



BRINGING THE MARGINAL INTO THE MAINSTREAM:

**‘Hidden Histories’, Public Engagement and Lessons
Learned from the Centenary of the First World War**

A report by Professor Catriona Pennell, University of Exeter,
as part of the AHRC-funded Teaching and Learning War Research Network

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Front cover: Men of the Nigerian Brigade on a transport between Calabar and Cape Town, on their way to German East Africa, November 1916.

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FOREWORD

This report stems out of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded **Teaching and Learning War research network**, a collaboration between the University of Exeter (Catriona Pennell) and Victoria University of Wellington (Mark Sheehan). Between 2017 and 2020, it brings together EU and international researchers and stakeholders, from a range of academic disciplines and professional backgrounds, to explore young people's engagement with and receptivity to the cultural memory messages of the two world wars from an international comparative perspective. Configured around a series of events, the project is positioned at an important juncture in cultural memory: as commemorative focus in Britain and the Commonwealth shifts from the First to the Second World War.

The **British Future 'A Centenary Shared' report** (November 2016) suggested that, during the period 2013 to 2016, the British public's understanding of lesser known aspects of the First World War has expanded 'globally' taking into account contributions made by soldiers from Australia, Canada and India and pushing understanding of the war beyond commonly held ideas of white British soldiers on the Western Front. On 11 April 2018, at King's College London (KCL) a panel of experts from academic historical research, education, the museum sector, popular history publishing, and the BBC gathered as part of a public roundtable event to interrogate this claim. Speakers were asked to reflect on attempts to integrate lesser known – or 'hidden' – histories of the First World War into centenary commemorative events between 2014 and 2018 and the degree to which lessons could be learnt from this period when thinking forward to the major anniversaries of the Second World War between 2019 and 2045.

This report is designed to capture and distil the discussions at the roundtable, including the contributions made by members of the audience, in order to provide a point of reference for those individuals, groups, organisations and institutions that wish to incorporate lesser known histories of the Second World War into their public engagement activity over the next two decades.

Discussions centred around four key questions:

1. What examples of public engagement activity from the centenary should be commended for shining a spotlight on lesser known histories of the First World War?
2. When attempting to integrate marginalised histories of the First World War into commemorative practice between 2014 and 2018, what worked well?
3. What could have been done better?
4. What should those committed to public engagement and the Second World War over its 80th, 90th and 100th anniversaries consider to ensure 'hidden histories' are made visible?

I am sincerely grateful to all the panellists who gave their time – without a fee – to speak at this event and who summarised their contributions for this report: Rob Attar, Suzanne Bardgett, Santanu Das, Paul Kiem, Lucy Noakes and Simon Young. Their interjections were masterfully choreographed by the evening's chair, Helen Weinstein, Creative Director of History Works, to whom I would like to extend my thanks. I would also like to thank the fantastically engaged audience members who raised important points of provocation and reflection over the course of the evening's discussion. This event was not possible without the generous funding of the AHRC. Thanks also to Ashley Jackson, Professor of Imperial and Military History at KCL and member of the project's advisory board, who assisted in securing the room at KCL and to Danni MacDivitt, Website and Events Officer, Defence Studies Department, KCL for all her administrative support. Finally, my thanks to James Clark and Sanja Djerasic at the University of Exeter for their support in producing this report.

**Professor Catriona Pennell,
University of Exeter,
November 2018**



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CENTENARY COMMEMORATIONS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Community Engagement Projects

Medals All Round

Community drama project which encouraged groups in Belfast to research, script and perform family and community stories to reveal more nuanced and inclusive accounts of the human experience of war in a region simultaneously 'at war' with itself and an external enemy.

Nominated by Lucy Noakes:

'An exemplary example of integrating 'hidden histories' into the centenary of the First World War'.

The Unremembered

Interactive project that seeks to highlight the experience of the Labour Corps from across the world who served in the First World War by inviting communities hold their own commemorative event or take part in larger cross-continent initiatives.

Nominated by Santanu Das:

The project 'deflects attention from grand narratives of heroism and combat' through 'an innovative way of involving younger people across countries'.

Lest We Forget: First World War – Refugees Then and Now

Between 2015 and 2016, new and established Scots worked together to research arrival, reception and experience of Belgian refugees in Scotland during the First World War. As well as uncovering the past, the researchers captured their own experiences and understanding of integration today communicated through public events and a documentary.

