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**LEGACIES OF THE FIRST
WORLD WAR FESTIVAL:
WOMEN & WAR**

Glasgow Women's Library & CCA:
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30-31 August 2019

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First World War

DIVERSITY

Birmingham
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22-23 March 2019

Remaking Histories of the Nation

SERIES: Beyond Commemoration: Community,
Collaboration and Legacies of the First World War



Series: *Beyond Commemoration: Community, Collaboration and Legacies of the First World War*
General Editor: Ian Grosvenor

Remaking Histories of the Nation
Editor: Sarah Lloyd

Project Team: Garry Stewart, Kiran Sahota, Kevin Myers
with support from Natasha Macnab, Ian Grosvenor, Anna Hammerin

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Cover image: First World War Engagement Centres, *Four Nations Festival of Research and Ideas*, 2019.

Inside front cover image: An unknown soldier, close to the Somme frontline in France, photographed by Louis and Antoinette Thuillier. Thousands of their fragile glass plate negatives were discovered in 2011 in the farmhouse where they were taken, including images of Black volunteers who served with the Royal Engineers. *Image courtesy of the Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth: The Louis and Antoinette Thuillier Collection.*

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Ian Grosvenor and Sarah Lloyd

SERIES:

Beyond Commemoration: Community, Collaboration and Legacies of the First World War

Conflict, Commemoration and Context

In 2014, five First World War Engagement Centres were established by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). At the core of the objectives set by the AHRC was a desire to benefit communities across the UK by enhancing public understanding of the First World War and its role in shaping the world we live in today, and to challenge traditional narratives of the conflict.

This was to be achieved through: supporting community research and promoting research skills among a wide range of people, making them more confident in accessing and interpreting different types of sources and information; working collaboratively to reach new communities and make the commemoration relevant to, and inclusive of, a culturally diverse population; and furthering universities' commitment to public engagement with research.

The Engagement Centres can best be understood as a unique experiment. Unique in that they involved multi-institutional partnerships and a commitment to funding in excess of the normal research project funding period. These factors enabled academics, citizen historians, community volunteers, heritage practitioners and community enterprises to come together in meaningful and productive relationships. There is extensive evidence that the work of the Engagement Centres has enriched public understanding of the First World War (FWW) and its legacies, and has enhanced the research capacity of diverse communities across the UK. In turn, this has generated confidence in engaging with the complexities associated with the critical study of the past and, in particular, building understanding of the contemporary resonances and issues relating to the conflict in personal, local and global contexts. Over six years, the Centres supported the establishment of new research relationships across higher education institutions and new models of working with civic society mediators. They delivered and enhanced opportunities for early career researchers to experience participatory research and public engagement, and effected institutional change through the promotion of public engagement and the sharing of good practice.¹

In 2019, the *Voices of War and Peace* and *Everyday Lives in War* Engagement Centres organised the *Four Nations Festival of Research and Ideas* to mark the end of the commemoration period. This initiative, involving all five Centres, presented research produced during the centenary. It reflected a wide range of the arts and humanities and celebrated the expertise,

¹ For an account of the activities of the *Voices of War and Peace* Engagement Centre, see Nicola Gauld and Ian Grosvenor, 'The Role of Commemoration in History and Heritage: The Legacy of the World War 1 Engagement Centres' in Matilda Keynes, Henrik Åström Elmersjö, Daniel Lindmark and Björn Norlin (eds.), *Historical Justice and History Education* (Cham, 2021), pp. 153-176 and <https://www.voicesofwarandpeace.org/> accessed 8 October 2021.

experience and insights located within communities. The *Festival* engaged diverse publics in exploring the legacy of the FWW and its relevance for today. It provided opportunities to critically reflect on FWW research collaborations between the academy, community groups, creative practitioners, and the heritage sector; and to explore how existing and new research collaborations between the academy and the cultural, creative and third sectors could be sustained and evolve. In addition, the *Festival* included a series of Policy Breakfasts which focused on areas relating to effective community engagement: *Diversity*; *Shared Heritage*; *Heritage, Community and Opportunity*; and *Gender*. These events were attended by major funders, heritage organisations, community enterprises, academics, and politicians. The data generated from these events were translated into a policy statement by the two Centres, in consultation with the other Centre PIs, AHRC officers, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF): *Communities, Commemoration, Collaboration: Shaping Our Futures Through Sharing Our Pasts*.

However, the question still remained as to how research legacy can be identified and made accessible and durable beyond the span of a national anniversary or major public investment in community engagement. It was a question that was not foreseen when the FWW Engagement Centres were established in 2014, nor one that was identified by the Centenary Partnership. It only became a pressing question in the aftermath of the FWW centenary as Parliament and other national bodies assessed what has been achieved.

As the House of Commons DCMS Select Committee enquiry into the centenary concluded in 2019:

The centenary commemorations reached new audiences, and enabled the public to be more exposed to hidden or less well-known histories. But this approach could have been more systematic and better embedded in all strands of activity... We are concerned that little attention seems to have been given at the outset to what the legacy of the commemorations would be.²

Beyond Commemoration: Community, Collaboration and Legacies of the First World War emerges from a follow-on funding AHRC project which addressed this concern and aimed to make visible the work of citizen historians involved in commemorative activity between 2014 and 2019.³

Rather than memorialise community research, this project has aimed to keep it in circulation by working with communities to produce a series of four downloadable legacy-themed e-books: *Remaking Histories of the Nation*; *Children and Conflict*; *Women and War*; and *War and its Aftermath*. The themes represent gaps in historical understanding or poorly represented topics. They were identified through the Centres' close working relationship with the NLHF across the centenary period, and through the 2019 Festival where they became visible. Each of the books has been delivered by a project team consisting of community activists, academics and independent scholars. The books are uniform in design but different in terms of approach, as each one reflects different experiences within the project team. In producing the books we have drawn on an earlier cross-Centre initiative, the book *Beyond the Battlefields: Käthe Buchler's Photographs of Germany in the Great War* (2018). In combining research, new material and community responses, it offered a template for the current publications. This project also drew on the insights and approach offered by the AHRC-funded *Connected Communities Foundations Series* (2018), edited by Keri Facer and Kathleen Dunleavy, and by *Making Histories, Sharing Histories* (2020) in which members of this project team translated a commitment to collaboration into practical guidance.⁴

Working through community networks built up over the period of the centenary, the project aimed to reach out to new user communities and audiences. It began and ended during the Covid-19 pandemic. Every conversation and meeting happened online; every image was negotiated in the context of reduced archive services. As a collaborative project addressing some 'difficult' histories, it depended wholly on dialogue, conscious participation and transparency, on sustained relationships of trust and on an ethics of care and empathetic listening.

Reflections, Learning and Challenges

This project has documented what was so evident throughout the centenary; that communities have a deep commitment to history and that their own concerns are a powerful tool for shaping research. New questions emerge when different communities engage with the past. Contemporary contexts can give an added urgency to calls for stories to be told, heard, and absorbed into the national narrative. However, emphasis on the military, the dead and memorialisation through anniversary events during the centenary period had the effect of reinforcing traditional narratives to the detriment of public engagement with what were sometimes perceived as uncomfortable histories. Nevertheless, if one looks, there are other stories, hidden within bigger themes, which enrich understandings of the conflict.

² House of Commons, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 'Lessons from the First World War Centenary', 2019: Recommendation 6 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcmds/2001/200102.htm> accessed 8 October 2021.

³ The First World War and its Legacy, 2020 and Beyond: Community, Collaboration and Conflict, Arts & Humanities Research Council Follow-on Funding for Impact and Engagement, Reference: AH/V001329/1

⁴ See <https://connected-communities.org/index.php/connected-communities-foundation-series/> accessed 8 October 2021; *Making Histories, Sharing Histories: putting university-community collaboration into practice* (2020), <https://www.voicesofwarandpeace.org/2020/11/23/resource-making-histories-sharing-histories/> accessed 8 October 2021.

While the team pooled its knowledge of community research during the centenary, trawling the internet for its traces, even three years on, it proved difficult to discover what many projects had done once they were launched. The fragility of community outputs, and particularly of digital materials, makes it difficult to document legacies. Lost projects constitute enduring gaps in knowledge. Identifying those voices and themes that surfaced during the centenary, but which have subsequently disappeared from widely accessible historical narratives, challenges everyone to consider how to create an inclusive, diverse and tangible historical legacy, which can be acknowledged by a broad public.

The unfinished business of the past creates generational burdens, which are historical, such as the violence of Empire and the inequalities of historical neglect. Nevertheless, the process of researching the past can be as important as what is found. It can be an agent of collective redress; it can aid in the repair of personal trauma. The impact of projects – for example, those that explored the enduring legacies of the conflict – can be profound for individuals and organisations. Centenaries and anniversaries create opportunities to understand the complexity of the past and the exclusionary nature of received notions, but then close the window when attention moves on to other events.

Finally, what has emerged in the conversations surrounding the production of the project books is, first, the extent to which place-based narratives and photographic evidence can complicate familiar narratives of the First World War. Visualisation of experience is a powerful trigger of historical imagination, but also requires strategies to recognise and deal with gaps in knowledge: who is named in images, who is not; absent information about context and provenance. Second, where communities and collaborative partners experience successful projects, these energise organisations and stimulate distinctive new research. Of course, there still remain unanswered questions which the project does not address explicitly; for example of the moment, who, in today's world of 'wokeness' and 'cancel culture', are the custodians of historical legacies?



Remaking Histories of the Nation A significant achievement of the UK centenary has been the inclusion of men of colour within established narratives of the First World War, alongside the role of Europe's global empires. Much of this work has been driven by a desire to reflect ethnic diversity in the UK in the 21st century, yet the centenary has itself often reinforced narratives about the nation state, which have in turn prioritised certain forms of knowledge over others. *Remaking Histories of the Nation* builds on community project work to reveal the limits of this approach, the distortions it entails and what an honest history requires in its place.



Children and Conflict Considerable emphasis was placed on young people as a key audience during the centenary – the desire to inspire a new generation in order that the conflict's legacies could be carried forward was central to the commemorative vision. Numerous projects engaged with young people, yet the stories told were in the main those of adults, in projects defined and managed by other adults. Research led by young people about young people was rare, and the community projects captured here give a voice to not only the unheard of the past, but also to those of the present whose power to shape history has traditionally been limited.



Women and War During the centenary of the First World War, community historians expanded knowledge of women's lives, at times departing from familiar, streamlined narratives about women who nursed, worked in munitions, or volunteered for the Land Army. *Women and War* describes some of that research, with the aim of creating a richer and more nuanced account of women's experiences during the conflict. In the process of compiling the booklet, the reasons why women's history matters became increasingly prominent: it connects people with their ancestors; it provides a testing ground for present-day experience; it makes visible what is often hidden, unspoken or unnamed.



War and Its Aftermath Now that the official UK First World War centenary has concluded, the aftermath of the war, and its international dimensions, are receding from public view. This book draws together community research that addressed the impact of the FWW on survivors and on the generations that followed. It considers how the legacy of the war affected communities, families, and individuals, both in the years immediately after and up to the present day. It also reflects on how the seemingly straightforward act of engaging in community research offers its own legacy for those involved, going beyond just the accumulation of information but setting in motion new questions and debates, inspiring new areas of interest, while also challenging old assumptions.

Key Policy Statement for Makers

Heritage is a major resource for empowering communities. In a rapidly changing, globalised world, heritage can foster a sense of identity, security and belonging. Innovative research and community partnerships can address contested heritage and strengthen human connections across time and place. A collaborative model of heritage has potential to shape new policies and practice, creating more resilient communities for the future.

Universities have a key role to play in bringing people together to commemorate events of national significance. They are uniquely placed to connect academic and public knowledge of the past, enabling diverse communities to tell their own stories of belonging and contribution. Universities can facilitate processes that develop and share new understandings, that sustain an inclusive, rigorous, rich heritage, and that respond to the challenge of divisive and uncomfortable histories.



First World War Engagement Centres: Broader Lessons Learnt

- ▶ Collaborative work around history and heritage encourages people to explore new stories relevant to their own lives and experiences.
It opens spaces for alternative voices to be heard, creating multi-layered stories.
- ▶ Operating across the UK can bring different stories into focus and enable discussion of contested and uncomfortable pasts.
In aiming at a more inclusive heritage, including new shared histories, collaborative research has the potential to challenge received narratives. It can incorporate broader global perspectives.
- ▶ A sense of place and the local are critical to many community participatory projects.
Place-based institutions can contribute significant expertise. If universities are to fulfil their civic responsibilities and meet the needs of local communities, relationships must be sustained.



- ▶ Partnerships between universities, cultural organisations and community groups initiate challenging conversations and dialogue.
Productive research collaboration requires clear agreed agendas, open exchange and a sense of everyone being an equal stakeholder.
- ▶ By devolving research funding to a series of multi-institution hubs, it has proved possible to create a structure which facilitates innovation and responsive community engagement.
This model promotes wider understanding and appreciation of what can best be characterised as 'hidden histories'.

Images on page 7 courtesy of the CAER Heritage project: <https://caerheritageproject.com>.



About the authors

Kiran Sahota

Kiran Sahota is a Heritage and Education Consultant, Project Manager, history researcher and public speaker for South Asian history. She currently works with BAME young people from low socio-economic areas, educating them on histories that are often not taught in mainstream education. She is especially passionate about empowering women around their culture and heritage through creating projects that they can be involved in. Founder of *Believe in Me CiC*, Kiran Sahota has won a Point of Light award (2021) for her work in South Asian history.

Kevin Myers

Kevin Myers is a social and educational historian, working on migration, education and social change. He is the author of *Struggles for a Past: Irish and Afro-Caribbean Histories in England, 1951–2000* and a special issue of the journal *Paedagogica Historica* on migration, mobility and education. Current research projects include work on citizen histories of the First World War and on memory practices in decolonising India.

Garry Stewart

Garry Stewart joined the Army and served in the Royal Signals, including on operations in the Falkland Islands, the Gulf and across Europe. After a career spanning nearly 30 years in mobile telecommunications, he is now the Founder and Director of *Recognize Black Heritage and Culture*, and is engaged in preserving and sharing the stories of African Caribbean service personnel.

We are very grateful to those authors who contributed additional material about a selection of centenary projects, and who are credited individually in the relevant places.

This booklet was co-written by Kevin Myers, Kiran Sahota and Garry Stewart, and all text is jointly theirs unless stated otherwise.

Kevin Myers, Kiran Sahota, Garry Stewart

Introduction



European War Collecting Project, State Library, New South Wales, Australia: some of the 550 personal accounts collected by the Principal Librarian and Trustees from 1919 through the 1920s. Credit: Ian Grosvenor.

2014 marked the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. The centenary represented arguably the most significant and sustained act of historical commemoration in the UK in a generation.

This was partly because a state-sponsored programme of events ended four years of official activities with services of remembrance at Westminster Abbey in the presence of the head of state and other dignitaries. Yet, the commemoration was also significant, and perhaps unprecedented, for its attempt to democratise historical remembrance. National Lottery Heritage funding, of some 96.5 million pounds, was designed to enable a 'bottom up approach' to the First World War commemoration, and to engage a more diverse set of voices in investigating and interpreting the national past.¹

In this book we identify, celebrate and reflect on the achievements of those volunteers, and those projects, to shed new light on our understanding of British history. In doing so, we present and discuss the work of people we have defined as 'citizen historians'. Citizen historians, we argue, are embedded in local communities. They work at the grassroots level, with individuals, social groups and communities. Their collaborative working typically facilitates historical research, promoting the development of historical skills and thinking, and they routinely demonstrate a commitment to displaying, re-creating, and discussing historical events as part of a broader process of education. These educative processes are distinctively creative, producing a wide variety of texts, performances and images. Participants in, and audiences for, these historical projects and artefacts have reported experiencing a wide range of feelings and emotional states that include, but certainly are not limited to, pride and shame, gratitude and anger, and admiration and disgust. These emotions are, in turn, testimony to something citizen historians know best; the living memory

¹ Karen Brookfield, 'The People's Centenary: a perspective from the Heritage Lottery Fund', *Cultural Trends*, 27:2 (2018), pp. 119-124

of the First World War is alive and vibrant. The way it is both remembered and forgotten is at the centre of contemporary conflicts around national identities and patriotisms, around belonging and exclusion and around inequality, race and Britishness.

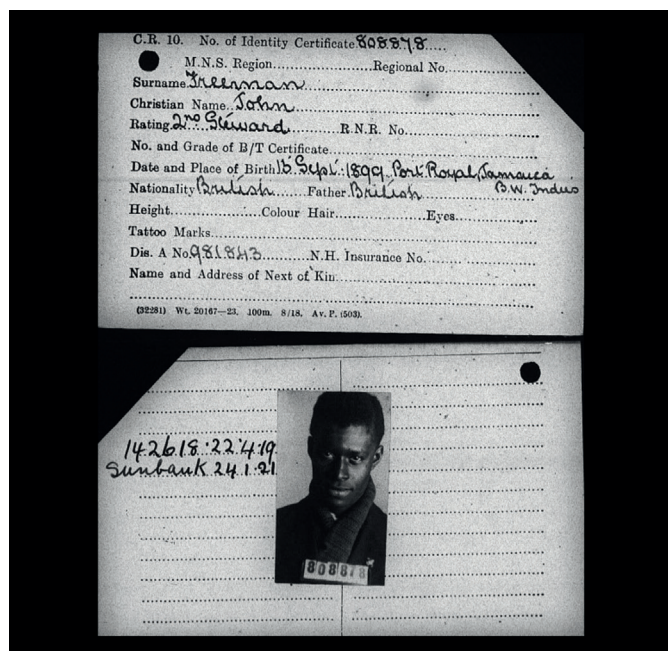
Some citizen historians of the First World War have brought to light new stories of the past from perspectives that were previously marginalised or silenced. These stories include voices and experiences from across the vast expanse of the British Empire and whose diversity – of geography, ethnicity, gender and experience – help to improve the accuracy, and the factual detail, of existing narratives. They have also helped to stretch the geographical boundaries, and the timelines, of our understanding of the First World War.²

Yet citizen historians were not, and are not, simply ‘fact grubbers’. They have not only been avidly collecting the facts of the past buried in documents and data held by record offices and archives. Instead, citizen historians have necessarily been engaged in a politics of war memory and commemoration.³ This politics has, in the first instance, comprised identifying and confronting the power of national histories of war. If the dominant national narratives of war, and its sites and rituals of commemoration, have excluded the war experiences of children, women, and people of colour, citizen historians have been prominent in demanding not only public recognition of those histories, but also reparation for the injustices suffered by those groups.⁴

There has been a considerable degree of resistance to these developments. On both scholarly and political grounds, there are many people for whom the First World War remains a major part of a definitively national past, populated by (military) heroes, whose sacrifices in the cause of freedom are worthy of remembrance and respect.⁵

The work of the citizen historians of the First World War demonstrates that it is possible to write and remember the past in ways that are both historically accurate and more sensitive, responsive and ethical to the changing world around us. In this book we seek to evidence that claim.

But we also want to explore the relationship between unjust pasts and possible futures. We want to explore how and why critical engagement with the First World War is so elusive. And we want to reflect on what might happen if the histories and memories associated with the war changed. As well as the national histories of military sacrifice, what futures might be enabled by recognising the global dimensions of the First World War; by recognising the experiences of some of the most marginal people and communities; and by honestly acknowledging, and taking responsibility for, a history of racist thinking and action?



John Freeman’s British Merchant Seaman card. Selected for the People’s Collection Wales from the collection of the National Archives, Kew, by the 1914-18 U-boat project.

Image: © People’s Collection Wales, Creative Archive Licence.
Individual card images sourced from British Merchant Seaman Cards, 1918-1921, © The National Archives/BT350.



Citizen historians are embedded in local communities. They work at the grassroots level, with individuals, social groups and communities. Their practices are distinctively creative, producing a wide variety of texts, performances and images.

