**Crime Reporters at Work: Investigating the Underworld in Wartime Leeds, 1944-45**

Crime news was a media staple throughout the twentieth century. What Britons read, heard and watched shaped public understanding of crime, prompted police inquiries and initiated legislation. While we know much about the content of crime news and something of its reception, we know little about its production. This article addresses this known unknown. Using a unique police investigation into press reports of black marketeering and corruption in wartime Leeds, it reveals the investigative methods reporters used and the rules under which they operated. What the reporters and the editors of two national daily newspapers considered well-sourced stories reported saloon bar tittle-tattle as fact. The evidence confirmed senior police officers in their low opinion of journalist-sleuths, and substantiates contemporary criticisms of press accuracy.

Keywords: crime reporting; investigative journalism; criminal underworld; Second World War

On Thursday 11 January 1945 the *News Chronicle* ran a front-page story headed ‘The Black Market of Leeds.’ The article alleged that ‘a man in a position of trust’ was behind the city’s thriving trade in black market goods and an illegal gambling boom.[[1]](#endnote-1) An editorial judged that illicit trading was ‘sufficiently well organised to constitute a real social menace.’ It urged the government to act for fear that this was ‘the beginning of gangsterism in this country.’[[2]](#endnote-2) The story outraged council leaders and the local police chief who refuted the charges. This was a costly mistake. Journalists reported the rebuttals alongside the allegations without fear of libel. By late January, the city had acquired ‘the unenviable reputation of being the worst spot in Britain for black market trafficking’ according to one London crime reporter.[[3]](#endnote-3) British troops advancing from Paris to the Rhine were said to dream of spending their leave in Leeds fleshpots.[[4]](#endnote-4) Local people burnished the myth, telling a story about a visitor with a bagful of *£*1 notes asking a Leeds Central Station ticket collector: ‘When does the black market open?’ What had been an open secret on Fleet Street was now public knowledge.

Crime reporters and ministry officials had known about the story since December. On Wednesday 6 December 1944 the *Daily Mail* printed a feature article about a northern city it called ‘Racket Town.’ The reporter cast wartime Racket Town as Cicero to London’s Chicago. This echoed occasional concern about the ‘underworld’ in interwar Britain’s big cities.[[5]](#endnote-5) Here, in Racket Town, London’s criminal underworld found refuge from the Luftwaffe and Scotland Yard. While the *Mail* was careful not to name Leeds, the article contained clues to Racket Town’s identity.[[6]](#endnote-6) Provincial and trade papers had also picked up the story. A day earlier the *Yorkshire Post* printed police denials that Leeds was the chief centre of the black market.[[7]](#endnote-7) The following week *Men’s Wear* drew attention to a spate of clothing thefts across the city.[[8]](#endnote-8) These articles prompted a *News Chronicle* reporter to visit Leeds. They also convinced ministry officials that Leeds was a major black market centre.[[9]](#endnote-9) The Home Office spent a month contemplating whether the London Metropolitan Police should investigate.[[10]](#endnote-10) Within days of the *News Chronicle* naming Leeds ‘Black Market City’, it launched a Scotland Yard inquiry.[[11]](#endnote-11) Three months later the Home Secretary told parliament the allegations ‘were much exaggerated, and in most instances quite unfounded’. While Leeds was ‘no more immune than any other large city,’ the inquiry concluded, there was no reason to think it ‘the headquarters of openly practised black market activities’.[[12]](#endnote-12)

Neither article is a classic work of investigative journalism. Their influence outside the true crime genre is negligible.[[13]](#endnote-13) Were it not for the police inquiry, their historical significance is as a footnote testifying to the steady growth of investigative crime reporting after 1918.[[14]](#endnote-14) Their publication belies any notion that *The People* under Sam Campbell’s leadership resurrected the genre of social investigation.[[15]](#endnote-15) Rather the Sunday paper’s weekly investigations of postwar crime marked its climax. A few shaped public understanding of crime, which forced an official response. Duncan Webb’s ‘Vice in London’ series was the most influential.[[16]](#endnote-16) This much-studied series illustrates the great known unknown of crime news: how it was produced. Webb’s memoir says little about the practicalities of writing the story. He prefers colourful anecdotes that portray him as intrepid journalist-sleuth penetrating the underworld. That we have any information, reliable or not, about a story’s production is rare. As Peter King notes, this makes it ‘almost impossible to work out who wrote them, under what constraints and with what purposes in mind’.[[17]](#endnote-17) This is not true of ‘In Racket Town’ or ‘The Black Market of Leeds’. Thanks to Detective-Chief-Inspector McDonald of Scotland Yard, we know who wrote the articles and how. His investigation allows us to shadow two crime reporters at work in wartime Leeds. It also highlights similar records that solve the evidentiary problem bedevilling studies of news production.[[18]](#endnote-18)

While historians know little about the production of crime news, we know much about its content. Crime news was a media staple throughout the twentieth century.[[19]](#endnote-19) Violent crime, particularly murder,[[20]](#endnote-20) dominated the London press from the eighteenth century onwards.[[21]](#endnote-21) What Britons read, heard and watched, shaped public understanding of crime, prompted police inquiries and initiated legislation.[[22]](#endnote-22) In this, historians are indebted to the radical and critical criminology of the 1960s and 1970s. Exposing the role the media played in manufacturing deviance was a central plank of platforms at National Deviancy Conferences. Conference participants’ work casts a long shadow over historical studies of crime news. Labelling theory, especially Stan Cohen’s idea of ‘moral panic’, provides a template for most discussion of the content of crime news and its reception.[[23]](#endnote-23) Due to its compatibility with competing philosophies of history, moral panic - more social mechanism than grand theory - sits comfortably in the historical toolkit. Whether or not one agrees with labelling individual episodes as panics, this work means we know much about what the print media reported, and something of radio and newsfilm coverage.[[24]](#endnote-24) Drawing on these content analyses, other historians have begun exploring press genres.[[25]](#endnote-25)

By comparison, we know little about the way newspapers put stories together. Again, it is easy to discern the influence of radical and critical criminology on the small body of work that tries to fill this gap. In his 1977 book *Law-and-Order News* Steve Chibnall provided a critical account of press ideology and reporting practices. Through a handful of crime reporters’ memoirs, he traced the origins of contemporary values and practices to the postwar ‘golden age’ of crime reporting.[[26]](#endnote-26) By comparing press coverage to criminal and judicial statistics, historians pushed back the origins of these news values to the interwar years while stressing continuities with earlier periods.[[27]](#endnote-27) When it comes to crime reporters at work, historians approach the topic indirectly. Like archaeologists scrutinising toolmarks for evidence of technique, scholars conclude from studying journalistic copy that interwar crime news moved away from court reporting towards pre-trial and post-trial investigative journalism. Findings from journalists’ and detectives’ memoirs as well as contemporary reports about the press bolster such conclusions.[[28]](#endnote-28) Unlike the London detectives’ wartime visits to ‘Racket Town’, this work brings us no closer to understanding how a story came to be.

