The Dog Fancy at War: 
Breeds, Breeding, and Britishness, 1914-1918

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Abstract
This essay examines the impact of the Great War on the breeding and showing of pedigree dogs (the “dog fancy”) in Britain. Hostility toward Germany led first to a decline in the popularity of breeds such as the dachshund, with both human and canine “aliens” targeted by nationalist fervor. Second, the institutions of dog breeding and showing came under threat from accusations of inappropriate luxury, frivolity, and the wasting of food in wartime, amounting to the charge of a want of patriotism on the part of breeders. Third, the paper shows how the “dog fancy” responded to this “agitation against dogs,” turning on mongrels, stray dogs, and “useless” and unpatriotic humans, exposing deep divisions within the dog breeding community. By looking at the politics of the “dog fancy” in wartime, this paper extends the discussion of animals and national identity, arguing that while dogs could be used to articulate patriotic sentiments, their conditional citizenship meant that they were uniquely vulnerable at a time of national crisis.

Keywords
animals in history, Britishness, dog breeding, dog food, dogs, dog shows, nationalism, World War I

Introduction

The origins of the breeding and showing of pedigree dogs—the “dog fancy”—have been ably documented by Harriet Ritvo (1986, 1987) in her seminal work on nonhuman animals in Victorian Britain, interpreting British dog breeders’ manipulation of animal nature and construction of breed standards principally through the lens of class. Reconceiving the social order as simultaneously fluid and stable, dog fanciers drew a distinction between “pedigree” and “mongrel” dogs, while climbing the social ladder themselves. More recent contributions have emphasized that the history of the dog and of the dog fancy has a more directly political significance still (e.g., Cheang, 2006; Harrington, 2009; Skabelund, 2008; Swart, 2003; Van Sittert & Swart, 2008), focusing on questions of nationalism and national identity. This paper extends
this work—and that on the companion animal more generally (e.g., Fudge 2008; Kete, 1994; Mason, 2005)—by considering the politics of the dog and the dog fancy in Britain during the Great War. In the wartime emergency, the key institutions of dog breeding, and the association between dogs and Britishness, were called into question as never before: not only were particular breeds associated with the German enemy, the dog fancy was also attacked as a frivolous and even unpatriotic extravagance. The political relationship between the human and the dog in modern Britain was perhaps never more anxiously exposed.

In making this argument, the paper goes against the grain of much popular discussion of nonhuman animals, war, and patriotism. It is widely recognized that animals could serve the articulation of nationhood (Franklin, 1999, p. 39), and in the Great War dogs certainly became icons of patriotic endeavor, second only to horses (Lemish, 1996, pp. 11-32; Morey, 2010, p. 227; Swart, 2010). On the British home front, dogs did their bit—for example, by bearing collection boxes for various war charities; their ranks included such notables as the pedigree bulldog “Death or Glory Boy” (Figure 1), whose tireless work for the Red Cross led to his retiring with the rank of Captain in “Lady Decies’ Four-Footed Force,” having raised the admirable sum of £15 (Our Dogs, 1914, October 2, p. 613). In Flanders, dogs were also celebrated for valor and loyalty, the active service of a few attracting effusive praise. Lieutenant Colonel E. H. Richardson’s specialist canine brigade, for example, earned honorable mentions in dispatches; his War-Dog Training School at Shoeburyness trained hundreds of dogs for important war work as ambulance auxiliaries, messengers, and sentries (Richardson, 1920). Dogs like these were imagined as loyal and fully deserving of military honors, for “They get killed, wounded, and gassed like us, and the survivors should certainly have their medals” (Our Dogs, 1918, August 9, p. 86). Indeed, the memorialization of animals’ “sacrifice” and “loyalty” has been a longstanding refrain in both the popular and academic literature (e.g., Allen, 1999; Cooper, 2000; Jenkins, 2010, pp. 133-135; Kean, 2000, pp. 166-171; Le Chêne, 1995; Porter, 1987, pp. 124-126, 174-176). While the academic discussion of animals and war has been far more careful, critical, and compelling, for Neil Pemberton and Michael Worboys (2007) to have written that “[g]enerally, dogs had a good war” (p. 165), leaves considerable room for misinterpretation of the period.