² For evidence of the fresh perspectives of citizen historians see Will Eadson, Ben Pattison, Mark Stevens, Alison Twells and Nicola Verdon, ‘Evaluation of Heritage Lottery Fund’s First World War Centenary Activity: Year 3 Report’ (Sheffield, 2017) at https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/corporate/first_world_war_centenary_activity_year_3_report_full_report.pdf

³ For an introduction to the politics of war memory see T. G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper, ‘The politics of war memory and commemoration: contexts, structures and dynamics’ in T. G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper (eds.), *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (Abingdon, 2000), pp. 3-85.

⁴ Gaynor Legall, ‘Cardiff Race Riots: Reparative Histories’ (June 2019) <https://uboatproject.wales/2019/06/20/cardiff-race-riots-reparative-histories-by-gaynor-legall/> accessed 6 July 2021; Colin Prescod, ‘Archives, race, class and rage’, *Race & Class*. 58: 4 (2017), pp. 76-84.

⁵ David Cameron, ‘Speech at Imperial War Museum on First World War centenary plans’, (11 October 2012) at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/speech-at-imperial-war-museum-on-first-world-war-centenary-plans>

Citizen histories of the First World War



'The Empire Needs Men!', 1915. Image: National Army Museum.

Thanks to the work of citizen historians, the geography of the conflict, and the ethnic diversity of soldiers fighting not for 'Britain', but for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and the associated Dominions and Colonies of the British Empire, have become clearer.

On the Western Front, the arena that continues to dominate historical memory, citizen historians investigated the experiences of the Indian Army, the British West Indies Regiment (BWIR) and other people of colour, from their recruitment and training, through to ranks and occupations, experiences in the trenches and in the major battles at Ypres, Verdun, the Somme and Passchendaele.⁶ They unearthed the stories of Julian Clarence Gogerly from Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Abdul Latif from India and James Slinn from Kingston, Jamaica whose enlistment with the Coldstream Guards was celebrated in the media as signaling the end of old prejudices but whose service mysteriously lasted just 44 days.⁷ Private Clarence Algernon Mais was one of the first five hundred volunteers to set sail from Jamaica but, dressed only in the light weight uniforms of the BWIR, was ill-prepared for the snow and frost he experienced during a diversion to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Mais likely contracted pneumonia in Canada and died aged 18, just a month after reaching England, in January 1916.⁸ Jabez Nquza served with the South African Native Labour Corps and drowned, aged around 30, in the sinking of the SS Mendi.

Alongside this archival research, citizen historians supplemented and re-presented the biographies of soldiers to new and wider audiences. George Blackman, for example, volunteered at 17. He experienced vicious racism, witnessed the mutiny at Taranto stimulated by unequal pay for Black and white soldiers, and received no help, and no pension, on his return to Jamaica. Blackman's story, accompanied by new images, was re-told and re-contextualised by the *Stories of Omission* project. Their work went beyond a dominant narrative of sacrifice for the nation to directly address questions around the legacies of the war, and its relationship to racism, to decolonisation and to the future.⁹

Thanks to this research, the scale of colonial contribution to the war effort, in terms of both military manpower and materials, has become much clearer. Military heroes, and military sacrifice, became visibly multi-ethnic and multi-faith and it became factually harder to claim that this was a 'white man's war'. As Baroness Warsi, a member of the UK government whose two grandfathers had fought in the conflicts, put it in 2013, the 1,500,000 men 'from modern day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh who served, fought and fell for Britain in the Great War' were like a chapter torn from the book of history.¹⁰

However, and despite political attempts to locate an inclusive national identity in imperial history generally, and the



Members of the British West Indies Regiment observe aircraft above their camp on the Albert to Amiens Road. Lantern slide, World War One, Western Front (1914-1918), 1918.

Image: National Army Museum.

First World War specifically, the experiences of all military personnel were crucially dependent on an exclusive racial nationalism.¹¹ Social Darwinism, and scientific racism, were crucial components of British imperial identities, and the military conquests that accompanied the expansion of the British Empire, were widely understood as evidence of the racial superiority of the white British man. During the conflict British military policy was haunted by the possibility that the war would bring a loosening of racial hierarchies, and an unprecedented degree of social mixing, that threatened the health and the moral order of the white world. If so-called 'inferior' or 'uncivilised' or 'savage' races, could demonstrate discipline, bravery, intelligence and skill in military service, and if 'coloured' men could be deployed against Europeans, even if they were enemy ones, then the racial myths that underpinned colonial rule could be shattered. Similarly, the imagined dangers of sexual relations between people of colour and white women, which built on racist and sexist depictions of 'erotic primitives', lacking in reason and respectability, led to elaborate attempts to regulate contact between soldiers of colour and white women.¹²

⁶ Recognize Black Heritage & Culture, *Stories of Omission: Conflict and the experience of Black soldiers* (n.p., 2018) https://www.voicesofwarandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/storiesofomission-guide_rd.pdf accessed 18 May 2021; *Trench Brothers*, South East Research Project, Newhaven Fort, August-December 2018 <http://www.hmdt.org.uk/hmdtmusic/trenchbrothers/exhibition/> accessed 18 May 2021.

⁷ Research by John Ellis at <http://historicalroots.com/james-slim-a-jamaican-in-the-french-foreign-legion-and-the-coldstream-guards-1914-1915/> <http://historicalroots.com/abdul-latif-a-boy-soldier-in-the-highland-light-infantry-during-the-first-world-war/> <http://historicalroots.com/julian-gogerly-a-sri-lankan-in-the-northumberland-fusiliers-during-the-great-war/>

⁸ *Trench Brothers*, South East Research Project.

⁹ Recognize Black Heritage & Culture, *Stories of Omission*. On the mutiny at Taranto see the documentary by Illuminations in association with Sweet Patootee, <http://www.sweetpatootee.co.uk/work/mutiny/> accessed 21 May 2021

¹⁰ S. Warsi, 'The First World War: The Commonwealth Contribution' (2013) <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-first-world-war-the-commonwealth-contribution> accessed 1 May 2017. Some key texts on these themes include: Stephen Bourne, *Black Poppies* (Stroud, 2014); Ray Costello, *Black Tommies: British Soldiers of African Descent in the First World War* (Liverpool, 2015); David Olusoga, *The World's War. The Forgotten Soldiers of Empire* (London, 2014).

¹¹ For statements on the First World War and an inclusive national identity see, for example, David Cameron, 'British Values' (15 June 2014), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/british-values-article-by-david-cameron> accessed 30 July 2021; David Cameron, 'Speech at Imperial War Museum on First World War Centenary Plans' (11 October 2012), <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/speech-at-imperial-war-museum-on-first-world-war-centenary-plans> accessed 16 May 2021.

¹² Santanu Das, 'Experiences of colonial troops' (29 January 2014), <https://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/colonial-troops>; Richard Fogarty and Andrew Tait Jarboe, 'Non-European Soldiers' in Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer and Bill Nasson (eds.), *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War* (Berlin, 2021).



Recruitment Poster in Urdu, 'Look at that Man', 1918.

© IWM Art.IWM PST 12576.

These ideas, and the falsehoods and myths attached to them, explain the deployment of Black and Asian troops. The Indian Army was recruited mostly from an illiterate peasant class in the Punjab, Nepal, the United Provinces and along the north-west frontier, partly because racialized British thinking identified these areas as being populated by 'martial races' who were inherently warlike. The British Army believed that a lack of formal education would also ensure that Indians would be immune to dangerous 'Western' or 'political' ideas. In contrast, African troops were not deployed by the British Army in Europe, or anywhere outside of Africa, because of the particular racial fears prompted by black African skins. In what was an unprecedentedly global conflict, research into non-European theatres of war, in Africa, the Middle East and

in Asia, has therefore been a particularly important strand of research. Around one third of funded projects explored the war outside Europe and, up to 2017, there were eight National Lottery Heritage projects on the war in the Middle East, fourteen on the Eastern Front and eight which focused on Africa.¹³

If this research added important detail to well established historical narratives, and in doing so recognised and included a more diverse range of voices and experiences, other projects shed light on areas that had been marginalised or omitted. Citizen historians explored the impact of war on Black, South Asian and Jewish communities.¹⁴ They identified, and traced the effects of, racial prejudice. Non-combatant military labour, a crucial part of the war effort and a common experience for volunteers from India, Jamaica and the West Indies, and from China, has perhaps been one of the most significant areas of new research.¹⁵ The Chinese Labour Corps (CLC), numbering around 100,000 men, were recruited by Britain to provide essential logistical support in Europe. After the war, some 80,000 or so CLC personnel still alive were engaged in the dangerous and often fatal work of mine clearance. Some of those that survived were ordered to leave Belgium and interned in France. Some were killed when groups of British, Canadian, Australian and New Zealander troops threw grenades into CLC camps; others are said to have been shot to avoid repatriation costs.



A parade of Chinese labourers at Boulogne, 12th August 1917.

© IWM Q 2696.

¹³ For data see Eadson et al, 'Evaluation of Heritage Lottery Fund's First World War Centenary Activity', pp.46-47. For a selection of projects concerned with non-European theatres of war see: *Away from the Western Front* <https://awayfromthewesternfront.org/>; *Views of an Antique Land: Imaging Egypt and Palestine in the First World War* <https://www.imagesegypt.org.uk/>; *Breaking The Myths: First World War & Africa* <https://www.diversityhouse.org.uk/portfolio-items/breaking-the-myths-first-world-war-africa/>; *They Also Served* <https://cte.org.uk/about/whos-who/pentecostal-charismatic-forum/further-resources/they-also-served/>; *On the Sideline. Photographs of the East and West African Campaigns in World War I*, <https://m-prez.com/2018/09/12/on-the-sideline-photographs-of-the-east-and-west-african-campaigns-in-world-war-1-project-to-mark-first-world-war-centenary/> all accessed 18 May 2021.

¹⁴ 'We Were There Too': *British Jews in the First World War* <https://www.jews4ww.uk/>; Wenlan Peng, *Forgotten Faces of the Great War: The Chinese Labour Corps*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfPawm9vdm8>; Philip Udeh and Andreas Persson, 'Hidden Black Stories of the First World War', <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/blogs/hidden-black-stories-first-world-war> accessed 16 May 2021.

¹⁵ The Meridian Society, *The Chinese Labour Corps*, <http://themeridiansociety.org.uk/chinese-labour-corps/> accessed 18 May 2021; Wenlan Peng, 'The Chinese Labour Corps on the Western Front' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3-g3F2_5Q accessed 21 June 2021.

Kiran Sahota, Believe in Me (CIC)

Honouring Indian Victoria Cross soldiers



Muslim soldiers from South Asia at prayer in Mesopotamia. No date. @IWM Q 24572.

In Birmingham, and in the wider West Midlands, individuals and groups with South Asian heritage responded enthusiastically to new opportunities to research the First World War.

The histories of their ancestors, and their communities, rarely appear in the school curriculum, and historical research can be daunting, and difficult, for those with no training. So there were lots of projects, usually run by men, which focused on Sikh soldiers or on Muslim contributions to the war effort.

I wanted to do something a little different. I wanted to develop a project whose starting point, and organisation, was not religious difference but some of the common experiences of South Asian soldiers. The project, joined by volunteers who were both Muslim and Sikh, researched the histories of South Asian soldiers of the British Army who won the Victoria Cross.



Wounded Indian troops at a hospital in Brighton, August 1915
© IWM Q 53887.

It was not an easy task. A small grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund helped me find time to read through soldiers' letters home, and to understand the wider history of the war. I found that until 1911 the highest gallantry award an Indian serviceman could receive was an Indian Order of Merit and that, even though the award of the Victoria Cross became possible, just eleven Indian soldiers were First World War recipients. Yet very few people knew about these men and their names were largely forgotten.

The project set out to explore the histories of these military heroes and their families. I was especially pleased that fifteen women of South Asian heritage joined the project. We were thrilled to discover, and to visit, memorial sites to these men

in London and in Brighton. We were particularly fascinated by the story of Gabar Singh Negi who died, aged twenty one, at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915. But our research did not end with his citation for 'conspicuous bravery'. We also discovered that Gabar Singh Negi left behind a widow who neither received a pension (it was given to his family of origin), nor allowed to remarry. For the widows of military heroes, the war cast a long shadow.

Two expert mentors from the Arts and Humanities Research Council's First World War Engagement Centre, *Voices of War and Peace*, helped us to research these stories. We worked together to plan, design and curate the exhibition *Honouring Indian Victoria Cross Soldiers* held at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (November 2016-January 2017). Our aim was to communicate with, and explain these stories to, the modern day communities of Birmingham. We were proud to attend the opening night of the exhibition. None of us had trained as historians. None of us had curated an exhibition.

I know the project shocked a lot of people. There was this attitude: 'how is a woman creating a project on Indian military history? She's not even a historian'. But history doesn't belong to historians. And you don't have to have a famous ancestor, or important connections, to research the past. Individuals, groups and communities all have stories and memories. The right, and ability, to explore them is an important part of being British. Gabar Singh Negi was 21 when he died. Just like British Soldiers, Indian soldiers never made it back home.

<https://www.bimcic.com/indian-victoria-cross-winners-project>

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c3cb7be12b13fb318bb35ce/t/5c8a98b6e4966b7f5ad2a33f/1552586973739/VC_Soldiers_Brochure+%281%29.pdf



Disabled Indian soldiers knitting socks for the troops abroad at the Queen Mary's Technical School © IWM Q 52631.



A British nurse adjusts the blanket of a wounded Indian soldier, as the stretcher on which he is lying is lifted and placed into a motor ambulance somewhere on the Western Front, 25 October 1914. © IWM Q 53345.

Strike a Light -- Arts & Heritage

Shalom Sussex – The Jewish Community in World War One



Image by kind permission of Strike a Light – Arts and Heritage.

Strike a Light – Arts and Heritage led the project 'Shalom Sussex – The Jewish Community in World War One' between March 2019 and December 2020. The project documented and commemorated the contribution Jewish people in Sussex made during the First World War, both on the home front and abroad on the battlefields.

They recruited and trained 18 volunteers to take part in the project and organised a number of research trips to archives including The Keep, West Sussex Records Office, The National Archives, Imperial War Museum and Jubilee Library in Brighton. There were various outputs that the project included that helped volunteers expand their knowledge of the Jewish contribution.



Image by kind permission of Strike a Light – Arts and Heritage.

These included:

- ▶ A website – The research undertaken by the volunteer research team enabled us to create a community history website to develop, promote, create and collect new archive material, and to share this heritage publicly. The website can be accessed at: <http://shalomsussex.co.uk/>
- ▶ Postcards – We created a series of eight project postcards celebrating and profiling key figures within the Jewish community in Sussex's past. These were made publicly available and disseminated to all project partners, volunteers and participants at our events.
- ▶ Reminiscence Sessions – We undertook reminiscence sessions with partner charity Jewish Care at a care home called Hyman Fine House where residents are often in their 90s and memories stretch back very far. We also organised a Jewish Care outing to Newhaven Fort, East Sussex to see FWW exhibitions and organised a Sukkot party for residents of Hyman Fine House.
- ▶ Partnership working – The findings of our project have been included on the 'We Were There Too' project website, which will be a permanent record of the lives of Jewish men, women and families during the First World War, with



Image by kind permission of Strike a Light – Arts and Heritage.

details of their military and home front activities, ensuring that their stories are not lost for future generations.

<https://www.jewsfww.uk/>

- ▶ Symposium – We organised a symposium for the project on the 10th December 2019 at the University of Brighton to share our findings which featured expert speakers, Dr Gideon Reuveni, Director of the Centre for German-Jewish studies, and Professor Mark Connelly, a specialist in Jewish memorialisation post-FWW and Jewish veterans in the 1920s. Dr Diana Wilkins, Research Coordinator for the Shalom Sussex project, discussed the project's research findings.

We were really happy with the project and the wide array of activities and engagement which took place as a result of this. We have also, in addition to the project outputs and outcomes, created a case study for the Imperial War Museum, written articles for the Subject Specialist Network and engaged with other Jewish research projects such as the 'Jewish County House' and the 'Highdown Gardens' projects. We have learnt a great deal and been able to work with the new partnerships and minority groups as a result. We are pleased with the learning gained from this and from the new projects which are happening as a result.



Image by kind permission of Strike a Light – Arts and Heritage.



Image by kind permission of Strike a Light – Arts and Heritage.

Merchant seamen



SS Chyebassa, a merchant ship of the British India Line, 1917. © IWM Q 94607.

Merchant seamen were responsible for the importation of foodstuffs and a vital part of non-combatant military labour.

Some 70% of that food was imported and it relied on a cosmopolitan workforce to load, carry and deliver it to the British Isles. These were perilous journeys on dangerous seas. Approximately 30% of seamen in the British Mercantile Marine were 'foreign', and 17.5%, or some 51,000 men, were so called 'Lascars' (a term that referred to both employment at sea but which also carried racial connotations attached to men of Asian and Arab origin). Allocated the most arduous and dangerous work, suffering from lower pay and poorer rations than white counterparts, and with their movement in ports restricted, their lives, and their deaths, were also conditioned by racist ideas.¹⁶ When the citizen historians of the Meridian

Society investigated the sinking of the passenger ship SS Maloja in the Straits of Dover in 1916, for example, they found that the 62 members of the crew who were killed were all Indian. The majority of the deceased, including Muhammad Ghulam Husain, trimmer, and Bhura Latif, paniwallah (water carrier), were Muslim and restricted to work below decks in the stokeholds and in extreme heat for the lowest pay. But also among the dead were lighter skinned Goan seamen, including Antonio Da Costa, second cook, and iceman Santana De Sousa, recruited to roles that involved the most interaction with white officers and passengers.¹⁷

¹⁶ The Maritime Archaeology Trust, *Forgotten Wrecks of the First World War* https://forgottenwrecks.maritimearchaeologytrust.org/uploads/images/Booklets/BME_booklet_v2.pdf accessed 20 July 2021.

¹⁷ Maritime Archaeology Trust, *Forgotten Wrecks*, pp. 18-24.

