t get his money. And I was under-age, nobody would give me credit. And I had to work hard to have the money up front to buy things and I...at that age, I mean, it was dreadful what I went through. And I was beaten and everything in the shop.

WU: Really?

MP: Yes.

WU: When you were on your own?

MP: [quietly] Yes.

WU: By customers?

MP: Yes. Spat on. It was dreadful. It was really...And ones that you thought were your real good friends. I was brought up with them: [---] and all them. [---] was alright but her parents they forbid her to speak to me anymore, you know and things like that. At that age that really hurt. I was on my own. On my own. (SA1999.25)

Mrs M’s father was interned and, two days later, her mother ordered to leave Edinburgh. Her recollection of the night a crowd attacked the family shop, echoes this sense of loneliness and fear:

A soldier and a sailor came forward and said, “Are you on your own?” I said, “Yes!” They said, “Well, look. You go inside at the back and we’ll stay here to make sure that they don’t get in”...They were scared in case they would attack me but they weren’t interested in that. They were only interested in what was in: the cigarettes and the sweeties and everything and they cleared me out! They stayed until the crowd went further down into the next ice cream shop [sighs]. So, they said, “Look, we’ll close the door, we’ll lock up. Where do you [stay]?” I said, “I just stay up above the shop.” They said, “That’s fine. We’ll see you up there and just stay there” and that’s it. They couldn’t do anymore, naturally. I mean, I was confused, I thanked them but I wasn’t aware of what had happened. So I went upstairs, crying of course and I thought, “Oh my Goodness, what am I going to do?” However, I went to bed, got up and the next morning, I’m walking down the stairs intending to open the shop. [sighs] So I stood at the staircase and I looked up and down
and I thought, "Oh I'm frightened". So I went towards the shop and I just got, went to the padlock and this lady came over and she spat in my face, she said, "You Italian b-" - can I swear? - you Italian bastard", she says... And the tears and the spit were running down my face. (SA1999.24)

As well as these specific incidences of physical and verbal aggression Italian Scottish women also laboured under a more vague, but palpable form of hostility. As in the earlier chapter on riots, where narratives exposed levels of hostility from those previously considered friends or customers, this chapter provides further evidence of the phenomenon of being shunned by former acquaintances. For respondents, one of the most shocking aspects of this time, neglected in official histories, was the fact that it was people that they knew who turned against them. Irene Politi who grew up in Loanhead says that Italians were treated badly 'by the people living with us.' (SA2002.057) Miss. P said she could 'count on one hand' those who had helped her during these difficult months. Six decades on she expressed disbelief at the 'nastiness of people':

When you’ve been brought up with someone and you’ve played with them and they’ve been at your home and that. And then, all of a sudden because the country that your parents were born in go with another country to fight the war, then all of a sudden you’re scum and you’re dirt. (SA1999.25)

Diana Corrieri who took over responsibility for her family’s shop in Uphall echoes these sentiments, ‘You really knew who your friends were [...] And they were few and far between.’ (SA2002.065) Her husband Frank agreed that during the war ‘You found out who your true friends were.’ He grew up in Kelty, Fife, the son of a naturalised Italian:

We had one family we were very friendly with and one of the sons used to come to the house. He could come to the house at a mealtime and just pull a chair up and sit down. It was then Italy came into the war and he went into the Army and he was an officer. And he came back and he looked in to see
[us] and my father said, “Oh hello. How are you getting on? Blah-blah. Where are you?” “Oh I can’t tell you that. That’s a military secret.” But his brother had already told me where he was. I said, “Oh aye. You’re on a lighthouse. Stationed at Kinghorn [in Fife] aren’t you?” He didn’t like that. But that was the kind of thing you got, you know? That was what you thought was a real friend. And his mother always crossed the road and passed the shop on the other side of the road after Italy came into the war. (SA2002.065)

As Cocozza eloquently observes of his mother’s experiences in Wishaw, their regular customers gradually began to drift back to their shop: ‘But Assunta was on her guard, feeling she had lost the special intimacy she had once enjoyed with them. It was as if an invisible veil of distrust had risen between them, which it would take much time to rend.’ (1987: 237)

Overall, for women who remained in Edinburgh, working in the family businesses, their experiences confirmed their pre-war suspicions that they were outsiders, the ‘other,’ and this in turn contributed to a heightened sense of being Italian. Monsignor Rossi, who worked intimately amongst the wives and children of Italian internees in Scotland during the war, notes how the experience of keeping the family businesses going at a time of ‘humiliations’:

rather than lessen the ties with their land of origin, had strengthened their attachment to Italy, the land which they had left because it did not have enough to feed them. Some of these women had never been in Italy; they were born and brought up in Scotland, still felt that they were fully Italians. (1992: 63) [my italics]

II. RELOCATION

As noted above, as a result of the Aliens (Protected Areas) No.5 Order, all Italian women designated ‘enemy aliens’ were ordered to leave coastal areas and relocate twenty miles inland within three days. According to the circular issued by Edinburgh
Police Aliens Department in June 1940, “You will be allowed to make your own arrangements for leaving the Protected Area, but you must not go to any other aliens Protected Area, nor to any place within 20 miles of the East or South coasts of Great Britain.” The most common destination areas for Edinburgh Italians appear to have been Peebles, Pitlochry and, further west, the conurbations surrounding Glasgow. Relocation caused major upheaval and dislocation in the lives of Italian immigrant families in Edinburgh yet surprisingly Colpi deals with it in just one sentence in The Italian Factor. (1991a: 127) Of the 44 people interviewed, nine women and five men were young enough to have been relocated with their mothers in 1940, from periods ranging from seven months to three years. Thirteen members of this group were the children of internees and five of the women lost their fathers through drowning.\textsuperscript{158} This section will highlight the struggles of Italian women though the memories of their children and will then address the experiences of the children themselves. Personal testimonies highlight feelings of bewilderment, dislocation and a sense of being at the whim of bureaucratic cruelty.

In contrast to the government-sponsored evacuation of schoolchildren in September 1939, the authorities did not provide any official support or guidance to those subject to relocation orders. Italian families were effectively being uprooted from their homes and livelihoods but were expected to make their own arrangements.\textsuperscript{159} The relocation policy also contradicted the promises of the government that it would avoid complete destruction of family unity ‘by the conservation of the mother as an

\textsuperscript{158} The father of one respondent died before the war.

\textsuperscript{159} This contrasts with the case of rural villagers, such as the 225 Tyenham valley dwellers, who were forcibly evacuated from their homes by the military authorities during the war but were paid compensation and received help in finding new accommodation. However, Churchill’s pledge that the villagers could return to their homes was rescinded in the post-war era. (Wright 1995: 207)
immovable (officially an ‘immobile’) cornerstone.’ (Summerfield 1998: 47) In Edinburgh, women struggled to find new tenants to take over their businesses and to organise new accommodation and schooling for their children often within a three-day period. The experiences of this group of women, most of whom are now dead, can only be recovered through the memories of the children who accompanied them. One of the most poignant memories is that of John Costa whose mother received notice to ‘clear out’ of Edinburgh following an attack on their shop and the arrest of her husband:

Now we had a small room less than half the size of this. We had two beds, a table, an open fire where she cooked and probably a couple of chairs. My bed was here, her bed was next to it, further down. Now during the day she was normal, calm and everything but when she thought I was sleeping she cried every night. I can still see my mother with her head in her arms, crying every night... (SA1998.30)

**Dangerous Places**

The government’s official evacuation scheme intended ‘to disperse school children who live in congested, closely-built areas where the effect of air raids would be serious.’ (TS 3.6.1940: 3) yet many Italian women from Edinburgh were often forced to relocate with their children to areas with greater exposure to bombing; indeed some were subjected to the air raids on Clydeside as a consequence of relocation. Anita Boni endured the bombing in Manchester when her mother took her to stay with her maternal grandmother. (SA1997.100) Rena Valente, relocated in Coatbridge recalls her horror at being in the air raid shelter during the ‘big raid in Glasgow’ (SA1998.27) whilst Carmen Demarco remembers being ‘incarcerated every night in a Clydebank tenement basement.’ (SOE 63) Mrs M reports that her mother, enduring
the air raids in Glasgow with her younger epileptic sister was initially too ‘embarrassed’ as an Italian to join the other residents in the tenement shelter. (SA1999.24)

Significantly, by employing the inverse of the term ‘protected areas’ in his narrative, Rolando Ugolini invests his relocation with a more sinister meaning – that of the government failing to protect its citizens. His narrative also reflects a sense of disaffection apparent in the narratives of other relocated children:

My mother and I were sent to a non-protected area. That was in Cambuslang in Glasgow. Now the reason was... these non-protected areas were a place where it’s likely to be bombed by the Germans. And bombed it was! We were there for a year and we used to go down in the shelter every night and we could hear the shrapnel hitting the tin roofs and that. And the ironic part about that was: my father was interned and my brother, born here, was in the Black Watch, fighting for Britain. And we were, you know... It was a bit hard to take. (T.314/96)

Interestingly, narratives highlight the growth, in the face of more overt wartime prejudice, of spontaneous support networks amongst some Italian women, who eventually clustered together in central Scottish towns such as Peebles and Pitlochry. Life story interviews reveal how women subject to relocation orders sought refuge with other Italians, moving into rooms with either relatives, family friends or business contacts. Carmen’s narrative highlights the ways in which Italian women relied on each other to help find accommodation.

Aunt Connie by this time had moved to Glasgow, she was staying in Bearsden and so was Marietta whom you’ve met and Zia Carlina, Mrs Capaldi. All of them were all staying around Glasgow. Some of them had relations in Glasgow and were staying with them and so on. And she found us a flat in Clydebank, just a few days before the Clydebank Blitz. [EDIT] And my mother got in touch with Aunt Connie, she says, “Look Conchetta, I’ve got to get out of here”. She said, “You’ve got to find me somewhere”. She said, “Most of the women are going to Peebles. Can you not find me
somewhere in Peebles?” “Well,” she said, “I’m going down to Peebles and I’ll certainly look out for a place for you as well”. Because Mrs Demarco—who’s still alive, Annie—Annie, she’d got a place in Peebles and she was quite happy there because it was safe and there were no bombs or anything. (SOE 63)

Indeed, during this period of unprecedented hostility, it became commonplace for several Italian families to share the same limited accommodation. There was a large element of both sticking together in a time of adversity and of ‘keeping their heads down’. Lola Corrieri remembers how a lot of people from Glasgow moved to Callander:

Every possible house in Callander that my auntie knew was filled with people who were Italians. […] I think there was about eight rooms in my auntie’s house and they were all chock-a-block with, each room went to a family. And the people next door to her, they were the same. (SA1998.24)

Restrictions

Once in the place of relocation, Italian women were also controlled by a number of complex rules and regulations ranging from basic Aliens Orders which required women to register their movements with the police to legislative clauses such as the Contraventions of the Caledonian Railway Act 1898 which made it illegal for Italian aliens to travel on the railways without permission. In 1943, for example, two Italian women in Dumfries were each fined £2 with the option of fifteen days imprisonment for travelling beyond a five-mile radius without a travel permit.¹⁶⁰ These wartime restrictions created geographical estrangement amongst Italian families and left Italian women essentially trapped in the areas of relocation powerless to deal in person with any business or legal matters arising in Edinburgh.

¹⁶⁰ N.A.S. HH55/57 Scottish Home Department. Special Branch Report for Month of Dec. 1943
Second generation Italians who had been relocated were often the only members of the family permitted to travel back freely to the 'protected area' of Edinburgh on behalf of their families. One respondent recalled returning regularly to Edinburgh, as a child of thirteen, to supervise the family business and to visit her seventeen-year-old brother detained in Saughton Prison. Betty Di Ponio who remained in Edinburgh with her children received few visits from her mother, relocated in Glasgow, because the latter 'was afraid of getting into trouble.' (SA1999.27) Although recounted as a light-hearted anecdote, the following extract from an interview with Mrs D reveals the emotional consequences of the government's policy of physically separating different generations within one family:

[My mother] got her daughter-in-law [...] to write to the Alien Department to say that her daughter had had a baby and she would like to visit her daughter in the hospital in Edinburgh and she would just come through and go straight back. Please could she do this? So, mother was too impatient to see me and this baby, she didn’t wait for an answer. She took the train to Edinburgh, took a taxi to the hospital and came in. I heard her – my baby was only two days old – I heard this voice, in her broken English, “I want to see Mrs D. I’m her mother!” I thought, “What’s mother doing here?” She came in. I said, “Oh mother, what are you doing?” She says, “Well, we’ve written away for permission but the answer hasn’t come back yet. I’ve just taken a taxi and I’m going straight back to the station by taxi and back to Glasgow. So I’m perfectly alright”. She’d done something she shouldn’t have done but she went back to Glasgow. A few days later came the reply: ‘Sorry. Request refused’. But she went, “Ha! I’ve been!”, you know. But she said she went into church first. She went to church and says, “Now I’m going to Edinburgh to see my daughter and the baby. I’m not doing anybody any harm so just you take care of me.” (SA1998.061)
Welfare and Employment

Italian Canadian historian Carlson Cumbo points out that in addition to the internment of the chief family breadwinner, economic hardship 'was compounded by the family's inability to retrieve its savings, as all assets were legally frozen and held by the dominion Custodian of Enemy Property. Under these circumstances, livelihoods were lost and businesses sold off.' (2000: 105) This was also the case in Britain with the Custodian of Enemy Property taking over some businesses and others closing down 'unable to survive in the face of local racism, trading difficulties and sheer lack of profits.' (Colpi 1991a: 138) With the absence of both senior members of a family, rents to pay on new accommodation and rates on abandoned business properties, many families found themselves increasingly in debt. Rothesay Sheriff Court in June 1940 recorded that several actions for debt had been called against Italians who had been interned or deported and anticipated that many Italian properties would go into receivership. (TS 26.6.1940: 5) Relocated women with children too young to work or to stay in Edinburgh and keep the business operating particularly struggled. To paraphrase Diamond in her study of French women during World War Two, 'physical survival was intensely gendered and was a key factor in women's experience of the war.' (1999: 49)

Simpson is critical of the authorities' failure to make special arrangements for the care of the dependents of male internees at a time when 'ostracism aggravated the plight of families.' (1992: 233) An Italian Internes Aid Committee was established in London with a Miss Muriel De B Daly as Organising Secretary and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster as Patron. A letter from a Bishop Matthew on behalf of
the Cardinal highlights their concern over the hardships suffered by the wives of internees, ‘these isolated and friendless women.’ The standard advice given to internees’ wives was to ‘apply to the Public Assistance Board in your town for assistance under the Regulations for the Prevention and relief of War Time Distress.’ In his interview, John Costa mentions his mother’s recourse to the ‘Parish’ on her return from relocation as she struggled to buy him clothes and boots for school. (SA1998.30) According to the letter issued from Edinburgh Police Aliens Department: ‘After removal from the Protected Area you should, if you desire employment, register with the nearest employment exchange in the district in which you take up your residence.’ As most women had always worked within the confines of family business it was, as Miss A points out, ‘alien’ for them to look for work elsewhere and many were forced onto the labour market for the first time. (SA1998.27) Respondents’ mothers tended to find work with other Italian women whose husbands had been interned or whose sons were away and needed help in the shop or would take on menial jobs such as cleaning.

**Children – ‘overnight your whole world collapses’**

Davies addresses the phenomenon of ‘civilian war trauma’, noting how severe disruption in psychological functioning among some separated and orphaned children was recorded during the war, as well as the traumatic effects of various wartime experiences on children. (1997: 189) Narratives of loss and dislocation predominate amongst those who were children at the time of relocation and were

---

161 HO 215/367 Family Matters entry into voluntary interment. Wives of Italians. It would appear that the Committee lobbied on behalf of desperate Italian women who were volunteering to join their husbands in internment camps.

162 HO 214/22 REALE
forcibly uprooted from their homes. Respondents recall how their familiar world fell apart as their fathers were removed and their mothers ordered from their homes. In her narrative, Rena alternates between her own perspective as a ten-year-old onlooker and that of her mother, transmitting a sense of the latter's fear and anxiety:

My mother's in the shop with my aunt, my father's in the house, policemen come - the CID or something, the plain clothes ones - come and take him away and it's just...overnight your whole world collapses. You've lost your business...you lost your husband as well, you know, really. Because that was the last time you saw him. So, everything happened, it was overnight you lost...you lost everything. (SA1998.27)

The experience of relocation, under the cloud of external identification as the enemy 'other', served to dramatically reinforce feelings of not 'belonging' amongst those who were children and adolescents. Flora's memories of her relocation to Peebles focuses on both the specific restrictions faced and a wider sense of exclusion:

I don't think the Italians were allowed to walk about the streets at night after eight o'clock...you know? And even my sister and the rest of the Italian girls, we were never allowed to go out and play in the streets or anything like that. We were kept indoors. Because we were getting a lot of verbal abuse even in Peebles of course. Some of the Italians made us welcome in Peebles because they knew our situation but at the same time there were a lot of people still prejudiced against us being of Italians, you know? (SA1999.31)

One respondent recounts how her family were 'put out' from their lodgings in Blair Atholl when the Laird discovered they were staying, linking this to the visible 'otherness' of an Italian relative:

This nice lady gave us her cottage. She always rented it for the summer anyway and it was summertime. She had a wee place at the back she used to stay in herself...and she rented us this lovely little cottage...We had people visiting us who were already in Pitlochry - relatives. Because it wasn't only my mother and myself and young brother. It was my aunt too and some of her children in this cottage, you see. And they were visiting and he was obviously Italian, well, they didn't know at the time but it was a son-in-law. The daughter that night and this fellow got married. [...] He was standing outside the door and he looked Italian...and the Laird passed and got onto this little
lady and told her that if she didn't get rid of these foreigners she would lose the tenancy of her house...so the poor soul was upset, we had to move. (SA1997.106 Mrs B)

Whilst John Costa's narrative is imbued with positive memories of his stay in Newbigging, he recalls one incident which forcefully reminded him of his precarious status within the local community:

They had a Home Guard up there of five [farmers] and they used to meet in the Post Office, maybe after six when they met. I was very friendly with the son of the Post Office and I used to go into the house and play. And here were these five men with their rifles and their uniforms sitting in the Post Office, probably from six o'clock till -what? - ten o'clock, drinking beer. [...] But there was one of them who – poor man, I can't remember his name but he was a man of about forty or fifty then who obviously was the village idiot, lets' say that – and he had this rifle and that. Now he never bothered me, I must be honest, but one day we were in the fields and there he was with his rifle. I don't know what he was doing in the field with his rifle - and there were some Italian prisoners either passing or working. I think they were working down there. And I remember – as I said he had this rifle, I don’t know if it was loaded but he certainly had ammunition. He said “See these bastard Italians. I’d shoot them!” And I was standing there looking, thinking “Oh my God!” But, as I said, he never referred to me in that way. (SA1998.30)

Overall, anti-Italian hostility served to heighten a sense of difference amongst relocated Italian Scots. Mark Bianchi of Musselburgh interviewed by a Strathclyde University student, spent three ‘terrible’ years in Innerleithen and remembers childhood relocation at the age of ten as the first time he had been physically abused. (Rowley 1992: 24; 35) Flora recalls how two new school friends in Peebles started to give her ‘abuse:’ ‘and then I started going home crying and that would upset my mum.’ (SA1999.31) Yet, as with the memories of the older cohort of women who ran businesses in Edinburgh, amongst these women it was striking how their memories of relocation were almost unwillingly revealed. One female respondent was reluctant to talk in any detail about her experience of relocation to Airdrie at five
years of age. Throughout her narrative she neatly summarised any negative experiences and usually moved the interview onto present-day family matters. Her succinct description of relocation was typical:

We were in Airdrie, not far from Glasgow. So the shop was closed for a wee while. Then we all came back and my older sister, Theresa, she was more or less in the shop and that’s it.

Faced with more direct questions about her schooldays in Airdrie, the respondent revealed unhappy memories which she was clearly not keen to dwell on:

I was just at school and I had to walk to the school and it was horrible because I used to meet some of them. And they weren’t even Catholics so they were coming and, oh, they were going to have a fight with me and I was only a wee lass, a wee lassie for five years old so I was a bit scared. Scared even to go to school at the finish up. But anyway I had taken, what’s its name? That children’s thing? Chicken pox or something it was. Yes chicken pox. And I was off school for a wee while as well and...oh, I couldn’t stand thinking of going to school because I was all alone. It’s who you meet going along! They were coming for me! I mean that’s terrible but...it scared me a bit. (SA1999.34 Benedetta Matrundola)

Ultimately, the enforced relocation of Italian women and their children further contributed to a sense of marginalisation and exclusion amongst Italian immigrant families during the wartime period. Yet, as Italian women and their British-born children congregated in the same few areas and lived and worked with other Italians, relocation also had the effect of reinforcing the second generation’s own sense of ‘being’ Italian. In the most literal sense, both Remo Catignani and Carmen Demarco remembered Pitlochry and Peebles respectively as ‘Little Italy.’ Thus, in their attempts to weaken and undermine the Italian presence in Britain, government policies often assisted in strengthening immigrant families’ sense of ‘otherness’. Indeed, for those British-born children relocated with their mothers, the national
rhetoric of unity struck a particularly discordant note as illustrated in the following extract from Carmen Demarco, relocated to Peebles:

Eventually we found digs with a Special Constable who was also an arch poacher and to this day I think twice before I can eat grilled salmon because we lived on salmon, salmon, salmon. Every time you turned it was a big lump of salmon! Anyway, we lived with them and the funny thing was that, whenever the National Anthem came on the wireless, he used to make his family stand to attention and we used to have to do the same! But we didn’t feel – we didn’t feel very British at the time, after what we’d been through. We didn’t feel we deserved all this. (SOE 63)

Education

Resentment and bitterness at the disruption of education caused by relocation was commonly expressed by the younger cohort of respondents. Furthermore, the act of relocation also served to reinforce pronounced feelings of religious difference amongst many Italian-Scotts, the Government failing to ensure the continuation of Roman Catholic education for those relocated. Referring to evacuated children, Gardiner stresses how Catholic children in Scotland could encounter difficulties on the grounds of religious observance, especially when placed ‘in strict Presbyterian homes’ increasing ‘the children’s ‘sense of isolation and distance from their families and their former lives.’ (2004: 27) For children of Italian origin their religious denomination provided yet another opportunity for feeling isolated:

It was a mixed school that I went to. There wasn’t a Catholic school in Peebles – that was difficult...You got classed as being different. “Oh she’s Catholic, she’s RC. She’s of Italians”. So walking along in Peebles, people would: “Oh that’s the Italian family down at Northgate”. You heard them, you tried to ignore them. A kid at twelve, thirteen, what do you do? You tried to ignore and sometimes it goes past you and other times it sticks. (SA1999.30 Flora Gallo)
Dina Togneri returned to her school in Irvine in February 1941 but felt that it was never the same... All your friends had made new friends and it was different. She was relocated to Glasgow and attended St. Pat’s secondary school in Coatbridge:

Before you left a cosy school where everybody knew you and you knew all the teachers and you knew all the children that went there. And to go to this strange school... oh I had bother. I had a lot of bother with that as well. I was in the corridor one day and I saw a man that I recognised. He had been a maths teacher at my old school in Irvine. And this poor man, he must have wondered what had hit him because I just threw myself at him with tears pouring down my face. A Mr McMillan. He was a very nice man and he sort of took me under his wing and spoke to the headmaster and told him all that had happened to us and that and they were very nice and understanding. But at the beginning I was... I was a nutcase I think [laughs]. A psychiatrist would have had a field day with me because I really was emotionally mixed up... about the whole thing. (SA2002.064)

Many expressed frustration at the constant changes of school as they moved between lodgings or moved back to their original hometown and regretted the overall negative impact relocation had on their education. In the opinion of John Costa, the fact of having to move from school after school, ‘ruined me completely.’ (SA1998.30)

Children who experienced such negativity during the relocation period did not discover much improvement on return to their hometowns. As I have shown in Chapter Three, anti-Italian sentiment and prejudice pre-dated the war. However, the incidences of verbal and physical abuse - the name-calling, the taunts, and the fights in the playground - inevitably intensified during this period. ‘Mussolini’ joined the litany of pre-war insults, Tally Bob and Eyetie. Dina Togneri, born in 1928, comments that being of Italian extraction in wartime Irvine ‘was no picnic.’ (SA2002.064) Diana Corrieri, born in Uphall in 1927 when asked whether she had
any problems at school during the war replied matter-of-factly, ‘You always got called “You filthy Italians.” Always.’ (SA2002.065)

Return

A review of policy relating to the granting of permission to aliens to enter and reside in Aliens Protected Areas was undertaken in December 1940. In relation to aliens of enemy nationality it reiterated that, as a general principle, ‘an alien possessing enemy nationality should not be allowed to enter or remain in an area declared to be a Protected Area’. However, the circular also outlined a number of categories where exceptions could be made, including those ‘whose interests and associations are British and who are friendly towards this country.’ Within the latter category, ‘the fact that an alien of enemy nationality has a son serving in His Majesty’s Forces should count in his favour’. In every case discretion was left to the local Chief Constable and there could be no appeal from his decision.163 Within my research sample, most estimated that they returned home after one to two years of relocation; some returned as early as January 1941, others as late as 1943. Return appears to have depended on whole set of variables. Flora connected her family’s return to Edinburgh from Peebles to her detained brother’s decision to join the Pioneer Corps. (SA1999.30) In a written communication, another respondent stated that ‘the police spoke up for my mother because they knew her so well and also she had three sons and sons-in-law in the army, two grandsons in the RAF, one in the army and another in the Navy.’164 Conversely, Mrs D acknowledged that as her aunt was married to the

163 HO 213/1750. Aliens (Protected Areas) Orders. Circular to Chief Constables from Home Office 14/12/1940
head of the Edinburgh Fascio ‘[she] never got back till the war was over.’

(SA1998.061)

Those who had left behind rented premises and had entrusted their businesses to non-family members often found themselves ousted, on their return, by the new tenants. As Colpi notes, the chances of a returning family reacquiring their business were often ‘slim.’ (1991a: 127) Anita said that the enforced relocation of mother (and her father’s death on the Arandora Star) meant their business had to be closed down, dragging her mother into debt. Her memory reflects the bitterness of those who lost their businesses during the war:

She had to walk out and leave it all when she was told to clear out. So somebody else went into it too, supposed to be looking after it for her but when she came back she was in debt, there was not a thing in it. She had to start from nothing. (SA1997.100)

Flora Gallo recalled how when her mother returned from relocation to Edinburgh the ‘so-called friends’ who had run their Junction Street shop had taken all the stock, left the place filthy and run up a lot of debt; essentially ‘they ran it into the ground.’ (SA1999.32) At the end of the war many respondents said that they had ‘lost’ their business and, in the words of Mr A, were left with ‘Nothing, nothing, nothing’. (SA1999.33) Yet, for other respondents, the war was remembered as signalling the beginning of their prosperity, providing their families with the opportunity to expand, acquiring new businesses and properties. Colpi also points out that many Italian Scottish families, ‘and particularly many padroni’ made their fortunes during the war ‘through the operation of the Black Market.’ (1986b: 32)
Conclusion

The silence on women’s experiences within Anglo-Italian historiography means that there are currently few constructions available to facilitate the composition of home front narratives. (Summerfield & Peniston-Bird 2000) Female respondents often appeared hesitant and reticent when discussing this intense period of their lives. The fact that it is often difficult for women who were children and young adults during the war to address their traumatic memories of that period means that some utilise the public discourse of male experience, internment and the Arandora Star tragedy, as a starting point for telling their own stories and in some cases to delay addressing more personal and painful events. As Portelli suggests, ‘dwelling on an episode may be a way of stressing its importance, but also a strategy to distract attentions from other more delicate points.’ (1998: 66) One of the respondents quoted in this chapter was willing to talk at length about her father’s arrest and his death on the Arandora Star and the devastating impact that had on her family. However, when I returned for a second interview with the intention of recording her memories of relocation she became far less articulate and seemed uncomfortable with the focus on her own experiences.

Relocation and the experience of running businesses at a time of great popular hostility towards Italians appear to have been highly traumatic for respondents. For seven of the women interviewed, the bewilderment and distress apparent in their narratives was further compounded by grief at the deaths of their fathers by drowning. Significantly, within women’s narratives, overall, there was an admission of psychological fragility that was absent from men’s narratives. Women were more
willing to volunteer information on the emotional and psychological impact of being treated as the ‘other’ during their formative years and to address episodes of personal vulnerability in their testimony. Three female narrators employed the term ‘breakdown’ in relation to their younger selves during interviews. One reported that she had received professional psychiatric help during her adult life.

Remembering relocation and her trips back to Edinburgh to sort out her family’s affairs, Flora comments:

The chippy was still open so the people used to give me a fish supper to take up to the house to eat by myself. And I’d lock myself and stay there at night. I blame that for sometimes the nightmares that I get even today...Because the fear sometimes wakes me up during the night. I still get them. And the loneliness and that sort of thing, it comes back, you know what I mean? (SA1999.32)

Perhaps this chapter is the first step in attempting, in Anderson and Jack’s phrase, ‘to facilitate access to the muted channel of women’s subjectivity.’ (1991: 11) This chapter highlights, for the first time, the profound – and long-term - psychological impact on those who experienced the war as the enemy ‘other’ and underlines the need for more work to be done to recover the wartime experiences of Italian Scottish women.
Chapter Eight

British Forces - Service Overseas

At the outset of my research on the wartime experiences of the Italian community in Scotland I identified a major gap in the existing literature – the experiences of those Italian Scots who served in the British Forces. I started out on my fieldwork having absorbed the basic assumption of much Anglo Italian historiography that second generation Italians who served in British Forces had assimilated and were essentially British. What I found out was the complete opposite of what I expected. Interviews with those who served in the British Forces and who would superficially appear to have ‘integrated’ or seen themselves as more British than Italian reveal a far more complex picture. Most importantly, the majority of veterans displayed a dual identification with both Britain and Italy throughout their narratives. Treated as the ‘other’ by those in command and ever since omitted from official army accounts, the experience of Scots-born Italians was rich in contradiction. Often, men and women\footnote{The experiences of women in the services will be addressed in the next chapter.} had to succumb to the manpower demands of the very State that had interned their fathers or relocated their families. Those who volunteered to serve were often denied their first preference due to official suspicion of their ‘alien’ origin. The fact that many Scots-born Italians were of dual nationality, deriving Italian citizenship from their father and British citizenship from their place of birth compounded their sense of conflicting loyalties and made the act of serving in the armed forces a complex and symbolic act. The knowledge that they could potentially end up fighting Italian cousins overseas further amplified a sense of divided loyalties. Narratives of Italian
Scot veterans reveal how they reconciled service in the British Army through a complicated process of negotiation and accommodation. However, to date, their experiences have been largely ignored. Publications addressing the question of ethnicity within the British Services have generally focused on the experiences of ‘visible’ immigrant groups such as Black and Caribbean veterans (Sherwood 1985; Bousquet and Douglas 1991) yet the narratives of Italian Scots provide rare insights into the experience of ethnic minorities within the armed forces. Veterans have also been ill served by Anglo Italian historiography where their experiences are rarely represented. Both Colpi and Sponza’s influential publications on the war completely fail to address the military service of British-born Italians. (1991a; 2000a)

**Background**

In September 1939, the National Service (Armed Forces) Act made all men between the ages of 18 and 42 liable for military conscription. The fact of conscription essentially removed the decision of whether or not to join up from many Italian Scots of military age, although some volunteered ahead of call up whilst at the other extreme, others took the option of declaring Italian citizenship at the age of majority to avoid military service. I interviewed nine men who served in the British Armed Forces, including two who switched from regular army units to the Pioneer Corps. A significant number of respondents also referred to the military service of family members including fathers, brothers and husbands. There was already a tradition of Italian service in the British Army within the Italian community in Scotland. During

---


167 See Appendix 2 for service records of respondents.
the First World War, when Britain and Italy fought as Allies, Italian citizens had the
option of returning to Italy to fight in the Italian Army or serving in a British
regiment. Two respondents reported that their Italian fathers had joined the Royal
Scots and one woman said that three of her second generation brothers had served in
the British Army during World War One.

Statistics are not held centrally on the numbers of Anglo Italians who served in the
British Forces during World War Two\(^{168}\) and oral testimony remains one of the key
ways to discover more about service in the armed forces by Italian Scots. This
chapter will address the ways in which current historiography has denied Italian
Scottish veterans a voice and then explore the particular experiences of veterans
during the war. Narratives reveal the multiple and shifting ways in which Italian
Scots negotiated their identities during their war service. As this chapter aims to
show, a different sense of self could assert itself at particular stages in their service
career – at call up, at the point of receiving an overseas posting and even when
offered the opportunity for promotion. External factors such as the entry of Italy into
the war, the influx of Italian American troops into Italian fronts and the 1943 Italian
Armistice could all in turn influence the shifting identity of this unique set of
recruits.

**The myth of assimilation**

Dominant discourse ignores and suppresses the critical experience of those Italian
Scots who either volunteered or were called up to the British Forces. An underlying

\(^{168}\) Correspondence with author from S A Dickinson, Air Historical Branch (RAF) Ministry of
assumption of Anglo-Italian historiography, particularly Colpi’s work, is that those second generation Italians who served in the British Forces were more assimilated into British society; a belief linked to contested ideas over what it meant to be a ‘good Italian’ during the war. Colpi asserts that men, ‘who served in the fiercely anti-Italian British Armed Forces during the war, perhaps more than any other sector of the Italian population, were forced to throw off their heritage, shake themselves adrift of their roots and pretend to be something they were not.’ (1991a: 193) [my italics] In sharp contrast, the smaller group of second generation Italians who were interned, usually because of their involvement in the Italian Fasci, are extolled in the following terms: ‘There were...many British-born Italians who were determined to go with “the Italians” and to remain united with their roots and their Community.’ (Colpi 1991a: 111) As in (mis)representations of internment, the father/son paradigm is continually emphasised - these men ‘were interned with their fathers.’ (1991a: 112) The sub-text here crudely represents service in the British Forces as an act of betrayal by Italian Scots, a disavowal of their Italian heritage. Yet Colpi goes even further, essentially presenting service in the British Forces by second-generation sons as an act of disloyalty to their own families. She implies that the fact that a son would be serving in the British Forces where a father was interned meant that ‘every family was placed in a situation which began to weaken the entire family-based structure.’ (1991a: 112) [my italics]

Sponza also makes flawed assumptions when he contrasts the refusal of 18B detainee Ogni to ‘fight my own people’ with the suggestion that ‘some British born Italians

169 See Chapter Ten
170 Fortier introduces the useful concept of the ‘good son’ in her section on war remembrance. (2000: 90)
had no particular attachment; their family assimilated'. Overall, his failure to address the experiences of servicemen within a book entitled *Divided Loyalties* reflects the pervasive notion that those who served in the armed forces should not be included in wartime representations of Anglo Italian experience. This superficial, and judgemental, interpretation leads to a general failure to address the fluidity and complexity of ethnic identity at a time of conflict and to acknowledge the ways in which service in the British Forces could further heighten a sense of ‘otherness’ amongst this particular ethnic group. Historiography, by neglecting those who served in the British Forces and failing to explore their motivations and experiences, makes an implicit judgement about their claim to being a ‘good Italian.’ One Scots-born internee I interviewed provided a glimpse of some of the tensions and bitterness surrounding the act of enlistment when he referred to Italian Scots who fought in the British Army in the following way: ‘A lot of them died: Tobruk. Italian boys fought against their own brothers.’ (SA 1998.35 Renzo Serafini) The exclusion of Anglo Italian servicemen from accounts of the war testifies to deeply suppressed divisions within the community relating to contested issues of loyalty, allegiance and duty to one’s country of birth – divisions which have rarely been publicly aired.

**Loyalties and allegiances**

In America, an estimated 1.5 million Italian Americans, mostly second generation men and women, served in World War Two. (Belmonte 2001: 6) There is a general consensus amongst historians that, by providing Italian Americans with the opportunity to show how loyal they were, the war became ‘the fuel of the melting

---

171 Unpublished paper presented at the Centre for Migration and Ethnicity Research, University of Sheffield June 2 1998.
Indeed, in Belmonte’s publication *Italian Americans in World War II*, veterans overwhelmingly assert the American side of their identity: Al Miletta, an aircraft armourer with the 81st Fighter Group, typically recalls: ‘we were American soldiers doing a nasty job, and we did it proudly.’ (2001: 101) It is apparent from personal narratives that there are substantial differences between Scottish veterans of Italian origin and their American counterparts.