Nominated by Lucy Noakes:

'A really beautiful project that linked past and present'.

The Anzacs of Brightlingsea

In collaboration with Brightlingsea Museum and the Australian War Memorial, three days of events took place in June 2016 to commemorate the members of the Australian Infantry Force who trained at Brightlingsea and integrated with the local community between 1916 and 1918.

Nominated by Paul Kiem:

'A great example of local and voluntary effort operating to successfully complement larger national commemorative projects'.

Memorialisation

Centenary of the Battle of Neuve Chapelle (10-13 March 1915), March 2015

Public event to commemorate the centenary of the arrival of Indian troops on the Western Front.

Nominated by Suzanne Bardgett:

'To see people who had come from all over India pointing out their fallen ancestors – in terms of marginalised history, this was a real highlight for me and I felt very privileged to be there'.

Publications

Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary at War, 1914-1918* (London: Allen Lane, 2014)

Compelling new history of the major events of the First World War from the perspective of the people of Germany and Austria-Hungary.

Nominated by Rob Attar:

'He tells the story of the war from the German and Austrian point of view, which is an important way to challenge how British people understand the war and especially the Battle of the Somme'.

Museum Exhibitions

World War I: Five Continents in Flanders

Exhibition at In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres, 2008.

Nominated by Santanu Das:

'The exhibition excavated an enormous amount of fresh material – objects and images as well as oral and textual records – about the multiracial and colonial dimensions of the conflict'.

1914-1918, The First World War

Exhibition at the German Historical Museum, Berlin, 5 June – 7 December 2014.

Nominated by Paul Kiem:

'This was one of the first public, national exhibitions of the centenary and it was very interesting to see how the Germans approached marginalised histories of the war'.

Empire, Faith and War: The Sikhs and World War One

Exhibition organised by the UK Punjab Heritage Association hosted at SOAS, 9 July – 28 September 2014.

Nominated by Santanu Das:

'Exhibitions are among the most appropriate forms of commemoration of 'hidden histories' as they can open up various view-points and side-doors and thus excavate a more complex past'.



Media/Broadcast

World War One At Home series

BBC radio and TV, IWM, and AHRC partnered to curate new stories about how the First World War affected the people and places of the UK and Ireland. Broadcast across various BBC stations and channels between 2014 and 2018.

Nominated by Suzanne Bardgett:

‘Using the network of local radio and TV, IWM helped to identify, curate and present a vast range of new stories about people, places and cultural outputs all related to the wider, unknown history of the First World War’.

The Somme 1916: From Both Sides of the Wire

Three-part BBC2 documentary series, broadcast in 2016, presented by historian Peter Barton that explored the events of the Battle of the Somme.

Nominated by Simon Young:

‘Too often the victors write their history; at least being able to see the perspective from the other side helps to make amends for that a little bit’.

The World’s War: Forgotten Soldiers of Empire

Two-part BBC2 documentary series, broadcast in 2014, presented by historian David Olusoga that explored the stories of the millions of Indian, African and Asian troops and ancillaries who fought during the First World War.

Nominated by Suzanne Bardgett:

‘A really superb two-part programme that was an absolute model of getting the public enthused with history. Both really, really important and very entertaining’.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

**Lucy Noakes, Rab Butler Chair in Modern History,
University of Essex**

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“The First World War centenary has been particularly successful in widening public perceptions of non-white British, (or Australian!) male participation, as well as casting light on the participation of troops from the Indian sub-continent and the Chinese Labour Corps. Where I think it has been less successful is in terms of women's stories of war (from Britain and elsewhere), recounting the experience of communities and nations from the 'enemy' perspective and those from the non-British world. I'm also unsure how successful it has been in integrating the stories from some economically marginalised communities in Britain.

As we approach the forthcoming anniversaries of the Second World War, one thing that strikes me is the importance of the local, perhaps especially in global wars. Local stories and histories can be a really good means of involving people who might otherwise not participate in commemorative activities.

In order to ensure that well known narratives of the Second World War are challenged during this commemorative period, the media has to do more than simply recycle existing 'myths' of the war years. Instead, they should work to complicate and sometimes challenge these ideas. That said, academics can also do more (within time and monetary constraints) to get these other stories known. An event that brings together academics and the media to discuss possible stories in advance of the commemorative season would be really helpful.”



IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

**Paul Kiem, Professional Officer,
History Teachers' Association of New South Wales, Australia**

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“In Australia, it could be argued that the formerly ‘hidden history’ of Indigenous service has emerged during the centenary of the First World War and been successfully incorporated into the larger national commemoration. This belated recognition has suited the current political climate, where both conservative and progressive agendas have converged to support a longstanding Indigenous campaign for recognition. A next step will be how Australia’s pre-Anzac frontier wars are dealt with in a similarly inclusive way.

The commemoration of the Second World War in Australia is likely to be more inclusive because the narrative has always allowed space for more stories than the relatively simple national ‘coming of age narrative’ of the First World War. It is also likely to be shaped much more by Asian considerations: the war was fought in Asia, where Australia had one enemy and many allies, and Australia’s own population is increasingly Asian.

We need to be alert to the danger of ‘commemoration fatigue’. Space must emerge between 2018 and the next round of anniversaries so people will be alert to their significance. The commodification of commemoration runs the risk of blurring all history. A more cost-effective and meaningful approach might be to fund local and voluntarist initiatives. This is more responsive and will embrace more marginal and ‘hidden histories’. Historians, as well as politicians and bureaucrats with a vested interest in commemoration, need to be involved in the long-term planning of the commemoration. A significant challenge is the practical impossibility of acknowledging all marginal stories within the one national narrative. This is especially relevant to school curriculums, where time, space and the need for coherence do not allow for history that can be all-embracing. However, this is all the more reason to develop in students the skills and attitudes that allow them to appreciate the selective nature of history and give them the ability to pursue their own inquiries. Such students will not only be informed participants in future commemoration but be well-equipped to discover ‘hidden histories’ that are relevant to themselves or their families and communities.”



WHAT WORKED WELL DURING THE CENTENARY OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR?

‘The Colouring of Memory’

With some caveats, discussed in the next section, the speakers and audience were in agreement that centenary commemorations, both in the UK and abroad, had contributed to what Santanu Das has described as **‘changing the colour’** of First World War memory. In the UK, focus on experiences of non-white colonial troops had broadened understanding of lesser known aspects of the First World War. Examples of increased visibility in Australia include memorials to indigenous service and a separate banner at Anzac Day marches. Commemoration during the centenary should be commended for trying to take public viewpoints past variations on ‘classic overviews’ that everyone has heard before. However, the discussion repeatedly returned to what we mean by – and how we should treat – ‘hidden histories’. More pressure needs to be put on this term to ensure it is not automatically conflated with race and nationality alone.

Availability and Harnessing of Public Funds

Discussants noted the essential contribution of funding to support initiatives that attempted to broaden public understanding of ‘hidden histories’. The AHRC-funded **‘Whose Remembrance?’** research project enabled Imperial War Museums (IWM) to produce a film on ‘hidden histories’ that is now being used by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in training. The five **AHRC World War One Engagement Centres** (set up to support a wide range of community engagement projects across the UK), as well as multiple community-led projects funded by the HLF, are the result of significant investment. The AHRC has ensured a specific focus on minority, marginalised histories by funding a dedicated engagement centre: the **‘Hidden Histories’ Engagement Centre at the University of Nottingham/Nottingham Trent University**. Australia has also witnessed an influx of funding for commemorative projects although some significant initiatives that sought to challenge the traditional heroic nation-building narrative have been notably overlooked.

Community Engagement

The First World War centenary has seen significant community engagement work that has attempted to push understanding beyond traditional narratives. Like the other AHRC engagement centres, the **‘Hidden Histories’ Engagement Centre** has supported community engagement into diverse topics such as Sikh contribution, Belgian refugees in Cheshire, and the 1919 race riots. More generally, these centres have provided the opportunity to engage local communities in research and outreach activities, broadly defined. **BBC World War One at Home** was understood as a commendable example of how local researchers could work in collaboration with IWM and BBC local and regional TV/radio to deliver close-to-home stories, searchable by postcode, that have revealed lesser known aspects of how the war affected the people of the UK and Ireland.

Diverse and Charismatic Voices of Commemoration

Speakers commended initiatives that forced communities to work beyond 'the ethnic village'. For example, **Medals All Round** identified a chance to use commemoration practice for inclusion, reconciliation, and development with communities in Northern Ireland. Similarly, as an audience member remarked, the **campaign to erect a memorial to mark the memory of the Chinese Labour Corps in the First World War**, was a way of harnessing the concerns of communities within and beyond the UK for social-justice, rather than war-commemoration, goals.