Trevor Godbold

Tiger Bay Project, Cardiff

					Vessel	Place of Birth	Address
					Goathland	Aden	2 Ruperra Street Cardiff
				7/1917	Camellia	Aden	215 Bute Road Cardiff
			40	7/4/1917	Goathland	Aden	26 Bute Street Cardiff
			25	1/23/1918	Baykerran	Arab	21 South Church Street Cardiff
		Fireman and Trimmer	40	12/3/1917	Dowlais	Aden	155 Bute Road Cardiff
MUHAMMAD	ABDULLAH	Donkeyman	26	8/20/1917	Edernian	Arabia	215 Bute Road Cardiff
HASAN	ABDULLAH	Fireman and Trimmer	28	2/26/1918	Maltby	Arab	250 Bute Road Cardiff
E S	Abdullah	Fireman and Trimmer	51	3/29/1918	T R Thompson	Port Said	50 Bute Street Cardiff
SALEH	ABDUS	Trimmer	22	1/7/1918	Arab	Aden	1 Peel Street Cardiff
Frederick	Adams	Steward	58	12/16/1917	Greenhill	Bristol	Cardiff
Vincent	Agius	Steward	52	7/30/1917	Ganges	Malta	8 Hafod Street Cardiff
FAT	AH	Fireman and Trimmer	27	6/28/1918	Queen	China, (including Hong Kong)	196 Bute Street Cardiff
SAM	AH	Second Cook	28	6/28/1918	Queen	China, (including Hong Kong)	192 Bute Street Cardiff
SING	AH	Fireman and Trimmer	27	6/28/1918	Queen	China, (including Hong Kong)	192 Bute Street Cardiff
SALAM	AHMAD	Fireman and Trimmer	29	10/20/1916	Bayreaulx	Port Said	225 Bute Road, Cardiff
MUHAMMAD	AHMAD	Fireman and Trimmer	32	2/19/1918	Commonwealth	Aden	42 Peel Street, Cardiff
ABDUR RAUF	AHMAD	Fireman and Trimmer	20	12/3/1917	Dowlais	Egypt	185 Bute Road Cardiff
		Fireman and					

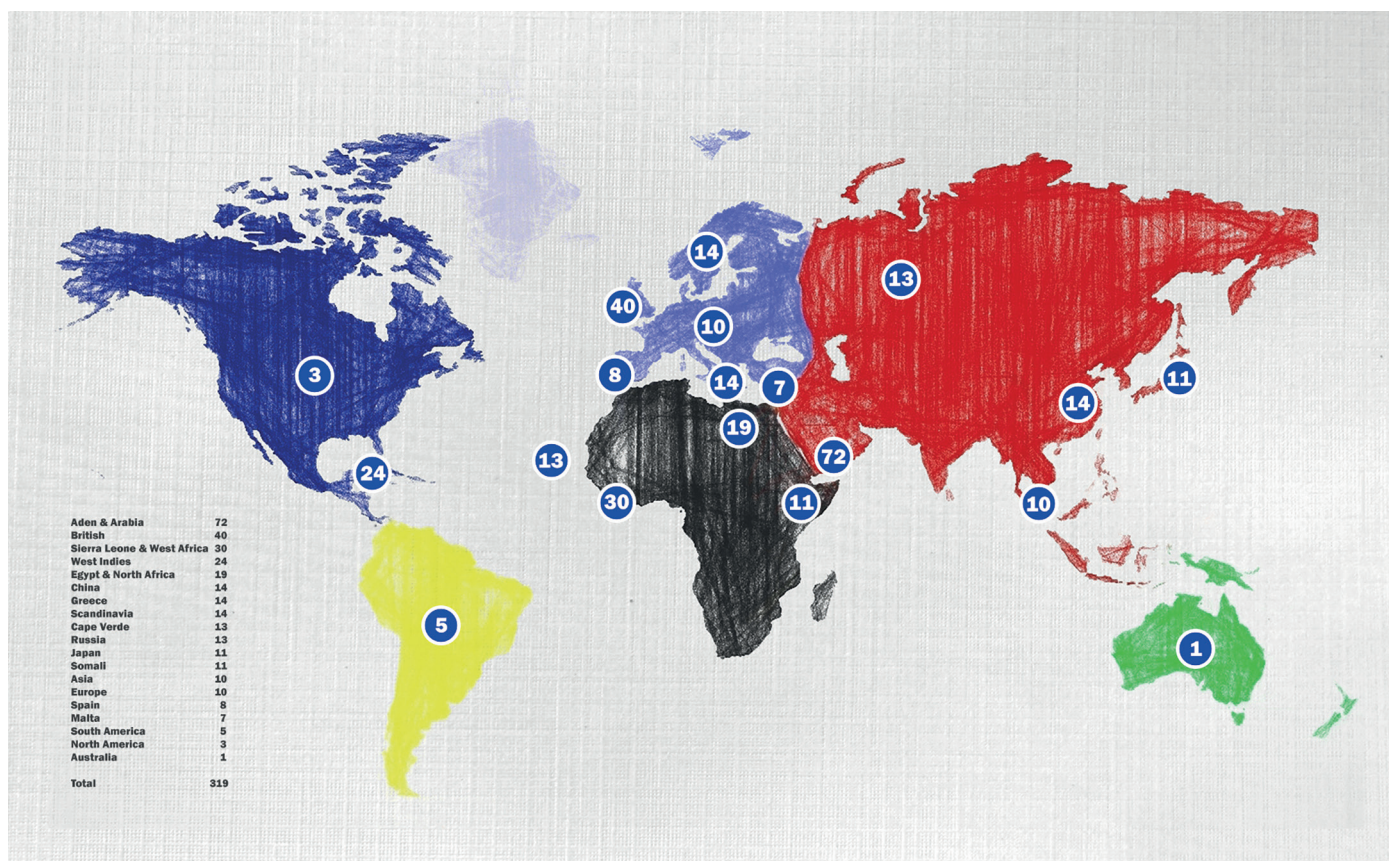
ButeTown and Tiger Bay Seafarers lost at sea during World War 1: data collected on where they originated and their roles on board ship.
 Image: © People's Collection Wales, Creative Archive Licence.

The Heritage & Cultural Exchange, a community organisation that aims to preserve and promote the history of Tiger Bay and Cardiff Docklands, won funding to research the crucial role played by the docks in the war effort.

The Tiger Bay Project investigated the ships lost to U-boats during the war and the experiences of seafarers who came from across the British Empire.

The project was part of a wider one across Wales and instigated by The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales which worked with local organisations

around the coast of Wales to investigate and share stories about the effect of the U-boat campaign. Volunteers scoured the Cardiff Register of Shipping for vessels that were lost but, owing to the complexities of ship registration, the group also used an extensive range of online resources to identify vessels lost to U-boat attacks.



Regional distribution of places of birth for sailors based in Butetown who lost their lives to U-Boat attack on their merchant vessel.

Image: © People's Collection Wales, Creative Archive Licence.

Initially the project had intended to focus on the ships but ended up focusing as much, if not more, on the seafarers, and especially those who perished in the service of the nation. The strength of racial prejudices was a consistent theme in the project research. Many of the deceased seafarers had been recruited from around the British Empire to replace the British seafarers who had left to serve with the British Army or Royal Navy. Most of these Empire seafarers were given jobs in the engine room where they would stoke coal into the boilers in conditions that were very hot, dark and dangerous. When German torpedoes hit, engine room seamen were in the most vulnerable position in the ship. Our research identified 333 ships that were lost at the cost of more than 1,500 seafarers' lives.

Cardiff was a hub for coal transportation and, both before and during the war, the ships and the docks were an important source of employment and opportunity. Most seafarers stayed in Cardiff between voyages. Many married local women and, in doing so, added to the cosmopolitan mix of peoples typical of major seaports. Tiger Bay had a vibrant black community.

But both the economy and the communities of Tiger Bay were on the cusp of major change. The introduction of oil as a maritime fuel meant that demand for coal exports fell rapidly in the 1920s. Jobs dried up. Competition for employment intensified racial prejudice.

The project has left an ongoing local legacy. Volunteers were able to arrange for the final exhibition to be showcased at Pierhead Building (a Welsh Parliament owned facility) in Cardiff. As a result a good relationship was formed with the visits team and they are now working together on other projects. All the research and connected stories are recorded on the website of The Heritage and Cultural Exchange which has a collection that includes oral histories, photographs and images. Volunteers are undertaking the task of digitalising this information for it to be shared with wider audiences and perhaps other interesting stories will emerge.

The U-boat project did leave a lasting impression with citizen historian Trevor. Most of the research was undertaken by him personally and this is because he loved doing it. While researching, Trevor would find a new narrative and soon the project was to include themes such as racial prejudices and Empire because it highlighted what was happening in Cardiff at the time.

Trevor was really proud of his involvement in the project and was glad that the project was raising awareness within the local community. The impact the project had was that the local community liked learning about local history and what happened to the merchant ships and their crews. Trevor's project was part of an all-Wales one and helped to bring these themes to other communities around Wales.

<https://www.tigerbay.org.uk/projects/uboaat-project>

<https://www.hcearchive.org.uk/>

BAME Seafarers in the First World War:

Searching for Grandad

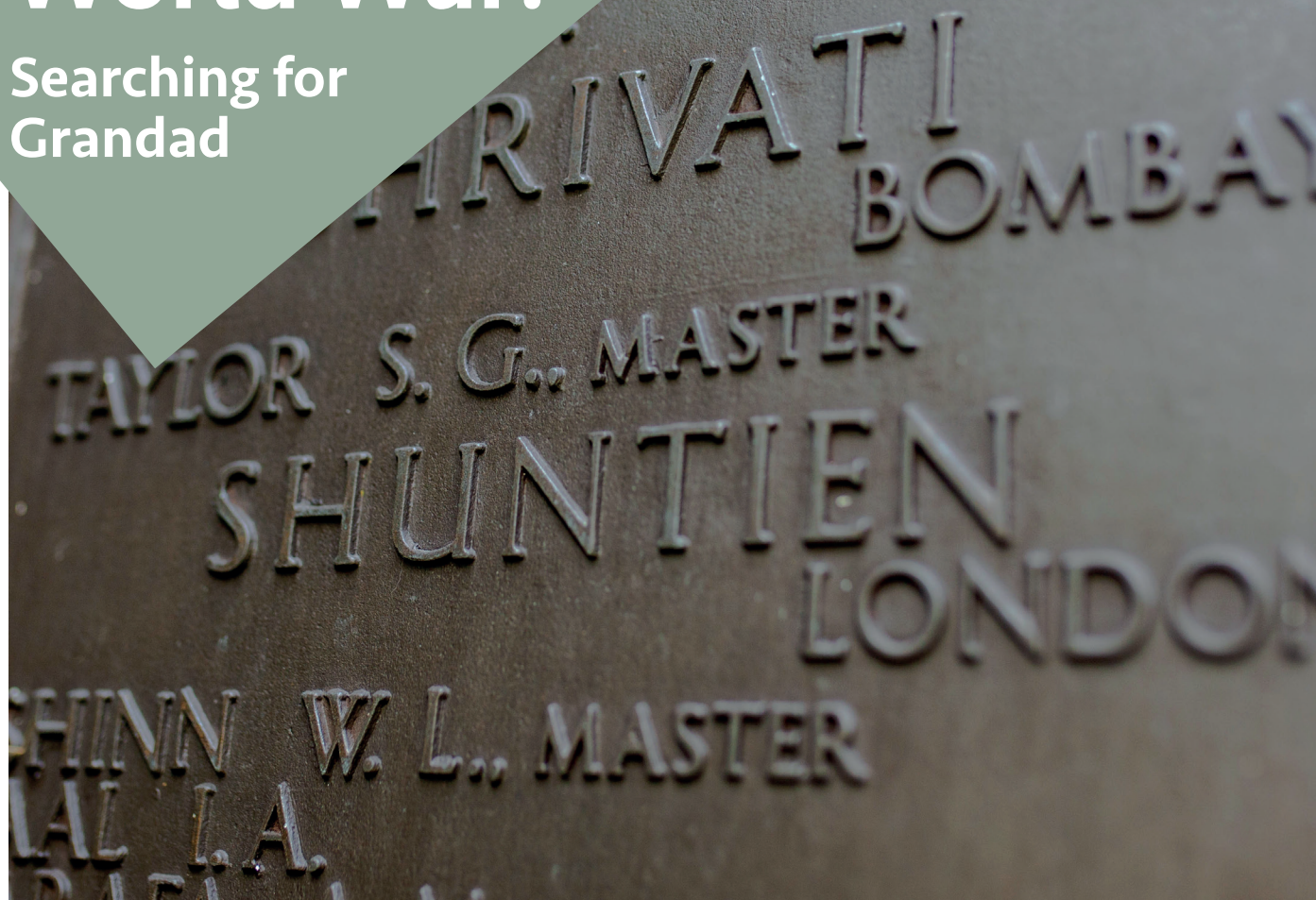
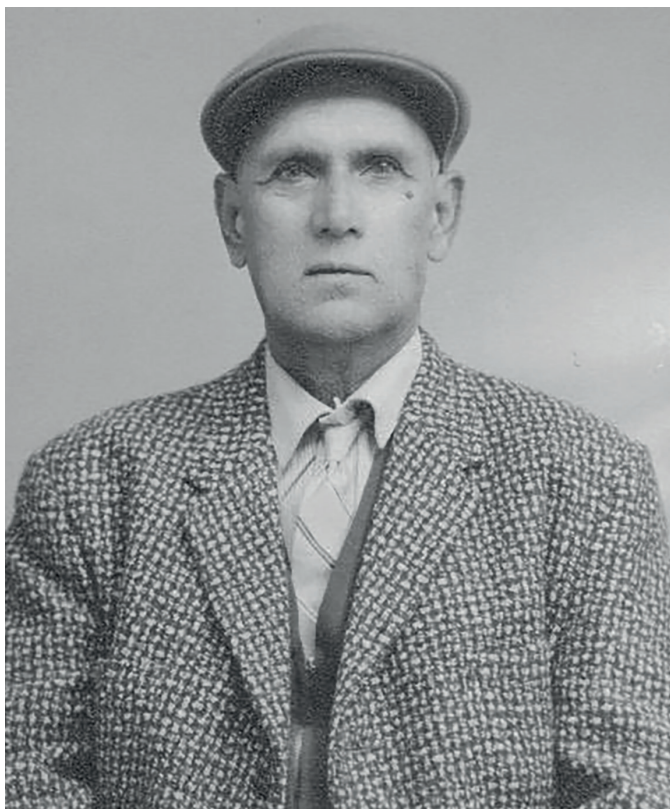


Image: © Kiran Sahota - Believe in Me CIC.

Stories of Commonwealth contribution are now being made more available. Some might say that funding for the First World War centenary, and greater participation in centenary activities, have enabled ordinary people to discover new links to the First World War.

This was certainly the case when the *Gateways to the First World War* Engagement Centre held a community event at The National Archives. It was full of academics, citizen historians and researchers exploring the stories of BAME Seafarers. During the event one story stood out and it was told by Asif Shakoor, who discovered that his grandfather, Mahomed Ghama, was a seafarer. Unlike other projects and stories that

were encouraged by the centenary, Asif had in fact been trying to find help from academics as early as 2011. The centenary allowed him to find the answers and to connect with professionals that would lead him into speaking about Indian Seafarers. In conversation with Kiran Sahota, Asif Shakoor shared where the research journey began and how the search for the contribution of Lascars might never end.



Asif Shakoor's grandfather, Mahomed Gama. *Image courtesy of Asif Shakoor.*

It was during a family trip to Pakistan in 2011 that Asif found out about his family history and connections to war. The family home in Pakistan was being demolished and Asif's uncle and great aunt retold stories from their past.

'It was an upsetting time as our family house was being demolished and every memory in a sense was going to be erased. As I was packing up the items of the house, my aunt handed me a wooden box to keep as a reminder of my grandfather. I thought it was strange that I been given a wooden box - what would I want with a box? You don't question when an elder is giving you something. The wooden box contained some old papers, written in Urdu, and patient letters, pension documents and paperwork regarding war medals. At first I could not make sense of what I was reading or how they might be connected to my grandfather. We had not spoken about my grandfather growing up as it would often upset my grandmother'.

Finding these letters, which were a link to his grandfather, Asif felt a powerful sense of needing to know his story.

Mahomed Gama was born in Mirpur in 1895. Asif discovered that his grandfather had joined the British Mercantile Marine and had made several voyages during First World War. The paperwork referred to Mahomed Gama as a 'Lascar'. 'Lascar' was the name given to Indian sailors employed as crew and whose pay and conditions were considerably worse than those of white British seafarers.

'Gama was one of 51,000 Lascars who in 1914 made up 17.5% of all seafarers on British Ships. I did not know until I started my research into my family history that my grandfather made

several journeys on SS Khiva. The ship's crew records, held at The National Archives, helped me understand Gama's journey.

My grandfather first served on SS Medina during the war transporting cargo and passengers. The ship called at ports in London and New Sydney in February 1916, eventually landing in Bombay on 20th November 1916. Five months later, on 28th April 1917, German submarine UB31 torpedoed and sunk Medina 25km (15 miles) east-north-east of its start point in British waters. He boarded a lifeboat and was towed into Dartmouth and Brixham by local vessels.

Grandfather's next ship, the SS Khiva, was requisitioned by the British Government in 1917, after America entered the war, in order to help transport American troops to France. 40,000 American troops had embarked at the port of New York waiting to be transported. Mahomed Gama and other Indian seamen on Khiva left Bombay on 8th October 1917; calling at ports in St. Nazaire, Brest, Le Havre, Liverpool, London, Plymouth and New York. Khiva had four narrow escapes from German submarines in 1917-1918. The ship twice missed being struck, evaded and escaped attack another time, and also repelled an attack with gunfire.

After serving on Khiva, Mahomed Gama returned to British India, married and had five children. He moved to Great Britain with his son and was employed as a labourer in Smethwick and Oldbury before settling in Newham. My grandfather died on 16th August 1965 during a visit to West Pakistan. He served Great Britain in war and in peace'.

I feel I have achieved so much in highlighting Seafarer stories. I often wonder if I am walking along the same streets that he was walking and sharing a space that history has forgotten to mention'.

Asif Shakoor in conversation with Kiran Sahota



Image: © Kiran Sahota - Believe in Me CIC.

Internment Camps



Nico Jungman, 1917, A panoramic view of Ruhleben prison camp that is housed within a horse racecourse. © IWM Art.IWM ART 522.

Seamen were also affected by another area where there has been significant new research; the practice and experience of civilian and military internment.

Internment camps became a common feature of landscapes around the world. The Red Cross International Prisoners of War Agency estimates that a staggering 10 million people were incarcerated in the First World War.¹⁸ Around 8 million of those detained were military combatants and a further 2 million, including women and children, were people designated 'enemy aliens'. A number of projects around the United Kingdom have explored the creation of, and life in, some of these internment camps including those at Lofthouse, Castle and Sutton Donnington, Dorchester, Plas Brynkir in Wales and Kinlochleven and Stobs camps in Scotland.¹⁹ The Knockaloe Camp on the Isle of Man for civilian internees, has, on the basis of extensive historical research, been partially recreated and enables visitors to get a greater understanding of the process and experience of incarceration.²⁰

Inevitably, the experiences of internees varied widely, partly because of climate and location, and partly because of the gender, class, age and race of those detained in the camps. However, it was common for camps to develop rich cultural activities. Orchestras, sport and exercise, camp newspapers and educational classes were commonplace.²¹ Theatre productions, featuring cross dressing and 'drag soldiers' who could achieve fame, were another conventional part of camp life but one whose significance, especially in terms of sexual identity, remains underexplored.

Yet, if the experiences of the 5,000 British subjects caught in Germany at the outbreak of war and interned at the Ruhleben Internment Camp near Berlin were in anyway representative, what is clear is that camp routines mirrored the social and

¹⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross, 'Prisoners of the First World War Archives' https://grandeguerre.icrc.org/Content/help/Introduction_en.pdf accessed 30 July 2021.

¹⁹ 'In the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time/Am falschen Ort zur falschen Zeit: Civilian Internment in the Engländerlager Ruhleben and Lofthouse Park Camp, 1914-1918' <https://ruhlebenlofthouse.com/about> accessed 23 July 2021; Claudia Sternberg and David Stowe (eds.), *Pleasure, Privilege, Privations: Lofthouse Park near Wakefield, 1908-1922* (Leeds, 2018); *Beyond the Barbed Wire: An Exhibition of Images from the W.W. Winter Photographic Archives*, University of Derby (October 2019-January 2020) heritage.wwwinter.co.uk/behindthebarbedwire.html; Dorchester Heritage Committee and the Keep Military Museum, 'Dorchester and the First World', pp.22-24 <https://www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk/docs/downloads/Dorchester-WWI-Resources-Guide-FINAL.pdf> accessed 21 July 2021.

²⁰ 'Stobs Military Camp', <http://www.stobscamp.org/> accessed 16 July 2021.

²¹ Lincs Inspire, 'In Ruhleben Camp' <https://www.lincinspirelibraries.com/web/arena/ruhleben> accessed 30 July 2021.



Napkin ring crafted from bone, the letter 'W' is carved on one side and 'POW 24000 KNOCKALOE FF' is carved in the bottom of the ring. © IWM EPH 2888.

racial hierarchies common in the British Empire. There, for example, a contingent of approximately 300 seamen, primarily from Sierra Leone and from the Aden Protectorate (now Yemen), were interned. Although there is some documentary and photographic evidence to suggest that the

camp offered new educational opportunities for people of colour, the reality was that camp routines mirrored the class and racial hierarchies of the British Empire. The seamen from Sierra Leone and the Yemen, for example, lived in separate accommodation, barely fit for human habitation, and without either halal food or places to worship.²²



Community-based projects have the autonomy to actualise and handle the cultural memory archive differently.

