

Pioneers of World Wide Web Fascism: The British Extreme Right and Web 1.0

Abstract: This chapter explores the ways that, around the turn of the millennium, British fascist organisations, such as the British National Party, and leading ideologues, such as David Irving, developed websites as part of their activism. It uses the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine to engage in a 'web history' of this early online activism by British fascists. It argues that websites could sometimes be used to help present British fascist politics as more respectable, as in the case of the BNP, or alternatively as a way to allow activists access to the fringe cultic milieu of British fascism, steeped in conspiracy theories, overt neo-Nazism and other ideas deeply oppositional to mainstream perspectives. It concludes that, although often amateurish and poorly resourced, British fascist groups were often eager early adopters of Web 1.0, and argues that a deeper understating of this early 'web history' offers important context for those studying contemporary forms of extreme right online activism.

Index keywords: groupuscular, cultic milieu, fascism, neo-Nazism, neo-Nazi, Nick Griffin, Roger Griffin, web history, British National Party, National Front, White Nationalist Party, Aryan Unity, David Irving, Simon Sheppard, Michel Walker, Troy Southgate, *The Scorpion*, *Terra Firma: National Anarchism Online*, *Spearhead*, Eddie Morrison, Blood & Honour, Redwatch, Wayback Machine, Heretical Press, Aryan Unity, Focal Point Press

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It has become commonplace to discuss the rise of the Internet as transformational for extreme right politics. For example, Simpson and Druxes (2015) have demonstrated, persuasively, the transformative effects of online activism. The advent of what has been described from around 2004 as Web 2.0 – typically understood as online tools promoting greater levels of interaction and a much more user-friendly experience (O’Reilly, 2005) – have certainly offered many political extremists new ways to foster communities online. However, analysis on the use of more recent Web 2.0 formats, such as social media, or alternatively the ways extremists use the nebulous ‘dark web’ (Weiman, 2016), steers discussion away from reflection on the early pioneers of online communication. Behind current practices there is a curious ‘web history’ of fascist activists who recognised, around the turn of the millennium, the new possibilities offered by the Internet. Richard Rogers, among others, has started to conceptualise how historians can engage in researching such ‘web history’, and the problems it poses. Though problematic, understanding this history is important. Notably, as early as 1999, David Copeland used Internet searches to help develop a terrorist campaign (McLagen and Lowles, 2000). At the same time, a number of British fascist organisations began exploring ways to develop their activism through forms of online publication and dissemination.

Examining such ways a variety of British fascists initially embraced websites helps to bring depth and historical context to debates on contemporary forms of online extremism. To explore the rise of this early, online milieu, this chapter will examine various examples of early adopters to construct a picture of the ways webpages started to be used as a means of communication and engagement. While these websites now look quite basic and amateurish, in their day they certainly provided a novel avenue for conducting political activity. However, before examining examples of early British fascist websites, it is worth briefly clarifying some conceptual and methodological issues for exploring these online spaces.

The Wayback Machine, and studying the ‘web history’ of ‘British fascism’ By

concentrating on British fascists, what follows will focus on a disparate but related set of individuals, groups and organisations that emerged from an interconnected culture engaged in variants of revolutionary white nationalism – from Holocaust deniers, to registered parties, to fringe extremist groups. While ‘fascism’ is a muchdebated

concept, this chapter uses the term in the manner developed by historians of the phenomenon, such as Roger Griffin (2018) and Roger Eatwell (2003). Griffin argues that fascism is usefully understood as a heuristic term indicting a range of ideologies that share a ‘family relationship’ of promoting a politics that calls for national or racial regeneration, or palingenesis, in order to escape from a liberaldemocratic modernity deemed decadent and threatened by an existential threat of some description, such as a Jewish plot to destroy the nation. Following Griffin, it is important to stress the need to explore the diversity of fascist cultures, including those online, and he recognises that a fascist culture can be expressed in a wide range of phenomena. As I have argued elsewhere (Jackson, 2016), modern British fascist activism is spread across a wide range of small groups, or groupuscules, organisations that can include political parties, violent direct action groups and intellectual debating networks. Therefore, rather than focusing on a single node in British fascist culture, this chapter will explore how various groupuscules, especially of the later 1990s and early 2000s, developed forms of online activity. Among them were activists who tried to legitimise the past actions of fascists, such as David Irving, alongside others who used the legacy of earlier fascists as direct inspiration for new types of party political activity, for example as Nick Griffin. Moreover, some were out-and-out conspiracy theory obsessives, such as Simon Sheppard, while others were trying to engage with philosophical ideas to develop their fascist activism, such as Michael Walker.