Presenters who are not 'middle-aged white men with authoritative voices' should be placed at the centre of commemorative broadcasting in order to destabilise traditional narratives and attract new audiences. In the First World War centenary, David Olusoga, Reeta Chakrabarti, and Kate Adie have added important variety to programming but it was noted that the dominance of traditional presenters is the product of decision-making in both programming and presenting.

Multiple Forms of Commemoration

The discussion emphasised that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to integrating lesser known aspects of First World War history into commemorative spaces. Appreciation was expressed for the many different forms of commemoration, from words to movement and music, which have been witnessed over the course of the centenary period. The written word can, to some extent, be restrictive whereas performative commemoration leaves room for 'different' and more complex stories to be explored. Exhibitions, and the variety of content within them, often provided the format to grapple with 'hidden histories' and to present complex material to audiences. **IWM's First World War Centenary Partnership** has produced a vibrant global programme of cultural events, exhibitions and activities as well as online resources that connect current and future generations with the lives, stories and impact of the First World War. **14-18 Now**, a cultural programming initiative, has helped deliver multi-format commemoration pieces and events, including film, poetry, alternative exhibitions, installations, sculptures, some of which have shined light on lesser known subjects, such as the **experience of African soldiers**. Visual images, particularly photographs, could act as a useful springboard into discussions of 'forgotten' histories, such as those explored in the 2017 BBC Four documentary '**Hidden Histories: WWI'S Forgotten Photographs**'. Discussants reflected on the diversity of community commemorative projects and the degree to which 'living legacies' – rather than static forms of commemoration – with a direct impact on people living today have been created over the course of the centenary.

Mobilising the Local

Panellists reflected on the importance of harnessing the local as a 'way into' stories of greater complexity. The emotional pull of the individual or local voice acted as a stimulus for lesser known aspects of the war to be made intelligible. The [Anzacs of Brightlingsea project](#) was highlighted for its power to tell a 'glocal' story of the war through the experiences of local families interacting with Australian soldiers during the First World War. The remit of the [BBC World War One at Home](#) series was to try and combine the local and global in every story.

Involving Academics

Panellists from beyond the university sector commented on the importance of involving academics throughout the commemorative period, including the early planning stages. Expertise was the only way to ensure the showcasing of latest research into lesser known aspects of the war. International participants positively remarked on the extent of UK academics' public engagement activity, even if much of this drive is from external assessment exercises such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

Incorporating the 'Enemy' Perspective

Several participants commended literary and media efforts to portray the perspective of the 'enemy', both within the UK and abroad, including the example of the 2014 '[1914-1918: The First World War](#)' exhibition at the [German Historical Museum, Berlin](#).



IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

Simon Young, Commissioning Editor, BBC History

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“In my opinion, ‘hidden’ stories of the First World War have been very successfully integrated into centenary programming particularly from the point of view of TV. For example, *The Somme 1916: From Both Sides of the Wire* (BBC2, 2016) was a great example of a documentary which managed to highlight a less well-known aspect of the history of the First World War, by exploring the perspective of both the victors and the defeated. I don’t believe there have been any lost opportunities.

Regarding the forthcoming commemorative period of the Second World War, I think it’s really important that we look at both sides of this conflict. Perhaps the most significant lesson we’ve learned at the BBC is that in terms of audience engagement, it is natural for programming related to a longer anniversary period to cluster around the start of the period, and then extend through it. It is harder to cluster at the end and maintain audience engagement.

Compared to 2014, I think there are fewer obstacles to block the communication of less dominant narratives of the Second World War. This isn’t so much to do with the First World War centenary, and any lessons learned, but more the by-product of a drastically altered political and cultural landscape. The history conversation has changed fundamentally as a result. Everything from the current Windrush scandal, to gender pay conversations, to #MeToo, mean that audiences and content creators are primed to explore ‘hidden histories’ and question dominant narratives.”



IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

Rob Attar, Editor, BBC History Magazine

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“Regarding the issue of integrating ‘hidden histories’, from what I have observed of the First World War centenary, I’d say the picture has been mixed. Undoubtedly, there has been a lot of effort on an academic level, as well as in the media, to incorporate these stories into the centenary discourse but I do wonder about how much of this has percolated to the wider public where the traditional picture of the war remains quite hard to shift.