Claudia Sternberg, In the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time/Am falschen Ort zur falschen Zeit.

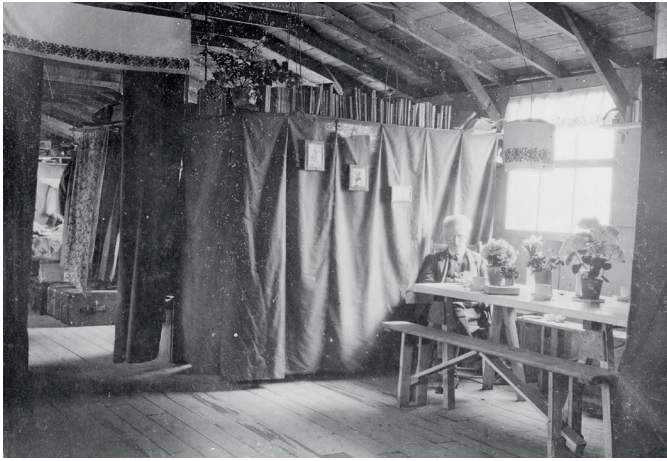
The consequences of the mass incarceration of people, including civilians, who were identified as suspects and enemies, was a theme explored by only a small number of projects. Yet it is clear that the anti-alien sentiment, and specifically the anti-German hostility that swept Britain during the war, had devastating consequences for individuals and families. It also encouraged people to imagine, and to accept, that 'foreigners', however that term was defined, posed a threat to the nation that could be managed by incarceration and deportation.

The imposition, and the effects, of militarised government was a theme that recurred again and again in the citizen history projects that actively sought to recover the stories of some of the most marginalised people in British society. The state, and powerful institutions in civil society, reached into the lives of people in unprecedented ways. The bodies, sexual practices, family arrangements and contacts with racial and alien others all became matters of regulation. So, too, did the memory of the conflict itself where the figure of the white man, fighting valiantly in the trenches of Western Europe, came to dominate the national imagination.

In the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time



27



Gottlieb Feuerberg, conductor of the Edinburgh Royal Choral Union, interned at Lofthouse Park until his repatriation in 1918.
© IWM HU 58701.

The internment of civilians is a lesser-known aspect of the First World War. Although rarely remembered, the practice affected tens of thousands of non-military men of 'enemy' nationality who lived, worked, studied or travelled in the British and German empires at the onset of war. Formerly inconspicuous, these men were classified as threatening and undesirable; they lost their occupations and faced confiscations and years of imprisonment. Some of their families were displaced or encountered other hardships. In the camps, the inmates organised themselves to counteract boredom, worry and uncertainty with education, religion, sport and cultural activities. After the Armistice, British internees were able to return to their previous lives while forced repatriation followed for most German, Austrian-Hungarian and Turkish men in 1919.

From the outset, *In the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time/Am falschen Ort zur falschen Zeit* was conceived as a comparative, transgenerational and bilingual project. With support from the First World War Engagement Centre, Hidden Histories, UK-German Connection, the Jugendgeschichtswerkstatt Spandau, Wakefield Library, Leeds Museums and Galleries, the University

of Leeds, and other organisations, our collaboration involved descendants, local residents, community members, young people, historians, educators, artists, collectors, curators and librarians.

Lofthouse Park had left faint memory traces as a place of containment for German military officers from 1918 to 1919, but its four years as a 'privilege' camp for fee-paying German, Austrian and Hungarian civilians had been forgotten. Motivated rather than discouraged by a lack of material and scholarship, we organised Heritage Open Days at Lofthouse Gate Working Men's Club, explored the area of the former camp, liaised with libraries and societies, invited experts, and mixed and mingled Britons and Germans and those in between. After a while, archival sources, local knowledge and even objects began to emerge. Further research shed light on the running of the camps as well as the logistics of goods and people that developed around it. Lofthouse Park was put back on the map through walks, talks, digital activity and exhibitions.

The archive for both camps, however, favoured the literate, the well-to-do, and white Europeans. Other experiences had to be speculatively reconstructed from allusions and incidental details, for example those of British colonial seamen in Ruhleben, or working-class internees providing services for their gentlemen peers at Lofthouse. Together with creative practitioners, we also imagined the views and thoughts of a Jamaican singer-actor who had come to Germany to study theatre, and of a British wife whose German husband was locked away while the war rages.

It was an early insight of the historical enquiry that those affected by internment in the First World War were often people whose pre-war motivations and lives, given some adjustment, resembled those of British and German nationals in Germany and the UK in the 2010s. To reflect on migratory trajectories and continuities from the 19th century onwards, we brought Britons of German descent and Germans in Britain together to share family stories and personal memories. Their narratives exposed salient moments in which nationality became an all-defining factor, but also showed that most lives were touched rather than dominated by them.

Focussing comparatively on First World War internment and the wider discourse of intra-European mobility complicates dominant patterns of remembering war. The approach subverts the simple logic of nations at war and the concept of 'contributions' to the war effort; it also diffuses the binaries of friend and foe, and front and home front. War anniversaries will remain nationally charged events, and stakeholders of political memory will align commemoration with preoccupations of the present. Community-based projects have the autonomy to actualise and handle the cultural memory archive differently. *In the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time* will continue to ask more questions, especially about mixed families, repatriation, imperial legacies and, last but not least, the critical potential of paying attention to the confinement of civilians in other contexts.



Civilian internees on the grounds of Lofthouse Park Camp.
© IWM Q 56595.

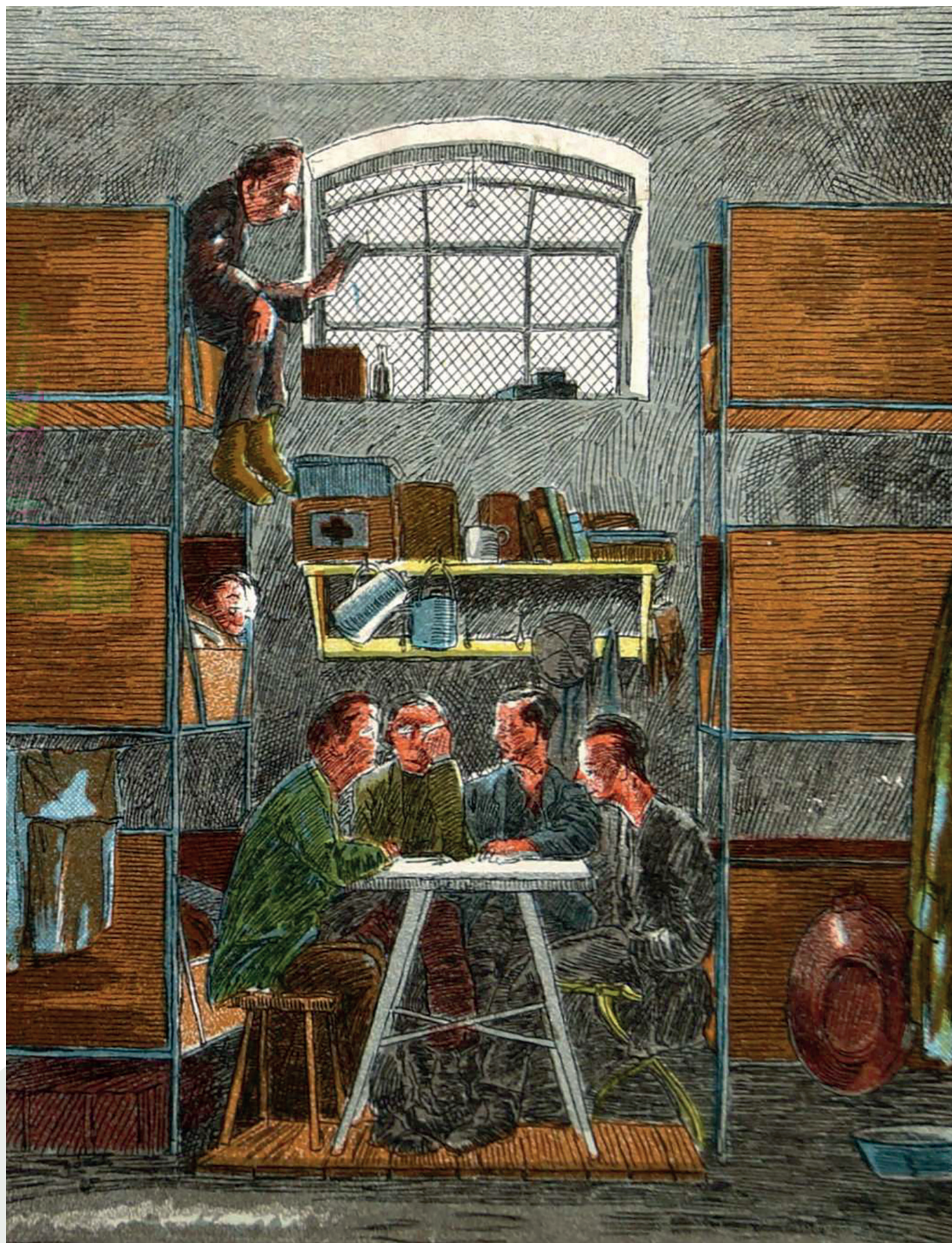


Illustration of British internees in converted horseboxes at Ruhleben Camp (detail of drawing by Robert Walker (Ruhleben 1917), produced by A. Page & Co., London. From the file of E.R. Vincent, LIDDLE/WW1/RUH/56. Reproduced with permission of Special Collections, Leeds University Library.

Silenced knowledge



Shot at Dawn Memorial. IWM image: 329 Shot at Dawn 4, © Colin Sweett (WMR-46465).

In the aftermath of the First World War individuals and societies had to somehow come to terms with both the psychological and physical damage of war.

The injured and the bereaved, and all those who lived through the war, sought ways to mourn their losses, repair their scars or simply learn to endure pain that did not subside. Those processes of mourning were at once psychological, shared by all those who experienced loss, and political, because the rhetoric and rituals deployed by states played an important part in attributing meaning to death in war.²³

In the British Empire, the dominant public meaning attached to the war was redemptive sacrifice: that the war had been a regrettable but necessary intervention to make possible

a world without war. The sacrifice of combatants, and the pain of the bereaved, was described as glorious, their actions dutiful and a meaningful contribution to a better world.²⁴ This dominant popular memory also conditioned what war veterans recounted to families and friends of their experiences. Although specific details obviously varied, veterans tended to share stories of duty, heroism and the pleasure gained from masculine adventures and comradeship at war.²⁵

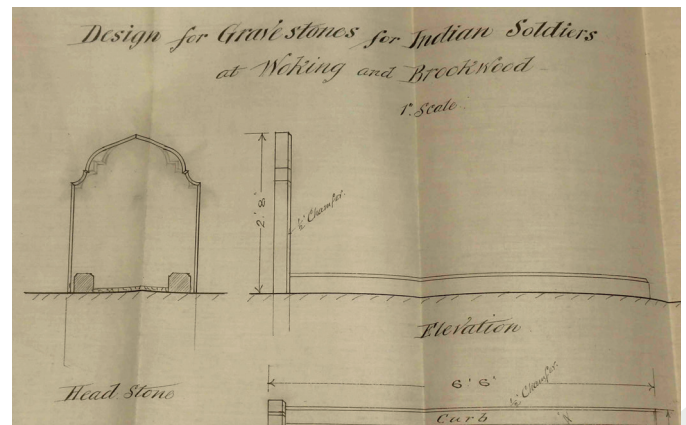
The British Legion was arguably the single most important civil society influence on the construction of war memories and

the foundation of the national narrative. By the late 1920s, the British Legion was producing 37 million individual poppies and 20,000 wreaths in preparation for the annual Armistice Day commemorations. War memorials, which received new levels of care and attention as a result of the centenary, were erected in villages and towns. Both the Imperial War Graves Commission and the Imperial War Museum originated in the First World War. Across all of this activity, minority populations, and especially people of colour, were not only absent but actively excluded from the national narrative. Indeed, in both campaigning for anti-alien legislation, and in their wider commemorative activities, the British Legion 'actively encouraged a form of identity that labelled all aliens as "other"' and it consistently deployed the idea of race.²⁶

The dominant memorial stories, and their language, had little space for violence and killing. They marginalised the role of women in war. Those designated as 'enemy', 'alien', or 'coward', or people of colour, were deliberately denied a voice and excluded from commemorative events, memorials and activities.²⁷ Although there were many different mechanisms for producing this exclusion, two warrant particular attention.

The first was a powerful process of shaming, through which individuals and groups were singled out for violating patriotic norms. New terms, like 'conchies' and 'corner turners', and new symbols, like the white feather, were used to identify and describe those who had resisted or refused to fight.²⁸ In the aftermath of war, citizenship, and belonging to the nation, was increasingly articulated as a privilege, or a reward, for national service and sacrifice which could be denied those who were judged to have undermined the war effort.²⁹

A second mechanism for exclusion was the active production of ignorance. British national identity was so enmeshed with the idea of whiteness, with a heterosexual masculinity that lauded military prowess and conquest, that it became impossible to acknowledge different actors or events or worldviews.³⁰ Dominant ideas about Britishness, which associated national character with freedom, democracy, tolerance and a force for good in the world, precluded comprehending some wartime experiences. There were people, activities and events that were not, and could not, be spoken of because they were widely, and deeply, felt to dishonour, and to shame, the dominant memories, and meaning, of the war.³¹



Design for gravestones for Indian soldiers. British Library: IOR/L/SUR/5/8/8. © British Library Board and available under a Creative Commons Attribution Licence.

These silences entered the archives. There were no documents, no finding codes and no collections that recorded the experiences of abused women or of LGBTQ people. If the names of soldiers of colour survived at all, their names were changed, or misspelt. And in the memorial landscapes of the war, these people became invisible. Black African soldiers were, we know now, denied named burial sites. Even when memorials did exist, such as that at the Woking Muslim Military cemetery opened in 1917, they lay unknown to contemporary South Asian communities, who entered the centenary commemorations used to the assertion that this was a 'white man's war'.³²

Historical remembering, and forgetting, had similar dynamics in places where anti-colonial struggles resulted in political independence. The experiences of military and auxiliary personnel who had, as professional soldiers, volunteers and conscripts, fought for the British Empire were silenced in post-colonial states whose identities were usually located in struggles against British imperialism. In those states the lived experiences of the war, and all its many consequences, were erased.³³

The people affected by this silencing were compelled to repress their experiences and their memories. These processes of repression inevitably had consequences, both material and psychological, for individuals, for families and for the generations who came after.³⁴

²³ Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, 'The politics of war memory and commemoration', pp.7-15.

²⁴ Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day 1919-1946* (Oxford, 1994).

²⁵ Joel Morley, 'Dad "never said much" but... Young Men and Great War Veterans in Day-to-Day-Life in Interwar Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 29 : 2 (2018), pp. 199-224.

²⁶ Tom Lawson, "'The Free-Masonry of Sorrow': English National Identities and the Memorialization of the Great War in Britain, 1919-1931", *History and Memory*, 20 : 1 (2008), p.112.

²⁷ John Siblon, 'Black & Asian soldiers and the "White Man's War"' (2021), <https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/commonwealth-war-graves/>; John Siblon, 'Negotiating hierarchy and memory: African and Caribbean troops from former British colonies in London's imperial spaces', *London Journal*, 41 : 3 (2016), pp. 299-312.

²⁸ Nicoletta F. Gullace, 'White Feathers and Wounded Men: Female Patriotism and the Memory of the Great War', *Journal of British Studies*, 36 : 2 (1997), pp. 178-206; Ute Frevert, 'Wartime Emotions: Honour, Shame, and the Ecstasy of Sacrifice' in Daniel et al, *1914-1918-online*; Anne-Marie Kilday and David S. Nash, 'White Feathers and Black Looks: Cowardice, Conscientious Objection and Shame in the Great War' in Anne-Marie Kilday and David S. Nash, *Shame and Modernity in Britain* (London, 2017). For a citizen historian interpretation see 'Conchies' produced and directed by Nigel Streeter as part of the 'World War 1 - Then and Now' project at <https://www.filmfocuswales.co.uk/projects> accessed 18 June 2021.

²⁹ Nicoletta F. Gullace, *'The Blood of Our Sons': Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War* (New York, 2002).

³⁰ This paragraph draws on ideas about 'epistemologies of ignorance'. For an introduction to these ideas see Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (eds.), *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (New York, 2007). For their influence on historical studies and scholarship see, for example, Bill Schwarz, *The White Man's World. Memories of Empire Volume 1* (Oxford, 2011), pp.13-32.

³¹ Edgar Jones, 'Trans-Generational Transmission of Traumatic Memory and Moral Injury', *Military Behavioral Health*, 6 : 2 (2018), pp. 134-139.

³² Michael Hough, Steve Ballinger and Sunder Katwala, *A Centenary Shared, Tracking Public Attitudes to the First World War Centenary 2013-16* (London, 2016), pp.13-14.

³³ James E. Kitchen, 'Colonial Empires after the War/Decolonization' in Daniel et al, *1914-1918-online*.

³⁴ Michael Roper and Rachel Duffett, 'Family Legacies in the Centenary: Motives for First World War Commemoration among British and German Descendants', *History and Memory*, 30 : 1 (2018), pp. 76-115; Marlene A. Briggs, 'Dis/Composing the First World War in Britain: Trauma and Commemoration in the Testimony of Harry Patch, 1998-2008', *History and Memory*, 28 : 1 (2016), pp. 71-109; Jones, 'Trans-Generational Transmission'.

Questioning the Nation



Armistice Day, Birmingham, 1920. Reproduced with the permission of the Library of Birmingham.

Nation-states have been a major influence on the production of historical knowledge and memory since at least the middle of the 18th century.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the case of war memory and commemoration. In their experience of military service, of new sites of memory – national archives, battlefields, graveyards, statues of national patriots – and the history curricula that were a characteristic feature of basic education, men, women and children were presented with a history of the nation whose explicit purpose was to produce patriotic subjects. These histories, and the memories and meanings associated with them, are repeated and circulated so frequently that they can become to feel natural and universal.³⁵

Official centenary commemorative activities have often been framed by this dominant, but also very particular, idea of the nation state. However, the foundation of five First World War Engagement Centres by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) was an explicit intervention designed to encourage wide participation in historical research and education. A particular aim was to reach communities previously disengaged from historical research generally, and British First World War commemorations specifically. A philosophy and practice of co-production, in which academic

scholars worked collaboratively with community groups, produced not just new historical knowledge, and not just in a wide variety of textual, visual, digital and theatrical forms. It also produced a distinctive quality of historical knowledge, and one that, potentially at least, facilitates a better understanding of the identities of people in modern Britain's four nations.³⁶

Histories and memories are never fixed. What is written about the past, and what is remembered from it, have always been open to contest and subject to change. The processes through which individuals, social groups, communities and nation states turn memories into narratives, and seek recognition of those memories in the public arena, confirm that narrating, distributing and championing particular historical accounts are political acts because they are concerned with distributing particular forms of culture. In fact, both the political character of historical memory, and the public debates about how the past is remembered, are essential conditions of democracies.³⁷ After all, democracies require a framework through which human identities are expressed, plurality recognised and differences between peoples articulated. Public cultures of the past, or the ways in which the past, and ideas about history, are produced, circulated and consumed, help provide that framework.

When a diversity of people were encouraged to engage in the research process, new stories and new interpretations emerged. Prominent among these stories were the experiences of people touched in various ways, by the growing power of state and civil institutions, and by levels of domestic, societal and military violence that, to some contemporaries at least, appeared unprecedented.

Democratising historical research also helped to produce a new understanding of how central ideas of race were to British society in the First World War, and how they affected the legacies of the conflict around the British Empire. For well before the guns finally felt silent in November 1918, an imperial British identity, which could be embraced by Indians, South Africans and Trinidadians, was increasingly inflected by ideologies of race, and by an exclusive nationalism, which would crucially help to determine how the conflict, and the experiences of all those affected by it, was remembered and memorialised.³⁸



Mr Mal, an informed contributor to the discussion on the Sikh support to the British Army in WW1. Photograph by Anna Hammerin, captured at the AHRC First World War Centres' Diversity-themed festival in Birmingham 2018.



