‘Boom time for old guns’
Creative commemoration, memory politics, and British identity at the centenary of the First World War

Louise Anne Rodwell

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Philosophical, Historical, and Interdisciplinary Studies
University of Essex

April 2026

Abstract

This thesis examines the creative commemoration that took place at the centenary of the First World War at both state level and through community led projects. Determined to be something that matters 'not just in our heads, but in our hearts', David Cameron outlined the value and meaning the First World War was felt to have to the British people, which he used to justify spending large amounts to commemorate the conflict during a time of national austerity. Through analysing the emphasis these national and local commemorative actions took through exploring thematic case studies, it will also uncover the interactions these projects had with each other in the national imagination. This thesis examines how these themes intersected with national identities, understandings and memories of the First World War, to understand how meaning making was constructed 'creatively' at the centenary.

Contents

Abstract ii
List of figures vi
List of abbreviations vii
Acknowledgements viii
Introduction - 'Lights out' 1
The centenary moment 3
The 'Big Society' 7
A national moment of remembrance? 11
Methodology and sources 18
Art as a 'way of seeing' the 'look of the past' 19
Nations, memories, imaginations 23
The First World War – an imagined site of modern memory? 26
Mechanised war, mechanised memory? 37
'Horseshoe of memory' theory 40
Structure 42
1: The Imperial War Museum and the experiences of memory of the First World War 48
Introduction - Memorial and museum? Navigating changing memories of war 48
Whose memories…and of what? 50
Museums and the shaping of national memories before the First World War 52
Memory and the museum during and immediately after the First World War 55
Finding a home for Britain's war 60
Space for More Wars? The Imperial War Museum since the Second World War 65
Approaching the 50th anniversary of the First World War 1964 – 68 69
The 'Memory Boom' 71
The centenary moment at the Imperial War Museum 75
Conclusion 83
2: Imagined landscapes of the First World War 86
Introduction – The depictions of landscapes during the First World War 86
Landscapes and Englishness – pre-war and pre-centenary 92
14-18 NOW - affective, emotive, aesthetic and embodied rurality 100
***Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* and the 'Poppy Tour'** 100
100: The day our world changed and 100:Unearth 106
Shot at Dawn 112

Still 114

Heritage Lottery Funded projects 115

Local remembrance and landscapes 116

Landscape as a 'frontier' space 122

Working landscapes 126

Conclusion 128

3: 'Come along, boys – Enlist today!'/ 'It is YOUR DUTY' - Remembering men at the centenary of the First World War 132

Introduction - Men during the war 132

14-18 NOW – Re-bodying a traditionally 'bodyless' space 138

We're Here Because We're Here 139

They Shall Not Grow Old 146

Pages of the Sea 152

This Is Not For You 158

Heritage Lottery Fund 161

Local men and their stories 161

Non-traditional narratives 165

Conclusion 167

4: 'Something for the girls' at the centenary 170

Introduction - The First World War for women 170

The suffrage movement 172

War work 174

Grief 177

14-18 NOW – Which women were remembered at the centenary? 178

'Naw tae politics o' fear and hate' - *Processions* and protest 179

Women at work – Nurses and 'munitionettes' 186

Expressions of grief 190

Heritage Lottery Fund 199

Uncovering 'lesser-known' histories 199

Commemorating nurses of the war 201

Protest 202

Conclusion 205

5: Foreign fields, 'fighting for the flag' and forgetting – Empire soldiers represented at the centenary 208

Introduction – ignoring memories? 208

Legacies of non-commemoration of troops of colour 210

Empire troops or Dominion troops? 213
On the Western Front – the racialised roles of servicemen of colour 216
14-18 NOW – Narratives made visible 218
Mimesis: African Soldier 218
The Head and the Load 221
Not Yet at Ease 225
Heritage Lottery Funded projects 227
Physical legacies 228
Intangible heritages and making visible the 'forgotten' 231
Conclusion 237
Conclusion: Connected, creative memories 241
Bibliography 254

List of figures

Figure 1 - Imperial War Museum, London 50
Figure 2 - *Crystal Palace - Great War Exhibition - Imperial War Museum* (1920) 62
Figure 3 - First World War Galleries, 'Shock' 79
Figure 4 - Paul Nash, *Wire*, (c1918/1919) 89
Figure 5 - Ploegsteert Memorial Cemetery, Belgium 91
Figure 6 - Hooge Crater Cemetery, Belgium 91
Figure 7 - *Your Country's Call*, (1915) 98
Figure 8 - *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* at the Tower of London 101
Figure 9 - *100: The Day our World Changed*, (2014) 107
Figure 10 - Reflections from community project on the 'Englishness' of war cemeteries 118
Figure 11 - Community project imaginations of the war dead within the landscape 121
Figure 12 - 'First World War Centenary Woods - The Woodland Trust' 127
Figure 13 - #wearehere performers at Kings Cross Station 144
Figure 14 - Banners from *Processions* 180
Figure 15 - 'The making of *Courage Calls to Courage Everywhere*' exhibition, Firstsite 185
Figure 16 - William Hatherall, *Nurse, Wounded Soldier and Child*, (1915) 186
Figure 17 - 'Trailblazers: World War One's Inspirational Women' (Author's own image) 203
Figure 18 - Indian and Chinese servicemen's graves, Lijssemthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium 213
Figure 19 - Chattri memorials, 'Remembering Forgotten Heroes' 230
Figure 20 - Diya making instructions, NUTKHUT: Dr. Blighty 233
Figure 21 – 'The Unremembered' Project 236

List of abbreviations

IWM – Imperial War Museum

DCMS – Department for Culture, Media and Sport

FWWCCP – First World War Centenary Cultural Programme

HLF – Heritage Lottery Fund (pre-2019)

NLHF – National Lottery Heritage Fund (post-2019)

CWGC – Commonwealth War Graves Commission

NUWSS - National Union of Women Suffrage Societies

VAD - Voluntary Aid Detachment

RNAS – Royal Naval Air Service

FANY - First Aid Nursing Yeomanry

WASPI - Women Against State Pension Inequality

WSPU - Women's Social and Political Union

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to give special thanks to my supervisors Lucy Noakes and Alix Green, for their support, guidance, and belief in me for the past seven years. There were times I didn't believe in myself, but their counsel and kindness have helped develop my academic voice and craft considerably, and I will be forever thankful. I would also like to thank Sean Kelly and Felix Schnell for their insights on my supervisory panels, as well as Tom Freeman, who was a part of my Essex journey from undergraduate to doctoral degree, and David Rundle, who encouraged me in my first steps in academia.

I was privileged alongside my PhD journey to be a part of the REPLACE project, which has been a source of great insight, interest and excitement. I would like to thank Paola Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco, Matteo Baraldo and Francesca Dolcetti for their collegiality and guidance throughout my academic first steps both inside the REPLACE project and with my PhD.

I have felt at home at Essex since I started my undergraduate degree in history in 2012, and whilst there have been some changes to the departmental structures, I have been lucky enough to keep my sense of belonging when the Department of History became a part of the School for Historical, Philosophical, and Interdisciplinary Studies (PHAIS). I would like to take this opportunity to particularly thank Diana Bullen Presciutti, Matthew Grant and Hannah Whiting for their support through what has felt like an academic marathon at times, and also to the broader PHAIS community for always being a source of intelligent discussion and academic curiosity.

I was fortunate to share my time undertaking a PhD with other brilliant candidates. There are too many to name, but special mention must go to Sam Woodward, Liam Redfern, Lewis Smith, Francis van Berkel, and Mike O'Keefe.

Thanks must also go to the special collections team at the University of Essex, the Imperial War Museum archive team, and the Mass Observation archive team for their diligence and knowledge in the archives, as well as to James Hyde, whose tour of the battlefields in October 2025 greatly enriched my understanding of the landscapes of the Western Front.

Whilst our friendship journey began at Essex as undergraduates, I am eternally grateful to Olivia Lofters and Sophie Morfett for their support, virtual hugs and constant cheering that has spurred me through the PhD.

I would also like to thank my family. You all mean so much to me, the support of my gang has helped me tremendously through this PhD. To my parents, Mick and Karen, my siblings Laura and Steven, my brothers in law, Ben and Hoi, and my grandparents, Ann, Don and Janet, who have been a great source of comfort, love and encouragement.

Finally, special thanks to Ryan, my love. Words cannot describe how much your love has supported me through this journey.

Introduction - 'Lights out'

> 'Has the past said its farewells and left us for good, or does it continue to exist within this moment, Cicianne?'[1]

At 10pm on 4th August, lights went out all over the country to mark the outbreak of the start of the First World War. Government buildings, museums, and homes went dark in a moment of collective reflection on the beginning of a conflict that was felt, at the time, to change the trajectory of Europe for a generation. Contemporary voices remember seeing the 'black out' from miles away, professing it was not something that they would forget for their whole life.[2]

On the 3rd of August 1914, the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, had imagined aloud to a friend that the lamps were going out all over Europe, not to be lit again in their lifetime.[3] The present-day knowledge that the conflict which followed would be among the most catastrophic wars the world has seen, and that Grey and others could have foreseen such a cataclysmic event, feels to be literary foreshadowing in the extreme.

Except, the lights did not *actually* go out on the 4th of August 1914. This event took place a hundred years later, on the centenary of the start of the First World War as part of an event named 'Lights Out'. This creative intervention was constructed in response to Edward Grey's reflection that spoke to the loss of a generation, which, as Samuel Hynes has suggested, may have never been uttered by him at all. Grey could not remember saying it when asked about it again.[4] Nevertheless, the significance was clearly felt for participants at the centenary. A

[1] Elif Shafak, 'In search of Untold stories' in *1914 - Goodbye to all that: Writers on the conflict between life and art*, ed by Lavinia Greenlaw, (Pushkin Press, 2014) p. 80.
[2] 14-18 NOW, '42a - Written Evidence submitted by 14-18 NOW', *WWO0073 – Evidence on lessons from the First World War Centenary*, (March 2019) https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/100393/html/ , [13th February 2026]
[3] James Cronan, 'The lamps are going out all over Europe', *The National Archives*, (4th August 2014) https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20250613143436/https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/lamps-going-europe/, [13th February 2026]
[4] Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined*, 2nd ed, (Pimlico, 1992) p. 3.

participant to the 2014 event emphasised the meaningfulness of the artistic interpretation of the outbreak of war, and how it 'hits home'.[5] If Grey *had* said those fateful words in 1914, the response in 2014 seems rather to be a confirmation that his foresight had not only described his generation, but left a legacy which is understood for the generations since. Whilst questions can be asked about the assumed knowledge of participants in these early centenary activities, over a million people took part in the opening event for the centenary.[6] The affective emotional connection of 'Lights Out' brought together two moments in time, separated by a hundred years, through a moment of collective, creative reflection.

The imaginative atmosphere of the First World War centenary was off to a good start. With over a million participants in the 'Lights Out' event, public engagement in the full programme of centenary commemorative events exceeded the expectations of the government considerably, by its own admission.[7] 'Lights Out' was the first creative event held by the government's cultural programme during the centenary, which featured 107 projects and 269 new artworks in 220 locations across the United Kingdom. Entitled 14-18 NOW, the programme's goal was to engage more people than ever with the First World War at the centenary. It was heralded as a success, and, as a result, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) were encouraged to take a similar approach to future commemorative events, acknowledging that 'the arts are a core part of our national life.'[8]

[5] 14-18 NOW, '68A - Written Evidence submitted by 14-18 NOW', *WWO0073 – Evidence on lessons from the First World War Centenary*, (March 2019) <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/100393/html/>, [13th February 2026]
[6] 14-18 NOW, '42 - Written Evidence submitted by 14-18 NOW', *WWO0073 – Evidence on lessons from the First World War Centenary*, (March 2019) <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/100393/html/>, [13th February 2026]
[7] Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, House of Commons, (Thirteenth Report of Session 2017-19), 'Lessons from the First World War Centenary', p45 (10th July 2019) <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcumeds/2001/2001.pdf> [3rd September 2025]
[8] DCMS committee 'Lessons from the First World War Centenary', p. 19.

The centenary moment

The Coalition Government envisioned the centenary to be an opportunity to collectively commemorate a 'truly national moment'[9] and was led by David Cameron. This thesis seeks to analyse the centenary within the broader national memory of the First World War in Britain, specifically the narratives that have been led from Westminster. It explores the themes that were identified by the government as central to the understanding of the First World War at its centenary, and how these themes manifested through the creative arts programmes funded by the state and third sector organisations. This thesis examines the dualities present between state-led and community centred creative projects, exploring which themes were prioritised across the projects, and the interpretations these themes revealed about understanding and memory of the First World War at the centenary. The approach taken uses David Cameron's 2012 'Speech at Imperial War Museum on First World War centenary plans' as an outline to identify the subjects relating to the war considered by the state to have shaped modern Britain. Each theme is examined through close analysis of case studies of the state-led artworks relating to the theme, alongside community-centred projects funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) formerly the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).[10] I will be using the name the Heritage Lottery Fund and its acronym throughout this thesis, as it was the fund's name at the time.

Before the centenary, discussions were held by politicians and public history practitioners in the mainstream press about what emphasis the commemorative activities should take. Was the war fought by 'conscious believers in King and country, committed to defending the western liberal order,'[11] as Education Secretary Michael Gove asserted? Should

[9] 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> [12th August 2025]
[10] The name change from the 'Heritage Lottery Fund' to the 'National Lottery Heritage Fund' took place in 2019.
[11] Tim Shipman, 'Michael Gove blasts 'Blackadder myths' about the First World War spread by television sit-coms and left-wing academics', and Michael Gove, 'Why does the Left insist on belittling true British heroes?' *Daily Mail*, (2nd January 2014), <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2532923/Michael-Gove-blasts-Blackadder-myths-First-World-War-spread-television-sit-coms-left-wing-academics.html> [12th August 2025]

space be given to the 'multiple histories that the war evinces—from the Royal British Legion to the National Union of Railwaymen to the Indian, Ethiopian and Australian servicemen fighting for the empire'[12], as the head of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Tristram Hunt suggested? Concerns about the best way to mark the centenary were not the only worries present in the lead up to 2014. Recent work by Kristin O'Donnell outlines that in the years leading up to the commemorations, there was a sense of anxiety within the coalition government that rituals and remembrance were not enough to sustain public imagination or interest in the memory of the First World War.[13] As a result, 14-18 NOW was established by the government, a nationwide arts programme for the centenary which drew on the legacies of war artists and poets through who the memory of the First World War has greatly relied on.[14] 14-18 NOW was established as an arm's-length body, which was designated as 'independent' from the state-led commemoration,[15] despite being co-ordinated through the broader First World War Centenary programme led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).[16] Nevertheless, the perception of 14-18 NOW being in addition to, but ultimately separate from the traditional commemorative activities was particularly important for securing artists and maintaining its credibility.[17] Alongside broad engagement, 14-18 NOW was envisioned by the government to be able to create spaces for 'new perspectives', as well as engaging particularly with young people and people less likely to engage with arts and culture.[18] Originally named the First World War Centenary Cultural Programme

[12] Tristram Hunt, 'Michael Gove, using history for politicking is tawdry' *The Guardian*, (4th January 2014), https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/04/first-world-war-michael-gove-left-bashing-history [12th August 2025]
[13] Kristin O'Donnell, 'The cultural politics of commemoration – cultural policy and participatory art during the centenary of the First World War in the United Kingdom', unpublished paper presented at *Memory, Narrative, Histories* reading group, (Online, 24th October 2024)
[14] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_06_02_02_02_01_002_003_2, 'Agenda Items – 4A Vision and Aims – 18th September 2013, First World War Centenary – Cultural Programme'
[15] Kristin O'Donnell, 'The cultural politics of commemoration' (24th October 2024)
[16] Jack Malan, Eugénie Lale-Demoz, Michaela Brady, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport & Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services, *First World War Centenary Programme: Legacy Evaluation*, (September 2019), <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/606378718fa8f515b08c5722/DCMS_FWWC_Legacy_Evaluation_Report__CSES_17_Sept_2019___1__V2.pdf> [12th August 2025]
[17] Kristin O'Donnell, 'The cultural politics of commemoration' (24th October 2024). By 'traditional activities', I am referring to the sombre Remembrance Day reflections at the cenotaph, and the Royal British Legions' 'Festival of Remembrance' at the Royal Albert Hall.
[18] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_06_02_02_02_01_002_003_2, 'Agenda Items – 4A Vision and Aims – 18th September 2013, First World War Centenary – Cultural Programme'

(FWWCCP),[19] 14-18 NOW was delivered by the London 2012 Olympics creative producer, Jenny Waldman, who reported to a Centenary Cultural Programme Board.[20] The 'small, unremunerated cultural board',[21] were given clear objectives by the DCMS to deliver an appropriate programme of substance and impact that would use culture to reach and engage a wide demographic- especially young people.[22] 14-18 NOW was also overseen by an expert advisory panel chaired by the then Culture Secretary Maria Miller, who were tasked to 'provide expertise, innovation and advice for the creation of commemorations worthy of the historic centenary of the First World War.'[23] Despite being designated as 'independent' from state led commemoration, the government retained close supervision of the activities of 14-18 NOW.

The centenary also saw the establishment of five First World War Engagement Centres at U.K. Universities, through the UK Research and Innovation funding body. These Engagement Centres were established, and provided UK-wide support for community groups funded through a range of Heritage Lottery Funded programmes, enabling a connection between communities and university academics, and disseminating their interests together.[24] The centres noted in their submission to the inquiry into the 'Lessons from the First World War centenary' committee that the arts offered a way to sensitively deal with contested

[19] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_06_02_02_02_01_002_003_2, 'Agenda Items – 4A Vision and Aims – 18th September 2013, First World War Centenary – Cultural Programme'
[20]Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Maria Miller, 'Plans to mark 100 years since the beginning of the First World War in 2014 announced', (10th June 2013), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plans-to-mark-100-years-since-the-beginning-of-the-first-world-war-in-2014-announced#:~:text=%C2%A310%20million%20cultural%20programme&text=She%20will%20report%20to%20a,was%20paid%20by%20all%20involved.> [2nd March 2026]
[21] Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 'Lessons from the First World War Centenary', *WWO0096 - Written evidence submitted by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport – Evidence to the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee inquiry into Lessons from the First World War Centenary*, (March 2019), < https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/100440/html/>, [2nd March 2026]
[22] DCMS, 'Lessons from the First World War Centenary', (March 2019), <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/100440/html/>, [2nd March 2026]
[23] Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Maria Miller, 'Plans to mark 100 years since the beginning of the First World War in 2014 announced', (10th June 2013), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plans-to-mark-100-years-since-the-beginning-of-the-first-world-war-in-2014-announced#:~:text=%C2%A310%20million%20cultural%20programme&text=She%20will%20report%20to%20a,was%20paid%20by%20all%20involved.> [2nd March 2026]
[24] 'World War 1 engagement centres' UKRI, last updated 4th February 2026, <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/browse-our-areas-of-investment-and-support/world-war-1-engagement-centres/>, [18th February 2026]

histories.[25] This project will explore how the arts offered the opportunity to look beyond the 'facts' of the First World War, interrogating the 'very strong emotional connection'[26] Britain supposedly has with the war, and what that looked like in Britain in the 2010s. If the war is truly 'a fundamental part of our national consciousness'[27], mattering 'not just in our heads, but in our hearts,'[28] the centenary offered the opportunity to glimpse the sense of identity that people feel from the shared heritage of the war, and their relation to it 100 years later.

Using creative projects as a lens will uncover the *expressions* of the themes identified by the government, and how these themes are more broadly understood in terms of national memory, identity and the ongoing experiences of the First World War. The inclusion of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the commemorative activities of the centenary speaks to a broader understanding of the state that 'heritage as a discourse is part of the social processes of meaning making', as outlined by Laurajane Smith in her study *Uses of Heritage*.[29] I will be assuming the governments understanding of the value of heritage as outlined by Smith's argument:

> Heritage is a process of remembering that helps to underpin identity and the ways in which individuals and groups make sense of their experiences in the present. Heritage and the identities and understandings of both the past and the present it creates do not simply exist internally to the group or other collective that has created them – they do work, or have a consequence, in wider social, cultural, economic and political networks.[30]

This project is ultimately a memory studies approach to how the heritage of the First World War was conceptualised during the centenary moment by artists and communities, and how this related to the outlook of the Coalition Government towards a 'national moment' at a time of national austerity and rising nationalist feeling in Britain.

---

[25] John Beckett and others, 'The Committee's terms of reference,' *WWO0121 - Written evidence submitted by First World War Engagement Centres – Evidence to the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee inquiry into Lessons from the First World War Centenary*, (March 2019) <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/100905/html/> [13th August 2025]
[26] Cameron, 'Speech on First World War centenary plans', (11th October 2012)
[27] Cameron, 'Speech on First World War centenary plans', (11th October 2012)
[28] Cameron, 'Speech on First World War centenary plans', (11th October 2012)
[29] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, (Routledge 2006) p. 276.
[30] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 276.

The 'Big Society'

It is important to situate the centenary within the socio-political environment in which it occurred. The Conservative-led coalition with the Liberal Democrats entered government in 2010, two years after the 2008 financial crash and promised to take control of an economy on 'the brink'[31] as described by George Osborne. The Conservative led coalition entered government promising to make the 'hard choices' and identify 'wasteful and unnecessary public spending.'[32] Alongside the policy of austerity, which cut public funding significantly as a response to the national deficit by reducing public borrowing, and stressing spending reductions rather than tax rises,[33] Cameron's government championed the idea of the 'Big Society'. The 'Big Society' was envisioned to give communities and individuals 'more control over their destinies' by decentralising government decision making to give local groups the opportunity 'to run post offices, libraries, transport services and shape housing projects, (in what) would be a 'big advance for people power,'[34] ultimately removing state oversight and spending in these areas.

The 'Big Society' project has been criticised considerably by scholars such as Ruth Levitas, who has argued that in light of economic crisis, the 'Big Society' is 'little more than an attempt to get necessary social labour done for nothing, disproportionately by women, by pushing work back across the market/non-market boundary.'[35] Andres and Round have argued that 'Big Society' thinking is part of a broader approach by government to encourage communities to become 'persistently resilient' to ongoing crises, whilst allowing for

[31] Hansard, 'Comprehensive Spending Review', Volume 516, Column 950, (debated Wednesday 20th October 2010), <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2010-10-20/debates/10102049000003/ComprehensiveSpendingReview> [3rd September 2025]
[32] Deborah Summers, 'David Cameron warns of "new age of austerity"' *The Guardian*, (26th April 2009), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/apr/26/david-cameron-conservative-economic-policy1> [12th August 2025]
[33] Hansard, 'Comprehensive Spending Review', Volume 516, Columns 949/950, (debated Wednesday 20th October 2010), <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2010-10-20/debates/10102049000003/ComprehensiveSpendingReview> [3rd September 2025]
[34] 'David Cameron launches Tories "big society" plan', *BBC News*, (19th July 2010), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10680062> [12th August 2025]
[35] Ruth Levitas, 'The Just's Umbrella: Austerity and the Big Society in Coalition policy and beyond', *Critical Social Policy*, (2012), 32.3, pp. 320–342, (p. 322.), DOI:10.1177/0261018312444408

reductions in public spending. They maintain that the 'Big Society' argument is significantly undermined in places that rely considerably on geographically rooted social networks and sites of social interactions, which are often provided through publicly funded community centres or spaces.[36] Rather than 'persistent resilience' being evidence of a community's ability to 'bounce back' to a crisis, it serves to discourage future public spending by demonstrating an ability of communities to cope with not just economic change, but also social, political, and/or cultural transformations, all of which have no end point. Andres and Round assert that from this, the rhetoric arises that 'as regions have previously bounced back from economic shocks, they should be able to do so again…if this is inherent within communities then why should the state be involved, or provide funding for it?'[37] Thus, the outcomes for 'resilient' and 'self-sustaining' communities (regardless of the environment they are working in or the strain they were placed under), is the reward of less support from the state in future.

However, Jason Edwards maintains that that whilst the 'Big Society' may look to be an exhausted project, it has contributed to an important shift in the language of politics in an age where new political solutions to familiar crises are desperately required.[38] Steve Corbett and Alan Walker have argued that the 'broken society'[39] which the 'Big Society' was meant to fix was not demonstrably evident,[40] but this rhetoric by the Prime Minister nevertheless invites anxieties about the condition of Britain, which plays into a broader decline narrative that has been long-standing in British political discourse.[41] This implied instability can, in turn, invite

[36] Lauren Andres and John Round, 'The role of "persistent resilience" within everyday life and polity: households coping with marginality within the "Big Society"' *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space,* (2015), 47.3, pp. 676 – 690, (pp. 678 - 679) DOI:10.1068/a46299
[37] Andres and Round, 'The role of "persistent resilience"' p. 680.
[38] Jason Edwards, 'Introduction', in Edwards, *Retrieving the Big Society*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 7.
[39] David Cameron, 'PM's speech on Big Society', (4th February 2011), <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-on-big-society> [13th August 2025]
[40] Steve Corbett and Alan Walker, 'The big society: Rediscovery of "the social" or rhetorical fig-leaf for neo-liberalism?' *Critical Social Policy*, (2013), 33.3 pp. 451–472 (p. 452) DOI:10.1177/0261018312471162
[41] Jim Tomlinson, 'A 'Failed Experiment'? Public Ownership and the Narratives of Post-War Britain', *Labour History Review*, (2008), 73.2, pp. 228–243, and P. F Clarke and Clive Trebilcock, (eds), *Understanding decline: perceptions and realities of British economic performance,* (Cambridge University Press, 1997)

nostalgic imaginations of the past.[42] That the 'Big Society' is a part of a broader conservative utopian project, concerned with individualism, localism (without local government), and freedom speaks to a nostalgic imagination of what Edwards describes as a 'lamentation' for a lost world,[43] and 'tory romanticism.'[44] The 'Big Society' project and the conditions it was experienced within created space for a nostalgic vision of the past that did not hinge on narratives of decline, but instead could still imagine a stable future.

Several scholars have outlined the problems with the deployment of this imagined heritage of individual philanthropy. Simon Szreter has outlined that history demonstrates that no amount of 'Big Society' style volunteering can reverse negative trends of health and wellbeing outcomes in communities.[45] Szreter shows how previous examples of this approach in early to mid-Victorian charitable practices were performative and ineffective, especially in comparison to the civic activism of the municipal local government of the late Victorian period which saw considerable social improvements.

Lorie Charlesworth has demonstrated that rather than being drawn from a supposed shared cultural history of philanthropic volunteerism, the 'Big Society' is a new model, a shift to a paternalist world of amateur philanthropy.[46] In this new model, the state would step back and allow for more free and individualistic choices to be made by the public, giving 'nudges,'[47] where appropriate, to help people make the choices best for them. Corbett and Walker go as far to say that despite this romanticised past being evidence-free, in using the 'Big Society' framework,

[42] Niklas Salmose, 'Nostalgia Makes Us All Tick: A Special Issue on Contemporary Nostalgia', *Humanities*, (2019), 8.3, p. 144. DOI:10.3390/h8030144
[43] Jason Edwards, 'Retrieving the Big Society', *The Political Quarterly*, (2011) 82: pp. 1-8. (p. 2.) https://doi-org.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.2011.02322.x
[44] Edwards, *Retrieving the Big Society*
[45] Simon Szreter, 'Britain's social welfare provision in the long run: the importance of accountable, well financed local government', in *The Big Society Debate: A New Agenda for Social Welfare?* ed. by Armine Ishkanian and Simon Szreter, (Edward Elgar, 2012), pp. 39 - 49
[46] Lorie Charlesworth, 'Big Society, legal structures, poor law and the myth of a voluntary society', in *The Big Society Debate,* ed. by Armine Ishkanian and Simon Szreter, (Edward Elgar, 2012) pp. 50-60.
[47] Corbett and Walker, 'The big society' p. 458.

> …the Conservatives were able to tap into a real or imagined popular sense of the dislocation and fragmentation of community solidarity. It did so without addressing (or even properly acknowledging) fundamental differences in social and economic power and other inequalities to which the capitalist market is the prime contributor and thus acts as a rhetorical fig-leaf for socially corrosive neo-liberalism.[48]

The national debt was still very high before the centenary moment, sitting at £115 billion or 7 per cent of GDP.[49] In December 2014, George Osborne announced his plan to tighten the public finances further, stating he will not 'ease up' on his determination to deal with the country's debt, and refusing to 'squander' the economic security that had been supposedly gained thus far,[50] whilst the government also committed to tens of millions of pounds to be spent on a centenary event which said something about 'who we are as a people'[51] at a moment that saw the Trussell Trust's foodbank usage rise to over a million for the first time ever.[52] In his 2014 Autumn Statement, Osborne drew further on conceptions of national identity by positing his approach to the budget as 'Britian's choice…Britain's future.'[53] The coalition government were able to place the 'Big Society' at the centre of the Conservative idea of British society.

By asserting the existence of a 'connected society' based on affection or personal ties, the coalition government was able to use 'conservative communitarian ideals of small scale intermediary institutions as the lynch-pins of social identity and action, devoid of formal collective identities and with an emphasis on solidarity and freedom, but not equality.'[54] Communities that required intense or long-term support are therefore placed at the mercy of elusive philanthropic individuals, who may be from social groups that have little to no

[48] Corbett and Walker, 'The big society' p. 457, p. 468
[49] Jon Riley and Robert Chote, 'Working paper No.7 - Crisis and consolidation in the public finances' Office for Budget Responsibility, (September 2014), < https://obr.uk/docs/dlm_uploads/WorkingPaper7a.pdf> [2nd March 2026]
[50] Hansard, 'Autumn Statement' Volume 589, Column 305, (3rd December 2014) <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2014-12-03/debates/14120348000001/AutumnStatement> [2nd March 2026]
[51] Cameron, 'Speech on First World War centenary plans', (11th October 2012)
[52] 'Foodbank use tops one million for first time says Trussell Trust', *Michael Roberts Charitable Trust,* (April 2015), <https://mrct.org.uk/latest-news/foodbank-use-tops-one-million-for-first-time-says-trussell-trust/#:~:text=The%20latest%20figures%20published%20by,and%20unemployment%20have%20increased%20slightly.> [14th April 2026]
[53] Hansard, 'Autumn Statement' Volume 589, Columns 305 and 315, (3rd December 2014) <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2014-12-03/debates/14120348000001/AutumnStatement> [2nd March 2026]
[54] Corbett and Walker, 'The big society' pp. 457 – 458.

understanding of the pressures that communities in crisis face. Furthermore, in the context of the centenary, pressure was placed upon local charities and organisations to mark the centenary moment in a meaningful way, at a point in time where communities were having to make extra effort to find connections to support themselves and their social networks. Nevertheless, as this thesis will show, many community led projects used the centenary to assert their local identities, and their perception that their local networks deserved to have their heritages spotlighted within a nationally shared moment.

A national moment of remembrance?

When announcing his plans for the centenary, Cameron was keen to once again encourage people to volunteer their ideas for marking the centenary, emphasising the local stories that he wished would be brought out through the commemorative activities.[55] This approach can be understood through the broader 'Big Society' umbrella, with much of the responsibility for the delivery of commemorative projects being given to communities with limited intervention from the state, through the Heritage Lottery Funded projects, and as volunteers and participants in state led activities.

There are some difficulties with this approach. Firstly, as the think tank *British Futures* demonstrates, before the centenary moment most people had a very shaky grasp of almost any information at all about the First World War, and a common inability to separate the two (world) wars.[56] This lack of understanding presented a problem for some within the Conservative party, particularly the then Education Secretary Michael Gove (a key figure in

[55] Cameron, 'Speech on First World War centenary plans', (11th October 2012)
[56] Lucy Buckerfield and Steve Ballinger, British Future, *The People's Centenary: Tracking public attitudes to the First World War Centenary 2013-2018*, (British Future, 2019) p. 4. < https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/The-Peoples-Centenary.Final-report-2018.pdf>

Cameron's government), who was concerned that the public may have succumbed 'to some of the myths which have grown up about the conflict.'[57]

Despite the 'soft touch' approach of the 'Big Society', it seems that in this instance, there was a particular 'nudge' given by the Education Secretary to remember the war in a particular way leading up to the centenary, emphasising a nostalgic look to the past that celebrates British history.[58] This approach indicates that although the commemoration was supposed to have a 'voluntary' approach which implied a choice of project subject, Gove had very clear ideas about the memory of the war, and used his role as Secretary of State for Education to steer the educational activities that were part of the centenary, heavily criticising the 'futility' narratives in the dominant memory of the First World War in a 2014 article.[59] Gove went on to assert that historians had been foolish to denigrate the patriotism, honour, and courage of what was ultimately a 'just' war, and his approach centralised these ideals as 'Britain's special traditions.'[60]

Catriona Pennell has written extensively on how Gove's remit in education has impacted how the First World War's centenary moment was used to explore nation-building narratives in schools.[61] Pennell maintained that the centenary was also an opportunity to extend military objectives and priorities into civilian life, by asserting to young people that war is necessary and purposeful, enemies are a natural condition, violence is normal, and the soldier is to be glorified.[62] Whilst Pennell argued this approach had varying degrees of success amongst its audience, this thesis will explore the appearance of these nation building 'nudges' amongst

[57] Gove, 'Why does the Left insist on belittling true British heroes?' (2nd January 2014)
[58] Matthew Watson, 'Michael Gove's war on professional historical expertise: conservative curriculum reform, extreme whig history and the place of imperial heroes in modern multicultural Britain' *British Politics,* (2020) 15.4, pp. 271–290, (p. 271) DOI:10.1057/s41293-019-00118-3
[59] Gove, 'Why does the Left insist on belittling true British heroes?' (2nd January 2014)
[60] Gove, 'Why does the Left insist on belittling true British heroes?' (2nd January 2014)
[61] Catriona Pennell, 'Taught to remember? British youth and First World War centenary battlefield tours', *Cultural Trends*, (2018) 27.2, pp. 83-98, DOI:10.1080/09548963.2018.1453449 and Catriona Pennell, 'Centenary (Education, Pedagogy, Youth Programs)', *1914-1918-online - International Encyclopaedia of the First World War,* by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer D. Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, (Freie Universität Berlin, 2021) DOI:10.15463/ie1418.11506
[62] Catriona Pennell, '"Remembrance isn't working": First World War battlefield tours and the militarisation of British youth during the centenary', *Childhood* (2020), 27.3, pp. 383–398, (p.384) DOI:10.1177/0907568220908307

the U.K. based arts projects, and analyse these against the centenary's broader aim of fostering a national identity through these lenses.[63]

In the years leading up to the centenary moment, hyper memorialisation during the 'remembrance season' had been observed by Maggie Andrews,[64] and D. M. Withers has identified the poppy as being central to the hyper-commemorative atmosphere, acquiring a new prominence in the cultural, affective, political and aesthetic life of Britain.[65] Some of these instances of hyper-commemoration echo the views that Gove posited surrounding ideas of glory and heroism, and has consequentially become the subject of ridicule. An account on X (formerly Twitter) with the handle @giantpoppywatch lambasts displays relating to remembrance it finds particularly gauche, including the pinning of a poppy on the 'cookie monster' during an appearance on BBC's *The One Show*,[66] vehicles adorned with extensive remembrance motifs,[67] and garden displays of remembrance themed scenes[68] (including one that featured a reimagining of a battlefield).[69] The sheer volume of submissions the site received during the centenary moment, and continues to receive demonstrates the affective power of hyper-commemoration, but also, the complex memory atmosphere the centenary moment took place within, and demonstrates some clear resistance to the top-down narratives of patriotic heroism advocated for by Gove.

British Futures research also challenges the degrees of success of the narrative perpetrated by Michael Gove that the First World War was a 'just war (fought against an)

---

[63] Pennell, '"Remembrance isn't working"' pp. 384-385.
[64] Maggie Andrews, 'Poppies, Tommies and remembrance: Commemoration is always contested' *Soundings: A journal of politics and culture,* 58, (2014), pp. 104-115 < https://muse.jhu.edu/article/565763.>
[65] D-M Withers, 'Wounding poppies: hyper-commemoration and aesthetic interventions', *Critical Military Studies*, (2020), 6.3-4, pp. 429-433, (p. 430) DOI:10.1080/23337486.2019.1575123
[66] Giant Poppy Watch, 'Me Remember Fallen" Twitter, 7th November 2016, <https://x.com/giantpoppywatch/status/795710802280017920> [13th August 2025]
[67] Giant Poppy Watch, 'Car Remembrance' Twitter, 7th November 2022, <https://x.com/giantpoppywatch/status/1589737296659877889> [13th August 2025]
[68] Giant Poppy Watch, 'Poppy Man', Twitter, 1st November 2023, <https://x.com/giantpoppywatch/status/1719824545979204019> [13th August 2025]
[69] Giant Poppy Watch, 'Suicide Corner', Twitter, 6th November 2021, <https://x.com/giantpoppywatch/status/1457041782185803777> [13th August 2025]

aggressively expansionist …ruthless enemy.'[70] Their research indicates instead that messaging that glorified the war received little support across the centenary period from the public.[71] This does not mean, however, that the memory of the First World War was seen by the public as apolitical. *British Futures* demonstrated that the argument against commemorating the First World War because 'it might promote nationalism' was also rejected by the public.[72] However, this does not necessarily mean the war *did not* hold a sense of nationalism for the public, for even if it *was* a source of a feeling of nationalism, there may have been a belief that the centenary should be marked *in spite* of the feelings it may have encouraged. In any case, what became clear throughout the centenary was the scale by which the public engaged with this nation building moment, and the ways by which communities demonstrated their sense of a local 'buy in' to a nationally shared history, which will be outlined in the forthcoming chapters. As Anthony Smith has identified, the mass communications of the modern era have created a '"compression" of time and space,'[73] and have thus opened

> new possibilities for small scale networks and cultural communities to increase their social density and raise the level of their grassroots participation, at the same time as the number of power centres, and the scale of economic organisations have grown.[74]

This 'compression' allowed for the centenary to become a moment which Cameron hoped would build a shared sense of the past which could be used to promote shared values and identities in the present. To this end, the centenary saw the broader British public engage in a nation building event that used the First World War as a lens to see into ideas surrounding 'Britishness' in the 2010s. By funding both national and local approaches to the centenary, the government were able to situate 'sedimented histories' of the First World War into a

[70] Gove 'Why does the Left insist on belittling true British heroes?' (2nd January 2014)
[71] Buckerfield and Ballinger, 'The People's Centenary', p. 7.
[72] Buckerfield and Ballinger, 'The People's Centenary', p. 7.
[73] Anthony Smith, *Nations and nationalism in a global era*, (Polity Press, 1995) p. 11.
[74] Smith, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 32.

broader national narrative. Sarah Lloyd and Julie Moore's analysis has shown that this approach can be helpful when elements of the past are differently weighted or valued, or where the past sits as a series of connected, but not necessarily uniform histories.[75] In the memory of a war that has contested and fragmented voices and memories, local interventions allowed for differing perspectives to be subsumed into a national, yet multi vocal memory project which could claim to speak for numerous heritages of the First World War, whilst also assert their distinct 'Britishness'.

This thesis explores the idea that whilst the nation -building approach of the centenary of the First World War may not have been focussed particularly on 'winning' the conflict,[76] the themes of nationhood that were 'nudged' into the national consciousness during the centenary moment took a different form. As this thesis will demonstrate, themes of 'sacrifice' and 'bravery' were perceived to appear particularly in the 14-18 NOW commissions, and these themes speak to a deeper chivalric past celebrated by Michael Gove, by which national characteristics are defined by of individualistic, and often imperial 'heroes' who were exemplars of the 'British character'.[77] The centenary moment also provided an opportunity to explore lesser-known stories about the war. *British Futures'* analysis demonstrates that awareness of the contribution of Indian soldiers was held by the minority of people before the centenary, yet by the end of the centenary this was majority knowledge.[78] The experiences of troops of colour and commonwealth soldiers were identified by Cameron as 'marking the beginnings of ethnic minorities getting the recognition, respect and equality they deserve' in Britain, and diverse communities were identified as one of the key audiences that the

[75] Sarah Lloyd and Julie Moore, 'Sedimented Histories: Connections, Collaborations and Co-production in Regional History', *History Workshop Journal*, (2015), 80.1, pp. 234–248, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbv017
[76] I am here working on the assumption that this is because in British cultural memory, the British were on the winning side of the unarguably 'just' war – the Second World War, as outlined by Penny Summerfield, 'The generation of memory: Gender and the popular memory of the Second World War in Britain' and Frances Houghton, 'The "missing chapter": Bomber Command aircrew memoirs in the 1990s and 2000s', in *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War,* ed. by Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson (Bloomsbury, 2014)
[77] Watson, 'Michael Gove's war on professional historical expertise', p. 273.
[78] Buckerfield and Ballinger, 'The People's Centenary', p. 16.

FWWCCP would engage with, indicating a defined agenda by the government which hoped to bring traditionally obscured narratives of the war into broader general knowledge.[79]

There is evidence that the centenary piqued an interest in these lesser-known histories, with many respondents hoping to learn more about troops of colour, and the role of women in the narrative of the war.[80] Many community led projects engaged with these themes, often demonstrating the centrality people of colour and women had in the broader narrative of the war. The 'Vision and Aims' document for the FWWCCP outlined the wish for how engagement with a diverse collection of artistic experiences in the centenary commissions would promote more tolerant and understanding attitudes.[81] This approach served to integrate these communities more tightly into the national memory of the war, in an attempt to solidify a sense of shared nationhood via a shared heritage of the First World War.

This national exploration of a shared history was considered a success in bringing people together,[82] and was an opportunity to use the past to explore present day considerations, such as refugees, racial diversity, and EU relations, via the prism of First World War history.[83] Indeed, some of these present-day issues seemed to come to a head during the centenary, with the Brexit vote and the so-called migrant crisis, and were uniquely positioned against the backdrop of a history that included, but also stretched beyond the First World War. In the rhetoric surrounding the Brexit debate, the public was invited to reflect on and imagine the idea of Britain's historic and long-standing commitment to freedom in various ways,[84]

---

[79] Cameron, 'Speech on First World War centenary plans', (11th October 2012) and London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_06_02_02_02_01_002_003_2, 'Agenda Items – 4A Vision and Aims – 18th September 2013, First World War Centenary – Cultural Programme'

[80] Buckerfield and Ballinger, 'The People's Centenary', p. 11.

[81] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_06_02_02_02_01_002_003_2, 'Agenda Items – 4A Vision and Aims – 18th September 2013, First World War Centenary – Cultural Programme'

[82] Buckerfield and Ballinger, 'The People's Centenary', p. 24.

[83] Lucy Noakes and others, *Reflections on the Centenary of the First World War: Learning and Legacies for the Future*, (project report), (2021), p110, <https://reflections1418.exeter.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Reflections-on-the-Centenary-of-the-First-World-War-Learning-and-Legacies-for-the-Future.pdf> [3rd September 2025],

[84] Moments in British history were called upon to claim this view including but not limited to the Reformation (Giles Fraser, 'Brexit recycles the defiant spirit of the Reformation', *The Guardian*, (5th May 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2016/may/05/brexit-recycles-the-defiant-spirit-of-the-reformation> [14th August 2025],

sometimes being encouraged to think that the European Union obstructed these freedoms,[85] all whilst actively remembering how and reflecting on the idea that the fallen of the First World War died for these freedoms.[86] It seems that whilst Michael Gove's nostalgic imagination lost in the battle of the memory of the First World War, by his own metrics, he won the war of realising a 'freer, more liberal…great'[87] British state 'taking back control' of its sovereignty[88] through Brexit. The Brexit moment has, in turn, been identified as being part of a broader 'shift to the right' with some commentators stating that since the Brexit vote, Britain's appetite for imperial mythology has grown,[89] and nostalgic reflection continues to appeal to imaginations of Empire to create rhetorical structures that seek to put the 'Great' back into Great Britain.[90] I explore how the feelings of 'togetherness' identified by the *British Futures* report were navigated and identified by the public through engagement with 14-18 NOW or Heritage Lottery Funded projects, taking particular consideration as to the visual and participatory nature of these outputs. This approach uncovers the different ways participating members navigated considerations of British identities in an atmosphere where senior government figures pushed for celebration of an imperial past in a multicultural present, and how the longer memory of the First World War which has been popularly remembered as 'futile',[91] was re-examined in an attempt to connect with audiences in 2014.

This thesis demonstrates how national histories, such as those collectively produced during the First World War centenary can speak to an 'innate Britishness' that helps to define individual identities within an imagined national character. It can be felt to connect people in

---

and the Hundred Years War (Christopher S. Browning 'Brexit populism and fantasies of fulfilment', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, (2019) 32.3, pp. 222-244, (p. 235) DOI:10.1080/09557571.2019.1567461

[85] Browning, 'Brexit populism and fantasies of fulfilment', p. 232.

[86] 'What is Remembrance?' Royal British Legion, n.d. <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/remembrance/about-remembrance> [14th August 2025]

[87] Hansard, 'The Governments Plan for Brexit', Volume 618, Column 261, (7th December 2016), <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2016-12-07/debates/CA09D9B2-9634-41C8-8979-8B9CD82DBB8F/TheGovernmentSPlanForBrexit> [14th August 2025]

[88] Hansard, 'Article 50', Volume 616, Column 1264, (7th November 2016), <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2016-11-07/debates/C59A3B55-6FB3-455D-B704-F8B1BF5A5AF5/Article50> [14th August 2025]

[89] Nadine El-Enany, *(B)Ordering Britain: Law Race and Empire*, (Manchester University Press, 2020) p. 217.

[90] Watson, 'Michael Gove's war on professional historical expertise', p. 274.

[91] Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory,* (Hambledon and London, 2005)

a particular moment, but also across time and space using imaginations of a grand historical narrative. It acts on an emotional, rather than an academic level, and for some people, is deeply embodied. My work contributes to the literature of the subject by demonstrating that through interactions with sites of memory, embodied feelings of connections with the past can be heightened through a creative mechanism, which allows people to perceive the past as both physically and emotionally 'closer'. Understanding these relationships to the past is crucial to developing a better sense of present-day identities.

Methodology and sources

By examining the Imperial War Museum led 14-18 NOW UK arts programme, alongside the outputs found in the National Lottery Heritage Fund's *First World War Centenary Community Collection*, housed at the University of Essex, this thesis will explore how the First World War was creatively remembered 100 years later within an atmosphere of divisive messaging.[92] It will explore which themes particularly resonated with participants and audiences at both the state and local level, and investigate the impact and legacy the First World War is felt to have left on the country more broadly, as well as on local people and places. The close analysis of the pieces is drawn from personal experiences of the events where possible, digital legacies of artworks where possible, social media and news captures of the events, as well as insights from the Imperial War Museums Archive and in-house analysis of the 14-18 NOW programme. Alongside these sources, I have used the parliamentary reports commissioned in response to the centenary period, as well as the post centenary moment analysis undertaken by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the think tank *British Futures*, and the *Reflections on the Centenary of the First World War* project team. To give a sense of the attitudes towards the centenary moment more

[92] Buckerfield and Ballinger, 'The People's Centenary', p. 7.

widely, I have drawn upon the accounts from the respondents to the Mass Observation Directive of Autumn 2014 which explored the prevalent views on the First World War and attitudes towards remembrance at the start of the centenary.

This thesis sets the outputs of the centenary moment against the established historiography of the memory of the First World War, serving to contextualise some of the themes that came out of the memorialisation activities. Each chapter has a specific bibliography that explores the relevant theme more deeply, and these are set against established texts regarding the First World War and its memory, that has helped to shape this analysis. There are also thematic considerations regarding the use of art as the lens for the memory of the First World War, as well as how this speaks to the national memory of Britain during the centenary, which will be explored below.

Art as a 'way of seeing' the 'look of the past'

The creative legacy of the war has permeated our culture,[93] and was one reason given in the FWWCCP 'Vision and Aims' document for the creative commemoration approach seen at the centenary.[94] War poets like Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, along with the visual art of the Nash brothers and C. R. W. Nevinson and others, have shaped present day understanding of the conflict, with this artistic legacy dominating memory of the war into the 1980s with shows like Blackadder. As already discussed, art was also seen as a way to navigate the more challenging aspects of commemorating a destructive world war, and was hoped to engage with groups that were less likely to engage with arts and culture. The use of the visual arts to communicate the centenary thus needs initial consideration.

[93] Cameron, 'Speech on First World War centenary plans', (11th October 2012)
[94] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_06_02_02_02_01_002_003_2, 'Agenda Items – 4A Vision and Aims – 18th September 2013, First World War Centenary – Cultural Programme'

Matthew Rampley has argued that western society has become a predominantly visual culture, linking this with Walter Benjamin's theory of the 'dream landscape', asserting that what was a literary and oral storytelling culture has given way to mass media and the 'digital spectacle'.[95] Rampley asserts that although art and popular culture are still separate cultural practices, there has been an increased 'blurring' between the two.[96] Rampley continues to say that in addition, within western culture, visual art has long been regarded as a rhetorical practice, rather than simply depicting the visual world. The communicative process of this rhetoric, its interpretation, and its reception are key parts of engagement with the visual arts, inviting a dialogue with its audience, infiltrating our daily lives with ideologies.[97]

Bearing this in mind, Berger has established that 'seeing comes before words', and whilst we use words to define and describe the world around us, words can never *undo* the experience of the world mediated through the visual, through which we establish our place.[98] Through this, and Berger's explanation that all images are man-made, [99] we can assume that those things that are 'made for seeing' have been made for a reason that relates to our relationship between the world and our place within it. In the context of remembering, images such as photographs reconnect us with the moment in which they were produced. Using Berger's framework against a First World War example, when looking at a picture of a man in uniform about to leave for the Western Front, we are aware as viewers that the photographer, the subject and the family which held onto the picture after the soldier left were acutely aware of its importance. Through remembrance, which may include looking at these images, we are also made aware of the importance of this photo at the time it was made, and the implied importance this broader events that created the need for this photograph has, in our revisiting

[95] Matthew Rampley, 'Visual Culture and the Meanings of Culture' in Rampley, *Exploring Visual Culture*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 14-15.
[96] Rampley, 'Visual Culture', p. 16.
[97] Matthew Rampley, 'Visual Rhetoric' and 'The Ideology of the Visual', Rampley, *Exploring Visual Culture*, (Edinburgh University Press 2007), pp. 134-177.
[98] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972)
[99] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, pp. 7-9.

the ritual of remembrance yearly. Our perception or appreciation of an image adds to the 'way of seeing,' and connects the importance of such an image at the time it was made, with the value of its importance in the contemporary moment it is being viewed in. Our experience of the ritual of remembrance, and the 'cultural memory' of the war will impact the way we see images presented to us at the centenary, even if some of these insights should not be constituted as 'historical knowledge'.[100]

That being said, Ludmilla Jordanova has argued that

> the sense of sight shapes experience. The material world is a visual world, which impacts upon human beings through their eyes, and is intimately bound up with touch… Sight has long been accorded privileged status: that the expression 'I see' means 'I understand' neatly reveals the point. The diversity and complexity of what was seen, and made to be seen, demands our attention.[101]

Jordanova stresses that whilst there are messages to be decoded from visual media, it is important not to downplay the ambiguity and complexities of artefacts that frequently work at a number of levels.[102]

How does this approach to 'seeing the past' manifest when interacting with artworks *about* (not always from) the past? Some pieces of art at the centenary used historic materials in new ways to convey a sense of a 'past' that was being commemorated on a large scale, but these are arguably 'new' outputs featuring 'old' materials, as was the case with Peter Jackson's feature film *They Shall Not Grow Old*. Jackson's film took archival footage of the Western Front and reframed it, adding sound and colour to the piece, which will be explored further in chapter four. Jordanova highlights and warns us of a particular feature of art as myth making.[103] Just as those reporting the news use photographs, to – apparently – tell it as it was, we are prone to trust representations of the past as an 'original' and engage with that

[100] Noakes and others, 'Reflections on the Centenary', p. 21.
[101] Ludmilla Jordanova, *The Look of the Past - visual and material evidence in historical practice,* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) p. 28.
[102] Jordanova, *The Look of the Past*, pp. 39 – 40.
[103] Jordanova, *The Look of the Past* pp. 256 – 257.

scene as if it were immediately before us.[104] The featuring of the 'original' in some artworks, as well as the inclusion of well recognised symbols that connects the present with the past, can lead to creative, yet informed imaginings which feel particularly meaningful.

The cultural perception of 'art' can sometimes obstruct interactions with creative interventions. Berger maintains that when an image is presented as a 'work of art', the way people look at it is affected by learnt assumptions about art. Furthermore, many of these assumptions can be related to the social and cultural atmosphere the art was created within. If they no longer accord with the world as it is, these assumptions can sometimes obscure the past - they mystify rather than clarify.[105] The cultural knowledge of the First World War seems to be particularly useful in demonstrating this process of 'mystification' and this project will demonstrate instances of 'complexities' and 'ambiguities' which occurred across the centenary artworks. This 'mystification' also seems to be present in the memory of the war too. During this research, it was particularly striking to see the difference between the reflections of various generations in the responses to the Mass Observation Directives from the centenary moment. Those respondents that had direct experience of people who served in the First World War and lived through its immediate aftermath almost always spoke matter-of-factly about these relationships and experiences. When moving into the accounts from people that had no direct experience or relationship with the First World War, these reflections often became emotional, imaginative and especially expressive. Anecdotally, there was the sense that these respondents were trying to 'decorate' their understanding of and connection to the First World War by demonstrating their knowledge of the visual and cultural legacy they have experienced, in lieu of a direct connection with the war itself. Building on Berger's theory of 'mystification,' this thesis will demonstrate how affective and

[104] Jordanova, *The Look of the Past*, pp. 176 – 177.
[105] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, pp. 10-11.

mystifying experiences with nation – building creative projects have profound impacts on people's conceptions of 'Britishness' and national identity.

Nations, memories, imaginations

Why do people attempt to make these connections with a moment they had no experience of? Benedict Anderson explains in his foundational text *Imagined Communities* that this assumption of a shared culture and history, traditionally manifested through language, is the foundation for the modern nation state, and the experience of nationalism.[106] Streamlining and simplifying a national character through a simple narrative which can be demonstrated by an easily understood cultural heritage has been the *modus operandi* of nation states, especially those that are imperial. The notion put forward by imperial nation states that minority groups within such states are bereft of 'historical personalities'[107] implies (alongside the explicit offensiveness of such a statement) that non-minority citizens of nation states *do* in fact have a 'historical' (and thus evidentiary) shared series of qualities. This sense of belonging is reinforced and evidenced by shared moments, 'Take national anthems… No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity…. providing occasions for unisonality, for the echoed physical realization of the imagined community.'[108]

Pierre Nora describes how these evidentiary indicators can be found in 'lieux de memoire' (realms of memory) that hold particular significance to the nation and its assumed collective identity. These realms are 'real' but also 'imagined' places of magic and emotion that selects only the facts that suit them.[109] In what Nora calls 'memory versus history',

[106] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd ed, (Verso, 1991) p. 67.
[107] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 103.
[108] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 84.
[109] Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French past*, *Vol. 1 Conflicts and Divisions*, ed. by Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. By Arthur Goldhammer, rev. ed, (Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 3.

modern societies that are driven by and experiencing change are, according to Nora, pulled further from their ancestral yesterdays.[110] This perception of the past is mediated through constructed and imagined memories, which can furnish national histories. However, Nora also highlights how memory and history, rather than being synonymous, can appear in fundamental opposition to one another.[111] As discussed above, the experience of the centenary took place within a divisive atmosphere which grew increasingly anxious and divided as the centenary continued.[112] Within this atmosphere, communities were invited to look back to this memory of the past to inform a sense of themselves in the present. Nora's vast work *Lieux de Memoire* highlights that national memories are reinforced through traditions and symbols that have been imparted with significant national meaning, 'spotlighting selected elements of the past'[113], and allowing for a strategic forgetting of aspects that do not fit the narrative.

Paul Connerton draws on these works, establishing memory as a cultural rather than an individual facility[114] and emphasises that the embodiment of memories through rituals helps to cement a sense of belonging.[115] Connerton also highlights the emotive embodied practice that occurs in these cultural-bodily exchanges. [116] In tying the First World War to the nation's history, the British public are encouraged to maintain silence at remembrance events, bowing their heads to reflect on the war dead. These embodied practices are incorporated into remembrance practice, and thus the performance of nationalism through the observation of a shared history, honouring those that have 'served and sacrificed'.[117] Finally, Connerton

[110] Nora, *Realms of Memory,* p. 2.
[111] Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire', Representations, (1989),* 26, (Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory), pp. 7-24
[112] Buckerfield and Ballinger, 'The People's Centenary', p. 4.
[113] Nora, *Realms of Memory,* p. 13.
[114] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989) pp. 1-4.
[115] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, pp. 72-104.
[116] Paul Connerton, *The Spirit of Mourning,* (Cambridge University Press, 2011) pp. 104-124.
[117] 'Who We Are', Royal British Legion, <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are?_gl=1*dju5rb*_up*MQ..*_gs*MQ..&gclid=Cj0KCQjwh5vFBhCyARIsAHBx2wxAYfGSsqrOuWmSbyK_dKLFapf6evgNRYVINj98NP578x6ShntjlXQaAojuEALw_wcB&gbraid=0AAAAAD7umtLPGqT9Br_iih1SwibjXccHZ> [1st September 2025], and 'How to take part in Remembrance', Royal British Legion, <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/remembrance/how-to-take-part-in-remembrance-this-

establishes that forgetting is integral to modern memory[118] and is deployed to define and re-define the parameters of the 'truest' history for nation states.[119] As Nora maintains, memory-history is always narrative.[120]

As communities look to memory-history to reinforce their sense of belonging in an increasingly fraught present, the methods of connecting with this imagined past have also diversified with the advent of modern technology. Alison Landsburg argues that modernity has heralded a new form of public cultural memory, which she refers to as *prosthetic memory:*

> This new form emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theatre or a museum. In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history… the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt 'memory'[121] of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person's subjectivity and politics.[122]

This 'suturing' of oneself into the larger history of Britain is embedded into the rituals of remembrance, began with the creation of war memorials in almost every town, city and village of the United Kingdom creating an experiential site to specifically 'remember' the war and the war dead, and the continued use of this site for not only the First World War, but all conflicts since. Using this framework, the centenary moment was an opportunity for its audience to reconnect with already established prosthetic memories they may have, and to potentially create new ones. Landsberg goes on to explain that this is a particular feature of engaging with 'memories' of moments that were not directly experienced where the

year?_gl=1*1s5flkv*_up*MQ..*_gs*MQ..&gclid=Cj0KCQjwh5vFBhCyARIsAHBx2wxAYfGSsqrOuWmSbyK_dKLFapf6evgNRYVINj98NP578x6ShntjlXQaAojuEALw_wcB&gbraid=0AAAAAD7umtLPGqT9Br_iih1SwibjXccHZ> [1st September 2025]

[118] Connerton, *The Spirit of Mourning,* pp. 33-49.

[119] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 17-19.

[120] Nora, *Realms of Memory,* p. 13.

[121] Quotation marks added by me to demonstrate thought process

[122] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory – The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (Columbia University Press, 2004) p. 2.

'flattening' of time is facilitated by one's identification with the characters within the story, making this experiential relationship seem less like memory. These can sometimes,

> 'speak' to the individual in a personal way *as if* they were actually memories of lived events…they are privately felt public memories that develop after an encounter with a mass cultural representation of the past… (blurring the boundaries) between individual and collective memories.[123]

It is this 'blurring' moment that feelings particularly important to the memory of the First World War, and something that will be returned to throughout this project. The complex and often contradictory history of the First World War lends itself particularly to 'blurring', and as Anderson argues, it is through the very act of 'imagining' a nation that the mutability of a national identity can be mediated.[124]

The First World War – an imagined site of modern memory?

This 'blurring' is captured by Jay Winter in his introduction to his study *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning.* Winter explores the idea that the end of the twentieth century has disturbingly similar echoes to its beginning, citing the collapse of European state systems.[125] Since the turn of the century, too, this acceleration of anxiety, which has been heightened by the 'war on terror' and the financial collapse of 2008, has permeated people's everyday lives. These anxieties, as well as those explored earlier in this section, lends itself to nostalgic reflections on a time that seemed to be free of these worries, and in this experience of worry there are parallels at the centenary. For the wartime generation, Samuel Hynes has argued that there was a fear that the Edwardian 'golden afternoon' was ruptured completely by the war, and discussions were had by the social elite about how the pre-war environment could be recaptured after the war.[126] During the centenary moment, the public were invited to reflect

[123] Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory,* pp. 5-19.
[124] Anderson, Imagined Communities, p. 141.
[125] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning; The Great War in European Cultural History*, 4th (Canto) edn, (Cambridge University Press, 2014) p. 1.
[126] Hynes, *A War Imagined*, pp. 262-265.

on the difficulties and successes of a period that was demonstrably terrible, the sacrifices made, and the freedoms won. In particular, the strength of character demonstrated by a generation that experienced a 'great war' was spotlighted, and Britons in 2014 were asked to think about how this related to them.[127]

Rather than a complete rupture, the cultural environment of the First World War lent itself more to a blending between modernist interpretations, and what Winter describes as traditional forms of imaginations regarding the war.[128] It is these imaginings colliding that created the unique cultural memory of the First World War. Although modernist expression spoke to the experience of war and the anger and futility many participants felt, the traditional modes of seeing the war, whilst at times less challenging intellectually or philosophically, enabled the bereaved to live with their losses.[129]

In managing loss, the bereavement culture of the war saw a particular interest in spiritualism, and the belief (and hope) of some that the war dead were still present in the spectral plain. The invasion of the dead into the dreams and thoughts of the living haunted the imaginations of the living, and many families at home engaged in spiritualist practices in the belief that the dead could communicate with them.[130] This practice slowed considerably in light of the Second World War, but this paper will demonstrate that some aspects of the cultural experience of spiritualism of the First World War remain still. For example, in Winter's description of the dead troops marching above the Arc du Triomphe,[131] one cannot help but imagine this phenomenon occurring at the Cenotaph and wonder who else imagines this spiritual/physical overlay too, and whether this is still an imagining of the First World War at the centenary. This is, I believe in part due to Thomas Laqueur's assertion that 'the

[127] Buckerfield and Ballinger, 'The People's Centenary' pp. 22-23.
[128] Winter, *Sites of Memory,* p. 3.
[129] Winter, *Sites of Memory,* p. 5.
[130] Winter, *Sites of Memory,* pp. 54-77.
[131] Winter, *Sites of Memory,* p. 69.

dead are alive everywhere',[132] and this can be particularly imagined in the remembering of a war where there were so many missing, and where the war dead were not returned to Britian. As Laqueur continues, a purposely empty tomb—a cenotaph—or an empty coffin have power precisely because they lack what is universally expected.[133] When combined with artworks, this 'power' can add further to the 'mystifying' effect described by Berger, and will be explored more fully in chapter three, when considering how the dead seemingly 'reappeared' in Jeremy Deller's work *We're Here Because We're Here*.

The experience of a sacred spiritualism, which invited imaginings comparing Christ and the war dead, was imbued with secular, nationalist experiences by the end of the war.[134] The incorporation of a quasi-religious sphere[135] to national experience permeates the art of the war and post war period (with one example being the creation of a chapel, with fresco-style paintings which directly compare the biblical resurrection with the war dead),[136] but also extends to the remembrance rituals practiced every year at war memorials. In Winter's reading of the culture of the Great War, romantic traditions were recast to express both the dignity of the men who had fought and the degradation to which they had been subjected.[137]

Winter emphasises that the catastrophe of the First World War was encoded into the cultural traditions of Europe, through visual, and poetic expression. Both expressions emphasise the enduring legacy of the dead, highlighting both their continued presence amongst the living, as well as their eventual 'return', often through resurrection.[138] The social sphere of post-war remembrance ensured that the war was not simply restricted to the creative sphere, but rather, reinforced through a set of practices that ensured support for

[132] Thomas Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains,* (Princeton University Press, 2015) p. 18.
[133] Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead*, p. 18
[134] Winter, *Sites of Memory,* pp. 132-137.
[135] George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, (Palgrave, 2002) pp.137- 140.
[136] 'Sandham Memorial Chapel', The National Trust, <https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/place/sandham-memorial-chapel>, [24th February 2026] and Winter, *Sites of Memory,* p. 168.
[137] Winter, *Sites of Memory,* p. 204.
[138] Winter, *Sites of Memory,* p. 225.

grieving communities and returning servicemen, who all had to readjust to a society that was felt to be in need of 'reconstruction'.[139] This blurring between artistic and the activist cultures meant to ensure the war would not be forgotten, and is still manifested in the remembrance ceremonies, conducted on behalf of the 'imagined community' of the nation.[140] The 'congregation' of remembrance ceremonies are invited to imagine, in silence, how 'remembrance is part of the landscape'[141] not just physically, but spiritually, incorporating a type of forgetting[142] that is integral to imagining a future for a nation that has a debt of war dead.

Samuel Hynes has written extensively on how the First World War was *A War Imagined* to be a fracture in time and space that separated the past from the present,[143] and this has impacted modern understanding of the conflict. Speaking on the cultural experience of the war in the early twentieth century, Hynes asserts that 'English culture was transformed, and English imaginations were altered by what happened between 1914 and 1918.'[144] On the face of it, the war started with worries of the 'lights going out' and the end of the 'Edwardian afternoon', but these images cover a complex experience of Britain in 1914 that looked and felt particularly precarious, causing contemporary voices to wonder whether Britain was 'too soft' for European war, and hoping for a bloodletting that would release seemingly unresolvable feelings,[145] which manifested in the art of the Vorticists, who criticised the 'effeteness' of the pre-war period.[146] At the outbreak of war, the creative responses were, in the main, heroic accounts that dealt with the idea of war rather than the reality of war. One of the most popular literary conventions of the time appears to be accounts that encourage and

[139] Hynes, *A War Imagined*, pp. 262-265.
[140] Winter, *Sites of Memory,* p. 225.
[141] Winter, *Sites of Memory,* p. 1.
[142] Paul Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets*, (Cambridge University Press, 2009) p. 49.
[143] Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. xi.
[144] Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. xi.
[145] Hynes, *A War Imagined*, pp. 5-16.
[146] 'Vorticism', *Tate*, (n.d.) https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/v/vorticism , [3rd March 2026]

advise men to prepare to be the 'last man alive, and fight to the death', imbued with the heroism and adventure that borrowed from childhood stories of cavalry charges and 'playing up the game', as Henry Newbold's poem *Vitaï Lampada* encourages.[147]

As the war dragged on, however, these accounts were quickly challenged by young men who found themselves in these positions and found nothing adventurous or heroic about it at all. The experience of, and subsequent legacy of the 'lost generation' (who, as Hynes describes, were 'literate volunteers', producing 'the most literary and the most poetical war in English history, before or since')[148] has imbued the memory of the war, starting with a heroic charge 'over the top' of a romantic pastoral scene, and ending, empty, with Paul Nash's stark and broken landscapes of the *New World*.[149] After the war, in spite of relatively minor damage to British infrastructure, there was felt to be need for 'reconstruction', not of Britain's physical terrain, but something socially deeper. This was not just felt on an abstract level, Jon Lawrence has argued that post First World War society saw an attempt to reposition 'peaceableness' as a British virtue, demonstrating an acknowledgement of the need to move from a wartime economy and reject the social order that had emboldened a militaristic spirit.[150] Lawrence highlights that it was the creative reworking of idealistic 1914 myths (which promised the final defeat of militarism, identified at the time as a 'Prussian' attribute) that helped to delegitimise violence in the nation.[151]Hynes indicates that although there was this attempt to return to the 'world-before-the-war,' the idealism that fed ideas around 'reconstruction' led others to feel further scorn, anxiety and division.[152] Whilst Winter has demonstrated the continuity between pre and post war expressions, there is no doubt that the

[147] Henry Newbold, *Vitaï Lampada* , (1892) <https://allpoetry.com/Vita-Lampada> [3rd March 2026], and Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. 30.
[148] Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. 28.
[149] Paul Nash, *We are Making a New World*, (1918), Oil on Canvas, 711 mm x 914 mm, Imperial War Museum (Art.IWM ART 1146), <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20070>
[150] Jon Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post–First World War Britain,' *The Journal of Modern History,* (2003), 75.3, pp. 557–89. (p. 558), https://doi.org/10.1086/380238.
[151] Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom' (pp. 588-589.)
[152] Hynes, *A War Imagined*, pp. 262-265.

'imaginings' of war and peace present in the immediate post war environment, and made possible by the First World War significantly impacted British experiences both at the time, but also in the imagined *memory* of the war – imaginations that exist a hundred years later, and considered to be 'meaningful'[153] to a 2014 audience.

In light of this complex history, there were tensions that needed to be navigated by the government, who wished to reflect on the unifying and nation building aspects of a war that is popularly remembered as destructive and futile. During the centenary, there seemed to be a strange revisit of the counter point between the themes that Hynes describes, with Michael Gove insisting that the war was 'just…noble… (and) heroic,' a hundred years after Wilfred Owen lamented 'the old lie, "*Dulce et decorum est, Pro patria mori."'* In order to serve its purpose as a 'truly national moment', the centenary would have to navigate between a picturesque popular *image* of the war, which is clear and easy to respond to, and the *'truths'*, which are inconsistent, contradictory and sometimes threatening,[154] especially to the idea of 'national unity'.

Finally, Paul Fussell's text, *The Great War and Modern Memory* has been the cornerstone for understating the legacy of the First World War in cultural memory. If the present-day memory of the First World War is prosthetic, Fussell demonstrates how the historic mode of knowledge transportation about the war through its literature has considerably influenced our understanding and imagining of it.[155] The ways and means of describing total mechanised and industrialised warfare at the time it was experienced has had considerable influence on our ability to reflect on it. It is difficult not to be moved by the expressions of fear, or of descriptions of dwindling hope found in the words of men known to have been killed in the war, not able to escape a hellscape they wrote about so movingly. Fussell identifies the

[153] Cameron, 'Speech on First World War centenary plans', (11th October 2012)
[154] Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. 117.
[155] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 3rd edn, (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 1-38.

themes these writers drew upon to try to make sense of their surroundings, and the new ways of using old themes to express the unsayable. The 'troglodyte'[156] world of pre-war Britain, with its myth, ritual, romance, and arcadian recourses, were revisited and split open by writers and artists of the war who had been encouraged to believe in the war as a glorious honour.

Fussell's monumental work captures the sense of disbelief at the experience of the First World War, which shapes the way the war is viewed today. Using irony as his framework, Fussell highlights to the reader that 'irony is the attendant of hope, and the fuel of hope is innocence.'[157] What was imagined to be the golden summer of British power, fell sharply into a nightmare where the hopes for Britain's future were destroyed on the battlefields of Europe.[158] This reading of the First World War has been embedded in the English historical narrative. It is used to describe situational experiences through metaphor and myth and has had a tremendous effect on British linguistic and cultural heritage.[159] As a result, it is 'entrenched' into British nationhood, reinforcing Anderson's ideas theory that language, and shared understandings of linguistic forms are central to the experience of nationalism. It is precisely these influences and the breadth of difference in the experience of the Great War that so captures Fussell's imagination:

> …the passage for these literary characters (the lost generation) from prewar freedom to wartime bondage, frustration and absurdity signals just as surely as does Joyce's Bloom, Hemingway's Fredrick Henry, and Kafka's Joseph k. The passage of modern writing from one mode to another, from the low mimetic of the plausible and the social to the ironic of the outrageous, the ridiculous and the murderous. It is their residence on the knife edge between these two modes that gives the memoirs of the great war their special quality, a quality often overlooked because too few readers have attended to their fictional character, preferring to confound them with 'documentary' or 'history'. These memoirs are especially worth of the closest examination because, for all the blunt violence they depict, they seem so delicately

[156] Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory,* p. 39.
[157] Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory,* p. 19.
[158] Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory*, p. 25.
[159] Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory,* p. 39.