Summerfield and Peniston-Bird note how the Second World War was a period ‘in which an association between masculinity and military participation was strongly constructed in political discourse and in popular memory.’ This wartime configuration of masculinity was built upon traditional notions that it was a man’s patriotic duty to defend the nation and the women and children within it, iterated in modernist ways. (2003: 57) Similarly, Graham Dawson’s work attests to the centrality of the ‘soldier hero’ within the narrative imagining of masculinities in nineteenth and twentieth century Britain. (1994) As British born subjects, Italian Scots would be subjected to the all-pervasive discourse of wartime underlining the role of men as ‘soldiers, fighting and dying for their country.’ (Noakes 1998: 14) Yet, this intertwined discourse of militarism and masculinity was one largely eschewed by male Italian Scottish veterans when articulating their wartime identities six decades on. In the context of First World War, Thomson notes how enlistment ‘represented a choice between two different prescriptions of masculinity, between the family man (son) and the independent soldier adventurer.’ (1995: 74) For this ethnic

---

172 It is interesting to note how readily the figure of the Italian American soldier has been incorporated into popular representations of American wartime troops—from the character Lieutenant Joe Friselli in the 1945 film *Way to the Stars* to the pilot Mario Bottone in the 1982 TV Show, *We’ll Meet Again*—yet an Anglo Italian has never have been utilised in a similar way to denote Britishness in cinematic portrayals of the British at war.
group, there was a fundamental conflict between these roles, as the sons of ‘enemy aliens’ or naturalised Italians. Thus, within my research sample, a sense of ambivalence and shifting identities was characteristic of most veteran narratives. Peter Togneri was rare amongst the interviewed veterans in explicitly stating where his loyalties lay:

when Italy came into the war, they were the enemies. I was British and the Germans and the Italians were classed the same – they were the enemy. Because my way of thinking, everything was British. Not that I was ashamed of being Italian or anything like that, I mean my name was Togneri, I had to be Italian. But my outlook, my way of thinking and my sentiments, were British. (SA2002.064)

As American law professor Peter J Spiro notes, ‘The very idea of dual nationality seems antithetical to the traditional conception dominated by notions of indivisible allegiance, which leave little room for multiple attachments.’173 According to Ende, when a dual national registered for military service, Regulation No.74 of the 1939 National Service Act would be applied and the papers of these men (Army form AFB 103) tabbed "dual national" upon a claim to dual nationality being established. Conscripts were also subject to Recruiting Instruction W/293 AG 10 BM/5722, dated December 8 1940 which classified as a ‘dual national’ any person either of whose parents was not at birth a British subject. (Ende 1944: 1) Of those I interviewed, six were dual nationals and three the sons of naturalised Italians. There appears to have been significant confusion within government departments during the period of Italian neutrality from Sept 1939–June 1940 relating to the treatment of dual nationals. The Ministry of Labour, when sending out their early National Service notices pointed out to dual nationals, in accordance with an international convention,

that they were entitled to renounce their British nationality and make a declaration of alienage.\textsuperscript{174} Sponza also points out that the Italian consulate ‘strongly recommended’ that dual nationals state their intention to opt for Italian citizenship upon reaching their majority to exonerate themselves from service. (2000a: 59) However as a Home Office official pointed out, when reviewing the situation in March 1941, ‘When Italy entered the war this choice involved the commission of treason by British Italians and [the] Ministry of Labour thereafter decided to give them the choice of joining the Armed Forces or claiming exemption.’\textsuperscript{175} Significantly, none of my respondents raised the issue of making a declaration of alienage, reflecting the fact that for these men, it was never a serious option. At the time, it was felt that the relatively small number – ‘around 350’\textsuperscript{176} - who had taken steps to renounce their British nationality in 1939 and 1940, were ‘obviously of Fascist sympathies.’\textsuperscript{177} Significantly, within Home Office documents two decades later, addressing the question of whether to grant naturalisation to those dual nationals who renounced British nationality during the war, dual nationals are criticised for having ‘deliberately cast off British nationality’ in 1940: ‘They took positive steps to establish their disloyalty at the very moment when this country was in great peril’ and deliberately ‘threw off allegiance to the country of their birth.’\textsuperscript{178} The perception that some dual nationals in Edinburgh were renouncing their British nationality at this time also attracted some opprobrium in the local press. The \textit{Edinburgh Evening News} remarked on the ‘resentment’ being caused:

\textsuperscript{174} HO213/1662 Alienage: Declarations By Dual Nationals. Memo of 18/2/1942.
\textsuperscript{175} HO213/1662 Minute by Mr Rumbelow 13/3/1941
\textsuperscript{176} HO 213/2259 Naturalisation. Policy and Practice with regard to a) Former Italian Fascists b) Dual Nationals
\textsuperscript{177} HO213/1662 Minutes 20/6/1940
\textsuperscript{178} HO 213/2559.
by the number of young British subjects of foreign parentage who have given up their British birthright and adopted the nationality of their parents in order to avoid being conscripted for service with the British Forces. Italians, in particular, are understood to be adopting this practice. Resentment is felt because such persons are shirking their responsibility after enjoying the benefits of British nationality over a long period of years. (EEN 19.4.1940: 3)\textsuperscript{179}

Another correspondent, the self-styled ‘Scoto-Italian’ rebutted this charge three days later, pointing out that ‘not more than two’ Edinburgh-born Italians had renounced their nationality. Rather, many British subjects of Italian origin were serving with the British Forces, including ‘many such from Edinburgh’:

The average young British subject of foreign parentage, Italian in particular, is not unmindful of his duty, and is, in fact, like most other young men of his age and time. He is, after all the product of British institutions, touched, it may be, with livelier imagination, but in all other respects the counterpart of his ‘longer-established’ British Brother. (EED 22.4.1940)

I. FACING CALL UP

The requirement to register under the National Service (Armed Forces) Acts would be the first instance in which Italian Scots were called upon to make a particular decision regarding their own personal allegiances. A major stumbling block for many male and female veterans was that they had to succumb to the manpower demands of the very State that had interned their fathers or relocated their mothers and siblings. Within my research sample, four veterans were the sons of internees and one the son of relocated parents. A combination of documentary evidence and personal testimony reveals how Italian Scots tended to divide into three main groups in response to call up – what I will term resisters, negotiators and consenters.

\textsuperscript{179} Index cards held at the National Archives show three internees from Edinburgh who appear to have been British born but had Italian citizenship. NA. HO396/284-294.
Narratives of Resistance

As well as those who made declarations of alienage, there appears to have been a small contingent within Scotland of dual nationals who refused to register for military service as a form of protest. This ties in with Australian research which concludes that the most common acts of 'alleged Fifth Columnism' by Italians during the war consisted in young naturalised Italians openly refusing to serve with the Australian Military Forces because of their Fascist loyalties. (Cresciani 1992: 27)

For example, Attanasio Camillo of Glasgow was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment in 1941 for refusing to register under the National Service Acts and to submit to medical examination.\(^{180}\) His sister Gilda was detained under Defence Regulation 18B in 1942 accused of having 'done her best to persuade the young men in her large circle of Italian-dual acquaintances to register either as Conscientious Objectors or to refuse to register for military or any other form of war service.' In her private correspondence Camillo was found to have referred to relations and friends who had joined the British Forces as a 'dirty shower of bastards' and called her cousin in British uniform a 'traitor.'\(^{181}\) During my preliminary fieldwork in Fife, a discussion amongst potential interviewees hinted at the fact that some Italian Scots utilised conscientious objection as a way of rejecting military service. I did not

\(^{180}\) See also NAS. HH155/58. Enrico Caira, a 20 year old of Italian parentage received four months imprisonment in March 1944 for refusing to be medically examined at his army medical board. Caira 'considered that his work in the Blood Transfusion Service was of more importance than service in the Forces which he refused to join.'

\(^{181}\) HO 45/25759 CAMILLO, Gilda.
personally interview anyone who adopted this stance\textsuperscript{182} and overall, these narratives of resistance were largely absent from my sample – although one female respondent briefly alluded to the fact that her brother ‘refused to go to the Army’ following her father’s death on the \textit{Arandora Star}. (SA2002.052 Mrs Mac) Indeed, amongst my research sample, narratives seemed to be mainly split between the negotiators, usually the sons of internees who focus on their family’s personal circumstances and the consenters, largely (but not exclusively) the sons of naturalised fathers who express more willingness to accommodate the idea of military service. All narratives, however, were deeply imbued with a sense of negotiation and there is fluidity within these categories. There were also respondents who defy categorisation – for example, Alex Margiotta was a dual national who refused to renounce his Italian identity yet volunteered for the RAF four times.

\textbf{Narratives of negotiation}

A number of respondents – negotiators – foreground their personal family circumstances when they explain their response to military call up, constructing their narratives as a refusal to serve until interned fathers were released or relocated mothers returned to their homes. For some, their anger and bewilderment at the treatment of their parents remains resonant today. Romeo Ugolini recalls that he felt ‘disgusted’ to receive his call-up papers following his father’s release from internment in 1941. As a member of the balilla, Ronnie Boni was detained for a short period in Saughton Prison. On his release, he received call up papers and attended an

\textsuperscript{182} The Imperial War Museum holds the letters of C Ruffoni, a conscientious objector of Italian parentage. However I was unable to access the full correspondence to learn more about his motivations. IWM Dept of Documents Box Ref: 88/35/2
army medical. In his narrative, Boni directly links his father’s release from internment to his agreement to serve in the army:

There was a desk: an eye doctor, all different doctors for different parts of the body and we had all to march round there, four hundred and fifty of us, stark naked, to all of these doctors and be examined for the particular thing. Eyes, throat, whatever. Then I was interviewed by a major as to what would happen to me in the Forces. I wasn't allowed the RAF, I wasn't allowed the Navy. I'd only be able to go into the army, which I promptly refused to do anything until they released my father. I said, “If you want me in the army I'll go but you take my father out of the Isle of Man and I'll come into the army.” So, my father was out for Christmas! 1942, he was out for Christmas...and I was in the army two months after. (SA1997.106)

Geraldo Cozzi, whose mother was relocated, places similar emphasis on his negotiation with the authorities:

At first they put my mother, in 1939, said she could be a spy! Now can you imagine? She couldn't speak English; she couldn't speak Italian properly. So they sent her to a place called Motherwell. She had to be so many miles away from Edinburgh, being next to the sea like, in case she was a spy. And she was there - with other Italians - and had to live there. In 1941 I got calling up papers and my brother got calling up papers: join the British Army. First of all, I had to get a medical. That was alright. Then they sent me another one: A1. You're to go to the British Army. I said, “No, no, no, no!” See? I went, “No, no, no, no”. I says, “As long as my mother’s in the Grassmarket. Bring her back from Motherwell, into her own house. You've taken her as a foreigner and you're wanting me to fight against the Italians? Oh no, no!” I says, “When she comes back, then I'll join the army”. And this is what happened. After three months they got her back and in 1941 I had to join up with my brother. (SA1998.45) 183

It is clearly important to these 'negotiators' that they are perceived as having put their families first. Significantly, this group also tend to project themselves as reluctant warriors— one even drawing upon the stereotypical imagery of the cowardly

---

183 Conversely, respondent Dora Harris alludes to the fact that some believed consenting to relocation would prevent their sons from being called up. Referring to a woman relocated with her mother in Motherwell she says, 'Maria was a bit awkward, you ken?...[pause] She'd stay there forever she said as long as her sons didn’t have to join the army.'
Italian soldier when depicting his wartime self\(^{184}\) – reflecting the burden placed upon them by the tangled web of family obligations and the conflicting demands of the State. It could be significant that the one man I interviewed who most fiercely articulated his disquiet on call-up regarding his father’s internment, switched from the Black Watch to 270 (Italian) Company of the Pioneer Corps.

**Narratives of Consent**

The other identifiable group within the research sample were the consenters – those who expressed more willingness to serve and incorporated more conventional features of war memories – adventure, excitement, and friendship – into their narratives. Three of these men were the sons of naturalised Italians which on a superficial level suggest that they saw themselves as British. What is fascinating therefore is the extent to which their narratives are also permeated with instances of negotiation, compromise, and accommodation. They show how, rather than destroying the father/son bond, fathers of those facing call up could often control the situation or collude with sons in an attempt to establish acceptable boundaries of involvement. Decisions would be made within the context of paternal consent enabling veteran sons to reconcile their contradictory identities. Mr Mac remembers:

> I got my call-up, I had to go for my medical. Get call-up papers. Father put his hand on my shoulder and he says, “Son, you’ll have to go, you’re the oldest. But the other two are not going”. So that was it – I was off to war.

**WU:** And you said your brother applied for the RAF?

**MM:** Oh aye, Peter. He passed for the RAF but my father threw his stuff in the fire. Aye, he wasnae allowed to go...

**WU:** So your dad saw it as, if you went...?

**MM:** That was enough. One son went. See what I mean? (SA2002.052)

\(^{184}\) See Appendix 3.
Addressing the ways in which Italians remembered the Fascist period, Passerini comments that testimonies ‘reveal a world of mediations’ that allowed the Fascist authorities’ domination to be simultaneously accepted and modified. She notes how the family is ‘a key site and agent in such processes.’ (1987: 139) Italian Scottish veterans, as with Passerini’s informants, often had to ‘accept the inevitable’ (1987: 140) but at the same time, one sees ‘the interaction at work between oppositional identity and a form of pragmatic acceptance.’ (1987: 141)

**Discrimination on Enlistment**

Although the Army Council initially refused to accept dual nationals into the army, it eventually reversed this decision. The Navy and the Air Force, however, appear to have adhered to their pre-war wariness of dual national recruits. At the outbreak of war, the Royal Navy had modified its nationality rules regarding entry but only to accept ‘British-born sons of naturalised parents, provided both parents were naturalised at the time of the candidate’s birth.’ (Sherwood 1985:9) Regarding RAF personnel, under the Air Force (Constitution) Act 1917 regulations required that entrants to the air forces be both British nationals and the sons of parents both of whom were British subjects. Significantly, although new regulations under the Emergency Powers Act in September 1939 provided that aliens could be accepted into the air force, within recruiting instructions issued a month later, it was stated that ‘Specific attention was to be paid to the security aspect in regard to volunteers who were of enemy alien origin.’ (Shirley 1958: 229) In his work on the recruitment of

---

185 NA. HO 213/1662. Minute by Mr Rumbelow 13/3/1941.
Jews into the army, navy and air forces, Kushner confirms that ‘the degree of snobbery was stronger in the last two’ which he believes was reflected in a greater hostility to Jews. (1989: 125) Ende also cites cases of dual nationals being rejected for enlistment in the RAF on the grounds of their parentage. (1944: 6)

Two respondents mentioned that they had been denied the option of serving with their first preference, articulating a sense of exclusion and rejection. Angelo Valente, who ultimately served with the Royal Army Medical Corps, was initially denied entry into both the RAF and the Merchant Navy. In his narrative he presents himself as an object of official distrust:

I wanted to be a flier and applied for the RAF. I passed my medical exam A1, fit for the...but the interview with the Royal Air Force...being...we were dual nationality and the other half of the nationality was enemy alien. Do you follow? So they wouldn’t trust me to...to go up and be in the air force! They said “We’ll take you in the Air Force but you’d be a cook.” I said “I don’t want to be a cook. I’ve done enough cooking!” […] Anyhow, before that, this friend and I we went into Glasgow to learn how to do radio telegraphy for the Merchant Navy. We went into this college together and we had an interview with the gentleman there in charge and he says, “Oh we’ll take your money Mr Valente,” he says, “but they won’t employ you because of your dual nationality”. So they didn’t trust me either. So I’d to do without that. I thought it’d be nice not to be in the military, you know. You’d come under the Navy just the same but with a civilian status. So, anyway, you just accepted it. (SA1998.28)

The following extract from an interview with Alex Margiotta is significant in exposing the double standards at play within a coercive wartime state which was
prepared to use Italian Scots for its own manpower purposes but still treated applicants as second class citizens:

I volunteered for the Royal Air Force four times. Four times I volunteered and they wouldn’t take me on because I was Italian. The fifth time when I got my papers for call up, I had to state a preference. I stated preference for the air force and I got taken and sent up to the Aircrew Selection Board in Hanover Street. You were up there doing tests for three days. I got through all that okay except for the fact that there were three bloody Group Captains or something on the Board. And there was a bloke sitting on a chair there taking the minutes of the interview. The bloke says, “Well Margiotta,” he says, “I want to ask you a question. How would you feel if you were in a bomber over Rome?” A right dirty, under-the-belt one. I said, “Well that’s a difficult question to answer but I can only reply and say, how would any Italian pilots feel if they were in a bomber over Edinburgh. Would they be considering my family?” “Oh!” The bloke that was sitting there started laughing to himself! Pat answer that....The bloke went ‘huh’. He didn’t like it but anyway, he says, “I’ll have to make a decision. I’ll have to go back to the Air Ministry”. And I knew what would happen. Seven or eight days afterwards I got a letter from the Air Ministry: I was ineligible for enlistment in the Royal Air Force. (SA1999.29)

II. EXPERIENCES IN THE FORCES

Racism

Work by Sherwood and Bousquet and Douglas has highlighted both the long tradition of racism within the British Services and, in particular, the racist policies implemented by the British State towards Black recruits during World War Two. (1985: 1991) Addressing the experiences of Black West Indian women, Bousquet and Douglas note the irony of how the British Empire ‘practised racism within its armed forces even when fighting fascism.’ (1991:7) The author of a
contemporaneous polemic aiming to expose racism in the armed forces, Ende, refers to ‘an organised and officially approved system of racial discrimination.’ (1944:8) As the British-born son of a German national Ende felt that within the forces ‘certain individuals not considered by the War office as ‘racially pure’ are to be treated as suspect and incapable of serving their country in anything but second-rate or menial positions.’ (1944: 9) Overall, dual nationals had to overcome ‘the prejudice of their immediate officers and NCOs,’ misled by documents labelled “treat as suspect.” (Ende 1944: 7)

Italian Scottish recruits certainly appear to have confronted suspicion, hostility and prejudice from superior officers who perceived them as the ‘other.’ As historian Michael Bosworth notes in relation to the Australian Army, the mere fact that a soldier’s parents were interned could indicate that he might be a potential source of danger in the fighting forces. (1992:85). The invective pouring from John Boswell’s infamous Daily Mirror article in April 1940 underlines the negativity surrounding second generation recruits:

The youths learned the principles of Fascism […] – British nationals, yet keen and enthusiastic Fascists. Many of these lads are now soldiers, wearing the khaki of Britain. Wearing it gallantly no doubt. In most cases…But in other cases? What a source of potential danger! (Quoted in Sponza 2000: 70)

Kingsley Amis’ short story My Enemy’s Enemy provides a rare literary depiction of a second generation Italian within the British Army. The story focuses on the racial harassment of Lieutenant Dalessio - ‘Dally’ - of the Signal Corps who, although he has contributed well to his unit’s Normandy campaign, is viewed by his Adjutant as “a standing bloody reproach to this unit.” (1955: 15) Discussing whether Dalessio
should be moved from their unit, the Adjutant remarks, “You ever heard me say a word about Dalessio being an Eyetie? Never. You were the one who brought it up. It makes no difference to me if a fellow’s father’s been interned... Presumably he’s okay from that point of view or he’d never have got here.” (1955: 19) Narratives highlight the existence of prejudice within army against those of Italian origin with many veterans highlighting instances of racism when recalling their wartime service. Mr Mac expresses resignation at being ‘called an Italian B-’ when he was issuing orders as a sergeant in the Royal Artillery, seeing it as ‘all part and parcel of the thing.’ (SA2002.052) Peter Togneri who served in the Seaforth Highlanders said he occasionally met with ‘animosity;’ one of the ‘little prejudices’ he experienced being the sergeant deliberately mispronouncing his Italian surname at every morning roll-call. (SA2002.064).

An analysis of narratives reveals that treatment of the Italians in the armed forces was often confused, arbitrary and contradictory and a lot depended on the personal relations formed between Italian Scots and their superior officers. When addressing racism, a few mentioned hostility from their peers but they tended to dwell on the attitudes of their superior officers. Angelo Valente of Fife’s recollection of racist abuse whilst serving with the army forms part of a wider narrative about a lifetime’s experience of racism:

In the army, front line, I was a sergeant. The Regimental Sergeant Major came up to me and he said, “You’ve moved these troops from that dug-out to this one and we can’t make an approach.” I said, “I’m only doing what the officer told me to do. Go and ask him.” He said, “See you – you’re just an

186 Clearly, all those I interviewed were immediately singled out as ‘different’ by their surname. It would be interesting to recover the experience of those who were the sons of Italian mothers and did not have an Italian surname to provide such a fundamental marker of difference.
"Effing Italian so-and-so!" I said, "Is that a fact?" Well there was a wee bit of rum. We all get a wee bit of rum and I was kind of high. So, I just smacked him. Down he went. He went to the Commanding Officer. The Commanding Officer came up and said, "Hey, what's this Sergeant Valente? What's going on here?" And I told him. I said, "And I'll tell you something else. If you have him here and he's in the front line with me, there's something going to happen. That man will not be able to get up because I'm going to effing shoot him." He was moved. Yes! He was moved. (SA2002.054)

In his interview, Angelo Valente of Coatbridge states that he did not have any problems in the Army being of Italian origin but mentions his brother's experiences:

Tony was in the Service Corps and when Italy came into the war, he was taken out of circulation. Put in the guardroom for his own protection! And they took his rifle away from him. They didn't know what to do - it was panic stations. It just depended on the officer in charge, how to go about this problem. He'd no problem except one of the sergeants - I don't know the guy or anything - he came in and he called Tony an Italian bastard! And Tony went [mimics punch]. Biffed him. And that was a crime for a rookie to punch a Non-Commissioned Officer, NCO. Normally he'd have been sent to prison for that but the Commanding Officer knew what to do. He did nothing about it. Because he deserved that! Because there's Tony in there parading up and down, doing his work for the Army and this man to come and insult him! Anyway, there was nothing said about it. (SA1998.28)

Cozzi's only mention of racism in his whole interview was when he discussed his military service. He felt he was victimised in the Army because he was of Italian origin. He uses a more picaresque comic narrative to address the themes of racism and abuse highlighted by other respondents:

When I went abroad in the Royal Army Service Corps there was a bloody, rotten swine of a bloody officer. He hated me because my name was Cozzi and he was trying to get rid of me. So... every time the King's Own Scottish Borderers, went into action I was attached to them. Do you know what I mean? I was amongst always the fighting! And this lieutenant - I don't know what but he hated the sight of me. He was wanting me to get killed but I come back every time! And the Royal Scots, they come in. See they'd only done three or four days but I got attached to them. And when the other one, the KOSBs, went in, I was attached to them! And then there was another regiment. I was never out o' the front line! And I was getting thin wi' fear... [sighs] Anyway, I survived it all. (SA1998.45)
During the conflict, long-standing anti-Italian xenophobia was fuelled by Italy’s wartime status as the ‘Enemy’ (until 1943 at least). For those Italian Scots serving in the Forces, the anti-Italian abuse they faced was just one of the many ways in which they were reminded of their ‘difference’ throughout their service.

**Dual nationality**

All veterans provided fascinating examples of the complex, and often contradictory, ways in which they continually negotiated their own identities throughout their military service. The complexities surrounding Italian Scots in the army crystallised at the point where the recruit faced the prospect of being posted overseas. Whilst German soldiers were most commonly identified by respondents as the ‘enemy,’ there was also a profound and uncomfortable awareness of their Italian relatives on the opposing side. Another misplaced assertion which has been made is that no second generation Italians volunteered for the British armed forces or served overseas prior to 1943, where they would have been fighting against Italian soldiers in various theatres of war. In a 1998 paper, Sponza states that ‘Italians who did put on British uniform asked not to go over[seas] and acted as auxiliaries in Britain.’

Yet, in reality, many Italian Scots who enlisted were in front line units and many served overseas. Amongst my research sample, two respondents served in both North Africa and Italy, three served in Western Europe, following D-Day, one served in the Far East and the other remained in the United Kingdom. This level of

---

187 The Centre for Migration and Ethnicity Research, University of Sheffield June 2. The assertion was not repeated in Sponza’s *Divided Loyalties* (2000).

188 It is worth noting that none of the veterans within my sample geographically fought Italian troops as the ‘enemy’. However there is ample evidence of other Italian Scots serving in Soissons, Dunkirk, North Africa and the invasion of Italy. See NAS. HH55/5 Letter from Leonello Biagi 15 October 1940; Pieri (1997: 23); Kennedy (2000:11).
service overseas would be proportionate to the service of British servicemen at the time.\(^{189}\)

Home Office minutes in May 1941, discussing the recruitment of dual national, remarks, ‘We are now at war with Italy, and it is now possible for these dual nationals to join the British Army either in an active fighting force or in the Pioneer Corps under a guarantee that they will in no circumstances be sent to fight on an Italian front.’\(^{190}\) It is clear from narratives that there was a very real fear amongst Italian immigrant families that their sons would face reprisals if caught by Italian troops. It appears to have been a commonly held belief, repeated in a few interviews, that soldiers of Italian origin serving overseas were shot on capture. John Costa said that his family were in a ‘panic’ because his older brother, serving in the RAMC, was sent to North Africa: ‘we didn’t know what had happened to him because, you know, it did happen to American Italians […] some were captured by Italian troops and shot. Especially Fascist troops if they saw an Italian name it was considered…’\(^{(SA1998.30)}\)

Interestingly, ‘the epic story’\(^{191}\) of Fusilier Dennis Donnini was utilised by two respondents, helping to rationalise or explain their particular experience as an Italian Scottish recruit. Donnini, a soldier of Italian origin from County Durham was awarded a posthumous VC for his ‘gallantry and self-sacrifice’ on the battlefield between the rivers Roer and Maas, Holland in January 1945. Donnini, of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, was only nineteen when he was killed whilst rescuing a wounded

\(^{189}\) Crang notes that for much of the war more than 1.5 million troops, which represented well over half of the British army, were stationed in Britain. It was not until after D-Day that the majority of the army was serving overseas and even in the spring of 1945 about a million were still serving at home. (2000: 2)

\(^{190}\) HO213/1662 Alienage: Declarations By Dual Nationals. Minute 6/5/1941

\(^{191}\) Phrase used by Serafino Di Felice, President of Italian Heritage Association, whose brother Giuseppe was wounded in the same action. ‘The Sad Story of a Forgotten Hero’ www.ancoats.demon.co.uk/donnini.html accessed 10/02/2000.
companion and drawing enemy fire away from his comrades. Mr Mac uses an inaccurate version of the Donnini myth to articulate his feelings about being posted overseas:

One of the first VCs of the war was Donnini from Newcastle. And he had been in the paratroops when they did that little thing at the Bridge in Rome. That was before we got there and he was shot...I think that’s what sort of brought all this on to start with. Because they found out that his parents were Italian and he was shot. Now he should never have been shot, Donnini, but he was the first VC. And he’d come from Newcastle. Donnini. He was Italian.

WU: Was he shot by?
MM: He was shot by the Italians. A lot of people said that he should never have been, that wasnae right. Because they found out he was Italian, that would be with whatever he had round his neck I suppose...

By utilising the Donnini legend, Mr Mac highlights one of the most pressing issues amongst Anglo Italian soldiers – the fear of reprisals if caught by the Italians:

that’s what brought a lot of that on about people claiming dual nationality and things like that. As long as Italy was in the war, there was always that danger right enough. I mean, I’m not saying it could happen but you could be shooting at your cousins!...Do you understand what I mean? You’d be shooting your rel- not that they were...as close as, they were close cousins in name because they were there and we were here. And I’d-- never been to Italy but we had relations fighting against us. (SA2002.052)

The legend of Donnini thus has a symbolic importance, serving as an available construction through which Italian Scot veterans can explain and articulate their own decisions.

When faced with postings overseas, to North Africa or Italy for example, individuals would face a delicate balancing act of different loyalties and allegiances based on family background. Within this constant process of negotiation and re-negotiation, a sense of place was important. The news that he would be posted overseas provoked

---

sergeant Mac, son of a naturalised Italian, into attempting to ‘claim’ dual nationality. Initially threatened with being stripped of his rank of sergeant, he was then sent to Nottingham to guard an old WWI gun emplacement. Mr Mac believes ‘they beat me in the end’ when he was transferred to the Royal Artillery Headquarters. 193

I get to Woolwich and to see this, it’s amazing. It’s all red brick buildings and it’s just houses. Hundreds and hundreds. It was the headquarters of the R.A., you see: “You’re in charge of 400 men.” I said, “What?” “You’re in charge of 400 men.” [...] So, anyway, ye ken, they did the usual thing, parading by numbers and da-da-da. “Right. Da-da-da-da-da. First Army”. You see? They had me. They had me. I was frightened to open my mouth down there, the headquarters. So I said, I’ll just go!

WU: Why was that? Why was it different?
CM: Well, I mean, you’re at the headquarters of the barracks and that. And you’ve a wee bit of pride too in your regiment, I suppose. Different things. You say to yourself, I’d better not open my mouth here or they’ll put me in the clink right enough! Oh yes! You’re kind of frightened. So, I went off to North Africa as a First Army replacement. I just went. (SA2002.052)

Angelo Valente of Coatbridge reconciled his sense of conflicting loyalties by serving in the Medical Corps. Posted to Algeria in November 1942, he presents himself as a resigned hostage to fortune and typically recounts his story in a humorous fashion.

He was sent for by a sympathetic Commanding Officer when on ‘rookie training’ in Leeds.

He said, “Valente. It’s an open secret. We’re packing, getting ready to go overseas.” [...] He said, “We’re going abroad, our unit, same as so many more”. He says, “There’s a possibility, Italy being in the war...We don’t know where...” – he knew quite well where we were going! Everybody knew where we were going - he says, “There’s a distinct possibility that we’re going to fight against the Italian troops” and he says, “What do you think?”.

“Well,” I says, “there’s nothing I can do about that! I’ve to go where I’m sent. And I’m doing medical work so we’re doing something useful, you know what I mean. We’re not destroying life, we’re trying to help the people that are in danger of losing their lives.” You’d nothing much to say. He says, “It’s a possibility that, if you’re caught by the Italian troops, you might be considered a traitor or a deserter or a spy. You never know how they might treat you. That’s whatever theatre of war we’re going to.” He just spoke along

193 See Appendix 4 for full extract.
those lines and then he said, “Would you be prepared to go overseas?”. I said, “Not in view of what you're telling me Sir.” So, that was all. I lost my career as an army PT instructor because I couldn’t go at the same time and I didn’t get another chance because we moved shortly. […]

WU: So you went anyway then?
AV: I went anyway, yes. Och aye...I wasn’t going to do anything about it but the question never came up. I just went. They bundled everyone on, “Right on you go!” They used to say when you were going for your medical “If you’re warm, you’re in!” (SA1998.29)

Personal testimony suggests that there was some potential for confusion and room for personal interpretation of guidelines from the army hierarchy over how to respond to the situation of dual nationals and British subjects of Italian origin within their units. Within my sample, whilst Mr Mac was a British subject attempting to assert dual nationality, dual nationals such as Valente, Margiotta and Cozzi were consulted over their preferences. Margiotta recognises that the events of 1940 ‘created the difficulty’ for veterans of Italian origin but says that when he was asked about theatres of war, he replied, “Well don’t send me to Italy, that’s all I want you to do. I’ll go anywhere but not to Italy”, a demand which his officers complied with. If there was a standard policy, it may not have been consistently applied and a lot more work needs to be done to clarify the position of second generation Italians in the Forces. Testimonies suggest that their individual situation could often depend on whether they had developing an understanding with their superior officer. Mr Mac, for example, attributes the resolution of his dilemma to ‘a bargain’ struck with his colonel when based near Mers-el-Kebir:

I gets wakened up with shots. So I rushes out the tent – because being a NCO I had a tent to myself – and I rushed out and here’s this officer firing and blasting...He’s drunk as a lord. So I took this thing and said, “Come on, where’s your tent?” “Blah-blah-blah”. So, I gets him over anyway and I says to a boy at headquarters, “Who’s that?” He says, “Oh that’s the Colonel!” I

194 Files held at the National Archives could shed more light on this matter.
said, "I'll bloody colonel him if he doesn't get into his bloody tent!" So, I put him to bed! But you see, how things happen? He sent for me the next morning. "I must thank you very much Sergeant Mac for what you done last night". And, "By the way," he says, "That's a strange name." He says, "Italian extraction?" I says, "Yes. My parents are Italian." "Oh aye," he says, "Well, it'll not be very long now before Italy capitulates. But until that day comes, you won't go up the front line." I said, "Thanks very much, Sir." I thought a lot of him for that. (SA2002.052)

Dual Identification

One of the most fascinating aspects of veteran narratives was the articulation of a dual identification with both Britain and Italy, illustrating the extent to which they appeared to inhabit 'two worlds.' (Daiches 1957) Indeed, their unconscious references to themselves as Italian within their texts are literally, in Roper's phrase, 'signifying a split' in their self identity.' (2000: 194) The narrative of Angelo Valente, referring to Christmas 1944 spent in Italy, illustrates this dual identification:

We came into Brindisi, a big port down in the heel of Italy and they just put us in a transit camp to wait to see where we were to be distributed to and get the hospital equipment over. So we had a nice wee spell. That was Christmas Eve. The following day was traditional, you'd get your Christmas dinner: turkey and plum duff and all that. It's traditional that the officers serve the troops, and the nurses. So we were out in the open. Christmas Eve and beautiful sunshine and there was this little group of musicians came up from the town to give us a wee concert while we were having our dinner. They played nice music and one of them was 'Two Lovely Black Eyes.' Do you know that? [sings] "Two Lovely Black Eyes". And the Company Officer, he was sitting near me and he says "Imagine them knowing that." I say, "That's a traditional Italian tune! That's 'Viene sul mare'!" Which it was! [laughs] So, I wasn't going to let him away with it! That's our ... that's our music! 'Two Lovely Black Eyes' was a parody on it. (SA1998.28)

Another revealing anecdote was provided by Peter Togneri of the Seaforth Highlanders who was hospitalised with impetigo in India:

195 Mr Mac worked as a discipline sergeant at First Army HQ in Tunis but once Italy surrendered, he was ordered to join the 45th Light Ack-Ack Regiment and left the following day for Italy.
When I reached this hospital, the doctor in charge was taking down my particulars – but by this time, Italy was out of the war and the Italians were our co-belligerents. Now, in this hospital the clerk, the cook, the orderlies, everybody was Italian Prisoners of War, you see? So, I mean, in the battalion where I'd just come from I was [dismissive] 'Peter Togneri' you know? But when I reached this place and I saw this fellow in an Italian uniform. He was the clerk taking down my particulars, you see? So I thought, I'm going to have this fellow on, you know. So then, the doctor was taking down my particulars, “Where am I from? Where am I going?” So I said in my best – now, my real name is Pietro Togneri. So, he said, “What’s your name?” So, I said in my good Italian accent, “Pietro Togneri.” And this clerk’s head shot up, you know? And, we looked each other in the eye, you know, obviously Italian. Because you can tell Italians can’t you? [...] Anyway, before I got out that office, it was round the whole camp that an Italian had come in.

He then went on to explain how he was taken ‘under the wing’ of the Italians and acted as a ‘go-between’ between the prisoners and the medical staff. At his wife’s prompting, he also revealed a further dimension to his identification with the Italians:

I hadn’t had Italian food since I left home but the Italians invited me out one Sunday for lunch. They were getting exactly the same rations as us: the tin of beans and all the rest of it. They were making Italian food with the same rations that we got! We were getting mince and tatties [laughs] and they were making pasta, you know! Minestrone and all that. Things I hadn’t tasted since I’d left home. (SA2002.064)

Even though Alex Margiotta presented himself as someone detached from the Edinburgh Italian ‘community’ and who volunteered several times for the RAF, his testimony still included a self-identification with Italy when talking about being an NCO in the Royal Scots Fusiliers:

I have to say...you consider these chaps knowing that I belonged to an enemy nation, you know and they still did what they were told without any arguments. I always feel a wee bit chuffed about that. [my italics]

Another important aspect of Margiotta’s testimony – in that it contradicts the prevailing idea of ‘assimilated’ veterans - was that he refused to ‘divest’ himself of
Italian nationality. Here Margiotta, a NCO in the Royal Scots Fusiliers, recalls how he had to turn down the opportunity of promotion, asserting his Italian sense of self:

I did my primary training with the Black Watch up in the Queen’s Barracks in Perth and about a week before the training period finished I was sent for. They were going to give me a commission if I would change my nationality and be British. They would bring out natural[isation papers]. The Company Commander said, “We’ll do all the necessary paperwork.” I said, “Now look, my father would shoot me!” From that point of view, I wouldn’t; I thought it was being traitorous to change my nationality. Because at that time we were dual nationality till we were twenty-one. [Q] You had to declare, you had to decide whatever nationality you wanted to be. Whether it be British or Italian. [...] Anyway, I wouldn’t have anything to do with it. I said no. (SA1999.29)

**Increased sense of Italianness**

Personal testimony also highlights, for the first time, the multiple ways in which the Army hierarchy was willing to utilise Italian Scots within its ranks to liaise with the local population when in Italy, Italian POWs or displaced persons. The fact that Italian Scots would regularly come into contact with Italians, through their work with POWs, for example, or liaison with local Italian people provided further opportunities for encouraging identification with the Italian aspects of their identity. Army service in Italy, for example, provided some respondents with the opportunity to either improve their Italian language. Working at a requisitioned hospital in Tunisia, Angelo Valente’s unit received fifty Italian POWs as volunteers:

They had difficulty making the guys understand what to do and I learnt later that the Commanding Officer, a nice old chap, Colonel Downes, he sent for the Sergeant Major. He says, “I don’t know what you’re thinking about. You’ve two Italians on your unit. Get them to interpret for these chaps.” So, I got a good job out of that! [EDIT] So I spoke Italian all the time and I used to say to this nice man “Sergente Maggiore, Cristofero Faiolo” – Christopher Faiolo was his name – “tu mi corregge quando ho fatto sbaglio con la lingua”. “You correct me when I make mistakes with the language”. And he used to do that. He was a jolly fella. They were all nice. [EDIT] As I say, having to do that, it made my grasp of the language much more fluent and it was
practical as well because – if the likes of you start studying, you’re at a disadvantage because I had a basic grounding in the language and although my parents spoke in dialect, Neapolitan dialetto, it still meant you could understand what was said. But I made sure, I decided that I’d speak the proper Italian. (SA1998.29)

Whilst stationed in India, Peter Togneri was asked by the Military police to enter an Italian camp as a Prisoner of War and report back to them on ‘troublemakers’ within the camp. He turned down the job on the grounds that he felt uncomfortable with the idea of spying and also because he felt ‘even if they put me in an Italian Prisoner of War uniform and put me in there, they’d twig that I wasn’t a real Italian.’ (SA2002.064) At the end of the war, Margiotta was based near a camp of displaced persons near Bremen. He was sent to talk with the Italians in the camp as he could speak Italian, was greeted like an old friend and fed chicken and Chianti.196

Service in AMGOT, the Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories, in Italy - a world immortalised by Norman Lewis’s novel Naples 44 - provided another opportunity for Italian Scots veterans to identify with Italians and Italy. Angelo Valente of Fife recalls that whilst he was based in Reichlin Hossen Zutt, ‘an order went out for all soldiers who had attachments to the Italian origin who would like to volunteer and go out to be an interpreter into Italy.’ (SA2002.054) Mr Mac, having served with First Army in Italy, opted to train in police work at the end of the war and became Sergeant Major in Garrison Police in Milan for a year. This experience led to a heightened sense of Italianness as evidenced in the following narrative:

We did a police course at Ottaviano. [...] I was made Sergeant Major and I was in charge of a station at Milan. Did police work for the station and different things like that... [LARGE EDIT] It was great! Absolutely great!