When a diversity of people were encouraged to engage in the research process, new stories and new interpretations emerged.

³⁵ The Popular Memory Group, 'Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method' in R. Johnson, G. McLennan, B. Schwarz, and D. Sutton (eds.), *Making Histories: Studies in History* (London, 1982), pp. 205–52.

³⁶ Elizabeth Pente and Paul Ward (with Milton Brown and Hardeep Sahota), 'The co-production of historical knowledge: implications for the history of identities', *Identity Papers: A Journal of British and Irish Studies*, 1: 1 (2015), pp. 32–50.

³⁷ Roger I. Simon, *The Touch of the Past: remembrance, earning and ethics* (Basingstoke, 2005).

³⁸ Olusoga, *The World's War*; Ben Wellings, Shanti Sumartojo, Matthew Graves (eds.), *Commemorating Race and Empire in the First World War Centenary* (Liverpool, 2018), pp. 7–20.

Diverse histories

2 Bedford Cres.
Stockbridge
Edinburgh

I received your letter & thought it very kind of you to write me.

My husband & I lived so happy together that it will be a long time before I realise we are parted forever.

I have two children both girls one 3 years the other 1 year & six

I am quite able to work but my children being so young prevents me doing so.

I applied for help from the Widow's Relief Fund. the third time I was granted £2 & they did not give me the money which would have been more useful to me. as I have a few small debts I could have cleared with the £2.

The Lady left the £2 in a shop & I had to get goods for it.

Two pages of a letter from Agnes Ritchie to Mrs Pennyman. From the Teesside University project: Dear Mrs Pennyman, *Letters of the King's Own Scottish Borderers (KOSB) Widows and Orphan Fund*. Image: © Mrs Pennyman Letters, Creative Archive Licence.

Citizen historians of the First World have been asking new questions of the past, seeking out anyone who, in the words of the Diverse Narratives project, 'does not fit the traditional stories or narratives, whether this means via ethnic, national, religious, ideological, or a number of other differences'.³⁹

These histories are often local, or regional, and usually co-produced. Although they are motivated by a wide range of interests and priorities, they have some common features; putting new historical actors at the centre of the national story; providing critical perspectives on nations or groups identified as antagonists or enemies; questioning the idea that history presents us with stories of progress that warrant pride; offering new events, dates and periods as potential markers in the national story; and offering new ideas about the relationships between past, present and future.⁴⁰

One example of these diverse histories is the research into widows who were left to cope not only with the emotional pain and the loss of loved ones but, at the same time, negotiating a welfare landscape in which financial support, and a war widow's pension, were not statutory rights, but a charitable bonus that could be rescinded from those women

judged lacking in moral rectitude.⁴¹ Widowed Agnes Ritchie, mother to two children under the age of three, had to apply three times before she received aid from the Widows' Relief Fund and, even then, doubts about her character meant it was given in kind rather than in cash.⁴² Ritchie's emotional pain, and her precarious financial position, are captured in a digitized archive of letters sent to Mary Pennyman in her capacity as secretary of the King's Own Scottish Borderers Widows and Orphans Fund. Hearing the individual voices of the bereaved remind us, in sometimes heart-breaking terms, that ideas about gender, and specifically about women's place in society and their supposed emotional instability, conditioned their experiences both during the war and in its aftermath. The idea of glorious sacrifice may have dominated public narratives but bereaved women were left vulnerable to poverty, to domestic violence and to physical and psychological illness.

Although ideas of moderation and toleration have long been central to British national identity, conscientious objectors were amongst the thousands of people subjected to campaigns of vilification and intimidation. Somewhere between 16,500 and 23,000 men were conscientious objectors. They came from diverse backgrounds, were motivated by a wide range of reasons including religious belief and socialist politics, and they were subject to widespread scorn and condemnation. Conscientious objectors were seen as cowardly, degenerate, criminal, and as unmanly and unpatriotic. Around 6,000 served jail sentences, often in silence and in solitary confinement, and experiences of physical or psychological mistreatment were common. Medical care was often rudimentary and at least 70 men died in prison.⁴³

The same dismal story, and the same tendency to denigrate and incarcerate, has been identified as a critical part of the experiences of minority communities in the First World War. In the United Kingdom around 75,000 people, including British-born women and children under the age of 14, found themselves classified as 'enemy aliens'. These were nationals of the German, Austro-Hungarian or Turkish empires, or (from October 1915 onwards) Bulgarians. Many of them had lived in Britain for most of their lives and had few or no connections to their countries of origin. A series of regulations, including registration with the local police and restrictions on movement, already constrained their lives before the introduction of a policy of segregation and internment in May 1915. From that date, all male 'enemy aliens' of military age were made subject to internment. Women, children and men over military age were to be repatriated to their country of origin. British-born women who had married German men were also subject to repatriation.

Vibrant Anglo-German communities, and those suspected of being German, were subject to incidents of verbal and physical harassment and assault. After the sinking of the RMS Lusitania by German submarines in 1915, the hostility and xenophobia directed at minority communities intensified and spread. Violent xenophobia, far from being a sporadic feature of national life in the First World War, was a constant presence. Anti-Chinese rioting was seen in London in 1916, 1917 and 1919. There were widespread riots and mob violence in Cardiff, Chesterfield, Glasgow, Hull, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Sheffield and South Shields, as well as across the Empire in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, and Victoria, Canada. German communities were attacked and their shops and houses burnt and vandalised.⁴⁴



I feel I have achieved so much in highlighting Seafarer stories. I often wonder if I am walking along the same streets that he was walking and sharing a space that history has forgotten to mention'.

Asif Shakoor.

Many victims of these attacks were sent to specially designated internment camps, sometimes for their own safety. Over 32,000 German and Austro-Hungarian civilians were interned in Britain between 1914 and 1919 and there were camps in Australia, Barbados, Bermuda and Trinidad, Canada, Egypt, Gibraltar, India, Malta and New Zealand.⁴⁵ Yet, and despite their number, and despite the significance of internment camps to local wartime experiences, there were, until recently, very few signs of this militarized environment on the home front. As historian Tim Grady argued, 'Instead of commemorating the complexities of the conflict, Britain's memory culture focused on more comfortable narratives; British military "sacrifice" on the Western Front quickly replaced any discussion of the internment of the "enemy" at home'.⁴⁶

War widows, conscientious objectors, the interned and the objects of popular prejudice, including those murdered in lynching by mob violence, are diverse narratives. They are among the more difficult, and more painful, stories that make up the national past. They are among the more difficult, and more painful, stories that make up the national past.

³⁹ Nicola Morris, 'Diverse Narratives of WW1', <https://www.diversenarratives.co.uk/> accessed 19 July 2021.

⁴⁰ For more on the philosophy and practice of co-produced histories, and their relationship to diverse narratives see, Paul Ward and Elizabeth Pente, 'Let's change History! Community histories and the co-production of historical knowledge' in Katie Pickles et al (eds.), *History Making a Difference: New Approaches from Aotearoa* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2017); Kevin Myers and Ian Grosvenor, *Collaborative Research: History from Below* (Bristol, 2018); Sarah Lloyd and Julie Moore, 'Sedimented Histories: Connections, Collaborations and Co-production in Regional History', *History Workshop Journal*, 80 : 1 (2015), pp. 234–248;

⁴¹ Janis Lomas, 'The Women Left Behind: soldiers' widows in First World War Britain', <https://www.voicesofwarandpeace.org/portfolio/the-women-left-behind> accessed 29 October 2021

⁴² Agnes Ritchie to Mrs Pennyman, 1 November (no year), Letter 37 at <http://www.dearmrspennyman.com/Browse/Page/?Letter=37&Page=1> accessed 29 October 2021

⁴³ Leicester Memories in Conflict Collective, *Uncovering Resistance: Leicester and Leicestershire in World War One* (Leicester, 2015); Bristol Radical History Group, *Steps Against War* (Bristol, 2020); 'Conscientious Objectors of South Wales. Part 1', <https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/606547> accessed 29 October 2021

⁴⁴ Thomas Brodie, 'Xenophobia' in Daniel et al, *1914-1918-online*.

⁴⁵ Stefan Mainz and Panikos Panayi, *Enemies in the Empire: Civilian Internment in the British Empire during the First World War* (Oxford, 2020).

⁴⁶ Tim Grady, 'Landscapes of Internment: British Prisoner of War Camps and the Memory of the First World War', *Journal of British Studies*, 58 : 3 (2019), pp.543-564.

Sylvie Fisch

Hunting the Hun:

German Communities in the North East during World War 1.



Hunting the Hun project, Memorial Quilt. Image courtesy of Sylvie Fisch.

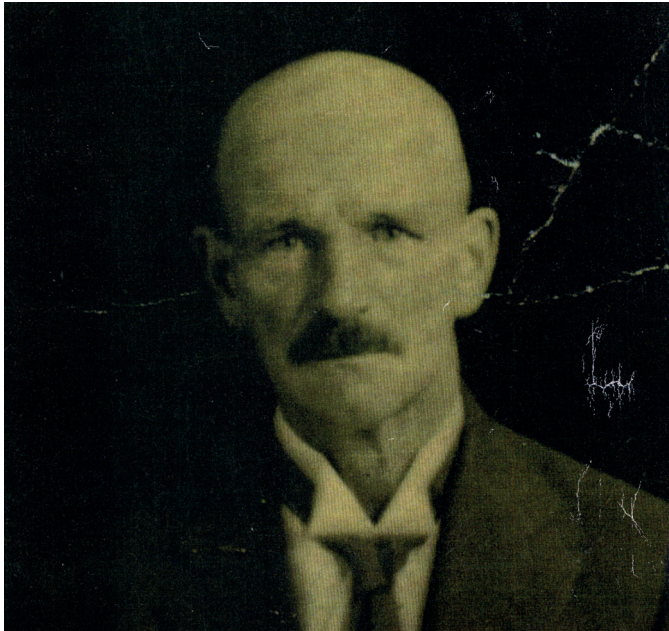
A team of community historians and volunteers set out to uncover some of the individual experiences, the often harsh realities endured by innocent people who suddenly found themselves strangers in their own land.

The project aimed to contribute to a more complex history that highlights diverse cultural memories of the period. Of course, the stories we found illuminate the big issues, the historical developments and socio-political influences.

The team conducted research in the region's archives, including Northumberland Archives, which holds over 300 police files. They recorded the movements and experiences of

foreign nationals from all over the world who temporarily or permanently resided in the area.

There are countless stories of 'ordinary', less publicly visible, people who lived in constant fear, struggled with the authorities over the most trifling matters, were misinformed, harassed, and had to put up with the prying eyes of their neighbours and their anonymous letters to the police.



Theo Fiedler. Image courtesy of Sylvie Fisch.

Carol Hunt reflects:

'Our great-grandfather, Theodor Gotthilf Fiedler, emigrated to England from Germany in 1884, to be apprenticed to a German butcher. By the time of the 1911 census, he had settled in Shadforth, Co. Durham where he worked for the Co-operative stores as a pork and beef butcher, as well as running a small-holding where he reared his own pigs. He married Annie Lowes from Newcastle and the couple had four children.

When war broke out, the family's land was confiscated by the government, in case they signaled to the enemy, and their landlord evicted them. Annie decided to take her three younger children back to her family in Newcastle.

Theo, who was fiercely proud of being German and had never been naturalised, was arrested and sent to the Isle of Man internment camp as an enemy alien. Theo junior, who was 17 at the time, volunteered for the British Army, changing his surname to Fielder, and travelled to the Isle of Man in uniform in a futile attempt to persuade the authorities to release his father. Once in France the only job he was allowed to do was collecting the dead bodies from the battlefield, often under

fire. He did survive the war but, not surprisingly, was severely traumatised and suffered from shell shock.

Annie took a job at Armstrong's factory; it was one of her colleagues there who reported her to the authorities for writing to her interned husband. Annie was arrested and charged with communicating with the enemy'.

The project outreach programme in schools included a trip to Stobs Camp with an educational tour of the former internment camp by Archaeology Scotland. Children worked with a textile artist on a large memorial quilt which was displayed in various public spaces alongside Aston University's *Behind the Wire* exhibition which looked at civilian internment in the British Empire 1914 – 1919.

A series of talks co-produced and delivered with volunteers attracted several descendants of former enemy aliens who shared their family memories, photographs and memorabilia. Talking to descendants made us realise that the FWW is not some distant historical event. They still live with the consequences today.

Sylvie Fisch, Director, Northern Cultural Projects, ncp.cic@gmail.com

Further Resources:

<https://sites.google.com/view/ww1enemyaliens>



Trip to Stobs Camp with Bridgewater Community Primary School. Image courtesy of Sylvie Fisch.

Anti-German riots

Sean Mattimore's grandmother was a member of the Anglo German community, and a victim of anti-German rioting. Sean reflects:

'When they were putting all the shop windows out their son was probably in Gallipoli by then, but there were these people from South Shields putting the windows in and burning out the German shops. This was a subject that never got spoken about at all. My grandmother never mentioned it. There was a whole part of her life just shut off. Obviously it must have been quite traumatic, you have got this little life going on, you're five years old, then your house burns down and then you lose your brother. He was a High School champion in athletics, you kind of go from this 16 year old boy winning all of these trophies and going to Durham University, a good looking man as well, and next thing he's gone, isn't he. My grandmother kept most of her heritage locked away. She didn't speak German at all. It was only when she had a stroke that she started speaking the language again. She was born in 1911. I guess after the riots and everything that had happened you just tried to fit in.' (cited in Northern Cultural Projects, 'Enemy Alien Civilians in North East England, 1914-18' at <https://sites.google.com/view/ww1enemyaliens/publication?authuser=0>)

1919

1919 LIVERPOOL RACE RIOTS

WEDNESDAY 1ST MAY
TO MONDAY 24TH JUNE 2019

THE AFTERMATH OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR MADE 1919 A TURBULENT YEAR, AS SIMMERING TENSIONS ERUPTED INTO RACE RIOTS ACROSS THE WORLD. IN THE UK MAJOR RIOTING BROKE OUT IN THE PORT CITIES INCLUDING CARDIFF, LONDON AND GLASGOW. IN LIVERPOOL THE VIOLENCE INFLICTED ON THE BLACK COMMUNITY LED TO THE DEATH OF BERMUDIAN SEAFARER CHARLES WOTTEN.

THIS EXHIBITION MARKS THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RACE RIOTS IN LIVERPOOL AND IS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN WRITING ON THE WALL, LIVERPOOL RECORD OFFICE AND THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES.



Exhibition banner, 1919 Liverpool Race Riots. Image courtesy of The National Archives. <https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/raising-awareness-of-the-1919-race-riots-in-liverpool/>

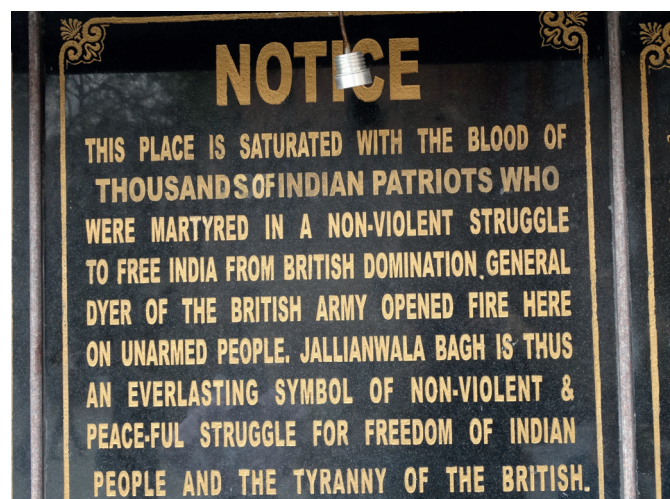
For any new national narrative, 1919, rather than the end of military conflict in 1918, might become a pivotal and symbolic year.

In the British metropole, sections of the white populations in seaport cities formed lynch mobs, attacking the homes and the bodies of local black populations, resulting in widespread damage to property, and the murder of men in Cardiff and in Liverpool.⁴⁷ In the aftermath, the government summarily repatriated some two thousand black people who, it maintained without evidence, represented a threat to the public good. Denounced as indolent and immoral, many of the men had white wives and children who were informally discouraged from leaving Britain for fear of disrupting rigid racial hierarchies in the colonies.⁴⁸

The Aliens Act of 1919 was similarly motivated by a fear of people, or things, identified as foreign, even if they were in many cases actually British. The legislation continued and strengthened wartime restrictions on international movement, employment and political activities, and it became the mechanism for the systematic expulsion of over 30,000 former 'enemy aliens'.

In countries around the world, including British Honduras (Belize), Egypt, India, Iraq, Ireland, Malta, Palestine, Persia (Iran) and Trinidad, anti-colonial movements pressed for political independence and freedom. In those expanding circles, the British Empire, far from providing rights, privileges and resources, was seen as an occupying and hostile power. European claims to racial superiority were badly damaged by the evident destructiveness of the war and by mundane social mixing occasioned by military service.⁴⁹

Imperial claims for the loyalty and affections of black and brown bodies were weakened when, in the aftermath of war, colonial administrations dropped a rhetoric of common imperial cause and turned 'colonial difference', and 'tutelage', into a ruling strategy.⁵⁰ And despite new terminologies, of 'commonwealth' and 'mandate', and new policies of 'development', a diverse range of anti-colonial ideologies and movements became increasingly prominent in the aftermath of the First World War. When anti-colonial movements turned to violent uprisings, as in, for example, Ireland in 1919-21, in India in 1919 and in British Iraq in 1920, the military and policing response was often ruthless, indiscriminate, and destructive. It also remained conditioned by racialized ideas and by making clear distinctions between 'civilised' and 'uncivilised' peoples, that help explain the 'scale and level of brutality in the counterinsurgency campaigns'.⁵²

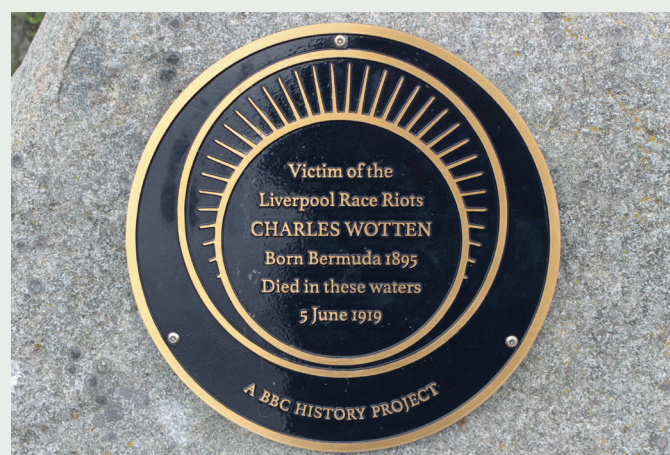


Plaque Memorializing 1919 Amritsar Massacre.

Image credit: Adam Jones. CC BY 2.0. bit.ly/3xzjaSW.



The Aliens Act of 1919 was motivated by a fear of people, or things, identified as foreign, even if they were in many cases actually British.



Close-up of the plaque to Charles Wootten at Queens Dock, Liverpool. Image credit: Phil Nash from Wikimedia Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 & GFDL. bit.ly/3p76Aq1.

⁴⁷ Madeline Heneghan and Emy Onoura, *Great War to Race Riots* (Liverpool, 2017); Kyle Legall (with National Theatre Wales), 'Cardiff 1919: Riots Redrawn' (2020) <https://www.cardiff1919.wales/english> accessed 15 May 2021.

⁴⁸ Jane L. Chapman, *African and Afro-Caribbean Repatriation, 1919-1922* (Basingstoke, 2018).