Proponents of using Roger Griffin’s ‘culturalist’ approach to analysing the history of British fascism include Nigel Copsey (2008), and Graham Macklin (2007). Other scholars of British fascism, such as John Richardson (2017), are critical of some elements of this methodology, though he too recognises the importance of exploring the cultural and linguistic dynamics of fascist activism. To help understand the diversity in fascist cultures, Macklin (2015), among others, have employed the term ‘cultic milieu’, originally coined by Colin Campbell, to help conceptualise the wide range of esoteric knowledge found within the politicised, clandestine worlds generated by fascists. Jeffrey Kaplan and Helene Löow (2002) helped to introduce this term to fascism studies, and they emphasise that the cultic milieu is a heterogeneous space where a wide range of ideas, sharing characteristics of being taboo and unacceptable within mainstream culture, vie and combined in a variety of ways to provide its adherents with a sense of mission and purpose. Others have also recognised how British fascist cultures are constructed through their deeply

oppositional stance to mainstream cultures. For example, Chris Atton (2006) identified that British fascists had, by the early twenty-first century, adopted discourses that presented their activism in ways akin to messages found in postcolonial discourses. As Atton expands, in his analysis of the BNP's online materials of the 2000s, these focused on narrating the party's agenda as a struggle to sustain and develop a sense of identity in an era they deemed oppressive.

Experts on the wider extreme right have been sensitive to the impact of online systems for some time. For example, in terms of the American extreme right, Chip Berlet (2008) has suggested that 1984 was the key year when 'hate went online', claiming that George P. Deitz was the first to use a public BBS to spread white supremacist material. Berlet and Carol Mason (2015) have also discussed how others in America, such as Tom Metzger, started using online communication around this time. Regarding the British extreme right, as early as 1999 Michael Whine recognised the Internet offered cheap, potentially anonymous networking opportunities that would allow marginalised political extremists to punch above their weight and reach new audiences, including those who were younger and more educated than their traditional support bases. He also stressed the growing transnational dynamics found in the milieu as a consequence (Whine, 2012). Moreover, Jamie Bartlett (2017), a leading commentator on the use of the Internet by political extremists, has rightly noted that far right activists have been successful and effective early adopters of the Internet, highlighting not only American websites such as Stormfront that developed in the 1990s but also the relative sophistication of the British National Party's website in the 2000s when compared to those of other political parties of the period. To help explore the rise of online communication by British fascists, this chapter engages in 'web history' of the phenomenon, by using archived forms of online activity as a way to engage in the type of source analysis historians normally apply to traditional paper-based archives. It uses archived websites generated by the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine to capture the variety of websites created by British fascists before Web 2.0 made the Internet much more user friendly and accessible. However, before proceeding, it is worth noting there are some methodological issues with using the Wayback Machine in this way. Superficially, it may seem that its archived Internet websites are simple records of a discrete site at a specific time. However, there are issues of automated reproduction at play with the Wayback Machine's method for archiving sites that prevent them from ever being

perfect reproductions of online material from an earlier time. Richard Rogers (2017) explains that archived websites are complex reconstructions of parts of what was once online, and stresses the Wayback Machine stores different sections of websites at different points in time. In other words, they are only ever artificial approximations of what were once a discrete websites. For Richard Rogers, these are ‘website reborn’, and far from perfect reproductions of original websites. Therefore, care care should be taken when exploring archived websites as source material, and the claims that can be made when using them.

With this in mind, what follows seeks merely to use these ‘reborn websites’ as tentative samples of what was once on offer to those interested in British fascist politics around the turn of the millennium. It uses them to piece together what Jane Winters (2017) describes as ‘micro histories’ of specific websites, and uses these comparatively, to draw out the groupuscular dynamics from a range of discrete yet related websites that made up a online fascist milieu.

British National Party and the National Front: British fascist parties online Both the British National Party and the National Front can be described as promoting forms of British fascism at the turn of the millennium. They both sought a fundamental political as well as demographic reordering of Britain, and identified forces of liberalism and political and social pluralism as an existential threat to an authentic British identity. The BNP had clearly also become receptive to the power of the Internet by the end of the 1990s. This coincided with the era of Nick Griffin’s takeover and ‘modernisation’ of the party, which essentially sought to couch the BNP’s underlying fascist objectives in a more ‘saleable’ language and a more family orientated public profile (Goodwin, 2011). A positive attitude towards the Internet could be detected in Griffin’s own arguments for rebranding the party at this time.

