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Inherent Vice? Maltese Men and the Organization of Prostitution in Interwar Cardiff

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Abstract

This article explores concerns over Maltese men and the organization of prostitution in interwar Cardiff, and reveals the central role of masculinity in shaping both perceptions and the social experiences of this marginalized group. Maltese cafés became connected to prostitution as a result of a shipping downturn, the exemption of the Maltese from ‘aliens’ restrictions, and heavy policing of street prostitution that encouraged more clandestine methods. However, links between some Maltese and prostitution were extended to Maltese men as a whole. Drawing on imperialistic discourses of sexual behaviour and “race,” this connection was used by Cardiff’s Chief Constable to denote racial difference for the Maltese. The Chief Constable’s rhetoric – amplified by the local and national press, and the actions of his force – had a lasting impact on Maltese seafarers and how they were perceived, and drew international attention from the Maltese Imperial Government, which became concerned over the impact the narratives had on the ability of Maltese sailors to obtain work on ships. This case study, which sheds light on an overlooked minority group in twentieth-century Britain, demonstrates that racialization is an active process, formed in specific contexts in response to localized concerns. As such, it also reveals that historians need to pay close attention to local and regional settings in order to pick apart the complexities, continuities, and contradictions of the production of racial difference.

In 1927, Cardiff's Chief Constable, James Wilson, wrote to the Home Office to express concerns over "questionable establishments [...] styled as 'cafés'" in Butetown, the city's dockland.¹ His arguments focused on Maltese men, whom he saw as using cafés to facilitate spaces for "illicit carnal intercourse between the white and coloured races." Wilson argued that the cafés jarred with "the British point of view" on prostitution, were symbolic of a systemic shift in the organization and practice of prostitution in interwar Cardiff, and driven by "vices ingrained" in Maltese masculinity.² In order to combat the "problem" of the Maltese, the Chief Constable lobbied the Home Secretary, William Joynson-Hicks, to shut down Maltese cafés under the 1920 Aliens Order, with the ultimate aim of removing Maltese men from the city. This article explores why the Chief Constable became so concerned with the role that Maltese men played in the organization of Cardiff's prostitution in the 1920s, revealing the significant role that masculinity and sexuality played in shaping both perceptions and the social experiences of this marginalized group, and the centrality of local contexts in forming ideas of racial difference.

While earlier scholarship on race in interwar British ports focused on the 1919 race riots and labor relations, studies by Lucy Bland and Laura Tabili have emphasized the need to think about sex and sexuality as contributing factors to racial conflict, and subsequent formations of racial identity.³ This historiography has revealed that post-war miscegenation anxieties coalesced responses to shifts in both gender and race relations and shaped perceptions of interracial relationships into the 1930s.⁴ Miscegenation anxieties had a significant impact in port cities like Cardiff, informing perceptions of prostitution and a pathologization of "half caste" children.⁵ But what does this tell us about how racial difference was constructed? Tabili has gone on to argue that "race" and racial difference need to be seen not as embedded and essentialist features of societies but as an "historical process, constructed by people, thus susceptible to analysis and modification."⁶ Despite this, studies of race have often presented,

as Alison Bashford has argued, a “generic ‘othering’” which fails to pick apart the complexities, continuities, and contradictions of the “othering” process.⁷ The role of sex in constructing racial difference in colonial contexts is one aspect of “othering” to have received attention. Cultural histories of race and empire have emphasized how fears and fascinations over ideas of sexual differences played a significant role in forming and upholding colonial-racial hierarchies.⁸ Lisa Sigel’s work on pornography in Victorian and Edwardian Britain reveals how colonial connections between sexual behaviours and racial difference also shaped perceptions in the Metropole. She shows how “foreign” sexuality was frequently exoticized through being placed outside the bounds of “normative” sexual behaviour, and thus infused “colonial hierarchies” through “sexualized representations” of peoples “conquered” by the British. As such, themes like cuckolding, voyeurism, and interracial sex, which all featured in Wilson’s reports on Maltese cafés in Cardiff, were tropes that “reinforced the symbolic importance of race.”⁹

Evidence from interwar Cardiff relating to the Maltese – a group often overlooked by historians – can help go beyond generic “othering” to reveal the complexities and continuities of racialization, how this process gained traction, and how it was linked to a wider imperialistic sense of masculinity and heteronormative sexual behaviours. An examination of port cities and regional centres like Cardiff also offers invaluable evidence through which to gauge the prevalence – or not – of “metropolitan” or “national” ideas, and the extent to which they shaped policing at a local level.¹⁰ Regional differences emerge when we compare Cardiff against existing studies of prostitution in twentieth-century England. Julia Laite’s work has shown that the interwar period saw an increasing criminalization of women as “common prostitutes” by the Metropolitan Police, with connections between prostitution and race becoming more pronounced after the Second World War.¹¹ However, as this article reveals, connections between prostitution, race and masculinity were dominant in interwar Cardiff and were a

greater threat to Cardiff's police force than the "common prostitute." What was it about Maltese men that posed such a threat to Cardiff's Chief Constable? Why were they seen to be intrinsically linked to prostitution? How influential were the Chief Constable's ideas about the Maltese and their alleged links to the organization of prostitution?

This article revises existing assessments of racialization and prostitution by showing how, for the Chief Constable, it was not the socio-economic and racial inequalities of Britain's global economic dominance, nor the police's attempts to eradicate prostitution from city streets which had created the conditions for clandestine prostitution in Cardiff's docklands. Rather, the cause was seen as "immorality" ingrained in Maltese men: colonial subjects seen by Wilson as racially different to the "British" based on perceptions of their masculinity and the sexual behaviours they were deemed to facilitate and engage in. The article begins with an exploration of Wilson's reports for the Home Secretary, which detail the Maltese "café scheme" and how Wilson saw it to facilitate miscegenation.¹² While Wilson had the means to control Cardiff's black population through the 1925 Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, the Maltese were exempt from such restrictions.¹³ In order to make his case for them to be seen as un-"British" and racially different, Wilson drew on wider connections between "race" and sexual behaviours to promote an idea of tendencies towards "pimping," and non-heteronormative sexual behaviours like voyeurism and polyandry, as being "ingrained" in Maltese masculinity. In doing so, Wilson externalized vice to an "other," despite having little concrete evidence of the role of the Maltese in controlling prostitution. In the context of wider national concerns over dockland miscegenation, Wilson's rhetoric also drew on eugenic notions of gradations of "Europeanness," and painted Maltese men as racially "in-between."¹⁴

Wilson's anti-Maltese sentiment went beyond the rhetoric of his reports to shape wider perceptions, meaning that masculinity and sexuality were powerful tools in shaping racialization. The middle section of this article looks at how Wilson directed his force to focus

efforts on Maltese men, and to build up “evidence” against them in order to paint them as exploitative pimps. This had a negative impact on Maltese seafarers based in the port, and international consequences, as the Maltese Imperial Government became concerned over how racialized narratives were preventing Maltese sailors from gaining work. The article concludes with an analysis of the longevity of the Maltese stereotype, which shows that while police action against the Maltese retired with Wilson in the late-1940s, links between the Maltese and café prostitution endured – in the eyes of both local and outside observers, including sociologists who studied race relations in Butetown. This article shows how a process of racialization in interwar Britain emerged in response to localized concerns, and was shaped by ideas of masculinity and sexual behaviour. The case study of Cardiff raises important issues for approaches to “race” in general, as it demonstrates that racialization, while informed by wider discourses, is an active process tied to specific contexts. The racialization of the Maltese was driven by Cardiff’s Chief Constable, amplified by the press, and had a much wider impact on the social experiences of Maltese seafarers in British ports and how they were perceived and treated. Racisms, as oppressive power structures, are thus produced and reproduced by historical actors within particular contexts, meaning that historians need to pay close attention to the local or regional settings in which they are formed. Only through looking at specific historical contexts can we pick apart the complexities, continuities and contradictions of processes of racialization, and the social constructions of “race” and racial difference as a whole.

<Insert Figure 1 near here>

The Maltese “café scheme”

The emergence of Chief Constable Wilson’s concerns over the Maltese coincided with a significant decline in the numbers of women arrested for street prostitution offences in the city. As shown in Figure 1, arrests remained at a consistently high level until the beginning of the

1920s when they fell dramatically – from 294 in 1921 to just 54 in 1930. Studies of prostitution in Britain have demonstrated how women selling sex employed various means to avoid arrest in response to police action against streetwalking, including clandestine practices.¹⁵ This can be observed in Cardiff, as the decline in overall arrests during the mid-1920s followed a period in which the police targeted streetwalking in the city centre in response to complaints from newspapers and vigilance groups over the behaviour of “common prostitutes.”¹⁶ Newspapers praised Wilson for his actions against “social vice” and for allegedly transforming Cardiff into “morally one of the cleanest cities in Britain.”¹⁷ However, police action had simply pushed prostitution into more clandestine sites – like dockland cafés.¹⁸ Using the press as tool to build his credibility, Wilson had shaped a reputation as a combatant against “vice” – one that he sought to uphold. After targeting city centre streets, he turned the resulting shift in the ways in which women used different spaces to sell sex into a narrative about the “evil” of Maltese café keepers. Why did the panic about prostitution get displaced onto foreigners running dockland cafés?