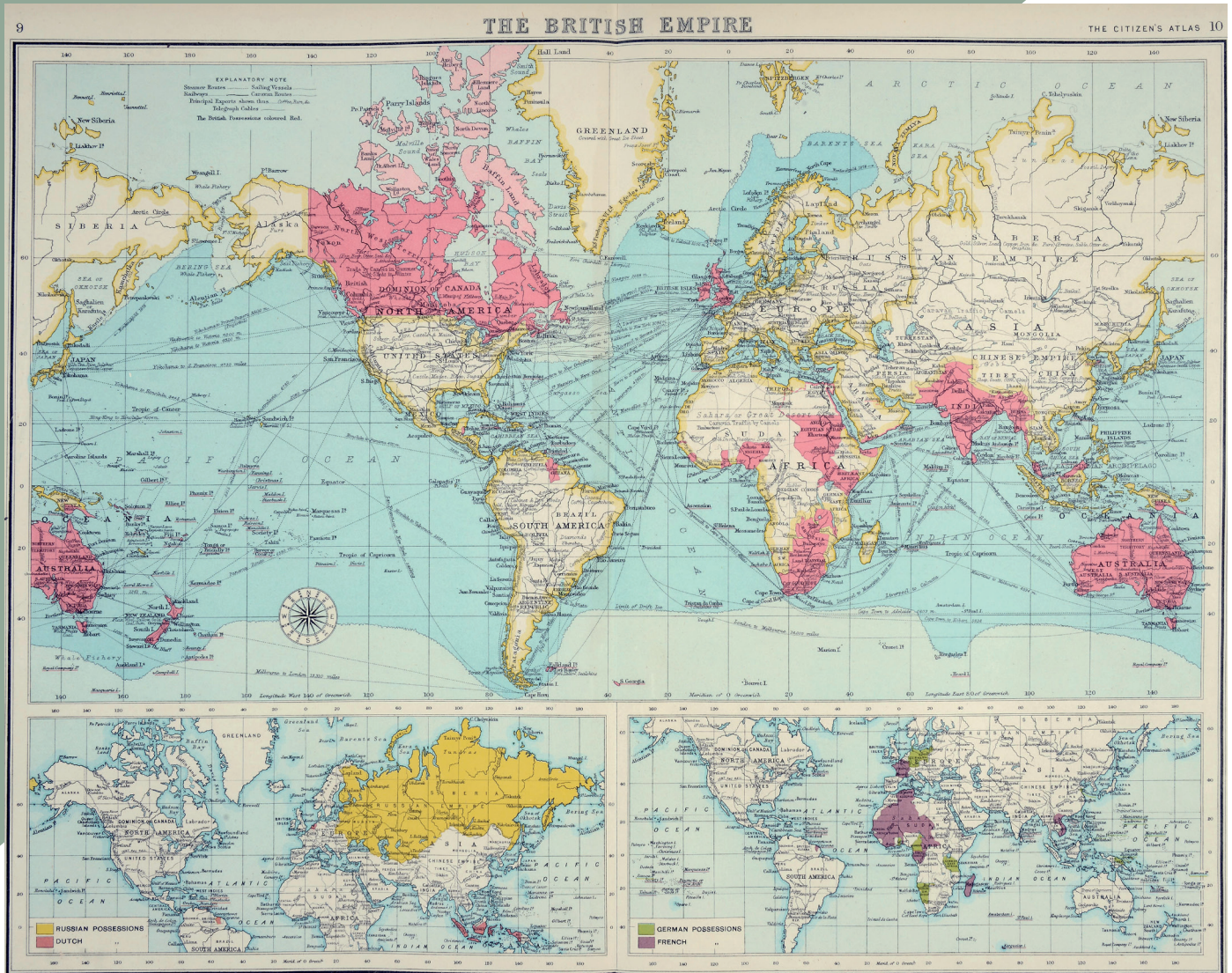
⁴⁹ Kitchen, 'Colonial Empires'; David Omissi, 'Europe Through Indian Eyes: Indian Soldiers Encounter England and France, 1914-18', *English Historical Review*, 122: 496 (2007), pp. 371-396.

⁵⁰ Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, 'Empires after 1919: old, new, transformed', *International Affairs*, 95: 1 (2019), pp. 81-100; Alexander Sydney Kanya-Forstner, 'The War, Imperialism, and Decolonization' in Jay Winter, Geoffrey Parker and Mary R. Habeck (eds.), *The Great War and the Twentieth Century* (London, 2000), pp. 231-262; Elleke Boehmer, *Empire, the national, and the postcolonial, 1890-1920: resistance in interaction* (Oxford, 2005).

⁵¹ Robert Gerwarth, Erez Manela, 'The Great War as a Global War: Imperial Conflict and the Reconfiguration of World Order, 1911-1923', *Diplomatic History*, 38: 4 (2014), pp. 786-800; Chris Ballard, 'Swift injustice: The expedition of imperial punishment', *Journal of Colonialism & Colonial History*, 18: 1 (2017), doi:10.1353/cch.2017.0020.

⁵² Kim A. Wagner, 'Savage Warfare: Violence and the Rule of Colonial Difference in Early British Counterinsurgency', *History Workshop Journal*, 85 (2018), pp. 217-237 (230); Kim A. Wagner, 'Calculated to Strike Terror: the Amritsar Massacre and the Spectacle of Colonial Violence', *Past & Present*, 233: 1 (2016), pp. 185-225; David Leeson, 'Death in the Afternoon: the Croke Park Massacre, 21 November 1920', *Canadian Journal of History* 38: 1, (2003), pp. 43-67; Jon Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain', *Journal of Modern History*, 75: 3, (2003), pp. 557-89.

Reckoning with History



The British Empire, The Citizen's Atlas, 1912. © The National Archives, ref. FO 925/30207.

....those who benefited most from the largesse of Empire were deeply unwilling - even afraid - to face the actions and events that created their wealth and privilege. To my mind, this fear must be faced. Those events are history and a nation can only be strengthened by acknowledging and making peace with that history.

Patricia Cumper

(On researching & writing *Chigger Foot Boys*)

<http://www.strongbackproductions.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Chigger-Foot-Boys-Education-Resource-Pack.Pdf>

Memories and silences



The marriage of Mr and Mrs Murrell, St Mary's Church, 1917, Butetown, Cardiff. Image: © People's Collection Wales. Creative Archive Licence.

It will already be clear that citizen histories of the First World War are diverse in topic, theme and approach. Yet one feature is characteristic and distinctive.

They address the experience of peoples who were, because of attributed differences in race or ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion and ability, or because of their class position, deemed as outside of, or marginal to, the nation. Their marginality has been confirmed in their erratic appearance in historical research, published narratives and in the commemorative activities of the First World War.

The citizen histories presented here followed the rules and procedures of historical research and writing. They were supported by painstaking documentary research and mined a range of primary sources – government records, census data and newspapers – for evidence. They drew on national and local state archives, on military and police records, and those of religious, humanitarian and political organisations. This evidence, though often partial and fragmentary, was located firmly in the workshop of academic and professional history: the archive.

The fact that these histories have remained marginal is, therefore, not because of a lack of primary sources.

The evidence for these citizen histories has often been original -- and immediate -- to the people and events now being recalled. So the marginality of the stories, and the voices and the perspectives they represent, is learned. They were deemed peripheral, insignificant and irrelevant to the dominant story of the nation's war.

It is important to ask the questions:

- ▶ What implications do these diverse histories have for contemporary understandings of national history?
- ▶ If we put different historical actors, and new events, dates and experiences, at the centre of the national story, what happens to the British national story?

We think that there is much to learn from recent research into inequalities in the commemoration of casualties of the First World War.

Kiran Sahota

Addressing silences in the archives



Indian troops stand around or sit on their packs as they prepare to leave their base. © IWM Q 70213.

There are different ways of ensuring history reaches wider audiences. When working on community projects, manuscripts, photographs and archives, often collected through research centres, are crucial because they help to tell our stories. Yet the collection, cataloguing and preservation of historical evidence are processes that have silenced some communities. Museums, libraries and research centres have, historically, ignored the communities we work with.

So when we see an exhibition on display in a museum it is important to remember, and to ask questions about, where items have come from. In the case of many community projects I have worked on, private collections of manuscripts, photographs and artefacts have helped to give voice to people and communities marginalised from mainstream institutions

and histories. Private collectors have donated and shared items. They have provided crucial evidence, and depth, to the stories being shared. This was the case in South Asian history and when I came into contact with Mr Davinder Toor, a leading figure among Sikh art collectors.



Memorial Plaque issued to the immediate next-of-kin of those killed while serving in British and Imperial forces during the First World War. Many eligible families, whose addresses were unknown, never received theirs. © IWM (EPH 2223).

Not only did Mr Toor have objects relating to the First World War, but he also had artefacts dating as far back as Maharaja Ranjit Singh (former Maharaja of the Sikh Empire). During the centenary of the First World War there was increasing demand to learn about Commonwealth contributions. South Asian communities were visiting museums and libraries to learn more about their histories. Yet not every museum or archive had objects, manuscripts and photographs to display. In a way, we are reliant on people like Davinder Toor and his expertise in identifying and purchasing pieces at auction.

But there aren't many South Asian private collectors. When our grandparents migrated to the UK back in the late 1950s and early 1960s their aim was to ensure we had a house. Bricks and mortar were the dream. A place to call home, and ensuring children and grandchildren did not face the same struggles for secure housing and a good education. We have benefitted from their tenacity, and our privilege is to ensure that items from our mother countries can be saved and shared with others.

Hearing Davinder speak about acquiring items from auction houses around the world and knowing the value of past history, helped to shape a conversation around the histories of objects and their ownership. These stories are often ones we are not prepared for, and they open new narratives that academics don't always have access to. One example would be when Davinder Toor went to look at some photographs and, by chance, came across photos of his own grandfather. The realization that his grandfather had been involved in war, and that the photographic evidence of his service was owned by someone else other than his family, was a shock. The ability to purchase and display family photographs helps to make us proud of the contributions older generations made to the war efforts. These photographs are now used by community projects as part of their exhibitions and the narrative of contribution discussed more widely.

It is important that when we look to the future we look at how important private collectors are in the narratives and discussions. Moving away from manuscripts and having an actual object placed in front of you can sometimes tell the story in a different perspective. Ensuring the younger generations have access to these is so important. Not all stories of Indian soldiers were captured by British Officers, so when we have photographs of Indian troops contributing to war efforts, it can engage audiences of all ages. Objects from the Toor Collection of Sikh Art featured on mainstream television documentaries: both the collection and collector were featured on the BBC's 'Lost Treasures of the Sikh Kingdom' (2014) and 'The Stolen Maharaja: Britain's Indian Royal' (2018). The increasing interest in South Asian history that was stimulated by the centenary has meant that museums, archives and communities have turned to private collectors. Their knowledge, and their objects, can help connect past histories to the society we live in today.

The past and future

The centenary allowed communities and organisations to research further and tell a range of stories not possible before. This is due to funding dedicated to Commonwealth stories and also to communities passionate about not being forgotten. In the midst of all this there was more emphasis on women's history being told by women. Yes, more demand for Indian women's stories from the First World War, as they seem to have been overlooked and forgotten, and also for ALL women's stories regardless of race and ethnicity. Women from Wales, Scotland and all over the world had endless responsibilities when men left for war, but somehow the centenary captured the male stories. The archives hold the facts and figures, but more personal stories of emotions and the after-effect of war need to be continued. Everyone working together will help to bring out these stories.



When we see an exhibition on display in a museum it is important to remember, and to ask, where items have come from.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the 'White Man's War'



Pemba Memorial, Mozambique, 'This memorial originally commemorated without names the 81 casualties buried within the African and Indian plots of Pemba cemetery. Their names were recorded in a memorial register but the position of their graves within the cemetery was unknown. In 2011, new panels carrying the names of the dead were added to the memorial.' © Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The Imperial (latterly Commonwealth) War Graves Commission (CWGC) was established by the British government in 1917 to bury bodies of service personnel killed in conflict and to maintain their graves.⁵³

⁵³ Previously the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC)

The CWGC was, and remains, a powerful example of state-sponsored commemoration.⁵⁴ The maintenance of military graves, and the public commemoration developed around them, provided the images, narratives and memorial events, with which to remember, and make sense of, the war and its dead.

Research conducted by Michèle Barrett and John Siblon in the CWGC archives over more than a decade demonstrated clear inequalities in the way the organisation commemorated casualties from both the First and Second World War. In violation of its founding commitment to equality of treatment for the war dead irrespective of rank or religion, Barrett and Siblon's work demonstrated that hundreds of thousands of African names were either missing completely, or were not used to commemorate individuals through inscription on a permanent headstone or memorial.⁵⁵ Their explanations for this situation centred unambiguously on racist imperial attitudes and beliefs.

Faced with this evidence, but only after the powerful documentary film *Unremembered* exposed the scandal on national television in 2019, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission established a Special Committee, composed of independent experts and community representatives, to review historical inequalities in commemoration.⁵⁶ In its report, published in April 2021, the Special Committee noted that a number of 'historical discrepancies in commemoration have been identified by the organisation, and corrections and additions have been made, are in progress or are planned for a number of sites globally.' The Special Committee's new research estimated that between 116, 000 and 350, 000 casualties in East Africa and Egypt were not commemorated. A further number, of between 45,000 and 54,000 casualties, were commemorated unequally across East Africa, West Africa, Egypt and the Middle East.

In explaining these inequalities, the Special Committee pointed to a number of administrative or bureaucratic difficulties. Many casualties had been commemorated, but their memorials did not include individual names because, variously, the 'IWGC was never furnished with their names or places of burial by the military or colonial authorities'; there was a 'scarcity of information'; 'errors [were] inherited from other organisations'; outside Europe 'resources and staff were stretched'.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, the Special Committee did accept that, underpinning all these difficulties, were 'the entrenched prejudices, preconceptions and pervasive racism of contemporary imperial attitudes'. It also made a number of recommendations designed to rectify these problems, including actions that 'acknowledge and accept this difficult history'. In their formal response to the publication of the report, the

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO REVIEW HISTORICAL INEQUALITIES IN COMMEMORATION

|||||
COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES
|||||

MAIDENHEAD
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION. 2021.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) carefully accepted the findings of the Special Committee. They apologised 'unreservedly', but also rather specifically, for the 'historic wrongs of the past' and welcomed an 'opportunity not to rewrite our history, but to complete it'.⁵⁸ The Secretary of State for Defence, Ben Wallace, 'apologise[d] for the failures to live up to the founding principles all those years ago' and reiterated this time span by referring to 'historical failings' and 'historical wrongs'. The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, in comments reported in media around the world, was reportedly 'deeply troubled' by the findings of the investigation and also offered an unreserved apology.⁵⁹ The precise responsibilities of the CWGC, or the Prime Minister or other government representatives, for the commemorative shortcomings was not made explicit, but it seemed to begin and end with a 'patriotic love of country' and a desire to make good failings that were safely located in the past.

⁵⁴ Projects updating and renewing CWGC work include: <http://www.leicestershirewarmemorials.co.uk/download/newsletter/Bulletin04edit.pdf> On the wider significance of bodies and memorialisation see Olivette Otele, Luisa Gandolfo, Yoav Galai (eds.), *Post-Conflict Memorialization: Missing Memorials, Absent Bodies* (London, 2021)

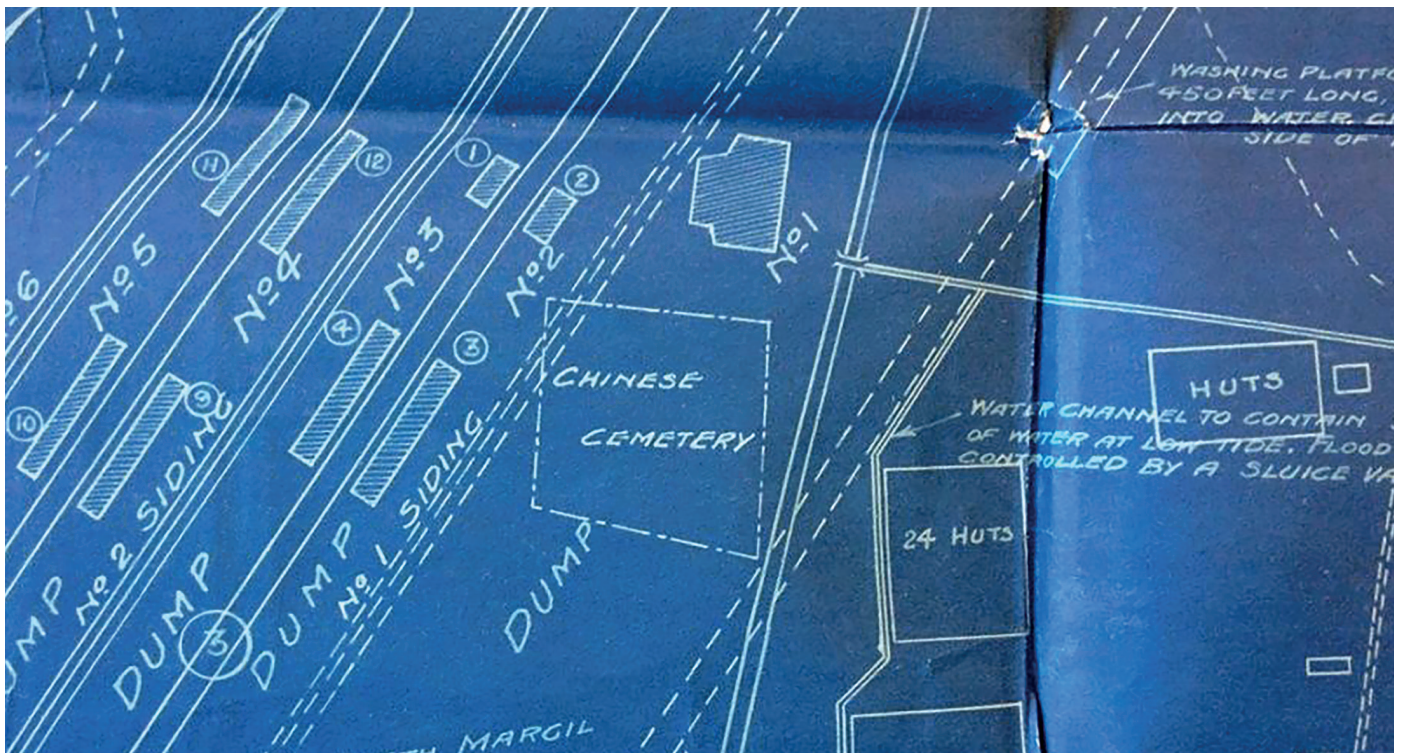
⁵⁵ Michèle Barrett, 'Dehumanization and the War in East Africa', *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, 10 : 3 (2017), pp. 238-252; Michèle Barrett, "'White Graves' and Natives: The Imperial War Graves Commission in East and West Africa, 1918-1919' in Paul Cornish and Nicholas Saunders (eds.), *Bodies in Conflict: Corporeality, materiality, and transformation* (London, 2014), pp. 195-218; John Siblon, "'Race", rank, and the politics of inter-war commemoration of African and Caribbean servicemen in Britain' in Hakim Adi (ed.), *Black British History: New Perspectives* (London, 2019), pp. 52-70.

⁵⁶ *Unremembered — Britain's Forgotten War Heroes*, Channel 4, 10 November 2019 <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/unremembered-britains-forgotten-war-heroes>

⁵⁷ Commonwealth War Graves Commission, *Report of the Special Committee to Review Historical Inequalities in Commemoration* (Maidenhead: Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 2021), pp. 6, 10, 21. <https://www.cwgc.org/media/noantj4i/report-of-the-special-committee-to-review-historical-inequalities-in-commemoration.pdf>

⁵⁸ Commonwealth War Graves Commission, *Commission Response to the Report of the Special Committee and its Review into Historical Inequalities in Commemoration* (Maidenhead, 2021) <https://www.cwgc.org/media/mhnjtpka/commissioners-response.pdf> [accessed 20 July 2021]

⁵⁹ Paul Muldoon, 'A reconciliation most desirable – shame, narcissism, justice and apology', *International Political Science Review*, 38 : 2, (2017), pp. 213-226.