Notably, shortly before becoming leader, in 1999 Griffin wrote a key article in the influential extreme-right publication *The Patriot*, ‘BNP – Freedom Party!’. Here, he outlined some central elements of his modernisation strategy. Revealing his own cultural reference points, the essay included a discussion on how, in their own era, the Nazis had been pioneers who drew on new communication technology. As he explained, ‘In the ’30s, the Nazis seized upon the new technologies of the day: the recent invention of the spotlight, loudspeaker systems and radio made it almost

inevitable that their movement would make use of huge rallies and the spoken word.’ Although Nick Griffin argued that such techniques were now somewhat ‘old hat’, the idea of using new forms of mass communication was an important lesson for the party’s future. As he presciently identified: ‘The potential of this new medium [the Internet] to destroy the mass media’s much abused position as self-appointed “gatekeepers”’, was crucial to grasp, and he also identified the public’s:

... growing dissatisfaction with the remoteness of all this [i.e. mainstream media], and its unsatisfactory results. But within the next five years, ten at the most, the continued march of information technology into every home will give, to any would-be revolutionary force which cares to grasp it, an unprecedented opportunity to remodel our entire system of government.

By 1999, Griffin foresaw that the Internet could be used by a modernised BNP to create radio stations, television programmes, and even an independent news system, allowing a revolutionary fascist party to connect directly with an alienated electorate, bypassing the mainstream media altogether.

The first record the Wayback Machine has for www.bnp.org.uk is from 15 August 2000. At this time, the website greeted visitors with a Flash animation of Griffin’s four keywords for the modernised BNP, ‘Democracy’, ‘Freedom’, ‘Security’ and ‘Identity’, but the Wayback Machine has only preserved the Young BNP webpage from this time. Here, it explained ‘our website is a bastion of truth and hope for the future security and survival of our race’, and gave an email and telephone contact details for those wanting more information (BNP, 2000). The Wayback Machine’s capture from 8 March 2001, however, offers a much more complete picture of the early BNP website. Its Introduction page set out its propose as follows:

The aim of this website is to foster and promote a feeling of national and cultural unity amongst our people, whilst allowing them access to facts and information denied to them by the liars of the media. We aim to instill [sic] in the British people of today pride in themselves, their people, their history, their culture and their country (BNP, 2001).

Much of the website was designed to transmit information of various types to those either active in the BNP, or at least interested in its agenda. For example, a latest news section offered two email news services, one offered messages related to the on-going running and campaigning activities of the BNP itself, the other offered 'Politically Incorrect news from around the world', as well as graphics from the party's publicity department. Elsewhere, a photo gallery section on the site helped to evoke a sense of community, putting a human face on the activities developed by the BNP. This section included uploaded photos detailing the party's Red, White and Blue festival of 2000, featuring images of a wide range of BNP activists as well as its leaders. There were also images of Paul Golding, Nick Griffin and other leading BNP figures visiting Jean Marie Le Pen's Front own National Bleu-Blanc-Rouge festival, which the BNP had effectively copied; a bonfire night celebration also from 2000; and a BNP rally in February 2001, with photos from the speeches delivered by various figures. This included the party's Director of Technology, Simon Derby, talking 'about the technology revolution and how the BNP is grasping it for the cause of British survival!'

Derby's argument were also prominently featured in the 'Library' section of the website, which included his article 'Nationalist Radio is Within Our Grasp'. Derby argued that, despite the Internet's reputation for being slow, new ADSL technology would allow faster download speeds opening the possibility for the party to develop an Internet radio station. The 'Library' section was already expansive, and featured around 125 essays, book reviews and interviews on a wide range of topics, from the supposedly 'totalitarian' nature of liberalism to a review by John Tyndall of David Duke's book *My Awakening*. The BNP was clearly alert to changing developments in online systems, and keen to find ways to draw on them. In an era before YouTube, a 'Multimedia' section of its 2001 website even offered downloads of video files of BNP-created media in Real Video format, and a link to download Realplayer software so people could watch them.

Other sections of the website took care of a wide range of elements related to running a growing political party. In the 'Programme' section, the website set out the BNP's core political views, and talked up the role of technology in the party's proposed alternate future for Britain. It argued they sought a 'massive expansion of Freedom and Democracy to roll back the erosion of our traditional freedoms and truly reflect the wishes of the people; the adoption of popular referenda & hi-tech direct

democracy' (BNP, 2001). Threatened 'traditional' values would be restored through the latest technology. The website also offered merchandise, such as stickers and T-shirts; links to the websites of related groups in Europe such as the National Alliance and the Front National; adverts for its print publications, such as *Freedom* and *Identity*; a donation page that accepted credit card payments online; and a membership form, though this still needed to be printed out and posted. In sum, looking at an early incarnation of the BNP's website demonstrates the party's ambitions to pioneer the online space. A wide range of material was being shared online, and this early website sought to generate a sense of community in a new way. Fast-forward to 2009, at the party's electoral height, and here a more recent Wayback Machine capture shows how the website had changed dramatically (BNP, 2009). By this time it offered a much wider range of material: Donor and membership details were now clearly on the homepage; BNPTv offered a range of streamed video content; and activist guides included information from summaries of the legal rights of campaigners, to advice on how to use appropriate language when engaging with the public. Moreover, a wide range of news and party-related developments were used to keep the website regularly updated. Ultimately though, most of this retained a transmission approach to engaging with an audience, and little effort was devoted to cultivating an online network of activists.