As Cardiff’s export trade was dominated by tramp shipping and port authorities kept no official records of numbers of seamen, it is difficult to ascertain exact figures for Butetown’s Maltese community.¹⁹ However, data on Butetown’s boarding houses can help demonstrate the diversity of Cardiff’s dockland, which had significantly increased through the recruitment of wartime labor from Britain’s colonies. **<Insert Table 1 near here>** Boarding house figures detailed in Table 1 demonstrate that while not having as great a presence in the port as “Arab,” Indian, West African and West Indian seafarers, the Maltese became an established part of Butetown society by the interwar years. This can be seen in the variety of Maltese businesses on Bute Street, the district’s main thoroughfare, by the late-1920s. **<Insert Table 2 near here>** Table 2 contains data collated from city trade directories, which reveals that while the Maltese were involved in a number of businesses – including boarding houses, general stores, and

butchers – cafés became the most prominent Maltese enterprise. Table 3, which is drawn from information listed by the Chief Constable as evidence to the Home Secretary, also shows that the number of Maltese cafés increased during the late-1920s. Of forty-three cafés on Bute Street in 1927, twenty-three were run by Maltese men, one possibly by a Maltese man, and three by the British wives of Maltese men.²⁰ By 1929 the number of Maltese cafés at Bute Street were recorded in city directories had risen to twenty-nine.

<Insert Figure 2 near here>

The prevalence of Maltese cafés in Butetown was attributable to both social geography and the Maltese's favourable legal status in a climate otherwise hostile to colonial seafarers.²¹ While the dockland's business district was part of Cardiff's urban society, the residential portion was distinct; an "alien enclave" in terms of both how it was perceived, and how it was disconnected from the rest of the city by a canal, docks, railways and a river (Figure 2).²² Bute Street businesses, including cafés, catered for seamen who had either settled in, or were regular visitors to the port – as well as men from other parts of the city and surrounding region drawn to Butetown's nightlife.²³ As the Maltese were not counted under the 1919 Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act, they were able to remain in Britain.²⁴ While evidence on exactly why the Maltese came to run most of Butetown's cafés in the 1920s is scarce, it is likely that their exemption from "alien" status during a shipping downturn meant that keeping a café might have appealed to out-of-work seamen who had no barrier to settling in the port. Additionally, the police had previously targeted premises operated by other minority groups, meaning that Bute Street businesses became open to the Maltese.²⁵ For instance, in the early-1920s the police and the press had focused on "undesirable foreigners" running boarding houses and employing "white women", along with concerns over white women being lured into sexual "depravity" at Chinese opium dens.²⁶ Observers like local Maltese resident Michael Camilleri and Ercole Valenzia, Secretary of the Maltese National Union of Seamen, noted how in Butetown "a

certain gang of Maltese” had “taken upon themselves the dirty work that was done in years past by Italians, Greeks and Chinese, i.e. that of keeping Cafés [*sic.*] of ill-fame.”²⁷ The exemption of the Maltese from the aliens legislation and prior actions of the city’s police force thus created circumstances favourable for Maltese men to open cafés and other businesses in Butetown.

While opportunities for Maltese café keepers may have arisen as a result of prior police efforts to target other minority groups in the dockland, Chief Constable Wilson vehemently disagreed with the observations of Camilleri and Valenzia:

The suggestion that the Maltese café keepers have inherited the legacy of immoral Italians, Greeks and Chinese in keeping cafés of ill fame is without foundation. It is the Maltese themselves who conceived and developed the café scheme. A Maltese named Louis Fenech at one time controlled 22 cafés in which he placed managers.²⁸

This excerpt epitomizes Wilson’s views towards the Maltese in the interwar years. Despite Bute Street’s cafés being kept by a number of nationalities, those run by the Maltese became *the* source of anxiety for Cardiff’s police. Replacing groups like the Chinese in allegedly dominating a specific dockland industry, the Maltese became Wilson’s sole focus of concern.²⁹ Maltese-run cafés became seen by the police and the press as sites for prostitution and miscegenation, driven by the “disreputable vices” of the Maltese “character”. Even if a figure like Louis Fenech did control dockland prostitution to such an extent, Wilson’s concerns lay not with individuals but with the Maltese as a group. Why did Maltese men resident in Butetown pose such a threat to Cardiff’s Chief Constable, and what does it reveal about formations of racial difference in interwar Britain?

The answer to the first part of this question can be partly explained by their exemption from the 1919 Aliens Act and the 1920 Aliens Order, meaning that they were able to become

resident in Britain. Cardiff's black population was targeted using the 1925 Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, which demanded that undocumented black seamen in Britain register themselves as "aliens." The 1925 Order further impaired the ability to obtain work at a time when work on ships was becoming harder to find, and many were threatened with deportation.³⁰ Providing proof was not straightforward, as seamen did not need to carry passports and "coloured" seafarers were unable to have their discharge books considered as proof of status by port authorities – unlike the case for their "white" counterparts. An investigation by the League of Coloured Peoples, a prominent civil rights group, discovered that Cardiff's police had "employed any and every means to compel [all] coloured seamen to register as aliens," even those who had been born in British territory and had been living in Cardiff for over twenty years.³¹ These comments can be verified by the frequency of "alien" cases at Cardiff Petty Sessions from the late-1920s, as the police clearly sought to limit the numbers of "coloured" seamen in the port.³²

Having the means to regulate black seamen, Wilson turned his attentions to the Maltese, who had become a visible and settled presence in the dockland by the late-1920s. This shift from transience to a settled aspect of Cardiff society was a defining feature of Wilson's anxieties, meaning that their presence in Butetown symbolized a challenge to "British" hegemony over colonial subjects. Wilson explicitly lamented that Maltese café keepers provided an "avenue" for "ultimate sexual license" between "coloured" seafarers and "white women of low moral calibre," but "cannot be expelled from the country because they are British subjects."³³ The Maltese café was coupled with Wilson's other concern in the dockland – miscegenation – as he also felt that the Maltese facilitated an increase in a "half-caste" population in the port that he did not have the means to regulate.³⁴ Hence, for Wilson the Maltese embodied a much wider "racial problem" that was seen to be at odds with a sense of being "British," which in his eyes equated to cultural and racial hegemony over colonized

“others.” The Chief Constable was adamant that it was the duty of the police to regulate sexual behaviours in cosmopolitan ports like Cardiff in order to curb miscegenation and maintain “British” dominance over colonial subjects. In his own words, police forces, as opposed to social reformers, were in an ideal position to act against “the fact that our race has become leavened with colour strain to such an extent.”³⁵ The local press concurred, and likewise externalized vice to “others” through openly suggesting that “alien or casual population, including persons of alien descent” were a direct cause in an increase in recorded crime in the mid-1920s.³⁶ In reports for Cardiff Watch Committee, Wilson argued that while the “flow of coloured men” to the ports was subject to “measures of control,” the “problem dealing with the association of coloured men with white women and their half-caste progeny remains untouched. I cannot conceive how its partial or complete elimination can be effected without the aid of Parliament.”³⁷ In an attempt to deal with the perceived problem of the Maltese, Wilson lobbied the Home Office to bring them under the auspices of the Aliens Acts, and initiated a process of racialization that affected both the social experience and perceptions of Maltese seamen in Britain into the middle of the century.

<Insert Table 3 near here>

Wilson marked out Maltese men as racially different through persistent emphasis on them organizing prostitution, exploiting young white women, and engaging in non-heteronormative sexual behaviour. In September 1927, Wilson prepared a report for the Home Secretary, William Joynson-Hicks, on the “immorality” of the Maltese and their “café scheme.” Wilson sought a kindred spirit in the Home Secretary, a prominent ‘anti-alien’ who, on assuming office in late-1924, announced a crusade against “aliens” and visited British ports in order to impart his zeal onto immigration officials.³⁸ Joynson-Hicks’s approach to immigration also received favourable reports in Cardiff newspapers, providing further impetus for Wilson’s crusade against the Maltese.³⁹ In his report to the Home Secretary, Wilson emphasized the

Maltese man's "low moral character" and "evil influences," and requested that he use the 1920 Aliens Order to shut down caf  s "frequented by aliens [and] conducted in a disorderly or improper manner or in a manner prejudicial to the public good." To support his claim, Wilson included a list of Butetown's caf  s detailing their owners and previous convictions (Table 3).⁴⁰ While Joynson-Hicks shared Wilson's views on the Maltese and was "anxious that all possible means of dealing with the evil of disorder [...] should be adopted," he was unable to fulfil Wilson's demands. This was partly a result of Wilson's fabricated evidence: only three Maltese men included in his report had previous convictions for brothel-related offences, with the others only being included on account of them being Maltese. Additionally, the 1920 Order could not be applied to the Maltese given that they were not legally "alien." Joynson-Hicks instead encouraged Wilson to use licensing byelaws to regulate and shut down Maltese caf  s.⁴¹