**In Racket Town**

‘This is the story of an evil thing – the Black Market. It is a story that might be duplicated in any of a dozen big towns and cities. That is why *The Daily Mail*, prompted to action by daily reports of the growth of this evil, does not propose to single out by name the northern city from which a special investigator has just returned with a shocking story.’ So began a lengthy standfirst to the feature ‘In Racket Town’. The special investigator studying this ‘poisonous weed’ was 55-year-old feature writer Montague Smith. The standfirst went on to allege that Britain’s ‘Racket Towns’ sheltered ‘Black Marketeers’ from London. The ‘racketeers’ had left the capital – formerly the ‘G.H.Q.’ of ‘the Black Market’ – to escape Scotland Yard detectives and German bombing. The feature editor considered the situation jeopardised the national war effort. If ‘honest citizens’ thought evasion widespread, the likelihood that they would obey the rules decreased. Nobody wanted to be taken for a mug.

The story that followed this sensational introduction did not disappoint. Smith detailed the illicit sales of food, petrol, and whisky he witnessed during ‘three astounding and disquieting days’ in Racket Town. He listed going rates for black market goods in the city’s clubs, pubs and shops: petrol at 5*s*. a gallon, clothes coupons costing 2s. each, whisky at *£*5 a bottle and sugar and lard by the hundredweight. While significant, this traffic paled by comparison with dealings in men’s suits, women’s shoes, and silk stockings. ‘Behind all these stories of petty swindles’, wrote Smith, lay ‘the much bigger one of how these supplies are obtained.’ Black marketeers met demand for shoes and clothes through cloth robberies and coupon thefts. Warehouse-breaking and shop-breaking were so common that local insurers refused to issue cover for theft. This fact alongside unsolicited offers of large quantities of food led Smith to conclude that ‘the Black Market in Racket Town appears to be conducted on a wholesale scale and with country-wide ramifications.’

Worse than all these rackets and ‘the cause of many more’ were illegal baccarat games played for stakes of *£*1,000 or more. To afford the stakes or cover their losses, gamblers got involved in black market deals. The high-stakes games attracted thieves and robbers who preyed on high rollers. The gamblers hired ‘Knife Men’ for protection from the ‘Terror Men’. This fuelled violence. According to Smith, a knife fight between a thief and two ‘Terror Men’ had recently taken place in one club as the two henchmen tried to recover their employer’s stolen cash. Smith ended the article by calling on the government to provide local police forces with more trained detectives to smash the ‘Black Market.’

Smith provided little evidence to support his allegations. He had two official sources. ‘One of the most responsible spokesman of the honest traders’ supplied a direct quote. Another paragraph paraphrased a discussion with ‘the local officer of the Food Ministry’. Most of his information came from unnamed locals. Unattributed quotes from these conversations peppered the article. In each case he said ‘he was told’ something or ‘it was suggested’ to him. Such vague sourcing left who said what and when unclear. Readers could not distinguish between individual informants. Smith bolstered the story with personal experience. He reported receiving four unsolicited offers of illegal goods. These informed the typical but fictional dialogue between reporter and crook that followed. Although familiar journalistic practices, many journalists would have considered this dishonest sourcing. Not naming the city or the sources ensured anonymity. Running together quotations and fictionalising dialogue was an unnecessary precaution. The *News Chronicle* report ‘The Black Market of Leeds’ sourced its allegations more carefully. The paper had to. Its credibility rested on a reputation for accuracy. It had also raised the stakes. Naming Leeds made identifying alleged wrongdoers easier and a libel action more likely.

By shaming Leeds, the *News Chronicle* had turned a month-old *Daily* *Mail* feature into a front-page scoop. Only Allied progress in the Ardennes received more attention and, unlike the Leeds story, it did not merit an editorial. A ‘*News Chronicle* Reporter’ filed the article from Leeds the night before publication. It gave a first person account of two recent visits to the city: the first before Christmas and the second early in the New Year. Vincent Evans, the unnamed staff reporter, made similar allegations to Smith. If one had means, motive and few moral scruples, one need only visit city centre pubs and clubs to find black marketeers ready to sell you unlimited quantities of clothing, food, drink, petrol and cosmetics. Evans suggested that local government corruption enabled this brazen trade, and that its illegal profits fed a gambling boom as gangsters staked their cash in baccarat games or bet on racehorses. Anyone threatening this state of affairs was ‘liable to get a bottle broken over their head in an alleyway one dark night.’ Evans attributed this quote carefully. Unlike Smith, he strove for honesty in sourcing and newsgathering. He gave as much context and detail about the unnamed sources as he could. For example, he described a conversation with ‘one of the people I met in Leeds’ and ‘a soldier’ ‘going on leave next week’, quoting them directly and distinguishing between what they said at an unnamed ‘hotel’. He made the limits of his knowledge explicit too, confessing that ‘Most of the time I knew that I was only touching the fringe of the black market.’ Corruption allegations were more specific and the accused got a right of reply. He reported the counter allegations ‘the man who holds a highly responsible position locally’ made against ‘the man in a position of trust’ who accused him. [[29]](#endnote-29)

Although the reporters differed over sourcing, their image of the underworld was the same. Both treated the underworld as synonymous with participants in an illegal night-time economy whose principal markets were gambling, intoxicants and stolen goods. Like their peers, they thought criminal gangs dominated these illegal markets concentrated in city centres.[[30]](#endnote-30) Comparing wartime economic control to US prohibition, they feared criminal syndication along American lines.[[31]](#endnote-31) Criminals might form large-scale illegal enterprises to meet black-market demand. Using violence and corruption, these criminal enterprises would secure legal immunity. Referring to the ‘Black Market’ rather than a black market or black markets, as they did, underlined the idea of black market as underworld.[[32]](#endnote-32) Neither reporter held the local Jewish community responsible, which was unexpected. With a large Jewish community heavily involved in the local rag trade,[[33]](#endnote-33) fashioning an alien conspiracy theory would have been simple. In fact the only ‘oft-comers’ mentioned were Londoners, Liverpudlians and American GIs. Criticism of anti-Semitic crime reporting earlier in the war might explain editorial wariness.[[34]](#endnote-34) The reporters also overlooked prostitution. Fear of obscenity and libel laws explains their reticence. The papers broke this aspect of the story after a local magistrate commented on ‘immorality’.[[35]](#endnote-35) Both papers had conformed to established conventions. Prostitution was the topic of court reports emphasising its corrupting influence on an otherwise moral nation.[[36]](#endnote-36) A sex-free Leeds underworld was not all Smith and Evans agreed upon. They told their stories in a similar manner.

