RESISTING NAPOLEON
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Unless otherwise stated, these illustrations are reproductions from the Curzon Collection, the Bodleian Library, Oxford, with the kind permission of the Library. The Bodleian has been a partner with the Department of Politics and International Relations in the 1803 Invasion project and staged the exhibition ‘Napoleon and the Invasion of Britain’ in the library in 2003. The editor of the collection and Dr Alexandra Franklin have also collaborated with the Bodleian’s Oxford Digital Library in the development of a digital web-resource ‘Images of Napoleon: 1789-1815’ which provides images of over 1200 caricatures from the period, from which these illustrations are drawn. The collection is accessible from the Bodleian Website: <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk>.

Note: BMSat refers to the print number, where applicable, in the Dorothy George catalogue of the British Museum’s caricatures and satires.

1. John Bull and Bonaparte!!
By G.M. Woodward, etched I. Cruickshank
London: R. Ackermann, 13 August 1803
Bodleian Library, Curzon b.22(80); BMSat 10064
364 × 245 mm (sheet)
A classical caricature combining personal and national stereotypes of John Bull and Bonaparte.

2. The raft in danger or the republican crew disappointed.
By Isaac Cruikshank
London: S.W. Fores, 28 October 1798
Bodleian Library, Curzon b.3(84); also in BMSat 9160
267 × 682 mm (sheet)
One of several depictions of the Whigs (Fox, Lauderdale, Tierney, Sheridan and Norfolk) conspiring with French invasion plans in 1798, something rarely implied during the later threat of 1803–5.

3. John Bull in a dream or the effects of uncertainty!
London: W. Holland, 12 April 1803
Bodleian Library, Curzon b.3(170)
235 × 325 mm (sheet)
Just before the resumption of war in 1803, John Bull is beset by the financial and political implications of renewed hostilities, including Pitt’s anticipated replacement of Addington as Prime Minister. (His actual return to power was not until 1804.)
4. *Liberty a la francoise!*
   London: W. Holland, 19 April 1803
   Bodleian Library, Curzon b.12(64)
   234 × 386 mm (platemark)
   Napoleon is attacked here, not as the enemy of monarchy, but for betraying the legacy of the American and French Revolutions.

5. *Armed heroes; vide., military appearances at St Stephens & at St Cloud’s on ye day of defiance.*
   By James Gillray
   London: H. Humphrey, 18 May 1803
   Bodleian Library, Curzon b. 21 (298); BMSat 9996
   250 × 355mm (sheet)
   Addington and Bonaparte depicted on the verge of hostilities as Britain declares war on France – behind Addington is Hawkesbury and the front bench of the House of Commons, portrayed as in a panic, as reports suggested.

   By James Gillray
   London: H. Humphrey, 26 March 1803
   Bodleian Library, Curzon b.4(22); BMSat 10019
   314 × 245 mm (sheet)
   The ‘little Napoleon’ figure is incorporated into Jonathan Swift’s famous story in this image of George III, wearing military uniform, confronting the tiny aggressor.

7. *Gulliver and his guide, or a check string to the Corsican.*
   By William Charles
   London, August 1803
   Bodleian Library, Curzon b.4(41); BMSat 10051
   244 × 349 mm (sheet)
   In a variation on the theme of Napoleon as Gulliver, his captor is Jack Tar, the bold English sailor (with George III in the background).

8. *A little man’s night’s comforts, or Boney’s visions.*
   By ’Lt. B.’
   14 July 1803
   Bodleian Library, Curzon b.4(29)
   263 × 341 mm (sheet)
   The visions and surroundings characterize Napoleon as burdened by a guilty conscience about the ‘black legend’ of his misdeeds in the Near East, and as morbidly sensitive to his public image: a caricature of ‘Little Boney’ is among the papers crumpled beside the chair. The print takes up the same themes as Gillray’s ‘Maniac-ravings’, 24 May 1803; BMSat 9998.
9. **The three plagues of Europe!!**  
Attr. G.M. Woodward  
London: William Holland, 1 July 1803  
Bodleian Library, Curzon b.21 (327); BMSat 10084  
257 × 340 mm (sheet)  
Bonaparte (Mr Fight All) is depicted alongside Addington (Mr Tax All) and the devil (described as The Rev’d Mr Take-all), suggesting less than one hundred per cent support for the renewal of war.

10. **The French fleet sailing into the mouth of the Thames!!!**  
London: W. Holland, September 1803  
Bodleian Library, Curzon b.12(10)  
230 × 404 mm (sheet)  
Jack Tar embodies England in this vision of the fate of a French force attempting to cross the Channel.

11. **John Bull viewing the preparations on the French coast!**  
Attr. West  
London: W. Holland, 13 October 1803  
Bodleian Library, Curzon b.11 (54); BMSat 10110  
234 × 325 mm (image and text)  
A sombre but stubborn John Bull surveying the French preparations.