As well as a central site for the party, by this time the BNP's various local branches had also developed their own blogs. For example, www.northantspatriot.blogspot.com was active from 2007 and engaged with a wide range of local issues. In a Wayback Machine snapshot from October 2009, the site had uploaded 55 articles in 2007, 241 in 2008 and 269 in 2009, suggesting these local blog were regularly maintained online spaces at the BNP's height. The BNP also sought to place a degree of distance between the central party and such local online initiatives, ensuring the following text was displayed on local party blogs: 'Please note that these posts are entirely the opinion of the author/s and not the British National Party' (Northantspatriot.blogspot.com, 2009). In sum, over the 2000s, the BNP clearly developed a complex online presence, and were attuned to the potential of using this Internet presence to connect with a wider audience from the beginning of the 2000s onwards.

As the BNP leadership promoted a more outwardly populist profile under

Griffin, other components of the groupuscular milieu responded critically. John Tyndall, for example, created a webpage for his own magazine, *Spearhead*, founded in 1964. The Wayback Machine has archived the www.spearhead-uk.com website from August 2000. The site contains articles from August 1999 onwards. Initially, Tyndall's online version of *Spearhead* was supportive of the BNP, despite his demotion from party leader. For example, articles from October 1999 by Bernard Write from Oldham BNP commented positively on the nature of BNP activism in the region, and set out why the town was on the front line of conflict between white and Asian communities (Spearhead, 1999). However, Tyndall grew increasingly critical of Griffin, reflected article from March 2001, 'BNP Election Special', which explained that he sought to challenge for the leadership against Griffin. Another article, 'One Change too Far', from October 2001, was more critical still, and complained about the BNP's new Ethnic Liaison Committee, as well as Griffin's public assertions that achieving a white only Britain was no longer possible. As Tyndall stressed, 'the day we abandon our commitment to the aim itself will be the day for the abandonment of our party and all it stands for and has fought for' (Spearhead, 2001). In 2003, Tyndall was briefly expelled from the BNP for his hostility towards Griffin, though was later reinstated. His *Spearhead* website stated afterwards: 'An out of court settlement was reached when Griffin and [Tony] Lecomber were persuaded that there was no chance that a judicial review, initiated by Mr Tyndall, could be won' (Spearhead, 2003). Online spaces offered opportunities for conflicts between leading figures to be developed in public; Tyndall's criticism of Griffin could be made widely accessible to any activist with access to the Internet.

One-time competitor to the BNP was the National Front. By the late 1990s and early 2000s it had declined to a shadow of its 1970s heyday. From the late 1990s, the National Front too cultivated an online presence, its activists wanted to grow the organisation as a hard-line competitor to the BNP's seemingly moderate public image. The Wayback Machine's earliest records for www.natfront.com is from November 1999, yet at this point the site was very basic. It consisted of a homepage, which promised to send home refugees who had come to the UK from the conflict in Balkans, and just seven sub-pages. These included a short outline of the party's policies, as well as a brief history of the National Front. It described how the party was embracing online communication, for example stating:

Now, every two weeks *White Nationalist Report* in [sic] distributed in both printed and e-zine form. Its email distribution regularly reaches over 1,000 subscribers. The new NF website is being constantly updated and expanded (National Front, 1999).

Like BNP, there was effort to report on gatherings, though this consisted of only one event, the annual Remembrance Day rally from November 1999. Such examples, with just one photo and a short description of the event, show how the National Front's website was far more limited when compared to the BNP's.

Other features of this early online presence included a page with a set of figures that claimed white people were far more likely to be the victims of racist attacks; and a link to an edition of the *White Nationalist Report*, edited at this time by Eddie Morrison. The *White Nationalist Report* offered a range of articles including: discussion on the Kensington and Chelsea by-election of 1999, where the party intended to stand a candidate; the alleged sale of human skin in Zaire, in a story clearly designed to demonise African people; and detailed tips for how to hold a successful National Front meeting. It also called for new and former activists to return to the party, and gave a @breathemail.net email address for such returnees. The *White Nationalist Report* concluded with a membership application form, though no online system for joining. The contact page itself listed one email address, again a @breathemail address, nineteen postal addresses for regional branches, and a mobile contact number, suggestive of a limited embrace of using online systems to recalibrate activism.

When compared to the BNP's more recently archived site, the www.nationalfront.org.uk website of 2009 remained an inferior imitation. It too now included leaflets and posters for downloading, news stories, a selection of online videos, a collection of articles, and some branded merchandise (National Front, 2009). However, while the BNP website had clearly grown throughout the 2000s into a rich, complex and genuinely impressive online space, the National Front's competitor offering was much more restricted. As with the BNP, by this time some of its local branches had also developed related blog sites. For example, in Swindon, www.swindonnf.blogspot.com was active from 2008 to 2012, again expressing party policy in a local context. In sum, while the National Front clearly saw the value of

developing an online presence, the party's much more limited resources were all too clearly reflected in its online presence.

