

‘SANDERS OF THE RIVER, STILL THE BEST JOB FOR A BRITISH BOY’; RECRUITMENT TO THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE AT THE END OF EMPIRE*

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ABSTRACT. *In February 1951, the Sunday Express printed a piece extolling the virtues of a Colonial Service career, under the headline: ‘Sanders of the River, Still the Best Job for a British Boy’. This article explores the ideological and practical reasons why Sanders of the River, a character apparently so at odds with the post-Second World War Colonial Service message, continued to hold enough cultural resonance that it was considered appropriate to utilize him as a recruitment tool in 1951. Edgar Wallace’s literary creation occupied a defining place in metropolitan understandings of the Colonial Service’s work. Yet, by 1951, the ideological aims of the colonial project were changing. Sanders’s paternalism had been dismissed in favour of a rhetoric that emphasized partnership and progress. The post-1945 district officer was expected to be a modern administrator, ready to work alongside educated Africans to prepare Britain’s colonies for self-government. Exploring both Colonial Office recruitment strategies and recruits’ career motivations, this article situates the often ignored issue of Colonial Service recruitment at the end of empire within a wider cultural context to illuminate why, even as many turned away from careers in empire after 1945, a significant number of young Britons continued to apply.*

In February 1951, the *Sunday Express* printed an article under the headline ‘Sanders of the River, Still the Best Job for a British Boy’.¹ It extolled the virtues of the Colonial Service as a career and encouraged young men to apply, whilst seeking to reassure their parents that worthwhile long-term prospects remained in imperial administration. To do so, the article invoked

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¹ *Sunday Express*, 25 Feb. 1951.

Edgar Wallace's literary creation 'Sanders of the River', a character who first appeared in print in 1911 and went on to star in a series of twelve bestsellers, the last published in 1928, and which were subsequently adapted into a highly successful 1935 film and a 1937 West End musical production.² Sanders was a district officer (DO) in pre-1914 Nigeria where, like his real life counterparts, he was responsible for the day-to-day administration of the empire and 'keeping the King's peace'. His was an Africa of paddle steamer and jungle, tribal warfare and superstition, where the district officer was 'king of all he surveyed'.³ Throughout the interwar and post-1945 period, Sanders held such a prominent place in the British cultural imagination that the leading historian of the Colonial Service has argued '[Wallace's] Sanders stories...quite simply put the Colonial Service on the reading map...In Sanders we have not the typical but the archetypal colonial administrator of the early years of the African empire.'⁴

Although the article was not directly commissioned by the Colonial Office, its tone would have undoubtedly won approval. Praising the Colonial Service as the empire's 'Key-men', it stressed the desperate need for more recruits. Central to the appeal was an emphasis upon the romance and adventure of a posting, contrasting a life 'deep in the African bush' or in an office overlooking 'the trade winds bowing the palms on the beach' with the tedium of 'tending a suburban garden and playing golf'. Opening in rousing tones, the article speculated:

What sort of careers do boys dream about these days? Pilot, county cricketer, engineer – the prevailing ambition changes with the times. But there are still boys with the same idea as their fathers and grandfathers who see themselves in jungle or desert helping primitive tribesmen towards progress, keeping law and order in a 'district' as big as Yorkshire.⁵

At least one recruit recalled the positive impact of the article on his career choice. After being demobbed from the Army in 1949, J. Lewis-Barned had

[N]o very clear idea of what to do next. I scanned the daily newspapers, went for interviews with the Ministry of Labour and sundry agencies, and made enquiries from friends and acquaintances...I had no professional qualifications, nor a degree, and I felt that my field was accordingly limited. I was rather attracted by an article which appeared in the *Sunday Express*...

² David Glover, 'Wallace, Edgar (1875–1932)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography*; see also Clive Bloom, *Bestsellers: popular fiction since 1900* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 59, 130–1; Philip Waller, *Writers, readers and reputations: literary life in Britain, 1870–1918* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 673–5; Q. D. Leavis, *Fiction and the reading public* (London, 1932), pp. 6–8. On the film version, see Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Best of British: cinema and society from 1930 to the present* (London, 1999), pp. 20–36.

³ Edgar Wallace, *Sanders of the River* (Kelly Bray, 2001; first publ. 1911).

⁴ A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, 'The Colonial Service in the novel', in John Smith, ed., *Administering empire: the British Colonial Service in retrospect* (London, 1999), p. 26.

⁵ *Sunday Express*, 25 Feb. 1951.

Having attended Harrow and served in the Grenadier Guards during the war, Lewis-Barned closely fitted the Colonial Service's profile of an ideal recruit. First attracted to the Service as a schoolboy, he was ultimately persuaded by the article's concluding exhortation, 'Empire builder, still the finest job for a British Boy.'⁶

Yet, by 1951, the ideological aims of the imperial project were changing. Sanders's paternalism had been dismissed in favour of a rhetoric emphasizing partnership and progress. The post-war DO was expected to be a modern administrator, ready to work alongside educated Africans to prepare Britain's colonies for self-government.⁷ The political and practical ramifications of this transition have drawn much scholarly attention. Dissections of the internal wrangling amongst Britain's Whitehall elite have laid bare the priorities behind the formulation of policy.⁸ Efforts to prolong the colonial empire by keeping 'change within bounds' after 1945 – both for Britain's economic benefit and to avoid the chaotic aftermath of the transfer of power in India – ensured that, despite the adjustment in language, few officials envisaged a swift transition towards self-government.⁹ Accounts of how colonial governments struggled to keep change within intended bounds have provided much needed perspective on the interplay between metropolitan ambition and local exigency.¹⁰ In the turbulent post-war conditions, the necessity of re-establishing control and productivity allowed competing voices across Britain's colonies to harness the language of reform to divergent agendas, whilst opponents to colonial rule quickly leveraged emerging fissures to accelerate

⁶ J. F. de S. Lewis-Barned, 'A fanfare of trumpets', unpublished memoir, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Rhodes House, Oxford, MSS.Afr.s.1778, p. 1.

⁷ Arthur Creech Jones (under secretary of state for the colonies), statement in the House of Commons on colonial affairs, 9 July 1946, *Hansard*, vol. 425, cc. 237–352.

⁸ Amongst the best of such surveys are Ronald Hyam, *Britain's declining empire: the road to decolonisation, 1918–1968* (Cambridge, 2006), chs. 2–4; Ronald Hyam, 'Africa and the Labour government, 1945–1951', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 16 (1988), pp. 148–72; David Goldsworthy, *Colonial issues in British politics, 1945–1961* (Oxford, 1970), passim; Frank Heinlein, *British government policy and decolonisation, 1945–1963: scrutinizing the official mind* (London, 2002); Phillip Murphy, *Party politics and decolonization: the Conservative party and British colonial policy in tropical Africa, 1951–1964* (Oxford, 1995).

⁹ David Goldsworthy, 'Keeping change within bounds: aspects of colonial policy during the Churchill and Eden governments, 1951–1957', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 18 (1990), pp. 81–108. Arguing that the 1950s witnessed a concerted reassertion of colonial control, see Martin Lynn, ed., *The British empire in the 1950s: retreat or revival* (Basingstoke, 2006).

¹⁰ Colony-specific studies have tended to dominate but taken together offer a revealing account of the challenges faced across Africa after 1945. See for example John Iliffe, *A modern history of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 436–84; Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African society: the labor question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, 1996); Richard Rathbone, 'The transfer of power and colonial civil servants in Ghana', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 28 (2000), pp. 67–84; Martin Lynn, 'The Nigerian self-government crisis of 1953 and the Colonial Office', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34 (2006), pp. 245–61. For an excellent account of the confused, competing, and often contradictory voices attempting to shape colonial strategy after 1945, see Joanna Lewis, *Empire state-building: war and welfare in Kenya, 1925–1952* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 82–123.

the process of change.¹¹ However, neither field of inquiry tends to address how the post-1945 change in direction was received in Britain more widely and, in particular, amongst the group considering careers in the Colonial Service.

Frustratingly, more focused studies of the Colonial Service also largely fail to address this silence. Most frequently the impression of amateur, gentlemanly uniformity has occupied scholars' attention.¹² Before 1939, the demographic of the Colonial Administrative Service (CAS) remained remarkably homogeneous. From 1922 to 1939, roughly 70 per cent came from schools belonging to the Headmasters' Conference and after 1925 a similar proportion attended Oxbridge. Although a unified CAS only came into being in 1932 (and unified technical services piecemeal over the following decades), after 1918 recruitment was co-ordinated from London and dominated by the figure of Sir Ralph Furse until his retirement in 1948. Like his counterparts in India and the Sudan the average DO was, in the words of Ronald Hyam, 'usually a practitioner of the public school code and cultural ethos, even though not always from a public school'.¹³ In the late 1920s, the CAS introduced a standardized recruitment process, partly intended to dispel accusations of patronage and, in so doing, attract the Varsity's top graduates.¹⁴ Although in theory based on principles of meritocracy, it further entrenched a self-perpetuating professional middle-class monopoly over appointments. Academic success and practical training mattered far less for the pre-1939 administrator than what Furse – and his deputy, successor, and brother-in-law Francis Newbolt (son of Sir Henry Newbolt) – endorsed as the 'imponderables of character'.¹⁵ Throughout the period, Furse unashamedly refused to expand his 'hunting

¹¹ Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: the past of the present* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 49–53.

¹² The classic, although flawed, study of the Colonial Service and motivation behind an application is Robert Heussler, *Yesterday's rulers: the making of the British Colonial Service* (Syracuse, NY, 1963). Many of Heussler's romanticized assumptions have been debunked in Nile Gardiner, 'Sentinels of empire: the British Colonial Administrative Service, 1919–1954' (Ph.D. thesis, Yale, 1998). Gardiner's conclusion that the Colonial Service predominantly comprised sons of the professional middle-class, public schools, and Oxbridge supports earlier analyses of Britain's other principal imperial civil services. See also A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *Britain's imperial administrators, 1858–1966* (Basingstoke, 2000); Peter Duigan and L. H. Gann, *Rulers of British Africa, 1870–1914* (London, 1978); Henrika Kuklick, *The imperial bureaucrat: the Colonial Administrative Service in the Gold Coast, 1920–1939* (Stanford, CA, 1979), pp. 19–39.

¹³ Hyam, *Britain's declining empire*, p. 11. On the Sudan Political Service, see J. A. Mangan, 'The education of an elite imperial administration: the Sudan Political Service (SPS) and the British public school system', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 15 (1982), pp. 671–99. For the Indian Civil Service (ICS), David Potter, *India's political administrators, 1919–1983* (Oxford, 1983). Offering a comparative survey of all services, Kirk-Greene, *Britain's imperial administrators*.

¹⁴ 'Report of a committee on the system of appointment in the Colonial Office and the Colonial Services', Cmd 3554, 1930, *Reports Commissioners 1929–1930*, VIII (London, 1930), p. 29. This was commonly known as the Warren Fisher Committee after its chairman. Fisher was permanent secretary to the treasury. The committee largely endorsed Furse's selection strategy and praised his ability to pick the 'right man'.

¹⁵ Sir Ralph Furse, *Aucuparius: recollections of a recruiting officer* (Oxford, 1962), p. 228.

grounds', with the Colonial Office's focus centring upon Oxbridge and the public schools, where it was believed the finest of England's youth were to be found.

This image becomes increasingly problematic for the post-1945 period. The cessation of hostilities presented the Colonial Office with a significant challenge as colonial governments demanded a massive influx of officers to fill gaps created by the war and to cope with the expanded responsibilities laid out in the 1945 Colonial Welfare and Development Act. John Lonsdale's characterization of this expansion as the 'second colonial occupation' is apt in terms of scale and ambition.¹⁶ New ambitions necessitated a reassessment of recruitment priorities. More remains to be written on the relative attractions of a career in the technical services compared to the CAS, but as Sabine Clarke and Joseph Hodge have both shown, after 1945 massively expanded technical services were elevated from supporting roles to a position of central importance within the colonial project.¹⁷ Nonetheless, as the continuation of the Sanders-figure illustrates, this shift did not mean that more traditional conceptions of colonial authority simply melted away.

Surprisingly, the demise of a career in empire after 1945 has received little attention from historians. In consequence, as Anthony Kirk-Greene has acknowledged, career motivation remains one of the last 'unexplored wildernesses' of Colonial Service historiography, with the current literature offering little sense as to why, even as many turned away from a colonial career, a significant number still continued to apply.¹⁸ With a few notable exceptions, studies of the imperial services have tended to remain distinct from wider studies into the significance of empire within British culture and rarely move beyond 1939.¹⁹ Subsequently, when colonial officials do appear in accounts of the post-1945 period, they invoke, as Clarke rightly observes, an unchanging gentlemanly imperialism.²⁰ However, as the work of Wendy Webster and Bill Schwarz demonstrates, whilst the construction of 'imperial manliness' remained

¹⁶ J. M. Lonsdale and D. A. Low, 'Introduction: towards the new order, 1945–1963', in D. A. Low and A. Smith, eds., *History of East Africa* (Oxford, 1976), p. 13.

¹⁷ Sabine Clarke, 'A technocratic imperial state? The Colonial Office and scientific research, 1940–1960', *Twentieth Century British History*, 18 (2007), pp. 453–80; Sabine Clarke, 'The chance to send their first class men out to the colonies: the making of the Colonial Research Service', in B. Bennett and J. M. Hodge, eds., *Science and empire: knowledge and networks of science in the British empire, 1850–1970* (Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 187–208; J. M. Hodge, *Triumph of the expert: agrarian doctrines of development and the legacies of British colonialism* (Athens, OH, 2007), pp. 205–9; Helen Tilley, *Africa as a living laboratory: empire, development and the problem of scientific knowledge* (Chicago, IL, 2011), p. 323.

¹⁸ A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of authority: the British district officer in Africa* (London, 2006), p. 15.