“In the Enemy’s Camp”: Dachshunds and Enemy Aliens

One breed that no one could consider as having had a “good war,” was the German teckel, the dachshund, all too vulnerable precisely because of what
Figure 1. “Death or Glory Boy.” *Our Dogs*, October 2, 1914, p. 613.
had previously made it popular: its distinctive status as a mascot or “national dog” (Tenner, 1998, p. 75). As the breed’s chronicler put it, “Ever since its first appearance among us the little Teckel had been recognized as the national dog of the Teutonic Empire, and with the outbreak of hostilities he came in for a share of the obloquy heaped on everything ‘made in Germany’” (Daglish, 1952, p. 21). In 1916, even the name of an engine on the London and North-western Railway was changed, after crew complaints, from the unfortunate Dachshund to the unimpeachable Bulldog (The London Times, 1916, January 10, p. 5). Whether dachshunds were routinely stoned on the streets at the height of anti-German sentiment (as some have claimed) is open to question, but there are certainly some accounts of their mistreatment, in Britain and elsewhere (Beckett, 2006; Gardiner, 2006, p. 166; see also Stites, 2002, p. 9). C. F. Harriss’s diary of life on the Home Front during the war years, for example, recorded that “[t]here is resident in Tiverton a dog of the ‘Dachshund’ or German sausage variety. This poor animal constitutes a little part of the ‘Fatherland’ in the eyes of the local hot youth, and so, as the objective of a constant battery of missiles, is not allowed to forget that he is in the enemy’s camp” (cited in Panayi, 1987, p. 354).

The dachshund’s admirers complained of the blatant injustice involved, insisting that “There are other breeds in England just as German, so why the suggested internment of this breed was made I don’t know, unless it is because it is always a good subject for a caricature. Surely it’s a good case of Love me, love my dog and be d-d to his nationality” (Kennel Gazette, XXXVI, No. 409, 1915, p. 26). The dachshund was defended not only as lovable but also as loyal: “one of the gamest and most companionable of the canine race, and as devoted to its British owner as any dog can be” (Our Dogs, 1916, November 24, p. 750). Special pleading was to little avail, however. The dachshund’s indelible identification with Germans and the German threat resulted in a catastrophic fall in Kennel Club registrations (Figure 2). Since all dog breeds suffered from the wartime emergency, it is more enlightening to record the decline in dachshunds as a proportion of all breeds, and perhaps for good measure to contrast their progress with that of the iconic bulldog (see Appendix A). The relative decline of dachshunds had started some time before the start of the war, but by the armistice fewer than one in a thousand registered dogs were teckels. By contrast, while the bulldog’s great popularity slipped somewhat after 1918, it increased its hold on the pedigree population during the war. Comparing the two breeds directly, the dachshund fell, between 1914 and 1919, from being a tenth as popular as the bulldog to little more than a hundredth.
What is more telling is that the fortunes of the dogs were always linked with those of their human counterparts. For the dog lobby, defending the dachshund typically meant separating the dog from its putative “owners,” condemning as they did only the “perverted patriotism” that irrationally attacked an “innocent” animal (Our Dogs, 1918, July 12, p. 22). Our Dogs, in its regular “dachshund data” reports, complained of the scapegoating of the breed and, significantly, referred to the growing call for internment of German nationals, only to deny that dachshunds should be considered as “enemy aliens”:

From all accounts it would seem as if the sins of the Fatherland are being visited upon the Teckel, and, as is so often the case in such afflictions, there is a lot of injustice being done. There is a very widespread grumbling amongst Dachshund fanciers because their favourites have been eliminated from the schedule of a certain show, and the fear is being expressed that other executives may follow the example of the society in question. The poor little Teckel has never done anything to cause us to register it as an alien enemy, or to place it in the concentration camp of canine “Coventry,” and it seems to us that this is carrying patriotism to the extreme of unreasonable prejudice, and that it is totally divorced from the spirit of British fairplay. (Our Dogs, 1914, November 6, p. 806)

The theme of Britishness was taken up time after time in the dog press, as this paper confirms, but its invocation here did not seek to deny a thoroughly patriotic antipathy to the enemy, instead merely rejecting or redeeming the association between the dachshund breed and the Fatherland. “No rational Britisher,” the editorial line in Our Dogs (1915, February 19, p. 281) argued, “no matter how anti-German he may be in his feelings as a result of this abominable war, in which the Kaiser and his entourage have plunged Europe,
will hold the innocent dogs of the Fatherland responsible for the blind folly of the rulers of their unhappy country.” There was a clear distinction, then, to be made between “innocent” animals and “guilty” humans.