196 Post-interview conversation 3 May 1999
But then, I'm a lover of Italy, Italian... you were getting the chance to practise the lingo and you sort of... you know. A lot of people when you were serving your time in Italy, they seemed to... a lot of them they seem to have an affinity with you. "Italiano?", they'd see right away. In a way, I suppose they would say that to a lot of the American troops because there was a helluva lot of American Italians. I found that when I got to Rome. When you looked at the list of the Fallen [laughs] there were DeMarcos and all sorts of things there, you know, with the... fighting with the American forces. Because they were first in Rome. It was funny but I am fundamentally I think I'm more Italian than anything. To be quite honest with you. (SA2002.052)

Within his narrative, Angelo Valente of the Medical Corps mentioned socialising with the Italian surgeon at his hospital and generally mixing with Italian civilians. Their extended Italian families also remained important within the personal and mental landscapes of soldiers serving in the British Army. For example, Angelo Valente who served for three years in Italy narrates at length about how he negotiated with his officer to obtain leave to visit his relatives in bomb damaged Cassino. (SA1998.28)

Thus, the personal reminiscences of veterans reveal the range of different factors at work within the army where negative prejudice and stereotyping could exist alongside a more positive recognition of the potential of ethnic recruits. Ultimately, whatever their experience, Italian Scots in the British services were rarely allowed to forget their 'otherness' and because of their confusing and contradictory experiences, veterans often emerged with a increased sense of Italianness.

**Conclusion**

Gellner has written that the ultimate image of national allegiance is the men's willingness to fight and die for their country (1983. Quoted in Fortier 2000:91) yet
significantly, Italian Scottish veterans did not readily employ the language of patriotism and duty when interviewed. Instead, veteran narratives were almost universally imbued with a sense of ambivalence and conflicting loyalties. Some respondents found the persona of the ‘soldier hero’ to be ill fitting, resting precariously as it did upon a morass of complicated and conflicting duties – to one’s family, country or country of origin. Even amongst those veterans who articulated traditional masculine narratives of camaraderie, adventure and pride in their military service, their memories were overshadowed by the fact of their ethnicity and a sense of dual identification. Ultimately, to paraphrase Thomson, the fact of ethnicity amongst Italian Scottish recruits, made for ‘contrasting experiences of war and different identities as soldiers.’ (1995: 101)

As this chapter has shown, it is erroneous to assume that service in the British armed forces by some Italian Scots acts as an indication of greater ‘assimilation’ into British society and to dismiss them from accounts of Italian wartime experience. Significantly, amongst Italian Scot veterans, traditional army narratives of regimental pride and camaraderie co-exist alongside recollections of racism and hostility. As this chapter has illustrated those who served in the British armed forces did face prejudice but, on the other hand, were often required to work as intermediaries with Italian POWs or displaced persons. Since the war, veteran respondents had maintained strong links and a strong sense of identification with Italy.197 One has organised twinning trips for school children to Florence, one watched an Italian quiz

197 An interesting example is that of artist Alberto Morrocco, born in Aberdeen of Italian parents in 1917. Morrocco served in the 51st Highland Division and was in the army for six years. From the 1950s onwards, he spent his career depicting the landscape of Italy, its streets, buildings, people and shores. (Keller and Young 1993)
show on cable TV when our interview ended, another always answers his phone in Italian. Seven of the veterans had travelled to Italy since the war, many regularly; one had an Italian wife. One veteran respondent born in 1906 in London interspersed his wartime army narrative with colourful Italian dialect and expletives. As with Betty Di Ponio’s brother, army service in Italy often provided respondents with the opportunity to ‘pick up a wee bit of Italian’ and many felt more ‘Italian’ as a consequence of their active service. (SA1999.27)

Thus, I would argue that service in the British armed forces does not indicate a diminished sense of Italian identity; rather it reflects socio-cultural differences within the inter-war community and the consequent decisions made regarding naturalisation, membership of the Fascio club and so forth. It could be significant that of the nine veterans who agreed to be interviewed, six were from Fife or other areas outwith Edinburgh where the Fascio had been less influential in the inter-war years. Furthermore, the three Fife veterans had naturalised fathers, indicating that in advance of the war their families had already made decisions concerning allegiance to Britain. Most Italian Scottish men assumed the obligation as British subjects to defend their country. (Ende 1944: 10) There were not overt in stating their aims and motivations but Angelo Valente of Fife puts it most succinctly:

WU: Were you called up?
AV: Yes. Conscription...We didn’t resent [...] going. We went and that was it. You understand? An awful lot of Italian origin, didn’t, you understand? (SA2002.054)

Communal myth denies the crucial experience of those Italians who either volunteered or were called up to the British services. Yet, their narratives offer a
more subtle analysis of the forces of racism at work within the armed forces and wider society during the war. Indeed, by addressing the complex issue of divided loyalty and dual nationality at a time of conflict, their narratives offer an alternative memory.
Chapter Nine

British Forces - Service At Home

I. THE PIONEER CORPS

As we have seen in the previous chapter, service in British Army regiments and front line units by Italian Scots could often lead to a heightened sense of 'difference', and more specifically, of Italianess. One of the most fascinating areas to look at is the experience of those who served in 270 (Italian) Company of the Pioneer Corps. Second generation Italians could enter the Pioneer Corps via two distinct routes: either by agreeing to enlist from internment or prison detention or by transferring from regular army units. I interviewed two veterans who switched from regular army units into the Pioneer Corps as well as two internees who turned down the opportunity to serve in the Corps in exchange for release from internment. Traditionally amongst internees and detainees, the Corps is consistently represented in a negative light. The chance to serve in the Corps is presented either as a personal slur or an act of treachery, the overall emphasis resting on the image of the Corps as 'scavengers' who dig latrines.198 As the Gillmans note, 'The Pioneer Corps enjoyed a sad reputation as the dumping ground of the British army; all human dross, it was once unkindly said, was there.' (1980: 257)199 The original badge of the Corps depicting a rifle, pick and shovel piled and surmounted by a whole laurel wreath with

---

198 This derogatory term is employed in this way by Pia in his interview with MacDougall (1996: 319). Its origin stems from the fact that alien recruits helped to clear away the rubble of bomb sites.
199 An assertion repeated by Hickey & Smith (1989: 223)
the motto: 'Work conquers all' further encourages the widespread perception of the Corps as 'labourers'. Yet interviews with veterans who served in the Corps highlight its hugely positive aspects, including the function of the Corps as a site for ethnic identification amongst second generation Italians. It would appear that the negativity surrounding the Pioneer Corps is linked again to the concept of the 'good Italian' whereby those who helped support the British war effort in any form have since been criticised or diminished.

Again, little information survives about the alien companies of the Pioneer Corps and in particular, its Italian company. Both the Royal Logistics Corps and the Royal Pioneer Corps Association retain little information about the wartime (Italian) company. To find out more about the men of Italian origin who had served in Coy, I corresponded with the official archivist of the Corps, Major John Starling and placed an advert in the Royal Pioneer Corps Association newsletter asking for interviewees. Typically, I received no responses. I also accessed an Imperial War Museum interview with a second generation detainee who transferred to the Pioneer Corps. Again, oral testimony proves invaluable in recovering the experiences of those who served in this much-maligned corps.

**Entry into the Pioneer Corps**

The Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps were raised on 17 October 1939, becoming the Pioneer Corps in November 1940. (Royal Pioneer Corps Association 1998)

---

200 A common misconception is that the Pioneer Corps was 'non-combatant,' whereas in fact, of the 5,500 men who served in the alien companies, more than half were eventually transferred into various combatant units and of those, 150 died on active service. (Leighton-Langer 1997: 1-2)

201 IWM 4415/3 Robert Rietty.
12 of the July 1940 White Paper had allowed for the release of internees, mainly German and Austrian, who were willing to enlist into the Pioneer Corps and the publication of two further White Papers in August and October extended its application to Italian civilian internees. (Sponza 2000a: 113) ‘Alien’ companies were initially only employed for duties within the UK, including building work, forestry, maintenance, the extension of railways and ports and the guarding of prisoners of war. (Royal Logistic Corps Museum 1998) The 270 (A) ‘Italian’ Company, formed at Ilfracombe in December 1940, was initially made up of alien volunteers of Italian nationality from internment camps but its original strength of 109 Ordinary ranks was brought up to a full eleven section company strength by the posting of dual nationals from British units. The Company was stationed in or around Slough from 1941 until it disbanded five years later.202

The internee perspective

According to Stent, some five thousand men joined the Pioneer Corps straight from various internment camps but these would have been largely German and Austrian refugees. (1980: 241) Indeed, Sponza shows that, by early 1941, there were concerns about ‘the low number of Italians’ who had applied for release via this route. Sir Percy Loraine, chair of the Home Office Advisory Committee (Italian), which made recommendations on the release of internees, suspected that Italians might be deterred by the fear of reprisals from Italy after the end of hostilities. (2000a: 118)

---

By the beginning of 1943, only 260 Italians had joined the Pioneer Corps. (Sponza 2000a: 164)\textsuperscript{203}

Service in the Pioneer Corps was clearly not a straightforward or simple option for Italian internees with accusations of treachery surrounding their decision to enlist. As Sponza writes, ‘The “Fascist” hotheads and “patriotic” Italians looked down on any of their compatriots who were prepared to bargain for their freedom by offering their service to Britain – Italy’s enemy.’ (2000: 141) The Isle of Man Examiner of 25 October 1940 also contributed its view that internees who joined the Pioneer Corps were particularly bad characters because ‘the enemy alien who buys his liberty by disowning his country is nothing but a traitor, and treachery is always a despicable thing.’ (Sponza 2000a: 163) Both second-generation internees I interviewed turned down the chance to serve the British war effort through the channel of the Pioneer Corps although they articulated their reasons in different ways. Renzo draws on the discourse of treachery in his testimony:

\begin{quote}
When you were interned they used to give you a tribunal – and the British used to say, first of all they started saying, “Will you join the Pioneer Corps?” They wanted a pioneer army but nobody wanted that. The first five or six that went as Pioneers they were shot right away when they landed in Italy because they’re traitors… They wouldn’t give you a ticket round your neck that you’re a soldier. You’re a Pioneer, which means you’re a traitor to your country.
\end{quote}

(SA1998.34)\textsuperscript{204}

Joseph Pia, who ran the dopolavoro in Edinburgh and was interned in 1940, similarly utilises the negative imagery surrounding the Pioneer Corps to justify his refusal to serve. However, his testimony also alludes to more complicated issues related to pro-

\textsuperscript{203} It is not clear whether Sponza includes second generation Italians within this statistic.

\textsuperscript{204} In an interview for the STV programme, Scotland At War Serafini elaborates on this theme, referring to those who were released into the allied forces as ‘collaborators.’ (Robertson & Wilson 1995:50)
Italian feeling, or disaffection, amongst a particular cohort of second generation internees. For example, the ‘dozen or two’ internees who turned down the Pioneer Corps were also likely to be former Fasci members:

The Anglo-Italians were told “Go one at a time in front of Captain Crastor”. We queued up and went in one at a time and this question, “Are you willing to join the Pioneer Corps?” Now, they were all asked this but I speak about me of course: “Are you willing to join?” “No... why the Pioneer Corps?” I said, “I’ve been put into prison and that sort of thing. All my friends might think I’m a criminal or a spy or a traitor or something. I’ve done nothing at all! So, release me. Let me be like any other fellow. Let me volunteer for any regiment. I’m quite willing to join the Royal Scots, the HLI, any regiment you like just like any other fellow. But not just the Pioneer Corps.” So, whilst I was speaking there a Major comes in. He was inspecting all kinds of military camps, not just us you know. Soldiers’ camps. So he comes in and Captain Crastor says, “Major Veitch. A very interesting case here.” [...] “Mr Pia here refuses to join the Pioneer Corps although he would join any other Scottish regiment.” So the Major turned to me: “And what’s wrong with the Pioneer Corps?” So I said to him, “Well I consider... I’m not a military man at all but I consider they are the scrapings of the British Army. To me the Pioneer Corps are people who dig roads and build latrines and that.” Anyhow, I refused to join the Pioneer Corps. I wanted to be released, treated like any other fellow and then join. I guess – and I’m sure my guess is very good - the big majority of Anglo-Italians said, “Yes, we’ll join the Pioneer Corps” and they were released to go to it. Whereas me, my brother, cousin, we’ll say a dozen or two who were thick with me but many who were not pals of mine or anything had refused to join the Pioneer Corps and we were kept in. Until the end of the war. But if we had said, “Yes”, we would have got out. (SA1998.32)205

It is interesting that amongst this small group of internees service in the Pioneer Corps is consistently represented as either degrading, humiliating or dishonourable.

This emphasis sidesteps the issue that other options had been available to these men prior to internment and ignores the fact that there were other Italian Scots at that time serving both in the Corps and British army units. It is also significant how this sense of degradation has been culturally transmitted to the children of second generation

205 In his interview with MacDougall, where he provides an almost facsimile account, Pia elaborates upon those who ‘refused’ to join the Pioneer Corps: ‘My brother Gerard, Victor Crolla and I, we refused to join the Pioneer Corps.’ (1995: 319)
men who entered the Pioneer Corps following detention in Saughton Prison.206 I interviewed two third generation women, both born at the beginning of the war and daughters of this cohort of detainees. They described the Corps respectively as ‘a sort of lower…regiment’ (Gloria Bee) and ‘The worst part of the regiment.’ The latter expanded on her theme:

He was in the kitchens making food. Oh it was degrading for him. He just didn’t like that idea at all. He was a self-educated Italian. (SA2002.057)

The army recruit perspective

As Colpi recognises, second-generation men who ended up in the Pioneer Corps ‘felt that they could not actually fight against Italy.’ (1991a: 104) Two of the army veterans I interviewed were transferred to the Pioneer Corps because they did not want to serve overseas. Romeo Ugolini, who was training with the Black Watch, in explaining his transfer, utilises the motif of resistance and refusal highlighted in the previous chapter:

They wanted to send us abroad at first and I refused to go abroad. He [the Adjutant] says, "Why's that?" I says, "Well, I don't want to fight against my uncles. You never know I might meet them on the battlefield." That was in Africa. [...] The regiments were being sent to Africa and I said - "No, I don't want" - I said, "I'll stay here and defend the country. If anything should happen I'll defend the country while I'm here but I'm not going abroad"...He says, "You must be a coward!" I said, "You can call me what you like, I'm not going." So, they relented and let me go to Slough. (SA1997.109)

Significantly, Ugolini’s narrative also uncovers a possible sense of alienation amongst a particular cohort of Italian Scots conscripts – those whose families had

---

206 A significant number of second generation men who were detained in Scottish prisons such as Saughton and Barlinnie, rather than in internment camps, also had the option of transferring to the Pioneer Corps.
been involved in the Italian Fasci – in this revealing anecdote from his army training days in Perth:

We slept in these tents anyway and, as I said before, we heard the whistling of the Fascisti [song]. We says, "It must be an Italian". So we went to see him and it was Valente. His name was Valente and he says "Hello." I says, "I'm Ugolini from Armadale", you know, introduced each other and he says, "What's happening to you?" I says, "We don't know yet. We were down here for getting dispersed on different detachments, different patrols." He says, "Why don't you put in for Slough?" He says, "That's an Italian non-combatant group under the Pioneer Corps". I says, "Well, I'll try!" So we asked to get down there and, it was okay! (SA1997.109)

Ronnie Boni focuses on the fact of his dual nationality to explain his move to the Corps:

They couldn't post me overseas because I was dual national and if the Germans or the Italians or the Japanese had got hold of me, I would have been shot. Because I was in the British forces and I'm really an Italian... until I was twenty one I was classed as an Italian... which I didn't mind! (SA1997.106)

Yet, it was the ways in which both the Pioneer Corps veterans conveyed overwhelmingly positive memories of their time in Slough that is most significant, Ugolini repeatedly stating that it was 'marvellous.' For these two respondents, service in 270 Company not only provided a welcome alternative to the dilemma of service overseas but also offered an officially condoned space in which they were able to acknowledge and reaffirm the Italian side of their dual identity. When he begins to recall his service in the Corps, Ugolini’s narrative exudes a sense of finally being ‘at home’ in an all-Italian unit:

...So, we got sent to Slough and when we arrived there it was wonderful! First thing we got was a big plate of minestrone and you could hear the accordions

207 The common and inaccurate usage of the term ‘non-combatant’ indicates the extent to which army veterans linked the Pioneer Corps with the option of not fighting.
and the guitars playing and...we settled in. It was great. It was all Italians. (SA1997.109)

In stark contrast to his depiction of his unhappy time in the Black Watch, Ugolini dwells on his service in the Corps as a period of enjoyment, focusing on escapades with fellow privates, sexual relationships with local women and ATS girls and friendships with other Italians, including internees and Prisoners of War. Not only would second generation Italians based in Slough be mixing with Italian internees – most often depicted as tailors, barbers and cooks - but they also had the opportunity to socialise amongst large local Italian communities. Ugolini recalls:

At night we went out to the dances and we went to the pubs...We were allowed out every night. And at the weekends we went to London to Soho...We had great times in Soho. Italian cafes again...Italian food...and dancing at the Hammersmith Palais. (SA1997.109)

This was confirmed by Carmen DeMarco, a child onlooker of her brother’s exploits in the Corps:

all the Italians, all the London Italians, everybody who was young enough to be in the army was in this Pioneer Corps stationed at Slough. It must have been a hoot of a regiment because before we knew where we were, Ronnie was having nice pleats in his trousers and fancy jackets tailored and his hair cut the way he liked it by a barber in Soho. And you name it, they were having the life of Larry and he had a great time in the Pioneer Corps, you see. He met all the Bertorellis and so on who had all the big restaurants in Soho. (SOE 64)

A further opportunity for ethnic identification occurred through the physical closeness with Italian Prisoners of War whom they were guarding: Romeo mentions

---

208 This view is confirmed by the diary of Dorio Melfi, held by the Pioneer Corps archivist. Melfi, from Kent, enlisted in the Pioneer Corps in 1941. He mentions receiving dance lessons from the Italian headwaiter at Café de Paris, playing the accordion and having music evenings.
playing football with the POWs and Melfi’s diary shows that he took a police job, involving the supervision of Italian prisoners of war. Glasgow-born Enrico Cocozza, who served in the Pioneer Corps from 1944-46, records how he was posted as an interpreter to an Italian prisoner of war camp in Manchester where he was happy ‘making many friends among the Italians.’ (1987: 249)209 This mixing of Italians – POWs, internees and men of Italian origin - provided fertile ground for ethnic identification and appears to have contributed to a heightened sense of Italianness amongst the two respondents. At the close of his interview, in response to a question on his ‘sense of identity’, Ronnie Boni picked up a photograph of himself in 270 (Italian) Coy:

I can identify with that: 450 men there who were all Italian, or at least born Italian. I mean in that company, that was in the British army and yet we were eating Italian food. I mean you would get risotto! Risotto one day for a meal, you’d get pasta, you’d get cotoletta alla milanes, things that were unheard of! The Commanding Officer used to invite the hierarchy of the British army and our groups down for meals because we had chefs from London cooking our meals. Chefs from the Paradise Club, from Pollari’s, all the lovely big restaurants. And the meals, I mean, they were fantastic! You know, I mean, the old porridge sort of thing, and cabbage and mutton in the British Army, it was...They’d, they’d never even heard of this stuff, really! And then we had dances...The cooks were very good, they used to make chocolate eclairs with fresh cream - during the war! We had a farewell company do, which was, we had £5000 to spend...and it was in the Astro Hall in the Slough area, and an American band. There were about two thousand people there...husbands and wives, boyfriends, girlfriends. It was a fantastic do! But it was all Italian food. (SA1997.107)

Thus, in glaring contradiction to the views which pervade existing literature based on the perspective and accounts of internees, interviews with Italian Scots who actually served in the Corps suggest a radically different perspective and offer a fresh insight into the fluidity and dynamism of ethnic identity within the British Forces. The

209 Ultimately 270 Coy supplied over sixty men for transfer to Intelligence Corps and POW units as interpreters. NAWO253/9 Monograph of 270 (A) ‘Italian’ Company. 23 May 1945.
congregation of second generation male Italians within the Pioneer Corps, had the effect of reinforcing their own sense of 'being' Italian. To paraphrase Thomson, the 'common unit identity' of 270 Coy, Pioneer Corps was clearly comfortable and affirming for the two respondents. (1995: 80)

II. WOMEN'S AUXILIARY SERVICES AND WAR WORK

The two main groups marginalised within communal discourse about World War Two are Italian Scots who served in the British forces and women. As an extension of this, women who were in the British services are doubly excluded from representations of Italian wartime experience. Sponza's scholarly work covering the experiences of 'Italians in Britain during the Second World War', Divided Loyalties, singularly fails to address the experience of Italian Scottish women in the Services. Although the index includes the 'Women's Land Army' a closer look at the text reveals that Sponza is addressing the question of fraternisation between British members of the Land Army and Italian Prisoners of War. (2000a) Amazingly, Colpi doesn't even refer to women in the Services. The service of Italian Scottish women in essential industries or the women's auxiliary services is also overlooked in national discourse. Summerfield's masterful account of women's wartime subjectivities includes the narratives of Black women but typically neglects the experiences of the less visible 'other' in Britain. (1998) Of the 25 women I interviewed, four were involved in some form of war service: Miss P. in the Land Army, Maria Angelosanto in factory work, Miss N of Glasgow in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) and
Agnes Natella of Alloa in the shipyards.\textsuperscript{210} I also managed to communicate with two other Italian Scottish women who had served in the Land Army, one on the telephone and another, Dora Kennedy, via a written questionnaire. The small number of available interviewees again reflects the reluctance or unwillingness of second-generation women, in this case, ‘war workers’\textsuperscript{211}, to talk publicly about their experiences.

Summerfield believes that women who were most detached from, or even alienated by ‘the contradictory discourse of wartime feminine identity’ (for example, women who did not relish the opportunities for the new roles offered by war work) were unlikely to offer their memories of the war for public consumption: ‘If the discourse of the heroic woman war worker is muted in today’s society, that of the woman who did not really want a role in war at all, but was made to have one, is doubly so.’ (1998: 104-5)\textsuperscript{212} Inevitably, those women who endured the war as the enemy ethnic ‘other’ remain in the shadows, marginalized by both national and communal discourse. This ‘muting’ is reflected in the poor response to my adverts seeking interviewees. I placed gender-specific adverts in the national publications \textit{The Scots Magazine} (‘The World’s Top-Selling Scottish-Interest Title’) and \textit{People’s Friend} (‘The Famous Story Paper for Women’) asking to hear from ‘any Scottish women who were called up for work – Land Army, munitions, auxiliary workers etc. – during World War II.’ These magazines were selected on the criteria of having a wide popular readership, a tradition of publishing ‘nostalgic’ appeals for interviewees and having the potential to reach women who might not primarily

\textsuperscript{210} The others were either too young, married with small children or received exemption.
\textsuperscript{211} For brevity, I will use the term ‘war workers’ to cover all four respondents.
\textsuperscript{212} See also Thomson on those ‘significant by their absence.’ (1995: 231)
identify themselves as Italian. Surprisingly, even with this level of national exposure, I received only two responses, both from readers of *The Scots Magazine*.

In America, Italian Americans embraced war work to such an extent that the iconic symbol of the female war effort, Rosie the Riveter, is said to have been based on an Italian American aircraft worker, Rosina Bonavita. In sharp contrast, the official wartime discourse of ‘doing your bit’ - a phrase frequently employed by Summerfield’s respondents (1998: 83) - often held little resonance for women of Italian origin in Scotland who were confronting the devastating fragmentation of their families as a direct consequences of the government’s policies of internment and relocation. They were bombarded by the discourse of all ‘pulling together’ when their families were being deliberately pulled apart. Of the four ‘war workers’ interviewed, three were the daughters of internees and their mothers were either relocated or subject to alien restrictions. Within this emotional context, they could feel somewhat disaffected by events and perhaps more resistant to the key messages of government propaganda aimed at mobilising the female population for the ‘common good.’

**Facing call up**

From March 1941 all women between the ages of 19 and 40 had to register at an employment exchange. The National Service (No. 2) Act of December 1941, made unmarried women aged between 20 to 30 eligible for the call-up, and by 1943 the age limit was reduced to 19. In theory, women conscripted under the Act had a

---

213 There are other claims to being the original inspiration behind this iconic image, including Rose Monroe. (Ruberto 2001)
choice between industry, the services, civil defence and the Land Army but in practice they were usually directed into the ATS and munitions factories because of the shortages in these areas. (Bousquet & Douglas 1991: 26)

Active service being 'the major differentiator of the roles between the two sexes,' essentially Italian Scottish women didn’t share the same dilemma of their male counterparts relating to service overseas. (Summerfield and Peniston-Bird 2003: 58)

Rather, women faced their own particular set of cultural pressures primarily revolving around their position in the family as ‘dutiful daughters’ and the fact that they were often shouldering the burden of running the family business. In Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives, Summerfield explores the areas of conflict and overlap between the obligations of the young women to the wartime state and ‘older understandings of the familial duties of daughters.’ (1998: 78) This is highly relevant when addressing the responses of Italian Scottish women to call-up. As Judith Smith has concluded in relation to Italian immigrant groups in America, families were strategies for economic survival with every member of the family expected to put the family good above individual indulgence or personal mobility. (Quoted in Strom 1978: 193-4) Both men and women would be expected to contribute to the family income before they married, and most left school at fourteen to work fulltime in the family business. As we will see below, in the inter-war period, Italian Scottish women would be closely supervised by their parents and were allowed limited freedom. This traditional acquiescence to parental authority was accentuated in wartime when the family itself was facing an array of external threats. Yet, at the same time the war offered the possibility of new experiences and
opportunities outwith the confines of the family. In her work addressing women's lives in France during the war, Diamond highlights 'the complex ways in which choices could be determined, or prevented, or helped or hindered by family and everyday circumstances.' (1999: 16) All of the respondents were deeply wedded to family responsibilities at a time of acute distress and responded to the State's demands within the context of their family's emotional and practical needs and in particular, the survival of the family's livelihood. Under the National Service Acts of 1939 and 1941, any person liable to be called up for service was allowed to apply to the Minister of Labour for a 'postponement certificate' on the grounds that 'exceptional hardship would ensue if they were called up for service.' Only one male veteran mentioned the fact that he initially postponed his service but it is likely that this was the main route via which a considerable number of Italian Scottish women avoided or delayed liability for call up. Others made use of the option of postponing or 'deferring' their service until there was someone else available to manage the family business. Significantly, three of the women interviewed obtained 'essential' work available in their local area, thus allowing them to juggle the demands of the State and their own families. In her testimony Miss P highlights how her war service had to accommodate the reality of her parents' prescribed lives:

Then there was the curfew. They had to be out of the shop by eight o'clock at night. I got permission to stay in Edinburgh when I was in the Land Army. For the simple reason that I could go into the shop when I left. When I'd leave my work in the Land Army and that was getting up at five in the morning and not getting home until about six o'clock at night. From six o'clock at night I'd get my dinner and then in the shop until twelve o'clock at night... 'Because my mum and dad had to go up the stairs and I had to look after the business. So my life wasn't very great. (SA1999.25)

214 House of Lords. HL/PO/PU/1/1939/2&3G6e81 National Service (Armed Forces) Act, c.81.
215 It is possible that two women were classified as 'immobile' - those who had to work locally because they had dependents.
Maria Angelosanto said that she was exempt from service until her parents return from relocation in Glasgow and then, 'I did have to do a wee bit of war-work.' From 1942 to 1944, she worked day shifts in a local rubber mill canteen and then returned to the family fish shop where she worked with her mother until around midnight. (SA2002.056) From the narratives of these two women there was no hint of the ‘heroic’ narrators of Summerfield’s work who carved out a new feminine identity from their war work. Instead they were more like the ‘reluctant conscripts’ she identifies who presented ‘stoic’ narratives of ‘just getting on with it.’ (1998: 97; 116)

Ultimately it is difficult to draw any general conclusions from the personal testimonies of just four women, whose narratives range from angry disaffection to more conventional celebrations of wartime opportunities. For example, within this small sample, there are varying degrees of identification with the national war effort. One respondent, Miss P., expressed outright resentment towards the State, focusing on the perceived hypocrisy of the government in treating her parents so harshly as ‘enemy aliens’ yet requiring her to serve: ‘I was an alien for one thing, like this... but I’m British now if I’m to go in and serve the country.’ Here, Miss P elaborates on this theme:

I was called up and I thought, “Well, I’ll go into the WAAFs.” Just because I liked the uniform, that was all. So I went for my interview and everything and that. And then I was even told what I could do and all that and I wanted to be in the kitchen because I’ve always liked cooking and things like that. Or a waitress, you know. Whatever. So it was all settled that I was going into the WAAFs. Then I got called again: no, I was an alien. I couldn’t go into the WAAFs because, with me being Italian. They wanted to put me into the munitions and I said, “No you can put me in jail but I’m not going into munitions”. I says, “Oh I’m an alien for the RAF but I’m not an alien for munitions!” I said, “I could cause sabotage”...I said, “So it’s just because I’m
an Italian?” And “Yes”. So, anyway, it [went on] for a bit and then they said that I could go into the Land Army. And I thought, well, my father had said to me, “Don’t do anything. Don’t let me go back to the Isle of Man.” Because he knew that I’ve got a bit of a temper... And being left on my own I’d learnt to fight and I’d learnt to look after myself... So, I says, oh well “Alright” and I thought the uniform, I thought, “It’s not too bad. Alright then I’ll go into the Land Army.” (SA1999.25)

Her narrative touches upon some of the key features identifiable in ‘war worker’ narratives – the sense of being treated as second class citizens and the need to balance their own families’ wishes and the demands of the State. It is also worth noting in Miss P.’s testimony above - as with male veteran narratives - the father’s equation of her enlistment as a symbol of loyalty and the perceived link between the service of the child and the freedom of the father.

As with men, narratives of women highlight the ways in which Italian Scottish families internally negotiated the acceptable boundaries of involvement in war work. Overall, Agnes Natella presents the most positive and untroubled account of her wartime service. Born in 1925 in Alloa to an Italian father and Scottish mother, she volunteered aged sixteen to join her two sisters in the local shipyards via Harland’s Engineering. Yet even within her narrative, the problems faced by Italian families in Scotland are subtly indicated:

It was so easy to get a job then because of the war and men being taken away. And my mum always said, “Well, they’ve taken my sons but they’re not taking my daughters.” Because they wanted the girls to go away to munitions outwith Alloa when there was loads of work in Alloa for girls. So they got their papers to go to such-and-such a place, she said, “No, I’ll go up.” So, she went up to the office or whatever, and she said, “No, you’re not having my girls. You can have my girls for Alloa, but they will not go outwith.” And again, you see, during the war, my mum couldn’t go any more than a ten mile radius out of the town and rather than do that, well she was kept as a sort of prisoner thing. She just didn’t go out of Alloa at all. She just stayed there. And she wanted her family to be there all the time, as we were. (SA2002.058)
Miss N states that her younger sister in Glasgow managed to avoid call up by constantly moving digs and ignoring all the ‘buff coloured envelopes.’ Echoing Mr Mac in the previous chapter, her comment was that, ‘One in the family was enough.’ (SA2002.060)

**Narratives of Resistance**

Significantly, two short interviews with second generation women published in the community newspaper *Italiani in Scozia* introduce the concept of resistance to call up, with the women stating that they ‘refused’ to serve on the grounds that they were running the family business and constructing their stories as acts of defiance against the British State. Deferments for some women could occur automatically due to their occupational position yet the interesting thing here is how the women retrospectively represent their decision. The first interview is with ‘Dora’ who was born in Edinburgh in 1916 and worked at Waterloo Place with one of her siblings during the war. She states:

> Everyone had to do a job for the British government, but I was the daughter of Italians and they wanted to send me to the barracks to wash: dishes for the soldiers. I refused saying that my brother was fighting in France with the English and my parents were interned. I wasn’t able to close the business; I had to keep it open for my brothers...for when they returned from the war. I fought a court case and I won. Other Italians were instead forced to close their business. (Chistolini 1984: 2)

Ancella Roissi in Chiocconi, also born in 1916, had a shop in Glasgow which she ran with her older sister. Her published interview contains both a sense of resistance and a significant detachment from the war effort:
I remember that some days after the declaration of war by the Italian government the Defence Services sent for me. But I showed my opposition by doing the contrary of what they told me, so that, when they tired of my behaviour, they left me in peace in my shop. Instead, they took my two brothers. They put one of them Rizieri in the fire service whilst Oliviero was sent off on the merchant ships. (Zorza 1986: 2)

It is significant how, in these narratives, Italian Scottish women position themselves as outside the exigencies of official wartime discourse. An apocryphal tale by one male respondent, Renzo Serafini, is also worth noting as it shares the theme of resistance and avoidance:

In London, there was an Italian and he had a shop, a wee sort of restaurant where all the prostitutes used to hang around. And they were very well known. So, the husband was interned, the brother was interned and who was running this shop here [but] the mother and the daughter. They were still under the bombardment open. And this day [...] the oldest girl of the shop got calling up papers. She was sort of down the dumps and she was crying and one of these prostitutes comes in, she says, “Maria, what’s wrong?” “Well,” she says, “You know my father’s interned, my brother’s interned and I’ve got to appear like that”. She says, “If they take me why should I go and fight with my father and brother interned? I don’t know what to do”. “When you go in you just tell them you’re a prostitute. ‘What’s your job?’ ‘A prostitute’. That’s you out!” And she looked and the mother says, “Well it’s as good an idea as any”, see? And she said she was a prostitute and she didn’t have to go into the army. (SA1998.34)

Within my research sample, however, this ‘narrative of resistance’ was evident in only one interview with female respondents. Mrs Mac lost her father, a naturalised Italian, on the Arandora Star and in the traumatic aftermath of his death carried on working in the family business in Ayr. When we reached this stage in the interview, she became visibly upset and the interview had to be terminated. However she did state that her brother refused to go to the Army: ‘And I refused to go and help. And my sisters.’ (SA2002.052) 216

216 Mrs M was taking part in a joint interview with her husband. After a break the interview resumed but she did not answer any more questions.
The enemy ‘other’

As in the previous chapter, the interviews I have carried out with second generation women indicate the importance of oral testimony in illuminating how service in the British Forces during the war could quite dramatically reinforce a sense of difference and of Italianess. As the testimony of Miss P illustrates, within the context of the ‘wartime polarity of Allied/enemy’, Italian Scottish women were constantly reminded of their identification with the latter. (Lant 1991: 90) Miss P’s father was interned and her mother relocated to Glasgow and she joined the Land Army following their return to Edinburgh. Brought up on a rather romanticised idea of the Land Army (see Tyrer 1996) I approached the interview with Miss P armed with a list of questions to do with milking, tractor-driving and scything, only to feel rather ashamed and naïve as Miss P’s more disturbing narrative unfolded. Her recollection of her wartime service forms part of a powerful narrative outlining the abuses she faced as an Italian Scot since childhood, culminating in this shocking memory dating from the war:

I was very lucky; most of the places were alright to me except in D[-]. That’s where they ganged up on me, the men. They called me ‘The Holy Virgin’ because I didn’t understand the jokes that they were telling. And then I was a ‘Pape’ because I was a Catholic... They used to say to me, “Get back to Mussolini,” “You’re a Pape” and this and that. Then one day I just couldn’t take it anymore and I just answered back. What it was, one of them had started - they were always cursing and swearing - well, I wasn’t brought up like that and in my parents’ home, mabbe my father did swear but I never, ever heard him. It was never, ever done in front of any of the children and I said, “If you don’t mind, I’d rather you didn’t use that language when I’m about”. I said, “I just don’t like it.” I wish I had never opened my mouth. Because they ganged up on me. And they battered me to pulp. They got me on the ground and they used me like a football. (SA1999.25)
Miss P’s recollection of her time market gardening in the Land Army is deeply imbued with a sense of isolation and exclusion as she confronted the racial and religious prejudice of some of her co-workers and employers. Whilst insisting that most people were nice to her, she singled out two workplaces where she suffered severe discrimination and felt that she was treated badly purely on the grounds of her national origin. Significantly, her account oscillates between the themes of acceptance/difference or inclusion/exclusion as she recalls her encounters with one particular employer. It is also significant that she presents herself as an ‘Italian’ within the Land Army context, highlighting the degree to which her experiences heightened her sense of difference:

I got it the whole time: “See what your Mussolini’s done” and this and that. And one day I got hold of her and I says like, “If you were a civilian... You and me before the war, you wouldn’t have been fit to lick my boots!” Oh I really...she got a fright. I didn’t hit her because I know that I would have been jailed if I had of because I was Italian and she was Scottish. And that give her a bit of a fright. [EDIT] She just hated Italians and that was it. [EDIT] You’ll know how much [---] hated me and tried to break me. Tried to break my spirit but she couldn’t...her father stopped her after that though. She sent me out to work with a pick and shovel with the men...Honestly. The men when I went up, you know, sent here to work, they said, “You can’t do this!” They said, “It’ll kill you”. And I said, “Well I’ve been sent out to do it”. So, I went to lift up the [laughs], I couldn’t lift it up. What a weight! But then I got it going and I kept up with the men! Kept up with the men...And I could saw the big trees and everything, could do it all. But then when the father found me working with the pick and shovel...I mean, he...he must have given her hell. Because then I was put back onto doing ...all the dirty work, you know. In the rain and everything. I was the one that was always sent out to collect things in the rain. Not the rest, just me. Because she was in charge, you see. (SA1999.25)

Significantly, when she reached the point in her narrative where she found satisfactory employment with a Mr Bruce in Edinburgh, her delight centres on the fact that at this workplace, she was accepted as an equal: ‘nobody said anything about me being a Catholic or about being an Italian. They treated me as one of them.’
Of course, the appalling abuse recalled by Miss P is only one individual memory and far more interviews with Italian Scottish war workers need to be carried out to identify more collective themes.