I thought David Olusoga’s series (and book) *The World’s War: Forgotten Soldiers of Empire* (BBC2, 2014) was excellent and a really effective way of bringing lesser-known histories to a broad audience. Conversely, my impression has been that the flurry of books published for the centenary have not always covered ‘hidden histories’ particularly well.

Challenging dominant narratives is difficult – especially for commercial organisations – because there tends to be a bigger market for the more traditional stories. It requires people with excellent communication skills to bring the lesser known narratives to the public attention. Increased diversity within government, media and academia could make a big difference as it will mean people with personal connections to ‘hidden histories’ are making the decisions about some of the key centenary outputs.”



WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN DONE BETTER?

Engaging with the Politicisation of 'Hidden' Histories

To what extent are lesser known stories about the First World War on the 'margins' of mainstream narratives through design and not oversight? The voices of the marginalised have not suddenly been 'found' during the centenary; instead the social climate has evolved so that more people are willing to 'listen'. Stories of minority communities who participated in the war may not necessarily be waiting to be 'discovered'; instead they may have been purposefully hidden away because of the way members of these communities were treated during the war and after.

Limited Geographical Boundaries

In the UK, disproportionate attention has been paid to the Western Front over the course of the centenary. Little consideration has been given to theatres of war beyond France and Flanders. Virtually no attention has been paid, for example, to the Salonica Front.

Tokenism

It was widely recognised that more could have been done beyond what often appeared as tokenism to explore 'hidden histories' of race, nationality, gender, and class, as well as grapple with issues of (homo)sexuality, pacifism, or disability. In some ways, as noted by both speakers and audience members, the 'hidden histories' to which more attention should be paid are the stories of the living, the wounded, traumatised, and scarred as opposed to a fixation with the 'soldier dead'. Further interrogation of the term 'hidden histories' is required so that it is not reduced to questions of race and nationality.

Over-sanitisation of the Painful and Uncomfortable

Where lesser known histories have been incorporated into the centenary, to what degree have they been subjected to over-sanitisation? Acknowledging the participation of other nationalities in support of the British Army requires a head-on engagement with the realities of racial hierarchy, exploitation and slave labour. Stories should not be smoothed over and selectively applied to suit narratives of martial heroism and celebrations of imperial loyalty.

Commemoration and the Wider Political Discourse

While state-level commemoration activities are inevitably linked to political agendas this should not be to the extent where the memory of the war encourages a version of 'xenophobic nationalism' (in relation to European enemies) or forced racial integration through, for example, the 'poppy hijab' phenomenon. Memory should be used ethically and not instrumentally.

Lack of Dedicated Research Funding and Professional Mobility

A missed opportunity of the centenary was the UK government's failure to ring-fence funding for new PhD research projects specifically into the history of the First World War. It was also agreed that more should be done to encourage and support researchers from 'non-traditional' backgrounds to access the profession of academic history, in line with recommendations made by the Royal Historical Society's **'Race, Ethnicity and Equality'** report (October 2018).

Commercial Reality

Media outlets have to meet audience targets. While there is an appetite for audiences to be 'told' something new, there is also a commercial reality of providing audiences with what they want to hear/see/read. A broad range of history has to be made available; niche history does not always sell. Audience ratings have to be a consideration when deciding what is broadcast on mainstream channels, such as BBC 1; the home for more experimental 'niche' programming is BBC4 yet this has significantly smaller audiences. During the centenary, the publishing industry in particular has remained somewhat immune to anything beyond either the Western Front, the major battles, or the war poets. To what extent is this a result of public demand? How can marginalised histories be made appealing to the non-engaged wider public who appear satisfied by mainstream narratives?



IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

**Suzanne Bardgett, Head of Research and Academic Partnerships,
Imperial War Museums (IWM)***

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“Over the course of the First World War centenary there has been greater integration of ‘hidden histories’ than might have been the case a decade ago – the result of a surge of interest in lesser-known stories of the war across the cultural and media sectors, supported by key organisations such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). IWM has built on this momentum to access and highlight a range of ‘hidden histories’ reflected both in IWM’s own work and outputs, particularly its new galleries, digital assets and learning programmes, and through the wider work of its partnerships.