Both men placed themselves at the centre of their reports. Their papers billed them as ‘special investigators’ who penetrated the Leeds underworld alone. They visited city centre bars, pubs, clubs, hotels and local shops. Here, they spoke with black marketeers and under-the-counter dealers. They visited the upperworld too, interviewing ministry inspectors in government office buildings. Evans' sojourn was longer than Smith’s. The *News Chronicle* reporter met with local police and politicians - men in ‘positions of trust’. According to the journalists, their investigations were not without personal risk. The clubs they visited were rough. Violence was a real possibility. The same was true of the pubs Evans entered. In one of them, he received a physical threat. These fearless investigators were effective ones too. After a few days they knew more about the local underworld than local officials. Editorial commentary put this down to an over-stretched and inexperienced police force. Evans went further by alleging corruption.

The debt the reporters owed American crime writing is clear. Their stories conformed to ‘hardboiled’ conventions for realistic settings and characters. The reporters, not Philip Marlowe or Sam Spade, were the heroes of the articles. Smith and Evans were the ordinary men who felt honour bound to expose ‘a world in which gangsters can rule nations and almost rule cities’. They spoke and wrote ‘as the man of his age talks.’[[37]](#endnote-37) Both men peppered their prose with street slang to lend their stories authenticity. The ‘boys’ ‘in the know’ ran the ‘swindles’ and ‘rackets’. These ‘gangsters’ enjoyed playing ‘the shoe’ alongside ‘Knife Men’ who might hurt people when the ‘finger’s put on them’.[[38]](#endnote-38) If you had ‘hard cash’ and asked him ‘no questions’, a ‘racketeer’ ‘up to his eyes’ in it might ‘fix you up’ and ‘push something your way’.[[39]](#endnote-39) Like a Chandler novel, the articles were an ‘adventure in search of a hidden truth’.[[40]](#endnote-40) It was a style that appealed to men, especially young working-class men.[[41]](#endnote-41) The reporters knew their audience. In 1947 the *Mail* had 2.6 million adult male readers. Of these, 18 per cent were young working-class men. The comparable *News Chronicle* figures were 1.8 million and 16 per cent.[[42]](#endnote-42)

This was not new. A strong American influence was readily apparent in interwar crime reporting, which owed much to the celluloid and printed American crime fictions of the period.[[43]](#endnote-43) Reporters stuck American labels on British criminals. ‘Gang’ replaced the older term ‘mob’ when describing crimes involving three or more people. Criminals extorting money from bookmakers, club owners and prostitutes were no longer ‘terrors’ or ‘strong-arm men’. Journalists drew vivid comparisons between these relabelled ‘gangsters’ and their American counterparts.[[44]](#endnote-44) Reporting of organised theft was also Americanized. Thieves who availed themselves of firearms and cars were ‘motor bandits’,[[45]](#endnote-45) an American re-export of a French term from La Belle Époque.[[46]](#endnote-46) Linguistic traffic was not always one way.[[47]](#endnote-47) Familiarity with the American vernacular inspired new journalistic idioms. When London’s ‘motor bandits’ added ‘smash-and-grab’ raids to their repertoire, the American papers used this neologism enthusiastically.[[48]](#endnote-48) The influence of the American hardboiled style continued into the war years with reporters likening food rationing to prohibition. By 1941, ‘van-draggers’ had given way to ‘hi-jackers’ stealing lorry loads of food.[[49]](#endnote-49) ‘Food-runners’, their counterparts, supposedly operated across the Northern Irish border.[[50]](#endnote-50)

Smith and Evans were clearly not the first British crime reporters to imitate the hardboiled style. Neither were they the first to see its storytelling possibilities.[[51]](#endnote-51) Social investigations published on the inside pages exhibited these ‘American’ features too. Self-proclaimed ‘crime specialists’ such as Netley Lucas and Peter Cheyney updated this press genre for interwar readers.[[52]](#endnote-52) Proprietors and editors had long thought ‘insider’ accounts from detectives and criminals sold papers. These had assumed greater importance in interwar circulation battles.[[53]](#endnote-53) Editors paid retired detectives to recount their greatest cases and provide readers with underworld tours. Sometimes these features serialised a ghost-written memoir; at other times they inspired them.[[54]](#endnote-54) Anticipating postwar chequebook journalism, papers also paid criminals for confessions, memoirs and underworld guides. This amounted to a new subgenre: the crook’s life.[[55]](#endnote-55) Lucas and Cheyney, having established their expertise as a ‘reformed’ criminal and a private detective respectively, assumed the new role of investigative reporter. Their articles and others like them recounted reporters’ dangerous journeys through metropolitan underworlds. Cheyney’s articles were seminal. They formed a view of the London underworld and its gangs that has exerted a lasting influence over popular ‘true crime’ histories.[[56]](#endnote-56) By posing as intrepid reporters, ‘crime specialists’ cast themselves as questing heroes. They were not puzzle-solvers like the journalist-sleuths in ‘Golden Age’ British detective fiction.[[57]](#endnote-57) Rather they were private investigators who could spell like the crime reporters in American crime fiction.[[58]](#endnote-58)

Both approaches to underworld reportage fell into desuetude for much of the war. Extensive coverage of the ‘People’s War’ in shrinking newspapers crowded out court reports and underworld features.[[59]](#endnote-59) All changed on Sunday 25 June 1944. That day, the *Sunday Dispatch* began a five-part investigation of the wartime underworld. Peter Cheyney took readers ‘Inside the Black Market’.[[60]](#endnote-60) The series showed editors how to cover the illegal economy’s wartime boom; of increasing concern now an Allied victory appeared a matter of time. Traditional court reporting had proven ineffective at meeting this challenge. With daily broadsheets cut to four pages and daily tabloids to eight, papers had less space for background reporting.[[61]](#endnote-61) Few black market cases merited extended coverage. Editors set the bar high. Crime news was unusual, fitted the press cycle, involved well-known people and places, occurred close to home, or marked crime reaching a significant level. Cases that met two or more of these requirements were rare indeed. Those that did tended to involve high-status offenders. They exhibited whimsical, sentimental or dramatic features if they did not.[[62]](#endnote-62) Violence was absent. There were profits enough for deserters and professional criminals not to fight.[[63]](#endnote-63) With no black-market-related ‘battles’, ‘wars’ or murders, reporters struggled to tell the Home Front’s biggest crime story.[[64]](#endnote-64) By placing himself at the centre of the story, Cheyney overcame these problems. Rival papers soon took note. Both Smith and Evans owed the publication of their stories to Cheyney.