12. **What Britons ought to avoid. The tender mercies of Buonaparte in Egypt.**  
Published by John Badcock, [October 1803]  
Bodleian Library, Curzon b.12(39)  
190 × 244 mm (platemark)  
Combining the revelations about Napoleon’s Egyptian campaign in 1798 with current events, this print aims to heighten the fear of a French invasion of England in 1803.

13. **Britannia weighing the fate of Europe; or John Bull too heavy for Buonaparte.**  
London: W. Holland, December 1803  
Bodleian Library, Curzon b.4(71)  
357 × 259 mm (sheet)  
As well as contrasting John Bull and Napoleon, this design neatly includes the respective symbolic roles of John Bull and Britannia, as stolid homebound patriot and global superpower.

14. **The sentinels at his post or Boney’s peep into Walmer Castle!!**  
[By ‘J.B.’]  
London: S.W. Fores, 22 October 1803  
Bodleian Library, Curzon b.22(73); BMSat 10113  
244 × 330 mm (sheet)  
William Pitt is shown as Colonel of the Cinque Port Volunteers.
15. **John Bull guarding the toy-shop, – or Boney crying for some more play things.**
   By 'J.B.'
   London: S.W. Fores, 29 October 1803
   Bodleian Library, Curzon b.3(1); BMSat 10118
   231 × 323 mm (image and text)
   A print identifying print-shops with the nation: the monuments Napoleon wishes to occupy are in the shop window of 'Fores, caricaturist to the First Consul'. By the same artist as 'The sentinel at his post'.

16. **National contrasts or Bulky and Boney.**
   By Roberts
   London: Roberts, [c.1804]
   Bodleian Library, Curzon b.27(181)
   248 × 338 mm (sheet)
   The fat John Bull, surrounded by his wealth, and the emaciated Napoleon, consumed by rage and envy.

17. **St George and the dragon – a design for an equestrian statue, from the original in Windsor Castle.**
   Etched by James Gillray
   London: H. Humphrey, 2 August 1805
   Bodleian Library Curzon b.23(253); BMSat 10424
   390 × 382 mm (sheet)
   The Emperor appears in a deadlier form in this imagined meeting with George III, drawn at the height of the 1805 naval confrontation.

18. **Resolutions in case of an Invasion!!**
   By West
   London: William Holland, 8 August 1803
   Courtesy of the British Museum, BMSat 10055
   222 × 337 mm
   A portrayal of the responses of the various trades to the threat of Bonaparte.

19. **Monument to General Sir Ralph Abercromby, St Paul’s Cathedral, London (1802-5).**
   By Richard Westmacott
   Print courtesy of the Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

20. **Design for a monument to Major-General Dundas for St Paul’s Cathedral, London.**
    By John Bacon
    Design drawing, c.1798
    Print courtesy of the National Archives, PRO, Kew, MPD 1/78.
Acknowledgements

This volume is one product of a four-year collaboration between the editor, the Department of Politics and International Relations in Oxford, and the Bodleian Library. That collaboration also produced an exhibition at the Bodleian between June and October 2003, with a catalogue, *Napoleon and the Invasion of Britain*, published by the Bodleian Library in 2004, but the core of the activity has centred around the digitizing of 1200 caricatures from the Curzon Collection in the library relating to the invasion threat, which is accessible through the Bodleian’s Website at <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk>. The collaboration also produced a concert of music from the period, involving Café Mozart, under the direction of Derek McCulloch, and the Central Music School of the Oxfordshire County Music Service.

This collection of essays grows out of two seminar series held at the Maison Français, Oxford, in the spring terms of 2002 and 2003, which were themselves preparatory for the subsequent conference, concert and exhibition held in June 2003. The seminars and conference produced a wide range of excellent papers on aspects of the threats of invasion, and this collection puts together a selection of those papers that tracks some of the central themes identified, while also introducing some of the more original contributions on topics not generally discussed in relation to this period. I would like to thank all those involved in the seminar series, the Maison Français, Oxford, which hosted the two seminar series and the conference, the British Academy for a conference grant, Bridget Taylor and Andrew Fairweather-Tall for their mobilization of departmental support, and Bill Eason at Laing and Cruickshank Investment Management Ltd, who provided supplementary funding to enable the concert to take place.

