

*The Memory of the First World War at its Centenary in Britain: A
Study of War Memory at National, Local and Individual Levels*

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Abstract

This research project examines the commemoration of the First World War Centenary (2014-2018) in Britain and assess the relationship of between centenary events and cultural memory of the war. Since the Armistice in 1918, the memory of the First World War has been reshaped throughout the past century and the pity of war narrative, as told by poets, of trench warfare that amassed in thousands dead, is the dominant commonly held view. The centenary can be perceived as a unique modern platform that could change these dominant narratives, and this research project will ask, did it? By looking at commemoration from a national perspective through the British government marking the outbreak of war in 2014, the Battle of the Somme in 2016, the Battle of Passchendaele in 2017 and Armistice in 2018 and public art projects from 1418-NOW, to see how they acted as agents of war memory and to what extent they modernised or retained traditional commemoration. The Heritage Lottery Fund funded communities across Britain to commemorate the centenary in their own way. It is here we see the 'world' of First World War being acknowledged and what impact this has within the dominant popular memory. A study on individual memory investigated the popular responses to topics involving the centenary, the current battlefields and the future of commemoration. The consistent resonance of family connections to the First World War has shown to be a motivating factor for public involvement in the centenary and how modern media brought the topic of the First World War to an audience that may have not been aware of a centennial national commemoration. This project will assess if the centenary distorted the dominant popular perceptions of the First World War or if it retained them.

Introduction

In 2013 the 'No Glory' campaign entered the British news as they campaigned against the British government's choice of narrative by which they would commemorate the centenary of the First World War. High profile celebrities and anti-war activists raised concerns that the 'war will be presented as something glorious and part of our national heritage' because they believed the First World War to be 'a total disaster that was unnecessary and destroyed a generation'.¹ This was only the beginning of controversies that were to surround British plans to mark the centenary.

As Andrew Murrison the British Special Representative for Centenary Commemorations, met with his German counterpart in 2013, it was revealed that Germany wanted a 'less declamatory tone about who was responsible for the conflict and greater acknowledgement of their shared losses'.² It is no surprise that historians of the First World War also criticised the British government in their choice of centenary narrative. Their concerns were that too much focus was being placed on 'British defeats and the carnage and futility of the war'³ because the British government wanted to avoid 'upsetting' the Germans. Revisionist and military historian Gary Sheffield claimed the government's centenary planning was late in comparison to its Commonwealth partners Australia and New Zealand and argued against the government's plans that appeared to focus on the defeats of the First World War and largely ignoring the success and victory of 1918.

¹ Ben Quinn. *Anti-War Activists Battle To Get Their Voices Heard in WW1 Centenary Events*, The Guardian Sept 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/08/anti-war-activists-ww1-centenary> (Accessed 2 August 2019)

² Michael Roper and Rachel Duffett. *Family Legacies in the Centenary: Motives for First World War Commemoration Among British and German Descendants*, *History & Memory*, Volume 30, Number 1, Spring / Summer 2018, p.85.

³ Jasper Copping. *Historians Complain Government's WW1 Commemoration 'Focuses on British Defeats'*, The Telegraph, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/britain-at-war/10037507/Historians-complain-Governments-WW1-commemoration-focuses-on-British-defeats.html> (Accessed 2 August 2019)

Military historian Hew Strachan voiced his concerns of the centenary turning into ‘Remembrance Sunday writ large’,⁴ in January 2014 the then Education Secretary Michael Gove contributed to the concerns over the centenary by stating that the Left-Wing and *Blackadder* Myths of the First World War ‘belittle’ Britain and ensure Germany avoids blame. Gove justifies his argument that the First World War was a ‘just war’ against German aggression, whilst criticising fictional media such as *Oh! What a Lovely War*, *The Monocled Mutineer* and *Blackadder* insisting they make the public believe the war is a ‘misbegotten shambles’. Gove stressed how our contemporary understanding of the war has been ‘overlaid by misunderstandings and misrepresentations’⁵ which led Lucy Noakes to conclude that Gove was ‘weaponizing cultural memory’ in a political attack on the Left and reiterating the viewpoints of the politicians in 1918 ‘who favoured the celebration of victory over the commemoration of the dead’.⁶

Despite these conflicting views of how the First World War centenary should be perceived, it was widely agreed that the first industrialised, globalised war had to be commemorated on a grand scale, to acknowledge its profound impact on the United Kingdom then and now. The centenary could also be perceived as a part of a wider process of looking back at the history of the First World War. This Research Project will examine the commemoration of the centenary in Britain between 2014-2018 in order to consider the various ways that the war was represented and the inter-relationship between events and wider cultural memory of the war.

⁴ Ben Quinn. *Anti-War Activists Battle To Get Their Voices Heard in WW1 Centenary Events*, The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/08/anti-war-activists-ww1-centenary> (Accessed 2 August 2019)

⁵ Tim Shipman. *Michael Gove Blasts ‘Blackadder Myths’ about the First World War Spread by Television Sit-Coms and Left Wing Academics*, Daily Mail <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2532923/Michael-Gove-blasts-Blackadder-myths-First-World-War-spread-television-sit-coms-left-wing-academics.html> (Accessed 2 August 2019)

⁶ Noakes, Lucy. *Centenary*, in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopaedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2019-06-03. DOI: [10.15463/ie1418.11369](https://doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.11369). (Accessed 20 August 2019)

This project will explore whether the centenary created an awareness and connection to the history of the First World War which may not have existed previously. One example of this was 'A Nations Thank You- The People's Procession' which saw 10,000 ballot chosen people march through London to the Cenotaph to mark the centenary of the signing of Armistice in 2018. Each individual had a reason to be there, from the two individuals who remembered their great-grandfathers, with one having died two weeks before the Armistice in Flanders⁷ and the other simply wanting to honour his memory for 'what he did for our freedom'.⁸ Others remembered a relative's experience: 'I'm really here to honour the courage of my grandmother. She was obviously traumatised and remained a widow for the rest of her life'⁹ and not forgetting the 'emotional' pride from the members of the public who marched wearing relatives' medals. As the First World War is out of living memory in the United Kingdom, these events demonstrate the power of the cultural memory of the war as it retains its resonance amongst some people in society. The People's Procession is just one example of the vast number of centenary events organised around the country and is a good example demonstrating some of the complexities underpinning why people wanted to be a part of this national centenary. The many reasons for this involvement will be explained later on in the project.

Methodology

This project will examine representations of the war at three different levels, focussing on national, community and individual events and perspectives. Before exploring these, the methodology used and the approaches of cultural and popular memory of the First World War

⁷ Ali Gibson, *Thousands March In 'People's Procession' To Honour War Dead*, <https://www.forces.net/news/thousands-march-peoples-procession-honour-war-dead> (Accessed 8 February 2019)

⁸ Jackson, Marie. *Remembrance Day: Pride and awe at the People's Procession*, BBC News <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46172641> (Accessed 8 February 2019)

⁹ *Ibid*

will be discussed. Jay Winter summarises cultural memory as ‘how men and woman make sense of the world in which they live’¹⁰ whilst Bart Ziino explains how ‘narratives attached to the First World War are not static or agreed, but are subject to constant contestation, and change over time’.¹¹ As First World War British cultural memory tends to privilege literary and artistic representations of the past, Ziino also addresses how ‘a selection of materials forms a specific understanding of the First World War’¹² and whilst these exact materials will be explored in the next chapter, these specific representations of memory which have been formulated since the signing of Armistice have shaped present day understanding of the First World War. Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, however, argue that cultural memory engages within the individual and national memory and retains its effectiveness if it engages within the individual memory of the First World War.¹³ Marita Sturken shows how cultural memory and history combine within national remembrance and ‘play a vital role in the development of national meaning’¹⁴ and this is where this research project will be looking at how different cultural forms convey an understanding of the First World War, as the centenary became a platform for new and modern forms of commemoration. In his book *The Great War: Myth and Memory* Dan Todman has shown since the end of the war ‘private and detailed understanding of the war has been increasingly populated with national myths developed and redeveloped over the decade following the war’.¹⁵ It is this redeveloped ‘myth’ of the war which is the focus within this research project, as the British public entered the centenary, the commonly understood dominant myths of the war retained their hegemonic status.

¹⁰ Jay Winter and Antoine Prost. *The Great War in History*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 2005), p.29.

¹¹ Bart Ziino. *Remembering the First World War*, Routledge, (2015), p.5.

¹² *Ibid*, p.61.

¹³ Ed by T.G Ashplant., Graham Dawson., and Michael Roper. *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, Routledge (London and New York, 2000) p.18.

¹⁴ Aileen Blaney. ‘Remembering Historical Trauma in Paul Greengrass’s *Bloody Sunday*.’ *History & Memory* 19, no. 2 (2007): pp.113-138.

¹⁵ Ziino, *Remembering The First World War*, pp.5-6.

Cultural memory offers a useful methodology for analysing how and what the British public are thinking of the First World War, but as the field of cultural memory has many different approaches and methods, it is popular memory theory that I will be using to understand how particular narratives and perceptions of the First World War are engaged within. There are three approaches to memory which coalesce and create the foundation for popular memory. In *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, Ashplant, Dawson and Roper outline the first two approaches which are typical paradigms within which war memory and commemoration operate. The first approach is Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger's theory of the Invention of Tradition which is focussed on – 'social engineering from above' where war memory is orchestrated by the state that 'determined which aspects of collective and individual experience are admitted to public recall and commemoration'.¹⁶ Hobsbawm has argued for the importance of invented traditions when analysing the nation, with war being a central feature of a nation's history and identity, where it helps to 'bind citizens into a collective national identity'.¹⁷ Benedict Anderson argued that 'the commemorative rituals and patriotic rhetoric of the nation-state are involved in precisely making particular meanings about death in war'¹⁸ and research conducted by Adrian Gregory has looked at the origins of State- led commemorative traditions in Britain which still define the country's yearly commemoration. For example, Remembrance Sunday and November 11 will see the nation undertake a two-minute silence as to remember the country's war dead. Chapter 2 will explore the government-run centenary commemorations of the Battle of the Somme, Passchendaele and Amiens centenaries and what commemorative features the government employed on these anniversaries.

The second paradigm Ashplant, Dawson and Roper outline is the 'psychological emphasis' used by Jay Winter in his social agency theory. Winter had criticised the invention of tradition with

¹⁶ Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper. *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, p.10.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.7.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.9.

its emphasis on politics and accused it of ignoring 'the existential function of mourning in commemoration'.¹⁹ Social agency theory's primary focus is 'translating individual grief into public mourning for the dead' which Winter claims is a response to the traumatic ubiquity of deaths nations suffered during and after the war. Winter's approach is 'bottom up' for he believes it is the everyday lay person who are the social agents of remembrance which is 'based on the interaction of the expressed and perceived desires of the population at large, rather than officially imposed'.²⁰ According to Winter, collective remembrance is created by individuals who have come together through mourning and found ways to cope with their bereavement and this is, Winter argues, the basis for the commemorative rituals we know today. Winter claims that 'mourning is a shared human impulse'²¹ and the erection of local war memorials, the publication of war diaries and the production of plays are symbols through which this loss is expressed and the driving force behind the creation of war memory and commemoration.

The work by the Popular Memory Group (1983) illustrates the third approach of popular memory theory as it marries the invention of tradition and social agency theory. The group distinguished between public representations which refers to representations 'of the past that achieve centrality within the public domain' where the 'national and local state, the culture industries or public media ensure their scope to make public meanings for vast audiences' and the private memories that circulate 'among particular social groups in the course of everyday life'.²² The interaction of 'public' and 'private' memory is understood as a hegemonic process, as Dawson explains, it is how 'narratives contest the past and vie for recognition within a field structured by dominant public memories and involving processes of subordination and

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.8.

²⁰ Dan Todman. *The Great War Myth and Memory*, Hambledon and London (London and New York, 2005), p.51.

²¹ Ashplant, Dawson, Roper. *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, p.8.

²² Popular Memory Group, *Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method* in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics*, (London, 1982), pp.205-52.

marginalization, silencing and forgetting'.²³ Ashplant, Dawson and Roper also demonstrate how popular memory operates not just through its 'public visibility', but 'also on their capacity to connect with and articulate particular popular conceptions, whilst actively silencing or marginalizing others'.²⁴ Thus, popular memory appeals to the social and political context in which it arises and is then adopted by the majority as a shared and agreed belief. It helps us to understand how shared beliefs about the First World War maintained consistency throughout the centenary. Using popular memory theory will allow me to develop an understanding of what the popular perceptions of the First World War are and how they have been articulated during the centenary, within an understanding of the socio-political environment in Britain during the centenary and what impact this may have had on the popular perceptions of the war.

Coupled with popular memory theory, Marianne Hirsch's post-memory theory will also be used to understand the popular First World War narratives. Hirsch recounts her personal experience of duty and guilt in relation to the Holocaust. She grew up with a sense of loss relating to people who are no longer there, that they still remain a living presence within their family and her parents are passing on this memory to her to ensure it's kept alive. This is applied as a reflection of war to the contemporary and the continued duty to commemorate people we would have not known.²⁵

As previously mentioned, this research project is structured by firstly looking at the national perspective, then the local community and finalising with the individual. Chapter Two begins by exploring the national level (top down agent of war memory) by using the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) run events and the larger scale public art projects run

²³ Dawson, Graham. *The Theory of Popular Memory and the Contested Memories of the Second World War in Britain*, In K. Hoffmann, H. Mehrrens, & S. Wenk (Eds.), *Myths, Gender and the Military Conquest of Air and Sea*, Oldenburger Beiträge zur Geschlechterforschung, (Oldenburg, Germany), 2005, p.1.

²⁴ Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper. *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, p.13.

²⁵ Marianne Hirsch. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, Columbia University Press (Columbia, 2012) pp.1-24.

by 1418-NOW! and Historic Royal Palaces. I focussed on these popular projects as their popularity reflects wider understandings of the conflict.

Chapter Three examines three community-led Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) projects (bottom up agents of war memory): *Killyleagh Remembers*, *Dear Mrs Pennyman* and *Remember Us-Muslim Communities*. I chose these three projects by examining the list of First World War centenary projects the HLF had funded and picked ten that stood out as a form of ‘hidden history’ and then narrowed it down to the final three projects. I wanted to look at projects that focussed on gender, religion and politics, as projects that were representative of the wider body of ‘hidden history’ projects the HLF funded during the centenary.

The think-tank *British Future* throughout the centenary had conducted ‘attitude tracker’ surveys, using a representative sample, to obtain quantitative research to gauge an understanding of the British public perceptions of the First World War. Their first piece of research in 2012-2013 sought to capture ‘the public expectations of the First World War’ and then continued to examine public perceptions once the centenary had begun, repeating these ‘attitude trackers’ after the Battle of the Somme and Armistice centenary commemorations, to draw a comparison between pre- and post- centenary results.²⁶ In their pre-centenary report *Will 1914 Matter in 2014?* *British Future* found that ‘66% of people know that the First World War began in 1914 and only 44% know that Indian soldiers fought alongside British troops’. They also revealed statistics of what the centenary should mean ‘88% agree the centenary is about sacrifice’, ‘80% the last tommy’ and ‘87% agreed it meant peace’.²⁷ In 2019 *British Future* released *The People’s Centenary: Tracking Public Attitudes to the First World War 2013-2019* revealing a change in public perception. For example in 2014 ‘just 19% of the public agreed with the message: ‘We should have worried about the rush to commemorate the First World War as this may encourage war and nationalism when

²⁶ Lucy Buckerfield and Steve Ballinger. *The People’s Centenary: Tracking Public Attitudes to the First World War Centenary 2013-2018*, *British Future*, (April 2019), p.4.

²⁷ Ed by Jo Tanner. *Will 1914 Matter in 2014?* *British Future*, (August 2013) p.22.

this was a futile and unimaginable slaughter’ but in 2018 only 14% agreed with the statement.²⁸ Furthermore in 2012 they found that ‘only a minority 44% were aware of the contribution of Indian soldiers in the First World war’ and by 2018 ‘that had risen to 71%’ which reflected the ‘same proportion of the public who know the beginning and end dates of the war’.²⁹

The example of *British Future* and their research is used here to help explain the primary research I conducted via survey, which will be discussed in Chapter Four. In this, I was not looking to obtain a representative sample but was instead interested in individual detailed responses. The respondents to my survey were people who shared a pre-existing interest in the history of the First World War and are engaged with the centenary with a particular drive (family, local history etc.). Susan Defranzo shows that using qualitative research helps ‘uncover trends in thoughts and opinions’³⁰ and Ashley Crossman extends this stating, ‘it allows the research to investigate the meanings that people attribute to their behaviour, actions and interactions with others’.³¹

The reason for conducting my own primary research derives from my own experience of living and working on the Western Front during the final months of the First World War centenary. I was fortunate enough to spend time as a Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Centenary Intern, based at the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme. I held a public engagement role representing the CWGC at Thiepval daily - I would give guided tours covering the history of the CWGC, the Battle of the Somme, the memorial itself, stories of the men and of the Anglo-French cemetery behind the memorial. Additionally, I would spend time in the Visitor Centre aiding members of the public researching ancestors of theirs who fought in the war, finding where their relatives were first buried using trench maps, and giving basic touristic advice of the Somme. During my time as an intern no day was ever the same. We would encounter so many

²⁸ Buckerfield and Ballinger. *The People’s Centenary*, p.7.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.16.

³⁰ Susan E. Defranzo. Snap Surveys, <https://www.snapsurveys.com/blog/qualitative-vs-quantitative-research/>, Accessed (22 February 2019)

³¹ Ashley Crossman, ThoughtCo, <https://www.thoughtco.com/qualitative-research-methods-3026555> Accessed (22 February 2019)

different walks of life coming to visit the memorial: descendants, historians, battlefield guides, politicians, celebrities, passers-by, and school children. It was this unique daily interaction with members of the public, along with the early ideas for this Research Masters, that started to make me listen to how the public thought about the war and what brought them to these sites. One of the most poignant memories was telling the story of Harry Farr, shot at dawn in October 1916, to have one gentleman in my tour group boldly state, 'if it wasn't for those bloody generals none of these boys would be named up here'³². This type of comment, I found, was quite typical. What this did was give me a first-hand experience as to how members of the public (British and Commonwealth) were remembering the war.

I formulated ten questions, with the aim of understanding what people (those most interested in the centenary) thought of the First World War and the First World War centenary. Additional to my own experience of engaging with the public on the battlefields, one of the other aims was to understand the popular memory surrounding the contemporary First World War battlefields. The survey was completely anonymous, whilst some respondents revealed some personal details in their answers, the anonymous nature of the survey enabled me to directly focus on the provided answers. I used the online survey organisation *Survey Monkey* to create the survey and decided to disseminate it through social media. Firstly, on Twitter, where I asked people to retweet my survey to reach a wider audience and followed the same method on Facebook asking people to share. I left the survey active for people to answer for a month to give enough time to generate a larger result. After the month I had discovered that 528 people had responded, leaving me with 528 responses to each of the ten questions. Taking a question at a time, I read over the answers to gauge a theme in the responses, and once a consistent theme or answer appeared, I created categories to place those answers in. For example, some were as easy as 'Yes', 'No', 'Unsure', or thematic responses were categorised under 'Loss', 'Poppies', 'Historical

³² September 2018

Figures'. I then colour coded the responses to their category and counted how many responses fell under a category and then worked out the percentage of that response to 528. The responses to the questions are discussed in Chapter Four and will be discussed using the percentages formulated from the response categories whilst drawing out notable qualitative responses as examples.

The Mass Observation (M-O) organisation is a prime example of where in-depth qualitative research has been conducted. Put simply, M-O asks self-selecting members of the public an 'open-ended set of questions and prompts designed to stimulate people to write'.³³ Similar to my survey their work is not representative of the British public, but it is valuable to the growing understanding of our society and culture. I believe the strength in using qualitative data can reveal the human experience, perception and understanding to the First World War centenary, providing access to the emotional responses to the centenary that were so central to the cultural memory of the war.

From the outset of the First World War centenary the United Kingdom has been through a turbulent time. Starting with a coalition government in 2010, the centenary saw the Scottish Referendum in 2014, the European Referendum in 2016, General Election in 2017, and extensive Brexit political dramas defining the country throughout 2018. At the turn of the 21st century, it was only natural to look back at the centenary of historical events that had occurred, and the centenary can be perceived as another national reflection on the past. In many ways the centenary was used as an anchor for the British people in providing a sense of social stability in a time of great turbulence uniting people through a shared historical and national centenary commemoration. Political beliefs may have divided the nation during the centenary years, but that division wasn't apparent when reflecting upon the Great-Grandfathers who fought on the

³³ Edited by Sheridan, Dorothy. Street, Brian. The Mass Observation Archive Occasional Papers Series http://www.massobs.org.uk/images/occasional_papers/Occ_no1_bloom_sheridan_street.pdf (Accessed 24 February 2019)

Somme or Passchendaele. The next chapter will analyse how and why we have come to perceive the First World War by reflecting on the century from 1914 to 2014. The project will go on to consider what social and cultural commemorations arose during the centenary and what impact they had on the British public's popular memory of the First World War.

Chapter 1: First World War Cultural Memory From 1914-2014

'The British response to the war at the time was multi-vocal: over time, some voices have disappeared, and others have grown stronger. The tune we now hear uses the same notes, but it sounds very different to that of 1918. A single melody has emerged and all the voices now audible sing along to it'.³⁴

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term 'myth' as 'a widespread but untrue or erroneous story or belief; a widely held misconception; a misrepresentation of the truth'³⁵. Whilst it defines 'memory' as 'senses relating to the action or process of commemorating, recollecting, or remembering'.³⁶ Dan Todman married these two terms as he analysed the development of public cultural responses to the First World War from 1914 to the modern day. Military historian Catriona Pennell's has shown that the British public in 1914 knew it was 'necessary' to mobilize as they 'understood the war as a moral crusade' against Germany's aggression. Pennell continued that despite the events that took place over four and a half years of war, 'the vast majority of people continued to believe that the war was worth fighting and that Germany had to be defeated'.³⁷ If this was the accepted belief of the British public throughout the duration of the First World War, then why is the war now perceived as a muddy, bloody, futile affair narrated by poets? This chapter will provide an analysis as to why a 'single melody' now narrates the history of the First World War, in order to establish how this melody is still being sung throughout the centenary in the following chapters.

³⁴ Todman, *The Great War Myth and Memory*, p.221.

³⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary* (Accessed 14 January 2019)

³⁶ *Ibid*

³⁷ Pennell, Catriona: *Making Sense of the War (Great Britain and Ireland)*, in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopaedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2015-08-25. DOI: [10.15463/ie1418.10714](https://doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10714).

The Origins of War Memory

The British public began to remember the First World War, during the war itself. As early as September 1914 Laurence Binyon wrote the poem, '*For the Fallen*' which includes the (now) famous line of 'at the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them'.³⁸ Not only does this set an instructive tone of remembrance, it emphasises the focus on those who gave their lives, were giving their lives and were to give their lives to this war. The term 'The Great War' did not originate in the post war years, it was coined in 1915 indicating that contemporaries 'understood what they were living through, an exceptional event'.³⁹

The Battle of the Somme 1916 film was produced as propaganda; the War Office wanted the film 'to contain images that would support the war effort and raise morale'.⁴⁰ Twenty million people viewed the film within the first weeks of its release, and with this first filmic release of the Western Front to the public, the contemporary's popular conception of the war was shaped by what they saw in the film. This conception of a memorable and 'Great War' is illustrated in the immediate post-war year of 1919, as Michelin and Muirhead's published guides to the Western Front battlefields⁴¹. Additionally, the emergence of the battlefield touristic industry sprung to life in the immediate post war years. The first trips run by Church groups advertising 'it's escorted parties of relatives to visit graves on the Western Front'.⁴² Mark Connelly has suggested the popular desire to visit the battlefields in the immediate post-war era would achieve a sense of

³⁸ Duffy, Christopher. *Through German Eyes: The British and the Somme 1916*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson (London, 2006), pp.93-4.

³⁹ Winter and Prost. *The Great War in History*, p.7.

⁴⁰ Duffy, C. *Through German Eyes*, pp.93-4.

⁴¹ Trudi Tate and Kate Kennedy. *The Silent Morning. Culture and Memory After the Armistice*, Manchester University Press (Manchester and New York, 2013), p.310.

⁴² Mark Connelly. *Journey's End? The Early Pilgrims to the Western Front*. Gateways to the First World War, <https://www.gatewaysfww.org.uk/blog/journeys-end> (Accessed 3 September 2019) ; Gateways to the First World War, *Visiting and Revisiting the Western Front 1919-1939*, https://www.gatewaysfww.org.uk/sites/default/files/BT_126189_Battlefields_British_update2_FINAL_web.pdf (Accessed 3 September 2019) p.3.

'closure' for those who had lost someone. Also profiting were companies such as Thomas Cook and even veterans who remained on the battlefields working for the Imperial War Graves Commission and conducting their own touring business in the meantime.⁴³ These examples demonstrate the fascination and desire to experience or imagine what the war had been like and where loved ones had fought and died.