By inspiring British film makers, these stories had a long-lasting impact on the image of Britain’s underworld. They gave rise to a postwar cycle of spiv films that marked ‘the first surge of an indigenous British underworld genre’.[[65]](#endnote-65) The scripts took direct inspiration from British crime news, which itself reimagined the underground economy in terms borrowed from interwar American crime news and fiction. This is best seen in the Ealing Studios film *It Always Rains on Sunday*.[[66]](#endnote-66) This was an adaptation of a novel by London crime reporter Arthur La Bern, who gave the *Yorkshire Evening News* his take on black marketeering in wartime Leeds.[[67]](#endnote-67) Such films retailed the notion that wartime economic control represented Britain’s prohibition moment. It was a powerful idea that still shapes the popular and academic chronologies of British organised crime.[[68]](#endnote-68) Recent work highlighting that ‘most black marketing involved established businesses developing an illicit side-line’ questions the news stories that gave rise to this view.[[69]](#endnote-69) Thanks to Scotland Yard, we know how crime reporters put together two such stories. It offers historians a rare chance to inspect their evidentiary foundations.

**‘Carefully checked Facts’**

While we know how the investigations progressed, their origins are a mystery. Fortunately, contemporary accounts of newspaper production make informed speculation possible.[[70]](#endnote-70) As a feature article, the *Mail* features editor likely commissioned ‘In Racket Town’. The editor Sidney Horniblow would have known about and agreed the planned article. Who got the story was doubtless a topic of conversation at one of their daily meetings. ‘Monty’ Smith, a former news editor with 33 years’ experience, was the obvious choice. Contributing the odd editorial and feature, Smith had the time as well as the experience for a special investigation. The legman Ken Hinsley accompanied Smith northwards. He had local contacts having worked in the provincial press. This was a typical arrangement. When visiting the provinces, crime reporters worked in pairs. The legman undertook onerous news-gathering tasks. This left the lead reporter free to focus on writing the story.[[71]](#endnote-71) Horniblow and the features editor probably discussed the piece two days before publication. If they lacked confidence in Smith’s sourcing, the standfirst turned this into an asset. The ‘responsible’ *Mail* did not want to shame a town that was one of many racket towns.

‘The Black Market of Leeds’ had similar origins. As a news story, the news editor authorized a scouting trip. Given the resources involved, the editor Gerald Barry likely knew about it. The idea for the trip came from Evans. It was an open secret that Leeds was Racket Town. He knew that a report naming Leeds would make the headlines. Such a report chimed with the paper’s reputation for quality investigative-cum-campaigning journalism. It promised to burnish Evans’ reputation too. He headed north on 14 December 1944, staying overnight in Leeds. There, he met local freelancer Christopher Hunter. The *News Chronicle* paid Hunter a retainer for his services. Hunter took Evans to the Oak Room in *The White Swan Hotel*. Hunter had arranged for them to meet a local detective over a pint. What Hunter and ‘Peter’ told Evans persuaded him there was a story. It convinced his editor too. They agreed he should return in the New Year. He returned on 5 January 1945 with £50 to buy information. Recent coverage of ‘a procession of petty gangsters’ queuing to receive sentences from the Leeds Recorder had bolstered his case.[[72]](#endnote-72) Evans left Leeds three days later with a front-page story that cost him £12 of drinks.[[73]](#endnote-73) He spent the next two days in London writing his report. It went through the usual news production process with subeditors checking the copy. The editorial conference likely agreed the story merited comment and deserved a follow-up story.

We are on firmer ground when determining what the reporters did in Leeds. When questioned by police, Smith ‘admitted that the allegations contained in his Article were based on hearsay and gossip’. Asked to make a statement about his three-day visit, he declined. He refused to give the police ‘any names or one scrap of evidence in support of what he had written’. Smith cited the journalist’s moral obligation to his sources.[[74]](#endnote-74) Protecting informants was part of the National Union of Journalists’ ‘Code of Professional Conduct’.[[75]](#endnote-75) Refusing to name his sources stopped the police from testing the evidence, which left his reputation intact. When pressed, Smith said he ‘obtained his information ‘from four different men he met casually in bars and restaurants in Leeds’. He gave two names: those of his legman Ken Hinsley and a local professional gambler. Smith recommended police speak to them both. Hinsley’s reports and the gambler’s yawns were likely Smith’s only sources of information. Walking with the aid of sticks and intermittently blind due to war wounds, Smith let the news come to him rather than chase it.[[76]](#endnote-76)

The police followed Smith’s tip. Interviewed in Leeds, the 62-year-old gambler said he enjoyed ‘leading the reporter on’. Everyone drinking in the bar could see that Smith wanted a story badly. The gambler told Smith that he knew some black marketeers before branding the local police corrupt. In support he said a retired detective inspector and others had stolen £2,000 from his home. Smith took down the uncorroborated story. As one reader of the police report noted, ‘Smith of the D.M. appears to have swallowed this story’.[[77]](#endnote-77) Bar room confidences alone were not enough. Smith asked his legman Hinsley to find out more. Hinsley activated his local contacts. Two Leeds detectives provided him with background information. John Bapty, a *Yorkshire Evening News* reporter, helped too. Any background information they provided was shallow. One of the detectives reported that a former colleague told him senior officers could get ten years’ imprisonment if he let slip all he knew. True or not, it was hearsay. Yet, Smith thought it justified hinting at police corruption in his article. Bapty was less helpful than the detectives. He told Hinsley he had no personal knowledge of black marketeering in Leeds. Bapty doubted whether local people’s petty evasions justified the label black market.[[78]](#endnote-78) His views did not shape the final article, which was largely a product of boozy conversations. Most took place between middle-aged men in city-centre watering holes. All of which were within easy walking distance of Central Station and the local *Daily Mail* office. The *News Chronicle* investigation was little better.

Like the *Mail*, the *News Chronicle* touted its ‘special investigation’ as based on ‘a most careful assessment of the facts.’ The London detectives considered its author Evans ‘a very decent type of man’ unlike his legman Hunter. They found Hunter ‘drink-soddened’. According to local police, he was ‘constantly under the influence of drink.’ This ‘shify individual’ was Evans local guide.[[79]](#endnote-79) Their investigation centred on the *White Swan Hotel* in Call Lane. Hunter was a regular. On the southern edge of the city centre, close to City Station and the River Aire, ‘The Mucky Duck’ catered for market traders, warehousemen and bargees. Its reputation was that of a rough working-man’s pub. It was earthier than the plush hotel bars near Central Station that Smith visited. Here, Evans met two local policemen. The hotel was a regular stop on their daily round of dodgy pubs. The first was ‘Peter’, a police constable in Chapeltown. When asked, he offered to get Evans a suit length coupon-free. This was the man in the article ‘who occupies a position of trust’. Peter was not a reliable source. He had recently returned to the beat after lying to fellow detectives. The second police informant was a detective-inspector due to retire a few weeks later. According to him, the rackets involved many people. The most important was the deputy chair of the local watch committee. After the inspector left the bar, the reporters spoke to the councillor who Hunter had asked to meet them there. The councillor accused the inspector of running local rackets. These two men, who the London detectives discovered detested one another, were the sources for the allegations of corruption. It was the councillor’s word against the inspector’s.[[80]](#endnote-80)