<Insert Table 4 near here>

Joynson-Hicks's inability to use the Aliens Orders to act against the Maltese did not weaken Wilson's zeal in demonizing this group. Table 4 demonstrates how Wilson followed the Joynson-Hicks's advice in using licensing laws in an attempt to remove Maltese caf  s from Bute Street, with convictions for the illegal sale of alcohol increasing in 1927.⁴² The years following the initial report to the Home Secretary also saw a continuation of public debate instigated by both Wilson and the press over "problems peculiar to Butetown" and the role of the Maltese in controlling prostitution, leading him to continue with his crusade against them.⁴³ Wilson produced two reports for Cardiff's Watch Committee in early 1929, in which he continued to emphasize the links between Maltese caf  s and prostitution. He lamented that the "police are guardians of the law, but they have their limitations in dealing with a form of vice not subject to penal laws," and advocated legislation along the lines of South Africa's 1927 Immorality Act in order to prohibit interracial sex.⁴⁴ Wilson forwarded his reports to authorities in other ports, Cardiff MPs, and the Home Office, with "a view to securing cooperative effort

towards strengthening legislation in respect of the evils mentioned.”⁴⁵ These “evils” included an idea of an innately exploitative nature within Maltese masculinity, which was apart from “British” standards. In his reports to the Watch Committee he stressed that Maltese men were “immoral,” “dishonest,” “debased and degenerate types” with “disreputable vices ingrained in them from their early environment. They do not appreciate the British point of view with regard to prostitution. To them it is a commonplace of life and a matter of business.”⁴⁶

Wilson’s actions in circulating the report led national newspapers to relay these arguments to a much wider audience.⁴⁷ For instance, *The Times* placed the cafés at the centre of a “social evil in Cardiff,” while the *Daily Herald* sensationally echoed Wilson’s views through describing the Maltese as “debased and degenerate,” and their “tragic cafés” as the source of “hundreds of half-caste children” and a “devaluation of life” in the port.⁴⁸ The *South Wales Echo* also echoed Wilson’s arguments. For this regional newspaper, “undesirables” (i.e. the Maltese) had identified a weakness in the law and were exploiting it. The newspaper also lamented the “tremendous difficulties” raised by “Coloured seamen of every caste” claiming rights to protection as British subjects and that the “problems of Empire” prevented easy deportation.⁴⁹ Additionally, perceptions of the role that Maltese men played in prostitution and miscegenation sometimes led them to be grouped as “coloured”: for instance, the *Daily Herald* and *The Times* referred to the cafés of Bute Street, mainly run by Maltese men, as being “kept by coloured people.”⁵⁰ In his evidence to the Royal Committee on Licensing in 1930, in which he provided extensive detail on Maltese cafés, Wilson equally blurred racial boundaries. He reported how Maltese cafés were “frequented by prostitutes [...] and the wives or paramours of alien or coloured seamen who live either on or near the premises”.⁵¹ While Wilson hinted at how the cafés might have intertwined with the clandestine approaches of prostitutes through suggesting that bedrooms were “‘farmed out’ on the ‘combined furnished room’ and rent-book

system to women of low moral character,” he continued to frame Maltese men as the source of the ‘problems of the docks district’.⁵²

In October 1930, following enquiries from the Agent General for Malta regarding Cardiff’s Maltese cafés, Joynson-Hicks requested another report from Wilson. The Chief Constable’s response noted that the number of Maltese-owned cafés had increased to forty-eight, and stressed that Maltese men had now transformed the nature of prostitution in Cardiff. He pleaded for Joynson-Hicks to recognize that the Maltese had caused a shift from “the old style brothel which was a house used by prostitutes for their own purposes” to “a so-called café in which prostitutes and immoral women under the guise of waitresses and dance partners cater for the sexual licence of the floating population.”⁵³ In this report, Wilson expressed some anxiety over casual “prostitution” or the “good-time girl,” reflecting a popular source of moral panic in the 1920s.⁵⁴ While this was a feature of Wilson’s anxieties over Butetown’s cafés, it was always the Maltese that he saw as the source of the “problem.” He argued that Maltese men were exploiting ‘young [girls] of immoral character’, and dominated “the actions of young British prostitutes by sending them to the City centre [*sic.*] to earn money by prostitution which they hand to the Maltese.”⁵⁵ Instead of acknowledging that the heavy policing of streetwalkers had pushed commercial sex into more clandestine arrangements, Wilson, using mainly baseless allegations, depicted the Maltese as an exploitative group that had come to control the entire operation and nature of prostitution in the city.

For Wilson and his supporters, the Maltese were both a significant cause of “colour strain” and a challenge to “British” hegemony. Wilson’s report to Joynson-Hicks in 1930 illustrates his conception of the Maltese as “debased and degenerate types,” as well as the vivid association between – and lurid fascination with – café prostitution and interracial sex. Miscegenation was a source of sensation for the press, and lurid coverage of dockland sexual behaviour in the interwar years perpetuated ideas of racial difference.⁵⁶ The conservative

Western Mail, for instance, argued that the social fabric of Butetown was “dominated by social and moral standards imported [...] from countries where civilized conditions are in a state of development and where the moral conventions are wholly at variance with our own.”⁵⁷ In a later article entitled “The Coloured Man in Our Midst” the *Western Mail* invoked notions of an “island race” in arguing that “We can no longer tolerate the [...] burden on our doorstep,” and advocated the repatriation of colonial immigrants in order to cease “the ethnological experiment of cross-breeding which has made the problem of the half-caste girl one of the most heart-breaking facing our social workers.”⁵⁸ Wilson placed the Maltese at the centre of this wider concern over miscegenation, primarily as he saw Maltese masculinity as inclined towards facilitating interracial sex, and being driven by what he saw as unorthodox sexual behaviours that jarred with those of the “British.”

In addition to providing the means for miscegenation, Wilson also took issue with what he saw as tendencies towards non-heteronormative behaviour as being inherent in Maltese masculinity. Wilson used this frame of reference to denote racial difference for the Maltese, and stressed how, alongside organizing prostitution, Maltese men also engaged in non-heteronormative sexual behaviours. As evidence for the “un-British” culture of the cafés, Wilson argued that

No. 212 Bute Street is kept as a café by a Maltese named Jack Gauci and his wife who was formerly a prostitute. They have living with them another Maltese named Tony Ferrugia and his wife who was formerly a prostitute. A fortnight after the marriage of Mrs Ferrugia she was found in the act of prostitution with an African negro with the knowledge and consent of her husband who was keeping observation outside the door of the room whilst immorality took place.⁵⁹

Wilson used this imagery of voyeurism and polyandry to support his argument that Maltese men were “immoral, indolent, dishonest, and despicable creatures” who “brazenly flout the moral code of this country.”⁶⁰ Sexual monogamy was therefore central to Wilson’s conception of a “British moral code” and masculinity, viewing “ingrained” vices within Maltese masculinity as providing the means for not only prostitution and miscegenation, but as tendencies towards sexual practices that further challenged hegemony over colonial “others.”⁶¹ As such, heteronormative sex roles were an aspect of what Wilson saw as being “British,” and how a conception of “British” masculinity was formed against that of colonized peoples, echoing wider binary oppositions between normative “Western”/“Christian” notions of monogamy, and colonial discourses of “polygamic races.”⁶²

The racialization of the Maltese was thus built on a connection between masculinity and non-heteronormative sexual behaviours, meaning that physical properties and skin colour operated as mediating but not defining markers in conceptualizing racial difference.⁶³ Reflecting colonial hierarchies, the Maltese were placed within a racialized framework in which they were seen to possess an “un-British” sexual nature that inclined towards non-heteronormative sexual behaviours, and exploiting both the perceived innocence of “young British girls” and the more base sexual desires that were argued to be within “black” men. Ideas of racial difference between Maltese and “British” masculinity were also evident in other contexts, including the political economy of labor on naval ships, where, like most West African and West Indian seafarers, Maltese men tended to be employed as firemen or trimmers on British ships.⁶⁴ This colonial rank may have influenced ideas of similarities between the characteristics of “coloured” and Maltese men, particularly as both “groups” were colonial “natives” and both were seen to be intimately involved in producing the “colour strain” so feared by Wilson.⁶⁵ As Tabili’s work has shown, notions of “black” and “coloured” were often

culturally heterogeneous, in that despite speaking of people from a range of backgrounds, “they were united by a political and historical relationship of colonial subordination.”⁶⁶

Yet Maltese masculinity was more often presented as inhabiting a middle ground in a hierarchy of racial-sexual identity, being situated between Wilson’s heteronormative ideal of the “British” and an idea of “black” atavism and hypersexuality. While both Maltese and “black” men in Butetown were viewed as predatory, different forms of predation were attributed to these two groups. While the former was conceived as predatory with regards to an idea of their calculating exploitation and employment of local girls as prostitutes, “black” men was seen to be driven by “uncurbed sexual passion” and intellectual inferiority.⁶⁷ Thus, while the Maltese were perceived as sexually degenerate in providing the means for an “immoral” form of prostitution involving “black” men and “British prostitutes,” Wilson and his supporters did not suggest that they possessed an “uncurbed sexual passion” themselves. Instead, they were presented as being particularly calculating and parasitic through exploiting the “uncurbed” desires of black men, and young white “white [...] prostitutes or women of loose moral character.”⁶⁸