> transitional, pointing at once in two opposite directions - back to the low mimetic, forward to the ironic, and – most interestingly – to that richest king of irony proposing, or at least recognising, a renewed body of rituals and myths.[160]

Although this memory of the war has been critiqued considerably by scholars such as Dan Todman,[161] it cannot be denied that the meaningfulness of this mode of memory is still present. It is precisely the moment that Fussell describes, the knife edge between the pre-war experience of writers and artists, and their lived experiences of the First World War that spoke to the shock of modern warfare that is continuously imagined at the centenary, and which will be seen throughout this thesis. Interactions with the memory of the First World War at the centenary saw personal, emotional engagements with a memory of the war that spoke to an inherited, yet imagined experience of grief and loss. The Great War is popularly imagined to have taken place in a comparatively static world, which assumed a future where the moral and social pressures were the same as they had been in the past,[162] making the conflict feel particularly cataclysmic and horrific. In 1914, values appear to have been stable, and the meanings and abstractions of words such as 'glory' and 'honour' were permanent, reliable and understandable.[163] This perception of an innocence shattered by a total, mechanised war shapes the national imagination that the First World War is remembered in.

Much to Michael Gove's dismay,[164] this national imagination had, as Dan Todman has suggested, become interspersed with myths of horror and futility: a 'pointless, foolish and unnecessary' waste.[165] If, as suggested earlier, there is in national imagination a 'static' past that has been disrupted by the First World War, the scale of participation (and death), as well as the rapid pace of change this modern, mechanised war world has brought, has served to deepen interest in a past that seems particularly meaningful and macabre in the modern day,

[160] Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory,* p. 338.
[161] Todman, *Myth and Memory*
[162] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory,* pp. 20-25.
[163] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory,* p. 22.
[164] Gove, 'Why does the Left insist on belittling true British heroes?' (2nd January 2014)
[165] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, p. 121.

which itself has suffered from a sense of dislocation from 'community' ties.[166] Todman has highlighted three factors which enabled myths of futility to dominate the memory of the war. Firstly, the cultural and political contexts these myths were produced and consumed in were affected by socio-cultural changes of the twenty-first century, and also reacted to the pre-war inheritance of myths which correlated with the experience of the conflict.[167] Secondly, the deaths of the bereaved and veterans of the war after the war further encouraged a monosyllabic narrative of the war to be produced, with the myths produced remaining useful at the twentieth century progressed.[168] Finally, in a changing world, having a scaffolding of futility to hold on to may have helped navigating changing circumstances feel more manageable.[169] If these were the factors which helped define a narrative of the First World War in the hundred years since the event, the 'futility' narratives that were previously useful became vulnerable to an upending by Gove's 'proud' version of the First World War, creating a usable national history that could be redefined at the centenary.

The First World War is particularly useful as a 'national history' because there is a clear concept of the nation state in its character, and people are imagined to have died particularly 'moral' deaths in its defence, which is reinforced by remembrance rituals and popular imaginations that the majority of men who fought for Britain were volunteers doing so under the impression of a clear set of national principles.[170] These reflections bring closer an assumed shared history, and start to pull the experience of the war from a moment in the linear history of Britain closer to the present via these *assumed shared understandings of* this history. As Berger argues, 'when we "see" a landscape, we situate ourselves within it. If we

[166] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, p. 70.
[167] Todman, *Myth and Memory,* pp. 222-223.
[168] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, pp. 222-223.
[169] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, pp. 222-223.
[170] Using Anderson's application in *Imagined Communities,* (p. 144) and applying this understanding of 'morality' to include ideas about 'glory' (i.e. 'the glorious dead'), 'sacrifice', (the 'ultimate sacrifice') 'honour', ('roll of honour') and freedom (i.e. the idea that soldiers died defending 'our freedom', as seen in 'About Remembrance' Royal British Legion, (n.d.) https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/remembrance/about-remembrance , [23rd March 2026]

saw the art of the past, we would situate ourselves in history.'[171] The 'imagined community' is present in the men that appear in British remembrance imaginations, which will be explored further in chapters two and three. These are the representative body of men that died for Britain, the truly 'lost' of the lost generation. Very few people today have direct knowledge of the individuals taking part in specific actions on the front, but we know *of* them, because British national histories and memorialisation practices have ensured they do not leave collective memories.[172] Thus, when within the landscape of remembrance, one sees, hears and feels from within, sharing that 'unisonality'[173] of remembering (and sometimes mourning) with the living, but also *with* the war dead in the national imagination. Furthermore, despite the First World War being a global conflict, the sense of the national features heavily in British memory of the war, and this had implications for how the war was to be remembered at the centenary. Jenny Macleod has argued that the most arresting moment of the commemorations of the Somme had a distinctly 'British' focus.[174] Whilst the centenary moment was envisioned to broaden traditionally narrow narratives of the First World War, the Battle of the Somme continued to be remembered as an episode that has left a defining and distinct scar in British national memory of the war, and was particularly useful as an established cultural touchpoint that audiences could engage with, which will be seen in chapter three.

Is it hard to imagine, then, in these embodied moments of national connection that imagine and mourn the war dead, there is also a mourning process taking place for the (equally imagined) time they inhabited? In a centenary moment full of divisive political messaging about identity, heritage and collective histories, the public are reminded at the

[171] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, pp. 10-11.
[172] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* pp. 31-32.
[173] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* p. 145.
[174] Jenny Macleod, 'Looking Forward to the Centenary of the Second World War: Lessons from 2014-2018', *British Journal for Military History*, 8.3 (2022), pp. 2-16.

centenary of the lost futures that destructive conflict robbed the country of. Hauntologies[175] that can never be realised, British society can never again imagine a future where people live without fear of instability or destruction, just as Fussell imagines those before the First World War could never imagine the precarities of the modern world.[176] Martin Francis has written about the societal potentials that were extinguished by the loss of so many men, stating that the registering of the ghost stories and spirituality that came out of the First World War also requires reconsideration of established notions of temporality. He goes on to say that,

> At the most basic level, (consideration of the uncanny) might help draw attention to what might be identified as historiographical phantoms, fields of enquiry, and possibilities of reconceptualization that, like the ghost, inhabit a liminal space between presence and absence, observed, but not necessarily comprehended or substantiated.[177]

The centenary saw some projects attempt to put to rest some of these historiographical ghosts but also proved to be a moment which demonstrated how First World War haunts not just the histories of the war, but also imaginations of its futures. In being distant from the temporal site of the loss of the First World War, it is more difficult than ever to imagine a present where the conflict did not happen in the past. The First World War haunts perceptions of modernity, with the war dead remembered as generation that 'gave their tomorrow for our today.' These hauntings have ramifications for conceptions of citizenship, which will be returned to later in this introduction, and in chapters three and five specifically.

The centenary moment demonstrated that the First World War continues to have meaning, implying that the memory of the war, the imagined time before and most of all, the innocent,[178] must be protected through ritual and commemorative vigilance, lest they be

[175] Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of my life: writings on depression, hauntology and lost futures,* 2nd ed, (Zero books, 2022) p. 36
[176] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory,* pp. 20 – 25, pp. 77 – 81.
[177] Martin Francis, 'Attending to Ghosts: Some Reflections on the Disavowals of British Great War Historiography', *Twentieth Century British History*, (2014) 25.3, pp. 347–367, DOI:10.1093/tcbh/hwu034
[178] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p. 19.

swept away by time and forgotten.[179] To allow the memory of the war to be forgotten, would be allowing for the 'defining part of our history, and… the sacrifice of all those who gave their lives for us,'[180] to be forgotten, too – Cameron's 2012 speech implied that the countries very 'Britishness' would be at stake, 'lest we forget' about the First World War.

Mechanised war, mechanised memory?

To conclude the historiographical framework of this thesis, I want to briefly consider the availability and ease of which one can deploy images and idols in the practice of nationalism, much like the use of idols in religion. As Winter has demonstrated, simpler and cheaper printing techniques led to a growth in the production and consumption of popular religious imagery.[181] The quasi-religious application of First World War nationalism has been established, and a trip to the Imperial War Museum shop shows how popular images that are felt to be quintessentially 'British' experiences of both the First and Second World War have been utilised in the production of prints and posters (amongst other objects).[182] The remembrance poppy features heavily, and is itself a religious-nationalist symbol. It is through this object we can begin to understand Anderson's application of nationalism to a 'religious', rather than a socio-political framework.[183]

Considering this, we can turn to Walter Benjamin. Benjamin asserts that through the ease of cultural production, there is a displacement of art from the religious, to being at risk of deployment by the political sphere. As individual instances of artistic production became emancipated from the context of religious ritual, opportunities for displaying the products

[179] Nora, *Realms of Memory*, p. 7.
[180] Cameron, 'Speech on First World War centenary plans', (11th October 2012)
[181] Winter, *Sites of Memory,* p. 119.
[182] 'Keep Calm and Carry On' and 'Where there is Tea, there is Hope' Imperial War Museum shop, (n.d.) <https://shop.iwm.org.uk/collections/second-world-war-posters> and <https://shop.iwm.org.uk/collections/first-world-war-posters> [3rd September 2025]
[183] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 5.

increased.[184] Benjamin describes the shift between the poles of emphasis for art, one being its cultic value and the other being its display value. The first (and ancient) pole places the subject of the piece at its centre, a connection with the holy or beautiful or meaningful thing being conceptualised through art, and ultimately a channel through which the artist, and observers can connect with the subject. As Benjamin puts, 'the elk depicted by the stone age man on the walls of his cave is an instrument of magic. Yes, he shows it to his fellows, but it is chiefly targeted at spirits.'[185] Benjamin argues that this transcendence has been muted with the move towards the display value, which has happened in the modern age and puts the spectator at the centre, thus reducing the cultic value of art, and making it object rather than subject. However, it is my belief that art retains its 'magic' to those who are looking to find it. As with Berger's 'man-made' images, the First World War centenary artwork, in being 'made for seeing' by humans rather than spirits, the mystification intensifies. Knowing they are the main target for these displays, audiences look for messages and meaning in spaces that are created by art's 'ambiguities', with the centenary art becoming both object *and* subject, holding meaning for its audiences, but also being understood to something larger than simple audience interaction.

Whilst the power balance has shifted between art and audience, the understanding of the cultic heritage of art continues to be present, particularly when art is deployed for purposes that demonstrate moments or memories of nationally held importance. Taking the red poppy as an example, its representative power, whilst broadly understood to be merely symbolic of the bloodshed in the First World War than actually transubstantive, is used to demonstrate meaning, connection and importance. Nevertheless, there will be examples throughout this study that indicate that the poppy holds a transformational role in the understanding and

[184] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Great Ideas*, trans. by J. A. Underwood, (Penguin books Ltd, 2008, eds), pp. 27 – 30.
[185] Benjamin, 'Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', pp. 29 - 30.

practice of remembrance for some. In the creative imagining of the First World War, and the spiritualistic understandings that the war dead remain amongst the living, the poppy can act as the gateway to the past, bringing the experience of the First World War closer to the present.

Returning to the concept of 'Hauntologies', Mark Fisher's exploration into lost futures demonstrates that the advent of digital recall has made 'loss' itself lost,[186] meaning that creative outputs can theoretically be stored and experienced forever, making cultural experiences endlessly repeatable, and cultural production easier than ever. What mechanical reproduction advances had already made very accessible, digital information technology has made accessible at the click of a button. Digital longevity plays a part in the discussion of the centenary, but to start, it must be acknowledged that the digital tools for making a creative centenary perpetually available are available, and there to be used. However, it is Fisher's expansion of Derrida's 'hauntology' theory (used primarily for the exploration of musical culture) that is of particular interest. In his discussion of 'postmodern retro' music, there is the exploration of 'performing anachronism,' whilst a creative endeavour can be sufficiently 'historical' passing as belonging to the period which they mimic, there is something not quite right. They do not belong to the present, or the past, but to 'some implied "timeless" era.'[187] As the centenary progressed, there was sometimes the sensation of a 'time lapse'. As will be discussed in chapter three, amongst the television dramas and visual art programmes of the centenary, the 1st of July 2016 saw the reappearance of Somme soldiers on the streets of the United Kingdom, as if manifested by the hyper commemoration of the centenary. It appeared as though the very distinction between past and present was breaking down.[188]

[186] Fisher, *Ghosts of my life,* p. 36.
[187] Fisher, *Ghosts of my life*, pp. 43-44.
[188] Fisher, *Ghosts of my life,* p. 41.

The centenary became a moment where people could not imagine a future that was free of the memory of the First World War, having been built on a culture of remembering the First World War that insists the dead remain amongst us, and on governmental policy which demanded that the British public remember that they died 'for us'.[189] In spite of the many voices *of* the First World War that reject the romantic nationalism which contributed to the start of War, the experience of the horrors and broadly understood necessity of the Second World War meant that there will always be felt to be caveats to 'no more war.'[190] As a result, the tragedy of the war is remembered, but the lessons of the war have had to evolve into a nationalist narrative that tries to give meaning to futility. This thesis will demonstrate that the creative interventions and community projects of the First World War Centenary created spaces where dominant memory of the war as 'futile' is being moved away from.

'Horseshoe of memory' theory

It is the sense of a 'haunted present' which first interested me in the subject. The First World War is 'stuck' in a moment of time that is impossible to recreate, but nevertheless attempted every year through remembrance practices, and the subsequent imaginings of the First World war and its war dead. The resulting experience of the imagination of the First World War is a 'horseshoe of memory'. This horseshoe brings the linear experience of time closer to the present through anachronistic linkages in the present of an assumed shared past. this is made possible by national conceptions of a shared (imagined) community of 'Britishness', that is sometimes conceptualised as embodied. When engaging with imaginations of a 'British Identity', senses of Britishness are awoken within some people engaging with affective artworks. This engagement between national identity 'within' (i.e.

[189] Cameron, 'Speech on First World War centenary plans', (11th October 2012)
[190] Winter, *Sites of Memory*, pp. 8 – 11.

embodied) and ‘without’ (seen in the cultural and creative outputs of the centenary) is a key part of this thesis.

The imbedding of nostalgic cultural ‘cultic’ artefacts into everyday life helps us see ourselves within an imagined historical landscape, which in turn continues to provide experiential moments via sites of memory that continually reconnect us with the past. That the present society is so intrinsically connected with this shared past is made more visible and believable through the digital media that furnishes our understanding of and education about the First World War. This experience of the imagined historical landscape, amplified by digital medias, was further augmented by the event of the centenary moment, throughout the four years of commemoration, the First World War was made visible through a range of cultural and social outputs both locally and nationally.

At the centenary, the governing documents for the FWWCCP make clear the aim of creating links between the First World War and people’s lives today. Whilst centenary audiences knew they were reflecting on a time that had passed, the centenary moment made this ‘past’ feel to be within touching distance of the present. The past was felt to be closer through the immersivity of emotive and often large scale, mass participation artworks, making a past of many multitudes feel 'shared' through an assumed understanding and the shared experience in the present. This is not necessarily nostalgic, though. Engagement with the past seems experiential, creating the sense that the past is 'closer', relational, and more relevant to the present moment, and above all, meaningful. Engagement with these affective artworks and projects 'bends' the timeline, giving the sense that the influences of the time 'in between' the point in history being imaginatively experienced and the present are less relevant and incidental, rather than intrinsic to the shaping of knowledge and memory of the past. The creative interventions of the centenary helped to connect the ‘time- now’ with the ‘time before’, as Matthew Riley has demonstrated with the affective atmosphere Elgar’s

music has for nostalgic imagination.[191] The experience of 'felt time' moves from being a linear sensation, to one that is parallel to or across from a moment in the past. Just as Carla Merino-Rajme explores how music can create a sensation of spatial time which can be physiologically manipulated,[192] the affective atmospheres of artworks that engage the imagination can also manipulate spatial and temporal experiences of a represented past in the centenary artworks. Connecting *through* the past via the centenary artworks simply requires a leap of imaginative faith (across the closest point of the horseshoe), which is furnished from the creative and cultural legacies of the First World War that have captured the attention of scholars and artists since its outbreak.

Structure

Reflecting on Winter's comparison between the closeness of late and early twentieth century Europe, and the encouragement of Cameron's government to situate the First World War into a narrative of 'Britishness', blurred the linear understanding of time and pulled these moments together. This informed the visualisation of a horseshoe when conceptualising these types of nationally led memory events. As a result, this thesis has been divided thematically, using the emphasis Cameron placed upon certain themes outlined in his speech of 2012, and critically examines artworks from the national arts project 14-18 NOW, alongside the community led creative projects made possible through the HLF First World War fund. This structure will allow for the exploration of the following research questions:

- How did the memory of the First World War manifest creatively through the artworks of the centenary, both at national and local levels?

[191] Matthew Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*, (Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 5 – 22.
[192] Carla Merino-Rajme 'The Fragmentation of Felt Time', *Philosophers' Imprint* (2022) 22.2 DOI: https://doi.org/10.3998/phimp.2121

- What does the reception to these interventions tell us about the memory of the First World War in Britain at the centenary?
- How do these projects and reception to them link to senses of belonging and national identity?

This thesis begins, as Cameron's speech did, with the Imperial War Museum, where I will explore the foundations of the museum and the foundational threads that evolved with the museum and informed the centenary. The Imperial War Museum declares it is the holder of some of the most important artefacts relating to Britain and its role in conflict since 1914, with no other museum telling stories that matter more than these.[193] It is important therefore to situate the history of this institution into the broader understanding of this commemorative moment, and understand how the heritage of visualisation of the war has informed the visual arts led approach to the centenary. After all, the centenary moment of the First World War also saw the centenary of the Imperial War Museum.

The second chapter explores the 'iconic'[194] poppy and its interpretation over the centenary. One of the most popular pieces of the centenary was *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*, commissioned by Historic Royal Palaces and subsequently taken 'on tour' by 14-18 NOW. The conceptualisation of the poppy as a particularly 'British' war symbol, as well as visions of pastoralism that war evokes, will be compared with the nationally led projects, as well as local projects that explored First World War memory though pastoral means.

The memory of servicemen is explored in chapter three, taking Jeremy Deller's and Rufus Norris' piece *We're Here Because We're Here* and Peter Jackson's *They Shall Not Grow Old* as the main case studies, bringing in local interpretations of servicemen and the associated loss communities continue to commemorate. This chapter explores themes of

[193] 'About IWM', Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) https://www.iwm.org.uk/about , [10th March 2026]
[194] Cameron, 'Speech on First World War centenary plans', (11th October 2012)

masculinity, sacrifice and the enduring legacy of servicemen and how they are imagined in British cultural memory.

Representations of the role of women during the First World War is examined in chapter four, with the key artwork being Artichoke's *Processions*, which focussed on the 1918 Representation of the People Act. Interestingly, Cameron's speech did not acknowledge the campaigners for women's rights in his speech concerning the centenary, choosing instead to identify Edith Cavell, (a nurse executed by the German army for assisting with the escape of Entente servicemen) as a key figure in advancing women's emancipation.

Chapter five studies the experiences of people of colour in the services during the war – an experience that has been traditionally overlooked. This analysis explores the war heritage of British communities who have links to the former British empire, and how this heritage manifested at the centenary moment. These projects are of particular interest considering the then-Conservative led coalition government's approach to the 'Big Society', and the contemporaneous 'Windrush Scandal', where people who migrated to the UK between 1948 and 1973 and lived and worked legally were wrongfully detained, denied rights, and threatened with deportation (or actually deported) by the Home Office.[195] How did these stories and experiences of people of colour at the centenary fit into the Conservative government's approach to a 'truly national memory'?

There will, of course, be a degree of overlap between these themes, but by using Cameron's explicit identifications of points of connection with the First World War, the thesis will examine the realisation of creative interpretation for governmental 'nudges' set out in the Imperial War Museum speech. One theme in particular had to be incorporated into others,

[195] 'Introduction', *The Historical Roots of the Windrush Scandal: independent research report*, Home Office, (26th September 2024) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-historical-roots-of-the-windrush-scandal/the-historical-roots-of-the-windrush-scandal-independent-research-report-accessible> [20th February 2026]

namely the technological and medical advancements that were brought around by the First World War. Creative responses tended not to focus on the advent of the tank, and discussions around prosthesis and medicine have been incorporated into chapter three.

Where possible, this thesis incorporates broad geographic examples in what was promised by Cameron to be a nationwide commemorative event. As will be demonstrated, however, much of the government led centenary work focusses itself within England, with the other three nations being given less emphasis in place based commemorative activities, receiving more 'duplicated' projects, rather than individual interventions.[196] A broader exploration of framing of this can be found in chapter two, which explores how British memory of the war has a decidedly 'English' tone.

Whilst I have included occasional examples from wider Great Britain in my analysis, the focus of this research centres around the dominance of English memory practices in the centenary of the First World War, and the assertion of a particularly English memory as a *national* memory. This thesis identifies how an emphasis of 'Englishness as Britishness' is a key mechanism for understanding some people's sense of connection with the First World War, and the ways that this approach shapes senses of nationalism, especially when supported by a national programme. Whilst broader British experiences were not excluded from the centenary's creative commemoration, they were not given the same emphasis, or shared across the four nations of Britain in the same way project which emphasised an 'English' Britishness was, and projects which had a particularly Scottish, Welsh or Irish cultural heritage were not spotlighted in the same way. This is particularly important to consider in instances where non-English, British (that is, Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish) memory-histories are positioned as tangentially included, but not interrogated, which can particularly

[196]London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_02_02_06_002_2, 'Complete Programme Statistics - 14-18 NOW'

be seen in chapter three. The exception to the scale of commemorative activities undertaken is the island of Ireland, where considerable centenary activities took place.[197] This thesis does not explore creative interventions which took place in either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland, which requires further comprehensive study due to the amount of activity undertaken as part of a 'decade of centenaries'.[198] It is worth mentioning at this stage, however, that the presence of British troops in Ireland after the 1916 uprising, and the subsequent civil war experienced in Ireland, this was, as far as I have seen, not acknowledged in any of the mainstream artworks of the centenary moment that took place in Great Britain, despite it having significant implications for modern understandings of the British state.

Further scholarship is required for the creative engagement with national memory in Wales and Scotland, and how these countries experience of memory interacts with the broader British memory, which, as this paper will demonstrate, is predominantly 'English' in nature. Projects which were conceived and led from London as spotlighted projects, (for example, the Poppies Tour, *We're Here Because We're Here* and *Pages of the Sea*) were replicated in, or visited sites across Britain. Whilst local examples were used in local communities, the decision-making process and oversight was led from IWM London. This thesis acknowledges that where the term 'British' is used, it refers to a particular 'English' Britishness, unless otherwise stated, and this tension will be explored throughout the study.

During the centenary moment David Cameron asked everyone in the nation to reflect on the ultimate sacrifice of a generation of people, in a conflict that 'matters, not just in our heads, but in our hearts.' This was an explicit expectation of emotional duty to the past, which took place at a time when Cameron's government was asking communities to do more with less, volunteer their time and tap into a nostalgic imagination of qualities which he claimed to

[197] Edward Madigan, 'Centenary (Ireland)' *1914-1918 Online International Encyclopaedia of the First World War*, (27th October 2021) < https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/centenary-ireland/ > [10th March 2026]
[198] Macleod, 'Looking Forward to the Centenary of the Second World War', pp. 2-16.

be particularly 'British', but often looked distinctively 'English'. As this thesis will demonstrate, the creative commemorations of the war brought together established 'lieux de memoire' with 'new'[199] and 'engaging'[200] ways to think about the First World War. The government spent considerable funds on furnishing a narrative for Britain's national story, which at times brought the centenary moment into the centre of divisive political messaging about identity, heritage and collective histories.

[199] Cameron, 'Speech on First World War centenary plans', (11th October 2012)
[200] Malan, Lale-Demoz, Brady, *First World War Centenary Programme: Legacy Evaluation*, (September 2019)

1: The Imperial War Museum and the experiences of memory of the First World War

'(War museums) never describe war; they only tell us about its footprints on the map of our lives.'[1]

Introduction - Memorial and museum? Navigating changing memories of war

This chapter will explore how the Imperial War Museum (IWM) is a 'site of memory'[2] for the First World War. Borrowing from Jay Winter's argument, which emphasises the agency of individual memory making when encountering experiential sites, this section will explore how the affective atmosphere of the IWM is mediated through its role as a narrator of British histories of conflict, as well as its legacy as a 'memorial'. If the museum is a 'site of memory' as well as an agent of 'memory making', experiences of individual, collective and public memories sit both within and without the museum and interact with the museum space in a way that requires constant negotiation.

It is important to emphasise that the Imperial War Museum was selected as the lead organisation for the centenary partnership activities, rather than the armed forces or church. Although both the church and the armed forces are the traditional leaders of remembrance activities in Britain, the IWM was felt to be the best suited to be the cultural lead in commemorating the First World War centenary, and to host the First World War Cultural Programme board, owing to its founding remit, expertise, and world-wide relationships.[3] On the face of it, the museum space also has a sense of broader, contemporary inclusivity that the church and armed forces cannot claim. Whilst the bounds of the inclusivity of museum

[1] Jay Winter, 'Museums and the Representation of War' in *Does War Belong in Museums?: The Representation of Violence in Exhibitions,* ed by Wolfgang Muchitsch (Bielefeld transcript Verlag, 2013)
[2] Jay Winter, Sites *of Memory, Sites of Mourning; The Great War in European Cultural History*, 4th (Canto) ed, (Cambridge University Press, 2014)
[3] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_06_02_02_02_01_001_001_2 (n.d.) 'First World War Cultural Programme Board - draft terms of reference'

spaces will be explored in this chapter, the IWM purports to tell the stories of the human impact of war, emphasising its broad remit and diverse narratives of conflicts that feature different generations of Britons, and which have occurred around the world.[4] Whilst there are other historic 'sites of memory' which have established role in the commemoration of the First World War, as more traditional graveside and monumental sites, the Grave of the Unknown Warrior and the Cenotaph were not subject to creative interventions at the centenary. Neither were they nominated as sites through which the centenary moment would be managed other than through their traditional roles, and therefore, they will not be central sites of exploration in this thesis. It is important to consider, however, that local war memorials were sites that experienced creative interventions and renewed memory making which can be understood through the affective histories the graveside-type sites of the Grave of the Unknown Warrior and the Cenotaph have on memory practices.[5] These relationships, as well as the creative renegotiation of local war memorials, will be briefly explored in chapter two.

Benedict Anderson identified the museum space as a key institution of power, that 'profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion.'[6] How did a museum, which owed its foundation to a war fought in defence of an empire, navigate Britain's changing status in the world, as well as respond to changing perceptions about conflict and empire? Changing approaches to historicising the First World War further complicates the IWM's task in documenting the story of the conflict, with testimonies of veterans adding diverse narratives to a war which had been remembered as particularly horrific.[7] The range of experiences of war time were so numerous, and collections of wartime so broad, that the museum was forced to prioritise certain narratives above others as

[4] 'Stories of war and conflict', (n.d.) Imperial War Museum, https://www.iwm.org.uk/history [11th March 2026]
[5] Lucy Noakes, *Dying for the nation: Death, grief and bereavement in Second World War Britain*, (Manchester University Press, 2020) p.47.
[6] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd ed, (Verso, 1991), pp. 163 - 164
[7] Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory,* (Hambledon and London, 2005), p. 28, p.188.

it struggled to find a location, and assert its identity, in its initial years. This chapter will consider that whilst museums may not be able to *describe* war in its totality as Jay Winter suggests, war museums can furnish understandings of war with context, empathy and understanding, and can reveal multiple experiences of the past.



Figure 1- Imperial War Museum, London. (Author's own image). Classical and imposing, the London site of the IWM sits in gated parkland south of the river.

Whose memories…and of what?

Whilst not a traditional remembrance monument, the role of the Imperial War Museum as *memorial* is central to legacies of remembrance. Initially envisaged as a national memorial site for the First World War, the changing landscapes of twentieth century conflicts have pulled apart founding definitions of the museum and required evolution in its practices. Since its founding in 1917, the IWM has marked and memorialised conflicts since the First World War. Since then, it has exhibited narratives of the Second World War, the Korean War, the Falklands War, the Gulf Wars, the War in Afghanistan and the War on Terror, not to mention

the conflicts that Britain took part in relating to decolonisation and in its commitments as part of NATO.[8] The museum has also extended in sites, incorporating the Cabinet/Churchill War Rooms, the HMS Belfast, the aerodrome at Duxford, and a site in Manchester (IWM North).[9] The unifying of conflict in one space narrows the stories of 20th century conflicts and 'packages' their histories for a range of audiences, creating a sense of closeness with a 'past' that is both current, and over a century old.[10] The centenary provided an opportunity not only to reframe the exhibition of the First World War in a museum space, but also to reframe the experience of twentieth century warfare that has been dominated by an ever developing military, alongside the reduction of British power.

Michel Foucault's work on Heterotopias and the expansion of this work by Tony Bennett are of particular use to explore the tools and processes museum spaces employ both as gatekeepers of historical narratives, and as moral educators of the public.[11] Encounters with museums during the nineteenth century were experienced as part of a broader collection of cultural institutions. These included large exhibitions and fairs, which embodied and communicated specific cultural meanings and values, and posited 'Man' – the outcome of evolution – as both the object and subject of knowledge.[12] Therefore, a series of assumptions informed and realised museum displays which also had to take into consideration the 'civilizing' influence that the museum was hoped by some to be a vehicle of, a space for codifying behaviours.[13] However, this heritage is decidedly more difficult to draw upon in a war museum. Telling the stories of a conflict that was hard fought, bitterly won and most

[8] These conflicts all feature in parts of IWM London's permanent exhibition spaces, and throughout their online 'stories' catalogue, see; 'Stories of war and conflict', (n.d.) Imperial War Museum, https://www.iwm.org.uk/history [11th March 2026]. The museum also features temporary exhibitions which explore legacies of decolonisation, see; 'Emergency Exits: The Fight for Independence in Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus', (n.d.) Imperial War Museum, https://www.iwm.org.uk/events/emergency-exits-the-fight-for-independence-in-malaya-kenya-and-cyprus, [12th March 2026].
[9] 'Our Museums' (n.d.) Imperial War Museum, https://www.iwm.org.uk/, [12th March 2026]
[10] The Imperial War Museum states on its website; 'Our family of five museums uncover the causes, course and consequences of war, from the First World War through to present-day conflict', (since edited), 'about IWM', (n.d.) Imperial War Museum, https://www.iwm.org.uk/about, [25th April 2022]
[11] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces' *Diacritics*, (1986), 16.1, pp. 22-27, Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, 4th ed, (Routledge, 2002), pp. 136 - 180, and Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum, History, Theory, Politics,* (Abingdon 1995) pp.109 – 128.
[12] Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, pp. 6-7.
[13] Bennett, *Birth of the Museum,* p. 8, p. 27, p. 114.

importantly, recently experienced, made any ‘story telling’ of the First World War in a museum space subject to a delicate balance. It needed to acknowledge the range of experiences of conflict, which could range anywhere from trauma to pride, as well as a recognising the rawness felt by the bereaved. This chapter will demonstrate that as the twentieth century progressed, the role of the Imperial War Museum as both a gatekeeper of memory and a memorial space complicated its ability to react to changing political and social atmospheres but also allowed it to forge new ways to conceptualise conflict.

Museums and the shaping of national memories before the First World War

In order to properly understand the establishment of the Imperial War Museum as a ‘site of memory’, we must first understand its context as a museum space in Britain in the early twentieth century. The development of museum culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries took on an almost evangelical character and was seen by many social reformers as a kind of ‘cultural prescription’ for a population considered to be in ‘moral decline’. Spaces like galleries and museums presented themselves as instruments capable of improving 'man's' inner life.[14] Towards the end of the nineteenth century, social investigators such as Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree uncovered the widespread nature of poverty and inequality,[15] and it became increasingly clear that these experiences compounded class-based prejudices and further inspired the need for intervention. For cultural reformer Sir Henry Cole, the museum space could help “the working man” choose a life characterized by moral restraint, which was of course preferable to “the temptations of both bed and the ale-house”[16] in the mind of genteel Victorian society. The opportunity to use new spaces to educate the population on their civic duties was at the forefront of the development of museums, which,

[14] Bennett, *Birth of the Museum,* p. 18.
[15] Lucy Noakes, *Dying for the nation,* p. 47.
[16] Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, p. 20.

at a time of rapid industrialisation, was considered to be under threat. Modernity was felt to be dissolving duty and discipline, which, as social critic Matthew Arnold felt, was a slip towards anarchy and could be mediated through reflection on the 'perfection' of humanity, which he asserted 'echoed' through culture.[17]

What was considered acceptable material for the moralising museum machines of the nineteenth century? Foucault emphasises that the 'great obsession of the nineteenth century was…history: with its themes of development and of suspension…(finding) its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermodynamics.'[18] As Foucault indicates, the belief that a shared national history was the combustion rocket engine that propelled states like Britain forward in progress has been long dismissed. However, the anxieties demonstrated by Arnold concerning modernity made the balance between a rich internal culture and a rapidly changing external environment seem to be of dire importance. He concluded that the best way for culture to be experienced and understood was via an 'establishment', through which a heritage of culture could be drawn upon for reflection.[19] Arnold drew heavily on religion as a traditional establishment which conceives 'culture', through which national identity could be further explored through. Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach have demonstrated that the museum space is ideologically and architecturally similar to temples and churches, and thus asks visitors for similar reverence. By embodying and making visible the idea of the state, museum spaces reinforce state authority and subjects visitors to a codified practice of reverence,[20] placing the state at the centre.

In Britain, the linear narrative presented in museum spaces was a direct result of the anxieties felt in light of the rapid industrial changes, and Hannah Woods has demonstrated the

[17] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy: An essay in political and social criticism*, (Smith, Elder & Co. 1869), pp. 58 - 59, p. 270.
[18] M Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', pp. 22 – 27.
[19] Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, p. xix
[20] Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, 'The Universal Survey Museum', *Art History,* (1980) 3.4, pp. 448 - 469. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8365.1980.tb00089.x

extension and expressions of these anxieties in the late nineteenth century.[21] In order to connect a population anxious about an ever changing present, assumptions about a shared national past became a popular way to ensure understanding of a shared heritage and reassure the public that their national character was not under threat. Folk histories in particular were sought after in museums in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in the face of what was felt to be alien and imposed change brought about by industrialisation. [22] Kavanagh emphasises that memories of a past deemed to be unchanging, harmonious, and innocent were part of a panicked reaction to change and in some instances a need to buttress senses of racial superiority.[23] This imagined pastoral landscape presented the peasantry and their traditions as the 'true spirit' that held modern British society together, '"proof" of the unique culture of the nation and of its long history.'[24] Additionally, where narratives were posited as a 'British' history, in practice these were often manifestations of an ordered, 'English' history (or at the very least, a history that emphasised virtues that were decidedly 'English').[25] Whilst Britain had showcased itself as a technological, superior nature in the Great Exhibition, by the 1904 World Fair in St. Louis it was projecting a rural nostalgic character on the international stage.[26]

As such, museums helped populations understand their current condition as part of a broader, linear heritage of forward momentum, using a narrative form constructed around a trail of clues from the past.[27] Similar nostalgic, pastoral and patriotic narratives furnished late Victorian and Edwardian culture, appearing in music halls and theatres, pubs, popular art and juvenile fiction, with all taking slightly different but ultimately complimentary approaches to

[21] Hannah Rose Woods, 'Anxiety and Urban Life in late Victorian and Edwardian Culture, 1880-1914', (April 2018) (Apollo - University of Cambridge Repository) <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.22085>
[22] Gaynor Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum*, (Leicester University Press, 2000) p. 49.
[23] Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces,* p. 49.
[24] Donald Horne, as quoted by Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces,* p. 50
[25] This is a complex and multifaceted theme of so-called 'national narratives' in Britain, which requires further study during the centenary moment. For this argument I am inclined to follow Philip Dodd, 'Englishness and the National Culture', in *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920,* ed by Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, 2nd ed, (Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 25 – 53.
[26] Anne Helmreich, "The Nation and the Garden: England and the World's Fairs at the Turn of the Century', in *Art, Culture and National Identity in Fin-de-Siecle Europe*, ed by Michelle Facos and Sharon Hirsh, (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 39.
[27] Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, pp. 178-179.

British nationalist and imperialist ideals.[28] Museums and galleries provided to be a useful tool in disseminating stories that supported the rising nationalistic feeling in Britain that was in turn supported by the Empire-building efforts of the late nineteenth century. These patriotic narratives helped create and enforce a sense that a certain set of virtues imagined in the past, as well as the 'modernised' experience of the present established Britain as a superior race.[29]

Building on the work of Foucault, Bennett explores how the self-regulating nature of museum spaces meant that despite their 'free and open' appearance, museums 'effect their own pattern of informal discriminations and exclusions…a set of culturally differentiating practices aimed at screening out the forms of public behaviour associated with places of popular assembly.'[30] In the assembly space of the museum, visitors are expected to listen, not to speak.

Memory and the museum during and immediately after the First World War

The establishment of the Imperial War Museum was a direct response to the experience of the First World War, and this reaction was expressed in the language that society had become accustomed to communicating significance with. Curating the First World War for the museum space was undoubtedly due to present a challenge against the recognised practices of museology considering the palpable shock of the catastrophe of the war.[31] The war had been directly experienced by the population as it had progressed, if not in the horrors of the trenches then through the experiences of rationing, air raids and casualty lists from the front, and individuals were already keeping their own records of their wartime experiences, some of which would find its way to museum spaces across Britain as well as the Imperial

[28] John M MacKenzie, (eds) *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, (Manchester University Press, 1986)
[29] Jacqueline S Bratton, 'Of England, Home and Duty: The Image of England in Victorian and Edwardian Juvenile Fiction', in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed by MacKenzie, pp. 75-78.
[30] Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, pp. 100-102.
[31] Winter, *Sites of Memory*, p. 5.

War Museum.[32] As established sites of cultural education, museums had until this point occupied a ground that was difficult for audiences to contest. Despite arguments against 'artificially breaking' the story of continuity in warfare,[33] when exhibiting the First World War, it became clear that there would have to be a slightly different approach that reflected the experiences of people who had lived through the war.

Kavanagh has highlighted that even from the outset of the war, there was felt to be a need (indeed, a common anxiety) for the conflict to be chronicled and remembered.[34] The scale of loss was felt to be so great, it demanded a reaction. The collection of war related paraphernalia for the Imperial War Museum began during the war itself. On 16th March 1917, *The Times* reported that the government was establishing a National War Museum, charged with collecting 'Relics and Souvenirs', from battlefield trophies to autographs of those considered key characters in the 'story of the British share of the war.'[35] At its establishment, many cultural legacies could be drawn upon to situate this new museum within the broader nation-making museums that could be found both nationally and locally. Words such as 'relic' and 'souvenir' give a sense of the initial collecting phase, conjuring a religious, material outlook on the new collection similar to the religious relic collection practices of the Middle Ages. The medieval themes that the legacy of the First World War expresses have been explored by Stefan Goebel,[36] and this alone gives a quasi-religious approach to remembering the First World War. However, when combining the collecting culture of the Victorian museum and the resulting implication of value this brings,[37] the implication of the museum

[32] Ann-Marie Foster, '"We Decided the Museum Would Be the Best Place for Them"': Veterans, Families and Mementos of the First World War', *History and Memory*, (2019) 31.1, pp. 87-117.
[33] 'National War Museum: Suggestion for the Tower of London' *The Times*, (London, England), (21st February 1917), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources), [10th December 2024]
[34] Gaynor Kavanagh, 'Museum as Memorial: The Origins of the Imperial War Museum', *Journal of Contemporary History* (1988) 23.1, pp. 77-97.
[35] A series of reports on the matter were published in *The Times;* 'Political Notes – The National War Museum' *The Times,* (16th March 1917), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources), [20th April 2022], and 'National War Museum: A Collection of Relics and Souvenirs' *The Times,* (26th March 1917), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources), [20th April 2022]
[36] Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britian and Germany, 1914-1940,* (Cambridge University Press, 2007)
[37] Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces,* p. 98.

site as a place of cultural education, and the veneration of the material culture of war that produced not only objects of destruction, but objects of nationalist propaganda,[38] the museum space serves to promote a quasi-religious veneration of the *subject* of the objects of war themselves.

Indeed, the 'Great War' was great in production as well as loss. The material reality of waging a global industrialised war for over four years was made visible in the shells spent, the letters written and songs sung – all were to be exhibited in this new museum.[39] As the war continued, the importance of the visual in connecting people to the war (manufactured or otherwise) became apparent.[40] Different windows into warfare had been experienced during the war through the battlefield films produced at the front. Alongside still photography, film photography made a significant impression on the view of the war. Described by the IWM as a 'star object in (the) collection (The Battle of the Somme film), made in 1916, is the first feature-length, documentary-style film about conflict, and has been credited with changing the way cinema was viewed by the public.'[41] The original nitrate negative was given to the IWM in 1920, where steps were made to limit further damage to what was already an incredibly worn reel,[42] with the Imperial War Museum estimating that around 20 million people saw the film in 1916 when it was released. Whilst the morality of screening footage of the war was questioned by commentators at the time, with some people being horrified by the footage, on the whole people were very keen to watch a film of the supposed 'reality' of war.[43]

[38] 'Political Notes – The National War Museum' *The Times,* (London, England), (16th March 1917), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources), [3rd December 2024]
[39] 'Political Notes - The National War Museum', *The Times,* (16th March 1917),
[40] Kavanagh, 'Museum as Memorial' pp. 77-97.
[41] 'The Battle of the Somme Centenary' Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) https://www.iwm.org.uk/partnerships/first-world-war-centenary/centenary-partnership/battle-of-the-somme, [12th December 2024]
[42] 'Memory of the World Register - *The Battle of the Somme'*, Ref no. 2004-16, UNESCO, (2004), <https://media.unesco.org/sites/default/files/webform/mow001/united_kingdom_battle_of_the_somme.pdf> [17th September 2025]
[43] Nicholas Reeves, 'Cinema, spectatorship and propaganda: "Battle of the Somme" (1916) and its contemporary audience', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, (1997), 17:1, pp. 5-28. DOI: 10.1080/01439689700260601

Even though there was a new lens on warfare, ideas emphasising courage and gallantry were still present. All aspects of the experience of the war were expected to feature in its exhibition and memorialisation at the National War Museum, presenting a nation of homogenous and united people.[44] This representation was expanded further still, with the envisaged 'National War Museum' quickly becoming the 'Imperial War Museum' after a resolution was made by the India and Dominions committee.[45] The emphasis that it was an *empire* at war and not simply a nation was reiterated in the years following the IWM's foundation, and even as the war was ongoing, the newly formed museum was exhibiting 'The Empire at War' at Burlington House, showing tanks, guns and photographs, despite having no official space.[46] *The Observer* emphasised in 1920 that the war was won by 'the great Empire family…with the Museum as the guardian of the family mantlepiece or cabinet of precious relics.'[47] At the official opening of the Museum in its first home at the Crystal Palace, First Commissioner of Works Sir Alfred Mond stressed that the IWM was not a monument, but 'a record of (the people of empire's) toil and sacrifice'.[48] As Jenny Macleod has argued, the memorialisation of the First World War drew together an 'Imperial Britishness', where the identities of Englishness, Britishness and the broader empire were unselfconsciously emplaced within a museum site in London, and whereby these broad war experiences were further blurred by an English understanding of the British Empire's war.[49] To 'join up' individual stories and experiences, the war museum had to provide an overview that presented the story of the war and placed Britain and its (now former) Empire within it, and this framework has served the museums mission from its inception.

[44] Sue Malvern, 'War, Memory and Museums: Art and Artefact in the Imperial War Museum', in *History Workshop Journal*, (2000) 49, pp. 177-203.
[45] Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War; A Social History*, (Leicester University Press, 1994) p. 137.
[46] 'The Empire At War – Relics and Pictures at Burlington House' *The Times*, (London, England), (14th December 1917), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources), [25th March 2026]
[47] *The Observer*, (8th August 1920), as quoted by Malvern, 'War, Memory and Museums', pp. 177-203.
[48] Kavanagh, 'Museum as Memorial', pp. 77-97.
[49] Jenny Macleod, 'Britishness and Commemoration: National Memorials to the First World War in Britain and Ireland', *Journal of Contemporary History*, (2013) 48.4, pp. 647 - 651

National, local, and individual collecting practices began almost as soon as the conflict started,[50] and the First Commissioner of Works Sir Alfred Mond began establishing the war museum committee, led by director Sir Martin Conway, and including veteran armouries curator Charles ffoulkes. Conway's vision for the space was for a 'site of memory' which could recapture a moment in time that could be returned to,

> When peace returns and …memory of the great days and adventures which they lived will grow dim. It is the purpose of the museum to be a place which they can visit with their comrades, their friends, or their children, and there revive the past and behold …(things) memorable to them.[51]

These collections of memories connected experiences across the globe, sharing stories from colonies, dominions and the centre of empire, and binding together the 'shared' experience of the British empire in the First World War.

Memory of the war was to be negotiated outside the museum space, too, and decisions taken in regard to the war dead would further stretch the frontiers of memory spaces for the conflict. After the war, memorials quickly sprang up in towns across Britain, making the First World War the most aggressively memorialised and commemorated conflict than any before or since, having profound effects on the national consciousness and the way in which the war was historicised.[52]

Additionally, the Imperial War Graves Commission had established that British soldier's bodies were not to be repatriated. As a result of this decision, many funerary and bereavement practices that had been common before the war were no longer possible, and graveside relationships were limited to those with the means to travel abroad, if there was a grave to visit at all.[53] Public expressions of the anguish of grief were seen as unhelpful, even unpatriotic, at a time when all were being asked to make sacrifices, and the shifts in cultures

[50] Kavanagh, *Museums and First World War*, p. 119.
[51] Sir Martin Conway, as quoted by Kavanagh, *Museums and First World War*, pp. 129-130.
[52] George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, (Palgrave, 2002), p. 208.
[53] Winter, *Sites of Memory,* p. 52.

of bereavement and grief in Britain before the Great War were strengthened by the demands of the conflict and acted to shape the British 'way of death' in the interwar years.[54]

Before a museum space had been settled upon, public and private spaces were already generating memories of the war, which were shaped by the varying experiences of grief, the return of soldiers, and the personal experiences of home front services. Public engagements with the war were negotiated and combined with the private and varying experiences of wartime, which could take a range of voices and has been explored by Dan Todman[55] and further examined throughout the thesis.

Finding a home for Britain's war

Initially being made up of a series of collections dotted around London,[56] when it officially opened on the 9th of June 1920, the imperial war museum was located in the Crystal Palace. The museum's opening in the grand building was advertised with considerable nationalistic and celebratory aplomb.[57] Advertised in the Daily Mail as the "Great Victory Exhibition",[58] flags from the 1919 victory parade were placed alongside relics of the war and interspersed with large plants framing the story of the First World War within the culturally significant site of the rebuilt Crystal Palace, and its connotations with the 'Great Exhibition' of 1851. The use of this museum space as a unifying place commemorating the Great War was emphasised at its opening, asserting itself as the institution that will hold the collection of the First World War that was "now in (the) possession of the nation".[59] George V spoke to the

[54] Noakes, *Dying for the Nation*, pp. 24-30.
[55] Todman, *Myth and Memory.*
[56] 'A Museum on the Move – Relics of the War – A Study in Mobility and Contrast' *The Times,* (London, England), (18th July 1935), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources), [16th December 2024]
[57] P I Rixon*, Crystal Palace - Great War Exhibition - Imperial War Museum*, (1920), Lithograph on paper, 1012 mm x 651 mm. Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM PST 3278), https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/22951
[58] 'Multiple Display Advertising Items (The Crystal Palace, The Imperial War Museum and Great Victory Exhibition' *Daily Mail*, (London, England), (1st June 1920), The Daily Mail Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources), [16th December 2024]
[59] 'The King Opens War Museum - Tribute to Empire Sacrifices – The Victory Bringers' *Daily Mail*, (London, England), (10th June 1920) The Daily Mail Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024]

museum being "at once a storehouse of material for the historian and scientific student and an inspiration for posterity. It is a memorial which speaks to the heart and to the imagination."[60]

The collection that was initially displayed to the public at the Crystal Palace was huge, completely filling the vast building.[61] In spite of the extensive collecting practices that the Imperial War Museum exercised at its start however, the museum experienced something of an identity crisis in its initial years. Gaynor Kavanagh has indicated that the end of the war brought a 'turning away' from realistic conditions of battlefield carnage, and by 1921 photographic exhibitions depicting such realities were no longer popular.[62] Asserted to be a memorial space by the king, the museum hosted a 'Great Victory Exhibition'[63] at its opening, conflating and somewhat blurring the experiences of excitement, grief and joy felt during and after the war, as well as its own role within these emotional experiences. Was the museum a site of record, or memory, of mourning, or of celebration? Other interventions outside of the museum sought to answer these questions too. Due to the popularity of a temporary cenotaph erected in 1919, the permanent cenotaph standing today was erected in 1920, meaning the IWM was no longer considered to be the national war memorial,[64] despite assertions that it *did*, in fact, serve a memorial purpose too.[65] As an alternative, an attempt was made to try to create a "Hall of Heroes", with individual photographs of all the fallen. This proposed 'site of mourning' was envisioned to be a sort-of shrine signifying to visitors that the meaning of the museum was sacrifice and redemption. In fact, this proposal was met with a lukewarm response by the public,[66] and by the 1920s designated war memorial spaces were being proposed across Britain within communities themselves. Instead, the museum adopted a role

[60] George V, as quoted by the *Daily Mail*, 'The King Opens War Museum' *Daily Mail*, (10th June 1920)
[61] 'The King Opens War Museum' *Daily Mail*, (10th June 1920)
[62] Kavanagh, *Museums and First World War*, p. 70.
[63] 'Opening Of the Imperial War Museum' *The Times* (London, England), (8th June 1920) The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [17th September 2025}
[64] Lord Crawford's committee recommended that the National War Memorial should take the form of a War Museum, 'National War Memorial – Decision of Lord Crawford's Committee' *The Times* (London, England) (5th April 1918) The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024]
[65] George V, as quoted by the *Daily Mail*, 'The King Opens War Museum' *Daily Mail*, (10th June 1920)
[66] Malvern, 'War, Memory and Museums', pp. 177-203.

commemorating the 'war to end war'[67] through objects, and was given the collection of art produced by war artists to display alongside the 'relics' and 'souvenirs' collected during the war.



Figure 2- Crystal Palace - Great War Exhibition - Imperial War Museum (1920) IWM (© Art.IWM PST 3278) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/22951> [27th March 2026] (Use under Non-Commercial licence).
Early exhibitions showcasing the story of the war took overtly patriotic imaginations as the museum tried to navigate the tone for exhibiting the war.

By March 1924, the lease had expired at the Crystal Palace,[68] and the Imperial War Museum had been moved to the Imperial Institute at South Kensington.[69] From its opening in June 1920 until its move, *The Times* reported that over three million people had visited the exhibits at the Crystal Palace. Many visitors to Kensington were disappointed to find that the new site was still closed at the end of April, where it appeared that the two galleries allocated

[67] Malvern, 'War, Memory and Museums', pp. 177-203
[68] 'Imperial War Museum – Some New Exhibits', *The Times* (London, England), (21st July 1923), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources), [16th December 2024]
[69] 'The Crystal Palace', *The Times* (London, England), (19th December 1923), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024] and 'Imperial War Museum Still Closed – Many Visitors Disappointed' *The Times*, (London, England) [25th April 1924], The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024]

to the Imperial War Museums exhibits were wholly insufficient to house the enormous collection, and many exhibits remained in storage.[70] The site needed to house the collection was required to be Crystal-Palace-like in size, the collection included but was not limited to over 100,000 photographs, ships' models, artist pictures, and over 600 tonnes of dead weight metal, which included howitzers, tanks and naval guns,[71] despite many objects being sold in anticipation of the move.[72] As evidence of the popular interest in the museum, *The Times* reported that "140,000 large photographs of the exhibits" had been sold.[73]

Ideas were proposed for a permanent space separate to the Kensington Museum site for the huge collection of the Imperial War Museum,[74] and complaints about want of both exhibition and storage space continued.[75] *The Times* reported that, after many negotiations, "the only possible storage space available was a more or less derelict building…near Waterloo station, which was unsuitable for fragile museum exhibits. The building was old and in very bad condition, and it was "quite impossible to ensure that the exhibits were dry."[76] In 1930, a new site was found: the old Bethlem hospital in Lambeth, which had been acquired via a gift made to the nation.[77] Despite acknowledgments in the press that the site was on the "less fashionable side of the river",[78] the Imperial War Museum opened in Lambeth on the 7th of July 1936 to "cheers from a large crowd".[79] The larger new site, along

[70] 'Imperial War Museum Still Closed – Many Visitors Disappointed' *The Times*, (25th April 1924)
[71] 'Imperial War Museum – Removal to South Kensington – A Difficult Task', *The Times* (London, England) (18th December 1923), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024]
[72] 'Imperial War Museum – Some New Exhibits', *The Times* (London, England), (21st July 1923),
[73] 'Imperial War Museum Still Closed – Many Visitors Disappointed' *The Times*, (25th April 1924)
[74] 'Science Museum', *The Times* (London, England) (27th December 1923), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024]
[75] 'Imperial War Museum – Lack of Storage Facilities' *The Times*, (London, England) (6th September 1926), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024]
[76] 'The Imperial War Museum – Problems Due To Want Of Space', *The Times*, (London, England) (1st June 1925), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024] and 'Public Interest In Museums – Increased Attendance', *The Times*, (London, England) (19th August 1930) The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024]
[77] 'The Imperial War Museum – Proposed Transfer to Old Bethlam Hospital', *The Times*, (London, England), (12th November 1930), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024], and Steven Cooke & Lloyd Jenkins, 'Discourses of Regeneration in Early Twentieth-Century Britain: From Bedlam to the Imperial War Museum,' *Area*, (2001) 33.4, pp. 382-390
[78] 'Bellona in Bedlam' *The Times,* (London, England), (7th July 1936), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources), [17th September 2025]
[79] 'The Imperial War Museum – Reopening by the Duke of York', *The Times*, (London, England), (8th July 1936), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024]

with the sale of many objects during the occupation of the Kensington site,[80] was now able to better display the multitude of pieces collected from the First World War.

The inability to secure a site for a museum that was considered to be of national importance indicates the complex situation memory of the First World War was felt to have in the years after its ending. Despite the extensive memorialising taking place within communities by way of street shrines, and the popularity that news and footage from the front line was felt to have during the war, attitudes to a war museums at its conception was met with disinterest by policy makers in 1917.[81] Whilst the popularity of the initial conceptions of the Imperial War Museum was clear from the strong visitor numbers of ex-service people,[82] the extensive funds spent on this 'record of toil and sacrifice' was of little interest for people who only had home front experience.[83] Arthur Marwick has highlighted how the misery of the war years was met with an almost pre-war excitement at its end, which, when met with mass unemployment, sharp increases in prices, and the continuation of rationing, turned to strike action and protest.[84] Homes fit for heroes became apparent to be a costly ask, and would not be provided at an acceptable rent rate, and the decision was taken that many would have to 'go without.'[85] As Adrian Gregory has highlighted, the majority of those who had to 'go without' in the 1920s had been in the armed forces during the war, young men who had not established themselves in trades or completed training found themselves particular vulnerable to the principle of 'last in, first out'.[86]

The Imperial War Museum was founded at a time of great emotional uncertainty, and at a time when the old international economic order had become severely dislocated,[87] and sat

[80] 'The Imperial War Museum – Lack of Accommodation' *The Times*, (London, England), (25th August 1933), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024]
[81] Kavanagh, *Museums and First World War*, p. 135.
[82] Kavanagh, *Museums and First World War*, p. 149.
[83] Kavanagh, *Museums and First World War*, p. 147 -151.
[84] Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge – British Society and the First World War*, (2nd ed), (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) p. 300- 313.
[85] Marwick, *The Deluge,* p. 324.
[86] Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day, 1919-1946*, (Bloomsbury, 1994), pp. 68-69.
[87] Marwick, *The Deluge,* p. 325.

against the literary revelations of Sassoon, Sheriff, Remarque and others who suggested that the war had destroyed even those men who had survived it.[88] Whilst considerable time and effort was put in by the founders to properly situate the nation's war museum within this context, the taking of nearly 20 years to settle on a 'site of memory' speaks to the metaphor of how complex Britain's war experience was, and where the nation could, or should situate its experience both literally and figuratively. The post First World War landscape of Britain, like the Imperial War Museum, struggled to settle, and the experience of this post war environment considerably affected the way the public were able to engage with both private and public memories of the war.

Space for More Wars? The Imperial War Museum since the Second World War

In just over three years of the Imperial War Museum occupying its new site south of the river, Britain was engaged in another global conflict. Another world war so soon after the end of the First World War shed some doubt over the legacy of the 'victory' celebrated by the IWM at its initial opening. Whilst it had overcome its initial site management issues, and established itself as a site that had made comprehensive record of the experiences of an empire at war,[89] the cultural mythology of 'witness bearing' curated by the Museum, which had navigated narratives of heroism and futility throughout the 20s and 30s had to be redefined.[90] The aerial warfare tactics employed by Nazi Germany placed the victory relics of the First World War under a real risk of destruction. Under threat from the very enemy that was perceived to have been beaten by Britain less than twenty-five years ago, the collection

[88] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, p. 20.
[89] Kavanagh, *Museums and First World War*, p. 171
[90] Phillip Deans and Darren Kelsey, 'National Narration and Organisational Crisis: A Discourse -Mythological Analysis of the Imperial War Museum During the Second World War', *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*, (2024) 15.1, pp. 86 –108.

in the IWM was moved to protect it from the Blitz, and certain pieces were either relocated or placed in strongrooms deep under the capital.[91]

Scholars have identified this period to be a moment of crisis for the Museum, which depended so heavily on a mythologised Britain and her Empire that emerged triumphant from the war to end all wars.[92] As Phillip Deans has demonstrated, in the Museum's struggle to assert itself as a relevant space after the First World War, it had developed a dependency on the cultural cognitive pillar[93] to remain relevant, echoing broader societal concerns for peace[94] within its affective memory-making atmosphere. A choice had to be made, drawing into question the initial mission of the museum to make an historical record of the war "that was to end war", or record further wars, which could potentially be a "series of world wars, each more terrible than the last".[95] By 1933, the supposed knockout-blow of the First World War was now being realised to have only been a temporary count, and the museum started departing from the philosophy by acknowledging the growing threat of another war.[96] In the face of cultural irrelevancy,[97] the flexibility displayed by the museum through its multiple site moves was once again deployed, drawing on its experience of adaptability.

The Imperial War Museum was now an ongoing record of history in the making, and this altered perspective would have profound consequences (and potentials) for the institution's continuing approach to material culture.[98] As early as 1940, the Imperial War

[91] 'Protecting Art Treasures – War-Time Dispersal in Mansions and Quarries – National Collections Saved', *The Times*, (London, England), (1st September 1945), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024]
[92] Deans and Kelsey, 'National Narration and Organisational Crisis', pp. 86 –108, and Phillip Deans, '*Crisis Management, Reinvention and Resilience in Museums: the Imperial War Museum During the Second World War Era, 1933-1950*, (Dissertation, University of Newcastle, 2022)
[93] By this I refer to Philips Deans analysis that the IWM understands itself to be an organisation that exists due to a certain need, which is either political, regulative, and hinges on the want to reinvigorate the countries fighting spirit, as he understands Kavanaghs argument, or tasked with social and cultural healing and cohesion, as Diana Condell has described. Whilst the historiography is presented as 'one or the other', I am inclined to believe that the IWM exists as different things to different communities, and can operate as a political, 'regulative pillar' space for the state, but perceived to be a place of socio – cultural healing, cohesion and connection for visitors. This is not to say that the space does not operate surreptitiously as a regulative pillar when visited by the public - in its role as a cultural cognitive pillar which connects people with history and each other, it can be both culturally and socially connecting communities, whilst also reinforcing regulative belief structures about nationhood and belonging.
[94] Deans, 'Crisis Management, Reinvention and Resilience in Museums', p. 98
[95] Alys Cundy, 'Objects of War: The Response of the Imperial War Museum, London, to the First and the Second World Wars', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, (2017) 51.2, pp. 261-273.
[96] Deans, 'Crisis Management, Reinvention and Resilience in Museums', p127
[97] Deans and Kelsey, 'National Narration and Organisational Crisis', pp. 86 –108.
[98] Cundy, 'Objects of War', pp. 261-273.

Museum had acquired the "Peace in our Time" declaration, in the midst of a war that was demonstrating the opposite.[99] Alongside this active collecting practice the IWM also provided tuition to both the home front and the fighting services of the Second World War, giving technical information to air wardens and infantry soldiers about the experience of mechanised warfare from its First World War Collection.[100]

When the Imperial War Museum partially reopened in November 1946 after being forced to close by the Blitz in September 1940, the First World War had been almost entirely excluded in favour of the Second World War.[101] Damage sustained during the Blitz had meant that substantial repairs needed to be carried out and prevented a full reopening of the museum, but this did not stop the IWM in transmitting the story of the Second World War as soon as was possible. By 1949, both world wars were being exhibited,[102] but the apparent connection between technology and commemoration that had dominated the collection before the Second World War was vanishing.[103] Rather than displaying an authentic object, with its material connection to the past and its consequent memorial resonance, there was a move to display models, which were seen by the new director (L.R. Bradley) to be more valuable, and directly informative.[104]

The role of the Imperial War Museum as the custodian of Britain's wars since 1914 continued to be negotiated after the Second World War. In a bizarrely publicised moment,[105] Field Marshall Montgomery refused to part with the original document of German surrender

[99] '"Peace in Our Time" in the War Museum', *Daily Mail*, (London, England), (7th February 1940), The Daily Mail Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [17th December 2024]
[100] '"Footsloggers" Burdens", *The Daily Telegraph*, (19th September 1939), The Daily Telegraph Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [17th December 2024]
[101] 'Changed War Museum – Galleries Reopening To-Day' *The Times* (London, England), (27th November 1946), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [17th December 2024]
[102] 'Relics Of Two World Wars – Museum Wing Reopened' *The Times* (London, England), (23rd February 1949), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [17th December 2024]
[103] Cundy, 'Objects of War,' pp. 261-273.
[104] Cundy, 'Objects of War,' pp. 261-273.
[105] Subsequent research indicated that there was more than one of Montgomery's document, as shown in the following reports. 'That Document: Monty's May Be only a Copy' *Daily Mail*, (London, England) (1st July 1954) The Daily Mail Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024], and 'U. S. has another Monty paper' *Daily Mail*, (London, England) (3rd July 1954) accessed at The Daily Mail Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024]. The Imperial War Museum eventually received the document from Montgomery in 1968, 'Surrender pact for Museum', *Daily Mail*, (London, England) (5th September 1968), accessed at The Daily Mail Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [16th December 2024]

at the end of the Second World War.[106] That the document that effectively ended Britain's war was in a private collection, and not in the possession of the War Office seemed to present an archival headache for both the IWM and the government. Ultimately though, this episode highlights the tensions, difficulties and realities that the Imperial War Museum faced as the assumed authority of twentieth century British conflict. Nevertheless, the museum's quick understanding that the Second World War was going to be another 'war to remember', demonstrated through its speedy take up of 'collecting' the war, speaks to its resilience. Deans highlights that this is also in part due to the museum's development of meaning-making practices for its visitors, which firstly encouraged them to form opinions legitimising Britain's involvement in the war, and secondly provided them with psychological nourishment.[107] Revelations about the extent of Nazi war crimes would have provided further support to the museum's assertion of the legitimacy of British involvement, and were brought to the public's attention through news reports throughout 1945 as the allied armies liberated death camps across Europe.[108] It was not just museum spaces that were able to provide these analyses. Penny Summerfield has demonstrated that the film industry of the 1950s provided many opportunities for directors to reinforce themes of the 'just war'.[109] As the Museum moved toward the 50th anniversary of the First World War, the experience of the Second World War would have significant implications for reflecting on an older conflict which was extrinsically linked to the conflict recently experienced.

[106] 'Monty's D-Day Starts "War" – Museum wants German Surrender Treaty' *Daily Mail*, (London, England) (8th June 1954), The Daily Mail Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [17th December 2024]
[107] Deans, 'Crisis Management, Reinvention and Resilience in Museums', p. 140.
[108] There are many articles which outline the atrocities, but as an example see; 'Slave Women Lived like Animals in Nazi Camp', *The Daily Telegraph*, (London, England) (12th April 1945), The Telegraph Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [12th March 2026] and Edwin Tetlow, 'The most terrible story of the war', *The Daily Mail*, (London, England) (19th April 1945), The Daily Mail Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [12th March 2026]
[109] Penny Summerfield, 'Film and the Popular Memory of the Second World War in Britain 1950–1959', In Gender, Labour, War and Empire – Essays on Modern Britian, ed by Phillipa Levine and Sue Grayzel, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) pp. 157–175 https://doi-org.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/10.1057/9780230582927_9

Approaching the 50th anniversary of the First World War 1964 – 68

By 1964, the First World War was being culturally reinterpreted due to a drive in interest in the lead up to the 50-year anniversary. This coincided with a period of difficulty for the Imperial War Museum. Despite defying predictions during the interwar period that it would not last longer than a few years,[110] it had continued on to document and exhibit two world wars. However, as James Wallis identifies, 'the forced extension to its remit had squeezed rich collections into the impractical spaces of a building not equipped to act as a fully functioning museum. It also seemed to lack resonance in what would turn out to be a contradictory decade of social change, radicalism and the declining British Empire.'[111] Summerfield has also identified that in film, the heroic and hard-fought stories of the Second World War veiled the experience of a declining state, and already by the 50s, nostalgic reflections on when Britain was 'great' had entered popular culture.[112]

How could the Imperial War Museum navigate yet another moment of flux, especially when the focus was due to return to the First World War at a moment which meant such a return would mean shifting away from the 'cultural cognitive pillar'? Firstly, a change in directorship of the museum heralded in a more professional approach to exhibiting war. The conflict's' fiftieth anniversary saw Special Photographic Exhibitions created following the theme of 'Then and Now', with photographs depicting events of the War coinciding with their respective anniversaries between 1964 and 1968.[113] Recruitment of young, professional staff members and the historicization of displays promoted the museum as a centre for education, rather than a collection of cabinets of curiosities.[114]This period also oversaw a push to include more voices in the story of the First World War too. The BBC put out a call

[110] Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War*, p. 135.
[111] James Wallis, 'Commemoration, Memory and the Process of Display: Negotiating the Imperial War Museum's First World War Exhibitions 1964 – 2014', (Dissertation, University of Exeter, 2015), p. 90.
[112] Summerfield 'Film and the Popular Memory of the Second World War', pp. 157–175.
[113] Wallis, 'Commemoration, Memory and the Process of Display', p. 92.
[114] Wallis, 'Commemoration, Memory and the Process of Display', p. 90

for recollections to be shared about the war for a new production in partnership with the IWM and 20th Century Fox, to be entitled *The Great War*,[115] a series that still has significant cultural impact. Whilst the depiction of servicemen as agonised and doom-laden was not felt by all veterans to be a fair representation of their war experience,[116] the inclusion of veteran voices demonstrates a desire to learn more about the 'everyday' experience of the war. The rise of social histories of the war not only enabled a broader understanding of the experience of total war, but also as Gaynor Kavanagh has suggested, brought a new dimension of understanding to how the museum spaces operate in collecting, narrating, and educating visitors on the subject of war.[117]

Dan Todman has explored how the experience of the Second World War for soldiers had been directly compared with the experiences of the First, which had become a touchpoint for understandings of horror, as well as a way for Second World War servicemen to contextualise their own experiences.[118] In the lead up to and during the anniversary moment, interest in the First World War was rekindled through various literary and media outlets, and this refocus of attention helped the Imperial War Museums co-production of *The Great War* to be incredibly popular.[119] However, this popularity was not necessarily to be seen as supportive of the reasons for the First World War, or indeed any form of celebration of it. Several books intended for a general readership became extremely popular, with Alan Clark's *The Donkeys* explicitly accusing high command of the indiscriminate slaughter of British men due to high handed mismanagement.[120] Productions such as *Oh, What a Lovely War!* reasserted the First World War as one of futility and trauma, and used already prevalent understandings of the war as a ways to situate the memory of the war against a wider post-

[115] B Norman, 'BBC asks viewers for 1914-18 memories' *Daily Mail*, (London, England), (3rd July 1963), The Daily Mail Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources), [19th December 2024]
[116] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, p. 34
[117] Kavanagh, *Museums and First World War*, pp. 174-175.
[118] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, p. 28
[119] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, p. 30
[120] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, p. 100

war cultural reorientation and broader socio-political movement which saw the founding of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, reshaping British society in the 1960s and early 1970s.[121]

It was during this period that the internal structure was altered to reflect the evolution of understanding of what the Imperial War Museum represented, leading to the eventual removal of the commemorative forms[122] that had felt so important to its identity at its inception. These changes reflected the reinterrogation of conflict that was happening in society. Wallis explains how museum leaders understood this change in society as reflective, with the public seeing American tactics in Vietnam attempting to overwhelm and attritionalise their enemy similar to the 'incompetent' leadership employed during the First World War.[123] Although there was a growing interest in the First World War at this time, and more veterans were able to share their reflections of the conflict through the interviews collected for *The Great War* series, Derek Paget has argued that through the cultural reimaginations of the 60s, a sense of futility was firmly established as a by-word for the First World War, and for war more generally.[124] Anti-war sentiment was directed towards the institutions which were seen to house stories of war, and during this period, the museum itself came under physical attack. A poet, Timothy Daly, caused approximately £200,000 worth of fire damage in protest against the exhibition of militarism to children.[125]

The 'Memory Boom'

In the years leading up to the centenary, a new approach to history and heritage within museums was being adopted, with the 'heritage boom' of the 1980s and 1990s reinvigorating

[121] Derek Paget, 'Popularising Popular History: "Oh What A Lovely War" and the Sixties.' *Critical Survey*, (1990) 2.2, pp. 117–27.
[122] Alys Cundy, 'Thresholds of Memory: Representing Function through Space and Object at the Imperial War Museum, London, 1918–2014', *Museum History Journal*, (2015), 8.2, pp. 247-268
[123] Wallis, 'Commemoration, Memory and the Process of Display', p. 121
[124] Paget, 'Popularising Popular History', pp. 117–27.
[125] 'Museum fire charge' *Daily Mail*, (London, England), (16th October 1968), The Daily Mail Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [19th December 2024], and 'Jump my brothers jump: poems from prison', (Obj no. LBY K. 98 / 612) (1970), Imperial War Museum, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1500098325> [19th December 2024]

public interest in the past. Engagement with the observance of Armistice Day, which had been significantly impacted by the Second World War and the creation of a broader day of reflection in Remembrance Sunday, saw a renewed interest during the period, along with the broader interest in the commemoration of military sacrifice that included the Second World War.[126]

In the museum, immersive and participatory displays emphasised the emotional and experiential aspects of the past through contact with supposed 'national' histories, which Lucy Noakes has argued, sometimes assumed an approach that represented limited experiences of war (for example, the London Blitz), to have been an ordeal that was broadly shared nationwide.[127] The IWM placed London, and the shared national history the Blitz represented at the centre of its experiences in the museum. Rather than build a display around historical objects, for the fiftieth anniversary of the Second World War, the curators created a particular version of the past for people to visit and, importantly, to interact with.[128]

Alongside this evolution of approach by museums, Nick Merriman's analysis asserted that at the beginning of this period people's images of the past were not primarily of a nostalgic nature but were drawn from a desire to learn more about history.[129] Ann Marie Foster has highlighted that the 1980s constituted a time where the embodied memories of veterans were transitioning into the museum space to become the recognisable memories of the First World War that present day nonparticipants understand them to be.[130]In 1989, the Imperial War Museum had reopened after a period of redevelopment that took it from a relic of Bethlem hospital to a more appropriate museum space. Displays were produced to be 'stimulating, lively and attractive', and the slogan for this period of operations encouraged

[126] Jenny Macleod and Yvonne Inall, 'A Century of Armistice Day: Memorialisation in the Wake of the First World War.' *Mortality* (2020) 25.1 pp. 48–68. doi:10.1080/13576275.2019.1611752.
[127] Lucy Noakes, *War and the British: Gender and National Identity, 1939-1991*, (I.B. Tauris, 1998), p. 28. DOI: 0.5040/9780755626083.ch-002
[128] Noakes, *War and the British*, p. 34
[129] Nick Merriman, *Beyond the Glass Case: The Past the Heritage and the Public in Britain*, (Leicester University Press, 1991) p. 39.
[130] Ann-Marie Foster, '"We Decided the Museum Would Be the Best Place for Them": Veterans, Families and Mementos of the First World War.' *History and Memory*, (2019), 31.1, pp. 87-117.

people that the IWM was 'part of your family's history'.[131] Hands on exhibitions such as the Trench Exhibition were popular additions to a museum educating the public about a war that was getting further and further away. As Noakes highlights, rather than preserving the past, the past is created via the experience of a 'historical theme park', giving a particular credence to certain versions of events that cannot be achieved in the more traditional museum space.[132]

This 'theme park' approach to public history is complex and contested. Jane Lovell and Chris Bull have argued that the themed experience found in some museums and galleries may not resemble theme parks at first glance, but attract similar cultural tourists who foster expectations regarding enjoyable leisure experiences.[133] These spaces can engender a sense of awe: when visiting the Imperial War Museum for the first time in 2003 around the age of 10, I myself remember looking at the huge rockets and aircrafts hanging in the atrium and feeling a sense of amazement. Whilst this curatorial design does not historically situate these objects of destruction, it 'themes'[134] the museum as one of war, and immediately demonstrates the almost fantastical scale that modern warfare inhabits in the twentieth and twenty first centuries. As Alys Cundy suggests, without the experience of destructive loss, the remaining messages left to us today are ones that encourage curiosity: "Large pieces of technology… guns and heavy weapons, appear fetishized when exhibited by the museum; their physical impact seeming to demand awe, regardless of the curators' aims for the display."[135] Whilst these interventions may increase visitor numbers, Robert Hewison has argued that the pastiche of history, presented rather than interrogated, conspire to create a shallow screen that intervenes between our present lives, and our history, shortening the time lapse between the historic event, and its nostalgic reprise.[136] What is more, is that through virtue of their

[131] Wallis, 'Commemoration, Memory and the Process of Display', p. 138
[132] Noakes, *War and the British*, pp. 34-37
[133]Jane Lovell and Chris Bull, *Authentic and Inauthentic Places in Tourism: From Heritage Sites to Theme Parks*, (Routledge, 2017), pp. 183 – 4.
[134] Lovell and Bull, *Authentic and Inauthentic Places in Tourism,* p. 187
[135] Cundy, 'Objects of War', pp. 261-273.
[136] Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a climate of decline*, (Methuen London, 1987), pp. 134-135.

organisational heritage and role as an institutional space, the museum's voice of authority still impacts visitors ideas of historic truth,[137] and are still subject to established codified practices of reverence, as mentioned earlier in the chapter. As Lovell and Bull continue, the very buildings can remind visitors of their 'authenticity', some national museums are built in imposing classical styles as muscular statements of national power, reminding the viewer of the seriousness of art enclosed within these temples of culture.[138]

With the passage of time, the direct memory of the First World War was due to move beyond the experience of the living. With participants of the war due to be remembered 'in absentia',[139] the Imperial War Museum faced another challenge. When trying to make visible a moment in time that human life has moved beyond, museums have to develop ways of seeing the past that they cannot really see.[140] Changing social, cultural and political experiences through time further abstracts understandings of the past, which cannot fully be understood simply due to the passage of time. As Marianne Hirsch has demonstrated in her work on the Holocaust, the practice of family histories has helped to reduce distance and abstraction, and its emotional resonance can provide a meaningful way for people to engage with the past.[141] This movement to and experience of what Hirsch terms 'post-memory' is particularly critical for the understanding of embodied traumatic pasts,[142] and helps family members situate their own lived experience against their understandings of the realities and trauma of their family members. In including voices of the past, as well as encouraging imagination through sense of play in the museum space in the trench experience, the Imperial War Museum has reduced the distance to the past, and has given personal responsibility to

[137] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, listed as 'Concept design narrative brief v 8 9 November 2011 Overview', document entitled 'Historical Narrative Overview – First World War Gallery, Imperial War Museum London" – JT – 31st October 2011',
[138] Lovell and Bull, *Authentic and Inauthentic Places in Tourism*, p. 184
[139] Todman, as quoted by Foster, Foster, 'Veterans, Families and Mementos of the First World War', pp. 87-117.
[140] Martin Rudwick, as quoted by Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, p. 177.
[141] Marianne Hirsch, as quoted by Lucy Noakes, 'My Husband is Interested in War Generally': gender, family history and the emotional legacies of total war.' *Women's History Review*, (2018) 27.4. pp. 610-626. DOI https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2017.1292634, Noakes' application of Hirsch's approach to this form of memory can be seen in the IWM's Second World War galleries.
[142] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, (Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 80 – 82.

visitors through their understanding that these are memories that define the 'British' experience of the war, and are therefore a national inheritance.