The Twenties: The Invention of Tradition

This fascination with the First World War calmed down, as the British public made a shift from curiosity to a commemorative culture, but it wasn't a smooth transition. As the country prepared to face the first anniversary of the Armistice, the British government originally had no formal plans to commemorate this anniversary. The first official events of Armistice Day were held in the grounds of Buckingham Palace, and it was here that the two-minute silence was introduced as a mark of respect for those who died in the war.⁴⁴ This and the erection of the cenotaph were the two defining commemorative acts which would set in motion a national commemorative mourning culture. The social survey group Mass Observation sent out investigators to enquire what people thought about on the two-minute silence in the 1930s and 'they found that individuals did not think of empire, or nations, or armies, but of individual people who were no longer there'.⁴⁵ As we know today, the two-minute silence is a ritualistic-tradition in the United Kingdom which shows our country's respect to those who died during the war and any subsequent wars to date. This is the foundation for Eric Hobsbawm's 'Invention of Tradition'

⁴³ *Ibid*

⁴⁴ Peter Street, *The Great Silence Begins*, 07 November 2014.

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2014/7-november/features/features/the-great-silence-begins>
(Accessed 15 January 2019)

⁴⁵ Jay Winter. *Remembering War, The Great War and History in the Twentieth Century*, Yale University Press (New Haven & London, 2006), p.150.

as this ceremonial reflection of war brought the public and the private into one space and emitted the individual to 'public recall and commemoration'.⁴⁶

Prior to the first anniversary of Armistice- the formal end of the First World War with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles- was celebrated with the Peace Day Parade in July 1919. Sir Edwin Lutyens had erected a temporary wooden structure outside Whitehall, designed to be a representation of those whose bodies remain elsewhere. It was eventually decided that this Cenotaph was to be erected on a permanent basis outside Whitehall and was unveiled on 11th November 1920. This was the second defining commemorative act. Whilst the Cenotaph was symbolically erected as a 'permanent and imperial symbol of the wrenching loss of the Great War',⁴⁷ the unveiling of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey became the literal representation of the bodies that remain elsewhere.

To have the Unknown Warrior unveiled with the Cenotaph was a last-minute decision. The body of an unknown soldier had been picked from a choice of four unknown soldiers, exhumed from the battlefields of France or Belgium. It is estimated that 'over 200,000 people had passed the Cenotaph and had visited the Unknown Warrior's final resting place', with 'over 10,000 wreaths (that) were laid at the new, unveiled Cenotaph'.⁴⁸ Benedict Anderson argues that the Unknown Warrior is quintessential for 'evoking the sacrifice that may be required from the citizen as the cost of belonging, and the means by which the nation-state persuades its citizens to die for it'.⁴⁹ In this sense, the Unknown Warrior epitomised 'the 'noble sacrifice' of 'dying for your country'', which Ashplant, Dawson and Roper claim is a part of the 'patriotic rhetoric of the nation-state in making particular meanings about death in war'.⁵⁰ Just like the Cenotaph, the Unknown Warrior represented all the soldiers who had not come home, providing comfort to the mothers,

⁴⁶ Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper. *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, p.10.

⁴⁷ Winter, *Remembering War The Great War*, p.141.

⁴⁸ Michael Gavaghan. *The Story of the Unknown Warrior. 11 November 1920*, M and L Publications (Preston, 1995), p.2.

⁴⁹ Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper. *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, pp.8-9.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*

daughters, wives, that the soldier in the tomb could be theirs. Reflecting a likeness to the two-minute silence a year before, this ceremony intertwined the national and individual as one through a collective mourning as Bart Ziino argued that it effectively provided a place for families to project their grief.⁵¹

After the national commemoration, de-centring of the war memorials around the country began as the idea of the Cenotaph embodied a place of mourning, had become a national feature in villages, towns, and cities. England and Wales are made up of 14,000 parishes and only 50 parishes saw all their soldiers return after the First World War, whilst every community in Northern Ireland and Scotland lost someone.⁵² Jay Winter's Social Agency Theory is a useful way of interpreting the intentions behind the erection of local war memorials. Winter argues that the war memorials allowed individual grief to be transformed into a 'public mourning of the dead' as the nation tried to 'accept the brutal facts of death in war'.⁵³ The war memorials were now a part of the mnemonic landscape, acting as 'salient elements in the cultural memory'⁵⁴ ensuring a local site to which the war dead would not be forgotten.

The War Books Boom

In terms of war memory, the 1920s starts and ends in a paradox. The previous discussion has been focussed on the commemoration of the war dead in the war's aftermath, and, throughout the 1920s the narrative of the First World War remained stable, emphasising the victorious and heroic. It wasn't until the late 1920s and early 1930s where this narrative began to change. Todman has suggested that the change began with the death of Earl Haig in 1928 which

⁵¹ Bart Ziino. *Remembering The First World War*, pp.25-26.

⁵² David Cameron. *Speech at Imperial War Museum on First World War Centenary Plans*, 11 October 2012. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/speech-at-imperial-war-museum-on-first-world-war-centenary-plans> (Accessed 3 September 2019)

⁵³ Jay Winter. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 1995), p.94.

⁵⁴ Winter, *Remembering War The Great War*, p.139.

triggered a 'rehearsal of memories about the war'.⁵⁵ This rehearsal of memories has been called the 'war books boom': a period where novels and memoirs, written by soldiers, nurses, and civilians came into popular culture. Arguably the war books boom continues to frame our First World War memory today. As veterans published accounts of their wartime experiences, this process legitimised their experiences as historical truth through the notion of first-hand accounts of the atrocities of war. The international success of Erich Maria Remarque's book *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) and the film (1930) which presented the war as a monumental waste, transformed the popular First World War narrative from victorious and heroic, to a pity of war narrative.

The turbulent social, economic and political context of the late 1920s and early 1930s can be understood as catalysts to the war-books boom. The 1929 Great Depression was the starting point for disillusionment as 'Britons were forced to admit that their land is far from fit for heroes'.⁵⁶ The new Labour government was headed by wartime pacifists; Fascism was on the rise and Communist ideas infiltrated European society; new military air technology brought about a new fear that another European war could be more wasteful than the first. The famous authors that arose during this period were Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen, Vera Brittain, and R.C Sherriff. Janet Watson has argued that the war books 'were much more about the life after the war than about the war itself. They were part of the construction of memory, not experience'.⁵⁷ This is a key element to understanding popular memory, for it can reveal as much about the present as it can the past.

Vera Brittain and her war memoir *Testament of Youth* is a prime example of the reconstruction of war memory. If one was to compare *Testament of Youth* (1933) with Vera's war-

⁵⁵ Todman. *The Great War Myth and Memory*, pp.18-19.

⁵⁶ Gary Sheffield. *Forgotten Victory. The First World War: Myths and Realities*, Headline Book Publishing (London, 2001), p.8.

⁵⁷ Janet Watson. *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 2004), p.187.

time diary *Chronicle of Youth* (1981) you would see a stark contrast in the two war-time accounts. Watson stated that 'in a brazen failure to acknowledge her earlier self, the older Brittain chose to highlight the single passage that best matched her feelings later'.⁵⁸ By the 1930s Brittain was developing her own pacifist views, saw her personal recollection of the war as intended to persuade others of the horror that war can bring, and not another war memoir. The pacifist movement was expanding in the 1930s as a result of the Japanese renewing their attack on Manchuria; the difficulties of establishing disarmament in Geneva; Britain had imposed a short trade embargo on Russia; America suffering from the Wall Street Crash; Italy invading Abyssinia and using poison gas on civilians. These war memoirs are not representative of all the soldiers or nurses who encountered the war, but facets of individual memory. As is the case with Brittain and possibly other authors, the war books boom is an account of the author's own reaction to events and an understanding of the author rather than the history.⁵⁹ Regardless of the fact of historical accuracy, the socio-political context throughout the 1920s and 1930s made the authors' reality of war and anti-war message more appealing, illustrating their unanimous popularity. The war memoirs, poetry and prose, have since their publications, been a valuable cultural asset to narrate an understanding of the First World War. Their circulation within popular culture saw the change in war memory, as the pity of war narrative slowly labelled itself as a generally accepted historical narrative.

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the First World War

The generation learning about the First World War during the 1920s and 1930s had seen the war transformed from a victorious war to a pity of war narrative. As the fiftieth anniversary of the First World War occurred in the 1960s, the generation of the 1920s and 1930s had verified

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.250.

⁵⁹ Todman, *The Great War Myth and Memory*, p.159.

the pity of war narrative in popular culture. Prior to the anniversary, commemoration of the First World War was muted due to the outbreak of the Second World War. As the names from the military dead in the Second World War were added to the memorials erected for the first, the underlying warning of those memorials echoing 'never again' was not listened to. Despite the outbreak of another world war, the Second World War was perceived in popular culture as the 'Good War' for fighting against the evil of Nazism. This then left the First World War isolated in its purpose and so in the period of the Cuban Missile crisis, the Vietnam War and the ever-present threat of nuclear weaponry, it became a new vehicle to demonstrate the impact and aftermath of a futile war. At the time of the 50th anniversary the war had started to become a historical fact rather than a lived experience, as veterans and their parents were dying off in high numbers. Todman has argued that the dying of these two groups was a significant catalyst in 'shaping the tone of discussions about futility' and 'what could be said about the war and how far new interpretations were contested'.⁶⁰ Whilst these groups were alive, critical thinking of the war was limited to lessen the distress of those who survived, but as they started to disappear it 'removed a key limiting factor on the terms in which the First World War could be discussed'.⁶¹

The drifting of the war from a lived experience allowed it to become vulnerable to new interpretations. Surrounding the 50th anniversary of the First World War another out-burst of war books flurried into British popular culture. Between '1959-1968 200 new books on the war were published in Britain, more than the previous two decades put together'.⁶² This association between the 50th anniversary and new books brought the war back into the public eye. British society now had new inflections of public conversations about the war, developing a momentum through popular culture: books, television series and films.

⁶⁰ Winter, *Remembering War, The Great War and History in the Twentieth Century*, p.6.

⁶¹ Todman, *The Great War Myth and Memory*, p.144.

⁶² *Ibid*, p.29.

The first new influence on First World War memory was the publication of Alan Clark's *The Donkeys* (1961). The book reflected on the war during 1915 with a primary focus on the 'stupidity with which the war was fought'. This book saw the entry of the phrase 'lions led by donkeys' into popular culture. Clark picked a suitable year to highlight the ineffectiveness of the pre-war army entering a modern war. Todman has touched upon the fact that mocking the army generals is a comedic/critical trait in British society that had existed prior to the war. However, what does the emergence of this critical trait tell us of the perceptions of the First World War in the 1960s? One inference could be that it targeted the military incompetence surrounding the Cold War, as a review from *The Economist* stated that the development of nuclear weapons 'offers an even more terrible butcher's bill'.⁶³ Again, another possibility could be the book had a motive to persuade the public against war by highlighting the atrocities of it. Moreover, the free-moving spirit of the 1960s saw the beginning of the end of deference to higher social classes, illustrating the appeal of a historical example of attacking many forms of the ruling elite. Similarly, to the 1920s and 1930s, the turbulent socio-political context generated the narrative of the First World War generals as donkeys, to flourish into popular culture.

Next entering popular culture was *The Great War* (1964) television series first broadcast on the newly created BBC 2. 26 40-minute episodes were created for the series, using a 'combination of disturbing images, plangent music and sombre narration'⁶⁴ to engage the public, the First World War in this case became 'principally concerned with death'.⁶⁵ Eight million people tuned in to watch each episode, as reviews revealed the series tapped into popular perceptions of the First World War, as it brought 'home the horrors of war and the dreadful waste of young manhood'⁶⁶ and 'the appalling and needless slaughter of innocent people'.⁶⁷ Winter argues that

⁶³ *Ibid*, pp.101-3.

⁶⁴ Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory*, p.482.

⁶⁵ Todman, *The Great War Myth and Memory*, p.66.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.113.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.141.

the growth of modern media meant ‘the visual increasingly trumped the literal’ as ‘the message of the images escaped from the message of the text historians’.⁶⁸ Winter also stressed that what made the series a ‘major cultural event was that the families of the survivors and of those who did not come back, integrated these war stories into their own family narratives’.⁶⁹ Through this the popular memory of the First World War began to be reshaped. *The Donkeys* (1961) and *The Great War* (1964) complimented each other within popular culture, for it was the hands of incompetent generals which produced the thousands who died.

The final cultural influence on the British public’s First World War memory was the release of the film *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1969). It’s first production was in 1963 as a play in London, which embraced and utilised the acted popular perception of an incompetent ‘Donkey’ in General Haig. Ross Wilson has reflected that the play ‘operates to provide a means of censoring and critiquing the operation of power’,⁷⁰ which can be a personal reflection of the production’s writer Joan Littlewood. Littlewood’s own personal distaste for the establishment and concern about international crises is an example of how the ‘negative view of the First World War was born out of the play’s appropriation of a new political and social agenda’.⁷¹ The popular response to the play enabled it to be adapted to film in 1969. The combination of *The Great War* (1964) and *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1969) generated the British public to ‘have a memory of an event which they did not participate in’.⁷² Winter terms this form of memory as historical remembrance, whereby ‘we see past events through exposure’ and how ‘our responses to film help restructure and fortify our notions of history’.⁷³ Gary Sheffield claimed that the film had a ‘seductive message’ that ‘the

⁶⁸ Winter, Jay: *Historiography 1918-Today*, in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopaedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014-11-11. DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10498.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*

⁷⁰ Ross Wilson. *Cultural Heritage of the Great War in Britain*, Ashgate Publishing Limited (Surrey, 2013), p.142.

⁷¹ Todman, *The Great War Myth and Memory*, p.105.

⁷² Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory*, pp.16-17.

⁷³ Winter, *Remembering War The Great War*, p.199.

war was pointless, and the soldiers died for nothing'⁷⁴ which was reflected in the emotive reviews that followed: 'there was not a dry critical eye in the house. We are left with a sense of wasted lives, a feeling of impenetrable sadness, of unassignable grief'.⁷⁵ Like *The Great War* (1964), *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1969) mobilises the theme of death through poppies as they become precursors of death in the film, handed to those who are about to die. Todman has argued that the focus on death in the 1960s cultural interpretations of the war is a result of the generation who grew up in the war's shadow, for the 'inter-war school culture had inscribed death upon them'⁷⁶ thus providing a basis for the future of negative cultural expressions of First World War memory.

The combination of *The Donkeys* (1961), *The Great War* (1961) and *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1969) are just three examples of how war memory changed and where new interpretations began to be recycled within popular culture. Modern technology delivered war memory to a new audience who began to believe what they saw as a national truth. An ambiguous and liberal socio-political time coupled with a deteriorating army of veterans too enabled these myths to flourish and retain a place within the British public's popular beliefs of the First World War.

'I Heard That It Started When A Bloke Called Archie Duke Shot An Ostrich Cause He Was Hungry'

As the 1960s set the new trend for war memory to be expressed through modern media, it also set the trend where it could be entertaining. The First World War continued to be a popular subject in cultural memory from 1970 through to the turn of the century, as more than 20 television programmes were made and a 'host of new works of historical fiction were produced'.⁷⁷ Alan Bleasdale's *The Monocled Mutineer* (1986) is a good example of a television series recycling

⁷⁴ Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory*, pp.16-17.

⁷⁵ Todman. *The Great War Myth and Memory*, pp.64-5.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.64-5.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.39.

the negative First World War myths that obtained precedence in the 1960s. The four-part series focussed on the Etaples mutiny in March 1918. Similar to Joan Littlewood and *Oh! What a Lovely War*, Bleasdale used the events of the First World War to make contemporary political points against Thatcherism, unemployment and the Falklands War. Again, we are seeing the memory of the First World War as a vehicle to shine light on and challenge contemporary issues, reinforcing the notion that cultural memory can reveal as much about the present as it does the past. An interesting perspective from *The Monocled Mutineer* is that it shows the events of the First World War through the eyes of the everyday man. This perspective was continued and elaborated upon in *Blackadder Goes Forth* (1989).⁷⁸

The comedic series *Blackadder Goes Forth* (1989) was created in a time where the dominant cultural memory of the war was futility, loss and tragedy. General Melchett played by Stephen Fry, mirrored the Generals in *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1969) whilst Blackadder, played by Rowan Atkinson as the protagonist common soldier, uses Atkinson's comedic talents to express a discontent with First World War generals through remarks such as: 'the primary aim of offensives is to move General Haig's drinks cabinet 6 inches closer to Berlin' and 'not even our generals are mad enough to shell their own men. They feel it's more sporting to let the Germans do it'.⁷⁹ In addition, the series used its comedic theme to enhance the futile and tragic perception as summarised by Blackadder: 'we've been sitting here since Christmas 1914, during which time millions of men have died, and we've moved no further than an asthmatic ant with heavy shopping'.⁸⁰ The British public's responses to the show indicate the continued dominance of negative myths as they praise *Blackadder* for 'the most moving World War One image I have ever seen still remains the final scenes of Blackadder' and 'the last shot... was so poignant that if you

⁷⁸ Wilson, *Cultural Heritage of the Great War in Britain*, p.10.

⁷⁹ Best Blackadder Quotes, <https://blackadderquotes.com/great-blackadder-quotes-from-blackadder-goes-forth> (Accessed 9 September 2019)

⁸⁰ *Ibid*

cried it was no surprise'.⁸¹ The final scene where the protagonist characters go 'over the top' was 'voted amongst the ten most popular television moments of all time'⁸² in 2000. Todman has argued that historians shouldn't be too harsh when assessing *Blackadder* (1989) for 'laughter is a crucial tradition in British efforts to understand the First World War'.⁸³ Even at nearly eighty years on, the British public were still trying to make sense of the horror and deaths of the war, and *Blackadder* (1989) represents how reducing the First World War memory down to a couple of popular perceptions (Donkeys, Futility and Death) provides an easier method to comprehend the war. Additionally, the acceptance of *Blackadder* is a good marking point for demonstrating how far attitudes towards the First World War have changed as Britain grew chronologically further away from the war.

The Modern Memory Boom

As the new century approached, a new surge in interest of First World War history and family involvement came about. This surge was driven in part by the growth of the internet and increased accessibility of genealogical research. Todman argued that this is the 5th generation since the war, who were educated in school about the First World War through the poetry of Wilfred Owen and laughed at *Blackadder* (1989) in their private time. The memory of the war was entering a time where a small percentage of the population could claim it as a lived experience, but it was the 'rediscovery of familial links' which 'led individuals to reformulate emotional connections to the war'.⁸⁴ Just like the 1960s the emotional reconnection to 'my grandad fought on the Somme' or 'my great-uncle was gassed at Ypres', enabled contemporaries to imagine their

⁸¹ Todman, *The Great War Myth and Memory*, p.146.

⁸² *Ibid*, p.176.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p.117.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.147.

relatives in a war of mud, blood and death as Todman argued made the First World War 'all the more realistic and interesting'.⁸⁵

The reconnection with the war can also be attributed to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Their online records created a modern avenue for family research, which saw by '1998, 50,000 requests for information were received, 21,000 letters and phone calls in a year, all relating to the First World War'.⁸⁶ Further cultural methods communicated stories of the war throughout the 21st century as the television programme *Timewatch* in 2008 'sought to locate descendants of soldiers who died on 11 November 1918, to bring to the graves of forgotten family members'.⁸⁷ The ancestry television series *Who Do You Think You Are* had at least one episode from 2004-2008 series⁸⁸ during the 90th anniversary of the First World War. Both series combine war memory and family history together as one and add a cultural element to the growing interest in family history. It can also foreshadow the emotive connection and interest of First World War family history that is a driving factor throughout the centenary.

Jay Winter has considered why there was an upsurge of interest in the First World War at the end of the 20th and into the 21st century, arguing that this memory boom 'created a sense of duty to remember the collective past'.⁸⁹ The fear that the First World War could be easily forgotten was exacerbated with the death of Harry Patch in 2009. Harry Patch was symbolised as the last surviving 'Tommy' of the First World War; the last living connection to the war disappearing upon his death. The public desire to commemorate and remember was epitomised through Patch's funeral, as hundreds of people queued for hours to get one of the 1,050 public allocated tickets for the cathedral service. This is in addition to the thousands who lined the

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p.176.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p.68.

⁸⁷ Wilson, *Cultural Heritage of the Great War in Britain*, p.11.

⁸⁸ Who Do You Think You Are IMDB, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0429466/?ref=tttop_ep_tt (Accessed 24 February 2019)

⁸⁹ Winter and Prost, *The Great War in History*, pp.27-8.

streets for his procession, and the song *Harry Patch (In Memory)* by Radiohead in 2009.⁹⁰ Patch's anti-war rhetoric defined his recollection of the war as he believed war was 'organised murder' and said 'it was not worth it, no worth one, let alone all the millions', which formed the lyric in the song 'I've seen hell upon this earth'.⁹¹ To mark the Armistice in 2009, a special service of remembrance was held at Westminster Abbey to mark the passing of the First World War generation, after the final three veterans of the war had passed that year. The Dean of Westminster spoke of how we should 'remember, with grief, the gas and the mud, the barbed wire, the bombardment, the terror, the telegram; and, with gratitude, the courage and sacrifice. Never again, they said; the war to end all wars'.⁹² With the passing of the last veteran, the reductions and negative perceptions of the war had gained their hegemonic status and settled as a widely accepted belief within popular culture and popular memory.

An example of the extent that negative myths have obtained a hegemonic status within the British popular memory, prior to the First World War Centenary, is through the House of Lords debate of March 4th, 2013. The agenda was 'To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to commemorate the centenary of the First World War'.⁹³ The discussion began with Lord Clark who stated, 'it is a war which came to epitomise carnage and human sacrifice' and evoked the Lords imagination by commenting 'life in the trenches was hell. I think that is a rallying point for us tonight.' Viscount Colville pointed out 'the big events planned for four years from 2014 will concentrate on remembering the dreadful loss of life that took place in the First World War', to

⁹⁰ The Telegraph, *Harry Patch Funeral, Thousands Line the Street*, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/5982588/Harry-Patch-funeral-thousands-of-people-line-streets.html> (Accessed 9 September 2019)

⁹¹ Mark Townsend. *Harry Patch, Britain's Last Surviving Soldier of the Great War, Dies 111*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jul/26/world-war-one-veteran-harry-patch-dies-aged-111>, (Accessed 9 September 2019) ; Miller, Matt. *Radiohead Just Shared the Exact Song We Need Right Now*, <https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/music/news/a50599/radiohead-harry-patch-in-memory-of-listen/> (Accessed 9 September 2019)

⁹² Westminster Abbey, *A Service to Mark the Passing of the World War One Generation*, <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-news/a-service-to-mark-the-passing-of-the-world-war-one-generation> (Accessed 9 September 2019)

⁹³ House of Lords March 4th, 2013, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2013-03-04/debates/1303043800067/FirstWorldWarCentenary> (Accessed 29 January 2019)

which Lord Cormack added that, post August 2014 'it is terribly important that we focus attention on the horrors that came after'. The trauma surrounding death is still prominent in discussions of the war, making the deaths of nearly a century ago a present-day attempt to understand.

To try and make sense of the First World War the majority of Lords touched upon their own familial experiences: 'my own grandfather left the pits of County Durham to mine under the German lines'; 'my father first served on the Western Front at Passchendaele'. Whilst others used the war as a form of national identity: 'the generations that come after us shall never forget the heroic dead of Ireland' and gender awareness: 'many young women lost their young husbands' and 'the immense contribution made by women in the workplace'.⁹⁴ Finally other Lords thought progress in trying to understand the war can only be summarised through Captain Flashheart in *Blackadder* (1989) as 'the mud, the blood, the endless poetry'⁹⁵: 'I must admit that in studying World War I, at times I have found it very difficult to justify'... 'what Wilfred Owen meant when he talked about the pity of war' ...'That war was largely pointless, meaningless and avoidable'.⁹⁶

Conclusion

What this discussion in the House of Lords demonstrates is how far the idea of a victorious war has changed to a pity of war narrative over a century. Even throughout the centenary modern media interpreted the First World War to the British public through television series such as *Downton Abbey*, to films such as *War Horse* (2014), *Testament of Youth* (2015) and *Journeys End* (2018). From looking at the past one hundred years through cultural memory, it is evident that books, television series and films, articulate a historical narrative of the past, whilst it provides a frame through which contemporary political, cultural or social concerns can be applied to a

⁹⁴ *Ibid*

⁹⁵ Todman, *The Great War Myth and Memory*, p.153.

⁹⁶ House of Lords March 4th, 2013, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2013-03-04/debates/13030438000067/FirstWorldWarCentenary> (Accessed 29 January 2019)

historical topic. What this century reflection should do is provide the foundational understanding as to what the popular memory of the First World War is at its centenary, and by having this understanding when reading the next chapter, it will demonstrate how the British government led centenary events and public art projects took on modern adaptations to interpret and understand the First World War.

Chapter Two: State Events and Public Art Projects

'There is something about the First World War that makes it a fundamental part of our national consciousness. Put simply, this matters not just in our heads, but in our hearts; it has a very strong emotional connection'.

The comment above comes from the then British coalition government Prime Minister David Cameron, who on October 11th, 2012 made a speech in the Imperial War Museum London to outline the First World War Centenary events. It was this speech which sparked the 'No Glory' campaign and Michael Gove's comments in 2013. Within three points Cameron outlined why he made 'these centenary commemorations a personal priority'. Firstly, Cameron positioned the soldiers who fought in the war as the poignant features of commemoration due to 'the sheer scale of sacrifice' whilst supporting this thought by drawing on the country's ignorance on entering the first industrialised and globalised war. He emphasised that 'it was a sacrifice they made for us, and it is right that we should remember them'.