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Introduction: The British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797–1815

Mark Philp

The essays collected in this volume focus centrally on Britain’s resistance to the threat of invasion posed by Napoleon, first as Commander of the Army of England in 1797–8, and subsequently as First Consul and then Emperor in 1803–5. The war with Napoleonic France continued for another ten years, and Napoleon’s capacity to threaten Britain’s naval supremacy was not broken once and for all at Trafalgar in 1805, as is often assumed. But 1803–5 was the longest and most sustained threat of French invasion, with an army of some 80,000 camped along the Channel, more troops stationed within three or four days’ march of the ports, a massive flotilla of barges and boats constructed to transport troops across the narrow stretch, and a sizeable naval presence mustering to challenge Britain’s command of the sea. In 1797–8, in the light of the experience of Hoche, who had sailed to Bantry Bay late in 1796 only to have his fleet dispersed by poor weather, Napoleon quickly decided that he lacked sufficient command of the seas to effect a landing, and he persuaded the Directory to allow him to take his army to Egypt to threaten Britain’s connections to the East. Following a mixed campaign of successes against Egyptian and Turkish forces and major reverses against English forces, especially the disastrous loss of the French fleet after the devastating attack by Nelson at Aboukir Bay and the repulse of the siege of Acre, which forced Bonaparte to return to Egypt with little to show for his Syrian campaign, Napoleon left his troops and slipped back into France, where he was received with sufficient enthusiasm for him to emerge as First Consul in the triumvirate that overthrew the Directory in November 1799. To gain a respite, France put out feelers for peace with Britain, which Pitt fiercely resisted. Pitt was replaced by Addington in February 1801, and following new preparations for invasion by Napoleon in the summer, peace negotiations developed in earnest, although the final treaty was not ratified until March 1802. The Peace of Amiens lasted only fourteen months, with Britain declaring war again in May 1803. With Britain as his sole enemy, Napoleon turned his whole attention, and very considerable resources, some earned through the sale of Louisiana to America, to establishing his invasion force. No other military endeavour distracted him from the task until September 1805, when he seems to have abandoned the idea of an assault – a decision half enforced by the loss of a substantial part of the
French fleet at Trafalgar in October and then confirmed by the commitment of troops to defeating the Austrians at Austerlitz in December.

After the return to war in May 1803, Britain remained under a relatively constant threat of French invasion for the best part of two years. Napoleon thought a successful landing was within his grasp, and the British government and its people seemed largely to concur. Although fortifications were planned and building begun in 1806, prior to then the southern and eastern coasts of the country appeared remarkably exposed, and the British Army was simply too small to deal with an invasion force of any size. As Napoleon suggested: ‘A nation is very foolish, when it has no fortifications and no army, to lay itself open to seeing an army of 100,000 veteran troops land on its shores. This is the masterpiece of the flotilla. It costs a great deal of money, but it is necessary for us to be masters of the sea for six hours only, and England will have ceased to exist.’

There were additional reasons for the British government to worry. The country had had little respite since the troubles of the 1790s and the first years of the 1800s. For much of the previous seven to eight years, the government had resorted to political repression to deal with the flurry of reform societies and protest movements that had demanded political reform, bread and peace, and it had faced armed insurrection in Ireland in 1798 and troubling domestic disturbances in the winter of 1800–1801. The breakdown of the Peace in 1803 and the accompanying threat of invasion raised a series of troubling questions: How would the renewal of war be greeted by the British people? How far could the government count on the loyalty of its own subjects in resisting the French? Would Napoleon be welcomed or repulsed if he succeeded in landing his veterans on British soil? How far could the government sustain the loyalty and support of the British people, both practical and financial, in the face of renewed hostilities? In fact, the renewal of hostilities was greeted with what seems to have been an outpouring of spontaneous loyalty to the Crown and Constitution. For a period of nearly two years there was considerable apparent unanimity in British views of France and in her assessment of the First Consul, and an unprecedented level of popular mobilization in response to the invasion threat. But how deep this went and how calculated and orchestrated it was require considerable further investigation.

The flurry of popular activity has led a number of writers to see the period as one in which there is a growing sense of Britishness and an emerging national identity that plays a part in unifying the political nation under its king and government. ‘Britain United’ provides a clarion call for the period, stressing both unity and a sense of a national identity and a national political agenda. But the identification of symptoms of national identity often rely on sources that can be misleading. For example, as Stella Cottrell has noted, while it is true to say that patriotic publications in 1803–5 were directed at the populace, they were not for the most part produced by it. And the issue of how far that ‘direction’ took effect is one which requires a multi-faceted investigation of the variety of sources that exist. Only with that can we begin to
get a fuller picture of the character of the British resistance to Napoleon and France. This collection does not claim to complete that exercise, but it does bring together a range of contributions, drawing on a wide variety of materials, that examine the experience of Britain under the threat of French invasion that shed new light on the response to Napoleon and the threat of invasion at the turn of the century.