This “in-between” status echoed wider popular and anthropological notions of the European “race” being divided into “Nordic”/“Teutonic”, “Alpine” (or “Slavic,” sometimes “Celtic”), and “Mediterranean” “strands.”⁶⁹ The Maltese also occupied a middle-ground geographically, with Malta’s close proximity to the North African coast and Maltese being a Semitic language, which situated the Maltese between Europe and the Arabic world. Debates over Cardiff’s Maltese community therefore demonstrate continuities with nineteenth-century ideas of “Europeanness,” a notion which was not “a fixed attribute, but one altered by *environment*, class contingent and not secured by birth.”⁷⁰ Ideas of gradations of “Europeanness” also bore similarities with interwar perceptions of southern Italians. In his 1926 analysis of Italy’s “Southern Question,” Gramsci articulated the northern bourgeoisie’s

ideas of southern Mediterranean men: “if the South is under-developed it is not the fault of the capitalist system, or any other historical cause, but of the *nature* that has made Southerners lazy, incapable, criminal and barbaric.”⁷¹ Similarly, Cardiff’s interwar “café scheme” was on the one hand a product of the structural inequalities of British capitalist imperialism, and on the other a consequence of heavy police action towards women selling sex on streets. However, for the Chief Constable and his supporters it was not the adverse effects of Britain’s global economic dominance, nor police attention to street prostitution that had created the conditions for clandestine prostitution. Instead, they argued that it was a criminal and immoral nature ingrained in Maltese men. While it is difficult to gauge how widespread these views were in interwar Cardiff, this perception of Maltese men was powerful and went beyond the rhetoric of Wilson and his supporters. As the next section will reveal, the racialization of this group shaped the actions of Wilson’s force, had a negative impact on Maltese seafarers seeking work, and led to international attention.

The wider impact of anti-Maltese rhetoric

Cardiff City Police’s persistent attention to the Maltese had a wider effect on their perception and treatment at the port as it hampered Maltese seafarers from obtaining work, and drew international attention from the Maltese National Union of Seamen and Maltese Imperial Government. Therefore, Wilson’s anti-Maltese rhetoric pushed local concerns beyond Cardiff, shaping both the socio-economic experience of Maltese seafarers, and wider perceptions of this group. In response to the narratives of exploitative Maltese masculinity promoted by the police and the press, Michael Camilleri, a Maltese boarding-house keeper in Butetown and “a father to all those [Maltese seamen] that go to him for advice and help,” submitted grievances to the Maltese National Union of Seamen in 1930.⁷² Camilleri, with the support of forty-eight signatories, complained that the British National Union of Seamen were blocking Maltese men

from gaining work on ships at Cardiff, Barry and Newport, and were openly hostile towards them when they attempted to sign on for work. He lamented that the “Maltese seaman is still the same seaman who served before and during the Great War,” yet the behaviour of a few individuals linked to prostitution was “given the widest publicity in the local Cardiff newspapers on every small offence which enhances the prejudice [...] as it seems to involve the rest of the emigrants who are well behaved and law-abiding.”⁷³ The impact of anti-Maltese narratives had also reached the Maltese Imperial Government by 1930. The Government wrote to the Agent General for Malta in London, requesting that he “approach the proper Authorities with a view to steps being taken to close down such Maltese coffee shops” as the panic instigated by the Chief Constable had become “prejudicial to the good name of these Islands and to the interest of Maltese seamen seeking employment on British merchant ships.”⁷⁴ Wilson’s attempts to demonize the Maltese and expel them from the port of Cardiff thus had international ramifications, and a detrimental effect on Maltese seamen seeking work in a market already hostile to “foreign” sailors.

The Maltese National Union of Seaman’s Secretary, Ercole Valenzia, had also learned of the Maltese “café problem” while attending the Union’s annual conference in London, and from visiting Cardiff in 1929. After receiving Michael Camilleri’s complaints in August 1930, Valenzia wrote to the Malta Emigration Office. He did not dispute claims that “the whole of Bute Street is full of such Cafés [*sic.*], chiefly owned by Maltese and whose principal business is the traffic of women of doubtful character,” despite there being little hard evidence of trafficking at Maltese cafés. However, Valenzia argued that this was not anything peculiar to Cardiff or Butetown, as similar establishments could be found in Swansea, Barry and Newport. For Valenzia, that Butetown’s Maltese cafés had reached a particular level of notoriety resulted from the specific and vitriolic focus on the identities of Maltese men from the police, and the local and national press, which had “rendered [the atmosphere] rather hot for Maltese seamen

who ship in great numbers from that port,” driving shipping authorities to class Maltese seamen as “undesirables,” despite having previously pursued them with “eagerness.”⁷⁵ As such, the need to address the anti-Maltese prejudice driven by Chief Constable Wilson was to “the vital interest of thousands of Maltese seamen, who ship regularly from ports in the Bristol Channel in British ships.” Valenzia also alleged that the cafés had “been the cause of a good number of seamen deserting their wives and children in Malta,” as keepers enticed Maltese seamen at the shipping office, resulting in them spending their money in cafés and having to immediately find work on another ship. He argued that the police were well aware of how the cafés operated, yet reduced the argument to describing all Maltese men “as the worst class of people that were living in the ports of the Bristol Channel.”⁷⁶ In response the police denied any prejudice shown to Maltese seamen on behalf of shipping authorities.⁷⁷

<Insert Table 5 near here>

Despite protestations from the police, Valenzia had a point: Table 5 contains details on Maltese men prosecuted against for brothel-related offences, which shows how the police specifically targeted this group in order build up “evidence” against them after Wilson failed to obtain controls from the Home Secretary. While Maltese men had previously rarely figured in prosecutions for brothel or “pimping”-related offences, by 1930 hearings at Cardiff Petty Sessions were weighted towards the Maltese. For instance, of the thirteen brothels recorded at the petty sessions in 1930, only three were not linked to Maltese men. Likewise, of five men convicted for living on the earnings of prostitution in 1930, four were Maltese.⁷⁸ Influenced by Wilson’s narratives, the press invoked notions of white slavery when reporting on cases regarding Maltese men. In December 1930 the *Western Mail* reported on a case in which a young woman from Bargoed, a mining town in the Rhymney Valley, had ended up in a Butetown Maltese café-brothel after seeking employment as a domestic servant. For this newspaper, the case epitomized how “young girls are being lured from the Rhondda and

Monmouthshire valleys into the haunts frequented by coloured men and other foreign seamen in the Docks district.” While the charges of procurement were dismissed, the keeper of the café received a sentence of six months for keeping a brothel and living on the earnings of prostitution.⁷⁹

Evidence from Cardiff relating to both the racialization of the Maltese and the policing of prostitution reveals how knowledge is tied to place and locally produced, and thus did not necessarily follow debates around national policy or patterns of regulation in the metropolis.⁸⁰ The correlation between rhetoric and policing demonstrates the intensity of the belief in the centrality of Maltese *men* in organizing prostitution in interwar Cardiff. This contrasts against evidence for interwar London, which has been seen to indicate an increasing criminalization of “common prostitutes.”⁸¹ The racialization of Cardiff’s Maltese drove their treatment by the police, local magistrates, and shipping authorities, meaning that the narratives initiated by the Chief Constable had a significant impact on this group and their lives. Driven by Wilson’s rhetoric, the punishments for Maltese men convicted of prostitution-related crimes were notably harsher than their non-Maltese counterparts. For instance, in December 1930, one Lora Power received a £20 fine or two months imprisonment for keeping a brothel at Cranbrook Street in the Cathays district, north of Cardiff city centre. In contrast, Edward Camelleri and Andrea Spiteri both received fines of £100 or three months imprisonment for keeping brothels at Bute Street in May and July 1930, respectively.⁸² Court records also reveal that Maltese men sometimes ran cafés in conjunction with their British wives or partners, an aspect almost wholly overlooked in the vitriolic rhetoric of the police and the press. As such, while *some* Maltese were clearly involved in the organization of prostitution, the perception that this was something ingrained in all Maltese men negatively impacted upon the socio-economic experiences of Maltese seafarers as a whole.