The Cultic Milieu and Online Neo-Nazi and Conspiracy Theorists

The early use of the Internet by British fascists allowed a wide range of fringe activists to present their politics in new ways. Here, the tenor was often much closer to the cultic milieu concept described by Campbell. For example, one particularly curious site, offering access to a wide range of esoteric knowledge and fascist leaning material was Simon Sheppard's website for the Heretical Press. Notably, in 2008, Sheppard, along with a co-defendant Stephen Whittle, was arrested, and later successfully prosecuted for inciting racial hatred using a website hosted in a foreign jurisdiction, a legal first (BBC, 2010). The Wayback Machine's first functioning archive was dated 31 August 1999. Its homepage boasted that www.heretical.com had been active since June 1998. Evoking the trope of users gaining accessing forbidden information, it stated: 'it is now split across multiple servers to better withstand attempts at censorship. **If you've made it this far - congratulations!** Powerful vested interests are doing their best to prevent it.' Sheppard's site included numerous essays promoting anti-Semitic conspiracy theories as well as pseudo-scientific analysis arguing against the equality of men and women, a particular obsession of his. The website also offered tasters from his various print publications engaging with these themes, as well as details on how people could purchase them – via a PO Box based in Hull. For example, regarding his book *Anna Frank's Novel: The 'Diary' is a Fraud*, the website explained 'Anne Frank's Diary, claiming to document the period 12 June 1942 – 1 August 1944, is really a collection of letters to eight imaginary people, sketches and fictional stories. The collection was supplemented and rewritten when Annelies Marie Frank decided to write a novel in 1944'. Other pages ranged enormously, some analysing on taboo subjects such as cannibalism; another offered extract from John Charnley's memoir about his time in the British Union of Fascists, *Blackshirts and Roses*. There was even a guide to using a variant of the programming language BBC Basic. The overall impression is akin to Campbell's ideas on the cultic milieu, offering readers access a many esoteric themes, some ideologically fascist others not. It was a world apart from the efforts by the BNP to present themselves as legitimate through their new online spaces.

While the www.heretical.com website was primarily a portal to Sheppard's own esoteric interests, it also included a link to www.skrewdriver.org, the website for Blood & Honour England. Blood & Honour, founded in 1987 by Ian Stuart Donaldson, had by this point become a transnational network of neo-Nazi activists held together by a shared culture of White Power Music (Pollard, 2016). The first substantial Wayback Machine record for this site was from 28 April 1999. Here, an early form of online shopping appeared central. An ISD Records CD List and Order Form included a range of CDs, at £12 per disk. After printing the form, people could send cheques or postal orders 'leaving the payee blank', or send cash in US dollars, to an address in Denmark. There was also an option to place any non-music orders via another website, one that did take online credit card payments. However, this linked back to a www.heretical.com webpage selling Sheppard's books, as well as a wide range of posters featuring Norse mythological themes (heretical.com, 1999b).

As well as online shopping, Blood & Honour's early website included pages that demonstrated its neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic credentials, such as 'Adolf Hitler on Jews' and 'What is "ZOG"'. It also expressed the transnational nature of Blood & Honour, with reports on 'News from B&H Spain', and 'Stand by Serbia'. There were also several pages dedicated to Ian Stuart Donaldson, founder of Blood & Honour, who died in a car crash in 1993, promoting a mythology of 'Ian Stuart' as a martyr for international neo-Nazism. These neo-Nazi webpages were more ideologically coherent than Sheppard's, though still offered taboo knowledge, a sense of mission and an alternate worldview deeply oppositional towards mainstream values – all evocative of the cultic milieu.

Sheppard was also involved in creating the website www.redwatch.org, launched in 2001. Once more, this website was driven by opposition to mainstream values. Along with Sheppard as technical support, it was run by, among others, Kevin Watmough and Tony White (redwatch.org, 2001). The aim of the Redwatch website – itself an extension of a print newsletter of the same name published by Combat 18 in the 1990s – was essentially to engage in an early form of doxing, publishing photographs and addresses of left wing activists and anti-fascists. Clearly racist, its posts were also steeped in a language of highly aggressive homophobia. Alongside pages listing details of left wing activists organised by cities and regions, the Wayback Machine archived a version of www.redwatch.org from August 2002 that included a 'Reds on the Net' section, featuring the names and photos of twelve

people, most with an email address, presumably to encourage online harassment (redwatch.org, 2002). Redwatch developed several mirror sites too, including www.redwatch.net and www.redwatch.co.uk. A recent iteration of the site explains this was necessary due ‘to a hysterical campaign by Marxist moaners against Redwatch’ (redwatch.org, 2018).