What made this kind of targeting of dogs possible was both the steady growth over several decades of pronounced anti-German sentiment, and the acute “fear, panic and vindictiveness” prompted by the outbreak of hostilities and the acceptance of the philosophy of “total war” (Panayi, 1991, p. 291; see also Douglas, 1995, p. 19; Gregory, 2008, pp. 234-48; Panayi, 1990, 1995). The fortunes of the dachshund are in this respect a footnote to wartime xenophobia and the resultant “attenuated liberalism” in British political culture (Cesarini, 1987; Cesarini & Kushner, 2003; Dove, 2005; Panayi, 1993), represented most obviously by the resort to internment—the “constipation camp,” as the misplaced humor of the cartoons had it (Figure 3). The situation may be summed up in the fortunes of the unfortunate German waiter Gustave Hofsass, who had attempted to exhibit his dachshund at the 1915 Crufts show, only to be refused registration by the Kennel Club’s Secretary, E. W. Jaquet, on the grounds that he was an alien and unable to produce a certificate of naturalization.1 Evading the charge of parochialism and narrow-mindedness, Jaquet criticized the government’s want of effort in dealing with alien enemies, spies, and other dangerous persons, commenting darkly that it is “somewhat extraordinary that an enemy alien who should, in all probability, be under restraint is at liberty” (Kennel Gazette, 1915, February, XXXVI(419), pp. 2, 32). Sympathy for “German” dogs thus in no way led the fancy to question the demonization of German nationals unfortunate enough to find themselves living and working in Britain. Defending dogs during the war often came at the expense of people, since the dogs were frequently treated as fully nationalized, while the humans were considered aliens—a consistently misanthropic theme to which this paper will return.

“Is This Helping to Win the War?”: The Agitation against Dogs

At the end of 1914, the Illustrated Kennel News (1914, December 11, p. 476D) was relieved to note that while some important—and many smaller fixtures—in the fancy’s calendar were wiped out, in “one of the minor calamities the result of the world’s war,” the rot had perhaps been stopped in time. The Kennel Club Stud Book (1917, p. x; 1918, p. vi) recorded that as many as 475 shows were held in the United Kingdom in 1915, with 429 held the following year. Temporary concessions to the Kennel Club’s strict rules and conditions allowed shows and field trials to continue, as did offering rosettes instead of prizes.
“Where’s your father gone, Fritz?”
“I don’t know—mother says he’s in a ‘Constipation Camp.’”

Devoting profits to war charities also managed to secure a measure of legitimacy for shows in wartime conditions. But this patriotic stance was increasingly difficult to sustain, as the war and its impact were brought home to the British in ever more insistent form, particularly from the second half of 1916.

Although Crufts was able to continue in some form for every year except 1918, other important shows, like the National Dog Show at Birmingham, and the Kennel Club’s Olympia show, had to be abandoned, in the latter case with the venue being required by the military authorities (notably, to hold internees). The government also took action on the use of railway facilities for transporting dogs, following complaints from the railway companies and from the general public. One correspondent to the *Times* argued in December 1916 that “if the promoters of dog shows will not voluntarily abandon them during the war the railways should be authorized to refuse to carry dogs for show purposes,” adding for good measure that the advertising of stud dogs was a disgrace “in these times,” and that the dog tax should be raised to the point at which people would begin to drown unwanted puppies (*London Times*, 1916, December 18, p. 3).

In February 1917, the Kennel Club considered the conditions under which its sponsored dog shows could be held, following a letter from the Board of Trade passing on the railway companies’ proposal to withhold facilities in connection with shows. Its response reiterated its policy of discouraging all but local and members’ shows, trying in so doing to avoid an outright ban. It initially proposed a limit of a 20-mile radius for dog shows (later 10 miles), with no more than two dogs allowed from each exhibitor (*Kennel Gazette*, XXXVIII(443) 1918, February, p. 19). These “radius,” “license,” or “sanction” shows enabled at least some of the fancy’s activities to continue, albeit in a heavily circumscribed form. The situation became ever more severe, however, to the point that dog shows were reported in May 1917 as being wholly forbidden under the Defence of the Realm Act. A fancier could rightly declare, in early 1917, that “[a]t last the war and its consequences have hit the Fancy hard” (*London Times*, 1917, May 23, p. 7; *Illustrated Kennel News*, 1917, February 2, p. 73).

Far worse news was to come, though. The most difficult decision the Kennel Club ever had to make was the abandonment of breed registration in late 1917: after the 8th of September of that year, no puppies born were to be registered at the Kennel Club, except those bred under special and strict license. Intended to mollify political and public critics, this decision struck to the heart of the dog fancy, creating at a stroke a whole class of “illegitimates” and threatening the entire pedigree program. The Kennel Club felt the loss of
income very keenly, resorting to trying to plug the gap in its finances by consider-
ing raising debentures, subscriptions, and income bonds, but being reduced to near bankruptcy by the end of 1917. As feelings in many quarters ran high against the continuance of pedigree activities in wartime, the Kennel Club was increasingly pushed on the back foot politically as well as economically, with the defensive tone of some of its publicity articles hard to miss.