However, 1930 marked a peak in the prosecution of Butetown's Maltese café owners. As the decade progressed, the Maltese featured less frequently in the court registers for prostitution-related offences, and received lesser sentences. The growing absence of Maltese men at the courts was accompanied by a shift in the debate over their role in Butetown's so-called "colour problem." In a notorious 1935 survey commissioned by the British Social Hygiene Council that reignited debate and racial fears over Butetown, the role of the Maltese was downplayed while the sexuality of black men was emphasized. For instance, the report stressed how "Negro seamen are more attractive to prostitutes than [...] British seamen" and that "Once a girl has been in company with a coloured man she seems to prefer them to other types of seamen." Yet instead of exaggerating the role of the Maltese in facilitating these relationships, the survey presented the Maltese café only as an aspect of the "poverty and grime" of the dockland.⁸³ This discursive shift did not represent changing patterns of dockland prostitution and its links with Maltese cafés, but a diminution of the exaggerated links between Maltese masculinity and pimping. Chief Constable Wilson, with the help of the press, had manufactured a problem that could not be solved – as Cardiff City Police reluctantly acknowledged. In 1935, Cardiff's Deputy Chief Constable, William Harrison, reported to the *Metropolitan Police College Journal* on how their efforts to persecute and drive out the Maltese from the city had ultimately failed:

The natives of the island of Malta, appear to regard Bute Town, Cardiff, as a home from home. Some of them keep very low-class restaurants in the shipping quarter which are not even worthy of the category in which they have been placed. The restaurant keepers employ immoral women as waitresses, and they nefariously commercialize vice. Needless to say, they have been convicted and fined over and over again, and sent to prison. Unfortunately the very special attention they receive from the Police is

insufficient to make them pine for the blue sea and sky of their Mediterranean home.⁸⁴

The mid-1930s also saw a shift in the legal status of Maltese immigrants, which made it more difficult for Wilson to continue to frame the Maltese within a national debate over “aliens.” Under the aliens legislation, Maltese subjects were not regarded as “persons of colour,” and did not require the “special certificate,” which was essentially a marker of second-class British nationality for “black” workers. In 1935, however, the Home Office proposed to extend the special certificate to Maltese British subjects, which would have implicitly redefined their racial identity. The Maltese government intervened, owing to Malta’s dependence on migration and repatriation of wages to relieve unemployment, leading the Home Office to relent on their proposal. This exemption essentially classified Maltese seamen as “white” – if they could prove they were Maltese.⁸⁵ Wilson and his force therefore had to reluctantly accept that they had failed in their efforts, reducing the level of vitriol towards Maltese men in police and press reports. Nonetheless, the process of racialization instigated by Wilson in the interwar period had a significant impact on the treatment of migrant and transient Maltese men, to the extent that it drew international attention. The shaping of this group as racially different based on discourses of masculinity and sexual behaviour was therefore powerful, and continued to shape perceptions of the Maltese into the middle of the century – both locally, and beyond.

Contrasts and continuities

Cardiff City Police’s admission of defeat did not end the stereotyping of the Maltese, which lingered into the middle of the twentieth century and continued to shape perceptions. While the 1930s saw senior figures of Cardiff City Police concede defeat in their attempts to shut down Maltese caf  s and expel Maltese men from the city, Wilson attempted to use the Second World War to reignite his campaign against them. In February 1940 he persuaded Cardiff licensing

justices to lobby the Government to introduce restrictive legislation to target Butetown cafés.⁸⁶ Wilson had limited success in these efforts, as he was granted an order under Article 10 of the 1920 Aliens Act to close one café for the duration of the war. However, a more pronounced concern became the sale of illegal ‘intoxicants at fabulous prices’ out of licenced hours as opposed to prostitution, and levels of open vitriol towards the Maltese had noticeably lessened.⁸⁷ Despite this, the image of the Maltese café as a source of “vice” and “immorality” persisted in the local imagination. The durability and influence of these perceptions can be seen in a 1941 Mass Observation survey of the dockland, which complained of Bute Street being dominated by night-time cafés, where

the women who frequent [...] are ostensibly provisions. [...] There were some 12 to 15 of them within 300 yards of [Bute] street. Only one of them was run by an Englishman – [and] he took pains to impress on Inv. That [*sic.*] his was a decent place without any ‘girls’.⁸⁸

The survey posed a contrast between the single “English” café and the rest in the Bute Street vicinity, suggesting that the image of the Bute Street café as a “foreign” space linked to prostitution had become an enduring trope. Yet, despite this continuity in how dockland cafés were perceived, the vitriolic depictions of the character of Maltese men were absent.

The enduring influence of the Maltese stereotype transcended Cardiff, forming the views of outsiders like sociologists who surveyed race relations in Butetown in the 1940s and 1950s. For instance, continuities in perceptions of the Maltese can be seen in the work of Kenneth Little, a social anthropologist who studied race relations in Butetown for his University of London PhD. His work, most notably his 1947 monograph, *Negroes in Britain*, was highly influential – both in Britain and the United States – and shaped subsequent sociological surveys of ethnic minority communities in Britain.⁸⁹ Influenced by the urban sociology of the Chicago School, Little’s work on Butetown signified a shift away from the

heavily racialized ideas of the interwar period through exploring the social complexities of the district. However, Little's work also points to how anxieties over sex in the dockland, including the idea of the Maltese café as a site of prostitution and sexual exploitation, persisted and extended beyond Cardiff and the Bristol Channel.

The influence of interwar perceptions of the Maltese on Little's thinking can be seen in his discussion of prostitution, which described the process of how young women became café prostitutes. In his example of the path towards dockland prostitution, a "young girl of good-class family" was sent to an approved school for theft following her having had her pocket-money stopped by her father as he "did not approve of her expenditure on cosmetics." Emphasizing the exploitative role of the Maltese "pander" (pimp), the girl was then said by Little to have been "picked up" by a Maltese café owner, who

proceeded to buy clothes for her, and gradually to 'break her in' (that is to accustom her to the life, art and technique of prostitution) whilst looking after her. After this she was more or less in the toils for good. She felt she could not return to her parents, and was in constant fear lest the authorities should discover her. Lacking in experience of the world and without any means of coping with the situation in which she found herself, she simply accepted it as the only life open to her.⁹⁰

Like interwar reports in the local press, Little's illustration hence referenced the white slavery-tinged narrative promoted by Wilson, being that Maltese men were inclined, by way of their masculinity, to exploit otherwise respectable "British" girls into a life of prostitution.⁹¹ Despite his attempts to rethink the predicament of Butetown's communities, Little thus repeated narratives characteristic of the police and the press from the interwar years. This evidence demonstrates the enduring nature of the racialization of the Maltese that Wilson had instigated during the 1920s – both in Cardiff itself, and in the eyes of outsiders.

Therefore, while there were some continuities in depictions of the Maltese in post-war Cardiff, there was a noticeable diminution of the vitriolic racialization of Maltese men that Chief Constable Wilson had instigated in the 1920s. Along with the shift in the legal status of Maltese seafarers and the recognition of the Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable of their failure to remove them from the city, structural shifts in the post-war years helped to further quell police and press attention on Maltese “pimps”. Economic decline in Cardiff’s dockland following the Second World War meant that fewer seamen passed through the port. The city also did not experience Commonwealth immigration to the extent of other British urban centres, meaning that Cardiff ceased to be prominent in debates over race and immigration in Britain. The diminished attention to Cardiff’s Maltese was accompanied by a new focus on London as a national centre of vice: this was driven by the Wolfenden Committee and the subsequent 1959 Street Offences Act, which, via “amplified” media coverage turned a “localized problem” into “a much larger national dilemma.”⁹² While newspapers were keen to publish sensational depictions of sexual relations in Butetown during the interwar years, by the 1950s it was London’s “vice gangs” that presented a greater source of fascination.

In 1956, the Welsh Sunday title *Empire News* ran a series on “Welsh Girls in Peril,” which stressed the dangers of the metropolis. It was penned by Metropolitan police officer-turned memoirist, Robert Fabian, and coincided with the BBC’s primetime dramatization of his first book, *Fabian of the Yard*.⁹³ In contrast to interwar anxiety over Bute Street’s Maltese men luring local girls to work as café “prostitutes,” Fabian explained that Cardiff’s taverns and cafés were now places to find “lonely, impressionable young girls” that could be lured into prostitution in London. Instead of Cardiff-based Maltese men being cited as the instigators, it was now a wider “vice operation” that Fabian identified as the problem, with direct links to London’s notorious Messina brothers.⁹⁴ In contrast to the “new” threats of London, Cardiff’s police were arguing that Butetown’s image was outmoded, and that “In the old days we could

expect most of our crime to come from the docks”, but “the docks are dying. Very few foreign seamen go ashore there now.”⁹⁵ Even the new Chief Constable, W. Francis Thomas, stressed that Butetown “no longer deserves the bad name it once had.”⁹⁶ Similarly, in 1947 the *South Wales Echo* reported on a case in which a Maltese man faced charges of living on a prostitute’s earnings and allegations that he had procured a nineteen-year-old girl from nearby Newport. While the interwar press reported on such cases with sensational fervour and invoked narratives of white slavery, this case received a dry report in the *South Wales Echo*, only offering a brief account of the main aspects of the case and no comment on the ‘character’ of Maltese men.⁹⁷ Meanwhile, the police returned to what concerned them before Wilson initiated his crusade against the Maltese in the 1920s. Instead of Butetown and Maltese cafés, they again targeted women selling sex on city streets, particularly in the city centre. From no arrests in 1944, figures rose steadily through the late 1940s and early 1950s, and at the end of the decade the number of arrests had returned to mid-1920s levels, with 108 in the city centre alone of a total 179 in the city.⁹⁸

Heavy police attention to Cardiff’s Maltese had thus retired with Wilson in June 1946, shortly after he received a knighthood for “services to Civil Defence” and having become the most “senior Chief Constable of all the cities and boroughs in Britain.”⁹⁹ Therefore, while he ultimately failed in his attempts to remove the Maltese from the port of Cardiff, his vitriol towards this group was utilized to build a career of national renown, and played a significant role in influencing perceptions of the Maltese into the middle of the twentieth century. The post-war situation significantly contrasted against Cardiff’s position in the interwar period when it had been a major port with global connections and a prominent position within Britain and its empire, and in debates on the problems of port cities. Within this context, Cardiff had obtained a national notoriety for racial conflict and miscegenation. Racialized perceptions of the Maltese driven by Chief Constable Wilson reflected a projection of “British” superiority

over colonial subjects. In addition to the “contested racial terrain” codified by the aliens legislation, Maltese men linked to prostitution in Cardiff’s docklands were racialized upon a notion that they were inherently inclined towards sexual exploitation and sexual behaviours seen as a threat to British hegemony.