¹⁹ Significant studies that do situate imperial administrators in a wider cultural settings include J. A. Mangan, *The games ethic and imperialism: aspects of the diffusion of the ideal* (Harmondsworth, 1986); Christopher Prior, *Exporting empire: Africa, colonial officials and the construction of the British imperial state, c. 1900–1939* (Manchester, 2013).

²⁰ Clarke, 'A technocratic imperial state?', pp. 453–4.

contingent upon a sense of racial, cultural, and social privilege ingrained within domestic culture, the contours of these categories were in flux after 1945.²¹ Subsequently, this article moves beyond 1945 to explore the attitudes, tensions, and dilemmas that shaped Colonial Service recruitment strategies, alongside career motivation amongst CAS recruits during the period of decolonization. At its heart, lies the paradox of why Sanders, a character apparently so at odds with the post-Second World War Colonial Service message, continued to hold enough cultural resonance that it was considered appropriate to utilize him as a recruitment tool in 1951.

I

The Colonial Service envisaged in 1945 was intended to be very different from its 1930s counterpart, both in ideological mission and scale.²² Impetus to shift the Service's central role from one of law-and-order provision to a dynamic participation in the economic, social, and political development of colonial societies emerged during the late 1930s. Under the stewardship of Malcolm MacDonald at the Colonial Office and through the growing influence of left-leaning metropolitan think-tanks, a constructive alternative to the laissez-faire imperialism of the 1930s was articulated.²³ Making ready use of Lord Hailey's detailed research into conditions in Africa to inform its new development agenda, the Colonial Office advocated centrally planned and carefully targeted welfare schemes as the surest means of alleviating the worst of colonial poverty, whilst at the same time encouraging the emergence of an educated elite capable of becoming partners in the progress towards self-government.²⁴ Crucially, it demanded a forthright disavowal of the orthodoxy of indirect rule. Even though the first Colonial Welfare and Development Act (1940) failed to deliver the level of investment initially hoped for, it represented a seminal change in colonial policy. For the first time, the British government acknowledged direct responsibility for funding colonial development and in so doing signalled the abandonment of the assumption that the colonies should be self-supporting.²⁵

²¹ Wendy Webster, *Englishness and empire, 1939–1965* (Oxford, 2005); Bill Schwarz, *The white man's world (memories of empire)*, 1 (Oxford, 2013).

²² A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *On crown service: a history of HM Colonial and Overseas Civil Service, 1837–1997* (London, 1999), pp. 41–2; L. J. Butler, *Britain and empire: adjusting to a post-imperial world* (London, 2002), pp. 22–4.

²³ Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British politics: the left and the end of empire, 1918–1964* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 143–4; R. D. Pearce, *The turning point in Africa: British colonial policy, 1938–1948* (London, 1982), pp. 99–108.

²⁴ W. H. Hailey, *An African survey: a study of problems arising in Africa south of the Sahara* (London, 1938); Stephen Constantine, *The making of British colonial development policy, 1914–1940* (London, 1984), pp. 232–46. See also Margery Perham, 'From power to service', *Listener*, 23 Apr. 1943. Reprinted in Margery Perham, *Colonial sequence, 1930–1949* (London, 1967), pp. 243–7.

²⁵ Hodge, *Triumph of the expert*, pp. 179–80.

Supported by all parties, the Colonial Office convulsed with new purpose during the war years.²⁶ Fears over a haemorrhaging of morale amongst serving officers combined with determination to outmanoeuvre emerging nationalist opposition to fire intent.²⁷ Under Conservative Colonial Secretary Oliver Stanley, MacDonald's plans crystallized into a clear strategy aimed at re-invigorating the Service and offering a new basis of legitimacy to colonial rule; it stated unequivocally Britain's commitment to a policy of partnership with colonial peoples that would lead naturally to self-government as a part of the Commonwealth. With the advent of the 1945 Labour government and the ascendency of Arthur Creech Jones to colonial secretary in 1946, the project took on even greater impetus.²⁸ Building upon an expanded Colonial Welfare and Development Act (1945) and supported by a rising generation of Colonial Office officials, including Andrew Cohen, Creech Jones promised radical new initiatives.²⁹ Shrewdly characterized by Joanna Lewis as a process of 'Empire state-building', it was understood that the architects of this development project would be the civil servants, academics, and expert advisers at the Colonial Office, and the agents of its implementation the officers of the Colonial Service.

Not only would the Service require vastly expanded levels of manpower to achieve these aims but also a radical new philosophy.³⁰ If the revised mission was to find success beyond the corridors of Whitehall, the Colonial Office had to convince a new generation of recruits that prospects for a colonial career remained as secure as in the 1930s but the Service's new *raison d'être* – essentially the working towards the dissolution of their position – was a worthwhile and attractive ambition.³¹ Post-war recruitment literature echoed successive governments' public declarations. Opening with a stirring call to action

²⁶ Hyam, *Britain's declining empire*, pp. 87–90; Goldsworthy, *Colonial issues in British politics*, pp. 15–36.

²⁷ G. B. Cartland (CAS Gold Coast and Uganda, 1935–63) Colonial Office (CO) memorandum 'Factors affecting native administrative policy', Jan. 1946, The National Archives (TNA), CO847/25/7/1; A. F. Newbolt, CO memorandum, 'Report of African tour 24th June–8th October 1946', 15 Oct. 1946, Perham papers (PP), Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Rhodes House, Oxford, MSS.Perham/245/1. See also R. D. Pearce, 'Morale in the Colonial Service in Nigeria during the Second World War', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 11 (1983), pp. 175–96.

²⁸ Heinlein, *British government policy and decolonisation*, pp. 24–6.

²⁹ For example, Andrew Cohen, CO memorandum 'Native administration policy: notes for further discussion', Apr. 1946, TNA, CO847/35/6/2; Arthur Creech Jones, 'Local government: circular dispatch to African governors', 25 Feb. 1947, TNA, CO847/35/6/15–24; Arthur Creech Jones, 'British colonial policy: with particular attention to Africa', *International Affairs*, 27 (1951), p. 179.

³⁰ 'Statement on post-war recruitment for the Colonial Service', broadcast on the BBC, 16 Sept. 1944, TNA, CO/877/22/7; Charles Jeffries, CO memorandum 'Job analysis for the Colonial Service', 1943, Furse papers (FP), Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Rhodes House, Oxford, MSS.Brit.Emp.s.415/4/4/7.

³¹ CO memorandum 'The university and the Colonial Service', pp. 3–6, Oxford University Archives (OUA)/UR6/COL/4/10; Sir Sydney Caine, CO minute on 'Memorandum on Colonial Service recruitment and training', 9 Nov. 1947, TNA, CO877/31/5/1.

from the secretary of state for the colonies – although written by Newbolt – a 1945 recruitment pamphlet vigorously proclaimed:

After the war is over one of our first duties will be to fulfil our promise to guide the sixty million inhabitants of our colonial territories – now at a most critical stage of their history – along the road to self-government within the British Empire. We must help them to build up their political, social and economic institutions and to develop the natural resources on which their well-being will depend.³²

Unlike in the years following the First World War, the response proved enthusiastic, with total applications soaring to over 44,300 between 1945 and 1946 (compared to roughly 500 annual applications during the early 1930s).³³ Benefiting massively from the flood of decommissioned officers, Furse was conscious that this war-hardened cadre represented prime recruitment fodder.³⁴ Many had fought alongside colonial troops across the globe, with the exposure to the realities of life in empire proving a better advertisement for the Colonial Service than any propaganda handed out in college common rooms.³⁵ This tactic proved eminently successful, with over 98 per cent of recruits during the period 1945 to 1949 having had active military experience.³⁶ In the following years, recruitment reached unprecedented levels; by 1952, the Colonial Service had made 8,800 appointments to all departments, at an annual average of 1,350 compared to fewer than 250 during the interwar period.³⁷ Contrasting 1938 (325 appointments) with the peak in 1947 (1,715 appointments) underlines the Colonial Service's broadened scope.³⁸ A Service that had totalled about 7,000 European officers in 1936 (just 4 per cent of a total

³² *Handbook on post-war opportunities in the Colonial Service*, 1945, FP, MSS.Brit.Emp.s.415/4/4/4. On the problems of recruiting after 1918, see Furse, CO memorandum 'Recruitment in the 1920s', FP, MSS.Brit.Emp.s.415/4/1/19; Alison Light, *Forever England: femininity, literature and conservatism between the wars* (London, 1991), pp. 8–10.

³³ 'Colonial Service appointments board report, 1931–34', TNA, CO877/9/7; 'Review of administrative cadets 1946', TNA, CO/877/23/3.

³⁴ Furse, CO memorandum, 'An inquiry into the system of training the Colonial Service with suggestions for its reform to meet post-war conditions', 1943, TNA, CO877/22/16. He wrote to Douglas Veale that 'In fact it is [application rates] unlikely to reach anything like this summer's figures again at any rate until after the next world war!', Furse to Veale, 25 Apr. 1946, OUA, UR6/COL/4/5.

³⁵ For example, A. J. Cordy (CAS Nigeria, 1949–65), Overseas Pensioners' Association Survey v, *Towards a retrospective record*, box 3 (2003), Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Rhodes House, Oxford; R. G. Hodgson (CAS Nigeria, 1947–63), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 4.

³⁶ Furse, 'Appendix to review of the position in regard to recruitment and training', 9 Nov. 1947, FP, MSS.Brit.Emp.s.415/4/4/6. Of the 560 men appointed to the CAS in 1946, only three had not seen active military service, CO memorandum 'Post-war recruitment to the Colonial Service', 1 May 1947, PP, MSS.Perham/245/1.

³⁷ Colonial Service recruitment report Jan. 1952, Cambridge University Archives (CUA), CDEV/4/5.

³⁸ A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *A biographical dictionary of the British Colonial Service, 1936–1966* (London, 1991), p. viii.

Table 1 *Analysis of CAS appointments, 1947–56*

	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	Total	%
Degree												
1 st	13	9	5	7	7	5	6	2	4	0	58	5%
2 nd	13	41	38	61	59	67	46	56	48	47	476	37%
3 rd	17	19	20	20	17	15	17	15	18	12	170	14%
4 th	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	<1%
Unclassified	6	3	14	17	24	9	1	2	0	5	81	6%
Pass	36	17	28	15	13	8	19	0	4	3	143	11%
War	6	1	0	2	2	1	1	1	0	2	16	1%
No degree	86	51	31	56	12	12	9	16	18	19	310	24%
Unknown											20	2%
Universities												
Oxford	48	23	31	38	33	40	27	28	24	24	316	32%
Cambridge	43	25	26	26	22	26	31	27	24	27	277	28%
London	9	7	9	12	11	3	6	4	6	2	69	7%
Provincial incl. Ireland	18	29	26	36	40	25	19	21	21	17	252	25%
Commonwealth	3	5	13	12	15	11	6	2	2	6	75	8%
Foreign	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	6	<1%
Schools												
HMC	146	84	81	88	55	72	54	52	47	46	725	57%
Grammar and state	51	57	55	90	79	45	45	40	45	43	550	43%

Table 1 (Cont.)

	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	Total	%
Status												
Married	54	43	47	58	32	18	20	19	17	18	326	26%
Single	143	98	89	123	102	99	79	73	75	71	952	74%
Age on appointment												
20	10	7	2	4	3	1	1	0	1	2	31	3%
21	9	10	5	11	3	5	8	7	3	4	65	5%
22	16	14	11	18	6	16	14	18	13	17	143	11%
23	22	13	10	15	23	32	24	25	30	25	219	17%
24	15	17	24	23	35	15	13	10	12	8	172	14%
25	21	14	16	14	23	16	12	6	9	10	141	11%
26–30	71	47	41	64	28	27	19	11	8	6	322	25%
31+	33	19	27	29	13	5	8	15	16	17	182	14%
Total appointments	197	141	136	178	134	117	99	92	92	89	1275	100%

Note. Total for universities and degree do not match – presumably because some men attended more than one institution. Universities – 995 (1,305 total including no degree); Degree – 1,255; Married – 1,278.

Source. Analysis of CAS appointments, 1947–56, CUA, CDEV/4/7.

200,000 officers) grew to 11,000 in 1947 (of a total 300,000) and reached its peak in 1957 with about 18,000 European officers.³⁹ The CAS in particular reflected this expansion with the equivalent of eleven years' pre-war appointments being made in the first two years of post-war recruitment alone (Table 1).⁴⁰

Nevertheless, despite persistent claims from within the Colonial Office that the Service remained popular amongst elite university graduates, the post-war application rate never kept pace with the demand for recruits. The number of appointments made directly after the war may have been substantially higher, but still remained some way short of the required total, and once the surge of ex-service personnel calmed, this dearth became even more acute. By 1951, only 50 per cent of available positions were filled, a shortfall that persisted for much of the decade and was more severe in the technical services.⁴¹ Recruitment difficulties intensified through the insistence that vacancies should be left unfilled rather than appoint the 'wrong type of man'.⁴² Openly refusing to place advertisements in the national press, the Colonial Office remained wary of undertaking too aggressive a recruitment drive for fear of appearing desperate.⁴³ This attitude necessitated the development of alternative strategies to restore the cachet of a Colonial Service appointment and meant Sanders, as the most recognizable representation of an African administrator, became a focal but nonetheless controversial recruiting aid amongst the post-war generation.

II

Although never a member of the Colonial Service himself, Edgar Wallace drew on his military service in South Africa and experience as a journalist in the Belgian Congo to produce a character that 'distilled the essence of the ideal District Officer'.⁴⁴ Reputedly based on Sir Robert Bower, a soldier and administrator in Nigeria from 1893 to 1897,⁴⁵ Sanders should be viewed as one of

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

⁴⁰ Furse, CO memorandum 'Review of the position in regard to recruitment and training', 9 Nov. 1947, FP, MSS.Brit.Emp.s.415/4/6.