From late 1916, as the *London Times* correspondence above indicates, the careful alignment between the dog fancy, Britishness, and patriotism, was increasingly under threat. Most notably, the *Daily Mail* (1916, December 2, p. 1) launched a winter offensive against dogdom with a front page that featured show dogs and their female “owners,” along with the pointed question: “Is This Helping to Win the War?” (Figure 4). The most immediate issue here was that of food economy in wartime—a topic fast becoming a “public obsession” (Gregory, 2008, p. 214; Wood, 1917; Wood & Hopkins, 1917). The *Mail* claimed that “[a] cushioned and degenerate pet may consume or spoil as much good food as would feed a small family,” adding that “[t]he intense affection that some women and some men have for their pets does not justify waste” (*Daily Mail*, 1916, December 2, pp. 1, 4). This was a tellingly gendered critique, as the photographs accompanying the *Mail’s* attacks attest, and the *Daily Mirror’s* parallel discussion of “Economy in War Time” also trained its guns on fond, foolish woman: “Despite all appeals for economy, there are many women who waste an enormous amount of time and money on their lap-dogs” (cited in *Illustrated Kennel News*, 1917, February 23, p. 119).

Condemnation of the practice of wasting food on useless “pets” was not entirely novel, but the topic resurfaced many times in the subsequent “agitation against dogs.” In February 1917, the Master of Christ’s and Reader in Zoology at Cambridge, A. E. Shipley, calculated that there were in all probability at least 2,000,000 adult dogs in England, Scotland, and Wales, consuming 4,500 tons a week, some or much of it fit for human consumption (*London Times*, 1917, February 19, p. 10). An even more precise accountant worked out that 2,500,000 dogs, great and small, eating on average one pound of food per day, would consume an amount of food that, if brought from abroad, would require 100 ships averaging 4,073 tons each. Even these figures were made out to be underestimates (*London Times*, 1917, April 13, p. 9); Sir Arthur Yapp, Director of Food Economy at the Ministry of Food, and a fervent campaigner against waste, considered that there were 2,600,000 pet dogs in London alone. Other calculations put the figure for Britain at nearer 5,000,000 dogs, accepting the scale of evasions and exemptions (*London Times*, 1918, January 7, p. 2). In one of the most extreme claims, it was argued that “there is no room for toy pets in war time, and that many toy dogs are fed
Figure 4. “Is This Helping to Win the War?” Daily Mail, December 2, 1916, p. 1.
with milk, for the lack of which babies in the East-End of London, especially baby boys, are dying” (see The Field, 1916, December 9, p. 900).

These complaints need to be placed in the context of biting food shortages, far short of famine, but aggravated by inefficient distribution and limited government control, and capable of provoking raw anger and major disturbances in many parts of Britain (Gregory, 2008, pp. 217, 219, 309 n. 33; Wilson, 1986, pp. 513-16). While the argument based on economy, limited food supplies, and waste was always central, however, it encompassed, implicitly and explicitly, a number of other issues, including the nuisance and danger of uncontrolled dogs in towns and in the countryside, the transmission of disease and the threat to public health, the indulgent and indefensible pampering of “pets” (particularly by women), the inappropriateness and impropriety of holding dog shows and breeding luxury animals, and, last but not least, the selfishness, sentimentality, and sheer unpatriotic effrontery of dog enthusiasts.

To everybody except the owner, a dog in a town is an unmitigated nuisance. The pavements are so fouled that even in daylight one has to pick one’s way carefully, while the yelping and yapping morning and evening when the unfortunate animals are turned out are a daily disturbance to invalids and others in the neighbourhood. I have been a lover of dogs all my life, and have kept many sorts in the country, and I have sympathy with the old people to whom their dog is their chief companion, but is it not time that, under present conditions, a stop should be put to the selfish luxury of keeping a useless dog in a town? (London Times, 1918, May 8, p. 7)

A second example: “A one-dog man” complained to the Times of his female neighbors, one of whom “has four Pekingese, another two fat Norwegian dogs, while a third sends out two Irish greyhounds with her baby’s perambulator” (London Times, 1918, April 30, p. 9). To add one last example, “Patriot” commended this correspondent by arguing, “Now that food is scarce, and will be even more so than at present, all unnecessary animals, such as many of the pariah dogs one sees in the streets and shops every day, to the annoyance and inconvenience of passengers, should be destroyed” (London Times, 1918, May 3, p. 9).³

These arguments about nuisance and economy were typically bundled up—as the pen name above demonstrates—with accusations of a want of
patriotism and even a want of Britishness, a position that could hardly be sounded out more clearly than by one last critic, who castigated “owners” as sentimentalists, and as such both callous and cruel:

The keeping of unnecessary dogs is now, as we know one of many means of helping the Germans to win the war. Taxation, appeal, reproof being all futile, I suggest that the occupants of every house where more than one dog is kept should be compelled to exhibit in each of their front windows an attractive placard, bearing in emphatic letters the legend “Pro-German; Anti-British.” It would speak no more than the truth, in fact if not in intention. And the street-boys might be left to do the rest. (London Times, 1917, May 31, p. 9)

That this was not an entirely idle threat is apparent in the Times’ report of a boarhound, Nero, who was poisoned by two chemists’ assistants who, if the report is accurate and truthful, complained of the dog’s “owner” “that the money spent on the dog’s food would keep at least one wounded soldier’s child from starvation, and if he did not get rid of the animal they would destroy it” (London Times, 1916, May 25, p. 3).

The “dog question,” as it was known, was important enough to be taken up in Parliament. Asked directly to comment on the calculus of utility versus food consumption, the President of the Board of Trade’s reply was not exactly reassuring to the nation’s dog lovers. Demurring only to the extent that dogs’ usefulness varied greatly, Mr. Pretyman agreed with his questioner that the number of urban dogs was indeed too high (Hansard, 1918, November 29, col. 345). The logic of these attacks on dog keeping was therefore always quite simple: fewer dogs. This could mean more than merely restrictions on breeding, or increased taxes for “owners” of “new” dogs (that is, those who had not owned one before), or even the rounding up and destruction of strays and unwanted animals. By extension, this injunction encompassed, if it did not exactly envision, the wholesale culling of domestic dogs. In May, 1918 the Chancellor of the Exchequer was forced to state in the Commons that “no order for the destruction of dogs, such as seems to have been anticipated in some quarters, is suggested” (Hansard, 1918, May 14, col. 199), but some dog lovers feared precisely what Bonar Law was at pains to deny. Theo Marples, editor of Our Dogs, allowed himself to believe that nothing less than the total extermination of dogs from the British Isles was envisioned (Our Dogs, 1917, July 6, p. 6). Francis Darwin, son of Charles, asserted that such a cull of dogs would be treated by Englishmen like Swift’s modest proposal in regard to superfluous babies (London Times, 1918, May 8, p. 7). For most dog lovers, however, the threat they feared was more indirect but also more insidious: a canicide that would follow either from drastic increases in taxation forcing
“owners” to destroy or abandon their dogs, or from food restrictions making dog food impossible to come by. In an editorial entitled “The anomalous dog,” critiquing dog-food restrictions and the end to the manufacture and sale of dog biscuits, the *Manchester Guardian* reflected on the insistent logic involved in the government restrictions:

The dog, it would appear, has now no legal existence. This fact does not emerge from any specific order pronouncing the doom of dogs. Such an order would be intelligible, if drastic. But apparently one may still keep dogs so long as one is careful not to give them food. (*Manchester Guardian*, 1918, April 26, p. 4)

**“Patriots First and Fanciers Second”: Defending Dogdom?**

The agitation against dogs was portrayed by the fancy as motivated by the purest prejudice, the work of those for whom the war was simply an opportunity to indulge their ineradicable hatred of dogs. *Our Dogs* editorialized that “[t]he great kennel interest has not escaped the notice of those who dislike dogs, from whom have come many suggestions for their curtailment in this country, most of them selfish, many fantastic, and all displaying their proposers [*sic*] pitiable narrow-mindedness and a puny outlook upon Nature” (*Our Dogs*, 1916, December 1, p. 779). A “Kanine Kook” replied to the fanatical dog haters responsible for the agitation in these terms: “I do not, as a matter of everyday practice, use Bolinger [*sic*] and raw eggs even for the Greyhounds at breakfast; neither do I consider a leg of mutton and a bottle of stout absolutely essential for Bull Terriers” (*Illustrated Kennel News*, 1917, January 19, p. 42). Wanting to show the world that patriotism and the breeding of dogs were synonymous, however, the dog fancy also attempted to turn the tables on its critics by insisting that they were the ones who were acting out of sympathy with the mood and the mind of the British people. One way of doing this was by associating antidog fanaticism with the enemy, equating dog hating with “the Hun.” *Our Dogs* (1918, May 10, p. 373) condemned, for instance, the “relentless Hun ruthlessness” behind some of these attacks. At a protest meeting in June 1917, sponsored by the newly formed Dog Owners’ Defence League, one speaker lamented that “[t]he country was getting more and more into a state of Prussianism” (*The Field*, 1917, June 23, p. 881). Even pithier was the protest that “Have you killed your dog yet?” was “playing the German game” (*The Referee*, 1918, May 19, cited in *Kennel Gazette*, June 1918, p. 66).