Throughout its tenure, the Imperial War Museum has exerted itself as the expert institution on conflict of and since the twentieth century, and its recognisable and imposing façade has become synonymous with British histories of modern warfare. The imperious site of the IWM adds to its cultural dominance. As Anderson maintains in *Imagined Communities,* 'Monumental archaeology, increasingly linked to tourism, allow(s) the state to appear as the guardian of a generalised, but also local, Tradition.'[143] Not only is the IWM a guardian of memories of the past, but it is the key custodian of how these pasts can be told, simply through its appearance as an impressive monument to the British memory of war.

The centenary moment at the Imperial War Museum

As well as being the site from where he made his speech, in Cameron's 2012 speech the Imperial War Museum was identified 'as the centrepiece of our commemorations for the centenary of the First World War… (it being) a special place for all of us to come to learn about a defining part of our history.'[144] The IWM faced the difficult challenge of delivering a nationwide project that resonated with and connected everyone to the First World War. This 'shared history' faced some immediate and apparent challenges. Although the Imperial War Museum has five sites, all of those sites are in England, and three of those sites are in London.[145] The national impact that the centenary was expected to have needed to look beyond these site restrictions and consider its role as a national arbitrator for a collective memory of Britain. To truly be a place where 'all of us' can come together to learn about a shared history, there needed to be a conscious engagement with stories that have historically

[143] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 181.
[144] 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> [17th December 2024]
[145] These sites are the 'flagship' site of the IWM in London, the Cabinet/Churchill War Rooms and the HMS Belfast (both in London), the aerodrome and airfield at IWM Duxford (Cambridgeshire), and a site in Manchester (IWM North).

been overlooked, specifically those of women and people of colour. Most importantly, the First World War must be understood as a war of empires which left a colonial legacy on both Britain, its former colonies and its current multi-racial, multicultural citizens.

The Imperial War Museum, in its role of custodian of Britain's conflict heritage since 1917, was identified as the lead institution for centenary projects. Rather than simply being a physical space that hosted centenary events and exhibitions, the Imperial War Museum became the 'command centre' for a multi-year and multi programme approach to Britian's First World War centenary. The museum's centenary programme played host to several large-scale projects alongside the large-scale arts programme of 14 18 NOW, such as "Lives of the First World War", the "First World War Centenary Partnership" and "Mapping the Centenary", with many projects taking place outside of traditional museum spaces and projected to the public.

'Lives of the First World War' is described as an 'innovative digital project' which ran from May 2014 to March 2019, bringing together more than 160,000 people to collaborate and piece together the lives of people who experienced the conflict, 'through sharing anecdotes and digitising material that has been hidden away in attics until now.'[146] The result is a sort-of digital dictionary of biographies of the First World War that is often quite moving, exploring the lives and stories of people that experienced the war first hand,[147] and speaks to the high level of public engagement and interest the centenary moment had. Michael Roper has highlighted how these new digital technologies helped descendants undertake research and contribute to the historical record, keeping memories present through the instantaneous public access to heritages of private households.[148] These connections, though virtual, brought the stories of the First World War closer than ever before, and bonded people through

[146] 'First World War Centenary,' Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/partnerships/first-world-war-centenary> [26th November 2024]
[147] 'Lives of the First World War', Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/> [26th November 2024]
[148] Michael Roper, *Afterlives of War: A descendants' history*, (Manchester University Press, 2023) p. 99.

shared storytelling and meaningful connections with the past. The digital aspect was considered to be an exciting and significant feature of the centenary commemorations, and whilst there were many opportunities presented by the digital sphere, Noakes and others have highlighted how the longevity of the digital platforms have proven to be fragile, and in some cases, non-existent.[149] 'Mapping the Centenary' is a digital portal containing information about projects and activities across the country that marked the centenary of the First World War.[150] As the name suggests, it includes an interactive map that indicated where in the country community projects took place. The 'featured projects' map in Figure 9 shows that whilst the scope of projects were truly nationwide, central London hosted the most commemorative projects,[151] with more than the centres of Manchester and Birmingham combined.[152] The Imperial War Museum was also the lead on the First World War Centenary Partnership programme, bringing together 4159 community partners and organisations as part of the commemoration activities, who led projects outside of the capital and led on regional experiences of the centenary. The Partnership promised to directly support members to enhance, share and diversify their centenary activities, with exclusive use of over 300 IWM Archive photographs, sound and film clips, online platforms, access to networking events, and one-to-one support from IWM teams.[153]

For the site of the Imperial War Museum, however, the most important feature of the centenary was the redevelopment of the First World War Gallery spaces. The multitude of material available to comprehensively yet succinctly tell the story of the First World War at

[149] Noakes and others, *Capturing Commemoration: Reflections on the First World War Centenary in Britain*, (Berghahn Books, 2025) p. 110.
[150] 'Mapping The Centenary,' Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) < https://www.iwm.org.uk/partnerships/mapping-the-centenary> [26th November 2024]
[151] When engaging with the interactive map, there is a scrolled-to moment that shows London was the host for 45 projects, Birmingham hosted 11, and the wider Manchester arear hosted 27 (showing as 15 and 12 around the Manchester area), see fig. 9
[152] 'Featured projects map', Imperial War Museum, (n.d.), <https://www.iwm.org.uk/partnerships/mapping-the-centenary/projects-map> [27th November 2024]
[153] 'First World War Centenary Partnership', Imperial War Museum, (n.d.), <https://www.iwm.org.uk/partnerships/first-world-war-centenary/centenary-partnership> [27th November 2024]

the centenary presented both an opportunity and a challenge. In his shadowing of the gallery's development, James Wallis identified that,

> All of these objects, having witnessed and survived the conflict, act as tokens of war - permeated with a heighted authenticity that can elicit an emotional reaction amongst visitors who encounter them. Situated within an 'enriched learning environment' featuring a constructed narrative driven by displayed evidence, each individual item therefore had to earn its keep by playing a justifiable role within the narrative – either making a broader point within the brief or telling a potential story of loss, endurance, courage or destruction.[154]

The IWM outlined its plans for the new gallery spaces in a 'Narrative Overview' documenting the rationale for design decisions made in the gallery space, and it is in this document we can see evidence of Foucault's and Bennett's assertions of the museum as historical gatekeepers and moral educators.[155] The document presents its vision for the new gallery spaces in direct contrast to the previous exhibition spaces of the First World War, and asserted its wish to "cover not just the war as an event, but, in a departure from previous IWM practice, (to) explore its wider causes and consequences, and with it, the wars context and relevance for us today."[156] Curiously, despite the commemorative nature of their opening and founding, the senior curator for the 2014 First World War displays explicitly stated that the 'Museum is not a war memorial,'[157] marking an attempt to move beyond part of its founding purpose. In an interview in 2014, the lead curator emphasised how the

> policy of 'contemporaneity'… (is) absolutely central to our approach – looking at the war as it was seen at the time. …. (using things) people said or wrote at the time, without the benefit of hindsight. … I think the First World War can only be understood if you see it 'forward', through the eyes of the people who were there, because the decisions they made about going to war– and continuing to support it – were based on information they had at the time.[158]

[154] Wallis, 'Commemoration, Memory and the Process of Display', p. 301.
[155] Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', and *The Order of Things*, and Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*
[156] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, listed as 'Concept design narrative brief v 8 9 November 2011 Overview', document entitled 'Historical Narrative Overview – First World War Gallery, Imperial War Museum London" – JT – 31st October 2011',
[157] Cundy, 'Thresholds of Memory', pp. 247-268.
[158] Ashlee Godwin, (2014), 'Remembrance Transformed: An Interview with Senior Curator Paul Cornish about the Imperial War Museum's New First World War Galleries', *The RUSI Journal*, (2014), 159.3, pp. 84–89. https://doi-org.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/03071847.2014.928022

However, it is my view that to understand the story of war during a centenary moment, it is crucial to understand *how* war has been remembered, and how this can impact the look of the past. This approach of contemporaneity however was taken precisely to avoid 'memory troubles' presented through interpretations of the war highlighted by Michael Gove, which were explored in the introduction. In the view of the team at the IWM, "The benefit of a policy of 'contemporaneity' is that it defuses such issues because a lot of this discussion is about hindsight, not so much about the war itself but about the way the war has been represented in British popular culture."[159]



Figure 3- First World War Galleries, 'Shock', (Author's own image). The First World War Galleries take the visitor through multi linear narratives to try and capture the sense of a global conflict.

The narrative overview asserts the IWM's role as a 'record maker' of "the effort and sacrifice not only of the people of Britain but those in the empire as well…focussing unashamedly on the British and empire story".[160] Upon walking through the gallery space, it

[159] Godwin, 'Remembrance Transformed', pp. 84–89.
[160] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, listed as 'Concept design narrative brief v 8 9 November 2011 Overview', document entitled 'Historical Narrative Overview – First World War Gallery, Imperial War Museum London" – JT – 31st October 2011',

seems that the empire story is set up to be a main feature of the First World War galleries. The opening spaces 'Britain and its people' highlights how most British people were proud of its empire and considered it to be the greatest the world had ever seen, with the opening narration of the gallery emphasising Britain's huge wealth, its naval prowess and the financial powerhouse of London. It contextualises these aspects of 1914 by making clear the huge wealth divide, the growing discontent and the rise in strike action. Rather than a country united at the head of a huge empire, the exhibit highlights how precarious the situation in Britain was in the years leading up to the First World War, struggling with the internal politics of suffrage and Irish home rule, stating that 'millions lived in poverty..(and) discontent was growing.'[161] The focus of the first stage of the exhibition is the 'war table' in the middle, which highlights the growing tensions between European nations, the changing balance of power from 1871 – 1914, and the tribalism that emerged in European politics at the beginning of the twentieth century. This is communicated alongside images from imperial magazines showing nostalgic visions of exciting empire adventures, and a large map highlighting the imperial connections around the world. When communicating the changing balance of power in Europe, the audience sees a film of animal headed nations, implying a sort of game like attitude to imperial ambitions and relations that is not immediately clear if the exhibition is satirising or supporting. There is little exploration of the imperial background these rising tensions take, or the broader imperial condition of the British empire, but explicit reference is made on how although Britain had a much smaller standing army than France, it could call upon a broad empire for reinforcements.[162]

Whilst a deeper analysis for the causes of the war would be welcome, the exhibition moves through the experience of war using multisensory modes to immerse and heighten the sensory experience of mechanised warfare. Experiences of empire are present through the

[161] London, Imperial War Museum, First World War Galleries, 'Hope and Glory' (First gallery room, January 2026)
[162] London, Imperial War Museum, First World War Galleries, 'Shock' (second gallery room, January 2026)

exhibition space, but there is markedly more representation of Anzac and Canadian troops than, for example, Indian troops, and this as a theme of the centenary will be more closely examined in chapter five. Voiceovers present contextual information in newsreel formats, and the visitor can hear the sounds of shells flying through the air, and gunfire, foreshadowing the experiences of soldiers approaching war, as well as the visitors journey to the rest of the exhibition. However, the narrative overview makes a series of assumptions about its visitors. As Foucault maintains, museums as Heterotopias are manifestations of ordered, 'slices' of time, 'enclos(ing) in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes… a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages'.[163] For the Imperial War Museum, its visitors visit for a sense of the past delivered with a purpose, that tells a story of Britain and its people at war. As a result, an understanding of 'Britishness' is presented, which can be identified by non-British visitors, or potentially connected to a sense of a shared past by British visitors.

In its description of how it will exhibit the recruitment campaign, the IWM wished to show "vivid, colorful (sic) representations of the various motivations for enlisting, from appeals to loftier notions such as patriotism, which might seem strange to us today, to the more familiar, such as the chance to go on an adventure with friends."[164] This analysis, and the words of the lead curator seem particularly odd in the context of memory of the First World War that has been outlined throughout this chapter. If the First World War is understood as a part of our national story, as David Cameron asserts in his speech, then the concept of patriotism in why the war was fought must equally be understood as the lens for understanding the conflict at all, and this narrative outline seems to misunderstand the legacy the First World War has on British cultural memory. It is not the inability to understand the

[163] Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', pp. 22-27
[164] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, listed as 'Concept design narrative brief v 8 9 November 2011 Overview', document entitled 'Historical Narrative Overview – First World War Gallery, Imperial War Museum London" – JT – 31st October 2011',

war, or the thematic reasons behind people joining up, which have been negotiated through local community spaces and war memorials and further explored in chapter three. It is the perception of the role of the state in the First World War that that *defines* its meaning making. As Dan Todman has asserted, 'it remains difficult for Britons to deny all meaning to wartime death. Instead, the perceived futility of their cause has come to mark the bravery for those who fought."[165]

Whilst the exhibition space strives to portray a balanced and multivocal experience of war, the narrative document reveals the underlying hopes these stories were expected to have to the overall narrative of the war. In stepping away from the figure of the tragic trench soldier, the IWM refocuses aspects of trench warfare to show how trenches protected their occupants.[166] Visitors to this new trench experience will see that the previous display of a cowering soldier, which was extremely memorable for me as a ten-year-old visitor in the nineties/noughties gallery space, is gone in favour of an upright shadow figure joining the visitor down the trench. Rather than focusing on stories of men as 'cannon fodder', which IWM expects many visitors to have in their understanding of the war, the exhibition instead emphasises that Kitchener's army battalions were given a lengthy period of training before called upon to fight.[167]

The overarching take away is the move away from futility, emphasising German war crimes and the use of poison gas by the enemy, and highlighting the beliefs held at the time that Britain was fighting the war for a reason, and demonstrating this reasoning to a contemporary audience. Alongside the trench experience, explanations highlight the technological interventions that came about due to the war, and explain how deployment of these new techniques and technologies helped win the war for Britain, echoing Cameron's

[165] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, p. 121.
[166] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, listed as 'Concept design narrative brief v 8 9 November 2011 Overview', document entitled 'Historical Narrative Overview – First World War Gallery, Imperial War Museum London" – JT – 31st October 2011',
[167] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, listed as 'Concept design narrative brief v 8 9 November 2011 Overview', document entitled 'Historical Narrative Overview – First World War Gallery, Imperial War Museum London" – JT – 31st October 2011',

speech in acknowledging some 'positives' of warfare. When looking at the narrative overview, we see perhaps the most illuminating entry of the perceptions the IWM has of its visitors, as well as its own organisational understating of how the First World War should be exhibited to the public:

> The First World War is surrounded by more mythology than any other conflict in British history….. If they have any knowledge at all, our visitors …(are) likely to think of the war as both 'accidental' and 'futile'. We will show that conscious human decisions led to a conflict justified by all the combatants as one of national self-defence. We will also show from this point onwards in the exhibition that neither the leaders nor the citizens of the fighting nations saw the war as futile. As with other myths and legends which have attached themselves to the way we think about the Great War, we will gently challenge our audiences, without patronising them or making them feel ignorant.[168]

This insight shows the presentation of the war through a homogenized and stable narrative,[169] which minimises discussion around popular memories of conscientious objectors (for example)[170] and reasserts the war as being a justifiably undertaken. In doing so, however, the exhibition denies the legacies of memory of the First World War that has been developed over the subsequent years, and demonstrates a sense of the past that is understood through emotional legacies defined by familial bond and local identities.

Conclusion

As the twentieth century progressed, the role of the Imperial War Museum as a gatekeeper of memory has morphed in response to changing political and social atmospheres, incorporating new stories of warfare that inevitably reshaped understanding of the First World War through the benefit of hindsight. The 2014 gallery renovations show how the IWM wishes to move away from the 'memory' of the war, without explicitly acknowledging

[168] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, listed as 'Concept design narrative brief v 8 9 November 2011 Overview', document entitled 'Historical Narrative Overview – First World War Gallery, Imperial War Museum London" – JT – 31st October 2011',
[169] Todman, as quoted by Foster, 'Veterans, Families and Mementos', pp. 87-117.
[170] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, listed as 'Concept design narrative brief v 8 9 November 2011 Overview', document entitled 'Historical Narrative Overview – First World War Gallery, Imperial War Museum London" – JT – 31st October 2011',

that the dominant memories of war have become a key facet in British understanding of the conflict, and modern experiences of Britishness as a result, which will be critically analysed in the following chapters. Whilst the 2014 curator was adamant that the 'museum is not a memorial' the very fact of its establishment, and the need to mark the war through its material legacies speak to a broader understanding of the heritage of the First World War as a traumatic experience the country collectively experienced, and of which has grasped to find an explanation for through ritual and the wider invention of a tradition[171] of remembrance.

The cultural legacies of the monuments, artists, and poets of the First World War have shaped and reshaped the way war was seen in Britain and the ways that Britain remembers the war today,[172] so to deny these influences on First World War memory is to deny the inheritance of British experiences of remembrance, which before the centenary focused on the 'pity of war'. The Imperial War Museum not only tells the story of the First World War, it also narrates the story of Britain's *inheritance* of the memory of war. The scale of the war, the shift in the depiction of warfare and the continued development and priorities of government and institutions approaching themes of commemoration in an exhibition space creates an environment that blends the visual and produces a new creative reality that is reflected in our memory of the First World War as a cultural moment. The IWM has attempted to step away from its role as memorial, and distance itself from the memory narratives which have been developed since the conflict itself. However, Geoffrey Cubitt and Jessica Moody's work has shown that it was the invocation of the centenary itself that acted to strengthen and heighten this language of commemoration, boiling down possible responses into stock formulations, which were relatively easy and accessible for people to reach for while negotiating the meaning of the First World War and its memory.[173] Whilst this thesis will demonstrate that

[171] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Inventing Traditions', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 3rd (canto) ed, (Cambridge University Press, 2013) pp. 1-14.
[172] Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*, 2nd ed, (Pimlico, 1992) pp. i-ix.
[173] Geoffrey Cubitt and Jessica Moody, 'Centenaries, museum audiences and discourses of commemoration: Remembering the First World War 2014–2018'. *Memory Studies*, (2024) 18.4, pp. 986-1003. https://doi-org.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/17506980241283890

every theme identified in the introduction was due to be renegotiated at the centenary, the Imperial War Museum has inadvertently added to its affective 'site of memory' designation through its experiences of the difficulties in separating the memorialisation of conflict from its physical legacy. By continuing to house memories of the First World War in an imperious piece of monumental archaeology,[174] the Imperial War Museum cannot be separated form how Britain views her past of conflict, or how this view has to engage with wider narratives of war. It remains a 'site of memory' - the cathedral of British memory of war.

[174] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.181.

2: Imagined landscapes of the First World War

> No glimmer of God's hand is seen anywhere. Sunset and sunrise are blasphemous, they are mockeries to man, only the black rain out of the bruised and swollen clouds all through the bitter black of night is fit atmosphere in such a land…it is unspeakable, godless, hopeless.[1]

Introduction – The depictions of landscapes during the First World War

The landscapes of the Western Front have inspired some of the most popularly understood cultural outputs of the First World War. The physical environment of the war has become both tangible and intangible 'lieux de memoire'[2], and has dominated remembrance practices of the First World War since the war itself. The landscapes, both real and imagined, continue to be contested spaces in the memory of the First World War in Britain. Whilst Paul Nash saw the Western Front as 'hopeless', the desolate images of the front depicted by war artists are far removed from many of the pastoral, gentle artworks that represented the First World War at its centenary. How can a landscape so famously rendered by those that saw it, be remembered in such a different way a hundred years later?

What forms do the landscapes have in the memory of the First World War in Britain? In David Cameron's speech, there are multiple references to poppies and the landscape of the Western Front, and brief descriptions of the experience on the Gallipoli peninsula[3] (although this landscape is implicitly linked to the ANZAC experience by Cameron). During the war, artists' impressions and poets' explorations of their experiences informed broader understanding of the physical landscapes of total warfare. Traditional battlefield scenes such

[1] Paul Nash, as quoted by George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (Palgrave, 2002) p. 141.
[2] By this I mean the visual languages of war artists like the Nash brothers and C. R. W. Nevinson and the tangible realities of mechanised warfare on landscapes, set against the establishment of pastoral war cemeteries after the war and the nostalgia for the cultural atmosphere of what Paul Fussell terms 'Arcadian Recourses', *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (Oxford University Press, 1975, 2003 eds) pp. 251 – 292.
[3] David Cameron, 'Speech at Imperial War Museum on First World War centenary plans' Imperial War Museum, 11th October 2012, transcript accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/speech-at-imperial-war-museum-on-first-world-war-centenary-plans> (accessed on 20th November 2025)

as Lucy Kemp Welch's *Forward the Guns!*[4] emphasised warfare as exciting and heroic, with little acknowledgement of any pain or suffering, and with little impact on the rural landscapes war took place within.[5] Some artists, such as William Barns Wollen (who had exhibited heroic, rural depictions of the Peninsular War at the Royal Academy in 1912),[6] continued to depict warfare as pastoral as the First World War progressed.[7] As the war continued however, the landscape scene (and its implied virtues), began to be deconstructed by some war artists. For Samuel Hynes, these differing voices meant that the language and imagery changed, traditional conceptions of space and time were disordered, and connections to what had been living traditions were denied.[8] Whilst disordering and denial seems a necessary response to war, Hynes asserts that in the face of this new reality, these creative choices were abrupt and conscious breaks with tradition.[9]

John and Paul Nash, C. R. W. Nevinson and Eric Kennington[10] demonstrated the 'brokenness' of the rural landscape that had previously looked very similar to the southern landscapes of Britain.[11] The implied heroism that had previously been imagined to spring from the idealised landscape of Britain therefore came under similar scrutiny, especially in C.

---

[4] Lucy Kemp Welch, *Forward the Guns!* (1917), Oil paint on canvas, 60 × 120 1/2 (152·5 × 306), Tate, N03217, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/kemp-welch-forward-the-guns-n03217 [27th March 2026]

[5] For examples of this, please see John Henry Frederick Bacon, *The Relief of Ladysmith, 27 February 1900*, (c 1900), Oil on canvas, National Army Museum, (NAM. 1996-04-1-1), <https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=1996-04-1-1> [7th March 2025], Sir *Herbert Stewart's column crossing the Bayuda Desert, 1885*, (c.1885), Oil on board over photograph, (unknown artist), (c), National Army Museum, (NAM. 1978-08-97-1), <https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=1978-08-97-1> [7th March 2025], and Edward Matthew Hale, *Piper George Findlater winning the Victoria Cross at Dargai 1897*, (1898), Oil on Canvas, National Army Museum, (NAM. 1957-04-3-1), <https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=1957-04-3-1> [7th March 2025]

[6] William Barns Wollen, *The Flag, Albuhera, May 16, 1811*, (c.1912), Oil on canvas, National Army Museum, (NAM. 2001-04-325-1), <https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=2001-04-325-1> [7th March 2025]

[7] William Barnes Wollen, *Our 'Little Contemptibles', 1914,* (1918), Oil on canvas, National Army Museum, (NAM. 1998-04-49-1), <https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=1998-04-49-1> [7th March 2025] and *The Last Stand of the 2nd Devons at Bois-des-Buttes, 27 May 1918*, The Rifles Exeter Office, The Devonshire and Dorset Regimental Charitable Trust, <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-last-stand-of-the-2nd-devons-at-bois-des-buttes-27-may-1918-95218> [7th March 2025]

[8] Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture,* 2nd ed, (Pimlico, 1992), p. 191

[9] Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. 191

[10] John Nash, *Oppy Wood, 1917, evening*, (1918), oil on canvas, 1828 mm x 2133 mm. Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM ART 2243) < https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20016> [27th March 2027], Paul Nash, *Wire*, (c1918/1919) Watercolour on paper, 486 mm x 635 mm, Imperial War Museum (Art.IWM ART 2705), <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20092> [27th March 2027], C. R. W. Nevinson, *The Harvest of Battle*, (1919), Oil on Canvas, 1828 mm x 3175 mm, Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM ART 1921), <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20223> [27th March 2027], and Eric Kennington, *The Conquerors*, (1920), Oil on Canvas, 2978 mm x 2428 mm, Canadian War Museum, (19710261-0812), <https://www.warmuseum.ca/collections/artifact/1017199> [10th August 2027]
and John Nash, *Oppy Wood, 1917, evening*, (1918), oil on canvas, 1828 mm x 2133 mm. Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM ART 2243) < https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20016> [27th March 2027]

[11] Mark Connelly, 'From Southern England to the Somme: Chalk, Landscapes and the English Imagination' Talk given at the University of Essex, 22nd January 2025

R. W. Nevinson's 'Paths of Glory'.[12] These disparate, dissident commissions portraying the First World War sat against the establishment figures of John Singer Sargent and William Orpen, whose more traditional outputs also began to show the creeping influence of a new look at conflict and the realities of mechanised warfare. The art of the First World War cracked the veneer of warfare as a heroic, idealised scene, establishing war as an 'anti-landscape' that annihilated nature, and with it, tradition.[13] The scenes of destruction are amplified by the difference in colour, with the rich colourful landscapes of the pre-war period are replaced with browns, greys and black tones. In the imagination of the war artists, the Western Front was a place where vitality of life and land went to die – even the earth itself could not be saved from the mechanisation of the First World War.

War artists often used the war-torn landscapes they experienced as a theme to explore modern, mechanised warfare and the effect it had on the earth, and by extension the men supposedly born from it. However, rural themes were often drawn upon by soldiers to make sense of the scale of destruction they were experiencing, or even simply, to bring a sense of normality to their immediate environment. Soldiers' letters home made frequent references to the pre-bombardment similarities in the natural environment between Britain and areas of the Front, and mentioned attempts by servicemen to create little gardens in trenches, and passing the time in the lines by birdwatching.[14]

Alun Howkins has highlighted how the poetry anthologies the soldiers were exposed to were largely pastoral, and conditioned the heavily pastoral and ruralist tone in the literary response to the war.[15] These anthologies also allowed for a rural 'home' to be imagined that

[12] C R W Nevinson, *Paths of Glory*, (1917), 20 mm x 460 mm x 610 mm, Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM ART 518) < https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20211> [27th March 2026]
[13] Hynes, *A War Imagined*, pp. 196-201.
[14] Connelly, 'From Southern England to the Somme,' talk on 22nd January 2025, and John Lewis-Stempel, *Where Poppies Blow: The British Soldier, Nature, and the Great War*, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2017), pp. 32 – 68 and p. 206 – 226.
[15] Alun Howkins, 'The discovery of rural England', *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920,* ed by Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, 2nd ed, (Bloomsbury, 2014), p.105

was separate from the mechanised horror of the trenches, even if urban and industrial 'homes' were more likely to have been the norm for the men of the front.[16] Recourse to the pastoral allowed individuals to fully gauge the calamities of the war and imaginatively protect themselves against them.[17] Some 'war poets' used the natural world to make sense of their experiences, with romantic poets like Rupert Brooke idealising English landscapes he imagined to be leaving behind.[18] Poets frequently referred to and compared their experiences in the trenches with the comparatively peaceful, undamaged landscapes of home, sometimes imagining life after death as being situated in gentle field-like settings.[19] If a mechanised, destructive 'War (is) Hell'[20], then then a gentle, pastoral peace must be heaven. Indeed, Paul Fussell states that, 'if the opposite of war is peace, the opposite of experiencing moments of war is proposing moments of pastoral. Since war takes place outdoors and always within nature, its symbolic status is that of the ultimate anti-pastoral.'[21]



Figure 4 - Paul Nash, Wire, (c1918/1919) Watercolour on paper, 486 mm x 635 mm, Imperial War Museum (© Art.IWM ART 2705) (Use under Non-Commercial licence) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20092> [27th March 2026]

[16] Howkins, 'The discovery of rural England', p. 104.
[17] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 3rd ed, (Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 255.
[18] Rupert Brooke, '1914: The Soldier', in *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, ed by George Walter, (Penguin Books Ltd, 2006) p. 108
[19] There are many pieces of war literature that compare the landscapes of peace and war, so I will mention a few specific pieces and refer the reader to *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* by way of an anthology for further reading. Specifically, Wilfred Owen's 'Spring Offensive', (pp. 133 - 134) Isaac Rosenburg's 'Break of Day in the Trenches' (p. 48) and 'Dead Mans Dump' (p. 146) and Siegfried Sassoon's 'The Death Bed' (p220, all found in *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, ed by George Walter
[20] Robert Graves, 'A Dead Boche', in *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, ed by George Walter, p. 150
[21] Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory,* p. 251.

The irony of the natural world hosting a mechanised frontline is explored in Wilfred Owen's work, lamenting the deaths of men who 'die like cattle', and in Paul Nash's paining 'Wire', what first looks to be the leaves of a tree, is in fact a bundle of barbed wire.[22] Fussell explores the irony of this contrast by comparing John McCrae's poem *In Flanders Fields* against Isaac Rosenberg's *Break of Day in the Trenches.*[23] Whilst McCrae's poem delivers the war dead to an Elysian Field-like resting place, Rosenberg's inverts the natural world order. By being on the front line as the strength of England, Rosenberg, like the poppy he has pulled from the ground – is already dead.

After the war, the Imperial War Graves Commission was established to manage and memorialise British and Empire war dead. Now named the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), the organisation continues to maintain sites that hold the war dead, which, in the First World War, were mostly concentrated over a relatively small area of land in northern France and Flanders. Indeed, Paul Gough emphasises that the layout of the cemeteries of the Western Front brings together both officers and men as fallen comrades in arms and reinforces the powerful sentiment of distant Britons lying in 'some foreign field', which looks distinctly 'English'. The repeated rows of congruent headstones were envisioned as being able to 'carry on the military idea, giving the appearance as of a battalion on parade',[24] whilst the strict regimen of most cemeteries focusses attention on the planting regimes of the flowers and shrubbery.[25] The result is an ideal, a peaceful garden the war dead can rest in forever, an Elysian Field fit for British heroes.

In light of the decision not to repatriate British war dead, battlefield cemeteries began to be conceptualised whilst the war was still ongoing, drawing a range of experts to effectively

[22] Wilfred Owen, 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', in *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry,* ed by George Walter, (Penguin Books Ltd, 2006), p.131, and Paul Nash, *Wire*, (c1918/1919) Watercolour on paper, 486 mm x 635 mm, Imperial War Museum (Art.IWM ART 2705), <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20092> [27th March 2027]
[23] Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory,* p. 251.
[24] Paul Gough, 'Memorial Gardens as Dramaturgical Space' *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, (1998), 3.4, pp. 199–214 DOI: 10.1080/13527259808722208
[25] Paul Gough, 'Conifers and Commemoration: the politics and protocol of planting', *Landscape Research*, (1996), 21.1 pp. 73–87. DOI: 10.1080/01426399608706476

shape the sites into places of enduring memory. To help realise the considerable project, esteemed individuals such as Edwin Lutyens and Rudyard Kipling were invited to work on the commission in light of their significant and established reputations.[26] Alongside these figures, botanical advisors were consulted from Kew, whose expertise and donation of flora helped establish the 'distinctive English country garden style'[27] of the sites.



Figure 5 - Ploegsteert Memorial Cemetery, Belgium, (Author's own image)

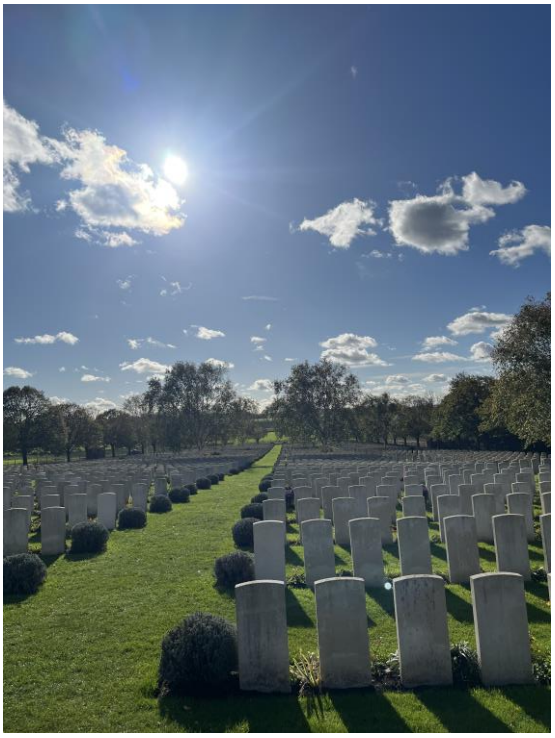


Figure 6 - Hooge Crater Cemetery, Belgium, (Author's own image)

The design of war graves sites endorses the idea of the memorial as an elite space, which is further codified as a site of memory due to the elegiac symbolism of

[26] Architect Edwin Lutyens designed the cenotaph in London, and author Rudyard Kipling acted as a literary advisor. Kipling revered the commission in his short story *The Gardener*, which implied the war dead manifested in the gardens. For other individuals involved in the establishment of the CWGC, see 'The creation of the CWGC', (n.d.) *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, <https://www.cwgc.org/who-we-are/our-story/the-creation-of-the-cwgc/>, [3rd April 2025], for Kipling's short story about the commission, see Rudyard Kipling, *The Gardener*, (1925) The Kipling Society, <https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/tale/the-gardener.htm> [19th December 2025]

[27] 'The creation of the CWGC', (n.d.) *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, <https://www.cwgc.org/who-we-are/our-story/the-creation-of-the-cwgc/>, [3rd April 2025]

flowers.[28]Furthermore, there is the added expectation of maintenance expected of garden spaces, especially spaces that are kept for the public. Green spaces, especially manicured gardens, need constant management. The gardens, and by extension, the dead within them, are given constant care and attention by an army of gardeners employed by the CWGC. In this sense, reverence of the dead is reinforced by the need to maintain these garden spaces, and this earth-based reverence becomes part of the ritual for the dead, a cyclical deference in line with the seasons, that culminate at moments of shared remembrance every year.

Landscapes and Englishness – pre-war and pre-centenary

It is important to recognise that the tradition of the pastoral and its subsequent established narratives were embedded into the identities of a generation of people that were asked to defend this idea of Britain. So revered was the pastoral, that some creatives subsequently saw little hope for a humanity who could so savagely destroy the natural world.[29] However, historians including E. P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm and Hannah Rose Woods have identified that by the 1880s, Britain was the first predominantly urban society in the world, and the first nation in human history to have experienced such a scale of urbanisation.[30] As a result, most people's experience of their environment was decidedly unpastoral.

As industrialisation progressed in Britain, efforts were made by social reformers to explore the living and working conditions of urban societies. Charles Booth and Joseph Rowntree's social surveys toward the end of the nineteenth century suggested that about forty

[28] I read 'elite space' here to mean a site of particular cultural relevance, in Gough, 'Memorial gardens' pp. 199–214, and apply Fussell's reading of floral symbolism to be the mechanism through which visitors can draw an implication of the use of the site, see Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory*, p.275
[29] George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, p. 143.
[30] Hannah Rose Woods, 'Anxiety and Urban Life in late Victorian and Edwardian Culture, 1880-1914', (April 2018) (Apollo - University of Cambridge Repository) https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.22085 [19th December 2025]

percent of the working-class lived-in poverty.[31] These findings contributed to a sense that urban environments were becoming increasingly problematic to the social fabric and enabling the bodily decline of the population. Theories of eugenics were explored as a serious consideration in the years leading up to the First World War, in an attempt to stop this perceived decline in 'English stock', which was a source of anxiety in an imperial nation like Britain.[32] The conceptualisation of the British Empire relied on a social code which emphasised the racial superiority of British people, which in turn supported its global ambitions. As the nineteenth century progressed, recruits for imperial wars were increasingly taken from a predominantly urban environment. Joanna Bourke has demonstrated that recruiting data from the Boer War indicated that only 14,000 of the 20,000 volunteers were sufficiently fit to join the army, and the conviction that the British race was degenerating physically became more prevalent in society.[33] Rapid industrialization brought with it increasing concerns about the health of the nation.

Landscapes were understood to conceptualise embodied experiences of illness and health. The sin and sickness of the city had a definitive opposite in the countryside, increasingly portrayed as a 'healthy' place in contrast to the urban, and sites of recovery were ideally situated rurally, and failing that, situated in parkland.[34] Whilst the middle classes had been retreating beyond the urban landscape for much of the nineteenth century,[35] themes of 'the countryside' were more broadly permeating into the Victorian and Edwardian consciousness as an imagined nostalgic space. Woods has identified that the concurrent nostalgia for the rural past could be both 'an escapist fantasy reflecting contemporary unease

[31] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Pelican Economic History of Britain Vol. 3 – From 1750 to the present day: Industry and Empire*, 2nd ed, (Penguin books Ltd. 1969) p. 161.
[32] Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, (Reaktion books, 1999) pp. 171 - 172 and Richard Carr and Bradley W Hart, 'Old Etonians, Great War demographics and the interpretations of British eugenics, c.1914–1939' *First World War Studies,* (2012) 3.2, pp. 217–239, DOI: 10.1080/19475020.2012.728743
[33] Bourke, *Dismembering the Male,* p. 171
[34] Woods, 'Anxiety and Urban Life', p. 47 and for sites of recovery, as was the case with the Bethlem hospital, which became the permanent home of the Imperial War Museum, see Steven Cooke and Lloyd Jenkins, 'Discourses of Regeneration in Early Twentieth-Century Britain: From Bedlam to the Imperial War Museum', *Area*, (2001) 33.4, pp. 382-390, DOI: 10.1111/1475-4762.00044
[35] E P Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 2nd ed, (Penguin books Ltd. 1968), p. 355

over urban life, and a "restitutive link" assuaging anxiety over the present by rooting it in a stable past.'[36] This 'stable past' provided a well from which imagined histories of England and Britain could be drawn from, and Howkins's work demonstrates how this sense of the past was drawn on by politicians to reassert a sense of Englishness, where for Stanley Baldwin, 'England comes to me through my various senses – through the ear, through the eye and through certain imperishable scents…(speaking to) the very depths of our nature…which (our) ancestors knew and loved.'[37] For Baldwin, England is both 'within' and 'without', with rural England speaking to his own deeply embodied sense of 'Englishness'.

Whilst the stable rural past presented in Victorian nostalgia is imagined, rural societies and folk traditions experienced a particular surge of interest in late Victorian and Edwardian museum culture and through cultural experience more broadly.[38] Efforts were made to recover and record any folk practices that indicated a purity of tradition, and this served to provide a framework that justified imperialism and the class system and came to be characteristic in nationalistic expressions.[39] Magazines circulated by the 'Peasant Arts Movement', as well as novels and poetry of the time period demonstrate overt pastoral themes and imply their virtues, and this influence also comes through in the Arts and Crafts movement, and the rural nostalgia of Edward Elgar's compositions. [40] Popular music halls sometimes staged concerts that drew significantly on the 'ancient, noble' characterisation of

[36] Woods, 'Anxiety and Urban Life', p. 191. It is worth noting here that Paul Readman has also written on how discourses of rural Englishness remained integral to the nineteenth century experience of modernity, and embodied continuity with the past through recognisable and historically rooted understandings of national identity at a time of significant social, economic and technological change, see Paul Readman, *Storied Ground: Landscape and the Shaping of English National Identity*, (Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 14
[37] Howkin, 'Discovery of rural England', p. 105.
[38] Gaynor Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum*, (Leicester University Press, 2000) p. 49.
[39] Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces*, pp. 49 – 50.
[40] Thomas Hardy and Rudyard Kipling among others make particular use of the rural, see Margaret Higonnet, 'Introduction' in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, by Thomas Hardy, (1891) (Penguin Books Ltd. 1998), p. xxxii, Gabriel Moshenska, 'Digging up Pook's Hill: Archaeological Imaginaries in Kipling's *Puck* Stories', *Landscapes*, (2012) 13.1, pp. 16–31. DOI: 10.1179/lan.2012.13.1.002. and Amy Palmer, 'Radical Conservatism and International Nationalism: The Peasant Arts Movement and its Search for the Country Heart of England', *Cultural and Social History*, (2018) 15.5, pp. 663 – 680. DOI: 10.1080/14780038.2019.1568028. for a brief overview of the influence of an idealised rural England in the Arts and Crafts movement, see 'The Arts and Crafts Movement – Profile', The Design Museum, (n.d.) <https://designmuseum.org/design/arts-and-crafts-movement> [11th August 2026], for Elgar, I have used Matthew Riley's argument that Elgar's work reflected how his creative life had been surrounded by literature and art that celebrated rural life, and had considerable influence on the nostalgic echoes of his music, see Matthew Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*, (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 9 – 10.

England and her people.[41] Around the turn of the century, local pageants often situated historic narratives within rural settings with little or no stage dressing, connecting folk traditions, histories and identities into a neatly packaged version of the past that attempted to allay the anxieties surrounding Britain in the present.[42] These creative interventions connecting national identity and pastoral ideals allowed for imaginative engagements with the past.

As a recourse to the pastoral was already an established trope of late Victorian and Edwardian creative practice, it is not difficult to understand why these practices were drawn upon in attempts to convey an industrialised war. Additionally, the voices of the war poets and artists which are most popularly remembered and accessed as a lens into the First World War are mostly taken from a class of men who were encouraged to pursue the rural masculine ideal of the country gentleman. Country sports were encouraged, with hunting and poaching reaffirming upper class license in society and over the environment. [43] As much as embodiments of the rural asserted that there was a 'people' who were distinctly 'of England', rural sports and traditional educations taught young men that the land of England was theirs, too.

Conversations exploring the concept of a sense of Englishness that could be both embodied 'within' and externally experienced 'without' were revisited in the run up to the centenary moment. A *Guardian* article exploring the supposed 'English identity crisis' in the summer of 2004 before the European Football Championships interviewed a series of people on their definition of 'Englishness'. The sense of an embodied 'Englishness' defined by the landscape was present in those interviewed, of whom the majority were farmers and/or rural

[41] Penny Summerfield, 'Patriotism and Empire: Music-Hall Entertainment 1870 – 1914' In *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed by John M. MacKenzie (Manchester University Press, 1986) pp. 17 – 48.
[42] Angela Bartie, Lorraine Fleming, Mark Freeman and others, *Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain*, (UCL Press, 2020), pp. 9 - 10, p. 44, pp. 159 – 163.
[43] J A Mangam and Callum McKenzie, 'The Other Side of the Coin: Victorian Masculinity, Field Sports and English Elite Education, in *Making European Masculinities: Sport, Europe, Gender,* edited by J. A. Mangan (ed) (Frank Cass, 2000) pp. 62-85.

landowners.[44] It therefore may not be a surprise that these interviewees felt very close to the rural, and is how they understood their English identity:

> **Interviewee 1:** I don't understand how anyone can feel English when they don't have a connection with the English soil. The soil is my identity… It is who I am, where I come from and, in the end, where I will go.
>
> **Interviewee 2:** …others come to simply spend a day in a field of flowers and bring a picnic. I can't image anything more English than that.
>
> **Interviewee 3:** The Vale of Evesham is the home of English asparagus and my family has been in this trade for as many generations as I can remember…It is in my blood and the blood of this area.[45]

Although roughly less than twelve percent of the population lived in rural or semi-rural settlements smaller than a small town in 2004,[46] *The Guardian* nevertheless understood and projected English national identity through a decidedly rural lens, and as the quotations show, much of this identity was embodied, again demonstrating a sense of the embodied 'within' which connected with a rurally understood 'without'. Less than a decade later, Englishness was again conceptualised and celebrated as having decidedly pastoral 'roots' in Danny Boyle's 2012 Olympic Games opening ceremony *Isles of Wonder.*[47] In the years preceding a national commemorative programme of events for the centenary of the First World War, the British national myth continued to build upon the cultural imagination of Britain's' 'green and pleasant land'.[48] Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm have demonstrated how the national character is mediated through external and environmental factors which are often imagined and/or invented,[49] and this is supported by Alun Howkins exploration that despite England having been an urban nation since the late Victorian period, the concept of England,

---

[44] The choice of interviewees was particularly interesting, and further study is needed to explore why a national newspaper believed these voices could speak convincingly to a sense of Englishness in the early twenty-first century.
[45] Amelia Hill, 'The English identity crisis: who do you think you are?', *The Guardian*, (13th June 2004), <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2004/jun/13/britishidentity.ameliahill> [24th November 2025]
[46] 'Rural and Urban Area Classification 2004: An Introductory Guide,' *The Countryside Agency Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Office for National Statistics, Welsh Assembly Government*, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c7c45ed915d6969f4533b/2001-rural-urban-definition-methodology-intro.pdf> [16th March 2026] p. 10
[47] Danny Boyle, 'Isles of Wonders', London 2012 Olympic Games, Opening Ceremony, (2012), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4As0e4de-rI> [30th March 2026]
[48] William Blake, *Jerusalem*, (c. 1810), https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54684/jerusalem-and-did-those-feet-in-ancient-time [30th March 2026]
[49] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd ed, (Verso, 1991), pp. 141 – 148, and Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire* pp. 97 – 99.

and the ideology of Englishness is imagined to be remarkably rural.[50] However, when considering David Cameron's wish for a 'truly national commemoration'[51] there are some clear difficulties with asserting rural ideals that are traditionally 'English' onto a multinational, and multicultural union of states that make up modern Britain. In order to create a sense of a shared heritage, general themes of 'Britishness' were 'flattened' into a narrow landscape of southern 'Englishness'. This manifested in British propaganda during the war too. In figure 7, a Scottish solider (identifiable by his kilt) gestures to a gentle, rolling landscape of southern England, complete with thatched cottages and country gardens. Conceptions of 'home' (i.e. Britain) were often conceptualised via landscapes of southern England.

David Lowenthal's work has also explored this conflation, stating that in modern understanding of nationhood, white Britons typically assume that Britain was highly homogeneous until twentieth century migration, and has traditionally consisted of an 'Anglo-Saxon amnesia' which at points forgets its multi ethnic origins, and at other times draws upon it.[52] As Lowenthal goes on to explain, British identity is rooted in the nineteenth century assumption that although there is a recognition of the multiple states that make up Britain, its 'core' is essentially English, with Scotland, Wales and (at the time) Ireland being 'lesser gems' in the British diadem.[53]

[50] Howkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England', p. 85.
[51] 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> [26th November 2024]
[52] David Lowenthal, 'British National Identity and the English Landscape', *Rural History*, (1991) 2.2 pp. 205-230. DOI:10.1017/S0956793300002764
[53] James Bryce (f.n. 25) as quoted by Lowenthal, 'British National Identity and the English Landscape', pp. 205-230.



Figure 7– Your Country's Call, (1915), Lithograph on paper, (unknown artist) 754 mm. x 499 mm, Imperial War Museum, (© Art.IWM PST 11765), <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30548> [31st March 2026] (IWM Non-Commercial Licence)

In order to effectively pull apart the deeply held meaning of these rural ideals, there must be an analysis of the depth to which they go, and how these chauvinist experiences of national identity in the past reflect on the centenary moment. Paul Fussell and Samuel Hynes have established the use of the pastoral as an 'arcadian recourse' during the war, and their analysis has helped to conceptualise the sense that the imagination of a rural heritage from before the war, was crystalised during the war, and ultimately 'stress-tested' the limits of the pastoral as a place of safety.[54]

Hannah Woods and Paul Connerton have been especially useful in furthering my understanding of the embodiment of memory and the role of the environment in the imagined

[54] Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory*, p. 251 – 292, and Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. 33 and pp. 189 - 202

British identity.[55] The application of their thematic analyses to the accounts of spectators of centenary artwork has demonstrated some insightful similarities to the emotional and embodied *affects* of one's environment, and how this has spoken to an idea of a shared national character demonstrated through nostalgic ruralism. Imaginations of the landscapes of the Western Front were captured through large scale participatory art works that drew on the legacies of the poppy, and what Gough has termed the 'tangible rurality' of the CWGC war cemeteries.[56] I will demonstrate how the themes of nostalgic ruralism present at the centenary connect with understandings of the English national character, as well as with the memory of the First World War.

This chapter will demonstrate that despite attempts to expand beyond the traditional understandings of identity and sacrifice of the First World War implied by the overt pastoralism of remembrance practices, rural themes, and their culturally understood meanings continue to dominate the memory of the First World War at the centenary. If pastoralism is a dominant theme in the memorialisation of the war, the poppy is the most recognisable link to the pastoral in the memory of the war and is the immediate link to ideas surrounding remembrance practices. By focussing on the role of the aesthetic form in generated memorability, we can see how the creative use of a medium can help redefine the borders of imagined communities by commanding the attention of individual subjects and hence providing conditions for a cognitive and affective opening to the memory of strangers.[57] This not only highlights the idea that the symbolic significance of the poppy would be understood

[55]Hannah Rose Woods, 'Anxiety and Urban Life in late Victorian and Edwardian Culture, 1880-1914', (April 2018) (Apollo - University of Cambridge Repository) https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.22085, p.3. and Paul Connerton, *The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory and the Body* (Cambridge University Press, 2011) pp. 104 - 124

[56] Gough, 'Conifers and Commemoration' pp. 73–87.

[57] By this I am using Ann Rigney's exploration of how creative mediums allow for an expansion of imagination of belonging. In this case, the Remembrance Poppy is a symbol that has taken on more and different meanings through its heritage and application as a tool of Remembrance, specifically in reference to her use of the phrase 'aesthetic form in generated memorability'. At surface level, the poppy could be understood to be a broadly encompassing, non-complex symbol of remembrance. However, it relies on individual engagement with its symbolism, heritage and application to provide meaning and context, which will vary from person to person, yet still provide areas of overlap. As a result, two people who have different backgrounds may be able to find common grounds of connection through their creative understandings of the meaning of the poppy as a symbol. see Ann Rigney, 'Remaking memory and the agency of the aesthetic', *Memory Studies*, (2021), 14.1, pp. 10-23

to those within the community it supposedly represents, but is understood by those who see themselves as outside this community.

Perhaps most significantly, the poppy, both a symbol of a rural elysian, yet also already dead or dying when not in the ground, is almost a perfect ironic symbol for the First World War dead. As Fussell has outlined, the war was a 'satire of circumstance,' beginning in a golden summer with fears it would be over too quickly, and descending into over four years of attritional warfare that changed the face of European society.[58] A generation of men were sent into the trenches with rural poetry anthologies of an imaginary England, with some of these men depicting their experiences of the war through violent language and imagery which was distinctly un-rural, shining a light on the political, cultural and social forces which enabled this to be. To be imagined through the singular, pastoral lens of a corn poppy which recalls an Edwardian golden afternoon seems to be the ultimate irony.

14-18 NOW - affective, emotive, aesthetic and embodied rurality

Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red and the 'Poppy Tour'

The poppy is one of the most enduring symbols of the First World War in British collective memory and was the key feature of the centenary artwork *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*. Paul Cummings, a ceramicist who works with floral designs, and Tom Piper, a theatre designer, co-produced the piece which was commissioned by Historic Royal Palaces and exhibited in the moat of the Tower of London in time for the commencement of the centenary. Hundreds of thousands of ceramic poppies, were 'planted' in the moat, representing the lives of British and Empire troops lost during the war, and quickly became

[58] Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory*, pp. 3- 38.

one of the most popular pieces of centenary art, drawing crowds of millions.[59] In order to capitalise on this success, 14-18 NOW took the piece on a 'centenary tour' of the country, emplacing the sculptural forms of the piece, 'Wave' and 'Weeping Window' into sites of cultural and/or historic significance across the United Kingdom. Despite not being originally conceived or commissioned as a 14-18 NOW project, the successful poppies tour features heavily as a triumph in the review literature of 14-18 NOW's programme.[60]



Figure 8 - Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red at the Tower of London, 2014 (Author's own image)

The piece captured the public's imagination and became one of the visual centrepieces of the arts programme at the centenary. One *Mass Observation* (*MO*) respondent said:

> … I went to see them… when about half of them had been planted, and even then, they were extremely striking. Since then, of course the spectacle has become even more beautiful and profound, not to mention popular. It's such a simple idea but so effective. Some of the aerial photographs in particular have been stunning.[61]

The aesthetic quality of the piece resonated deeply with audience members. The 2018 audience evaluation undertaken by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre of the 'Poppy Tour'

[59] Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, House of Commons, (Thirteenth Report of Session 2017-19), 'Lessons from the First World War Centenary', p. 4, (10th July 2019) <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcumeds/2001/2001.pdf> [3rd September 2025]
[60] Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre, '14-18 NOW Overall Summary of Evaluation', (n.d. no longer accessible) <https://issuu.com/1418now/docs/03560_1418now_jo_burns_report_v4_wr> [17th December 2024]
[61] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent P2957

indicated that most visitors came to see the installations across the country because they wished to see something beautiful or awe-inspiring.[62] The evaluation explicitly linked this aestheticism with the emotional experience visitors had with the poppies,[63] with one interviewee at Hereford cathedral stating:

> I think it's an absolutely stunning work of art and the dedication that went into each and every poppy (sic). It's amazing, it really is. I can't think of a better way with the connection with the Flanders fields poppies. It makes me want to cry…I became very emotional.[64]

A visitor to the Tower of London found the sight so overwhelming, it was difficult to speak of it without crying, stating, '(I) felt quite emotional and I tried to describe to my son about it, and I felt myself welling up.'[65]

Media responses to the installation were almost totally positive. Whilst installed at the Tower, the pieces aesthetic quality was celebrated by the *Daily Mail*, which called it an 'incredible spectacle… stunning… stupendous.'[66] The *Financial Times* went as far to say the installation was 'the most popular art installation, as well as arguably the most effective expression of commemoration in British History.'[67]

However, not everyone agreed that the poppies were so effective at commemoration. Rather than helping to visualise the sheer volume of lives lost,[68] the piece came across as a

[62] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_01_02_05_003_2 'Embracing A Visual Moment': Audience Evaluation 2018 Poppies, p. 25
[63] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_01_02_05_003_2 'Embracing A Visual Moment': Audience Evaluation 2018 Poppies, p. 25
[64] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_01_02_05_003_2 'Embracing A Visual Moment': Audience Evaluation 2018 Poppies, p. 20.
[65] 14-18 NOW evaluation: 2018 Season Evaluation Report, 14-18 NOW (n.d. no longer accessible), <https://www.1418now.org.uk/about/> [28th September 2023]
[66] Robert Hardman, 'How you can buy one of the Tower's amazing ceramic poppies for £25 - and the man behind the incredible spectacle', *The Daily Mail*, (London, England), (5th August 2014), < https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2716788/From-kiln-Tower-London-Dozens-British-artists-1million-ceramic-poppies-inspired-unknown-soldiers-account-blood-soaked-fields-Flanders-buy-one-25.html> [1st November 2023]
[67] Edwin Heathcote, *Financial Times*, (2014), as quoted by Paul Cummins, 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red', (n.d.) <https://www.paulcumminsceramics.com/blood-swept/> [24th April 2021]
[68] 'Interview: Paul Cummins - Blood Swept Lands & Seas of Red' (10th November 2014) <https://www.johnson-tiles.com/blog/2014/11/interview-paul-cummins-blood-swept-lands-seas-red/#> [28th September 2023]

singular 'sea,' even to its enthusiasts.[69] As a result, it missed the true meaning of commemoration for one *MO* respondent, who reflected,

> Whilst (a trip to the cemeteries) does not offer the experience of the trenches, it does, however, give an idea of how many people died via the lists of names of the lost…at least the names are there, which is more than can be said about the recent 'memorial' at the Tower of London…the names were nowhere to be found on this new, temporary memorial: each soldier having been reduced to an anonymous ceramic poppy. Owen said the poetry of war was in the pity. What a pity that after such campaigns to get names onto war memorials in the 1920s, that they have been ignored at the centenary. I was surprised by this, as a name makes the project more personal, which I thought was the whole point: that each of the 888246 lives lost was a real person, it seems we are more bothered about visual spectacle and the 'wow' factor, rather than the 'ow' factor.[70]

Additionally, not all media response were positive. Jonathon Jones of *The Guardian* described the poppies as 'fake, trite and inward-looking', reducing the conversation to one that is centred around but never directly deals with the nationalism which caused the Great War.[71] Jones was particularly critical of the audience reaction *Blood Swept Lands* provoked, emphasising that 'the gentle jostling and sense of fun made it hard, when I visited, to see this as a profoundly moving work about the First World War.'[72] However, Jenny Kidd and Joanne Sayner have identified that this mass participation was 'important' to audience members in allowing for remembering as 'one big community',[73] thus contributing to the feeling of a shared national heritage which was felt to require acknowledgement at its centenary marker.

Jones goes on to say that any expectation of reflection from the audience is,

> …probably an overinterpretation, because the spectacle of all these red poppies is emptier than that. In spite of the mention of blood in its title, this is a deeply aestheticized, prettified and toothless war memorial. It is all dignity and grace. There

[69] Robert Hardman, 'How you can buy one of the Tower's amazing ceramic poppies for £25 - and the man behind the incredible spectacle', *The Daily Mail*, (London, England), (5th August 2014), [1st November 2013]
[70] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent B4290.
[71] Jonathon Jones, 'The Tower of London poppies are fake, trite and inward-looking – a UKIP-style memorial' *The Guardian*, (29th October 2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2014/oct/28/tower-of-london-poppies-ukip-remembrance-day> [28th September 2023]
[72] Jonathon Jones, 'The Tower of London poppies are fake, trite and inward-looking – a UKIP-style memorial' *The Guardian*, (29th October 2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2014/oct/28/tower-of-london-poppies-ukip-remembrance-day> [28th September 2023]
[73] Jenny Kidd, and Joanne Sayner, 'Unthinking remembrance? *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* and the significance of centenaries', *Cultural Trends*, (2018), 27.2, pp. 68–82. https://doi-org.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/09548963.2018.1453448

> is a fake nobility to it, and this seems to be what the crowds have come for – to be raised up into a shared reverence for those heroes turned frozen flowers.[74]

For some audience members, however, the 'blood' was particularly visible, leading to some complex reflections prompted by the artwork whilst it was on tour. One interviewee explained; '…it was a lot more emotive than I thought it would be. It really does look like a wave of blood, quite moving and almost quite disgusting. It is beautiful and disgusting.'[75] The 'blood' interpreted from the poppies was particularly important to another audience member who saw it as being intrinsic to its beauty, 'I will remember most that from a distance the beautiful red flow that in a way represented the flow of blood and once you get near and you see that they are individual poppies – it's a lovely achievement.'[76]

For several participants, the 'blood' imagined as part of the piece was integral to the connection they felt with the artwork and spoke to a deeply held sense of ownership of a broad, shared heritage:

> My grandmother's brother died. He was one of the first to die in the First World War. He was 19 years old. One of those poppies represents a drop of his blood. It's got to be personal to everybody, hasn't it? Everybody has somebody who shed blood in the war.[77]

The implications of sacrifice made by the 'blood' helped conceptualise a sense of 'buy in' to the nation for audience members. Another participant stated, '…well, my family contributed to the deaths in the war. and (sic) it still means a lot to me and my family. Something like this portrays, in such a personal way, the shedding of the blood of my family.'[78] These insights

[74] Jonathon Jones, 'The Tower of London poppies are fake, trite and inward-looking – a UKIP-style memorial' *The Guardian*, (29th October 2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2014/oct/28/tower-of-london-poppies-ukip-remembrance-day> [28th September 2023]
[75] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_01_02_05_003_2 'Embracing A Visual Moment': Audience Evaluation 2018 Poppies, p. 88
[76] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_01_02_05_003_2 'Embracing A Visual Moment': Audience Evaluation 2018 Poppies, p. 90
[77] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_01_02_05_003_2 'Embracing A Visual Moment': Audience Evaluation 2018 Poppies, p. 57
[78] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_01_02_05_003_2 'Embracing A Visual Moment': Audience Evaluation 2018 Poppies, p. 54

demonstrate how visitors' understandings of their own family histories informed their sense of identity in relation to the First World War.

The conception of relatives 'bleeding' into the memory landscape of the First World War is a powerful and personal reflection on a conflict that had no living participants. One account from an interviewee of the poppy tour explained how this sensation seemed to create an experience of the past that was almost transubstantive, 'being so close to something that touches the soul so deeply. (I was) so close that I could almost touch it… to almost touch the blood of my ancestors.' This account reveals the conceptual slippage between forms of contact and forms of emotion, as well as the value this embodied inheritance was felt to hold to the individual. Here, the pastoral image of the poppy is not just symbolic, it is being imagined to actually hold the blood of the war dead.

This semi religious experience, and the installation of the artwork at the Tower of London and subsequent heritage spaces across the Britain helps to further ideas of the 'national myth' that continues to grow from the past. This is supported by D M Withers explanation that '(poppies) are planted within… our consciousness…(and) have become an inextricable part of how a deliberately constructed "We" thinks about questions of justice, suffering, remembering, and forgetting.'[79] These accounts demonstrate a sense of national identity that has been engaged with through this nationally understood symbol of British war memory, bringing the past closer with the present across the closest point of what I have referred to as the 'horseshoe' of memory.

The initial installation of *Blood Swept Lands* at the Tower expanded the site beyond its traditional character of a site of imprisonment to become 'a site of Remembrance and

[79] D M Withers, 'Wounding poppies: hyper-commemoration and aesthetic interventions', *Critical Military Studies*, (2020) 6.3–4, pp. 429–433. DOI: 10.1080/23337486.2019.1575123.

reflection…(with) a unique place in the history of WWI'.[80] This blending of significant memory sites is highly complementary, as the Tower's core myths involve stories of innocence and youth,[81] and invite a collusion between the site, and themes of loss and innocence which the First World War dead comfortably fit into due to the connotations of death, tragedy, suffering and pity, that have been reinforced by the invented traditions of remembering the war since its end.[82] *Blood Swept Lands* placed the meaningful modern event of the centenary against the ancient identity of England, a site of 'high' history in one of its best recognised castles and links the memory of the First World War to the broader narrative of British history, and the ways which this is perceived both within Britain and around the world. The use of the most widely recognised symbol of British remembrance placed in one of Britain's most iconic locations, gives the impression of quite literally placing the memory of the First World War within a wider narrative of a place which has come to be recognised as a central site of English history and heritage.

100: The day our world changed and 100:Unearth

Some 14-18 NOW projects used the natural landscape to further imbed pastoral narratives of the nation and the First World War into local environments. Two 14-18 NOW events took place in Cornwall over the centenary, *100: The Day Our World Changed* in 2014 and *100:Unearth* in 2018. WildWorks, a Cornish based arts company that creates large scale immersive, local, artistic experiences worked with the Lost Gardens of Heligan to explore the heritage of the First World War in Cornwall, producing outdoor performances that used the

[80] The Tower of London created a database which allowed visitors and members of the public to upload pictures and stories of the family members they were remembering as part of 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red', which took the form of a digital map of the Tower of London, where visitors could digitally 'plant' memories into the moat, see, 'The Tower of London Remembers: View the dedications', (n.d.) <https://poppydedications.hrp.org.uk/> [17th March 2026] 'The Tower of London Remembers' Historic Royal Palaces, (n.d.) <https://www.hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london/history-and-stories/tower-of-london-remembers/>, [27th September 2023]

[81] Eleanor O'Keeffe, 'Radical Histories, Emotional Legacies, and Everywhere in between? Exploring Everyday Responses to the Traumas of War in *Blood Swept Lands & Seas of Red*. (2014).' *Mortality* (2024) 29.2, pp. 306–29. DOI:10.1080/13576275.2024.2310102.

[82] Ross Wilson, 'Witnessing the Great War in Britain: Centenaries and the making of modern identities', *Anglica*, (2018) 27.3, pp. 233–248.

Cornish landscape as the stage. For the *100: The Day Our World Changed* event in 2014, the audience travelled with the performance to follow the story, which in 2014 started at the quayside in Mevagissey and moved up to the Lost Gardens, with engagement taking place between performers and audience members.

These events called upon the heritage of pageants held in the early 20th century that explored local heritage, with both projects being place-based, site-specific creative interventions which reimagined and embedded local stories into the aesthetic Cornish landscape of the 2010s. Holly Maples' work on local rural heritage projects in Norfolk demonstrates that 'Heritage Performance' encourages audience members to not only witness historic narratives, but experience, embody, and 'touch' a localised past.[83] Drawing on the work of sociologist Mark Auslander, her work explores how the

> tactile and experiential nature of historic performance practices allow spectators to create an 'intimate traffic' between their contemporary experience and that of 'previous epochs and persons'.[84]



Figure 9 –100: The Day our World Changed, (2014), (Mercedes Kemp, Bill Mitchell, Myriddin Wannell, and Seamus Carey, (2014) 100: The Day Our World changed. [Project]) <https://repository.falmouth.ac.uk/2470/> [8th April 2026], (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

[83] Holly Maples, 'Touching Past Lives: Sensorial Spectatorship in the Paston Footprints Project' (2018), Paston Footprints (Show/Exhibition), PaR Project Appendix, p. 3. University of Essex repository
[84] M Auslander, as quoted by Maples, 'Touching Past Lives', p. 3.