The impact of the French Revolution on neighbouring Britain has been the subject of extensive historical research. If there was general support for the opening events of the Revolution among the political elite of the kingdom, this began to die down and to be replaced with a positive aversion to the French ‘experiment’ after the shift to republicanism and revolutionary violence in the autumn of 1792, culminating in the September Massacres. While the publication of Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in November 1790 does mark a turning point in public opinion, its contribution to that turn is paradoxical. Although Burke doubtless persuaded some, the more marked response was an outpouring from friends of reform of pamphlets designed to demonstrate Burke’s folly. Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man*, published in two parts, in March 1791 and March 1792, provided a powerful attack on Burke’s *Reflections* … that achieved unprecedented circulation – ably assisted by the reinvigorated Society for Constitutional Information, which subsidized the production of cheap versions of Paine’s text and those of other reformers. It was this upsurge of popular, extra-parliamentary interest in political reform, and its willingness to direct reformist ambitions against Britain’s own Constitution and political arrangements, that increasingly drove the government, ‘respectable’ opinion and a concerned loyalist gentry against France and its British sympathizers. By the middle of the 1790s, the country had become increasingly polarized between supporters of reform who sought to capitalize on popular discontent arising from the exactions and shortages caused by the war and by a series of poor harvests by mobilizing mass meetings to demand annual parliaments and universal manhood suffrage, and loyalists who used similar tactics of mobilization to secure the commitment to King and Constitution among the middling orders and political elite of the country. Against the reform societies, the government used prosecutions for sedition and treason, and in 1795 introduced the ‘Gagging Acts’, forbidding mass political meetings. Attempts to continue agitation for reform produced further prosecutions and the repeated suspension of habeas corpus, allowing the detention of many leading popular reformers until June 1802. After 1797, Charles James Fox, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, stayed at home in disgust at what he described as the Prime Minister’s ‘Reign of Terror’, and with radical activity driven underground and insurrection breaking out in Ireland in 1797 and 1798, fears of a wider revolutionary movement among the population were widespread. In this sense, the impact of events in France was profound, leading to a widespread popular movement that called into question to an unprecedented extent the Constitution of the country. In the second half
of the final decade of the eighteenth century, Britain seemed to come close to losing the broad political consensus that had underpinned its institutions since the Glorious Revolution of 1688. More significantly, although the political elite was to some extent split on the issue of reform, by far the most troubling feature of the events of the 1790s was the development of a set of genuinely popular extra-parliamentary organizations for political reform. As the *sans culottes* took to the streets of Paris, a mobilization of ‘treadsmen, shopkeepers and mechanics’ (as Thomas Hardy, the founder of the London Corresponding Society, described its members) took place in London and a number of provincial cities, in ways that persuaded the government and its loyalist allies that they were dealing with a similar ‘Jacobin’ menace.

The rise of a popular movement in Britain discussing political principles and issues of constitutional and electoral reform in the 1790s was certainly one dimension of the impact of the French Revolution, but it was far from the only one. After the announcement in November of 1792 that the National Assembly in France would provide aid to all subjugated people in their struggle to secure their liberty, war between Britain and France became inevitable. From the war, other hardships (exacerbated by a series of poor harvests) flowed: food shortages, difficulties with trade, increased taxation, the brutal tactics of recruitment used by both the Navy and the Army, and the appalling losses suffered by British troops in the West Indies all contributed to popular unrest, and to an increasing weariness with the war and a desire for peace. These concerns were exploited by more ideologically orientated reformers, and certainly fuelled a movement that might otherwise have been of less significance, but the government’s increasingly punitive response only served to enhance a sense of spiralling divisions within British society, which in turn led to grave concerns about the basic loyalty of the British population and to anxieties that a successful invasion attempt by France might be welcomed and encouraged by them. Certainly, by 1797 it seemed that the government was neither willing to negotiate for peace with France, nor confident that it could rely on its population to support it in the event of a French force landing on British shores. The example of the insurrection in Ireland in 1798 only further confirmed that the French had the ability to land forces, and that there were elements within the population who might respond to such an initiative. Hence the case made for the repeated suspension of habeas corpus, and the arrest of those associated with the various remnants of the popular societies that the government’s campaign had driven underground. How realistic these fears were is unclear – certainly the reformers were in a minority, but it is simply not known how far, in the absence of political repression and loyalist intimidation, a wider, more popular movement might have developed, or how far resentment and long-standing grievance at their treatment may have fuelled popular resistance had the opportunity arisen. While reformers certainly capitalized on popular unrest, those who sought to mobilize and politicize this opinion after 1795 were systematically pursued by government informers and prosecuted by local magistrates, so that the growing appearance of political
quiescence at the end of the decade seemed to many at the time to be more a
sign of the extent of government repression than any indication that the
government had succeeded in securing the allegiance of the British people.
Indeed, as Linda Colley has shown, so uncertain was the government of the
basic allegiance of its people that it commissioned surveys in both 1798 and
1803 by its Lords Lieutenant to report on the state of their counties as to the
disposition of the people. The value of this testing of opinion is very debatable
– not least with respect to how far local constables who communicated with
their lieutenants really understood their people. Moreover, a pacified,
fragmented and fearful population with little will to resist left might be
difficult to distinguish from one which had little interest in political change.
Bruised and battered by a decade of political controversy and persecution, by
spiralling taxation, food shortages and relentless recruitment, apparent loyalty
might easily be merely lip-service, whose continuance would depend on the
absence of feasible alternatives. Yet, as Colley shows, even so, some of the
responses were robustly antagonistic to government, and there are many
instances of people refusing to serve against the French.