The Redwatch website linked to another Blood and Honour / Combat 18 website, www.skrewdriver.net. Wayback Machine has archives of this website dating back to October 2000. A December 2000 variant includes a range of material, including a version of the Blood & Honour Field Manual written by ‘Max Hammer’, which includes a specific chapter called ‘Violence and Terror’; as well as an online magazine called *Strikeforce*. This webpage was archived later (screwdriver.net, 2001), and its articles included, ‘Holohoax!’ which analysed the impact of the first Holocaust Memorial Day in Britain, that took place in 2001, through its lens of its deeply conspiratorial neo-Nazi worldview. One article in *Strikeforce* was an interview the White Power band Razor’s Edge; while another webpage feature interviewed Serbian Action, an openly militant National Socialist group that emerged from Blood & Honour activism in the Balkans region during the breakup of Yugoslavia. As well as ideological material, www.skrewdriver.net included an online chat room (though Wayback Machine archiving does not allow access to this), and a guestbook where people could write in comments of support and criticism for the movement as a whole. Such elements within the website suggest efforts to develop a sense of online community in these early, overly neo-Nazi web spaces.

Along with Morrison, Watmough helped to found the White Nationalist Party in 2002, another neo-Nazi groupuscule of the period. The White Nationalist Party was again keen to present a far more extreme version of a fascist politics than was offered by the BNP at this time. Its online presence was www.aryanunity.com. As an archived statement on its webpage shortly after it was founded explained, ‘The Purposes of this Site ...’ is to ‘represent the interests of the ultra Nationalists of Great Britain’; necessary as, ‘with the advent of “Populism” into the edges of the mainstream of British politics, there are many of us who refuse to compromise our principles and strategy’. Clearly critical of the BNP’s direction under Griffin, it argued the White Nationalist Party offered a more authentic version of a white nationalist politics. In terms of ideological material, the site featured an online book by Morrison, *The White*

Revolution, offering not only a racist pseudo-history of Britain but also a ‘political blueprint for the future salvation’ of the white race. After surveying Britain from pre-Roman times to the present day, the conclusions stressed a transnational project, as

White nations all over the world must throw off the shackles of Zionist International Finance ...A new line up of White nations all dedicated to a racial Imperialism would have no boundaries and could look to the stars!

As well as such material promoting an international vision for revolution, to encourage interaction there was also a guestbook, once again acting akin to a letters page in a more traditional publication; and even an online poll, here asking the question ‘Is an Aryan World possible?’. Alongside features encouraging reader participation, there was practical guidance for activists. The page ‘Organising a White Nationalist Party Unit’ included tips on leafletting, using PO Boxes, and developing press releases to raise awareness for the party. Such tactics suggest a limited embrace of new types of online activism, as all involved older methods, such as using letterboxes, postal services and engaging with the print media. Indicating expectation that activists may receive attention from the police, there was also a page titled ‘The Political Rebel’s Survival Kit’, offering advice on how to avoid arrest, and what to do if this did happen.

There was a transnational element to White Nationalist Party in other ways, as it described itself as the UK branch of the organisation Aryan Unity, which had its own pages on the www.aryanunity.com website. These included a description of the organisation’s main aims, promoting ‘co-operation between White Nationalist Organisations throughout the world’, and working ‘with the FOURTEEN WORDS as our guide for the preservation of our Aryan people for the future.’ There was also a page that advertised the sale of *Signal*, described as a quarterly ‘multi-media CDROM magazine’ that was ‘packaged in a professional and great way to learn about White Nationalism.’ Copies cost £2.50, were available through a PO Box address based in London, paid for by cheques and postal orders made out to WNP, or foreign banknotes worth £5.00. The Aryan Unity pages were filled with more ideological content, such as another online book by Morrison, his ‘politico-biography’ *Memoirs*

of a Street Soldier, which he dedicated to the inspiration offered by American Nazi Party founder George Lincoln Rockwell; and a link to an online copy of *Mein Kampf*. There were articles on a range of fascist-related topics, from the Spanish interwar fascist Antonio Primo de Rivera; to William Pierce's obituary for George Lincoln Rockwell; to a discussion by Tomislav Sunic on the idea of death in the writings of the Romanian intellectual and sympathiser with the fascist Iron Guard, Emile Cioran. Such elements again evoked a fascist variant of the cultic milieu, and show that online content could be quite lengthy and even include philosophically complex material. The pages also features a news section, sharing emotive stories on themes such as attacks on white people by black people, and issues around immigration from America, Australia, New Zealand, as well as the UK, arguing that white people were threatened around the globe. Finally, showing Morrison's debt to earlier British fascists, it also featured several pages dedicated to Colin Jordan, including a reproduction of his dystopian, racist novella *Merrie England – 2000*.