1919 map of the village of Magil, on the banks of the Euphrates, near Basra in Mesopotamia (Iraq) showing the Inland Water Transport depot. A small patch of land is identified as a Chinese Cemetery. According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 227 bodies were interred, all unnamed casualties, who worked for the Chinese Labour Corps. Credit: British Library blog. © British Library Board and available under a Creative Commons Attribution Licence.



The maintenance of military graves, and the public commemoration developed around them, provided the images, narratives and memorial events, with which to remember, and make sense of, the war and its dead.

Nonetheless, official recognition of, and apologies for, the injustices of unequal historical commemoration were widely welcomed. David Lammy, who had presented the *Unremembered* documentary and done much to publicise the historical research underpinning it, called it a 'watershed moment', whose most important lesson was: 'we cannot hide from the worst parts of our history if we want to move forward as a nation'.⁶⁰

However, while there may be welcome changes in the commemoration of the First World War dead, there is little evidence to suggest that a more important lesson has been learnt, or that there is any clear idea of what the lesson is. Lammy's own formulation articulated the commemorative failures in explicitly emotional terms: 'it is a great travesty and a stain and a shame that this country failed to [honour] black and brown people across Africa, India and the Middle East' who died for their country. Yet there are reasons to doubt whether feelings of shame, and public apologies for the failings located in the past, can help us to understand the power of the national past.

Shame is fundamentally inward-looking. It is associated with a failure to look honestly at oneself in the mirror, and with pain that results from failing *oneself*. Resulting apologies for acts that are configured as 'mistakes', and as matters of 'regret', may be primarily concerned to restore the wholeness and unity of the nation.⁶² It is far from certain that these forms of narcissistic apology will translate into a national history that puts the experiences, or the interests, of marginalised others at the centre of the national past. For that, we argue, it is necessary to think differently about relationships between pasts, presents and futures.

⁶⁰ 'Commonwealth war graves: PM "deeply troubled" over racism', 26 April 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56840131> accessed 29 October 2021; David Lammy, 'This war graves report shows Britain must face its colonial past with honesty', *The Guardian*, 23 April 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/apr/23/war-graves-report-britain-colonial-past-soldiers-died-unremembered-race>.

⁶¹ House of Commons, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates: The Official Report* (22 April 2021, volume 692, column 1167 [online] <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-04-22/debates/81850D1C-F3A8-4130-A808-666B7C0D65E/CommonwealthWarGravesCommissionHistoricalInequalitiesReport> accessed 28 July 2021

⁶² Muldoon, 'A reconciliation most desirable', p.220.

Reparative Histories



Image courtesy of Federica Ciotti - @fedeciotti (Twitter) - www.federicaciotti.com

In the last section, we saw that the state, organisations in civil society, and the politicians, scholars and administrators who work in them, often express the desire to correct, and to complete, national history.

NO MORE WAR

Haringey's First World War Conscientious Objectors



Hundreds of Haringey men stood up to say NO MORE WAR in 1916 by choosing to become Conscientious Objectors and refusing to fight in the First World War.

NO MORE WAR tells an alternative tale of bravery and courage from a forgotten part of Haringey's History.

Bruce Castle Museum
Lordship Lane, Tottenham, N17 8NU. Tel: 020 8808 8772.
Email: museum.services@haringey.gov.uk

Nearest Tube: **Seven Sisters**
Buses: Lordship Lane / Wood Green / Tottenham Bus: 243 / 123
Mainline Station: **Bruce Grove**

Exhibition opening times
Wednesday - Sunday 1pm - 5pm
Until 20th December 2015

peace pledge union

Supported by **The National Lottery**
through the Heritage Lottery Fund

Haringey Council

'Pasts', in these projects, are never really past. Instead, the pasts investigated by citizen historians were an active and dynamic component of the present. These were histories as they are lived; enmeshed with psychic needs, laden with emotion, and a crucial component of personal and social identity.⁶³ Citizen historians often know the texture of these marginalised histories because of the depth of their relationships with communities. In working with individuals, groups and communities, citizen historians embody an emotional authenticity that often makes them a trusted partner, a confidant with whom to share, and validate their significance and value.

We think that the excavation of these lived, unofficial and marginal forms of historical knowledge have considerable potential. Unofficial histories provide a resource for trying to think differently about pasts, presents and possible futures. This can be the case for both individuals and groups. Some projects worked with individuals who have experienced personal trauma. Exploring historical stories, and writing and performing historical fiction and drama, can contribute to the validation and processing of traumatic events, even if it is clear that citizen historians are not, and do not attempt to be, therapists.



Gaynor Legall next to a photograph featuring her father and great uncle at 'BAME Seafarers in the First World War', University of Portsmouth, January 2018.

Both academic and citizen historians, community development workers and heritage practitioners also sometimes present their work as correcting historical silences and providing a more accurate record of the past. The work presented here persuasively demonstrates the achievement of those aims.⁶³

Yet, we argue that citizen historians have also helped to demonstrate something more than, and profoundly different to, completing the 'historical record', and the archival and interpretative skills associated with professional or scientific History. In working closely with individuals, families and community groups, citizen historians have become skilled at facilitating, and working with, that apparently more private sense of the past that operates among individuals and social groups. So even while they worked on, and contributed to, a major national commemoration, they also encountered fragments of familial stories. These were sometimes half-remembered and inconclusive tales, with gaps and silences in knowledge. At other times they were stories with deep significance for individuals, families and communities, and experienced with an intensity, and sometimes a rage, that mirrored that importance. Some projects created these memories by reconstructing, or imagining, the experiences of both real and fictional historical actors.⁶⁴

⁶³ There are now, for example, marked graves and memorials to some of the Black African soldiers who fought in the First World War. A memorial to the 306 British soldiers executed for desertion and cowardice was installed in the National Memorial Arboretum in 2001. After a long 'Shot at Dawn' campaign, in which citizen historians and community organisations were prominent, a posthumous pardon was granted to these soldiers in 2016.

⁶⁴ Hidden Histories, Hidden Historians, 'Project Toolkits' <https://manchesterhistories.co.uk/getinvolved/toolkits> accessed 16 September 2021.

⁶⁵ Laura Jane Smith, *The Uses of Heritage* (Abingdon, 2006).

Frances Nutt, of Tandem Theatre

On her their lives depend



Eve's space performance group: Waving Goodbye to the Men. Credit: *On Her Their Lives Depend*, Tandem Theatre.

Tandem Theatre works in partnership with women's organisations and organisations addressing homelessness in Bolton, Salford and Manchester.

Three drama groups explored the theme of WWI and the impact it had on women. They focused on certain issues such as poverty, loss and the change of women's status. The women also learnt how the war affected their local area by visiting their local museum and receiving a guided tour.

One of the groups' overriding themes was not only the loss the women would have felt when their loved ones lost their lives in the war but how to deal with that loss.

The women used the knowledge they learnt through the workshops and from the museum visits to create their own unique piece of theatre to perform. These performances were shown at their respective centres and at their local museums.

Fran Nutt, of Tandem Theatre, reflects on the On Her Their Lives Depend project:

Most of the participants that we work with have low academic attainment, and most of them don't have English and Maths, or a History GCSE qualification. And I think what's really fascinating from my point of view, is that you hear 'Oh, I can only do history if I can memorise dates, if I can write an essay'.

And my response is, 'no, you can just enjoy it, you can learn about it without having to write an essay or memorise a load of dates'.

That's why I love doing projects where it's practice-based learning. We can explore elements of history that even if you were to do a history qualification, you might not necessarily explore. Through doing the project and discovering that some women might be relieved when men left for war, we're able to highlight something that isn't talked about a lot.

We're not there to address trauma. We call it being 'one-step removed'. We address an issue through exploring a character. People ended up being a character that reflected an issue that they were facing themselves. So we're exploring women in the First World War and the role of women and how difficult it was for women. Also how sometimes when men left, women became a bit more independent. And actually, was it a bit of a relief for some women to not have their husband present or have any kind of male presence? And it was interesting that discussions of people's own experience came into what we were exploring.

For one woman, it was very much about the abuse of power that men would hold over women, especially at that time, but it always bled into a conversation about her own experiences of the abuse of power.

And there was another woman who had a male partner, and it was a very unhealthy and potentially dangerous relationship for her to be in. She really wanted to focus on a character who was deeply in love and really missed her husband. And that was quite complicated from our point of view, trying to facilitate this discussion of what is a healthy relationship and what is an unhealthy relationship through exploring this character.

And, because we weren't therapists, that was more challenging, but there was definitely a sense of, this is what I'm experiencing, and this is how I can relate to the stories of these women I'm hearing about in the First World War.

<https://onhertheirlivesdepend.wordpress.com/>

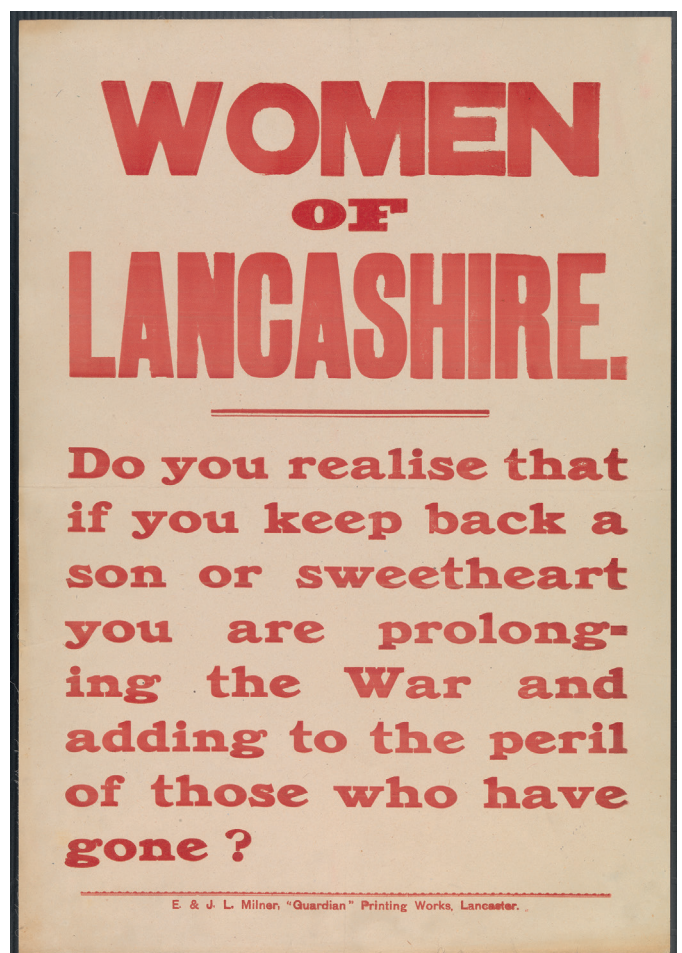
In societies with histories of violent conflict it has become common to argue that the recovery of historical truth is a precondition for establishing future peace. Public spaces for victims of violence and survivors of traumatic events, alongside techniques for sharing historical stories, are seen as integral to a process of psychological, cultural and political repair. In some states, South Africa and Argentina among them, formal national truth commissions have led processes of national remembering.⁶⁶

In others, including Northern Ireland, civil society groups, like *Healing Through Remembering*, have developed grass roots projects, and guidance for their conduct, covering a wide range of historical practices including 'truth, 'recovery and acknowledgement', 'storytelling' and 'commemorative activities'.⁶⁷ These forms of engagement, or reckoning, with the past do not come with a simple blueprint. These may seek to commemorate the military sacrifice of ancestors; to celebrate, and find inspiration, from political or social and religious movements; to set out the common pasts that serve to define minority groups; to find nostalgic reassurance in a different, but known, world or to uncover some truths thought hidden. These, and other, grassroots or marginalized histories are a vital part of a democratic society. They provide spaces in which identities can be articulated and defended, and shared and validated.⁶⁸

Crucially, however, grassroots memory practices also provide spaces in which pasts can be critically interrogated, in which the actions committed in the name of the nation may be identified, faced and discussed. Citizen historians know well that these can be dynamic and contested spaces, where different versions of the past can collide and where emotions may run high. They are, after all, key actors in these spaces.

As we have seen, their commitment to investigating and interrogating the national past was both encouraged and lauded when the key themes of their work were around military sacrifice and contribution to the national war effort.

Yet when the work of citizen historians moves into more 'difficult' territory, investigating racial prejudice, colonial violence, and discussing the question of reparations for example, it has been widely and roundly denounced. The successive 'scandals', from war graves to Windrush, are not exceptional events. They are, as the 'Black Lives Matter' and 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaigns have once again made clear, systemic features of a society founded on a racialized citizenship.⁶⁹ We think there is a need to confront and address these histories, histories of the marginalised and the excluded, in democratic spaces built on a willingness to listen and to learn. To do that, we will also need to learn to identify, understand and manage the emotions that can tell us much about the legacies of the past and act as a resource for change.



Poster: WOMEN OF LANCASHIRE. Do you realise that if you keep back a son or sweetheart you are prolonging the War and adding to the peril of those who have gone? E. and J. L. Milner, 'Guardian' Printing Works, Lancaster. © IWM Art.IWM PST 6061.

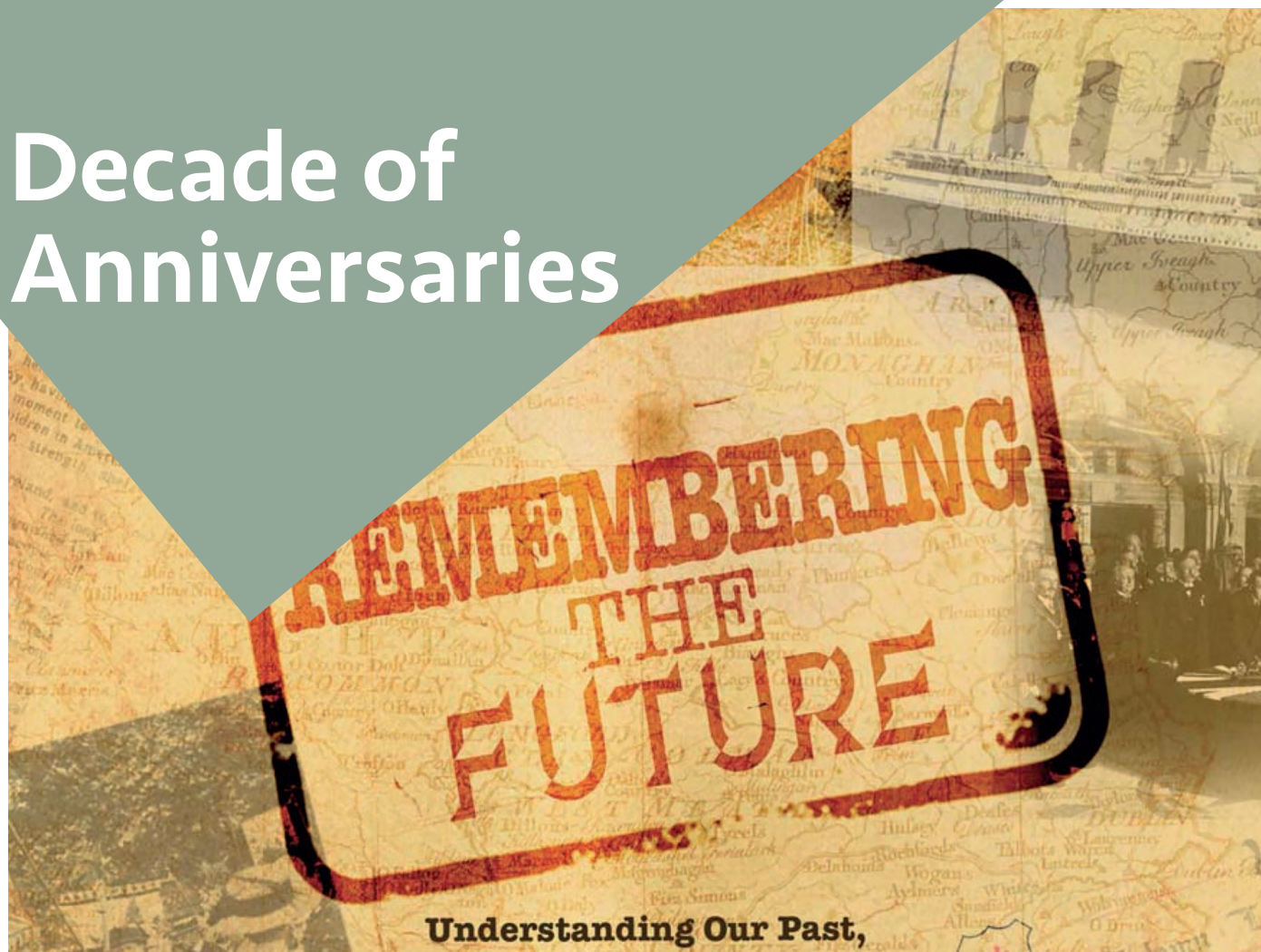
⁶⁶ Berber Bevernage, *History, Memory and State-Sponsored Violence: Time and Justice* (London, 2012).

⁶⁷ Healing Through Remembering, Themes of Work, <http://healingthroughremembering.org/what-we-do/themes-of-work/> accessed 20 September 2021.

⁶⁸ Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, *Decade of Anniversaries Toolkit: Understanding Our Past, Shaping Our Future*, Update 2018 (Belfast 2018), p.4.

⁶⁹ Kenetta Hammond Perry, 'Undoing the work of the Windrush narrative' (2018), <https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/undoing-the-work-of-the-windrush-narrative/> accessed 15 July 2021.

Decade of Anniversaries



In Northern Ireland the Decade of Anniversaries project set out to create a set of principles that could guide historical commemoration in a divided society.

Those principles were developed in partnership by the Community Relations Council (CRC) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (National Lottery Heritage Fund) in order to inform events related to the Decade of Anniversaries:

- 1) start from the historical facts;
- 2) recognise the implications and consequences of what happened;
- 3) understand that different perceptions and interpretations exist;
- 4) show how events and activities can deepen understanding of the period;
- 5) all to be seen in the context of an 'inclusive and accepting society'.

These principles were developed over the course of two years as a method that could assist both CRC and NLHF as well as others involved in Decade of Anniversaries events, informing practice and providing guidance for the development of commemorations. The origin of these best practice principles was in discussions at grassroots level in civil society. They included the CRC and NLHF, and a wide range of individuals

and groups (including historians, commentators, community groups, government, museums and heritage services, etc.) between 2010 and 2011.

The 'Remembering the Future' conference in March 2011 was the beginning of a conversation which raised the issue of remembering in a public space in light of the Decade of Anniversaries. The process of developing the principles enabled organisations connected with the CRC and NLHF to engage with issues around culture and identity, rights, concepts of democracy, and political change as well as acknowledging the legacy of the conflict in the context of Northern Ireland. The principles were then formally adopted in 2011 and have since been distributed and utilised in on-going Decade of Anniversaries commemorative events.

Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, *Decade of Anniversaries Toolkit*:

Understanding Our Past, Shaping Our Future, Update 2018 (Belfast 2018), p.4. Reproduced with permission.

<https://www.community-relations.org.uk/sites/crc/files/media-files/final%20CRC-Toolkit%20Revised%202018.pdf>

Emotions and Legacies

Summary of discussion between school students, politicians , funders, heritage professionals, academics, activists and local residents on the interconnections between heritage and community, 2019, Cardiff West Community High School. Credit: Anna Hammerin.