The impact of the French Revolution on Britain has generated several
important and valuable historical studies, the vast majority of which stop at the
end of the century. This has its own logic, with a natural break provided by the
establishment of the Consulate and thereby an end to the Revolution proper, by
the long-negotiated Peace of Amiens which was finally in place in 1802, by
Pitt’s resignation as Prime Minister in early 1801, by the British government’s
gradual relaxation of its grip on reformers with the release of those imprisoned
after the return of habeas corpus in 1802, or by the final collapse of the
revolutionary underground movements that had sprung up following the Irish
rebellion. Each point has some rationale, but hard and fast divisions are
inevitably rather arbitrary and there is much to be gained by not breaking the
narrative so abruptly. From the point of view of the British people, there was in
fact considerable continuity between the France they faced in the 1790s and
that faced in the following decade. The commander of the Army for the
Invasion of England in 1797–8 was the young Napoleon Bonaparte, and while
he looked across the Channel again in 1803 as First Consul, and thereafter as
Emperor of France (completing his translation from Bonaparte to Napoleon),
there was at least some sense that this was an essentially similar threat – he
himself saw the logistic problems of a descente in essentially similar terms on
each occasion. Even if people could recognize a difference between a general of
a revolutionary army and the Consul-then-Emperor, the significance of that
difference was different for different interpreters – was this really a
continuation of Jacobinism? Had Napoleon fulfilled or betrayed the essential
cause of the French Revolution? Was this a popular revolutionary army, or the
army of an empire with despotic ambitions? – One of the difficulties of the
period is precisely that there were many and increasing incentives for
propagandists and government to try to create distinctions and insist on
differences so as fundamentally to change popular perceptions of the war with
France once it was renewed in 1803 – there were many incentives to try to persuade people that this was a different war! After a brief peace, Britain, now isolated, without allies and once again at war with France, needed to ensure that the deep unpopularity of the 1790s war would not be repeated in the ensuing campaign.

The experience of 1803–5 was, in fact, a dramatically different one from that of the previous decade, although there remain puzzles about why this turned out to be so. At the height of the invasion scare in 1797–8, just after the attempt by Hoche on Ireland and before the Wexford insurrection, the government reluctantly called for volunteers to help back up the local militia and armed forces in the event of an invasion – reluctantly, because there was considerable concern that by doing so they might be arming some of those who wished to see the overthrow of the political system. The response was gratifying, with numbers rising between April and July 1798 from 54,000 to 116,000. Although this is impressive, the response in 1803–5 was still more so: the House of Commons received a report in December 1803 that the sum total of volunteers across the country was marginally short of 500,000. Tom Paine, now back in America, sneered, with some bitterness:

By the experiment of raising the country in mass, the government have put arms into the hands of men whom they would have sent to Botany Bay but a few months before, had they found a pike in their possession.

He was not the only one to mark the contrast. The exiled French Revolutionary General Charles Dumouriez gave a depressing account of the state of his new country in 1798:

The opposition to Government, revolutionary spirit, discontents of numerous workmen without work or victuals, the falling off of commerce, the distrust which the stoppage of payment and partial bankruptcies will produce in mercantile transactions, the embarrassment of the Bank, the activity of the French in fomenting discords in the three kingdoms, the necessity of keeping up a numerous army to put the coasts above insult, the dearness of this expense, the danger of arming the whole nation in the midst of the discord and innovation which agitates it: this combination of real calamities is sufficient to depress the resources and courage of the nation, which derives all its strength from its riches and commerce, though the French should not even employ more decisive measures against it. What will be the consequence, if the French, turning all their strength and industry towards their navy, obstinately determine the execution of a descent?

Yet between 1803 and 1804 he wrote a methodical and instructive memorandum to the government, Memoirs on the defences of Great Britain and Ireland, in which there is very little concern with the loyalty of the citizens and the efficacy of their participation in the defence of their country. One way to understand this sudden flood of volunteers is to see at work the
expression of a basic loyalty to the King and Constitution, and perhaps a still more basic antipathy to the French. But this fails to explain the sharp contrast to the earlier decade, in which men were moved to contemplate insurrection, collaboration and mutiny against their government. While these may have been extremists, they were certainly not alone, but in the twenty-four months of the re-opened war with France, they and their compatriots were apparently silent. A more fruitful line is to ask how far this activity demonstrates an expression of loyalty, and to what? The evidence suggests a deep localism to the volunteer movement: people were willing to defend their localities, but had no desire to serve outside them – and were not reluctant to say so. Mass mobilization does not thereby create a national army. Moreover, the incentives for volunteering were many – not least, it offered status: volunteers were treated by convention as gentlemen, whatever their social status. They were allowed to wear uniforms, to carry arms and to parade. They had, essentially, a position of respect within the local community, and one in which they gained a degree of equality with those who led the community. Moreover, as the chapters at the beginning of this volume demonstrate, the final totals mask the complex stories that underlay the particular histories and conditions of each of the local units. These more particular stories offer an important counterweight to the view that there is at work a process of national identification and commitment to the country. In this respect, the analysis of the volunteering and other ‘participatory’ activities of the period contribute to a growing body of literature that is sceptical of claims about the significance of symptoms of popular loyalism in the period.