The second point focussed on the understanding that the First World War was central to the creation of the country and modern world we live in today. Cameron stated the war was not just fought in the trenches, and in doing so, addressed the advances in medicine, the recognition of ethnic minorities and the creation of new military weapons, as being of national and international significance that should be equally commemorated. The third and most important point to Cameron, was the First World War's emotional resonance: 'this matters not just in our heads, but in our hearts'. Cameron positions the continued emotional connection with the First World War as the driving force behind commemoration. Cameron concluded by stating: 'our duty towards these commemorations is clear: to honour those who served, to remember those who

died, and to ensure that the lessons learnt live with us forever'.⁹⁷ The personal pronouns of 'our', 'us' and the use of 'duty' implies that it is a national obligation to partake in the centenary commemorative events.

Cameron specified that he wanted the British government to play a leading role in the remembrance by marking the first day of conflict, 4 August 2014, the first day of the Battle of the Somme (2016), Passchendaele (2017), Amiens (2018) and the centenary of the Armistice (2018). It was this focus on the Somme and Passchendaele which provoked Michael Gove to state the centenary commemorations focused on loss rather than the successful battles which enabled the eventual victory. In addition to the State-led events, Cameron stated that government money would be given to Public Art Projects such as 1418 Now! and the Heritage Lottery Fund who would fund localised educative projects throughout the duration of the centenary. In this chapter an assessment will be made of the Government led projects that marked the start of the war, the Battle of the Somme (2016), the Battle of Passchendaele (2017) and the centenary of the signing of the Armistice (2018). In addition, this chapter will also look at the public art projects run by 1418 Now! (*We're Here Because We're Here, They Shall Not Grow Old* and *Pages of the Sea*) and Historic Royal Palaces (*Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* and *Beyond the Deepening Shadow*) to see what extent they engage with and articulate the popular memory of the First World War as a muddy, bloody, futile affair, as narrated by war poets- such as Sassoon, Owen and Rosenberg.⁹⁸

Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Centenary Events

The British government decided the significant dates of the First World War which the country would commemorate. Despite the thousands of historical events that defined the four

⁹⁷ David Cameron, *Speech at Imperial War Museum on First World War Centenary Plans*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/speech-at-imperial-war-museum-on-first-world-war-centenary-plans>, (Accessed 10 March 2019)

⁹⁸ Though Rosenberg's *Break of Day* in the trenches is less widely read, is a key motif of mud, blood and pointless sacrifice.

and a half years of fighting, the government narrowed it down to five significant moments. Maria Miller, the then Culture Secretary, worked alongside the First World War Centenary Advisory Board to oversee and create the national events. Jenny Waldman, who had twenty years' experience as a producer of large-scale international productions, was brought in as the director of the cultural programmes. Miller claimed the focus on the outbreak of war on 4 August 2014 'is right we remember and mark the centenary of this momentous day in the world's history and remembering the price that was paid by all involved'.⁹⁹ Miller also outlined the events taking place to commemorate this date, a service for Commonwealth leaders at Glasgow Cathedral, a service at the Belgium cemetery St Symphorien Military Cemetery, followed by a candle-lit vigil in Westminster Abbey. The Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and 14-18-NOW! wanted the entire U.K to participate in turning their lights off but leaving a single light on, from 10pm to 11pm on 4 August 2014 to create a national 'shared moment of shared reflection' and to highlight the then foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey's words of 'the lamps are going out all over Europe'.¹⁰⁰ 14-18-NOW! estimated that 16.7 million people partook in Lights Out,¹⁰¹ a notable success at the start of the centenary.

⁹⁹ Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, *Maria Miller Sets Out How Government Will Mark First World War Centenary in 2014*, 10 June 2013. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/maria-miller-sets-out-how-government-will-mark-first-world-war-centenary-in-2014> (Accessed 12 March 2019)

¹⁰⁰ Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, *Take Part in #LightsOut*, 10 July 2014. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/take-part-in-lightsout> (Accessed 12 March 2019)

¹⁰¹ Jill Rutter and Sunder Katwala. *Crossing Divides: How Arts and Heritage Can Help Bring Us Together*, British Future (London, 2019), p.10.



Figure 1: *Lights Out* (Lights Out Media Gallery)

The government's next centenary event was the 1 July 2016. Just the word Somme creates a sombre atmosphere when mentioned in contemporary Britain. Being labelled as the worst day in British military history, with 19,000 dead and 40,000 wounded or missing on 1 July 1916, it is understandable why David Cameron chose this as a prominent historical event, yet interesting why the other 140 days of the Battle of the Somme that continued to affect those at home were forgotten within the national commemoration. To mark the event, the British government collaborated with the French government, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Westminster Abbey, Royal British Legion and Manchester City Council, to reflect upon 'the sacrifice not just of the thousands of British and Commonwealth troops who gave their lives, but on all sides did not return home'.¹⁰² The commemorations began on the 30th of June with an evening service at Westminster Abbey, which extended into an overnight vigil at the Unknown

¹⁰² David Cameron,

https://www.nexis.com/results/enhdocview.do?docLinkInd=true&ersKey=23_T28545802755&format=GNBFI&startDocNo=201&resultsUrlKey=0_T28545814812&backKey=20_T28545814813&csi=408506&docNo=212 (Accessed 12 March 2019)

Warrior. 'The vigil ended at 7:25am in Parliament Square, three guns from Kings Troop Royal Horse Artillery fired on Parliament Square for 100 seconds. This was followed by a two-minute silence, and then at 07.30am one long whistle blow marked the moment that the men went over the top 100 years ago'.¹⁰³

In France, the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme hosted an all evening vigil on the 30th June 2016 then on 1 July 2016 welcomed 10,000 guests, including 8,000 British, Irish and French members of the public, descendants and serving military, to join political dignitaries and royal family in a commemorative service of poetry, readings, and British and German music.

In Manchester on the evening of the 1 July 2016, a British national event took place involving a home front and military parade, followed by a service at Manchester Cathedral and an evening concert at Heaton Park. Manchester was chosen to hold the British event because 'a significant number of Pals Battalions' were raised in Manchester and in the North of the country',¹⁰⁴ for it was some of these new Pals Battalions who saw their first combat on the morning of the 1 of July 1916. 19,240 tickets were made available for the concert, with the number of tickets being the exact number of British soldiers who died on 1 July 1916.¹⁰⁵ All tickets were sold. The centenary of the Somme was given three national commemorative events, which is evidence of how the British government perceived it as symbolising a poignant national historical event. Despite the Battle of the Somme commemorations falling a week after Britain had decided to leave the European Union, this political context didn't appear to impact the event. Yet, David Cameron did comment on 'today is a chance to stand as friends with the representatives of all the countries who are here today'.¹⁰⁶ The 'on all sides' comment could have

¹⁰³ Liz Robertson, First World War Centenary, 5th August 2016. <http://www.1914.org/news/national-commemorations-mark-the-start-of-the-battle-of-the-somme-july-2016/> (Accessed 12 March 2019)

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁶ ITV News, *PM: Commemoration is a time to stand as friends*, 1 July 2016, <https://www.itv.com/news/update/2016-07-01/david-cameron-now-is-a-time-to-stand-as-friends/> (Accessed 12 March 2019)

been Cameron's last attempt to find political unity by using a world war. Similar was the 2018 visit to Thiepval Memorial to the Missing by the then Prime Minister Theresa May and President Macron as they sought to strengthen the Anglo-French relations on a historical Anglo-French ground.

The next national centenary event was in July 2017 marking the Third Battle of Ypres, or better known as Passchendaele. Passchendaele, just like the Somme, is a sombre household name. During the overall battle, it is estimated that the British army suffered 250,000 casualties from August to November 1917. The first commemorative event took place at the Menin Gate, in Ypres on the 30th of July with a traditional Last-Post and a thanksgiving service. On 31 July 2017 at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Tyne Cot site, 4,000 members had the chance through ballot to obtain tickets to attend the ceremony of music, poetry and readings, before the event concert in Ypres market square. Readings were given by celebrities including Michael Morpurgo and Hellen Mirren, alongside performances of *The Wipers Times*, battle re-enactments' and commentary from veterans' whose interviews were projected onto the Cloth Hall and voices heard throughout the entire square. These included Harry Patch's account, the reading aloud of veteran's letters and archived images and clips of the battle. The British government intended the Third Battle of Ypres centenary would commemorate the three Battles of Ypres (the first in 1914 and second in 1915) signifying Passchendaele as the most important battle of the three. Karen Bradley, the DCMS secretary noted the focus on Ypres: 'it is important that we remember the horrors of the battlefields of Ypres and honour the many who lost their lives. Some of the First World War's most defining images of futility, mud, gas attacks and trenches come from these battlefields'.¹⁰⁷ Effectively the focus on the army's war through the Somme and Passchendaele will metaphorically entrench trench warfare as the only warfare feature of the First World War.

¹⁰⁷ Karen Bradley, *They Called it Passchendaele: Government Unveils Plans to Mark Centenary of The Third Battle of Ypres*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/they-called-it-passchendaele-government-unveils-plans-to-mark-centenary-of-the-third-battle-of-ypres>, (Accessed 15/03/2019)



Figure 2: Harry Patch Projected on Ypres Cloth Hall (DCMS Twitter)

The introduction outlined the national event marking the centenary of the Armistice, discussed why 10,000 people wanted to take part in ‘A Nations Thank You: The Peoples Procession’. The idea of a national thank you, the then Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright explained, was about ‘the unique generation who served so bravely and made the ultimate sacrifice for their country’. Wright further centred the event around the British public as they gave ‘thanks to all those who served in the First World War to secure the victory that helped shape the rights and privileges we enjoy today’.¹⁰⁸ Heather Jones has argued that the British commemorations were ‘cherry picked’ and silenced other military contributions to the First World War. The war in the air

¹⁰⁸ Sophie Williams. *Remembrance Day People’s Procession 2018*, Evening Standard, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/remembrance-sunday-poppy-procession-2018-route-times-and-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-peoples-a3982546.html> (Accessed 11 September 2019)

and the war at sea were marginalised by the army's war, and this 'cherry picking' Jones argues 'runs the risk of distorting our own popular perceptions of the conflict'.¹⁰⁹

When looking at the two significant government run centenary events, the Battle of the Somme and Battle of Passchendaele (Third Battle of Ypres), the Somme and Ypres were both commemorated across a multitude of national events. Effectively the British government had solidified the scale and loss associated with the First World War in the public's popular memory. One of the features which strengthened this memory was through the choice of location for the commemorative events. The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme was the focal point for the Somme events, which is the largest British and South African memorial in the world commemorating over 72,000 men who have no known grave. The Battle of Passchendaele event was held at the Menin Gate and Tyne Cot Cemetery and Memorial. The Menin Gate commemorates 54,000 men with no known grave and Tyne Cot is the largest cemetery in the world with 12,000 graves and 35,000 men with no known grave marked on the memorial.¹¹⁰ The people's march past the cenotaph in 2018 reminded the country that it represents the absent dead coupled with focus on the Unknown Warrior in a service at Westminster Abbey that evening.

Ross Wilson reasoned that 'the memorials served to focus commemorative activities and frame the memory of the war as one of sacrifice'.¹¹¹ The rhetoric of sacrifice has retained a redemptive status as contemporaries continue to make sense of cost of war. By having the focal point of the Somme and Passchendaele centenary events in cemeteries and memorials can only result in the centralisation of death within First World War popular memory. Furthermore, the commemorative events used cultural expressions such as poetry, readings from diaries or memoirs, music written by deceased soldiers, as defining features of these centenary events. The

¹⁰⁹ Heather Jones. *Conference Report: Commemorating the Centenary of the First World War*, <https://defenceindepth.co/2017/02/28/conference-report-commemorating-the-centenary-of-the-first-world-war/> (Accessed 11 September 2019)

¹¹⁰ Commonwealth War Graves Commission, <https://www.cwgc.org/find/find-cemeteries-and-memorials/featured-cemeteries-and-memorials> (Accessed 9 September 2019)

¹¹¹ Wilson. *Cultural Heritage of the Great War in Britain*, p.18.

ballot ticket advertisement for the events specified for descendants of soldiers in those battles to apply and attend. The remarkable feature of the First World War's dominant memory of death is that 91.6% (8,375,000 mobilised with 702,410 dying)¹¹² of the mobilised British troops survived the war. Benedict Anderson states that by having a focus on sacrifice and death within national commemoration, there is an influence on who can be commemorated and how.¹¹³ In terms of the centenary, the dead were chosen to be commemorated whilst those who survived were not. The British government failed to include this historical fact within their commemorations and acted as an agent to perpetuate this myth. The reason could be the strength of the sense of death and loss associated with the war which results in the blatant disregard of the fact that the First World War was not an entirely a blood bath.

While researching the government centenary events, I found various quote from Prime Ministers and Members of Parliament and discovered their continued use of the word sacrifice when talking about an event. Dan Todman shows how sacrifice is as a national validation for understanding and giving purpose to the vast death that occurred during the war. Todman claims that the association of sacrifice when talking about the First World War, arose in the 1960s, as the futility mythology began to gain weight and the British public were growing chronologically further away from the war. As sacrifice provides a purpose and resonance to death, this narrative effectively challenges the futility myth by tying sacrifice to victory, and the British government could be seen to be protecting their predecessor's legacy by evoking the term sacrifice. In addition, Todman claims that by using words such as sacrifice this adds emphasis on the soldier's valour for 'the redemption of death through sacrifice: they died that we might live'.¹¹⁴ This notion could explain the collective national duty embedded in David Cameron's 'our duty' remark,

¹¹² Gordan Corrigan, *Mud, Blood and Poppycock: Britain and the Great War*, Hachette (London), 2004, p.55.

¹¹³ Benedict Anderson. In *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, Routledge (London and New York, 2000), p.9.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.152.

ensuring the nation understands the significance of the historical event they would be commemorating. Furthermore, the strength in the sacrifice narrative is connected to traditional remembrance ceremonies which feature extracts of The Kohima: 'for your tomorrow, we gave our today'.

Public Art Projects: 14-18-NOW

In June 2013 the DCMS announced funding would be given to the First World War Centenary Programme, which subsequently became 14-18-NOW. The Director, Jenny Waldman remarked 'from the poetry of Siegfried Sassoon to the paintings of Paul Nash, art has provided a prism through which generations have seen the First World War. 100 years later, 14-18-NOW invited contemporary artists to forge fresh connections with the war and the period 1914-18'.¹¹⁵ Throughout the centenary 14-18-NOW delivered 107 projects, in the form of film, theatre, literature, visual arts and music, in all the nations and regions of the United Kingdom.¹¹⁶ The commemorative structure 1418-NOW followed was similar to the government run events covering the anniversary of the declaration of war (2014), the Battle of the Somme (2016) and the Armistice (2018). Throughout the centenary, the programme achieved local, national and international coverage, generating '19,620 items of coverage with 900,000 people visiting the 14-18-NOW website, and Twitter activity reaching 3.5 billion impressions'.¹¹⁷ 1418-NOW's aim 'to engage and stimulate the UK public in fresh and engaging ways that will lead to a new perspective of the First World War and its resonance today'¹¹⁸ can in part be said to have been a success, as the art projects produced saw a modern interpretation of commemoration, but the extent to

¹¹⁵ Burns, Josephine. *14-18-Now: Summary of Evaluation*, https://cdn.1418now.org.uk/uploads/2019/04/03560_1418NOW_Jo_Burns_Report_V4_WR.pdf (Accessed 16 April 2019), p.4.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.12.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.4.

which they created new perspectives of the First World War is limited and the rest of this section will address why.

We're Here Because We're Here

From 2014, where Britain marked the centenary since the First World War broke out, 14-18-NOW had funded a variety of smaller scale, localised projects. However, it wasn't until 2016 where the first national public art project was revealed to British society. How 14-18-NOW chose to commemorate the centenary of 1 July 1916 'raised the bar for cultural programming and has become a leading model for large-scale commemoration'.¹¹⁹ *We're Here Because We're Here* (*Because We're Here* hereafter) commissioned by 14-18-NOW, was created by the artist Jeremy Deller, who worked with the National Theatre and 26 other organisations. On 1 July 2016, Deller and his ephemeral army dispersed 1,600 participants, dressed as First World War soldiers, into 21st century public spaces: railway stations, shopping centres and high streets, in 52 locations around the United Kingdom.¹²⁰ The soldiers remained silent all day, if anyone addressed them, they handed out a card which said a name, regiment, age and date of death of a soldier, being 1 July 1916. It wasn't until the end of the day that they became vocal, singing 'We're Here Because We're Here', a song the soldiers sang as they headed to the trenches, and then they dispersed. It is estimated that the project reached '28 million people through broadcast, print and social media, and in total was experienced by 63% of the UK population'.¹²¹ In their 2016 Evaluation report 14-18-NOW claimed '77% of people who experienced *Because We're Here*, felt that it had made the Battle of the Somme more relevant to people's lives today',¹²² whilst 86% of people who

¹¹⁹ 14-18-NOW, <https://www.1418now.org.uk/>, (Accessed 18 April 2019)

¹²⁰ Burns, Josephine. *14-18-NOW: Summary of Evaluation*, https://cdn.1418now.org.uk/uploads/2019/04/03560_1418NOW_Jo_Burns_Report_V4_WR.pdf, p.6. (Accessed 16 April 2019)

¹²¹ *Ibid*

¹²² 14-18-NOW 2016 Season Evaluation Report, <https://cdn.1418now.org.uk/uploads/2017/06/14-18-NOW-Evaluation-Report-2016-executive-summary.pdf>, P.5 (Accessed 18 April 2019)

experienced the project 'agreed it was an appropriate way of commemorating the centenary of the Battle of the Somme'.¹²³ The vast publicity received resulted in the project receiving 14 awards for its digital campaign.

One of the main successes of this project can be attributed to the artist in a thirty-minute documentary¹²⁴ about the project, Deller stated that he discovered reports of mothers or wives during the war saying they had seen their deceased in the public street, on a bus or in a shop-. Deller reflected that 'it's as if the project had already happened during the war'.¹²⁵ This was a common phenomenon amongst the grieving widows or mothers, especially upon the unveiling of the tomb of the Unknown Warrior. Adrian Gregory claimed the tomb had a more profound emotional reaction than the Cenotaph did, because it allowed those who were grieving to imagine the body to be their husband or son, for thousands of men's bodies went missing and have no known grave. One woman had travelled from Pentland to the Unknown Warrior on 11 November 1920 because 'her man was one of the missing and in her heart was thought that he might be the unknown'.¹²⁶ An unidentified mother wrote an open letter to the Unknown Warrior expressing 'I knew he would make his history. Buried in Westminster Abbey- my son John'.¹²⁷ It wasn't just mothers' intuition which led these women to believe their son was the Unknown Warrior, women would visit clairvoyants to try and reconnect to their lost ones, and in 1921 one woman brought a wreath to the cenotaph after being told by a clairvoyant, the bones in the Unknown Soldier were that of her son.¹²⁸ This unknown figure had the ability to soothe mourning and provide hope for those mothers and widows that their man had returned home.

¹²³ *Ibid*, p.6

¹²⁴ Jeremy Deller, *We're Here Because We're Here* (2016)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXnr3w74TJs> (Accessed 18 April 2019)

¹²⁵ *Ibid*

¹²⁶ Adrian Gregory. *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day 1919-1946*, Berg (Oxford), 1994, p.27

¹²⁷ Bourke, Joanna. *Dismembering the Male, Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, Reaktion Books, 1999, p.245.

¹²⁸ Gregory. *The Silence of Memory*, p.27.

Gregory believes part of the reason for these women desperation for answers or peace, was due to the falling infant mortality rates in the 1880s. He claimed a ‘situation which we now consider to be natural, the expectation that children would outlive their parents. Perhaps for the first time in history, parents were emotionally unprepared for the death of their children’,¹²⁹ which provides some resonance to the longing desire of seeing their son or husband in everyday life to believing they are the Unknown Warrior.



Figure 3: We're Here Because We're Here (Because We're Here Media Gallery)

Deller wanted to ensure the living memorial would have a profound public reaction, he decided it should be secret up until the day, mimicking the secrecy kept around the Battle of the Somme itself. Deller avoided typical places of commemoration: churches, war memorials, and castles, to avoid sentimentality and to create genuine public shock. Deller wanted to evoke shock from the British public, to remind them how 1 July 1916 was the worst day in British military history and a national tragedy for the families and loved ones who had lost someone, and to create

¹²⁹ Gregory. *The Silence of Memory*, p.22.

a 'public enquiry of British history, through art'.¹³⁰ The impact of this shock stemmed from placing the soldiers into everyday spaces, which Deller wanted to remind the British public that they were like us- they would shop, make the morning commute, go to school etc. That was the true power in this artwork.

By starting the soldiers in transport hubs, it allowed the British public to disseminate the soldiers through social media and from there the project became a public one. In theory, the British public became a part of the production process of commemoration, as allowing the public to control the project through social media, transforms the artwork from a 'top-down' creation to a 'bottom-up' control, as the British public captured the event and narrated it by tapping into their dominant cultural memory. This does create an issue for other projects that could be misunderstood by the public or important projects that might not be picked up and disseminated.

To the surprise of Deller, 14-18-NOW and everyone else involved, the public response was exactly what they hoped for and more. Even today, the project still has resonance with the public as found on Twitter: 'Jeremy Deller's piece was the one that moved me to tears when I saw it'¹³¹; 'seeing those young men in uniform at the station and being so thankful that my sons, and those of others, were safe due to those who died',¹³² 'the experience of seeing soldiers... walking the streets like any one of us- it was an emotional, overwhelming, humbling and emotional experience- I actually had a little tear'.¹³³ This demonstrates the poignancy of seeing a First World War soldier and how impactful that image is within popular memory. Helen McCartney has identified the male 'victim soldier' as a 'logical consequence' of popular narratives. For the image

¹³⁰ Jeremy Deller, *We're Here Because We're Here* (2016)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXnr3w74TJs> (Accessed 18 April 2019)

¹³¹ Misthois (@Farore13) 'Jeremy Deller's piece was the one that moved e to tears when I saw it. Certainly, one of the best and the most sobering, public art pieces I've ever seen'. 29 March 2019, 11:56 PM, Tweet

¹³² Horn, Avril (@Stitchinscience) '#1418NOW seeing those young men in uniform and being so thankful that my sons, and those of others, were safe due to those who died'. 31 March 2019, 09:51 AM, Tweet

¹³³ Kelle (@kellegall) 'The experience of seeing (in real life) soldiers who were on the way to war (especially knowing how it turned out), walking the streets like any one of us- it was an overwhelming, humbling and emotional experience- I actually had a little tear #1418NOW'. 1 April 2019, 01:44 PM, Tweet

of this soldier, the one that Deller had walking around Britain, is one associated with the 'senseless slaughter of millions of young men who fought in an alien landscape of muddy trenches and gaping shell holes'.¹³⁴ This popular image can provide an explanation of the emotional response by the public.

Whilst the human cost of war was a defining feature of Deller's art work, Deller conveyed a unique perception and interpretation to the narrative of death. In the *Because We're Here* documentary, Deller refers to his piece of art as a living kinetic memorial and what is interesting is how Deller referred to the project as a memorial rather than a piece of art. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, to memorialise is 'to preserve the memory of; to be or supply a memorial of; commemorate' and as we know from the previous chapter the memorials that were erected in the 1920s, were derived as an expression of a collective personal loss. These memorials are defining features of villages, towns or cities and Deller personified the names on the memorials, making them living soldiers again. Adrian Gregory explained how in the early 1920s the use of local war memorials and Books of Remembrance in Cathedrals or Churches, to read out the names of the war dead were a vital part of the process of bereavement.¹³⁵ Perhaps without realising, Deller has tapped into traditional forms of commemoration by having living memorials which reveal a name on the memorial to the public. Jay Winter argues that war memorials in fact 'deconstruct death' for they draw attention to the horror, trauma and sacrifice when reflecting on an individual. Winter too claims that war memorials have an association with 'a collective sacrifice' which takes away the individuality of the soldier's names on the memorial and reduces them to the 'collective spirit embodied in the state' where the living British public recall up their 'indebtedness' to those who died.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Helen McCartney. *The First World War Soldier and His Contemporary Image in Britain*. International Affairs 90: 2 (2014) p.299.

¹³⁵ Gregory, *The Silence of Memory*, pp. 23-24.

¹³⁶ Winter. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* p.94.

Deller also memorialised his soldiers through the card's that were handed out to the members of the public. Deller stated that he wanted these cards to be durable, just like miniature tombstones- each card had similar description to what you would find on a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone- Name, Rank, Regiment, Date of Death. Ross Wilson argued that the headstones of soldiers are a permanent reminder of the 'sacrifice and heroic death for a great cause'.¹³⁷ He uses a quote from Edward Lutyens – 'all men in all times may read and know the reason why these stones are so placed throughout France'- to enhance associated popular memory of death and sacrifice to the cemeteries and memorials seen all over the Western Front today.