⁴¹ 'Colonial Office figures on recruitment, 1950/1951', CUA, CDEV/3/5; CO to H. H. McCleery (Cambridge Devonshire Course Co-ordinator), 21 Jan. 1958, CUA, CDEV/4/7; Oxford University Appointments Board annual report, 1961, Oxford University Careers Service archive, OUA, CR1/8/61, p. 5. See also A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, 'The thin white line: the size of the British Colonial Service in Africa', *African Affairs*, 79 (1980), p. 30.

⁴² Letter from McCleery to Cambridge college tutors, 29 Sept. 1954, CUA, CDEV/4/6.

⁴³ R. O. Greig (Colonial Office Recruitment Section) to McCleery, 5 Sept. 1954, CUA, CDEV/4/6.

⁴⁴ Aldgate and Richards, *Best of British*, p. 24.

⁴⁵ 'Honouring Sanders of the River', *Daily Express*, 16 Jan. 1937, p. 7. Bower hailed from the gentry and attended Harrow before serving during the occupation of Egypt in 1882, the first Sudan campaign, and the Jebu Expedition campaigns. He then transferred to the civil administration as Resident, Ibadan.

many similar figures who appeared in Edwardian literature on empire.⁴⁶ However, the sheer volume of Wallace's output established him as an enduring stereotype. Perhaps more importantly for the post-war generation of applicants, this image was reinforced through Zoltan Korda's 1935 film, which received extremely positive reviews from the conservative press.⁴⁷ *The Sunday Times* exulted that the film gave 'a grand insight into the special English difficulties in the governing of savage races and...the terrors and delights of contact and conjunction between the civilization and savagery, the white man's burden and the Englishman's rule'.⁴⁸ The film was so successful that it was re-released in 1938, 1943, and 1947. It should be noted, however, that an Ealing Comedy lampoon entitled *Old Bones of the River* appeared in 1938, suggesting that not all appreciated the empire in such reverential terms, and that when Sanders was first shown on the BBC in 1957, *The Times* printed a letter of complaint from the Nigerian high commissioner angered that a film depicting 'Nigeria as a country of half-naked barbarians' was being screened.⁴⁹

Oscillating between father to his district and summary executioner, Sanders oozed the cultural, racial, and moral arrogance that has made the DO such a controversial figure within the 'new imperial histories'.⁵⁰ In his world, the authority of the DO was absolute. No one knew his district as intimately, whilst scrutiny from superiors remained several days away. Dressed in the obligatory pith helmet ('worn at a rakish angle') and a pristine white safari suit, and articulating his orders in a 'razor cold voice', Sanders personified the unbending gentlemanly poise that underpinned imperial rule.⁵¹ As representative of the 'Great White King', 'Lord Sandi' commanded both respect and fear from those under his authority.⁵² Even though he was never slow to draw his revolver, Sanders was appreciated as the bringer of law, order, and justice.⁵³ Interestingly, in the film version, Sanders's moral authority eclipses his more brutal instincts, although the threat of the military force always loiters menacingly at hand.

⁴⁶ Peter Keating, *The haunted study: a social history of the haunted novel, 1875-1914* (London, 1989), pp. 353-5. In the same genre, he mentions Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling, G. A. Henty, A. E. W. Mason, John Buchan, and W. H. G. Kingston.

⁴⁷ Jeffrey Richards, *The age of the dream palace: cinema and society in Britain, 1930-1939* (London, 1984), pp. 249-50.

⁴⁸ 'Korda as imperialist', *Sunday Times*, 7 Apr. 1935, p. 6.

⁴⁹ 'Film damaging to Nigeria', *Times*, 22 Nov. 1957, p. 6.

⁵⁰ For example, see Maria Misra, 'Colonial officers and gentlemen: the British empire and the globalization of "tradition"', *Journal of Global History*, 3 (2008), pp. 135-61; David Spurr, *The rhetoric of empire: colonial discourse in journalism, travel writing and imperial administration* (London, 1993), pp. 68-9, 185-6.

⁵¹ Wallace, *Sanders of the River*, pp. 10-17. See also David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: how the British saw their empire* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 66-70; Terence Ranger, 'The invention of tradition in colonial Africa', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 212-24.

⁵² Wallace, *Sanders of the River*, p. 74.

⁵³ Edgar Wallace, *Keepers of the king's peace* (London, 1917).

Reflecting the shift in tone of British imperial rule after the First World War, the film depicts a largely quiescent empire where force of character is far more persuasive than force of arms. Sanders's air of calm, detached authority and innate ability to 'handle natives', combined with his life of adventure, independence, and responsibility, ensured he remained a popular character throughout the first half of the twentieth century and the standard by which many potential Colonial Service recruits initially judged the attractions of a career in colonial administration.⁵⁴

Scholarship aimed at exposing the centrality of the empire in British domestic culture consistently emphasizes the importance of film and literature in inculcating support for the imperial mission.⁵⁵ The qualities embodied by characters such as Sanders reflected the ideals of public school education and late Victorian manliness.⁵⁶ The self-sufficiency, integrity, and patriotism of these figures became crucial facets in creating a vision of empire that resonated with the professional middle-class, public schoolboy.⁵⁷ Such assertions have not gone unchallenged and caution should be urged when generalizing about the nature of children's responses to books and films.⁵⁸ With this in mind, it is important to note that for many applicants after the Second World War Sanders was a character who never entered into their vision of empire.⁵⁹ Some serving officers writing in the 1950s even displayed a palpable desire to distance the modern Colonial Service from traditional stereotypes.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, in the recollections of recruits from throughout the interwar and post-war periods, references to Sanders as an early formative influence are recurrent. In both published memoirs and more focused surveys into motivation, Sanders repeatedly appears as a character that fired youthful imagination. For instance, A. V. Arthur first became inclined towards a career in imperial administration when '[i]n my second year at Cambridge in 1935, I saw the film "Sanders of the River"...The film enthralled me and I decided

⁵⁴ Charles Allen, *Plain tales from the British empire* (London, 2008), pp. 316, 375; Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of authority*, pp. 11, 35.

⁵⁵ Jeffrey Richards, ed., *Imperialism and juvenile literature* (Manchester, 1989), pp. 1–3; Martin Green, *Dreams of adventure, deeds of adventure* (London, 1980), passim; Webster, *Englishness and empire*, p. 6.

⁵⁶ Jeffrey Richards, *Happiest days: the public schools in English fiction* (Manchester, 1988), pp. 142–8; John Tosh, *A man's place: masculinity and the middle-class home in Victorian England* (London, 1999), pp. 177–8; John Tosh, *Manliness and masculinities in nineteenth-century England: essays on gender, family and empire* (London, 2004), pp. 194–200.

⁵⁷ Aldgate and Richards, *Best of British*, p. 24.

⁵⁸ Andrew Thompson, *The empire strikes back? The impact of imperialism on Britain from the mid-nineteenth century* (Harlow, 2005), p. 105; Bernard Porter, *The absent-minded imperialists: what the British really thought about empire* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 180–7; Jonathan Rose, *The intellectual life of the British working classes* (2nd edn, London, 2010), pp. 321–64.

⁵⁹ I am grateful to Professor John Lonsdale for this insight.

⁶⁰ J. B. Carson, *Sun, sand and safari: some leaves from a Kenya notebook* (London, 1957), p. 13; Arthur Grimble, *A pattern of islands* (London, 1952), pp. 11–13.

there and then that this was the life for me.⁶¹ Similar references are to be found for those entering after the Second World War.⁶² D. D. Yonge was explicit in his assessment 'Sanders was all I had to base my expectations upon.'⁶³ Even into the 1960s, recruits recalled his enduring influence, as R. B. Eberlie remembered: 'I was brought up on the film of "Sanders of the River".'⁶⁴

The continuing popularity of Sanders as a symbol of British colonial rule and the Colonial Office's willingness to use him as a recruiting tool suggest a paradox at the heart of post-war Colonial Service identity. Why was a character that represented a style of colonialism so publicly decried as entirely unsuited to the post-war colonial aims of partnership, progress, and friendship still allowed to hold such cultural sway over popular and especially youthful perceptions of the Colonial Service?

III

Reconceptualizing the colonial mission created a dilemma that went to the heart of the CAS's identity. If the ambition of partnership and progress was to be achieved, there would be little room for the racial, paternalistic attitudes Sanders embodied and it was explicitly demanded that any recruit

[M]ust above all not be infected with racial snobbery. Colour prejudice in the Colonial civil servant is the one unforgivable sin. One has come across an old school of Colonial administrator who likes the primitive people but cannot get on with the educated 'native'...The European whose prejudices will not allow him to accept them as colleagues, as social equals, as opposite numbers in negotiation and even as official superiors may be an admirable person, but should seek another vocation.⁶⁵

Unlike his predecessors, the post-war officer would need to appreciate educated Africans as partners in progress rather than agitators.⁶⁶ Contact between the DO and potential opponents was identified as essential to engendering a spirit of co-operation and heading off extremism.⁶⁷ However, it had never before been questioned that the district administration should form the foundation of colonial authority, nor whether the DO should be the principal actor in the colonial cast. While public pronouncements were unequivocal, there remained reluctance amongst some senior officers to abandon fully the traditional conception of the DO. In consequence, the Colonial Office's

⁶¹ A. V. Arthur (ICS 1937 and SPS 1948), unpublished memoir, Sudan Archive Durham (SAD), 726/7/1.

⁶² C. W. B. Costeloe (CAS Tanganyika, 1944), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 3.

⁶³ D. D. Yonge (CAS Tanganyika, 1948), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 3.

⁶⁴ R. B. Eberlie (CAS Tanganyika, 1957), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 3.

⁶⁵ Jeffries, 'Job analysis for the Colonial Service'.

⁶⁶ F. J. Pedler, minute on CO memorandum 'Native administration policy', 1 Nov. 1946, TNA, CO847/35/6.

⁶⁷ 'The university and the Colonial Service', p. 6.

message to potential recruits became confused as deep-rooted contradictions emerged between policy-makers in Whitehall and attitudes on the ground.⁶⁸

For all his innate conservatism, Furse had been quick to seize the reforming initiative, producing a lengthy memorandum in 1943 outlining his vision for the role, composition, and training of the post-war service.⁶⁹ Furse's focus fell upon the Administrative Service, observing '[t]he Service will have to deal with a new type of coloured man and acclimatize a new type of white officer'.⁷⁰ Poor terms of service were again emphasized as a real hindrance in attracting the best men, with the lack of guarantees on long-term security a palpable cause for concern.⁷¹ Furse stressed the necessity for improved training and closer liaisons between the Colonial Office and universities to ensure new officers arrived in post fully cognizant of the transformed policy goals. Although a Tropical Administrative Services training course had been initiated in 1924, by 1945, the Colonial Office recognized that a more exacting programme was required.⁷² Instead, Furse proposed a sandwich programme combining a taxing year of initial training followed by a second year at the conclusion of an officer's first tour. Such a system would rectify the problem of men arriving in the colonies with virtually no practical knowledge, and provide what Furse described as 'a piece of practical meat between two slices of theoretical bread'.⁷³ Post-war conditions would present complex challenges that necessitated the pre-war 'talented all-rounder' evolve into a technocratic administrator capable of working as a part of a team of experts engaged in the task of colonial development.⁷⁴

Furse's recommendations, along with those of a Nuffield Foundation sponsored report into the requirements of the Nigerian colonial government, were considered by the Devonshire Committee (1944–5).⁷⁵ It was decided

⁶⁸ Annex by Sir Philip Mitchell to Arthur Creech Jones, 'Local government dispatch, April 1947', 30 May 1947, TNA, CO847/35/6/88.

⁶⁹ Furse, 'An inquiry into the system of training the Colonial Service with suggestions for its reform to meet post-war conditions', 27 Feb. 1943, TNA, CO877/22/16.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*; also quoted in Kirk-Greene, *On crown service*, p. 43.

⁷¹ CO minute relating to 'An inquiry into the system of training the Colonial Service', 10 Apr. 1943, TNA, CO877/22/16. Furse made similar suggestions when the Colonial Service faced recruitment chaos in the aftermath of the First World War. See, for example, Furse, 'A unified Colonial Service and notes on salaries', 18 June 1919, FP, MSS.Brit.Emp.s.415/1/2/11–12.

⁷² 'Post-war training for the Colonial Service: report of a committee appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies' (Devonshire Committee), 1946, pp. 21–2.

⁷³ Furse, *Aucuparius*, p. 273. On these discussions, see 'Minutes of the committee on post-war training for the Colonial Service evidence of Sir Alan Burns', 11 May 1944, OUA, UR6/COL/4/3, henceforth recorded as Devonshire Committee; Oxford University memorandum, 'Further development of colonial studies in Oxford', 15 Nov. 1945, pp. 2–3, OUA, UR6/COL/4/4. This attitude is well summarized in J. F. Cornes (Oxford Devonshire course supervisor) to Veale, 5 May 1953, OUA, UR6/COL/4/11.

⁷⁴ Furse, 'An inquiry into the system of training the Colonial Service', pp. 5–6.