Whilst watching the *100* performances against the backdrop of the aesthetic Cornish countryside, audiences took part in dawn-til-dusk remembrance event that placed Cornish experiences of the outbreak of the First World War at its heart. It is worth mentioning that historically, Cornwall has *not* been recognised as part of a southern English ideal, and has a distinct identity set apart from one of 'Englishness'. This project is particularly interesting as it brings a distinctly English rural heritage of memorialising the war to a landscape and people that have historically been left out or subsumed by a broader national heritage tradition.

In *100: The Day Our World Changed*, one audience member who was engaged in the practice of 'creative remembering' for the event noted certain phrases that particularly struck her in the performance, one of which being, 'Today, I have a strong sense that I shall never see Cornwall again.'[85] The author, who outlines her own connection to the local area, posits her understanding of remembrance via the landscape of Cornwall throughout the piece. This seems to be an outcome the organisers of the *100* series hoped for, with the programmes for both artworks making frequent references to the expected familiarity of the landscape for their audiences.[86] This approach implies this was a series of performances which specifically drew on the audience's connection to their place, despite its national funding, but also situates the Cornish experience of the war as part of a broader, shared national experience that visitors would be aware of through multiple mediums over the centenary period.

The project also allowed for exploration into the Lost Gardens*'* own 're-founding' myth directly linked to the First World War. A traditional 'English country garden' before the war, Heligan lost most of its gardeners during the conflict and as a result, the garden became

[85] Elizabeth Bennett, 'Trace: *100: The Day our World Changed'*, *Platform: Performance, Place and Geography*, (2015), 9.2, pp. 95 – 112.
[86] Mercedes Kemp, Bill Mitchell, Myriddin Wannell, and Seamus Carey, *100: The Day Our World Changed* – Project programme, (2014), <https://repository.falmouth.ac.uk/2470/37/100%20TDOWC%20Programme.pdf> [30th March 2026]

overrun, wild and 'lost' to the war too.[87] One participant felt the 2014 performance redefined and reinvigorated their sense of place, commenting, 'I feel immense gratitude for being a part of something so important for the community - and so beautiful. A changed view of Heligan and Meva(gissey)'[88]

The immersive experience the 2014 artwork provided, combined with the implied depth of knowledge that its (mostly local) audience were presumed to have, contributed to a feeling of 'time slippage', and brought an almost ethereal sense of embodiment to the piece. This was partly due to the staging of the performance in the local area, which made the audience members quite literally part of the story. Performers invited the audience members to imagine themselves as part of the crowds who had gathered on the dockside when war was announced in 1914. As part of her 'creative remembering', Elizabeth Bennett speaks to how the 'sweeping narrative' seemed to be fixed in a 'fleeting moment somewhere between 1914 and 2014.'[89] For Bennett, this overlay of space and time contributed to a sense of displacement with time itself.

The WildWorks creative team worked closely with the local community and recruited their storytellers from the local population. The result, in the words of the community performance director, was an experience that 'suddenly you (didn't) have to imagine any more…. we see the boy of 2014, full of the future and all that his life will bring, and we also see what might have become of him had he been born a hundred years earlier.'[90] Rather than being as literal as possible with the subject material, the production designer was keen to assert that this was not a re-enactment.[91] Inspired by photographs, objects and stories shared

[87] 'Introduction: Our Story,' The Lost Gardens of Heligan, (n.d.) https://www.heligan.com/explore-heligan/our-story/introduction/, [30th March 2026]
[88] Participant quotation from *100: The Day our World Changed*, (n.d.) https://wildworks.org.uk/, [30th March 2026]
[89] Bennett, 'Trace: *100: The Day our World Changed'*, pp. 95 – 112.
[90] Kemp and others, *100: The Day Our World Changed* – Project programme, (2014), <https://repository.falmouth.ac.uk/2470/37/100%20TDOWC%20Programme.pdf> [30th March 2026]
[91] Kemp and others, *100: The Day Our World Changed* – Project programme, (2014), <https://repository.falmouth.ac.uk/2470/37/100%20TDOWC%20Programme.pdf> [30th March 2026]

by the local community, the Heligan story of the First World War had '….been put through a filter of retold tales and sensory memory in all its truths and exaggerations. The kind of memory that might be triggered by a smell, or a flash of colour, or the flapping of a sheet in the wind or a rumour.'[92] The piece reimagined memories of members of the community who experienced the war, and encouraged performers and audience members to take these memories forward creatively with the piece. As a result, a *new* memory was created at the centenary focussing on the outbreak of war one hundred years earlier, with the contemporary participants as its stewards, empathetically linking the two moments across generations. The emotional implication of this stewardship is imparted on the audience in the piece's programme, which suggests '…we all die twice. The first time when our body dies and the second time when people stop saying our names and stop telling the stories of the things we did in our lives.'[93] The audience is asked to keep the lost men 'alive' through embodied remembering.

This immersive, embodied remembering had a similar visceral sense for some participants as *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*. One of the performers explained,

> … it was at around half past three on the day of the performance that I finally, blood and guts, understood who my gardener was, then at the very end in the poppy field with my fellow spirits, I realised there was something very, very magical going on, which completely blew away my notions of what theatre should be.[94]

Again, this tangible, embodied experience gave this participant a perception that he had a deep connection to an event that been imagined at the centenary. Through contact with the local environment, and immersive storytelling, *100: The Day Our World Changed*

[92] Kemp and others, *100: The Day Our World Changed* – Project programme, (2014), <https://repository.falmouth.ac.uk/2470/37/100%20TDOWC%20Programme.pdf> [30th March 2026]
[93] Kemp and others, *100: The Day Our World Changed* – Project programme, (2014), <https://repository.falmouth.ac.uk/2470/37/100%20TDOWC%20Programme.pdf> [30th March 2026]
[94] '100: The Day Our World Changed,' *WildWorks*, (n.d.) https://wildworks.org.uk/projects/100-the-day-our-world-changed/ [30th March 2026]

demonstrates that art is perceived (in this instance) to be providing an *experiential* knowledge of the past.

100:Unearth in 2018 further drew upon the landscape as a way to conceptualise the mass death of the First World War, exploring the stories of those who lived through the war locally and those who returned home. *100:Unearth* used the myth of Orpheus and Euridice to explore the hopes families had for soldiers returning, who may never have returned, or, who have returned to a different reality changed by war, where life has gone on. Writer Mercedes Kemp explains that,

> The Lost Gardens of Heligan (gave) us the perfect metaphor. A place where growth and decay co-exist. A place full of promise. A place that teaches us a valuable lesson. Death is inevitable. Gardens die out in the winter, but they return back to life in the spring.[95]

The audience journeyed through the underworld, but alongside the souls of First World War dead that are encountered are the war dead of subsequent conflicts. This further reinforced the cyclical metaphor and invited reflection on the potentiality of never ending fields of war dead where 'the great Lord of Death continues to reap his harvest.'[96] Building on its application of imaginative 'time (and place) slippage' experienced by audience members in the 2014 event, Heligan as the stage for the underworld asserts the Lost Gardens as a place of magic, capable of opening a gateway to memory, the past, and the dead, and implies that the dead never really left. This was an experience that was not difficult for audience members to imagine. Bennett's foreshadowing from the 2014 event demonstrates that her own experience of remembrance can been rurally bound, reflecting on the 'erasure of lives 100 years ago, and the wounds that ran deep into the pasture before us.'[97] Despite not being a traditionally

[95]Mercedes Kemp, *100:UnEarth* – Project programme, (2018), <https://repository.falmouth.ac.uk/3071/1/100%20UnEarth%20Programme.pdf> [30th March 2026] https://repository.falmouth.ac.uk/3071/1/100%20UnEarth%20Programme.pdf
[96] Kemp, *100:UnEarth,* (2018) https://repository.falmouth.ac.uk/3071/1/100%20UnEarth%20Programme.pdf, [30th March 2026]
[97] Bennett, 'Trace: *100: The Day our World Changed'*, pp. 95 – 112.

'English' rurality, Cornish remembrance at the centenary took the shape of an affective, embodied rural imagining.

Shot at Dawn

Whilst the first two projects posited the rural as a place of peace and safety, some 14-18 NOW projects used the environment to subvert these concepts. Photographer Chloe Dewe Mathews' work *Shot at Dawn* explored the final locations of soldiers of the British, French and Belgian armies shot for cowardice and desertion at the front.[98] Comprising of images of twenty-three locations at which individuals were shot or held in the period leading up to their executions, all photographs were taken as close to the exact time of day and time of year of execution as possible.[99] Described by the artist as 'almost the opposite of war photography,' Dewe Mathews was drawn to the idea of rather than the photographer bearing witness, it was the landscape that had witnessed the event and her who had to go into that landscape in the hope of finding anything tangibly connected to the event.[100]

Compared to the richly pastoral, 'elysian fields' type projects examined at the beginning of this chapter, Dewe Mathews frames are decidedly 'untranquil' and distinctly empty. The viewer almost feels as though they are looking at photographs of a crime scene. Lynsey McCulloch and Rob Tovey question whether the piece is a 'site of memory' by Nora's definition, citing its concentration on the 'now' rather than the 'then', and its failure to 'to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a stage of things, to immortalize death, (and) to materialize the immaterial.'[101] However, when considering the photograph *as*

[98]Chloe Dewe Mathews, *Shot at Dawn*, (n.d.), <https://www.chloedewemathews.com/shot-at-dawn/> [30th March 2026]
[99] Chloe Dewe Mathews, *Shot at Dawn*, (n.d.) <http://shotatdawn.photography/about/> [30th October 2023]
[100] Sean O'Hagan, 'Chloe Dewe Mathews's Shot at Dawn: a moving photographic memorial' (29th June 2014), https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/jun/29/chloe-dewe-mathews-shot-at-dawn-moving-photographic-memorial-first-world-war , [30th March 2026]
[101] Lynsey McCulloch and Rob Tovey, 'Shot at Dawn: Late Photography and the Anti-War Memorial', *Visual Studies*, (2019) 34.2, pp. 93-106.

the object of memorialisation, the site of memory *is* the empty frame – in remembering war dead executed by their own forces, their 'un-memorialisation' is remembered in Dewe Mathews work too.

Dewe Mathews herself speaks to how although there was no material marker for the deaths of these men, their deaths lingered over the local area, haunting the population for generations. The agency of the landscape is apparent in the artist's words, 'one man I met, who was born not long after an execution had happened in a yard on his family's farm in Loker, West Vlaanderen, told me how the event had lingered in the local imagination, and cast a kind of shadow over the land and the family for years afterwards.'[102] Some visitors felt the affective atmosphere which was reinstated by some of the stark images produced. Some viewers felt the urge to touch the scene, imbued with a sense they could reach through time, to 'comfort a man (they had) never met.'[103] For these visitors, the affective atmosphere of viewing the images produced an experience of conceptual slippage across time.

Whilst McCulloch and Tovey maintain that Dewe Mathews' work refuses to directly commemorate those shot at dawn,[104] Alex Danchev's work highlights that Dewe Mathews deliberately reinsert the individuals into the spaces they were executed, 'stamping their presence back onto the land, so their histories are not forgotten,' making Mathew's herself a 'moral witness' to the past.[105] A modern memorial standing in opposition to the traditional memorial of the First World War, the meaning is derived from the sense of a pregnant absence. Dewe Mathew's carefully researched additional material provides contextual information for each site, and through these brief descriptions more uncomfortable truths are uncovered. Beyond the inequity in memorialising those shot at dawn, the artists' choice to

[102] O'Hagan, 'Chloe Dewe Mathews's Shot at Dawn' (29th June 2014), https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/jun/29/chloe-dewe-mathews-shot-at-dawn-moving-photographic-memorial-first-world-war , [30th March 2026]
[103] Moira Jeffrey, 'Shot At Dawn: Chronicling men killed for desertion', The Scotsman, (9th November 2014) <https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/shot-at-dawn-chronicling-men-killed-for-desertion-1521390> [30th March 2026]
[104] McCulloch and Tovey, 'Shot at Dawn', pp. 93-106.
[105] Alex Danchev, 'Our Brothers' Keeper: Moral Witness.' *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, (2015) 40.3/4 pp. 191–200.

select diverse subjects to memorialise demonstrates the further inequity in the cases which were not commuted to imprisonment. Of the 306 troops shot by the British, a significant proportion were non-English, and non-commissioned officers were far more likely to suffer the death sentence than officers.[106] Dewe Mathews' 'post-witnessing' of these events imaginatively invests and creates[107] a narrative for those executed by the army, whose stories had, until recently, remained untold in British memory.

Still

Photography presented another opportunity to explore concepts of 'emptiness' inspired by the war. Simon Armitage's work *Still* is a series of poems written in response to aerial battlefield photographs of pre-and-post battle landscapes on the Somme, conflating the 'stillness' of the images he works from with the knowledge of chaotic, destructive warfare that they depict.[108] Armitage, a poet, drew upon his own literary background and knowledge of classical epic poetry to inform his response to the aerial and panoramic captures in the Imperial War Museum collection, which he described as 'idyllic'. [109] Whilst some captures were of pre-bombardment landscapes, Armitage was surprised to learn that smears on what he thought were gentle scenes were in fact shell bursts on the chalk soil, disrupting the sense of a pastoral idyll he initially saw in these images.

Although this work is not available on a free to view platform, readers can glimpse the interaction with the literary heritage through online clips. In these clips, Armitage invites the listener to imagine ploughmen in the fields of the Somme, harvesting 'raw bones'. [110] British

[106] McCulloch and Tovey, 'Shot at Dawn', pp. 93-106.
[107] Marianne Hirsch, as quoted by Danchev, 'Our Brothers' Keeper', pp.191 – 200.
[108] 'Simon Armitage talk - Still - 14-18 NOW', 14 – 18 NOW, (2016) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPy7DS-SgOA>, [30th March 2026]
[109] 'Simon Armitage talk - Still - 14-18 NOW', 14 – 18 NOW, (2016) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPy7DS-SgOA>, [30th March 2026]
[110] 'Still', Enitharmon Editions, (n.d.) <https://www.enitharmon.co.uk/product/still-simon-armitage/> [30th March 2026]

soldiers are imagined to be embedded into the soil still, where the 'yield of earth is death'.[111] Across the images, the 'flow' of battle is apparent, the landscape of the Somme moving from pastoral to heavily destroyed, but with neither showing clear indications of people in the frame. One commentator on the artwork explained that even though the frames often appear empty, the viewer has the contextual knowledge that under barrage on the Somme, there would have been soldiers hiding away in defensive positions.[112] In spite of the initial pastoral impression, the viewer knows that there are people hiding in terror in these images. Like Dewe Mathews work, the absence in both pieces is further curated by the personal contextual knowledge the spectator brings to their experience of seeing.

Armitage was asked why he selected Virgil's' *Georgics* (which are particularly pastoral) rather than a poem centralising war, which could have balanced poetic narratives of war with the visual narratives of war which were shown in the aerial photographs. His reply demonstrated that for him, what was apparent in these frames was that the war was about land, and Virgil's *Georgics* held resonance, having (to his mind) subtle discourses on nationhood running through them, and themselves written at the time of a civil war. Here, Virgil and Armitage both use the pastoral as an 'arcadian recourse'[113] to explore land-based conflict, and Armitage draws on the memory of the war poets to grapple with visions into the war that he had not seen before.

Heritage Lottery Funded projects

Whilst not at a similar scale, or receiving similar coverage, Heritage Lottery funded projects exploring themes of landscape were a common theme by which local groups engaged with the memory of the war at the centenary. Whilst some nationally led projects

[111] 'Still', Enitharmon Editions, (n.d.) <https://www.enitharmon.co.uk/product/still-simon-armitage/> [30th March 2026]
[112] 'Simon Armitage talk - Still - 14-18 NOW', 14 – 18 NOW, (2016) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPy7DS-SgOA>, [30th March 2026]
[113] Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory*, p.251

dealt sensitively with lesser-known narratives of the landscape in war, the large scale and by far most popular nationally led project (the poppies) maintained a traditional narrative of British war dead through a non-violent, pastoral lens. The use of the pastoral to mitigate complex and difficult experiences of conflict was at the forefront of Jonathon Jones' critique of *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*, but also further complicates ideas surrounding identity and visibility of British servicemen of the First World War.

The 'flattening' of broad and diverse themes into a simplified and sanitised narrative is born from the reading of David Swift and Oliver Wilkinson's study of British Veterans after the First World War.[114] From the 'flattening' of the manifold of British identities into a homogenised English one explored at the beginning of this chapter , to the 'levelling' of the British and Empire war dead in the symbol of the poppy, Noakes and Wallis have argued that the reduction of the narrative in the visual landscape of the war enabled deeply held traditional interpretations of the futility of the war to be maintained.[115] In the following section, the community led projects have been divided into three broad themes of engagement with memory of the war, and there is evidence in some cases that traditional discourses of pastoral elements were renegotiated at the centenary.

Local remembrance and landscapes

Many projects did (as one might expect) situate their place's local experience of the war within the broader pastoral narrative. Several projects allowed communities to explore their war dead, adding to local knowledge and reinforcing meaning to the stories of local people who experience the First World War. In some publications, such as that produced by

[114] David Swift and Oliver WIlkingson, *Veterans of the First World War: Ex-Servicemen and Ex-Servicewomen in Post-war Britain* (Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group 2019) p. 3.
[115] Lucy Noakes and James Wallis, 'The People's Centenary? Public History, Remembering and Forgetting in Britain's First World War Centenary', *The Public Historian*, (2022) 44.2 pp. 56 - 81. DOI https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2022.44.2.56

Daresbury parish and the town of Montgomery, poppies often decorated the front covers and pages of biographies,[116] further reinforcing the eulogic messaging of flowers.[117] The village of Christleton overlaid poppies on photo pages that showed village life at the time of the war, as well as local stories and biographies.[118] The head of the Christleton local history group explained in a letter to the Heritage Lottery Fund that the whole experience of researching these local stories had been 'so worthwhile…the most rewarding work I have ever done',[119] demonstrating the deep meaning this work had for this individual, who had committed much of his time to place making through his work with the local history society. The project reconnected diaspora members of the community with the local place and resulting in the creation of a small local archive of stories about the local experience of the First World War.[120]

The Black Country Society published a booklet that followed the stories of local regiments and people, one of whom was Ronald Leighton, the fiancé of Vera Britten, who was killed near Picardy in December 1915. The publication draws attention to the poems he shared with Vera before his death, particularly 'violets from plug street wood' and the sharing of stories of the landscape whilst at war, bringing it closer to British understanding and experience. Another story explored by the publication was of William Dimmock, a reverend who was posted to British East Africa and subsequently killed in the fighting between the colonial holdings. When reflecting on the burial of William in a Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery in Dar es Salaam, the author notes that from sight, it 'could be anywhere in

[116] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA 690.D13, 'Daresbury: The story of a Parish in World War One'
[117] Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory*, p.275
[118] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA 690 .C517 'Christleton Great War Stories: Special Commemoration marking the Centenary of World War One'
[119] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA 690 .C517 'Christleton Great War Stories: Special Commemoration marking the Centenary of World War One'
[120] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA 690 .C517 'Christleton Great War Stories: Special Commemoration marking the Centenary of World War One'

England'.[121] For this local history project, the 'Englishness' of their community members final resting place was meaningful and reminds the reader of Brook's 'corner of a foreign field'.[122]

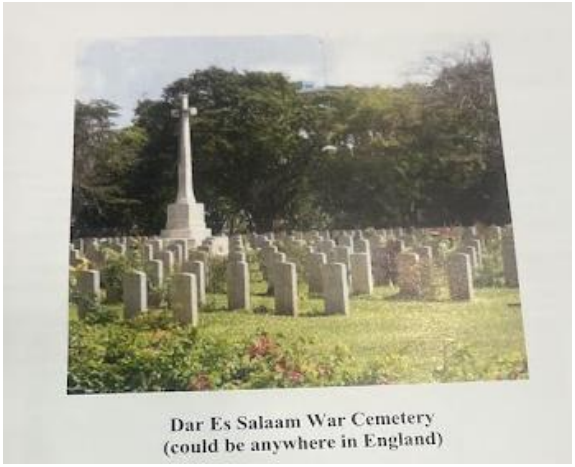


Figure 10 – Reflection on the 'Englishness' of war cemeteries outside of Europe, in Dar-es-Salaam Cemetery. Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA 690. D75, 'Remembrance 2018: Never Good Bye – Remembrance of Dudley's Great War "heroes"' (Author's own image)

Some projects attempted to assert local ownership over their war dead through creatively embedding the war dead into the local landscape. Such was the case of the Wigmore Abbey Parish (Figure 11), which overlaid an image of a commonwealth war grave over the fields of Herefordshire,[123] inverting the 'foreign field' analogy, and implying that the war dead never really left their local area, in a similar way to how *100:Unearth* lessened the distance between the war dead by placing them within the Gardens of Heligan. Many local projects attempted to create links between war dead which were not repatriated to England, and the local landscapes the solider came from.

[121] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA 690 .D75, 'Remembrance 2018: Never Good Bye – Remembrance of Dudley's Great War "heroes"'
[122] Brooke, '1914: The Soldier', p. 108
[123] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA 690 .W544, 'They Shall Not Grow Old',

Other projects drew upon Heritage Lottery Fund funding to reimagine their local memorials. The Welsh town of Montgomery redeveloped their old war memorial garden, which had fallen into disrepair. The community took this opportunity to embed local environmental elements, rejecting pastoral ideals in favour of (in this instance) locally sourced Welsh stone, placing a distinctly 'Welsh' monument within a paved 'garden' that had minimal greenery. The committee overseeing the redevelopment were keen to find a 'more fitting'[124] monument with local links, originally hoping to use stone from the disused quarry site in Montgomery itself (which ultimately proved impossible).[125] The final design was put to the local public for consultation, and after funding was successfully awarded, the local community continued to be a key component of the memorial creation, through clearing the old site, and establishing the new site, planting locally sourced yews. As Vergunst et al. have argued, this co-designed and co-produced approach to heritage disrupts the sense that the past is static,[126] with the project booklet keenly expressing how this was a local reclamation of their war dead, with the community responsible for a more meaningful memorial to memorialise its fallen, but also a place the community had come together to be creative within. Local schools and children's groups were included in the research process for the fallen, and the decision was taken that anyone who had significant ties to Mongomery who had been killed in the war would be memorialised on this new memorial. Montgomery's project brought people together through collective memory practices. This grass roots, outward looking approach to memorialisation reinforced local community identity, but also emplaced Montgomery in a network of memory that reached beyond the local area,

[124] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D 680.G7 'Montgomery Remembers: The Making of a Memorial Garden', p. 5.
[125] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D 680.G7 'Montgomery Remembers: The Making of a Memorial Garden', p.6
[126] Jo Vergunst, Elizabeth Curtis, Neil Curtis, Jeff Oliver and Colin Shepard, 'Shaping heritage in the landscape among communities past and present', in *Heritage As Community Research: Legacies of Co-Production*, ed by Helen Graham and Jo Vergunst, (Policy Press, 2019) pp. 27 – 51.

acknowledging the shared heritage of war dead beyond their own historic occupants, and gave the community their own way to broaden local concepts of local identity.

Finally, the Black Poppies project disrupted the supposedly 'levelling' aspect of the red poppies and re-embodied the black servicemen who served in the war. The project deliberately 'recoloured' a monochromatic pastoral heritage to shine a light on black experiences of the First World War which have traditionally been ignored, thus disrupting the traditional narratives described by Noakes and Wallis.[127] Working with diverse communities in Southwark, historian Stephen Bourne supported the development of a touring exhibition, with the Heritage Lottery Fund asserting that many project participants found a personal link to the stories.[128] Whilst it is not clear if Bourne had published any reflections after his involvement with this project, or if they are simply not accessible, there remains a broader issue around longevity of this project in particular (which has no physical legacy in the archive), and community led projects more generally. The *Reflections* project report has highlighted the issues with that the digital longevity of the community projects, emphasising the optimal solution being the development of a purpose-built, autonomous, public-funded, digital cultural heritage repository, which would provide the definitive space for accessing and preserving digital outputs of community heritage projects.[129] When digital longevity is not fully integrated into a project plan, the insights provided by the *Reflections* report warns us that the lack of long term sustainability in meaningful local projects might affect the experiences of community groups. When considering that the long-term use and re-use of the content was a priority for many users (61%),[130] a continued lack of longevity in community

[127] Noakes and Wallis, 'The People's Centenary?' pp. 56 - 81. DOI https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2022.44.2.56
[128] 'Black Poppies Exhibition; Southwark and the black British First World War heritage', National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/black-poppies-exhibition-southwark-and-black-british-first-world-war-heritage, [30th March 2026]
[129] Lucy Noakes, Emma Hanna, Lorna M. Hughes, Catriona Pennell, and James Wallis, *Reflections on the Centenary of the First World War: Learning and Legacies for the Future*, (project report), (2021), <https://reflections1418.exeter.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Reflections-on-the-Centenary-of-the-First-World-War-Learning-and-Legacies-for-the-Future.pdf>, p. 107
[130] Noakes and others, *Reflections on the Centenary of the First World War*, p. 99

projects may mean a fall in engagement if participants fell their priorities are not being listened to.

Whilst it is wrong to assume that, as the expert, Bourne has a duty to speak to the project outcomes and the digital longevity, thus reaffirming the role of the 'expert' in public history,[131] this project demonstrates the value of integrating efficient mechanisms into the grant funding process. In order to ensure communities work (often volunteered) is not lost, and to properly achieve the Heritage Lottery Funds own requirements that heritage will be better recorded, interpreted, explained, and identified, sharing findings should be encouraged to better understand the broader framework of public history practice, and what Green calls 'history with a public purpose.'[132] Both the Black Poppies project, and the Montgomery project demonstrate the value of visibility for communities traditionally ignored or 'swallowed' by broader 'British'/English narratives of the conflict, and purposefully inserts them back into the narrative of the First World War.



Figure 11 - The design of this booklet imagines that the war dead of the area are embedded in the local landscape. Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA 690. W544, 'They Shall Not Grow Old' (Author's own image)

[131] Alix Green, 'From Cultural Case Studies to Global Conversations: Towards an Interconnected Community of Enquiry in Public History', *The Public Historian*, (2018) 40.4, pp. 56-60
[132] Alix Green, *History, Policy and Public Purpose: Historians and Historical Thinking in Government* (Palgrave Macmillian, 2016), p. 3.

Landscape as a 'frontier' space

The Heritage Lottery funded projects also gave an insight as to how the First World War is perceived to have affected broader cultural trends. A series of projects that explored how the landscape of 'no man's land' has been understood to be a frontier, not just in the war itself but speaking to broader cultural themes related to British society and have been embedded into national understandings and language. Whilst not all these projects overtly dealt with pastoral landscapes and their heritages, some community projects explored assumptions of safety and danger in landscape metaphors, thus contributing to the broader British practice of understanding identities via landscapes as discussed earlier in the chapter.

A project in Bradford used the phrase 'no man's land' as the starting point for young people to explore the opportunities the war presented for women, looking beyond the singular role of nursing that is traditionally attributed. In a series of workshops, participants were invited to explore how women were able to expand and redefine their roles as photographers and medics who bore witness to the landscapes of war. An imaginative, metaphorical application of landscape as a concept shows the mythologisation that the wartime generation of women experience in modern memory, and is further discussed in chapter four. Nevertheless, by combining this concept of 'no man's land', alongside stories of female war photographers, this project draws upon several heritages of the landscape and the First World War to look at the conflict in a different way – rather than being a landscape of destruction and futility, it was a horizon of opportunity for many women.

The New Focus group who produced the booklet hoped to break the stereotype of war photography as just being pictures of soldiers on a battlefield. The creators go on to emphasise that a century after the First World War, the term No Man's Land:

> has come to mean a barren, uninhabited and neglected place...this was a good metaphor for the way women's photography has been forgotten or ignored. We hope

> we've rescued women's stories from the No Man's Land of history and helped to show the First World War through the eyes of women.[133]

One participant particularly emphasised how the shift from landscape captures to more intimate, everyday images captured by female photographers appeared to him to show a 'real life portrayal of the war from a woman's perspective.'[134]

The Age Exchange project 'Meeting in No Man's Land' again draws on and redefines the concept of 'no man's land' as a 'frontier space', using the generational inheritance of the First World War in both British and German families as a starting point for exploring a shared heritage. This project used the mythologised meeting in 'no man's land' during the 'Christmas truce'[135] as a widely 'remembered' temporal touch point for building international relations at the centenary. Artistic director of Age Exchange David Savill expressed his concern that 'in the many 100s (sic) of centenary projects taking part (sic) across the UK, none it appeared, reached out to Germany to explore working together on an anniversary project. My worry was that many UK (sic) projects were focussed on victory, on national remembrance rather than the impact war had on families and individuals at the tie and on their children and grandchildren across the generations.'[136]

The Age Exchange project saw descendants of both British and German veterans and war dead meet in a series of interview 'memory-sharing' events, and participants had multitudes of reasons for taking part. Whatever the reason people had for taking part, however, it became apparent to academic observers that the experience was very meaningful. Michael Roper and Rachel Duffett emphasised the 'imaginative investments that participants

---

[133] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D639.W7N6, 'No Man's Land: Young people uncover women's viewpoints on the First World War'
[134] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D639.W7N6, 'No Man's Land: Young people uncover women's viewpoints on the First World War'
[135] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D640.A2M44, 'Meeting in No Man's Land: British and German memories of World War One'', and 'Meeting in No Man's Land: German and British Elders Exchange Family Histories from the First World War', Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/partnerships/mapping-the-centenary/projects/meeting-in-no-mans-land-german-and-british-elders-exchange-family-histories-from-the-first-world-war> [30th March 2026]
[136] 'Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D640.A2M44, 'Meeting in No Man's Land: British and German memories of World War One'

were making in their ancestors' First World War past, investments that were simultaneously emotional and historical.'[137] This work also demonstrated how imaginative historical thinking helped participants conceptualise their ancestors war experience, which in turn informed their own reflections on war and conflict. One fiercely pacifist participant, whose grandfather had served on the Somme, explained his ancestor's 141-day experience as one extended scene of 'mud, blood and madness', where Roper and Duffett theorised that for this inherited memory experience, 'time and geography were condensed.'[138]

This project also showed evidence of a sense of embodiment the memory of the First World War was felt to still have to these participants, this time across both generations and borders. The voiceover for the YouTube video specifically mentions how 'the war from a hundred years ago still lives within each of us,'[139] with emotional conversations between participants demonstrating the embodied and deeply meaningful sense the war still had when being discussed as part of 'Meeting in No Man's Land'.

Imagining contemporary applications to the frontier space has allowed for stories to be explored beyond the traditional 'tragic trench soldier,'[140] and allow for the exploration of stories of hope, opportunity and reconciliation that is often left out of British memory of the First World War. Imagining the landscapes of the Western Front differently also allowed for an investigation into how the landscape had been used imaginatively as a frontier space during the war.

Whilst the first two projects explored in this section deal with the reframing of the concept of 'no man's land', the final project explores the battlefield through its Victorian

[137] Michael Roper and Rachel Duffett, 'Family Legacies in the Centenary: Motives for First World War Commemoration among British and German Descendants.' *History and Memory* (2018) 30.1, pp. 76–115.
[138] Roper and Duffett, 'Family Legacies in the Centenary', pp. 76–115.
[139] 'Meeting in No Man's Land' AgeExchange, (n.d.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtOvjVihEfA>, [30th March 2026] Timestamp: 1.25-1.35
[140] Noakes and Wallis, 'The People's Centenary?' pp. 56 - 81. DOI https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2022.44.2.56

conceptualisation as a 'game field', interrogating its use as a recruiting tool and uncovering conceptions of masculinity. *The Greater Game* project looks at the role of sports and their application to warfare and recruitment, encouraging men to see the war as a controllable landscape that was accessible and exciting, growing out of the 'ideology of athleticism'[141] explored by Richard Holt and J. A. Mangan.[142] Taking the form of a museum exhibition, *The Greater Game* committed to explore the 'fact and fiction behind the famous Christmas Truce matches as well as commemorating the sacrifices made by players from clubs across the land.'[143] The project explores the role that football took during the war, ranging from recruitment, relaxation for troops, and as a battlefield tactic, a way to encourage troops to go over the top, following the ball in an attack.[144] The Victorian public school emphasised the outdoors as a 'male space', where field sports and hunting (and by extension, warfare and conflict) were the preferred expressions of masculinity.[145] In being encouraged to see the frontier of battles like the Somme as an adventure-scape, *The Greater Game* explores how this operated in practice at the front, with officers who kicked the football starting off an attack being lauded for their gallantry.[146]

The Director of the National Football Museum, Kevin Moore, invited visitors to reflect on how 'even in some of the world's darkest times, the love of football and the spirit of the game continues.'[147] Whilst reviews of the exhibition have yet to be uncovered by this research, the accompanying booklet to the exhibition indicates that whilst this project did

[141] Richard Holt, 'The Amateur Body and the Middle-class Man: Work, Health and Style in Victorian Britain', *Sport in History*, (2006) 26.3, pp. 352–369. https://doi-org.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/17460260601065953
[142] J A Mangan (ed) *Making European masculinities – Sport, Europe, Gender* (Frank Cass, 2000), pp.1 – 3.
[143] 'Mather & Co designs "the greater game" exhibition to mark ww1 centenary for the football museum' Museums and Heritage Advisor, (19th December 2014) https://museumsandheritage.com/advisor/posts/mather-co-designs-the-greater-game-exhibition-to-mark-ww1-centenary-for-the/ [16th December 2025]
[144] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D 639 .S76, 'The Greater Game – A History of Football in World War I'
[145] James A Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology*, (Cambridge University press 1981), p. 5.
[146] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D 639 .S76, 'The Greater Game – A History of Football in World War I'
[147] 'Mather & Co designs "the greater game" exhibition to mark ww1 centenary for the football museum' Museums and Heritage Advisor, (19th December 2014) https://museumsandheritage.com/advisor/posts/mather-co-designs-the-greater-game-exhibition-to-mark-ww1-centenary-for-the/ [16th December 2025]

serve to re-enforce traditional ideas around gallantry and sport, *The Greater Game* also highlighted the lesser known stories of football players of colour, as well as women's football.

Working landscapes

The final theme identified in the local projects concerns the landscapes as working places, unravelling some of the allegoric applications of pastoral themes. For example, the Woodland Trust's project established four First World War Centenary Woods in each country of the United Kingdom, highlighting that these woods would be places of remembrance and reflection.[148] The First World War Centenary Woods project emphasised that these spaces were gentle places of reflection, thus continuing the pastoral tradition of the environment in the memory of the war. However, the Woodland Trust took the opportunity at the centenary to highlight that rather than hosting rural sanctuary, the U.K.'s native tree population was working hard during the war. The Future Trees trust estimates that at the start of the twentieth century, just five per cent of Britain was covered with trees, which was further affected by timber imports falling and the increased usage of native woodland for wartime construction.[149] The Woodland Trust also highlighted that unlike human life, the tree population has taken considerably longer to recover, with the U.K. having 'barely a quarter of the woodland cover enjoyed by the average European country.'[150] By reframing the war as one that damaged the U.K.'s natural landscape, the Woodland Trust project ultimately disrupts the idea that Britain is an untouchable rural ideal.

[148] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D 639 .S76 'First World War Centenary Woods - The Woodland Trust',
[149] 'History of our Forests', *Future Trees*, (n.d.) https://www.futuretrees.org/about-us/history-of-our-forests/ [30th March 2026]
[150] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D 639 .S76 'First World War Centenary Woods - The Woodland Trust',



Figure 12 – Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D 639 .S76 'First World War Centenary Woods - The Woodland Trust'. (Author's own image)

A project at that explored the landscape of Cannock Chase during the war demonstrated how the current natural landscape of the area was very different during the war.[151] The project focussed particularly on the stories of the New Zealand soldiers headquartered in the area whilst it was a training camp. The grant holders used this opportunity to demonstrate how non-British stories of the First World War were embedded within the British landscape, using walking groups as one of many access routes to envisioning how the conflict affected the Cannock area.

The groups explored the area through its material heritage, looking at spent training shells, New Zealand rifles graffiti, and the trench training area uncovered by archaeological activity.[152] Both the Cannock project and the Woodland Trust project encouraged people to explore their landscapes to find heritages that are lesser known, with 'getting outside' being quoted as key for the improved feeling of wellbeing in participants of this project, and the

[151] Elaine Batty, Will Eadson, Mark Stevens and Nicola Verdon, 'The New Zealand Rifle Brigade & Cannock Chase 1917-19', Evaluation of Heritage Lottery Fund's First World War Centenary Activity: Year 4 report - Case Study Summaries, (August 2018), <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/corporate/hlf_fww_centenary_activity_year_4_case_study_summaries.pdf> [20th March 2026] pp. 2 – 9, and 'Lest We Forget: The key role of Cannock Chase in the First World War', (n.d.) https://www.cannock-chase.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Lest-We-Forget-compressed.pdf [30th March 2026]

[152] Batty and others, 'The New Zealand Rifle Brigade & Cannock Chase 1917-19', <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/corporate/hlf_fww_centenary_activity_year_4_case_study_summaries.pdf> [20th March 2026] p. 4.

ongoing impact of working environments are paramount.[153] These projects, along with projects that explored wartime allotments[154] and farming practices[155] encouraged investigation into working land heritages that went beyond the traditional pastoral iteration of landscapes in war memory. These working environments contributed to the war effort too, and they are not just historic case studies, they continue to work for their local communities.

Conclusion

Despite the creative interpretations of landscape explored by local communities during the centenary, the popularity of the poppies at the tower, and the continued appearance of poppy themed crafts, clothes and garden designs around remembrance events demonstrate the continuing hold of pastoral memories of the war. Many projects at the centenary, especially those that followed traditional themes of national remembrance, did not expand beyond the bounds of the British experience. In landscape projects which explored the foreign resting places of British soldiers, emphasis was often placed on the 'Englishness' of the scene, or imagined these men to be 'in English soil' quite literally, rather than the globalised nature of a war that had led to these foreign burials.

The nationally led projects *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* and the Cornish *100* projects explored here demonstrate that the environment enabled an affective, emotional and embodied experience of the past for some audience members. The aesthetic quality of the environment mediated through these projects, alongside the 'local remembrance and landscapes' themed projects funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, highlight how creative

[153] Batty and others, 'The New Zealand Rifle Brigade & Cannock Chase 1917-19', <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/corporate/hlf_fww_centenary_activity_year_4_case_study_summaries.pdf> [20th March 2026] p. 11.
[154] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, (no item number) War and Peas: Feeding People in times of Conflict
[155] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, (no item number) Food, Farming and Fishing in Devon during the First World War

applications of the landscape in national memory moments help to condense time and geography to foster a perception of the past. This perception of the First World War via the environment places the war dead actually *in* the local British environment, whether planted in the form of a poppy at significant historic sites, hiding behind a veil-like gateway in a lost garden, or imagined to be growing in the earth of their local landscapes. Rather than indicating a shift away from identities mediated through national definitions of an 'English' landscape, these projects built on and broadened traditional applications of the landscape to identity, adding in local experiences to a national story.

In doing so, however, the centenary created the opportunity to redefine the traditional stories of the war, whilst still keeping them nationally relevant. Sarah Lloyd and Julie Moore have written on the experience collaboration and co-production had on their understanding of community histories, stating that

> The connections are not always direct or explicit, but they are evocative, and this quality can suggest ideas and questions beyond the collection and archiving of material. By insisting that this particular story matters, the imagination and enthusiasm of the group transform a set of facts into a living history…In some senses we act in relation to these projects as a memory exchange, and we bring to them particularly academic preoccupations with comparison and context.[156]

We can see how the vitality brought to these projects by co-creation makes the event being studied and memorialised seem closer and more relevant, again making time slip between the past and present.

Despite the continuing popularity of the rural ideal in the memory of the war, some creative interventions at the centenary demonstrate how these traditional imaginings of the First World War can be subverted, particularly when considering the *Black Poppies* project, the 'No Man's Land' related projects and the photography of Dewe Mathews. These

[156] Sarah Lloyd and Julie Moore, 'Sedimented Histories: Connections, Collaborations and Co-production in Regional History', *History Workshop Journal*, (2015), 80.1, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbv017

interventions shine a light on the historic silences these pastoral lenses have facilitated in the past. Whilst the Age Exchange project used a multinational approach to consider reconciliation and renegotiation of memories at the centenary, Dewe Mathews work uses multinational landscapes to cast a critical eye on allied culpability for the deaths of its men. In doing so, these projects in particular highlight the agency the environment is felt to have in storytelling, and employ this by pulling apart conceptions of time, space and language to reassert nontraditional stories about the war and shared experiences of trauma across generational and geographical boundaries.

The understanding of the agency of the environment was also apparent in the local projects that explored 'working landscapes', some of which were keen to assert the 'work' the environment was perceived to have put into the war effort, thus attempting to demystify and demythologise ideas of the landscape as either a mechanised hellscape of war, or a rural idyll to retreat to. These projects demonstrated the impact a foreign war had on local environments and showed how local landscapes are deeply embedded into the narrative of the First World War in Britain.

However, what is apparent across many local remembrance projects is the *meaning* that is felt by communities that comes from the act of remembering the local war dead. One project participant expressed his hope that their work at the centenary had 'done justice'[157] to the memory of their local war dead, and these projects demonstrated clear understandings that the men that they are researching are 'their' men. These projects dealt with complex place-based concepts which demonstrated the continued complexities of overseas burials and community ownership of local stories. Local projects that explored the stories of local war

[157] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA 690 .C517 'Christleton Great War Stories: Special Commemoration marking the Centenary of World War One'

dead were commonly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and the application of the environment to these stories further highlights forms of 'conceptual slippage'.

By implanting the war dead into the British landscape, local and national projects mirror the practice of Commonwealth War Grave sites which often 'emplanted' the English pastoral ideal abroad, forever connecting the war dead with the mythologised English pastoral landscape, and becoming a British 'elysian fields' for fallen servicemen. It is through these pastoral modes of contact that distortions of time and spaces are most easily imagined, as demonstrated in the experiences of visitors to *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red.* Whilst popular national projects like the Poppy Tour did sanitise and streamline complex narratives about the war, its popularity clearly demonstrates an acute understanding that the landscape (in many forms) is an integral part of the memory of the war, and local projects used the centenary to explore and sometimes even challenge established narratives. It is through these local interventions that there were some 'truly national' moments that reflected locally felt and often hard-fought conceptions of Britishness that sit outside of the traditional imagination.

By expanding landscapes of the war to look beyond dominant pastoral narratives, local projects in general demonstrated that diverse, community led, learning based projects, localised heritage and memories of the war and provided contact with tangible, working landscapes, which encouraged community development and cultural understanding. By continuing to fund and support local and community led heritage interventions, this can not only make inequalities visible,[158] but also begin to deconstruct deeply held and widely felt cultural memories, making *memory* inequalities more visible.

[158] By this I refer to the HLF's understanding of and wish to capture engagement with communities and areas that are less likely to engage in arts and heritage, see London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_06_02_02_02_01_001_001_2 (n.d.) 'First World War Cultural Programme Board - draft terms of reference'. Scholarship suggests that by advocating for community led creative work, this should help tackle the pervasive inequalities found in the creative and cultural sectors, see Dave O'Brien, Mark Taylor, and Orian Brook's, *Culture is Bad for You: Inequality in the Cultural and Creative Industries*, (Manchester University Press, 2020) pp. 277-278. It is

3: 'Come along, boys – Enlist today!'[159]/ 'It is YOUR DUTY'[160] - Remembering men at the centenary of the First World War

> …. I got up to go to the remembrance service at our village church. I've never actually been to one here before, but since I've been researching the lives of the men whose names appear on the memorial, it seemed rude not to attend this 100th anniversary tribute. On the 1911 census we see that these men, mostly in their twenties, were shoe smiths, wheelwrights, agricultural labourers and carters. Some were married with children, some still living with their parents and siblings. It is quite sobering to think of them getting on with life, making plans, unaware that within a few short years they would die in the 'war to end all wars'.[161]

Introduction - Men during the war

Men are the central characters in the traditional story of remembrance in Britain, and their presence in the memorialisation practices were bound to be a key part of the centenary commemorations. As demonstrated by the opening quotation from a Mass Observation respondent (MOR), a common imagination of the men of the First World War are the men who died. The fact remains however, that the majority of men who served survived, and returned after the war, and those men experienced the war in many ways and through multifaced experiences. As Dan Todman suggests, our understanding of the experience of the men who took part in the war has been skewed by the memory of two separate figures; the silent veteran, remembered as and presumably muted by their horrific and unspeakable experiences, and the soldier writer, communicating horrors of a war which had destroyed even those men that had survived it.[162] As Todman asserts, these figures can obscure views of the past which may speak to a variety of realities that were experienced by millions of men.

---

my view that in engaging with diverse creators and practitioners, seldom heard histories will be made more visible, and thus reduce inequalities in memory practices for some communities, see Chapter Five: Foreign fields, 'fighting for the flag' and forgetting – Empire soldiers represented at the Centenary

[159] *Come Along, Boys!* (1915) Lithograph on paper, 758 mm x 506 mm. Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM PST 11448) < https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/4167> [1st April 2026]

[160] *Trained Men - It is Your Duty,* (1915) Lithograph on paper, 743 mm x 499 mm, Imperial War Museum (Art.IWM PST 5098), https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/28400 [1st April 2026]

[161] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent W1813

[162] Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory,* (Hambledon and London, 2005), p. 20.

How then, were the men of the First World War remembered through the creative interventions of the centenary, and how were multiple experiences of war communicated?

First, we must try to understand experiences of the soldiers during the war, and immediately afterwards. Many men felt that they wished to be a part of a great historical event, and mark themselves out as warriors, who have seen and done things that others have not.[163] George Robb has argued that the First World War reinforced traditional and romantic imaginings of gender, equating combat with sexual virility, manly adventure and as being vital to the imperial mission.[164] Whilst the regular army and some imperial forces began their engagements on the Western Front in 1914, in Britain, large numbers of men joined up in the first few weeks of August, with Adrian Gregory analysing that by 22nd August the number of enlistments had grown to over 100,000.[165] Many men joined locally raised 'pals' battalions, encouraged by propaganda posters and films encouraging men to enlist, and often buoyed by a sense of enthusiasm and excitement.[166] Interviews with veterans undertaken by the Imperial War Museum indicate the mood in 1914 Britain of about the worries of a speedy war that had to be reached before it was over, did not match with the reality of the front lines, with one veteran stating:

> Everybody said; 'It'll be over by Christmas and you've got to get out soon, otherwise you won't see anything'. But I don't know if it was my opinion, or if everybody was saying it. One certainly changed one's mind when we found how well-organised Jerry was compared with us for instance.[167]

Adrian Gregory and Catriona Pennell have highlighted that the gathering of the public upon entering the war should be understood rather as a moment of anxiety rather than

[163] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, p. 13
[164] George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, (Palgrave, 2002), p. 33.
[165] Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*, (Cambridge University Press, 2008) p. 31
[166] 'Voices of the First World War: Joining Up', Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/voices-of-the-first-world-war-joining-up> [1st April 2026]
[167] 'Voices of the First World War: Over By Christmas', Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/voices-of-the-first-world-war-over-by-christmas> [1st April 2026]

excitement,[168] with Gregory demonstrating that new reports in the lead up to the war were full of both pro and anti-war anticipatory feeling.[169]

Through joining up, men were classified for service through a complex series of physical examinations, which differentiated whether they were either: fit for general service, fit for service in a support role, only fit for service at 'home' (i.e. in Britain), or not fit for service at all.[170] In spite of the realisation that the war may be longer than initially anticipated, many men especially from the middle and working classes found that their bodies were greatly changed once they entered the army. Some men gained stones of weight and were getting 'fitter and fitter'[171] as their training went on.

Nevertheless, the memory of fit, excited, naïve young men entering the war only to be obliterated remains a point of reference in the memory of the First World War. Phillip Larkin's poem MCMXIV speaks of 'never such innocence again',[172] and this excited naivety of youth provides another 'horseshoe of memory' moment for one MOR to make sense of their present day understanding of young people through an understanding of the past:

> The men who went to the front were looking for excitement and adventure, they were young and foolhardy, egging each other on not seeing the big picture or the danger. Teenagers today are still like this, doing silly things, egging each other on, without thinking of the consequences…[173]

Whilst it is a fair consideration that the volunteers of 1914-15 may not have understood the far-reaching consequences of industrial warfare, it remains the case that many veterans were proud of their service, and understood the war and their role within it as part of their broader conception of nationalism and the citizen-service bargain.[174] Once at the front, regular

[168] Catriona Pennell, A Kingdom United: popular responses to the outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland, (Oxford University Press, 2012) p. 38
[169] Gregory, *The Last Great War* p. 17
[170] Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male; Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, (Reaktion books, 1999), p. 172.
[171] Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p. 175
[172] Phillip Larkin, *MCMXIV*, (n.d.) https://allpoetry.com/Mcmxiv [1st April 2026]
[173] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent W632
[174] This concept feeds into much of the analysis in this thesis and is explored further in chapter five.

soldiers, conscripts and volunteers alike experienced exhaustion, excitement, terror and boredom. However, even for those men conscripted from 1916 onwards, Dan Todman asserts that most men seemed to believe in the righteousness of the British cause, which gave many men a sense of purpose.[175] Whilst over 700,000 British men were killed, and a similar number injured (many permanently),[176] it is important to remember that many men did what they believed to be their duty, and through that sense of duty, they experienced a variety of experiences and emotions that ranged from laughter to terror and beyond.[177] How these complex narratives are managed in memory can further compound narratives of futility. Helen McCartney has argued that whilst family histories can provide a link to the past for many, the challenge of placing family stories in a broader, more complex narrative is compounded by the fact that many popular sources of information that family historians are directed to as part of their exploration tend to re-assert narratives of futility.[178] Her work additionally highlights that the family history approach can also cloud understandings of the past through empathetic responses. Drawing on David Cameron's reflections on how he connected with his military ancestors, 'imagining' how they thought and felt, McCartney posits that memory practices of the First World War encourage empathy for the men who served through a sometimes boundless medium of emotional imagination, without providing tools or knowledge with which to guide that empathy.[179]

As Jessica Meyer has argued, the narrative of warfare continues to be dominated by those who fought as soldiers.[180] Combat roles were the focus for much of army recruitment efforts, and women's involvement in the war was made increasingly possible by the movement of female labour into auxiliary roles in order to 'free up' men to take up front line

[175] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, p. 5.
[176] Gregory, The Last Great War p. 1.
[177] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, p. 5.
[178] Helen B. McCartney, 'The First World War soldier and his contemporary image in Britain', I*nternational Affairs*, (2014) 90.2, pp. 299–315, https://doi-org.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12110
[179] McCartney, 'The First World War soldier', pp. 299–315
[180] Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p. 1.

duties.[181] However, whilst combat roles are particularly remembered, many 'supporting' roles existed at the front, which were often operating in perilous conditions without weaponry. Meyer has explored the conceptions of masculinity that has been applied to the service of the Royal Army Medical Corp, whose work 'bringing mercy, relieving wounds, and assuaging torment was not sufficient to lay claim to the full heroism associated with male military duty and sacrifice.'[182]The auxiliary roles also offered a space for some pacifist societies to perform war work in roles that focused on healing rather than harming, with Quaker communities setting up 'friends ambulance units' that operated across the front lines. Auxiliary roles were also the most diverse areas of the army, with the ranks made up of a broad spectrum of men from across the world, including British men. Whilst British, Indian, Australian, New Zealand, Canadian and white South African soldiers were able to take up combat roles, Chinese, African and West Indian servicemen served at the front in predominantly auxiliary units. These experiences will be further explored in chapter five.

British social and cultural discourses had affirmed that war would 'make men', and the survivors of war would invigorate society with their newly acquired physical health and moral strength.[183] These 'new men' sometimes found that these benefits of war, and their new found physical prowess led some civilians to doubt their accounts of war that emphasised horror and decimation.[184] At the end of the war, soldiers who returned found society had sometimes changed considerably from when they had left, and some found that their return was far from what they had anticipated. Four years of absence and the changes wrought by the war, along with the emphasis on mourning the dead rather than celebrating the return of the living[185] led to a muted return for one veteran:

[181] Lucy Noakes, *Women in the British Army: War and the Gentle Sex, 1907 – 1948* (Routledge, 2006) pp. 64–71.
[182] Jessica Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, (Oxford University Press, 2019) p. 1.
[183] Meyer, *An Equal Burden,* p. 3.
[184] Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p. 175.
[185] Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 97.

> Naturally, we were pleased to be home and we were looking forward to the sort of welcome which we'd heard which said we would be welcomed and we should be kissed on our arrival. But, in point of fact, the atmosphere and the reception which greeted us was one of returned jail escapers.[186]

Those with disabilities often found that the roles they had anticipated returning to or taking up were now unattainable, with a lack of state support forcing men to rely on charity which further alienated them from a world where economic independence remained a key ideal.[187] Returning soldiers who were promised 'homes fit for heroes' after the war, could now find themselves isolated from their families and support structures through mental ill health and/or disfigurement, unable to work and with no state safety net to support them. Those that were able to receive military pensions were often able to draw upon reserves of time, energy, wealth and support to lobby their case, leaving those without such reserves having to turn to the voluntary sector.[188]

Along with practical challenges, post war society had cultural considerations to make too. How to talk about, mark, and remember the war was consistently negotiated through the 1920s and 30s.[189] Whilst many men who took part in the war would have experienced schooling, the ability to express their own experiences of the First World War would have varied. Many may have struggled with talking about their experiences simply because they were of a generation where forms of expression were very different to modern cultures of sharing.[190] Additionally, trauma and conflict can scramble cohesive narratives, making remembering events which men had tried to not to dwell on difficult to recall at a later stage.[191] Understanding conditions of warfare are often intrinsic to storytelling, and Meyer has suggested that the inability to share stories of soldiering indicate an inability to integrate

[186] 'Voices of the First World War: Homecoming', Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/voices-of-the-first-world-war-homecoming> [1st April 2026]
[187] Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 98
[188] Meyer, *Men of War*, pp. 98-104
[189] Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, pp. 217-224
[190] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, pp. 8 - 12
[191] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, pp. 8 - 12

their identities as soldiers with the domestic identities they returned to.[192] Finding themselves in a post war society that struggled to make sense of how to properly mark, memorialise and manage its immediate memory, veterans of the war may have simple not wished to add to a social rhetoric which (perhaps inadvertently) pitted survivors of the war against their dead comrades.

14-18 NOW – Re-bodying a traditionally 'bodyless' space

As Dan Todman has suggested, narratives of sacrifice and futility have shaped modern understandings of the war due to the social and economic pressures of the 20s and 30s, the experience of the Second World War and the renegotiation of social, political and heritage discourses during the latter half of the twentieth century.[193] In the 2014 Mass Observation directive, one respondent reasserted their belief that 'the odds against survival were unbelievably high…(and) futility is the overriding sense I felt when reading anything about the Great War.'[194]

As explored in the previous chapter, there were 14-18 NOW projects that used pastoral and rural themes to eulogise the war dead through allegoric means. The projects explored here specifically emplace male bodies within the landscapes of war, and it the form these emplacements took at the centenary that can reveal how men of the First World War are remembered. With no remaining veterans of the First World War living at the centenary, there also remains the question of how to remember those that returned from the war, whose accounts furnished much scholarship of war during the memory boom of the 80s and 90s.

Performance was the main mode of representing the experience of men during the First World War. 42 of the commissions of 14-18 NOW dealt directly with the experiences of men

[192] Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 164
[193] Todman, *Myth and Memory* (whole book)
[194] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent B1771

of any role or background during the First World War. Over two thirds of those artworks used theatrical performance to convey these experiences, far outweighing any other medium.[195] 1916 and the experience of the Somme was highlighted to be a key focus of the British commemoration at the centenary by the First World War cultural programme board.[196] On the 30th June, overnight vigils were held across the U.K. in preparation for commemorations on the 1st July, with the BBC broadcasting live commemorative events from the Thiepval Memorial.[197] In Manchester, a national commemorative service took place at Manchester Cathedral, and was followed by a people's procession through Manchester to Heaton Park, where live performances of music, spoken word and dance recalled the lives of those lost in the Manchester pals battalions.[198] In the days leading up to the anniversary of the first day of the battle of the Somme, BBC 2 broadcast a heavily pastoral trailer drawing attention to the upcoming events, emphasising the legacy of thanks owed by a nation to servicepeople who are no longer living, and anticipating an emotional reckoning with the centenary of the Somme.[199]

We're Here Because We're Here

On the 1st July 2016, the social media network Twitter played host to a performance of real-time remembrance. First World War 'soldiers' had appeared on the streets of the United Kingdom, handing out small cards indicating the name of a soldier killed on the first day on the Somme a hundred years earlier, along with some regimental information. The public

[195] Calculated by analysing the contents of the 14-18 NOW publication of works, which showed 29 pieces used theatrical performance or actors to convey experiences of the men of the First World War, compared with 14 pieces did not use theatrical performance.
[196] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_06_02_02_02_01_001_001_2 (n.d.) 'First World War Cultural Programme Board - draft terms of reference'
[197] 'Nationwide vigils to remember The Somme', (20th November 2015) <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nationwide-vigils-to-remember-the-somme>, [1st April 2026], and 'Battle of the Somme: Royals at Somme centenary commemoration', BBC News, (1st July 2016), https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36674451 [1st April 2026]
[198] 'Somme 100 - Heaton Park in World War One', Manchester City Council, (n.d.) https://www.manchester.gov.uk/parks-leisure-and-the-arts/parks-playgrounds-allotments-and-open-spaces/heaton-park/somme-100-commemoration [1st April 2026]
[199] Several days before the 1st July 2016, the BBC broadcast trailers for upcoming commemorative events. This trailer anticipated 'The Vigil', the beginning of the Commemorations for the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme. 'Trailer: Centenary of the Battle of The Somme: The Vigil', BBC Two, (28th June 2016) < https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03zslrj> [7th April 2026]

engaged with the piece as perfectly as the artist could have hoped for – taking pictures, documenting these 'apparitions' and mapping these temporary visitors on the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. The public reaction to the piece was mighty - there were at least 340 million impressions worldwide recorded of people engaging with the project online, and the hashtag #wearehere trending for over 14 hours, with at least 2 million people experiencing the work live, and over 30 million experiencing it via social media.[200] Whereas many physical performance art pieces face challenges regarding the posterity of their creation, the documentation of the project on social media by the public meant that *We're Here Because We're Here* became a physical *and* digital project created in part by the audience themselves.

Described as a 'living memorial' by the artist, *We're Here Because We're Here* sits at odds with the traditional remembrance rituals in the United Kingdom. Conceived by Jeremy Deller, a Turner Prize winning artist known for his political performance art, collaborated with Rufus Norris, who was at the time the artistic director and chief executive of the National Theatre to deliver his response to the 'ordered, unchanging' Cenotaph ceremony, opting for something much more random in appearance and trajectory. As all its participants are dead, Deller believed society had lost the 'human connection to the war, and as such, wanted to deliver a 'jolt' for the public.[201] What he got, he did not expect[202] - a digital love letter from the British people, with millions of online and in person interactions and people brought to tears at the sight of such a moving display. One performer commented, 'For the stoic British public, there was a lot of crying.'[203]

[200] 14-18 NOW, *We're Here Because We're Here*, *YouTube*, (n.d.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pd1XYx27_U> [27th October 2021]
[201] 14-18 NOW, 'Meet the Creatives behind *We're Here Because We're Here*, *YouTube*, (15th July 2016), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJEy5Y3JFCU [1st April 2026]
[202] 14-18 NOW, 'Meet the Creatives behind *We're Here Because We're Here*, *YouTube*, (15th July 2016), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJEy5Y3JFCU [1st April 2026]
[203] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_03_09_001_002_2, 'A contemporary memorial: breaking new ground – evaluation of *We're Here Because We're Here* April 2017, (Morris Hargreaves Macintyre), p. 21.

Although not a typical pageant, *We're Here Because We're Here* borrows heavily from the heritage of pageant performance in the United Kingdom. Although not quite the same as historical re-enactments or so-called 'living history', historical pageants raise similar questions about the ways in which the past is represented and 'experienced'.[204] Although Bartie et. Al. acknowledges that popular interest in pageantry has undoubtedly declined, remnants of it survive and echoes still occur.[205] *We're Here Because We're Here'*s apparent re-enactment of soldiers killed on the First day of the Somme in full costume bridged the distance that separated the present from the past. By making the present feel and seem strange and distant, Deller 'made' this event into the time of historical experience[206] and spun a reality that bridged between the same day in 1916 and 2016 respectively. For the public, this resulted in an interaction which created a confusing mix of emotions and brought a sense of John Berger's 'mystifying experience'.[207] One audience member explained their sense of

> …surprise and a strange mix of feelings…obviously (sic) understood why they're here, but also a strange sense of…uncomfortable-ness (sic) and loss for a bunch of people I would have never met and weren't in my generation.[208]

Another audience member spoke to how they experienced *We're Here Because We're Here* as both an exciting moment in what was otherwise meant to be an ordinary day, and an acknowledgement of a sombre history, feeling 'that weird mixture of emotions of both…excitement and enjoyment in that piece of public display. But also like, remembrance and… sadness of what has happened in the past.'[209] This shared moment in time, across time could be seen in the emotional interactions between audience members and performers and

[204] Mark Freeman, 'Splendid Display; Pompous Spectacle': historical pageants in twentieth-century Britain' *Social History*, 38.4, pp. 423 – 455.
[205] Angela Bartie, Lorraine Fleming, Mark Freeman and others, *Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain*, (UCL Press, 2020), p. 1.
[206] Patrick Greaney, 'Rescuing the Past, Repetition and Re-enactment in Jeremy Deller, Andrea Geyer, and Sharon Hayes' *in Postscript: Writing after Conceptual Art*, ed by Andrea Andersson, (University of Toronto Press, 2018) pp. 93 - 107.
[207] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972) pp. 10 – 11.
[208] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_03_09_001_002_2, 'A contemporary memorial: breaking new ground – evaluation of *We're Here Because We're Here* April 2017' (Morris Hargreaves Macintyre), p. 17.
[209] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_03_09_001_002_2, 'A contemporary memorial: breaking new ground – evaluation of *We're Here Because We're Here* April 2017' (Morris Hargreaves Macintyre), p. 18.

demonstrates the tension between the excitement and anticipation of a pageant type event, and the understandings of social expectations of remembrance and its associated performances of grief. In a way, these responses mirror the heritage of pageants themselves as nation building tools, creating a link between history and the present in a national setting, building on Benedict Anderson's understanding of *Imagined Communities*.[210] *We're Here Because We're Here* demonstrated a view of the past that encouraged people to reflect on the First World War and what they knew of it, which supported the meaningful engagement desired by David Cameron in his 2013 speech. Following Bartie et al's argument, a sense of continuity was created between the past and the present, between the stories of the First World War, and a 2016 moment that asserted that the First World War means something to 'who we are as a people.'[211] Helen McCartney has argued that the emphasis placed on the death toll of the Somme also led to a particular focus on British experience of the battle, rather than placing it in the broader context of a world war, thus narrowing the commemorative landscape.[212]

However, Jeremy Deller specifically wanted to avoid a sense of romanticising the first day of the Somme. When speaking of his surprise at the reaction his piece evoked, he acknowledges that 'When working with the public, they bring their own interpretation, (and) some people did bring a sense of sentimentality.'[213] His previous work reimagining the Battle of Orgreave (which took place during the miners strikes of 1984) was envisaged by him to be a 'form of public enquiry or, more viscerally, an autopsy of an exhumed corpse. Or even possibly as a reenactment of a crime in its original setting….it was intended to make people

[210] Benedict, Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd ed (Verso, 1991)
[211] Bartie and others, *Restaging the Past*, p. 14, and 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> [12th August 2025]
[212] Helen B. McCartney, 'Commemorating the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme in Britain.' *War & Society,* (2017) 36.4, pp. 289–303. DOI:10.1080/07292473.2017.1384138.
[213] Jeremy Deller speaking in 14-18 NOW, 'Meet the Creatives behind *We're Here Because We're Here*, *YouTube*, (15th July 2016), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJEy5Y3JFCU [15th October 2024]

angry again.'[214] When developing *We're Here Because We're Here,* Deller wanted something that came to the public, an intervention that they weren't expecting or maybe not even wanting – but they would have to deal with.[215] Deller wanted these performers to look odd, out of place and for them to unsettle the public, going as far to say he wated to make 'children cry', and training the performers to anticipate potential conflicts with the public.[216] In bringing the past to the public without their prior knowledge,[217] *We're Here Because We're Here* attempted to provoke a reckoning with the concept of 'Lest We Forget', but instead of provoking antagonistic responses, Deller surprised even himself when his project provoked an outpouring of grief, which appeared to be a sort-of performance in itself. McCartney has argued that the silence of the soldiers participating in the memorial helped to create space for the public to form their own opinions and reactions, potentially allowing them to draw different moral conclusions to Deller's own reflections on war.[218] One performer felt he 'demanded a response by (his) presence', and another described the holding a 'moment' with a member of the public who had begun crying before even approaching the soldier performers.[219] Even at the centenary, the First World War is still expressing Fussell's conception of irony.[220]

By opening a connection to the past, *We're Here Because We're Here* felt preternatural too, and was inspired by reported sightings of the dead by families during the First World War.[221] Although Deller is explicit that these soldiers are not 'ghosts',[222] descriptions of the

---

[214] Jeremy Deller, '" It was intended to make people angry again": Jeremy Deller on restaging the Battle of Orgreave,' *The Guardian*, (23rd April 2023) https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/apr/23/jeremy-deller-art-is-magic-extract-orgreave-stonehenge-murdochs [1st April 2026]
[215] Jeremy Deller speaking in 14-18 NOW, 'Meet the Creatives behind *We're Here Because We're Here*, *YouTube*, (15th July 2016), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJEy5Y3JFCU [15th October 2024]
[216] Jeremy Deller speaking in 14-18 NOW, 'Meet the Creatives behind *We're Here Because We're Here*, *YouTube*, (15th July 2016), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJEy5Y3JFCU [15th October 2024]
[217] Charlotte Higgins, '#Wearehere: Somme tribute revealed as Jeremy Deller work' *The Guardian* (1st July 2016) <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jul/01/wearehere-battle-somme-tribute-acted-out-across-britain> [15th October 2024]
[218] McCartney, 'Commemorating the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme', pp. 289–303. DOI:10.1080/07292473.2017.1384138.
[219] 14-18 NOW, 'Meet the Creatives behind *We're Here Because We're Here*, *YouTube*, (15th July 2016), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJEy5Y3JFCU [15th October 2024]
[220] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 3rd ed, (Oxford University Press, 2013) pp. 3-39.
[221] Jeremy Deller speaking in 14-18 NOW, 'Meet the Creatives behind *We're Here Because We're Here*, *YouTube*, (15th July 2016), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJEy5Y3JFCU [15th October 2024]
[222] Jeremy Deller speaking in 14-18 NOW, 'Meet the Creatives behind *We're Here Because We're Here*, *YouTube*, (15th July 2016), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJEy5Y3JFCU [15th October 2024]

event by the press and even director of 14-18 NOW Jenny Waldman continually describe them so.[223] Crucially, the artists maintain that the performers are not representing anyone in particular, they are simply men wearing First World War uniforms, commemorating the first Day on the Somme. They are simply just there – they're there because they're there.

> If they speak they become re-enactors, living history…they'd have to assume a character for a day. We didn't want that – we wanted them to have a detached quality to them. There is no narrative. They are not playing or acting the men who fought. They are a presence.[224]

The performers are not representing the people that are depicted on the cards handed out, but the project cleverly leads the audience to imagine that they are.



Figure 13 - Performers at Kings Cross Station, as part of the #wearehere commemoration, 1st July 2016, (Billthom, own work, Wikimedia creative commons) <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:We%27re_Here_Because_We%27re_Here_-_Kings_Cross.jpg> (CC BY-SA 4.0) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

[223] Jenny Waldman, 'Remembering the ghost soldiers of the Somme,' *The Art Newspaper*, (1 March 2017), <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2017/03/01/remembering-the-ghost-soldiers-of-the-somme> [17th August 2024], Alexander Robertson and Steph Cockroft 'The spine-tingling moment commuters in Glasgow were moved to tears as actors dressed as fallen soldiers sung a poignant WWI song from the trenches at Battle of the Somme' The Daily Mail, (1 July 2016) <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3669617/Silent-actors-dressed-ghost-soldiers-posted-stations-country-poignant-reminder-lost-bloody-Battle-Somme.html> [1st April 2026] , 'Artists behind "ghost soldiers" project revealed', *BBC News*, (1st July 2016), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-36682140>, [17th August 2024], and 14-18 NOW, 'Written Evidence submitted by 14-18 NOW', *WWO0073 – Evidence on lessons from the First World War Centenary*, (March 2019) https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/100393/html/ , [17th August 2024]

[224] Jeremy Deller, as quoted by Charlotte Higgins, '#Wearehere: Somme tribute revealed as Jeremy Deller work' *The Guardian* (1st July 2016) <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jul/01/wearehere-battle-somme-tribute-acted-out-across-britain> [15th October 2024]

We're Here Because We're Here challenged the notion of the veil between the living and the dead. Inadvertently, Deller and Norris had conjured an image of British male youth that Britain has mourned for over one hundred years, and physically, rather than metaphorically place 'the dead' at the centre of remembrance with *We're Here Because We're Here*. By 're-bodying' a memorial event in a country where memorialisation is usually marked by the absence of the dead, Deller and Norris upended the physical landscape of remembrance and captured the imagination of their audiences. The dead did not appear with their death wounds, however. Joseph Roach has explored why perceiving 'whole' bodies of the dead matter, explaining that 'pretty ghosts characteristically mark the incidence of an inversion of human expectations. When young people die 'before their time,' their passing upends death's usual protocols…this is particularly so when young people die in large numbers.'[225]

It seems that rather than holding a mirror up to society about the cost of war, *We're Here Because We're Here* inadvertently plays into the established narrative of sentimental remembrance. *We're Here Because We're Here* was meant to confront. It was created to highlight the idea of men frozen in a stage of crystallisation by the insistence of remembrance and ultimately pull through the humanity behind the stone memorials in a different, 'living memorial'. Deller speaks at length about his perception of 'unscrupulous mediums', who targeted grieving families in the face of loss, yet he captured the concept that spiritualism (of sorts) acted as a kind of living memorial to the dead.[226] Ironically, Deller is in fact the most successful medium – he brought the soldiers of the Somme 'back', in a form that was 'more…reparative than vindictive, more alluring than terrifying, and more inspiring than inspiriting, the secularized ghost-angel figures.'[227]Deller's performance piece shows that

[225] Joseph Roach, '"Pretty Ghost, a Duet": On Dying While You Still Look Good. In Theatre and Ghosts, ed by Mary Luckhurst and Emilie Morin, (Palgrave Macmillan 2014), pp. 128 – 129.
[226] Jennifer Hazelgrove, 'Spiritualism after the Great War,' *Twentieth Century British History*, (1999), 10.4 pp. 404 - 430
[227] Roach, "'Pretty Ghost, A Duet"', p. 130.

despite the artist's best efforts to take seriously the concept of mechanised mass death, there seems to be a sense of comfort in the established narrative of lost heroes that the British press and public refuse to let go of.