Undoubtedly, there is plenty to learn particularly in regard to the redesign of the Second World War galleries due to open in 2020. We aim to make the people stories embedded within it more prominent and reflective of a wider range of experience; ensure the new galleries (and associated events) are more accessible for people with a variety of needs; and reflect community aspirations as far as can be managed within a difficult and challenging story. Through frank discussions around representation with the established People’s Forum, IWM staff have experienced first-hand how important it is to be honest about the ‘gaps’ in its collection and discuss with communities practical ways to address this resulting in new acquisitions.

The new galleries will seek to challenge received understandings of both the Second World War and the Holocaust by shining light on lesser known histories. One of the major challenges for IWM’s new galleries is to take the familiar and cast this in a more meaningful, relevant context for modern visitors. To do this, IWM must work hard to avoid a celebratory, nationalistic narrative and look instead to show how Britain fared as one of many nations drawn into the events of the Second World War. Difficult and controversial topics have to be openly and honestly presented, along with giving greater space to the experiences of people from outside Britain and the Commonwealth. Only in this way can we hope to present the story of the Second World War as one of global significance and meaning.”



** With additional input from the following IWM staff: Nigel Steel (Content Leader, Second World War), Rachel Donnelly (Holocaust Learning Manager), Vikki Hawkins (Curator Second World War Galleries) and Laura Boon (Learning and Audience Advocate)*

IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

Santanu Das, Professor of Modern Literature and Culture & Senior Research Fellow, All Souls College, University of Oxford

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“The centennial commemoration of the First World War has to a degree challenged the colour of the memory of the war: it is – hopefully – no longer just white. Not only is there greater recognition of the contribution of colonial non-white troops, but the recovery of a substantial amount of fresh material – objects, images, diaries, memoirs – will enable further investigation and research.

However, more pressure needs to be put on the term ‘hidden histories’, which is too-easily conflated with questions of race and nationality alone. Less visible have been ‘hidden histories’ of sexual minorities serving in the war, wounded soldiers, class dimensions or indeed ‘conscientious objectors’. The colonial contribution is more visible than a decade ago, but it is debatable whether these experiences have been successfully ‘integrated’. Take the curious case of the two major national commemorations in August 2014 – one at Westminster – deeply moving but conventional without much reference to any ‘hidden histories’ – and the other at Glasgow Cathedral for Commonwealth troops. Why was there no single integrated ceremony that accommodated the world?

While the scope of First World War memory has been broadened, some of the messier or unattractive aspects of the war experience have been excised. The First World War has been reinvented as the grand stage to play the anthem of multiculturalism; as a result, there is a pressure to highlight only the ‘positive’ aspects of colonial experience often in a celebratory tone. Yet these are histories of trauma and bloodshed. In order to have a more robust and truly multicultural future, one needs to engage with and actively work through these histories, however difficult or painful.

The Second World War was more complex, fraught and geographically widespread than its predecessor. Regarding its commemoration, how do we integrate the complexity of the experience of those ‘on the margins’? Countries such as India were internally divided during the Second World War; were its people fighting for ‘liberation’ for or from the British Empire? Secondly, just as the whole timeline and geographical dimensions of the First World War have been reconfigured, similarly the Second World War has to be understood in relation to other contemporary upheavals, such as the Bengal Famine and Partition.”



CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Defining and Accessing 'Hidden Histories'

This report has highlighted some of the successful and less successful examples of the way 'hidden histories' have been incorporated into the centenary commemorations of the First World War. Drawing on earlier examples and key challenges identified, this closing section offers reflection on some important considerations for the future, particularly in relation to the forthcoming anniversaries of the Second World War over the next two decades (2019-25; 2029-35; 2039-45).

One of the most prominent aspects of the debate concerned the definition of 'hidden'. While it was perceived that commemorations of the First World War centenary has done a lot in terms of achieving visibility of the racial component of the term, more should have been done to include stories about, and perspectives of, those who may remain hidden on the basis of gender, sexuality, class, ethnic persuasion (e.g. conscientious objectors) or political struggle taking place in parallel with the conflict. It was pointed out that the reasons for some stories remaining 'hidden' could have been due to hiding family histories that jarred with 'integrationalist' narratives, or having them purposefully taken away, due to the internal conflicts such as those in Northern Ireland. Occasionally, challenge refers to the difficulty with which diverse narratives can be accessed, both within the UK and further afield. Some recommendations towards resolving this included:

- ▶ Support public participation and critical input at early stages of planning, whether through public forums or dedicated efforts to engage local communities. Advertise these efforts in a way that ensure target communities will be reached.
- ▶ Ensure participation from historians who represent minority communities and perspectives.
- ▶ Use global media reach (such as BBC global service) to source narratives from across the world.
- ▶ Source material from non-UK residents to help tell 'Britain's' history.

