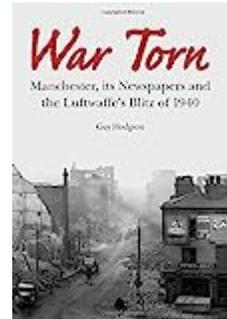


**Guy Hodgson.** *War Torn: Manchester, its Newspapers and the Luftwaffe's Blitz of 1940.* Chester: University of Chester Press, 2015. xiv + 252 pp. GBP 14.99 (paper), ISBN 978-1-908258-16-8.



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Newspapers provide the historian with a plenteous bounty of information. They offer a window into popular opinion as well as the overarching influence of the media in shaping those views. Despite their value, scholars of the Second World War have traditionally been hesitant to rely on such material, something that Guy Hodgson seeks to address in *War Torn: Manchester, its Newspapers and the Luftwaffe's Blitz of 1940*. Its focus on newspapers allows for a detailed look at the portrayal of a British city exposed to aerial bombardment. A fresh angle on a familiar topic, the author's work illustrates how the costliest war in human history remains a rich area for scholarship.

Hodgson seeks to address the lasting impact of the media on both contemporary readers and those of later generations. He clearly outlines his methodology, strategy to analyze patterns among the sources, and examination of both regional *and* national newspapers to provide a more meaningful, broader set of conclusions. While the non-narrative approach is academically laudable, many in the public audience may be unaccustomed to it.

The volume explores the civilian war experience, stressing the connections between military actions and efforts to maintain a population's morale. One question central to Hodgson's research is whether "the imperative

for journalists between 1939 and 1945 [was] to support the war effort in a "deliberate and systematic attempt to shape opinions" or to hold the authorities to account" (p. xiii). His choice of Manchester as the book's subject is logical given its role as the second center of newspaper production in Britain after London. This degree of importance means that patterns of representation and reporting in that city can be extrapolated for other regions.

Regardless, this should not be taken as an assumption that the city represents the entire British experience from 1940 to 1941. Indeed, Hodgson admits that the population of various metropolitan areas could react quite differently, citing the Home Intelligence reports for Liverpool and Manchester. Despite mutual exposure to Nazi German raids, the "contrast" hit the inspectors immediately: "Going from Liverpool to Manchester was like going from an atmosphere of reasonable cheerfulness into an atmosphere of barely restrained depression" (177).

The author admirably balances a highly readable writing style with a significant level of detail. When comparing the amount of coverage offered by different newspapers, he presents the number of columns and even the number of centimeters devoted to a particular topic. In so doing, the writer does not neglect context. He makes

continual references to the work of other historians, an approach that familiarizes the reader with multiple viewpoints and places the tome in the historiography. The potential downfall of this approach is unfamiliarity. The public is unlikely to know many of the cited names, and some degree of introduction would be helpful.

Scholars will appreciate Hodgson's clear organization and academic rigor. The result of a PhD dissertation, the book layout features not only chapters, but also sub-categories that allow the reader to easily keep track of the content. The author's use of footnotes rather than endnotes makes the tome accessible to the researcher interested in the source of a particular finding. Conversely, recreational readers may find that the footnotes visually disrupt the flow of the text. Another relevant factor is Hodgson's inclusion of only eight images; less knowledgeable readers would likely appreciate more visual aids.

Nevertheless, the degree of research informing this volume is evident. The bibliography numbers fourteen pages, although less than three consist of primary source material. Still, Hodgson's selections are subject to intense evaluation throughout the tome. The nature of the work required a narrow focus on several sources rather than a sweeping survey of wartime journalism in the mid-twentieth century. The listing of numerous secondary sources in this case does not imply a lack of research, but rather an impressive foundational knowledge

of the author's field.

Hodgson's concentrated approach and regional emphasis on Manchester do not hinder the broad relevance of the volume. Its conclusions are pertinent to readers around the world: the importance of factual reporting, the dangers of propaganda justified by military exigencies, and the challenges of discovering the voices of the population. Anyone engaged in the study of history or journalism will find this discussion of great interest. Furthermore, the resulting contribution to the historiography will challenge scholars to carefully evaluate the agendas of their sources.

Over the past several decades, historians have sought to expand the discussion of military history to encompass war *and* society. Guy Hodgson's *War Torn: Manchester, its Newspapers and the Luftwaffe's Blitz of 1940* ably demonstrates the potential for wide-ranging scholarship of considerable appeal to academics and the public alike. To appreciate the transformative effect of conflict on a population, probative research into civilian-military relations can go far towards drawing together what are sometimes (and unfortunately) considered separate topics. This book accomplishes that goal, revealing the vast metaphorical gulf between a people's wartime experience and the stance taken by the government in such a time of crisis.

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