Miss N, the daughter of Italian parents, was born in Glasgow in 1921 and enlisted in the Medical Corps of the ATS in 1942, employed in the administration of military convalescent hospitals. Of all the women interviewed, her narrative was the most complex in that it combined positive recollections of friendship and job fulfilment with more underlying discordant memories. For example, in the following extract she addresses the discrimination she faced as a conscript of Italian origin but turns it into a positive story emphasising the fact that she was trusted:

The adjutant called me – he was very nice – and said, “Look”. There was my A103 [army form] with the red of ‘Of Enemy Alien Origin’. “Yes! I’ve no doubt about that.” He said, “We’ve been very pleased with you but you’ve been doing something that’s of an extremely confidential nature.” So they sent me to the Royal Corps of Signals at Mitton Hall. Not far away. That was Whalley, [near] Clitheroe. [...] And of course, I got all this ciphering under lock and key and I thought, “Now, what’s this? I’d better point out.” And the Adjutant just said, “No, no. Just you do what we ask you to do and it’ll be alright. Don’t worry.” So, I just carried on daily like that. But I was only there a matter of months before they sent me back to the Convalescent Depot. So, that kind of pleased me because it meant that they must have had enough trust in me to give me the job I was doing before.

Miss N reached the rank of ‘More Substantive Corporal’ within the ATS and was clearly an enthusiastic and able recruit. Yet she presents the fact that she was effectively barred from promotion in the following way, focusing again on the themes of acceptance and accommodation:

You’d start at the very bottom. I don’t know how you’d do it because I mean, I got on quite well. I made Grade – naturally do trade tests. You see you went through [reads her ATS documents] ‘upgraded.’ So, considering I was of ‘enemy alien origin’ – because somebody said to me once, “You know,
you’re officer quality" and I said, “Well I wouldn’t mind having a pip or two on my shoulder.” But, because of that, I mean, you were really…and I accepted that. (SA2002.060)

The aura of distrust surrounding Italian Scottish recruits, which again could lead to a sense of alienation and exclusion, is highlighted in the case of Triesta Margiotta, a war worker in Edinburgh. In February 1944 twenty-five-year old Margiotta, a café manageress, was reported to the Sheriff Court for contravention of Regulation 2B (1) of the Defence (General) Regulations, 1939. Margiotta had been placed in employment by the Ministry of Labour with the Coastal Radio Ltd of Edinburgh and was accused of having ‘wilfully damaged 21 iron dust core half rings, the property of the Admiralty in order that she be released from this employment.’ Although the Special Branch report admits that, ‘It is not considered that the damage caused was done in any way to assist the enemy’217 the mere fact that ‘Miss Margiotta is of British nationality but of Italian origin’ was clearly enough to arouse suspicion and to justify the charge. Predictably, in March Margiotta appeared at the Sheriff Court on a reduced charge of Malicious Mischief which was found ‘not proven’.218 However, the fact that she was arrested as late as 1944 underlines the persistence of suspicion and hostility towards Italians within the auxiliary services and industry.

Interestingly, the two respondents who had generally positive recollections of their service, Miss N and Agnes, identify religion as the key site where they experienced a sense of ‘difference.’ The former recalls being excluded, as a Catholic, from the church service which followed the Church Parade on a Sunday: ‘I really shivered and

217 NAS HH/55/58 Police War Duties, Special Branch Reports and Conferences, February 1944
218 NAS HH/55/58 Scottish Home Department Special Branch Report March 1944.
I wished I was inside that building and I never got [in].’ (SA2002.060) Agnes felt there was only ‘one incident’ in the shipyards where she came up against prejudice and that drew on the local traditions of sectarianism. She recalls of her interview at Harland’s:

I had an interview with a Mr Fletcher, I can always remember this. He said, “How old was I?” and I said, “Sixteen.” He said, “What makes you want to apply here?” I said, “I just thought I’d like to work in a place like this.” Because it seemed to me you could move around, well I didn’t know if you could but I had this in my mind. So, after quite a wee chat, he said, “Well, when could you start?” I said, “Well I could start maybe tomorrow or whatever.” Then he said – which upset me – he says, “What denomination are you?” And it was only then I realised, if you were a Catholic that it was difficult to get into this place. (SA2002.058)

Mixing with Italians

As discussed in previous chapters, the war ironically provided Italian Scots with the opportunity to meet Italian Prisoners of War presenting an opportunity to identify themselves and their families with Italy. Dora Kennedy who served in the Land Army in Bridge of Allan and Kintyre came across Italian POWs during her work. In Blackburn, Miss N used the presence of POWs in nearby barracks to attempt to ‘get word through’ to her mother back in Italy:

We used to go to Fulwood Barracks and there used to be prisoners, Italian boys, unloading, loading. I used to say to the Sergeant Major, “Can I say hello to them?” We weren’t able to fraternise. Of course, they wondered who and what the heck I was doing if I could speak Italian but I was just wondering if anybody came from Tuscany. My Italian couldn’t have been all that good because when they asked me why I spoke Italian, I said, “E miei parenti erano italiani.” That’s wrong because “My parents are Italian” in Italian you’d say, “Miei genitori sono italiani” because parenti just means relations. So, anyway, you learn as you go. Anyway, one boy apparently told somebody that he had been to school with me. I says, “Auch that’s – no.” So I said, “Ask him where and when.” So he came back and said “Ponte A Moriano?” which was right but the dates didn’t coincide. But I said, “Maybe he’s been to school with another Ventisei” because I had a lot of cousins. So I
Miss N states that she spoke to POWs primarily to get contact through to her mother in Italy; ‘I didn’t particularly want to date them’ and to buoy their spirits up. Yet later on in her narrative – in relation to the prospect of service overseas - she indicates that her contact with the POWs was not as straightforward or unproblematic as it first presented, illuminating the complexity of dual identity for recruits of Italian origin:

They must have at one stage needed personnel who maybe were bilingual so I was quite pleased to attend the medical and whatever and was endorsed ‘fit for overseas’. So I thought, in a way I thought, oh that would be nice if I was able to go but in another way, I think with the war ending, it was a blessing in disguise because… not that the Prisoners of War ever but they were puzzled that I should be wearing [British uniform] and I think somebody in my mother’s village who had heard that I was in the [British forces] one of them said, “Oh she’s never going to put her foot in [my door].” There was that kind of – I never encountered it though but I knew it existed. […] You don’t know what people, how people can react. Sometimes unwisely but never the less you could be at the receiving end of things. So, I never got that. So, it was a disappointment in one way and a relief in [another]. (SA2002.060)

Identification with the war effort

Of the four women, Agnes most strongly asserted a sense of identification with the British war effort. Her Italian father was not interned, her sisters worked alongside her in the shipyards and her brothers were in the Forces. In a positively glowing recollection of her time in the shipyards, Agnes depicts herself as confident and popular, relishing the opportunity to learn the masculine tasks of drilling, soldering and fitting which the shipyard afforded her. The fact that she ‘thoroughly enjoyed’
her work is clearly reflected throughout the comedic account she provides of her wartime service, gleefully recounting the ‘tricks’ she got up to. She recalls this period primarily as a time of laughter and involvement, personified by her taking part in the shipyard concert parties which visited local hospitals for wounded soldiers.\textsuperscript{219} Significantly, Agnes had addressed incidences of harassment and abuse as a child in her narrative but these were totally absent when recollecting her war work. Her total identification with the British war effort also comes through when she mentions how she met her Scottish husband at a dancehall:

He was in the Navy for five years. I said, “So there was me making ships for you John and there were you sitting in them” you know. We always had laughs about this. (SA2002.059)

Dora Kennedy, who was born in 1922 to Italian parents in Campbeltown, responded to a written questionnaire about her time in the Land Army. She states that she had no problems being of Italian background and ‘thoroughly enjoyed’ her time working in Perthshire, concluding, ‘I am glad to have been a part of the war effort, I would have hated not to be involved.’ Maria Angelosanto also states that she ‘enjoyed’ her work in the rubber mill canteen. (SA2002.056) Clearly, far more interviews need to be carried out with second generation Italian Scottish women to fully explore the different meanings of wartime service amongst this group.

\textbf{III. NARRATIVES OF FREEDOM}

A significant feature amongst the narratives of Italian Scots, both men and women, who served in the British Forces is the motif of freedom; the fact that the war

\textsuperscript{219} For full extract, see Appendix 5.
afforded them opportunities outside of the constrictions of family home life and family business. A powerful theme running through both male and female narratives, when recalling the inter-war period of their childhood, was the restrictions of working in the family business and the burden of parental expectations. Women narrators emphasise the sense of claustrophobia of living and working in the same environment under close parental supervision. The men express frustration that they were unable to pursue their own ambitions in deference to their fathers’ desire for them to work in the family business. Romeo Ugolini, Ronnie Boni and Remo Catignani used almost the exact phrase ‘my father wouldn’t let me’ when describing how they were unable to pursue a career in art college, engineering and professional football respectively. Three male narrators went as far to say they ‘hated’ working in the fish and chip shops which had dominated their working lives. (SA2002.054 Angelo Valente, SA1998.30 John Costa) As Remo Catignani put it, ‘For twenty five years I stuck in fish and chips and I hated every minute of it.’ (SA1997.108)

In their narratives of adolescence, Italian Scottish women frequently voice their envy and resentment at the comparative ‘freedom’ of their Scottish friends, referring to clandestine visits to the Palais dancehall in the afternoons. A sense of oppression pervades female narratives emphasising their long working hours, lack of time off and the control of their parents, as Mrs D illustrates:

I used to envy my Scottish friends...You went down at nine o’ clock in the morning and you closed the door at eleven o’ clock at night. And just went up the road to bed. Only to bed - the only thing we ever made in that house was a cup of cocoa going to bed! We never cooked in it and that was life. I used to say, “My goodness me!” I had two days off a week when I grew up. I used to have a Thursday off; that was my proper day off but - oh! - Italian parents were very strict in those days. They were always afraid of what...what is known as a fate worse than death! [laughs] They wouldn’t let you mix, they
wouldn't let you go to a dance hall or anything. The only dances I got to were the ones run by the Italian Club which were about four a year. But the very thought of the Palais or anything like that. You were a scarlet woman! (SA1998.061)

Thus, for a significant number of second generation Italians war was also remembered as a time of unprecedented personal freedom - in particular amongst those who served in the forces. In Angelo Valente of Fife's narrative a strong sense of frustration dominated his childhood memories of enforced labour within the family business. He attributes his enlistment as the time in his life when his opportunities improved: 'it opened up my world for me.' Ronnie Boni, who went into the Pioneer Corps, presents his father's internment in these terms:

I didn't have very much of a social life. My father was a very hard task master. Sport was a thing you, I managed to get to play rugby but that was the only thing I played. I was mainly working in the factory even as a young...boy in secondary, about ten, eleven, twelve and thirteen, fourteen, I was always helping out in the factory. "Work is good for you" my father used to say. But, when he went to the Isle of Man, I sort of made hay while the sun shone! I used to go dancing and dress up to all the fancy: yellow gloves, pork-pie hat, long coat like a gangster! And I had a good time. And in the army I had five years of freedom, as it were... (SA1997.106)

Consequently, most of the male veterans interviewed express a sense of regret on demob and a reluctance to return to the daily grind of working in the family shops and cafes. Geraldo Cozzi, who presented a picaresque comic narrative of his time in the RASC still stated that being a batman during the war was 'the best time in my life.' (SA1998.45) Angelo Valente said of his return to Coatbridge, 'I felt kind of lost... because when you're there you've all the pals in the world.' (SA1998.29) Mr Mac felt it was 'bloody terrible' returning home and had seriously considered staying on in Rome until ordered back to the business by his father. (SA2002.052) For women, army life also offered them a 'taste of independence' and a chance to
experience more freedom. (Bousquet & Douglas 1991:2) Before the war, Mrs M had made the rather unusual decision to train as a nurse in London to 'get away from that closeness'. (SA1999.24) Mrs B spoke of being 'too confined within the family group.' (SA1997.106) Miss P also emphasises her lack of freedom as a girl and her resentment that she was 'always with my parents' especially her father. She identifies the war – when she ran the family business alone - as a watershed in her own attitudes, a time when she became 'my own person.'

He wouldn’t let me go to a school picnic unless he was there. In the background. He would bring ice-cream and sweets for all the kids and everything but he had to be there or I didn’t go. Simple as that. [...] When I did start realising what I was missing out was when war did break out and afterwards and that. Then I had a mind of my own. The boy that my father wanted me to marry and that: no way! That was it. Because I’d been left a year on my own to fend and protect my parents and so, I’m afraid, when he came back, I said to him, “Look Dad, if I had wanted to do anything wrong I’d have done it while you were inside. I wouldn’t, your business wouldn’t be here just now so why are you being still so protective?” (SA1999.25)

**Conclusion**

To date, no publication has attempted to address the unique, complex and fascinating situation of male and female recruits of Italian origin in the British Forces during World War Two. As with the previous chapter, a focus on the experiences of second generation Italians who enlisted in the British Forces at home, shows how service could contribute to heightened sense of Italianness. Indeed, through the use of oral testimonies, the Pioneer Corps is shown to be a more positive experience than traditionally represented, offering a comfortable unit identity for dual nationals. Whilst women's narratives overlapped in some areas with the experiences of their male counterparts there were also significant differences. For many Italian Scottish
women there was a rupture between the official wartime discourse of ‘doing your bit’ and the complex reality of their distressing family circumstances. The ways in which women reacted to call-up would depend on a number of inter-linked factors – such as whether or not a father was interned or their position within the household. To paraphrase Diamond on women in France, ‘war offered them a complex combination of both opportunities and constraints, and brought numerous changes, negative as well as positive.’ (1999: 125)

As we saw in the previous chapter, service in the Pioneer Corps, the auxiliary services or undertaking war work is not in itself a straightforward indication of someone who was more British or assimilated. Both male and female veterans would often identify themselves as Italian in their self-representations. Indeed, many felt more ‘Italian’ as a consequence of their wartime service. Of the two Land Army veterans, one proudly told me how she had been awarded the honour of Cavaliere for her work for Italy and Dora Kennedy, who presents herself as completely comfortable with her war work, concludes, ‘I feel as much Italian as I do Scottish.’ Miss N, who served in the ATS, worked for whole of her post-war career with Italian companies in Scotland, Olivetti and Alitalia, strengthening her links with Italy. Again ‘war worker’ narratives completely contradict Colpi’s assertions about “negative enemy status” and, in particular, the argument that those who served in the British Forces denied their Italian roots.
Chapter 10

Remembering

Commemoration within the Italian Scottish Community

In Scotland, the dominance of an elite over representations of the Italian community's past continues into commemoration of the war. Until recently there has been relatively subdued 'memorial activity' (Wood 1999: 1) or commemoration amongst the Italians in Scotland. However, in the last two decades, there has been a clearly definable move within sections of the Italian community from private remembrance towards more public commemoration; what Wood refers to as 'rememoration' of the Second World War. (1999: 17) Whilst this is undoubtedly part of the wider societal trend towards commemoration, it is also an indication that Italians in Scotland now feel that it is safe to publicly claim their own sites of memory. However, by following the usual contours of communal myth - a firm, unwavering focus on internment and the Arandora Star - this rememoration of the war serves again to deny or neglect alternative memories. In addressing Italian Scottish commemoration, this chapter will analyse two separate developments - the concerted campaign by the community newspaper, Italiani in Scozia in the late 1980s to gain recognition for the survivors of the Arandora Star from the Italian Government and more recently, two parallel campaigns for an apology for internment and the Arandora Star disaster from the British government and the Scottish Executive. It will also explore the ways in which the Arandora Star internees, some of whom held prominent positions in the Fasci, are all reconstructed as 'innocent victims' (vittime innocenti) and the utilisation of the emotive imagery of
'fathers and sons' (capi famiglia coi loro figli maschi) to represent those on board the Arandora Star. This chapter will argue that the privileging of the internment narrative within 'rememoration' of the war detaches the tragedy from its historical and political context, suppressing debate about the role of inter-war Italian Fasci and denying competing interpretations. In particular, it silences the narratives of non-internees, particularly those who served in the British Forces and women.

The Arandora Star

At a War Cabinet meeting on 11 June, it was agreed that those categorised by MI5 as 'the most dangerous' German and Italian internees would be deported to Canada. Between 21 June and 10 July 1940 four ships left Britain for Canada and one for Australia. The 15, 500-ton Blue Star Liner Arandora Star, was the second ship to sail; according to Stent, she was a 'fast vessel' and did not sail in convoy. Her complement of internees consisted of 734 Italians and 479 'A' class Germans and Austrians including merchant seamen. (1980: 100) The ship set sail in the early hours of 1 July but was struck by a torpedo from a German U-Boat at 6.40 am on Tuesday 2 July. There was a disproportionate loss of life amongst the Italians. Of the 734 Italians aboard the ship, 486 lost their lives. Out of 479 Germans, only 175 drowned. (Stent 1980: 105) Sponza calculates that the average age of Italian Arandora Star casualties was 47, and nine per cent were over 60; they mainly came from London.

220 N. A. FO 371/25193. Extract from War Cabinet Conclusions 11 June 1940
221 The case of the Dunera deportation is almost as notorious – many of the Italians on board were survivors of the Arandora Star, hastily being shipped to Australia. They were subject to the most terrible abuses by crew – locked in their cabins whilst the ship was being torpedoed, robbed of personal belongings and physically abused. Ultimately three crew members were court-martialled. (Gillman & Gillman 1980: 245-53).
222 Converted into a troopship in May 1940 (Williams 1997:107).
As Simpson notes, MI5 did not come out of this affair well; those selected to be sent abroad were supposed to be the most dangerous but 'the choice of Italians had been quite incompetent.' (1992:163) Within the current literature, there appears to be some confusion about the exact composition of deportations on the Arandora Star; the accounts of the Gillmans and Sponza, for example, contradict each other. The Gillmans note how, by 21 June 1940, the War Office had sent MI5's list of 1,500 'dangerous characters' to the five camps where Italians were housed with instructions to the commanders to find them within twenty four hours as a designated ship was due to sail shortly. However, as 'only just over 700 Italians supposedly on the MI5 list could be found' the empty places were then filled by Category 'A' Germans and Austrians. (1980: 182) Sponza states that when MI5 could find only 750 names the War Office made 'an arbitrary selection of a further 400 which they had taken out of the 20/30 age group.' (1993: 126-7) Ultimately, however, all accounts agree that there was a mixture of Fasci members, non-Fascists and anti-Fascists on board the ill-fated ship.

The Aftermath

The Arandora Star disaster caused a major outcry, in both press and parliament, exemplified by the publication of the excoriating polemic by Francois Lafitte, The Internment of Aliens. Yet, as Lafitte notes, the more sensational newspapers

---

223 Actual figure is 24
presented the story of the *Arandora Star* in ‘a lurid and revolting manner.’ (1988: 123) In Parliament on 9 July, the National- Liberal MP, Morris-Jones claimed that there was a general feeling in the country that the lives of British sailors should not be sacrificed to save the skins of enemy aliens (Stent 1980: 106); a sentiment reflected in a yellowing press cutting kept by one bereaved widow and shown to me by her daughter:

*Question of the Week?*

*Was it necessary to risk a grand ship like Arandora Star in transporting enemy aliens to place of safety? Wouldn't some old tubs have done as well?*

Certainly, the Scottish press coverage of the disaster perpetuates the racism prevalent against the Italians by employing stereotypical, and contradictory, accounts of their cowardice and treachery. Under the headline ‘*Arandora Star Panic,*’ the *Edinburgh Evening News* reports how a surviving crew member, ‘said the behaviour of the Germans and Italians was frightful...’If they had not panicked so completely many more would have been saved, particularly Englishmen.” (EEN 4.7.1940: 5) Similarly, *The Scotsman* report on the *Arandora Star* with the by-line ‘Aliens’ Wild Rush for Boats’ incorporates the following survivor account, “‘The Italians and Germans behaved,” said one Londoner, “just as you would expect them to behave. They thought of their own skins first.”” (TS 4.7.1940: 5)

The tragedy of the *Arandora Star* was compounded by the insensitive handling of the affair by the British Government who presented, in Lafitte’s opinion, ‘a sorry picture of muddle, ignorance and lack of responsibility.’ (1988: 75) As Stent indicates the core of the tragedy was that many internees had switched or substituted places ‘sometimes with and sometimes without the knowledge and approval of the camp
officers. Thus nobody knew exactly who had been shipped, who had been lost and who saved... The only roll of internees had gone down with the ship, and that had been inaccurate anyhow.' (1980: 105) Chaos and confusion reigned in attempting to ascertain names of those lost. Attlee admitted in Parliament on August 6 that 'every endeavour is being made to inform the next of kin, but in some cases it is very difficult to find out who are the next of kin.' (Quoted in Lafitte 1988: 131) Two months later Home Secretary Herbert Morrison admitted that the Government still had no accurate record of who had been aboard the ship. (Stent 1980: 106) The Government's failure to provide accurate information to grieving relatives provides another indication of the general disregard for Italian immigrants which permeated the military authorities. Officials also displayed a profound lack of consideration for distressed and bereaved families with relatives of 'the missing' having to rely on the Brazilian Consulate for information as well as more informal lines of communication. Zorza recounts how an Arandora Star survivor in a Scottish hospital smuggled out a list of casualties on toilet paper. (1985: 34) Many widows did not receive official certification of death for many months afterwards.224 One respondent showed me the callous note her widowed mother had received from the War Office in December 1941, more than a year after the disaster. Insensitively headed 'Re: Adolph Valente, deceased,' it enclosed a pitiful and heartbreaking inventory of 'impounded articles, the property of the above-named': 'Pyjama suit, Pants long, Vest, Perished and Destroyed by mice – Chocolate, Sardines, tin of, Italian fruit, tins of, Perished and destroyed by mice – Chocolate

224 ECA D136. Correspondence from lawyers on behalf of Mrs Antonietta Delicato states that although she received 'intimation of the possibility' that her husband had been lost on 15 July 1940, a Certificate of the Death was not issued until 6 January 1941. Letter to Town Clerk 14 January 1941
biscuits.’ The recipient was curtly told to sign and return the duplicate inventory so that the items could be forwarded.

On 12 August the Cabinet bowed to parliamentary pressure and asked Lord Snell to undertake an enquiry into both the Arandora Star affair and conditions at a Huyton internment camp. By the time of a Commons debate on 22 August the Home Secretary Anderson admitted that ‘most regrettable and deplorable things’ had occurred:

They have been due partly to the inevitable haste with which the policy of internment...had to be carried out. They have been due in some cases to the mistakes of individuals and to stupidity and muddle. (Quoted in Gillmans 1980: 231)

Lord Snell submitted his report to the Cabinet on 24 October. (Stent 1980:108) A number of mistakes in the compilation of the lists were admitted, particularly in relation to the Italians. It was stated that ‘the names of twenty-six Italians did not coincide with names on the lists of dangerous characters supplied to the Camp Commandants.’ (Sponza 2000a: 111) It was also pointed out that the lists of dangerous Italians had been largely based on membership of the Fascist party - ‘the only evidence against many of these persons.’ (Hickey & Smith 1989: 223) Placing the responsibility for the lists’ compilation with the ‘security authorities’, Snell identified the central flaw of MI5’s by now notorious list:

[they] apparently took the view that those who had been only nominal members of the Fascist Party, and those who were ardently Fascist, were equally dangerous. The result was that, among those deported, were a number of men whose sympathies were totally with this country. I cannot regard this lack of discrimination as satisfactory... (Quoted in Gillmans 1980: 261)

225 In November 1940 the head of MI5, Brigadier Harker, was sacked.
226 The report was limited in its brief to the ‘method of selection.’ (Gillmans 1980: 261)
The report was discussed in Cabinet in November when the furore had largely died down and a decision was made not to publish the findings. (Gillmans 1980: 262) However, as a result of the whole debacle, it was decided that ‘no more Italians should be sent overseas’ and further deportations were abandoned. (Sponza 2000a: 112) Sadly, by then the damage had been done.

**Commemoration**

The high death toll and the apparently chaotic nature of the final selection for the *Arandora Star*, with many internees chosen for deportation switching places with others (Lafitte 1988: 129; Stent 1980: 105) explains why it retains a powerful grip on the collective imagination and remains, in Marin’s view, ‘a perpetually aching, bleeding scar on the living body of the Italian collectivity’ (*una cicatrice perennemente dolorante e sanguinante nel corpo vivo della collettività italiana*). (1975: 86) At the time of the tragedy, there were no public or private sites of mourning for the bereaved families of the *Arandora Star* victims. An investigation by the Italian priest Zorza in the 1980s highlighted the fact that a number of bodies had been washed up on the shores of western Scotland, in areas such as Colonsay. (1985) However, as most of the bodies were never recovered, no private burials could take place and many relatives today express narratives of profound loss and absence. In the poignant words of Flora Gallo: ‘We don’t know where they are. We don’t know if they’re still in the sea. Who knows?’ (SA1999.31)
Official commemoration began to be expressed some two decades after the war primarily via the medium of memorial sculptures. In November 1960, an ‘expressive bronze monument’ of the Arandora Star sculpted by Mancini was placed in the entrance of the Italian church of St Peter’s in London, inscribed ‘To the Memory which lives on in the Hearts of the Relatives, the Survivors and the Italian Community.’ (Marin 1975: 87) In Scotland, the Arandora Star disaster was first commemorated by a mosaic erected in the Casa d’Italia in Glasgow in 1975 stating ‘We will never forget you.’ (Non vi scorderemo mai) (Colpi 1991b: 145)228 Another significant memorial is Eduardo Paolozzi’s Edinburgh sculpture The Manuscript of Monte Cassino, installed in 1991 at St Mary’s Cathedral, Leith Walk, which consists of three massive bronze sculptures of an ankle, a foot and a hand. Although primarily perceived as a homage to Paolozzi’s roots,229 the sculptor, who lost his father and maternal grandfather in the Arandora Star disaster, has acknowledged the commemorative function of his sculpture.230 Indeed, Paolozzi originally suggested that the objects be inscribed in the memory of the Italians who died on the Arandora Star. (Paolozzi 2000:19)231

Fortier points out that that the tragedy of the Arandora Star is repeatedly remembered as a distinguishing feature of the British Italian ‘community’,

228 This talismanic motto is repeated in Di Mambro’s play Tally’s Blood when Massimo Pedreschi, who loses his father on the Arandora Star stands centre stage and declares, ‘Arandora Star. Non vi scorderemo mai.’ (Di Mambro 1989)

229 The Latin inscription on the pieces, of the medieval poem the Manuscript of Monte Cassino, was intended to serve as a double link between the Cathedral and the origins of artist’s father, grandfather and the ‘many Italians who came from these regions to make Scotland their home.’ (Paolozzi 2000: 18)


231 Commemoration continues to take on new forms. The Daily Mail of June 27 2005 reports that a granite plaque would be unveiled on the island of Colonsay to commemorate the tragedy. It says that ‘every year, the dead of the Arandora Star are remembered along with the islanders who fell serving their country.’ (Madeley 2005: 13)
continually creating a historical and cultural environment for the Italian population of Britain. (2000:159) In particular, memories of the Arandora Star, and to a lesser extent of internment, emphasise the suffering and alienation that distinguish British Italians from other Italians worldwide. (Fortier 2000: 91) Epitomising this, the community newspaper, Italiani in Scozia, defines the event as the ‘biggest disaster and tragedy that has struck the Italian emigrant community’ (più grande disastro e tragedia che ha colpito la comunità emigrante italiana) (1990 No.28:3) and a ‘tragedy unique in the history of both Italian and worldwide emigration.’ (tragedia unica nella storia dell’emigrazione italiana e mondiale). (1990 No. 26:6)

Fortier believes that, ‘the British Italian community defines itself by the grief over the lives lost in the Arandora Star.” (2000: 57) Essentially, over time, the central internment/Arandora Star narrative has been utilised to create the ‘story’ of the war and has come to represent what it meant to ‘be Italian,’ or to be a ‘good Italian’, during the war. The iconic status of the Arandora Star has been reinforced by the numerous books, press articles and television documentaries that have been produced, focusing on the disaster. (Zorza 1985; Hickey & Smith 1989; Rossi 1992; Logan 1994; Morrison 1999; Stock 1999; Bernabei 2000b; O Hagan 2003) Yet as Portelli stresses whilst public memory ‘embodied in its own narratives and recognised narrators’ is based on lived experience and deeply felt emotions, it remains ‘a highly ideological and institutional construction, distinct from the personal memories on which it is based.’ (1997: 157) Bearing this in mind, this chapter will now address the campaign by the newspaper Italiani in Scozia to gain recognition for the survivors of the Arandora Star which led to the projection of a
one-dimensional and limited representation of the community’s wartime experience. The unwavering focus on the Arandora Star has succeeded in overshadowing other narratives and alternative perspectives.

**Italiani in Scozia**

*Italiani in Scozia* was edited by Padre Pietro Zorza, an Italian missionary priest based in Glasgow whose parish was the whole of Scotland, with Gloria Crolla of Edinburgh as Administrator. Printed in the Italian language, it ran for twenty eight editions from December 1983 to October 1990 and was apparently ‘distributed free to all Italian families in Scotland by volunteers.’ From 1984 onwards, its pages are increasingly dominated by its *Arandora Star* campaign culminating in 1990, on the fiftieth anniversary of the tragedy, with the Italian national honour of *Cavalieri* being conferred on the Scottish survivors of the disaster by the Italian president, Cossiga.

In 1985, the editor, Zorza published a book, *Arandora Star*, as a supplement to *Italiani in Scozia*. The book aimed to highlight the tragedy of the *Arandora Star*, outlining the discovery of graves of some of the victims in Colonsay and publishing interviews with survivors living in Scotland. This publication, through its subtitle, urges upon its readers ‘The duty to remember them’ (*Il dovere di ricordarli*). (Zorza 1985: 9). At the end it publishes a ‘List of the Dead’ and asks readers who know the names of any other victims to supply them to *Italiani in Scozia*. (Zorza 1985: 64) The seventh edition of the newspaper, published in the summer of 1985, was dedicated to the *Arandora Star*, covering much of the material found in Zorza’s book. The editorial again urged ‘Il dovere di ricordarli’ with a particular focus on the religious
and civil ceremonies held to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the disaster. On 2 July 1985 a mass was held at St Andrew’s Cathedral, Glasgow in honour of the victims of the *Arandora Star*. (IIS 1985 No.7:1) This was followed by a civil ceremony at the Casa d’Italia conferring ‘una Riconoscenza’ (‘gratitude’ or ‘recognition’) on five survivors and relatives of the victims. (IIS 1985 No.7:1) The rest of the paper includes personal testimonies from survivors, internees and relatives of internees and of the *Arandora Star* victims. Thus, from the mid-1980s onwards, a religious mass and civil ceremony was held every year at Glasgow Cathedral ‘in memory of those who perished’ (nel ricordo del periti) on the *Arandora Star*. (IIS 1988 No.20: 6) The mass would be regularly presided over by an Italian priest, Monsignor Rossi, a former internee, and those ‘invited’ included survivors, relatives of the victims and internees from the Isle of Man and Canada, effectively establishing a commemorative hierarchy within the community. (IIS 1989 No.24: 10) As well as being possibly inspired by Padre Zorza in the first instance, all these memorial events were diligently recorded by *Italiani in Scozia* with photos of survivors and internees regularly reproduced. As with a comparable campaign by the Italian Canadian newspaper *Il Corriere Canadese*, ‘it is the names, faces, and narratives of the male internees that punctuate the newspaper’s pages.’ (Iacovetta & Ventresca 2000:395) A classic example is a photograph of a group of elderly men outside Glasgow’s Catholic Cathedral following the 1988 *Arandora Star* mass. Although only one survivor is present at the ceremony, signor Bertoia, he is surrounded by internees from the Isle of Man and Canada with the former internee, Monsignor Rossi, standing behind him. (IIS 1988 No.20: 6)
The ninth edition of the newspaper reiterates that Zorza’s book was written about the tragedy ‘so as not to be forgotten’ (per non essere dimenticati.) (IiS 1985 No. 9: 7)

Alongside Zorza, Renzo Serafini, the Italian consular agent in Inverness and a former internee on the Isle of Man appears to have been instrumental in the campaign lobbying for a civic honour for the survivors and he appears regularly in the pages of Italiani in Scozia. Some insight into his motivations is gained by a Scotland-on Sunday interview which quotes Serafini as saying he lost many friends: “I swore I would never abandon them, never forget them.” (Morrison 1999: 21) In Italiani in Scozia, he says of the internees, ‘We suffered nothing compared to the victims of the Arandora Star and their relatives!’ (Ma noi internati abbiamo sofferto nulla in paragone a quelli dell’ Arandora e dei loro familiari!) (1990 No. 26:1) Thus we begin to see a significant process at work. The decision in the 1980s to officially commemorate the victims of the Arandora Star and internees reflects what Wood defines as the elucidation of an ‘intention to remember’. (1999:3) Significantly, Portelli identifies this ‘pressure to not forget and to derive memories from only one group’ such as a tight-knit circle of survivors, as a key example of the pressure of “collective” upon “individual” memory, a materialisation of “social control.” (1997: 157)

Furthermore, whilst the newspaper depicts a very narrow strata of experience, the language surrounding its portrayals is one of inclusivity – this commemoration is supposedly for the entire Italian community. Zorza’s book claims that the tragedy affected ‘the conscience and the heart of the entire Italian community in Scotland’ (la coscienza e il cuore dell’intera comunità italiana in Scozia). (1985:9) In the October
1989 edition of *Italiani in Scozia* plans are revealed to utilise the fiftieth anniversary of the tragedy to honour, 'through the 6 living survivors, all those struck by the tragedy, their families and the entire Italian community' (attraverso i sei viventi, tutti i colpiti dalla tragedia, le loro famiglie e l'intera comunità italiana). (IIS 1989 No. 24: 10)

In 1990, the paper proudly announces that, ‘after five years of our newspaper taking an interest’ (dopo cinque anni che il nostro Giornale si è interessato) the Italian authorities, with the ‘direct intervention’ (intervento diretto) of the Italian President, Francesco Cossiga, had agreed to confer knighthoods on the seven survivors of the *Arandora Star* living in Scotland. The decorations were presented at the Italian embassy in London, although for the Scottish survivors a ceremony was also held at Glasgow Cathedral. (IIS 1990 No.28: 3) This honouring of the victims inevitably sent a powerful message to members of the community in Scotland about those considered ‘good Italians.’ Whilst *Italiani in Scozia* succeeded in its objective to gain recognition for the survivors and victims of the *Arandora Star*, it also presented a one-dimensional view of the Italian community’s wartime history. In particular the paper largely remained silent on the experiences of women and those who served in the British forces. The fact that the paper was produced in the Italian language serves to further exclude those who are not perceived as ‘good Italians.’