Such a defense was perhaps as predictable as the puzzlement expressed by a Clara Smith: “The one thing I cannot understand is that there has been no
attack on cats” (Illustrated Kennel News, 1917, May 11, p. 299). Rather more surprising is the fact that for the dog lobby, defending dogs by no means equated to defending all dogs. Fancy journals and correspondents often enthusiastically joined in the attacks on stray dogs, for a start. The Country World and Illustrated Kennel News (1918, April 12, p. 184) called for an embargo on the breeding of such evidently useless animals, for “By so doing, they will strengthen the Government’s hands in dealing with this question, eliminate the mongrel, to the ultimate advantage of the Fancy.” More vociferously still, the Kennel Club’s young rival, the Pedigree Dog Owners’ and Exhibitors’ Association, urged action against “the promiscuous propagation of hordes of pestiferous and unsightly mongrels which pervert the decency and peace of our thoroughfare” (see Our Dogs, 1918, April 12, p. 304).

The desperation of pedigree dog “owners” to prove their patriotism manifested itself in an anti-German hysteria as virulent as anything leveled against an inoffensive dachshund. Some dog lovers allowed themselves to ask why enemy aliens should continue to be fed, while their “pets” fasted. In November 1917, for instance, Dorothy Edmunds of Leighton Buzzard wrote to The Field to say that “in my humble opinion the total elimination, deportation or extermination, or any other suitable scheme, applied to all uninterned pure bred and half-bred Huns now flourishing in our midst, would be more likely to help England in her hour of need” than the wiping out of prized bloodlines (The Field, 1917, November 3, p. 631). Near the end of the war, Our Dogs similarly weighed the scales and found the claims of humanity wanting: “The Dog has always formed and will continue to form part of the home life of Britain…. ONE BRITISH BULL DOG is more worthy of food than all the uninterned Huns in our midst. Their food is assured them—our dogs’ food must likewise be secured” (Our Dogs, 1918, May 3, p. 363; emphasis in original). One week later, the Country World and Illustrated Kennel News (1918, May 10, p. 253) asked, “[W]hy should our dogs be killed while thousands of aliens are devouring the food of the country? The dogs at least do not act as traitors.” So dog haters were not the only ones who could calculate in such nakedly biopolitical terms; adapting Boddice’s (2008) recognition of the essential anthropocentricity of the British humane movement, we might think of this as the manifestation of a characteristically misanthropocentric attitude, defined by human interests but at the same time placing their investment in some dogs over the interests of some humans. In this vein, The Sphere offered the opinion that “[i]f there were a referendum as to whether the dogs or the ‘C.O.’s’ and Huns were to go first, we venture to think that the vote of the kingdom would hugely preponderate in favour of the dogs staying!” (cited in Illustrated Kennel News, 1917, June 15, p. 379).
The response of the British dog fancy to these concerted attacks is worthy of further and final attention, though, for it is exemplary of the kinds of divisions that the Great War instigated or at least helped to widen—even within the fancy itself. The Kennel Club—the nearest thing to a governing body for the fancy—was notable for its advocacy of discretion when it came to dealing with the government and the wider public. When the original agitation broke out, its organ (*Kennel Gazette*, 1916, December, **XXXVII**(441), p. 382) reminded readers to be “careful to refrain from exciting the susceptibilities of dog haters,” and its consistent message was that dog “owners” should respect the regulations that the government of the day demanded. It censured the likes of Miss Caroline Stiff—“An unpatriotic dog owner” fined £5 at Dover for using 20 pounds of bread a week for feeding her 14 dogs, each apparently indulged four times a day with bread and biscuits soaked in milk or gravy—the paper conceding that “[w]hilst it is admitted that the vast majority of the nation are lovers and owners of dogs, it is clear, on the other hand, that a noisy minority are ceaseless in their endeavours to force the Government to restrictive measures against all owners of dogs” (*Kennel Gazette*, 1917, September, **XXXVIII**(450), pp. 117-118). The Kennel Club clearly feared that such recklessness would stoke such antipathy to dogs that pedigreed animals would be drawn further and further into a legislative net that restricted, taxed, policed, and prosecuted.