Deller may have not intended to make an awareness of the pre-existing narrative of death within the First World War, but by creating ghost soldiers who represented a living memorial, carrying around a headstone card, echoing 'we're here because we're here', all have elements which reinforce pre-existing popular memory, rather than create a new perception to the understanding of the First World War. A new modern perception of how commemoration could be conducted was created, it showed the effectiveness of living history, rather than the ability to educate.

They Shall Not Grow Old

14-18-NOW showcased two public art projects to mark a centenary since the signing of the Armistice. The first project was Peter Jackson's documentary film *They Shall Not Grow Old*, first shown to the British public on 15 October 2018, in cinemas, theatres and schools around the country. Peter Jackson and his production company Wingnut Films restored and colourised over 600 hundred hours of century old First World War footage from the Imperial War Museum (IWM).

¹³⁷ Wilson, *Cultural Heritage of the Great War in Britain*, p.87.

14-18-NOW and the IWM approached Jackson with this project in mind and he took ‘an immersive deep-dive into what it was like for ordinary British soldiers on the Western Front’. Jackson remarked that ‘this film becomes about people, about human being’ and colourisation was ‘because they saw it in colour’.¹³⁸



Figure 4: They Shall Not Grow Old (They Shall Not Grow Old Media Gallery)

The name *They Shall Not Grow Old* comes from the 1914 poem ‘For the Fallen’ by Laurence Binyon, where the fourth stanza is famously used in the Ode of Remembrance in most remembrance ceremonies. This is another example of how traditional forms of remembrance have infiltrated the modern commemoration used in the centenary. The juxtaposition of tradition and new is how Jackson has structured the documentary: archived century old footage now colourised and archived veteran interviews now narrating a documentary.

It wasn’t a typical documentary, there was no narrative, no naming of dates, places or soldiers, only use of 120 veteran’s interviews which had been recorded by the BBC in the

¹³⁸ Bringing Colour to World War One, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDc-6amUf4> (Accessed 21 April 2019)

1960/70s. The main focus of the documentary was 'What was it like to be a British soldier on the Western Front' and that is exactly what the British public were educated on. They saw the latrines, heard and saw what the soldiers ate, and how they attempted to overcome boredom. Peter Bradshaw from *The Guardian* rightly stated that the documentary is 'limited in scope: it is just about the Western Front and there is nothing about the German point of view, or about the war elsewhere'.¹³⁹ A valid point indeed, the scope of what the public were having revealed as a reality of war, was just as Heather Jones termed 'cherry picked' and limited to the Western Front. Neglecting the Russian, Italian and the Dardanelles fronts. There is a justification for this, working with the IWM and BBC would mean their achieves would be focussed on the Western Front where the majority of British troops were stationed. This cultural production ensures the British public are provided with a focal point of recognition that the Western Front is the main arena of fighting during the First World War, effectively reducing the complex four-and-a-half-year history to one battlefield. This reductionist narrative is not attributed solely to Jackson's work, as explained earlier in the chapter the DCSM placed the Western Front battles as poignant markers for commemoration during the centenary.

Regardless, this film is arguably one of the only projects which attempted to challenge myths of the war. Death is an inevitable factor of war, but this documentary focussed in on what it was like for those who lived and survived the war first-hand. Similarly, to Deller's project, the reality of seeing 'the faces and hearing voices made the soldiers real people, they were no longer names on a war memorial'.¹⁴⁰ This enabled the history to come to life again and the British public to reimagine some aspects of the First World War. A complete distortion of the dominant popular memory would not have been achieved through one film, but it highlights and educates on some hidden histories surrounding the realities of 20th century warfare.

¹³⁹ Peter Bradshaw <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/oct/16/they-shall-not-grow-old-review-first-world-war-peter-jackson> (Accessed 21 April 2019)

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*

They Shall Not Grow Old was shown on television on 11 November 2018 on BBC 2, in addition to BBC iPlayer audiences, 14-18-NOW reported an estimated 3.9 million people watched the documentary, whilst 78,000 people saw it in the cinema and 5,797 UK secondary schools had a free DVD sent to them.¹⁴¹ The documentary clearly caught the British public's attention and, in a survey, conducted by 14-18-NOW and YouGov asking which project is appropriate to mark the centenary, 73% responded 'strong agree' to *They Shall Not Grow Old*. The popularity of the documentary can be an indicator of a public acceptance for what they are seeing and hearing as the historical truth. One of the features the documentary used to provide an element of historical accuracy, was the use of interviews from 120 veterans, which took place just over 50 years after the war.¹⁴²

The extent to which these accounts are historically accurate could be challenged on the basis that the interviews 'were much more about the life after the war than about the war itself'. Janet Watson believes there are a multitude of elements which come into the construction of memory, rather than the original experience.¹⁴³ The BBC interviews were recorded in 1964 a period of time during which Gary Sheffield believed 'that the British national perception of the First World War as futile and incompetent became firmly established'.¹⁴⁴ Jackson's use of veteran's accounts from the 1960s is a good example demonstrating the cyclical nature of popular memory. Bart Ziino claims popular memory of the First World War in Britain derives from media portrayals, as the British public are accepting the historical portrayal as a believed truth.¹⁴⁵ This is supported by the Popular Memory Group as they found the power of dominant memories

¹⁴¹ 14-18-NOW 2018 Season Evaluation Report, <https://cdn.1418now.org.uk/uploads/2019/04/14-18-NOW-2018-Season-Evaluation-Exec-Summary-Final-1.pdf> (Accessed 22 April 2019) p.10

¹⁴² BBC News, *Meet the Real Soldiers Behind They Shall Not Grow Old*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-46157508/meet-the-real-soldiers-behind-they-shall-not-grow-old>, (Accessed 9 September 2019); Flicks, *Peter Jackson Interview: How I made the Visually Stunning They Shall Not Grow Old*, <https://www.flicks.com.au/features/peter-jackson-interview-how-i-made-the-visually-stunning-they-shall-not-grow-old/> (Accessed 9 September 2019)

¹⁴³ Watson. *Fighting Different Wars*, p.187.

¹⁴⁴ Sheffield. *Forgotten Victory*, p.14.

¹⁴⁵ Ziino. *Remembering The First World War*, p.59.

depends not simply on their public visibility but also on their capacity to connect with and articulate particular popular conceptions'.¹⁴⁶ This is what Jackson did in the creation of *They Shall Not Grow Old*, by reusing veterans' recollections to fit in with the historical narrative Jackson wanted to portray, whilst legitimising the veteran's recollections as historical truth to the contemporary audience. By using the veterans accounts Jackson stated, 'I didn't want individual stories about individuals. I wanted it to be what it ended up being: 120 men telling a single story'.¹⁴⁷ From the outset, Jackson had an intention to create one historical narrative from a multitude of voices, whilst silencing some perspectives that didn't fit within his creation of what it was like on the Western Front. Whilst Jackson did create an awareness of new features of the life of the soldier on the Western Front in a new modern way, it was limited in its historical focus by narrowing the First World War history to an hour and a half footage narrated by 120 British veterans.

Pages of the Sea

The second 14-18-NOW Armistice centenary project was Danny Boyle's *Pages of the Sea*. A national project across the United Kingdom and Ireland, using 32 beaches, Danny Boyle invited communities to come and join him on 11 November 2018 to create faces of the First World War on the beaches. Boyle wanted the beaches to 'partner the more formal ceremonies that happen at the cenotaph- a compliment to it, and to try and make it more a community-based gesture'.¹⁴⁸ That is exactly what the project did, with an estimate of 94,500 people volunteering or visiting the beaches. The images of the First World War figures were of a mixed variety, from the omnipresent

¹⁴⁶ Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper. *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, p.13.

¹⁴⁷ Flicks, Peter Jackson Interview: How I Made The Visually Stunning *They Shall Not Grow Old*, <https://www.flicks.com.au/features/peter-jackson-interview-how-i-made-the-visually-stunning-they-shall-not-grow-old/> (Accessed 22 April 2019)

¹⁴⁸ Danny Boyle, *Pages of the Sea*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMgUE2Lg79E>, (Accessed 22 April 2019)

Wilfred Owen; to the lesser known first black officer to command white troops, Walter Tull; to Elsie Inglis: avowed suffragette, a medical nurse and surgeon who served in Serbia and Russia. Danny Boyle emphasised the atmosphere for the event to be one of thanks, by being thankful for ‘those who gave, and changed their lives’.¹⁴⁹ Similarities can be drawn from *Because We’re Here* and *They Shall Not Grow Old*, by the humanisation of these projects, centralising around the human cost of war.

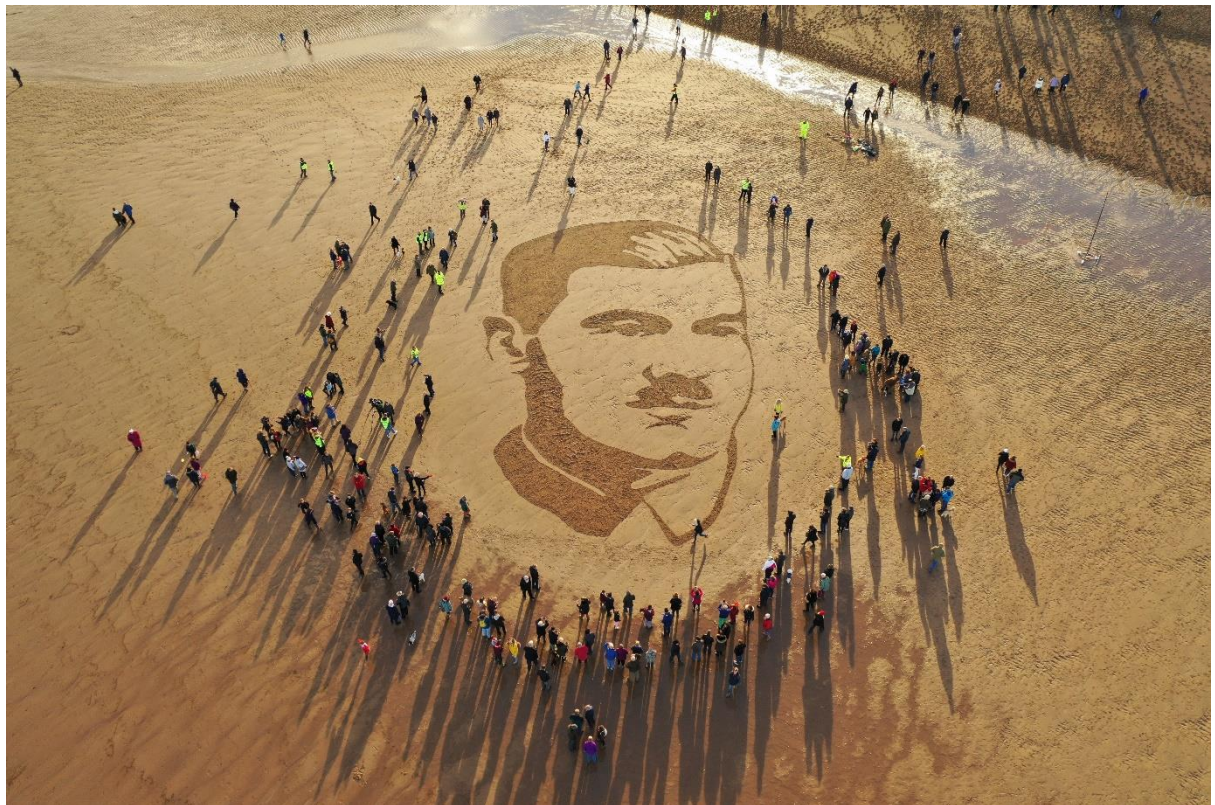


Figure 5: *Pages of the Sea* (Pages of the Sea Media Gallery)

Just as projects threaded in traditional forms of remembrance, *Pages of the Sea* used poetry to convey its meaning. Poet Carol Anne Duffy was commissioned to write a poem for the event, as Boyle believed ‘poetry changed the world then. It reported in the way TV does now. It reported something that is unimaginable to the people’.¹⁵⁰ The final three lines from the poem are quite poignant, evoking the futility narrative by associating the soldiers sacrifice with the

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*

notion that we haven't learnt from history. With history being the sea, it washes away the faces of the soldiers as they each represent a sacrifice made before we learn from history:

'History might as well be water, chastising this shore;

for we learn nothing from your endless sacrifice.

Your faces drowning in the pages of the sea'.¹⁵¹

A participant from Folkestone remarked, in the 14-18-NOW focus group, how *Pages of the Sea* was different to the other projects, because of its inclusivity of the local communities.¹⁵² 14-18-NOW were impressed with 'the number of family and intergenerational visits' to *Pages of the Sea* and how '27% of visitor came on a family visit'.¹⁵³ In addition, a YouGov survey in 2019 found '61% of attenders at '*Pages of the Sea*' reported that the experience made them want to find out more about their own family in relation to the First World War'.¹⁵⁴ The First World War has a special ability to intertwine national memory and family memory. *Pages of the Sea* is one of the larger scale projects which allowed families to identify with the First World War on a metaphorical or literal basis within a community environment. *Pages of the Sea* enabled people to collectively assert their emotions to an individual which the local family visiting could adopt for their personal commemoration. By Boyle placing historical figures with a connection to the area on a beach, it allowed members of the public to identify and frame their localised history with this individual. By intertwining a national event within individual memories, this reaffirms a localised personal connection to the First World War. The face in the sand can also be perceived as a social frame

¹⁵¹ Carol Ann Duffy, *The Wound in Time*, <https://www.pagesofthesea.org.uk/the-wound-in-time/> (Accessed 22 April 2019)

¹⁵² Rutter and Katwala. *Crossing Divides*, p.12.

¹⁵³ 14-18-NOW: Summary of Evaluation, https://cdn.1418now.org.uk/uploads/2019/04/03560_1418NOW_Jo_Burns_Report_V4_WR.pdf, p.15

¹⁵⁴ House of Commons, *Lessons From the First World War Centenary*, 16 July 2019, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcomeds/2001/2001.pdf> (Accessed 21 September 2019)

for members of the British public to assert their personal claim and identify within the national commemoration, thus tying the individual to the nation.

14-18-NOW stated they had three aims when directing their art projects throughout the centenary and their final one reads 'to engage communities all over the United Kingdom, especially young people and new audiences, in reflection on the period of the First World War, broadening awareness and bringing new perspectives'.¹⁵⁵ The question to ask here, when assessing the three main projects is, did 14-18-NOW as an agent of remembrance, achieve a broaden awareness and new perspectives during the First World War centenary? It can be agreed that 14-18-NOW did create a new awareness of modern commemorations of the First World War. Whilst the projects were created on a national basis, they engaged local communities. *Because We're Here* placed the soldiers in as many aspects of a local community, from the local train station to walking through the aisles of Tesco. *They Shall Not Grow Old* was screened in a host of local cinemas, but also sent out to 5,797 secondary schools to ensure another generation and target audience was reached and *Pages of the Sea* sought to engage and deliver a project to a local community, so that the young and old could create a centenary project.

Unlike any other First World War national commemoration, the First World War centenary harnessed the power of social media to disseminate these projects on a national and international level. The reward being worldwide recognition, but is this recognition attributed to an awareness of the commemoration rather than achieving a new perspective? The three projects looked at, in one way or another focussed on loss. These projects did encourage more people to participate in the centenary commemorations, hopefully inspired and encouraged some to dive deeper into the history, they brought families together, and even created unity and identity amongst society at a time of socio-political uncertainty but didn't enable 14-18-NOW in achieving its aim of bringing in new perspectives of the First World War. *Because We're Here, They Shall*

¹⁵⁵ 14-18-NOW: Summary of Evaluation, https://cdn.1418now.org.uk/uploads/2019/04/03560_1418NOW_Jo_Burns_Report_V4_WR.pdf, p.1

Not Grow Old, and *Faces of the Sea* did not challenge the dominant cultural / popular memory of the war. Lucy Noakes argues that *Because We're Here* and *Pages of the Sea* focus on the impact of war, by personalising and bringing to life the soldiers it maintains the narrative of loss and 'the figure of victim-soldier' which Noakes and McCartney believe is 'central to the cultural memory of the war in 21st Century Britain'.¹⁵⁶ The new perspective they did create was the modernisation of commemoration. Since the 1920s the way in which Britain commemorates its war dead is bound within the national calendar with Remembrance Sunday and November 11. These were and are the British traditional forms of commemoration, but what the 14-18-NOW projects did was create a new environment for national commemoration and personal reflection, but still contributed to the hegemony of the First World War popular memory by conveying messages of death and the cultural association attached to death.

Historic Royal Palace Projects

In conjunction to the public art projects produced by 1418 NOW, two public art projects were produced by Historic Royal Palaces to coincide with the outbreak of the First World War and the signing of Armistice.

Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red

Their first big project was *Blood Swept Lands and Sea of Red* (hereafter BLSLR). Artists Paul Cummins and Tom Piper worked with Historic Palaces England to create BLSLR in the moat of the Tower of London. 888,246 ceramic poppies were planted by 30,000 volunteers, to represent the 888,246 British and Commonwealth military fatalities of the First World War. Todman has argued by using statistics in this way is a tool to 'attract audience's attention, to make

¹⁵⁶ Lucy Noakes, 'Poppy Petals'. Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres 2019

a point or to ground a specific aesthetic representation in a wider experience'.¹⁵⁷ Yet to Paul Cummins the poppy appeared more than a statistics, 'ceramics are transient and fragile, like we are ... I settled on the poppy because of its links to war and remembrance'.¹⁵⁸ The ceramic poppies were revealed to the public on 4 August 2014 and remained encircling the Tower of London until 11 November 2014.



Figure 6: *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* (Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red Media Gallery)

Since John McCrae published his power *In Flanders Fields* in 1915, the poppy has retained its poignant symbol to the First World War dead since: 'In Flanders fields the poppies blow, Between the crosses, row on row ... We are the Dead. Short days ago, We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow, and now we lie, In Flanders fields... We shall not sleep, though poppies grow, In Flanders fields'.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Todman. *The Great War Myth and Memory*, p.66.

¹⁵⁸ Imogen Tilden, *How We Made the Tower of London Poppies*, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/mar/05/how-we-made-tower-of-london-poppies-paul-cummins-tom-piper> (Accessed 17 April 2019)

¹⁵⁹ John McCrae, *In Flanders Fields* (1915), <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47380/in-flanders-fields> (Accessed 12 September 2019)

The poem inspired an American woman named Monia Michael and a French woman Anna Guérin who both successfully campaigned for fabric poppies to be created and sold, with the funds supporting the ex-servicemen. Guérin had met with Early Haig in 1921 -Haig at this point had founded the Royal British Legion- and found Haig too was appalled with the post-war hardship the veterans had to deal with. Guérin persuaded Haig to make the poppy the symbol of the Royal British Legion and from Armistice day 1921 the Royal British Legion has sold poppies ever since.¹⁶⁰ The hegemonic popular memory to the remembrance poppy ties it to the imagery within McCrae's poem of trench warfare which is the believed cause of thousands of deaths. The naming of the art project also conjures up this imagery. '*Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*' creates all sorts of horror-film imagery in one's head but stems from an unknown soldier of the First World War which Cummins discovered some old records in Chesterfield¹⁶¹. Within this artwork the remembrance poppy is reduced to the narrative of death and the mythological associations to death.

Such a display did not go unnoticed: *The Spectator* claimed the poppies were 'for a week or so, the most Googled image in the world'¹⁶² and it was estimated that nearly five million people from the United Kingdom came and visited the poppies. Edwin Heathcote from the *Financial Times* summarised the poppies as 'the most effective expression of commemoration in British history'.¹⁶³ The public were also given the chance to purchase one of the poppies for £20 and it was reported that some expressed their discontent to the inability of purchasing a poppy, for they had sold out.¹⁶⁴ The ceramic poppy became a part of modern commemoration, whereby it wasn't just something you'd pin to a coat in November, it became an attraction and a souvenir, allowing

¹⁶⁰ Royal British Legion, *About Remembrance*, <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/remembrance/about-remembrance/the-poppy> (Accessed 12 September 2019)

¹⁶¹ Maeve Kennedy. *Poppies to Fill Tower of London Moat in First World War Commemoration*, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/07/tower-london-moat-filled-ceramic-poppies-ww1-dead> (Accessed 13 September 2019)

¹⁶² Kidd and Sayner. *Unthinking Remembrance?* p.1.

¹⁶³ Paul Cummins, <https://www.paulcumminsceramics.com/blood-swept/> (Accessed 17 April 2019)

¹⁶⁴ Kidd and Sayner, *Unthinking Remembrance?* p.78.

the purchaser to turn the public memory attached to the poppy, into a private memory attributing to it whatever First World War connection they may have.

Jay Winter reminds us that 'war experience is not in your belly, unless you were wounded there; for everyone else it is in your mind and in your memories'.¹⁶⁵ This is an interesting point to remember when forming an understanding of the British public's reaction and understanding of BSLSR. Upon seeing the poppies, the British public would have naturally understood the poppy as a traditional symbol of remembrance, whilst associating it with the popular understandings of the First World War: loss, trench warfare and poetry. Jenny Kidd and Jane Sayner conducted research on the British public's response to the poppies at the *Tower of London*, by handing out questionnaire postcards to people visiting the *Tower of London*. They themed the responses into two categories: '100 years as an ambiguous but compelling milestone and narratives of sacrifice'.¹⁶⁶ They found the public understood the centenary by intertwining the three statements: '1) that 100 years functions as a significant milestone, 2) that a centenary keeps memories and stories alive, 3) that it means there are few people left who lived through the war itself'.¹⁶⁷ Kidd and Sayner believed this understanding of the centenary was a 'consequence of the cult of centenary' whereby people understand 'the appropriate ways to debate the centenary'.¹⁶⁸

By demonstrating how some members of the British public are understanding the centenary, Kidd and Sayner also demonstrate how members of the public responded to the poppy as a symbol of remembrance. They discovered that the public were interpreting BSLSR as a narrative of sacrifice. The postcards that were given out asked three questions which focussed on the individual reflection to commemoration. They found respondents evoked sacrifice in two ways: the first through possessive pronouns, that sacrifice was made by 'our ancestors', 'our forefather' or 'our grandfathers and their fathers'. Kidd and Sayner claim that the use of

¹⁶⁵ Winter, Jay. *Museums and the Representation of War*, *Museum and Society*, 10(3), 2012, p.162.

¹⁶⁶ Kidd and Sayner. *Unthinking Remembrance?* p.5.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.72.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*

possessive pronouns is an indirect way of the public tying themselves to the nation.¹⁶⁹ Using pronouns such as ‘our’ or ‘us’, is an example of the individual identifying themselves within the national historical past, which links back to David Cameron’s comments in 2012 outlining the centenary as ‘our duty’.

The second using non-specific possessive pronouns such as ‘they sacrificed their lives for our country’ and ‘they gave their lives for all of us’.¹⁷⁰ They found that freedom was the reason for understanding sacrifice. In terms of the non-specific possessive pronouns, evidence is shown of the connection between the traditional words read out from the Kohima and how sacrifice in this instance is being used by the British collective memory to make an understanding of the death tolls put in front of them with this piece of art. Through it has a history dating back to 480 BC the Kohima as an epitaph arose in 1916, where J.M. Edmonds wrote it with twelve others for a cemetery in France. His version was ‘When you go home tell them of us and say’, ‘For your to-morrows these gave their to-day’.¹⁷¹ In the Second World War the Kohima got its revival from Major John Etry-Leal of the British 2nd Division, who remembered Edmonds version and created his own version to remain with the British men who were buried at Kohima after a vital battle in the Burma Campaign. The Major’s version is the one which has been used at most remembrance ceremonies since 1944: ‘When you go home, tell them of us and say, ‘For your tomorrow, we gave our to-day’.¹⁷² The use of traditional commemorative language shown in the respondent’s answers link with the message in the Kohima and evoked when seeing a remembrance poppy. As the poppy is the British remembrance symbol of military death it is understandable that the image of 888,246 poppies will link sacrifice with death as the British public still try to make sense of the scale of loss within the First World War.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.10.

¹⁷⁰ Kidd and Sayner, *Unthinking Remembrance?* pp.75-6.

¹⁷¹ Kohima Museum, <http://www.kohimamuseum.co.uk/kohima-epitaph/>, (Accessed 10 May 2019)

¹⁷² Burma Star Association, <https://web.archive.org/web/20150510152752/http://www.burmastar.org.uk/epitaph.htm> (Accessed 10 May 2019) (Accessed 10 May 2019)

Beyond the Deepening Shadow: The Tower Remembers

The second commemorative art installation from Historic Royal Palaces was *Beyond The Deepening Shadow: The Tower Remembers* which was installed for the centenary marking the end of the First World War. The Tower of London was centre stage to the art installation seeing its moat light up with thousands of individual flames. Historic Royal Palaces said it was ‘a public act of remembrance for the lives of the fallen, honouring their sacrifice’.¹⁷³ Tom Piper and Mira Calix were the artists who designed the installation, and had it run for eight nights from 4th – 11th November, where the Beefeaters (significantly all ex-military) gradually lit the cannisters and let them burn for four hours an evening.