Conclusion

This article has shown the prominent role of masculinity in racializing the Maltese in interwar Cardiff. In his reports for the Home Secretary, Cardiff Watch Committee and subsequent coverage in the regional and national press, Chief Constable Wilson used a marker of “Britishness” to denote an idea of racial difference for the Maltese. While some Maltese were clearly involved in the organization or facilitation of prostitution in Butetown, Wilson framed this as something inherent to all Maltese men. His perceptions of the Maltese reflected a projection of “British” superiority over colonial subjects amidst a climate of contested ideas of race and nation, symbolized by the 1925 Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order. However, in addition to the “contested racial terrain” of the aliens legislation, Maltese men linked to prostitution in Cardiff were racialized through ideas of masculinity and sexual behaviours. Through the ownership of the majority of caf  s in Butetown, Maltese men were alleged to have created a “caf   scheme” that exploited “British prostitutes,” and the “uncurbed sexual passion” of “black” seamen, ultimately providing sites which enabled miscegenation.

Wilson’s rhetoric reveals how, in addition to the political context of racial difference embedded in the aliens legislation, discursive connections between sexual behaviour and “race” played an equally important role in shaping how migrant groups were seen as racially different. In the case of Cardiff’s Maltese, sexual behaviours were the dominant signifier in constructing their racial difference from the “British.” Wilson, with help from the press, argued that the role of the Maltese in organizing Cardiff’s prostitution was racially “ingrained” in Maltese

masculinity, and jarred with “British” attitudes towards prostitution – and sexual practices in general. The denigration of the Maltese in these debates was thus a projection a sense of racial superiority over peoples subjugated under colonial rule. These ideas had a significant effect on the policing of prostitution in Cardiff, turning attention away from arresting high numbers of female streetwalkers in order to focus energies on prosecuting Maltese men and removing their cafés from the dockland. In essence, for the Chief Constable and his supporters, the Maltese were seen to have an inherent and racially-distinct tendency towards sexual exploitation, and their settling in the port had created the emergence of a form of prostitution that was set against heteronormative sexual behaviours that signified their notion of ‘Britishness’. This transcended mere rhetoric, becoming a source of international tension as the Maltese Imperial Government became concerned over the inability of Maltese sailors to gain work as result of prejudices built on Chief Constable Wilson’s narratives, which continued to linger and shape perceptions into the 1950s.

In sum, ideas of masculinity and sexual behaviours played a central role in shaping the racialization of Cardiff’s interwar Maltese community. While this was instigated within the local/regional context of Cardiff, this process had much wider long-term consequences in influencing both perceptions and the social experiences of this marginalized group in Britain and beyond. Evidence from Cardiff reinforces how the construction of racial difference is a complex historical process, and not simply limited to static binary oppositions of ‘difference’. It shows how racialization in interwar Britain drew influence from imperial political economy and the racial hierarchies of colonialism, but was driven by social relations in local and regional contexts. In the case of Cardiff, links between *some* Maltese and the organization/facilitation of prostitution in a multiracial community was extended to Maltese masculinity as a whole. This process, instigated by Chief Constable Wilson in an attempt to reinforce the structural inequalities of British imperialism in response to Maltese men being able to settle freely in the

port, gained traction through the press and the efforts of his force to persecute this group. The wider cultural context of British imperialism was far from amorphous, as it clearly influenced Wilson's ideas about race and the anti-Maltese narrative that he promoted. However, while the racialization of the Maltese was influenced by wider cultural discourse around race, gender, and sexuality, evidence from interwar Cardiff reveals that racisms, as oppressive power structures, can be instigated and driven from a micro level in response to localized concerns. Local and regional contexts are therefore key to understanding the reproduction of racial and imperial processes, and the construction of racial difference in modern Britain.

Endnotes

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¹ Glamorgan Archives (GA) DCONC/7/7 Report from Chief Constable J. A. Wilson, Cardiff City Police, to the Home Office, September 23, 1927.

² Women's Library (WL) 3AMS/08/B/02 Wilson, 'Problems peculiar to the Bute Town area or shipping quarter of the City and Port of Cardiff', January 6, 1929.

³ Lucy Bland, "White Women and Men of Colour: Miscegenation Fears in Britain after the Great War," *Gender and History*, 17:1 (2005), 29-61; Laura Tabili, "'Women of a Very Low Type': Crossing Racial Boundaries in Imperial Britain," in Laura L. Frader and Sonya O. Rose (eds), *Gender and Class in Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY, 1996), 165-90. For earlier work on race relations in British ports, see: Neil Evans, "The South Wales Race Riots of 1919," *Llafur*, 3:1 (1980), 5-29; "The South Wales Race Riots of 1919: a documentary postscript," *Llafur*, 3:4 (1983), 76-88; "Regulating the reserve army: Arabs, blacks, and the local state in Cardiff, 1919-45," *Immigrants and Minorities*, 4:2 (1985), 68-115; and "Across the Universe: Racial Violence and the Post-War Crisis in Imperial Britain," *Immigrants and Minorities*, 13:2-3 (1994), 59-88. Also see: Jacqueline Jenkinson, "The Glasgow Race Disturbances of 1919," *Immigrants and Minorities*, 4:2 (1985), 43-67; "Black Sailors on Red Clydeside: Rioting, Reactionary Trade Unionism and Conflicting Notions of 'Britishness' following the First World War," *Twentieth Century British History*, 19:1 (2008), 29-60; *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain* (Liverpool, 2009). For more general analyses and surveys of race in twentieth-century Britain, see: Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London and Sydney, 1984); Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London and New York, [1987] 2002); and Paul Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne, [1986] 1990).

⁴ Bland, "White Women and Men of Colour," 30.

⁵ See: Simon Jenkins, "Aliens and Predators: Miscegenation, Prostitution and Racial Identities in Cardiff, 1927-47," *Cultural and Social History*, 11:4 (2014), 575-596; and Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics*, Chapter 6.

⁶ Laura Tabili, "Race is a Relationship, and Not a Thing," *Journal of Social History*, 37:1 (2003), 128. Also see by Tabili: "A homogeneous society? Britain's internal 'others,' 1800-present," in Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (eds), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge, 2006), 53-76;

and *Global Migrants, Local Culture: Natives and Newcomers in Provincial England, 1841-1939* (Basingstoke, 2011), which explores the development and dynamics of South Shields's multicultural community.

⁷ Alison Bashford, "Foreign bodies: vaccination, contagion and colonialism in the nineteenth century," in Alison Bashford and Claire Hooker (eds), *Contagion: Historical and Cultural Studies* (London and New York, 2001), 39-60.

⁸ See: Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London, 1995); Richard Phillips, "Heterogeneous Imperialism and the Regulation of Sexuality in British West Africa," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 14:3 (2005), 291-315; Anne Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2002); Anne Laura Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Gender, Race and Morality in Colonial Asia," in Micaela di Leonardo (ed.), *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era* (Berkeley, 1991), 51-101. Also see: Linda Bryder, "Sex, Race and Colonialism: An Historiographical Overview," *International History Review*, 20:4 (1998), 806-822.

⁹ Lisa Sigel, *Governing Pleasure: Pornography and Social Change in England, 1815-1914* (New Brunswick, NJ and London, 2002), 98, 126, 153.

¹⁰ See arguments made in John Welshman, "Eugenics and Public Health in Britain, 1900-40: Scenes from Provincial Life," *Urban History*, 24:1 (1997), 56-75.

¹¹ See: Julia Laite, *Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens: Commercial Sex in London, 1885-1960* (Basingstoke, 2011)

¹² For wider concerns over miscegenation and prostitution in interwar Cardiff, see Jenkins, "Aliens and Predators."

¹³ For a detailed analysis of the social impact of the 1925 Order, see: Laura Tabili, "The Construction of Racial Difference in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925," *Journal of British Studies*, 33:1 (1994), 54-98.

¹⁴ For eugenic and anthropological ideas of gradations of European identities, see: Marius Turda, "Race, Science, and Eugenics in the Twentieth Century," in Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford and New York, 2010), 66. This racialization was also akin to ideas of Italian migrants in America as being an 'in-between people'. See: Thomas A. Guglielmo, "Rethinking Whiteness Historiography: The Case of Italians in Chicago, 1890-1945," in Ashley W. Doane and Eduardo Ionilla-Silva (eds), *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism* (New York and Abingdon, 2003), 49-62. Also see: Tabili, "'A Maritime Race': Masculinity and the Racial Division of Labor in British Merchant Ships, 1900-1939,"

in Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Iorling (eds), *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920* (Baltimore, 1996), 171, n. 68.