*The White Swan* was also where Hunter introduced Evans to a local crook. He had recently completed a prison sentence for theft and receiving stolen goods. Like the police officers, the man spoke in general terms. He offered to buy Evans black market gin and whisky from a soldier who frequented the bar. The crook changed his mind the following day.[[81]](#endnote-81) Another regular known to Hunter stepped into the breach. He agreed to sell Evans whisky and gin he had bought legally. The same man sold Evans a coupon-free suit-length that he bought from a friend who managed a clothes shop. The shop manager stole it to order.[[82]](#endnote-82) These were the only test purchases that Evans made. Both deals were petty and initiated by the reporter. Another drinker told the reporters that the manager of the upmarket Metropole Hotel close to Central and City Stations sold butter, cloth and stockings. The same man informed them that a wine merchant and a catering supplier sold black market goods. The police found no evidence to support these claims. Another informant named a local detective who extorted bribes from bookmakers. Again, this proved baseless. There was no such detective on the force.[[83]](#endnote-83) Although Evans made a greater effort to source his story, he too was guilty of accepting hearsay evidence. Like Smith, he got off the train at Central Station and walked into a nearby bar, albeit a rougher one frequented by detectives and criminals, paid for drinks and noted down what he was told. The Scotland Yard detectives sent to investigate their allegations took a different tack.

**“An Unjustifiable Slur”**

Having received instructions to probe the articles’ veracity, Detective Chief Inspector (DCI) McDonald interviewed the journalists. ‘After long talks’ and ‘without coming to hasty conclusions’, McDonald was of the opinion ‘that their articles are coloured exaggerations of the true position, mostly built up on scraps of hearsay and gossip.’ Next, he planned to travel to Leeds where he would speak with their sources. McDonald thought ‘there may be quite a lot in the information furnished by Mr. Evans who has some evidence to support his allegations.’ Any testimony would be cross-checked with local law enforcement. It was a logical strategy. Both articles staked strong truth claims that needed checking. Retracing the reporters’ steps was one prong of a two-pronged police investigation. With his sergeant’s help, McDonald conducted a parallel inquiry into black marketeering. This stuck to established police procedure for criminal investigation. The pair sought information from ‘contacts’ and ‘informants’. ‘Contacts’ were professionals whose jobs brought them in touch with criminals. The London detectives focused on criminal justice professionals: ministry inspectors, police officers and prison officers. Their ‘informants’ were known criminals. As outsiders, visiting Armley Gaol was a quick and easy way to find local informants.[[84]](#endnote-84) When they discovered evidence of crime, McDonald ordered his sergeant to conduct separate inquiries. One of these resulted in the prosecution of five businessmen from Leeds and London.[[85]](#endnote-85)

The police reports record the detectives’ growing disdain for investigative reporting. McDonald, a former detective instructor, thought criminal investigation the only way to gather reliable criminal intelligence. When probing the underworld, McDonald and his fellow instructors thought the careful and patient assembly of evidence vital. Contacts, informants, observation and test purchases supplied the best evidence. Before interpreting this evidence, the good detective weighed and considered it. When drawing inferences, the criminal investigator stuck to the facts. The investigator expressed any conclusions soberly and noted an interpretation’s weaknesses.[[86]](#endnote-86) As McDonald later made clear to his boss Percy Worth, the journalists’ approach was anathema to him.[[87]](#endnote-87) It took him a month to complete his initial investigation during which time he spent two weeks in Leeds. It took a further two months and several trips to Leeds to conclude the inquiry.[[88]](#endnote-88) By comparison, the journalists threw their reports together. Evans visited Leeds twice, spending a week in the city, while Smith made one three-day visit.[[89]](#endnote-89) Their sources bore comparison with McDonald’s professional contacts and prison informants. But they did not weigh or consider them. Having retraced the reporters’ steps and conducted his own black market investigation, McDonald concluded that ‘The truth is that the newspaper reporters wanted a sensational story and made one without bothering too much about truth and facts.’[[90]](#endnote-90) The reporters were not guilty of colouring the truth, as he first thought. Their allegations were baseless.

McDonald reserved his fiercest criticisms for Smith and the *Daily Mail*. Reflecting on Smith’s article, he considered it ‘a surprising state of affairs when a newspaper such as the “Daily Mail” asserts that facts alleged in one of their Articles have been carefully checked when in fact they are nothing but hearsay picked up by one of their reporters.’ [[91]](#endnote-91) His superiors agreed. One Home Office official noted that Smith had ‘swallowed’ whole the bar-room tales he heard.[[92]](#endnote-92) By withholding his sources’ names, Smith obstructed the very inquiry he had called for. Worse still, he broke his word. Smith promised not to publish news of the inquiry before McDonald went to Leeds. The *Mail* broke the story the day before the detectives visited the city for the first time. This infuriated McDonald. ‘G-Men of “Yard” go north’ reported that ‘specially chosen’ detectives would conduct independent ‘secret investigations’ of the Yorkshire cloth black market. This ‘squad’ would ‘operate on much the same lines as the G-men gangster-breakers of the United States.’[[93]](#endnote-93) Flattering though the comparison was, it jeopardised the investigation. By warning the police inquiry’s subjects in advance, the article gave them time to get their stories straight. Stressing their independence and secrecy, the report also implied the Londoners distrusted Leeds police and spurned their knowledge. This threatened relations with local police.

These and similar comments highlight police scorn for mid-twentieth-century investigative reporting. Criminal investigation and investigative journalism were not equally valid ways of knowing the underworld. Although detectives clipped press exposés, they did not consider them reliable intelligence sources. They filed such articles because their publication required an official response. In police eyes, investigative reporters were neither rivals nor partners in a search for truth and justice.[[94]](#endnote-94) Sensational reporting justified McDonald and others in their belief that police were *the* experts when it came to crime. Dependent on detectives for access and information, journalists allowed them this expert status. In private, reporters might consider detectives conservative, plodding, unimaginative and unduly secretive: more Inspector Lestrade than Sherlock Holmes.[[95]](#endnote-95) Publicly, they attributed police success to individual flair, intuition or good fortune. Burnishing the myth of the great detective might help them curry favour.[[96]](#endnote-96) Only professional criminals rivalled police expertise but they largely kept silent for fear of prosecution or underworld retribution. Evans encountered this problem in Leeds.[[97]](#endnote-97) As Duncan Webb later discovered, underworld sources were often a liability. Having picked his side, honest detectives spoke guardedly to Webb if at all.[[98]](#endnote-98)