In sum, for those seeking the most extreme forms of neo-Nazi fascist activism, by the early 2000s British activists had developed a range of webpages that promoted small, clandestine groups, and allowed people to access a rich array of ideological material steeped in National Socialist themes. Typically, these had a more cultic element than was found on the BNP's website, which itself aimed at mainstream acceptance.

David Irving, Troy Southgate and the online fascist intelligentsia

As well as overtly neo-Nazi activists, other early adopters of online activism included what could be described as Britain's fascist intelligentsia, those who tried to present their extreme political views in more intellectualised ways. Most prominently, another keen early adopter was David Irving. The Wayback Machine's first archived page for the website for Focal Point Publications, www.fpp.co.uk, was 2 December 1998 (fpp.co.uk, 1998). A hub for Irving's ideas, it demonstrated his entrepreneurial approach to self-promotion. Giving him an aura of legitimacy, its homepage featured decontextualized quotes styling Irving merely as a radical historian, including from leading historian of the Holocaust, Hans Mommsen as well as the respected academic journal *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*. By this time www.fpp.co.uk was well established, and displayed engagement between readers and Irving himself. For

example, it included fifty letters sent to Irving from a range of authors. Often he replied online too, making his online engagement with fans public. This section of his website was described as fostering open debate, and stated Irving would publish any letters he received, unless asked not to. One letter, written during Irving's attempt to prosecute Deborah Lipstadt for libel, stated:

Best wishes in your fight in the courts. Freedom of thought ,speech [sic] and truth is a long drawn out process that only the strongest of men can endure. I am an American, but freedom of speech and thought must be universal for the truth to endure. Best of luck from across the pond.

Another was written by the daughter of Arthur Liebehenschel, one of the commandant's of Auschwitz. She enquired whether the crematorium she had seen on a visit to Auschwitz I was actually used during the Second World War. Irving's reply stated the Polish government created it after the war, adding 'More women died on the back seat of **Edward Kennedy**'s car at Chappaquiddick than were murdered in that "chamber"'. Authors of letters also included: Anneliese Remer, the widow of Otto Remer – who help foil the plot to kill Hitler in 1944 and later became a founder of the Socialist Reich Party in West Germany, among other neo-Nazi activities – commenting on her problems with the German government; and a former student at Berkley who explained she enjoyed Irving's talk on campus in 1994, was a fan of his books, and how she disliked the way the university's history professors tried to discredit him in her classes.

Elsewhere, Irving's website showed his international profile. For example, events and tours to various countries, including South Africa and especially America, were given dedicated pages, often framed around lengthy excerpts from his diary as well as photos of him addressing large, attentive audiences. The website also featured stories of how Irving struggles against Jewish individuals and organisations. This included a page that highlighted the Anti-Defamation League was threatening legal action unless its logo was removed from Irving's website; another explained the Board of Deputies of British Jews were raising funds for Deborah Lipstadt, for her libel defence case. Irving's role in the controversy around the Hitler diaries scandal was also included, as the website described his actions as unmasking reports in *Der Stern*, *The Sunday Times* and *Newsweek* that claimed these notorious forgeries were

genuine. While these types of pages are to be expected from a Holocaust denial website, other elements are more curious. There were short summaries of not only the staff Irving employed, but also his family. Moreover, the site advertised an extensive collection of photos, and documents, linked to Reinhard Heydrich including letters by his wife Lina Heydrich and others detailing his relationship with Heinrich Himmler. Described as being in the hands of a private collector who now wished to sell the collection, Irving both vouched for the collection's veracity and acted as a point of contact for anyone wanting to purchase the set.

The website also included a link to an online version of David Irving's Action Report, another effort to proselytise Holocaust denial themes. One page commented on ways that the Anti-Defamation League was trying to free speech on the Internet. The article 'Cyberspace is Still out of Control' explained this was happening in two ways that even George Orwell would have found beyond imaginable:

- They are seeking technical ways of blocking material that they find objectionable.
- They are seeking ways of forcing governments to impose this software on the communications industry at every level.

The mainstream was not to be trusted, in other words, and was attacking those who opposed it online, such as Irving. Like the BNP at this time, Irving was clearly aware of new possibilities of self-promotion and communication the Internet offered. While Irving offers one example of an online fascist 'scholar', there were others who sought to cast new forms of fascism in an intellectual light, using online tools. Troy Southgate was an activist who linked to the National Front in the 1990s, who then went through a range of ideological transformations – explored more fully by Graham Macklin (2005) – to become what he described as a National Anarchist. By the early 2000s, he was a leading figure in the National Anarchist milieu, and helped run its online academic-style journal *Terra Firma: National Anarchism Online*, hosted at www.terrafirma.rosenoire.org. The Wayback Machine's earliest capture is from January 2004, and it reproduces the Summer 2003 edition of *Terra Firma*. This included an essay outlining of the core ideals of National Anarchism, using the pseudonym 'Darksphere', explaining some of its core principles:

The National-Anarchist thus aims to create a kind of popular Nationalism in which the culture of his/her Nation is kept alive through a living, vibrant interest in the public for the culture of the Nation rather than through artificial State-support: A popular Nationalism in which people freely decide to indulge in their own culture (terrafirma.rosenoir.org, 2004).