⁷⁵ 'Post-war training for the Colonial Service', col. no. 198 (1946).

that prior to departure all cadets would undergo a year of carefully planned training at Oxford, Cambridge, or London, culminating in examinations, which if failed may have led to the withdrawal of appointment. Although a sandwich course was considered impractical, a second course was established for some officers to return on a sabbatical year.⁷⁶ Post-war administrators were thus expected to carry with them far more than a sense of cultural superiority alone, with their legitimacy resting, like their colleagues in the technical departments, upon specialized training and professional expertise.⁷⁷ While anxieties over the lack of co-operation between the Administrative Service and other departments formed the basis of much discussion, the committee stopped short of endorsing a fundamental reordering of the established hierarchy.⁷⁸

The discussions did, however, trigger a serious re-evaluation of the ideal make-up of a colonial official. Alongside the pressing need for expansion in 1945 was a growing consensus amongst advocates of reform that the CAS's narrow demographic base undermined both its domestic appeal and ability to realize the new goals of welfare and development. A. M. Carr-Saunders (director of the LSE and member of the Devonshire Committee) evoked widespread frustration with the DO-cum-prefect stereotype, writing '[r]unning all through Furse's memorandum there is a feeling of dissatisfaction about the Service as it is...what is wrong is the absence of any serious professional interest in their job among Colonial Civil Servants. They are rather empty-headed, though when on the spot conscientious and honourable officials.' He emphasized the deficiencies of the selection process in favouring public school/Oxbridge recruits, a background he felt 'tends to artificially prolong adolescence'.⁷⁹ Fellow members of the committee were equally adamant over the need for greater social diversity in recruitment. Sir Christopher Cox argued that although a public school training in character and 'the habit of mind of the prefect' had been ideal during the 'law and order period,' a modified approach was now required: 'The justice of a ruling class was no longer enough. We must train a body of men who could welcome and direct the coming changes.'⁸⁰ Lord Hailey similarly lamented that 'improvement was overdue' and 'a broader base' to recruitment was required.⁸¹

Unsurprisingly, Creech Jones proved especially eager to encourage a widening of the Colonial Service's intake and so concerned by Furse's dogmatism that

⁷⁶ For a more detailed summary, see Kirk-Greene, *On crown service*, pp. 43–6.

⁷⁷ Lord Hailey to the Devonshire Committee, 11 May 1944, OUA, UR6/COL/4/3; Arthur Creech Jones, 'The place of African local administration in colonial policy', *Journal of Africa Administration*, 1 (1949), pp. 3–6.

⁷⁸ Professor Frank Engledow to the Devonshire Committee, 11 May 1944, OUA, UR6/COL/4/3. CO minuted discussion regarding 'Memorandum on training by Ralph Furse', TNA, CO877/22/16.

⁷⁹ A. M. Carr-Saunders (director of LSE) to Sir David Ross (provost Oriel College Oxford), 17 Mar. 1944, OUA, UR6/COL/4/3.

⁸⁰ Sir Christopher Cox to the Devonshire Committee, 7 June 1944, OUA, UR6/COL/4/3.

⁸¹ Lord Hailey to the Devonshire Committee, 11 May 1944, OUA, UR6/COL/4/3.

he appointed him a grammar school educated assistant in an effort to mitigate his influence.⁸² Early signs were promising. The policy of recruiting direct from the armed services broadened the demographic of appointees by making the Colonial Service a more obtainable ambition for individuals who could compensate the lack of a public school or university education with wartime service.⁸³ In 1947, Creech Jones announced in the Commons his pleasure at

The very high quality, the energy, the initiative and the intelligence of the men who are now joining the service...a large number of them have come from varying walks of life. They are not men straight from the schools or universities. Among the administrative people only one half of those recruited have come from the universities. At least 40 per cent have come from the fields of local government, finance, industry and commerce, and so on. The quality of the cadets is, beyond question, very high.⁸⁴

Nonetheless, for all the focus on pre-deployment training, few senior officers surrendered the belief that success would continue to rely upon innate qualities of character.⁸⁵ Subsequently, Furse's suggestion of a specialized colonial staff college based on the French model never found favour.⁸⁶ Although the Colonial Office remained unequivocal that there was no longer any place for racial prejudice in a recruit's outlook, they were less clear on what qualities were desirable. The resulting compromise reflected an ambiguous mixture of enlightened idealist and stereotypical empire-builder:

What type of man is required? He must be, frankly, a good man, in the literal as well as the slang sense of the word. He need not be a huntin' and shootin' man, but he should not have a 'townee mind' – he should not be like Dr Johnson, a man who cannot be happy away from towns, who needs society and salons to give of his best...He must not be gnawed by monetary ambition. He must have a passionate interest in his work and seeing results – be philosopher-king and not the pure philosopher – but he must have patience enough to teach, and to watch his pupils do the work worse than he could do it...He must have no race prejudice, and not much sentimentality.⁸⁷

⁸² Pearce, *The turning point in Africa*, pp. 118–19. The assistant Frederick Pedler was educated at Watford Grammar School and Cambridge, where he received a First in History. After university, he took the Civil Service Commission examination and joined the Colonial Office. From 1934 to 1937, he gained first-hand CAS experience while on secondment in Tanganyika. His appointment as Furse's assistant was not a success, with Pedler soon resigning in frustration at Furse's obstinacy.

⁸³ See figures on school background above, 'Analysis of appointments to the Colonial Administrative Service, 1947–56', CUA, CDEV/4/7.

⁸⁴ Arthur Creech Jones to the House of Commons, 29 July 1947, *Hansard*, vol. 441 cc. 263–378.

⁸⁵ Sir Bede Clifford to the Devonshire Committee, 11 May 1944, OUA, UR6/COL/4/3; CO memorandum 'Summary of feedback from colonial governments on First Devonshire Course', 20 Aug. 1955, OUA, UR6/COL/4/12.

⁸⁶ Richard Symonds, *Oxford and empire: the last lost cause* (London, 1986), p. 286.

⁸⁷ 'The university and the Colonial Service', pp. 7–8.

Opinion was resolute amongst the governors – and tacitly endorsed by Furse – that no amount of training could possibly overcome an absence of these human virtues. Post-war expansion not only led to a diversification of backgrounds but also an increase in the average age of recruits. Far more officers arrived in post well into their twenties, if not thirties, often with families. Governors across East Africa vehemently criticized these men, lamenting their lack of adaptability, pre-occupation with conditions of service, and inability to integrate their family and official duties.⁸⁸ All were unanimous on the desired alternative: younger men, not necessarily even of degree age as academic success remained overrated, who would embrace the privations of life in the bush, be flexible in approach, and accept the low starting salary without complaint.⁸⁹

The resulting compromise awkwardly sought to preserve the fundamental prestige of the DO whilst simultaneously elevating the standing of technical officers.⁹⁰ Little effort was made to distinguish between the relative attractions of each role, leaving the path to the ultimate ambition of self-government opaque. All officers were appealed to on the basis of service to Britain and her colonies. All were told that they were making history in contributing to the development of self-sufficient states in the framework of a multi-racial Commonwealth; but the modernizing, scientific expertise of the technical departments remained elided with the traditional authority of the DO.⁹¹ Senior officers argued that an official's strength of character remained central to his ability to win the respect of local communities and thus achieve Britain's wider goals. Ultimately, no one could suggest where these qualities could be found in greater concentration than in the public schools and Oxbridge. Thus, despite the wider challenge to the Sanders stereotype, the Colonial Office quickly slipped back into the pre-war habit of focusing their recruiting efforts upon a tried and tested audience.⁹²

⁸⁸ J. D. Rankine (chief secretary Kenya) to CO, 1 Sept. 1950; Henry Potter (chief secretary Uganda) to CO, 14 Oct. 1950; Edward Twining (governor Tanganyika) to CO, 18 Oct. 1950, TNA, CO/877/33/5. These sentiments were reiterated by E. G. Rowe (CAS Tanganyika, 1928–58) in an interview for the Oxford Colonial Records Project (OCRCP), 24 Sept. 1969, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Rhodes House, Oxford, MSS.Afr. s.1698, pp. 12–14. Rowe asserted: 'I think most of the cases I had where the young men were too self-centred and interested in their own allowances and general comforts, or groused at the lack of amenities that they claimed to find, I think most of these cases originated with their wives.'

⁸⁹ All of the aforementioned correspondence makes this point, whilst in a follow-up letter from January 1951, Philip Mitchell (governor of Kenya) informed the CO that many of the older recruits had quickly resigned, whilst the most recent batch of younger cadets were much more acceptable, Mitchell to CO, 10 Jan. 1951, TNA, CO/877/33/5.

⁹⁰ 'Appendix V: the Colonial Service, report of the committee on the conference of African governors', 22 May 1947, Ronald Hyam, ed., *British documents on the end of empire, series A vol. II: the Labour government and the end of empire, 1945–1951; Part 1– High policy and administration* (London, 1992), p. 234. Furse, CO memorandum, 'An inquiry into the system of training', TNA, CO877/22/16.

⁹¹ 'The university and the Colonial Service', p. 8.

⁹² Furse to Veale, 25 Apr. 1946, OUA, UR6/COL/4/5.

In spite of proclamations on the need to modernize, this ambition was consistently stifled by the difficulty of attracting sufficient applicants. General feeling blamed a lack of knowledge of the Colonial Service's work amongst likely recruits, combined with negativity on the part of parents and teachers who feared a lack of long-term prospects.⁹³ However, entrenched attitudes meant little actually changed. Despite the grand hopes of some for the new training, others were more ambivalent, asserting that the job of a DO could only be learnt in the bush and that the prime function of the course should be to serve as an advertisement for the Service amongst the group whose applications they most coveted.⁹⁴ No effort was made to reform the recruitment process or to reduce the reliance upon Oxbridge. Newbolt's guidance to interviewers intimated that the criteria upon which to judge an applicant still held more in common with the values eulogized by his father in the late nineteenth century than the technocratic revolution envisaged by Creech Jones:

His appearance will have been noted at once; the cut of his face and the extent, if any, to which he has the indefinable quality of 'presence'. Colouring, build, movement, pose will have come under review, and even such superficialities as style of dress and hair, health of skin and fingers. But your scrutiny will be directed chiefly to eyes and mouth, for they, whether in repose or in action combined with speech and gesture, may tell you much. You will have in mind the truism that weakness of various kinds may lurk in a flabby lip or in averted eyes, just as single-mindedness and purpose are commonly reflected in a steady gaze and firm set of mouth and jaw...In the same classification may be included the question of Background. A man's natural qualities, in the sense here implied, derive partly from inheritance and home environment and partly from school or academical training. If he comes of stock that has proved its worth, generation by generation, in the professions or in public service, if he has been reared in the faith that duty and chivalry are of more account than ambition and self-seeking, if his education has broadened his mind in that faith and taught him the meaning of responsibility and the value of comradeship, then he has been blessed with such a foundation that should ensure his possession of many of the qualities for which you are looking.⁹⁵

A brief concession to egalitarianism appearing in the final paragraph did little to ameliorate the prevailing sense that the Colonial Office's priorities still favoured a robust manliness and nebulous qualities of character over more professional attributes.⁹⁶

⁹³ CO circular 'Recruitment and publicity in schools', Aug. 1956, CUA, CDEV/4/7.

⁹⁴ Sir Edmund Richards to the Devonshire Committee, 12 Apr. 1944, OUA, UR6/COL/4/2; Greig to McCleery, 13 Nov. 1953, CUA, CDEV/4/5. Furse had long stressed the potential benefits to recruitment of having serving officers based in the universities, Furse, CO memorandum 'A unified Colonial Service and notes on salaries', 18 June 1919, FP, MSS.Brit.Emp.s.415/1/2/6-24.

⁹⁵ A. F. Newbolt, *Colonial Office appointments handbook* (London, 1948), pp. 13-14.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14. See also Schwarz, *The white man's world*, pp. 254-5.

Annual tours were made of provincial universities and National Service officer training colleges, but it was only at Oxford, Cambridge, and London (until 1955) that the Colonial Service retained a permanent presence. The Colonial Office continued to rely on close personal relationships with the Oxford and Cambridge Appointments Boards and college tutors to publicize opportunities and spot potential candidates. These informal recommendations emphasized many of the same qualities that had dominated recruitment in the 1930s. Even in the face of certain reservations, interviewers still recommended such individuals for an appointment, as one report from 1961 illustrates:

I would say that X is attracted by the Colonial Service mainly on account of what it was some years ago...He is a likeable chap but I just wonder whether he is equipped for the Administrative Service and what comes after it in today's conditions. He would have been a very good choice some years ago, but I must confess I am a bit doubtful of him in this year of grace.

The second interviewer was even more candid in his assessment:

Save that he is a footballer and not an oarsman, X is very much of a piece with the members of his College who, some years ago, applied in droves for appointment to Tanganyika when that territory seemed to offer a future untroubled by constitutional change; and resigned in droves almost as great when it became apparent that this was not the case. X has many of the same qualities: an attractive personality, leadership powers, rather limited intellect and, perhaps, a slightly uncritical, uncomplicated approach to life.⁹⁷

The unreformed recruitment process ensured the perpetuation of the Sanders-character until the very end of permanent recruitment. Even though modernizing voices warned of the dangers of trying to recapture the glory days of the interwar years, few workable alternatives were suggested.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Colonial Office interview summaries, 1961, CUA, CDEV/3/29/A. The reports for all cadets who undertook their training at Cambridge are held in the CUA CDEV Archive, as well as several interview summaries for recruits in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The conditions of access demand all references are kept anonymous. Subsequently, where I quote directly from a report or interview summary I give the year and folder, whilst more general points must be taken as reflective of the overall tone of the collection.

⁹⁸ Rebuffing Patrick Renison's proposals for a new Commonwealth Service in 1957, John Macpherson was clear that 'we would be deluding ourselves and indulging wishful thinking if we thought that we could recapture the career assurances of the 20s and 30s'. Sir John Macpherson to Patrick Renison, 18 Feb. 1957, Renison papers (RP), Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Rhodes House, Oxford, SS.Brit.Emp.s.404/1/4. On proposals for replacing HMOCS (as the Colonial Service became in 1955) with a multiracial Commonwealth Service, see RP, MSS.Brit.Emp.s.404/1/4. The suggestion of a Commonwealth Service raised considerable contention. For a summary of the arguments for and against, see Sir Hilary Blood, 'A review of the Overseas Service', *Corona*, 9 (1957), pp. 454-6; and Kenneth Bradley, 'A Commonwealth Service?', *Corona*, 10 (1958), pp. 125-8.