¹⁵ See: Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge, New York, and Melbourne, [1980] 1999), Chapter 10; Philippa Levine, "Rough Usage: Prostitution, Law and the Social Historian," in Adrian Wilson (ed.), *Rethinking Social History: English Society 1570-1920 and its Interpretation* (Manchester and New York, 1993), 266-292; Laite, *Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens*, especially Chapter 8.

¹⁶ GA DCONC/5/12-58 Newscuttings, 1900-1919; Cardiff Central Library (CCL) 943.2(561), Cardiff and District Citizens Union (CDCU), *Third Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1909-10*; CCL 948.2(552.3)CAR, CDCU, *War and Public Morals*, November 26, 1914; CCL 948.2(561)CAR, CDCU, *Eleventh Annual Report, 1918-19*; National Library of Wales MS 15450C, Minutes of the Cardiff and District Citizens' Union/South Wales and Monmouthshire Vigilance Association, 1919-1937.

¹⁷ *South Wales News*, February 9, 1927.

¹⁸ As Philippa Levine suggests, the "very existence [...] of 'clandestine' women does suggest effective, though not necessarily organized, resistance which legislative and judicial action seemed unable wholly to dampen." Levine, "Rough Usage," 277.

¹⁹ GA DCONC/7/7 Report from PC Lionel Brint to Superintendent [unnamed], October 18, 1930.

²⁰ GA DCONC/7/7 Report from Wilson to the Home Office, September 23, 1927. The other sixteen were operated by West African, West Indian, "Arab" and Spanish men, and the wife of a Malaysian man.

²¹ See: Tabili, "The Construction of Racial Difference in Twentieth-Century Britain"; and "*We Ask for British Justice*": *Workers and Racial Difference in Late-Imperial Britain* (Ithaca, NY and London, 1994).

²² For the social evolution of nineteenth-century Butetown, see: M. J. Daunton, *Coal Metropolis: Cardiff 1870-1914* (Leicester, 1977), particularly 140-145.

²³ GA DCONC/7/7 Report from Wilson to the Home Office, October 14, 1930.

²⁴ GA DCONC/7/7 Superintendent Andrew Fraser, Report on Butetown Cafés, September 1927; Report from Wilson to the Home Office, September 23, 1927. For the development of aliens legislation, see: Helena Wray, "The Aliens Act 1905 and the Immigration Dilemma," *Journal of Law and Society*, 33:2 (2006), 302-323; Jill Pellew, "The Home Office and the Aliens Act, 1905," *Historical Journal*, 32:2 (1989), 369-385; Alison Bashford and Catie Gilchrist, "The Colonial History of the 1905 Aliens Act," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40:3 (2012), 409-437; David Cesarani, "Anti-alienism in England after the First World War," *Immigrants*

and Minorities, 6:1 (1987), 5-29; David Cesarani, "An Alien Concept? The Continuity of Anti-Alienism in British Society before 1940," *Immigrants and Minorities*, 11:3 (1992), 24-52.

²⁵ Bute Street 'opium dens' and gambling houses were common features of court registers from the 1910s into the interwar years. See: GA PSCBO/4/43-107 Cardiff Petty Sessions Registers, 1920-1924. For an overview of attitudes towards the Chinese in early-twentieth century Cardiff, see: Joanne M. Cayford, "In search of 'John Chinaman': Press Representations of the Chinese in Cardiff, 1906-1911," *Llafur*, 5: 4 (1991), 37-50.

²⁶ See: *South Wales News*, 4 December 1922; GA DCONC/5/64-65, Newscuttings, April 1922-January 1924. Links between Chinese men and white women were also a pertinent concern in interwar London. See: Lucy Bland, *Modern Women on Trial: Sexual Transgression in the Age of the Flapper* (Manchester and New York, 2013), Chapter 2.

²⁷ GA DCONC/7/7 Letter from Michael Camilleri to the Minister for Migration, Malta, August 15, 1930; Correspondence from Ercole Valenzia to H. Arrigo, Superintendent, Malta Emigration Office, [n.d., ca. September 1930].

²⁸ GA DCONC/7/7 Report from Wilson to the Home Office, 14 October 1930.

²⁹ These arguments also overlooked the myriad other businesses that were lined along Bute Street – including lodging houses, public houses, clothiers, jewellery shops, grocers, and tobacconists – in favour of the Maltese café and its links to prostitution. See: *Western Mail Cardiff Directory*, numerous editions (Cardiff, 1897-1937). Also see: Kenneth Little, "Loudoun Square: A Community Survey – I (An Aspect of Race Relations in English Society)," *Sociological Review*, 34:1-2 (1942), 12-33.

³⁰ Tabili, "The Construction of Racial Difference in Twentieth-Century Britain."

³¹ G. W. Brown, "Investigation of Colonial Coloured Seamen in Cardiff," *Keys*, 3:2 (1935), 19. Wilson described the LCP's claims that Cardiff City Police used "questionable" and "illegal" methods around aliens registration as "balderdash" and that "No one has gone out of his way more to assist coloured seamen than I have. [...] Cardiff has as many coloured seamen as all the other ports, including London, Liverpool, Newcastle and Shields, put together. We have a problem here that no one else has, and the coloured seamen have no reason to complain in any way as to the manner in which they have been dealt with." *Daily Mail*, October 4, 1935.

³² See: GA PSCBO/4/108-122 Cardiff Petty Sessions Registers, 1925-1929.

³³ WL 3AMS/B/08/02 Report from Wilson to Cardiff Watch Committee, January 8, 1929.

³⁴ For a detailed discussion of miscegenation and prostitution in interwar Cardiff, see: Jenkins, "Aliens and Predators."

³⁵ WL 3AMS/B/08/02 “Problems peculiar to the Bute Town area or shipping quarter of the City and Port of Cardiff,” April 10, 1929.

³⁶ *Western Mail*, February 14, 1925. Also see *South Wales News*, February 23, 1925.

³⁷ WL 3AMS/B/08/02 “Problems peculiar to the Bute Town area or shipping quarter of the City and Port of Cardiff,” April 10, 1929.

³⁸ Cesarani, “Anti-alienism in England after the First World War,” 19.

³⁹ For example, see: *Western Mail*, January 20, 1925; *South Wales News*, January 27, 1925; *Western Mail*, July 25, 1925.

⁴⁰ GA DCONC/7/7 Report from Wilson to the Home Office, September 23, 1927.

⁴¹ GA DCONC/7/7 Report from the Home Office to Wilson, October 31, 1927. The byelaws in question being the 1871 Cardiff Improvement Act and 1862 Cardiff Borough Act.

⁴² Wilson also rejected license applications for Bute Street refreshment houses if the person was not deemed to be of “good character.” See: GA PSCBO/59/1 Minutes of Adjourned General Annual Licensing Meeting, March 5, 1926; Licensing Committee Minutes, January 28, 1930; Licensing Committee minutes, February 3, 1930; and GA DCONC/1/1/8 Chief Constable’s Annual Report to Cardiff Watch Committee, June 7, 1933; Chief Constable’s Annual Report to Cardiff Watch Committee, October 11, 1933.

⁴³ GA DCONC/5/72-74 Newscuttings, November 1927-June 1930.

⁴⁴ WL 3AMS/08/B/02 Wilson, “Problems peculiar to the Bute Town area or shipping quarter of the City and Port of Cardiff,” January 6, 1929; and “Problems peculiar to the Bute Town area or shipping quarter of the City and Port of Cardiff,” April 10, 1929.

⁴⁵ *The Times*, January 23, 1929.

⁴⁶ WL 3AMS/08/B/02 Wilson, “Problems peculiar to the Bute Town area or shipping quarter of the City and Port of Cardiff,” January 6, 1929.

⁴⁷ CCL, City of Cardiff, *Reports of Council and Committees*, Nov. 1928-Nov. 1929.

⁴⁸ See: *Daily Herald*, January 10, 1929; *Daily Telegraph*, January 10, 1929; *Daily Herald*, January 10, 1929, January 11, 1929, and January 23, 1929; *The Times*, January 11, 1929; and *Western Mail*, January 11, 1929, January 23, 1929, January 28, 1929, January 29, 1929, and February 1, 1930.

⁴⁹ *South Wales Echo*, January 23, 1929.

⁵⁰ *Daily Herald*, January 11, 1929; *The Times*, January 23, 1929.

⁵¹ *Western Mail*, February 1, 1930.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ GA DCONC/7/7 Report from Wilson to the Home Office, October 14, 1930.

⁵⁴ The “good-time girl” or the “amateur” was seen to mark “the modern phase of the problem” of prostitution, using transactions which “may not be in cash but in kind, a ‘good time,’ a week-end, clothes, jewels, etc.” M. F., *Prostitution: The Moral Bearings of the Problem* (London, 1917), 114. For discussions of the “amateur” and fears over female promiscuity, see: Angela Woollacott, “‘Khaki Fever’ and its Control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29:2 (1994), 325-347; Lucy Bland and Frank Mort, “Look Out for the ‘Good Time’ Girl: Dangerous Sexualities as a Threat to National Health,” in Bill Schwarz (ed.), *Formations of a Nation and People* (London, 1984), 131-151; Samantha Caslin, “Flappers, Amateurs and Professionals: The Spectrum of Promiscuity in 1920s Britain,” in Kate Hardy et al (eds), *New Sociologies of Sex Work* (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2010), 11-22; Roger Davidson and Lesley A. Hall, “Introduction,” in Roger Davidson and Lesley A. Hall (eds), *Sex, Sin and Suffering: Venereal Disease and European Society since 1870* (London, 2001), 8-11.