---

232 They were Romolo Chiocconi, Alex Pacitti and Rando Bertoia from Glasgow, Giovanni Dora from Beath, Enio Casci from Falkirk, Fortunato Jannetta from St Andrews and Gentile Cocozza from Airdrie. This appears to have been part of a wider UK initiative. Colpi states that only 21 of the *Arandora Star* survivors were still alive in 1990: ‘these men were awarded the prestigious civic title of Cavaliere al Merito della Repubblica Italiana by President Cossiga of Italy.’ (1991a: 124)

233 In contrast another community newspaper published for Italian Scots in the 1980s, *Oltremare* was bilingual, acknowledging the fact that second generation Italians speak English as their first language.
Apology Campaigns

As Ashplant, Dawson & Roper note, social groups suffering injustice, injury or trauma that originates in war have become increasingly prepared to demand public recognition of their experience. Frequently the demand for recognition also involves claims for material compensation and reparation requiring some form of official investigation in the political or legal spheres. (2000:3) In North America, there has been a significant advance over the last two decades in the number of ethnic groups seeking redress for events spanning both world wars, inspired by the success of Japanese American communities in gaining compensation and an apology for wartime relocation. Although there has been no formal apology to the Italians, in 1990 the Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney offered a ‘full and unqualified’ apology to the National Congress of Italian Canadians. (Iacovetta & Ventresca 2000:386) In the United States of America, the Wartime Violation of Italian American Civil Liberties Act was signed by President Clinton into Public Law in November 2000, acknowledging ‘the wartime mistreatment of Italian resident aliens during the Second World War’ and addressing those interned, evacuated or arrested for violations under wartime regulations. (DiStasi 2000:1) No doubt influenced both by the high profile success of redress campaigns overseas and the devolution of power to the Scottish Parliament in 1999, similar calls have now been made in Scotland from certain key figures within the community. Whereas for Italiani in Scozia, the key audience was the Italian government, now the British authorities are targeted. The idea of a public apology from the Scottish Parliament was first mooted by arts impresario Richard DeMarco in an interview with Scotland on Sunday: ‘For De

234 Zorza’s book has been circulated in Italy. (IIS 1985 No. 9: 7)
Marco, the close of the twentieth century seems an appropriate time for the Edinburgh parliament to call for a public apology to all those whose loved ones died on the SS *Arandora Star.*' (Morrison 1999: 21) He and Colpi circulated a petition at the *Italian Scottish Identities* conference held in Edinburgh in September 2000 where, according to a journalist, the latter 'called for the drafting of a motion asking the Scottish parliament for an apology to the Scottish-Italian community for internment.' (Gilchrist 2000:3)

Another recent development is the appearance of The *Arandora Star Campaign* on the Internet, founded by an Italian Scot from Edinburgh, Anthony Gallo.\textsuperscript{235} The stated aims of the campaign are 'to make known the tragic events of June/July 1940 and the circumstances surrounding the loss of the *Arandora Star*; to obtain an official apology from the British Prime Minister and to seek compensation for the many Italian families who suffered grave personal and financial loss due to the Government's policy of internment; to recognise the brave contribution made to the British war effort by sons, brothers and cousins of those interned.' The website makes the following claims about the *Arandora Star,* namely that it:

- sailed without convoy, was grossly overloaded, and with no regard to the capacity of the ship's lifeboats.
- put to sea with 80\% of the crew newly signed on that morning. No emergency drill or instruction was given either to the crew, the military guards or to the internees.

\textsuperscript{235} A respondent.
• the ship had been over painted in battleship grey and had the appearance of a
troop carrier. It carried no Red Cross or other means of identification.
• All the lifeboats had been secured behind heavy wire mesh. The number of
lifeboats being grossly inadequate, having been designed for the ship’s
maximum complement of only 500 passengers.236

Whereas there was perhaps reluctance to talk about or draw attention to the *Arandora Star* disaster in the immediate post war period things have slowly changed in the intervening period. As Portelli notes, ‘mourning, like memory, is not a compact nucleus impenetrable to thought and language, but a process shaped (“elaborated”) in historical time.’ (1997: 144) Not only are there now highly visible campaigns for an apology and compensation from the British government but there have been noticeable shifts in how the tragedy has been presented over time. For example, one of the survivors of the disaster, Rando Bertoia states that his internment was something he ‘accepted’ as ‘one of the harsh realities of war.’ (Morrison 1999: 21)237

However, in Zorza’s book, the *Arandora Star* is represented as a ‘massacre’ (*l’eccidio*). (1985: 9) More recently, Bernabei defines the *Arandora Star* as ‘somewhere between a war crime and a tragedy at sea,’ (2000a: 53) a sentiment echoed by Pieri. (2005:91)

---

236 It is generally accepted by commentators that the high casualty rate was caused by a combination of the initial explosion, an insufficient number of life-boats and the fact that no boat-drill had been carried out (Gillman & Gillman 1980: 198-200; Stent 1980: 101; Hickey & Smith 1989:233) The Gillmans also refute claims that the presence of barbed wire on board was the reason why so many died. (1980: 200)
237 See also Cesarani & Kushner (1993: 230)
Victimhood Narrative

With the move towards rememoration within the Italian community in Scotland, in particular the Italiani in Scozia campaign and, more recently, the apology campaigns, the narrative of victimhood has been firmly embraced. This ties in with what Ashplant, Dawson & Roper define as the emergence of ‘a transnational discourse of trauma, victimhood and human rights’ since the mid-1970s, and more rapidly since 1989. (2000: 25) However, as Portelli notes, precisely when experiences are unspeakable, and yet must be spoken, speakers will be sustained by the mediating structures of language, narrative, social environment, religion, politics. He urges that the resulting narratives – ‘not the pain they describe, but the words and ideologies through which they represent it’ – must be critically understood. (1997: 144) On the 45th anniversary of the tragedy, Italiani in Scozia declared, ‘For the first time in Scotland, we record the fathers and brothers, innocent victims (padri e i fratelli vittime innocenti) of World War Two.’ (1985 No.7:1) Five years later, the paper was announcing the commemorative service to honour the Scottish survivors of the Arandora Star: ‘We will pray for all the innocent victims (Preghemeremo per tutte le vittime innocenti), the majority of whom were Italian emigrants.’ (1990 No. 27:1)

The motif of innocence runs throughout Anglo Italian literature addressing internment, denying any political connotations surrounding the arrests. Colpi, pointing to the arrest of ‘anti-Fascists,238 British subjects, sympathisers and innocuous Fascists, and men over 60 years of age alike’ in the initial police round-up

---

238 There is a strong argument that MI5 deliberately arrested known anti-fascists. See Pieri (2005: 90)
says this meant that ‘hundreds of entirely innocent civilians would soon perish as a result.’ (1991: 109) This trend towards depoliticising the inter-war era is encapsulated by the former internee Monsignor Rossi: ‘Italian emigrants paid the price of internment and of the Arandora Star for a war which they did not want and towards which they had not contributed in any way. They were only interested in their work and family.’ (1992: 67)239 The recent Arandora Star website both serves to give the impression that everyone shared the same fate and completely omits inter-war Fascism from the picture, referring to those who lost lives on Arandora Star in following terms: ‘These men were civilians most of whom had made their homes in this country in the early 1900s.’240 Another common motif is the representation of the internee as the ‘harmless caterer.’ Colpi writes of the initial phase of internment that, ‘it was becoming obvious to the authorities that they were not dealing with professing Fascists but harmless caterers.’ (1991: 112) Orwell’s contemporaneous reference in his war diary to the attacks on ‘harmless Italian shopkeepers’ assists in the overall representation of Italian internees as somehow completely apolitical. (Orwell 1970: 394).

Fortier argues that the Arandora Star iconography is one of suffering and sacrifice which draws upon the recurring motif within the Italian community of the suffering and sacrifices inherent in the act of emigration itself. (2000: 58) I would go further and suggest that as well as imagery of sacrifice and suffering, the constant emphasis on the Arandora Star tragedy within communal discourse, drawing upon the symbolism of victimhood, functions essentially to distract attention away from the

239 See Chapter Six on Fascism
diversity of Italian experience. Discussing memories of National Socialism in Germany, Rosenthal points out how the more controversial aspects of the past can often be obscured by 'cover stories', usually about personal suffering. She argues that, 'if one nation or group is faced with the question of political responsibility, then it is possible that cover-stories will appear which deal with personal suffering and serve to normalise the past.' (1991: 40) Annemarie Troger writing of German women's memories of World War Two, notes how the idea of being a victim permeates nearly all the war accounts of the women interviewed and attributes this to the fact that 'the religious and popular symbol of the victim absolves the victim of responsibility and guilt' - a victim of the war cannot be responsible for it. In the context of post-war German understanding, this notion is carried even further: as a victim one cannot be held responsible for Fascism: 'Suffering shields Germans from the threatening and guilt-provoking questions surrounding the issues of Fascism, concentration camps, and the Nazis' treatment of Jews.' (Troger 1987: 299) She also points out how the symbolism of the victim has a meaning beyond the actual circumstances that these women endured: 'it becomes ambiguous, like the metaphor of the natural disaster, yet it remains more compelling because of its religious roots.' (1987: 299)

Sarah Farmer, in her compelling work on the 1944 massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane in France (when the population of 642 women, children and men were brutally killed by SS troops) highlights how, in post-war commemorative accounts, the massacre has been reframed as 'the archetypical story of innocence and victimisation.' (1999: 55) The meaning of the event has been universalised with Oradour established as 'the
outstanding example of an ideal French village that, through no fault of its own, became the hapless victim of Nazi barbarism.' (87) In fact, Farmer argues, the massacre occurred within a long succession of German reprisal for local Resistance activity. She believes that Oradour has become 'detached from its historical context' (56) as part of an attempt to diminish the divisiveness of the activities of the Resistance and to distract attention from the brutal policies of the Vichy authorities:

The commemoration of Oradour permitted avoidance of uncomfortable political tensions and accentuated the idea of French innocence and victimisation, blurring the distinction between resisters and bystanders by giving the message that everyone was at risk. (58)

Portelli addresses a similar trend in Italy surrounding remembrance of the massacre at Civitella Val di Chiana when on 29 June 1944 the German occupying troops executed 115 male civilians, ostensibly in retaliation for the killing of three German soldiers by partisans. Portelli notes how the men are represented as victims who had not done anything that might explain their deaths (as opposed to martyrs who are always guilty of some disobedience and fully aware of its consequences), the dead of Civitella are victims who “died innocent”. Yet Portelli cuts through the sensitivity surrounding this imagery to tackle the crux of the matter:

The inexplicability of these deaths also depends on the purely negative definition given of innocence, in its etymological sense of harmlessness (non nocere). Being without guilt, however, does not mean being without responsibilities: having done nothing wrong is one thing but having done nothing against wrong is another.

As Portelli also points out in later work on the 1944 Nazi massacre at Fosse Ardeatine, referring to those killed in the caves as ‘victims’ diminishes ‘their subjectivity and agency.’ (2003: 198)
The focus in all British accounts is almost universally on the clear mistakes and anomalies – the naturalised British citizens or known anti-Fascists on board such as Uberto Limentani or Decio Anzani, Secretary of the League of the Rights of Man.\textsuperscript{241}

By throwing the spotlight on those who should unquestionably not have been on board, a veil is subtly drawn over the presence of known Fascists. MI5’s fundamental and appalling error in automatically equating Fascio membership with symbolising a national security risk – and the resultant individual and familial tragedies – has meant that attention has been diverted from a more critical analysis of those internees who were ‘ardently Fascist.’ Canadian historians identify a similar ‘silence’ surrounding the question of whether some internees were actually committed Fascists. (Iacovetta & Perin 2000: 14) In his report on the \textit{Arandora Star} disaster, Lord Snell commented that ‘In collecting internees for deportation, the War Office did, in fact, proceed on the principle that the more dangerous characters should be first to be deported.’ (Hickey & Smith 1989: 222) Lafitte, writing in 1940, probably strikes the most accurate note when he says of Italians on board the ship, ‘the majority probably were Fascists or sympathisers, but a considerable proportion were not’. (1988: 128) Even Colpi concedes, ‘Mostly the men who died came from London, Glasgow, Edinburgh or Manchester. Arguably, these men were from the large Italian Communities where there was Fascist activity.’ (1993a: 179) An analysis of the twenty four Edinburgh Italians who died on the \textit{Arandora Star} shows that at least five held prominent positions in the local Fascio, including the Fascio Secretary. In relation to Australia, Bosworth makes the following telling point:

\begin{quote}
There is little reason to doubt that quite a number of such ‘ordinary men’ (and women) would have sought to profit from the national and Fascist victory.
\end{quote}

Then they would indeed have agreed that they were Fascists because they were Italians and Italians because they were Fascists... The internment policy that Australian officials, another set of 'ordinary men', would practise in the war... was frequently absurd and tyrannous. It was not, however, beyond the bounds of all reason. (2000: 236)

**Images of Loyalty - Fathers & Sons**

Both Zorza and Colpi in their representations of internment place emphasis on sons who were interned with their fathers. In employing this compelling and poignant imagery, they both provide a misleading impression over the levels of second generation Italians interned and present on the *Arandora Star*. As we have seen in the chapter on the British Forces, Colpi effectively dismisses second generation men who served in the British Armed Forces whilst extolling those who were interned. This is part of a wider trend which utilises the imagery of the father and son on board the *Arandora Star* together. In one of the earliest mentions of the *Arandora Star*, *Italiani in Scozia* states that many of the dead were 'Italians fathers and their children' (*padre & figli italiani*) that worked in Scotland. (IiS 1984 No. 5: 7) A 1990 issue reminds readers, on the fiftieth anniversary, of the time when 'young Italians and their fathers' (*giovani italiani e padri*) were 'torn away from their homes and their shops and were taken to prisons in Scotland.' (*strappati dalle loro case e dai loro negozio e portati nelle prigioni della Scozia*) (1990 No. 26: 6) In his 1985 book Zorza asserts that when the boat was struck by a German torpedo, 'hundreds of heads of family with their sons' (*centinaia di capi famiglia coi loro figli maschi*) were drowned. (1985: 9) Yet, statistically, this was a rare occurrence – more sons went
into the British Forces than were interned.\textsuperscript{242} The sub-text here is that second generation internees put family loyalty above loyalty to the State, acknowledging them both as 'good Italians' and 'good sons.' Their involvement in the Fasci - the most likely reason for their detention - is mentioned only in passing.\textsuperscript{243}

Furthermore it would appear that there were relatively few 'sons' on board the Arandora Star. In The Italian Factor, Colpi reproduces the Home Office's 'missing persons' list of the 446 Italians lost compiled between November 1940 and April 1941 'which remains the most accurate and final account of those who lost their lives.' (1991a: 118) An analysis of this list reveals fifty clusters of men sharing the same surname. Even though some of these men were born in different areas of Italy and lived in the different parts of Britain when arrested I have still assumed some kinship link. I have also assumed that any couple with an age difference of 16 years and above could potentially be father and son. However, even making these generous assumptions there would appear to have been only 23 potential sets of 'fathers and sons' within the figures. The most frequent and probable kinship tie found is that of brothers (30 sets), or possibly cousins. The list also reveals that of those lost, only three were British-born. Yet, the potent 'father and son' imagery remains most utilised, linking as it does with the sub-text of loyalty to one's family.

\textbf{Prisoners of War Memorials}

Wood highlights the importance of 'commemorative rituals' as vectors of memory. (1999: 6) A key element of remembrance services within the Italian community in

\textsuperscript{242} No more than 200 British born Italians were interned and many of these were held in Scottish prisons and released rather than interned.

\textsuperscript{243} See Colpi (1993a:175); Sponza (1993: 127)
Britain is the fusion of the commemorative groupings of Italian Prisoners of War (POWs) and internees/Arandora Star victims which again serves to exclude the experience of second generation Italians in the British Forces as well as failing to reflect majority experience in Britain. One of the most significant of these events is the remembrance service, held every November at the Military cemetery of Brookwood, Sussex where 346 Italian Prisoners of War who died whilst prisoners in Britain are buried.

The inflow of Italian prisoners into Britain from Africa and India reached a peak of over 155,000 by the end of 1944. (Sponza 2000a: 261) During the period June 1942 – March 1943, 45,000 arrived in Scotland although it was anticipated that this figure would rise to a maximum of 82,000 by the end of 1943. It would appear that whereas the tragic figure of the Italian internee in Scotland is forgotten, the more romantic character of the prisoner of war is widely celebrated. Nostalgia about the presence of Italian POWs in Scotland endures, encapsulated in Jessie Kesson’s 1983 book, Another Time, Another Place made into a popular film the same year. Fortier highlights the extent to which positive representations of Italian POWs within British popular culture has aided the reintegration of Italians into British society. (2000: 93)

Typical are the comments by Norman Longmate in his social history of wartime Britain:

When the first Italians were sent to work on British farms there was a ridiculous public outcry, based, apparently, on the insulting belief that no British woman could ever say ‘no’ to a foreigner, but before long the Italians were not merely tolerated but positively popular. (2002: 480)

244 NAS HH057/00989 ‘Military Prisoners: Prisoners of war: admission to civil prisons of German and Italian prisoners sentenced by military courts. Letter to Graham-Harrison of Home Office from War Office 24 March 1943
Fortier also notes how representations of POW camps in local publications frequently provide an opportunity for ‘displays of alliance’ between Italy and Britain: ‘the most striking aspect of these accounts is their depiction of [Italian] soldiers and their legacy to the British cultural heritage.’ (2000: 91) As a result of this, Italian POWs are often represented as ‘soldier-artists, craftsmen, bricklayers or carpenters who built lovely chapels’ rather than as warriors fighting for their nation. They are primarily remembered for the cultural heritage they bequeathed to different parts of Britain, including the famous Churchill Barriers of Kirkwall and the ‘Italian chapels’ in Orkney and Henlan, Wales. (2000: 92) Indeed, the 1943 transformation of two Nissen huts on Orkney into an Italian Chapel by the artist Domenico Chiocchetti and other Italian POWs on the island is worth looking at in more depth. Colpi, for example, presents it as ‘a testimony not only to the faith of these men in adversity but also to the Italian love of the creation of beauty...a living symbol of the Italian POWs in this country.’ (1991a: 128) In the post-war era, the chapel became a visitor attraction, and in 1960 the BBC funded a return visit to Orkney by Chiocchetti providing him with the opportunity to restore his paintwork. This was followed by a service of rededication broadcast on Italian radio. In July 1996 a special declaration of friendship was signed between the peoples of Orkney and Moena, Chiocchetti’s home town and when Chiocchetti died three years later, a memorial service was held in the Italian Chapel, attended by his wife and family from Italy. (Stuart 2000: 17) On the 60th anniversary of the arrival of Italian POWs in Orkney, a specially commissioned play about the POW presence, Barriers by Alan Plater, with music by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies was premiered in Orkney as part of the 2002 St Magnus Festival. (Flett 2002)
This focus on the ‘alliance rather than enmity’ between Italy and Britain is also, Fortier notes, foregrounded in commemorative services where stories of alliances and friendships rather than of division and animosity are emphasised. (2000: 56)

Since the 1960s, the Italian consulate and embassy, in conjunction with the National Association of War Veterans (Associazione nazionale combattenti e reduci) have organised an annual memorial service in honour of Italian POWs in Brookwood cemetery. Although primarily attended by the Italian military, consular and religious authorities in south-east England, other Italian communities across the UK send delegates and Colpi sees this ceremony as representing the equivalent of ‘Remembrance Sunday’ for the Italian ‘Community’ in Britain. (1991a: 129) An important aspect to these anniversary celebrations, argues Fortier, is ‘to cancel out past enmities by highlighting past and present friendship and conviviality’ between the two countries. (2000: 92) She cites the example of the 1993 memorial service at Brookwood when an Englishman was honoured for his contribution to the Italian resistance and thanked by the Italian Ambassador in the name of all Italians. At the same ceremony, the Ambassador concluded the service with the following words: ‘liberty and unity are values which have been delivered by the sacrifice of our dead.’ (Fortier 2000: 91) This has echoes of President Cossiga’s message delivered on the 50th anniversary of the Arandora Star sinking when he spoke of Italy and Britain as ‘peoples bound together through the centuries by deep and solid ties of friendship.’ (IIS 1990 No.28:1) Thus, as Fortier astutely notes, ‘war memories speak of the struggle between estrangement and alliance, where the latter wins in the end. Britain, here, is the ‘host country’ where even former hostages were well treated and
respected... In other words, these remembrances are not reruns of the war, they are reruns of the armistice between Italy and England and the ensuing (re) integration of Italians in British society.' (2000: 93)

Building upon Fortier’s excellent analysis, I would argue that the most significant feature of these Brookwood services is the fact that they also commemorate the men who lost their lives on the Arandora Star and have, in Colpi’s words, ‘come to symbolise a pilgrimage representing the effect of the war on the Community.’ (1991a: 129) This fusion of two distinct commemorative groupings - internees and POWs - further heightens the identification of those men who were interned or on the Arandora Star as ‘good Italians’. Indeed, the commemoration of the Arandora Star victims appears to have merged over time with POW memorials to become a symbol of what it meant to ‘be Italian’ in Britain during the war. There is no public space in which to acknowledge the experiences of Italian Scots who died in the British forces; their stories fail to conform to the elite-led discourse of Italian wartime experience.245

Thus, they are effectively left stranded in a commemorative no-man’s land.246 The privileging of the internment/Arandora Star narrative ‘threatens to displace other kinds of war experience’ such as the contribution and experiences of those who served in the British Forces. (Ashplant, Dawson & Roper 2000: 51)

245 At the same cemetery the Brookwood Memorial commemorates those who died during the war with no known grave. It includes the names of Anglo-Italians such as Anthony Crolla. Commonwealth War Graves Commission website. Accessed 27/05/2000.

246 A publicity flyer for Mike Maran’s 1993 show Italia ‘n Caledonia promises to address the tragic events of the war when Scotland and Italy were enemies and then ‘the rebirth of their special relationship as Italians emerged from internment and Scottish soldiers returned from Italy to embrace each other again.’ The fact that members of the Italian community were Scottish soldiers appears to be ruled out. (1993: 146)
Significantly this exclusion of British army veterans from Italian memorial activity has a historical precedent. Following the First World War, splits and divisions emerged within the Italian community in Britain between those who had returned to Italy to serve in the Italian army and those who remained in Britain, often serving in the British Army. According to Sponza, ‘the surviving veterans who returned to Britain did not disguise their rancour towards their compatriots who, for whatever reason, had remained in Britain throughout the war.’ A Union of Italian Veterans in Great Britain established in 1919 welcomed everybody who had ‘worn the Italian military uniform with honour.’ Even though Britain and Italy had been allies during the war, British-Italians who had joined the British forces were excluded from this association, again sending powerful messages about inclusion in the Italian ‘community.’ (Sponza 2000a: 23) This exclusion of those who had joined the British forces is highly revealing in what it says about community dynamics and divisions and is relevant when addressing commemoration of World War Two. The hands of friendship will apparently still not extend to embrace those who took up arms in British uniform.

**Conclusion**

The concept of the ‘good Italian’ which predominated in the inter-war Fascio period has persisted throughout commemoration within the community with the shared memorials and commemoration of *Arandora Star* victims, internees and POWs and the marked absence of women or those in the British services. Whilst the recent commemoration has a valuable function for many in the community, particularly the children of those who lost their lives on the *Arandora Star*, it also perpetuates the
dominance of a one-dimensional discourse of Italian Scottish wartime experience, denying or silencing the memories of others. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website reveals a number of Anglo Italians who died during active service but there appears to be no public space in which to acknowledge the experiences of those who served in the British forces. Their stories do not conform to the central narrative of what it meant to be Italian during the war. In addition, the post-war commemorative focus on alliance rather than enmity means that memories of divisions and difference are suppressed. Thus, as Ashplant, Dawson & Roper note, ‘Even when survivor testimonies articulate alternatives to the dominant national and transnational narratives, still their voices may be privileged in ways that obscure and marginalize the voices of others.’ (2000: 52)

Words cannot adequately express the depth of despair and devastation wrought upon the families of those who drowned on the Arandora Star. Yet at the same time it is crucial not to let our emotional response mean we lose sight of the wider historical context in which this tragedy occurred. Popular representations which present the Arandora Star tragedy without reference to the preceding years of Fasci activity need to be examined more critically. As Portelli astutely points out, although the narratives of the massacre of Civitella leave one ‘breathless’:

It is the scholar’s task...after accepting the impact, [to] step back, breathe deeply, and start thinking again. With due respect for the people involved, the authenticity of their sorrow, and the seriousness of their reasons, our task is still to interpret critically all documents and narratives, including theirs...when we speak of divided memory, we must not imagine only an opposition between a spontaneous and pure communal memory versus an official and ideological one, so that once we deconstruct the latter we can

---

247 For example, R N Valvona, a 16-year-old Merchant Navy apprentice from Edinburgh who died on 25 August 1940. In her memoir, Dora Kennedy of Campbeltown mentions how her brother Italo, who fought in North Africa, lost his life at Arnhem and is buried in a war cemetery in Holland. (2000: 11)
implicitly take for granted the unmediated authenticity of the former. We are dealing rather with a multiplicity of fragmented and internally divided memories, all one way or the other ideologically and culturally mediated. (1997: 142)
CONCLUSION

The use of personal narratives throughout this thesis highlights the existence of 'counter-memories' within the Italian Scottish community which challenge prevailing discourse. (Doumanis 1997: 11) To date, the dominance of the elite narrative of male internment within communal discourse has overshadowed other stories and perspectives. Reconstructing the memories of neglected groups, such as women and those who served in the British Forces, enables us to recover a fuller and more variegated view of Italian Scottish wartime experience. Clearly, lots more work needs to be done but some tentative conclusions can be made.

Communal Myths

It has perhaps been in the interest of the more successful, commercially based members of the Italian community to reconstruct the past to suit the needs of the present, resulting in a rather sanitised account of the past. By linking into the wider myth about Italian immigrants being 'well-received', communal myth about the war offers a reassuring interpretation of Italian experience in Scotland. It presents the war as a 'one off' rupture in harmonious relations between Italians and the host nation and denies difference within the community on the grounds of class, gender, generation and politics. As Williams notes in his work with the Jewish community in Manchester, personal experience can often contradict communal myth but still utilise and draw from 'collective explanations' of events. (Williams 1979: 51) The dominant discourse of the war within the Italian community in Scotland has become powerful because it serves an important function, providing a narrative framework.
that can be utilised by members of the Italian community, whatever their own personal experience. For women, in particular, it would appear that communal myth is utilised to achieve composure, to recall the past in a safe and manageable way. However, whilst communal myth creates a framework through which Italians in Scotland can articulate their experiences, it also conceals significant points of tension. (Thomson 1999: 33) As Bodnar, who worked with Autoworkers at Studebaker, remarks:

the recollections ordinary people have worked out among themselves contain versions of the past that are both public and personal and reflect their ongoing need to reconcile what they experienced with what dominant or elite spokesmen have told them about their times. (1987: 411)

By marginalising the experiences of those who do not form part of the community elite, communal discourse acts as a control on memory within the community, silencing those who do not share the same experiences. Memories about the inter-war Fasci are suppressed, those who served in the Forces are ignored and women’s experiences neglected. This dominant discourse is so powerfully entrenched that, on reflection, I realise that in interviews I often found it difficult to move on from the events of 1940 and pursue new areas of experience. There clearly needs to be what one historian has referred to as a ‘cycle of recognition’ between public history and personal testimony to occur before more Italian Scots, and particularly women, will come forward to record their discordant memories. (Thomson 1999: 32)

Yet, as Summerfield stresses, personal narratives ‘may contest as well as accept the public rendering.’ (2000: 95) The personal narratives of Italian Scots contained within this thesis reveal hitherto unrecorded aspects of wartime life – women
enduring hostility and isolation as they struggled to keep family businesses open, the traumatic relocation of women and children from their homes and the divided loyalties of second generation Italians serving in the British Forces. It also highlights dissension surrounding the role and function of the inter-war Italian Fasci which contest current representations. The fresh perspectives which have emerged from personal narratives emphasise the importance of reflecting the heterogeneous nature of the Italian presence in Scotland during the twentieth century. (Williams 1979) As Portelli writes, once we realize that “collective” memory is other than the memories of individuals, but rather a ‘legitimate and meaningful formalization mediated by ideologies, languages, common sense, and institutions,’ then we are obliged to search not only for the divisions between fields of memory but also within them, for a ‘fragmented plurality of different memories.’ (1997: 157-158) Life story interviews are central to the recovery of a more variegated and contested account about the wartime experience of Italians in Scotland.

**Pre-war Prejudice**

Personal narratives reveal that many of the trends outlined by Colpi, when expounding her theory of “negative enemy status,” (the Anglicisation of Italian surnames, verbal and physical abuse at school) in fact pre-date World War Two. Prejudice and hostility, often subtle, sometimes aggressive, had already been part of Italian Scots’ everyday reality in the decades leading up to the war. The oral testimonies of respondents display a powerful sense of growing up in a culture and environment in which they felt, or were made to feel, ‘different’ and ‘foreign’. Holmes has pointed out that hostility towards immigrants ‘sleeps lightly’ ready to be ignited at a time of war. (1991: 95) When hostilities against the Italians in Scotland
broke out on 10 June 1940, they legitimised anti-Italian prejudice already in existence. Thus, for the Italian Scottish community, there is far less of a split between the 'golden' era of the inter-war period as portrayed by Colpi, and the outbreak of war in 1940. The life stories of second and third generation Italians in Scotland can only be understood when viewed firmly within the context of the historical traditions of intolerance and sectarianism in Scottish society.

Clearly, the war remains 'a profound watershed' in both communal and individual memory - for those who were adolescents and young adults during the war, it dominates and overshadows their life story narratives. (Ashplant, Dawson & Roper 2000: 31) Indeed, far from suppressing a sense of Italian identity, as Colpi asserts (1993a: 185), the war often instilled a deep self-identification amongst the second generation of themselves as 'Italian.' Personal narratives are useful in exposing the extent to which, throughout the conflict, Italian Scots felt themselves to be part of a wider 'imagined community' of Italians. (Anderson 1991) Most retained strong links with family members in Italy and after the war travelled to find out what had happened to their Italian relatives.248 (SA1998.24 Lola Corrieri) A number of narrators made their first visits to Italy in the immediate aftermath of the war and expressed a deep affinity with Italy. (SOE 64 Carmen Demarco; SA2002.064 Dina Togneri). Dina Togneri, who before the war had resolutely denied Italian aspects of identity says she fell in love with Italy when she visited in 1947 and started to learn the language. (SA2002.064) In addition, as the war had progressed, the Scottish landscape had become increasingly populated with Italian Prisoners Of War - by

248 For Edinburgh Italians there were particular concerns about families who had endured the bombing of Monte Cassino in their province of origin, Frosinone.
March 1943, 45,000 Italian POWs had arrived in Scotland.\textsuperscript{249} Numerous respondents mention coming into contact with Italian POWs during the war; two state that prisoners of war were invited to their homes for meals (SA1999.30 Flora Gallo; SA2002.058 Agnes Gillespie) and the sisters of two respondents even married POWs. (SA1999.30 Flora Gallo; SA1997.109 Romeo Ugolini)\textsuperscript{250} The presence of Italian POWs working in rural areas or near the main cities led to a further reinforcement and strengthening of links between Italian immigrant families and Italy.

Significantly, when Italians in Hamilton responded to a recent Strathclyde University study, they felt their identity was best expressed ‘within the context of being Italian in a Scottish setting.’ (Bradley 1995: 130)\textsuperscript{251} Ultimately, the abuse, intolerance and prejudice faced by Italian Scots had a long lasting impact both on their construction of personal identity and their perception of themselves as ‘outsiders’. Their sense of ‘Italianness’ has inevitably been shaped by local conditions – by the anti-Catholicism and bigotry of their childhoods to the anti-Italian xenophobia of the war years. This second generation which lived through World War Two as adolescents or young adults essentially defines itself as Italian in the context where to ‘be Italian’ effectively means to be ‘different.’\textsuperscript{252} Overall, the war, and the fact that the Italians

\textsuperscript{249} NAS. HII057/00989 ‘Military Prisoners’: Prisoners of war: admission to civil prisons of German and Italian prisoners sentenced by military courts. Letter to Graham-Harrison of Home Office from War Office 24 March 1943

\textsuperscript{250} NAS. HII/55/57. Police reports record ‘fraternisation’ between local Italians and POWs in Scotland.

\textsuperscript{251} The majority of respondents were born in Scotland but one quarter were born in Italy. (Bradley 1995: 123)

\textsuperscript{252} The Aberdeen-born artist Alberto Morrocco sums up the attitude of many respondents: ‘I am not a real Italian and certainly not a Scot.’ (Keller & Young 1993: 23)
have been settled for so many decades in Britain, has produced ‘a distinctly Italian form of belonging in Britain.’ (Fortier 2000: 165)

‘I’ve met it every day in my life’

As outlined in the introduction, there is a tendency within communal discourse to celebrate post-war ‘amity’ between Italy and Scotland, understating the continuation of hostility in the post-war era. Typical is the summary of the former internee, Monsignor Rossi: ‘when [Italian internees] came home, many things had changed, and also the anti-Italian feeling had more or less disappeared; not that this prejudice had been very evident before.’ (1992: 67) In contrast, oral narratives testify to the profound psychological impact of the war on many of those who lived through it. When discussing their post-war lives, many respondents highlight the different ways in which they have continued to encounter incidences of hostility and antagonism into old age. One female respondent concludes that she has suffered both racism and anti-Catholicism ‘all my life,’ alluding to the fact that she was even abused as a ‘Pape’ and a ‘foreigner’ when she arrived at her sheltered accommodation complex in Edinburgh. (SA1999.30) Another respondent recalls how she once refused to be treated by a locum doctor when she recognised him as a racist tormentor from her childhood. (SA2002.058)

In response to the question whether being of Italian origin in 1940 caused any problems, Angelo Valente launched upon a sweeping account chronicling incidences of racism from his 1920s childhood in Auchtermuchty through his time in the British Army to his post-war experiences as a Labour councillor in Fife. The following
extract from his interview illuminates one of the key themes of personal narratives—
that anti-Italian prejudice has been endured, with varying levels of intensity, for a
lifetime:

When we were young, we used to walk down the street: “Wee Mussolini!”
That was me. I had a man who was very high up in business in
Auchtermuchy and he hated my guts. And that was that. I won’t mention
names in case there is a repercussion. But I can say to you he used to kick my
bottom, arse I should say, periodically, for nothing. I had a headmaster who
used to give me the strap for three years in a row when I was ten until I was
thirteen, periodically, every other week or every other day. Until I was
thirteen, I became a boisterous young little man. He took me into his study
and he said, “Put your hand out”. I said, “Why? What have I done?” I was
just standing, he was coming in through the main door into the school. He
said, “I want you into the study. I’m going to give you the strap”. So, I went
into the study and he said, “Put your hand out I’m going to give you the
strap”. I said, “No!” I said, “that’s the last time that you’re going to do that to
me”. You understand me? And he was big. I was kind of wee but strong. So,
he bent over the desk to grab my hand. I said, “Don’t now! I’m warning
you!” So, I just used that hand and I hit him right under the chin and he went
flying right over the back of his chair in the study and he was lying there.
Now, in my heart, I was terrified. Why? Because in those days, if you were a
bad boy you were put in a reform home and you were treated like shit. You
understand me? There was no, as it is today, going for a background report
with the social services business. So, I then was terrified also of him phoning
the police but no, I was terrified, more so, that he’d go tell my father. Because
my father then would just take my shirt off and he would use the buckle end
of this belt on my back, not the leather end, which he did quite often with me
and my brother, right? Okay... Terrified. Never ate, went to bed, woke up,
came back to school. But who was standing at the front door of the school,
the main door – [the headmaster]. Yes! “Good morning, Angelo!” And
nothing more was said and he never touched me again. In the army, front line,
I was a sergeant. The Regimental Sergeant Major came up to me and he said,
“You’ve moved these troops from that dug-out to this one and we can’t make
an approach”. I said, “I’m only doing what the officer told me to do. Go and
ask him.” He said, “See you – you’re just an effing Italian so-and-so!” I said,
“Is that a fact?” [EDIT] As a councillor, I even encountered racial
discrimination. Oh yes! I used to sit on committees: “Here’s the Mafia!” I’ve
met it every day in my life. I now never even have my name in the phone
book. Yes, because of racial discrimination. My wife got hell on the phone
and you never get me on the phone anymore. (SA2002.054)

Newspaper reports confirm that manifestations of anti-Italian feeling can still occur –
the ‘prejudice and discrimination’ faced by Italians are not always, as Colpi asserts,
'now well in the past.' (1991a: 255) In 2003, an Italian factory worker in West Yorkshire was awarded £37,000 compensation by an employment tribunal after being subjected to remarks such as “f***g Italian B******, go back to Italy” for seven years. (McComish 2003) The *Daily Record* reports that, in Aberdeenshire, an Italian restaurateur and his Scottish wife faced ‘months of attacks, threats and taunts’ when they took over a local hotel. Racist abuse included, ‘Italian b*******, you lost the war and you helped the Germans.”253 As Gerry Finn points out, the very strength of the ‘myth of Scottish egalitarianism’ has become one of obstacles that have hindered both the identification of racism in Scotland and recognition of the need to mobilise against it. Instead, he writes, racism is often denied by the powerful chorus that there is “No problem here.” (2000: 55) For communal representations to imply that Italians have been largely exempt from the receiving end of prejudice is a falsehood which needs to be firmly laid to rest. Hopefully the personal testimonies within this thesis, by revealing the ‘interconnectedness of different expressions of prejudice,’ towards Italian Scots, are the first step towards achieving this. (Finn 2000: 61)

**Long-term Trauma**

Davies notes that there is ‘a growing, if reluctant, realisation that wartime experiences may have long-term psychological effects on civilian populations.’ (1997: 191) Amongst those I interviewed some had suffered trauma through the loss of others, whilst others had witnessed traumatic events. Schreuder notes how traumatic experience causes an abrupt disruption of existential continuity so that

---

many people ‘lose their sense of security within their emotional environment.’ For some respondents, especially those who witnessed the riots, lost their fathers or were relocated, ‘a feeling of security never returned.’ (1997: 18) Rena Valente remarks that at the end of the war, petrified of looking for work and afraid of meeting animosity, she ‘felt like an alien’ at times. When asked how long did it take for that feeling to go away, she replied, “I don’t think it ever does.” (SA1998.63; SA1998.27) Davies also acknowledges that ‘people who have experienced significant war trauma are likely to meet these events again in old age in some way.’ (1997: 194). One elderly woman I met at a social event said memories of the war had started to ‘penetrate’ in recent years. It is worth noting that, six decades on, events such as the attacks on Asian shops in Edinburgh following the September 2001 terrorist attacks have the potential to ‘reactivate distressing memories’ amongst older members of the Italian community in Scotland. (Hunt 1997: 9) Indeed, concerns raised by some respondents about the contents of the interview transcripts and the desire for anonymity reflects anxieties and fears which stem directly from their wartime identification as the enemy ‘other.’