Subsequently, this left the recruitment strategy compromised. At no point was a viable scheme put in place rapidly to augment recruitment to the higher grades of the Service with an elite local staff or radically expand the recruitment base in Britain, nor was the option of appointing women to the senior ranks of the district administration ever seriously considered, for fear of creating, in Charles Jeffries's words, 'a petticoat government'. Although growing numbers of women were appointed to various other branches of the Colonial Service, the CAS remained until its dissolution an overwhelmingly male institution.⁹⁹ Rather than radically reappraise the figure of the DO, the Colonial Service retained faith in a reformed version of Sanders.¹⁰⁰ While this made elements of their recruitment message troublingly incompatible with the new ideological goals, it did offer practical benefits in the efforts to stimulate applications and address fears over the long-term prospects of a colonial career.

IV

In 1953, Furse feared the Colonial Service 'threatened with disintegration' and warned of the imperative need to reassure potential applicants and serving officers alike over its future prospects.¹⁰¹ The failure to formulate a clear conception of what the modern colonial official should represent left the recruitment message both confused and confusing. Central to the Colonial Office's strategy was the need to convince applicants a colonial career still offered a combination of romance and adventure coupled with long-term prospects and prestige. Despite troubling inconsistencies with the new ethos, deploying Sanders as a means of achieving this goal remained expedient until the mid-1950s. Yet, the persistence of this character also exposed the ambiguous and perplexed attitude of some senior officers to the changing position of the DO and the rapidly accelerating decolonization process.

Many agreed that the solution to the recruitment problems of the 1950s lay in increasing awareness of Colonial Service opportunities amongst school and Oxbridge audiences. Reflecting the Colonial Office's natural inclination towards the public schools, suggestions such as utilizing school magazines to keep boys informed of their alumni's progress up the Colonial Service ladder were initially mooted as sufficient to attract 'aspiring colonial governors'.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ African governors' conference, 'Minute on constitutional development in Africa', Nov. 1947, in Hyam, ed., *British documents on the end of empire, vol. II*, pp. 303–6; Helen Callaway, *Gender, culture, and empire: European women in colonial Nigeria* (Chicago, IL, 1987), pp. 141–3. Callaway quotes Jeffries, p. 142; P. Holden, *Women administrative officers in colonial Africa, 1944–1960* (Oxford, 1985).

¹⁰⁰ For a radical reimagining of colonial officers, see the Charter of the Congress of Peoples against Imperialism, cited in Goldsworthy, *Colonial issues in British politics*, p. 150.

¹⁰¹ Furse to Veale, 11 May 1953, OUA, UR6/COL/4/11.

¹⁰² CO public relations (Schools) general policy, Feb. 1950, TNA, CO/877/56/8.

However, following questions in parliament in 1949 more care was taken to include grammar and state schools, with the Colonial Office acknowledging it wanted to contact 'all schools capable of producing potential candidates for the Service'.¹⁰³ This necessitated a more direct engagement with schoolboy audiences and the cultivation of contacts with headmasters and careers masters who could encourage boys towards the Service.¹⁰⁴ Subsequently, by 1953, over 400 schools had received lectures from colonial officers.¹⁰⁵

The Colonial Office quickly realized the limited effectiveness, not to mention interest to seventeen-year-old boys, of sending retired agricultural officers into schools.¹⁰⁶ Instead, they utilized young DOs, home for further training, to 'preach the gospel' to sixth-form audiences with anecdotal tales of their life that emphasized the Sanders appeal.¹⁰⁷ If this failed, officers were advised to stimulate interest by showing one of the big-budget films located in Africa, such as *Where no vultures fly* and *King Solomon's mines*.¹⁰⁸ Officials hoped Africa's quixotic draw would override more practical concerns amongst schoolboys who 'are not usually concerned about the security of the career they may be thinking of'.¹⁰⁹ Rather than offering detailed descriptions of a DO's administrative routine, recruitment publicity aimed to engender a romantic fascination with the colonies through the promise of adventure and the wonder of the African landscape.¹¹⁰ A lengthy report, undertaken in 1956, into the problems of recruiting to Northern Nigeria highlighted the enduring appeal of 'the cowboy side of colonial life' and the threat denying it posed to applicant numbers.¹¹¹ Even as younger members of the Service warned of the problems inherent within this contradiction, they remained equivocal over how to reconcile the paradox:

Part of the spirit that prompts a man to apply for OCS is what one might call the Sanders-of-the-River allure...The old paternal feeling, the 'prefect attitude', is also strong in the English public schoolboys. Paternalism no longer has a place in the administration of modern Nigeria. Yet had this sort of person come to Nigeria he could

¹⁰³ R. D. Salter-Davies (Ministry of Labour) to T. D. Vickers (CO), 14 Feb. 1949; Vickers to Salter-Davies, 22 July 1949, TNA, CO/877/56/8.

¹⁰⁴ CO memorandum 'Colonial Service recruitment: talks at schools', Feb. 1950, TNA, CO/877/56/8; CO to McCleery, 14 Oct. 1953, CUA, CDEV/1/4/5.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from CO to McCleery, 14 Oct. 1953, CUA, CDEV/4/5.

¹⁰⁶ Letter from A. G. H. Gardner-Brown (supervisor Cambridge Devonshire course) to CO, 4 Nov. 1949, CUA, CDEV/4/5.

¹⁰⁷ Request from Gardner-Brown asking a member of the Second Devonshire Course to visit Newmarket Grammar School, 13 Feb. 1951, CUA, CDEV/4/5.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from McCleery to Greig, 20 Apr. 1954, CUA, CDEV/4/6.

¹⁰⁹ 'Colonial Office circular on recruitment and publicity at schools', Aug. 1956, CUA, CDEV/4/7.

¹¹⁰ 'Colonial Service recruitment (expatriate staff) report', Jan. 1952, CUA, CDEV/4/5.

¹¹¹ A. H. M. Kirk-Greene and R. B. Du Boulay, 'Memorandum on recruiting for the Administrative Service of Northern Nigeria at Oxford and Cambridge universities, 1955-1956', 1 Aug. 1956, CUA, CDEV/4/7.

quickly have grown out of his prefect attitude and have made an excellent modern administrator.¹¹²

A significant number of officers appointed after 1945 did increasingly endorse the revised mission but few had advanced to senior positions by the mid-1950s, whilst the rising rate of resignations amongst serving officers further undermined the Colonial Service's reputation in Britain.¹¹³ Appointing senior officers to run the training courses and assess applicants and cadets alike provided much continuity in the type of men appointed. Serving officers acted as fastidious gatekeepers when endorsing as their 'heirs' and they remained loathe to jettison the Sanders image completely.

Even if promises of adventure were enough to stimulate adolescent curiosity, more was needed to convince sceptical parents and teachers not to curb youthful exuberance.¹¹⁴ In the 1920s, Furse appreciated the necessity of improving the Colonial Service's reputation if parents were to be convinced it was preferable to alternative opportunities at home.¹¹⁵ However, following the signing of the Atlantic Charter, the fall of Singapore, and the post-war focus on self-government, there developed a perceptible fear inside the Colonial Office that the young were increasingly being advised to look elsewhere.¹¹⁶ In the 1950s, such concerns only intensified; independence for the Sudan, Gold Coast, and Malaya and the cessation of Nigerian recruitment in 1957, combined with the negative publicity created by the Malayan Emergency and Mau Mau, convinced an ever growing number it was irresponsible to recommend a career in the Colonial Service.¹¹⁷ Although internal correspondence acknowledged the inability to any longer guarantee career security, the Colonial Office's public pronouncements conspicuously lacked such candour. Even when recruiters warned applicants of the unlikelihood of a full career, they still often suggested it would last for at least another fifteen or so years.¹¹⁸ Not until 1959, just three years before the cessation of recruitment, was

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ For example, the *Daily Express* published an article into the frustrations faced by new recruits under the headline 'Empire Makers Filled Forms: So the Young "Pioneers" Quit', 13 May 1948, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ 'Recruiting for the Administrative Service of Northern Nigeria'; Christine Heward, *Making a man of him* (London, 1988), pp. 195–201.

¹¹⁵ Furse consistently pushed for this during the interwar period. Furse, CO memorandum 'Warren Fisher Committee', 1929, FP, MSS.Brit.Emp.s.415/4/1.

¹¹⁶ McCleery to A. D. Garson, (CO), 8 Mar. 1955, CUA, CDEV/4/6.

¹¹⁷ R. Varvill, 'CO minute on recruitment to the Administrative Service', 1 Apr. 1953, TNA, CO/1017/264. For instance, in the first edition of a new careers encyclopaedia published in 1953 and listing descriptions and information on over 220 different job, the Colonial Service received a detailed three-page summary; by the third edition, published in 1963, it covered barely half a page, G. H. Chaffe, ed., *Careers encyclopaedia* (3rd edn, London, 1952), pp. 147–9; *ibid.* (2nd edn, London, 1958), pp. 129–30; *ibid.* (3rd edn, London, 1963), p. 103.

¹¹⁸ CO interview summaries 1958–61, CUA, CDEV/3/27–9; McCleery to Rev. D. P. Hardy (fellow Selwyn College, University of Cambridge), 24 Oct. 1956, CUA, CDEV/4/7. McCleery wrote that he thought there would still be British officers in Tanganyika in 1984.

the word 'career' removed from recruitment posters.¹¹⁹ Even at this late stage, the decision infuriated H. H. McCleery, officer in charge of the Cambridge Colonial Service training course, who remained adamant that any public acknowledgement the Colonial Service could no longer offer career security would wreck its reputation amongst the Oxbridge undergraduate community.¹²⁰

As morale dropped amongst serving officers, the dangers of relying on such limited recruitment networks were exposed. This proved acutely problematic when trying to enlist volunteers to return to their former schools to encourage recruitment. Fearful he would be misleading boys over their long-term career prospects, one DO wrote to the Colonial Office:

None of us on this Second Devonshire Course consider that the Colonial Service in general, and in particular the Administrative Department, is a sound offer of a career nowadays...I would be prepared to boost the Colonial Service, if to the best of my ability I could not in all honesty lead chaps at Marlborough to believe that the life is not getting precarious and will not become more so pretty soon. I know that this knowledge would not deter many, but it would deter some. Knowing this, and the fact that this feeling is widespread among junior officers of the Colonies I have come across, would you still want me to go and talk?¹²¹

Without a positive endorsement, or more damagingly an indictment, from those with personal experience, confidence and interest amongst traditional recruitment sources rapidly waned. Of great anxiety was the sense that families steeped in the tradition of imperial service were actively discouraging their sons from following family precedent because they feared the position of DO had forfeited its former prestige.¹²² Such concerns were well founded. Although ignoring paternal advice, H. J. B. Allen remembered:

My father (at that time Deputy British Agent in the Western Aden Protectorate) said that if I joined the Colonial Service he'd cut me off without a shilling in the unlikely event that he still had one. He emphatically expressed the opinion that I'd be looking for another career in a dozen years at most – probably much less: 'I trust you'll never tell anyone that I suggested you should join such a calamitous outfit' was his reaction to my recruitment.¹²³

Parents thus needed to be convinced, even though the ideological mission might be changing, that the Colonial Service still implicitly appreciated that the Sanders role remained imperative.

Deployed thus, Sanders created an illusion of permanence around British imperialism, connecting the traditional image of the DO with the new. Assessing the imagery of Sanders the film, Jeffrey Richards asserts that it created a 'lofty

¹¹⁹ Garson to McCleery, 9 Nov. 1959, CUA, CDEV/4/7.

¹²⁰ McCleery to Garson, 6 Nov. 1959, CUA, CDEV/4/7.

¹²¹ W. J. Griffith (CAS Nigeria, 1947–60) to CO, 10 Oct. 1950, CUA, CDEV/4/5.

¹²² Furse after dinner speech June 1948, FP, MSS.Brit.Emp.s.415/7/1/4; 'Memorandum on recruiting for the Administrative Service of Northern Nigeria'.

¹²³ H. B. Allen (CAS Uganda, 1954–62), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 2.

view of Britain's world role...as long as Britain regarded it as her God-given duty to ensure fair play for all the world, the maintenance of the Empire was inescapable...timeless and eternal'.¹²⁴ This is equally pertinent to the underlying message of post-war recruitment literature. Aware of the popularity amongst post-war recruits of Kenneth Bradley's *Diary of a district officer* (1943) and Sir Arthur Grimble's *Pattern of islands* (1952), the Colonial Office eagerly commissioned further 'recruitment propaganda' to encourage applications.¹²⁵ Bradley, a man steeped in the Colonial Service's identity, was approached to produce a booklet capturing the essence of a modern colonial career.¹²⁶ The resulting *The Colonial Service as a career* (1950) and its second edition *A career in the Oversea Civil Service* (1955) sought to supplement the drier annual information booklet *Appointments in Her Majesty's Colonial Service* by offering 'a more general and inspirational character than the pamphlet, more imaginative in treatment, and intended to appeal especially to the schoolboy and undergraduate'.¹²⁷ In the foreword, Newbolt was definite over the Service's revised goals but continued to articulate these in a language laced with public school amateurism:

Let me assure his readers that now more than ever the Colonial Service is calling for the very best of our young men and women that Britain and the other countries of the Commonwealth can give. Now more than ever the call is for those who are qualified not only in the academical or professional sense, but who have also the less tangible qualities of imagination, sympathy and human understanding. For in the years that lie ahead, as the Colonial Territories move forward step by step towards the realization of their nationhood, the essential need will be for good 'teamwork' between the Colonial peoples and ourselves. It is in this spirit which, as we learned in our school days, welds together the members of a successful team of athletes, and which is the secret of its success.¹²⁸

Bradley's message was more ambiguous still. Regardless of promises of teamwork and progress, the photos of DOs at work suggested a different dynamic, whilst the front cover showed an image of the DO as the very model of Sanders (Figure 1). References to the DO being 'king of all he surveyed' directly evoked Wallace, whilst a chapter entitled 'Empire building' reinforced the contradictory impression. Not only did the Sanders-figure reaffirm the primacy of the DO but in doing so cast Africa in a perpetual state of

¹²⁴ Aldgate and Richards, *Best of British*, p. 25.