Theo Marples summed up the political stance of the dog fancy best when he declared that “[w]e are, of course, all patriots first and fanciers second” (*Our Dogs*, 1917, February 16, p. 218). But the fact that Marples had to deny that this stance was neither funk nor the adoption of “Hun tactics” reveals that not everyone in the fancy community was quite so persuaded of the tactics of discretion. And as the war drew on, and as the wartime restrictions on activities were supplemented by the possibility that dogs could not be fed, dog men like Marples changed tack, becoming part of the noisy and provocative minority that the Kennel Club’s leaders were attempting to isolate. By May 1917, *Our Dogs* was maintaining that the government had gone mad on the dog question; now they urged dog fanciers to “agitate, agitate, agitate” (*Our Dogs*, 1917, May 11, p. 554). The threatened extermination of dogs from the British Isles had become an unconscionable crime against “this great community of tax-paying, law-abiding, and patriotic subjects of the King” (*Our Dogs*, 1917, July 6, p. 6).

Disgruntlement with the Kennel Club’s record of negotiation with the government called into question its leadership of the fancy. The Pedigree Dog Owners’ and Exhibitors’ Association was constituted in Manchester in 1917 as a populist, provincial rival to the metropolitan and aristocratic Kennel
Club. Accepting registrations from affiliated societies without fee, the PDO&EA advocated a democratization of the fancy—“Representation is our motto”—and it was briefly reconstituted as the National Representative Kennel Club. A more militant body still had its origins in the formation of the Dog Owners’ Defence Fund in May 1917, out of which emerged the Dog Owners’ Defence Association. If the PDO&EA might be seen as an alternative Kennel Club, the DODA was very clearly an anti-Kennel Club, breaking ranks with the London body in advocating agitation and noncompliance. For the Kennel Club, and its most prominent defender among the editors of the fancy papers, E. B. Joachim of the Illustrated Kennel News, the DODA was prominent among the “defenders of disorder” liable to provoke the government into drastic measures (Illustrated Kennel News, 1917, July 27, pp. 447-449). For their part, supporters and members of the DODA like Theo Marples praised it as “a young but very promising aspirant to the suffrage of dog owners” (Our Dogs, 1918, August 9, p. 85).

By 1918, the position of the Kennel Club as the de facto governing body of the dog fancy had never looked so shaky. The illness and retirement of Joachim in March of that year removed the Club’s most prominent supporter, and the new editor of the Illustrated Kennel News joined in the criticism of the breeding restrictions accepted and policed by the Kennel Club. Even the Field—hardly a radical or militant paper—criticized the Kennel Club for its weakness in dealing with the government. Other former well-wishers characterized its position as pusillanimity, such as this “Northern Fancier” writing to the Illustrated Kennel News in April: “[A]re we at home to support Kaiserism in its worst form while they [‘our sons and brothers’] are fighting to destroy it? The Kaiser does to some extent consult, at any rate, a section of his people on the laws he imposes on his country, but the K.C. never considers or consults those who are keeping the K.C. in its present position, neither will they listen to any complaints or dissatisfaction which exists among the Fancy” (Illustrated Kennel News, 1918, April 5). This correspondent observed that democracy was everywhere in the ascendant and that the war was not being fought to prop up unrepresentative and aristocratic institutions. Theo Marples reminded the Kennel Club that “[s]urely the fate of Russia and Germany is a lesson to all autocratic institutions” (Our Dogs, 1918, October 14, p. 242); he warned that only reform would prevent the Kennel Club from being “hurled into the vortex of the present crumbling autocracies of Europe” (Our Dogs, 1918, October 18, p. 261).

There were dissenters even within the Kennel Club’s own ranks. Lieutenant-Colonel T. B. Phillips, in his address to the Bi-annual General Meeting in early 1918, dissociated himself from “the Bolsheviks of Dogdom” but went on
to portray the rulers of the Kennel Club “in much the same light as the late rulers of Russia.” In these extraordinary attacks, something like revolution was in the air in the dog world. Confronted by protest meetings around the country, the Kennel Club vainly tried to mediate between people, press, and government. Increasingly vulnerable to being portrayed, from within the dog lobby itself, as alien, aristocratic, and anachronistic, its attempt to take the lead in defending Britain’s pedigree dog lovers from charges of disloyalty lay in ruins. The war had destroyed any notion of unanimity among the dog fancy and thus threatened the very conception of “the fancy.”

Conclusions

The darkest days of the war came shortly before its end (Figure 5), and with the cessation of hostilities the dog fancy successfully concealed most of its divisions as its business returned to something near normality. Breeding restrictions were lifted fairly promptly and open shows allowed. All the major shows were up and running by 1920. Even those “illegitimates” produced by the ban on breeding eventually became eligible for registration and welcomed into the stud books. In a mood of relief and self-congratulation it was claimed that “[p]atriotism has not been sacrificed in the least, but a glorious sport has been saved” and that “the cult of the dog may once more be followed without hindrance” (Country World and Illustrated Kennel News, 1918, November 8, p. 669; Kennel Gazette, 1918, December 18, p. 125).