Senior officers thought reporters an unavoidable hazard. Journalistic sleuthing could, and did, obstruct an inquiry or jeopardise a fair hearing.[[99]](#endnote-99) By 1939, the *Police Journal* advocated new legislation to tackle the problem. The journal editors thought the law of contempt a blunt and unwieldy instrument. A new law should ban reporters from interviewing prospective witnesses. This law should oblige journalists to tell police of crimes before reporting on them. Even the investigative reporter’s writing style was best avoided.[[100]](#endnote-100) Writing in the *Police Journal*, an experienced detective advised colleagues adopt an impersonal tone in reports. Prizing brevity and accuracy, he warned fellow detectives to avoid the style of popular ‘Fleet Street peep-hole reporters.’[[101]](#endnote-101) Writing in 1943, the Secretary to the Metropolitan Police offered similar advice.[[102]](#endnote-102) Of course, crime reporters had their uses. The press could warn the public about criminals or secure its assistance in catching them. Crime news could also bolster support for law and order generally. As a result, Scotland Yard and the Home Office approached press relations cautiously. Detectives had long appreciated the risks that inaccurate reports posed to a successful prosecution and with it their chances of securing a career-enhancing ‘result’. To manage this risk, senior officers insisted their detectives limit themselves to making terse public statements or, better still, avoid journalists altogether. Press relations were best left to senior officers at headquarters.[[103]](#endnote-103) Although marginally more open than the Edwardian approach,[[104]](#endnote-104) it proved equally ineffective.

While disdain characterised attitudes to the press at a senior level, this was not always the case amongst lower ranking officers. A good tip-off, a useful lead, or a flattering write-up might help a detective solve a case. Clearing up cases brought detectives recognition and reward.[[105]](#endnote-105) This placed them in journalists’ debt. From at least the Edwardian period, reporters had expected repayment in the form of inside information and access that allowed them to scoop their rivals. As long as they deferred to detectives’ expertise, a mutually beneficial but unequal relationship flourished. Under editorial pressure to provide sensational pre-trial coverage, journalists also offered uniformed officers bribes for information and letting them access crime scenes.[[106]](#endnote-106) On the advice of senior hacks, cub journalists had long cultivated individual police officers along with hospital porters and court officials as sources, but their relationships with police officers deepened as press attention shifted away from the courtroom.[[107]](#endnote-107)

This symbiotic relationship flourished as crime reporters and detectives had much in common. Both occupations were open to men of modest means prepared to work hard and committed to self-improvement.[[108]](#endnote-108) Career prospects were good. Cub reporters and police recruits followed well-worn career paths that offered the talented prospects for advancement. Chief-Inspector McDonald, former office clerk and son of a metal turner,[[109]](#endnote-109) and his Sergeant Bert Hannam, former pastry cook and a son of a print compositor,[[110]](#endnote-110) were typical. Both progressed steadily from the uniform to the detective branch, and from rank to rank. Except for Smith, a medical doctor’s son, all the journalists interviewed came from modest backgrounds. Vincent Evans, son of a Cardiff newspaper reporter, surpassed his father’s achievements, making the move from the provincial to the national press.[[111]](#endnote-111) Thanks to the openness of the journalistic profession, even Smith’s success, resting as did on the early patronage of Lord Northcliffe, was attributed to his talent and effort not his cultural capital, which no doubt made him a suitable candidate for the role of parliamentary correspondent aged 23.[[112]](#endnote-112)

Both detectives and journalists had strong professional identities. Moving newspaper, something journalists expected to do, meant they identified with their craft rather than their employer. Although detectives developed stronger institutional loyalties than journalists, anticipating serving with the same force for their entire career, they also shared a deep commitment to ‘the job’. Their workplace cultures encouraged entrepreneurialism too. Journalists colluded in creating the image of the hungry reporter who dished colleagues to secure a story or an exclusive, none more so than Evelyn Waugh in the 1938 novel *Scoop*. The book satirised the profession’s competitiveness, which did not preclude journalists working together as crime reporters frequently did.[[113]](#endnote-113) The entrepreneurial currents flowing through the CID were less well known. Judged by arrest rates and clear-up rates, the successful detective was necessarily a wheeler-dealer who competed with colleagues for criminal informants. These informants traded information that helped a detective to make arrests, solve crimes and recover stolen property in return for money and favours.[[114]](#endnote-114)

This pressure to get a ‘result’ or a ‘scoop’ could bring detective and journalist together. Needing a contact and a publicity agent, the ambitious detective sought out crime reporters. Looking for good sources, reporters welcomed such overtures. McDonald spurned the press but not his sergeant Bert ‘The Suit’ Hannam. Copying his seniors, Hannam courted publicity.[[115]](#endnote-115) For Hannam and aspiring detectives, finding a friendly reporter was easy. They shared a daily round of courts, police stations and watering holes. Some also socialised together. Keeping irregular and unpredictable hours, reporters and detectives frequented the same cafés and bars. Westminster’s *Red Lion* pub and *St Stephen’s Tavern* are the most well-known meeting places.[[116]](#endnote-116) There were similar establishments across urban Britain. Often they were ‘early houses’: pubs with early licences close to markets and docks. These served as works canteen and information clearing house for journalists, detectives and criminals alike.

Disdain for investigative reporters led McDonald and his colleagues to overlook further similarities between these competing forms of criminal intelligence. The most obvious was source handling. As the detectives and the journalists found, some people spoke to them out of a sense of duty. Others wanted to right a wrong. The ministry officials, police leaders and councillors they interviewed fell into these camps.[[117]](#endnote-117) Their reaction to information from others with murkier motives was particularly valuable. If these contacts considered it credible, both detectives and reporters accepted the information. They differed in how they interpreted their contacts’ remarks. For the journalists, they confirmed the rumours of widespread black marketeering. They did the exact opposite for the police.[[118]](#endnote-118) For both detectives and reporters, tallying information with trusted contacts saved time. It avoided the need to plumb the motives of serving and retired police officers, ex-offenders, and business-owners. It did not matter if these informants sought to impress, exact revenge, or remove a commercial rival. Paying for information was another way of avoiding fathoming motive. If someone took payment in cash or kind, it was a market exchange. Detectives preferred paying criminal informants. They felt the paid informant was easier to manage.[[119]](#endnote-119) The journalists bought informants drinks.[[120]](#endnote-120) The detectives offered prison informants ‘some remission of their sentences’.[[121]](#endnote-121) Whether paid or not, detectives and reporters compared what their sources said. Cross-checking statements against each other formed the basis of their investigative method. Testing statements through participant observation or tallying them with published sources were secondary tactics.