However, by showing a willingness to be interviewed by me, respondents were indicating that they have come to terms with at least some aspects of their wartime experience. Judith Zur, writing of Guatemalan war widows, notes how through the reworking of unofficial memories, women turn personal tragedies into narratives, thereby repositioning themselves in the past, constructing a sense of continuity and restoring a semblance of dignity. (1999: 45) Anthropologist, Peter Collins who
interviewed employees experiencing Local Government reorganisation also observes:

In providing me with accounts of particularly harrowing experiences they appeared to be creating a testament which demanded sharing. As interviewers, we are sometimes asked to bear witness to injustice; the stories are moral tales where wrongs, although they may never be righted, are at least acknowledged by another. (1998: 3.17)

It could be significant that I’ve interviewed six daughters of Arandora Star victims254 and it may be that this particular cohort of women want to ‘bear witness’ on behalf of their families. Whereas in the immediate post-war period ‘discussion of war experiences was discouraged both socially and officially’ (Davies 1997: 188), respondents were recalling hardships, and in many cases personal tragedy, in a modern day culture where the concept of ‘post traumatic stress disorder’ is commonly understood and there is a general recognition of the traumatic effect of sudden bereavement or loss. Respondents perhaps felt more confident about expressing both their grief and their anger at wartime events in light of these cultural developments whereas in the wartime ‘atmosphere of subjection’ they had to remain silent. (Cocozza 1987: 238)

Leydesdorff et al acknowledge that ‘trauma is not an isolated event in a life story but may in itself often play a decisive role in a person’s perception of life afterwards, interpretations of subsequent events, and consequently, memories of preceding experiences.’ (1999: 15) It is, of course, possible that the ferocity and trauma of the war influenced respondents’ assessment of earlier childhood events. Yet, it is also likely that respondents’ present day familiarity with the concept of racism and their

254 Another respondent lost her father during internment.
awareness of how more 'visible' immigrant groups have been treated in the post war era, provided them with the confidence to address what had happened to them in their life times. It is also significant that respondents were composing their life stories at a time when the Italian presence is widely celebrated in Scotland. More work needs to done to fully explore the impact of the war on the construction of memory and personal identity throughout the post-war decades.

**Influence of Gender on Narrative structure**

Many commentators have illustrated how gender differences are implicit in the way people remember. This was present to some degree in the narratives of my interview partners, in particular the women's tendency to focus on the emotional or familial context of events whereas the male respondents were more comfortable with being at the centre of their own story. (Bertaux-Wiame 1982) As Chamberlain has argued looking at the life stories of Caribbean migrants, whereas men stressed autonomy and progress in their narratives of self, the women retold theirs through the cycle of the family. (1997) Whilst I have already discussed the level of 'non-compliance' with my fieldwork, an almost tangible reluctance by some women to revisit the pain of the past, conversely the women I eventually interviewed were very forthcoming in the interviews and indeed often surprised me with their readiness to introduce and address memories of racial and religious hostility within their life stories. A historian who carried out cross-gender interviews in the New Zealand township of Taradale, argues that women remain silent or deny issues such as religious tension or alcohol abuse within their communities. (Daley 1998) This was not the case with my research sample, female respondents being as willing as male respondents to broach
questions of discrimination and incidences of prejudice when composing their life stories. Indeed, amongst my research sample, the women respondents were more likely than the men to provide detailed accounts of the anti-Italian riots, highlighting its personal significance within their life stories. Women were also more willing to volunteer information on the emotional and psychological impact of being treated as the ‘other’ during their formative years and to address episodes of personal vulnerability in their testimony. Women interviewed described themselves in the following terms: ‘timid’, not wanting to ‘draw attention’, ‘very withdrawn’ and ‘hyper-sensitive’. One female respondent repeatedly described her wartime self as ‘touchy’ (SA2002.064) and three female narrators employed the term ‘breakdown’ in relation to their younger selves during interviews.

Ultimately, however, ethnicity is one of the key ‘imaginative categories’ through which experience is organised, recalled, recounted and passed on. (Chamberlain 1997: 10) The fact that ethnicity can be more central than gender in the construction of personal identity was borne out by the life stories of my research group. (Higonnet et al 1987) Ultimately the fact of ethnicity, a lifetime of exposure to racial and religious discrimination and in particular the experience of being the enemy ‘Other’ during the Second World War, meant that there were more similarities than differences within the narratives of male and female Italian Scots.

255 It could also reflect the fact that the average age of female respondents was substantially younger than that of the men.
256 I have not included references here to protect the women’s anonymity.
Final Thoughts

It is generally acknowledged that ethnicity is a key form of identity that interacts with the sense of belonging to a nation. (Noakes 1998: 169) Wartime policies against members of the Italian community – arrests, restrictions, relocation – combined with various manifestations of popular hostility contributed to pushing Italian families to the boundaries of belonging. The events of the war were a violent shock to the children of Italian immigrants, causing them to fundamentally reconsider their place in Scottish society. The ‘pinpricks’ of prejudice had evolved into something far more dark and threatening which made them position themselves in narratives, six decades later, as forever ‘outsiders.’

This thesis is based on a relatively small research sample and as such it aims to highlight the current gaps in our knowledge and suggests new areas for research. Far more investigation is needed into the service of Anglo Italians in the British Forces, the detention of second generation Italians under Defence Regulation 18B and the role and function of inter-war Italian Fascism. Exploring the response of Italian Scots to military call up throws a light on the fascinating and tangled question of loyalty and allegiances amongst the children of Italian immigrants. A re-examination of the experiences of these veterans is long overdue as to date they have suffered from a double exclusion. As the ‘other’ they are invisible in popular memory of World War Two in Britain and within their own community, they have long been denied a voice. The ‘selective nature of war remembrance’ (Thomson 1995: 4) within the Anglo Italian community perpetuates the exclusion of the memories of those who served in the British Forces. What personal narratives of ex-servicemen and women reveal, in
all their rich complexity, is that internees did not have the monopoly on ‘being Italian’ in Britain during the war. Rather, service in the Army, the Pioneer Corps, war work or the auxiliary services could often heighten a sense of ‘being Italian’ amongst second generation recruits.

This thesis, through the use of personal testimony and a more critical analysis of existing documentation, challenges the idea propagated within communal discourse that all Italians shared the same experiences and exposes differences within the community based on class, gender and politics. Over time, the central Arandora Star/internment narrative has been utilised to create the ‘story’ of the war and has come to represent what it meant to ‘be Italian,’ or to be a ‘good Italian’, during the war. Attention or investigation is subtly diverted away from dissension within the pre-war community and the different choices made by Italian Scots at the outbreak of war between Italy and Britain. The past is repackaged into a reassuring communal myth which, by offering a narrative framework, gains dominance. My research has only scratched the surface but the use of personal narratives highlights the importance of oral history in providing a richer, more complex and contested account of wartime events.
Primary Sources

Taped Interviews

All taped interviews are held at the Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies Archive, University of Edinburgh, except where indicated.


SA1997.104. Taped interview with Maria Smith 2 July 1997


SA1998.27. Taped interview with Rena Valente 26 Jan 1998

SA1998.27. Taped interview with Miss A 26 Jan 1998


SA1998.32/33. Taped interview with Joseph Pia 1 August 1998


SA1998.63. Taped interview with Miss A 13 November 1998
SA1999.24. Taped interview with Mrs M 19 February 1999
SA1999.27. Taped interview with Elizabeth Di Ponio 6 April 1999
SA1999.25/26. Taped interview with Miss P 9 April 1999
SA1999.29. Taped interview with Alex Margiotta 3 May 1999
SA1999.30/31. Taped interview with Flora Gallo 4 May 1999
SA1999.32. Taped interview with Flora Gallo 28 June 1999
SA1999.33. Taped interview with Mr A 11 May 1999
SA1999.34. Taped interview with Bennedetta Matrundola 22 June 1999
SA 2002.052. Taped interview with Mr and Mrs Mac 19 August 1999
SA2002.053. Taped interview with Orazio Caira 2 October 1999
SA2002.054/055. Taped interview with Marco and Angelo Valente 11 February 2000
SA2002.056. Taped interview with Maria Angelosanto 7 March 2000
SA2002.058/059. Taped interview with Agnes Gillespie 1 October 2000
SA2002.060/061. Taped interview with Miss N 22 October 2000
Taped interview with Gloria Bee 7 May 1997. Private collection of author

315
Archival Sources

*Edinburgh City Archives (ECA)*
Burgh Court files June 1940.
D136. Anti Italian Demonstrations 1940.

*National Archives Scotland (NAS)*

HH055/5. 'Riots': Representations and general papers concerning the operation of the Riotous Assemblies Act (S), 1822, particularly compensation claims arising from Anti-Italian disturbances 1940-1943.'


HH/55/58 Scottish Home Department. Police War Duties, Special Branch Reports and Conferences. 1944.

HH057/00989 'Military Prisoners. Prisoners of war: admission to civil prisons of German and Italian prisoners sentenced by military courts.'

*National Archives (NA)*

FO 371/25193 Disposal of Italians on the outbreak of war.

FO 371/25193. Extract from War Cabinet Conclusions 29 May 1940.

FO 371/25193. Extract from War Cabinet Conclusions 11 June 1940.

HO 45/25088 BOTTACHI: Orazio.

HO 45/25759 CAMILLO: Gilda.

HO 45/25761 OGNI: Lorenzo.

HO 45/25760 VANUCCI: Nicodemo.


HO144/21079 (1937) Additional Notes on the Organisation and Activities of the Italian Fascist Party in the United Kingdom, the Dominions and Colonies.


HO 144/21079 Notes on file 24/6/1936.

HO 144/21079 Letter to Frank Newsam 20 August 1936.

316
HO213/1662 Alienage: Declarations By Dual Nationals.

HO 213/1750. Aliens (Protected Areas) Orders.

HO 213/2259 Naturalisation. Policy and Practice with regard to a) Former Italian Fascists b) Dual Nationals who made a declaration of alienage during the war.

HO 214/22 REALE.

HO 215/2. Release of persons detained under DR 18B.


HO 215/495 Enquiry from the Duke of Bedford about the disposal of 18B Detainees on the closure of V Camp.

HO 396/213-15 Italian Internees Released in UK. Women.

HO396/284-294 Italians Interned in UK 1939.


*Imperial War Museum (IWM)*
Dept of Documents Box Ref: 88/35/2 C Ruffoni

Sound Archive Ref: 4415/3 R Rietty.

*School of Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh*

**Parliamentary Papers**
National Service (Armed Forces) Act 1939, c.81. House of Lords
National Service (No. (2)) Act, 1941 c.4. House of Lords.

**Newspaper articles**
*Daily Record.* ‘Compensation Claims’ 13 May 1942


*Edinburgh Evening News* 17 December 1935 ‘Blackshirt Plans’ p.19

*Edinburgh Evening News* 19 April 1940. ‘1401 Aliens in Edinburgh.’ p.3

*Edinburgh Evening Dispatch Letters* 22 April 1940

*Edinburgh Evening News* 13 May 1940. ‘Edinburgh city police important notice’ p.1
Edinburgh Evening News 13 May 1940. ‘Police round up enemy aliens’ p.4

Edinburgh Evening News 10 June 1940 ‘Fear of Fascisti’

Edinburgh Evening News 11 June 1940 ‘Anti-Italian outburst’ p.5.

Edinburgh Evening News 12 June 1940 ‘Difficult Scottish problem’ p.3


Edinburgh Evening News 9 July 1940 ‘Surrender Maps Warning to Aliens’ p.5


Italiani in Scozia Giugno 1985 No.7, ‘Celebrazione religiosa e civile’ p.1


Italiani in Scozia Settembre 1986 No.12. ‘Paura di firmare,’ p.2

Italiani in Scozia Settembre 1986 No.12. ‘Non sara come nel 1940?’ p.2

Italiani in Scozia Settembre 1986 No.12 ‘Giornata della pace ricordando gli internati e la famiglie’ p.7

Italiani in Scozia Settembre 1988 No.20 p.6

Italiani in Scozia Ottobre 1989 No.24 ‘Degni di un Riconoscimento Civile?’ p.10

Italiani in Scozia Marzo 1990 No. 26 ‘50th anniversary dell’ Arandora Star,’ p.1

Italiani in Scozia Marzo 1990 No. 26 ‘50th anniversary,’ p.6

Italiani in Scozia Maggio 1990 No. 27 ‘50th anniversary dell’ Arandora Star’ p.1

Italiani in Scozia Ottobre 1990 No.28 ‘Arandora Star’ p.1

Italiani in Scozia Ottobre 1990 No.28 ‘Cossiga interviene e fa cavalieri sette dell’Arandora Star’ p.3

The Scotsman 3 June 1940 ‘Evacuation Scheme’ p.3

The Scotsman 11 June 1940 ‘Italy Declares War on Britain. Caporetto Recalled.’ p.5

The Scotsman 11 June ‘Italians Detained’ p.6
The Scotsman 12 June ‘Big Round Up’ p.5

The Scotsman 14 June 1940 ‘Enemy Aliens to be Removed’ p.4

The Scotsman 26 June 1940 ‘Rothesay Sheriff Court’ p.5

The Scotsman 4 July 1940 ‘Liner Torpedoed: 1000 Lives Lost’ p.5

The Scotsman 14 November 1940 ‘Prisoners Reach Athens’ p.5

The Scotsman 5 June 1941. ‘Damage to Shop’ p.3

The War Illustrated (1940) ‘Items of War Interest from Far and Near.’ 27 September, piii.

Barr, B. (1972) ‘Dilemmas facing Italian community’ Glasgow Herald 14 October


Hainey, R. (2005) ‘That’s entertainment, as Scots Italians make their mark on British culture.’ The Scotsman 5 December p.3


Harris, G. (1997) ‘The Ice Cream Lore’ Scotland on Sunday 6 July


Ice cream Topics (1964), p.27.


Monteith, A. (2001) ‘Scotland’s Italians are pasta masters at making friends.’ Scotsman Diary 15 September


General Bibliography


324


Colpi T. (1986b) 'Italian Migration to Scotland: Settlement, Employment and the Key Role of the Padrone.' Paper given at the Race, Curriculum and Employment Conference, University of Glasgow, 8 March, pp.1-37.


Diggins, J P. (1972), Mussolini and Fascism. The View From America, Princeton, Princeton University Press.


*Edinburgh and Leith Post Office Directory 1929-30*

*Edinburgh and Leith Post Office Directory 1934-5*

*Edinburgh and Leith Post Office Directory 1935-6*

*Edinburgh and Leith Post Office Directory 1937-38*


Mackie, A. (1952) *Gentle Like a Dove* Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd.


339


340


**Miscellaneous**


APPENDICES
1. ROLANDO UGOLINI b. 1924 Lucca. Father’s birthplace: Chifenti. Father’s occup: Shop owner Parents’ war: Father interned; Mother relocated. Wartime: Relocated Profession: Footballer. Spouse’s nationality: (1) English; (2) Scottish.


3. ANITA BONI (nee TUZI) b. 1937 Edinburgh. Father’s birthplace: Frosinone Parents’ war: Father drowned on Arandora Star; Mother relocated Wartime: Relocated Profession: Shop owner Spouse’s nationality: Italian Scot


5. MARIA SMITH (nee DE LUCA) b. 1931 Edinburgh Father’s birthplace: Stockton-on Tees Father’s occup: Worked in restaurant Parents’ war: Father served in Royal Artillery; Mother in Edinburgh Wartime: Edinburgh Profession: Shop assistant Spouse’s nationality: Scottish

6. REMO CATIGNANI b. 1927 Edinburgh Father’s birthplace: Barga Father’s occup: Fish and chip/ice cream shop owner Parents’ war: Father interned; Mother relocated Wartime: Relocated Profession: Fish and chip shop owner; Personnel Manager Spouse’s nationality: Austrian

7. MRS B b. 1925 Kirkcaldy Father’s birthplace: Barga Father’s occup: Fish and chip/ice cream shop owner Parents’ war: Father interned; Mother relocated Wartime: Relocated Profession: Worked with husband in family business Spouse’s nationality: Italian Scot

8. RONNIE BONI b. 1923 Edinburgh Father’s birthplace: Frosinone Father’s occup: Wafer factory owner Parents’ war: Father interned; Stepmother relocated Wartime: Detained in Saughton Prison; Pioneer Corps Profession: Factory owner Spouse’s nationality: Italian Scot

9. DORA HARRIS (nee VALENTE) b. 1920 Edinburgh Father’s birthplace: Frosinone Father’s occup: Worked in kitchens of North British Hotel
Parents' war: Father died 1929; Mother relocated Wartime: Worked in McVities Profession: Housewife Spouse’s nationality: Canadian

10. ROMEO UGOLINI b. 1923 Armadale Father’s birthplace: Lucca Father’s occup: Fish and chip/ice cream shop owner Parents’ war: Father interned; Mother relocated Wartime: Black Watch; Pioneer Corps Profession: Shop owner Spouse’s nationality: Scottish.

11. 'MISS A’ b. 1927 Edinburgh Father’s birthplace: Frosinone Father’s occup: Shop owner Parents’ war: Father drowned on Arandora Star; Mother relocated Wartime: Relocated Profession: Hairdresser; Shop assistant Spouse’s nationality: Not married.

12. RENA VALENTE b. 1929 Edinburgh Father’s birthplace: Frosinone Father’s occup: Shop owner Parents’ war: Father drowned on Arandora Star; Mother relocated Wartime: Relocated Profession: Dressmaker; shop assistant; administrator Spouse’s nationality: Not married.

13. LOLA CORRIERI b. 1928 Kelty Father’s birthplace: Barga Father’s occup Fish and chip/ice cream shop owner Parents’ war: Father naturalised: Parents remained in Kelty Wartime: Kelty Profession: Worked in father’s shop until 1968; Sub-post mistress Spouse’s nationality: Not married

14. ANGELO VALENTE b. 1914 Coatbridge Father’s birthplace: Frosinone Father’s occup: Shop owner Parents’ war: Father died 1918 Mother remained in Coatbridge Wartime: Royal Army Medical Corps Profession: Shop owner Spouse’s nationality: Not married.

15. GIOVANNI COSTA b. 1930 Edinburgh Father’s birthplace: Parma Father’s occup: Shop owner (rented) Parents’ war: Father interned; Mother relocated Wartime: Relocated Profession: Shop owner Spouse’s nationality: Italian

16. ORESTE POLITI b. 1930 Edinburgh Father’s birthplace: Parma Father’s occup: Shop owner Parents’ war: Father interned; Mother relocated Wartime: Relocated Profession: Ice cream shop owner Spouse’s nationality: Italian Scot

17. MARNA POLITI b. 1929 Edinburgh Father’s birthplace: Barga Father’s occup: Shop owner (rented) Parents’ war: Father interned Wartime: Italy Profession: Worked in shop with husband Spouse’s nationality: Italian Scot

18. JOSEPH PIA b. 1910 Edinburgh Father’s birthplace: Frosinone Father’s occup: Shop owner Parents’ war: Father died 1919; Mother died 1940 Wartime: Interned Profession: Confectionery Wholesaler Spouse’s nationality: Italian Scot

19. RENZO SERAFINI b. 1915 Hawick Father’s birthplace: Barga Father’s occup: Shop owner Parents’ war: Father interned; Mother remained in
Inverness Wartime: Interned Profession: Shop owner Spouse's nationality: Italian Scot

20. GERALDO COZZI b. 1906 London Father's birthplace: n/a Father's occup n/a (Abandoned by father when baby) Parents' war: Mother relocated Wartime: Royal Army Service Corps Profession: Travelling musician; Shop owner: Spouse's nationality: Not married

21. MRS D b. 1917 Frosinone Father's birthplace: Frosinone Father's occup Shop owner Parents' war: Father drowned on Arandora Star; Mother relocated Wartime: Ran husband's restaurant Profession: Housewife Spouse's nationality: Italian Scot

22. MRS M b. 1919 Edinburgh Father's birthplace: Frosinone Father's occup Shop owner Parents' war: Father interned; Mother relocated Wartime: Ran family business Profession: Sub-post mistress Spouse's nationality: Scottish

23. ELIZABETH DI PONIO (nee BONI) b. 1918 Whitburn Father's birthplace: Frosinone Father's occup Shop owner Parents' war: Father died 1940; Mother relocated Wartime: Looked after her children Profession: Worked with husband in fish and chip shop Spouse's nationality: Italian Scot

24. 'MISS P' b. 1923 Edinburgh Father's birthplace: Frosinone Father's occup Ice cream shop owner Parents' war: Father interned; Mother relocated Wartime: Ran family business; Land Army Profession: Barmaid Spouse's nationality: [-]

25. ALEX MARGIOTTA b. 1921 Edinburgh Father's birthplace: Frosinone Father's occup Cafe owner Parents' war: Relocated Wartime: Royal Scots Fusiliers Profession: Electrical Contractor Spouse's nationality: Italian Scot

26. FLORA GALLO b. 1927 Edinburgh Father's birthplace: Frosinone Father's occup Fish and chip shop owner Parents' war: Father drowned on Arandora Star; Mother relocated Wartime: Relocated Profession: Worked in shops Spouse's nationality: Scottish

27. 'MR A' b. 1936 Edinburgh Father's birthplace: Frosinone Father's occup Fish restaurant owner Parents' war: Father interned; Mother relocated Wartime: Relocated Profession: Engineer Spouse's nationality: [unknown]

28. BENNEDETTA MATRUNDOLA (nee LANNY) b. 1934 Edinburgh Father's birthplace. Frosinone Father's occup Ice cream shop owner Parents' war. Father interned; Mother relocated Wartime. Relocated Profession: Worked in father’s shop until marriage Spouse's nationality. Italian

29. MR MAC b. 1920 Lochgelly Father's birthplace: Frosinone Father's occup Fish and chip/ice cream shop owner Parents' war: Father naturalised. Parents
remained in Lochgelly. Wartime: Royal Artillery Profession: Shop owner Spouse’s nationality: Italian Scot

30. Mrs MAC b.1919 Ayr Father’s birthplace: Frosinone Father’s occup Ice cream shop and café owner Parents’ war: Father drowned on Arandora Star Wartime: Worked in family business Profession: Worked with husband in shop Spouse’s nationality: Italian Scot

31. ORAZIO CAIRA b.1911 Atina Father’s birthplace: Frosinone Father’s occup Died 1911 Parents’ war: Wartime: Interned Profession: Café owner Spouse’s nationality: (1) Italian; (2) Italian.

32. ANGELO VALENTE b. 1921 Auchtermuchty Father’s birthplace: Frosinone Father’s occup Die in family shop Parents’ war: Father naturalised. Parents remained in Auchtermuchty Wartime: Royal Artillery Profession: Shop owner; Physiotherapist Spouse’s nationality: Italian Scot

33. MARCO VALENTE b.1918 Miranda Father’s birthplace: Frosinone Father’s occup Ice cream and fish and chip shop owner Parents’ war: Father naturalised. Parents remained in Auchtermuchty Wartime: Royal Artillery Profession: Shop owner Spouse’s nationality: Italian

34. CARMEN DEMARCO (nee BONI) b. 1930 Edinburgh Father’s birthplace: Frosinone Father’s occup Wafer factory owner Parents’ war: Father interned; Stepmother relocated Wartime: Relocated Profession: Worked in family shop; WEA Tutor Organiser Spouse’s nationality: Italian Scot

35. MARIA ANGELOSANTO (nee CROLLA) b. 1921 Edinburgh Father’s birthplace: Frosinone Father’s occup Fish and chip shop owner Parents’ war: Father interned; Mother relocated Wartime: Ran family business; worked in rubber mill factory Profession: Worked in shop with husband Spouse’s nationality: Italian

36. IRENE POLITI (nee ROSSI) b.1939 Edinburgh Father’s birthplace: Edinburgh Father’s occup Shop owner Parents’ war: Father detained in Saughton Prison, transferred to Pioneer Corps Wartime: Remained in Loanhead Profession: Worked in shop with husband Spouse’s nationality: Italian Scot

37. AGNES GILLESPIE (nee NATELLA) b. 1925 Alloa Father’s birthplace: Pompeii Father’s occup Shop owner Parents’ war: Remained in Alloa Wartime: Worked in shipyards Profession: Tour guide Spouse’s nationality: Scottish

38. ‘MISS N’ b.1921 Glasgow Father’s birthplace: Lucca Father’s occup Café owner Parents’ war: Father interned; Mother in Italy Wartime: Served in ATS Profession: Secretary Spouse’s nationality: Not married
39. MARY AMBROSE b. 1929 North Berwick Father’s birthplace: Haddington Father’s occup Shop owner Parents’ war: Remained in Edinburgh Wartime: Evacuated Profession: Teacher Spouse’s nationality: Not married

40. PATRICIA AMBROSE b. 1933 Edinburgh Father’s birthplace: Haddington Father’s occup Shop owner Parents’ war: Remained in Edinburgh Wartime: Evacuated Profession: Teacher Spouse’s nationality: Not married

41. PETER TOGNERI b. 1924 Stirling Father’s birthplace: Barga Father’s occup Fish and chip shop owner Parents’ war: Father interned; Mother relocated Wartime: Served in Seaforth Highlanders Profession: Fish and chip shop owner; School caretaker Spouse’s nationality: Italian Scot

42. DINA TOGNERI (nee GUAZZELLI) b. 1928 Irvine Father’s birthplace: Barga Father’s occup Café owner Parents’ war: Father died 1939; Mother relocated Wartime: Relocated Profession: Teacher Spouse’s nationality: Italian Scot

43. DIANA CORRIERI (nee UGOLINI) b. 1927 Uphall Father’s birthplace: Lucca Father’s occup Shop owner Parents’ war: Father drowned returning from internment in Australia; Mother relocated Wartime: Relocated; Ran family business Profession: Worked with husband in shop Spouse’s nationality: Italian Scot


4. **ALEX MARGIOTTA.** Born 1921, Edinburgh. NCO, Royal Scots Fusiliers. Served in Holland and Germany.


7. **ANGELO VALENTE.** Born 1914, Coatbridge. Private, Royal Army Medical Corps. Served in North Africa from 1942 and Italy (post September 1943).

8. **ANGELO VALENTE** Born 1921, Auchtermuchty. Provost Sergeant, Royal Artillery. Served in France, Belgium and Germany

APPENDIX 3

Extract from transcript of interview with Geraldo Cozzi, Royal Army Service Corps:

In 1944, we got across the Rhine and the Somme, another river in Germany, and the Germans had got thingummy there. But I remember one place there when we went in: there was a wee lassie and she was kind of abandoned. *Me,* the *coward,* I went and picked that bairn up from there and brought her into the sort of shelter there...And one day I was in a trench there and – the Germans were surrounding us. There was a big battle; I forget the name of the wee village in Germany – and a big German come into my trench because, [laughs] I was in the trench. I wasn't fighting. The infantry was fighting. I told you I was a thingummy. And he says, “Comrade, comrade, comrade!” I says, “Get the hell oot o’ it!” I was more feared o’ them! And I sent him away! [laughs] He give himself up. I was more frightened than him.

This anecdote follows on from earlier references to the fact that he was ‘thin wi’ fear’ and would hide in a ditch during bombardments because he didn’t ‘like fighting’. (SA1998.45)
APPENDIX 4

Extract from transcript of interview with Mr Mac, Royal Artillery:

MM: I took to the army like a duck takes to water. It was alright with me, I was quite happy. Had rapid promotion and I was good at my job. [Q] I was in the Artillery. Then I became an instructor. Gunnery instructor. And then I asked to be put with the regiment to go overseas.

WU: When was that?
MM: Well that would be in '39, '40.

WU: And where were you posted then?
MM: [North Africa]. There's a great story about that. I shouldn't tell you this story [laughs] but, [...] I had Bertie Taddei, my pal you see from Aberdour. I had met him and his brother had been sent to [internment] camp [EDIT] Now, Bertie was with the Middlesex regiment – that's away down south – and that was a machine-gun regiment. When he got called up that's where he went. So then he met me and he said, "Listen. We can claim dual nationality"...I said, "Are you sure?" "I'm bloody claiming it" he said, "They've sent my brother" – he was on a boat to Canada – and he said, "I'm not bloody going to fight." He said, "I'm not going." So, I kept thinking about this and thinking about it.

But anyway...I can't remember where I was in England at the time – the funny thing about it was: my lieutenant at that time – was it the 118? – my lieutenant at that time was half-Italian. His mother was Italian but his father was an English man and I said to him, "Listen.". Told him like, you know. I said, "I'm going to claim dual nationality" ye ken? "Oh," he said, "you'll never get away with that." And I said, "Right" and I never said any more. Then, the regiment, we went down to - there's a holiday camp there now. I
can’t remember if it was Scarborough or the other one. It was a Butlin’s place - for our final shoot. And then the word came round that we were going abroad, you see. So I said, “I demand to see” – I was a sergeant at the time. I said, “I demand to see the Colonel.” This – I’ve forgot his name now this half-Italian boy, he said, “Listen. You’d better cool it or you’ll get into trouble”. And I said, “No way!” I said, “I’m not going! As long as Italy’s in the war, I’m not going”. So, it was funny. I went up before the Colonel: Colonel Phillips. I’ll always remember him. Square-headed, big b-. He looked more German than anything else. Phillips of Grimsby. The famous Phillips fish, ken? They were great fish merchants in Grimsby. Colonel Phillips. He sat there and I had to laugh. I had to laugh at this because half of them didn’t know the proper procedure. There were two sergeants waiting for me outside the door. Of course, I knew them. I said, “What are you waiting for?” They said, “We’ve to march you in.” I said, “You’re not marching me any bloody place”. I said, “I’m going in to see Colonel Phillips”. I said, “I’m not under any order for to see him. I want to see him” I said, “and you two buggers are not coming in with me so you’d better get –”

So then the sergeant-major comes up to me and he said, “Cap off!” I said, “Cap off? What? Am I on a charge like?” He said, “No”. I said, “Well, I’m keeping my bloody hat on then.” I said, “You don’t know the bloody rules.” Neither he did. So I went in and Colonel Phillips is sitting there. “I don’t think and da-da-da” I said, “But have I got the right or have I not got the right to claim dual nationality?” So he couldnae answer me you see. I’ll have to thingummy-thingummy-thingummy”. So what they done - it’s funny how, you know, you think back. You see to take the ranks away from me they had to go to the War Office because the Artillery is the Royal Regiment. That’s the Royal Regiment of Artillery. Now we’re right of the line and our WO, he stands next to the Queen on parade at Woolwich. The Artillery was the top regiment - supposed to be - and to disbar a sergeant they had to go through War Office. It was War Office that made you a sergeant, no’ them. They put your name forward but it was up to the War Office – at that particular time in history. So, he couldn’t do anything that way because it would have caused
too much of a fuss and they didn’t want a fuss. They didn’t want a fuss. So what they done is: me and two Irish boys – I can’t remember their name – we were sent to Nottingham. Up to the top of a hill in Nottingham to guard an old bloody gun that was left from the ’14 war. This was to try and break me down, see? The three of us were stuck up there for weeks and that didn’t bother us. We were down the pub every night and all the rest of it. But anyway, I goes back and the regiment was getting ready for to go overseas, you see? And, I was told that I couldn’t eat in the Sergeant’s Mess – I had to eat separate. The things that they done! But the more they done, the more determined I was that I was going to win my point. Ah but they beat me in the end. Because what they done was: they transferred me to a regiment down at the end of the Thames. What do they call that place? Thingummy had a shop there. The laddie Faccenda he went down there. What was the name of that place? It was a naval base on the Thames.

Anyway, I was sent down to a regiment there - this is funny. This regiment – I can’t even remember the name of the regiment, the number – this regiment, they had changed from searchlights to Ack-Ack. It was awfy funny, I’ll never forget this. I arrived down there. They sent for me you see and they said, “You’re posted to So-and-So and So-and-So.” So, I never said anything. I said, the buggers they’re going to get me. I knew they were going to get me. But what could I do? I said, I cannæ start kicking up stink because I was sent to Woolwich – that was it.

WU: Woolwich?

MM: I was sent to Woolwich Barracks and from Woolwich Barracks then I was posted out. No, no. No. no. Chatham, Chatham Docks. I was sent to Chatham.

And, as I say, when I got there it was right over the town of Chatham, right on this sort of old castle. The gun was there and the officer came up, “Glad to have you with us” etcetera, ecetera. I said, “What do you want me to bloody do like?” He said, “Well...” I said, “But the gun’s still on her bloody wheels. You cannæ use a gun like that”. “Oh,” he said, “I don’t know much about it. I said, “I don’t know either”. “I tell you what to do,” I said, “I’ll go down the
town, to Chatham and while I'm down there you get the gun sorted out because I'm not taking that gun over. I'm not signing for that”. He looked at me, you know. I just marched away. And I went to a film show in Chatham. I cannae mind the name of the film. So, I come back. It’s still on the wheels! And the officer’s there, you see. “Sergeant Mac,” he said, “you’ll have to help us out. We don’t have a clue”. “Oh,” I said, “It’s no bother”. So the ten men: “Number one do this, number two do that…” Rolled it all off, you see. Showed them what to do and I got the gun settled and everything and that was it. I was there. So funny thing about it is: my gun team, we got called out. There were a lot of air raids at that time in that particular area because there were naval submarines lying down below us in the water. They werefitting them out and getting them ready, you see? So, it was awfy funny what happened. The sirens went, we got out there at the thingummy. And of course, the boys didn’t know what to do or anything. And I’m shouting and bawling, “Get that elevation!” “Get that” “Do this and do that!” They fired the gun, it was a Dornier 217 and they knocked it down! Over Chatham! We got a barrel of beer sent up for that.

But, it was all a ploy this because then, after a couple of weeks, two or three weeks or maybe a month - I can’t remember - the officer came and said, “You’re transferred to the Woolwich, to headquarters”. So, I gets to Woolwich and to see this, it’s amazing. It’s all red brick buildings and it’s just houses. Hundreds and hundreds. Because it was the headquarters of the R.A., you see. “You’re in charge of 400 men.” I said, “What?” “You’re in charge of 400 men.” And incidentally, I met a wee thingummy from Lochgelly at that time and I thought, “My God I’ve got this little bugger. My life’s not thingummy”. So, anyway, ye ken, they did the usual thing, parading by numbers and da-da-da. “Right. Da-da-da-da-da. First Army”. You see? They had me. They had me. I was frightened to open my mouth down there, the headquarters. So I said, I’ll just go!

WU: Why was that? Why was it different?
MM: Well, I mean, you're at the headquarters of the barracks and that. And you've a wee bit of pride too in your regiment, I suppose. Different things. You say to yourself, I'd better not open my mouth here or they'll put me in the clink right enough! Oh yes! You're kind of frightened. So, I went off to North Africa as a First Army replacement. So I just went.
Extract from transcript of interview with Agnes Gillespie:

I *dearly* loved it. And these men in that place were so kind, so generous. I always remember – it was, Mr B [-] was his name and he said to one of the boys, “Right get Agnes a small hammer.” I said, “What for?” I said, “No thank you very much.” I said, “Just treat me like one of the boys, well as far as tools are concerned.” I’d never used a hammer in my life! So, at the first go I just about hammered the nail off myself. I said, “No, no, it’s okay.” Well, we done various jobs in there like, drilling, soldering, tacking. You know all, this was to make the [-] for the ships. That was placed into a big oven where they set. Then from there, I went over to the notching shop which was another experience. Standing there, you know, notching. Just standing, loads of plates, metal plates. You put them in the machine [demonstrates] you just stood there and did them all tight. And then you sat at a guillotine at one point with the group of big ones like this [demonstrates] and I wasn’t very big at that time and we put them through the guillotine, brought that and this is how it went on. It was a ton. And really and truly, I must say I thoroughly enjoyed it. Then I went from that part over to the Air Frame. Now, from the Air Frame, they were all rivets, minute to large ones. You had to sit and separate these. Even that, it was monotonous but it was fun because there were about six of us all doing it. It was so...how can I say?

[LARGE EDIT]

I started at the shipyard and you did six weeks in the welding school. This was like cubicles and you were taught how to flat weld, vertical weld, overhead weld, tacking, everything. So, we were in there six weeks, another girl and I. She was that tall compared with me. She was tall like you, nice. I was absolutely minute. Without shoes, I’m 5ft 1” and of course I was a lot slimmer then. So, I went over. Then we were sent out to the big shed, as they called it, to ask for Mr Aitken. So we went and asked for Mr Aitken. Of course, like a clown I thought, well you don’t have to cover your hair or anything. Because if my hair was never right, I was never right. And I said, “No, no”.

356
So, I waltzed over and Big Letty we called her and he said, "Right, who are you?"
I said, "I’m Agnes Natella," I said, "We were sent over to you Mr Aitken."
So he looked at me, he said, "What do you mean? What for?"
I said, "To work with you or something. Whatever." I said, "We’re just come out of welding school you see."
He says, "Oh have you now?" He says, "Well, can you flat weld?"
I said, "Yes"
"Vertical weld?"
I said, "Yes."
"Overhead weld?"
I said, "Yes." Confident, so confident.
Letty was the same. So, there were tanks right? There was one tank and another tank.
So, you had to join these two tanks together and on top of the top, you had a metal iron angle that was there [demonstrates] and that’s another one there. So along this you were joining this, somebody stood on an angle, placed it and you tacked it. Then after I did that, he said, "Right get under there and lie on your back."
I said, "I beg your pardon? Don’t you dare speak to me like that."
"I thought you said you could overhead weld?"
I said, "Yes I can."
He said, "Well, get under there!" No mercy.
I said, "Where?"
He said, "Get down there and lie on your back and what you’ve just tacked just now, right, you’ll overhead weld and join them together."
I said, "Oh yes."
So, Letty, she got the one next to me. So, we were welding away there. Oh! We were taught that if you burn a wee hole, how to fill it in. So, that was great. So, I was welding away here on the machine when I heard this banging on the plate and this, "Excuse me". And then the next thing, this guy come out and he says, "You stupid idiot!"
I said, "Pardon?"
He said, "Do you know what you’ve done?"
I said, "No."
He said, “You’ve welded a man onto a plate.”