¹²⁵ Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of authority*, pp. 21–2.

¹²⁶ A product of Wellington and Oxford, Bradley was appointed as a cadet to Northern Rhodesia in 1926 and rose to the position of colonial secretary in the Gold Coast before retiring in 1949 to take up the role of editor of *Corona* – the Colonial Service's journal – and subsequently the directorship of the Commonwealth Institute, for which he was knighted.

¹²⁷ 'Colonial Service recruitment (expatriate staff) report', Jan. 1952.

¹²⁸ Newbolt, foreword to Kenneth Bradley, *The Colonial Service as a career* (London, 1950), p. 6.

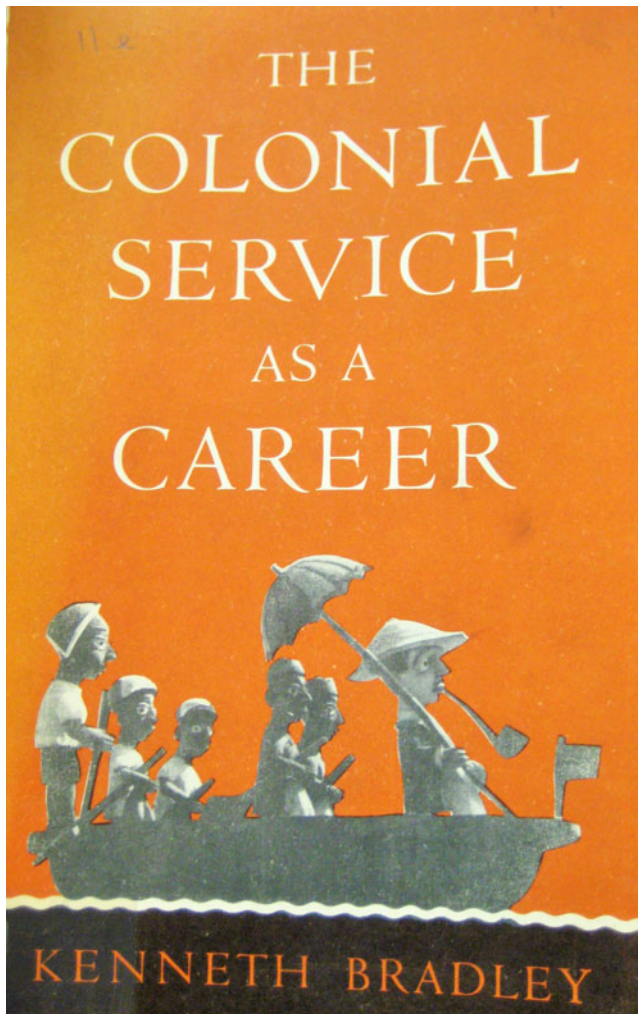


Fig. 1. Front cover, Kenneth Bradley, *The Colonial Service as a career* (London, 1950). Front cover image: “The District Officer goes on Tour in his Canoe” is the work of Mr Thomas Ona of Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria. The figures, which are about nine inches high, were carved in soft whitewood and gaily painted.’

backwardness.¹²⁹ Bradley’s own recollections of the moment he joined reinforced Africa’s traditional stereotype:

I remember that when I was offered my first appointment in the Service I had to find the family atlas and track down my particular colony – and it was quite a large one – on the map of Africa. Even now I shiver when I recall the total but enchanted

¹²⁹ This impression was reinforced in popular published accounts of Africa during this time, for example see Harold Evans, *Men in the tropics: a colonial anthology* (London, 1949).

ignorance in which I took what was obviously going to be one of the most important decisions of my life and accepted the offer. The magic casement opened to an entrancing vision of palm trees and elephants and I said 'yes' without another thought.¹³⁰

The impression painted evoked a primitive simplicity that left little room for the more sophisticated forces pushing for self-government. In the early 1950s, the Colonial Office utilized Sanders because they were confident he would resonate culturally with their target audience and in doing so conveyed their conviction in the longevity of the colonial mission.

In Bradley's 1955 second edition, the contradictions were again clearly evident. On the one hand, there was a more explicit focus on partnership and the inexorable progress towards independence. 'Empire building' had been rechristened 'Nation building' and it was now declared that the Colonial Service worked for the benefit of 'colonial peoples' rather than the 'colonial empire'.¹³¹ The new tone was most visibly captured in a revised set of illustrative photos (Figure 2). Yet, at the same time, Bradley's guide still sought unequivocally to reassure readers that career prospects were safe. In the foreword, Colonial Office Director of Recruitment, A. R. Thomas, praised a book 'which should appeal to the hearts and heads of all young people interested in an overseas career of service. It should also be read by all those older people who are presumptuous or dutiful enough to advise young people on the choice of a career.'¹³² Even though Bradley included the caveat: 'I would not be so foolish as to prophesy for all newcomers security of career for a full span of thirty years or more, because no such security is counted upon by any young man in an age dominated by power-politics and the hydrogen bomb', he was confident 'the long-term future of the Oversea Civil Service' was not so 'hazardous as to deter any young man of spirit who wants to take a hand in the immensely important work which it is doing'.¹³³ No mention was made of what would become of officials upon independence, but explicit reassurances were made that their 'interests would be looked after'.¹³⁴

Reluctance to abandon the Sanders-figure amongst senior members of the Service highlights the confused and ambiguous attitude of many serving officers towards the prospect of rapid modernization. Sanders became not simply a marketing tool but an affirmation of the recruiters' perception of their Service's identity.¹³⁵ Well into the 1950s, the character of Sanders

¹³⁰ Bradley, *The Colonial Service as a career*, p. 7.

¹³¹ Kenneth Bradley, *A career in the Oversea Civil Service* (2nd edn, London, 1955).

¹³² A. R. Thomas, foreword to Bradley, *A career in the Oversea Civil Service*, p. 6.

¹³³ Bradley, *A career in the Oversea Civil Service*, p. 17.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹³⁵ For instance, Bradley's own memoir, written in 1966, recalled his vision of the interwar colonial empire: 'Whilst at school these boys were learning to feel the tug of the reins of authority. Small wonder that a handful of men who had this schooling could keep the Pax Britannica right round the world over the teeming millions of the old Empire with justice and mercy as

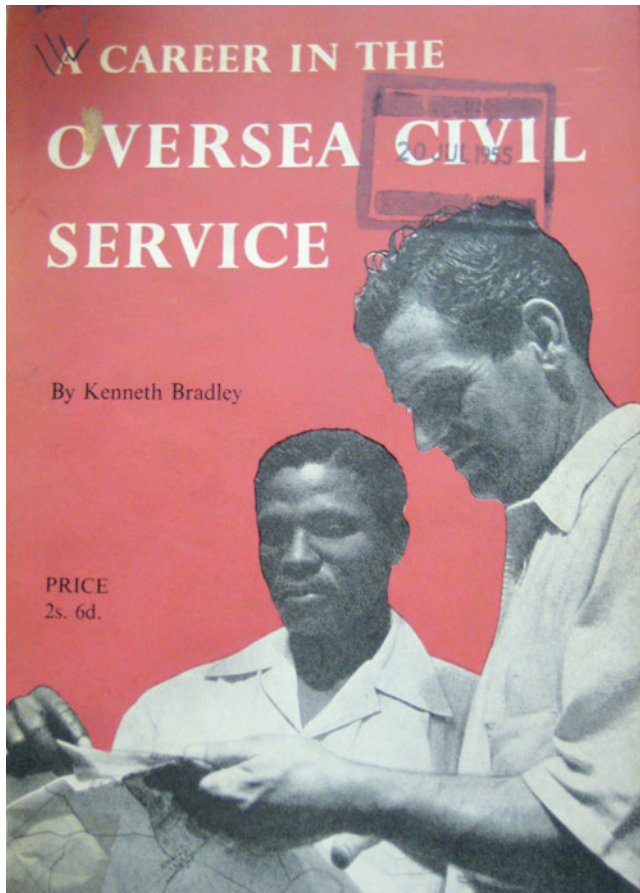


Fig. 2. Front cover, Kenneth Bradley, *A career in the Oversea Civil Service* (London, 1955).

remained an important benchmark by which new recruits were assessed. Regular references in cadets' training reports raised concerns that they would not be able to live up to the 'Sanders-role', with one being dismissed as 'rather more Lord Peter Wimsey than Sanders of the River'.¹³⁶ This

well as they did. The theory of Indirect Rule in colonial administration, that is to say, the delegation of power and responsibility to traditional rulers and Chiefs, instituted by Lord Lugard in Nigeria, was only the prefectorial system writ large, with, *mutatis mutandis*, the District Officers as masters, the Chiefs as prefects and the tribesmen as the boys', Sir Kenneth Bradley, *Once a district officer* (London, 1966), p. 15.

¹³⁶ Cadets' reports, 1955–6, CUA, CDEV/3/10. Another example: 'He is very interested in political matters and debates well, but I am not so happy about him as a "Sanders of the River"'. Studious rather than athletic... I imagine he will ultimately gravitate to the Secretariat', Cadets' reports, 1958–9, CUA, CDEV/3/26.

ambivalence was patent when the colonial government of Tanganyika drafted a recruitment guide in 1956 but remained uncertain how to pitch its message:

On the one hand it has been suggested that it should emphasize the ‘Sanders of the River’ touch and District Commissioner’s vital task of developing natural resources. On the other, it has been said that we should play down the ‘mad dogs and Englishmen’ approach, forget about safari and sun-tan, and talk about the ‘complexities’ of life...in fact everything that might appear calculated to put a young man off from the start. The reason, I am told, is that the modern young man is unmoved by a modified ‘Kipling appeal’ but will jump at Tanganyika if we point out the challenge of growing political tensions and what a harassed politician the DC has to be now...I believe we still need the healthy minded open air Briton, with a sense of humour, patience and common sense, rather than the callow young man who comes to the colonies to erase his quiet complex.¹³⁷

The notion that anyone would be attracted to the Colonial Service for reasons other than life in the district seemed an anathema to some officers recruited in a more paternalistic era. The essence of the life of the district officer lay in the bush, with the secretariat a poor bureaucratic imitation of real colonial governance. As one Nigeria official wrote in a letter of complaint to the Colonial Office ‘[f]or my sins I have been posted to the Secretariat, to half-sexed work for which I have no training and no inclination’.¹³⁸

In cadets’ reports, ‘Secretariat type’ never lost its negative connotation, just as a ‘good bush officer’ remained a badge of honour, with McCleery writing of one Kenya-bound recruit: ‘Born Secretariat type in my opinion able to clog the machine with reams of paper...Send him to Northern Frontier District.’¹³⁹ In contrast, those who lacked any particular intellectual engagement with the problems of colonial administration but displayed the makings of an effective bush DO were treated with greater sympathy if not admiration.¹⁴⁰ Recruiters continued to value common sense, good manners, and discipline far higher than imagination, whilst a sense of humour and personal charm remained essential to a job that revolved around human interaction.¹⁴¹ Cadets attracted by the hope of making a tangible difference to the lives of Africans were unequivocally informed that their job would be in the district implementing their seniors’ policy decisions.¹⁴² Even in the last years of recruitment, accounts of applicants’ interviews emphasize a latent suspicion of ‘do-gooding idealism’. As one training report warned: ‘He is a shade starry eyed in his political views, it would be well to send him to a tough realistic DC’ – one who would presumably quickly dispel any unwelcome idealism.¹⁴³

¹³⁷ George Baker (CAS Tanganyika) to McCleery, undated, Dec. 1955, CUA, CDEV/4/6.

¹³⁸ Stanhope White, *Dan Bana: the memoirs of a Nigerian official* (London, 1966), pp. xv–xvi.

¹³⁹ Cadets’ confidential reports, 1958–9, CUA, CDEV/3/26.

¹⁴⁰ Cadets’ reports, 1949–50, CUA, CDEV/3/4; Cadets’ reports, 1957–8, CUA, CDEV/3/12.

¹⁴¹ McCleery to Baker, 21 Dec. 1955, CUA, CDEV/4/6.

¹⁴² CO interview summary, 3 May 1961, CUA, CDEV/3/29/A.

¹⁴³ Cadets’ reports, 1958–9, CUA, CDEV/3/26.

Despite the expansion of university education, particularly in the sciences, during the 1950s, the Colonial Service remained traditional in its academic base.¹⁴⁴ By the time recruiting ceased in 1962, only one recruit had a degree in African Studies, whilst second-class Oxbridge Arts graduates continued to predominate.¹⁴⁵ Although the hope was consistently to attract top graduates, it appears the popular reputation of the Colonial Service as a sanctuary for the healthy but intellectually limited public schoolboy was not shaken. A. G. M. Gardner-Brown's advice to potential recruits in 1951 was that 'I always allow guts and experience to outweigh academic shortcomings provided the latter are not such as to indicate abnormal stupidity.'¹⁴⁶ Sentiments that would have been appreciated by C. P. Snow, who in the same year wryly noted in *The masters*:

[I]t's important for the child that he gets through his wretched Tripos in June. He's thought to stand a chance for the Colonial Service if he can scrape a third. Of course, I am totally ignorant in these matters but I cannot see why our colonies should need third-class men with some capacity for organized sports. However, one can forgive the child for not taking this view.¹⁴⁷

Reflecting wider cultural changes in attitude towards empire and the rapidly evolving political situation in the colonies, by the end of the decade, the tone of recruitment propaganda better echoed the language of partnership and progress towards a Commonwealth of self-governing nations. Upon the Gold Coast gaining independence in 1957, the *Daily Express* again invoked Sanders proclaiming: 'It's Demotion for Sanders-of-the-River.'¹⁴⁸ In stark contrast to the tone six years earlier, readers were now informed 'Sanders of the River got bad news today: No longer is his sun-tanned figure in white, open-neck shirt and blue shorts to be the centre of authority over wide regions full of cocoa trees and brick-red huts.'¹⁴⁹ Any sense that Sanders still represented a worthwhile example for young Brits considering their career options had vanished; instead, he cut rather an absurd, clichéd, and anachronistic figure bereft of his role in Africa but still distant from the fast-changing climate in Britain.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ John Roche, 'The non-medical sciences, 1939–1970', in Brian Harrison, ed., *The history of the University of Oxford*, III: *The twentieth century* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 253–7; Daniel I. Greenstein, 'The junior members, 1900–1990', in Harrison, ed., *The history of the University of Oxford*, III, pp. 59–61.