Southgate also explained, in an interview republished from *L'Ecole Europa*, that National Anarchism was neither left or right wing, and so distinct from traditionally 'right-wing' parties such as the National Front and the BNP. The website also featured interviews with a diverse range of international figures, such as the French activist Christian Bouchet and the Russian Victor Anpilov, among others. Authors of articles in this edition of the journal included Tomislav Sunic, who wrote on the theme of 'Intellectual Terrorism'; a discussion on the ideological power of the film 'Fight Club' by Greek activist Achilles Kritikos; and an essay by Jonothon Boulter on the idea of the Anarch, which was described as 'endlessly moving nomadically with mercurial freedom through thought, synthesising conflicting ideas. But always firmly grounded in Nihilism'. The site also had an associated Yahoo group. Though a closed site and not archived, the Wayback Machine has preserved a capture of its homepage from February 2004 listing 108 members (Yahoo.com, 2004). Finally, notably the site had a links page, with over 80 suggestions, spanning Hezbollah, the Russian National Bolshevik Party, the Sexual Freedom Coalition, David Icke, the Unabomber manifesto, and the Ramblers Association. Again, such an eclectic range of (mostly) esoteric and (mostly) counter mainstream perspectives is to be expected from the cultic milieu.

Another link listed on www.terrafirma.rosenoir.org was to the *The Scorpion*, a pseudo-academic publication run by Michael Walker, a leading British representative of the European *Nouvelle Droite*. The Wayback Machine's earliest archive for the website www.thescorp.multics.org is 15 December 2002. The first online edition of *The Scorpion* was edition 15, which included a 12,000 word essay by Walker titled 'The State', exploring the history, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of states; and an essay by leading light of the *Nouvelle Droite*, Alain de Benoist, on the achievements and importance of Ernst Jünger (thescorp.multics.org, 2002). Issues 17 to 22 were also available online, with essays on topics as diverse as

Julius Evola's politics, Roger Pearson's ideas on eugenics, and the philosophy of Carl Schmitt. Back issues of the *The Scorpion* were also available, either as a hard copy, priced between £1 and £5, or alternatively editions 1 – 19 were available as a CD priced £65. Like other sites of this period, there was a guestbook where visitors could leave comments, as well as an email contact.

Websites created by people such as Irving, Southgate and Walker, were quite different from either those of the BNP, or overtly neo-Nazi sites such as Redwatch. These spaces though were primarily about broadcasting fascist ideas, and to a degree fostering debate among activists. They often shared deeper, sometimes quite philosophically driven, arguments that were certainly oppositional, and evocative of the cultic milieu, but were not primary about directing party political or direct activism.

Conclusions

Surveying these helps draw out some broad observations on the variety of attitudes, practices and approaches among British fascists. By the early 2000s the BNP in particular was finding many ways to take advantage of new modes of online communication, and recognised its potential circumvent traditional media. By the end of the 2000s it was certainly a leader in this field among fellow British fascists. The BNP cast a shadow over other forms of British fascism, and the party was often much criticised by the wider array of British fascist activists. In the shadow of Nick Griffin, other fascist groupuscules of the period presented their activism as more authentic when compared to what they saw as the sell-out BNP. The websites of the National Front and especially the White Nationalist Party included clear examples of this trope, though were clearly less well resourced. Nevertheless, activists linked to these smaller groupuscules produced innovations such as CD magazines, and sale of material online. Often, these more extreme sites engaged with elements of the cultic milieu to give their activism some sense of deeper, more profound significance. This was especially clear in websites created by activists such as Simon Sheppard, Troy Southgate and Martin Walker, whose online spaces in various ways presented extreme positions at variance with those of the BNP and made claims of disseminating deep truths denied by mainstream society.

While the rise of Web 2.0 has made online activism much easier, these early online offerings from British fascists were certainly innovative in their era. They show clear evidence of activists developing range of tactics that now seem commonplace, from using the Internet to circumvent mainstream media, to selling merchandise and generating new income streams, to disseminating ideological material, to decrying opponents and even doxing. British fascists at the turn of the millennium can certainly be described as people experimenting with, and embracing, online activism. Some were remarkably prescient. Indeed, Nick Griffin's interpretation of the potential for online activism from 1999, arguing the Internet would soon transform the abilities of revolutionaries such as himself to connect directly with likeminded followers, in many ways seem remarkably prophetic and accurate.

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