They Shall Not Grow Old

The men of the First World War were not all silent at the centenary. Peter Jackson's project *They Shall Not Grow Old* took footage shot during the First World War and attempted to create a narrative of the shared experience many men would have had of their war years, adding colour and sound to a silent and monochromatic archive. Jackson, a New Zealand born film director who brought the Lord of the Rings universe to the screen, is a self-proclaimed 'war nerd', and his personal collection of First World War memorabilia amounts to a museum size collection.[228] The film was given its world premiere at the 62nd BFI London Film Festival as the 'Special Presentation' on 16th October 2018 and was simultaneously screened to cinemas and special venues across the UK with a special post screening Q&A with the director.[229] This 'special broadcast' felt like an invitation to 'flock to the cinema' like the audiences of the *Battle of the Somme* film of 1916,[230] with similar (and at points, the same) footage being watched over 100 years apart. This idea of continuity between the past, present and future was a prominent element of the British experience of modernity in the twentieth century.[231] Whilst Mark Freeman has argued that experiences of modernities have been mediated through similar conceptions of a linear past, present and future in the historical pageants of post-war Britain,[232] Jackson's film uses the voices and

[228] Peter Jackson speaking on 'The Making of THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD' - (2018 Documentary)' Rearview Mirror Media, YouTube, (29th September 2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQE4p6Q0N5Q> on [15th October 2024]
[229] 'World premiere of Peter Jackson's They Shall Not Grow Old announced for 62nd BFI London Film Festival' *British Film Industry*, (21st August 2018) <https://www.bfi.org.uk/news/lff-62-peter-jacksons-they-shall-not-grow-old> [15th October 2024]
[230] 'How the Battle of the Somme was Filmed' *Imperial War Museum*, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/how-the-battle-of-the-somme-was-filmed> [1st April 2026]
[231] Rieger and Daunton, as quoted by Bartie et al, *Restaging the Past,* p. 13.
[232] Bartie et al, *Restaging the Past,* p. 13.

videos of the First World War to create his own re-staging of the past for a digital, twenty-first century audience.

Jackson's film was almost universally celebrated as a triumph. 'It's as if the technology had somehow pierced the surface of the film, causing (virtual?) memories to come pouring out,'[233] remarked one critic. Jackson used state-of-the-art digital technology to restore black-and-white archival footage of the servicemen's lives in training and in the trenches. The footage was colourised and sharpened, and professional lip-readers were used to help dub in what the men are saying, as well as using oral history testimonies collected in the latter half of the 20th century for narrative voiceover.[234] Whilst much emphasis was made on the 'painstaking work' Jackson and his team put in exploring over 100 hours of footage and 600 hours of audio by 14-18 NOW.[235] Lawrence Napper correctly highlights that it was earlier work of archivists in rescanning, cleaning and regrading the master material that was central to the restoration of the original material.[236] With the lack of acknowledgement of this work completely erasing their expertise, and essentially implicating them in an accusation of institutional incompetence in their custodianship of the historic footage, Napper cites the tensions between the heightened media attention on archival projects being incredibly rare, and the sacrifices these experts were obliged to make in order to comply with the messaging of the piece.[237]

14-18 NOW claimed the project brought 'viewers closer to the reality of the First World War than ever before'[238], and there is no doubt that it was both a critical and popular success. Certified as 'fresh' by *Rotten Tomatoes*, the film holds a 99 percent approval rating from 157

[233] Mark Kermode, 'They Shall Not Grow Old review – an utterly breathtaking journey into the trenches', *The Observer*, (11th November 2018), https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/nov/11/they-shall-not-grow-old-peter-jackson-review-first-world-war-footage [16th September 2024]
[234] Peter Bradshaw, 'They Shall Not Grow Old review – Peter Jackson's electrifying journey into the first world war trenches', (16th October 2018), https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/oct/16/they-shall-not-grow-old-review-first-world-war-peter-jackson [1st April 2026]
[235] *14-18 NOW: Contemporary arts commissions for the First World War Centenary*, (Profile Editions 2019) p. 203
[236] Lawrence Napper, 'The Battle of the Somme (1916) and They Shall Not Grow Old (2018): archivists, historians, lies and the archive', *Studies in European Cinema*, (2021), 18.3, pp. 212–221. DOI:10.1080/17411548.2021.1899423.
[237] Napper, 'The Battle of the Somme (1916) and They Shall Not Grow Old (2018)': pp. 212–221.
[238] *14-18 NOW: Contemporary arts commissions,* p. 204

critics and a 91 percent approval rating from over 1000 audience reviews).[239] Using film more generally to explore the past is a captivating way to engage an audience with history. Robert Rosenstone emphasises that 'we forget that when we write the past, we always are translating a bright and noisy world into the black-and-white of the silent page, and that much is lost in this translation.'[240] By 're'-colouring and 're'- voicing the past,[241] Jackson's audiences felt that he had created new ways to see and explore old stories. Jackson himself believes that his interventions pulled men back through the fog of time and into the modern world, 'so that they (regained) their humanity once more …by using our computing power to erase the technical limitations of 100-year-old cinema, we can see and hear the great war as they experienced it.'[242] Jessica Meyer has highlighted that in the memory of a war that has been shaped by silence, the use of sound in Jackson's film is arguably a greater contribution than its use of colour.[243] Alongside the voices of veterans interviews, the addition of a soundtrack combining the voices of the men filmed, as interpreted by lip readers, with the underlying noise of the landscapes of conflict brought the noise of war (a common trope in personal narratives of men who had fought) to the forefront of footage that had previously been silent.[244]

The start of the film based in England and the initial journey to the Western Front is quick, grainy, black and white footage. The choice to only colourise the 'trench based' footage historicises the black and white footage, giving the impression that this was the 'time before', the 'olden days' before the First World War, and very distant from us today, and the war represented a 'break' between times, as Paul Fussell argues.[245] Oral testimonies of

[239] *They Shall Not Grow Old*, Rotten Tomatoes, (n.d.) <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/they_shall_not_grow_old>, [10th October 2024]
[240] Robert A Rosenstone, 'Reflections on what the Filmmaker Historian Does (To History)' in *Film History and Memory,* ed. by Fearghal McGarry and Jennie Carlsten, (Palgrave Macmillan 2015), pp. 183 – 193.
[241] My sense is that rather than the colour and voice added to the footage adding historical understanding to the footage, these interventions have added new creative lens over historic footage that has the potential to warp understanding further.
[242] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_201834_02_005_003_2, 'They Shall Not Grow Old sales summary'
[243] Jessica Meyer, 'Sound and Silence in Peter Jackson's *They Shall Not Grow Old*.' *The American Historical Review*, (2019) 124.5 pp. 1789 – 1792.
[244] Meyer, 'Sound and Silence', pp. 1789 – 1792.
[245] Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory*, pp. 21 – 25

veterans describe the sense they had of the beginning of the war, and the state of Britain's war readiness, with the film footage showing pastoral scenes of the English countryside and recognisable footage of London (e.g. Trafalgar square). There is no footage of factories, mines or other working communities, despite this being the main places of work for the majority of people rather than the countryside living the film projects. Indeed, less than 8 percent of the working population of Britain worked in agriculture at the beginning of the First World War,[246] and the framing of British troops leaving a rural ideal to face mechanised warfare draws on themes of rural nostalgia explored in chapter two. As Dan Todman has highlighted, the men of 1914 Britain were taken from a wide variety of backgrounds, and many of them would have been exposed to industrial dangers and experiences.[247]

Considering the hundreds of hours of footage available to create his 99-minute project, one can't help but wonder what else was left out. Indeed, one reviewer on IMDB's user reviews describes the film as 'jingoistic… (with) only English voices, no Scots, no Welsh, nothing.'[248] Whilst it certainly feels like the majority of voices heard were English voices, it is worth mentioning that at the end of the film, descriptions of the veteran's ranks, and service identities are displayed. Troops from the ANZAC forces, Highlander and Welch regiments, Irish, French, Canadian and American servicemen are indicated to have (posthumously) lent their voices to this project, and the footage shows Chinese Labour Corp auxiliaries and Indian army soldiers. Most curiously, despite the footage being very Western Front centric, voices of naval and air forces were included despite their experiences being left out of the visual element of the film. Whilst it is not clear from the film which voices are which, these additions give the sense that whatever these veterans had to say spoke to a broader experience

[246] Eric J Hobsbawm, *The Pelican Economic History of Britain Vol. 3 – From 1750 to the present day: Industry and Empire*, 2nd ed, (Penguin books Ltd. 1969), p. 158.
[247] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, p. 9.
[248] Reviewer klaas-wynne, They Shall Not Grow Old User Reviews, IMDB, (30th December 2018) <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7905466/reviews?sort=curated&dir=desc&ratingFilter=1> [1st April 2026]

of war that Jackson was trying to communicate in *They Shall Not Grow Old*, yet was somehow left out of the narrative in his feature film. As Susan Grayzel states,

> Why does the film make so little effort to explain anything other than a simple story of British boys who went away in 1914, all to suffer and many to die in a war both brutal and futile, while those who returned in 1918 were forever changed?...one hardly needs to watch the film to know this story, which is not to deny its power.[249]

The piece does succeed in demonstrating that the war was a moment in time which encapsulated a variety of experiences for its participants, effectively a 'a story of stories', with thoughts and feelings explained by the veterans manifesting alongside footage captured at the time these memories were made. The voices of the men being interviewed about their wartime experiences, set against the reimagined conversations of men in the footage who have been 're'-voiced bridge a gap to the past by a moment that gives a sense of wartime journalism, and follows Jessica Silbey's suggestion that reality is reproduced 'in front of a viewers' eyes… Film makes spectators feel as though they are witnessing the event or object as it existed when filmed.'[250] However, the coming together of the 1916 Somme film, described as the first documentary[251] and a creative commission a hundred years later is not a simple look to the past, but is subject to a century's negotiation of conflict on film and shaped by modern conceptions of what Lilie Chouliaraki has described as 'an intensely moralistic context for understanding war as *humanitarian benevolence*, rather than the nihilistic context of autonomous violence.'[252] As a result, the shock experienced by audiences in 1916 is lost, with footage of the war is viewed through a spectatorship that has very different moral principles than a 1916 audience, who were navigating their own experiences of a total war

[249] Susan Grayzel, 'Who Gets to Be in the War Story? Absences and Silences in *They Shall Not Grow Old*.' *The American Historical Review*, 124.5, (2019), pp. 1782–1788.
[250] Jessica Silbey, 'Persuasive Visions: Film and Memory', *Law, Culture and the Humanities,* (2014) 10.1, pp. 24-42
[251] Seth Feldman, 'Battle of the Somme: What the audience saw', *Revue Canadienne d'Études Cinématographiques / Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, (2018) 27.2, pp. 1–22.
[252] Lilie Chouliaraki, 'The humanity of war: iconic photojournalism of the battlefield, 1914–2012', *Visual Communication*, (2013), 12.3, pp. 315 - 340.

which encouraged optimism at the exaggerated stories of each small victory alongside the overwhelming number of individual tragedies.[253]

Whilst some members of the public celebrated the film as being 'honest' and 'visceral',[254] the curation of the piece impacts the viewers experience of the archival footage significantly. In a production interview, Jackson explains that footage of battle sequences were rare in the archive,[255] and with the exception of some trench raid footage and incoming artillery bombardment, the film shows moments before combat, after combat and away from combat. The 'hot' part of the war is missing, replaced with sounds of battles laid over images from copies of 'War Illustrated', a patriotic journal giving a fictionalised interpretation of news from the front, which Jackson acknowledges there are propaganda-type issues with.[256] Jackson also highlights in his production interview that wide shot camerawork was popular with the filmmakers at the time, and this lends itself to certain creative amendments.[257] In his reinterpretation of the footage, he uses the scope of angles to zoom in and focus on specific details that the original filmmaker did not emphasise. By creating these closer shots and changing the subject of focus, Jackson changes the 'feel' of the original creation and adds a new narrative of intimacy with their subject. By including footage of 'everyday life' and then zooming in on men shaving in the trenches,[258] audience members watch and listen as the soldiers carefully shave and try to keep clean in a war known for its sticking mud, and are reminded of their vulnerability.

On a piece of footage that shows men waiting in a sunken road before an attack, zooms and focusing are used to focus on the men's faces, and Jackson references this technique

[253] Feldman, 'Battle of the Somme: What the Audience Saw', pp. 1–22.
[254] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_201834_02_005_003_2, 'They Shall Not Grow Old sales summary'
[255] Peter Jackson speaking on 'The Making of THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD' - (2018 Documentary)' Rearview Mirror Media, *YouTube*, (29th September 2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQE4p6Q0N5Q> on [15th October 2024]
[256] Peter Jackson speaking on 'The Making of THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD' - (2018 Documentary)' Rearview Mirror Media, *YouTube*, (29th September 2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQE4p6Q0N5Q> on [15th October 2024]
[257] Peter Jackson speaking on 'The Making of THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD' - (2018 Documentary)' Rearview Mirror Media, *YouTube*, (29th September 2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQE4p6Q0N5Q> on [15th October 2024]
[258] Peter Jackson speaking on 'The Making of THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD' - (2018 Documentary)' Rearview Mirror Media, *YouTube*, (29th September 2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQE4p6Q0N5Q> on [15th October 2024]

specifically in his interview.[259] Having identified them as Lancashire fusiliers before an attack, he tells the viewer that his research indicates that 'most of the guys were probably killed'.[260] Such camera work implies the importance and integrity of lives lived in these moments of war, but a result the original film makers voice is lost with this camera frame hi-jack – the story is different. The new moment of intimacy with the frame's subject is a modern creation. Despite the footage being original, there have been layers added that change the narrative from the purpose of the original footage. Working under the guise of documentary and the authenticity this suggests, the lack of 'hot war' footage, and the reframed (yet distant) intimacy with the soldiers aestheticizes the men of the First World War as 'pretty ghosts'[261] of the past. Through Jackson's work, they have become what Ribeiro de Menezes calls 'embodied memories' who have become through remembrance, 'the objects of others' gazes (and at times others' politicised manipulations), at the same time as they elicit affective and emotional responses from those who view them.'[262] Whilst positioning itself as a film that centralises the traditionally remembered war dead through its title, *They Shall Not Grow Old* relies heavily on the testimonies of those who survived, and who gave their stories to the Imperial War Museum – those who *did* grow old.

Pages of the Sea

In Danny Boyle's *Pages of the Sea*, coastal communities in the United Kingdom were brought together to create sand figures and faces of people of significance of First World War. Boyle, the award-winning director of several feature films, was also the creative force behind another nation building event, the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony 'Isle of

[259] Peter Jackson speaking on 'The Making of THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD' - (2018 Documentary)' Rearview Mirror Media, *YouTube*, (29th September 2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQE4p6Q0N5Q> on [15th October 2024]
[260] Peter Jackson speaking on 'The Making of THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD' - (2018 Documentary)' Rearview Mirror Media, *YouTube*, (29th September 2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQE4p6Q0N5Q> on [15th October 2024]
[261] Roach, "'Pretty Ghost, A Duet"'
[262] Alison Ribeiro de Menezes, 'The Enchantment and Disenchantment of the Archival Image: Politics and Affect in Contemporary Portuguese Cultural Memories', in *Film History and Memory,* ed. by Fearghal McGarry and Jennie Carlsten, (Palgrave Macmillan 2015), p. 65.

Wonder'. The *Pages of the Sea* event was popular, and described by one participant as being a 'whole feeling … of remembrance, but also a togetherness.[263] As part of the event, the sand-based images created on the beach disappeared into the waves, and were washed away by the tide. Folkestone in particular was a focal point for this commemorative event, being the 'launch beach' for *Pages of the Sea*, as well as the town troops were launched from to make the journey to the Western Front.[264] This event was planned for Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday in 2018, and was seen as 'a unique moment to say goodbye, together, to the millions of men and women who left their shores during the war, many never to return.'[265] Whilst women were featured in the faces on the beach, the figures and faces were predominantly male.

Whilst Emma Hanna has highlighted that there were instances of misremembering the Second rather than the First World War during these events,[266] the symbolism of the beaches as final departure points, allowed for an imaginative, empathetic way into remembrance. This was particularly felt in Folkestone, which was the point of departure for many troops during the war: 'it's really bizarre, knowing that they left from this beach. You get an overwhelming feeling of watching them go off in their boats'.[267] Similar to the impact that rural themes had on memorialisation we saw in chapter two, the sea had its own symbolic meaning for ideas of death: 'I just thought about the sea coming in and claiming people was a bit like the guys coming out the trenches and being cut down',[268] and the conception of an island nation added

[263]London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'
[264] 'Folkestone stands proud as Danny Boyle's Flagship Beach for Pages of The Sea', *Folkelife*, (n.d.) <https://folke.life/folkestone/live/people-and-stories/pages-of-the-sea/> [3rd October 2024]
[265] 'Pages of the Sea: Danny Boyle' *Creative Folkestone,* (n.d.) <https://www.creativefolkestone.org.uk/news/2018/10/pages-of-the-sea-danny-boyle/> [3rd October 2024]
[266] Emma Hanna, as part of the roundtable – 'Professor Lucy Noakes and the Reflections on the Centenary of the First World War project team' *University of Essex* (online), (5th May 2021)
[267] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'
[268] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'

to this sense for another participant, who described it as a '…brilliant concept...especially for an island nation…the idea that the sea takes all'.[269]

As well as being symbolic departure points, beach sites were central to Boyle's vision for the piece and his idea of bringing people together:

> We wanted to create a partner to the more formal ceremony that happens at the cenotaphs around the country every year…It's not an alternative, it's more of a compliment to try and make it more community based…These are amazing democratic places, everybody is equal so we wanted to create an artwork.[270]

This piece allowed the public to connect with the First World War in an accessible, non-denominational and creative way, and these themes became clear through analysis of the evaluation of *Pages of the Sea*. The non-denominational aspect of the commemoration was felt to be very positive, with several comments acknowledging the event was made more accessible by not being a traditional church ceremony, and was even a way to engage with remembrance that seemed separate from the military connection.[271] One participant in St Ives stated that they '(liked) the fact that there isn't any sort of military aspect,'[272] despite joining a beach which displayed a likeness of Captain Edward Hains.[273] This indicates that for this participant, it was not necessarily the focus of the event that was felt to be 'military' but rather the atmosphere, which is supported by comments from a Lyme Regis participant, who commented how it was 'lovely to be outside without the fanfare or pompous military presence.'[274]

---

[269] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'
[270] Sophie Williams, 'Danny Boyle beaches: "Pages of the Sea" Armistice project sees stunning sand portraits of WW1 casualties', *The Standard*, (12th November 2018) <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/remembrance-day-2018-stunning-images-show-sand-portraits-of-casualties-who-fought-in-world-war-one-a3986991.html>, [7th October 2024]
[271] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'
[272] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'
[273] It is important to clarify however, that all beaches displayed faces of war dead, and not all people commemorated were from the military.
[274] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'

The participative nature of the piece enhanced the engagement. Participants felt that *Pages of the Sea* was democratic and imaginative,[275] with one visitor indicating that the creative act of drawing in the sand was particularly meaningful as an act of remembrance: 'I think the whole poignancy of the drawing in the sand, and then the tide coming in to wash it away – when they played the last post, I had tears rolling down my cheeks.'[276] Here then, we get a sense that the act of remembrance in the making – not the monumentalism, which is seen as a more restrictive mode of commemoration. Danny Boyle's project was able to create a 'space where memory is active in the present,'[277] where an active, bodily experience of remembering created a meaningful engagement with the past which helped situate people against to their pasts and within their communities.

This form of memory work builds on my previous explorations of embodied memory as a way to connect with others of an assumed shared identity mediated by interactions with the past. This form of bodily memory, as Paul Connerton has argued, has the capacity to be sedimented and amassed in the body.[278] Whilst feedback exploring how adults felt about the event emphasised how emotionally moving their experience was, and feelings of poignancy, the responses that reflected on children's involvement with the piece kept returning to the idea that the event was an important spring board for them to learn more about the First World War, and the activity based approach was a key for the involvement of young families.[279] If, as Connerton suggests, culturally specific postural performance provide us with a mnemonics of the body,[280] *Pages of the Sea* upended the traditional performance of remembrance by providing a new bodily performance by which to remember the war dead, in

[275] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'
[276] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'
[277] Rafael Schacter, Talk given at the University of Essex, 'TO BE SEEN & TO BE FELT: Memory and Memorials in Graffiti' University of Essex, [22nd January 2026]
[278] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p72
[279] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'
[280] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989) p.74

what was described by one participant as 'like a living piece of art, isn't it?'[281] As part of the event, historically significant individuals were remembered alongside more collective memories of the war dead, and included figures such as Wilfred Owen, Elsie Inglis and Walter Tull. Of the twenty-eight beaches which featured large scale sand portraits, three portraits were of women, and two were of servicemen of colour.[282]

In reimagining and inserting a tangible aspect to the act of remembrance, Boyle's artwork examined traditional rituals of remembrance that Emma Hanna has identified as being 'generally unquestioned.'[283] The tactile remembrance encouraged by *Pages of the Sea* was felt to give a sort of 'special gratitude'[284] to one participant in Ayr, and was a way for others to visualise familial links to the war, drawing figures and naming them after family members who had died in the First World War,[285] thus also serving as a way to create a local connection with past that may have previously been intangible.

Some of these local connections uncovered insights into engagement metrics which have been of interest in measuring the scale of arts engagement. The analysis of *Pages of the Sea* carried out to measure such engagement seemed somewhat surprised that there was particularly high attendance in areas that have previously shown low arts engagement:

> The beach at Roker saw the largest turnout, at around 10,000 people this is particularly impressive given that Sunderland is ranked as the 319th lowest local authority out of 326 in terms of arts engagement in England according to the arts councils 'Active Lives' survey. Overall, beaches in areas of low cultural engagement accounted for 45% of the visits, despite making up only a third of all beaches that took part in the event.[286]

[281] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'
[282] 'Beach Portraits' Pages of the Sea, (n.d.) https://www.pagesofthesea.org.uk/beach-portraits/ [2nd April 2026]
[283] Emma Hanna, 'Pages of the Sea: A UK case study' in Experiencing 11 November 2018; Commemoration and the First World War Centenary, ed by Shanti Sumartojo, (Routledge 2020), pp. 123 - 136
[284] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'
[285] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'
[286] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'

Whilst tempting to view this analysis as evidence of a particular appetite for the First World War, or remembrance in general, it is important to consider that in seaside towns that are low socio-economic areas with little arts engagement, one of the few things to do that is accessible and cheap is to go to the beach. One participant emphasised that its simplicity was key to its accessibility, noting, 'it's in the open and on the beach…everything is provided.'[287] Nevertheless, in a similar way to Borghi's war memorial analysis, the 'local' element of the piece helped to propagates the memory of the war into smaller collectives, allowing the monumentalisation of the sand figures to assert their significance in the context of an 'everyday landscape','[288] and added an imaginative landscape similar to those projects situated in pastoral spaces.

This sense of meaningful connection was intrinsic to the success of *Pages of the Sea.* Upon entering the project, Boyle felt that 'at some point the nation moves on',[289] but upon the realisation of *Pages of the Sea,* declared, 'I have changed, I have to say. I think we should go on [remembering]. When you make that personal connection ... It feels timeless. I felt that connection to them. It felt like it would be wrong to forget them.'[290] The 'togetherness' experienced by collectively meeting on the beaches to remember local people of the war made the experience particularly moving, and were described as 'really really powerful…(making) immediate connections with everybody in the local area as a result,'[291] and others referenced the 'sense of unity and grieving together.' For one participant, the national experienced through the local helped to reaffirm a sense of belonging to the country,

[287] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'
[288] Marco Borghi, 'On war and memory: First World War memorials and collective memory in Britain, France and Germany' *National Identities*, 23.5, pp. 555 – 571.
[289] Esther Addley, 'Danny Boyle salutes armistice's 'real heroes' after quitting Bond', *The Guardian*, (5th October 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/oct/05/danny-boyle-salutes-armistices-real-heroes-after-quitting-james-bond> [3rd October 2024]
[290] Esther Addley, 'Danny Boyle salutes armistice's 'real heroes' after quitting Bond', *The Guardian*, (5th October 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/oct/05/danny-boyle-salutes-armistices-real-heroes-after-quitting-james-bond> [3rd October 2024]
[291] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'

referencing ‘the fact that it’s happening at many beaches across the country as well – we’re all in it together. So it’s a big community isn’t it?’

This Is Not For You

Bringing the bodies of men of the First World War back into view as part of a remembrance event was incredibly successful in engaging with the public over the centenary. Remembrance is significant by the loss of the corporeal. By engaging with an act of remembrance, you are acknowledging the existence of something lost that was once there – mainly (but not completely)[292] men killed by conflict, and this theme was artistically rendered in Boyle’s *Pages of the Sea*. These remembered men took physical form in *We’re Here Because We’re Here* and *They Shall Not Grow Old* where they appeared ‘whole’, and ‘alive’ rather than injured, disabled or dead, adhering to the tradition of sanitising war dead when remembering them.[293] No project of 14-18 NOW dealt with the bodily reality of death, and the three ‘key projects’ of 14-18 NOW analysed here did not engage with disabled or wounded servicemen to any critical degree. Whilst 12.9 per cent of British forces were killed in the war, 31.5 percent were wounded,[294] disability and recurrent mental health crises were a significant feature of inter war manhood.[295] There was one notable project included in 14 18NOW’s programme that dealt with the legacy of disabled servicepeople, which was *This Is Not For You*, was ‘an epic outdoor performance’ paying tribute to wounded veterans from the First World War as well as more recent conflicts.[296] This was not a widely publicised artwork, however, and had two London centric performance dates.

[292] It is my sense that the war dead are not the only thing being remembered and being mourned during Remembrance Day. The loss of an imagined sense of peace, innocence, world standing and stability (as described by Samual Hynes) I think is also being mourned, but requires further scholarly interrogation.
[293] Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male; Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, (Reaktion books, 1999), p. 210.
[294] Jay Winter, ‘Britain's `Lost Generation' of the First World War’ *Population Studies,* (1977) 31.3, pp. 449-466 and Table 4, p. 451.
[295]Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, pp. 34 – 35.
[296] *This Is Not For You*, Graeae, (n.d.) <https://graeae.org/event/this-is-not-for-you/> [15th October 2024]

This Is Not For You included injured veterans in its cast, and chronicles veterans' fight for respect, rights and remembrance, and included audio description and sign language in its performances.[297] This project built on the legacy of the *Blemsa* charity (British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association) founded in the aftermath of the First World War to assist men that had lost limbs in the conflict. *Blesma* indicates that around 40,000 men lost limbs as a result of the War, and many came back to Britain realising that they were not to be welcomed home as heroes. The founder and chairman of the Teesside branch of *Blesma* Wilfred Whitfield, was one of three disabled war veterans sacked on the same day as an engineering draughtsman. He recorded his experience and the words of his manager: 'You ex-servicemen are a nuisance. You are behind in your experience, we have to economise and there are better men for less money.'[298]

The piece took its name from an account of a veteran who took part in the march past of the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday:

> You go past The Cenotaph and the crowd clap you. It's quite moving. We were waving to the crowd, and this little boy said: 'This is not for you survivors. This is for the dead.' It made me feel guilty.[299]

This guilt, and the words of the child indicate that service people can only earn respect and acknowledgement of their role in conflict when they die in conflict. There is no in-between in this interpretation of remembrance - there is only the grateful living, and the immortal dead. Adrian Gregory has highlighted that even as early as 1921, the public were being asked to not to forget the 'unknown warriors living',[300] and Jessica Meyer has outlined that the

> patterns of remembrance that developed in Britain through the memorial movement and the armistice day ceremonies served to further distance ex-servicemen from the communities they returned to through the emphasis placed on mourning and comfort

[297] 'This is Not for You', *Blesma – The Limbless Veterans*, (21st June 2018) <https://blesma.org/news-media/blesma-news/2018/this-is-not-for-you/> [15th October 2024]
[298] 'Our History', *Blesma – The Limbless Veterans*, (n.d.) <https://blesma.org/about-us/our-history/> [15th October 2024]
[299] *This Is Not For You*, Graeae, (n.d.) <https://graeae.org/event/this-is-not-for-you/> [15th October 2024], and Jenny Sealy speaking to 14-18 NOW, '14-18 NOW: This is Not for You - Jenny Sealey, Artistic Director & CEO, Graeae', *YouTube,* (n.d.)https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSqE-JRdgfw [15th October 2024]
[300] Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day, 1919-1946*, (Bloomsbury, 1994), pp. 73 – 76.

> for the bereaved, as opposed to the celebration of survival that some ex-servicemen desired.[301]

This Is Not For You casts a critical light on the continued challenges disabled servicepeople experience more than a hundred years after the beginning of a conflict that promised to provide for its veteran heroes.

What becomes clear in exploring the history of charities such as *Blesma* and the Royal British Legion (RBL), is the roles they have historically and continue to occupy as lobbyists for veterans and their families. This is especially the case in gaining better recognition and support for war widows or veterans that had experienced life changing injuries as a result of their service. As an example, in cases of injury and/or disability suffered as part of their service, servicepeople were at a disadvantage when entitled to military compensation, which before 2017 could be taken to pay for any care needs the serviceperson had developed. The RBL's 'insult to injury' campaign successfully ensured that veterans were able to receive all of their compensation award if they were injured at work, in addition to any social care they may require, as is the case for civilians who have been injured in the workplace.[302] Charities are at the forefront of developing toolkits such as the 'Needs Analysis' designed to help inform future policy,[303] and enabling research projects to connect with veterans to better understand post service qualities of life.[304]

However, the reality that this work seems to only happen due to charitable intervention does bring into question the money spent on these artistic interventions by the government at the centenary. Jenny Sealy sees her role as the artistic director of this is not for you as a

---

[301] Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 98
[302] 'Insult to injury' *Royal British Legion*, (n.d.) https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/about-us/our-campaigns/campaigns/insult-to-injury?_gl=1*70pncj*_up*MQ..*_gs*MQ..*_ga*ODAxNjY4NDA1LjE3NzM4NjEzNDc.*_ga_N0H21K3H1R*czE3NzM4NjEzNDQkbzEkZzAkdDE3NzM4NjE0MDYkajYwJGwwJGg5MzM2NzU2MDQ.&gclid=Cj0KCQjwmunNBhDbARIsAOndKpmkNplFi4yG2pfvXPqJkXtOE827Fhbfzrnbs-PUaNYNSpAwxMsCeZIaAinzEALw_wcB&gbraid=0AAAAD7umtKxw0HNPYh7a_MRhyaCNVTy_ [2nd April [2026]
[303] 'Needs Analysis', *Royal British Legion*, (n.d.) https://storage.rblcdn.co.uk/sitefinity/docs/default-source/campaigns-policy-and-research/needs-analysis-poster-2025.pdf?sfvrsn=5c9f2ae_0, [2nd April [2026]
[304] 'Research projects' *BLESMA*, (n.d.) <https://www.blesma.org/research-projects/>, [2nd April [2026]

chance to look back and think 'Have we learnt any lessons?'[305] The continuing role of the armed forces charities in roles that arguably should be statutory services indicate that she is right, '...maybe we haven't.'[306] This powerful work highlights the ability of art as activism.

Heritage Lottery Fund

Many of the Heritage Lottery Funded projects at the centenary centred men, and these projects saw some particularly creative and meaningful project being undertaken by communities who clearly demonstrate their sense of connection to the local could be manifested through their guardianship of a shared local past, and often centralised the stories of men going away to war, and explored the 'home front' as a support role site for local men. Some projects explored lesser-known roles in the war, or interrogated themes of adventure and excitement, but almost all projects that centralised a traditionally imaged man of the First World War had a distinctly local connection.

Local men and their stories

Many projects funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund focussed on stories of the local area, and reaffirms the connection to the local the First World War was felt to have by many communities. Some HLF projects resulted in publications that documented the research and stories uncovered by communities. The Ancestral Rescue group in Tamworth worked with families to explore the Great War stories of their community in their publication *Patriotism, Love, Pain,*[307] while in the village of Meanwood, research focussed on the local men who

[305] Jenny Sealy speaking to 14-18 NOW, '14-18 NOW: This is Not for You - Jenny Sealey, Artistic Director & CEO, Graeae', *YouTube,* (n.d.)https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSqE-JRdgfw [15th October 2024]
[306] Jenny Sealy speaking to 14-18 NOW, '14-18 NOW: This is Not for You - Jenny Sealey, Artistic Director & CEO, Graeae', *YouTube,* (n.d.)https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSqE-JRdgfw [15th October 2024]

[307]Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA690.T12, Ancestral Rescue, 'Patriotism Love Pain: Great War Stories Discovered by Tamworth Families'

went away to war, the war effort of the community and the story of the war memorial.[308] Other projects thought to expand the memorial area of their local area, and develop memorial gardens, once again pulling in pastoral elements to the act of remembrance and expressing memory practice through creative landscaping.[309]

These local interventions were significant in that they continued to demonstrate the strength of local meaning that was evident in *Pages of the Sea*. The project *Meanwood Men 1914 – 1918* highlights in its foreword that, 'what started out as a seemingly laborious task, to research initials and surnames which were, I have to say, quite meaningless at the outset developed into a quest to know these people better, who they were, where they lived, where they worked and sadly where and how they died.'[310] The narrative histories people were able to explore situated local stories in the nationally experienced event of the First World War, and helped communities make sense of a broad narrative through creative explorations of their local area. Through imaginatively seeking understanding of local people through their own conceptions of their sense of place, projects like *Meanwood Men 1914 – 1918* allowed for its authors to empathise with the past, demonstrated through the following insight: 'In the process of this book I used a 1906 Ordnance Survey map to try and visualise the impact losing so many men would have such a small community. It must have been devastating.'[311]

This sense of connection discovered by the author of Meanwood Men 1914 – 1918 was shared across projects that explored local stories of loss and connected those stories with contemporary families. *Duty Calls: The Country House in Times of War* was a Yorkshire based series of exhibitions in 2013 and 2014 which explored the impact of war on country

[308] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA690.M416, Cynthia Ruston, 'Meanwood Men 1914-1918'
[309] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War, D680.G7 'Montgomery Remembers: The Making of a Memorial Garden',
[310] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA690.M416, Cynthia Ruston, 'Meanwood Men 1914-1918'
[311] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA690.M416, Cynthia Ruston, 'Meanwood Men 1914-1918'

houses and their communities.[312] One of these exhibitions 'Red Poppies and White Butterflies' invited local people to search online archives to discover their family story via an 'ancestry station'.[313] Audiences learnt about the impact of the conflict on the area from exhibitions, talks and object handling sessions, and were able to leave a message on a red poppy (for those who died) or a white butterfly (for those left behind). These tactile interventions build on the ephemeral legacies of the war explored in Bruce Scates' work, demonstrating new attempts to assert ownership over the dead and crafting different modes of memorialisation to authorised modes of remembrance,[314] which included knitting socks for the trenches, and a postcard writing competition, ultimately resulting in the project winning a prestigious National Trust 'bringing places to life' award.[315]

Creative interventions and meaning making of the past were sensed to be particularly important when engaging young people with stories of local men at war. Many comments from participants of *Pages of the Sea* emphasised how the creativity of the project would help 'stick' in children's minds. The *Lincoln War Stories* saw the letters of the Beechey family, which lost five sons in the war, serve as inspiration for the creation of a soundscape based radio play.[316] The creative project *Orange Lilies* based in Brighton, worked with young people to commemorate the effects of the Battle of the Somme on the city, 'uncovering Brighton's Great War heritage for future generations.'[317] Drawing inspiration from archives and artefacts, and supported by local historians *Orange Lilies* used creative interpretation to reimagine the lives of Sussex men, producing short films and creating textile interpretation of

[312] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War (no number) 'Duty Calls: The Country House in Time of War'
[313] 'Red Poppies and White Butterflies' *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/red-poppies-and-white-butterflies, [2nd April 2026]
[314]Bruce Scates, 'Making the Memory Book: War-Time Loss and Memorialization through Ephemera' *Genealogy* (2024), 8.2: p. 64. https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy8020064
[315] 'Red Poppies and White Butterflies' *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/red-poppies-and-white-butterflies, [2nd April 2026]
[316] 'Lincoln War Stories', *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.), https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/lincoln-war-stories, [2nd April 2026]
[317] 'The Orange Lilies – Brighton and Hove Soldiers in the Somme', *The Orange Lillies*, (n.d.) https://theorangelilies.wordpress.com/ [2nd April 2026]

significant battles.[318] To the artists amazement, many boys joined in, and were keen to continue their creative engagements away from the workshops, with one of the boys attending three of the workshops and sourcing a sewing machine so he could carry on at home.[319] Whilst Catriona Pennell has highlighted how the battlefield tours of the centenary period can be seen as part of 'mundane embodied practices and idioms' that enable 'a broad and subtle form of militarism,'[320] these projects demonstrate that using a nationally shared memory to engage with young people can help engender creative, meaningful moments of arts and heritage engagement, which in some cases led to continued engagement in the arts.

The efforts of undertaking creative, local acts of remembrance at the centenary were not limited to Heritage Lottery funded projects or 14-18 NOW experiences, with handmade poppies and memorial pieces appearing at local war memorial sites, adorning letter boxes, and decorating churches. These creative interventions were sometimes used to symbolise a significant moment that had been uncovered at the centenary or since and have developed as a way to emphasise the memory practice in communities and projects that had taken place there.[321] Both funded and self-funded heritage projects that were undertaken at the centenary would have felt very meaningful, and the projects undertaken would have fostered a community spirit centred around a creative practice that may not have been experienced by people before. Project evaluation highlighted in their outcomes that the funded projects provided 89% of project participants with something rewarding and enjoyable to do. Participants also felt that their local area/community will be a better place to live, work or

[318] 'The Orange Lilies – Brighton and Hove in the Somme', The First World War in East Sussex, (n.d.) http://www.eastsussexww1.org.uk/orange-lilies-brighton-hove-somme/index.html, [2nd April 2026]
[319] 'The Orange Lilies – Brighton and Hove Soldiers in the Somme', *The Orange Lillies*, (n.d.) https://theorangelilies.wordpress.com/ [2nd April 2026]
[320] Catriona Pennell, '"Remembrance isn't working": First World War battlefield tours and the militarisation of British youth during the centenary', *Childhood* (2020), 27.3 DOI:10.1177/0907568220908307
[321] 'Dowland poppy cascade in memory of three WW1 soldiers', BBC News, (27th October 2022) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-63419483> [2nd April 2026]

visit in light of the projects, with 80% feeling that the project had helped their local community.[322]

Non-traditional narratives

Whilst many projects dealt with the experiences of their immediate local area and the fates of the men there, some projects explored individual stories from the war, and non-traditional experiences that moved away from narratives of the Western Front and the trenches. Some projects explored the legacies of the war as an exciting moment in some men's lives, with the project *Diary of a Dude: Bringing Jack Pulman's First World War Diary to Life* investigating his 'unique … experiences traveling through India and North Africa…. a keen photographer, artist and musician… (Jack's) diary includes a large number of photographs, newspapers clippings, letters and drawings.'[323] Once again drawing on legacies of ephemera in memorialising the First World War, this project repositions the material legacy of the war from one of mourning, to demonstrating a 'life well lived', filled with stories of adventure and expression. Themes of masculinity investigated through football has already been explored in *The Greater Game* project in chapter two, but remained a popular memory gate through which to engage with the First World War. The projects *Walter Tull: first black Tottenham Hotspur player and First World War officer*[324] and *A Miller's Tale: Football, Community and Remembrance in Central London during the Great War*[325] both used football

[322] Elaine Batty, Will Eadson, Ben Pattison, Mark Stevens, Alison Twells, and Nicola Verdon, 'Evaluation of Heritage Lottery Fund's First World War Centenary Activity: Year 4 report (August 2018) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/publications/fww_centenary_evaluation_year_4_accessibility_check_10_08_19.pdf [21st May 2023] p.ii

[323] 'Diary of a Dude: Bringing Jack Pulman's First World War Diary to Life' *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/diary-dude-bringing-jack-pulmans-first-world-war-diary-life, [2nd April 2026]

[324] 'Walter Tull: first black Tottenham Hotspur player and First World War officer', *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/walter-tull-first-black-tottenham-hotspur-player-and-first-world-war-officer> [2nd April 2026]

[325] 'A Miller's Tale: Football, Community and Remembrance in Central London during the Great War', *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.), <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/millers-tale-football-community-and-remembrance-central-london-during-great-war> [2nd April 2026]

as a way to reimagine themes of community, kinship and belonging against the racism and anti-German rhetorics of the early twentieth century.

However, lesser-known stories of conscientious objectors, home front experiences and injured servicemen were scant in the community projects, as was the case in the nationally led projects. Whilst BLESMA brought experiences of disabled servicepeople to the forefront of their story, the only story accessible in the online archive of the Heritage Lottery Funded projects concerning the disabled servicepeople or the convalescence experience of troops in the war was the project *Queen Alexandra Hospital Home - Our legacy to our country*, which used historic on site archives to explore the hospital's history, which had not been properly explored up until this point. The meaning this project held for its participants was evident in the comments of one volunteer, who emphasised the 'the courage and resilience of the patients and nurses….and above all humour and cheerfulness, which undoubtedly helped the men to overcome the horrors of war.'[326] Stories of courage and resilience were also central to the limited explorations of conscientious objectors. Whilst limited, these interventions showed considered project development from the grant applicants, using stories of men imprisoned for their anti-war beliefs to uncover 'invisible histories' from the Working Class Movement Library holdings of the No-Conscription Fellowship to explore the peace efforts of men and women from late 1915 to 1916.[327] Another project connected the past with the present through experiences of incarceration, with HMP Low Moss prisoners producing a booklet of poetry, diary entries, artworks, lyrics and letters written by them, as well as co-developing a play with the citizens theatre exploring imprisoned conscientious objectors.[328]

[326] 'Queen Alexandra Hospital Home - Our legacy to our country', *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/queen-alexandra-hospital-home-our-legacy-our-country [2nd April 2026]
[327] 'Invisible histories from the First World War' *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/invisible-histories-first-world-war [2nd April 2026]
[328] 'Brothers Behind Bars: HMP Low Moss explores the experiences of the Great War's conscientious objectors' *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.), <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/brothers-behind-bars-hmp-low-moss-explores-experiences-great-wars-conscientious-objectors> [2nd April 2026]

Conclusion

Large scale projects centring men were unsurprisingly among the most highly engaged with and considered to be some of the centrepiece projects of 14-18 NOW. These projects demonstrated deeply held emotional responses to a subject matter that is still clearly difficult to navigate for the British public a hundred years after the First World War, and continues to demonstrate that, as Helen McCartney has argued, it is the act of risking or losing one's life for a cause that was important to some centenary participants, and endowed their reflections on the war dead with meaning.[329] Whilst Jeremy Deller maintains that his actors were not ghosts, the projects looking at men's experience show that, 'The power of the ghost, as it resurrects and recreates, providing audiences with both a new mode of historical discourse outside of the official record and a summons to participate in its reconstitution.'[330] The audiences of the centenary were *looking* for ghosts, with the emotional responses showing a want to engage with men of the war who were understood to have died 'for them'.

Men of the war are (nearly completely) only accessible through the imaginations of people in 2014, and those that do have memories of those who served would not have held any memories of the men at the time they had served. Any conceptions of the wartime service of older relatives that had since passed away had to be mediated over what Michael Roper and Rachel Duffett termed the 'floating gap' between the impermanent experience of descendants and history'[331], and a complex and changing lens of First World War memory. As Dan Todman has suggested, this collective memory has changed over the years,[332] and conceptions of masculinity have changed dramatically since the war, linked in some part to

[329] Helen McCartney, 'Commemorating the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme in Britain.', *War & Society* (2017) 36.4, pp. 289–303. DOI:10.1080/07292473.2017.1384138.
[330] Paul D. Streufert, 'Masculinity, Haunting and Twentieth-Century American Realism', in *Theatre and Ghosts: Materiality, Performance and Modernity*, ed. by Mary Luckhurst and Emilie Morin, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p116
[331] Michael Roper and Rachel Duffett, 'Family Legacies in the Centenary: Motives for First World War Commemoration among British and German Descendants.' *History and Memory* (2018) 30.1, pp. 76-115
[332] Todman, *Myth and Memory*

the experience of female suffrage and subsequent women's rights movements, which will be explored further in the following chapter.

Whilst memories of men were mediated again at the centenary moment, there remains an unwillingness to engage with stories of disabled and injured men of the First World War, and the lived experience of veterans after the end of the First World War, including how these men reintegrated back into society. In Peter Jackson's film, one veteran is heard to comment, 'people never talked about the war. It was a thing that had no conversational value at all. Most people were absolutely disinterested'[333] when remembering his post war experience back in Britain. One can't help but think that for those who survived the war, they are still not considered to be the most important character in the narrative of the First World War, despite their memories and recollections shaping much of modern-day understanding.[334] For a twenty first century audience, the ultimate sacrifice is still key to British understanding of the conflict. Whilst stories of men killed during the war have natural endings, the majority of men returned from the war, and it is through these men that many community members had personal connections with war stories. Whilst explorations of these stories may have taken place, the lack of physical legacies for many community projects continues to hamper the work undertaken by community groups and participants.

Danny Boyles' *Pages of the Sea* monuments were meant to be lost, 'the final line in the sand, the final goodbye' to the 'real heroes'[335] of the First World War. As a result however, one of the only highly published nationally led artworks that portrayed people of the war, including people of colour and women, had no longevity. Images in the sand have been

[333] *They Shall Not Grow Old*, dir. by Peter Jackson, (U.K. 2018)
[334] By this I mean by lending their voices to narratives of the war, as in the 'Voices of the First World War' collection at the IWM, < https://www.iwm.org.uk/podcasts/voices-of-the-first-world-war>, [3rd April 2026} and as outlined by Todman in *Myth and Memory,* and Foster, Ann-Marie, '"We Decided the Museum Would Be the Best Place for Them": Veterans, Families and Mementos of the First World War', *History and Memory*, (2019) 31.1. pp. 87–117.
[335] Esther Addley, 'Danny Boyle salutes armistice's 'real heroes' after quitting Bond', *The Guardian*, (5th October 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/oct/05/danny-boyle-salutes-armistices-real-heroes-after-quitting-james-bond> [3rd October 2024]

washed away, and the website for the project has been decommissioned.[336] Whilst this was an unavoidable feature of this artwork, the other creative interventions which had limited, little or no legacy at all calls into question how the emotional labour of community groups were valued by the centenary partnership. These projects highlighted beyond anything else, the search for meaningful engagement with the past, and the enthusiasm in being able to explore these connections with the past in local spaces. Similar to many ghost stories, Britian's war memory continues to debate the past, just as it grapples with its very real effect on the present and imagined future.[337]

[336] The 14-18 NOW website was taken down from the IWM website in 2023 and archived ta the British Museum, which suffered a large-scale digital hack in October 2023 – 'Cyber-attack recovery update', *British Library*, (n.d.), <https://www.bl.uk/about/cyber-attack> [3rd April 2026]

[337] Streufert, 'Masculinity, Haunting and Twentieth-Century American Realism', p. 115

4: 'Something for the girls'[1] at the centenary

Introduction - The First World War for women

Women and war have a complex, intertwined history. One hundred years after the first British women were granted the right to vote in 1918, the first women were officially permitted to undertake any role in the British army, including front line combat roles.[2] Historians such as Lucy Noakes and Susan Grayzel have outlined how roles for women both in and at war have been constantly renegotiated in the twentieth century, and the centenary moment proved to be no different.[3] Whilst the First World War is popularly remembered as being part of a moment that saw votes for women to be realised for some, it also was a time where images of women were deployed for propaganda and recruitment purposes. Furthermore, despite not being permitted to fight, the First World War brought about a stretching of established gender roles that made experiences for women more flexible. However, the lasting impact of these changes to gender roles in both world wars has been questioned by Noakes, who argues that although women were working in large numbers outside the home in occupations previously only undertaken by men, gender relations 'remained essentially unchanged…when men return(ed) from battle, women … return(ed) to the home.'[4] In his exploration of gender, sex and sexuality in the First World War, George Robb maintains that, 'in wartime, the course of action for men seemed clear and straightforward – enlist and fight. Women, however, had no clear path to follow and no role model.'[5] Whilst wartime propaganda attempted to maintain traditional established roles for

[1] Quotation seen on a banner at Processions event, 2018
[2] 'Fit to fight: Women in the Army today', *National Army Museum*, (n.d.) https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/fit-fight-women-army-today [5th April 2026]
[3] Lucy Noakes, *Women in the British Army: war and the gentle sex, 1907-1948*, (Routledge, 2006), Susan Grayzel, *Women and the First World War* (Routledge, 2013) and Grayzel, Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War, (University of North Carolina Press, 1999).
[4] Noakes, Women in the British Army, p. 4
[5] George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, (Palgrave, 2002), p. 32.

women, the realities of total warfare meant that roles for the female work force were expanded significantly. Whilst this offered opportunity and praise for many women, gossip, parody and censure still operated to maintain a social code that attempted to ensure women did not become too unconventional in their new roles, some of which were considered arduous and adventurous even for men.[6]

Susan Grayzel has demonstrated how, by the end of the war, there was almost no work that women in the belligerent nations had not done to aid the war effort.[7] Before the war, women of all classes had had to navigate complex social and professional environments, which had been disrupted by Victorian and Edwardian industrialisation and increased educational opportunities.[8] However, as Arthur Marwick has demonstrated, women's work had long been a feature of Britain's professional society, but as the war approached, the visibility of this work was becoming more present.[9] In order to make this transition to visible, practical workers making up a united society fighting a war together, women were expected to combine their social roles with any war work, with emphasis on their cheerful attitude and virtuous character being essential to the war effort.[10] The centenary moment saw many projects which focussed on the role of women during the war, and as a result, these projects sat within particular themes similar to which we have seen in previous chapters. Whilst Grayzel is correct to highlight how broad women's war work became, the themes of the centenary projects which centred women indicate that there are particular roles that women are especially remembered for. This chapter will briefly outline the historiography of these roles, before analysing why these roles were considered important for the memory of the First World War in relation to the state and community led projects. It is worth mentioning at this stage that there are many aspects of women's war work that were omitted or forgotten at the

[6] Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, pp. 32-33.
[7] Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 3.
[8] Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War*, (MacMillian 1999) 2nd ed. pp. 11-26
[9] Marwick, *The Deluge*, p. 27
[10] Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 10

centenary, for example, the women's land army. Whilst there were community projects that explored community gardening during the war (for example the HLF funded War and Peas),[11] these interventions did not position women at the centre of the narrative.[12] In a centenary moment which went to great lengths to 'characterise' the past through projects like *Pages of the Sea* and *We're Here Because We're Here,* interventions for women's history put far greater emphasis on women in the present, than of the past.

The suffrage movement

The war began during a period of heightened political discourse surrounding women's right to vote. Whilst many women followed the advice of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and National Union of Women Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) to support the war effort and desist in their activist activities, conversely, many suffrage unions were founded on the basis of pacifism.[13] This created complex environments through which to navigate individual and collective senses of belonging, as well as senses of identity. June Purvis and June Hannam's edited volume highlights how historians have worked to uncover the complicated, extended and nuanced picture of suffrage and agitation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, emphasising that suffrage attracted women of all classes for many different reasons, which could wax, wane and change over time.[14] Women's working conditions affected this experience significantly, and some approaches to women's war work were seen as a potential avenue for suffrage during the First World War. Jenny Gould has highlighted how just before the war, Mabel St. Clair Stobart believed her Women's Convey

[11] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, (no item number) War and Peas: Feeding People in times of Conflict
[12] This is not to say these projects did not mention that women often were the main workers in these roles, merely that gardening, not women, was generally the subject of these projects.
[13] Nicoletta F. Gullace *'The Blood of Our Sons' Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (Palgrave Macmillian 2002), p. 120.
[14] June Purvis and June Hannam, (eds) *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign: National and International Perspectives*, (Routledge, 2021) pp. 17 – 18

Corps to be a perfect opportunity to demonstrate women's capability through showing that they could contribute to the national defence.[15]

Women's bodies were central to gender relations of the pre-war period. During the pre-war activities of groups like the WSPU, direct action and a campaign of 'deeds not words' brought particular tensions for the state. Marian Sawer has highlighted how opponents to women's voting rights emphasising the effects it would have on femininity,[16] but this paternalist approach was significantly undermined by the acts of violence the state committed on women fighting for their place in the political sphere. In 1909 the government ordered women to be forcibly fed if they refused to eat, violating women in a way some consider akin to rape.[17] Harold Smith has highlighted that the pressure created by the concern at public outcry against forced feeding and the fear that suffragettes might become martyrs for their cause through hunger-striking, forced the introduction of the 1913 so-called Cat-and-Mouse act, and allowed for militant activists to challenge the government to make a decision on women's personhood and their acknowledgement by the state.[18] In another example of irony, the bodies of women which had been violated by the state mere years earlier were being featured as objects that required protection, or personifications of justice in wartime propaganda.[19]

Nicoletta F. Gullace's work has highlighted the balance, and indeed the tensions between suffragettes' roles pre and post war. The renegotiation of Emmeline Pankhurst's position from enemy of the state before the war, to a government approved ambassador to Russian women in 1917,[20] demonstrates how for many women, their sense of patriotism was

[15] Jenny Gould, 'Women's Military Services in First World War Britain' in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. by Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz, (Yale University Press, 1987) pp. 114–25.
[16] Marian Sawer, 'Gender, Metaphor and the State.' *Feminist Review*, (1996) 52, (Special Issue) The World Upside Down: Feminisms in the Antipodes, pp. 118–34.
[17] Harold L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign 1866-1928:* (Taylor & Francis, 2009) 2nd ed. p. 53.
[18] Smith, *Women's Suffrage Campaign*, p. 53.
[19] For examples of women's bodies being used in propaganda whilst also being at the mercy of the state, see *Take Up The Sword Of Justice*, Lithograph on paper, 520 mm., x 672 mm, Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM PST 12422), <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/21155>, and *Have You any Women-folk Worth Defending?* Lithograph on paper, 737 mm x 503 mm, Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM PST 13625) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/31624>
[20] Gullace *'The Blood of Our Sons'*, p. 117

potentially a larger part of their sense of self than their gender. Pankhurst's role in visiting Russia was to try to encourage Russian women to support Kerensky and the war effort in light of the February Revolution.[21] That some women came to occupy quasi-official roles based on mythologised notions of womanhood which had been established during the struggle for representation before the war, demonstrates how gender had to be negotiated within conceptions of the state and national identity.

War work

The war effort required women to step into the many roles made vacant by the initial enlistment, and later the conscription laws. Gail Braybon has outlined how, in spite of initial wariness in employing women in roles traditionally filled by men, the terms of 'substitution' had been more or less established by the summer of 1915, and women were moving into new positions in non-industrial jobs in offices or as drivers, and lucrative positions in munitions factories.[22] Angela Woollacott has outlined how the civil service saw a vast expansion of women workers, and some professional positions in military related work were filled by women in chemistry and mathematics, conducting experiments for the air force and calculating aircraft design.[23]In munitions work, women were initially filling roles in factories that were considered acceptable before the war (such as shell filling)[24], but as the war continued, women performed a full range of tasks, from running machines to welding.[25] The work was often risky and put women in contact with dangerous chemicals, with TNT causing jaundice, and so-called 'canary girls' being easily identified by their yellow skin.[26] Poisoning, whether by TNT or other chemicals, injured or killed some female workers and so too did

[21] Gullace *'The Blood of Our Sons'*, p. 117
[22] Gail Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, (Routledge 2012) pp. 45-46.
[23]Angela Woollacott, *On her their lives depend: munitions workers in the Great War*, (University of California Press, 1994) p. 26
[24] Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War* p. 46
[25] Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p29
[26] Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p29

explosions in munitions factories.[27] Braybon goes on to argue that far from being a space of the 'coming together' of different classes in the spirit of patriotism, factory work was dominated by women who had worked before the war, including those married women whose marital status had prevented them remaining in the workforce.[28] Angela Woollacott has shown that women and girls only constituted twenty-five percent of the work force in metal industries, thirty-nine percent in chemicals and forty-seven percent in government establishments in 1918. Whilst these figures come after a process of gradual layoffs made of women workers in munitions roles from 1917, the public impression of the vast replacement of men by women in all areas of industrial munitions manufacturing was such that in the final year of the war, ninety percent of all workers in every branch of munitions were felt to be women.[29]

Compared to the numbers of women who joined the workforce in munitions factories, the amount of women who became nurses or part of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) were relatively small.[30] Popularly remembered in television shows like Downton Abbey, and through the memoirs of VAD nurses like Vera Britten, the role of women as nurses was established before the war[31] and did not offer a direct challenge to gender roles, drawing on women's alleged natural capabilities of care.[32] Even so, Lucy Noakes has outlined that even in these supposedly 'more suitable' roles, women's competence was still up for question, with Field Marshall Haig arguing that women nurses certainly could not stand the 'enormous and incessant strain' caused by the Battle of the Somme.[33] Despite undertaking obvious and necessary service which often put them in difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances,[34] their public character remained one that demonstrated safety and security.

[27] Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p29
[28] Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, pp. 49 – 50.
[29] Woollacott, *On her their lives depend*, p. 19
[30] Woollacott, *On her their lives depend*, p. 19
[31] Arthur Marwick, Women at War, 1914-1918, (Fontana Paperbacks in association with The Imperial War Museum, 1977) p. 83
[32] Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 37
[33] Noakes, Women in the British Army, p. 65
[34] Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 38

As George Mosse has highlighted, the image of nurses as caring 'angels of mercy' conveyed sedateness and security that reinforced the appeal of traditional femininity.[35] Alison Fell's work has shown these appeals to traditional femininity allowed for nurses to be recognised through a popular cultural stereotype, as the First World War nurse appealed to different constituencies and could be aligned with a range of different understandings of what constituted virtuous and patriotic femininity in wartime.[36]

Nevertheless, the intrepid work of female medical professionals during the war like Dr Elsie Inglis, allowed women to undertake fulfilling war work, which, although patronised by established tropes of femininity, enabled women all over the world to get close to the front lines and satisfy the sense for adventure[37] shared with many young men. Recollections of the war experiences of parents have demonstrated that excitement to be involved in the war, or at the very least, keenness to contribute to the war effort saw some women take similar steps to men that may have otherwise been found unsuitable for service, with one Mass Observer reflecting, 'My mother's brother was killed in August 1918, and no mention of the First World War was allowed in the house during my childhood. She advanced her age to go nursing in 1917.'[38]

This adventure and experience sometimes had the effect of making the communities they returned to suspicious of their moralities and behaviour. Susan Grayzel has highlighted that although 'the wartime world required this service from women, …the postwar world was not always sure what to do with the women who had performed it.'[39] Woollacott has shown that the new roles of women were often understood and mediated through symbolic gains that

[35] George Mosse, *Fallen soldiers: reshaping the memory of the world wars*, (Oxford University Press 1990), p. 61
[36] Alison S. Fell, 'Remembering First World War Nursing: Other Fronts, Other Spaces.' *Journal of War & Culture Studies* (2018), 11.4, pp. 269–72. DOI:10.1080/17526272.2018.1523779.
[37] Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, pp. 37 - 41
[38] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent M348
[39] Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 41

had been made through their war service, for example, driving was such a symbol of independence that the 'mere fact of women drivers attracted much social comment.[40]

Grief

For many women, their experience of war was one of loss. Richard van Emden has highlighted that with three quarters of those killed in the war aged 30 or less, there was a large group of young widows left behind, with many experiences of kind, considerate, and relatively new marriages.[41] With the removal of death from the feminine household sphere, the final acts of intimacy and care in preparing and laying out the body of the deceased, traditionally undertaken by working class women in the home, were taken away.[42] These acts of intimacy were an integral part of a wider, largely feminine, culture of care-giving and support, which extended from women's idealised role as wife and mothers.[43] Lucy Noakes has shown that even when women worked in areas previously closed to them because of their sex, such as engineering and munitions, 'motherhood, women's unique contribution to the war, was raised above all other forms of female wartime service.'[44] Women of the First World War expanded their roles in the workforce at a crucial time when the position of women, mothers and citizens were being renegotiated in light of a total war. Rather than emphasising the social challenges that encouraged women to maintain the social status quo, reflections on the challenges women faced in light of their altered role in society helped support understandings of war time motherhood that had shaped some personal family experiences of one Mass Observation respondent:

> It would fall upon women like my mother and her three sisters to produce the new generation, and they had no intention of producing large broods as their mother and

[40] Woollacott, *On her their lives depend*, p. 26
[41] Richard van Emden, *The Quick and the Dead: Fallen Soldiers and Their Families in the Great War* (Bloomsbury 2012), p. 305
[42] Lucy Noakes, *Dying for the nation: Death, grief and bereavement in Second World War Britain*, (Manchester University Press, 2020), p. 28
[43] Noakes, *Dying for the nation*, p. 28
[44] Noakes, *Women and the British Army*, p. 45

> grandmother had done. As my mother frequently said, they were not units producing more cannon fodder for the army. Happily for me, they still wanted a family.[45]

Braybon has emphasised how the attitude towards the 'value of the mother as a national asset', and the extent to which women expected to sacrifice themselves to the home were still discussion points throughout the war.[46] The emotional labour for women was amplified during the war due to increasing pressures on family economies, the need to continue to perform gendered roles of wife and motherhood to an acceptable degree, and the stress and worry of losing a husband or family member in a war where information on the dead and missing could often be scant. Furthermore, Grayzel has argued that as the war ended, women's mourning came to have a political overtone, and wartime and postwar efforts to provide spaces in which to mourn the dead highlighted the particular loss experienced by women and mothers, who stood in for the nation at large.[47] In a war which exploited paternalistic and gendered language in recruitment propaganda, encouraging men to defend her (i.e. the nation),[48] British women were expected to fulfil a semi classical role as handmaiden, and mourn Britannia's lost sons.

14-18 NOW – Which women were remembered at the centenary?

With the uptake in work previously seen as too difficult, dangerous and ultimately unsuitable for women, women's bodies became a part of the broader conversation surrounding citizenship, ownership and the broader 'body politic', which had previously been the reasoning for obstructing female involvement.[49] Nonetheless, the expansive and often conflicting 'versions' of women are difficult to conceptualise in commemorative art, and have

[45] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent H1543
[46] Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War* p. 118
[47] Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 111
[48] *In Her Hour of Need Your Country Calls for You*, letterpress on paper, 253 mm x 810 mm. Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM PST 5077) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/28384> [5th April 2026]
[49] Gould, 'Women's Military Services in First World War Britain' pp. 114–25.

been a central theme of the memory of the war, as it offers a different insight to the experience of war as seen by women, and can be spoken to by the words and recollections of women who also served during the war. This tension is captured by the reflection of a respondent to the 2014 Mass Observation directive: '…(Vera) Brittain's entire life was turned upside down by the war, she lost the most important people to her, but it also opened up the world to her. She would not have gone on to live the life she did if it hadn't happened.'[50] In contrast with the widely recognised 'sacrificed Tommy' figure that is widely understood to be the broader male experience of the war, this chapter explores how a state commemorates the women of the First World War when so many competing narratives exist.

Commemorating women of the First World War was a complex and multifaceted task at the centenary. For a conflict that is often imagined to be a watershed moment for the making of a new (modern) world,[51] women entered the First World War as non-franchised citizens and saw the end of the war with (limited) political representation. This next section will explore the multiple characterisations women of the First World War experienced at the centenary, and what these reveal about the ideals, and versions of womanhood considered important to remember one hundred years after the First World War.

'Naw tae politics o' fear and hate'[52] - *Processions* and protest

The central artwork that commemorated women at the centenary was the large-scale participatory piece *Processions*. The piece focussed on the 1918 Representations of the People Act, which permitted property owning women (or those married to property owners) over the age of 30 and all men over 21 to vote in Britain. Despite scholars such as Karen Hunt asserting that class was also a significant a barrier to suffrage in the early twentieth

[50] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent C4131
[51] Nash, Paul, *We are Making a New World*, (1918), Oil on Canvas, 711 mm x 914 mm, Imperial War Museum (Art.IWM ART 1146) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20070>

[52] Quotation seen on *Processions* banner in Edinburgh, 2018

century, as a result excluding many men from voting rights,[53] many pieces at the centenary focussed specifically on women's experience of enfranchisement, and positioned this as a particularly female moment. *Processions* was envisioned by artist Darrell Vydelingum and realised by Artichoke, a events-based charity that works with artists to create large scale, mass participation public artworks.[54] The piece focussed on the centenary of the first British women's right to vote, and encouraged those who identified as women and girls to walk together in a show of solidarity to commemorate and celebrate 100 years of the first enaction of women's suffrage. The participants were given a colour shawl and invited to march in colour coordinated streams through the city centres of the United Kingdom, with the purple, white and green colours representing those chosen by the suffragettes to symbolise dignity, purity and hope, respectively. Drawing on the legacies of 'spectacle' outlined by the women a hundred years before,[55] as part of this mass visual artwork created by the marchers, participants were invited to create and walk with banners detailing the challenges that women face today, echoing the displays of the struggles of women 100 years ago.



Figure 14 - Banners from the Processions event exhibited at London Scottish House, Westminster, (2021) (Author's own image)

[53] Karen Hunt, 'Class and adult suffrage during the First World War', in *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign: National and International Perspectives,* ed by June Purvis and June Hannam, pp. 136 – 154
[54] 'Our Mission', Artichoke, (n.d.) https://www.artichoke.uk.com/our-mission/ [27th October 2021]
[55] Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery in the Suffrage Campaign 1907 – 14,* (Chatto and Windus, 1987), pp. ix - xii, pp. 55 - 71

Women's groups across the Britain worked with artists to create over 100 pieces of community created banners, which were carried by their creators amongst and as a part of the huge piece of visual art created by the movement of women through the city streets, which, from a bird's eye view appeared to flow like a vast, living, suffragette flag.[56] The participants demographic were wide, and ranged from Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) groups, young artist communities, groups led by and championing women of colour, established makers groups, unions, and incarcerated women. All groups carried banners that explored themes that affected their experiences as women, the challenges they feel they still face due to their gender, and marching in memory and solidarity with women who fought and campaigned for the right for women to enter the political sphere. This performed act of solidarity was felt to be a particularly meaningful display of a shared experience, with one participant explaining, 'I wasn't expecting so many women and girls to be taking part. Women of all ages and religions. I felt empowered and proud to be a part of this.'[57]

Processions focused on a theme of 'women making history'. By inviting the audience to see that women are simultaneously celebrating women who have brought about change in the past, are physically 'making' this performance of history by participating in the physical artwork and creating of banners and showing solidarity to the women who continue to and hope to make change in future. Organiser of the parade in Edinburgh, Jean Cameron, said: 'The original processions used beautiful banners, (which) acknowledged the hopes and dreams of women then.'[58] In connecting with the shared experience of struggle through creative imagination practices, women marching in *Processions* were tapping into a legacy of activists who publicly challenged the state's treatment of women.

[56] 'Processions', 14-18 NOW, (n.d. – no longer accessible) <https://www.1418now.org.uk/commissions/processions/> [27th October 2021]
[57] 'Processions', Artichoke, (n.d.) https://www.artichoke.uk.com/project/processions/ [5th April 2026]
[58] 'Women march in Edinburgh to mark suffrage centenary', BBC News, (10th June 2018) https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-44412728 [5th April 2026]

This active participatory undertaking stressed the meaningfulness of empowered collective action, and participants were invited to conceptualized their place in *Processions* as a narrative of self- transformation, with a focus on knowledge of the event or the self.[59] By becoming *one* with those that have marched before for women's rights, the participants took on the presumed ideas and values of the suffragettes in a phenomenological sense, and there once again is a 'slippage' in time created through the embodied experience with the artwork – by recreating the protest of the suffrage movement, procession placed the women and girls of today at one end of the 'memory horseshoe', across from the women and girls of the 1910s.

Using the reenactment of historical pageantry, further historic reference is made simply by the engagement with pageantry, and an application of British nationalism via historic continuance, which was applied by pageant creators in the late 19th and early twentieth centuries.[60] The involvement of women at management level of pageants at the turn of the twentieth century can be seen most clearly in pageants that were celebrated for women's history, and Processions borrows from this form in its celebration of the actions of women fighting for suffrage. Zoe Thomas highlights this explicitly by explaining that,

> Women instead used pageants to conjure up an inspirational imagined community of women banded together in common aim…. with (representations of) female role models and inspirational figures who had been active in shaping public life through their bravery, creativity, and intelligence.[61]

Ultimately, this application of unity via inspirational, if somewhat imagined characters of women's suffrage leant itself to an event where many communities of women came together to represent themselves, remember and acknowledge the difficulties of a broadly understood shared past, and celebrate the individuals whose actions made contemporary women's

[59] John Drury, Christopher Cocking, Joseph Beale, Charlotte Hanson, Faye Rapley, 'The phenomenology of empowerment in collective action', *British Journal of Social Psychology* (2005), 44, pp. 309–328
[60] Angela Bartie, Lorraine Fleming, Mark Freeman and others, *Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain*, (UCL Press, 2020)
[61] Zoë Thomas, Duncan Tanner Essay Prize 2016: 'Historical Pageants, Citizenship, and the Performance of Women's History before Second-Wave Feminism', *Twentieth Century British History*, (2017) 28.3, pp. 319–343

engagement with society through politics possible. However, *Processions* did not make any explicit connection with the marches which took place during the war, where mass demonstrations took place with the support of Emmeline Pankhurst and David Lloyd George, demanding the 'right to serve'.[62] Whilst the complex tying together of citizenship and service (i.e. the service – citizen bargain, explored further in chapter six) was not at the forefront in the organisation of Processions, the banners of communities marching give a sense that, whilst (in general), civil laws do not continue to restrict women, the feeling that women are still impacted by their 'womanhood' is an affront to what the suffragettes called 'moral law'.[63]

However, it is important to consider once again the scale of *Processions*, and the scale of the movement it commemorated. *Processions* had over 80,000 marchers take part on the 8th June 2018 – the NUSSW had just over half of that amount of members at its peak just before the First World War,[64] not all of whom were able to march when invited to due to social constraints or financial limitations. The limitations of the movement realistically meant that it was to be dominated by middle class women, who were placed under further limitations and harassment if able to partake in activism. There are difficulties with representations of histories like this, especially considering the emphasis of scale as part of the visual cue for understanding, as it informs the audience's spatial imagination and also prompts a rethinking of the relationship between representation and the real.[65] Many pieces at the centenary focussed on women's experience of enfranchisement, commemorating and celebrating the famous figures who pressed for the vote. The piece which holds the most

[62] Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 27
[63] Laura E. Nym Mayhall, *The Militant Suffrage Movement: Citizenship and Resistance in Britain, 1860-1930,* (Oxford University Press, 2003) p. 98.
[64] '1897 Foundation of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Society', UK Parliament, (n.d.) <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/2015-parliament-in-the-making/get-involved1/2015-banners-exhibition/alinah-azadeh/1897-founding-of-the-nuwss-gallery/#:~:text=Led%20by%20Millicent%20Fawcett%2C%20the,the%20first%20female%20Prime%20Minister> [5th April 2026]
[65] Tatsiana Zhurauliova, 'Cartography as Collage/Collage as Cartography: The Spatial Turn in Mid-Twentieth-Century Abstraction', *American Art*, (2020), 34.3, pp.72-91

tangible outputs is Gillian Wearings' *Courage Calls to Courage Everywhere*. Wearing's project resulted in a permanent statue of Millicent Garrett Fawcett, a leading suffragist, in parliament square, where she was placed as a memorial to women's suffrage and the first woman to be in the garden facing the Houses of Parliament.[66] Physical aesthetic expressions in *Make Me Up* and *Fashion and Freedom Designers* were seen alongside projects that centred women's voices, and these themes for many smaller 14-18 NOW projects, such as *Poet in da Corner*, *Clarion Call* and *I Say Nothing*,[67] all used the visibility and voices of women to explore women's experiences in the 2010s against the experience of disenfranchised women of the early twentieth century. Disruptions in the story of enfranchisement was explored through the stage musical *Sylvia,* which explored the life of Sylvia Pankhurst, who took a route of pacifist socialism in contrast to her mother and sister. This production was Olivier nominated and is due to return to the stage in 2026.[68]

Whilst it is important to celebrate the success of the women's movement through the celebration of the expansion of platforms for women's voices, it is also important to remember the limited space women were forced to occupy when fighting for their rights. Often, the relationship of the war to the enfranchisement of women is remembered as being related to war work, as described by one Mass Observation respondent who surmises the war of being a moment of 'women at work – a hiatus in the struggle for the women's vote,'[69] implying this was the deciding factor in how the vote for women was won. The relationship between the pre-war suffrage movements and the tensions between the state and the suffrage groups are little examined.