Figure 7: *Beyond the Deepening Shadow* (Beyond the Deepening Shadow Media Gallery)

Accompanying the visual display was the musical work constructed by Mira Calix. The musical piece *One Lighted Look For Me* used words from Mary Borden’s *Sonnets to a Soldier*.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Historic Royal Palaces, *The Tower Remembers*, <https://www.hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london/whats-on/the-tower-remembers/#gs.2zdko1> (Accessed 13 September 2019)

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*

The message Calix took from the poem was its 'universality that transcends its romantic nature to that of wider reflection on encapsulating friendship, light, courage, and loss'.¹⁷⁵ Piper believed 'the flame is an act of commemoration, but also its hope for a peaceful world'.¹⁷⁶ General Lord Houghton, the Constable of the Tower of London commented 'we remembered them at the Tower on the anniversary of the start of the war, and it feels equally appropriate that we should again commemorate their sacrifice 100 years after hostilities came to an end'.¹⁷⁷

The comments above are insightful as to how *Beyond the Deepening Shadow's* creation was interpreted. The sacrifice narrative is prominent amongst the two artists, with Calix narrating the illumination through poetry which embodies the pity of war narrative and Piper drawing on Kidd and Sayner's theory that people understand 'the appropriate ways to debate the centenary'.¹⁷⁸ As Lord Houghton has also shown, marking the end of the First World War is dominated by the thought of commemorating the sacrifice given in four-and-a-half-years fighting, which stems from the traditional narrative when commemorating Armistice and Remembrance Sunday. *Beyond the Deepening Shadow* is an example of the hegemonic power behind the myths of death and sacrifice and an indication of the little impact the centenary had on these narratives.

Conclusion

Five national public art projects were explored in this chapter. Each project demonstrated the modern platforms on which remembrance and commemoration can be enacted, but still used traditional pre-existing commemorative features and demonstrated the cyclical nature of popular memory by reusing specific historical features to structure the projects. Jeremy Deller in *Because*

¹⁷⁵ Mira Calix. *Beyond the Deepening Shadow: The Tower Remembers*, <http://www.miracalix.com/news/beyond-the-deepening-shadow-the-tower-remembers/> (Accessed 12 September 2019)

¹⁷⁶ David Merchan. *10,000 Torch Display in London Marks 100th Anniversary of World War One's Conclusion*, ABC News, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/10000-torches-lit-night-london-ahead-100th-anniversary/story?id=58974336> (Accessed 12 September 2019)

¹⁷⁷ Asher McShane. *10,000 Flames Alight at Tower of London to Mark First World War Centenary*, Evening Standard, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/10000-flames-alight-at-tower-of-london-to-mark-first-world-war-centenary-a3980041.html> (Accessed 12 September 2019)

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*

We're Here personified the dead of the July 1, 1916 as the ghost soldiers walked through contemporary Britain handing out what can only be described as their own tombstones. Peter Jackson brought the First World War into modern imagery through the colourisation of archived footage narrated by veterans, whilst the title of the documentary *They Shall Not Grow Old* is the popular stanza in the Ode of Remembrance featured at most commemorative ceremonies. Danny Boyle's *Pages of the Sea* had faces of the First World War wash away at the end of the day in a poetic reminder that we hadn't learnt from the lessons of the First World War. The popularity amongst the 1418-NOW! projects can be attributed to the humanisation of history.

Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red and *Beyond the Deepening Shadow* structured their art projects around death and sacrifice narratives, the poppy was placed as the defining symbol of death as it represented a single British and Commonwealth death, whilst the illuminated torches marked the sacrifice made by the 888,246 military fatalities from the duration of the war. Each of these projects had the ability through social media and news coverage to reach audiences that may have not been engaged or known of the First World War centenary and their true power lay within the ability to create an awareness of historical commemoration rather than acting as platforms to communicate historical information.

Chapter 3: Heritage Lottery Funding and The Role Of Communities

*'Every single community in Scotland and Northern Ireland lost someone, and the death toll for our friends in the Commonwealth was similarly catastrophic. In the 1920s over 2,400 cemeteries were constructed in France and Belgium alone, while today there are cemeteries as far afield as Brazil and Syria, Egypt and Ireland.'*¹⁷⁹

The quote above is an extract from David Cameron's speech at the Imperial War Museum (IWM) in 2012. As touched upon in the previous chapter Cameron had not only set the tone for a national commemoration, but also for a community commemoration claiming he wanted the centenary to 'mean something in every locality in our country'.¹⁸⁰ In the quote above, Cameron addressed the 'world' meaning to the First World War, reminding his audience of the contribution of the Commonwealth nations and the battlefronts that were not the Western Front. In wanting to recreate a sense of national pride as performed during the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012, Cameron 'passionately' believed in the value of passing on our heritage to the next generation and in doing so wanted the centenary to have an identity focus on 'who we are as a people'.¹⁸¹ This chapter will look at the role of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the community throughout the centenary by exploring four under-represented areas of First World War history: Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) group, religion, gender and class. It was key for the HLF to achieve its aim in 'encouraging a broad range of perspectives and interpretation of the First World War'¹⁸² and the projects *Killyleagh Remembers*, *Dear Mrs Pennyman*, and *Remember Us – Muslim Communities* are just three representative examples of HLF projects which explored hidden narratives of the First World War. The last chapter assessed the impact of government centenary

¹⁷⁹ David Cameron, *Speech at Imperial War Museum on First World War Centenary Plans*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/speech-at-imperial-war-museum-on-first-world-war-centenary-plans>, (Accessed 10 March 2019)

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*

¹⁸² Heritage Lottery Fund, *Evaluation of First World War Centenary Activity*, <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/publications/evaluation-first-world-war-centenary-activity> (Accessed 2 June 2019)

events and public art projects and how they disseminated the dominant popular memory of the war. This chapter will look at the community projects to examine whether they reinterpreted or challenged the dominant popular memory of the First World War.

Heritage shares similar features to Popular Memory Theory, as it is 'constituted by a struggle between a series of agents' which reconstruct and construct to 'assert the primacy of person, religious, ethnic, cultural and national identities'.¹⁸³ Therefore, the HLF projects all demonstrate the importance of heritage in creating an identity and how national commemorations, such as centenaries, allow these minorities to stake a claim in the popular memory. The projects engage with pre-existing historical discourses, yet they don't achieve the disruption of dominant popular memory, instead they add and illustrate strands of history to the existing narrative. *Dear Mrs Pennyman* and *Remember Us* could be argued as projects that go against the dominant memory highlighting narratives away from traditional understandings of white-man in the trench and the likes of Vera Brittain, whilst *Killyleagh Remembers* and *Remember Us* capture a contemporary socio-political agenda.

Heritage Lottery Fund

As of the 28 February 2019 the funds raised by the players of the National Lottery, had contributed to the investment of £97.5m in 2,255 First World War Centenary Projects throughout the United Kingdom: from Ulster to Kent, and Cardiff to Glasgow.¹⁸⁴ The range of projects the HLF funded varied from the £15m for the restoration of HSM Caroline, to £10m for 14-18-NOW art projects and £6.5m for the new IWM First World War Galleries. These larger scale projects are estimated to have reached over 50 million people during the centenary.¹⁸⁵ The HLF Centenary

¹⁸³ Ed by Martin Gegner and Bart Ziino. *The Heritage of War*, Routledge (London and New York, 2012), p.2.

¹⁸⁴ See Appendix 4

¹⁸⁵ See Appendix 4

awards was a six-year project which would provide grants to local communities as they created and contributed towards ‘a national programme capturing our national spirit’, that had the ability ‘to explore, conserve and share their First World War heritage’.¹⁸⁶ Ashplant, Dawson and Roper address how ‘it has been the nation which has been the prime arena for the articulation of war memories’¹⁸⁷ but the three HLF projects that will be explored will contest that statement and demonstrate the importance of memory agents from below.

The projects fall within the HLF category of small awards for local community projects which saw £14.8m awarded to 1,754.¹⁸⁸ This was all conducted under the specific programme – First World War: Then and Now Programme- which awarded grants of between £3,000 to £10,000. The HLF believe that nearly 60% of grantees are community and voluntary organisations,¹⁸⁹ who had a focus on conservation, cataloguing and conserving within their heritage activities which included providing resources to the local community or running exhibitions. According to the HLF 69% of projects chose to invest their money into websites, whilst 50% created their own film, and 40% put on a performance for the local community.¹⁹⁰ HFL estimated that more than half of the projects had academics providing talks, around half of the projects were visits to schools and colleges, whilst two-thirds of the projects were visits in community venues to promote the centenary.¹⁹¹ HLF believed their ‘statistics are certainly eye-catching’¹⁹² as nearly ‘£100 million been invested in over 2,200 projects, coupled with 700 groups

¹⁸⁶ Heritage Lottery Fund, *Evaluation of First World War Centenary Activity*, <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/publications/evaluation-first-world-war-centenary-activity> (Accessed 2 June 2019)

¹⁸⁷ Ashplants, Dawson, and Roper. *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, p.22.

¹⁸⁸ See Appendix 4

¹⁸⁹ Heritage Lottery Fund, *Evaluation of Heritage Lottery Fund’s First World War Centenary Activity: Year 4 Report*, https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/corporate/fww_centenary_evaluation_y4_exec_summary_formatted.pdf, (Accessed 2 June 2019)

¹⁹⁰ Heritage Lottery Fund, *Evaluation of Heritage Lottery Fund’s First World War Centenary Activity: Year 1 Report*, https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/research/fww_evaluation_year_1_executive_summary.pdf (Accessed 2 June 2019)

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*

¹⁹² Heritage Lottery Fund, *What Has First World War Centenary Meant to Communities*,

having received HLF funding for the first time and 26,000 people have been inspired to volunteer for centenary projects'.¹⁹³ In a comparison to the 14-18-NOW projects, the HLF projects were considerably smaller, for these projects were not looking to impose or put on a remembrance show, they were local projects which were personal to the people of Britain. Amiee Fox-Godden and David Morgan-Owen questioned the extent to which 1418-NOW projects 'prompted people to reflect upon the conflict and its meaning',¹⁹⁴ however, the HLF projects created by the community and working with the community utilised this reflection on conflict by interpreting it on a personal level.

In March 2018 the HLF published a centenary evaluation report which explored the personal reasons behind why communities wanted to create their own centenary project. Through a series of surveys, it was discovered that those who wanted to lead and participate in projects were motivated to increase the understanding of the First World War, as 76% of participants wanted to learn more of the First World War history in the local area and in general.¹⁹⁵ In addition, open text survey responses from grant recipients 'most commonly referred to the importance of commemorating the First World War and its impacts, and to uncovering untold stories- either locally or those experienced by population groups (such as women, and people with diverse ethnic background).¹⁹⁶ It is clear that an appetite for knowledge of the First World War was desired at community level and showed the importance of understanding the local connection within the First World War. This is an interesting arena where national and individual memories of the First World War intertwine to create a localised popular memory.

<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/blogs/what-has-first-world-war-centenary-meant-communities>,

(Accessed 2 June 2019)

¹⁹³ *Ibid*

¹⁹⁴ Aimee Fox-Godden and David Morgan-Owen. *Conference Report: Commemorating the Centenary of the First World War*, <https://defenceindepth.co/2017/02/28/conference-report-commemorating-the-centenary-of-the-first-world-war/> (Accessed 14 June 2019)

¹⁹⁵ Heritage Lottery Fund, *Evaluation of First World War Centenary Activity*, <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/publications/evaluation-first-world-war-centenary-activity> (Accessed 3 July 2019)

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*

Killyleagh Remembers

Killyleagh Remembers is a project based in Northern Ireland which wanted to commemorate the 242 men who died and two nurses who served but survived from Killyleagh and Shirgley, during the last four months of the centenary. The project was granted £8000 and which saw 13 community groups take part in a programme of events and workshops entitled 'Battle's Over'. 'Battle's Over' included a photographic and war art exhibition, lectures by academics, a walking history trail, a Facebook page and a Great War roadshow.¹⁹⁷ Prior to their HLF funding, the historical group 'Killyleagh Remembers the Great War' had been involved in cross-community centenary events since 2014 - even having events take place at Church halls of different denominations- aimed at educating 'all generations and religious backgrounds'.¹⁹⁸ Key to their centenary programme was the aim of uniting the Catholic and Protestant communities through a shared local history. Proudly, the councillor for Newry, Mourne and Down, Harry Harvey, outlined the importance of the community based commemorative projects: 'the promotion of positive relations characterised by respect, where cultural diversity is celebrated, and people can live, learn and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance'.¹⁹⁹ In this instance the community embraced the First World War centenary as an anchor for community cohesion, identifying both Catholic and Protestant contribution to the war.

Before the centenary commemorations began in 2014, there were concerns in Northern Ireland and Ireland over the reception of the centenary events in Northern Ireland, as the First World War centenary was part of Ireland's decade of centenaries. Ireland's decade of centenaries

¹⁹⁷Newry, Mourne, and Down District Council, <http://www.newrymournedown.org/killyleagh-remembers-the-great-war>, (Accessed 9 June 2019)

¹⁹⁸ Killyleagh Remembers, <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/our-work/killyleagh-remembers> (Accessed 7 June 2019)

¹⁹⁹ Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, <http://www.newrymournedown.org/killyleagh-remembers-the-great-war>, (Accessed 9 June 2019)

began in 2012 with the mass signing of the Ulster Covenant and highlighted significant national historical events: 2013 with the Dublin Lockout, 2014 the outbreak of the First World War, 2016 with the Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme. The decade ends in 2023 after marking the civil conflict in the newly founded Free State and the birth of the Ireland that we know today. The decade of centenaries in Ireland can be perceived as an attempt to re-build a collective identity. Catriona Pennell has argued in Ireland's case, centenaries force countries to look at their identity 'head on'. She stresses that Ireland is using the decade of centenaries as 'de-organification' and to shape a narrative that focuses on 'equality of sacrifice'.²⁰⁰ Contesting Pennell's argument is Jonathan Evershed who believes that Northern Ireland's centenary commemorations were purely political in two aspects. Firstly, to serve as a reminder of the 'unbreakable connections between Ulster and England; through the blood sacrifice of the Somme'. Secondly, to use this sacrifice as a waver for Britain to support the unionist project in Northern Ireland.²⁰¹ As a Northern Irish man himself, Evershed's argument highlights the political resonance and continued identity within Northern Ireland. Pennell shows ubiquity of state narratives, reconciliation and peace-building, the diverse fact that unionist and loyalist soldiers fought together was not challenged.²⁰²

It is right for Ireland to be concerned about the public reception to the First World War centenary events, especially when the centenary of the Battle of the Somme fell on the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne (which ensured the continuation of Protestant ascendancy in Ireland). The murals around Belfast are a poignant reminder of Northern Irish history. One mural depicts men of the 36th Ulster Division before 'heading over the top' with a quote from King George V underneath reading: 'Throughout the long years of struggle, the men of Ulster proved how nobly they fight and die'.²⁰³ Whilst another mural states: 'my Ulster blood is my most priceless

²⁰⁰ Fox-Godden and Morgan-Owen. *Conference Report*.

²⁰¹ Pennell, Catriona. *Choreographed by the Angles? Ireland and the Centenary of the First World War*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07292473.2017.1384140?src=recsys&instName=University+of+Essex>, (Accessed 12 June 2019)

²⁰² *Ibid*

²⁰³ David Guerin, Pinterest. <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/470696598538312866/?lp=true>, (Accessed 25 June 2019)

heritage'.²⁰⁴ These murals are First World War specific, whilst other murals in Belfast depict Loyalist and U.V.F portrayals of recent Northern Irish history. These murals symbolise the unifying power of historical definition to a community and how they still serve as markers of identity and represent community division. *Killyleagh Remembers* embodies the national aim of intertwining two national identities within a shared local commemorative history and illustrate the influential power of the people as agents of memory, who shape their First World War remembrance around the political issues of reconciliation and peace.



Figure 8: David Guerin (Pinterest)

²⁰⁴ Belfast Murals, https://www.inyourpocket.com/belfast/Belfast-Murals_70999f, (Accessed 25 June 2019)

Dear Mrs Pennyman

In terms of understanding the experience of women during the First World War, dominant popular memory places Vera Brittain as the primary representative, but the project *Dear Mrs Pennyman* gives an insightful view of English working-class women's experience of the First World War. The project had received a grant of £9,700²⁰⁵ to archive and digitise 120 letters that were discovered at Ormesby Hall, Middlesbrough, that detail a delicate compassion between Mrs Pennyman, the secretary to the Kings Own Scottish Borderers Widows and Orphans Fund, and the mothers and wives of the men who had lost their lives serving for the regiment. Mrs Pennyman's own husband was serving in the Kings Own Scottish Borderers, at the young age of 26 showed how one woman became the support network to women suffering the deepest sadness. Mrs Pennyman helped them with practical, financial and emotional advice, as well as offering a chance to talk about their sons and husbands.²⁰⁶ Although Pennyman's original role was to 'provide practical advice about pensions and recovery of personal effects',²⁰⁷ she also enquired about the lives of the women and tried to provide as much information about the death to those enquiring as she could. What these letters show is an intimate window into the emotional aftermath of war, that allow historians and the public to firstly emphasise, but secondly understand the financial hardship, poor health and uncertain futures which came as a result of the loss of their men. The letters having been catalogued are now held in Teesside Archives and have been published online for all to read, and, as Dr Rosin Higgins said, they are 'an opportunity to reflect upon the cost of war and build a picture of the challenges they faced at the time and the strength it took to survive.' She continued explaining how 'many commemorative projects focus on the dead but this one will

²⁰⁵ Dear Mrs Pennyman, <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/dear-mrs-pennyman>, (Accessed 14 June 2019)

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*

focus on those who had to live on'.²⁰⁸ Ivor Crowther, the Head of HLF North East, summarises the letters as, 'the places the women turn to for comfort- their faith, their pride in their loved ones and even the advice of a kind stranger'.²⁰⁹ These women would have otherwise remained unnoticed in history and typify the hidden sacrifice of war, the one which tells the story of those who were left behind and the consequence not just of the loss of a loved one, but to the economic, health and mental battle that followed.

As explored through *Because We're Here*, the women who were left behind had to deal with ghostly imaginations of their lost ones and embraced war memorials to express their grief. *Dear Mrs Pennyman* is not just an example of women expressing their grief, it is an example of how the cultural history of the First World War is gendered and class defined. In an article titled '*My Husband is Interested in War Generally*' Lucy Noakes explores how cultural memory of the First World War has marginalised woman from the traditional narrative. Noakes remarks how the 'privileging of the narrative' towards male veterans 'over other types of war experience' is the traditionally accepted narrative for it plays alongside the typical trench warfare experience. Noakes further argues how the 'war memoirs of Vera Brittain apparently function as a satisfactory representation of all female experience', with the result that, within popular memory other woman's experience are marginalised.²¹⁰ Brittain's education and social status allowed her work to be published against the everyday woman whose lack of education didn't result in their war memories being published into a book, but merely written in a letter to the regimental secretary. As Sheila Rowbotham has argued, that it is not all women who have been marginalised from history memory, just working-class women.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Dear Mrs Pennyman, <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/dear-mrs-pennyman>, (Accessed 14 June 2019)

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*

²¹⁰ Lucy Noakes. '*My Husband is Interested in War Generally*': *Gender, Family History and the Emotional Legacies of Total War*, *Women's History Review*, 27:4, 610-626, 2018, DOI: [10.1080/09612025.2017.1292634](https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2017.1292634)

²¹¹ Sheila Rowbotham. *Hidden From History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It*, Pluto Press (London, 1973)

Contextually *Dear Mrs Pennyman* is an important social history discovery: the working-class woman writing to Mrs Pennyman would have been one of the three million Briton's, out of a forty-two million population, to have lost a son, brother or close relative.²¹² By 1914 a new social response to death had occurred which came as a result of the fall in mortality rates. By 1914 British society had adjusted to babies surviving to adulthood and the war ensured many parents would now outlive their children, creating 'a reversal of the natural order' according to Jallard.²¹³

Relatively little has been written on working-class women in the First World War,²¹⁴ but why is the experience of Vera Brittain more important? Can it be a sense of entitlement? That their story is worthier to record and recollect upon. These letters provide a new understanding of the experience of the everyday working-class woman, which will (hopefully) begin new research into the impact of death on those left behind in war.

Remember Us- Muslim Communities and the First World War

The final project *Remember Us- Muslim Communities and the First World War* (hereafter *Remember Us*), sought to restore the marginalisation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups from the popular memory of the First World War. The project received £10,000 that was put towards enabling 'diverse participants' in Glasgow and West Scotland 'to preserve the memories and heritage of many Muslim people' who were involved in the First World War.²¹⁵ Amongst the Muslim communities there is a strong belief that the British public have little knowledge of the Muslim contribution to the First World War. *Remember Us* aimed to change that national understanding through training, workshops, visits to Mosques and the National War

²¹² Pat Jallard. *Death in War and Peace*, Oxford University Press (New York, 2010), p.35

²¹³ *Ibid*, p.8

²¹⁴ Gail Braybon, Penny Summerfield and Deborah Thom have published work on women in the First World War. Largely, more published work on men in the trench still circulates.

²¹⁵ National Lottery Support for WSREC to Mark First World War Centenary, <https://www.wsrec.co.uk/national-lottery-support-wsrec-mark-first-world-war-centenary/>, (Accessed 15 June 2019)

Museum through two six-week workshops. The skills attained from the workshops were applied to local community exhibitions and a video to ensure the information learnt was disseminated to the wider public. The project had a variety of positive community aims, with the Executive Director, Mohammed Razaq saying their key aim was ‘the promotion of good community relations between all people of all communities’.²¹⁶ Those running the project hoped that the intercultural dialogue the exhibition brought about, would break down barriers, misconceptions and change negative attitudes bestowed upon the Muslim communities from the media, through the use of a shared historical experience. There are apparent similarities with *Killyleagh Remembers*, as both projects used the history of the First World War as a mediating factor for their own contemporary concerns.

Remember Us is an example of the value of heritage for local communities and for the remainder of this chapter it will explore the relationship between heritage and identity. A survey conducted by thinktank *British Future* found that only 2% of people know during that ‘there were over 400,000 Muslims who played an active role and who fought and died alongside British troops’.²¹⁷ *British Future* also discovered that only ‘22% of people in Britain knew Muslims had fought in the Great War’.²¹⁸ Rodney Harrison in *Multicultural and Minority Heritage*, offers a couple of explanations for the exclusion of Muslims from the First World War narrative and why they seek to re-enter it.²¹⁹ Harrison claims that since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the dominant popular memory of the Muslim community has been negative, identifying Muslims with the extremist terrorist associations, where this belief has been strengthened in Britain by the terror attacks in Paris 2015 and London 2017. These attacks occurred alongside the British vote to leave the European Union and the United States of America election of Donald Trump in 2016, resulting

²¹⁶ *Ibid*

²¹⁷ *Ibid*

²¹⁸ Rahil Sheikh, *Forgotten Muslim Soldiers of World War One ‘Silence’ Far Right*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46124467>, (Accessed 17 June 2019)

²¹⁹ Rodney Harrison. *Multicultural and Minority Heritage*, Routledge (London and New York, 2013), p.166.

in a rise of far-right political beliefs, which have drummed up racism towards BAME communities.²²⁰ Harrison also invoked the historical theory of ‘history from below’ derived by Marxist historians Eric Hobsbawm and Raphael Samuel, who believed in the exposure of the ‘social conditions of history rather than the narrative based on the lives of ‘great men’.²²¹ Harrison agreed with Hobsbawm and Samuel and stated how it is now a modern historical approach to focus on minorities who had been marginalised from the official histories.

Re-building an identity against contemporary Islamophobia, can be the foundation for Muslim communities wanting to recreate a historical narrative that identifies the global contribution that Muslim forces had alongside Britain in their shared memory of fighting the central powers during the First World War. Sara McDowell considers the link between heritage and identity, understanding it as an ‘unbroken narrative linking past and present’.²²² Building upon this, Bart Ziino and Martin Gegner in *Heritage of War* detail how as individuals we are agents of our own identity, as we embed our own personal identities within the state identities.²²³ This is correlational to popular memory, where our own individual memories are intertwined within the national popular memory.

Dr Irfan Malik, a British Muslim, who discovered two of his great-grandparents came from Pakistan to fight in the First World War, claimed it made him ‘feel more British as we have this shared history in common’.²²⁴ This one example shows how important the shared heritage is to identity, especially as the United Kingdom is a multicultural country. The use of heritage to create a sense of shared national identity has been a social tool since the 1948 British Nationality Act,

²²⁰ Silke Rothe, *Progressive and Far Right-Wing Counter Movements are Rising in the Age of Brexit*, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2019/02/28/counter-movements-to-brexit-are-on-the-rise/> (Accessed 17 June 2019)

²²¹ Harrison. *Multicultural and Minority Heritage*, p.168.

²²² Gegner and Ziino. *The Heritage of War*, p.8.

²²³ *Ibid*, p.9.

²²⁴ Rahil Sheikh, *Forgotten Muslim Soldiers of World War One ‘Silence’ Far Right*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46124467> (Accessed 17 June 2019)

which saw the creation of the status of a 'Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies'.²²⁵ The Windrush Scandal of 2018 is a good socio-political example which might have prompted some BAME groups to utilise the First World War centenary to assert their historical right to Britishness. Following the 1948 British Nationality Act many people from the Commonwealth (particularly from Caribbean countries) came to Britain to live as British citizens, and following legislative measures in the 1970s, those who had arrived the Britain before 1973 were granted automatic right to stay, without any documentation proof.²²⁶ The Conservative government's Hostile Environment Policy in 2010 it meant that anyone without proof of legal residence in Britain was encouraged to leave on their own accord, as an attempt to tackle immigration issues.²²⁷ People did not leave on their own accord and thousands of Commonwealth migrants subsequently faced illegal deportation.