The reality of British dogs’ experience on the home front, however, and that of their human companions, champions, and institutions, was traumatic. Rosy retrospect is impossible to reconcile with the Kennel Club’s anguished reflection that, “Owing to the continued stress of the war, which had lasted for nearly four-and-a-half years, the year 1918 must, in its effects, be reckoned as the most disastrous that has ever afflicted dogdom” (Kennel Club Stud Book, 1919, XLVI, p. viii). The Great War was more than merely an interruption of the business of dog shows and dog breeding and the culture of dog “ownership.” It was, above all else, a crisis that called into question the loyalty and patriotism of both dogs and their human companions. Postwar encomia to the “patriotism” and “loyalty” of the dog should be put into this political context rather than taken at face value. Almost immediately after the cessation of hostilities, the Times offered the opinion that “it is only right that the national service of the brave dogs of Britain should receive mention” (London Times, 1918, December 9, p. 3); but such commemoration and commendation is
Figure 5. The beginning and end of the war. Our Dogs, December 13, 1918, p. 435.
part of a deliberate forgetting of the disunity that the war had exposed—perhaps even a kind of national exculpation or contrition.

Britain’s dogs may then be numbered among the largely unheralded victims of the wartime “economy of sacrifice” identified by the historian Keith Gregory (2008, p. 245). While attacks on dogs and their “owners” initially focused on easy targets like the dachshund, these broadened into a wider assault on the central institutions of the dog fancy, coming to threaten even the right to “own” and maintain prized “pets.” These campaigns never came close to wiping out breeds, let alone the dog community, but they do reveal the paradoxes of the “anomalous dog” in wartime. While there are undoubtedly “national dogs,” even “citizen canines,” as Tenner (1998) recognizes, the existence of dogs was only ever conditional. In a time of war, dogs were uniquely vulnerable to the revocation of their privileged status as human companions. Their nominal champions might rally round “these most kindly and attractive members of the community, our friends the dogs,” as their Parliamentary defender, the Rt. Hon. J. G. Swift MacNeill, put it to the House of Commons (Hansard, 1917, May 3, col. 594), but it is clear that not all dogs (and not all humans) were deemed equally worthy of compassion. In brief, if dogs of certain breeds and pedigrees have been recognized as powerful instruments in nation-making as well as class cohesion, we should also accept a sense of how fragile such political articulations might be: such dogs could be conscripted and mobilized in the service of nationalism and patriotism, for sure, but whatever “citizenship” they possessed was critically compromised at a time of national crisis.6

Notes

1. See Kennel Club General Committee Minutes, Kennel Club Library, London (hereafter KCM), Volume 18: 1915, January 27, pp. 250-251; 1915, March 10, p. 312; 1915, April 7, p. 368. For another case, see the treatment of the Austrian internee R. Kirchel: 1915, January 27, p. 254; 1915, February 17, p. 280. Hofass was triply unlucky—not only to be a German national, but also a waiter, an occupation made equivalent with spying, in the Daily Mail’s “pogrom propaganda” (see Panayi, 1991, pp. 25, 157)—and the “owner” of a dachshund. I am particularly grateful to the Kennel Club for access to these documents.

2. On the British food crisis and the response of the state, Barnett (1985) remains the most substantial study; Olson (1963, p. 96) specifically refers to restrictions against feeding of dogs and horses. Overwhelmingly positive assessments of food policy (seen largely as a prelude to the establishment of rationing in 1918) have been challenged in recent years, but William Beveridge’s (1928) pithy summation of the post-1916 period as the “heroic age of food control in Britain” (p. 51) does need to be qualified in some measure by considering food security in terms of the strains on British society and its relationship with nonhuman animals.

3. It has been rightly pointed out how such language is reminiscent of the colonial experience; Gordon (2003) has an exceptional treatment of the cultural presence of dogs in the business of colonization, and their entanglement in colonial/racial hierarchies.
5. For arguments on the status of the “illegitimates” and the “disloyal” and “irresponsible” breeders who had produced them, see KCM, 1918, December 4, Volume 22: p. 56; 1918, December 18, p. 92; 1919, February 5, p. 200; 1919, February 26, pp. 259-69.
6. An immediate parallel is with the culling of animal companions at the start of the Second World War. Given her own ongoing research on this topic, I would like to express my gratitude to Hilda Kean for her interest in this paper, and her helpful editorial advice, and for the comments from two thoughtful reviewers, as well as to the Kennel Club for access to archival material.

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