A further set of important contrasts between the two periods concerns the propaganda that was mobilized in support of the status quo. Three features are particularly salient here. The first is that in 1792–8, propaganda was directed as much against forces within Britain as it was against outsiders. English ‘Jacobins’ and ‘Levellers’ were those targeted by John Reeves’s largely self-explanatory Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers. Although the French came in for their share of derision and caricature, the pamphlets, broadsides, squibs and prints were aimed as often against factions within the political elite and against those who sought to agitate for reform in Britain. In 1803–5, in contrast, the target is rarely domestic. Interestingly, Reeves did attempt to rejuvenate his Association and issued at least one or two pamphlets under its name, including The Alarum Bell series and editions of Cobbett’s pamphlet Important Considerations. But the Association had none of the prominence it had enjoyed a decade earlier – in large part, it seems, because its very title rested on a division between loyal and disloyal that was increasingly alien to the propaganda of the day and to the spirit of national unity it sought to generate. It is only briefly over the removal of Addington and his replacement by Pitt in April 1804, and then again around the growing corruption scandals in 1805, that domestic issues and tensions return to the caricaturists’ agenda, and while thereafter divisions and controversies develop normally enough, the period 1803–5 does demonstrate a
remarkable unanimity in focus on the enemy across the Channel, at least in
 caricatures, broadsides and songs. The second feature that is notable is the shift
 in focus from the French (and their revolutionary principles) as the enemy to
 an increasingly obsessive concern with Napoleon. The earlier fears of
 contamination by French principles, the caricaturing of the revolutionary sans
 culottes and the contrasts between the plump but plain John Bull eating roast
 beef, and the slightly foppish, skinny, revolutionary sipping soup or chewing
 on garlic are increasingly distilled into a reiterated trope of Napoleon as the
 avaricious conqueror, encountering the robust resistance of a somewhat
 simple-minded John Bull. As against the earlier division between the British
 and the French, with the distinction being used to treat any sympathy towards
 French revolutionary principles as essentially disloyal to the British Crown and
 Constitution, Napoleon comes first to epitomize and increasingly to displace
 France, becoming the most consistent object of fascination, fear and fun, with
 the result that loyalty asks little more than the recognition of his tyrannical
 ambitions, his cruelty and his illegitimacy as ruler of France. In the political
 propaganda, caricatures, popular songs, broadsides and other ephemera of
 1803–5, he becomes the essential and despotic driving force behind the
 invasion threat, providing a single focal point for the mobilization of popular
 opinion in a way that helped create the appearance of a very high degree of
 political unity. Of course, that appearance is certainly partly deceptive. There
 was a good deal of orchestration in this representation, and it was accompanied
 by a good deal of opportunism in such a commercial nation: selling the bogey-
 man Napoleon was good business for many printers, print sellers and
 publishers, and they produced attractive commodities – good to look at,
 reassuringly cutting the tyrant down to size (once Gillray had successfully
 portrayed him as ‘little Boney’) and emphasizing the redoubtable qualities of
 the English yeoman who would form the backbone to resistance. The songs,
 which in 1792–3 had more frequently lampooned Tom Paine than they had any
 of the French Revolution’s leaders, now turned to make sport with Bonaparte,
 and to hymn the collective loyalty and spirit of independence of the British
 people. And the broadsheet dialogues, which had earlier featured masters and
 their servants, or John Bull and some disaffected and subversive Paine-like
 character, become increasingly between John Bull and Napoleon. This is not an
 exceptionless pattern, which is hardly to be expected in a competitive cultural
 marketplace, but it is a general trend that is clearly distinct from that of the
 earlier decade with its obsession with French sympathizers.9