⁵⁵ GA DCONC/7/7 Report from Wilson to the Home Office, October 14, 1930.

⁵⁶ See: Jenkins, “Aliens and Predators.”

⁵⁷ *Western Mail*, January 28, 1929.

⁵⁸ *Western Mail*, July 8, 1935. The newspaper claimed that “half-caste” girls were “characteristically disinclined” towards work and were thus likely to end up as prostitutes, although providing no evidence to support this claim.

⁵⁹ GA DCONC/7/7 Report from Wilson to the Home Office, October 14, 1930.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Additionally, that a Maltese man was then said to engage in voyeurism of prostitution explicitly involving an “African negro” and his ex-prostitute wife echoes conceptions of “Africa as the quintessential zone of sexual aberration” and a reflection of ‘forbidden sexual desires and fears’ projected onto African colonial subjects. See: McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 22. Missionaries in British colonies in Africa, such as Sierra Leone, also tried to divert local populations away from polygamic practices, promoting what they considered to be “civilized” customs. See: Phillips, “Heterogeneous Imperialism and the Regulation of Sexuality in British West Africa.”

⁶² See: Angela Willey, “‘Christian Nations’, ‘Polygamic Races’ and Women’s Rights: Toward a Genealogy of Non/Monogamy and Whiteness’, *Sexualities*, 9:5 (2006), 531-532.

⁶³ See: Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 43.

⁶⁴ For example, Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet, Admiral J. D. Kelly, argued that the “Maltese are *not* white men,” and, unlike the “Englishman,” lacked “guts” and “initiative.” Cited in Carmel Vassallo, “Servants of Empire: the Maltese in the Royal Navy,” *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 16:1-2 (2006), 281.

⁶⁵ Vassallo, “Sailing under the Red Duster: Maltese Merchant Seafarers in the Twentieth Century,” *Mariner’s Mirror*, 94:4 (2008), 452.

⁶⁶ Tabili, “A Maritime Race,” 171.

⁶⁷ See: Jenkins, “Aliens and Predators.”

⁶⁸ WL 3AMS/08/B/02. Wilson, “Problems peculiar to the Bute Town area or shipping quarter of the City and Port of Cardiff,” January 6, 1929. Such opinions also echoed the views of Royal and Merchant Naval authorities who saw the Maltese as more favourable seafarers than “coloured,” “Lascar,” and Chinese men, yet not as reliable as “Englishmen.” Despite this, naval officers saw the Maltese man, like the “coloured man,” as possessing an innate “strong physicality” and “powers of endurance.” Additionally, the presentation of the Maltese as intelligent and calculating enablers also echoed naval ideas of “educated” Maltese men being equal in intelligence and aptitude to the “English boy,” unlike “black” seafarers who were seen to possess an intellectual inferiority. See: Vassallo, “Servants of Empire,” 281.

⁶⁹ See: Turda, “Race, Science, and Eugenics in the Twentieth Century,” 66.

⁷⁰ Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 104. My emphasis.

⁷¹ Antonio Gramsci, *The Southern Question*, trans. Pasquale Verdicchio (Toronto, [1926] 2005), 33. My emphasis.

⁷² GA DCONC/7/7 Correspondence from Michael Camilleri to Malta Emigration Office, August 15, 1930 (unfortunately the part of the document with the names of the signatories has not survived).

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ GA DCONC/7/7 Correspondence from Maltese Imperial Government to Agent General for Malta, London, September 30, 1930.

⁷⁵ GA DCONC/7/7 Correspondence from Ercole Valenzia to Malta Emigration Office, n. d., ca. September 1930.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ GA DCONC/7/7 Report from PC Lionel Brint to Superintendent [unnamed], October 13, 1930.

⁷⁸ GA PSCBO/4/93-125 Cardiff Petty Sessions Registers, 1920-1934. At the same time, the local press were calling for police action against the Maltese cafés in order to curb both “vice” in the district and an increase in “half-caste children.” See: *Western Mail*, January 10, 1929.

⁷⁹ *Western Mail*, December 17, 1930.

⁸⁰ David Livingstone has made similar arguments regarding the production of scientific knowledge. See: *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago and London, 2003).

⁸¹ See: Laite, *Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens*.

⁸² GA PSCBO/4/123-124 Cardiff Petty Sessions, Second Court Registers, 1930.

⁸³ WL 3AMS/B/08/03 Joint Council of the British Social Hygiene Council and the British council for the Welfare of the Mercantile Marine, "Social Conditions in Ports and Dockland Areas," July 1935. For a further discussion of this survey, see: Jenkins, "Aliens and Predators."

⁸⁴ W. W. Harrison, "The City and Port of Cardiff – Alien and Coloured Races," *Metropolitan Police College Journal*, 2:2 (1936), 203.

⁸⁵ Tabili, "The Construction of Racial Difference in Twentieth-Century Britain," 92-3.

⁸⁶ *Western Mail*, February 3, 1940.

⁸⁷ GA DCONC/7/1/2 Chief Constable's Annual Report to Licensing Justices and Calendar, City of Cardiff General Annual Licensing Meeting, February 7, 1941.

⁸⁸ Mass Observation Archive (MO) SxMOA1/2/66/3/6 Cardiff, 1941.

⁸⁹ Kenneth Little, "The Coloured Folk of Cardiff – A Challenge to Reconstruction," *New Statesman and Nation*, December 19, 1942; "Loudoun Square: A Community Survey – I"; "Loudoun Square: A Community Survey – II (An Aspect of Race Relations in English Society)," *Sociological Review*, 34:3-4 (1942), 119-146; "Race Relations in English Society: Preliminary Report on a Community Survey," *Man*, Vol. 42 (1942), 90-91; "The Psychological Background of White-Coloured Contacts in Britain," *Sociological Review*, 35:1-2 (1943), 12-28; *Negroes in Britain: A Study of Racial Relations in English Society* (London, 1947). In terms of Little's influence, in a review of the work of Sydney Collins (Little's student) the prominent American cultural anthropologist Ruth Landes claimed that Little's work had "pioneer[ed] anthropological descriptions of negroes in Britain." Ruth Landes, "Review: *Coloured Minorities in Britain* by Sydney Collins," *American Anthropologist*, 61:1 (1959), 173-174. For work that followed Little, see: Sydney Collins, "The Social Position of White and 'Half-Caste' Women in Coloured Groupings in Britain," *American Sociological Review*, 16:6 (1951), 796-802; "The British-Born Coloured," *Sociological Review*, 3:1 (1955), 77-92; *Coloured Minorities in Britain: Studies in British Race Relations based on African, West Indian, and Asiatic Immigrants* (London, 1957). The American social anthropologist, St Clair Drake, also studied Butetown for his University of Chicago PhD in this period: *Value Systems, Social Structure and Race Relations in the British Isles* (Unpublished PhD thesis: University of Chicago,

1954). Also see: Drake, "The 'Colour Problem' in Britain: A Study in Social Definitions," *Sociological Review*, 17:5 (1955), 197-217.

⁹⁰ Little, *Negroes in Britain*, 49-50.

⁹¹ This frame of reference was likewise used by the British photojournalism magazine *Illustrated*, which, using photographs of questionable authenticity, ran an article in 1953 featuring police scouring Bute Street cafés for girls on the run from remand homes. "Tiger Bay Fights Thugs: *Illustrated* goes out with police patrols," *Illustrated*, February 14, 1953, 7-11.

⁹² Helen Self, *Prostitution, Women and the Misuse of Law: The Fallen Daughters of Eve* (London and Portland, OR, 2003), 213. Also see: Frank Mort, "Mapping Sexual London: The Wolfenden Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution, 1954-57," *New Formations*, 37 (1999), 92-113, and *Capital Affairs: London and the Making of the Permissive Society* (New Haven, CT and London, 2010), Chapter 4.

⁹³ Paul Lawrence, "Fabian, Robert Honey (1901-1978)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2010) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/77433>, accessed 9 December 2014]

⁹⁴ *Empire News and Sunday Chronicle*, February 26, 1956. Also see Fabian's columns in issues on March 4, 1956; March 11, 1956; February 19, 1956; May 13, 1956; May 27, 1956; May 20, 1956; June 3, 1956; June 17, 1956; June 24, 1956; July 1, 1956; July 8, 1956; July 15, 1956. For the Messina brothers and Maltese involvement in prostitution in post-Second World War London, see Laite, *Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens*, Chapter 10.

⁹⁵ *Western Mail*, July 22, 1955 and May 8, 1958.

⁹⁶ *Western Mail*, July 22, 1955.

⁹⁷ *South Wales Echo*, July 22, 1947.

⁹⁸ GA PSCBO/4/167-200 Cardiff Petty Sessions Registers, 1945-59.

⁹⁹ *Western Mail*, January 1, 1946 and May 16, 1946. The newspaper also recorded with pride how Wilson had presided over more royal visits (fifty-six) than any other British chief constable.