[66] 'Millicent Fawcett: Statue of suffragist unveiled' BBC News, (24th April 2018) https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-43868925 [5th April 2026]
[67] *14-18 NOW Contemporary Arts Commissions for the First World War Centenary*, (Profile Editions 2019)
[68] 'Sylvia', Royal Albert Hall, (n.d.) <https://www.royalalberthall.com/tickets/events/2026/sylvia> [5th April 2026]
[69] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent G4560

In his speech at Imperial War Museum, David Cameron specifically mentioned the 'extraordinary bravery of Edith Cavell, whose actions gained such widespread admiration and played an important part in advancing the emancipation of women.'[70] Not explicitly remembered as a campaigner for women's votes, Cameron's adoption of Cavell as a pioneer of the women's rights is an odd one, when there are many women to draw on from the time period who actively pursued votes for women as their priority. Cavell, executed as a spy during her time nursing at the front, was responsible for saving hundreds of lives by surreptitiously helping British, French and Belgian men escape occupied territory. Portrayed as a saintly figure of protection after her death, and (usefully for propaganda purposes) possessing a brave, principled, and coolly unemotional countenance in the face of death,[71] Cameron implies that *this* version of British womanhood is the most valuable, sweeping aside the legacy of women who fought and died for the vote.



Figure 15 – 'The making of Courage Calls to Courage Everywhere' exhibition, Firstsite, Colchester (2018) (Author's own image)

[70] 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> [12th August 2025]
[71] Thomas Dixon, 'Edith Cavell: the British nurse who taught women the way of the stiff upper lip', The Conversation, (12th October 2015), https://theconversation.com/edith-cavell-the-british-nurse-who-taught-women-the-way-of-the-stiff-upper-lip-47061 [5th April 2026]

Women at work – Nurses and 'munitionettes'

Cameron's inference of ideal British womanhood draws on the heritage of the war nurse, which was highly romanticised in war propaganda, and depicts a form of femininity which reinforced traditional gender roles, as seen in figure 16. Women's roles as nurses, specifically Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) nurses have captured imaginations in the memory of the war, much like the volunteerism of the early recruits, and women in nursing roles were key figures in the imaginations of the women's experience of war at the centenary.



Figure 16- William Hatherall, Nurse, Wounded Soldier and Child, (1915) Oil on canvas, 457 mm x 323 mm, Imperial War Museum (© Art.IWM ART 5194) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/12369> [5th April 2026] (Use under Non-Commercial license)
A heavily idealised painting of acceptable war work that was not seen to infringe too much on traditional ideals of womanhood. Note the implied role of 'mother', a role that Noakes has identified was heralded as the best war work women could perform.

Programmes in the lead up to and during the centenary demonstrated how the broadening of avenues into 'work as war service' were used by women to help assert their own sense of identity, as was the case in *Downton Abbey,*[72] to reimagine established narratives, as seen by *Testament of Youth*,[73] or to navigate growing sense of independence, seen in *The Crimson Field.*[74] Some women saw it as a chance to overcome feelings of uselessness and passivity, and sought out closer involvement in the war that would prevent

[72] *Downton Abbey,* (Carnival Films and WGBH-TV, ITV 2011), Season 2
[73] *Testament of Youth*, dir. by James Kent (United Kingdom, 2014)
[74] *The Crimson Field, (*BBC Drama Production, 2014)

their relegation to the female sidelines of anxious waiting.[75] Rather than motivated by a gendered sense of care, the multiple reasons for joining VAD service, Vera Brittain's *Testament* series demonstrate that women were not immune to the pre-war sense of anxious excitement.[76] For Brittain, her war work was not only an opportunity for her to escape the feeling of uselessness she feared by remaining at home, it allowed her to craft a stronger link between her experience of the war and the experience of those dear to her, allowing hopeful imagination that any man she nursed was akin to nursing her fiancé 'by proxy'.[77]

However, the government led arts programme of 14-18 NOW demonstrated limited engagement with aid detachments of any kind during the war. Of the VAD, Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (now the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps) and the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY), only the FANY was explicitly represented by state led commemorative art. In *Coffin Jump*, the civilian FANY unit were remembered for their mounted aid heritage by the performance of a mounted rider performing a series of jumps over responses to nursing diaries. One reviewer indicates the use of text, and how absence continues to influence creative engagement with women's work in the war, '"NOTHING SPECIAL HAPPENED"…denotes the underappreciation of women in military spaces, one that the FANY also faced wherein the British Army initially refused to be associated with them despite their life-saving role.'[78] In any case, the country publicised the sacrifice of nursing groups at the end of the war, thanking them for their exemplary service and opening funds to ensure the continued development of the nursing profession.[79] In spite of Cameron's assertion of the memory of Edith Cavell, she was not commemorated in the government-led arts programme. Whilst there was a community led project which

[75] Lynne Layton 'Vera Brittain's Testament(s)' in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. by Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz, (Yale University Press, 1987) pp. 70-83
[76] Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*, (Virago Press, 1978) pp. 92-99
[77] Christine Hallett, *Nurse Writers of the Great War*, (Manchester University Press 2016) p. 193.
[78] Sandy Di Yu, 'Two wars and no satisfaction: The Coffin Jump and In Search of Dinozord' ArtRabbit, (19th June 2018) https://www.artrabbit.com/network/features/2018-june/the-coffin-jump-and-in-search-of-dinozord-review [5th April 2026]
[79] 'A National Tribute to Nurses of the Great War', *The Times*, (London, England) (12th November 1918) The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources), [5th April 2026]

explored her life and death which will be explored further in the chapter, the absence of her story, as well as stories of other nurses in the government led art projects speaks to the underappreciation that public memory has for the realities of nurses working during the First World War.

Whilst *Coffin Jump* did commemorate nurses of the war, it was not overt. There was little visibility for the women and gave the sense that the piece was combining the commemoration of human and animal. There was no distinct commemoration of nurses in 14-18 NOW, and the BBC drama *The Crimson Field* which depicted nurses' experiences in depth was cancelled after one season despite immense popularity, with over 6 million viewers of the first episode, and retaining over two thirds of that amount by the final episode broadcast.[80]

Women in munitions factories have featured in some literature relating to the First World War, often as supporting characters, as is the case in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy.[81] The 14 18 NOW project *Asunder* told the story of the Sunderland home front during the First World War. A film by Esther Johnson, *Asunder* asserts that the North East was in the front line, thanks to its shipyards and munitions factories.[82] Johnson describes her process as combining archive and contemporary footage and audio, collaging the stories of people from Tyneside and Wearside to uncover what life was like on the home front:

> In making *Asunder* I wanted to uncover alternative social histories of WW1 – moments of magic during the horror, attempts at finding normality in abnormal circumstances – to find a new way of understanding the war and give prominence to stories that may not have been given space in the history books…. Archive material is mixed with contemporary footage of locations in Tyne and Wear as they exist now in order to bring the period of 1914–18 to life in sometimes surprising ways.

[80] Hatty Collier, 'The Crimson Field makes strong start with 6 million viewers for first episode' *The Guardian,* (7th April 2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/apr/07/crimson-field-bbc-ratings-first-episode> [5th April 2026] and Frankie Collins, 'The WWI masterpiece the BBC axed after just one series' *The Express* (28th September 2025) https://www.express.co.uk/showbiz/tv-radio/2114000/ww1-masterpiece-bbc-axed [5th April 2026]
[81] Pat Barker, *The Regeneration Trilogy*, (Penguin, 1991, 2014) (ed*)*
[82] Esther Johnson, *Asunder*, (2016), https://www.shu.ac.uk/art-design-media-research-centre/archive/asunder#:~:text=Asunder%20tells%20the%20story%20of,its%20shipyards%20and%20munitions%20factories. [5th April 2026]

> Contemporary footage is themed into sections of Home, Leisure, and Work…. The film narrative has been woven from this (archival) material, in addition to articles published in 1914–18 copies of the *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette.* We were lucky enough to have Kate Adie and Alun Armstrong narrate the film, both from the North-East and familiar with locations where individuals featured in storyline's had lived. [83]

Asunder attempts to combine the past and present through a locational space, and repositions women's work form a 'support' role to a key feature of war making, removing the gendered expectations of the time and tying the stories of the First World War to a more modern understanding. Reviews outline that *'*...There's a sense that when the words and pictures come together you're living in the now, you're living in that moment rather than this being an historic document...'[84] Johnson's approach combining place based historical imagination with expectations of audience local experiences is shown to provide another example of 'slippage'.

Rather than giving an overview to the experience of an area, *The Forbidden Zone* focuses its story on women's role in the development of deadly weapons, bringing the experience of how, in 1915, the development of poison gas influenced a cascade of deadly weaponry expansion, where women were at the forefront of the scientific developments which led to the hydrogen bomb and Zyklon B, the gas used in the Holocaust death camps.[85]

It is a play about scientific ethics and responsibilities and is told from a feminist viewpoint with the text drawing on leading feminist writer's work, including Mary Borden, a Chicago heiress who financed and worked in her own field hospital. [86] The play demonstrated

[83] Esther Johnson, *Asunder*, (2016), https://www.shu.ac.uk/art-design-media-research-centre/archive/asunder#:~:text=Asunder%20tells%20the%20story%20of,its%20shipyards%20and%20munitions%20factories. [5th April 2026]
[84] 'Barbican Music podcast presented by Ben Eshmade interviewing Esther Johnson and Andrew Hodson · Feb 2017'/ 'Reviews', *Asunder*, (n.d.) https://asunder1916.uk/reviews [5th April 2026]
[85] 'The Forbidden Zone' *British Theatre Guide*, (n.d.) https://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/the-forbidden-z-barbican-theatr-12909 [[5th April 2026]
[86] 'The Forbidden Zone' *British Theatre Guide*, (n.d.) https://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/the-forbidden-z-barbican-theatr-12909 [[5th April 2026]

the difficulties of inheritance for women in science, some of whom are shown to have a family legacy of creating destructive armaments.

Despite a wish to use a female workforce to release men for active duty, women that were seen to be completing khaki uniformed 'war work' or considered to be 'aping' men faced considerable vitriol.[87] However, the projects exploring women's war work in industry positions decentralised the historic narratives levelled at women, and reasserted their positions as key workers for the war effort. This approach would serve to furnish family histories with narrative, and give more context to experiences which may have been only partially understood, as described by this Mass Observation respondent:

> … my dad accounts his grandmothers service in a munitions factory in Manchester. There is not much detail to his account except for that she worked relentlessly throughout the war and was enlisted again in 1939.[88]

Despite being seemingly important enough to remember and mention in their response to the Mass Observation directive, the lack of information indicates that detailed knowledge of this work was not something that was shared in some families.

Expressions of grief

The traditional role of woman as mother and caregiver also extended to her identity as a locus of emotion. Whilst the lived memory of the war is over a century old, the role of women as grief bearer has been embedded into memory practices of the First World War. Susan Grayzel's work has shown that the

> depiction of women as emblems of grief and as mourners on (war memorials) provides some evidence of the continued ambiguity of popular attitudes towards women and the war. On the one hand, women could represent the potent forces of peace, victory and the nation itself. On the other hand, the images of grieving women left a powerful symbol of feminised loss and the devasting cost of war in the post war world.[89]

[87] Gould, 'Women's Military Services in First World War Britain' pp. 114–25
[88] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent N5545
[89] Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p. 241

The tension between the need to display a deep pride in the death of a patriotic son, and the visceral grief of losing a child violently and far from home has resulted in one of the most poignant and enduring legacies of the emotion of war. Noakes' work has outlined during the First World War that these notions of patriotic and appropriate behaviour in wartime reshaped cultures of mourning and bereavement, and grief itself was mobilised for the war effort.[90] There remains an assumption that women are the vessels for managing grief appropriately, which is linked directly to the expectation that the sphere of the home is an inviolate space of womanhood.[91] Reflecting on the presence of remembrance practices, one Mass Observer reflected on the presence of remembrance practices toward the start of the centenary, 'I expect in large stores and supermarkets, as in previous years, the silence would have been observed. Though mostly by women, I've noticed…'[92]

14-18 NOW commissioned a range of pieces that explored the experiences of women. Alice Oswald's *Memorial* lent heavily on the influence the classical world had on the mythologising of young men killed in battle, and was commissioned by 14-18 NOW as a theatrical piece, having originally been a poetic response to Homer's Iliad. The production stripped much of the narrative from the Iliad, becoming instead an 'intense elegy for each of the 215 dead soldiers named in Homer's epic.'[93] The naming and memorialisation of these classical soldiers brought together ancient and modern histories of death, with one reviewer highlighting that 'its impact has something of the Menin Gate's punch about it - just so many names, their fragile individual humanity bulldozed away by man's industrialised collective inhumanity.'[94]

---

[90] Noakes, *Dying for the Nation,* p. 31
[91] Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p. 245
[92] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent G226
[93] 'Memorial - Brink Productions', Barbican, (n.d.) https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2018/event/brink-productions-memorial [5th April 2026]
[94] Gary Naylor, 'Review: ALICE OSWALD'S MEMORIAL, Barbican Theatre', *Broadway World* (28th September 2018) <https://www.broadwayworld.com/westend/article/BWW-Review-ALICE-OSWALDS-MEMORIAL-Barbican-Theatre-20180928> [5th April 2026]

Whilst the comparison between men of the First World War was made against the ordinary men of the Iliad,[95] the proximity to the heroic that the classical world invites implies valour in death. This was something which was widely understood to the contemporary society of the First World War and embedded in remembrance practices (not least, the adoption of the Cenotaph as the national memorial). In *Memorial*, the torment of mothers and wives is also depicted, Priam's wife mourns a son whose body is lost at sea, and warriors are repeatedly described as 'somebody's darling son',[96] explicitly tying together the role of women as the mourners of (and thus, supplicants of) male bravery and heroism. By drawing on classical themes, Oswald's piece situates itself within the broader classical legacy that the First World War occupies. Luyten's Cenotaph design in Whitehall, and many other war memorials draw on a classical, universal architectural style free of religious ornamentation, and established an inclusive cultural symbol to memorialize the sacrifice of the citizen-soldier.[97] By combining these themes, the performance of *Memorial* establishes its link to the classical memorial form of the cenotaph, and reinforces the idea of the war dead as classical fallen heroes.

As the war progressed, creative outputs began to demonstrate the grief imagined to be felt by mothers, sisters and lovers of soldiers killed in the conflict. In his 1916 piece *Youth Mourning*, George Clausen represents youth in the form of a young woman mourning at the graveside of a fallen solder, mirroring the graveside relationship many young women would come to experience.[98] More elderly respondents to the Mass Observation directive of 2014 refer to memories of women who had never married, perceived to be unable to due to the 'shortage of men' the war created 'old ladies who had never married were another reminder

[95] Arifa Akbar, 'Memorial review – Alice Oswald's exquisite elegy to Iliad's lost mortals', *The Guardian*, (30th September 2018) https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/sep/30/memorial-review-alice-oswald-homer-iliad-barbican [5th April 2026]
[96] Arifa Akbar, 'Memorial review – Alice Oswald's exquisite elegy to Iliad's lost mortals', *The Guardian*, (30th September 2018) https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/sep/30/memorial-review-alice-oswald-homer-iliad-barbican [5th April 2026]
[97] David A. Johnson and Nicole F. Gilbertson. 'Commemorations of Imperial Sacrifice at Home and Abroad: British Memorials of the Great War.' *The History Teacher*, (2010) 43.4 pp. 563–84.
[98] George Clausen, Youth Mourning, (1916) Oil on Canvas, 914 mm x 914 mm https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/5151 [5th April 2026]

of that time when I was young. Fiancés went to war and did not return.'[99] There is also evidence of a sort-of contract of social understanding that the loss of these women was not to be forgotten: that this was a grief that was not simply for a person, but a life these women expected to live, and were deprived of, as outlined by this MO respondent:

> We…went to see an elderly lady who had apparently been engaged to my uncle J before the War. She never married and I think my grandmother must have kept in touch and given us her address. Which leads me to remember how many women lost husbands and fiancés at that time.[100]

This account speaks to the 'absent presence' of the war that Michael Roper outlines in his work *Afterlives of War.* The respondent's choice of the word 'apparently' indicates that in their visits, the possible engagement that was ended by the war was not mentioned, even though this was the only link between the visiting family and the woman in question. The women who never married, the shadows of traumatic shock and even the skills learnt from men's time in the armed forces made the conflict 'conspicuous by its absence'.[101]

The nature of this grief is remembered as a deeply personal form of anguish, that is almost unspeakable. *Flight*, a 14-18 NOW commission which took place in Lake Windermere, draws on the sense of death that the war left for women at home. Responding simply to the prompt 'flight' to commemorate the Royal Flying Corps, artist Geraldine Pilgrim felt moved to create a piece that spoke to the 11-day life expectancy of what was termed the 'suicide club'.[102] In her proposal to the 14-18 NOW commission, Pilgrim drew on her work across theatre and the visual arts, and previous work on evocative participatory site-specific performances to explore the site specific relevance of her project, key to the development of aviation in the First World War. Noting that Cumbria has always had a

[99] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent H1543
[100] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent H2637
[101] Michael Roper, *Afterlives of War: A descendants' history*, (Manchester University Press, 2023) p. 66
[102] Helen Pidd, 'Wings over Windermere: high tea and horror as the Suicide Club flies again' *The Guardian*, (6th July 2016) https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jul/06/flight-brockhole-on-windermere-first-world-war-geraldine-pilgrim [5th April 2026]

tradition of flying due to its hills and updrafts, with 'Hills of Oaks' RNAS Windermere being known as the cradle of naval flying due to its development of the sea plane.[103] However, rather than focussing on the technological advancement of the aerial warfare, Pilgrim outlined that,

> The emotional core to *Flight* will be the missing airmen of the First World War, the young men who never returned and were never found, and the effect on the loved ones who waited for them to return. Ten weeks was the acknowledged maximum length of time a Royal Flying Corps pilot would be in the air before being shot down…. The 1914-18 Icarus' who flew too close to the sun.[104]

For Pilgrim, the shock of this knowledge and the young lives wasted led to the main theme of Flight: women waiting for their sons, brothers, fathers, cousins or lovers to return.[105] A large-scale performance piece, it is made powerful by its absence, planes are heard but not seen, with audience members looking to the sky to try to see aircrafts that are not there.[106] The performers do not speak, the grief of the women who have lost sons or husbands, and the worry of those waiting for their loved one's safe return is expressed silently, made palpable by the audiences understanding of the legacy of the First World War, and the scale of death that people endured. There is a sense, though, of this stylised mourning being romanticised, and the performance of grief is of value to the memory of the First World War dead.

This style of stylised, visible-yet-private, silent mourning continues to inform imagined memories of how women would have experienced the loss of their family members during the war. It continues to inspire creative interpretations of this experience, as shown in this MOR reflection from the centenary:

---

[103] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no.NOW_11_2016_08_02_001_004_2 'FLIGHT'
[104] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no.NOW_11_2016_08_02_001_004_2 'FLIGHT'
[105] Helen Pidd, 'Wings over Windermere: high tea and horror as the Suicide Club flies again' *The Guardian*, (6th July 2016) https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jul/06/flight-brockhole-on-windermere-first-world-war-geraldine-pilgrim [5th April 2026]
[106] Janine Johns, 'Flight: a fascinating journey with Lakes Alive' (8th July 2016) <https://lakedistrictgems.co.uk/2016/07/08/flight-lakes-alive/?utm_campaign=shareaholic&utm_medium=twitter&utm_source=socialnetwork#:~:text=Flight%20is%20a%20collaboration%20between%20Lakes%20Alive,house%20and%20gardens%20at%20Brockhole%2C%20and%20it> [5th April 2026]

> I myself intend to create my own First World War memorial. I am a miniaturist…dolls house & miniature (magazine) ran a competition on the First World War & I had felt it in poor taste. Until that is, I saw the results, the winning entries. They were so respectful, the designs so wonderful. One simply showed a woman, presumably a mother, kneeling down crying by an open drawer in a dresser, on the ground by her knees a teddy bear, war papers, the soldiers' hat– it was clear her son wasn't returning from the war. Another winner had connecting scenes, the first, the wife and child waving him off, later he's lying on a stretcher, next scene his photo by a vase with a single poppy, his wife in tears.[107]

Rather than imagining a public grief in society, that has traditionally been 'seen' at a war memorial,[108] this observer imagined a private grief, confined to the home and deeply personal. Representations of grief at the centenary therefore show how memory of war grief has been crystallised by the approaches outlined by Noakes during and after the war, identifying that,

> As the numbers of the dead, and of the bereaved, mounted, silence and restraint were increasingly seen as the only appropriate, patriotic response; a means of both demonstrating resolve and placing the needs of the wartime community over the mediation of individual grief.[109]

Mediation of loss and grief through stoic, restrained means have become not only a feature of memory of the war: through its heritage as a coping mechanism, it is recognised as a touch point for particular understanding of the *British* approach to grief and loss in war.

Whilst it is reasonable to assume that most women who lost loved ones in the war would mourn, the expectation and appearance of mourning placed a particular burden on women in the years after the war, further isolating them and contributing to the 'silence' that had come to define their lives as widows. One Mass Observer recalled seeing women in mourning as a child: 'It always seemed to be the houses with aspidistra plants in the front windows that to me as a child held aloofness rather than sadness – and where lived the women who were not often seen in the street, and when they did appear it was always in dark

[107] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent H4611
[108] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning; The Great War in European Cultural History*, 4th (Canto) edn, (Cambridge University Press, 2014) p6
[109] Noakes, *Dying for the nation,* p33

clothes and black bonnets…'[110] The mention of the 'typical' middle class aspidistra plants conjures a sense of performative social awareness, that as a child the respondent applied to the women in black who lived in these houses. The performative grief the First World War was seen to demand was also felt by another respondent, who experienced it through enforced generational remembering:

> I would have to watch the ceremonies on TV, the Festival of Remembrance the night before and the TV cenotaph wreath laying, in the following morning, year, after year. I would never be let off from doing it while (my parents) were alive…. I have also seen black jet effigies carved of relatives that died during (the First World War) and were displayed in living rooms or parlours as they called them. Those relatives would wear black silk floor length dresses and wear and (sic) mourning ring with a lock of their deceased relative's hair in it. ...since (her parents') demise, I had not been press-ganged or black mailed any more BY THEM to watch the cenotaph ceremonies or the festival of remembrance on tv the night before. I no longer have to drape black silk and black netting around a box, near a round table of black lacquer anymore either. I am now free, as an adult and a quaker to make my own decisions about 'what to do' regarding this day.[111]

Emotional labour was not only idealised in the arts as an effective form of war work for women, there were also practical applications women were encouraged to undertake. The most publicised iteration of this 'soft' care was Princess Mary's Christmas gifts; small brass tins to be delivered at Christmastime for 'every sailor afloat and every soldier at the front'. With funds needing to be raised by the public, people were encouraged to donate to the Princess' Christmas Fund, which appealed to a nationalistic, almost maternal sense of care;

> I want you now to help me to send a Christmas present from the whole of the nation to every sailor afloat and every soldier at the front. I am sure that we should all be happier to feel that we had helped to send our little token of love and sympathy on Christmas morning…Could there be anything more likely to hearten them in their struggle than a present received straight from home on Christmas Day? Please will you help me?[112]

[110] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent R1418
[111] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent H1470
[112] 'Look inside the Princess Mary Gift Fund 1914 Box' Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/look-inside-the-princess-mary-gift-fund-1914-box [5th April 2026]

Along with donating to the many benevolent funds, there were other helpful solutions in which women could aid the war effort in a distinctly feminine way. Women were encouraged to knit gloves and socks in order to ensure their sons and husbands kept warm at the front, and the legacies of this 'knitted care' continues to be demonstrated through the increasing Remembrance Day practice of knitting poppies, most recently in the news when Southend played host to the largest display of knitted poppies which spanned the whole length of the countries longest pier.[113]

Drawing women into the responsibilities of supporting the war effort by contributing to supply of 'homely' comforts, an appeal to *The Times* requested 'mothers and sweethearts' to send gloves to the front.[114] Graham Gingles's piece *At times like these, men were wishing they were all kinds of insects* speaks to the material legacy of these acts of compassion, with the artists inspiration coming from the Christmas boxes sent out by Princess Mary's fund in 1914. Reviewed as 'An evocative piece of art that should appeal to those interested in history and war as well as art enthusiasts'[115], the memory box like installation captures an idea of the war within a box -like installation which contained objects that were 'difficult to interpret'[116]. The piece also quietly satirises the increasing material culture of commemoration seen more recently. In Gingles's appropriation of apparently random objects and the subsequent 'pictorial equivalence of free association; the art therefore defies logical analysis.'[117] As a result, audiences will find meaning when none is meant, simply being drawn to a commemorative piece simply due to the established ritual of commemorating the First World War, rather than any meaningful interpretation of the legacy of the war itself.

[113] 'Poppies on the Pier: Southend unveils the UK's biggest Remembrance tribute' Southend of Sea City Council, (n.d.) https://www.southend.gov.uk/news/article/3432/poppies-on-the-pier-southend-unveils-the-uk-s-biggest-remembrance-tribute [5th April 2026]
[114] 'Deaths' *The Times* (London, England) (7th October 1914), The Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources), [19th May 2025]
[115] Chris Morrison, 'An artist reflecting on war and loss', *Irish News*, (10th July 2014) <https://www.irishnews.com/lifestyle/2014/07/10/news/an-artist-reflecting-on-war-and-loss-96399/> [8th February 2026]
[116] 'Graham Gingles at the MAC Belfast' *Visual Artists*, (n.d., no longer accessible) <https://visualartists.ie/van-critique-septoct-2014-graham-gingles-at-the-mac-belfast/>
[117] 'Graham Gingles at the MAC Belfast' *Visual Artists*, (n.d., no longer accessible) <https://visualartists.ie/van-critique-septoct-2014-graham-gingles-at-the-mac-belfast/>

Ironically, Gingle's piece seemingly unknowingly nods to another 'Marian' First World War legacy – namely Queen Mary's dolls house. Designed by Lutyens and displayed at the British Empire Exhibition in 1924, the feminine and domestic space reasserted gendered roles and offered a recuperative space after the suffering of war.[118] Rachel Duffett has argued that the doll's house demonstrated how 'Englishness' had become;

> 'less imperial and more inward-looking, more domestic and more private', where the stability and continuity of the nation's history were to be found in the privacy of the home rather than on the public stage or battlefield and the monarchs were presented in a manner that resonated with the family life of the nation's citizens rather than the rituals of the state.[119]

A display of a home in a memory box places the private sphere of the home within the private sphere of the emotional legacies of the war discussed earlier in the chapter, and asserts them as the women's sphere in a similar way to how Queen Mary's dolls house was interpreted in 1924.[120] The *Irish News* describes the make-up of the piece, which consisted;

> primarily of wood and glass and is full of stairs, ladders and bookcases. It resembles different rooms in a house a century ago. There are several references to the war, such as toy soldiers, playing cards and a bullet cartridge, which is being used as a pencil holder. Throughout are various books and letters dated 1914. All of these items contribute to the exhibition's main themes of memory and loss.[121]

The First World War allowed for a broader memorial practice to become emplaced in the trinkets of memorabilia of the war, but also allowed for the war memory to be conceptualised as a domestic, female space which still resonates with audiences at the centenary.

[118] Rachel Duffett, 'The War in Miniature: Queen Mary's Dolls' House and the Legacies of the First World War', *Cultural and Social History*, (2019) *16*.4, pp. 431–449.
[119] Duffett, 'The War in Miniature' pp. 431–449.
[120] Duffett, 'The War in Miniature' pp. 431–449.
[121] Chris Morrison, 'An artist reflecting on war and loss', *Irish News*, (10th July 2014) <https://www.irishnews.com/lifestyle/2014/07/10/news/an-artist-reflecting-on-war-and-loss-96399/> [8th February 2026]

Heritage Lottery Fund

Whilst community projects about men of the war tended to focus overwhelmingly on the soldiering role of men, projects exploring women's roles were keen to demonstrate the opportunities and variety of work and roles women took on during the war.

Uncovering 'lesser-known' histories

Women's war work was a popular source of inspiration for heritage lottery funded projects. In Bristol, the education charity 'acta Bristol' worked with people from across the community to create a new play about the lives of women who worked in the Mustard Gas factories in and around Bristol. The funding website outlines how the participants of *Gas Girls* undertook historical research into the factories and their workers at local and national archives, which allowed them to draw on the material they found to develop a variety of characters, which were then used to write a play about the gas workers' lives.[122] This lesser-known history was transformative to the knowledge of one audience member;

> …earlier this year we went to a play…called 'gas girls' and (it) featured the women who worked in the munitions factory in Avonmouth during the First World War. Although I had heard of munitions factories in the Second World War I had never thought about it with regard to the 1914 war. I had no idea that there was a factory in Bristol, and that working conditions were so awful and injurious to health. Many of the women were burned by the phosphorus, and they also contracted lung and skin disease and eye problems. They were not treated well and their part in the war never really acknowledged.[123]

The Gas Girls production also resulted in a book, which outlined the broader stories of the factory that could not be told through the performance piece. In the book, the experiences of women in and out of the factory were explored further, including the stories of factory

[122] 'Gas Girls: women workers in Avonmouth First World War Mustard Gas factories' National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/gas-girls-women-workers-avonmouth-first-world-war-mustard-gas-factories [6th April 2026]
[123] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent D826

football team, safety measures implemented by the factory and compensation claims made by the workers after their service.[124]

Research into the little-known histories of factory workers enabled some women participants to connect more deeply with local experiences and their own family connections. 'women's work' explored the experiences of women who worked in the Birmingham Small Arms factory, which was the wartime manufacturer of the Lewis Gun. The project uncovered family links for some of the women who took part and after some oral history training interviewed their relatives and the public about their ancestors' experiences.[125] The connection to local experiences of women's work was also the route taken by the 'Working War' project, which used the heritages of social change in the area to help interrogate feelings of local identity in a community which remains dominated by its industrial past. Working with Inverclyde Development Trust and the Watt Library Archive, young people researched the history of the factory alongside the real-life experiences of soldiers, using newspaper archives, and worked with a professional screenwriter to write a play.[126]

Performance dominated these explorations into the working lives of women in the war and served to connect performers and audiences with the past in a similar pageant type style as *Processions*. Mark Freeman has outlined that although not quite the same as historical re-enactments or so-called 'living history', historical pageants raise similar questions about the ways in which the past is represented and experienced. The place-based performances helps create a physical linkage between the performers and the past, alongside serving a performative educational function.[127] This is explicitly the case in the project *All the Nice Girls*, which used performance to explore the experience of female performers who took on

[124] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War UG 447.2.G7, 'Gas Girls'
[125] 'Womens' Work: Sharing the stories of Birmingham factory women' National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/womens-work-sharing-stories-birmingham-factory-women [6th April 2026]
[126] 'Working The War', National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/working-war [6th April 2026]
[127] Mark Freeman, '"Splendid Display; Pompous Spectacle": Historical Pageants in Twentieth-Century Britain.' *Social History*, (2013) 38.4, pp. 423–55.

traditionally male roles during the war, blurring the line between contemporary and historical performances through performing the historic plays as the characters they were representing.[128]

Commemorating nurses of the war

There were several Heritage Lottery Funded projects exploring the roles of nurses and VADs, the most prominent being a series of projects commemorating Edith Cavell, including the restoration of her grave at Norwich Cathedral, and the development of a research project exploring how her death was used as propaganda to drive allied recruitment.[129] The project demonstrated a real sense of local and national pride, with Norwich Cathedral highlighting routes to be taken as pilgrimage around the local area which would have been walked by Cavell,[130] and a website dedicated to Cavell that details centenary activities, research and a collection of reflections Cavell received about her during her life and after her death.[131] This sense of pride was shared by the celebration of the work of Scottish nurses and doctors during the First World War by the Scottish Women's Hospital project.[132] In Scottish memory of women's war work, Dr Elsie Inglis is the figurehead for promoting the contribution of Scottish women to the war effort across the fronts of the First World War.

A particularly ambitious project saw 100 trained volunteers transcribe information from 244,000 Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) personnel index cards to create a searchable online database, including details such as the volunteer's social background, gender, age, qualifications, and responsibilities, in what the project described as an invaluable resource for

[128] '"All The Nice Girls" - women in men's roles on stage 1914-1918', National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/all-nice-girls-women-mens-roles-stage-1914-1918 [6th April 2026]
[129] 'Lottery grant to tell the heroic story of First World War nurse Edith Cavell' National Lottery Heritage Fund, (13th October 2014) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/lottery-grant-tell-heroic-story-first-world-war-nurse-edith-cavell [6th April 2026]
[130] 'Edith Cavell' Norwich Cathedral, (n.d.) https://cathedral.org.uk/cathedral-highlights/edith-cavell/ [6th April 2026]
[131] '*Commemorating Edith Cavell, the World War I British nurse who is celebrated for saving the lives of soldiers in Brussels from all sides without distinction'* Edith Cavell 1865-1915, (n.d.) https://edithcavell.org.uk/ [6th April 2026]
[132] 'Scottish Womens Hospital WW1 Remembrance', National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/scottish-womens-hospital-ww1-remembrance [6th April 2026]

family history researchers and historians, and allows for the better understanding of who volunteered to provide humanitarian aid during the conflict.[133] Unlike many projects, the digital legacy of this work still remains, and is accessible on the Red Cross volunteers website.[134] Both this project, and the Edith Cavell project, reinforces the idea of the 'nobility and selflessness'[135] that came to represent reflections on women's nursing work in popular memory.

Other projects which had great potential to share physical legacies and ephemera of women's nursing experience during the war were not as well realised. The Order of St John project used VAD nurse Veronica Nisbit's wartime scrapbook as inspiration to commemorate the efforts of medical staff during the First World War.[136] Whilst the front page of the scrapbook, which is described as being 'enlivened' by her skill as an artist, and containing cartoons, sketches, and photographs, is available on a blog page, the full record of the scrapbook is not accessible.[137]

Protest

Whilst the locally funded projects did not focus on the suffrage movement as closely as the nationally led projects, there was still a sense of protest among many projects. Some projects in the North East did centre suffragette stories as part of the narrative, such as *In her footsteps: discovering Suffragettes in the North East*[138] and *Investigating South Tyneside*

[133] 'VAD indexes online: personnel records of First World War volunteers', National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/vad-indexes-online-personnel-records-first-world-war-volunteers [6th April 2026]
[134] 'British Red Cross volunteers during WW1' British Red Cross, (n.d.) https://vad.redcross.org.uk/ [6th April 2026]
[135] Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, p. 41
[136] 'Personal experiences of volunteer nursing during the First World War', National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/personal-experiences-volunteer-nursing-during-first-world-war [6th April 2026]
[137] 'Veronica Nisbet's Scrapbook 1917-1919' Museum of the Order of St John (16th May n.y.) https://museumstjohn.org.uk/online-resources/veronica-nisbets-scrapbook-1917-1919/ [6th April 2026]
[138] 'In her footsteps: discovering Suffragettes in the North East', National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/her-footsteps-discovering-suffragettes-north-east [6th April 2026]

women's roles in the First World War, [139] with the former project looking at stories of local women who found themselves in new and expanded roles due to the war. [140]

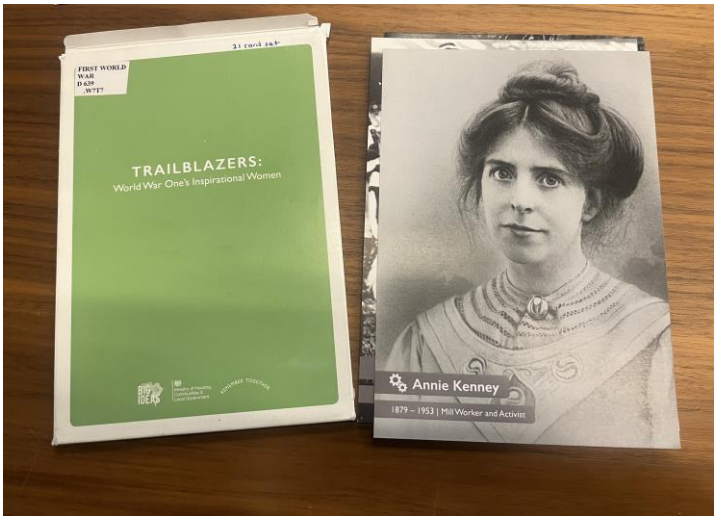


Figure 17 – Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D639.W7T7, 'Trailblazers: World War One's Inspirational Women' (Author's own image)

Other projects explored how experiences of war for women were a form of protest simply due to their trailblazing nature. The project *Trailblazers* explored individual women's stories from the First World War, looking at the range of experiences from serving soldiers, medical staff, activists, scientists, performers, footballers and police officers. The projects featured more well-known women like Vera Britten and Millicent Fawcett alongside Dorothy Lawrence, who dressed as a man to write about the experience of the trenches, and Henrietta Franklin, a pacifist campaigner who encouraged Jewish women to participate in the suffrage movement.[141]

Women footballers were also a key feature of projects which had a protest type undertone. *No Game For Girls* explored how First World War munitionette football teams drew crowds of thousands before they were banned after the war by an anti-women's football

[139] 'Investigating South Tyneside womens' roles in the First World War', National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/investigating-south-tyneside-womens-roles-first-world-war, [6th April 2026]
[140] 'Women's Health In South Tyneside: First World War Project' (Blog - multiple dates) https://whistww1.blogspot.com/ [6th April 2026]
[141] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D639.W7T7, 'Trailblazers: World War One's Inspirational Women'

campaign, and questioned how far the FA ban of 1921 had affected the development of women's football.[142] As part of the project players from Coventry City Ladies FC played a recreated match in honour of the munitionette team, wearing First World War era kit with the names of the original players printed on their backs.[143] The original match was held in 1917 between Rudge-Whitworth and Humber Ladies, two of the teams who formed the short-lived Ladies Football Association along with women from other factories run by Coventry Chain, Daimler, White & Poppe and Coventry Ordnance.[144] In reenacting a match played by Midlands women in original dress, we can once again see the influence of the pageant, providing opportunities for local women in playing, spectating and researching this project, helping to articulate understandings of history, heritage, 'progress', and the ways the past had shaped the modern world.[145]

The games were popular and spectators donated large sums of money to help soldiers injured at the Front, making them the 'Help for Heroes' of their day. However, the project highlights that despite the popularity of the teams, there were those who objected and the women's efforts were attacked by an Anti-Women's Football campaign.[146] Despite the in depth work undertaken by the community interest company eyeful media, there were no nationally led pieces that explored women's football, despite the rising prominence of the English and Scottish women's teams, and the recognition they have both been credited with in inspiring a generation of women into sport.

[142] 'No Game For Girls: A history of women's football in WW1' National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/no-game-girls-history-womens-football-ww1> [6th April 2026]
[143] 'First World War women's football match recreated', National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/first-world-war-womens-football-match-recreated [6th April 2026]
[144] 'First World War women's football match recreated' National Lottery Heritage Fund, (22nd August 2014) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/first-world-war-womens-football-match-recreated [6th April 2026]
[145] Zoë Thomas, Duncan Tanner Essay Prize 2016: 'Historical Pageants, Citizenship, and the Performance of Women's History before Second-Wave Feminism', *Twentieth Century British History*, (2017) 28.3, pp. 319–343
[146] 'First World War women's football match recreated' National Lottery Heritage Fund, (22nd August 2014) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/first-world-war-womens-football-match-recreated [6th April 2026]

Conclusion

Whilst men of the First World War were most often (if not always) represented as soldiers at the centenary, women were shown in various circumstances and roles. Whilst men were represented 'in time', that is, individuals with distinct experiences of the war, women were represented more thematically 'as women', often demonstrating the perceived shared experiences of women across time, with representations of women from 100 years ago positioned 'in conversation' with women of contemporary Britain. Whilst not explicitly acknowledged in the projects, or the reflections of mass observers, when comparing the reflections against other thematic approaches, the sense remains that the act of 'remembering' is still felt to be understood as 'women's work'.[147]

The centenary demonstrated the challenges of commemorating a large group of people in the context of a 'role'. In reality, most women occupied many (if not all) roles during the war, of worker, activist, widow and mourner. Whilst the mass participation of the celebration of the votes for women was clearly popular, the local interventions demonstrated a wish to learn more about the lived experiences of women during the war, with many projects exploring social histories. 14-18 NOW projects display the different experiences women had during the war, but struggled to overlap these experiences in a meaningful way, with women presented as either grief-stricken angels of the home, working women, or freedom fighters.

That the struggle for suffrage was the main state sponsored creative project centring women indicates an attempt to commit to a world where women's voices are listened to and respected in an equal and equitable society. A year before the outbreak of the First World War, the non-militant NUWSS (National Union of Women Suffrage Societies) organised a pilgrimage. *Processions* sought to capture the imagery and legacy of suffrage marches, with the director of Artichoke stating, 'I salute the thousands of women who have embraced the

[147] Noakes, *Dying for the Nation*, p.27 - 28

idea of PROCESSIONS and following in the footsteps of their Suffragette and Suffragist ancestors, will create an unforgettable image that will commemorate 100 years of women voting in a joyful inclusive occupation of our city streets.'[148]

However, these legacies are difficult to unpick when reading the content of some banners made in processions which highlight the struggles and sexism still experienced by women today. Subsequent years have further demonstrated a cruel irony in the treatment of women by the state. In 2021, Sarah Everard was abducted, raped and murdered by a serving police protection officer. Women who had gathered, with banners and placards to memorialise the murdered woman, and to protest against misogyny in the police force and violence against women were subjected to an illegal and heavy-handed response from law enforcement, prompting widespread anger and expressions of distrust with the police.[149] Whilst women's groups were invited to march in memory of the 1918 act of representations just three years earlier, the 2021 event felt like a moment much closer to the 1913 marches, where 'Police…stood by laughing and shrugging their shoulders. One of them was heard to say, "They're asking for it, let them have it."'[150] Comparing these two events, there remains a sense that the state continues to have a paternal attitude to the 'management' of women and their bodies.

Rather than emphasising the war work that many women undertook, the memory of the female experience of the war was conceptualised through the protest movements in the years leading up to the war, and does not deal directly with the tensions between pacifist suffrage campaigners, war time protest marches or the patriotic pausing of suffrage activities in support of the war. The placement of suffrage within war specific commemorative activities

[148] Processions', Artichoke, (n.d.) https://www.artichoke.uk.com/project/processions/ [5th April 2026]
[149] 'Sarah Everard: Met Police breached rights of vigil organisers' BBC News, (11th March 2022) https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-60707646 [6th April 2026]
[150] Women's Suffrage Pilgrimage Report, June and July 1913. HO 45/10701/236973, The National Archives, as quoted by Vicky Iglikowski-Broad, 'The 1913 Suffrage Pilgrimage: peaceful protest and local disorder', (15th November 2018) <https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/the-1913-suffrage-pilgrimage-peaceful-protest-and-local-disorder/#note-41532-4> [15th April 2025]

ties together and muddies understandings of suffrage during wartime and reinforces the idea that women were rewarded for their service with the vote, establishing them as 'British citizens' before their womanhood. In commemorating women, the state allowed itself a paternalistic overture. The centenary reinforced that protest is only allowed if it is performative.

5: Foreign fields, 'fighting for the flag' and forgetting – Empire soldiers represented at the centenary

> (there is) oddness in the casting…in *1917* they've done it with a Sikh soldier…there is something institutionally racist about forcing diversity on people in that way.[1]

Introduction – ignoring memories?

Less than two years after the end of the centenary, the actor Laurence Fox spoke about his perception that the filmmakers of the film *1917* were 'shoehorning' people of different ethnicities into the narrative of the First World War. Not only was Fox's assertion that Sikhs were 'incongruous'[2] to the story of the First World War incredibly offensive, it was also rather poorly timed. Fourteen months after a centenary moment that hoped to do 'everything it (could) to ensure (it) reflects the Commonwealth contribution,'[3] Fox's comments, and his assumption that his views would be shared, fell rather flat. Within a week of making these comments, Fox had apologised, and the backlash that had ensued in light of his original comments was far reaching, with multiple news sources publishing 'fact-checking' pieces.[4] Fox seemingly even went too far for other right wing commentators; Piers Morgan, who had

[1] 'Laurence Fox apologises to Sikhs for 'clumsy' 1917 comments', BBC News, (24th January 2020) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-51233734#:~:text=%22Even%20in%201917%20they've,what%20the%20story%20is'.%22> [20th May 2024]
[2] 'Laurence Fox defends Sikh 1917 racism comments' Good Morning Britain, (n.d. no longer accessible) https://www.itv.com/goodmorningbritain/articles/lauren-fox-defends-sikh-1917-racism-comments
[3] Baroness Warsi, 'Commonwealth contributions' in *Do Mention the War – Will 1914 matter in 2014?* Ed by Jo Tanner and *British Futures,* (August 2013), https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/BRF_Declaration-of-war-report_P2_Web-1.pdf> [6th April 2026]
[4] 'Laurence Fox apologises to Sikhs for 'clumsy' 1917 comments', BBC News, (24th January 2020) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-51233734#:~:text=%22Even%20in%201917%20they've,what%20the%20story%20is'.%22> [6th April 2026] and 'KS3 / KS4 / GCSE History: What was the contribution of Indian Sikhs in World War One?' BBC Bitesize, (n.d.) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/articles/zhkdhbk> [6th April 2026]

been 'until that point…cheering (Fox) on'[5] whilst he had been making previous controversial comments on race, called this episode 'unfortunate…insulting to soldiers who had served.'[6]

By 2018, the centenary of the First World War had contributed a great deal to the increasing awareness of commonwealth servicemen and the experiences of people of colour. British Future's evaluation indicated that awareness of the contribution of soldiers from imperial India had increased from 44% to 71% over the centenary moment,[7] and the department for Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) legacy evaluation particularly highlighted that the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund had enabled diverse communities to learn about and share stories of their ancestors' contributions to the conflict.[8] Alongside this encouraging increase in the visibility of previously 'forgotten' histories, though, was a more sinister increase of right wing populism, which coincided with the Brexit vote of 2016.[9] According to Satnam Virdee and Brendan McGeever, this 'tide' of reactionary populism sweeping across Europe, demanded nothing less than a 'restoration of a mythical golden age of sovereign nation-states defined by cultural and racial homogeneity.'[10] British Futures highlighted that the ongoing efforts of the extreme right to divide our society were real challenges to integration and belonging,[11] implying that the 'tide' could have also threatened to sweep away the stories of communities who had for so long been confined to the margins of history.

---

[5] 'Laurence Fox defends Sikh 1917 racism comments' Good Morning Britain, (n.d. no longer accessible) https://www.itv.com/goodmorningbritain/articles/lauren-fox-defends-sikh-1917-racism-comments

[6] 'Laurence Fox apologises to Sikhs for 'clumsy' 1917 comments', BBC News, (24th January 2020) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-51233734#:~:text=%22Even%20in%201917%20they've,what%20the%20story%20is'.%22> [6th April 2026]

[7] Lucy Buckerfield and Steve Ballinger, British Future, *The People's Centenary: Tracking public attitudes to the First World War Centenary 2013-2018*, (British Future, 2019) < https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/The-Peoples-Centenary.Final-report-2018.pdf> p. 16

[8] Jack Malan, Eugénie Lale-Demoz, Michaela Brady, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport & Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services, *First World War Centenary Programme: Legacy Evaluation*, (September 2019), <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/606378718fa8f515b08c5722/DCMS_FWWC_Legacy_Evaluation_Report__CSES_17_Sept_2019___1__V2.pdf> [12th August 2025] p. 33

[9] Satnam Virdee and Brendan McGeever, 'Racism, Crisis, Brexit', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, (2018) *41*.10, pp. 1802–1819.

[10] Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris 'Trump, Brexit and the Rise of Populism' (2016) as quoted by Virdee and McGeever 'Racism, Crisis, Brexit', pp. 1802-1819

[11] Buckerfield and Ballinger, 'The People's Centenary', p. 5

Yet, this chapter shows that even though there was a rise in right wing rhetoric during the centenary period, there was a parallel experience of British identity assertion made through both state and community led projects. Rather than Fox's assumption that his view, (which comprised of a lack of care for the stories of people of colour, and an assumption that diverse stories were extraneous) was popular, the work of artists and communities demonstrated a commitment to a multicultural, diverse and tolerant nation of modern Britain, and a hope that this experience could continue and be strengthened by a shared past.

Legacies of non-commemoration of troops of colour

The roles of non-white service people, including those from Britain's former colonies has been historically forgotten, and acknowledgement of this injustice was recognised by the BBC and *The Guardian* newspaper during the centenary.[12] The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) continues to address historical inequalities in commemoration, specifically focused on troops of colour and empire troops from the two world wars. The report into First World War 'non-commemoration' by the CWGC, (which was called the Imperial War Graves Commission at the time of the war,) found that divergences from the organisation's principles exist, estimating that between 45,000 and 54,000 casualties are or were commemorated differently across East Africa, West Africa, Egypt and the Middle East, and at least 116,000, but potentially as many as 350,000 casualties may not be commemorated by name or may not be commemorated at all, primarily across East Africa and Egypt.[13] What commemoration has been undertaken, however, remains patchy; John Siblon's work shows that whilst memorialisation of the South African Native Labour corps

[12] 'Why the Indian soldiers of WW1 were forgotten' BBC News, (2nd July 2015) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-33317368> [6th April 2026] and Maev Kennedy, 'First world war's forgotten Chinese Labour Corps to get recognition at last' *The Guardian,* (14th August 2014) https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/14/first-world-war-forgotten-chinese-labour-corps-memorial [6th April 2016]
[13] 'Report of the Special Committee to Review Historical Inequalities in Commemoration', Commonwealth War Graves Commission, (2021) < https://www.cwgc.org/media/noantj4i/report-of-the-special-committee-to-review-historical-inequalities-in-commemoration.pdf> [6th April 2026] p. 9

men who perished when the *SS Mendi* sank in 1917 has been undertaken, the stories, and indeed the names, of the black crew members of the ship have so far remained elusive.[14]

The realities of the work that these men were recruited to do, as well as the uncomfortable circumstances in how they were recruited, has also been largely forgotten within dominant memory of the war. Although conscription was not officially enforced, David Killingray has written on the enforced service in practice for African carriers,[15] and Paul Bailey has demonstrated how the historic racialised approach to China by western powers enabled the 'informal imperialism' that took men and supplies and offered little in return.[16] Servicemen of colour, from Africa, the West Indies and China were prevented by Britain from undertaking combat roles that put them into direct conflict with white troops, and were expected to serve as carriers, porters and labourers under enemy fire, and in terrible conditions.[17]

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is right to underline that it was not simply geographical overstretch that resulted in this non-commemoration, citing the inherent racialised approach to the policies of empire administrative bodies at the IWGC's conception.[18] This extensive memorialisation of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) and Canadian troops both on the Gallipoli peninsula and on the Western Front demonstrates the disparity between the attempts to individually memorialise white and non-white troops; to demonstrate this, one need only to look around when visiting the battlefields. To make another example, the First World War saw more than 1.2 million men volunteer to join the Indian Army, compared to over 1.1 million servicepeople from the white dominions

[14] John Siblon, 'Searching for African and Caribbean Service Personnel in the Metropolitan Commemorative Landscape of War' The First World War and the Commemoration of an Imperial Conflict in the United Kingdom Since 1918 panel, Britain and the World Conference, Liverpool John Moores University, (25th – 27th June 2025)
[15] David Killingray, 'Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns in British Colonial Africa 1870 – 1945', *Journal of Contemporary History* (1989) 24, pp. 483-501
[16] Paul Bailey, 'The Sino-French Connection and World War One', *Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies*, (2011) 1, pp. 1 - 19
[17] David Olusoga, *The Worlds War: Forgotten Soldiers of Empire*, (Head of Zeus Publishing, 2014) p.131
[18] 'Report of the Special Committee to Review Historical Inequalities in Commemoration', Commonwealth War Graves Commission, (2021) < https://www.cwgc.org/media/noantj4i/report-of-the-special-committee-to-review-historical-inequalities-in-commemoration.pdf> [6th April 2026] pp. 11-12

combined.[19] Considering these figures, it may be surprising to hear the Indian army labelled as the 'forgotten army' by the media,[20] and encourages reflection on the visibility afforded to (for example) ANZAC experiences, which has considerable popular and scholarly attention.[21] Whilst the narratives of individual nation states in their own memory making has considerable impact on the visibility of the stories of these servicemen, the fact remains that non British servicepeople of colour were under British command during the war and are thus integral to the British memory of the war. Santanu Das has demonstrated that even in places where memory narratives of the First World War conflict with national narratives, such as India, stories and memories of men who served in the Indian army persist; 'privately, silently, stubbornly.'[22] Many former colonies of Great Britain experienced mass emigration after the Second World War, and it stands to reason these memories continue to persist privately in families and communities of colour who settled in Britain, and would benefit from having channels through which their families' stories can be shared and brought into the national consciousness, especially at a moment of identity building such as the centenary moment.

Although the non-commemoration of troops of colour since the war has led to a problem with visibility when looking back at the war a hundred years later, the appetite for stories of people of colour at the centenary, and the nearly thirty percent increase in knowledge of Indian servicepeople's participation in the war in just a few years demonstrate that continued exploration and commemoration for these communities would be well received.[23]

---

[19] 'Report of the Special Committee to Review Historical Inequalities in Commemoration', Commonwealth War Graves Commission, (2021) < https://www.cwgc.org/media/noantj4i/report-of-the-special-committee-to-review-historical-inequalities-in-commemoration.pdf> [6th April 2026] p. 13

[20] 'Why the Indian soldiers of WW1 were forgotten' BBC News, (2nd July 2015) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-33317368> [6th April 2026]

[21] Popular memory histories of ANZAC troops can be seen in the *Gallipoli* film of 1981, with scholarly interventions being made by Bruce Scates, (see: *Return to Gallipoli: Walking the Battlefields of the Great War*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006)), Bart Ziino, (see*: A distant Grief: Australians war graves and the Great War*, (Deakin University, 2007) and Jenny Macleod*, Gallipoli (Oxford University Press, 2015)*, among others.

[22] Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War culture: writings, images, and songs,* (Cambridge University Press, 2018) p. 16

[23] Buckerfield and Ballinger, 'The People's Centenary', p. 12

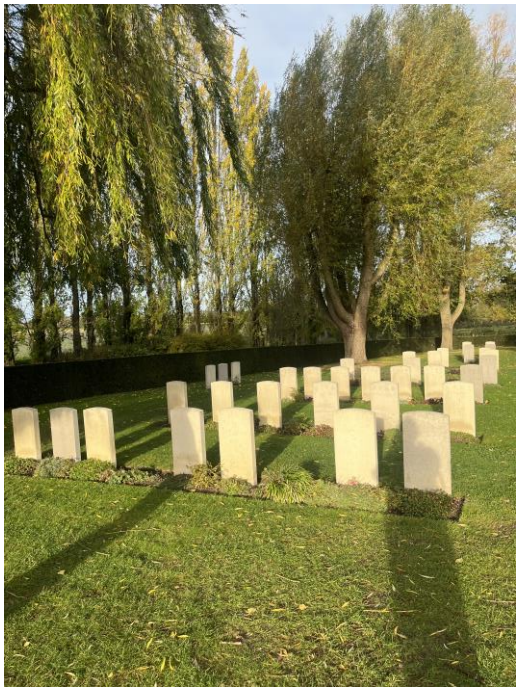


Figure 18- Indian and Chinese servicemen's graves at Lijssemthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium. These graves are slightly set apart from the traditional rows of British and Dominion troops graves. (Author's own photo)

Empire troops or Dominion troops?

ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) and Canadian troops have long been remembered in both their home countries and Britain through the lens of 'nation building', which memorialised the events at Gallipoli and Vimy Ridge respectively as 'forging' moments for self-determined nations. The memory of these moments are remembered in ways that particularly demonstrate facets of national character, highlighting the 'mateship', camaraderie and bravery of the Anzacs,[24] and for Canadians, their heritage as resourceful and courageous 'shock troops'.[25] However, the indigenous peoples of these nations have been historically ignored in these forging narratives; Lee-Anne Broadhead and Sean Howard have written on how Canada's Vimy Ridge memorial commemorates and mythologises the coming together of the two 'founding nations' of Canada, completely

[24] Bart Ziino, 'The First World War in Australian History', *Australian Historical Studies*, (2016) *47*.1, pp. 118–134.
[25] Tim Cook, 'Documenting War and Forging Reputations: Sir Max Aitken and the Canadian War Records Office in the First World War.' *War in History*, (2003) 10.3, pp. 265–95.

ignoring the indigenous nations, despite their service in the war.[26] Rachel Caines' work similarly highlights the discrepancies in recognition in Australia, where aboriginal Australians were only considered 'Australian' during their army service.[27] The complex racial structure of the British empire can been seen through the broader colonial structures which afforded different rules to certain colonial holdings within the British empire. Whilst subjects of the British Crown, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa were self-governing dominions, led by white settler governments. India, the West Indies, and other African states beyond South Africa were colonies, under direct rule of Britain, with no autonomous rule permitted for its local populations, sometimes led by local leaders that took direct orders from London. However, as David Omissi has highlighted, although colonies were subject to direct rule, this does not negate experiences of war which went beyond necessity. In the Indian army, although men may have enlisted to secure a wage; 'they did not then face death in battle simply because the army had lined their pockets…embattled armies deal in the currency of courage and loyalty, which cannot easily be reckoned in cash.'[28] However, Hew Strachan's work on Africa demonstrates that it was these 'warrior traditions' which were a particular anxiety to empire states, which colonialism had been 'designed to extirpate.'[29]

Within dominion states, the contentious realities faced by indigenous populations sometimes manifested through questions about what Caines calls the 'service – citizen bargain', a well-established idea that the citizen should defend the state when necessary, in return for the extension of rights and protections.[30] In the centenary events of former dominion states such as Australia and Canada, legacies of representation, citizenship and racism suffered by indigenous peoples were important considerations. Joan Beaumont's

[26] Lee-Anne Broadhead, and Sean Howard. '"Birth of a Nation," Life of a Narrative: Steps to a Critical Remembrance of Canada's "Great War."' *Peace Research*, (2017) 49.1, pp. 7–41.
[27] Rachel Caines, '"We Were Good Enough to Fight as Anzacs": Indigenous Australian War Service and Interwar Activism', *First World War Studies*, (2025) 16.1, pp. 23–44.
[28] David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940*, (Palgrave Macmillan 1998). p. 76
[29] Hew Strachan, *The First World War: A New History*, (Simon & Schuster 2014) (Ebook, no page number, beginning of 'A Global War' chapter)
[30] Caines, '"We Were Good Enough to Fight as Anzacs"' pp. 23–44.

scholarship[31] has particularly focused on these legacies in Australia and how they intersected with the identity making role in dominion countries at the centenary, exploring how memories of an Australian experience of war appear a hundred years later, which stories are included, and which faces are seen. David Olusoga has also written about the multiple narratives of colour that have traditionally been subsumed by broader national narratives of the First World War, highlighting experiences of indigenous Canadian experiences which have been historically 'whitewashed'.[32] Alongside the traditional memory of Anzac and Canadian troops, British servicemen are traditionally remembered as brave, stoic, tragic,[33] but ultimately, monochromatic.

Racism and historic non commemoration are not the only reasons for the lack of remembrance of service people of colour. As of 2026, the government style guidance on writing about ethnicity designates that all non-white people can be referred to in general as 'ethnic minorities' (which, this thesis attempts to avoid). Thus, meaningful and representative narratives of people from diverse backgrounds are often presented as 'one size fits all'. As this chapter will explore, the racial hierarchies within the racist structures of the British empire have directly impacted the memorialisation of troops of colour. The Imperial War Museum's centenary guidance documents encouraged engagement with non- white communities, and cite these communities as being of particular interest to engage with.[34] In order to properly commemorate and understand the historic 'un-remembering' of servicemen of colour, the IWM had a duty to ensure proper interrogation into the historic lack of representation of these communities.

[31] Joan Beaumont, 'Commemoration in Australia: A memory orgy?' *Australian Journal of Political Science*, (2015) 50.3, pp. 536–544.
[32] Olusoga, *The Worlds War,* pp. 23-24
[33] Lucy Noakes and James Wallis, 'The People's Centenary? Public History, Remembering and Forgetting in Britain's First World War Centenary', *The Public Historian*, (2022) 44.2, DOI https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2022.44.2.56
[34] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW _09_02_13_022_2, '14-18 NOW Brand Strategy'

On the Western Front – the racialised roles of servicemen of colour

Whilst the mainland British experience of war did not have the same indigenous considerations to make in its war memory as the former dominion states, the British population has grown more diverse during the twentieth century through decolonisation, asylum and economic migration. The British Nationality Act of 1948 created the new status of 'citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies' (CUKC) for people born or who were naturalised in either the United Kingdom or one of its colonies,[35] changing the demographics of Britishness after a second global conflict. The partition of India, the arrival of the Windrush generation, and the handover of Hong Kong are just some of the world events which brought people from around the world to Britain, many of whom had familial ties with the First World War through their ancestors' experience serving the British Empire. The experiences of these servicepeople of colour sit beyond the traditional memory of British service people during the First World War, and presented uncomfortable realities during a centenary moment that focused on a shared history of Britain – not least because of the racial segregation that marked many experiences of colonial service.

Santanu Das and others have explored how the First World War redefined structures of racism that sometimes aggressively reinforced existing prejudices, and other times facilitated environments where white Europeans demonstrated kindness, warmth and 'colour-blindness' to colonial subjects.[36] Through its global reach and mass scale, the chaos of the war facilitated encounters across racial divides that would have been limited by peacetime racial hierarchies. These encounters were also often subject to new, 'war-time' hierarchies, however. Whilst Indian troops were engaged in fighting on the Western Front, black West Indian and black African troops were not, and were classified as 'non-combatant' when

[35] Kew, National Archives, British Nationality Act 1948, BT 217/2349, https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/explore-the-collection/explore-by-topic/migration-and-citizenship/coming-to-britain/ [6th April 2026]
[36] Santanu Das, Anna Maguire and Daniel Steinbach 'Introduction', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914-1918*. Ed. by Anna Maguire, Daniel Steinbach, and Santanu Das, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2021) p. 3.

serving in Europe.[37] Black regiments were deployed as labour units on the Western Front, digging thousands of miles of trenches, employed in hard labour in desperate conditions and often under enemy fire.[38] Richard Smith has demonstrated that black Jamaican troops experienced substandard medical facilities compared to other troops, were withheld pay increases, and were unable to rise beyond non-commissioned rank.[39]

Indian and Chinese labour units were also deployed on the Western Front. In comparison to the combat units, Indian labour units were often designated by race and caste, with only the supposed 'martial races' designated as fighting forces. Das' work has demonstrated how the bodies of the martial races were orientalised and situated within an intimate framework of masculinity that inspired colonial imaginations, and worked within the prescriptive racial atmosphere of the early twentieth century.[40] Other communities in India, often subject to local tribal or feudal systems, could find themselves in labour battalions.[41] Chinese labour units were also designated as non-fighting units due to racial bias, with Xu Guoqi's work highlighting that whilst Chinese domestic politics had hoped to land fighting troops in Europe, pressure from Japan and lack of European excitement at this prospect in spite of desperate manpower need, resulted instead in a large labour force joining the Western Front, which became the largest and longest serving labour unit in France.[42]

Away from the Western Front, troops of colour were allowed to serve in combat roles due to their adversaries also being of colour. This meant that black troops from African units and West Indian units served in fighting roles across the colonial holdings of Africa, as well

[37] Das, Maguire and Steinbach 'Introduction', p3
[38] Olusoga, *The Worlds War:* pp. 252-254
[39] Richard Smith '"Heaven grant you strength to fight the battle for your race": Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and the First World War in Jamaican memory', in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed by Santanu Das (Cambridge University Press, 2011) pp. 265-282.
[40] Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs,* (Cambridge University Press 2018) pp. 145 - 146
[41] Das, *India, Empire and First World War Culture*, pp.278 - 279
[42] Xu Guoqi, *Asia and the Great War: A Shared History*, (Oxford University Press, 2016) p. 45

as in Palestine.[43] At Gallipolli, Indian troops again fought alongside British and ANZAC troops, but on this front Māori troops also fought, and the Haka war cry was heard as they successfully took Ottoman trenches.[44] The campaigns in the Middle East saw the greatest number Indian troops fight, with the fall of Kut al Amara seeing thousands of British and Indian troops taken prisoner in what was one of the biggest allied defeats of a war that has been remembered for its futility. Due to the work of the scholars outlined here, stories of troops from the colonies are easier to access than ever, and the centenary marks a moment where these stories began to be heard as part of the mainstream knowledge of the First World War. Most importantly, though, are the stories of exception to the historic racism of the British empire, especially in the context of a nation building moment. As some of the projects of the centenary have shown, such as Danny Boyles *Pages of the Sea*, which spotlighted the story of Walter Tull, there were men of colour that served within the ranks and as commissioned officers in the British army as Britons. Although roles were prescribed based on race for the majority of troops of colour, scholars have demonstrated that there are many exceptions, oversights and work arounds non white servicemen engaged in order to fight a colonial war on their own terms.[45]

14-18 NOW – Narratives made visible

Mimesis: African Soldier

As part of the Imperial War Museums 'Making a New World' exhibition in 2018, John Akomfrah's film piece 'Mimesis: African Soldier' used archival footage alongside

[43] Richard Smith, '"Heaven grant you strength to fight the battle for your race": nationalism, Pan-Africanism and the First World War in Jamaican memory' In. *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed by Santanu Das, (Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 269.
[44] Katherine Smits, 'Maori and Great War Commemoration in New Zealand: Biculturalism and the Politics of Forging National Memory.' in *Commemorating Race and Empire in the First World War Centenary*, ed by Ben Wellings and Shanti Sumartojo, (Liverpool University Press, 2018), p. 67
[45]Sarah-Jane (Saje) Mathieu, 2018. 'L'Union Fait La Force: Black Soldiers in the Great War.' *First World War Studies* (2018) 9.2 pp. 230–44. DOI:10.1080/19475020.2019.1583118.

contemporary creative interventions to explore the experience of empire troops. Running for 73 minutes, the triptych style piece was reviewed by *Frieze* magazine to be 'Fracturing a grand historical narrative',[46] and allowed for multiple stories to be revealed simultaneously, splicing archival footage and sound with newly filmed sequences to create an impressionistic, multifaceted perspective.[47] By visualizing the complex experiences of colonial soldiers during the First World War, Akomfrah, a Ghanaian born British artist and filmmaker, spotlights the stories of troops of colour in the memory of a war that historically has forgotten them, and commemorates those who fought, served and died.

It is a piece of work that sits at odds with the dominant narrative of the war, with anti-colonial undertones that are not completely visible. Carina Ray's analysis of the film emphasises that there is a wide range of emotions present in the film; the perceived excitement of the troops at being able to join up, burgeoning ideas around parity and representation in the colonial states and the forging of imperial loyalties establish the complexity of the war in Africa.[48] By combining these themes with a multiscreen viewing experience and a multilayered soundscape, the viewer is sensorially overwhelmed, swept along the narrative by archival and contemporary portraits of the past. Whilst there is no dialogue in the piece, the sensorial experience of the film creates an intimate link between the subjects and the viewers, which Akomfrah himself regards as a 'meeting' between past and present.[49] by skewing the timing and speed of the film, slowing down and speeding up at different points (sometimes simultaneously) across screens, Akomfrah further scrambles conceptions of historical and linear time, immersing the viewer in a complex visual poetry that echoes the chaotic dissonance of modernist and war poets.

---

[46]Osei Bonsu, 'John Akomfrah Commemorates the Colonial Soldiers Who Fought for a Foreign Cause', *Frieze*, (22nd January 2019), https://www.frieze.com/article/john-akomfrah-commemorates-colonial-soldiers-who-fought-cause-was-not-theirs [6th April 2026]
[47] Osei Bonsu, 'John Akomfrah Commemorates the Colonial Soldiers Who Fought for a Foreign Cause', *Frieze*, (22nd January 2019), https://www.frieze.com/article/john-akomfrah-commemorates-colonial-soldiers-who-fought-cause-was-not-theirs [6th April 2026]
[48] Carina Ray, 'Panel 4: Film Discussion – John Akomfrah's Mimesis: African Soldier, "Global Ghana: Sites of Departure/Sites of Return"' The Africa Institute, *YouTube*, (4th July 2022), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_EVuiV0aceQ [6th April 2026]
[49] BBC What's New / Actu Jeunes, 'Telling the story of Africa's WW1 soldiers - BBC What's New?', *YouTube*, (13th February 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itifBiC2-Uc> [6th April 2026]

List reviewed Akomfrah's piece as 'offering a profound insight into its emotional and psychological toll… (bridging) past and present, allowing us to experience the weight and texture of history.'[50] Drawing on the psychological legacies the war has, along with Fussell's analysis that the First World War was an eminently literary war, the verbose anger and frenetic energy employed by Sassoon and others is mediated through sound and image. When an offscreen gunshot kills the soldiers at the end of the film, Owen's assertion of 'that old lie' is made even more egregious by the knowledge that the country these men are dying for is not 'theirs', the actors find themselves strewn with other wartime ephemera in a desert like 'waste land', objectified and unremembered.

Whilst Richard Fogarty and David Killingray have questioned the existence of any effective 'nationalist' movements in British Africa during and immediately after the war,[51] the viewer of Akmofrah's work watches with the knowledge of hindsight. The disturbing images of colonial war on Akomfrah's three screens, alongside the understanding that African colonial states would be drawn into another global conflict as a result of their colony status in the near future, reframes the voluntary, (but often forced) service many African troops undertook during the war. Visual studies scholar Joseph Oduro Frimpong emphasises the deployment of Akomfrah's Ghanaian inheritance of 'indirectness' present in this work,[52] with the film not explaining, but showing African experiences of war, relying on and encouraging further exploration of the First World War in Africa by the audience.