[EDIT]
So, I tried the fitting. Great. There were so many laughs because we had - if there hadn’t been the laughs and the fun - I was in a concert party in the Harlands and one in the shipyard and we used to go out and entertain, like, the wounded. Like at Hairmyles Hospital and Donibristle. Places like that, you know. Although it was sad during the war and we had brothers and brothers-in-law and that away, all these things, it all sort of took, it was a pleasant perspective, you know. Whereas if you were kind of having a sad time, if somebody told you something, you were probably going out to a concert party that night with the concert party and sing your wee head off, you know? It was really fun and it kept us, kept us going.

[EDIT]
The tricks I used to get up to when I was in the shipyard. With like my boss or whatever, you know. For instance, everything was rationed, like your make-up and all that kind of thing. Well I was ‘in the know’. One of the men that came in was a chemist. He’d say, “Well when we get make-up, we’ll keep some under the counter for you.” So I got word that this make-up was in you see and I thought, “Right.” Well, they’ll be dropping it off at nine o’ clock in the morning.” So, I went up at nine and I phoned down to get one of my friends who then had started, two girls in the corn-bench place. I said, “Chrissie?”

“Is that you Agnes?”
I said, “Go and clock me in” – this was unfair - on the phone. “Go clock me in because I’ve got make-up for you. I’ve got to collect the make-up.”

“Okay” she says, “Okay then.”
So when I came in, my boss said, “Where have you been Agnes?”

“I was at the toilet.”
He says, “You were a long time at the toilet were you no’?”
I said, “Oh I know,” I said, “but –”
He said, “Auch away you go.” He was just so nice.
I have received formal permission from the publishers to include photocopies of the following articles in my thesis:


REINFORCING OTHERNESS? EDINBURGH’S ITALIAN COMMUNITY AND THE IMPACT OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

BY WENDY UGOLINI

For Italian immigrants and their families in Edinburgh the Second World War did not signal an abrupt end to their relatively tolerated position in Britain as some have suggested. Rather it dramatically heightened and reinforced feelings of not ‘belonging’. Based on oral history methods, this article explores the impact of the war on the narratives of second and third generation Italians who were children at the time. It also discusses the role and power of communal myths and the relationship of the individual to them. Interviews point to the influence of generation, gender and class within narrative structure of life stories and suggest that existing presentations of the Italian community as a homogeneous unit need to be challenged.

By 1940 Italian immigrants and their families were relatively well established in Edinburgh for Italian immigration to Scotland had peaked during the first two decades of the twentieth century. However, the life stories of children of Italian origin who grew up in inter-war Scotland reflect a distinct set of narratives from their Scottish contemporaries, which are often dominated by a sense of being ‘different’. This sense of difference was reinforced by their experience of the Second World War. For when Italy declared war on Britain in 1940 Italian immigrants became ‘enemy aliens’ practically overnight.

It has been argued that the war had such a devastating impact on the community that its older members are reluctant to dwell on this aspect of their past (Colpi 1991: 90). Furthermore, Colpi believes that many second-generation Italians who grew up during the war experienced ‘negative enemy status’ and have since tried to distance themselves from their Italian roots (Colpi 1986: 43). In order to test this idea I interviewed six second and third generation Italians, all born between 1925 and 1940 in either Fife or Edinburgh.

The six people shared many common experiences with their Scottish peers, a truncated education, financial pressure to contribute to the family budget and strict social and moral codes governing their behaviour. Nevertheless it is striking that the testimony of these people, and evidence from a previously made recording that I have also considered together with a biographical account by an Italian Glaswegian, all draw attention to
the experience of 'difference' through narratives concerning their religion, language, food and the marking of anniversaries (Pieri 1997: 4). These narratives of childhood experience have been placed in the wider context of the general hostility towards immigrant and minority groups commonplace in Britain during the last two centuries.

A significant feature to emerge from the narratives of my interview partners is their sense of growing up in a culture and environment in which they felt 'different', 'alien' and 'foreign'. This highlights the extent to which members of the Italian community in Scotland, although now celebrated as an integral part of the Scottish cultural fabric, were perceived as outsiders and to some extent still perceive themselves as 'outsiders'. It is now widely accepted that ethnic identity is a two-way process, the outcome of social interaction between different groups. As social interaction inevitably involves categorizations of 'us' by 'them' and of 'them' by 'us', ethnic identity 'can be constrained or shaped by its necessary dependence upon the categorisation of Others' (Jenkins 1997: 169). Relations between members of different groups will vary according to the attitudes and needs of the individual people involved, as well as the specific circumstances in which interaction takes place (Nocon 1996: 84). The tendency of individuals and communities to define self against the 'other' becomes acute during wartime and is particularly relevant when considering the life stories of Italians.

**Background**

The most popular settlement towns in Scotland for Italian immigrants were Glasgow (between 1891 and 1933 a third of all Italians in Scotland lived there), Edinburgh and Fife (Hughes 1991: 119). The Italians who came to Scotland, like those communities studied by Holmes, Colpi and Green, originated from a limited number of specific areas and locations and developed via a well-established mechanism of chain migration whereby settlers sent back to their home village for friends and relatives to join them. The two main provinces in which the Italian community in Scotland had its origins are the central provinces of Lucca and Frosinone with the majority (69.9 per cent) coming from this central zone (Wilkins 1979: 57). The Glasgow community is split fairly evenly between those from Lucca and those from Frosinone, with a third smaller contingent of people from Liguria whereas in Edinburgh over two thirds of Italians originated in Frosinone making it one of the most cohesive Italian communities in Scotland (Colpi 1992: 6). Most of the families of those I interviewed came from Frosinone. In 1861 there were only 38 Italian immigrants living in Edinburgh but by the outbreak of the Second World War there were 400.

For Italian immigrants and their families, the Second World War signalled an abrupt end to their relatively tolerated position in local communities and fundamentally altered the way they were viewed and viewed themselves. Holmes has highlighted the long history of intolerance and prejudice towards immigrant communities in Britain, a nation somewhat removed from the 'tolerant country' of myth, and has shown how groups, such as the Irish, Jews and Chinese, have all experienced 'expressions of hostility' to varying degrees throughout their lives in Britain (Holmes 1991: 100). Kushner, too, in his work with the Mass Observation archives, has exposed 'the deep roots of anti-alienism and racism' which exist in British culture (Kushner 1995: 8).

The narrative should be seen not begin in Scotland but in Italy: a potential fascist organ - 'the Arandoro' - and its counterparts were created during the last centuries. This hostility to 'the other' would be constrained or shaped by the necessity of categorisation of Others when, during recent events when, the centrality of the Italian 'human alien' was written, the general image that of 'males between us' and 'outsiders' being forced to accept the relative tolerance of the 1940 over the Arandoro.

As Edinburgh and Fife were forced to move to Pitlochry and Lucca, people living in Edinburgh were forced to move to Frosinone (Palmer 1997: 35).

Mass Observers recorded the lives of their interlocutors, making and containing evidence from people's lives. The concomitant of the main communals were the mass observation archives and the recording of people's lives. After the outbreak of the Second World War, there were a few recording the lives of the people living in Edinburgh and Fife and the concomitant of the main communal was the Mass Observation archive.
The narratives of my interview partners and their childhood wartime experiences should be seen firmly within this context. For many Italians in Edinburgh, the war did not begin in 1939 but on 10 June 1940 when Italy declared war on Britain. The most significant anti-Italian riots in Britain were in Scottish cities; the mass looting which erupted in Edinburgh being described by the local paper as ‘an orgy of destruction’ (Edinburgh Evening News 11 June 1940). At a time of increasing press hysteria about a potential fifth column within Britain following Germany’s sweeping invasion of the Low Countries, MI5 had compiled a list of 1500 Italians — referred to as ‘desperate characters’ — based largely on the membership of the Italian Fascist Party and other fascist organizations based in Britain. This deeply flawed list was largely subsumed by events when, following Mussolini’s declaration of war on Britain, Churchill demanded the general internment of all male Italians in Britain. Local police instigated an immediate ‘comb-out’ of the Italian community under defence Regulation 18B. About 4000 Italian males between the ages of 17 and 60 were arrested and interned with many ‘enemy aliens’ being deported to the Dominions. On 11 June the Canadian government agreed to accept 3000 Prisoners of War and 4000 internees, including 1500 Italians. On 2 July 1940 over 400 Italians drowned (24 from Edinburgh) when one of the internee ships, the Arandora Star, was torpedoed (Colpi 1991: 115).

As Edinburgh was a ‘protected’ defence area where ‘enemy aliens’ were not permitted to reside, men and women who were left behind, and who were not naturalized, were forced to move from their homes and businesses and relocate in rural areas such as Pitlochry and Peebles. These events undeniably had a huge impact on Italians, not only in Edinburgh but across the whole of Britain and have led to the development of powerful communal myths about the war. Palmer in his study of the Italian community in London noted that the trauma of these events is ‘engraved in the memories of the older Italians’ (Palmer 1977: 257). The extent to which Italians in Edinburgh make use of these communal myths to structure and develop their own narratives will be explored later.

Mass Observation recorded that the scorn poured on the Italians by various opinion makers on 10 June 1940 ‘put a stamp of official approval upon already existing prejudice and contempt’ (Mass Observation No. 194 1940: 5). Anti-Italian prejudice had been evident from the days of the earliest Italian settlers in Scotland but had remained relatively restrained due to their occupational concentration within the catering trade and the concomitant lack of a perceived threat to native labour or wages. This did not prevent the Italians, in the early 1900s, from arousing the antipathy of Scottish church leaders and the police. The latter condemned ice-cream shops as ‘acceptable only to their alien owners and to people of loose habits’ (Rodgers 1996: 129). Nor did it prevent them from being exposed to an array of derogatory stereotypes — ‘Wop’, ‘Dago’ and ‘Monkey’ — as they worked to establish themselves in Britain. Domenic Crolla, in a recording held at the School of Scottish Studies, suggests it was the distinctive physical appearance of the Italians that was often at the root of this prejudice:

at the beginning it was a little difficult because they saw these dark men, some of them with big moustaches and all that and they were frightened to go into their shops, the children were frightened to go into their shops. (Scottish Working People’s Oral History Group recording 1985)

This hostility towards Italian immigrants in Edinburgh provides the backdrop upon which the narratives and childhood experiences of my interview partners need to be understood.
However, the experience of growing up as a child of Italian origin in Edinburgh also needs to be viewed within the context of childhood and ethnicity in 20th-century Britain. Davin, in her study of working-class London in the years 1870–1914 points out that whilst the children of immigrants shared the social conditions of other children: ‘at the same time they were different, on the one hand in their sense of identity, created in home, community and perhaps religion and on the other in being perceived and treated as different by some of their peers and by their school’ (Davin 1996: 200). An ethnic child’s sense of difference would stem from a conflict between an ‘internal’ home life and an ‘external’ life in the neighbourhood and at school (Davin 1996: 206). This dynamic is indeed present in many immigrant autobiographies and memoirs, including Pat O’Mara’s lively autobiography about growing up as an Irish Catholic in inter-war Liverpool: ‘we children at school ... were rather patriotized and Britishized — until we got back to our shacks, where we were sternly Irishized. The paradox has remained in my make-up for years’ (O’Mara 1996: 57).

Methods

Oral history investigation provides a particularly effective way of uncovering the internal/external split within childhood narratives. The academic benefits of recording and assessing people’s recollections of their experiences have been well established notably by Paul Thompson (Thompson 1988; see also the useful edited collection of essays on the subject published more recently in Perks and Thomson 1998). These methods were central to my research.

I interviewed six people for my project (listed in Table I). These were selected through a combination of familial and professional contacts. The interviews followed a ‘life history’ structure with topics focusing on childhood themes such as home life, family, play and school. I was keen to let narratives flow unimpeded and to allow people to organize their stories in their own way, as narrative form is often as revealing as content. Interviews usually lasted between 60–90 minutes and were carried out in people’s homes with full transcripts being made of all the interview tapes. I carried out a total of five interviews with six people, one couple preferring to be interviewed together. Whilst I initially had reservations about this — bearing in mind Thompson’s comment that the presence of another person at an interview ‘not only inhibits candour, but subtly pressures towards a socially acceptable testimony’ (Thompson 1988: 205) — I found that ‘dual’ testimonies could also have a positive outcome. The couple reminiscing together often highlighted areas of conflict within the Italian community which I, as an outsider, would not have readily broached — such as fascio membership in the inter-war period — and provided an insight into the social and class dynamics of the community. My youngest interview partner was born in 1940 at the outbreak of hostilities whilst the oldest was born in 1925. I also listened to a recording of another second-generation Italian held at the School of Scottish Studies archive (Scottish Working People’s Oral History Group recording).

My own background as somebody linked to the Italian community by marriage also had a significant influence on the project, both in finding people willing to be interviewed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>DOL</th>
<th>DoB</th>
<th>F's birthplace</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>F's occupation</th>
<th>F's war status</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Marriage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gloria B</td>
<td>7-5-97</td>
<td>14.7-40</td>
<td>Frosinone</td>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>Shop-owner</td>
<td>Pioneer Corps</td>
<td>Counsellor</td>
<td>Scot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence B*</td>
<td>21.6-97</td>
<td>18.12.32</td>
<td>Frosinone</td>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>Shop-owner</td>
<td>Naturalised</td>
<td>Shop-owner</td>
<td>Italian-Scot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs B+</td>
<td>16.8-97</td>
<td>7.8.25</td>
<td>Barga</td>
<td>Kirkcaldy</td>
<td>Shop-owner</td>
<td>Interned</td>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>Austrian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remo C+</td>
<td>16.8-97</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Barga</td>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>Shop-owner</td>
<td>Interned</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Shop assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria S</td>
<td>1-7-97</td>
<td>10.1.33</td>
<td>Stockton-on-Tees</td>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>Worked for Valentinos</td>
<td>British Army</td>
<td>Shop assistant</td>
<td>Scot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key
Name: name of respondent
Dol: date of interview
Dob: date of birth
F's birthplace: where father born
Birthplace: where respondent born
F's occupation: father's occupation
F's war status: father's wartime status
Occupation: respondent's occupation
Marriage: nationality of marriage partner
[AS]: Arandora Star
*Respondents married
+ Respondents brother and sister
and encouraging people to discuss the past. It is likely that my semi-'insider' position encouraged people to be more frank in the knowledge of shared familial experiences.

The term 'interview partners' is now commonly used by oral historians to describe those people interviewed. I thus use the term here, even though it fails to reflect the balance of power within the interviewer/interviewee relationship. Interpretation and analysis of life stories rests with the listener or reader as well as those who have shared their life stories. The selection of oral material to support analytic positions inevitably raises difficult issues of 'purpose, interpretation, editorial selectivity and audience' (Sayigh 1997: 47) and it is important to recognize that working with living people can both inspire and inhibit interpretation. Indeed, it is the very attraction and strength of oral sources, their living humanity, which leads to this dilemma.

Findings

Hughes has argued that the lack of mobility and the Protestantism of Scotland accounts for the greater ease with which Italians integrated into Welsh society in comparison to their reception in Scotland (Hughes 1991: 120). Growing up as part of a Roman Catholic minority in Presbyterian Edinburgh certainly provided ample opportunity for my interview partners to be perceived as and to feel like 'outsiders'. At the turn of the century the Catholic community made up only 10 per cent of the Scottish population, concentrated mainly in the west, and records show that in Edinburgh in the inter-war period only 13 out of the 104 Edinburgh schools were Roman Catholic (Edinburgh and Leith Post Office Directory, 1930).

The decade preceding the Second World War was also one of unprecedented antagonism and hostility towards the Catholic minority in Edinburgh with the firebrand preacher John Cormack and his Protestant Action Society whipping up hysteria against the predominantly Irish-Catholic community. This hostility culminated in large-scale rioting when the Catholic Eucharist Congress was held in Morningside in 1935 (Gallagher 1987: 40). These events inevitably cast a shadow on the Italians resident in Edinburgh, a fact recalled vividly by two interview partners:

Italian was synonymous with ... with Catholicism, if you like. So we got more hassle, at least I did as a young boy, 'cos we had to pass three schools to go to St. Thomas' and they were all Protestant schools. (taped interview 16/8/97, Remo C)

You knew that you had to sort of keep away from going up to the Mound where, what was his name, McCormack always spoke anti-Catholic propaganda ... He used to stand there and throw his fists and your mum always said 'Now you walk away from the Mound, you know, go up by the art gallery'. (taped interview 7/5/97, Gloria B)

Another potential source of conflict for children of Italian origin was language. Although some of my interview partners now regret their rejection of the Italian language, during their childhood they often saw it as attracting unwanted attention or derision. Domenic Crolla, one of the most prominent members of the Edinburgh Italian community, remarked that 'not all Italians were so keen ... to speak Italian. A lot of them, in some way were ashamed to be foreign because in schools the boys made a fool of them (Scottish Working People's Oral History Group recording 1985).

Although this was a reaction to the influence of the second half of the century, it was a pattern of languages and cultures that was always there.
Although the third-generation Italians that I interviewed were less likely than those of the second generation to speak Italian, they often grew up under the strong matriarchal influence of an Italian grandmother and would be communicating in two separate languages at home. This was sometimes a source of some unease:

She always spoke to me in Italian, my granny, even when she could speak English... And she used to say to me — in Italian — 'Why don't you answer me back in Italian?' And it was sheer, just the embarrassment if you had your pals, you used to think I'm no' wanting to speak like that. (taped interview 2/7/97, Maria S)

It was not just a desire for conformity, however, that meant few Scottish Italian children learnt the language of their parents. It was also seen as 'taboo' to speak Italian in the public arena of the shop where families spent most of their time. One interview partner recalls that, in the xenophobic atmosphere of war, his parents were particularly anxious that Italian was never spoken in their shop (taped interview 21/6/97, Lawrence B).

Another interesting factor, which is beyond the remit of this article to explore in depth, is that of the complexities between language, love of the 'mother country' and the growth of Italian fascism in the 1930s. After his accession to power in 1922, Mussolini actively courted 'Italians abroad' and the inter-war period witnessed a flourishing of fascio clubs across Scotland. These held social and political events for the Italian community in the United Kingdom, established Italian language classes and even provided cheap holidays in Italy for the children of immigrants. One commentator who has studied fascio clubs in inter-war France believes that the establishment of schools and cultural institutes and the provision of social and medical assistance and holidays in Italy was 'very useful' for Italian immigrant groups but suggests that these institutions and initiatives also imposed ideological consent: 'it was not enough to be Italian, it was necessary to be fascist!' (Mastellone 1992: 123). For those who attended the fascio club, in Edinburgh, it appears to have served a primarily social function. The majority of my interview partners did not attend and within their narratives there is often an ambiguity surrounding reasons for familial or parental membership. This perhaps reflects a reluctance to address the pre-war role and influence of the fascio clubs in light of fascism's uncomfortable present-day associations and needs to be explored further.

Family mealtimes also provided an occasion for children of Italian origin to feel an accentuated sense of difference. Not only the fact that children would often be fed first but the very nature of the food itself:

People didn't know about pasta and we used to have pepperoni and we used to have salads with oil and vinegar. I mean, you couldn't have said to someone you had oil and vinegar on a salad because they would have thought that was, oil was for greasing a machine. (taped interview 7/5/97, Gloria B)

For another interview partner, her own memories of being taunted for eating spaghetti — 'they said you were eating worms' — came flooding back when her son reached school age:

he used to come home crying... telling me that people said he ate worms and I used to give him pizza... and he wouldn't take it to school in the end. Just wouldn't take anything like that. (taped interview 21/6/97, Anita B)
For all my interview partners, food symbolizes an important aspect of their Italian identity and, as with other ethnic groups, remains one of the most significant ways in which they express their cultural identity (Storrier 1993: 14). An Italian from Birmingham, interviewed for another project, considered herself English in every way, except at mealtimes (Hopwood and Dilloway 1996: 18). Whilst many identify family meals as a source of acute embarrassment when children, they still prepare and cook Italian dishes today and often give details of Italian recipes in their narratives. Food is also intricately linked to religious customs and anniversaries that were not celebrated in most Scottish homes. Whilst my interview partners have affectionate memories of Hogmanay, they also lend equal weight in their memories to the celebration of the Befana (Epiphany), Easter and 15 August, the Feast of our Lady. Many of these traditions remain today:

_Everybody looks at me as if I’m crackers but even on Easter Sunday morning, I produce this omelette for breakfast which my mother always did — I still do it ... and I don’t know why._

(taped interview 21/6/97, Anita B)

For my interview partners, therefore, feelings of difference — which are most pronounced when talking about religion, language, food and anniversaries — existed before, and persisted well beyond, the Second World War.

**Memories of the Second World War**

I now turn to look at their wartime memories and the way in which the war is recalled as part of their narratives. I also intend to explore the influence of communal myths on their life stories and consider whether or not the war led to a ‘negative sense’ of Italian identity.

The war was a watershed in the history of the Italians in Edinburgh, a fact which is reflected in the way it is recalled. All my interview partners introduced the war into their narratives at a very early stage. This was either in a direct way, as when one related her father’s death on the *Arandora Star* or more obliquely to explain a father’s illness or a family relocation. Memories of the war also varied depending on whether, for example, the respondent’s father was naturalized, interned or caught up in the tragedy of the *Arandora Star*. The tragic consequences of the outbreak of war between Britain and Italy, the rioting, the harrowing night-time arrests, internment and the *Arandora Star* disaster have all encouraged the development of powerful communal myths about the war.

More work needs to be carried out on the influence of these communal myths and the positioning of the Italians’ life stories within them. However some preliminary points can be made about them. Bill Williams, in his work with Jewish immigrants in Manchester, has highlighted the dynamics within life story interviews and the influence of communal myths on narrative structure. He shows how personal experience can often contradict communal myth but still utilize and draw from ‘collective explanations’ of events. Furthermore, the very contradiction between personal experience and communal myth can often illuminate the social and cultural components of a particular group (Williams 1979: 51).
The interviews I carried out certainly tend to support Williams’ analysis. For example, one can see how two of my interview partners interpreted potent collective myths about the war in vivid personal terms:

I can remember ... I think a lot's to do with my mother telling me too ... the CID or police, whoever it was, coming to the door at two or three o'clock in the morning, thumping on the door, banging and kicking and telling us to open up. And grabbing my father and that's the last she ever saw of him. (taped interview 21/6/97, Anita B)

Some of the lads came into my mum and they said, 'Well, they're having a terrible time in the city. All of Leith Walk, they're going down, the wine's running down the gutters where they've been into Victor Crolla's and they've bashed all the wine barrels and broken all the windows'. (taped interview 16/8/97, Mrs B)

The narratives indicate the extent to which the war heightened a sense of ‘Italianness’ and how far this was ‘negative’. The official definition of the Italians in Edinburgh as enemy aliens, the ‘other’, during the war certainly reinforced feelings of not ‘belonging’: one respondent recounts how when her family relocated to Blair Atholl, under government orders, they were promptly evicted by the laird because they were ‘foreigners’ (taped interview 16/8/97, Mrs B). The war also encouraged an atmosphere of more outright and open hostility towards the Italians in Edinburgh, as recalled by another interview partner:

One night there was two, must've been two big guys that came in, caused a rammy in our shop. And they got hold of my father and they slashed his face ... he used a hammer on them or something. (taped interview 21/6/97, Lawrence B)

Figure 1 Maria S, with her parents and brother John, during the Second World War. Her father was born in Stockton-on-Tees of Italian parents and served in the Royal Artillery during the war. Source: in private hands
During the war, many relocated Italians who had previously been an isolated minority in their local communities suddenly found themselves surrounded by other immigrant families with similar backgrounds and shared circumstances. One interview partner estimates that the relocation area of Pitlochry was '80% Italian' during the war (taped interview 16/8/97, Remo C). The placing of many second-generation male Italians into internment camps or into the non-combatant Pioneer Corps (see figure 2) may also have had the effect of reinforcing the community’s own sense of ‘being’ Italian. The nature of the occupational structure of the Italians had led to the dispersal of them not only to small towns, but also throughout Glasgow and Edinburgh (Colpi 1991: 240). Thus, in their attempts to weaken and undermine the Italian presence in Britain, government policies often assisted in strengthening the sense of ‘Italianness’ and ‘otherness’ felt by immigrant families.

Oral testimony, and within it the meanings that people give to their experiences, goes some way to countering Colpi’s argument that the war led to a ‘negative’ sense of identity amongst British Italians. However, it is now widely recognized that people’s memories are not retained unchanged over time but rather that their present lives shape the way they tell stories about the war (1994: 32) and will express it.

It is the nature of Italian culture to highlight individual interviews have been conducted with Italian veterans of the other side, and to exhibit a grand experience. Perhaps talk about the war. What was the sense of ‘otherness’ felt by immigrant families?

The cultural significance of ÒItalian’ to Italians was not ‘Scottish’ and it was a sense of that language which brought the men here, nor had the war in Edinburgh resolved an origin in immigration. Perhaps it was also some form of testimony to the role of the war in particular at the time of the war.

Conclusively...
the way they recall the past (Bertaux-Wiame 1982: 194). Thomson has stressed how life stories are profoundly shaped by subsequent events in the lives of interviewees (Thomson 1994: 33). It is important to note that the fluidity of ethnic identity means that people will express themselves differently at different times in their lives.

It is thus likely that developments over the last couple of decades — the proliferation of Italian restaurants in Edinburgh, cheap holidays to Italy and a flood of cultural events highlighting the contributions of the Italians in Scotland — makes it easier now for my interview partners to express 'Italian' aspects of their identity. A couple of them had been actively involved in a high-profile exhibition 'The Italian Scots: A century of the Italian community in Scotland' held at the National Library in Edinburgh in 1991, and the others would, at the very least, have been aware of it. The effect of such a public and prestigious affirmation of the Italian community cannot be underestimated. This exhibition perhaps partly explains why many were more willing to discuss their wartime experiences than I had anticipated. All my interview partners were over the age of 50. Perhaps their relative longevity meant that they had, as Wilton notes, 'a willingness to talk about things which in earlier years would have remained unsaid' (Wilton 1994: 94). What we are seeing, therefore, is not so much a denial of Italian roots and a 'negative' sense of identity as Colpi states, but rather a reinforced sense of 'Italianess' which has only found true expression in the last decade or so (Colpi 1986: 43).

The narratives of my interview partners display a powerful sense of growing up in a culture and environment in which they felt 'different', 'alien' and 'foreign'. It is also significant that, throughout their narratives, most of my interview partners tend to refer to Italians as 'we' and Scots as 'them' even though they define themselves primarily as 'Scottish-Italian'. The majority of my interview partners pay homage to both the Scottish and Italian aspects of their identity within their narratives. It should not be lost sight of that all of my interview partners were born, grew up and live in Scotland, were often brought up by Scottish nursemaids or neighbours and spoke English as their first language. Their parents, working long hours in their businesses, rarely had the time or the money to visit Italy and a couple of my interview partners have never visited Italy nor have any intention of so doing.

The issue of identity is a complex one. But ultimately, the wartime emphasis on Italians in Edinburgh as 'aliens' had a lasting effect on all those I interviewed. One interview partner resolutely refused to describe himself as Scottish, Italian or even Scottish-Italian. He was, perhaps, more eloquently expressing the experience of growing up as a child of Italian origin during wartime than those who recalled incidents of verbal or physical abuse. It is also important to bear in mind those who did not put themselves forward to be interviewed for my research. One man refused on the grounds that he didn't 'feel Italian' and again his testimony might have contributed to creating a more complete picture. Overall however I would support Colpi's statement, that there is a reluctance to dwell on wartime experiences, particularly amongst a slightly older generation. Most of those I interviewed were children at the time of the war and interviews I have carried out with a marginally older generation since indicate that there are substantial differences within narratives about the meaning of the war and its impact on life stories.

**Conclusions**

The themes of difference, alienation and exclusion that are at the forefront of some of my interview partners' life stories are relatively absent in others. Although the Second
World War had a massive impact on all the Italians of Edinburgh, many variables including father’s wartime status, gender, political affiliations and class, influence the extent to which the war affected my interview partners’ sense of identity and the way in which they recalled the war. The outbreak of hostilities between Italy and Britain reinforced and heightened the sense of difference of second- and third-generation Italians and left huge scars on the memories of many Italians in Edinburgh. For those who were children and adolescents during the war, it plays a central role in their narratives.

Paying attention to the ways in which perceptions of the past are articulated and how people make sense of an event as they experienced it gives us a fuller picture than that provided by existing accounts. My research indicates the values of small-scale oral history projects, which could also be undertaken for other relatively little studied local groupings. In this case the evidence of the people actually involved tends to support the view of Colin Holmes that hostility towards immigrants ‘sleeps lightly’, ready to be awakened in wartime (Holmes 1991: 95). The hostilities against the Scottish-Italian community initiated on 10 June 1940 built upon an already existing anti-Italian prejudice. The demarcation and definition of Scottish-Italians as ‘aliens’ in wartime was not a totally new phenomenon. It served to heighten a sense of ‘difference’ which already existed amongst children of Italian origin growing up in Edinburgh.

The experiences of my interview partners need to be seen within a historical context of the deep-rooted traditions of anti-alienism in Britain. In this respect further research could be interesting into how far the experiences of the Edinburgh Italians did or did not parallel that of other immigrant communities elsewhere. For the Scottish-Italian community at any rate, there is far less of a split between the ‘golden’ era of the inter-war period as portrayed by Colpi, and the outbreak of war in 1940. Furthermore, far from suppressing a sense of Italian identity, as Colpi argues, the war actually reinforced a sense of ‘Italianness’ and ‘otherness’ (Colpi 1986: 43).

References

PRIMARY SOURCES

With the exception of Gloria B all the recordings are deposited in the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh. In consultation with my interview partners I have abbreviated their surnames in order to protect their privacy.

Interview with Anita B, SA1997.100, SA1997.101
Interview with Gloria B, private collection of author.
Interview with Lawrence B, SA1997.100, SA1997.101
Interview with Remo C, SA1997.108
Interview with Maria S, SA1997.104

SECONDARY SOURCES


Hopwood, Birt Hughes, Brij Jenkins, Kushner, Oc Mastelli, Ug 1999

Biog

An ea Proj of Sco War.


Biographical note

An earlier version of this article was written as part of the Open University course A422 'Oral History Project: Aspects of Childhood' (1997). The author is presently continuing her research at the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, exploring more fully the impact of the Second World War.

Address: 35 Lauriston Street, Edinburgh EH3 9DQ, UK. E-mail: ugolini@dial.pipex.com
Although the Italians represent the second largest migrant group in Scotland after the Irish, comparatively little is known about their history and cultural development during the twentieth century, allowing rather stereotypical representations and images to endure. The Italian experience in Scotland has been principally addressed by Marin and Colpi in their comprehensive overviews of the British Italian community and by Sponza in his study of nineteenth-century Italian immigrants, but to date, there has been no study devoted exclusively to the Italians in Scotland. Two articles on Scotland were included in a 1979 edition of the Association of Teachers of Italian Journal devoted to Italian immigration and more recently, a monograph on Italian language and culture in Scotland was brought out. However, although commentators stress the importance of reflecting the diversity of experience within ethnic groups, Anglo-Italian historiography persists in presenting the community as a homogenous entity and has failed to explore differences of class, gender and generation amongst the Italians in Scotland. There is also a tendency within dominant discourse to use a singular elite narrative to make generalisations about the experiences of the Italian community as a whole.

The use of life story research affords a fresh opportunity to recover and reconstruct the experiences of Italians in Scotland during the first half of the twentieth century. As part of a Ph.D. research project at the University of Edinburgh, I am exploring the memories and experiences of second and third generation Italians who were born and grew up in Scotland before the outbreak of World War Two. A major aspect of the research explores the impact of the war on the construction of Italian identity and the extent to which the war heightened and reinforced Italo-Scots’ sense of ‘otherness’ or ‘difference’. By focusing on how the war is recalled and remembered within narrative and the ways in which it has been commemorated within the community, I aim to recover the complexity and diversity of Italian wartime experience in Scotland.
The Italian community in Scotland has a long established presence and has reached its fourth and fifth generations. There are currently around 23,000 Italians resident in Scotland, representing just fewer than 10 per cent of the whole Italian population in Britain. Although Italians began to emigrate in increasingly large numbers to the United Kingdom in the mid-nineteenth century, the number of Italians in Scotland remained low until the end of that century. Peaks in immigration to Scotland occurred at the turn of the century, in 1913, and again after the First World War in 1920-21. The decade 1891-1901 witnessed a dramatic threefold increase in the number of Italians in Scotland, from 1,025 to 4,051. The concentration of Italians in family catering businesses in Scotland led to increasing numbers of women immigrants and by 1911, women made up 32.5 per cent of the total Italian population. Following these peaks in immigration, the number of Italians in Scotland remained steady with a total of 5,447 Italian immigrants present prior to World War Two.

Italian immigrants in Scotland primarily settled as part of a process of chain migration whereby the earliest immigrants who had established themselves would send for relatives and neighbours in their village to work in their businesses. As a result of chain migration, strong links were developed between Scottish areas of settlement and specific regions in Italy, and the Italian community in Scotland today retains a strong central southern character. The earliest emigrants to Scotland originated from two clearly defined zones in Italy: Liguria, the region of Livorno and the northern part of Pisa. In Fife, the Italian community is fairly evenly divided between the Lucchesi and those from Frosinone, with a third smaller contingent of people from Liguria. In Edinburgh, over two thirds of Italians originate from Frosinone, as do many of the Italians in Fife. At the peak of immigration to Scotland, the concept of Italy as a nation was still fragile and local allegiances predominated over any feelings of national identity. This is reflected today in the emergence of regional associations based around the ‘old’ origin groups such as the Lucchesi nel Mondo and Laziali in Scozia.

The occupational concentration of Italians in the catering industry provides one of the most distinctive features of Italian settlement in Scotland. According to Sponza, the beginning of the twentieth century saw a ‘virtual explosion’ in food making and catering as the primary occupation for the Italian population, with hairdressing the second largest. The geographic dispersal of Italian businesses and long working hours meant that there was little time for socialising amongst the Italians and there is little evidence for ‘associative’ life in Scotland than has been identified in other Italian communities in Britain. In the 1960s, however, the advent of fascio clubs, strengthening ties between immigrants and the Italian Fascist government, did promote a more active community life. The post-Second World War period saw a second large wave of Italian emigration to Britain but Scotland received few of these new immigrants. Post-war increases in community size were more dependent on the reactivation of the old migration patterns, so that most ‘new’ immigrants entered the traditional catering trade. As a result of these patterns of immigration, the Scottish Italian community has been described as historically and sociologically old in type and form.

In Scotland therefore, there is currently a mix between the ‘old’ Italian immigrant group, the descendants of those who came over at the beginning of thetwentieth century who are now reaching their fifth generation and the ‘new’ post-war community which began arriving in the 1940s and has only reached its first and second generation. It is the former group that I am currently researching.

Methodology
Due to financial and time restraints, my research on the Scottish Italian community has been limited primarily to the south-east regions of Edinburgh and Fife although on occasion I have travelled outwith these areas to interview people. So far, I have interviewed 40 people of Italian origin born between 1896 and 1940. The main body of my research consists of semi-structured interviews, which are recorded and subsequently transcribed. Following Passerini’s maxim that, “To respect memory also means letting it organise the story according to the subject’s order of priorities,” I carry out life history interviews whereby the respondent is encouraged to direct the course of the interview and reflect on what is important to him or her. Memories are not different from other historical sources in that they are socially created and constructed. As Portelli notes, “Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing and what they now think they did.”

It is now widely accepted that ethnic identity is the outcome of social interaction between different groups and can be “constrained or shaped by its necessary dependence upon the categorization of Others.” The tendency of individuals and communities to define self against the ‘other’ becomes acute at wartime and is particularly relevant when considering the life stories of Italo-Scots. The fluidity of ethnic identity also means that people express themselves differently at different times in their lives. A significant factor in my research is that I am approaching respondents at a time when the Italians’ wartime experience has already been tentatively expressed through a variety of different media, including stage-plays, television documentaries and newspaper articles. Of perhaps most significance for Italo-Scots was an exhibition held by the National Library of Scotland in 1991, The Italian-Scots: A Century of the Italian community in Scotland. This exhibition not only celebrated the community’s strengths and achievements, but also addressed the painful events of the Second World War in a prestigious and affirmative setting. These cultural shifts undoubtedly encourage more people to agree to be interviewed than might have been the case just a decade ago.

A significant factor in my research is that I am not of Italian origin myself but am married to a third generation Italian. Whilst hoping to benefit from retaining the objectivity...
of the ‘outsider’, I must also acknowledge the profound influence that my links to the Italian community by marriage has on my research and on the way that I am viewed by potential respondents. My Italian surname undoubtedly affords me some of the benefits of being an ‘insider’ and hopefully contributes to an atmosphere of trust and security within the interview situation, which encourages people to share often painful memories. Although I do not speak Italian this has not been an issue with my research because, whilst most Italo-Scots retain an understanding of their parents’ regional dialect, half of those I have interviewed do not speak any Italian. As Farrell has noted, the use of Italian amongst many immigrant families “stopped being used at home very quickly”, reflecting perhaps for many immigrant children, a conflict between their ‘internal’ home speaking Italian and an ‘external’ life in the neighbourhood and at school speaking English. It was also seen as ‘taboo’ to speak Italian in the public arena of the shop where Italian families spent most of their time, a feeling heightened during the xenophobic atmosphere of World War Two.