Both detectives and journalists built cross-checks into their interviews. The standard integrity test involved inviting a source to agree with something the investigator thought false. If a source agreed with a false statement, interviewers pressed them for details. This helped establish whether a source was a pleaser, fantasist or manipulator. Another ploy was seeking confirmation of something investigators said they had the evidence for when they did not. If it succeeded, the investigator approached another source with this confirmation. In a detective’s hands, this might secure statements implicating both informants. Threatening people with arrest or public exposure was another way of levering information from the reluctant. Presenting conviction or publication as inevitable, investigators suggested things would go better with the source if they cooperated. They might promise to overlook an offence, drop charges or guarantee anonymity instead.[[122]](#endnote-122) DCI McDonald took this tack with prisoners at Armley Gaol. He ‘promised these men that the fact that they had given information would be brought to the notice of the Home Office and if the information proved of value, no doubt, they would be rewarded with some remission of their sentences.’[[123]](#endnote-123) Most prisoners refused to talk, but two accepted the offer. They supplied much of the detectives’ information about black market dealing in stolen cloth and clothing. Although the reporters guaranteed their sources’ anonymity, the detectives had a stronger hand. A criminal record was a stronger threat than a press clipping.

While they shared evidence-gathering techniques with the reporters, McDonald and Hannam adhered to a higher evidentiary standard. This difference was the main reason police scorned investigative reporting. Assuming local rumours contained some truth, the journalists Smith and Evans sought confirmation from their sources. The reporters credited the rumours because they fitted their beliefs about the war’s likely impact on the underworld. Reasoning by analogy with Prohibition-era America, journalists anticipated the growth of criminal syndicates. This primed the journalists to look for evidence of syndication. Having found the evidence, the reporters looked for rapid verification of it. Getting local officials’ reaction to this evidence was the central act in this verification ritual. If the officials took the allegations seriously, it lent them credence. This provided all the confirmation the reporters and their editors required. With the facts established, subeditors checked the stories. Supposed guarantors of fair and accurate reporting, the subeditors confined themselves to checking names, dates, quotes, facts and figures. They also reworded potentially libellous and contemptuous statements.[[124]](#endnote-124) This amounted to little more than a cursory read through when checking copy from an experienced journalist like Smith.[[125]](#endnote-125)At no point did the journalists or their papers look for evidence contradicting their working hypothesis that black marketeering was rife. This grated with detectives. As the *Daily Mail* standfirst and the *News Chronicle* editorial made clear, the papers considered this the job of the authorities. They should conduct a detailed public inquiry into the allegations.

The criminal courts held detectives to a higher evidentiary standard. The accused were innocent until proven guilty. And nothing was proven unless it was proven beyond reasonable doubt. McDonald bridled at the reporters’ circular method of verification: confirming hearsay with hearsay. Hearsay evidence on which the reporters built their stories was inadmissible in court. At best, hearsay was the starting point for a criminal investigation.[[126]](#endnote-126) He did not criticise the principle of verification. This underpinned police work as well as investigative reporting. McDonald cared more about the newspapers reporters’ motives. The detectives thought Evans sincere in his pursuit of the truth but considered his method irredeemably flawed. While ‘not so sensational’, Evans’ article was ‘a gross exaggeration of the true position at Leeds’. ‘Gossip’ rather than ‘facts’ guided him.[[127]](#endnote-127) By seeking verification of rumours rather than falsifying them, Evans was also unable to avoid confirmation bias. He also made faulty generalisations based on this anecdotal evidence. If Evans was a sincere fool in police eyes, Smith was an insincere knave for whom source-verification was a perfunctory and empty ritual. ‘Knowing Newspaper Reporters as I do’, McDonald concluded that Smith ‘went to Leeds for a sensational story, and he wrote one with a total disregard for facts and truth’.[[128]](#endnote-128) After three decades on the *Daily Mail* staff, Smith considered the press an industry, his paper a business, himself and his fellow reporters workers, and crime news a commodity. Fair and accurate reporting only mattered insofar as it helped sales and avoided legal troubles.

Unlike detectives, the newspaper editors thought the articles well-sourced, accurate and fair. Were it otherwise, they would not have published them. Their staffs had performed the rituals of verification correctly. The reporters sourced every statement that was not public knowledge. The sub-editors had corrected the copy and checked all the facts. When the Home Secretary accused the papers of exaggeration, neither published an apology. Both reporters continued to prosper. Smith worked on the *Daily Mail* for twenty more years.[[129]](#endnote-129) His legman Hinsley remained a staff reporter. Evans took a new job with the *Daily Express*, but produced similar reports for his new editor. His first subjects were black marketeering in Norfolk and the Channel Islands.[[130]](#endnote-130) This work consolidated his reputation as a crusading investigative journalist. Evans was an obvious choice as editor when political weekly *Truth* relaunched in 1953.[[131]](#endnote-131) He returned to Bouverie Street as *News Chronicle* diarist in 1960, the year it folded.[[132]](#endnote-132) Judging from their later careers, the profession considered the men good journalists.

What the inquiry found confirmed police prejudices about crime reporters leaping to conclusions. The journalists had not displayed the same reverence for facts as a police investigator. The detectives had compared the reporters’ sourcing with police rules of evidence and found them wanting. The reporters looked for informants in the wrong places. They failed to test the evidence they collected. Worst of all, they over-interpreted what they found.[[133]](#endnote-133) It was not a fair judgement. Press standards of fairness and accuracy bore no comparison to police rules of evidence. As the postwar Royal Commission on the Press discovered, the British press shared a commitment to fair and accurate reporting. This was not an absolute standard but a relative one. What counted as fair and accurate was what an editor could reasonably expect a journalist to produce in the time available. [[134]](#endnote-134) This principled stance obscured its value as a marketing strategy. Within legal constraints set by libel laws, ‘fairness and accuracy’ became a way of differentiating between popular, middle-market and quality papers. Press critics who understood the news business grasped this point.[[135]](#endnote-135)

Although unfair, the comparison with criminal investigation remains instructive. The detectives laid bare the investigatory-cum-campaigning journalism that would dominate the early postwar years. The methodological flaws they noted were not apparent to the press or its critics. Four years later, the first published study of British journalistic ethics identified the unavoidable problems that meant investigative reporting would always fall short of police rules of evidence. Chief amongst these were the inherent fallibility of human sources, time pressure, shortage of space, individual differences between journalists, and the subdivision of labour. The author of the study Robert Sinclair identified several avoidable problems too. He blamed mid-century journalists for not educating themselves about topics or working together to better understand them. He blamed proprietors and editors for increasing time pressure. He also held them responsible for cost-cutting measures that blurred responsibilities within newsrooms. Hailing cabs, booking rooms and other practicalities reduced the time journalists spent on reporting.[[136]](#endnote-136) This was not new. In its 1938 *Report on the British Press*, Political and Economic Planning noted similar pressures.[[137]](#endnote-137) None of these observers recognised the evidentiary flaws inherent in journalistic methods. They believed that investigative journalism, when practised in good faith, revealed the truth.