It speaks to the modern viewer through silent implication; modern views *know* there are stories here that cannot be heard due to historic whitewashing, demonstrated through the

[50] Aashna Sharma, 'John Akomfrah: Mimesis – African Soldier art review: Fresh exploration of the horrors of war', *The List,* (5th December 2024) https://list.co.uk/news/john-akomfrah-mimesis-african-soldier-art-review-fresh-exploration-of-the-horrors-of-war-46039 [6th April 2026]
[51] Richard S. Fogarty, and David Killingray. 'Demobilization in British and French Africa at the End of the First World War', Journal *of Contemporary History*, (2015) 50.1, pp. 100–23.
[52] 'Panel 4: Film Discussion – John Akomfrah's Mimesis: African Soldier, "Global Ghana: Sites of Departure/Sites of Return"' The Africa Institute, *YouTube*, (4th July 2022), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_EVuiV0aceQ [6th April 2026]

stream sequences in the film, washing over the images of black and brown soldiers but never erasing them. The water also draws on concepts of transience touched upon by Das and others;[53] in her review, Aashna Sharma identifies this artistic intervention as 'blurring… evoking memories that refuse to remain static.'[54]

The non-stationary past directly interacts with other centenary interventions, and this was identified by reviewers who went on to emphasise the impact of the visual contrast of the piece;

> In Mimesis, colonial uniforms are all the more striking for being set beside the grainy overcoats and khakis of the soldiers in his archive material. This historical footage is sometimes slowed up, tinted, or restored to remove scratches. But it never puts colour back into the cheeks of the dead: Peter Jackson's dazzling transformation of the monochrome archive in *They Shall Not Grow Old* could not be further from Akomfrah's mind. His actors warn us that remembrance comes in many guises, some of them unreliable.[55]

Like Jackson's film, Akomfrah's work offers us a new way of 'seeing' the dead, but rather than using this as simply a language of aesthetic redemption, the modern techniques used to present ancient motifs of sacrifice, death and resurrection are further upended by Akomfrah's wish to 'right' the historical record. Seeing the historically forgotten faces of African soldiers invokes a sense of justice drawn upon in Jay Winter's analysis of *J'accuse*; fallen soldiers silently asking for acknowledgement that was not afforded to them in life.[56]

The Head and the Load

In the stage performance *The Head and the Load*, film projections, mechanised sculptures and performance are combined to create an imaginative landscape telling the story

[53] Here I am referring to the sense of 'transience' conjured up by the encounters described by Das and others in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914-1918*, ed by Das, Maguire and Steinbach

[54] Aashna Sharma, 'John Akomfrah: Mimesis – African Soldier art review: Fresh exploration of the horrors of war', *The List,* (5th December 2024) https://list.co.uk/news/john-akomfrah-mimesis-african-soldier-art-review-fresh-exploration-of-the-horrors-of-war-46039 [6th April 2026]

[55] Jeremy Harding, 'Review of 'Mimesis: African Soldier'', *London Review of Books*, (6th December 2018) 40.23 <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v40/n23/jeremy-harding/ends-of-the-earth> [21st May 2024]

[56] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning; The Great War in European Cultural History*, 4th (Canto) edn, (Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 15

of African porters and carriers who served in the First World War.[57] Debuting at the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, South African artist William Kentridge expands on his previous work exploring socio-political conditions in post-apartheid South Africa and explicitly confronts the dehumanisation of black auxiliaries in the British army, with one actor portraying a military officer announcing, 'They are not men, because they have no name. They are not soldiers, because they have no number. You don't call them, you count them.'[58] Rather than the combat roles often commemorated, the exploration of porters and their erasure from the memory of the war invited the audience to reflect on race and the roles prescribed to people of colour during the war. The piece remembered the deaths of those who were often left unrecorded, finding 'its own rich language for incomprehension, its own ways of visualising those who were unseen.'[59]

The piece takes its title from the Ghanaian proverb; 'The head and the load is the trouble of the neck.' The non commemoration of these troops, alongside the racially segregated work and experience their First World War service took, gives the audience a sense that there are both physical and metaphorical loads that became the historical burdens of African servicemen.

Using a combination of music, dance, shadow play and puppetry, along with a moment where the 'heads' of resistance movements in Africa[60] parade across the stage in the foreground of depictions of the war, the piece demonstrates the chaos the war brought to many communities, many of whom lived in agrarian economies. William Kentridge explains

[57] Zo Andersen, 'The Head & the Load, Tate Modern, London, review: William Kentridge's piece about Africans in WWI is electrifying' The Independent, (16th July 2018) <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/the-head-and-the-load-review-tate-modern-william-kentridge-dance-first-world-war-a8443756.html> [21st May 2024]
[58] Cynthia Zarin, '"The Head and the Load," William Kentridge's Homage to Africa in the Great War' *The New Yorker*, (16th December 2018), <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-head-and-the-load-william-kentridges-homage-to-africa-in-the-great-war> [21st May 2024]
[59] Zo Andersen, 'The Head & the Load, Tate Modern, London, review: William Kentridge's piece about Africans in WWI is electrifying' The Independent, (16th July 2018) <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/the-head-and-the-load-review-tate-modern-william-kentridge-dance-first-world-war-a8443756.html> [21st May 2024]
[60] 'Trailer: The Head and the Load', Park Avenue Armory, YouTube, (8th November 2018) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lSPcVKMc5Ug> [6th April 2026]

his vision for the piece through his own ignorance of the scale of the war in Africa. Firstly, what he calls the 'designed ignorance' of non-commemoration, citing the particular approach of a colonial officer who allegedly commented on the service of African troops; 'lest their actions merit recognition, their deeds shall not be recorded.'[61] He differentiates between this approach, and what he describes as the ignorance of 'oversaturation' of stories of the Western Front, focusing of the stories of predominantly white troops, with a small acknowledgement of stories of 'Lawrence of Arabia', both experiences filled with, in his view, 'seductive' stories.[62]

The embodied experience of the war for African soldiers and porters is central to Kentridge's vision, and was a starting point for his creative team in perceiving and expressing experiences of African servicemen. Performers depicted the absence of knowledge many African servicemen may have felt through bodily spasms, experienced when initially learning how to salute and march. This spasm spoke to a larger disconnect and represented the thoughts of some communities in Africa who had no interest in fighting a European war, along with those groups that wished to demonstrate a 'harvest of devotion', whose service in Europe was often not considered on racial grounds.[63]

The embodied 'otherness' of black troops, touched upon briefly by Joanna Bourke, was used as a differentiation that was sometimes seen as a greater division than that between allied and axis forces.[64] This conception is directly challenged by Kentridge's piece, which draws upon African voices of the war questioning how 'In times of peace everything is for Europeans only, but in times of war, it is found we need to shed our blood in equality.'[65] The

[61] William Kentridge, 'William Kentridge on 'The Head & The Load' | HOW | SHOWING THE MAKING', The Centre for the Less Good Idea, YouTube, (21st April 2023) < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgW0xDxVJUw, [6th April 2026]
[62] William Kentridge, 'William Kentridge on 'The Head & The Load' | HOW | SHOWING THE MAKING', The Centre for the Less Good Idea, YouTube, (21st April 2023) < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgW0xDxVJUw, [6th April 2026]
[63] William Kentridge, 'William Kentridge on 'The Head & The Load' | HOW | SHOWING THE MAKING', The Centre for the Less Good Idea, YouTube, (21st April 2023) < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgW0xDxVJUw, [6th April 2026]
[64] Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male; Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, (Reaktion books, 1999), p. 148
[65] 'William Kentridge on 'The Head & The Load' | HOW | SHOWING THE MAKING', The Centre for the Less Good Idea, YouTube, (21st April 2023) < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgW0xDxVJUw [6th April 2026]

service/citizenship bargain is explored in *The Head and the Load,* and particularly highlights how men of Africa were asked to put their bodies at the service of an empire, for little to no acknowledgement. Indeed, until recently, South Africa's Delville Wood memorial did not record the names of the black Africans who had served and died in non-combat roles at the front.[66]

The piece was well reviewed, and particular note was made of the 'chaotic' experience the production was, with the programme offering a 'structure and meaning that proves rather elusive onstage.'[67] Nevertheless, this seems part of its appeal; 'symbolic of the tumult of war, but also the incomprehensibility inherent in colonial relations, the commands from European powers and unheard messages from colonised Africans.'[68] In highlighting the expunging of records of African servicemen, the piece encourages an imaginative historical approach to what was a defining experience for many Africans. The heritage of the war explored by the piece was particularly meaningful for the performers too, who acknowledged that the calling of names of the soldiers killed in the African theatre taking place finally in Africa was very important, a 'homecoming'.[69] There is the sense that even at the centenary, cultural memories of the black African servicemen of the First World War are still felt to be mediated through Europe.

[66] Michele Barrett, 'Afterword - Death and the Afterlife: Britain's colonies and dominions' in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. by Santanu Das (Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 301–20
[67] Jonathan Mandell, 'The Head and the Load Review: Colonized Africans during World War I', New York Theater, (5th December 2018) https://newyorktheater.me/2018/12/05/the-head-and-the-load-review-colonized-africans-during-world-war-i/ [6th April 2026]
[68] Ben Luke, 'William Kentridge - The Head & the Load review: A nightmarish masterpiece to mark a shaming tragedy', The Standard, (12th July 2018) https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/william-kentridge-the-head-the-load-review-a-nightmarish-masterpiece-to-mark-a-shaming-tragedy-a3885606.html [6th April 2026]
[69] 'William Kentridge on 'The Head & The Load' | HOW | SHOWING THE MAKING', The Centre for the Less Good Idea, YouTube, (21st April 2023) < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgW0xDxVJUw [6th April 2026]

Not Yet at Ease

RAQS media collective's installation *Not Yet at Ease* explored the experience of Indian Soldiers who suffered from 'shellshock' or post-traumatic stress disorder during the war. An Indian based arts collective, RAQS' work is located at the intersections of contemporary art, historical enquiry, and philosophical speculation, that explores themes of 'encounters'.[70] Whilst 'shellshock' is something of a by-word for the First World War (with many Mass Observation respondents referring to it in their responses to the 2014 directive), this installation added a new angle to a history of mental health and traumatic shock that is already understood to have varied by background. Whilst the experience of officers at hospitals like Craiglockhart has been explored by writers such as Pat Barker in her *Regeneration* trilogy, the experience of ordinary soldiers tended to be subject to martial order, sometimes resulting in execution as explored in Dewe Mathews' work. The experience of troops of colour has not been as fully explored, and RAQS' work with original material indicated that diagnosis of shellshock that was widespread among both Indian soldiers and British servicemen was denied to non-officers. Citing this 'clue' as an interesting way into the material, RAQS began to explore themes of medical discrimination explaining that to receive a diagnosis of shellshock; 'assumes that the person who is shocked has a mental life, an inner life … the common conscripted soldier …was not seen fit to have an inner life.'[71]

Not Yet at Ease demonstrated to its audience the perception that army censors had of 'shell shock' amongst Indian troops, believing poetic or florid accounts appearing in letters written home to be warning signs that troops were starting to struggle with their nerves. Santanu Das has written extensively on the how the poetic, written legacy of the First World War seen in the war time work of figures such as Robert Graves and Vera Britten extends

[70] 'Raqs Media Collective', Frith Street Gallery, (n.d.) < https://www.frithstreetgallery.com/artists/29-raqs-media-collective/> [23rd September 2026]
[71] Cleo Roberts, 'RAQS Media Collective', *ArtReview,* (3rd December 2018) https://artreview.com/ara-winter-2018-feature-raqs-media-collective/ [6th April 2026]

across servicemen in the Indian army,[72] and RAQS make use of the letters of Indian troops to explore the experiences Indian soldiers had in the European theatre of war. RAQS used the exhibition space at Firstsite gallery in Colchester to create a labyrinth of trench-like padded cells, with film projections only made visible by peering through slots in the padding, needing different angles to see each piece in its entirety. It is a difficult-to-understand environment, with many trench-like openings leading to dead ends and darkness. The piece gives the impression of being trapped in a strange place that you don't fully understand and can only glimpse at moments that seem pleasant or familiar. The suffocating atmosphere that has to be pieced together by the viewer in the shadow of a huge mural that alludes to, but never mentions the 'nerves', speaks further to the non-acknowledgement of these experiences at the time. Rather than poetic inclination being 'an ominous sign of mental disquietude', RAQS subverts the conception of insanity with the architecture of the installation, using the labyrinth of soft-walled cells to ask questions of the structures of care in the First World War army hospitals. The anger of the artists comes through in an interview; 'The categorisation of shock with the cruelties of war as "madness" made us respond …Who is the really insane one? What kind of normalcy is war? We are asking people to be within such structures and look 'out' through the viewing slits into a speculative interiority.' There is a justice that is felt to have not yet been achieved for these men, and the discomfort of the installation for viewers indicates that there are still some difficult conversations to be had in memorialisation of the First World War.

Medical descriptions of soldiers suffering from 'shell-shock' described the patient as 'not yet diagnosed – nervous'. RAQS media collective asserts that the past, for these soldiers and their legacy, is not the past yet.[73] Matthew Bowman goes on to review the piece

[72] Santanu Das, '"Life-Writing" from Below: Letters, Poems, Prayers and Songs of Sepoys in Europe, 1914–1918', in *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* ed. by Das (Cambridge University Press, 2018). p204
[73] Matthew Bowman, 'Review of '"RAQS Media Collective: Not Yet at Ease", Firstsite, Colchester', in *Art Monthly* 421, (2018), pp. 421 - 422

positively, citing the bodily sensation the viewer experiences the piece through, with RAQS communicating themes of disorientation and discomfort through a topography of the traumatised psyche, manifested as a trench like hospital, haunting and tormenting not only the viewers,[74] but also the men depicted, who the viewer imagines are trapped in the labyrinth too.

RAQs media collective asserted that 'In Britain, as everywhere else, there is a shying away from what military experience is.'[75] Criticisms of the piece focused on the lack of collaboration between the exhibition and its relationship with the present, given that Colchester is a garrison town and there were the opportunities to create 'more connections between the plight of Indian soldiers in the First World War and today's soldiers.'[76] *Not Yet At Ease* brought together audiences from the garrison town of Colchester, and lesser-known narratives of the First World War, placing traditional and non-traditional legacies in conversation with each other in the gallery space, and exploring the realities of military service over the years.

Heritage Lottery Funded projects

There is no doubt that the scale of representation of people of colour and their experiences during the First World War was more than had previously been acknowledged before the centenary. The Heritage Lottery funded projects led by communities were opportunities to broaden the scope of knowledge about troops of colour, and many projects highlighted that there *are* physical legacies for these troops in Britain. These sites are not as well-known as traditional remembrance sites in Britian, and some community projects have

[74] Bowman, 'Review of '"RAQS Media Collective"', pp. 421 - 422
[75] Cleo Roberts, 'RAQS Media Collective', *ArtReview,* (3rd December 2018) https://artreview.com/ara-winter-2018-feature-raqs-media-collective/ [6th April 2026]
[76] Bowman, 'Review of '"RAQS Media Collective"', pp. 421 - 422

not had the same level of exposure as was afforded to state led projects at the centenary. It is through these projects that one can see a distinctive sadness at the legacy of non-commemoration, as well as a deep sense of pride and belonging drawn out through exploring local stories, and the stories of relatives.

Physical legacies

Some of the focus of community commemoration explored the lesser-known physical legacies of troops of colour. Projects such as 'Honouring Indian VC soldiers in World War One' explored the stories of Victoria Cross recipients in the Indian army, and their lives after the war, with the description of their service in both English and what would have been the servicemen's first language.[77] Organised by Believe in Me, a community interest company, the collective researched and hosted a community exhibition focussing on the stories of the 11 men awarded the VC, which ran for three months at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, and featured on the BBC Asian network.[78] Believe in Me Community Interest Company (CIC) contributed to several community led projects over the course of the centenary, emphasising the importance of these lesser known stories to the South Asian community of Britain, and worked with the National Army Museum to exhibit artefacts related to the experiences of Indian soldiers. Through creating projects to engage young people about South Asian history, Believe in Me CIC seeks to empower and raise awareness of South Asian histories not taught in mainstream education. This approach showcased stories that are not traditionally explored in mainstream education and has a sense of echoing the objectives envisioned for young people's education during the centenary, which focussed on

[77] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War CR 4885, 'Honouring Indian VC soldiers in World War One'
[78] 'Honouring Indian Victoria Cross Soldiers in World War One' Believe in Me CIC, (n.d.) https://www.bimcic.com/indian-victoria-cross-winners-project [6th April 2026]

acquiring a deeper understanding of the war and creating a generation who will carry the memory of the war forward.[79]

The project *Remembering Forgotten Heroes* explored memorials and burial grounds located in the UK that memorialise and laid to rest Indian servicemen. Veterans from the 'undivided Indian ex-servicemen association' were invited to explore sites of memory present in Britain which commemorated Indian servicemen, some of which dated from 1921.[80] The accounts of these visitors demonstrate the meaningfulness these sites had for their own perceptions of service, faith and identity. One participant explained 'we've been here for 42 years in England, and we didn't know about (this memorial). It has given us real pleasure. All this information about our ancestors…'[81]

Another participant expressed his concern about the resilience of these 'sites of memory' when he visited a Muslim burial ground in Woking; ' there are no graves there now and it is in ruins,…I was expecting to find some evidence of a list of names of those who were wounded in France, but there was no mention of names …(memorials) need to be looked after for the next generation to know about …if they just disappear then the next generation will not know about the contribution commonwealth countries made to Britain.'[82] This statement demonstrates a deep feeling of belonging, which is again tied to the service/citizenship understanding and a sense of the injustice of non-commemoration in dominant memory of the First World War. Most evidently though, anxieties about the futures of First World War memories are still present;[83] with both the VC project and *Remembering*

[79] Catriona Pennell, 'Taught to remember? British youth and First World War centenary battlefield tours', *Cultural Trends*, (2018) 27.2 DOI:10.1080/09548963.2018.1453449, pp. 383–398.
[80] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D547.I5 'Remembering Forgotten Heroes'.
[81] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D547.I5 'Remembering Forgotten Heroes'.
[82] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D547.I5 'Remembering Forgotten Heroes'.
[83] Pennell, 'Taught to remember?' pp. 383–398,

Forgotten Heroes, the sense that those troops who have already suffered from delayed recognition may be forgotten all over again feels particularly egregious.



Figure 19 - Chattri memorials, Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D547.I5'Remembering Forgotten Heroes'. (Author's own image)

Finally, the project highlights the importance of having culturally specific sites of memory, to better hold the memories of the dead and manage the responsibility of post death care felt to be needed after war. One participant explains the meaningful experience the site has, stating; 'the architecture is unique. The Chattri means an 'umbrella', which means those who were cremated at this spot are protected at this site and it symbolises that no harm can be done to them…'[84] These sites of memory are integral to identity making and help to imaginatively encourage feelings of connection with the past.

Building on Jay Winter's work, as sites of collective grief, these memorials reaffirm the values of the community for which troops had laid down their lives; however, Winter asserts this is a feature of the immediate post war environment, and was used as a way to

[84] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D547.I5 'Remembering Forgotten Heroes'.

assert and affirm the role of the state, and the righteousness of the sacrifice of the dead.[85] The approach these community projects took is not dissimilar to the approach of 'reparative histories' described by Colin Prescod, whereby historic injustices are exposed, and rebellion against the systems of oppression can be undertaken through the evidence found in the historical record.[86] By righting the injustices of the memory of the war, restorative action is taking place against a system that has historically sought to write non – white stories out of a broader narrative. Drawing on the work of restorative cultural heritage scholars Marina Lostal and Emma Cunliffe, it is acknowledged that in war, the destruction of cultural heritage contributes to the erosion of its people's identity, and the denial of a place for these people in society.[87] It stands to reason then, that the creation of, and/or commitments to protection of existing cultural heritage sites can *affirm* a sense of place for communities, and reinforce identities both as distinct, and as part of a broader whole of a shared identity. For communities that have only recently experienced nationally led recognition of historic sacrifice, these monument relationships can similarly mirror the relationships experienced of the past, reaffirming senses of nationalism through understandings of historic sacrifice, albeit without the raw grief that that many of these graveside type relationships were forged through in the 1920s.

Intangible heritages and making visible the 'forgotten'

Other projects looked at intangible aspects of the heritage of non-white troops in wartime, including songs and burial customs, encouraging remembrance through cultural practice and the collective honouring of ancestors. As Laurajane Smith has outlined, forms of intangible experience become focal points, or cultural tools, for heritage practices

[85] Winter, *Sites of Mourning*, p. 79
[86] Colin, Prescod, 'Archives, race, class and rage', *Race & Class*, (2017) *58*.4, pp. 76-84.
[87] Marina Lostal and Emma Cunliffe. 'Cultural Heritage That Heals: Factoring in Cultural Heritage Discourses in the Syrian Peacebuilding Process.' *The Historic Environment: Policy and Practice,* (2016) 7.2–3, pp. 248–59. DOI:10.1080/17567505.2016.1172781.

concerned with defining, re/creating, negotiating, proclaiming and preserving identity.[88] As she argues, these intangible experiences (or heritages) can work in conflict or collaboration with an 'authorised heritage discourse' (AHD), which validates a set of practices and performances, and reinforces senses of meaning in cultural experiences.[89] Having traditionally sat outside the 'authorised heritage discourse' of the First World War, cultural practices of storytelling and memory of non – white communities in remembrance of war dead were now being brought into the AHD at the centenary, with some projects drawing on traditional art forms, and encouraging remembrance of non - white troops through these culturally specific practices.

These projects tended to repopulate the silent, militaristic remembrance practices seen in traditional Remembrance Day observance in Britian, adding active bodily experiences to the practice of remembering. *The Unknown Becomes Known*, a project by Annapurna Indian Dance, combined dance, music and storytelling to pay homage to the forgotten soldiers from undivided India, who fought for Britain during the First World War, teaching young people new ways of engaging with the past through a memorialising dance.[90]

Brighton Royal Pavilion was jointly funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund and 14-18 NOW and worked with the performance company Nutkhut to explore Indian soldiers experience in the Pavilion hospital, which was converted into a military hospital for soldiers from Imperial India with arrangements made to cater for the cultural and religious needs of the patients.[91] The piece *Dr. Blighty* outlined and explained how cultural customs of multi faith patients were mediated alongside wartime censorship and the maintenance of morale, citing the archive of Indian troops letters home and the multiple narratives of wartime

[88] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, (Routledge 2006) p. 276.
[89] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, pp. 11- 12.
[90] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War (no item number) 'The Unknown Become Known: A moving story of soldiers from undivided India who fought for Britain in WWI'
[91] 'Our History', Brighton and Hove Museums, (n.d.) <https://brightonmuseums.org.uk/visit/royal-pavilion-garden/our-history/> [6th April 2026]

experience they reveal.[92] Promising an ambitious programme of immersive performances and installations, *Dr Blighty* attempted to balance the conflicting narratives of pride and honour alongside anti colonial sentiment and disillusionment of the war.

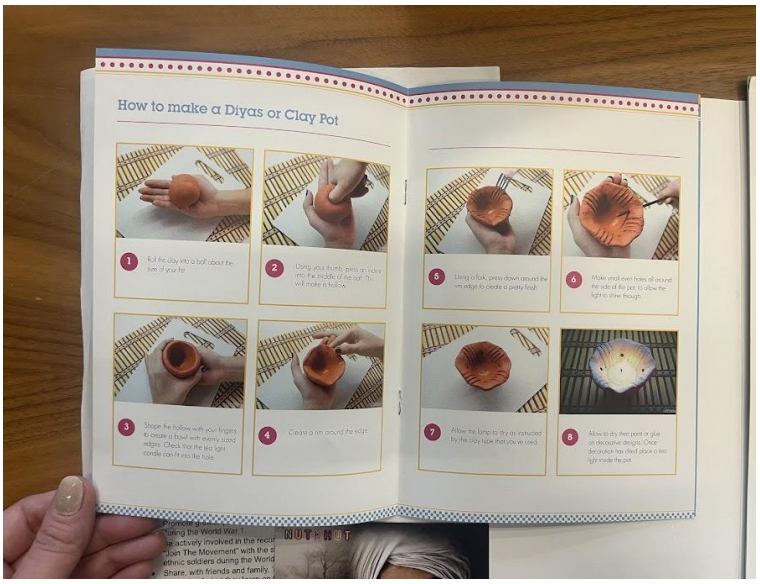


Figure 20 – Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War (no item number), NUTKHUT: Dr. Blighty (Author's own image)

Like *Not Yet at Ease, Dr Blighty* establishes the hospital site as one of reckoning; and places the audience at the centre of bright, riotous colour and disturbing, uncomfortable depictions of war and recovery.[93] Audience members could write letters to the troops through time and are encouraged by the programme to own commemorative 'diyas', featuring a step by step guide on how to make them.[94] *Dr Blighty* was co -installed by Tom Piper, one of the architects of *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*, who created birdcage-like enclosures in the gardens of the pavilion, evoking the wards in the sumptuous Regency rooms,[95] but also more sinisterly implying that the palatial atmosphere of the royal pavilion hid stories of repression, coercion and grief of men who were injured, and far from home.

[92] 'Dr. Blighty, NUTKHUT, (n.d.) https://www.nutkhut.co.uk/projects/dr-blighty/ [6th April 2026]
[93] Dorothy Max Prior, 'Nutkhut: Dr Blighty', (n.d.) https://totaltheatre.org.uk/nutkhut-dr-blighty/ [6th April 2026]
[94] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War (no item number), NUTKHUT: Dr. Blighty
[95] Maev Kennedy, 'Brighton festival recalls pavilion's use as wartime hospital for Indian troops', *The Guardian*, (22nd May 2016) https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2016/may/22/brighton-festival-pavilion-hospital-indian-troops-ww1 [6th April 2026]

These projects demonstrate the difficulties in commemorating experiences which did not sit with the carefully prescribed hierarchies established during and after the First World War, especially in regard to cultures of remembrance in Britain. Big Idea's *The Unremembered* project produced a booklet which specifically identifies the tensions of historical 'forgetting'[96] deployed after the war by the state in order to reassert its hegemonic identity, and commemorates the diverse peoples that served in the labour corps. By encouraging exploration and remembrance of traditionally forgotten people, through explorations of performances, traditional memory songs and singing, bowing and the laying of culturally significant flowers,[97] *The Unremembered* reminds the reader that traditional cultures of remembrance in Britain leave no space for commemorative practice that may be meaningful to non-white participants.

What is more, is that these remembrance cultures were only made possible through the labour of non-white troops; it was Chinese Labour Corps workers that were particularly associated with the creation of consolidated war cemeteries, identifying, burying and reburying the fallen to create the sites of memory that are still there today, and central to western remembrance practices of the First World War. The project also features a map, populating the world with stories of the world war, removing the emphasis on the Western Front and quite literally opening up new narratives of conflict around the world. Alongside the archived booklet for the *Unremembered* project, was a Channel 4 documentary which directly determined the non-commemoration of carriers and servicemen of colour, as outlined by Michèle Barretts' work.[98] David Olusoga produced the piece, and emphasises it took sustained pressure on the government and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to

[96] Paul Connerton, *The Spirit of Mourning,* (Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 33 – 50
[97] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D639.L2, 'The Unremembered: World War One's Army of Workers'
[98] Barrett, 'Afterword' in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. by Das, pp. 301–20

right this historical wrong.[99] What is particularly poignant for this project though, is one particular site of contention highlighted in the documentary, namely Dar es Saalam, which also features proudly in the community project *Remembrance 2018: Never Good Bye – Remembrance of Dudley's Great War 'heroes'* (previously explored in chapter two) where it is cited by a community member that it could be 'anywhere in Britain'.[100]

In the *Unremembered* documentary, the site is highlighted to also be a place where there was originally a large carrier corps cemetery, but is now just a dusty wasteland with no markings.[101] In allowing their remits away from the Western Front to become such contested sites of memory, the CWGC's historic non commemoration undermines subsequent work done for meaningful and collaborative gain. The *Unremembered* documentary did provoke a response from the CWGC, however, which attempted to respond to each of the claims made in the documentary, and highlighted how the incident had 'saddened' the commission. In a statement, The CWGC stated; 'As has unfortunately happened in many places across the world, the cemetery at Pugu Road in Dar es Salaam was lost to development by the local authorities, but the names of those men now appear on the memorial wall at the nearby Upanga Road Cemetery.'[102] Whilst the claims made in the documentary are refuted by the CWGC, this incident shows that the centenary was a moment where histories continued to be negotiated, and deep meaning was attributed to find justice in and for the memory of non-white service people of the First World War, in spite of the legacies of non-commemoration that attempted to exclude them from the traditional narratives of the British experience of war.

---

[99] David Olusoga, 'Britain's failure to honour black and Asian dead is a scandal of the present, not just the past', The Guardian, (25th April 2021) https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/apr/25/britains-failure-to-honour-black-and-asian-dead-is-a-scandal-of-the-present-not-just-the-past [6th April 2026]

[100] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA 690. D75, 'Remembrance 2018: Never Good Bye – Remembrance of Dudley's Great War "heroes"'

[101] Robert Booth, 'Unremembered: the African first world war soldiers without a grave', *The Guardian*, (21 Apr 2021) https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/apr/21/unremembered-the-african-first-world-war-soldiers-without-a-grave [6th April 2026]

[102] 'CWGC Statement in relation to the Unremembered Documentary', Commonwealth War Graves Commission, (4th November 2019) https://www.cwgc.org/our-work/news/cwgc-statement-in-relation-to-the-unremembered-documentary/ [6th April 2026]

These historic stories of omission, themes of visibility and 'forgetting' were directly dealt with in the final group of community led stories this chapter explores. Projects like *Stories of Omission* explored the visibility (or lack thereof) of black soldiers, and the selected visual representation given of black soldiers during the war (which was often racialised).[103]

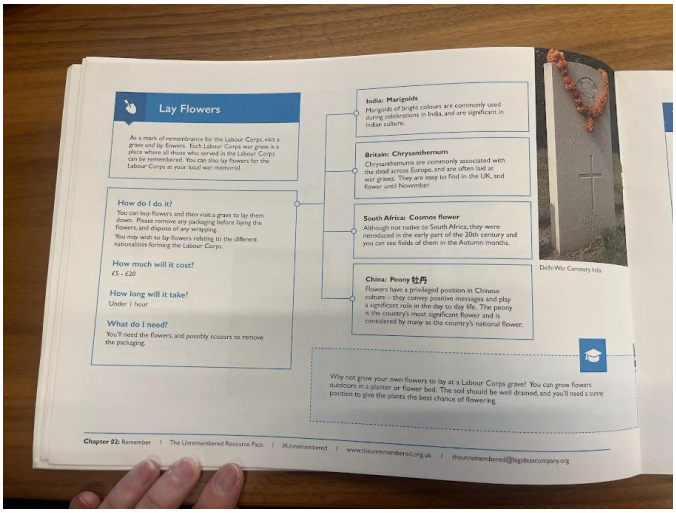


Figure 21 – The Unremembered Project encouraged the inclusion of culturally significant remembrance practices to traditional memorialisation of troops killed in the war. Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D639.L2, 'The Unremembered: World War One's Army of Workers' (Author's own image)

Cross-community projects emphasised shared heritages, with Believe in Me CIC and *We Were There Too* joining to create the *Journey from Home* project. This project has sought to research and make visible the stories and experiences of the men from many faiths (Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus) that came from South Asia and who are more usually addressed separately despite serving together and brings their narratives together through their experience of travelling to the Western Front to fight.[104] The project produced a booklet, and exhibition, and took participants to the battlefields to research the contribution of soldiers

[103] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War (no item number) 'Stories of Omission – Conflict and the experience of Black Soldiers'.
[104] 'We collaborated with We Were There Too on the Journey from Home project -funded by Heritage Lottery Fund', Believe in Me CIC (n.d.) https://www.bimcic.com/journey-from-home-project [6th April 2026]

from an undivided India, placing Imperial Indian soldiers at the forefront of the remembrance story.[105]

Shared heritages were also the theme of another *We Were There Too* project (of the same name) exploring the legacies of non-commemoration which affects minority communities in Britain, and in these projects, there is the proud assertion that these stories are key to these communities' understanding of the British Jewish identities. *We Were There Too* focussed its exploration on the experience of British Jews during the war, some of whom viewed the war as an opportunity to assimilate into British society, being recent migrants from Russia. It is clear too, that many communities took the centenary as an opportunity to demonstrate and advocate for their own British identities, and their heritage of contribution and belonging to a multicultural Britain.[106] A particularly poignant project that asserts a heritage of belonging is *From Jawans to Generals: Loyal Allies, Proud Britons,* which finishes, 'in the last two world wars 83,005 turban wearing Sikh soldiers were killed and 109,045 were wounded. They all died or were wounded for the freedom of Britain and the world, and during shell fire, (they wore) no other protection but the turban, the symbol of their faith.'[107]

Conclusion

In response to the 2014 Mass Observation directive, one participant replied thus;

> last year I attended a talk about the role of Muslim soldiers during the First World War. It was fascinating as I (like many I suspect) had no idea of what a vital role they had played during the war. Sadly it was very poorly attended. I have tried to promote it to my colleagues in the learning dept. at the National Museum of Scotland, in

[105] 'We collaborated with We Were There Too on the Journey from Home project -funded by Heritage Lottery Fund', Believe in Me CIC (n.d.) https://www.bimcic.com/journey-from-home-project [6th April 2026]
[106] 'Documenting & commemorating the contribution British Jews made during the First World War', British Jews in the First World War: We Were There Too, (n.d.) https://www.jewsfww.uk/ [6th April 2026]
[107] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D547.I5N 'From Jawans to Generals: Loyal Allies, Proud Britons'

> particular to those covering the National War Museum, but will (sic) little success so far![108]

By the end of the centenary, awareness had risen from a 22% level of awareness of the service of Muslim soldiers to 38% by 2018.[109] The engagement levels within diverse communities with the HLF funding, and the broader increase in knowledge show the importance of including these stories in increasing knowledge and undoing legacies of non-commemoration. Whilst the Heritage Lottery Fund maintained that engaging with diverse groups was still a challenge for them in their year 4 report,[110] the testimonies of participants speak clearly to the importance of continuing to explore and assert their heritages at British people of colour.

In regard to larger state led projects, colonial soldiers were largely absent and/or invisible, with any inclusion lacking deeper interrogation as to these troops experiences, and simply subsuming their stories into a narrative of British history which does not account for the general lack of non – white stories up until the centenary moment. The historic themes of omission and whitewashing somewhat undermine creative interventions which do not interrogate the implications of troops of colour with their narratives. Whilst one of the most popular pieces of the centenary, *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* claimed to represent over 800,000 troops of Britain and her colonies who fell in the First World War, the piece is as monochromatic as the traditional memory of the war in Britain. Whilst incredibly popular, the piece streamlined many diverse narratives into another singular visual image of a sea of red poppies, thus concealing any multiple narratives which are important to proper understanding of a global conflict. Some of the large scale, highly publicised works of the 14-18 NOW did make explicit reference to troops of colour; *We're Here Because we're Here*

[108] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent E5577
[109] Buckerfield and Ballinger, 'The People's Centenary', p. 17
[110] Elaine Batty, Will Eadson, Ben Pattison, Mark Stevens, Alison Twells, and Nicola Verdon, 'Evaluation of Heritage Lottery Fund's First World War Centenary Activity: Year 4 report (August 2018) https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/publications/fww_centenary_evaluation_year_4_accessibility_check_10_08_19.pdf

included black actors in the cast, and *Pages of the Sea* included people of colour in their depictions, including Walter Tull, one of the first mixed heritage officers in the British army.[111] Whilst important inclusions, they were ultimately temporary memorials, and for stories with legacies of omission there needs to be more meaningful engagement with long term commemoration in Britain, something the Chinese Labour Corp memorial campaign is still seeking in 2026.[112] Paul Connerton emphasises there needs to be permanency to memorials to meaningfully influence rituals of remembrance.[113] When considering the legacy of forgetting troops of colour, I believe that it was important to ensure some of these large scale projects made these histories more permanently visible, and directed more people to already established sites of memory which commemorated troops of colour.

As with other projects explored in this thesis, there is a continued issue around accessibility. 14-18 NOW projects, whilst multimedia and performance based, continue to be inaccessible after their run time, which frustrates the scholarly intervention into the work of creatives and impacts the learning outcomes these pieces may continue to have. The same themes of access can be said of the Heritage Lottery Funded projects too. The community work which has been undertaken for and in communities at the centenary is often difficult to find now that the centenary moment has passed, and the often voluntary work of engaged communities, where much of the centenary's most meaningful work was carried out, has been undone simply through squander. Without meaningful establishment of visible histories of people of colour, there is the risk that they will be forgotten all over again.

The projects, and in particular, the community led projects funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, ultimately emphasised the importance of visibility, the reality of the legacy of a

[111] 'AYR BEACH - PAGES OF THE SEA' *National Theatres of Scotland*, (21st May 2018), <https://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/past-performances/ayr-beach-pages-of-the-sea> [21st May 2024]
[112] 'Memorial design' Chinese Labour Corps - UK Memorial Campaign, (n.d.) https://ensuringweremember.org.uk/?page_id=1806 [6th April 2026]
[113] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 71

world war, and the complexities of commemorating the victory of one empire over another in a post-empire Britain. Contrary to tradition, by making room for explicated explorations of stories of colour, rather than hiding them behind homogenised narratives of 'Britain and her Empire' space was made to more fully and better understand the breadth of the First World War, and all the people who served in it. It was, as David Olusoga asserts, 'their war too'.[114] To ignore this is to discard the meaningful identity building that has taken place within communities that have historically had to fight harder than other communities for the equal acknowledgment.

[114] David Olusoga, 'The World's War: Forgotten Soldiers of Empire' BBC History Production, (6th August 2014)

Conclusion: Connected, creative memories

'History has become our substitute for imagination.'[1]

In November 1979, The *Financial Times* published a short piece entitled 'Boom Time for Old Guns' which explored the lucrative value of military hardware. In the piece, the keeper of the Imperial War Museum Department of Exhibits laments how, with the increase in space in the IWM, the sourcing of items which at one point would have been free to the Museum, now came at a premium.[2] Creating a war museum and populating the memory landscape with artefacts requires significant spend, and the centenary was no different. Consequently, it showed the value of 'software' of war memories; the combination of Heritage Lottery Funding, School battlefield tours and 14-18 NOW commissions, the centenary cost hundreds of millions of pounds,[3] with at least fifty million pounds committed by the state.[4]

In their study reflecting on the centenary, Lucy Noakes and her collaborators highlight that;

> The centenary captured the imagination and the feelings of so many of the British people, drawing upon and (at least for its duration) strengthening the cultural memory of the conflict that is a key element in the national narrative of British history. The centenary may have been planned by the state, but its success lay in the importance that many individuals and communities attached to the experience and legacies of the First World War.[5]

---

[1] Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French past*, *Vol. 1 Conflicts and Divisions*, ed. by Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. By Arthur Goldhammer, rev. ed (Columbia University Press, 1996) p. 20
[2] 'Boom time for old guns,' *Financial Times*, (London, England), (16th November 1979), Financial Times Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources) [19th December 2024]
[3] Lucy, Noakes, Catriona Pennell, Emma Hanna, Lorna Hughes, Chris Kempshall, and James Wallis. 'Introduction: Britain and the Centenary of the First World War,' in *Capturing Commemoration: Reflections on the First World War Centenary in Britain*, ed. by Lucy Noakes, Catriona Pennell, Emma Hanna, Lorna Hughes, Chris Kempshall, James Wallis, (Berghahn Books, 2026) p. 5
[4] Jack Malan, Eugénie Lale-Demoz, Michaela Brady, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport & Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services, *First World War Centenary Programme: Legacy Evaluation*, (September 2019), <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/606378718fa8f515b08c5722/DCMS_FWWC_Legacy_Evaluation_Report__CSES_17_Sept_2019___1__V2.pdf> [12th August 2025] p. 10.
[5] Noakes and others, 'Introduction', *Capturing Commemoration*, p. 2

Initially, I anticipated this thesis would uncover themes of nationalism which, although shaped by local and cultural identities, concerns and histories, would be clearly recognisable and united by the idea that although the First World War was costly, destructive and potentially futile (as Dan Todman suggests),[6] it was a defining moment in our nation's memory and a source of (muted) national pride, succumbing somewhat to the vision Michael Gove had of a proud national past.[7] What this thesis has uncovered, however, is the deep meaning so many people still draw from memories of the First World War, and how it remains to be used as a touch stone for people and communities to understand their own identities in relation to the First World War, and to contextualise how these identities fit within a broader British identity over the 2014 – 2018 period. This thesis has also demonstrated that David Cameron's sense that the First World War 'mattered in our hearts'[8] was in fact, correct. There were many creative projects which explored heritages, histories and conceptions of identities that helped people make sense of the present via the past, and brought a great deal of pride to local areas where historically the arts had failed to demonstrate its worth, as was seen in the *Pages of the Sea* project.[9]

There were several differing creative interventions explored in this thesis which were employed at the centenary, such as the mass participation artwork of *Pages of the Sea*, the pagentry-esque performances of *Processions* and *We're Here Because We're Here*, and the small scale, local practises of the *Unremembered* project which encouraged creative and private reflection. Analysing these interventions required an understanding of established cultural memory perspectives of the First World War, such as the Nash brothers' paintings and

[6] Todman, Dan, *The Great War: Myth and Memory,* (Hambledon and London, 2005), p. 121
[7] Matthew Watson, 'Michael Gove's war on professional historical expertise: conservative curriculum reform, extreme whig history and the place of imperial heroes in modern multicultural Britain' *British Politics,* (2020) 15.4, DOI:10.1057/s41293-019-00118-3
[8] 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> [12th August 2025]
[9] 'Overall, beaches in areas of low cultural engagement accounted for 45% of the visits, despite making up only a third of all beaches that took part in the event.' London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'

the poetry of Sassoon, as well as ritual remembrance events like Remembrance Day observance. However, this thesis also required a degree of critical visual art study to effectively understand the mediations of stage and screen performances as well as and exhibited art forms. The forms of communication these creative interventions took are crucial to understanding how the creative and imaginative memory of the First World War inform individual and collective zeitgeist of memory. Rather than being simply a 'literary' war,[10] the affective and immersive legacies the artistic interpretation of the war has had on British society makes it a creative war, that is still producing outputs a hundred years later.

How did the memory of the First World War manifest creatively through the artworks of the centenary, both at national and local levels, and what does the reception to these interventions tell us about the memory of the First World War in Britain at the centenary? The creative projects showed that traditional memories of the First World War were still strong, especially when considering pastoral conceptions of a distinctly 'English' Britain, and the continued feelings of grief over losing a generation of men. However, the breadth of projects showed that there were spaces created for new narratives of women and people of colour that were highly engaged with, especially by groups for which those stories resonated.

There were several reasons for people's engagement with these community projects at the centenary of the First World War. When Michael Roper and Rachel Duffett analysed the reasons people engaged with the 'No Man's Land' project they;

> Identified five types of motivation for commemoration: didactic ones which draw on moral convictions and anger; responses to silence and the traumatic impact of silence across the generations; responses that, by contrast, emphasised the recovery of survivors and their "lifeworlds" after the war; feelings of responsibility toward ancestors which impel the wish to preserve their memory; and responses to loss which seek to revivify emotional ties with the dead.[11]

[10] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 3rd ed, (Oxford University Press, 2013)
[11] Michael Roper and Rachel Duffett, 'Family Legacies in the Centenary: Motives for First World War Commemoration among British and German Descendants.' *History and Memory* (2018) 30.1

Did these reasons for engagement ring true for communities at the centenary? What were the reasons for engagement in relation to different social groups and to artistic projects? The creation of, and engagement with the 'landscapes' of war memory seen in chapter two demonstrate an emotional connection with the past felt by some audience members, helping them 'make sense' of a past they did not directly experience.

In this section, I will summarise each chapter findings and conclude how the creative projects at the centenary informed senses of belonging and national identity via memories of the First World War beginning with the heritages of memory of the war which had to be negotiated through the Imperial War Museum. The Imperial War Museum as a 'site of memory' of the First World War shows the difficulties with managing memories of the war in practice. To provide an easy-to-follow narrative to a complex, difficult and 'messy' war is incredibly difficult; something which is echoed in the breadth of subjects explored by the creative projects. That it was designated the lead institution for the centenary demonstrates how the Imperial War Museum continues to be an affective site of memory, as remains the conduit through which the state manages memories of Britain's war heritage.

Engagement with pastoral projects demonstrated that memories of the war, as well as local and national identities, continue to be negotiated via the environment, and was the most successful example of creating 'meaning' between participants at the centenary and stories of the First World War.[12] The legacies of the environment in the memory of the war has bound together conceptions of identity with the war via the pastoral, but, as seen with the *Black Poppies* project and the 'frontier' projects that explore women's stories, these landscapes continue to not acknowledge stories that have not historically remembered them. Much of the engagement with the projects in chapter two centred around a sense of responsibility towards

[12] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW _09_02_13_022_2 – '14-18 NOW Brand Strategy'

the men of the past, which were represented by the pastoral, and the wish to not forget them (Roper and Duffett's 'fourth reason' people had to commemorate).

Moving to chapter three, this approach can be seen to continue; dominant memories relating to men of the war remain 'in memorium-esque', despite the knowledge that most soldiers of the war returned. The projects that centred men demonstrated that when the First World War is engaged with in places they may not even be expected, there can still be emotional and meaningful encounters, which can affect semi-religious and 'mystifying' reactions. Despite not being envisioned by the artists as 'ghosts', the figures of *We're Here Because We're Here* haunted the public space on the anniversary of the first day of the battle of the Somme, and played host to the deep effect this shared past has on imaginations and the empathy of the British public. The emotional reactions spoke to Roper and Duffett's 'first reason', a sense of grief and anger at the lost futures of these men. Ghosts of the war dead still haunt British memory. Rather than a continued sense of futility, there is a subtle shift in memory to a sense of sorrow, which resonated deeply.[13] When considering Dan Todman's framework of the 'memory of futility', this shift removes the politics of 'pointlessness' of these deaths yet retains the grief. Whilst not the jump in attitude hoped for by Michael Gove, narratives of futility were challenged by the efforts to connect the First World War with people in the present.

The engagement with projects which centred women were perhaps the most challenging to navigate in this thesis. The emphasis on celebrating the political gains for women, rather than exploring the legacies of grief that were present in Mass Observation reflections and imaginations of women in the war seemed to show a tension in the memory of women's war. It is here we can see responses to silence and trauma being a key reason for engagement with the centenary in these projects, as well as wanting to acknowledge the lives

[13] Macleod, Jenny, 'Looking Forward to the Centenary of the Second World War: Lessons from 2014-2018', *British Journal for Military History*, 8.3 (2022)

of the women who had been traditionally left out of the narrative of the First World War. However, these competing memories of women show the difficulties of making sense of a period which provided much excitement and sense of freedom for women, whilst also being an experience of extreme emotional burden. Projects which dealt with the heritage of protest movements used these spaces to explore contemporary issues around equality and recognition and demonstrated that these subjects remain highly politicised. Interestingly, there was more of an emphasis in the shared identity of 'womanhood' in projects that centred female experiences, compared to projects about men. Projects centring men gave the men of the past a distinct, timely identity that both idealised and reified conceptions of First World War manhood that did not necessarily represent manhood ideals of the present. In comparison, projects centring women, and particularly those exploring protest, made explicit links with the present, and the continued work that needs to be done for parity for women in society, as well as memory.

Whilst many community projects that explored the experiences of people of colour veiled a sense of injustice and in some cases, anger, at the historic and continued omission of their stories there were also many that also demonstrated a deep pride in the legacy of their community in the shared history of Britain, sometimes navigating and acknowledging both experiences of unfairness and pride. The visibility of faces of colour was at the forefront of 14-18 NOW, which chose the face of Walter Tull, depicted in the sand as part of Danny Boyles *Pages of the Sea* as the cover image for its compendium.[14] Whilst black and brown faces were visible in Boyle's piece, they were washed away along with the other representations of the faces of the First World War. Considering the legacy of 'non commemoration' and seeing the success of the material legacy of projects like *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*, there remains a question of legacy and longevity of these important

[14] *14-18 NOW Contemporary Arts Commissions for the First World War Centenary*, (Profile Editions 2019)

projects which deal with difficult and traditionally ignored histories. The HLF funded projects in particular demonstrated the meaningfulness of recognised commemoration for the people of colour who served in the war, as well as the importance of educating people on the diverse stories due to the continuing implication of service-citizenship bargains, which came out in the community projects, particularly *From Jawans to Generals: Loyal Allies, Proud Britons*.[15] Whilst important and meaningful work was undertaken in the exploration of the non-traditional narratives of women and people of colour, the difficulties with embedding and visualising these narratives within large scale projects like *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* demonstrates the strength of traditional cultural memory. 'Non-traditional narratives' projects were more likely to relate to the present day rather than a 'lost' past, and it is here we can see a difficulty with dominant First World War memory which leaves very little space for differing conceptions or experiences of the conflict. 'Traditional' memories that centre men and pastoral legacies were easy to conceptualise and understand at the centenary but 'lesser-known' memories rely on more work being done to uncover them in the present, being more difficult to situate within the traditional memory framework, indicating that the enduring memories of the war are difficult to shift.

The sense of togetherness captured through the mass participation artworks and local interventions connected people to each other and gave them a sense of place, which in turn came to connect people with a broader sense of a nationally shared past. This sense was engendered in part due to the decision to hold free events in public space, meaning that many of those who attended represented a cross section of society, and provoked communication between strangers.[16] Whilst this sense of place varied from a broader sense of the national, (as was the case with *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*), the local iterations of state led

[15] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D547.I5N 'From Jawans to Generals: Loyal Allies, Proud Britons'
[16] Jill Rutter and Sunder Katwala, 'Crossing Divides: How Arts and Heritage can help bring us together' British Futures, (2019) <https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Crossing-Divides.Final10mb.pdf> p.17

projects helped to connect people across the country with a shared experience, and more importantly, a shared knowledge, that other people had shared the experience with other participants in a separate moment. As demonstrated in the comments of a participant of *Pages of the Sea* who explained; 'the fact that it's happening at many beaches across the country as well – we're all in it together. So it's a big community isn't it?'[17] Understandings of national identity through a shared past, and a shared present, was particularly meaningful for this participant. *British Futures* reported that there was a consensus among both the public and the arts sector that 14-18 NOW had bridged class, generational and ethnic divides, particularly where events took place in public space.[18] Through a conceptualisation of a shared past mediated through a pastoral lens, participants were able to 'see' Britishness anywhere this conception of Britain was present, for example, in an African war cemetery.[19] These reflections indicate that there is a sixth reason to commemorate; namely, the wish to feel a sense of connection in the present which hinges on a connection borne out of a shared past. Whilst 14-18 NOW's brand strategy documents emphasised the goal to link people with the First World War who may feel they had little connection with the conflict,[20] the creative interventions inadvertently demonstrated a real want for connection in the present.

These moments of shared experience which transcend the physical, which I have referred to throughout the thesis as 'conceptual slippages', cross imagined boundaries of time as well as space. Embodied experience of artwork seemed to open a route for participants and audience members to go 'back in time' in their imagination, with their engagement with the artwork being key to developing a sense of empathy with people in the past, and embodied closeness that was generated through mass participation, artwork and shared collective

[17] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'
[18] Rutter and Katwala, 'Crossing Divides', p.16
[19] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War DA 690 .D75, 'Remembrance 2018: Never Good Bye – Remembrance of Dudley's Great War "heroes"'
[20] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW _09_02_13_022_2 – '14-18 NOW Brand Strategy'

memories. Projects such as the *100* events in Cornwall, the *Poppies* tour and the *Pages of the Sea* events around the country particularly demonstrate experiences of closeness across time (across the closest point of the memory horseshoe), and the tangibility of the past that was sensed through engagement with these projects. The mechanism of imaginative memory was 'fired' by interacting with these creative projects, in a similar way to how this mass observer describes interacting with 'trench art' they have collected;

> They are important to us…because each piece represents the boys and men who were swept up by the theatre of war, each playing their part and telling their own unique story. When I hold the postcards and read them I can almost hear their voices as they write the words, I feel like I'm holding a little time machine in my hand. I know it sounds a bit silly…(it) made me cry.[21]

Imaginative and empathetic engagement with the war helps broaden the accessibility of the past. Writ large at the centenary, and using broadly understood artefacts, symbols and legacies of the war without the need for handling specific artefacts, the affective environments of the creative projects gave the sense of 'feeling' the past. This in turn helped to create the imaginative link with stories of the First World War that requires minimal effort from the audience, seemingly bring the past 'closer' to the present.

As outlined in the vision and aims brief for the centenary moment, the First World War cultural programme board emphasised that for the Heritage Lottery Fund, there were several outcomes that were required. Heritage needed to be better interpreted, explained, identified and recorded, and people will have learned more about the heritage they have engaged with.[22] By drawing attention to the heritage that lives behind the art, particularly with historic 'stories of omission', stories of the past will continue to hold meaning in the present. Whilst anger remains about the speed, or lack of, that it takes to uncover these stories, or the

[21] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent H5603
[22] London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack, Item no. NOW_06_02_02_02_01_002_003_2, 'Agenda Items – 4A Vision and Aims – 18th September 2013, First World War Centenary – Cultural Programme'

continued prejudices women continue to face, these stories of the past helped engender in many of these projects a sense of hope for the present and future, and gave a sense that historically marginalised communities claimed and redefined the sense of citizenship using the First World War as a 'jumping off' point. These stories have also provided a foundation for continued learning legacy that was inspired in part by the centenary, demonstrating the impact of better interpretations and explanations of the past. This has taken place specifically within Heritage Lottery Funded projects where signposting continues to support a Chinese Labour Corp memorial petition[23] through the *Unremembered* project[24], as well as through the 14-18 NOW legacy fund awarding commissions in both 2021 and 2022 which explored continuing legacies of conflict.

However, a key issue with the centenary moment was the lack of digital legacy in the state led projects, and in many of the Heritage Lottery Funded projects, and concerns have been raised as to whether this material will be 'discoverable or useable in 5, let alone 50 or 100, years' time.'[25]A lack of monitoring, and a lack of defined digital outputs expected of the centenary projects also hampered the centenary's digital legacy.[26] Whilst the Heritage Lottery Funded projects have individual successes in digitising their findings, it was only down to the collection of the physical legacies of the projects deposited at the University of Essex library, along with the brief catalogue of the existence of each funded project on the National Lottery Heritage Fund website that made this research possible. This experience highlighted the lack of digital legacy of the 14-18 NOW project, which was offloaded from the Imperial War Museum website to the British Library, which suffered a significant cyber-attack in October

[23] 'Memorial design' Chinese Labour Corps - UK Memorial Campaign, (n.d.) https://ensuringweremember.org.uk/?page_id=1806 [6th April 2026]
[24] Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection, Item No. First World War D639.L2, 'The Unremembered: World War One's Army of Workers'
[25] Lucy Noakes, Emma Hanna, Lorna M. Hughes, Catriona Pennell, and James Wallis, *Reflections on the Centenary of the First World War: Learning and Legacies for the Future*, (project report), (2021), <https://reflections1418.exeter.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Reflections-on-the-Centenary-of-the-First-World-War-Learning-and-Legacies-for-the-Future.pdf> [3rd September 2025], p. 92
[26] Noakes and others, *Reflections on the Centenary of the First World War*, p.92

2023,[27] and at time of writing, the 14-18 NOW online resources are still unavailable. Communities and participants in these projects have subsequently been let down by a lack of foresight in what would happen to their work, undertaking intensive, meaningful work for no money, and with little recognition, similar to the experience of the 'Big Society' outlined by Ruth Levitas.[28] The success of the community projects, and the level of engagement within communities directly contradicts the policies of the 'Big Society' which limited local funding, demonstrating the worth of investing in communities, the ability these interventions had for identity building, and above all the deep meaning that was drawn from these local interventions, which situated local communities across Britain more securely within a shared national past.

There were also tensions uncovered by the centenary between state led commemoration partners, and organisations and partners that believed they were national stakeholders, yet weren't included in the national programme from its outset. In its submission to the select committee tasked with reporting the lessons from the centenary of the First World War, Historic Royal Palaces emphasises its role as an independent charity responsible for raising all its own funds. Their report indicates that in spite of the fact that it did not receive government or lottery funding for either *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red ('Poppies')* or *Beyond the Deepening Shadow ('Flames')*, they were able to produce "the most popular… most celebrated… art installation…transcending conflicts and generations …and arguably the most effective expression of commemoration in British history."[29] The team at Historic Royal Palaces state in their report that their accessible, arts – driven approach to commemorative evets was "undoubtedly a success". As a result of their success, the report stresses that large

[27] 'Cyber-attack recovery update' British Library, (n.d.) https://www.bl.uk/about/cyber-attack [6th April 2026]
[28] Ruth Levitas, 'The Just's Umbrella: Austerity and the Big Society in Coalition policy and beyond', *Critical Social Policy*, (2012), 32.3 DOI:10.1177/0261018312444408
[29] Megan Gooch and Tom O'Leary, 'Written Evidence submitted by Historic Royal Palaces' *WWO0112 - Evidence on Lessons from the First World War Centenary*, (March 2019) <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/100462/pdf/#:~:text=1.,%E2%80%A2> [6th April 2026]

scale commemoration is now seen as an "established expectation" of the Tower of London. Ultimately, the Historic Royal Palace report fights for the inclusion of the Tower of London in future government led and state funded initiatives and used the centenary to assert and maintain its own heritage as one of Britain's War Museums.

Whilst there were difficulties with a commemoration of such a scale, the huge number of people involved, the new materials created and the engagement with and recording of heritage adds to the overall sense of a whole new countrywide record of the First World War and the centenary.[30] The sense from the Heritage Lottery Fund 2018 evaluation is that the engagements seen by the HLF demonstrated that commemoration *should* happen – and although histories are sometimes difficult and often unclear, it is the stories of the past and how they connected people in the present that are central to the commemorations. Using a historical moment to bring people together shows that even when there were moments of historical misunderstanding and mix ups with the Second World War, people were keen to connect, reassert their citizenship and examine their own conceptions of self within their understanding of nationhood. These individual connections, although not necessarily connected to the First World War, were able to be connected to in the spirit of First World War remembrance, slipping between sense of the individual and the collective, the present and the past. A Mass Observation respondent captured her understanding of remembrance, which is at once public and personal;

> During the silence I think of soldiers in WW1 and those in WW2 and include those of the Falklands War to fairly recent times of Iraq and Afghanistan and it feels overwhelming when you consider the grief of those bereaved and the casualties in suffering and in pain. You also realise that globally people grieve for whichever war is personal for them…I observed the 2 minutes silence at 11am. It was quite emotional because I pretended my husband was still beside me…[31]

[30] Elaine Batty, Will Eadson, Ben Pattison, Mark Stevens, Alison Twells, and Nicola Verdon, 'Evaluation of Heritage Lottery Fund's First World War Centenary Activity: Year 4 report' (August 2018) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/publications/fww_centenary_evaluation_year_4_accessibility_check_10_08_19.pdf> [6th April 2026]

[31] Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War), Respondent B1771

Sedimented histories[32] of conflict come to the fore through remembrance, complicating memories and ensuring meaning remains through engagement with a traditional form that can be understood to be many things to different people, but keeps a broadly understood shape. The centenary offered a 'boom time' for memories of the First World War that had to be mediated through a hundred years of history that changed the shape of Britain, all whilst keeping a crystallised idea of generation of men who made the 'ultimate sacrifice' in the 'war to end all wars'. Indeed, Jenny Macleod has identified that during the centenary moment, it could be seen that public opinion on the First World War had; 'shifted – subtly but to an appreciable extent – from an emphasis on futility to a narrative of terrible sacrifice.'[33]Whilst historians have gone to great lengths to demonstrate that people at the time of the First World War believed the war to be just and justifiable,[34] the emotional engagement with the centenary projects demonstrate that this has no bearing on how people in the present engage with the memory of the war. As a historian, there is a conflict between wanting to right historical misunderstandings, but also acknowledge the meaning that people take from memories of the First World War which I suspect, have less to do with First World War than it initially appears. In the public lamenting of the losses of a generation a hundred years prior, we glimpse a conception of the precarity of the modern age the First World War is felt to have heralded in, the irony of the 'confidence and determination'[35] to not repeat the horrors of the First World War, and the fear that loss on such a monumental scale can happen again, even when it was promised not to.

[32] Sarah Lloyd and Julie Moore, 'Sedimented Histories: Connections, Collaborations and Co-production in Regional History', *History Workshop Journal*, (2015), 80.1, pp. 234–248, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbv017
[33] Jenny Macleod, 'Looking Forward to the Centenary of the Second World War: Lessons from 2014-2018', *British Journal for Military History*, (2022) 8.3 pp. 2-16.
[34] Todman, *Myth and Memory*
[35] Cameron, 'Speech at Imperial War Museum' [6th April 2026]

Bibliography

Artworks

14-18 NOW

Artichoke, *Processions*, (2018)

Armitage, Simon, *Still*, Enitharmon Editions, (n.d.) <https://www.enitharmon.co.uk/product/still-simon-armitage/>

Borland, Christine, *I Say Nothing*, (2018)

Boyle, Danny, *Pages of the Sea*, (2018), <https://www.pagesofthesea.org.uk/>

Cummings, Paul, and Tom Piper, *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red,* (n.d.) <https://www.paulcumminsceramics.com/blood-swept/>

Deller, Jeremy, in collaboration with Rufus Norris, *We're Here Because We're Here*, (performance) (2016) <https://becausewearehere.co.uk/>

Dewe Mathews, Chloe, *Shot at Dawn*, (n.d.) <http://shotatdawn.photography/about/>

Graeae, *This Is Not For You*, (performance) (2018) <https://graeae.org/event/this-is-not-for-you/>

Jackson, Peter, *They Shall Not Grow Old*, (United Kingdom, 2018)

Johnson, Esther, *Asunder*, (2016)

Maclean, Rachel, *Make Me Up*, (2018)

Manchester Art Gallery, *Fashion & Freedom Designers*, (2016)

Palmer, Katrina, *The Coffin Jump* (2018)

Pilgrim, Geraldine, *Flight,* (2016)

Stevenson, Debris, *Poet in da Corner*, (2018)

Scullin, Byron J., Hannah Fox, and Thomas Supple, (SPILL)*, Clarion Call*, (2018)

The Old Vic, *Sylvia*, (2018)

Wearing, Gillian, *Courage Calls to Courage Everywhere*, (2018)

WildWorks, *100: The Day Our World Changed*, (performance), (2014) <https://wildworks.org.uk/projects/100-the-day-our-world-changed/>

—— *100:UnEarth,* (performance), (2018) https://wildworks.org.uk/projects/100-unearth/

Other artworks

Bacon, John Henry Frederick, *The Relief of Ladysmith, 27 February 1900*, (c 1900), Oil on canvas, National Army Museum, (NAM. 1996-04-1-1), <https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=1996-04-1-1>

Boyle, Danny, 'Isles of Wonders', London 2012 Olympic Games, Opening Ceremony, (2012), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4As0e4de-rI>

Clausen, George *Youth Mourning*, (1916) Oil on Canvas, 914 mm x 914 mm https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/5151 [

Hale, Edward Matthew, *Piper George Findlater winning the Victoria Cross at Dargai 1897*, (1898), Oil on Canvas, National Army Museum, (NAM. 1957-04-3-1), <https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=1957-04-3-1>

Hatherall, William, *Nurse, Wounded Soldier and Child*, (1915) Oil on canvas, 457 mm x 323 mm, Imperial War Museum (Art.IWM ART 5194) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/12369>

Kemp-Welch, Lucy, *Forward the Guns!* (1917), Oil paint on canvas, 60 × 120 1/2 (152·5 × 306), Tate, (N03217), <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/kemp-welch-forward-the-guns-n03217>

Kennington, Eric, *The Conquerors*, (1920), Oil on Canvas, 2978 mm x 2428 mm, Canadian War Museum, (19710261-0812), <https://www.warmuseum.ca/collections/artifact/1017199>

Nash, John, *Oppy Wood, 1917, evening*, (1918), oil on canvas, 1828 mm x 2133 mm. Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM ART 2243) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20016>

Nash, Paul, *We are Making a New World*, (1918), Oil on Canvas, 711 mm x 914 mm, Imperial War Museum (Art.IWM ART 1146) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20070>

—— *Wire*, (c1918/1919) Watercolour on paper, 486 mm x 635 mm, Imperial War Museum (Art.IWM ART 2705), <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20092>

Nevinson, C R W, *Paths of Glory*, (1917), 20 mm x 460 mm x 610 mm, Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM ART 518) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20211>

—— *The Harvest of Battle*, (1919), Oil on Canvas, 1828 mm x 3175 mm, Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM ART 1921), <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20223>

Rixon, P I, *Crystal Palace - Great War Exhibition - Imperial War Museum*, (1920), Lithograph on paper, 1012 mm x 651 mm. Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM PST 3278), <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/22951>

Wollen, William Barnes, *The Flag, Albuhera, May 16, 1811*, (c.1912), Oil on canvas, National Army Museum, (NAM. 2001-04-325-1), <https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=2001-04-325-1>

—— *Our 'Little Contemptibles', 1914,* (1918), Oil on canvas, National Army Museum, (NAM. 1998-04-49-1), <https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=1998-04-49-1>

—— *The Last Stand of the 2nd Devons at Bois-des-Buttes, 27 May 1918*, The Rifles Exeter Office, The Devonshire and Dorset Regimental Charitable Trust, <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-last-stand-of-the-2nd-devons-at-bois-des-buttes-27-may-1918-95218>

Sir Herbert Stewart's column crossing the Bayuda Desert, 1885, (c.1885), Oil on board over photograph, (unknown artist), (c), National Army Museum, (NAM. 1978-08-97-1), <https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=1978-08-97-1>

In Her Hour of Need Your Country Calls for You, (1914) letterpress on paper, 253 mm x 810 mm. Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM PST 5077) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/28384>

Come Along, Boys! (1915) Lithograph on paper, 758 mm x 506 mm. Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM PST 11448) < https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/4167>

Trained Men - It is Your Duty, (1915) Lithograph on paper, 743 mm x 499 mm, Imperial War Museum (Art.IWM PST 5098), https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/28400

Your Country's Call, (1915), Lithograph on paper, (unknown artist) 754 mm. x 499 mm, Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM PST 11765), https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30548

Take Up The Sword Of Justice, (1915) Lithograph on paper, 520 mm., x 672 mm, Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM PST 12422), <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/21155>

Have You any Women-folk Worth Defending? (1915) Lithograph on paper, 737 mm x 503 mm, Imperial War Museum, (Art.IWM PST 13625) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/31624>

Poetry and Prose

Barker, Pat, *The Regeneration Trilogy*, (Penguin, 1991, 2014)

Blake, William, Jerusalem, (c. 1810), <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54684/jerusalem-and-did-those-feet-in-ancient-time>

Brittain, Vera, *Testament of Youth*, (Virago Press, 1978)

Brooke, Rupert, '1914: The Soldier', in *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, ed by George Walter, (Penguin Books Ltd, 2006)

Graves, Robert, 'A Dead Boche', in *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, ed by George Walter, (Penguin Books Ltd, 2006)

Kipling, Rudyard, *The Gardener*, (1925) The Kipling Society, <https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/tale/the-gardener.htm>

Larkin, Phillip, *MCMXIV*, (n.d.) <https://allpoetry.com/Mcmxiv>

Newbold, Henry, *Vitaï Lampada* , (1892) <https://allpoetry.com/Vita-Lampada>

Owen, Wilfred 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', in *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, ed by George Walter, (Penguin Books Ltd, 2006)

—— 'Spring Offensive', in *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, ed by George Walter, (Penguin Books Ltd, 2006)

Rosenburg, Isaac, 'Break of Day in the Trenches' in *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, ed by George Walter, (Penguin Books Ltd, 2006)

—— 'Dead Mans Dump' in *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, ed by George Walter, (Penguin Books Ltd, 2006)

Sassoon, Siegfried, 'The Death Bed' in *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, ed by George Walter, (Penguin Books Ltd, 2006)

Shafak, Elif, 'In search of Untold stories' in *1914 - Goodbye to all that: Writers on the conflict between life and art*, ed by Lavinia Greenlaw, (Pushkin Press, 2014)

Archives

National Archive

Kew, National Archives, British Nationality Act 1948, BT 217/2349, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/explore-the-collection/explore-by-topic/migration-and-citizenship/coming-to-britain/>

Heritage Lottery Fund: First World War Centenary Community Collection

Colchester, University of Essex Special Collections, First World War Centenary Community Collection:

Item No. First World War DA 690.D13, ‘Daresbury: The story of a Parish in World War One’

Item No. First World War DA 690 .C517 ‘Christleton Great War Stories: Special Commemoration marking the Centenary of World War One’

Item No. First World War DA 690 .D75, ‘Remembrance 2018: Never Good Bye – Remembrance of Dudley’s Great War “heroes”’

Item No. First World War DA 690 .W544 , ‘They Shall Not Grow Old’,

Item No. First World War D 680.G7 ‘Montgomery Remembers: The Making of a Memorial Garden’

Item No. First World War D639.W7N6, ‘No Man’s Land: Young people uncover women’s viewpoints on the First World War’

Item No. First World War D640.A2M44, ‘Meeting in No Man’s Land: British and German memories of World War One’,

Item No. First World War D 639 .S76, ‘The Greater Game – A History of Football in World War I’

Item No. First World War D 639 .S76 ‘First World War Centenary Woods - The Woodland Trust’,

Item No. First World War DA690.T12, Ancestral Rescue, ‘Patriotism Love Pain: Great War Stories Discovered by Tamworth Families’

Item No. First World War A690.M416, Cynthia Ruston, ‘Meanwood Men 1914-1918’

Item No. First World War UG 447.2.G7, ‘Gas Girls’

Item No. First World War (no number) ‘Duty Calls: The Country House in Time of War’

Item No. First World War CR 4885, ‘Honouring Indian VC soldiers in World War One’

Item No. First World War D547.I5 ‘Remembering Forgotten Heroes’.