This double transformation of propaganda, turning away from internal
 divisions, and narrowing the focus from sets of principles and their extremist
 French examples to the tyrannical ambitions of a single man, provided a
 dramatically different context for political mobilization and controversy than
 in the preceding decade. But a further feature of the propaganda effort of the
 period around 1803–5 was its all-encompassing character – church sermons,
broadside, the raising of volunteer regiments, caricatures, public monuments,
concerts, theatrical performances and musical hall shows, public dinners,
drilling of the troops, and so on. Perhaps more so on the south coast and in London than elsewhere, but none the less to a significant extent throughout the rest of the country, it would have been impossible for most people to overlook the mobilization for war. Just as the militia and the Army and Navy serve as a natural backdrop for the action in Jane Austen’s novels towards the end of the war, so daily life for most people would have been punctuated with reminders of the threat of invasion and the need for public vigilance and support. Much was made of military spectacle, with 200000 turning out to see the King’s review of the volunteers in Hyde Park in 1803, and similarly large crowds could be found in the provinces. Although he personally doubted that the French would ever make an attempt at a landing, Charles James Fox had no doubt that this was the widely held view, and one which held the population in fear: ‘a picture of a People so terrified as we have been was never before exhibited’. This is not just a function of propaganda; the quotidian preparations for invasion, the mobilization and manoeuvring of the military, and the general sense of getting set to resist Napoleon became part of the natural ether for a substantial proportion of the British Isles. Most families would have had some part of their menfolk in some kind of uniform, many would contribute to the making or purchase of the uniform; information from the papers and the broadsheets would have circulated widely; those living in towns would be aware of the print shops, and those of means living out might hire a selection of the new prints for an evening’s entertainment with their friends; military bands were plentiful (there was often little practical to do, and both marching and entertainment called for accompaniment) and could serve local needs as well as regimental purposes, and the growing shortages of labour resulting from mass mobilization would have affected agricultural and industrial communities alike. Much of this activity is simply a function of the war and the level of participation in preparations for defence, but that itself was fuelled by statements from the pulpit, broadsides and popular pamphlets, a good deal of which were encouraged and subsidized by both loyalists and the government. Moreover, even those who had previously criticized the government and campaigned for reform, such as William Frend, the Cambridge radical, felt it incumbent upon him to participate in the mobilization, without any sense that he was thereby declaring support for an administration for which he had little time. Which is not to say that preparations crowded out all other considerations, as is clear from the letters and diaries of the time.

A third issue concerns the long-term impact of the French Revolution and the war with Napoleon. The tendency to complete the story of popular radicalism at the end of the century results in too sharp a break between the various currents of radical and reformist thinking and organization in the 1790s and those of the 1810s, when a new reform movement emerges under the leadership of Burdett, Cartwright, Cobbett, Hunt and others. There are continuities between the various movements, and while the language of reform tends to step back from the conventionism and rights-based egalitarianism of
Painite principles, to be replaced by a more constitutionalist idiom that attacks corruption in the government and administration and identifies electoral reform as a pre-condition for good government, we should not underestimate the continuing influence of Paine’s work in many quarters, nor the degree to which the new political rhetoric was a tactical move to help counter accusations of Jacobinism, and to link extra-parliamentary forces with elements inside Parliament. In contrast, there has been a tendency to see loyalism and the associated sense of national identity as a relatively enduring legacy of the period, as if this is the moment at which, in response to the centralization and unification of France under the Revolution and then under Napoleon, Britain becomes a self-conscious focus of identification for its people. Yet this story over-plays its hand. The evidence does suggest that there is a high degree of unanimity in the representation of Britain in these two years, and a very high level of mobilization in her defence. But the evidence also suggests that this is not a function of a new-found nationalism or sense of Britishness. In many respects, it is the cumulative result of a wide range of local and regional initiatives, bolstered by a powerful print culture that had learnt many lessons from the 1790s in terms of the distribution and circulation of tracts, broadsides and ballads. The period 1792–4 had demonstrated to the British government that there was an important battle to be won in terms of the hearts and minds of the middling classes and the minor gentry of provincial towns. They had appreciated the successes of Reeves’s Association, and of the distribution of tracts for the lower orders developed by Hannah More and evangelical sympathizers. When William Cobbett sent Addington his *Important Considerations*, a pamphlet designed to rouse British sentiment against Napoleon in June 1803, he ordered that sufficient numbers be sent to each parish to place a copy in each pew, and a number of copies in the aisles where the poor worshipped. It was an exercise in mass propaganda that had learned the lessons of 1792–4 and now applied them with considerable efficiency:

> Having under the name of Equality, established in his own person and family a government the most pompous and expensive, while the people are pining with hunger and in rags; having, with the word Liberty continually on his lips, erected a despotism the most oppressive, the most capricious, and the most cruel that the Almighty in his wrath, ever suffered to exist … he [Napoleon] feared that while there remained on the earth, and especially within a few leagues of France, a people enjoying all the blessings of freedom, their sentiments and their example would, by degrees, penetrate through his forest of bayonets, his myriad of spies, and would, first or last, shake the foundation of his ill-gotten power …

Others voiced similar sentiments, with less eloquence but equal vigour: *Strike or Die: Alfred’s First Letter to the Good People of England*, published by Hatchard’s in London in the summer of 1803 and sold by the dozen for distribution, told its readers: ‘You must immediately choose which you would have: a Corsican master, with rapes, pillage, confiscations, imprisonments,
tortures and scornful slavery, or George III with Old England, proud Freedom and Prosperity.26

The full extent of government involvement in and support for other propaganda in the period remains unclear, but it is difficult to doubt that it was considerable. Perhaps the most lasting influence of the French Revolution and the reform movement of the 1790s was the recognition by governments that they needed to attend to the opinions of a much wider portion of society than those who cast votes in elections. William Windham clearly set out a policy of creating a sense of danger by involving the maximum number of men in defence preparations ‘until defence becomes the talk of every ale-house’. 27 The extra-parliamentary reform movement had demonstrated the importance of communicating with the extra-parliamentary people, and the government had learned the lesson well.