These two examples show the ambiguous socio-political context for BAME and Commonwealth minorities in the United Kingdom during the First World War centenary. As other mitigating powers are not identifying these social groups as British, projects such as *Remember Us* can be argued as minorities' chance to create an all-inclusive heritage and make a claim to British national identity through the instrument of the centenary.

²²⁵ British Nationality Act 1948, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/11-12/56/section/33/enacted> (Accessed 17 June 2019)

²²⁶ Ann Stenhouse, *What is the Windrush Scandal? How the Windrush Generation Got Their Name and Why Many Fear Deportation*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180502023219/https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/what-windrush-scandal-how-windrush-12383743> (Accessed 17 June 2019)

²²⁷ BBC News, *Windrush: What is the Hostile Environment' Immigration Policy?* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-43831563/windrush-what-is-the-hostile-environment-immigration-policy>, (Accessed 17 June 2019)

Conclusion

I want to come back to the HLF aim that was mentioned in the introduction: ‘to encourage a broad range of perspectives and interpretations of the First World War and its impacts’,²²⁸ to assess the extent it was achieved. The HLF have provided figures which indicate this was achieved, which can be applicable to the three projects in this chapter, but it must be recognised as a correlation to the projects rather than a direct result of them. They found that 99% of grant recipients felt their project had increased the understanding of the war and 89% believed their projects aided a change in perceptions of the war.²²⁹ The variety of different projects the HLF funded could be an attributing factor in this change in perception. They stated a third of their projects looked at agriculture, medicine and healthcare, 61% of projects looking at women’s role, 31% looked at propaganda, and 28% looked at objection to the war.²³⁰ Are these statistics indicating that within British communities, the popular memory focus isn’t purely men on the Western Front trenches? Especially when 35% of projects looked at the war outside of the Western Front and 37% looked at the contribution of the British Empire / Commonwealth. At face value, these projects do appear to have created a more inclusive history, but that doesn’t mean everyone in a local community was included or even aware of the projects. Exclusions are always involved in attempts to bring people together, especially as these projects would have had self-nominated community leaders organising them, who may already have a pre-existing interest in the First World War, in a way which inevitably shuts out those who may not identify with a particular history, i.e. women, BAME or people of religion. This is where the heritage and identity

²²⁸ Heritage Lottery Fund, *Evaluation of Heritage Lottery Fund’s First World War Centenary Activity: Year 4 Report*,

https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/corporate/fww_centenary_evaluation_y4_exec_summary_formatted.pdf, (Accessed 2 June 2019)

²²⁹ Brookfield, Karen. *The People’s Centenary: A Perspective From the Heritage Lottery Fund*, *Cultural Trends*, 27:2, 119-124, DOI: 10.1080/09548963.2018.1553455

²³⁰ *Ibid*

link is apparent as some people may not engage with or may be excluded from a project, they don't identify on a historical basis with it.

What these three projects and the thousands of other HLF projects demonstrate, is the broadened sense of the history of the First World War which feeds into a contemporary narrative of Britishness, which wasn't necessarily the case before the centenary. *Killyleagh Remembers* demonstrates the Northern Irish contribution to the war, reminding people that the Irish divisions were fighting side by side with the English throughout the war. *Dear Mrs Pennyman* demonstrates how history is gendered and classed reminding us that the popular memory of loss extends away from the battlefields, whilst giving a voice to the working-class women and their struggles with wartime loss. Finally, *Remember Us* works to create a narrative away from the 'white man' in the trench and signifying the important role made by the Commonwealth nations in a 'world' war. These projects are examples of individual agents of memory, where the HLF funding provided the projects with the freedom to 'nurture their own identities and all engage in the production of heritage to give those identities value and legitimacy'.²³¹ Jay Winter argues that individuals are the responsible agent for these heritage practices, and how they work in 'tandem and in competition' with the dominant narrative of the First World War²³². In terms of individual agency of memory, Joan Beaumont critiques the state claiming that no longer can the memory of the First World war be 'shaped by the state' which she believes 'imposes a Gramscian-style hegemonic ideology 'from above' on a population that accepts this as natural and beyond critique'.²³³ This 'bottom up' approach to war memory has been made accessible through the funding of the Heritage Lottery Fund, yet it is rather ironic as the money originates from government funding. This could be where the tandem and competition of memory narratives comes into play. This

²³¹ *Ibid*, P.9

²³² *Ibid*, P.3

²³³ Joan Beaumont. *The Politics of Memory: Commemorating the Centenary of the First World War*, Australian Journal of Political Science, Volume 50, Issue 3, 2015

chapter demonstrates how communities engage within the memory of the First World War by highlighting and adding to the dominant narratives. The next chapter will assess how individuals have engaged and understand the First World War and consider the impact of centenary on individual popular memory.

Chapter 4: How Do You Remember the War? A Study on Individual War Memory

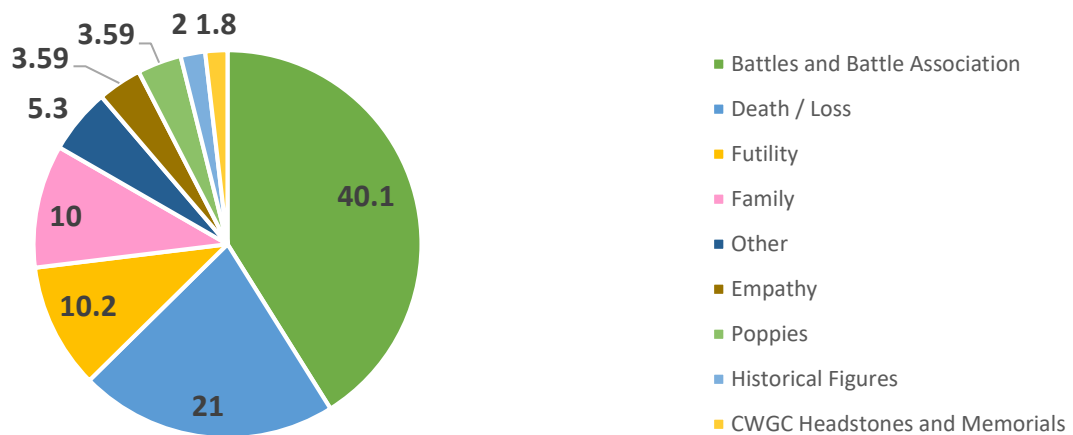
'Current generations are still absolutely transfixed by what happened in the Great War and what it meant.'

I had decided that upon conducting research on the popular memory of the First World War, the best way to really see how people are remembering the war would be to conduct my own survey. Throughout this chapter I will use the survey results as a base for understanding the popular memory of the First World War and the centenary to individuals. The qualitative answers will allow us to see how people -those most interested in the centenary- are perceiving the centenary and explore the impact the contemporary battlefields have on First World War memory, how important the interaction of younger generations with the First World War is, whether future historical anniversaries deserve the same level and the emotional relationship the public has with the centenary. The study of the survey is the concluding element of this project which began the popular memory 'cycle' assessing how war memory is disseminated on a national level in Chapter 2, to Chapter 3 where the community derived war memory driven from below. The combination of these two social distributors of war memory, as well as this chapter exploring individuals war memory, can provide an understanding as to how popular memory is formulated. Through the collective act of informed imagination, we believe people are remembering the war in a particular way, so the rest of this chapter will explore how a select sample audience are remembering the First World War.

Respondent's Popular Memory

The first survey question was 'What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of the First World War?' There were a vast variety of answers to this question which resulted in nine categories being created. From highest percentage answer to lowest:

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of the First World War? (%)



Battles and Association with battles came out highest, a lot of people mentioned trenches, artillery, whilst some stated images of soldiers in trench life. Answers such as 'poison gas', 'the desolated fields of mud and men', 'no man's land', 'attrition', 'how terrible it was', 'mud and trenches', 'bodies in mud' and 'soldiers in tin hats', provide an indication that for 213 people whose answers fit into this category, the dominant popular memory discussed in Chapter 1 meant that they instantly imagined trench warfare. Additional to these answers, I found the word Somme came up 24 times, whilst Trenches came up 197 times and Carnage 7 times. The second highest was Death/Loss with death being mentioned 35 times and loss 48 times. Phrases such as 'pals battalions decimated', 'men exactly like me that died very young' and 'end of innocence' engaged with the lost generation narrative. In addition, the 19 people who mentioned Poppies associated them with death: 'death, mud tragedy and poppies', 'poppy fields and death' and 'poppies and cemeteries'. The third highest was Futility and this category provided an interesting insight to how

people perceived the war, with comments such as ‘mindless pointless death and destruction’, ‘mechanised slaughter’, ‘the ridiculous amount of men who died pointless deaths’ and ‘a generation of humanity lost forever’.

There is a link between these top three responses. As McCartney explains ‘the First World War has become a byword for futility in Britain’ as the ‘words themselves conjure images of pointless industrial war, directed by incompetent generals’.²³⁴ Pennell believed that in evoking ‘the trenches’ it is ‘most often used as shorthand by modern Britons for stupidity, blind obedience, failure of leadership, appalling physical conditions and deadlock’.²³⁵ The how and why this has come about is detailed in Dan Todman’s *The Great War Myth and Memory* where he demonstrates how these perceptions have gained a hegemonic status. Yet Hirsch’s post-memory theory is applicable to the individual responses, for it shows us how ‘individuals can be haunted by a past that they have not experienced personally, but which has somehow been transferred to them’²³⁶ as a way individuals imagine and interpret the war. McCartney criticises Hirsch’s theory of imagination, arguing that some members of the public are not provided with the correct tools or knowledge to guide the imagination. She uses a quote from David Cameron where he said, ‘I imagine how they felt going off to war, and the fear and horror of what they went through’ and McCartney said, ‘the key point here was that he imagined how they thought and felt’²³⁷ as within our contemporary society how could we ever imagine that warfare experience.

Post-memory theory also shows why 19 people under Emotive Response category felt the first thing that came to their mind was ‘sadness’ or ‘gratitude’. I also added remembrance within

²³⁴ McCartney. *The First World War Soldier and His Contemporary Image in Britain*, p.299.

²³⁵ Pennell, Catriona. *Popular History and Myth Making: The Role and Responsibility of First World War Historians in the Centenary Commemorations, 2014-2018*. *Historically Speaking*, Volume 13, Number 5, November 2012, DOI: [10.1353/hsp.2012.0050](https://doi.org/10.1353/hsp.2012.0050), pp. 11-14.

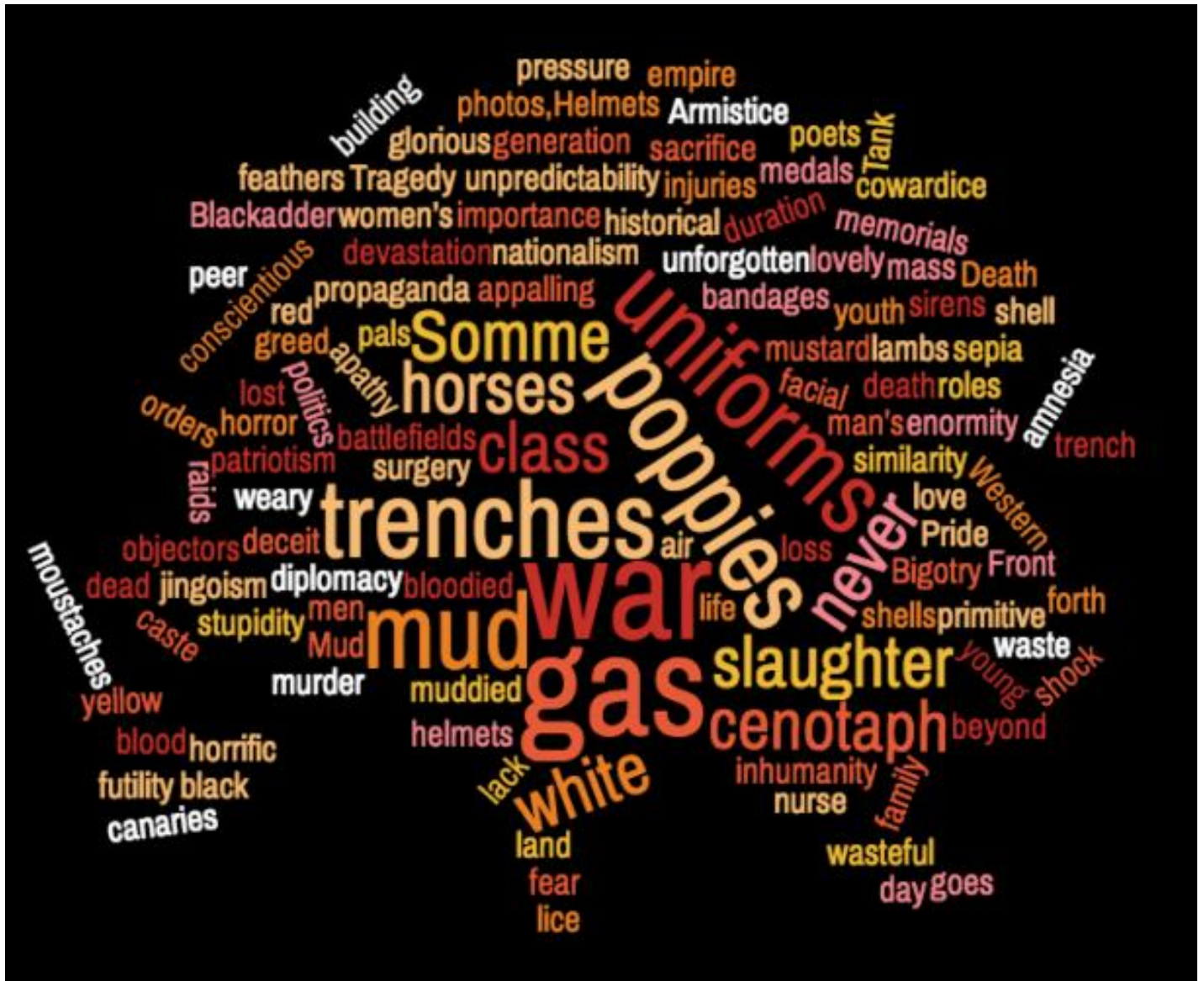
²³⁶ Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead, *Theories of Memory: A Reader*, Edinburgh University Press, (Edinburgh, 2007), p.7.

²³⁷ McCartney. *The First World War Soldier and His Contemporary Image in Britain*. p.306.

the Emotive Response category. I felt that remembrance is an individual choice, bound within a social construct resonating an emotional response. The final category response was historical figures. Vera Brittain, Wilfred Owen and General Haig were some of the names stated. It isn't surprising that these figures were thought of by some people, Haig's association with the 'Lions Led By Donkeys' myth has kept his name alive, whilst Wilfred Owen's poetry is taught in classrooms every academic year and Vera Brittain's became a household name (again) when in 2015 the film version of *Testament of Youth* brought her story alive to a new generation.

Noakes has explored similar respondents' answers, in her article *My Husband is Interested in War Generally*. Noakes examines a Mass Observation Directive of 2014 which looked at responses to the First World War. The first task was to list ten words or phrases that the respondents associated with the First World War. Using an example from two elderly male's and one female, the responses were as follows: The first male's list 'bloodied, muddied, battlefields, inhumanity, appalling loss of life, lack of diplomacy, cenotaph, unforgotten, lambs to the slaughter, youth, pals, (and) bereaved', the second male's 'mass slaughter, mud, trenches, horses, the cenotaph, Oh! What a Lovely War, Blackadder Goes Forth, war poets' and the female's 'death, blood, mud, futility, young men, uniforms, nurse, bandages, gas, (and) trenches'.²³⁸ In the 2011-2012 academic year, Pennell asked her students who took her First World War history module to write down the words and phrases they associate with the First World War. Pennell a found a majority (42%) chose trenches and closely followed death (23%). As my survey was conducted in October 2018 it shows that over the centenary period the popular representations of the war still retain their hegemonic status as they circulate within popular culture.

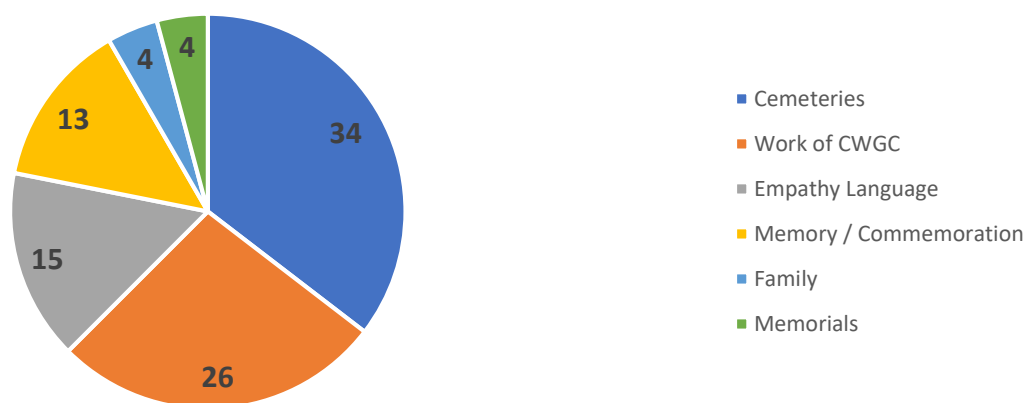
²³⁸ Noakes. 'My Husband is Interested in War Generally'.



²³⁹ 'Mass Observation, Autumn 2014 Directive', cited in Lucy Noakes, 'Poppy Petals'. Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres 2019

The second question was ‘What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission?’ I chose this question as I felt the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemeteries and memorials are some of the defining aspects of the contemporary battlefields. The responses were:

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission?



From the responses it was clear that the focus on the Commission sits with the work they conduct towards the neat, well-kept and orderly headstones and they are, summarised by one person as ‘the world’s best keeper of memorials’. The one category I was surprised didn’t receive a high amount of responses was Family. Only 23 people linked the Commission to family, and yet some of the responses were made in a generalised family narrative, not a personal one: ‘unsettled that the men remained soldiers and not returned to their families’ which provides an insight into the ongoing debate regarding repatriation and the Commission rather than an organisation that looks after the dead. However, some people remarked upon a current family association with relatives working for the Commission, whilst some stated about ‘how well they care for my relatives’ and ‘Epitaphs from the family’.

Todman discusses how 'visiting Tyne Cot can be an emotionally overwhelming experience'²⁴⁰ reiterated by a Year 9 male student exclaiming 'wow. It's one thing seeing 12,000 written in a book, but it's another thing seeing 12,000 headstones'²⁴¹ as the human cost of the war is neatly organised on the old battlefields on the Ypres Salient. Regardless of the fact that Tyne Cot is the largest cemetery in Europe, for most visiting any CWGC cemetery or memorial, as you drive through the Somme or Flanders you will pass a cemetery, as the neat and orderly Portland headstones stand out against the farm land, is an 'emotionally overwhelming experience'. When the CWGC were granted royal charter in 1917 they became the organisation that cared for the deceased of the First World War and continued that work during and after the Second World War. It is not surprising that 38% of people naturally think of cemeteries and memorials when reflecting on the CWGC, but what was interesting is the 15% categorised under Language that expressed their thoughts about the CWGC using terms associated with mourning: 'sombre', 'death', 'all those that died for a free world', 'a sense of grief- at all those people whose children are unremembered' and 'makes me feel sad that so many, many people died'.

Hirsch's post-memory theory illustrates how the emotional response to the First World War is seen daily on social media platforms. I am a member of a Facebook group called *Great War: Cemeteries, Battlefields and Memorials Pictures* and this group is a perfect example of individuals expressing their emotional response to the war. A photo posted of Railway Hollow Cemetery²⁴² in Serre had 16 people react with the 'sad' button, whilst members commented 'RIP AMEN', 'hard to hold faith!!! When you see all those memorials', 'such a poignant image, the open gate an allegory of those souls who will never come back'.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Todman. *The Great War Myth and Memory*, p.43.

²⁴¹ Year 9 male student, tour observation, February 2015. Pennell, Catriona. *Taught to Remember? British Youth and First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours*, *Cultural Trends*, 27:2, 83-98, DOI:10.1080/09548963.2018.1453449

²⁴² Appendix 2

²⁴³ Appendix 3

In addition, a *Telegraph* writer described the Imperial War Museum's *Lives of the First World War* as 'Facebook for the fallen' perceiving the project to 'provide online profile for 8 million who served in the Great War', as it will remain a 'permanent digital memorial'.²⁴⁴ A modern interpretation to commemoration which sees remembrance and commemoration enter the digital age. There are multiple Facebook groups which have the same agenda, as does Twitter. Countless battlefield guides post images of cemeteries or memorials in France or Flanders, or an image of a headstone transforming a dead soldier back to life through a story of 280 characters.

These two examples demonstrate how social media and digital platforms are modern mediators for infiltrating death into the popular memory of the public. Joan Beaumont understands the internet as 'the technology whereby individual and local memories could intersect with national memories',²⁴⁵ which transforms social media as the modern platform that accentuates popular memory. Despite little research conducted into this topic, social media can provide a surplus of information and resources to do so. For as long as people will visit the battlefields, cemeteries and memorials, post images of the Somme or Ypres or tell the stories of the soldiers who lost their lives over a century ago, the emotional power of the war will be maintained and thus allow the death to be an everlasting feature within the popular memory of the First World War.

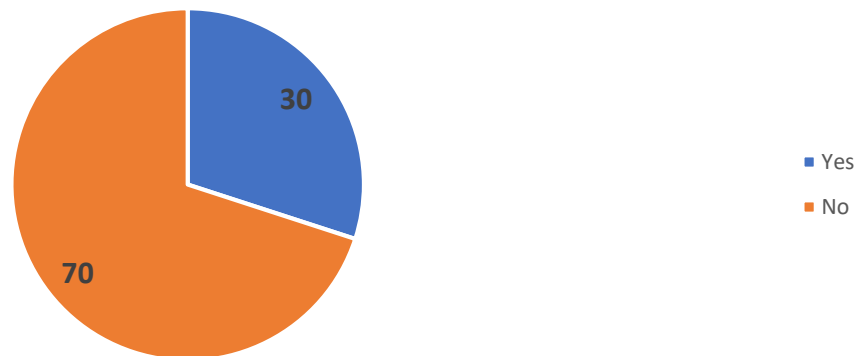
²⁴⁴ Jasper Copping. *Facebook For the Fallen' to Provide Online Profile 8m who Service in the Great War'*. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/britain-at-war/10066437/Facebook-for-the-Fallen-to-provide-online-profile-8m-who-served-in-the-Great-War.html> (Accessed 21 August 2019)

²⁴⁵ Beaumont. *The Politics of Memory: Commemorating the Centenary of the First World War*.

The Centenary

The survey questions then made a shift from gauging people's memory of the war to a focus on the centenary. When asked:

Did you attend any of the First World War Centenary commemorative events? If so, please state which one/s?



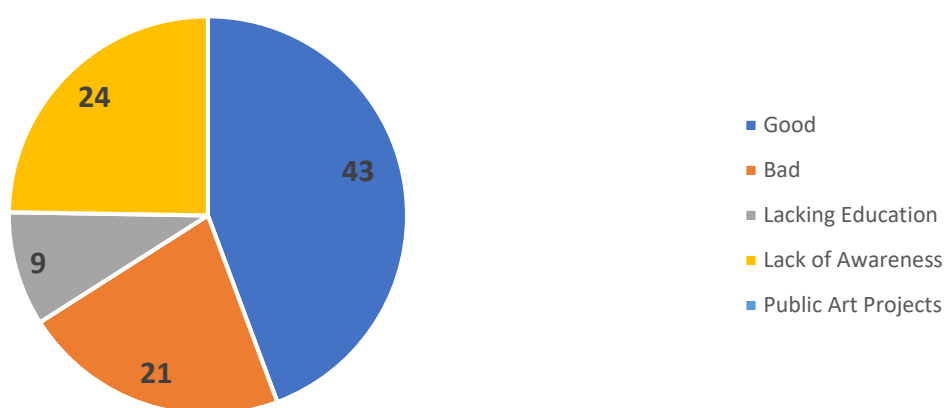
An overwhelmingly proportion of the response sample hadn't engaged in any of the centenary events, with reasons varying from contemporary political beliefs, 'never would do, these folks were wilfully murdered to serve capitalism, the Tories have no right to morally usurp those deaths', to personal reasons, 'nope, I don't like funerals', 'No, too crowded and impersonal', 'No, I made personal trips to the battlefields instead' and 'No, I attend remembrance day service every year'. Of the 160 people who did attend centenary events the responses I found could be split between the 77 people who said they attended the national / big commemorative events and 83 people who engaged in individual acts of commemoration. The big events stated in attendance were Gallipoli, Jutland, Somme, Arras, Passchendaele, Amiens, and Armistice.