¹⁴⁵ CO report 'Analysis of appointments to the Colonial Administrative Service, 1947–56', Oct. 1957.

¹⁴⁶ A. G. M. Gardner-Brown to prospective candidate, 28 Feb. 1951, CUA, CDEV/4/5.

¹⁴⁷ C. P. Snow, *The Masters* (London, 1951), p. 22. This takes on a different dimension when considered alongside the fact that Snow's brother was then serving in the CAS in Fiji, having gained a First Class degree from Cambridge. Philip Snow later wrote a memoir of his brother entitled *Stranger and brother: a portrait of C. P. Snow* (London, 1982).

¹⁴⁸ *Daily Express*, 27 Aug. 1957, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ For a particularly insightful analysis of the changing nature of the middle classes during the mid-twentieth century, see Mike Savage, 'Affluence and social change in the making of

Two years later, McCleery wrote of his concern that only fifty-five undergraduates attended the annual recruitment evening, half as many as 1958, most of whom were not career-seekers but rather those ‘who will clutter the evening up with questions about Dr Banda’.¹⁵¹ And yet despite these difficulties between 1957 and the cessation of recruitment in 1961, 330 new appointments were made to the CAS alone, to add to the roughly 18,000 colonial officials still serving across empire.¹⁵²

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For those trying to drum-up interest in a Colonial Service career, the Sanders-figure served both a practical and ideological utility. It accommodated enough ambiguity to reassure a traditional governing elite but also conjured a quixotic exoticism to appeal to young men whose social contours had been drastically reshaped by the upheavals of the war, as well as to the public school-boy who came of age in the post-war world. Subsequently, the Colonial Service’s mission of modernization was not entirely undermined by recourse to a character who seemingly personified the paternalism apparently so insistently being thrust aside. Certainly, some continued to be attracted by a conventional understanding of Africa, a DO’s role, and the objectives of colonial administration; yet, many explanations of career motivation catalogue a wide, complex, and frequently contradictory range of traditional and more progressive expectations that shaped the decision to apply. Frustratingly, surviving contemporary explanations of the decision to embark upon a Colonial Service career are few and fragmentary. Nonetheless, by reading interview and training reports alongside retrospective accounts – memoir, survey, and personal interview – one can start to build a picture of the dominant influences motivating recruits to join. Although all premised upon individual concerns and specific circumstances, these explanations offer an insight into the appeal of a Colonial Service career, the effectiveness or otherwise of the Colonial Office’s recruitment campaign, and the changing life priorities amongst elite graduates during the period of decolonization.

In all of its post-war recruitment propaganda, the Colonial Office demanded men driven by altruism and committed to the service of others. As the 1955 advert for the Cambridge recruitment evening made clear, ‘[t]he Overseas Civil Service (formerly known as the Colonial Service) provides a worthwhile career for a man who is not entirely self-seeking’.¹⁵³ Reflecting the rhetoric

technocratic middle-class identities: Britain, 1939–1955’, *Contemporary British History*, 22 (2008), pp. 457–76.

¹⁵¹ Francis Greenland (CO) to McCleery, 20 Nov. 1959, CUA, CDEV/4/7.

¹⁵² ‘Appointments in recruitment for service overseas: future policy’, Cmd 1740, *Parliamentary accounts and papers*, XXI, 1961–2, pp. 755–85.

¹⁵³ Colonial Service recruitment poster, Jan. 1955, CUA, CDEV/4/6.

of a public school chapel, a 1955 Colonial Office recruitment circular adopted a similarly portentous tone: 'It is a task which requires men of high character and ability. The Overseas Service is worthwhile as a career not on account of the rewards it may bring, but on account of the life that is led and of the opportunity it offers for service.'¹⁵⁴ Although the reasons why men settled on the career were often more pragmatic or incidental than the Colonial Office publicly recognized, applicants continued to respond enthusiastically to attempts to harness youthful idealism. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the rhetoric of paternalistic guidance remained prominent. John Duthie, who entered in 1946, observed '[a]lthough it might now be regarded as an extreme form of cultural bias, I was brought up to believe that the British Empire was essentially a beneficial institution, a beacon of progress, touched by greatness'.¹⁵⁵ As the 1950s progressed, recruits' paternalistic vision of empire was gradually supplanted by a more inclusive focus on the Commonwealth, with a growing number echoing the tone of contemporary recruitment literature by emphasizing the opportunity to participate in delivering self-government – although often with the caveat that it remained some years away.¹⁵⁶

Such idealism was not simply formulated in hindsight. Contemporary interview summaries consistently testify to applicants' ambitions for a 'worthwhile job' or 'useful career' in the 'service' of those less fortunate. During the decade following 1945, the inference of this language started to shift. In the late 1940s, 'worthwhile' tended to equate with service to crown, country, and empire but by the early 1960s, a growing number were telling interviewers their desire to work in Africa was based upon an interest in 'emergent nations' or humanity in general. Looking back upon his career from the early twenty-first century, one 1962 recruit recalled that despite his desire to travel, he never considered the Colonial Service as he was not 'politically attracted to it'. However, having been convinced that he could achieve more good from the 'inside', he joined to 'be a part of the action' in helping the colonies towards 'political, economic and cultural independence whether this was what I was meant to be doing or not'.¹⁵⁷ Forty years earlier, this fervour elicited a hesitant response during his selection interview: 'I do not doubt that he has a sincere, if rather woolly, desire to do something in life which is of benefit to his fellow men...His reasons for wanting to go overseas were, I think, grounded in his desire to do good for other people.'¹⁵⁸ After his year-long training course, McCleery praised his 'easy manner with Africans on the Course, who appreciate his attitude of unforced friendliness'.¹⁵⁹ The Colonial Office marketed the colonial project in idealistic terms precisely because it believed an appeal to

¹⁵⁴ CO circular 'Recruitment and publicity at schools', Aug. 1956, CUA, CEDV/4/7.

¹⁵⁵ John Duthie (CAS Gold Coast, 1946–57), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 4.

¹⁵⁶ D. Joy (CAS Northern Rhodesia, 1956–63), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 3.

¹⁵⁷ X, *Towards a retrospective record*, box 5.

¹⁵⁸ CO interview summary, May 1961, CUA, CDEV/3/29/A.

¹⁵⁹ Cadets' reports, 1961–2, CUA, CDEV/3/29/A.

youthful instincts to help others remained an effective strategy to attract applicants.¹⁶⁰ In response, many applied with the expectation that they could ‘make a real difference’.

By no means were all (or even the majority) motivated by a desire to participate in the dismantling of empire. For officials retrospectively explaining their career choice, altruistic idealism has certainly served an expedient role in helping them justify their career to often more cynical post-colonial audiences; however, rarely is it prioritized to the exclusion of all else. The contradictions that characterized the Colonial Office’s 1950s recruitment strategies were similarly apparent in recruits’ motivations, with few failing to acknowledge more self-serving and egoistic attractions. Joining in 1948, P. Mawhood captures evocatively the multi-faceted blend of attractions:

Why I joined, looked at in hindsight, was a gradual and complex decision. Factors included an overseas tradition among my mother’s brothers...I read Kim and was fascinated by living with exotic cultures; there was a certain idealism connected with ‘giving the poor a leg up’; I had seen Africa during my RAF service; and the colonial job gave an attractive combination of adventure (with the threat of fatal disease) plus the security of a pension if one survived. I feel sure too that administrators – even the nicest ones – were semi-consciously attracted by the personal power inherent in the DO’s job.¹⁶¹

The dominant perception remained that empire represented a force for human improvement and its true value lay in fulfilling an on-going – and, for some, never-ending – development role. Partly, this interpretation depended upon the territory to which a cadet was posted, but even amongst the last cohort some understood their role as revolving around a paternalistic delivery of good government and would continue to do so for some time to come.¹⁶² A minority retained unapologetic and unreconstructed attitudes better suited to the 1930s than early 1960s, which recruiters, despite certain misgivings, still found room to accommodate. As one 1960 training course report captured, ‘character’ in its most traditional sense – sporty, amateurish, and conservative – still counted for much: ‘A good cricketer and hockey player he should be most acceptable to the settler element in N. Rhodesia; about the Africans I am not so sure...I find it depressing that so young a man should be as reactionary as I am even at my age.’¹⁶³ The need for recruits combined with falling application

¹⁶⁰ Bradley, *A career in the Oversea Civil Service*, p. 62. The final sentence reads: ‘If you agree with me that the Commonwealth and Empire are our proudest heritage, and that to serve the Colonial peoples is the greatest privilege and the finest opportunity for practical, constructive and selfless service to humanity which you are ever likely to be offered, then for you this may be only THE BEGINNING.’

¹⁶¹ Dr P. Mawhood (CAS Tanganyika, 1949–64), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 3.

¹⁶² For example D. Glendening (CAS Northern Rhodesia, 1956–71), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 3; M. Wasilewski (CAS Kenya, 1957–62), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 2; Michael Crouch (CAS Aden, 1958–67), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 2.

¹⁶³ Cadets’ reports, 1960–1, CUA, CDEV/3/28.

rates meant it was not always possible for the CAS to be as discerning as the recruitment propaganda proclaimed.

Despite fears that sons of Colonial Service families were increasingly eschewing family precedent, the Service continued to rely heavily upon those hailing from imperial backgrounds.¹⁶⁴ No shortage of appointees cited the guiding example of a father, brother, or uncle, whilst others recalled a vague sense that ‘imperial service was in the genes’.¹⁶⁵ Family tradition impelled them to seek out opportunities that were central to a personal identity – even if these did fly counter to parental advice.¹⁶⁶ Most were aware to the dangers of a short-lived career but, as in the case of Tim Tawney, remained determined to realize childhood ambition by following in his father’s footsteps: ‘I joined the Colonial Service because I was brought up in Tanganyika; my father was in the service; I served in the KAR prior to joining; I never wanted any other career.’¹⁶⁷ The personal nature of the recruitment process meant a reference from a serving provincial commissioner or a young DO who had played in the same college rugby team counted for much. Regardless of the promise of meritocracy, it is patent that professional patronage remained vital to Colonial Service recruitment. The homogeneity and compact size of the upper middle classes meant such advantages were not to be ignored, as J. Daniell acknowledged of the Sudan Political Service, ‘it was not what you knew, but who you knew that was important’.¹⁶⁸

Nonetheless, disruption brought about by the war did open new vistas to many who would never have considered the Colonial Service in the 1930s.¹⁶⁹ Frequently, military service overseas offered a taste of foreign climes that otherwise may have remained unfamiliar. S. Richardson’s acknowledgement that had it not been for the Second World War he would most likely never have left England ‘and would probably have eked out an uninspired but comfortable life as a school teacher or public servant’ rang true for many recruits during

¹⁶⁴ Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of authority*, p. 16.

¹⁶⁵ R. N. Barlow-Poole (CAS Nigeria, 1947–68), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 3.

¹⁶⁶ CO interview summaries, 1961–2, CUA, CDEV/3/29/A; J. Vinter interview with J. J. Tawney, 26 Feb. 1971, OCRP, MSS.Afr.s.1999. See also, for example, Patrick Walker (CAS Uganda, 1956–62), *Towards independence: a district officer in Uganda at the end of empire* (London, 2009), pp. 11–49. For an analysis of similar impulses in the Indian context, see Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire families: Britons and late imperial India* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 180–7. Although lacking the same looming insecurity, a not dissimilar attitude was often displayed amongst military families, where sons joined the family regiment for a short commission with the clear intention of resigning after the initial tour. David French, *Military identities: the regimental system, the British Army, and the British people, c. 1870–2000* (Oxford, 2005), p. 53.

¹⁶⁷ T. J. Tawney (CAS Tanganyika, 1958–64), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 3.

¹⁶⁸ J. P. S. Daniell, to J. A. Mangin, SAD, 891/7/31.

¹⁶⁹ Alan Allport, *Demobbed: coming home after the Second World War* (New Haven, CT, 2004), pp. 141–8; James Hinton, *Nine wartime lives: Mass-Observation and the making of the modern self* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 169–71. For instance, G. J. Ellerton (CAS Kenya, 1945–63), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 2.

the immediate post-war years.¹⁷⁰ As Creech Jones observed, the cohort appointed in the immediate aftermath of the war included a far larger proportion of grammar school men who had embarked on other careers in the 1930s, when not only would it have been unlikely for them to gain entry but some had not even heard of the Colonial Service. M. Dorey left school at fifteen and worked for a colliery insurance company. After first hearing of the Colonial Service during his war service, he returned to the UK but ‘no longer found the work congenial...My overseas experience in the RN convinced me that the British Empire was a force for good in the colonies where the Colonial Service was needed and provided a worthwhile job.’¹⁷¹

Interview summaries made frequent mention of the ‘suitability’ of a candidate’s background. Although working-class origins were not the barrier they had been, interviewers found it hard to ignore entirely: ‘[C]omes, in his own words, from a “working class family”, Lancashire stock...I think that he could find a niche in the Service...not a “natural” for the top of the ladder but would be a very useful stay on the rung.’¹⁷² A latent fear that the Service would be infiltrated by ‘Angry Young Men’ quickly developed during the late 1950s, perhaps partly incited by John Osborne’s swipe at the empire caste.¹⁷³ The prevailing assumption appeared that the average working-class, grammar schoolboy would arrive with a ‘chip on his shoulder’ in the mould of an ‘angry young man’.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, appearance still counted for much. A strong physique and steely gaze continued to hold pride of place in a DO’s repertoire, whilst those who dared cultivate a less fastidious façade were quickly identified as potential trouble-makers.¹⁷⁵ The fear of a vociferous left-wing student challenge to empire made recruiters wary of any who appeared to betray such sympathies in their appearance: ‘X is not at first sight good “officer material”. He wears a beard, is leftish in politics and one would expect him to find a niche in the LSE.’¹⁷⁶ Serving officers were clear that the Service needed pragmatic, unsentimental recruits, not young idealists wanting to bring down the colonial system from the inside.