In this sense, then, there is evidence of a changing political culture – not so much of nationalism or national identity, but involving the emergence of a national political agenda (even if it was one that many people hooked up to, driven by very local motives and concerns). The repression of the 1790s successfully quashed the nascent democratic movement, and those driven into more insurrectionary and subversive activity were at best a very small minority, but the sources of unrest were certainly not unique to the second half of the 1790s: the hardships of war, poor harvests, inadequate systems for poor relief, brutal methods of recruitment, dissatisfaction with the ballot for the militia and a sense of unfairness as to who was able to evade conscription, high taxation, the perception that the war was serving to line certain people’s pockets at the expense of those who did the fighting, and a general sense that the war was achieving little or nothing – such factors remained intact between 1803 and 1815, albeit not combining together in the way they did in 1797 and 1799–1801.28 If the threat of insurrection was no longer present for much of the remainder of the war, it could not be said that the unanimity of the period immediately following the renewal of the war with France was destined to last.

The source material for understanding this period is extremely rich, but it is also widely diverse. We have the usual records of Parliamentary Debates, notes from the War and Home Offices and from the archives of papers from senior statesmen, and newspaper reports. There are also the returns of the 1803 Defence of the Realm Act, albeit these are very scattered in various collections. There are caricatures aplenty, broadsheets, songs, ballads, records of musical performances, and so on. But these different elements need to be understood both in their own right and against the background of the other events and productions of the period, and while there have been attempts to produce more comprehensive, complex and rounded pictures of the 1790s, this is not something that has been attempted for the period 1803–5. Stuart Semmel’s wide-ranging, informative and entertaining recent work on what Napoleon meant to the British people covers a much broader period, as does Colley’s Britons.29 Yet there is considerable value in focusing in particular on this moment, and doing so from a variety of different disciplinary backgrounds and
interests. In this collection of essays we have brought together a variety of contributions that shed a range of different lights on the period, and on issues of the relevant contexts for understanding the materials which remain.

In Chapter 1, Philip Harling provides an overview and assessment of the domestic impact of the long war with France between 1793 and 1815, and examines the way in which criticism of the government was largely stifled in the 1790s, only finding a voice in the later part of the Napoleonic Wars. Yet the conduct of war, and the corruption and peculation attending it, were certainly no worse in the later period than in the earlier. Perhaps the most notorious silence was that of Wilberforce and the anti-slavery lobby, which stood by tight-lipped as Pitt, facing a murderous campaign, decimated by disease, in the West Indies, decided to purchase some 13000 slaves to supplement and support British forces there. But this is only one of the more extreme cases of the problems that faced those who wished to criticize the government and its decisions without appearing alongside, and giving comfort to, those the government identified as French sympathizers and dangerous subversives.

In Chapters 2, 3 and 4, we examine three cases of the more amateur side of military preparations, looking with Nicholas Rogers at the sea fencibles (the volunteer force set up to guard the coastline against French invasion), with John Newman at the London Volunteers in Lambeth, and with Katrina Navickas at the social politics underlying squabbles between volunteer units in Lancashire. In each case, we find a more complex story than a volunteer movement driven by patriotism and a concern to do one’s bit for the country. Rogers and Navickas show the mixed motives that led men to volunteer, the subversion of the defensive effort by an ingrained localism and by serious rivalries both within and between volunteer units, and the extent to which the government confounded its own aims by allowing volunteering to avoid conscription into the militia and the regular services. Moreover, Rogers also provides new evidence of the very widespread protests that recruiting methods to the Navy provoked in 1803–5. Newman provides a provisional mapping of the considerable complexity of the London scene, and identifies both different incentives for volunteering in 1803 than previously and different levels of enthusiasm for the task in the more wearied and anxious days of 1803 than in the more elite-led units of the early 1790s. These three chapters provide valuable in-depth studies of phenomena that have largely been studied in aggregate at the national level.

If volunteering on the ground was subject to mixed motives, the parliamentary struggles over the leadership of the war effort, and the attempts by the Ministry to manage the invasion threat, also had their own complexities. As Charles John Fedorak demonstrates in Chapter 5, although Addington has suffered from a poor reputation for his office in comparison to his predecessor, William Pitt, he has been substantially maligned, and his partnership with the Duke of York in managing the military threat was in fact a considerable success, undermined only by the increasing factionalism in Parliament and Pitt’s own desire to resume office in his guise of the country’s great patriotic