It appeared that individual commemorations were more popular to commemorate throughout the centenary. Some respondents partook in the Royal British Legion 90th Pilgrimage in 2018, others simply stood underneath the Menin Gate at 8pm, and some engaged in events on Armistice/Remembrance Sunday. Whilst others chose to commemorate the centenary on a local or personal level: 'laying of commemorative stone of Claud Castleyon VC', 'I placed a wreath for a soldier from my home town in France', 'various local 100 years after the death of

commemorations' and 'I attended the installation of commemorative paving stone for a local VC'. On the other hand, 25 people classed visiting the *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* poppies at the Tower of London, or the *Wave and Weeping Window* poppies which travelled around the country and, other 14-18-NOW public art projects as a form of commemoration.

The respondents were then asked:

What did you think of the First World War Centenary events run by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport? (%)



Despite an overwhelming majority in the previous question who claimed they did not attend any centenary commemorations, 231 people said they thought the events run by the Department of Digital Culture, Media and Sport (DCSM) were good, and thought they were 'appropriate', 'positive', 'well thought out' and 'thought provoking'. Others believed the DCMS events conveyed the right educational message of the war: 'good for younger people to be aware of the horrors of war', 'brilliant way to honour those who sacrificed their lives', 'amazing, striving to bring home reality of war' and 'they were expected and proper, the least any country should do to honour the young men who were sent in fear to pass through horror'. Note the language used in those examples, 'horror' and 'sacrificed' and reiterating the narrative that everyone should be in full understanding of the 'reality of war', which privileges the experience of trench

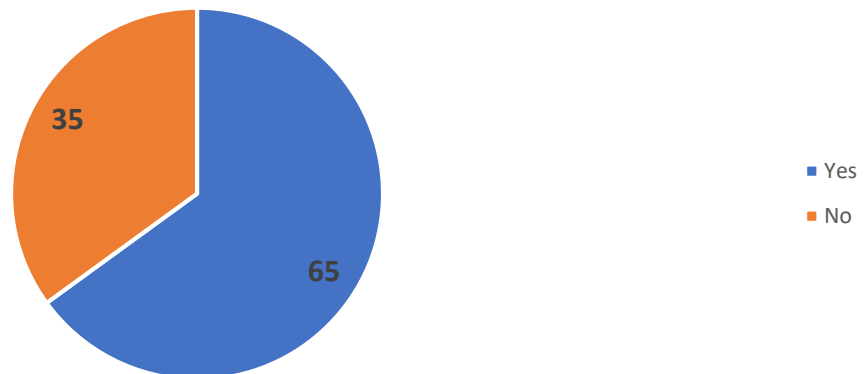
warfare. These examples demonstrate how hegemonic the mud, blood, and trenches memory is, for they are reiterated by people as a narrative to judge commemorative events by.

Whilst some found the events informative to the public, 111 people thought the events were bad, with comments like 'rather unfortunate that we had to wait for an anniversary to make public aware', 'revolting attempts to promote and reimagine UK imperialism', 'superficial publicity speakers', 'male-centric and exclusive', 'jingoistic' and 'dreadful'. In contrast to the prior comments, 127 people felt there wasn't enough publicity or advertising around the events, with a lot of people claiming they didn't even know there were events on, and others remarked that they didn't know who the DCMS were or that they ran public events. This could in part be due to the lack of direction from the British government when they began planning the centenary events. 39 people however, stressed the significance in the events being the correct platforms that could have disseminated the correct information of the First World War, yet believed they failed on that front. Yet others thought the events played into the dominant myths instead, whilst not doing enough to engage the younger generations into the events.

Contemporary Battlefields and the Centenary

As tourism to the Somme or Flanders battlefields increased over the centenary, I asked the respondents:

Do Commonwealth War Graves Commission sites help visitors to understand the First World War? (%)

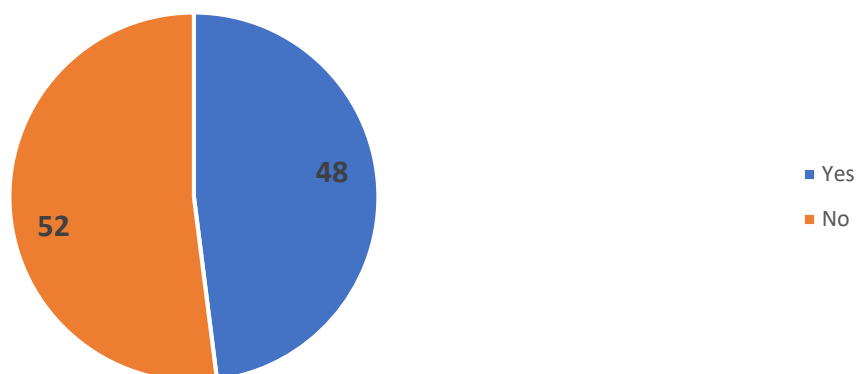


Some of those who said yes felt the CWGC sites were a good starting point for people to further their knowledge and interest in the war, whilst some remarked on the size of some sites to provide a scale to the imagination of what happened. Those people commented: 'the understanding of the huge sacrifice in human life', 'they humanize the war', 'they put human faces to the statistics', 'understand the scale of loss and global conflict', whilst one respondent preferred the CWGC sites compared to visiting the battlefields: 'I felt like I understood more about the human cost by standing in a CWGC site than standing in a former battlefield'. Some people interpreted site as in the CWGC website but still found it a useful educational resource. These Yes responses demonstrate how their perception of the battlefields are again narrowed through dominant mythology of trench warfare. In the No category, a percentage of respondents said that they had already been to the battlefields or have pre-existing knowledge of the First World War, but some remark on the usefulness of the CWGC sites for the education of the younger generations and those who have no prior knowledge. Others who said No commented on: 'the

worry of glorifying the dead', argued they 'should remain a primary focus of remembering and not a museum', stated 'they reiterate old ideas of the war being futile', 'emphasised the futility of it all perhaps', and said 'no, they aren't meant to be museums.' These responses reveal a split in public perceptions, with those who said Yes believe the main defining features of the battlefields reveal more of the human cost of war than they do to understand the battles, and those who said No stress the focus on death with the connections to reinforcing the futility narrative and disrespecting the dead by treating the cemeteries and memorials like museums.

The respondents were then asked:

Has the First World War Centenary inspired you to visit the battlefields or CWGC sites? (%)

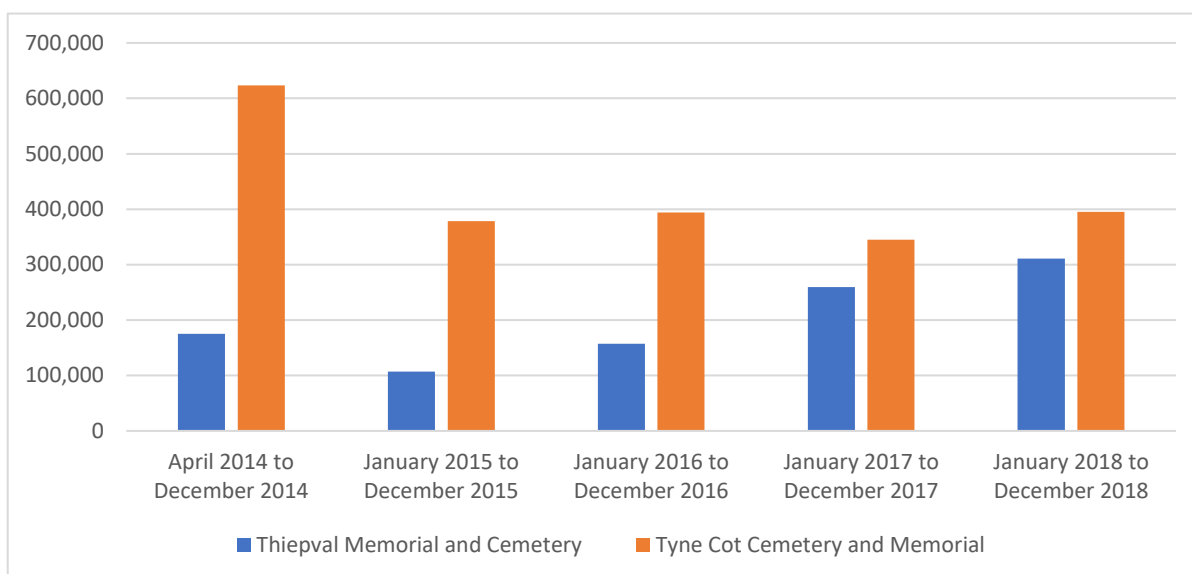


255 people said Yes (48%), whilst 273 said No (52%). A near 50/50 split to this response.

Those who answered Yes felt the centenary inspired them to visit different and new areas of the battlefields, as one person noted 'the centenary inspired me to look beyond the British sector and explore French and German sites.' Others were inspired due to the increased media coverage, 'the Somme centenary started it, seeing the services on TV confirmed to me that I had to visit', whilst others found following the centenary events allowed them to explore either the Somme or Ypres when they hadn't before. Some people expressed how they were inspired but due to

personal reasons could not get to the battlefields, and others found the centenary an inspirational time to share the battlefields with family members, notably children.

A majority of those who said No argued that they had already visited / were regular visitors of the battlefields and CWGC sites and others saw more significance in visiting graves in their local vicinity, with one notable response 'I was already visiting local CWGC graves in my London borough. Not especially interested in battlefields, they show off cemeteries.' One person expressed 'No the First World War feels far to in the past now, it's like Waterloo', others perceived the battlefields through the destructive narrative: 'No, too much destruction to bare' and 'No, have already done this and it continues to be the most desolate thing I have experience. Row up row, row upon row, never ending graves'. Between the two responses 56 people had specifically identified Thiepval and Tyne Cot as notable places that they had visited or wished to visit. This could be attributed to Thiepval and Tyne Cot already being the two largest CWGC sites on the Western Front and the increased media coverage during the Battle of the Somme centenary and the Battle of Passchendaele centenary events, significantly marking these as poignant places on the Western Front. At Thiepval and Tyne Cot the CWGC has in place visitor sensors to gauge a rough estimate as to how many people visit the two sites, in the table below are the visitor numbers from 2014-2018.



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The table demonstrates that despite the centrality of the Somme the popular destination is Tyne Cot and Ypres. This logically makes sense due to the tourist proximity of Ypres in comparison to the Somme. It also demonstrates how the weighted centenary attention was given to 2014, indicating a real awareness to the start of the centenary.

From the responses 33 people had said the centenary had inspired them to visit the battlefields and CWGC sites due to a family connection. The respondents expressed the personal reasons for visiting: ‘finding out about my relative has inspired me to visit’, ‘visited several in the Somme, especially Carony, where husband’s great uncle is buried’, ‘Yes, Epehy Wood Farm (visited my grandmother’s 19 year-old cousin’s grave on the anniversary of his death’, ‘Mud Corner (relative buried there), ‘on the 100th anniversary of my grandfather’s younger brother being KIA at Vilemontoire, my son & I visited the CWGC site at Vilemontoire’, and a handful of people

²⁴⁶ See Appendix 5; Also see Appendix 1 for CWGC 2015-2018 enquiry statistics. The statistics show how enquiries into family history gradually rise throughout the centenary, which links the individual memory to the community and national memory as an awareness to the historical context could have prompted an enquiry.

stating their relatives name is on the Menin Gate or Thiepval Memorial. Additionally, two people who said the centenary did not inspire them both expressed: 'No, but I would love to find my Great Uncle' and 'No, I do wish to visit the grave of a relative on the Somme'. These are good examples of Hirsch's post-memory theory as the descendants seem to be expressing a sense of duty- the duty to remember/commemorate, visit the grave of a dead ancestor.

In the first question of the survey, 56 people responded with a family connection as the first thing they think about when they think of the First World War. Many simply stated 'my great-granddad' or 'my great-uncle', whilst other imaginations were more specific: 'a framed picture of my great-uncle who was killed in action', 'a picture of my grandfather in uniform', 'my grandmothers fiancé killed on the Somme'. The First World War is a prominent historical topic where individual family history intermingles with national history. Since the 1990s 'the discovery of familial links to the war led individuals to reformulate emotional connections to the war', coupled with the death of Harry Patch in 2009. James Wallis concluded that these two factors created a consciousness amongst the 'post-living generation to go and re(discover) their familial connections'.²⁴⁷ With additional ease of access to online digitized war records and family history sites such as *Ancestry* empowers the public's desire to find an identity as they 'locate family stories in bigger, more universal narratives'.²⁴⁸

Family history allows private memory to engage with national memory as 'memories circulate and are reproduced and reformed within family and kinship networks', whilst family memories 'enter onto the public stage when they relate to elements of the wider cultural memory in circulation'.²⁴⁹ McCartney shows the danger of families placing their relatives within the broader context of a complex history. She stresses 'many popular sources of information which

²⁴⁷ James Wallis. 'Great-Grandfather, what did you do in the Great War?', in *Remembering the First World War*, Routledge, (2015), p.24.

²⁴⁸ McCartney. *The First World War Soldier and His Contemporary Image in Britain*. p.303.

²⁴⁹ Noakes. 'My Husband is Interested in War Generally', p.4.

family historians are directed reflect the more generalised reductive script of the futility of war'.²⁵⁰ This danger of a family placing an individual's history within a generalised narrative can lead them to believe that is what their relative encountered. Michael Roper and Rachel Duffett show how the public are more likely to be engaged with a historical topic through a family connection, because it was 'felt to be an important and trusted source of historical knowledge'.²⁵¹ The ways that families incorporated, gave meaning to and transcended individual First World War knowledge is seen in respondent's answers: "my grandfather, he was killed in action and my father was six. The loss had a terrible effect on the family' and the 'carnage and unimaginable horrors that my great-uncles endured'. This cannot be attributed to everyone, but if you researched where your relative was killed, be it the Somme or Passchendaele for example, the existing cultural material surrounding these events would 'always lean on familiar public narrative types and tropes'.

Roper and Duffett also show how the family is a source of collective memory, as they stress the emotional bonds that bind historical narratives from a 'lived rather than learned history' and this refers back to the notion that family history is perceived as a legitimate historical source.²⁵² The individual memory of family history has repeatedly been shown to be a motivating factor for individual commemoration throughout the centenary, thus showing the continued and desired strength of the First World War family connection and the engagement of individual memory within popular cultural representations of the war.

²⁵⁰ McCartney. *The First World War Soldier and His Contemporary Image in Britain*. p.305.

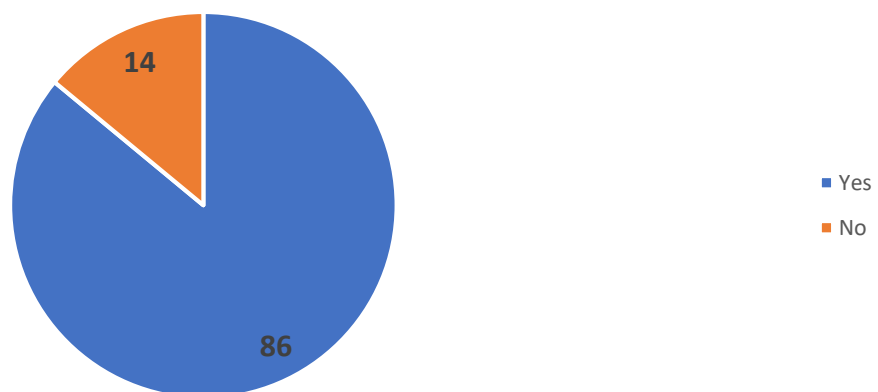
²⁵¹ Roper and Duffett. *Family Legacies in the Centenary*, p.77.

²⁵² *Ibid*, pp.77-9

The Future of Commemoration

The next three questions of the survey looked at the future of commemoration, investigating whether the public believes the same level of commemoration which we saw throughout the centenary, should be applied to other historical anniversaries. The first question asked was:

Should younger generations be brought out to battlefields and Commonwealth War Graves Commission sites in France and Belgium? (%)



Those who said No felt a generation shouldn't be forced and that the battlefields will be there still if they wished to visit and that school teaching is enough. Others remarked that 'for many reading about it is enough', 'no force feeding is counterproductive' or 'I think commemoration actually fosters militarism'. Despite these comments, 456 people believed that younger generations should be brought out to the battlefields. A variety of answers ranged from, 'younger generations are our future', you learn something different on the battlefields than you would in books', 'it's a practical way of teaching' and 'they had family who died, it being a part of their national identity'. To those who believed, 'to better understand the absolute futility of war', 'yes so that they can remember the folly of war', 'they need to see the huge waste of life and conditions in which they fought in', as well as reiterating they should understand why and how lucky they are to be here narrative.

Referring back to the comments made about being taught in schools or reading books is the right amount of education needed for the younger generations when learning about the First World War, I want to use two research projects by Catriona Pennell to demonstrate how classroom taught History and English First World War studies, and battlefield tours have the power to reinforce the dominant popular memory of the war. The first is, *The First World War in the Classroom* May 2014 report. The report draws on findings from a two-day workshop, using three regional focus groups and an online survey, specifically looking at secondary schools. Of the 261 History Pathway respondents (teachers, museum representatives, outreach staff, exam board representatives and history academics) they discovered Trench Warfare (96%), Origins/Causes (94%) and the Western Front (85%)²⁵³ were the top three traditional topics taught at secondary school level. When asked what resources were used to teach these topics, 91% used text books and 85% said they used Contemporary Footage (e.g. Battle of the Somme 1916). Interestingly, 82% used *Blackadder Goes Forth* and 70% used films about the war (notably *Oh! What a Lovely War*)²⁵⁴ as educational resources. Furthermore, when asked 'what are you trying to achieve in teaching First World War history?' 70% claimed to 'demonstrate the futility of war', with 77% teachers of 11-15 years' experience believing this to be 'either important or very important objective'.²⁵⁵

Pennell's *Popular History and Myth Making* further shows us how popular media are mobilised within secondary schools as anchors of education. Pennell discovered on a History Teacher's Discussion Forum, that a teacher had stated 'whenever teaching WW1 to Year 9 students, I'd consistently use the final *Blackadder* episode- found it always hit exactly the right

²⁵³ Ann-Marie Einhaus and Catriona Pennell. *The First World War in the Classroom: Teaching the Construction of Cultural Memory*, Final Project Report May 2014, p.34.
http://ww1intheclassroom.exeter.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/AHRC-Summary-report_July-2014.pdf

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.36.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp.41-3.

spot with Year 9s, illustrating the futility of war'.²⁵⁶ Pennell argued that despite the entertaining value of *Blackadder Goes Forth* it is not a legitimate historical source which articulates the complex nature of the First World War. Whilst *Blackadder Goes Forth* is the fourth series in the historical comedy, Pennell points out that 'teachers do not use the Elizabethan episodes as evidence of life in Tudor England, so why is the same standard not maintained in teaching the First World War?'²⁵⁷ According to Pennell, Gary Sheffield and Ian Beckett have openly criticised British schools in their teaching of the First World War and how educational textbooks are lacking revisionist works of history.²⁵⁸ If this is the case for the United Kingdom, then memory of the war at grassroots allows the pity of war narrative to continue as it is being taught as the correct historical narrative to the young and impressionable.

The report also looked at the context within which First World War literature was taught in English classrooms and found that of 98 respondents to the English Pathway 'indicated they had taught the First World War in relation to poetry analysis'.²⁵⁹ Wilfred Owen (97%), Siegfried Sassoon (86%), Michael Morpurgo (60%), were the most popular to use and following shortly behind Robert Graves (36%) and Vera Brittain (29%).²⁶⁰ Pennell explains that the works of these famous writers now, in our contemporary education 'stand as representatives of the 5.7 million men who passed through the British Army between 1914 and 1918'.²⁶¹ When asked 'where you do teach First World War writing, what is your main motivation?' 86% stated to demonstrate the futility of war, whilst 78% wanted to illustrate the cost of war.²⁶² In addition to these findings, the GCSE and ALevel boards AQA, OCR and Edexcel in their subject syllabus's²⁶³ use the First World

²⁵⁶ Pennell. *Popular History and Myth Making*, pp. 11-14.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*

²⁵⁹ Einhaus and Pennell. *The First World War in the Classroom*, p.45.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.47.

²⁶¹ Pennell. *Popular History and Myth Making*, pp. 11-14

²⁶² Einhaus and Pennell. *The First World War in the Classroom*, p.51.

²⁶³ For GCSE see <https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/history/gcse/history-8145/subject-content/understanding-the-modern-world>, [https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/History/2016/specification-and-sample-assessments/GCSE_History_\(9-1\)_Specification_Issue_2.pdf](https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/History/2016/specification-and-sample-assessments/GCSE_History_(9-1)_Specification_Issue_2.pdf). For ALevel see

War history with its' links to explaining the rise in dictatorship in Russia and Germany post war, or as a base for explaining the rise of Nazism, as well as why the war broke out and the peace settlements after the war. Whilst this report and syllabuses explain how the First World War is being taught in classrooms, Pennell believes that English teachers, as well as history teachers, 'have as much to answer for in terms of the enduring popular image of the Great War'.²⁶⁴

86% of the respondents believe the younger generations should be brought out to the battlefields to understand the First World War history and Pennell's second study *Taught to Remember? British Youth and the First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours* explores the government funded secondary school battlefield tours, that took place during the centenary. This particular study focussed on 790 Key Stage 3 pupils from across England who went on a battlefield of France and Belgium during 2015. A 34-question paper survey analysed these students' responses to the tours, as did two focus groups.²⁶⁵ Within this survey, Pennell asked students to list three pieces of new First World War information they had learnt, and the top five answers were: '(1) Major Battles; (2) Scale of Loss; (3) Trenches / Dugouts; (4) Significance / Rituals of Remembrance; (5) Equipment / Weapons / Technology'.²⁶⁶ This is a similar finding to the results in the first question of this chapter and in Noakes's listing of ten First World War words. Pennell's concluding thoughts within this study shows us that, by taking pupils to memorials such as Thiepval or Menin Gate, large cemeteries such as Lijssenthoek and Tyne Cot ensure the pupils are learning a predominantly British experience and scale of loss during the war, as well as remembrance rituals at sites (Last Post). A realisation of it being a world war when visits were made to the Indian Memorial Neuve-Chapelle, with 82% of pupils surveyed stating they had developed an understanding of why the First World War is called a world war. A better

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/170209-specification-accredited-as-level-gce-history-a-h105.pdf>,
<https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/170128-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-history-a-h505.pdf>,
<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/history/as-and-a-level/history-7041-7042/subject-content/2m-wars-and-welfare-britain-in-transition,-19061957>, (Accessed 1 August 2019)

²⁶⁴ Pennell. *Popular History and Myth Making*, pp. 11-14.

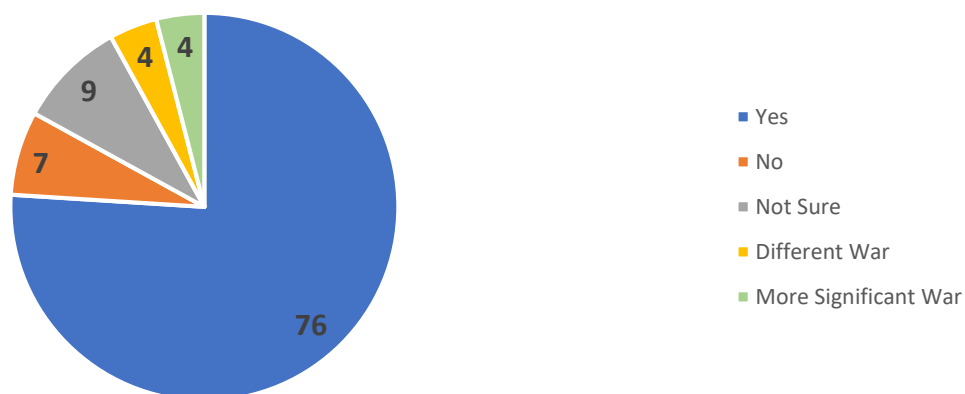
²⁶⁵ Pennell. *Taught to Remember?* p.86-7.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.88.

understanding of military tactics and realisation that the war wasn't solely trench warfare. With 90% of Pennell's survey respondents stating the purpose of visiting the First World War battlefields was 'to remember the dead'²⁶⁷ to what extent can these battlefield trips be effective in distorting the pity of war narrative? Most trips duration is only of a couple days, it is harder within that time to divulge into the complex history of artillery or tunnelling, than it is to send 30-40 schools' kids off around Tyne Cot or Thiepval searching for their surname. These findings show how battlefield trips can widen the perspective and awareness of the First World War to younger generations, but their education system perpetuates the pity of war narrative which their imaginations will attribute to what they saw on the battlefields.

The next question made a shift from First World War commemoration to looking at Second World War commemoration:

Do you think the same level of commemoration and remembrance should be given to the anniversaries of the Second World War? (%)



There was an array of answers within the Yes category with some explaining it was due to their family connection to the Second World War, others believed in the importance of

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*

commemorative events to encourage the historical education within the public sphere and some reiterated the notion of the horror of war and ensuring history does not repeat itself. Those who I categorised under 'Different War' and 'More Important War' shared similar themes in their responses. One 'Different War' answer stated, 'for the First World War we remember wasted life, for the Second World War there is an element of celebrating the defeat of evil as well', whilst someone who claimed the Second World War was 'More Important' explained 'World War One was the most horrendous, World War Two was a war against a greater evil'. Similar responses were seen in the Yes category: 'Yes, because so many died, and it was another dictator who wanted to rule the world' and 'Yes definitely- in fact we owe a greater debt to the men that fought in World War Two than the Great War. They helped to defeat the most evil regime the world has ever known'. Even a respondent who answered No shared the similar theme, 'No, the losses were not as huge, it was not as futile'. This is an interesting insight for if you were to include the civilian deaths during the Second World War, you would find the death tolls are much larger. This only shows the dominance of the First World War popular memory.