¹⁷⁰ S. S. Richardson (SPS 1947–56; CAS Nigeria, 1956) to J. A. Mangan, undated 1981, SAD, 891/7/44; H. H. Tomlinson (CAS Gold Coast, 1949–54), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 3.

¹⁷¹ M. H. Dorey (CAS Tanganyika, 1950–62), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 5.

¹⁷² CO interview summary, 1958–9, CUA, CDEV/3/26.

¹⁷³ John Osborne, ‘They call it cricket’, in Tom Maschler, ed., *Declaration* (London, 1957); Webster, *Englishness and empire*, pp. 199–210; Dan Rebellato, ‘Look back at empire: British theatre and imperial decline’, in Stuart Ward, ed., *British culture and the end of empire* (Manchester, 2001), pp. 84–7.

¹⁷⁴ CO interview summary, 3 May 1961, CUA, CDEV/3/29/A.

¹⁷⁵ Cadets’ reports, 1957–8, CUA, CDEV/3/12.

¹⁷⁶ Cadets’ reports, 1958–9, CUA, CDEV/3/26. The presence of Colonial Service cadets undertaking training at the LSE provided a provocative juxtaposition to the prevailing mood of anti-colonialism; Andrew Stuart, *Of cargoes, colonies and kings: diplomatic and administrative service from Africa to the Pacific* (London, 2001), p. 5; R. E. N. Smith, unpublished memoir, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Rhodes House, Oxford, MSS.Afr.s.2277, p. 8.

While the generation recruited after the early 1950s had largely missed war service, their experience of National Service often proved as pivotal in defining career trajectories. Figures for National Service are hard to be precise over; however, at least 25 per cent of CAS recruits had been based in the colonies, principally Malaya and Kenya. A posting to the King's African Rifles or Royal West African Frontier Force frequently precipitated an application after individuals 'fell in love with Africa'.¹⁷⁷ The positive – albeit often mildly patronizing – reaction to colonial troops frequently appears as a deciding factor in many career choices. One applicant wrote to McCleery during his degree: 'During my time as a National Serviceman I served a year in the Middle East, mainly at Khartoum. I found that I always got on well with the Sudanese and before leaving had become quite attached to them. They were in many ways admirable people, with a fine sense of humour. It is for that reason that I have long considered the Colonial Service as a career.'¹⁷⁸

Although not always coherently articulated, the cohort appointed following the gradual cessation of National Service after 1957 exhibited shifting attitudes towards the idea of a career compared to their predecessors. The generation leaving school in the mid-1950s had access to far wider and more sophisticated provision of careers advice than ever before. New career patterns undermined the appeal of the Colonial Service in a job market that favoured the seeker over employer. Amongst the Colonial Service's core demographic of public school and Oxbridge graduates career patterns showed a marked shift during the 1950s and 1960s, with public service careers receding in popularity to be overwhelmingly replaced by scientific jobs and engineering.¹⁷⁹ At the rapidly expanding Redbrick universities, the Colonial Service failed to make major inroads due to a lack of publicity and its enduring association with the public schools and Oxbridge. The growing sense of alienation amongst the 1950s generation towards the well-trodden colonial career paths of their predecessors was forcefully drawn in Andrew Sinclair's *My friend Judas*, whose protagonist's visit to his University Appointments Board, flicking through 'endless booklets about why didn't I become a Somaliland Policeman or a minor Protector of Aden' only reinforced his determination 'not to sweat it out, watching the last kicks of an ailing Empire'.¹⁸⁰

Yet, while declining application rates signify job security retained importance in shaping career choices, amongst those who did apply, there were clear indications that flexibility was prioritized over 'a gold-watch' career trajectory.¹⁸¹ By

¹⁷⁷ H. Taylor (CAS Tanganyika, 1959–62), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 5.

¹⁷⁸ W. R. Pennington to McCleery, 23 Jan. 1953, CUA, CDEV/4/5.

¹⁷⁹ *Graduate employment: a sample survey, September 1956* (London, 1956); Oxford and Cambridge University Appointments Boards' placement figures 1950–65; David Edgerton, *Warfare state: Britain, 1920–1970* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 172–4.

¹⁸⁰ Andrew Sinclair, *My friend Judas* (London, 1959), pp. 173–5.

¹⁸¹ This was noted as a general trend by both the Oxford and Cambridge Appointments Boards. See for example Cambridge University Appointments Board annual report 1962,

the late 1950s, few were misled by the Colonial Office's rhetoric; long-term prospects were accepted as poor.¹⁸² Much of this confidence emerged from the buoyant employment situation in the UK, which left many convinced they would have little trouble finding a new job and eager to seize opportunities when available rather than miss out.¹⁸³ This represented a stark contrast to the attitude displayed by men of the same age contemplating the same life choices in the 1930s when the pressures of the economic slump placed secure, long-term jobs at a premium. Unlike the immediate post-war generation, the late 1950s intake expressed little concern over long-term prospects. Repeated mentions in candidates' interview summaries acknowledged the relaxed attitude towards a premature termination of career and even when interviewers stressed this insecurity it was rarely enough to dissuade:

I think, that he is prepared to come in on the same basis as other recent good candidates, i.e. that he regards it as a first-rate job while it lasts and after that he is prepared to take his chance. At the moment, he contemplates giving no hostages to fortune, though obviously there is some chance of that.¹⁸⁴

Ignoring underlying insecurity in favour of liberating opportunities to see the world, enjoy new experiences, and soothe 'itchy-feet', the last cohort of recruits adopted an attitude to career selection that became more common a generation later.

Once school leavers became exempted from National Service, the pressure to find a career and settle down diminished. By the early 1960s, the Oxford University Appointments Board regularly commented on an increasing reluctance amongst undergraduates to commit to a career position immediately, as they preferred instead to bide their time undertaking voluntary work, further study, or a gap year. It was felt '[t]his lack of enthusiasm for a career appointment...so sharply differentiates the ex-schoolboy from the ex-national serviceman'.¹⁸⁵ Meanwhile, senior officers expressed concern that 'the pride of becoming a member of the Colonial Service is not what it was. The spirit of the Service is being allowed to run down' as 'temporary careerism seems to be gradually replacing the ideal of a lifetime's service'.¹⁸⁶

Many recruits articulated their desire to gain life experience before settling down.¹⁸⁷ As marriage patterns stabilized after the disruptions of the 1940s,

CUA, APTB/1/68. On career trajectories, see David Vincent, 'Mobility, bureaucracy and careers in early twentieth-century Britain', in Andrew Miles and David Vincent, eds., *Building European society: occupational change and social mobility in Europe, 1840-1940* (Manchester, 1993), pp. 221-4.

¹⁸² J. N. Stevens (CAS Sierra Leone, 1956-64), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 3.

¹⁸³ D. Connolly (CAS Tanganyika, 1959-62), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 3.

¹⁸⁴ CO interview summary, 4 Oct. 1960, CUA, CDEV/3/29/A.

¹⁸⁵ Oxford University Appointments Board annual report, 1964, OUA, CR1/8/64, p. 7.

¹⁸⁶ Rension to Macpherson, 3 Jan. 1957, RP, MSS.Brit.Emp.s.404/1/4.

¹⁸⁷ Jane Lewis, *The end of marriage? Individualism and intimate relations* (Cheltenham, 2002), pp. 29-32.

fewer recruits joined already married – much to the relief of McCleery – and several consciously saw a posting to Africa as an ideal way to delay this moment.¹⁸⁸ In contrast to the make-up of colonial society before 1939, the empire of the 1950s was far from a space of male sociability alone. Air-travel made Colonial Service appear less remote and more accessible for those with families.¹⁸⁹ The rapid increase in the numbers of women appointed after the war meant that many recruits of both sexes who joined the Service single soon met their future spouse, whilst the tendency for families to remain longer because of improved transport and health infrastructure allowed the prospect of a brief sojourn in the colonies to be easily reconciled with long-term life plans.

For some, the colonies never lost their romantic magnetism. The Colonial Service fully appreciated this allure and when recruitment stagnated in the 1950s specifically targeted university mountaineering and adventure societies in the hope of drumming up intrepid types.¹⁹⁰ Many recruits had been keen sportsmen throughout their education and like their predecessors continued to view life overseas as an appealing alternative to the drudgery of a daily commute and sedate office existence.¹⁹¹ The juxtaposition of Africa against the privations of austerity Britain proved particularly effective in drawing many towards an application.¹⁹² As the Sanders trope highlights, children's literature and cinema could be powerful influences, with the vision they created of Africa often enduring into adulthood. Adventure remained an important element for P. Wass, but alone cannot explain his career choice:

The prospect of being an administrative officer in the HMOCS offered an ideal combination of attractions: living in a less developed overseas environment; working with, and gaining an understanding of, people of a different culture from myself; a job which was geared to assisting people's development; opportunity for an outdoor adventure and exploration being part of a service. Somewhere running through this was a (perhaps subconscious) wish 'to be a bit different'.¹⁹³

This last remark is interesting and frequently appears in memoirs and interviews. Recruits show a tendency to cast their career choice in a romantic tone; abandoning the security and comfort of home to embark upon the exotic unknown.

Yet, the obvious paradox remains that little else in these men's backgrounds marked them out as strident nonconformists. In this sense, the Colonial Service

¹⁸⁸ CO interview summaries, 30 Dec. 1960, CUA, CDEV/3/29/A.

¹⁸⁹ Scott Anthony and Oliver Green, *British aviation posters: art design and flight* (London, 2012), pp. 130–4.

¹⁹⁰ 'Recruiting for the Administrative Service of Northern Nigeria'.

¹⁹¹ T. G. Brierly (CAS Tanganyika, 1950–1; Nigeria, 1951–64), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 3; D. E. Nicoll-Griffith (CAS Kenya, 1952–64), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 3; C. A. K. Cullimore (CAS Tanganyika, 1958–61), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 4.

¹⁹² M. V. Saville (CAS North Borneo, 1949–64), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 2.

¹⁹³ P. Wass (CAS Bechuanaland, mid-1950s), *Towards a retrospective record*, box 2.

offered a form of sanitized nonconformity, which, although perhaps signalling slight eccentricity compared to peers entering the City or Law, did not exclude them from the closely knit and regulated social group from which they emerged. Although rarely a simple choice, it is clear that much of the Colonial Service's appeal lay in the manner in which it legitimized and counter-balanced the urge to escape the stultifying climate of post-war Britain with the promise of patriotic duty and altruistic service. By the mid-1950s the transition from the frontier-adventurer towards the adventurous-bureaucrat, which had been initiated by Furse during the interwar years, was largely complete. The Service picked those who best conformed to its understanding of itself, but it was shared formative conditioning that ensured these individuals remained the most likely to be attracted. Compared to alternative opportunities favoured by this group, a Colonial Service career uniquely reconciled a variety of conflicting ambitions. However, once developments in the colonies undermined long-term career prospects, the Service's popularity plummeted amongst the group upon which it had always most relied.¹⁹⁴ Africa may have retained its promise of adventure, romance, and altruistic service, but without the assurance of a stable career this was not enough to perpetuate the recruitment cycle.

VI

In conclusion, there were pragmatic but also ideological factors that led to the Sanders-figure being employed to boost post-1945 recruitment. The Colonial Office exploited Sanders's cultural resonance to market a vision of empire to an increasingly sceptical domestic audience that emphasized romance, adventure, and continuity at the expense of the complicated political reality. The symbolic use of Sanders highlights the enduring incongruities between the Colonial Service's espoused and operative ideology during this period. At a time when the Service's traditional appeal within wider culture was diminishing, Sanders became a tool to suggest that its prestige and prospects remained as bright as they had been in the 1930s – but one that also indicates a marked scepticism within the Service to the new post-war idealism.

Some undoubtedly did respond to this traditional call; however, it is too easy and far too simplistic to condemn all post-war recruits as remnants of a patronizing tradition, and the reasons why men chose to enter the Service proved by no means uncomplicated. By moving beyond a purely institutional account of high policy to consider recruits within their formative cultural context, this article has sought to offer fresh insight into both the challenges faced by the colonial state during the period of decolonization, as well as a clearer sense of empire's shifting resonance amongst the group expected to undertake its day-to-day administration. Drawing together historiographical currents that have often run separate courses provides new perspectives on how changes in

¹⁹⁴ Hyam, *Britain's declining empire*, pp. 10–12.

policy intersected with evolving understandings of imperial manliness and career ambition amongst the British professional middle classes. After 1950, the Colonial Service was never able to fill all of its annual vacancies with its traditional recruitment strategy increasingly shown to be ineffective and anachronistic. Ultimately, the Colonial Office's refusal radically to reimagine the profile of the ideal administrator to reflect the changing ambitions of the colonial project meant it struggled to develop a message that appealed to its core demographic and fulfilled its new ideological promises.