Portraying Complexity

In the process of uncovering and narrating the 'hidden', commemoration activities should address the complex, nuanced, and sometimes uncomfortable aspects of war. It was felt that this might present even more of a challenge with the forthcoming Second World War commemorations, as the dominant rhetoric has so far tended to be self-congratulatory, and focus on the glorious and victorious aspect of British participation. Therefore, it was suggested that attention be paid to addressing war crimes and atrocities on both sides, tell stories that might not have a celebratory and uplifting message, highlight the colonial context of the war, and avoid the pitfall of 'Britain standing alone' narrative. Some suggestions towards this were:

- ▶ Do not homogenise 'hidden' narratives – these will occasionally bring up stories of further conflict and complexity between different communities involved. Do not shy away from 'hidden' narratives that might not be celebratory to the communities in question.
- ▶ Support local and volunteer initiatives, as these will create nuance and allow a plurality of voices and messages rather than seeking an overarching national narrative through centrally arranged activities.
- ▶ Represent 'hidden' narratives in a way that reflects a complex social and political history; these should be integrated, not bolted on.
- ▶ Emotional responses cannot be avoided; these will occasionally be difficult and uncomfortable, but this should be accepted. Emotional responses do not eliminate the critical.
- ▶ Pay attention to the form of commemoration – often complexity is best served by non-traditional forms of commemoration, particularly the performative and creative arts.



War Commemoration in the Wider Political Context

On numerous occasions it was recognised that through commemoration, the past is made to serve the present. In some cases, e.g. in Australia, commemoration has provided some degree of movement towards reconciliation and inclusive representation, which is clearly desirable. But in UK's case, the participants expressed fears that Second World War activities may end up being hijacked to serve post-Brexit narratives, and that substantial effort must be invested to counter that. For example, by:

- ▶ Avoiding the 'Britain stands alone' rhetoric.
- ▶ Ensuring that the positive message of Britain-with-the-Commonwealth does not come with an anti-European meaning.
- ▶ Considering with great care the way in which Britain's relations with Germany and other European countries post-Brexit might affect portrayal and memory of the Second World War.
- ▶ Using the opportunity to create living memorials that will serve the public good – initiatives that bring acceptance, reconciliation, and motivation to build the future, not just 'another lump of stone'.



Serving and Expanding the Audience

Finally, and crucially, while it was recognised that media have played an important role in telling some 'hidden' stories, multiple challenges in addressing a broad audience, as well as further widening it, were raised. This is seen as a vicious circle of risk-averse, and not very diverse, commissioning editors, and the sections of potential audiences remaining disengaged due to the lack of form and content that either reflects or stirs their interests. Recommendations on how this cycle can be broken include:

- ▶ Tell compelling stories – be inventive and use unexpected angles.
- ▶ Engage creative and innovative artists and programme makers, and diverse and charismatic presenters.
- ▶ Reflect with audiences on what worked in First World War centenary programming.
- ▶ Try to avoid commemoration fatigue and clustering programming at either end of the anniversary calendar.
- ▶ Diversify the pool of decision-makers.
- ▶ Diversify the pool of presenters but be careful not to fall into the trap of representation, tokenism, or identity politics. The issue of ownership, and the meaning of 'us' and 'ours' needs to be carefully considered. Do not assume the audiences' interests.
- ▶ Do not underestimate the power of emotional resonance, even if the emotions are uncomfortable. But be careful to keep the balance between personal and familial, and political significance.
- ▶ Take risks; do not underestimate the audience.

In conclusion, all agreed on the importance of the role that historians, particularly those from 'non-traditional' backgrounds, can play in connecting with and co-producing research with local communities and other actors – government, media, cultural and heritage institutions – and in addressing the above challenges. It was suggested that more be done in terms of widening access to the profession, particularly in line with recommendations made in the **Royal Historical Society's 'Race, Ethnicity and Equality' Report (October 2018)** and providing support for historical research that is publicly engaged. Conversations between those persons and/or organisations invested in telling the lesser known stories of the Second World War across all sectors (academia, heritage, museums, education, publishing, media) need to take place sooner rather than later and more joined up thinking needs to be nurtured between invested stakeholders.

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