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For investigative reporters, the underworld was an imagined community of full-time and part-time miscreants. Professional criminals formed its core. This underworld had close links with big city nightlife as the night-time economy afforded criminals opportunities for pleasure and profit. Interwar London's West End, Mayfair and Soho especially, had inspired this vision.[[138]](#endnote-138) Heather Shore has shown how coverage of violent clashes between competing criminal networks over its lucrative protection rackets fostered this impression from the 1920s onwards. Whether it reflected gangs extending into the West End for the first time or a struggle for control between well-established groupings is a moot point.[[139]](#endnote-139) By the war, the West End’s supposed criminal connections were public knowledge.[[140]](#endnote-140) Seeking a provincial equivalent, the London reporters trawled wartime Leeds for something similar. Their fishing expedition mirrored occasional pre-war exposés of provincial criminal networks.[[141]](#endnote-141) Like its rival Manchester,[[142]](#endnote-142) industrial Leeds had a thriving night-time economy. The reporters search strategy took them to the city-centre bars, pubs, clubs and casinos that lay at its heart. Here, they took a drink before speaking with the staff and their regulars. Local reporters acted as fixers. They suggested places to visit and made introductions to knowledgeable locals. Unlike the police, reporters preferred to study criminals in the wild. It made for a better story in which the fearless journalist-sleuth took the leading role.

Having found a provincial underworld where they expected it, crime reporters quizzed its members. They undertook participant-observation whenever possible. Going undercover, reporters attempted to make test purchases. If an illegal trade was taboo with their readers, reporters ‘made their excuses and left’. They did little to check the facts they had gathered or ponder their significance. Source verification was a short ritual due to time pressure and budgetary constraints. Editors disliked ambiguity. Their readers wanted certainties while paper rationing left no space for equivocation. These constraints led crime reporters to assume the worst. They credited hearsay evidence obtained from unreliable sources of questionable motivation. They sought confirmatory rather than contradictory evidence. They published bold claims shorn of qualifications. Editors condoned such practices. They trusted their reporters to perform standard verification rituals. Any doubts were easily assuaged. Rival papers and police would test the evidence. A retrial in the court of public opinion was always a possibility.

In many ways these findings confirm what crime historians have long suspected. The evidence chimes with Steve Chibnall’s study of crime reporting in the early 1970s.[[143]](#endnote-143) It complements Haia Shpayer-Makov’s excavation of ties between journalists and detectives before 1914.[[144]](#endnote-144) The flexible boundaries between fact and fiction in crime reporting mirror those Matt Houlbrook has found in interwar crime writing.[[145]](#endnote-145) This is no surprise as many reporters, most notably Edgar Wallace and Peter Cheyney, also ghost-wrote memoirs and produced crime fiction. Yet the police inquiry does challenge what we thought we knew in one important way. These working practices were not limited to the popular press. That the veteran hack Montague Smith wrote a story long on allegations and short on detail is no surprise. That a young ambitious rival from a middle-market paper produced a similar report is. The *News Chronicle* had a reputation for quality journalism. This differentiated its product from its rivals. Evans and others prided themselves on the accuracy and fairness of its reporting. The weaknesses of his article reveal the weakness of the sourcing and verification strategies the middle-market and quality press used. They did not check confirmation bias. How could they? Following standard practice verified plausible hearsay as fact. Investigative reporters found what they expected to find. They packaged these findings in an accessible and sensationalised manner. In doing so, they aped the conventions of hardboiled detective fiction. Mid-century investigative crime reporting is, as Frank Mort suggests, best understood as a press genre and a form of creative non-fiction.[[146]](#endnote-146) Through its imperfect lens, it captured a fleeting glimpse of crime’s dark figure.

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3. *Yorkshire Evening News*, 30 Jan 1945, pp. 1, 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. *Yorkshire Evening News*, 8 Feb 1945, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. J.P. Bean, *The Sheffield Gang Wars* (Sheffield, 1981); Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in Twentieth-Century England* (Harlow, 2011), p. 33; Andrew Davies, *City of Gangs: Glasgow and the Rise of the British Gangster* (London, 2013); Carl Chinn, *The Real Peaky Blinders* (Studley, 2014). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. R. Montague Smith, ‘In Racket Town,’ *Daily Mail*, 6 Dec 1944, p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. ‘*Yorkshire Post*, 5 Dec 1944, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. *Men’s Wear*, 9 Dec 1944, p. 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Minute of a meeting at the Home Office, 20 Dec 1944, The National Archives, Kew (TNA), MEPO 3/2358. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. S.J. Baker to Sir Norman Kendal, 22 Dec 1944, TNA, MEPO 3/2358. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. S.J. Baker to Sir Norman Kendal, 13 Jan 1945, TNA, MEPO 3/2358. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Hansard 12 Apr 1945 vol. 409 c.1981. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
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14. Judith Rowbotham et al., *Crime News in Modern Britain: Press Reporting and Responsibility, 1820-2010* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 215-20. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
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19. Three quantitative analyses exist: Report of the Royal Commission on the Press 1947-1949 (PP 1948-49 Cmd.7700 xx, 1); Bob Roshier, ‘The Selection of Crime News by the Press’, in Stanley Cohen and Jock Young (eds), *The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance and the Mass Media* (London, 1973), pp. 28-39; and, Robert Reiner, Sonia Livingstone and Jessica Allen, ‘From Law and Order to Lynch Mobs’, in Paul Mason (ed.), *Criminal Visions: Media Representations of Crime and Justice* (Cullompton, 2003), pp. 13-32. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
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23. Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* (London, 1972). [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Peter King, ‘Moral Panics and Violent Street Crime, 1750–2000: A Comparative Perspective,’ in Barry Godfrey, Clive Emsley and Graeme Dunstall (eds.), *Comparative Histories of Crime* (Cullompton, 2003), pp. 53-71; Siân Nicholas and Tom O’Malley, *Moral Panics, Social Fears, and the Media: Historical Perspectives* (London, 2013); Laite, ‘Justifiable Sensationalism’; Robert B. Shoemaker, ‘Worrying About Crime: Experience, Moral Panics and Public Opinion in London, 1660–1800,’ *Past and Present* 234, no. 1 (2017), pp. 71-100. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
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32. Ibid., pp. 77, 226-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
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34. Roodhouse, *Black Market*, pp. 231-6. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. *Yorkshire Evening News*, 8 Feb 1945, pp. 1, 3; *Yorkshire Post*, 9 Feb 1945, p. 1; *Yorkshire Post*, 10 Feb 1945, p. 1; *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 17 Feb 1945, p. 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
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