One of the strengths of oral history is its power to improve our understanding of the past by throwing light on areas which have been neglected or distorted. One of my original aims was to recover the narratives of Italo-Scottish women whose stories have been particularly neglected. I have made a deliberate and conscious effort to interview women although this has not been as straightforward as I had anticipated. What I have found, which echoes Colpi’s work, is that there is a deep reluctance amongst older Scots-born Italians to talk about the past, in particular the war. Many people, especially women, have refused to be interviewed or recorded. Whilst as a researcher these refusals can initially be frustrating, it is of the utmost importance to respect this desire for privacy and silence and also to recognise that this factor of ‘non-compliance’ is significant when addressing memory within the Italian community in Scotland.

The experience of being Italian in Scotland

It is perhaps difficult in an age when Italian culture is universally celebrated, Italian cuisine popular and holidays to Italy commonplace, to acknowledge that the Italians as an ethnic group in Scotland have often been on the receiving end of racist hostility and intolerance. It has become commonplace to assert that the Italians were ‘well received’ in Scotland with favourable comparisons made with the other large immigrant groups of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Irish and the Lithuanians. Indeed, there is a tendency to romanticise the presence of the Italians in Scotland and to avoid addressing the more painful reality of how the Italians were treated. A typical summary of Italian experience appeared in the literature accompanying a Scottish Record Office exhibition, ‘The Peoples of Scotland:

The self-employed Italian street vendors of hot chestnuts and ice-cream were popular figures in Scottish towns early this century. They later became the owners of shops, many of which developed into thriving family businesses in the 1920s and 1930s.

The Second World War was a traumatic period for many immigrant Italian families when, as a result of the Aliens Act, many were interned and imprisoned as aliens when Mussolini threw his lot with the Nazis. Later the Italian community went on to make an outstanding contribution to Scottish society in the post-war years, not only in business but in the arts and the professions.

Whilst superficially correct, this extract presents an oversimplification of events. It not only underestimates both pre-war and post-war incidences of racism and hostility towards Italian immigrants but fails to address the diversity of wartime experiences. Overall, current literature on the Italians in Scotland presents a rather sanitised account of the past, particularly about the wartime period. This is why oral testimony is important in enabling us to challenge prevailing accounts. The Italian community in Scotland evolved in a period of domestic intolerance towards ethnic minorities and of divisive sectarianism. Public hostility towards the Italians as a group intensified following Italy’s invasion of Abyssinia in 1935. Second and third generation Italians therefore grew up in Scotland before the Second World War with a strong sense of ‘difference’ and of growing up in a culture and environment in which they were made to feel ‘alien’ and ‘foreign’. This feeling of displacement often revolves around the spheres of food, language and religious discrimination and is evident in the testimony of Edinburgh-born Mrs C.

In 1937 it must have been - ‘37, ’38 I’m not sure about the date - one of the girls in my class had a birthday party and everybody in the class was invited, except me. It was because I was Italian and the parents didn’t approve of what was happening in [Abyssinia], so I never went to the party. That was the first time that it suddenly dawned on me that there was something different about me. Also, we used to have pasta on a Sunday and my mother always used to say, “You didn’t have pasta today. When anybody asks you at school what you had for your Sunday dinner, you had roast beef and Yorkshire pudding or roast chicken or something, you must never tell people that you eat macaroni.”

(Mrs C, taped interview, 13/2/00)

Significantly, when Scots-born Italians in Hamilton responded to a Strathclyde University survey, most expressed their identity as “being Italian in a Scottish setting”.

There is no doubt that the outbreak of war between Italy and Britain was a hugely traumatic event for Italian immigrants living in Edinburgh, and the rest of Scotland, and one which has left a tremendous scar on personal narratives. When Mussolini declared war on Britain in June 1940, anti-Italian riots broke out across Britain and were at their most violent in cities such as Edinburgh and Glasgow. Shop windows were smashed, stock looted and destroyed and people serving behind the counter physically abused. Concurrent with the riots, local police began to systematically arrest Italian nationals as ‘enemy aliens’ and, in Scotland overall, a further two hundred Scots-born or naturalised Italians were arrested under defence regulation 18B. There was a great deal of confusion and distress about the arbitrary and indiscriminate nature of the arrests. This was compounded when a ship deporting some of the Italian
internees to Canada, the Arandora Star, was torpedoed. Over 400 Italians drowned including 24 from Edinburgh. Those who remained in Edinburgh, elderly people, women and their children, were given three days notice to leave the city as it had been designated a militarily protected area. Most women were left alone to make their own arrangements and because of this enforced migration many ended up in the west of Scotland where they were subjected to the Clydebank blitz. There were also many second and third generation Italians who were called up or volunteered for the British forces and served in the Army, the Pioneer Corps, the Land Army and munitions.

The events of the wartime period left the community shocked and disoriented and served to dramatically heighten a sense of 'otherness' prevalent amongst Italian immigrants. Narratives of loss, absence and dislocation are particularly strong amongst those who lost their male relatives on the Arandora Star, as shown in the recollections of one woman whose father subsequently lost his life in the disaster:

What I remember distinctly about that night - there was a curfew. The men had to be in their homes by a certain time and in those days, the shops were open quite late at night. I remember being in the shop in L____ and the policemen came there to arrest my father. Of course, my mother said, 'He's at home.' My aunt, who used to help, was there in the shop. So, the policemen brought my mother home, my aunt locked up the shop, and we walked down. By the time I got home, of course, my father had gone. I didn't even see him.

(Miss R, taped interview, 13/11/98)

Colpi has argued that many second-generation Italians who grew up during the war experienced "negative enemy status" and have since tried to distance themselves from their Italian roots. However, an analysis of life story narratives reveals that most Italo-Scots emerged from the war with a heightened sense of Italianness and of being Italian. Colpi's interpretation not only neglects the wider context of pre-war anti-Italian hostility and sectarianism but also fails to address the diversity of Italo-Scott wartime experience.

A major focus of my research is to recover the experiences of those Italo-Scots who served in the British forces during the war. As a group, they are strikingly absent from prevailing accounts of the Italian wartime experience. A judgement is often made that those Italo-Scots who served in the British forces, and were potentially fighting Italian relatives overseas, were more assimilated within British society or had greater distance from their Italian roots. Oral testimony can powerfully challenge this view. For Scots-born Italians who served in the British forces, theirs was an experience rich in contradiction. Those who volunteered to serve were often denied their first preference due to official suspicion of their 'alien' origin. Others resisted call-up until their parents returned from internment camp or a relocation area. Amongst many Italo-Scott veterans, traditional army narratives of regimental pride and camaraderie co-exist alongside recollections of physical and verbal abuse. For example, in the following extract, an ex-serviceman of Italian origin alludes to the antipathy that his Italian surname aroused during army service in France:

When I went abroad in the Royal Army Service Corps there was an officer. He hated me because my name was C____ and he was trying to get rid of me. Every time the King's Own Scottish Borderers went into action I was attached to them...I was always amongst the fighting! And this lieutenant - I don't know why but he hated the sight of me. He was wanting me to get killed but I come back every time.

(Mr C, taped interview, 21/8/98)

Ultimately, Italo Scots in the British services were rarely allowed to forget their 'otherness' and because of their confusing and contradictory experiences, veterans often emerged with an increased sense of Italianness, as did those second generation Italians who were interned or relocated.

With post-war domestic hostility focusing on the more visible Asian immigrant groups in Scotland, Italians are now perceived as socially and economically integrated into the fabric of Scottish society. However, the experiences of the twentieth century, in particular the Second World War, means that assimilation depends on a set of variables such as naturalisation, inter-marriage with Scots, date of migration, and so forth. Being part of a Catholic minority in Scotland has also profoundly influenced and shaped the life experiences of Italo-Scots. Above all, the 'old' Italians in Scotland have lived through a particularly traumatic wartime experience that has never been fully transmitted to younger generations or to the new immigrants who arrived in a post-war multi-cultural Scotland. It would be fair to conclude that for this older generation, born and raised in Scotland and rarely visiting Italy, a sense of difference and of being 'Italian' remains strong.
Notes

10. Ibid.

Oral Sources

Taped interview with Mrs C, 13/02/2000, WEA Salt of the Earth History Project, Royal Museum Scottish Life Archive, Edinburgh.
The experiences of the Italian community in Scotland have been largely marginalised within national commemoration of the Second World War, yet the 1939–45 conflict had a highly damaging impact on Italian immigrant families. The declaration of war on Britain by Mussolini in June 1940 triggered violent anti-Italian riots in many Scottish cities and led to the arrest and internment of Italian nationals as ‘enemy aliens’. Tragically, many of these Italian internees died when the ship deporting them to Canada, the Arandora Star, was torpedoed. This terrifying sequence of events left a community shocked and disorientated and served dramatically to heighten a sense of ‘otherness’ prevalent among Italian immigrants. As a result, powerful myths and stories about the war have developed among the Italians in Scotland, forming a narrative framework through which the traumatic wartime events can be safely articulated. However, by focusing on selective aspects of the war and linking into a wider myth of friendly relations between Italian immigrants and the host community, communal myth neglects major aspects of Italo-Scot experience such as the relocation of women and children from coastal areas and, in particular, the service of Italo-Scots in the British forces. Historiography, having absorbed the fundamental aspects of communal myth, portrays a homogeneous community with one set of wartime experiences (Rodgers 1982; Colpi 1991a; Sponza 1996) yet Wood asserts that historical analysis ‘must embrace not only memories that achieve public articulation, but those that are denied expression or recognition, as well as those memories that are displaced or merely alluded to’ (Wood 1999: 10). In an attempt to obtain a more inclusive account of Italian wartime experience, this paper will explore the role and function of communal myth, its influence on personal narratives and finally question who speaks or remembers on behalf of the Italians in Scotland.
Historical overview of the Italian community in Scotland

The Italian community in Scotland has a long established presence and has already reached its third and fourth generations. Colpi estimates that there are currently around 23,000 Italians resident in Scotland, representing just under 10 per cent of the whole Italian population in Britain. Colpi estimates that there are currently around 23,000 Italians resident in Scotland, representing just under 10 per cent of the whole Italian population in Britain. This includes people born in Italy as well as those with Italian parents or grandparents (Colpi, 1993a: 153). Although Italians began to emigrate in increasingly large numbers to the United Kingdom in the mid-nineteenth century, driven out of Italy by the deepening agrarian crisis and rural poverty, the number of Italians in Scotland remained low until the end of the century. Peaks in immigration at the end of the nineteenth century, in 1913, and again after the First World War in 1920-21, brought the number of Italian immigrants in Scotland to a total of 5,447 immediately prior to the Second World War (Wilkin 1979: 54). The early Italian settlers in Scotland established themselves in the occupational niche of catering with small family shops and cafes selling ice cream, confectionery and fish and chips. The post-Second World War period saw a second large wave of Italian emigration to Britain but Scotland received few of these new immigrants and as a result of these patterns of immigration, the Scottish Italian community is historically and sociologically old in type and form (Colpi 1992: 3). Significantly, although the majority of old Italians in Scotland today were born in Scotland in the early part of the twentieth century, their narratives are often dominated by a sense of difference and of growing up in a culture and environment in which they felt ‘alien’ and ‘foreign’ (Ugolini 1998: 58).

Research methodology

My own area of interest is the wartime experiences of second- and third-generation Italians in Edinburgh (Italo-Scots), men and women who were born of Italian origin and whose parents or grandparents were classified as ‘enemy aliens’ when Italy declared war on Britain in June 1940. For the purposes of my research, I have focused on the southeastern region of Scotland, in particular the areas of Edinburgh and Fife. A large proportion of Italians who settled in Edinburgh and Fife originate from the same region, Frosinone, in the central zone of Italy, creating a sociologically cohesive grouping (Colpi 1991a: 78). In 1861, there were 38 Italian immigrants living in Edinburgh; this had reached over 400 by the outbreak of the Second World War. According to Italian Consulate figures compiled in 1991, there were around 2,200 Italians living in Edinburgh and 345 Italian residents in Fife although Colpi believes this was a severe understimation.
under-estimate of the Italian population in the respective localities (Colpi 1991a: 171).

The main body of my research consists of semi-structured interviews with 38 second- and third-generation Italians born in Scotland between 1906-40. Most were born in the period 1914-29, that is to say they were between 11 and 26 years of age in 1940. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed and lasted between 60-90 minutes on average. Following Passerini's maxim, 'To respect memory also means letting it organise the story according to the subject's order of priorities' (Passerini 1986: 8), I carry out life-history interviews whereby the respondent is encouraged to direct the course of the interview and reflect on what is important to him or her. In a review of oral history methodology, Smith emphasises that memories are no different from other sources in that they are socially created and recreated and he stresses the need to analyse the subjectivity and selectivity of oral accounts as social constructs (Smith 1998: 2). In Portelli's words, 'Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing and what they now think they did' (Portelli 1998: 67). The fluidity of ethnic identity, and its dependence upon the categorisation of Others, also means that Italo-Scots, as with other migrant groups, will express themselves differently at different times in their lives (Bertaux-Wiame 1982; Jenkins 1997). A significant factor in my research is that I am approaching respondents at a time when the Italians' wartime experience has been tentatively expressed through a variety of different media, including stage plays, poetry and television documentaries. Of most significance for Italo-Scots was an exhibition held by the National Library of Scotland in 1991, The Italian-Scots: A century of the Italian community in Scotland. This exhibition not only celebrated the community's strengths and achievements, but also addressed the painful events of the Second World War in a prestigious and affirmative setting.

These cultural shifts undoubtedly encourage more people to agree to be interviewed than might have been the case just a decade ago. Furthermore, my own background as somebody linked to the Italian community by marriage has a significant influence on my research and on the way that I am viewed by potential respondents. While I aim to retain the objectivity of the 'outsider,' my Italian surname affords me the benefits of being an 'insider' and contributes to an atmosphere of trust and security within the interview situation which encourages people to share often painful memories. Colpi notes that the Second World War had such a devastating impact on the community that older Italians are reluctant to dwell on this aspect of their past (Colpi 1991b: 90). Organisers of Una Storia Segreta (A Secret History), a recent American exhibition highlighting the experiences of Italian Americans during the war, concur with this view, acknowledging
that the story remained hidden for decades because silence had been ‘adopted as protective cover by those affected’ [my italics] (Distasi 1999: 3). I have found many survivors of the period, particularly women, either unwilling to be interviewed or apprehensive about making a public account of something which has remained largely private. Due to the sensitive nature of my research, the most successful method of contacting interview respondents has been by personal recommendation. However, in an attempt to reach those members of the community who have traditionally been neglected in historiography, for example, those who married Scots and are not so easily identified as ‘Italian’, I have placed adverts in local free newspapers and parish newsletters and contacted the wardens of residential homes for older people. I also made a conscious decision to contact military organisations such as the Royal Pioneer Corps Association, the British Legion, the Women’s Land Army and the Scots At War Trust in an attempt to reach those Italians who served in the British forces during the war. I have also consulted oral recordings held in the School of Scottish Studies archives, viewed the Italiani in Scozia programme transcripts from BBC Radio Scotland’s landmark oral history series, Odyssey, and surveyed official records at the Public Record Office, Scottish Record Office and British Library.

The Second World War

When Italy declared war on Britain on 10 June 1940, the intermittent prejudice faced by Italian immigrant families in Scotland erupted into outright hostility. According to Sponza, the anti-Italian riots which broke out across the UK were at their most violent in Scottish cities, particularly Edinburgh and Glasgow (Sponza 1996: 133). The destruction of Italian shops was a terrifying experience for Italian families, most of whom lived next door to or above their premises. Files held at Edinburgh City Archives show that by January 1941, over 51 actions had been raised by Italian shopkeepers against Edinburgh Corporation for compensation under Section 10 of the Riotous Assemblies (Scotland) Act 1822. Concurrent with the riots, local police began systematically to arrest Italian nationals as ‘enemy aliens’ and, in Scotland overall, a further 200 British-born or naturalised Italians were arrested under defence regulation 18B (Simpson 1992: 194). MI5 had compiled a list of 1500 Italians, referred to as ‘desperate characters’ or ‘professing Fascists’, based largely on the membership lists of the fasci clubs which had formed across the United Kingdom to strengthen ties between Italian immigrants and the Italian Fascist government. As an indication of ‘hostile’ intent towards Britain, this list was deeply flawed but when Churchill made the decision...
decision to indiscriminately intern all male Italians between the ages of 16 and 70, the arrests appeared even more illogical and haphazard. A number of women in Edinburgh, mostly those who had been involved in *il Fascio Femminile* (Women's Fascio), were also arrested and one 45-year-old Edinburgh woman was interned until 1943 (HO396/213–15). The majority of detainees were interned in camps on the Isle of Man but deportation to the Dominions was considered a particularly suitable option for the most 'desperate' men identified by MI5 (Sponza 1993: 126). When the ship carrying these internees to Canada, *Arandora Star*, was torpedoed, over 700 internees drowned, two thirds of whom were Italians (Colpi 1993b: 177).

While the aforementioned events are relatively well known, the experience of the majority of the Italians in Scotland remains largely neglected. Based on documentation held at the Public Record Office, I estimate that around 100 Italian-born men were interned out of an Edinburgh population of 400 (HO396/284–294). Their children, second-generation Italian men and women, were called up in vast numbers for the British forces while their wives, as Italian nationals, were given three days' notice to leave their homes in the designated 'protected areas' of Edinburgh and Fife and relocate inland.

Communal myth

The sheer human tragedy of internment and the *Arandora Star* disaster has encouraged the development of powerful myths and stories about the war within the Italian community. The tragedy of the *Arandora Star*, which occurred on 2 July 1940, was compounded by the insensitive handling of the affair by the British government who presented, in Lafitte's opinion, 'a sorry picture of muddle, ignorance and lack of responsibility' (Lafitte 1940: 75). The government's failure to provide accurate information about who had been aboard the ship and who had drowned reflected a disregard for Italian immigrants which had been apparent at every level of decision-making regarding internment. As Stent notes, senior officials in the security services were permeated with 'prejudices against foreigners in general, laced with a good dose of bias against "dagos" and Jews in particular' (Stent 1980: 260). Officials also displayed a profound lack of consideration for distressed and bereaved families with relatives of the 'missing' having to rely on the Brazilian Consulate for information as well as more informal lines of communication. Zorza recounts how an *Arandora Star* survivor in a Scottish hospital smuggled out a list of casualties on toilet paper (Zorza 1985: 34). Many widows did not receive official certification of death for many months afterwards. The high death
toll and the haphazard nature of selection for deportation on the *Arandora Star*, with many internees swapping places at the last minute, explains why it retains a powerful grip on the collective imagination and remains, in Marin’s view, ‘*una cicatrice perennemente dolorante e sanguinante nel corpo vivo della collettività italiana*’ (a perpetually aching, bleeding scar on the live body of the Italian community) (Marin 1975: 86). The iconic status of the *Arandora Star* has been further reinforced by the numerous books, press articles and television documentaries that have been produced, focusing on the disaster. Indeed, a pamphlet, published by an Italian missionary priest based in Scotland, *Arandora Star*, urges upon its readers ‘*Il dovere di ricordarli*’ (The duty to remember them) (Zorza 1985: 9).

The dominant discourse is that the Italian community was well established and well liked in the inter-war period, the war had a devastating impact but the community managed to rebuild their businesses and relations with the local community in the post-war period. The central motif of the myth is encapsulated in a book about multicultural Edinburgh, which refers to the Italians as ‘an ancient and honourable Edinburgh community which has retained its character and sense of culture, but which still feels that the most important thing is for people to get along’ (Wishart and St Clair 1984: 6). By interlinking with the wider myth that the Italians were ‘well-received’ in Scotland, communal myth is able to present the war as a brief ‘one-off’ rupture in positive relations between the Italians and the host community. This interpretation neglects the wider context of domestic anti-alienism and sectarianism, underestimates pre-war incidences of racism and hostility towards Italian immigrants and, by presenting a singular narrative of the war, fundamentally denies social, gender and generational difference within the Italian community in Scotland.

Essentially, Italo-Scot communal history ‘reflects the interests and preoccupations of an elite’ (Williams 1979: 43). As with the Manchester Jews studied by Williams, the Italian elite is determined to protect its security and social standing by formulating and projecting a favourable image of the community. This elite is predominately male, representative of the more commercially successful, well-established Italian families and has a vested interest in reconstructing the past to suit the needs of the present. Over time, the central *Arandora Star* narrative has been utilised to create the ‘story’ of the war and has come to represent what it meant to ‘be Italian’, or to be a ‘good Italian’, during the war. Attention or investigation is subtly diverted away from dissolution within the pre-war community and the different choices made by Italo-Scots at the outbreak of war between Italy and Britain. The past is repackaged into a reassuring communal myth which, by offering a narrative framework, gains dominance.
The role of the Fasci

Significantly, those who have emerged as the guardians of communal history are often likely to have been involved in the inter-war fascio clubs set up by the Italian Fascist government, the existence of which fuelled MI5's xenophobic suspicion of Italian immigrant communities.

On his accession to power in 1922, Mussolini began actively to court Italian emigrants across Europe, viewing the drain of manpower from Italy as an ideological problem demanding ideological solutions. From the early 1920s onwards, emigrants were to be viewed as 'Italians abroad' who were to remain loyal to Italy and avoid integration into the country where they were living (Mastellone 1992: 118). The establishment of fascio clubs overseas was advocated, aiming to unite Italians who had chosen 'obedience to the Duce and to the Fascist laws' (Salvemini 1977: 37). 'Italians abroad' were increasingly monitored and in 1927 were placed under consular jurisdiction through the establishment of a Bureau of Italians Abroad in Rome. In Scotland, during the inter-war period, fascio clubs were established in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee and Greenock with district representatives in Stirling, Coatbridge, Motherwell and Paisley. Those in a position of authority and influence, 'the leaders and important people of the Community' (Colpi 1991a: 93), played a central role in enthusiastically setting up the relevant committees, organising events and actively encouraging other members of the community to join. The Edinburgh fascio was set up as early as 1923 with Luigi Perella as Secretary. He was succeeded in 1926 by Alfonso Crolla, a shopowner, who was awarded the Italian honour Cavaliere Ufficiale della Corona d'Italia in 1939 for his fascio activities (Guida Generale 1939: 445). The provision of gendered activities for Italian children and annual picnics on holy days such as 15 August meant that the fasci increasingly fulfilled the church's traditional role of social control, appealing to many Italian families alienated by the Irish dominance of the Catholic church in Scotland. In addition, the fasci in Scotland were successful in restoring a sense of self-respect to Italian immigrants often on the receiving end of racial abuse and prejudice (Diggins 1972; Salvemini 1977; Sponza 1988).

A crucial aspect of communal myth is that the fascio club was simply a social club running dances, sporting events and providing cheap holidays to Italy for immigrant children. However, by focusing on the social and patriotic aspects of the fascio, communal myth underplays the club's propaganda and controlling function and denies the existence of different views within the pre-war community. In 1933, when a census of Italians in Scotland was compiled by the Italian consular authorities, less than half (44.2 per cent) of Italian male 'heads of family' were members of the Fascist Party. In interviews, narrators allude to the fact that commercial
pressure was often exerted on those who were reluctant to join the fascio while others record how their parents chose not to be involved in an overtly nationalistic movement. The narrative of Edinburgh-born Mr M provides an insight into the dynamics of community fascio activity:

The first of the Italians in Edinburgh here they had a sort of social club, which my father was involved with. After the advent of fascism in Italy, it became a political thing. My father was ostracised a bit because he said, 'I don’t think it’s fair to have a political party in the country that you’ve adopted.' And, as a consequence of that, he became unpopular. He wouldn’t go and he stopped attending the thing. He didn’t want to be a fascist. My father hated two -isms, Fascism and Communism. He just absolutely detested them and that was it. But that was the situation. They had the Fascist Party which used to have social things and then annually they used to have trips to Alva and places like that. Well, one of my sisters - I was only a nipper at the time - one of my sisters won a race. They gave her a rocking horse. Five minutes after they came and they took it off again: ‘You’re not a Fascist, your father’s not a Fascist.’ Took the rocking horse off her. Now she was only about eight at the time. Maybe a bit older, aye, she’d be about twelve at the time. They took it off her because my father wasn’t a Fascist.

(Mr M, taped interview, 3/5/99)

Communal myth, by promoting a homogeneous account in respect to membership and support of the fascio, fails to address the motivations of a significant number of Italians who did not attend. As Williams has shown, the deconstruction of communal myth can illuminate the social and cultural components of a particular group (Williams 1979). Life-story interviews are central to the recovery of a more variegated and contested account about the experience of Italians in Scotland.

Findings

To gain greater insights into the dynamics of Italian immigrant communities in Scotland it is essential to recover the neglected aspects of Italian war experience and to reconstruct the memories and narratives of women, children and those Italo-Scots who served in the British forces. To date, I have interviewed 19 women, six of whom lost their fathers on the Aranadora Star. In the immediate aftermath of internment in June 1940, women remained with their children and elderly dependants to face the antagonism and verbal abuse of neighbours and customers. A significant number of women were Scots-born Italians who lost their British nationality on marriage to Italian citizens but many were first-generation immigrant women who were elderly and illiterate. They were confronted by a bewildering array of restrictions ranging from the Aliens Order 1920 to the Control of Population (Trespass) (Scotland) Order 1941 as part of a national movement of anti-immigrant legislation. Aliens (Protection of Race) Acts permitted aliens’ wives and children to stay in Scotland within the limits of a particular police area or left alone if they wanted to leave for religion or work. In addition, the British businesses of the Edinburgh-born women were often targeted for disruption and relocation. The fear of the British soldiers, often too young to have fought in the war, travel with the fear of being seen as a collaborator regularly detaining and deporting them. The war marked a turning point in Edinburgh’s history and the lives of the Italian business community, and the memory of the events common to the community. Miss H: I had a brand new business at the time. We were just getting started and we lost it all for nothing. We were all criminalised and made to feel like aliens.
to the Contravention of Section 36 of the Caledonian Railway Act 1898 (Trespass on Railway) which cumulatively inhibited their freedom of movement and required registration with the police. As a result of the Aliens (Protected Areas) No. 5 Order, all women designated 'enemy aliens' were ordered to leave coastal areas and relocate twenty miles inland within three days. Without any official support or guidance, women were left alone to make their own arrangements and had sole responsibility for looking after their families, arranging new tenants to take over their businesses and organising new accommodation and schooling. Narratives highlight the growth, in the face of unprecedented hostility, of spontaneous support networks among Italian women, who often clustered together in remote villages or towns.

Narratives of loss and dislocation predominate amongst those who were children at the time of relocation. Italo-Scottish children suffered severe disruption in their education, abruptly moved to rural schools where they were often isolated as the solitary Catholic pupil. Many recall incidences of racist hostility linked with anti-Catholic sentiment in the areas of relocation and this prejudice in the spheres of school and play served to heighten their sense of difference and 'otherness'. Adolescent children often took on the burden of family and business responsibilities because, as British subjects, they were the only member of the family permitted to travel within military 'protected areas'. Many respondents recall returning regularly to Edinburgh to supervise the family business or to visit relatives detained in Saughton Prison.

The war necessitated a more prominent and public role for the female members of Italian families. Women who were permitted to stay in Edinburgh took over the running of family shops or cafes and kept the businesses operating. As well as struggling with the vagaries of rationing and the black market, they would also be exposed to xenophobic comment and abuse in the public arena of the shop. As Edinburgh-born Miss H recalls:

At the time the blackout was on, we were frightened to go out at night but I was never accosted once in the streets. Where we got an awful lot of abuse was standing at the back of the counter. One night in particular, a man came in. He was a wicked man; he had one leg. He asked for a fish supper but he got it in the face by the time I was finished. I think I told you, I had a tartan skirt on. He called me all the Italian so-and-sos. 'Get back to Italy, take that tartan skirt off. You're not entitled to put a British skirt on. You're not a Scots person'. He went on till I could stand it no longer. My mother said, 'H- please. Don't start'. She was frightened; she was scared. But I lost my temper and he got the supper in his eye.

(Miss H, taped interview, 4/5/99)
Italo-Scots in the British Services

Many second-generation Italian men and women were eligible for call-up and were faced with incredibly difficult choices when they had to respond to the manpower demands of the State that had interned their fathers or relocated their families. Yet, as a group, they are strikingly absent from prevailing accounts of the Italian wartime experience. Colpi makes the astute observation that when war broke out, "the community became deeply split into the so-called "good Italians" (the fascists) and "bad Italians" (the others) thus creating a great deal of factionalism and bitterness (Colpi 1991a: 100). Communal myth, by neglecting those who served in the British forces, makes an implicit judgement about their claim to being a 'good Italian'. To date, I have interviewed eight men and two women who volunteered or were called up to the British services. The fact that many Scots-born Italians were of dual nationality, deriving Italian citizenship from their father and British citizenship from their place of birth, made the act of serving in the armed forces a complex and symbolic act; the knowledge that they could potentially end up fighting Italian cousins overseas further amplified a sense of divided loyalties. Narratives of Italo-Scot veterans reveal how they reconciled service in the British Army through a complicated process of negotiation, resistance and accommodation. Many utilise the story of Donnini, a soldier of Italian origin from County Durham who was awarded a posthumous VC for his actions on the battlefield. Although respondents offer differing accounts of the time and context of his death, the legend of Donnini serves an important function for Italo-Scots veterans as an available construction through which to explain and articulate their own decisions. As Portelli has written, subjectivity is as much the business of history as are the more visible 'facts'; 'what informants believe is indeed a historical fact (that is, the fact they believe it), as much as what really happened' (Portelli 1998: 67).

Oral evidence also challenges the received view that service by Scots-born Italians in the British Army suggests a higher degree of assimilation within British society or greater distance from their Italian roots. Treatment of the Italians in the armed forces was often confused, arbitrary and contradictory and a lot depended on the personal relations formed between Italo-Scots and their superior officers. While respondents recall numerous incidences of racism in their regiments, including in the Land Army, the Army hierarchy would also utilise Italo-Scots in a positive way to liaise with the local population when in Italy, Italian POWs or displaced persons. Ultimately, whatever their experience, Italo-Scots in the British services were rarely allowed to forget their 'otherness' and because of their confusing and contradictory experiences, veterans often emerged with an increased sense of Italianness.
Commemoration

The dominance of an elite over representations of the Italian community's past continues into commemoration of the war. There is relatively subdued 'memorial activity' (Wood 1999: 1) or commemoration among the Italians in Scotland. Unlike the United States of America where legislation has been passed on the 'Wartime Violation of Italian American Civil Liberties', there have been few calls for compensation or an apology from the Government in the United Kingdom. At the time of the tragedy, there were no public or private sites of mourning for the bereaved families of the Arandora Star victims. As the bodies were lost at sea, no private burials could take place and many relatives today express narratives of profound loss and absence. In the poignant words of one respondent, 'We don't know where they are. We don't know if they're still in the sea. Who knows?' (Miss H, taped interview, 4/5/99).

A search of editions of the local newspaper published in the aftermath of the disaster show that no obituaries were placed for the Arandora Star victims. Although this can be partly explained by the fact that some families did not receive official confirmation of death for many months, it also suggests that in the xenophobic atmosphere of summer 1940, with the obituary columns filled with those 'Missing in Active Service' and 'Deaths in Active Service', there was little room for the Italian experience.

In recent decades, however, there has been a clearly definable move within sections of the Italian community towards what Wood refers to as 'rememoration' of the Second World War (Wood 1999: 17). While this is undoubtedly part by following the usual contours of communal myth, this rememoration of the war serves again to deny or neglect alternative memories of the wider societal trend towards commemoration, it is also an indication that Italians in Scotland now feel that it is safe to claim publicly their own sites of memory.

For many decades, a remembrance service has been held every November at the Military cemetery of Brookwood, Sussex where Italian prisoners of war are buried. Interestingly, this ceremony also commemorates the men who lost their lives on the Arandora Star and is attended by the Italian military, consular and religious authorities. Although primarily attended by Italians in south-east England, other Italian communities across the UK send delegates and Colpi sees this ceremony as representing the equivalent of 'Remembrance Sunday' for the Italian Community in Britain (Colpi 1991a: 129). This fusion of two different commemorative groupings is, I believe, highly significant as it further heightens the identification of those who were interned or on the Arandora Star as 'good Italians'. Indeed, the commemoration of the Arandora Star victims appears to have merged over
time with POW memorials to become a symbol of what it meant to 'be Italian' in Britain during the war.

In Scotland, the Arandora Star disaster was first commemorated by a mosaic erected in the Casa d'Italia in Glasgow in 1975 stating 'Non vi scorderemo mai' (We will never forget you) (Colpi 1991b: 145). Throughout the late 1980s, ceremonies began to be held in Glasgow on the anniversary of the Arandora Star disaster to commemorate the victims and survivors as well as those who were interned. These celebrations culminated in 1990, on the 50th anniversary of the tragedy, with the Italian national honour of cavalieri being conferred on the Scottish survivors of the disaster by the Italian president, Cossiga. These events were diligently recorded in Italiani in Scozia, a community newspaper published from 1983-90, which often paid homage to internees and the Arandora Star victims within its pages but remained largely silent on the experiences of men and women who served in the British forces. Thus, while the recent commemoration has a valuable function for many in the community, particularly the children of those who lost their lives on the Arandora Star, it also perpetuates the dominance of a one-dimensional discourse of the Italian wartime experience, denying or silencing the memories of others. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website reveals a number of Edinburgh Italians who died on active service, but there appears to be no public space in which to acknowledge the experiences of those who served in the British forces. Their stories do not conform to the central narrative of what it meant to be Italian during the war.

Conclusion

The dominant discourse of the war within the Italian community in Scotland serves an important function by providing a narrative framework that can be utilised by members of the Italian community, whatever their personal experience. Communal myth about the war, by linking into the wider myth about Italian immigrants being 'well-received', offers a reassuring interpretation of Italian experience in Scotland. However, as Calder points out, myths endure not only because they have some basis in truth but because they depend 'on the leaving out of certain things' (Calder 1991: 90). For the Italians in Scotland, communal myth masks a more complex reality. By marginalising the experiences of those who do not form part of the community elite, it acts as a control on memory within the community, silencing those who do not share the same experiences.

The concept of the 'good Italian' which predominated in the inter-war fascio period has persisted throughout commemoration within the community. The Arandora Star victims are commemorated in the British community, but the communal memory of the Italian war experience is used to account for the experiences of others from the twentieth century.

Notes

This chapter draws on a large amount of research.

1. For more on the Scottish infantry, see D13.
2. CALC/2/30/1/1/1/64.
3. D13/2/31/1/12.
5. This is adapted from a table in 340 Italiani in Scozia.
7. At the Arandora Star commemoration at the Italian War Memorial in Stanhope Street.
9. The original, from the Arandora Star website.
12. For more on the Arandora Star, see D13/2/31/1/12.
13. For more on the Italian community in Edinburgh, see D13

...
community with the shared memorials and commemoration of *Arandora Star* victims and internees and the marked absence of women or those in the British services. To deconstruct communal myth about the war provides fascinating insights into the social components of the Italian community and emphasises the importance of obtaining a heterogeneous account when discussing the Italian presence in Scotland during the twentieth century.

Notes

This chapter uses a reference system as well as endnotes in view of the large amount of documentation necessary.

1. For example, see Vettese (1995); Mackie (1952); Di Mambro, A.M. (1989); Scottish Television (1996).


3. D136. Edinburgh Corporation files. Correspondence from lawyers on behalf of Mrs Antonietta Delicato 14 January 1941 reveals that although she received 'intimation of the possibility' that her husband had been lost on 15 July 1940, a Certificate of the Death was not issued until 6 January 1941.

4. A sample includes Hickey and Smith (1989); Rossi (1992); Zorza (1985); Morrison (1999).

5. This was first stated in Rodgers 1982: 15 and since repeated by Millar 1988: 340; Wilkin 1990: 20; Devine 1999: 515.

6. Wilkin (1979) has recently recalculated the figure quoted in his 1979 article from 42.2% to 44.2% following email correspondence with author 22/3/00.

7. At the request of the interview respondent, this extract has been slightly edited.


9. There has, however, recently been a suggestion that the Scottish Parliament could call for a public apology to all those who lost relatives on the *Arandora Star*. See Morrison (1999).


13. For example, R.N. Valvona, a 16-year-old Merchant Navy apprentice, who died on 25 August 1940.
References

Unpublished sources:

HO 396/213-15 Italian Internees Released in UK. Women 1943-44.
HO 396/284-294 Italians Interned in UK 1939.

Published Sources:


Mackie, A. (1952) *Gentle Like a Dove*, Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd.


---

**List of Participants**

Studying memory, particularly from an anthropological perspective, is particularly timely in an age of increasing globalization and increasing capacity to memorialize the actual and perceived history of individuals. How we choose to remember the past becomes more significant as more and more of our past is thrown into the public domain, and so our attempts to 'memorialize' have become the business of historians and those whose business is the study of memory. The participants in this volume have been invited to give expression to their collective memories and to share their collective knowledge of the past.

By paying particular attention to the language and expression with which memories are recorded, we can begin to understand how memories are formed and sustained, and how they contribute to the ways in which we construct our sense of identity and our sense of belonging.

By paying particular attention to the language and expression with which memories are recorded, we can begin to understand how memories are formed and sustained, and how they contribute to the ways in which we construct our sense of identity and our sense of belonging.