Todman has compared the popular memory of the First World War with that of the Second World War. Firstly, addressing the notion that the First World War is represented as more horrific to the Second, Todman explains that 'given the horrific conditions on the Western Front, the scale of war effort and differences from Britain's previous wars, it is not surprising that horrors should be a staple of how the First World War was represented'.²⁶⁸ Along with the Second World War being fought in terms of campaigns in North Africa, Italy, Normandy and Asia, with the transformation of fighting from trench warfare to a more modern technological war, resulted that the British had suffered half the military casualties of the First World War.²⁶⁹ Secondly, the theme

²⁶⁸ Todman. *The Great War Myth and Memory*, 2005, p.8.

²⁶⁹ British Second World War military deaths came to 384,000 whilst First World War 704,803. The civilian deaths in the First World War were 2,000, and the Second World War was 70,000. Total of civilian deaths from Second World War 33,963,000. Parliamentary Britain, <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/olympic-britain/crime-and-defence/the-fallen/>, (Accessed 19 August 2019); Long Long Trail, <https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/some-british->

of futility and fighting a greater cause stand out as popular answers to this question. Todman addresses how historian of war Mark Connelly suggested that 'the Second World War provided the British people with a 'yardstick of futility' against which to judge the First'. The belief that the British were fighting an enemy which posed a 'direct threat' to the British Isles, and the post-1945 'public revelation of the Holocaust and Japanese mistreatment of prisoners of war' allowed the Second World War mythology to be seen in a positive light fighting an 'evil enemy' as the respondents refer to.²⁷⁰ Additionally, as the First World War was not 'the war to end all wars' it led people to question what the First World War had achieved in four years fighting, especially in comparison to the fight against the Nazi's.

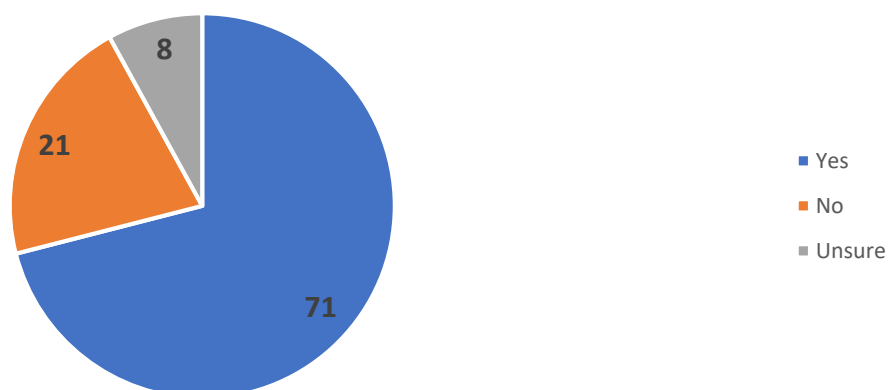
Those who responded No to the question believed 'it's time to stop when the last survivor of World War Two passes away', 'no it's still just about within living memory to an extent that the First isn't, or that 'we live too much in past', as other reiterated 'when do we stop?' It is interesting that the Second World War is still within living memory. The responses categorised under 'Unsure' were from respondents that stated, 'I won't be here', whilst others didn't think it was their decision to make, 'it is up the next generation not mine to decide' or 'we'll see what countries choose to do in 25 years'.

[army-statistics-of-the-great-war/](#) (Accessed 19 August 2019); Second World War History, <https://www.secondworldwarhistory.com/world-war-2-statistics.php> (Accessed 19 August 2019)

²⁷⁰ Todman. *The Great War Myth and Memory*, p.135.

The next question followed on, asking:

Do you believe soldiers fighting today deserve the same commemoration as we have given the soldiers of the First World War?



Firstly, those who were categorised as Unsure didn't give a clear answer but expressed how the wars then and now are very different, how war itself and the reason why we go to war have changed, whilst some stated that they were pacifists and held anti-war beliefs. One of the prominent reasons from the 378 who said Yes was the 'risked their lives for us' narrative, also evoking the for Us, for Queen, for Government, for Nation. One believed 'Yes, because acts of sacrifice should always be remembered' whilst another said 'Yes, because repatriation has changed the mourning and commemoration process'. Interestingly, in both Yes and No categories people's reasonings were because of the choice a person made to become a soldier, some believe it noble to want to represent the country in the military knowing the possible outcome, whereas some believed the soldiers made an informed decision on joining the army so they shouldn't get the same level of commemoration.

One person who responded No remarked 'soldiers today should already know our appreciation'. As a modern society we do already commemorate our current military deaths, especially as seen in France. In 2012, after the deaths incurred fighting in Afghanistan and increased media coverage given the contemporary military deaths, a new law was passed which

required 'the communes to inscribe on or near their war memorials the names of those whose death certificate bore the words 'died for France'. In addition, the same law made November 11 'the day of remembrance of all those who died for France, whatever conflict'.²⁷¹ France marking November 11 for all those that died for France is like the British Remembrance Sunday, but the main difference they have is adding names to / or near their local war memorials. In the U.K if a name was to be added a long process of regulations and permission of the local community must be obtained before it is even granted.²⁷² The National Arboretum is Britain's year-round national site of remembrance in Staffordshire and in London there is a national war memorial dedicated to the Gulf War, Afghanistan War and Iraq War (1990-2015). The artist, Paul Day said the 'rocky terrains' of the memorial was to 'suggest how the outcomes of both campaigns were not fully resolved and the 'division within the British people' over them'.²⁷³ Contemporary soldiers' names may not feature nationally on war memorials, but those that do and the incorporation of recent military deaths to traditional modes of commemoration symbolically links them with those of the First World War.²⁷⁴

A handful of respondents who said No reiterated that wars today are far too political, the scale of death is very different or stressed that soldiers today need better post-service help rather than public commemoration. Polls have shown the British public's discontent with Iraq and Afghanistan as the wars come to be perceived as 'unnecessary or unwinnable' driven by 'government callousness'.²⁷⁵ McCartney has argued that the British public have used their 'moral

²⁷¹ Jérémy Pignard, *Towards the Remembrance of Overseas Operations*, <https://www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr/en/towards-remembrance-overseas-operations> (Accessed 31 July 2019)

²⁷² War Memorials Trust, *Addition of Names to War Memorials*, <http://www.warmemorials.org/uploads/publications/115.pdf>, (Accessed 31 July 2019)

²⁷³ BBC News, *Iraq and Afghanistan Wars Memorial Unveiled*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-39202897> (Accessed 31 July 2019)

²⁷⁴ Esther Addley. *In Sorrow and In Anger*, Guardian, 11.Nov 2006, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/nov/11/iraq.military> (Accessed 31 July 2019)

²⁷⁵ McCartney. *The First World War Soldier and His Contemporary Image in Britain*, p.311.

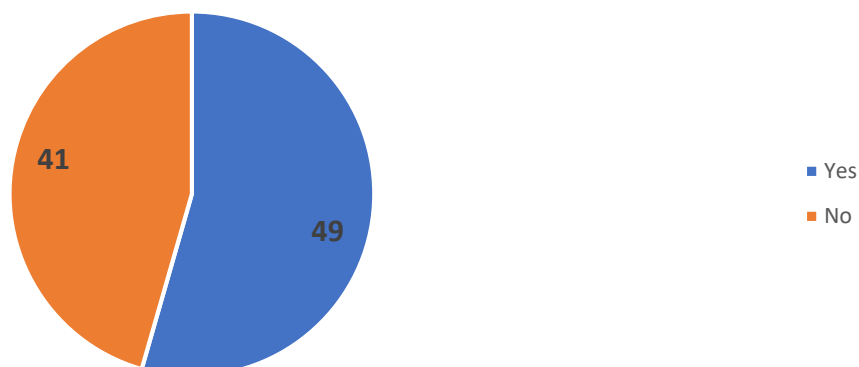
value' when 'drawing analogies between the contemporary British soldiers and those of the First World War',²⁷⁶ using the example of Harry Patch's remembrance service at Westminster Abbey, where two contemporary Victoria Cross winners laid a poppy wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The then Prime Minister Gordon Brown claimed 'bravery and sacrifice of the First World War generation' to the current armed forces. McCartney believes that creating an association between two can 'help to solidify the image of the soldier-victim'.²⁷⁷ This could be another avenue for the continuation of dominant memories where contemporary moral values are used to judge and be applied to the understanding of historical events, as current military events are comparatively drawn upon to strengthen particular values. Of the 528 respondents, three openly stated they were in current service or ex-service when answering this question and responded with: 'No I'm one of them- we knew what we're signing up for- a volunteer force', 'As an ex-soldier I'd say no- none have been as important or as crucial to the civilian population' and 'as an ex-soldier I personally could never consider myself and peers worth of being mentioned in the same breath as these men who came before us'. These perspectives provide differing insights as to how the future of commemoration could unfold, but it appears that the Second World War and even current soldiers will always be compared to those of the First World War, which signals the strength the narratives around the First World War soldiers continue to hold.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.312.

The final question of the survey:

Do you think the First World War Centenary has changed the way in which we remember the First World War? (%)



To a near enough 50/50 response to this question I have summarised the responses into the most popular themes per-category. The Yes responses have been summarised into three themes, the first being that the history of the First World War was new to people who hadn't learnt it before so that the centenary brought about a new historical education. The second change the centenary was believed to have brought about, was the idea that the centenary has been a positive platform for promoting 'hidden histories' as individuals or communities explored people of colour, the focus on a world war (the different colonies and religions involved in the war) and the role of women. The third change reiterated by respondents was how they believed the centenary made the First World War history more accessible to the public, through multi-media and the belief this encouraged people to engage on a deeper level with the centenary, especially to research whether a family connection existed. People stated that the aid of our digital age and mass media brought about a change in how we remember the war which, coupled with new interpretations (e.g. 14-18-NOW art projects) presented the war to a modern audience.

Some respondents stated that they believed a change had occurred, it wasn't impactful enough to sustain and commented it 'will be forgotten quickly' and returned to '2013 First World

War memory'. On the other hand, both Yes and No answers covered how the centenary wasn't about change but a time that created an awareness and public consciousness to the national historical event. Specifically, in the No category some respondents believed the centenary didn't bring any change and either strengthened or failed to dispel the traditional myths of trench warfare, futility, lions led by donkeys and death. One respondent said, 'the media has gone down the route of sacrifice, victim status and poetry', similar to others believing the media coverage was a negative aspect of the war providing a focus of a narrow historical narrative. Some respondents simply commented how dominant myths prevailed within the national popular memory. One notable No response was 'since the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, the way in which grief and mourning are interpreted and expected has changed to an over emotional, sentimentalised outpouring' which could suggest this individual believed the centenary was a part of a societal fad of expressive grief. The responses which were categorised under Unsure expressed how it is dependent on the younger generations, if a change did occur, for its continuation, whilst also stating it would take a couple of years to obtain any conclusions if a change had occurred or not.

Conclusion

The ten questions within the survey were aimed at exploring individual popular responses to topics involving the centenary of the First World War, the perception of the current battlefields and the future of commemoration. Throughout all the answers I found the reiteration of the futility myth, emphasis regarding the scale of loss and horror endured in the First World War, and the consistent mentioning of individuals having a family connection. The continued mentioning of horror, futility, death and the expression of emotion attached to such phrases, demonstrates the continued strength these beliefs of the First World War have within the sample's popular memory. A discussion of the public art projects when discussing the DCMS centenary events was

interesting, as they were not mentioned in the question but provide an indication of their power to provide thought provoking historical commemoration or drew upon the popular image of individuals minds retaining such significance within the centenary. Additional evidence of how younger generations are being taught the First World War in secondary education provides a further insight as to how these myths are reinforced and stay within popular memory. James Wallis argued family history underpins 'grass roots commemorative practice'²⁷⁸ and is a motivator behind individuals' participation within the First World War centenary and the individual emotive connection to those family members. The responses demonstrate the importance of the connection between family history and national historical events, and when regarding future events such as the centenary of the Second World War, some respondents believed in the importance of commemoration due to a relative that had participated. This chapter finishes the circle of the popular memory of the First World War, it provides an insight into how a select sample of the public perceive the First World War, whilst assessing how individuals are engaging within historical narratives and demonstrating the hegemonic power of popular narratives.

²⁷⁸ James Wallis. *'Great-Grandfather, What Did You Do in the Great War?'*, p.21.

Conclusion

The final question in my survey asked, 'Do you think the First World War Centenary has changed the way in which we remember the First World War?' This research project demonstrates that, largely, it has not. I believe an awareness of the history of the First World War, that wasn't necessarily present before 2014, was highlighted to the British public. Yet, what was largely being highlighted were the popular perceptions of trench warfare and death. The longer-term memory of the war, analysed by Todman and Winter shaped the way in which Britain chose to commemorate the First World War Centenary, marking the strength these popular perceptions had prior to the Centenary. When looking into the impact the centenary had on popular memory in the United Kingdom, it is clear it's status and circulation was retained within existing popular memory whilst engaging with a new audience.

Chapter 1 explored the development of First World War cultural memory that we know today, showing how it was solidified in the 1960s as Britain approached the 50th anniversary of the war. Alan Clark's *Lions Led by Donkeys* (1961), Joan Littlewood's *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1963) and the BBC *The Great War* (1964) began the process of war memory which dominated the centenary. This was further reinforced in the 1980s with *Blackadder Goes Forth* (1989), which saw Captain Flasher summarise the popular perceptions of the war as 'mud, blood and endless poetry'. It wasn't just through cultural means that popular perceptions of the war gained momentum, the memory of the First World War was also used as a political tool. The Second World War and the Cold War used the First World War as a futile comparison, as the Second World War fought off an evil enemy and as the Cold War tensions grew, the First World War was evoked to exemplify the idea of a futile war and the distrust of elites who make grand alliances and the horrors when they break. As time went on, the 80th and 90th anniversaries passed and so did Britain's last surviving 'Tommy' in 2008, Harry Patch. As the veterans began to die off, and their direct relatives too, we were left in a society where no one of living memory could contest cultural

interpretations of the war, or what newspapers and politicians had to say on the historical event and so the popular perceptions of trench warfare, death and futility firmly established their mark to narrate the First World War. The development of First World War memory from 1914-2014 established how memory can reveal as much about the present as it does the past, whilst not always being static or universally agreed, new narratives can infiltrate an existing memory and gain hegemony.

Chapter 2 investigated why and how the centenary would unfold, as directed in 2012 by the then Prime Minister David Cameron.²⁷⁹ He wanted a national event, just like the 2012 Olympics that captured the British national spirit. As the Battle of the Somme and the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) were marked as the two significant battles of the war, they brought with them the popular perceptions of mud, blood, death, donkeys and futility. David Cameron's plans reinforced these popular perceptions to the nation as new interpretations commemorated these events. Following the governments' centenary guidelines was the public art organisation 14-18-NOW²⁸⁰. 14-18-NOW took a step away from the traditional forms of commemoration and modernised commemoration to a contemporary audience. Jeremy Deller humanised the Battle of the Somme dead through a living memorial. Peter Jackson colourised our imaginations inviting the nation to reimagine the war. Danny Boyle took to the beaches as he humanised icons of the war into the sand. Further, Historic Royal Palaces combined traditional commemoration with a new artist twist as thousands of poppies and torches engulfed the Tower of London. Each representing a British and Commonwealth death, the poppies defined the first four months of the First World War Centenary,²⁸¹ whilst the torches marked the sacrifice made during the four-and-a-half-year war.²⁸² As thousands witnessed these modern artistic forms of commemoration, they

²⁷⁹ David Cameron, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/speech-at-imperial-war-museum-on-first-world-war-centenary-plans> (Accessed 19 August 2019)

²⁸⁰ 1418NOW, <https://www.1418now.org.uk/> (Accessed 19 August 2019)

²⁸¹ Historic Royal Palaces, <https://www.hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london/history-and-stories/tower-of-london-remembers/> (Accessed 19 August 2019)

²⁸² Historic Royal Palaces, <https://www.hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london/whats-on/the-tower-remembers/#gs.3gct8n> (Accessed 19 August 2019)

were less educational pieces but more pieces that created an awareness of an historical centenary. While they reached people, who may have not been aware of the centenary and even encouraged some to look further into the First World War, they still strengthened dominant popular memory of the war. What these projects demonstrate is the hegemonic memory of the war was firmly, before the centenary, during and after, entrenched via these large-scale projects and commemorative events.

14-18-NOW and Historic Royal Palaces were not the only organisations that created commemorative public projects. Chapter 3 looked at how The Heritage Lottery Fund provided public funding for communities to engage with the centenary. This 'bottom up' approach enabled the British public and local communities to mark the centenary and articulate First World War memory. Often, rather than challenging the dominant war memory, different communities added strands to the pre-existing memory as they unearthed non-traditional topics which included, the stories of everyday women in the war and rediscovering the 'world' part in the First World War as different religions and ethnic minorities reaffirmed their place within a national history. These projects are contemporary examples of how memory can reveal as much about the past as it does the present, as some projects used the First World War for identity and political purposes. As new war memories were created amongst communities it is hard to assess the impact these projects had on individuals' popular perceptions, but despite efforts to look at hidden histories, these projects created a community awareness and potential localised popular perception change.

Popular memory theory shows how national and individual memory interact and shape one another to create a dominant narrative, and to gauge a full understanding of the popular memory amongst the British public, the final chapter of this project looked at individual memory. Topics that assessed individual memory included public opinions of national commemorative events, how the battlefields are perceived today and the future of commemoration. Whilst these individual responses were not applicable to the wider public, they provide an insight into how

some of the public- those most interested in the centenary- are remembering the war. The importance of family history was maintained throughout the study, as early on it established itself as a motivating factor to an engagement with war memory and commemoration. There were signs from some members of the public that they did not follow the dominant narratives of the war and hoped the centenary had made a shift away from them. Yet a majority of respondents channelled the popular perceptions of the war as they reiterated trench warfare, death, futility and the pity of war narrative. This study, conducted towards the end of the centenary, shows that the centenary did not bring about a change in popular narratives among those most interested in the war, and instead strengthened them.

For military, cultural or social historians this research project should establish the importance of not solely following dominant narratives of historical topics. This is not to diminish the importance of teaching and learning about trench warfare or the sacrifices made by the everyday men and women, but to broaden the horizon of study, and to engage with popular and public representation of the conflict. As Dan Todman argues:

‘the British response to the war at the time was multi-vocal: over time, some voices have disappeared, and others have grown stronger. The tune we now hear uses the same notes, but it sounds very different to that of 1918. A single melody has emerged and all the voices now audible sing along to it’.²⁸³

How is it at the time of the centenary, have we quietened most First World War historical narratives? Multiple narratives and factors create a historical topic, yet when looking at a national and world historical topic such as the First World War, we largely maintain the popular understandings that first emerged in the 1930s and then solidified 1960s. The centenary was a four-year platform which could have vocalised the unquiet pasts of the First World War. Arguably the Heritage Lottery Funding opened a door to these hidden histories, but the projects lacked the

²⁸³ Todman, Dan. *The Great War Myth and Memory*, Hambledon and London (London and New York), 2005, p.221.

national platform needed to make a change in dominant understandings. A hope would be that a minority have had their perceptions changed or the awareness encouraged individual research and understanding of the war to flourish in those who may not have before. The centenary created an awareness of the First World War history on a national scale, but an awareness doesn't change popular perceptions and those popular perceptions remained largely unchanged by the end of the centenary.

Appendix 1: Record Count statistics from CWGC as provided by Victoria Wallace (Director General of CWGC)

From: Julie Pearson
 Sent: 07 January 2019 10:22
 To: Victoria Wallace <victoria.wallace@cwgc.org>
 Subject: Enquiries Stats

Hello Victoria

These are the stats as requested, CWGC changed from using the casualty database to the system we now use in 2015 , so 2015 stats represent part of that year.

2018

CASE ORIGIN	RECORD COUNT
Email	7,019
Phone	2,421
Web	5,937
Letter	1,403
Visitor	50
GRAND TOTAL	16,830

2017

Case Origin	Record Count
Email	7,319
Phone	2,584
Web	4,927
Letter	1,347
Visitor	78
Grand Total	16,255

2016

Case Origin	Record Count
Email	4,311
Phone	1,380
Web	2,573
Letter	700
Visitor	34
Grand Total	8,998

2015

Case Origin	Record Count
Email	1,393
Phone	781
Web	1,187
Letter	316
Visitor	13
Grand Total	3,690

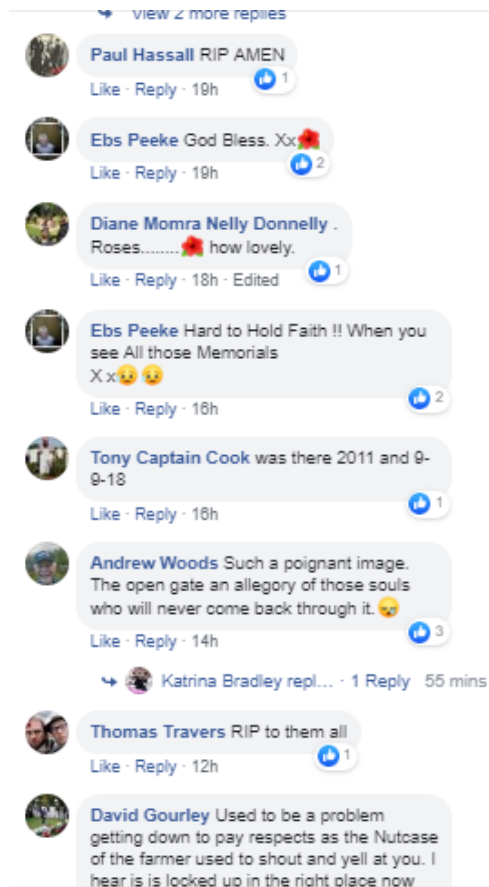
Victoria 1 of 8 - -

Victoria 1 of 8 - -

Appendix 2: The Great War Somme: Cemeteries, Battlefields and Memorials Pictures, image of Railway Hollow Cemetery. Posted by Andrew Mackay on July 21 2019



Appendix 3: Comments from The Great War: Somme Cemeteries, Battlefields and Memorials group members to the image of Railway Hollow Cemetery in Appendix 2.



Appendix 4: Email correspondence between Olivia Smith and Natasha Ley from Heritage Lottery Fund providing statistics for National Lottery funding for the First World War Centenary.

National Lottery funding for the First World War Centenary



Natasha Ley <natasha.ley@heritagefund.org.uk>
Tue 25/06/2019 10:21
Smith, Olivia A E



Hi there,

As promised, here's an overview of the money invested by The National Lottery Heritage Fund (previously the Heritage Lottery Fund until January 2019) in the First World War Centenary.

- The National Lottery Heritage Fund invested almost £100 million (£97.5m to 28 February 2019) in 2,255 First World War Centenary projects across the United Kingdom from Bellanaleck in Northern Ireland to Leiston in Suffolk, from Whalsay in Shetland to Penryn in Cornwall.
- Grants range from £15million for HMS Caroline to small awards for local community projects. The vast majority of projects have been funded through our 'First World War: then and now' grants programme, which has so far awarded £14.8m to 1,754 community projects, all receiving grants between £3,000 and £10,000.
- 98% of local authority areas and 91% of parliamentary constituencies have received at least one National Lottery Heritage Fund grant for a First World War project.
- Almost 10 million people have participated in these Centenary projects, not including the millions of visitors to the Imperial War Museum's First World War galleries (£6.5m) and the 35 million people engaged by 14-18 NOW, the Centenary cultural programme (£10m).
- A very wide range of people have been involved in the projects we have funded, researching stories of the war and its impact, and sharing them through publications, exhibitions, films, drama and social media.
- Alongside traditional forms of commemoration, millions of people have contributed through projects like these to a rich new citizen history of the First World War. This local community activity has had a profound impact on individuals and has increased our collective knowledge, enriching our heritage for present and future generations.
- We are proud of the fact, and it is fitting, that this has been made possible with funds raised by the players of the National Lottery throughout the United Kingdom.
- National Lottery funding has helped restore some of the most iconic heritage of the First World War including: HMS Caroline; HMS M33: Yr Ysawm the home of Welsh poet 2014. Grants have also helped conserve precious archives, records and letters and make them accessible to the public for the first time: the Royal College of Nursing digitised nurses' scrapbooks from its archives; Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives have digitised the rare survival of the Mid-Staffordshire Appeal Tribunal records.

This [film](#) is worth a watch, it give you the scope of our investment. Also, [#OneCentenary100Stories](#)

Best wishes,
Natasha

Appendix 5: CWGC Thiepval and Tyne Cot Visitor Statistics 2014-2018

	April 2014 to December 2014	January 2015 to December 2015	January 2016 to December 2016
Thiepval Memorial and Cemetery	175,228	106,723	157,273
Tyne Cot Cemetery and memorial	623,489	378,572	393,973
	January 2017 to December 2017	January 2018 to December 2018	
	259,250	310,649	
	345,199	395,109	

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