Item No. First World War D547.I5N ‘From Jawans to Generals: Loyal Allies, Proud Britons’

Item No. First World War D639.L2, ‘The Unremembered: World War One’s Army of Workers’

Item No. First World War D639.W7T7, ‘Trailblazers: World War One’s Inspirational Women’

Item No. First World War (no item number) ‘The Unknown Become Known: A moving story of soldiers from undivided India who fought for Britain in WWI’

Item No. First World War (no item number) War and Peas: Feeding People in times of Conflict

Item No. First World War (no item number) Food, Farming and Fishing in Devon during the First World War

Item No. First World War (no item number), NUTKHUT: Dr. Blighty

Item No. First World War (no item number) 'London Jews in the First World War: We Were There Too'

Item No. First World War (no item number) 'Stories of Omission – Conflict and the experience of Black Soldiers'

Imperial War Museum

London, Imperial War Museum, (Obj no. LBY K. 98 / 612) (1970), 'Jump my brothers jump: poems from prison', <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1500098325>

London, Imperial War Museum, 14-18 NOW Research Pack:

Item no. NOW_06_02_02_02_01_002_003_2, 'Agenda Items – 4A Vision and Aims – 18th September 2013, First World War Centenary – Cultural Programme'

Item no. NOW_02_02_06_002_2, 'Complete Programme Statistics - 14-18 NOW'

Item no. NOW_06_02_02_02_01_001_001_2 (n.d.) 'First World War Cultural Programme Board - draft terms of reference'

(No item number) 'Concept design narrative brief v 8 9 November 2011 Overview', document entitled 'Historical Narrative Overview – First World War Gallery, Imperial War Museum London" – JT – 31st October 2011'

Item no. NOW_11_01_02_05_003_2 'Embracing A Visual Moment': Audience Evaluation 2018 Poppies'

Item no. NOW_11_03_09_001_002_2, 'A contemporary memorial: breaking new ground – evaluation of *We're Here Because We're Here* April 2017'

Item no. NOW_11_201834_02_005_003_2, 'They Shall Not Grow Old sales summary'

Item no. NOW_11_2018_28_02_005_012a.2, 'Pages of the Sea - A living piece of art'

Item no. NOW_11_2016_08_02_001_004_2 'FLIGHT'

Item no. NOW _09_02_13_022_2, '14-18 NOW Brand Strategy'

Mass Observation Archive

Brighton, The Keep, University of Sussex, Mass Observation Directive Autumn 2014, (The First World War)

Respondent B1771

Respondent B4290

Respondent C4131

Respondent D826

Respondent E5577

Respondent G226

Respondent G4560

Respondent H1470

Respondent H1543

Respondent H2637

Respondent H4611

Respondent H5603

Respondent M348

Respondent N5545

Respondent P2957

Respondent R1418

Respondent W1813

Respondent W632

Project ephemera

Heritage Lottery Fund

'Black Poppies Exhibition; Southwark and the black British First World War heritage', National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/black-poppies-exhibition-southwark-and-black-british-first-world-war-heritage>

'Red Poppies and White Butterflies' *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/red-poppies-and-white-butterflies>

‘Lincoln War Stories’, *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.), <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/lincoln-war-stories>

‘Diary of a Dude: Bringing Jack Pulman's First World War Diary to Life’ *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/diary-dude-bringing-jack-pulmans-first-world-war-diary-life>

‘Walter Tull: first black Tottenham Hotspur player and First World War officer’, *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/walter-tull-first-black-tottenham-hotspur-player-and-first-world-war-officer>

‘A Miller's Tale: Football, Community and Remembrance in Central London during the Great War’, *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.), <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/millers-tale-football-community-and-remembrance-central-london-during-great-war>

‘Queen Alexandra Hospital Home - Our legacy to our country’, *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/queen-alexandra-hospital-home-our-legacy-our-country>

‘Invisible histories from the First World War’ *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/invisible-histories-first-world-war>

‘Brothers Behind Bars: HMP Low Moss explores the experiences of the Great War's conscientious objectors’ *National Lottery Heritage Fund*, (n.d.), <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/brothers-behind-bars-hmp-low-moss-explores-experiences-great-wars-conscientious-objectors>

‘Gas Girls: women workers in Avonmouth First World War Mustard Gas Factories’ National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/gas-girls-women-workers-avonmouth-first-world-war-mustard-gas-factories>

‘Womens' Work: Sharing the stories of Birmingham factory women’ National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/womens-work-sharing-stories-birmingham-factory-women>

‘Working The War’, National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/working-war>

'“All The Nice Girls” - women in men's roles on stage 1914-1918’, National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/all-nice-girls-women-mens-roles-stage-1914-1918>

‘Lottery grant to tell the heroic story of First World War nurse Edith Cavell’ National Lottery Heritage Fund, (13th October 2014) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/lottery-grant-tell-heroic-story-first-world-war-nurse-edith-cavell>

‘Scottish Womens Hospital WW1 Remembrance’, National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/scottish-womens-hospital-ww1-remembrance>

‘VAD indexes online: personnel records of First World War volunteers’, National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/vad-indexes-online-personnel-records-first-world-war-volunteers>

‘Personal experiences of volunteer nursing during the First World War’, National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/personal-experiences-volunteer-nursing-during-first-world-war>

‘In her footsteps: discovering Suffragettes in the North East’, National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/her-footsteps-discovering-suffragettes-north-east>

‘Investigating South Tyneside womens' roles in the First World War’, National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/investigating-south-tyneside-womens-roles-first-world-war>

‘No Game For Girls: A history of women's football in WW1’ National Lottery Heritage Fund, (n.d.) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/no-game-girls-history-womens-football-ww1>

‘First World War women’s football match recreated’, National Lottery Heritage Fund, (22nd August 2014) <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/first-world-war-womens-football-match-recreated>

14-18 NOW

Kemp, Mercedes, Bill Mitchell, Myriddin Wannell, and Seamus Carey, *100: The Day Our World Changed* – Project programme, (2014), <https://repository.falmouth.ac.uk/2470/37/100%20TDOWC%20Programme.pdf>

—— *100:UnEarth* – Project programme, (2018), <https://repository.falmouth.ac.uk/3071/1/100%20UnEarth%20Programme.pdf>

14-18 NOW Contemporary Arts Commissions for the First World War Centenary, (Profile Editions 2019)

‘Memorial - Brink Productions’, Barbican, (n.d.) <https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2018/event/brink-productions-memorial>

‘Beach Portraits’ Pages of the Sea, (n.d.) <https://www.pagesofthesea.org.uk/beach-portraits/>

‘Processions’, 14-18 NOW, (n.d. – no longer accessible) <https://www.1418now.org.uk/commissions/processions/>

Other sites

‘Lest We Forget: The key role of Cannock Chase in the First World War’, Cannock Chase, (n.d.) <https://www.cannock-chase.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Lest-We-Forget-compressed.pdf>

Esther Johnson, *Asunder*, (2016), <https://www.shu.ac.uk/art-design-media-research-centre/archive/asunder#:~:text=Asunder%20tells%20the%20story%20of,its%20shipyards%20and%20munitions%20factories.>

‘Honouring Indian Victoria Cross Soldiers in World War One’ Believe in Me CIC, (n.d.) <https://www.bimcic.com/indian-victoria-cross-winners-project>

‘The Orange Lilies – Brighton and Hove Soldiers in the Somme’, *The Orange Lillies*, (n.d.) <https://theorangelilies.wordpress.com/>

‘Sylvia’, Royal Albert Hall, (n.d.) <https://www.royalalberthall.com/tickets/events/2026/sylvia>

‘Edith Cavell’ Norwich Cathedral, (n.d.) <https://cathedral.org.uk/cathedral-highlights/edith-cavell/>

‘*Commemorating Edith Cavell, the World War I British nurse who is celebrated for saving the lives of soldiers in Brussels from all sides without distinction’* Edith Cavell 1865-1915, (n.d.) <https://edithcavell.org.uk/>

‘British Red Cross volunteers during WW1’ British Red Cross, (n.d.) <https://vad.redcross.org.uk/>

‘Veronica Nisbet’s Scrapbook 1917-1919’ Museum of the Order of St John (16th May n.y.) <https://museumstjohn.org.uk/online-resources/veronica-nisbets-scrapbook-1917-1919/>

‘Women's Health In South Tyneside: First World War Project’ (Blog - multiple dates) <https://whistww1.blogspot.com/>

‘Dr. Blighty, NUTKHUT, (n.d.) <https://www.nutkhut.co.uk/projects/dr-blighty/>

‘We collaborated with We Were There Too on the Journey from Home project -funded by Heritage Lottery Fund’, Believe in Me CIC (n.d.) <https://www.bimcic.com/journey-from-home-project>

Documenting & commemorating the contribution British Jews made during the First World War’, British Jews in the First World War: We Were There Too, (n.d.) <https://www.jewsfww.uk/>

‘AYR BEACH - PAGES OF THE SEA’ *National Theatres of Scotland*, (21st May 2018), <https://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/past-performances/ayr-beach-pages-of-the-sea>

‘Memorial design’ Chinese Labour Corps - UK Memorial Campaign, (n.d.) <https://ensuringweremember.org.uk/?page_id=1806>

Newspaper Archives

***Financial Times* Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources)**

‘Boom time for old guns,’ *Financial Times*, (London, England), (16th November 1979)

***The Daily Mail* Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources)**

‘Multiple Display Advertising Items (The Crystal Palace, The Imperial War Museum and Great Victory Exhibition’ *Daily Mail*, (London, England), (1st June 1920)

‘The King Opens War Museum - Tribute to Empire Sacrifices – The Victory Bringers’ *Daily Mail*, (London, England), (10th June 1920)

‘“Peace in Our Time” in the War Museum’, *Daily Mail*, (London, England), (7th February 1940)

Edwin Tetlow, ‘The most terrible story of the war’, *The Daily Mail*, (London, England) (19th April 1945)

‘Monty's D-Day Starts “War” – Museum wants German Surrender Treaty’ *Daily Mail*, (London, England) (8th June 1954)

‘That Document: Monty's May Be only a Copy’ *Daily Mail*, (London, England) (1st July 1954)

'U. S. has another Monty paper' *Daily Mail*, (London, England) (3rd July 1954)

Norman, B ‘BBC asks viewers for 1914-18 memories’ *Daily Mail*, (London, England), (3rd July 1963)

‘Surrender pact for Museum’, *Daily Mail*, (London, England) (5th September 1968)

‘Museum fire charge’ *Daily Mail*, (London, England), (16th October 1968)

***The Daily Telegraph* Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources)**

‘“Footsloggers” Burdens”, *The Daily Telegraph*, (19th September 1939)

‘Slave Women Lived like Animals in Nazi Camp’, *The Daily Telegraph*, (London, England) (12th April 1945)

***The Times* Digital Archive (Gale Primary Sources)**

‘Deaths’ *The Times* (London, England) (7th October 1914)

‘National War Museum: Suggestion for the Tower of London’ *The Times*, (London, England), (21st February 1917)

‘Political Notes – The National War Museum’ *The Times,* (London, England), (16th March 1917)

‘National War Museum: A Collection of Relics and Souvenirs’ *The Times,* (London, England), (26th March 1917)

‘The Empire At War – Relics and Pictures at Burlington House’ *The Times*, (London, England), (14th December 1917)

‘National War Memorial – Decision of Lord Crawford’s Committee’ *The Times* (London, England) (5th April 1918)

‘A National Tribute to Nurses of the Great War’, *The Times*, (London, England) (12th November 1918)

‘Opening Of the Imperial War Museum’ *The Times* (London, England), (8th June 1920)

‘Imperial War Museum – Some New Exhibits’, *The Times* (London, England), (21st July 1923)

‘Imperial War Museum – Removal to South Kensington – A Difficult Task’, *The Times* (London, England) (18th December 1923)

‘The Crystal Palace’, *The Times* (London, England), (19th December 1923)

‘Science Museum’, *The Times* (London, England) (27th December 1923)

‘Imperial War Museum Still Closed – Many Visitors Disappointed’ *The Times*, (London, England) (25th April 1924)

‘The Imperial War Museum – Problems Due To Want Of Space’, *The Times*, (London, England) (1st June 1925)

‘Imperial War Museum – Lack of Storage Facilities’ *The Times*, (London, England) (6th September 1926)

‘Public Interest In Museums – Increased Attendance’, The *Times*, (London, England) (19th August 1930)

‘The Imperial War Museum – Proposed Transfer to Old Bethlam Hospital’, *The Times*, (London, England), (12th November 1930)

‘A Museum on the Move – Relics of the War – A Study in Mobility and Contrast’ *The Times,* (London, England), (18th July 1935)

‘The Imperial War Museum – Lack of Accommodation’ *The Times*, (London, England), (25th August 1933)

‘Bellona in Bedlam’ *The Times,* (London, England), (7th July 1936)

‘The Imperial War Museum – Reopening by the Duke of York’, *The Times*, (London, England), (8th July 1936)

‘Protecting Art Treasures – War-Time Dispersal in Mansions and Quarries – National Collections Saved’, *The Times*, (London, England), (1st September 1945)

‘Changed War Museum – Galleries Reopening To-Day’ *The Times* (London, England), (27th November 1946)

‘Relics Of Two World Wars – Museum Wing Reopened’ *The Times* (London, England), (23rd February 1949)

Newspaper Articles

Express

Collins, Frankie, ‘The WWI masterpiece the BBC axed after just one series’ *The Express* (28th September 2025) <https://www.express.co.uk/showbiz/tv-radio/2114000/ww1-masterpiece-bbc-axed>

Guardian

Addley, Esther, ‘Danny Boyle salutes armistice's 'real heroes' after quitting Bond’, *The Guardian*, (5th October 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/oct/05/danny-boyle-salutes-armistices-real-heroes-after-quitting-james-bond>

Akbar, Arifa, ‘Memorial review – Alice Oswald's exquisite elegy to Iliad's lost mortals’, *The Guardian*, (30th September 2018) <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/sep/30/memorial-review-alice-oswald-homer-iliad-barbican>

Bradshaw, Peter, ‘They Shall Not Grow Old review – Peter Jackson's electrifying journey into the first world war trenches’, *The Guardian,* (16th October 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/oct/16/they-shall-not-grow-old-review-first-world-war-peter-jackson>

Booth, Robert, ‘Unremembered: the African first world war soldiers without a grave’, *The Guardian*, (21 April 2021) <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/apr/21/unremembered-the-african-first-world-war-soldiers-without-a-grave>

Collier, Hatty, ‘The Crimson Field makes strong start with 6 million viewers for first episode’ *The Guardian,* (7th April 2014)

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/apr/07/crimson-field-bbc-ratings-first-episode>

Deller, Jeremy, '"It was intended to make people angry again": Jeremy Deller on restaging the Battle of Orgreave,' *The Guardian*, (23rd April 2023) <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/apr/23/jeremy-deller-art-is-magic-extract-orgreave-stonehenge-murdochs>

Fraser, Giles, 'Brexit recycles the defiant spirit of the Reformation', *The Guardian*, (5th May 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2016/may/05/brexit-recycles-the-defiant-spirit-of-the-reformation>

Higgins, Charlotte, '#Wearehere: Somme tribute revealed as Jeremy Deller work' *The Guardian* (1st July 2016) <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jul/01/wearehere-battle-somme-tribute-acted-out-across-britain>

Hill, Amelia, 'The English identity crisis: who do you think you are?', *The Guardian*, (13th June 2004), <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2004/jun/13/britishidentity.ameliahill>

Hunt, Tristram, 'Michael Gove, using history for politicking is tawdry' *The Guardian*, (4th January 2014), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/04/first-world-war-michael-gove-left-bashing-history>

Jones, Jonathon, 'The Tower of London poppies are fake, trite and inward-looking – a UKIP-style memorial' The *Guardian*, (29th October 2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2014/oct/28/tower-of-london-poppies-ukip-remembrance-day>

Kennedy, Maev, 'First world war's forgotten Chinese Labour Corps to get recognition at last' *The Guardian,* (14th August 2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/14/first-world-war-forgotten-chinese-labour-corps-memorial>

—— 'Brighton festival recalls pavilion's use as wartime hospital for Indian troops', *The Guardian*, (22nd May 2016) https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2016/may/22/brighton-festival-pavilion-hospital-indian-troops-ww1

Kermode, Mark, 'They Shall Not Grow Old review – an utterly breathtaking journey into the trenches', *The Observer*, (11th November 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/nov/11/they-shall-not-grow-old-peter-jackson-review-first-world-war-footage>

O'Hagan, Sean, 'Chloe Dewe Mathews's Shot at Dawn: a moving photographic memorial' *The Guardian*, (29th June 2014), <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/jun/29/chloe-dewe-mathews-shot-at-dawn-moving-photographic-memorial-first-world-war>

Olusoga, David, 'Britain's failure to honour black and Asian dead is a scandal of the present, not just the past', *The Guardian*, (25th April 2021)

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/apr/25/britains-failure-to-honour-black-and-asian-dead-is-a-scandal-of-the-present-not-just-the-past>

Pidd, Helen, 'Wings over Windermere: high tea and horror as the Suicide Club flies again' *The Guardian*, (6th July 2016) <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jul/06/flight-brockhole-on-windermere-first-world-war-geraldine-pilgrim>

Summers, Deborah, 'David Cameron warns of "new age of austerity"' *The Guardian*, (26th April 2009), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/apr/26/david-cameron-conservative-economic-policy1>

Daily Mail

Gove, Michael, 'Why does the Left insist on belittling true British heroes?' *Daily Mail*, (2nd January 2014), <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2532923/Michael-Gove-blasts-Blackadder-myths-First-World-War-spread-television-sit-coms-left-wing-academics.html>

Shipman, Tim, 'Michael Gove blasts 'Blackadder myths' about the First World War spread by television sit-coms and left-wing academics', *Daily Mail*, (2nd January 2014), <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2532923/Michael-Gove-blasts-Blackadder-myths-First-World-War-spread-television-sit-coms-left-wing-academics.html>

Hardman, Robert, 'How you can buy one of the Tower's amazing ceramic poppies for £25 - and the man behind the incredible spectacle', *The Daily Mail*, (London, England), (5th August 2014), < https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2716788/From-kiln-Tower-London-Dozens-British-artists-1million-ceramic-poppies-inspired-unknown-soldiers-account-blood-soaked-fields-Flanders-buy-one-25.html>

Robertson, Alexander, and Steph Cockroft 'The spine-tingling moment commuters in Glasgow were moved to tears as actors dressed as fallen soldiers sung a poignant WWI song from the trenches at Battle of the Somme' *The Daily Mail*, (1 July 2016) <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3669617/Silent-actors-dressed-ghost-soldiers-posted-stations-country-poignant-reminder-lost-bloody-Battle-Somme.html>

The Scotsman

Jeffrey, Moira, 'Shot At Dawn: Chronicling men killed for desertion', The Scotsman, (9th November 2014) <https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/shot-at-dawn-chronicling-men-killed-for-desertion-1521390>

The Standard

Williams, Sophie, 'Danny Boyle beaches: "Pages of the Sea" Armistice project sees stunning sand portraits of WW1 casualties', *The Standard*, (12th November 2018) <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/remembrance-day-2018-stunning-images-show-sand-portraits-of-casualties-who-fought-in-world-war-one-a3986991.html>

BBC

‘David Cameron launches Tories “big society” plan’, *BBC News*, (19th July 2010), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10680062>

‘Why the Indian soldiers of WW1 were forgotten’ *BBC News*, (2nd July 2015) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-33317368>

‘Artists behind “ghost soldiers” project revealed’, *BBC News*, (1st July 2016), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-36682140>

‘Battle of the Somme: Royals at Somme centenary commemoration’*, BBC News*, (1st July 2016), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36674451>

‘Millicent Fawcett: Statue of suffragist unveiled’ BBC News, (24th April 2018) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-43868925>

‘Women march in Edinburgh to mark suffrage centenary’, BBC News, (10th June 2018) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-44412728>

‘Sarah Everard: Met Police breached rights of vigil organisers’ BBC News, (11th March 2022) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-60707646>

‘Dowland poppy cascade in memory of three WW1 soldiers’, BBC News, (27th October 2022) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-63419483>

‘Laurence Fox apologises to Sikhs for 'clumsy' 1917 comments’, BBC News, (24th January 2020) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-51233734#:~:text=%22Even%20in%201917%20they've,what%20the%20story%20is'.%22>

Miscellaneous news sources and review sites

Andersen, Zo, ‘The Head & the Load, Tate Modern, London, review: William Kentridge’s piece about Africans in WWI is electrifying’ The Independent, (16th July 2018) <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/the-head-and-the-load-review-tate-modern-william-kentridge-dance-first-world-war-a8443756.html>

Bonsu, Osei, ‘John Akomfrah Commemorates the Colonial Soldiers Who Fought for a Foreign Cause’, *Frieze*, (22nd January 2019), <https://www.frieze.com/article/john-akomfrah-commemorates-colonial-soldiers-who-fought-cause-was-not-theirs>

Di Yu, Sandy, ‘Two wars and no satisfaction: The Coffin Jump and In Search of Dinozord’ *ArtRabbit,* (19th June 2018) <https://www.artrabbit.com/network/features/2018-june/the-coffin-jump-and-in-search-of-dinozord-review>

Harding, Jeremy, ‘Review of ‘Mimesis: African Soldier’’, *London Review of Books*, (6th December 2018) 40.23 <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v40/n23/jeremy-harding/ends-of-the-earth>

Johns, Janine, 'Flight: a fascinating journey with Lakes Alive' (8th July 2016) <https://lakedistrictgems.co.uk/2016/07/08/flight-lakes-alive/?utm_campaign=shareaholic&utm_medium=twitter&utm_source=socialnetwork#:~:text=Flight%20is%20a%20collaboration%20between%20Lakes%20Alive,house%20and%20gardens%20at%20Brockhole%2C%20and%20it>

Luke, Ben, 'William Kentridge - The Head & the Load review: A nightmarish masterpiece to mark a shaming tragedy', The Standard, (12th July 2018) <https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/william-kentridge-the-head-the-load-review-a-nightmarish-masterpiece-to-mark-a-shaming-tragedy-a3885606.html>

Mandell, Jonathan, 'The Head and the Load Review: Colonized Africans during World War I', New York Theater, (5th December 2018) <https://newyorktheater.me/2018/12/05/the-head-and-the-load-review-colonized-africans-during-world-war-i/>

Morrison, Chris, 'An artist reflecting on war and loss', *Irish News*, (10th July 2014) <https://www.irishnews.com/lifestyle/2014/07/10/news/an-artist-reflecting-on-war-and-loss-96399/>

Naylor, Gary, 'Review: ALICE OSWALD'S MEMORIAL, Barbican Theatre', *Broadway World* (28th September 2018) <https://www.broadwayworld.com/westend/article/BWW-Review-ALICE-OSWALDS-MEMORIAL-Barbican-Theatre-20180928>

Prior, Dorothy Max, 'Nutkhut: Dr Blighty', (n.d.) <https://totaltheatre.org.uk/nutkhut-dr-blighty/>

Roberts, Cleo, 'RAQS Media Collective', *ArtReview,* (3rd December 2018) <https://artreview.com/ara-winter-2018-feature-raqs-media-collective/>

Sharma, Aashna, 'John Akomfrah: Mimesis – African Soldier art review: Fresh exploration of the horrors of war', *The List,* (5th December 2024) <https://list.co.uk/news/john-akomfrah-mimesis-african-soldier-art-review-fresh-exploration-of-the-horrors-of-war-46039>

Waldman, Jenny, 'Remembering the ghost soldiers of the Somme,' *The Art Newspaper*, (1 March 2017), <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2017/03/01/remembering-the-ghost-soldiers-of-the-somme>

Zarin, Cynthia, '"The Head and the Load," William Kentridge's Homage to Africa in the Great War' *The New Yorker*, (16th December 2018), <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-head-and-the-load-william-kentridges-homage-to-africa-in-the-great-war>

'They Shall Not Grow Old,' Rotten Tomatoes, (n.d.) <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/they_shall_not_grow_old>

Reviewer klaas-wynne, They Shall Not Grow Old User Reviews, IMDB, (30th December 2018)

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7905466/reviews?sort=curated&dir=desc&ratingFilter=1>

'World premiere of Peter Jackson's They Shall Not Grow Old announced for 62nd BFI London Film Festival' *British Film Industry*, (21st August 2018) <https://www.bfi.org.uk/news/lff-62-peter-jacksons-they-shall-not-grow-old>

'Folkestone stands proud as Danny Boyle's Flagship Beach for Pages of The Sea', Folkelife, (n.d.) <https://folke.life/folkestone/live/people-and-stories/pages-of-the-sea/>

'Pages of the Sea: Danny Boyle' *Creative Folkestone,* (n.d.) <https://www.creativefolkestone.org.uk/news/2018/10/pages-of-the-sea-danny-boyle/>

'Barbican Music podcast presented by Ben Eshmade interviewing Esther Johnson and Andrew Hodson · Feb 2017'/ 'Reviews', *Asunder*, (n.d.) <https://asunder1916.uk/reviews>

'The Forbidden Zone' *British Theatre Guide*, (n.d.) <https://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/the-forbidden-z-barbican-theatr-12909>

'Graham Gingles at the MAC Belfast' *Visual Artists*, (n.d., no longer accessible) <https://visualartists.ie/van-critique-septoct-2014-graham-gingles-at-the-mac-belfast/>

'Laurence Fox defends Sikh 1917 racism comments' Good Morning Britain, (n.d. no longer accessible), <https://www.itv.com/goodmorningbritain/articles/lauren-fox-defends-sikh-1917-racism-comments>

Reports

Baroness Warsi, 'Commonwealth contributions' in *Do Mention the War – Will 1914 matter in 2014?* Ed by Jo Tanner and *British Futures,* (August 2013), https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/BRF_Declaration-of-war-report_P2_Web-1.pdf>

Batty, Elaine, Will Eadson, Mark Stevens and Nicola Verdon, Evaluation of Heritage Lottery Fund's First World War Centenary Activity: Year 4 report - Case Study Summaries, (August 2018), <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/corporate/hlf_fww_centenary_activity_year_4_case_study_summaries.pdf>

Batty, Elaine, Will Eadson Ben Pattison Mark Stevens Alison Twells and Nicola Verdon, 'Evaluation of Heritage Lottery Fund's First World War Centenary Activity: Year 4 report (August 2018), <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/publications/fww_centenary_evaluation_year_4_accessibility_check_10_08_19.pdf>

Buckerfield, Lucy, and Steve Ballinger, British Future, *The People's Centenary: Tracking public attitudes to the First World War Centenary 2013-2018*, (British Future, 2019) < https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/The-Peoples-Centenary.Final-report-2018.pdf>

Malan, Jack, Eugénie Lale-Demoz, Michaela Brady, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport & Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services, *First World War Centenary Programme: Legacy Evaluation*, (September 2019), <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/606378718fa8f515b08c5722/DCMS_FWWC_Legacy_Evaluation_Report__CSES_17_Sept_2019___1__V2.pdf>

Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre, '14-18 NOW Overall Summary of Evaluation', (n.d. no longer accessible) <https://issuu.com/1418now/docs/03560_1418now_jo_burns_report_v4_wr>

Noakes, Lucy, Emma Hanna, Lorna M. Hughes, Catriona Pennell, and James Wallis, *Reflections on the Centenary of the First World War: Learning and Legacies for the Future*, (project report), (2021), <https://reflections1418.exeter.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Reflections-on-the-Centenary-of-the-First-World-War-Learning-and-Legacies-for-the-Future.pdf>

Rutter, Jill, and Sunder Katwala, 'Crossing Divides: How Arts and Heritage can help bring us together' British Futures, (2019) <https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Crossing-Divides.Final10mb.pdf>

'Report of the Special Committee to Review Historical Inequalities in Commemoration', Commonwealth War Graves Commission, (2021) <https://www.cwgc.org/media/noantj4i/report-of-the-special-committee-to-review-historical-inequalities-in-commemoration.pdf>

The Historical Roots of the Windrush Scandal: independent research report, Home Office, (26th September 2024) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-historical-roots-of-the-windrush-scandal/the-historical-roots-of-the-windrush-scandal-independent-research-report-accessible>

14-18 NOW evaluation: 2018 Season Evaluation Report, 14-18 NOW (n.d. no longer accessible), <https://www.1418now.org.uk/about/>

Parliamentary and select committees

Beckett, John, Mark Connelly, Nicola Gauld, Ian Grosvenor, Keith Lilley, Sarah Lloyd, and Elaine Reid, 'The Committee's terms of reference,' *WWO0121 - Written evidence submitted by First World War Engagement Centres – Evidence to the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee inquiry into Lessons from the First World War Centenary*, (March 2019) <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/100905/html/>

Gooch Megan, and Tom O'Leary, 'Written Evidence submitted by Historic Royal Palaces' *WWO0112 - Evidence on Lessons from the First World War Centenary*, (March 2019) <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/100462/pdf/#:~:text=1.,%E2%80%A2>

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 'Lessons from the First World War Centenary', *WWO0096 - Written evidence submitted by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport – Evidence to the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport*

Select Committee inquiry into Lessons from the First World War Centenary, (March 2019), <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/100440/html/>

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, House of Commons, (Thirteenth Report of Session 2017-19), 'Lessons from the First World War Centenary', (10th July 2019) <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcumeds/2001/2001.pdf>

'Rural and Urban Area Classification 2004: An Introductory Guide,' *The Countryside Agency Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Office for National Statistics, Welsh Assembly Government*, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c7c45ed915d6969f4533b/2001-rural-urban-definition-methodology-intro.pdf>

14-18 NOW, 'Written Evidence submitted by 14-18 NOW', *WWO0073 – Evidence on lessons from the First World War Centenary*, (March 2019) <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/100393/html/>

Hansard

'Comprehensive Spending Review', (debated Wednesday 20th October 2010), <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2010-10-20/debates/10102049000003/ComprehensiveSpendingReview>

'Autumn Statement', (3rd December 2014) <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2014-12-03/debates/14120348000001/AutumnStatement>

'The Governments Plan for Brexit', (7th December 2016), <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2016-12-07/debates/CA09D9B2-9634-41C8-8979-8B9CD82DBB8F/TheGovernmentSPlanForBrexit>

'Article 50', (7th November 2016), <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2016-11-07/debates/C59A3B55-6FB3-455D-B704-F8B1BF5A5AF5/Article50>

Programming and videos

'Trailer: Centenary of the Battle of The Somme: The Vigil', BBC, (28th June 2016), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03zslrj>

14-18 NOW, *We're Here Because We're Here*, *YouTube*, (n.d.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pd1XYx27_U>

14-18 NOW, 'Meet the Creatives behind *We're Here Because We're Here*, *YouTube*, (15th July 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJEy5Y3JFCU>

14-18 NOW, '14-18 NOW: This is Not for You - Jenny Sealey, Artistic Director & CEO, Graeae', *YouTube,* (n.d.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSqE-JRdgfw>

14-18 NOW, 'Simon Armitage talk - Still - 14-18 NOW', (2016) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPy7DS-SgOA>

AgeExchange, 'Meeting in No Man's Land', (n.d.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtOvjVihEfA>,

Rearview Mirror Media, 'The Making of THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD' - (2018 Documentary)' *YouTube*, (29th September 2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQE4p6Q0N5Q>

The Africa Institute, 'Panel 4: Film Discussion – John Akomfrah's Mimesis: African Soldier, "Global Ghana: Sites of Departure/Sites of Return"', *YouTube*, (4th July 2022), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_EVuiV0aceQ>

BBC What's New / Actu Jeunes, 'Telling the story of Africa's WW1 soldiers - BBC What's New?', *YouTube*, (13th February 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itifBiC2-Uc>

Park Avenue Armory, 'Trailer: The Head and the Load', *YouTube*, (8th November 2018) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lSPcVKMc5Ug>

The Centre for the Less Good Idea, 'The Head & The Load' | HOW | SHOWING THE MAKING', *YouTube*, (21st April 2023) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgW0xDxVJUw>

Gallipoli, dir. by Peter Weir, (Australia, 1981)

Downton Abbey, (Carnival Films and WGBH-TV, ITV 2011), Season 2

Testament of Youth, dir. by James Kent (United Kingdom, 2014)

*The Crimson Field, (*BBC Drama Production, 2014)

The World's War: Forgotten Soldiers of Empire, BBC History Production, (6th August 2014)

Online sources

Known author

Cameron, David, 'PM's speech on Big Society', (4th February 2011), <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-on-big-society>

—— '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>

Cronan, James, 'The lamps are going out all over Europe', *The National Archives*, (4th August 2014) <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20250613143436/https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/lamps-going-europe/>

Iglikowski-Broad, Vicky, 'The 1913 Suffrage Pilgrimage: peaceful protest and local disorder' (Women's Suffrage Pilgrimage Report, June and July 1913. HO

45/10701/236973,) *The National Archives*, (15th November 2018) <https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/the-1913-suffrage-pilgrimage-peaceful-protest-and-local-disorder/#note-41532-4>

Cummins, Paul, 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red', (n.d.) <https://www.paulcumminsceramics.com/blood-swept/>

Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, and Maria Miller, 'Plans to mark 100 years since the beginning of the First World War in 2014 announced', (10th June 2013), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plans-to-mark-100-years-since-the-beginning-of-the-first-world-war-in-2014-announced#:~:text=%C2%A310%20million%20cultural%20programme&text=She%20will%20report%20to%20a,was%20paid%20by%20all%20involved.>

Dewe Mathews, Chloe, *Shot at Dawn*, (n.d.), <https://www.chloedewemathews.com/shot-at-dawn/>

Dixon, Thomas, 'Edith Cavell: the British nurse who taught women the way of the stiff upper lip', The Conversation, (12th October 2015) <https://theconversation.com/edith-cavell-the-british-nurse-who-taught-women-the-way-of-the-stiff-upper-lip-47061>

Riley, Jon, and Robert Chote, 'Working paper No.7 - Crisis and consolidation in the public finances' Office for Budget Responsibility, (September 2014), <https://obr.uk/docs/dlm_uploads/WorkingPaper7a.pdf>

No named author

'Our Mission', Artichoke, (n.d.) <https://www.artichoke.uk.com/our-mission/>

'Processions', Artichoke, (n.d.) <https://www.artichoke.uk.com/project/processions/>

'KS3 / KS4 / GCSE History: What was the contribution of Indian Sikhs in World War One?' BBC Bitesize, (n.d.) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/articles/zhkdhbk>

'Cyber-attack recovery update', *British Library*, (n.d.), <https://www.bl.uk/about/cyber-attack>

'This is Not for You', *Blesma – The Limbless Veterans*, (21st June 2018) <https://blesma.org/news-media/blesma-news/2018/this-is-not-for-you/>

'Our History', *Blesma – The Limbless Veterans*, (n.d.) <https://blesma.org/about-us/our-history/>

'Research projects' *BLESMA*, (n.d.) <https://www.blesma.org/research-projects/>

'Our History', Brighton and Hove Museums, (n.d.) <https://brightonmuseums.org.uk/visit/royal-pavilion-garden/our-history/>

'The creation of the CWGC', (n.d.) Commonwealth War Graves Commission, <https://www.cwgc.org/who-we-are/our-story/the-creation-of-the-cwgc/>

‘CWGC Statement in relation to the Unremembered Documentary’, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, (4th November 2019) <https://www.cwgc.org/our-work/news/cwgc-statement-in-relation-to-the-unremembered-documentary/>

‘History of our Forests’, Future Trees, (n.d.) https://www.futuretrees.org/about-us/history-of-our-forests/

‘Nationwide vigils to remember The Somme’, U.K. Government, (20th November 2015) <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nationwide-vigils-to-remember-the-somme>

‘Somme 100 - Heaton Park in World War One’, Manchester City Council, (n.d.) <https://www.manchester.gov.uk/parks-leisure-and-the-arts/parks-playgrounds-allotments-and-open-spaces/heaton-park/somme-100-commemoration>

‘The Orange Lilies – Brighton and Hove in the Somme’, The First World War in East Sussex, (n.d.) <http://www.eastsussexww1.org.uk/orange-lilies-brighton-hove-somme/index.html>

‘1897 Foundation of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Society’, UK Parliament, (n.d.) <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/2015-parliament-in-the-making/get-involved1/2015-banners-exhibition/alinah-azadeh/1897-founding-of-the-nuwss-gallery/#:~:text=Led%20by%20Millicent%20Fawcett%2C%20the,the%20first%20female%20Prime%20Minister>

‘Poppies on the Pier: Southend unveils the UK's biggest Remembrance tribute’ Southend of Sea City Council, (n.d.) <https://www.southend.gov.uk/news/article/3432/poppies-on-the-pier-southend-unveils-the-uk-s-biggest-remembrance-tribute>

‘Raqs Media Collective’, Frith Street Gallery, (n.d.) <https://www.frithstreetgallery.com/artists/29-raqs-media-collective/>

‘This Is Not For You’, Graeae, (n.d.) <https://graeae.org/event/this-is-not-for-you/>

‘Poppy dedications’ Historic Royal Palaces, (n.d.) <https://poppydedications.hrp.org.uk/>

‘The Tower of London Remembers’ Historic Royal Palaces, (n.d.) <https://www.hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london/history-and-stories/tower-of-london-remembers/>

‘About IWM’, Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/about>

‘The Battle of the Somme Centenary’ Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/partnerships/first-world-war-centenary/centenary-partnership/battle-of-the-somme>

‘Emergency Exits: The Fight for Independence in Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus’, Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/events/emergency-exits-the-fight-for-independence-in-malaya-kenya-and-cyprus>

‘Featured projects map’, Imperial War Museum, (n.d.), <https://www.iwm.org.uk/partnerships/mapping-the-centenary/projects-map>

‘First World War Centenary,’ Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/partnerships/first-world-war-centenary>

‘First World War Centenary Partnership’, Imperial War Museum, (n.d.), <https://www.iwm.org.uk/partnerships/first-world-war-centenary/centenary-partnership>

‘How the Battle of the Somme was Filmed’ *Imperial War Museum*, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/how-the-battle-of-the-somme-was-filmed>

‘Keep Calm and Carry On’, Imperial War Museum shop, (n.d.) <https://shop.iwm.org.uk/collections/second-world-war-posters>

‘Lives of the First World War’, Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/>

‘Look inside the Princess Mary Gift Fund 1914 Box’ Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/look-inside-the-princess-mary-gift-fund-1914-box>

‘Mapping The Centenary,’ Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/partnerships/mapping-the-centenary>

‘Meeting in No Man’s Land: German and British Elders Exchange Family Histories from the First World War’, Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/partnerships/mapping-the-centenary/projects/meeting-in-no-mans-land-german-and-british-elders-exchange-family-histories-from-the-first-world-war>

‘Our Museums’, Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/>

‘Stories of war and conflict’, Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history>

‘Where there is Tea, there is Hope’ Imperial War Museum shop, (n.d.) <https://shop.iwm.org.uk/collections/first-world-war-posters>

‘Voices of the First World War’ Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) < https://www.iwm.org.uk/podcasts/voices-of-the-first-world-war>

‘Voices of the First World War: Homecoming’, Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/voices-of-the-first-world-war-homecoming>

‘Voices of the First World War: Joining Up’, Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/voices-of-the-first-world-war-joining-up>

‘Voices of the First World War: Over By Christmas’, Imperial War Museum, (n.d.) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/voices-of-the-first-world-war-over-by-christmas>

‘Interview: Paul Cummins - Blood Swept Lands & Seas of Red’ (10th November 2014) <https://www.johnson-tiles.com/blog/2014/11/interview-paul-cummins-blood-swept-lands-seas-red/#>

‘Introduction: Our Story,’ The Lost Gardens of Heligan, (n.d.) <https://www.heligan.com/explore-heligan/our-story/introduction/>

‘Mather & Co designs “the greater game” exhibition to mark ww1 centenary for the football museum’ Museums and Heritage Advisor, (19th December 2014) <https://museumsandheritage.com/advisor/posts/mather-co-designs-the-greater-game-exhibition-to-mark-ww1-centenary-for-the/>

‘Foodbank use tops one million for first time says Trussell Trust’, Michael Roberts Charitable Trust, (April 2015), <https://mrct.org.uk/latest-news/foodbank-use-tops-one-million-for-first-time-says-trussell-trust/#:~:text=The%20latest%20figures%20published%20by,and%20unemployment%20have%20increased%20slightly.>

‘Fit to fight: Women in the Army today’, *National Army Museum*, (n.d.) <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/fit-fight-women-army-today>

‘Sandham Memorial Chapel’, The National Trust, (n.d.) <https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/place/sandham-memorial-chapel>

‘About Remembrance’ Royal British Legion, (n.d.) <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/remembrance/about-remembrance >

Who We Are’, Royal British Legion, (n.d.) <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are?_gl=1*dju5rb*_up*MQ..*_gs*MQ..&gclid=Cj0KCQjwh5vFBhCyARIsAHBx2wxAYfGSsqrOuWmSbyK_dKLFapf6evgNRYVINj98NP578x6ShntjlXQaAojuEALw_wcB&gbraid=0AAAAAD7umtLPGqT9Br_iih1SwibjXccHZ>

‘How to take part in Remembrance’, Royal British Legion, (n.d.) <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/remembrance/how-to-take-part-in-remembrance-this-year?_gl=1*1s5flkv*_up*MQ..*_gs*MQ..&gclid=Cj0KCQjwh5vFBhCyARIsAHBx2wxAYfGSsqrOuWmSbyK_dKLFapf6evgNRYVINj98NP578x6ShntjlXQaAojuEALw_wcB&gbraid=0AAAAAD7umtLPGqT9Br_iih1SwibjXccHZ>

‘What is Remembrance?’ Royal British Legion, (n.d.) <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/remembrance/about-remembrance>

‘Insult to injury’ *Royal British Legion*, (n.d.) <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/about-us/our-campaigns/campaigns/insult-to-injury?_gl=1*70pncj*_up*MQ..*_gs*MQ..*_ga*ODAxNjY4NDA1LjE3NzM4NjEzNDc.*_ga_N0H21K3H1R*czE3NzM4NjEzNDQkbzEkZzAkdDE3NzM4NjE0MDYkaj

YwJGwwJGg5MzM2NzU2MDQ.&gclid=Cj0KCQjwmunNBhDbARIsAOndKpmkNplFi4yG2pfvXPqJkXtOE827Fhbfzrnbs-PUaNYNSpAwxMsCeZIaAinzEALw_wcB&gbraid=0AAAAAD7umtKxw0HNPYh7a_MRhyaCNVTy_>

'Needs Analysis', *Royal British Legion*, (n.d.) <https://storage.rblcdn.co.uk/sitefinity/docs/default-source/campaigns-policy-and-research/needs-analysis-poster-2025.pdf?sfvrsn=5c9f2ae_0>

'Vorticism', *Tate*, (n.d.) <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/v/vorticism>

'The Arts and Crafts Movement – Profile', The Design Museum, (n.d.) <https://designmuseum.org/design/arts-and-crafts-movement>

'World War 1 engagement centres' UKRI, (last updated 4th February 2026), <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/browse-our-areas-of-investment-and-support/world-war-1-engagement-centres/>

'Memory of the World Register - *The Battle of the Somme'*, Ref no. 2004-16, UNESCO', (2004), <https://media.unesco.org/sites/default/files/webform/mow001/united_kingdom_battle_of_the_somme.pdf>

Wildworks (n.d.) <https://wildworks.org.uk/>

Social media

Giant Poppy Watch, 'Me Remember Fallen" Twitter, (7th November 2016), <https://x.com/giantpoppywatch/status/795710802280017920>

Giant Poppy Watch, 'Suicide Corner', Twitter, (6th November 2021), <https://x.com/giantpoppywatch/status/1457041782185803777>

Giant Poppy Watch, 'Car Remembrance' Twitter, (7th November 2022), <https://x.com/giantpoppywatch/status/1589737296659877889>

Giant Poppy Watch, 'Poppy Man', Twitter, (1st November 2023), <https://x.com/giantpoppywatch/status/1719824545979204019>

Unpublished academic sources

Connelly, Mark, 'From Southern England to the Somme: Chalk, Landscapes and the English Imagination' Talk given at the University of Essex, (22nd January 2025)

Deans, Phillip, '*Crisis Management, Reinvention and Resilience in Museums: the Imperial War Museum During the Second World War Era, 1933-1950*, (Dissertation, University of Newcastle, 2022)

Hanna, Emma, as part of the roundtable – 'Professor Lucy Noakes and the Reflections on the Centenary of the First World War project team' University of Essex, (online), (5th May 2021)

Maples, Holly, 'Touching Past Lives: Sensorial Spectatorship in the Paston Footprints Project' (2018), Paston Footprints (Show/Exhibition), PaR Project Appendix, University of Essex repository

O'Donnell, Kristin, 'The cultural politics of commemoration – cultural policy and participatory art during the centenary of the First World War in the United Kingdom', unpublished paper presented at *Memory, Narrative, Histories* reading group, (Online), (24th October 2024)

Schacter, Rafael, Talk given at the University of Essex, 'TO BE SEEN & TO BE FELT: Memory and Memorials in Graffiti' University of Essex, (22nd January 2026)

Siblon, John, 'Searching for African and Caribbean Service Personnel in the Metropolitan Commemorative Landscape of War' The First World War and the Commemoration of an Imperial Conflict in the United Kingdom Since 1918 panel, Britain and the World Conference, Liverpool John Moores University, (25th – 27th June 2025)

Wallis, James, 'Commemoration, Memory and the Process of Display: Negotiating the Imperial War Museum's First World War Exhibitions 1964 – 2014', (Dissertation, University of Exeter, 2015)

Woods, Hannah Rose, 'Anxiety and Urban Life in late Victorian and Edwardian Culture, 1880-1914', (April 2018) (Apollo - University of Cambridge Repository) <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.22085>

Secondary sources

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd ed, (Verso, 1991)

Andres, Lauren and John Round, 'The role of "persistent resilience" within everyday life and polity: households coping with marginality within the "Big Society"' *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space,* (2015), 47.3 DOI:10.1068/a46299

Andrews, Maggie, 'Poppies, Tommies and remembrance: Commemoration is always contested' *Soundings: A journal of politics and culture,* (2014), 58

Arnold, Matthew, *Culture and Anarchy: An essay in political and social criticism*, (Smith, Elder & Co. 1869)

Bailey, Paul, 'The Sino-French Connection and World War One', *Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies*, (2011) 1.

Barrett, Michele, 'Afterword - Death and the Afterlife: Britain's colonies and dominions' in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. by Santanu Das (Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Bartie, Angela, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Alexander Hutton, Paul Readman, *Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain*, (UCL Press, 2020)

Benjamin, Walter, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Great Ideas*, trans. by J. A. Underwood, (Penguin books Ltd, 2008,) (ed)

Bennett, Elizabeth, 'Trace: *100: The Day our World Changed'*, *Platform: Performance, Place and Geography*, (2015), 9.2

Bennett, Tony, *The Birth of the Museum, History, Theory, Politics,* (Abingdon 1995)

Berger, John, *Ways of Seeing*, (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972)

Beaumont, Joan, 'Commemoration in Australia: A memory orgy?' *Australian Journal of Political Science*, (2015) 50.3

Bourke, Joanna, *Dismembering the Male; Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, (Reaktion books, 1999)

Bowman, Matthew, 'Review of '"RAQS Media Collective: Not Yet at Ease", Firstsite, Colchester', *Art Monthly,* (2018), 421

Bratton, Jacqueline S, 'Of England, Home and Duty: The Image of England in Victorian and Edwardian Juvenile Fiction', in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed by John M. MacKenzie, (Manchester University Press, 1986)

Braybon Gail, *Women Workers in the First World War*, (Routledge 2012)

Borghi, Marco, 'On war and memory: First World War memorials and collective memory in Britain, France and Germany' *National Identities*, (2021) 23.5

Broadhead, Lee-Anne, and Sean Howard. '"Birth of a Nation," Life of a Narrative: Steps to a Critical Remembrance of Canada's "Great War."' *Peace Research*, (2017) 49.1

Browning, Christopher S. 'Brexit populism and fantasies of fulfilment', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, (2019) 32.3, DOI:10.1080/09557571.2019.1567461

Caines, Rachel, '"We Were Good Enough to Fight as Anzacs": Indigenous Australian War Service and Interwar Activism', *First World War Studies*, (2025) 16.1

Carr, Richard, and Bradley W Hart, 'Old Etonians, Great War demographics and the interpretations of British eugenics, c.1914–1939' *First World War Studies,* (2012) 3.2, DOI: 10.1080/19475020.2012.728743

Charlesworth, Lorie, 'Big Society, legal structures, poor law and the myth of a voluntary society', in *The Big Society Debate, A New Agenda for Social Welfare?* ed. by Armine Ishkanian and Simon Szreter, (Edward Elgar, 2012)

Chouliaraki, Lilie, ‘The humanity of war: iconic photojournalism of the battlefield, 1914–2012’, *Visual Communication*, (2013), 12.3

Clarke, P. F. and Clive Trebilcock, (eds*), Understanding decline: perceptions and realities of British economic performance*, (Cambridge University Press, 1997)

Cook, Tim, ‘Documenting War and Forging Reputations: Sir Max Aitken and the Canadian War Records Office in the First World War.’ *War in History*, (2003) 10.3

Cooke, Steven and Lloyd Jenkins, ‘Discourses of Regeneration in Early Twentieth-Century Britain: From Bedlam to the Imperial War Museum,’ *Area*, (2001) 33.4. DOI: 10.1111/1475-4762.00044

Connerton, Paul, *The Spirit of Mourning: History Memory and the Body,* (Cambridge University Press, 2011)

—— *How Modernity Forgets*, (Cambridge University Press, 2009)

—— *How Societies Remember*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989)

Corbett, Steve, and Alan Walker, ‘The big society: Rediscovery of “the social” or rhetorical fig-leaf for neo-liberalism?’ *Critical Social Policy*, (2013), 33.3, DOI:10.1177/0261018312471162

Cubitt, Geoffrey and Jessica Moody, ‘Centenaries, museum audiences and discourses of commemoration: Remembering the First World War 2014–2018’. *Memory Studies*, (2024) 18.4

Cundy, Alys, ‘Objects of War: The Response of the Imperial War Museum, London, to the First and the Second World Wars’, *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, (2017) 51.2

—— ‘Thresholds of Memory: Representing Function through Space and Object at the Imperial War Museum, London, 1918–2014’, *Museum History Journal*, (2015), 8.2,

Das, Santanu *India, Empire, and First World War culture: writings, images, and songs,* (Cambridge University Press, 2018)

—— and Anna Maguire and Daniel Steinbach, *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914-1918*. (Eds) (Routledge, 2021)

Deans, Phillip, and Darren Kelsey, ‘National Narration and Organisational Crisis: A Discourse -Mythological Analysis of the Imperial War Museum During the Second World War’, *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*, (2024) 15.1

Danchev, Alex, ‘Our Brothers’ Keeper: Moral Witness.’ *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, (2015) 40.3/4

Dodd, Philip, ‘Englishness and the National Culture’, in *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920,* ed by Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, (2nd ed), (Bloomsbury, 2014)

Duncan, Carol, and Alan Wallach, 'The Universal Survey Museum', *Art History,* (1980) 3.4, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8365.1980.tb00089.x

Duffett, Rachel, 'The War in Miniature: Queen Mary's Dolls' House and the Legacies of the First World War', *Cultural and Social History*, (2019) 16.4

Drury, John, Christopher Cocking, Joseph Beale, Charlotte Hanson, Faye Rapley, 'The phenomenology of empowerment in collective action', *British Journal of Social Psychology* (2005), 44

Edwards, Jason, (ed.) *Retrieving the Big Society*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012)

—— 'Retrieving the Big Society', *The Political Quarterly*, (2011) 82. https://doi-org.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.2011.02322.x

El-Enany, Nadine, *(B)Ordering Britain: Law Race and Empire*, (Manchester University Press, 2020)

Feldman, Seth, 'Battle of the Somme: What the audience saw', *Revue Canadienne d'Études Cinématographiques / Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, (2018) 27.2

Fell, Alison S. 'Remembering First World War Nursing: Other Fronts, Other Spaces.' *Journal of War & Culture Studies* (2018), 11.4, DOI:10.1080/17526272.2018.1523779.

Fisher, Mark, *Ghosts of my life: writings on depression, hauntology and lost futures,* (2nd ed), (Zero books, 2022)

Fogarty, Richard S., and David Killingray. 'Demobilization in British and French Africa at the End of the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, (2015) 50.1

Foster, Ann-Marie, '"We Decided the Museum Would Be the Best Place for Them": Veterans, Families and Mementos of the First World War', *History and Memory*, (2019) 31.1

Foucault, Michel, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (4th ed), (Routledge, 2002)

—— 'Of Other Spaces' *Diacritics*, (1986), 16.1

Francis, Martin, 'Attending to Ghosts: Some Reflections on the Disavowals of British Great War Historiography', *Twentieth Century British History*, (2014) 25.3, DOI:10.1093/tcbh/hwu034

Freeman, Mark, 'Splendid Display; Pompous Spectacle': historical pageants in twentieth-century Britain' *Social History*, (2013) 38.4

Fussell, Paul, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 3rd ed, (Oxford University Press, 2013)

Godwin, Ashlee, (2014), 'Remembrance Transformed: An Interview with Senior Curator Paul Cornish about the Imperial War Museum's New First World War Galleries', *The RUSI Journal*, (2014), 159.3

Goebel, Stefan, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britian and Germany, 1914-1940,* (Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Gough, Paul, 'Memorial Gardens as Dramaturgical Space' *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, (1998), 3.4, DOI: 10.1080/13527259808722208

—— 'Conifers and Commemoration: the politics and protocol of planting', *Landscape Research*, (1996), 21.1, DOI: 10.1080/01426399608706476

Gould, Jenny, 'Women's Military Services in First World War Britain' in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. by Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz, (Yale University Press, 1987)

Grayzel, Susan, 'Who Gets to Be in the War Story? Absences and Silences in *They Shall Not Grow Old*.' *The American Historical Review*, (2019),124.5

—— *Women and the First World War* (Routledge, 2013)

—— Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War, (University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

Greaney, Patrick, 'Rescuing the Past, Repetition and Re-enactment in Jeremy Deller, Andrea Geyer, and Sharon Hayes' *in Postscript: Writing after Conceptual Art*, ed by Andrea Andersson, (University of Toronto Press, 2018)

Green, Alix, 'From Cultural Case Studies to Global Conversations: Towards an Interconnected Community of Enquiry in Public History', *The Public Historian*, (2018) 40.4

—— *History, Policy and Public Purpose: Historians and Historical Thinking in Government* (Palgrave Macmillian, 2016),

Gregory, Adrian*, The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*, (Cambridge University Press, 2008)

—— *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day, 1919-1946*, (Bloomsbury, 1994)

Guoqi, Xu, *Asia and the Great War: A Shared History*, (Oxford University Press, 2016)

Gullace, Nicoletta F. *'The Blood of Our Sons' Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (Palgrave Macmillian 2002)

Hallett, Christine, *Nurse Writers of the Great War*, (Manchester University Press 2016)

Hanna, Emma, 'Pages of the Sea: A UK case study' in *Experiencing 11 November 2018; Commemoration and the First World War Centenary*, ed by Shanti Sumartojo, (Routledge 2020)

Hazelgrove, Jennifer, 'Spiritualism after the Great War,' *Twentieth Century British History*, (1999), 10.4

Helmreich, Anne, 'The Nation and the Garden: England and the World's Fairs at the Turn of the Century', in *Art, Culture and National Identity in Fin-de-Siecle Europe*, ed by Michelle Facos and Sharon Hirsh, (Cambridge University Press, 2003)

Hewison, Robert, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a climate of decline*, (Methuen London, 1987)

Higonnet, Margaret, 'Introduction' in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, by Thomas Hardy, (1891) (Penguin Books Ltd. 1998)

Hirsch, Marianne, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, (Columbia University Press, 2012)

Hobsbawm, Eric 'Inventing Traditions', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, (3rd (canto) ed), (Cambridge University Press, 2013)

—— *The Pelican Economic History of Britain Vol. 3 – From 1750 to the present day: Industry and Empire*, 2nd ed, (Penguin books Ltd. 1969)

Holt, Richard, 'The Amateur Body and the Middle-class Man: Work, Health and Style in Victorian Britain', *Sport in History*, (2006) 26.3

Houghton, Frances 'The "missing chapter": Bomber Command aircrew memoirs in the 1990s and 2000s', in *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War,* ed. by Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson (Bloomsbury, 2014)

Howkins, Alun, 'The discovery of rural England', *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920,* ed by Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, (2nd ed), (Bloomsbury, 2014)

Hunt, Karen, 'Class and adult suffrage during the First World War', in *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign: National and International Perspectives,* ed by June Purvis and June Hannam (Routledge, 2021)

Hynes, Samuel, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture,* 2nd ed, (Pimlico, 1992)

Johnson, David A. and Nicole F. Gilbertson. 'Commemorations of Imperial Sacrifice at Home and Abroad: British Memorials of the Great War.' *The History Teacher*, (2010) 43.4

Jordanova, Ludmilla, *The Look of the Past - visual and material evidence in historical practice,* (Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Kavanagh, Gaynor, *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum*, (Leicester University Press, 2000)

—— *Museums and the First World War; A Social History*, (Leicester University Press, 1994)

—— 'Museum as Memorial: The Origins of the Imperial War Museum', *Journal of Contemporary History* (1988) 23.1.

Kidd, Jenny, and Joanne Sayner, 'Unthinking remembrance? *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* and the significance of centenaries', *Cultural Trends*, (2018), 27.2

Killingray, David, 'Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns in British Colonial Africa 1870 – 1945', *Journal of Contemporary History* (1989) 24

Landsberg, Alison, *Prosthetic Memory – The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (Columbia University Press, 2004)

Laqueur, Thomas, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains,* (Princeton University Press, 2015)

Lawrence, Jon, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post–First World War Britain,' *The Journal of Modern History,* (2003), 75.3, https://doi.org/10.1086/380238.

Layton, Lynne, 'Vera Brittain's Testament(s)' in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. by Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz, (Yale University Press, 1987)

Levitas, Ruth, 'The Just's Umbrella: Austerity and the Big Society in Coalition policy and beyond', *Critical Social Policy*, (2012), 32.3 DOI:10.1177/0261018312444408

Lewis-Stempel, John, *Where Poppies Blow: The British Soldier, Nature, and the Great War*, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2017)

Lloyd, Sarah, and Julie Moore, 'Sedimented Histories: Connections, Collaborations and Co-production in Regional History', *History Workshop Journal*, (2015), 80.1, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbv017

Lostal, Marina, and Emma Cunliffe. 'Cultural Heritage That Heals: Factoring in Cultural Heritage Discourses in the Syrian Peacebuilding Process.' *The Historic Environment: Policy and Practice,* (2016) 7.2–3, DOI:10.1080/17567505.2016.1172781

Lovell, Jane and Chris Bull, *Authentic and Inauthentic Places in Tourism: From Heritage Sites to Theme Parks*, (Routledge, 2017)

Lowenthal, David, 'British National Identity and the English Landscape', *Rural History*, (1991) 2.2 DOI:10.1017/S0956793300002764

MacKenzie, John, M. (eds) *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, (Manchester University Press, 1986)

Macleod, Jenny, 'Looking Forward to the Centenary of the Second World War: Lessons from 2014-2018', *British Journal for Military History*, (2022) 8.3

—— 'Britishness and Commemoration: National Memorials to the First World War in Britain and Ireland'*, Journal of Contemporary History*, (2013) 48.4

—— *Gallipoli: Making History* (ed), (Taylor and Francis, 2004)

—— and Yvonne Inall, 'A Century of Armistice Day: Memorialisation in the Wake of the First World War.' *Mortality* (2020) 25.1, doi:10.1080/13576275.2019.1611752.

McCartney, Helen B. 'Commemorating the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme in Britain.' *War & Society,* (2017) 36.4, DOI:10.1080/07292473.2017.1384138.

—— 'The First World War soldier and his contemporary image in Britain', *International Affairs*, (2014) 90.2

Madigan, Edward, 'Centenary (Ireland)' *1914-1918 Online International Encyclopaedia of the First World War*, (27th October 2021), < https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/centenary-ireland/ >

Malvern, Sue, 'War, Memory and Museums: Art and Artefact in the Imperial War Museum', in *History Workshop Journal*, (2000) 49.

Mangan, J A, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology*, (Cambridge University press 1981)

—— *Making European Masculinities: Sport, Europe, Gender,* edited by J. A. Mangan (ed) (Frank Cass, 2000)

—— and Callum McKenzie, 'The Other Side of the Coin: Victorian Masculinity, Field Sports and English Elite Education, in *Making European Masculinities: Sport, Europe, Gender,* edited by J. A. Mangan (ed) (Frank Cass, 2000)

Marwick, Arthur, *The Deluge – British Society and the First World War*, (2nd ed), (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

—— Women at War, 1914-1918, (Fontana Paperbacks in association with The Imperial War Museum, 1977)

Mathieu, Sarah-Jane (Saje), 'L'Union Fait La Force: Black Soldiers in the Great War.' *First World War Studies* (2018) 9.2, DOI:10.1080/19475020.2019.1583118.

McCulloch, Lynsey, and Rob Tovey, 'Shot at Dawn: Late Photography and the Anti-War Memorial', *Visual Studies*, (2019) 34.2,

Merino-Rajme Carla, 'The Fragmentation of Felt Time', Philosophers' Imprint (2022) 22.2 DOI: https://doi.org/10.3998/phimp.2121

Merriman, Nick, *Beyond the Glass Case: The Past the Heritage and the Public in Britain*, (Leicester University Press, 1991)

Meyer, Jessica*, An Equal Burden*, (Oxford University Press, 2019)

—— 'Sound and Silence in Peter Jackson's *They Shall Not Grow Old*.' *The American Historical Review*, (2019) 124.5

—— *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

Moshenska, Gabriel, 'Digging up Pook's Hill: Archaeological Imaginaries in Kipling's *Puck* Stories', *Landscapes*, (2012) 13.1, DOI: 10.1179/lan.2012.13.1.002.

Mosse, George, *Fallen soldiers: reshaping the memory of the world wars*, (Oxford University Press 1990)

Napper, Lawrence, 'The Battle of the Somme (1916) and They Shall Not Grow Old (2018): archivists, historians, lies and the archive', *Studies in European Cinema*, (2021), 18.3, DOI:10.1080/17411548.2021.1899423.

Noakes, Lucy, *Dying for the nation: Death, grief and bereavement in Second World War Britain*, (Manchester University Press, 2020)

—— and Catriona Pennell, Emma Hanna, Lorna Hughes, Chris Kempshall, James Wallis, *Capturing Commemoration: Reflections on the First World War Centenary in Britain*, (Berghahn Books, 2025)

——and James Wallis, 'The People's Centenary? Public History, Remembering and Forgetting in Britain's First World War Centenary', *The Public Historian*, (2022) 44.2, <https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2022.44.2.56>

—— 'My Husband is Interested in War Generally': gender, family history and the emotional legacies of total war.*' Women's History Review*, (2018) 27.4. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2017.1292634>

—— *Women in the British Army: War and the Gentle Sex, 1907 – 1948* (Routledge, 2006)

—— *War and the British: Gender and National Identity, 1939-1991*, (I.B. Tauris, 1998) DOI: 0.5040/9780755626083.ch-002

Nora, Pierre, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French past*, *Vol. 1 Conflicts and Divisions*, ed. by Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. By Arthur Goldhammer, rev. ed (Columbia University Press, 1996)

—— 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire', Representations, (1989), 26, (Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory)

Nym Mayhall, Laura E. *The Militant Suffrage Movement: Citizenship and Resistance in Britain, 1860-1930,* (Oxford University Press, 2003)

O'Brien, Dave, Mark Taylor, and Orian Brook, *Culture is Bad for You: Inequality in the Cultural and Creative Industries*, (Manchester University Press, 2020)

O'Keeffe, Eleanor, 'Radical Histories, Emotional Legacies, and Everywhere in between? Exploring Everyday Responses to the Traumas of War in *Blood Swept Lands & Seas of Red*. (2014).' *Mortality* (2024) 29.2, DOI:10.1080/13576275.2024.2310102

Olusoga, David, *The Worlds War: Forgotten Soldiers of Empire*, (Head of Zeus Publishing, 2014)

Omissi, David, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940*, (Palgrave Macmillan 1998)

Paget, Derek, 'Popularising Popular History: "Oh What A Lovely War" and the Sixties.' *Critical Survey*, (1990) 2.2

Palmer, Amy, 'Radical Conservatism and International Nationalism: The Peasant Arts Movement and its Search for the Country Heart of England', *Cultural and Social History*, (2018) 15.5, DOI: 10.1080/14780038.2019.1568028.

Pennell, Catriona, 'Centenary (Education, Pedagogy, Youth Programs)', *1914-1918-online - International Encyclopaedia of the First World War,* by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer D. Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, (Freie Universität Berlin, 2021) DOI:10.15463/ie1418.11506

—— '"Remembrance isn't working": First World War battlefield tours and the militarisation of British youth during the centenary', *Childhood* (2020), 27.3 DOI:10.1177/0907568220908307

—— 'Taught to remember? British youth and First World War centenary battlefield tours', *Cultural Trends*, (2018) 27.2 DOI:10.1080/09548963.2018.1453449

—— *A Kingdom United: popular responses to the outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland*, (Oxford University Press, 2012)

Prescod, Colin, 'Archives, race, class and rage', *Race & Class*, (2017) 58.4,

Purvis, June and June Hannam, (eds) *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign: National and International Perspectives*, (Routledge, 2021)

Rampley, Matthew (ed), *Exploring Visual Culture*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2007)

Readman, Paul, *Storied Ground: Landscape and the Shaping of English National Identity*, (Cambridge University Press, 2018)

Reeves, Nicholas, 'Cinema, spectatorship and propaganda: "Battle of the Somme" (1916) and its contemporary audience', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, (1997), 17:1 DOI: 10.1080/01439689700260601

Ribeiro de Menezes, Alison, 'The Enchantment and Disenchantment of the Archival Image: Politics and Affect in Contemporary Portuguese Cultural Memories', in *Film History and Memory,* ed. by Fearghal McGarry and Jennie Carlsten, (Palgrave Macmillan 2015)

Rigney, Ann, 'Remaking memory and the agency of the aesthetic', *Memory Studies*, (2021), 14.1

Riley, Matthew, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*, (Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Roach, Joseph, '"Pretty Ghost, a Duet": On Dying While You Still Look Good', in *Theatre and Ghosts*, ed by Mary Luckhurst and Emilie Morin, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

Robb, George, *British Culture and the First World War*, (Palgrave, 2002)

Roper, Michael, *Afterlives of War: A descendants' history*, (Manchester University Press, 2023)

—— and Rachel Duffett, 'Family Legacies in the Centenary: Motives for First World War Commemoration among British and German Descendants.' *History and Memory* (2018) 30.1

Rosenstone, Robert A. 'Reflections on what the Filmmaker Historian Does (To History)' in *Film History and Memory,* ed. by Fearghal McGarry and Jennie Carlsten, (Palgrave Macmillan 2015)

Salmose, Niklas, 'Nostalgia Makes Us All Tick: A Special Issue on Contemporary Nostalgia', *Humanities*, (2019), 8.3, DOI:10.3390/h8030144

Sawer, Marian, 'Gender, Metaphor and the State.' *Feminist Review*, (1996) 52, (The World Upside Down: Feminisms in the Antipodes),

Scates, Bruce, 'Making the Memory Book: War-Time Loss and Memorialization through Ephemera' *Genealogy* (2024), 8.2. https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy8020064

—— *Return to Gallipoli: Walking the Battlefields of the Great War*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006)

Silbey, Jessica, 'Persuasive Visions: Film and Memory', *Law, Culture and the Humanities,* (2014) 10.1

Smith, Anthony, *Nations and nationalism in a global era*, (Polity Press, 1995)

Smith, Harold L. *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign 1866-1928* (2nd Ed) (Taylor & Francis, 2009)

Smith, Laurajane, *Uses of Heritage*, (Routledge, 2006)

Smith, Richard, '"Heaven grant you strength to fight the battle for your race": Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and the First World War in Jamaican memory', in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed by Santanu Das (Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Smits, Katherine, 'Maori and Great War Commemoration in New Zealand: Biculturalism and the Politics of Forging National Memory.' in *Commemorating Race and Empire in the First World War Centenary*, ed by Ben Wellings and Shanti Sumartojo, (Liverpool University Press, 2018)

Streufert, Paul D, 'Masculinity, Haunting and Twentieth-Century American Realism', in *Theatre and Ghosts: Materiality, Performance and Modernity*, ed. by Mary Luckhurst and Emilie Morin, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

Strachan, Hew, *The First World War: A New History*, (Simon & Schuster 2014)

Summerfield, Penny, 'The generation of memory: Gender and the popular memory of the Second World War in Britain' in *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War,* ed. by Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson (Bloomsbury, 2014)

—— 'Film and the Popular Memory of the Second World War in Britain 1950–1959', In Gender, Labour, War and Empire – Essays on Modern Britian, ed by Phillipa Levine and Sue Grayzel, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

—— 'Patriotism and Empire: Music-Hall Entertainment 1870 – 1914' In *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed by John M. MacKenzie (Manchester University Press, 1986)

Swift, David, and Oliver Wilkinson, *Veterans of the First World War: Ex-Servicemen and Ex-Servicewomen in Post-war Britain* (Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group 2019)

Szreter, Simon, 'Britain's social welfare provision in the long run: the importance of accountable, well financed local government', in *The Big Society Debate: A New Agenda for Social Welfare?* ed. by Armine Ishkanian and Simon Szreter, (Edward Elgar, 2012),

Thompson, E. P. *The Making of the English Working Class*, (2nd ed), (Penguin books Ltd. 1968)

Tickner, Lisa, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery in the Suffrage Campaign 1907 – 14*, (Chatto and Windus, 1987)

Todman, Dan, *The Great War: Myth and Memory,* (Hambledon and London, 2005)

Tomlinson, Jim, 'A 'Failed Experiment'? Public Ownership and the Narratives of Post-War Britain', *Labour History Review*, (2008), 73.2

Thomas, Zoë, 'Duncan Tanner Essay Prize 2016: "Historical Pageants, Citizenship, and the Performance of Women's History before Second-Wave Feminism"', *Twentieth Century British History*, (2017) 28.3

van Emden, Richard*, The Quick and the Dead: Fallen Soldiers and Their Families in the Great War,* (Bloomsbury 2012)

Vergunst, Jo, Elizabeth Curtis, Neil Curtis, Jeff Oliver and Colin Shepard, 'Shaping heritage in the landscape among communities past and present', in *Heritage As Community Research: Legacies of Co-Production*, ed by Helen Graham and Jo Vergunst, (Policy Press, 2019)

Virdee, Satnam, and Brendan McGeever, 'Racism, Crisis, Brexit', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, (2018) 41.10,

Watson, Matthew, 'Michael Gove's war on professional historical expertise: conservative curriculum reform, extreme whig history and the place of imperial heroes in modern multicultural Britain' *British Politics,* (2020) 15.4, DOI:10.1057/s41293-019-00118-3

Wilson, Ross, 'Witnessing the Great War in Britain: Centenaries and the making of modern identities', *Anglica*, (2018) 27.3,

Winter, Jay, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning; The Great War in European Cultural History*, (4th (Canto) edn), (Cambridge University Press, 2014)

—— 'Museums and the Representation of War' in *Does War Belong in Museums?: The Representation of Violence in Exhibitions,* ed by Wolfgang Muchitsch (Bielefeld transcript Verlag, 2013)

—— 'Britain's `Lost Generation' of the First World War' *Population Studies,* (1977) 31.3.

Withers, D-M, 'Wounding poppies: hyper-commemoration and aesthetic interventions', *Critical Military Studies*, (2020), 6.3-4, DOI:10.1080/23337486.2019.1575123

Woollacott, Angela, *On her their lives depend: munitions workers in the Great War*, (University of California Press, 1994)

Zhurauliova, Tatsiana, 'Cartography as Collage/Collage as Cartography: The Spatial Turn in Mid-Twentieth-Century Abstraction', *American Art*, (2020), 34.3

Ziino, Bart, 'The First World War in Australian History', *Australian Historical Studies*, (2016) *47*.1

—— *A distant Grief: Australians war graves and the Great War*, (Deakin University, 2007)