⁷¹ M. Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding* (London, 2012)



'Significant Figures: remembrance through making', is a collection of work with loss and remembrance at its core, marking the act of remembrance carried out by Elsie, for her boyfriend Cecil, killed in action in 1916. Credit: Mary Crabb, <https://www.crabbaskets.com/basketry-projects/>

One result of strategic ignorance is that individuals and groups experience sociocultural invalidation and chronic stress related to prejudice, discrimination and stigma. Being unable to identify people and groups like themselves in the past, communicates to individuals and groups that their beliefs, needs, emotions and actions are wrong, inappropriate or inconsistent with the majority view.⁷³

Downplaying and dismissing emotions, or valorising only those emotions that are positively evaluated or judged appropriate, helps to embed nationalist or racial narratives that are exclusionary. Instead, identifying emotional responses to the past, including the family of emotions around anger, fear, sadness and disgust, can help us to understand ourselves, and others, in new ways. After all, these emotions can be guides to the legacies of the past that live on in psychic terms. The emotions, identifications and feelings that we live and experience are partly constituted by the past and the way it is reproduced and circulated in society.⁷⁴

It follows that producing, circulating and discussing different versions of the national past may give us the resources to imagine the present and possible futures in new ways. New histories may give us new versions of Britishness, ones more open and appealing to communities with heritage around the world, precisely because these new histories come to terms with those stories that remain hidden.



Producing, circulating and discussing different versions of the national past may give us the resources to imagine the present and possible futures in new ways.



Sources make visible the emotions and prejudices of the past, including derogatory representations of working people: sketch from 1921. Image credit: Sarah Lloyd.

⁷³ Cecilia L. Ridgeway, 'Linking Social Structure and Interpersonal Behavior: A Theoretical Perspective on Cultural Schemas and Social Relations', *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 69 : 1 (2006), pp. 5-16.

⁷⁴ Sandra Jovchelovitch, 'Narrative, Memory and Social Representations: A Conversation Between History and Social Psychology', *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 46 (2012), pp. 440-456 (2012); Alison Twells, Penny Furness, Sadiq Bhanbhro and Maxine Gregory, "'It's about giving yourself a sense of belonging': community-based history and well-being in South Yorkshire", *People, Place and Policy*, 12 : 1 (2018), pp.8-28.



Credit: Kiran Sahota.

Kiran Sahota, Believe in Me (CIC)

Journey from Home project



Credit: Kiran Sahota.

When creating the *Journey from Home* project the thought with the exhibition was always to include the communities that we would be visiting.

With different cities demanding to know more about the South Asian contribution in war, and in society, I thought that we should search for people that might have personal stories that we could share. This was easier said than done. I quickly realised that it was not straightforward for community members to participate in this project. I am from a South Asian background (I am British Indian) and I was initially puzzled that community members seemed unwilling to share personal stories now they had the opportunity. It was not until I sat down with some members in Leicester, Derby and Bradford that I realised that it was not that they did not want to share their stories. Instead, and because community members said they'd never been asked to share family histories and

memories, they either didn't know how to, or felt unsure about doing so. One of the achievements of the project was, I think, to enable community members to come forward, to help them feel that their narratives were properly a part of the centenary of the First World War and that history does not belong solely to academics.

Manny Kaur Taylor and her daughter Greta Taylor were members that I had spoken to. They trusted me to hear and share their story. Manny had items belonging to her great grandfather, Sham Singh, who was involved in the First World War. For years Manny had taken her children to museums asking for more information on Indian involvement in the



Credit: Kiran Sahota.

First World War. But there was never anyone to help. When I met with her, and her daughter Greta, they brought along two letters from Lady Chelmsford to Inder Kaur, the wife of Sham Singh. Along with the letters was a Death Penny that she had been given by her father when she was researching her family tree. For Manny Kaur researching her family tree was important because she wanted her children to know about their family history and their links to India.

Manny married a British white man. Her children are of mixed heritage. They wanted to know about her family and her Indian background. Manny knew her great grandfather had contributed to the national war effort, but she didn't know more than that. The *Journey from Home* project helped to provide some answers.

At one stage in the project, Greta and Manny were invited to Leeds Museum to share their story at an event with a community focus. The room was full and attended by senior

Armed Forces representatives, academics, young people and, clearly in the majority, community members. The event aimed to demonstrate how everyday family stories, like those of Manny, Greta and Sham Singh, were just as much a part of history as the work done by academics and professional scholars. Greta explained to the audience how proud she felt about her heritage and, although she never got to meet Sham Singh, how his story has helped her with the questions and the feelings she has around identity and belonging. Greta explained how she was often conflicted on where she belonged. Her group of White British friends did not understand either the importance of her family history to her, nor the struggles she faced trying to research her family history. During the event both Manny and Greta wept as they recounted their struggles of trying to research their family history in what seemed like a void. Neither community members, nor heritage organisations like museums and archives, had known much about Indian involvement in the First World War, until the *Journey from Home* project. There seemed to be a lack of interest and support for finding out – especially for people who had not studied history beyond that learnt in school.

Personal stories of everyday servicemen and women are what have been missing when researching past histories. The funding, collaborations and project allowed community members to come forward and share the missing links of history that we often read in books or sometimes see on an exhibition board. During the talk Manny was holding up the original letters and her grandfather's Death Penny. There were gasps from museum staff and academics as we know only too well how important and rare these items are to find in their original condition. After the talk we spoke to Manny about how research organisations can help in protecting these precious letters and items. These family stories are vital if we are to piece together a history that is accurate and that reflects all of the communities in modern day Britain.



Credit: Kiran Sahota.

Garry Stewart,
Recognize Black Heritage and Culture

Reflections on the Centenary and Remaking Histories of the Nation

Stories of Omission:

Conflict and the experience of Black soldiers



THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Garry Stewart, founder of Recognize Black Heritage and Culture, in conversation with Ian Grosvenor

Ian Grosvenor: How would you describe *Recognize*? Why did you start your First World War project? And how did you get people together to work on it?

Garry Stewart: I started *Recognize* back in 2008. And it wasn't actually to do with World War One. It was in response to the fact that President Obama was elected in America. From there, we developed and got involved in community work and projects. Then in 2013, Birmingham City Council organised a

round table to discuss Birmingham's part in commemorating the World War One centenary. It was through this meeting and these conversations that we started to understand what projects were, how we could deliver them, how we could develop *Recognize* and how we could develop as individuals within the organisation. It was also about communicating with other community organisations. There must have been about 55 of them at that meeting, all talking about their plans for the centenary. *Recognize* came on board as an organisation that wanted to make sure that the African Caribbean community were represented, as in our short research time we'd notice that we always seem to be left out.



Men of the British West Indies Regiment cleaning their rifles on the Amiens Road near Albert, September 1916. © IWM Q 1201.

I remember reading David Cameron's speech, when he announced £50 million put aside for the centenary. Then Baroness Warsi invited about 60 UK community groups to the Home Office in London, paid for our expenses and the first thing she said is, 'I want to make sure that all you groups here today tell the story of your communities, the centenary can't just be considered as a whitewash'. And it was interesting, everybody was looking around and saying, can you elaborate on that a bit more? She went through all these nations and groups that she'd assembled -- the African Caribbean community, Jewish community, women, Irish -- and said, it was a World War, a global war. We should make sure that the stories of those people who took part are told, and normally these voices are missed out. And I think that was the driving factor for myself and all those other community groups that produce work or work in partnerships. I think that we were all driven by that and not just by the centenary.

IG - So when you started your centenary project, *Stories of Omission*, you obviously had conversations about the directions it could go in. Did it go in directions that you expected?

GS - I think we had this grandiose idea of what we would do, and as with all projects and people who are new to this, we start with this blue sky thinking on what we want to do, and then we end up closer to the earth. We only can manage so much. I think for me, it was really understanding how to manage budgets, and what we can do realistically. One of the biggest issues that we found was people's time as most people work during the day and do this as a hobby, as a volunteer. We really appreciate the volunteers. But we're kind of hampered, if they have a busy week at work, and they're not really wanting to inject time into these projects, we then lose that time. At

some point, I think we were like beg, borrow and stealing people's time, knocking on doors and saying, can you really get this done, because we've committed to deliver it?

IG - Did the project plan change from where you thought it would be at the beginning when you first discussed it with the group you had?

GS - I remember that when we talked about our original themes, we had this great idea of looking at music, but some of this research hasn't been done before. So you're not just going to archives and libraries and books to find this information. You're having to really dig for it. And that's what became time consuming. While some work had been done on music, it was not in the depth that we required. And the volunteers became despondent when they couldn't find information that they expected to.

IG - You got to the end and the outcome was a very good publication. Did it surprise you to get to that end?

GS - Yes, because there were several times when we thought that the project might get away from us. So when I see the *Stories of Omission* book there's a bit of pride in taking it out and saying to the volunteers, you've created this piece of work. We had the mentorship and the experience of people around who delivered projects from an academic point of view, but now we see a community organisation engage its community volunteers, creating what is really considered an outstanding piece of work. Not just in the content, but also the appearance of the book. It's been professionally designed and had professionals working on it all the way through. It gave the volunteers a chance to see how they delivered this output.

IG - What was the reaction from the community when it was finished?

GS - I'd say 'wow.' The community saw something that connects with them, they looked at it, saw the pictures and saw people start to read the actual information and have a clear understanding of it. This was a story that they hadn't really been told or taught across Caribbean islands or among community groups here. When we went to schools, whilst it was normal for children to study World War One, what they were now doing was looking and saying these people look like me and represent me. And it was much more than that for me. It was also getting an understanding of the Caribbean today and how we are able to relate that back to World War One.

IG - How would you describe your personal journey?

GS - It's been a real career move for me. I always had ideas about what I wanted to do. I've always enjoyed history, but never been in that position to actually explore it further. And because it was a topic that I was keen on as well, it then led me to explore other aspects. How do you put this together? How do you create it? How do you budget for it? How do you deal with the problems from it as well? Doing the research then got me engaged in more community research. And it also was really good for me to be able to go back to the community and say, Look, I've been doing this work, I now have an understanding, let's create some more work from it. What are the other topics you want to discuss or create similar to *Stories of Omission*? Part of my own personal development is that

I went to university after this and studied the Black Studies degree at BCU. And I don't think that would have happened without me being part of *Stories of Omission*.

IG - How did you feel when the project finished?

GS - When we talk at community events some people come just to listen. But sometimes they come to tell a story that they've probably held for years and weren't given the space or time to actually talk about. And one of the great things that we love is being able to say, people, we give you the topic, and then you can come and share with us. And we found out so many more stories. I'll give you an example. One of my neighbours who I've known for about 20/25 years. He knew I was in the army back in the day. But he hadn't ever spoken about his connection. And then one day he saw me in my uniform going on a Remembrance Sunday parade. He says, I'm going back to Jamaica in a couple of weeks. I've got some pictures I want to share with you. And then he told me a whole story about how his great grandfather fought in World War One. He's got all the pictures and documents locked in Jamaica, but he'd never looked at them and he had nowhere to talk about them. And it was interesting, because I could see that he was proud now that he had the space to tell the story that he said has been locked in his loft for years. There are people we know amongst us who are now able to talk about their families and explore their own histories.

Legacy

Returning Home

Because of the Taranto mutiny, concerns about disillusioned Caribbean soldiers joining together to seek revenge meant that the first main shipload returning to Jamaica was met by a warship and a military guard on the wharf. However, a warm reception awaited the men from local residents:

'The town was gaily decorated, the streets were packed and several prominent persons made speeches' (Howe, 2002: 191).

In London, the Victory Parade of 19 July 1919 celebrated the end of the war on a vast scale. Thousands of troops marched in this celebratory parade, including allied forces, but not the BWIR:

'The British West Indies Regiment were unable to be represented in the procession on account of the fact that their demobilisation is almost completed' (*The Times*, 21 July 1919).

The joy of returning home was often short lived when the reality of their new life was known:

'Disenchanted soldiers and angry workers unleashed a series of protest actions in... Jamaica, Grenada and especially in British Honduras. The first large group of ex-servicemen arrived in British Honduras on 8 July 1919 and received a grand welcome, but by the night of 22 July they were involved in a major disturbance in the capital' (Howe & Marshall, 2001: 123).

“When the disgruntled BWIR soldiers began arriving back in the West Indies they quickly joined a wave of worker protest resulting from a severe economic crisis produced by the war (Howe & Marshall, 2001: 122)”

The BWIR and the West India Regiment were both disbanded in 1927. Caribbean soldiers were disillusioned not only by how they were treated during the war but also after they returned to their native islands, where they found themselves quickly forgotten. Pensions and medical treatment were not forthcoming as promised.

Some of the returning men went on to use their experience from the First World War to better their lives or to take on a second fight for betterment of the Caribbean, becoming actively involved in politics, such as Norman Manley, who went on to become the Premier of Jamaica.

FRANCE TO AMERICA

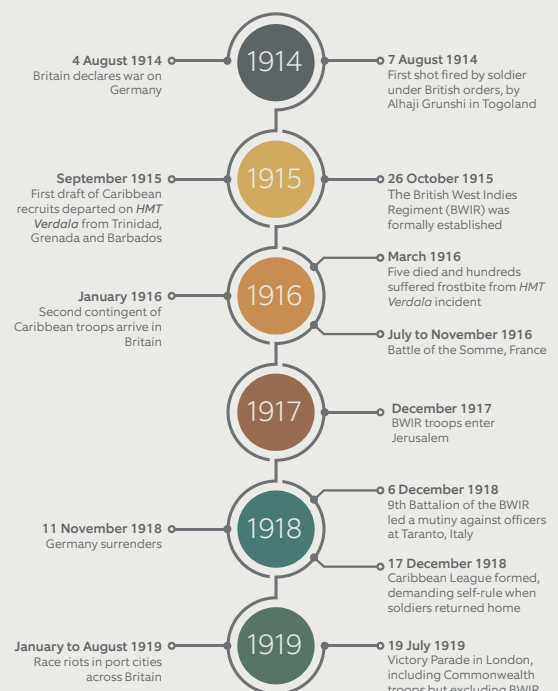
📍 What did the journey home feel like? This image gives an indication: 'Waiting to sight land (only 10 days more)' is written on the photograph. Another records 4,000 men being on board this troop ship.

'803rd Pioneer Infantry Battalion on the U.S.S. Philippine (troop ship) from Brest harbor, France, July 18, 1919'.

Library of Congress: Gladstone Collection 14024/43



Timeline





An unknown soldier, close to the Somme frontline in France, photographed by Louis and Antoinette Thuillier. Thousands of their fragile glass plate negatives were discovered in 2011 in the farmhouse where they were taken, including images of Black volunteers who served with the Royal Engineers. Image courtesy of the Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth: The Louis and Antoinette Thuillier Collection.

IG - Why do you think that people didn't come out and talk about these issues before?

GS -The title, *Stories of Omission*, speaks for itself. The experience of black soldiers had not been considered and we had to dig a lot deeper. Many people who went from the Caribbean to fight in WW1 did so out of economic need, some for a sense of adventure, and some because the Caribbean was financially broke. But there was also a lot of animosity with people saying, well, why would you want to go and fight in a White Man's War? The war had nothing to do with Jamaica, or with Barbados, Grenada, Antigua, but they all sent men to fight. When the men returned, some were embarrassed and didn't talk about their experiences because they were treated so badly before, during and after the war. *Stories of Omission* allows people to connect with this story. In the Caribbean people were warned again and again not to go and when they were not awarded pensions, pay and medals, they felt like they'd been really duped when they returned. It was better to just say, I've been overseas.

How can these stories be understood, if they're not told by the people themselves?

IG - What key lessons did you learn not just about the projects that you were involved with, but through participating in the centenary commemoration?

GS - As I'd served in the military, it's really interesting that it was during the centenary that I really found out about Caribbean and African contributions, as well as from other nations that we would just never have heard of otherwise. I do remember a conversation when a man, who was an academic, said, 'Oh, we want to help you to tell the story'. And I replied, 'but you've had 99 years to do that. And you haven't done a good job so far.' And he was quite offended. I went on to explain that for 100 years, most countries have been written out of histories of the war, with only Dominion countries included. Now people talk about black soldiers being recruited within the Dominions. And the history is not just about soldiers, it's about how those countries became politicised and it's about life on their home fronts.

One of the barriers to community participation is working with funding institutions and organisations. We did complete the project with amazing guidance from Nicola (Dr. Gauld) and from you, Ian.

IG - The title *Remaking Histories of the Nation* can be seen as very challenging to received notions of the past. What future do you think there is for the type of research you have been doing?



The second Bahamas contingent marching through Nassau, November 1915. © IWM Q 52372.

➡ These men are not dressed in the usual civilian clothing of the ship's crew but are wearing the British Navy uniform of an officer or midshipman, while Black men wearing ordinary ratings uniforms are stood nearby, just out of shot to their right.



West Indians for Navy (war 1914-1918), men for the fleet, July 1917. TopFoto.co.uk: EU056773.

GS - There was some amazing work created. For me, the biggest issue is what happens to all the projects when they've finished, where's their material gone?

It took the Commonwealth War Graves Commission until 2021 to admit that they didn't treat people of different nationalities equally or bury them correctly during WW1. It's only now, after the centenary, that we're having public conversations about this, possibly as a result of David Lammy's 2019 TV documentary, *The Unremembered*. I don't think we've even scratched the surface here. This is what we're talking about in *Remaking Histories of the Nation*: if we don't have an understanding of these issues, we think about WW1 only in the context of white soldiers at war and we think that nothing then happens until World War Two.

I can remember this particular Professor patronising me, saying that I hadn't discovered anything new as the material was already in the archive. I was quite offended that he was so dismissive of the work we'd been doing. And I remember being told that a lot of film material in the Imperial War Museum had not been archived correctly. The cataloguers had been instructed only to record the presence of white soldiers. In *Stories of Omission*, we included pictures that hadn't been seen before of Black sailors who joined the Royal Navy. Now they weren't Merchant Navy, they actually were in uniform. That book on *The Lost Tommies* had quite a few pictures of Caribbean soldiers. Before we were saying, okay, there were no Black soldiers in the World War. Okay, so there were one or two, there were more than one or two, but they really didn't do anything. Okay, so they were there, but they were doing labouring jobs. Each time we find another stage to actually propel them higher, they get pushed back down.

So it's really important that we, as the custodians of history, alternative history, tell these stories and also that we inspire other people to do research. I was working with the RAF Museum on a project in 2015/2016. They've just given me a call and told me they want to revive it, could I come and give some advice on it? And that's quite a privilege to be asked that question. I'm now thinking, who else wants to be involved in this as well?

IG - Is there a need for community groups like your own to challenge institutions to be more inclusive, in the guidance they give to people about using their archives?

GS - As a child, I was privileged enough to live quite close to the library. It was a 10-minute walk away in the city centre and became quite an important part of my life. But it's only now that I'm really coming to understand archives and what's kept and documented there. We've seen people saying in recent protests around decolonizing museums, but that's just not an institution I would go to visit. And if you're not going to visit, how are you going to understand what information and knowledge is in that institution? So there's work to be done to make these institutions understand that they have to be more open in what they're doing. A lot of these places have learning and engagement managers. But if everything follows a particular practice because, well, this is how we've always done it, this is how we do it, you're not making those archives open and available to everyone. Archives can be quite overwhelming, even just the process of having to book a visit weeks in advance. They need to host engagement programmes to bring people in and make the place friendly. You go into some institutions where you can't speak, which is difficult when people are excited or react and respond to the environment they're in. I remember one particular day when we were researching and you showed me this picture, my eyes just lit up and it's that spark that matters. Imagine all these citizen historians we could create, if people knew where to go and get this information, and what to do with it once they found it.

IG - Are centenaries useful or not, if you're wanting to change a national narrative?

GS - We talked about the war lasting from 1914 to 1918. But then we realised that in 1919 there were race riots in nine cities in the UK. Soldiers who had been here to fight during the war were no longer required, whether they were merchant seamen or actual military personnel. And when we got to 2019, if you remember, all these topics were just skimmed over or missed out completely because they were too controversial. In fact, I don't think the government actually did anything about them at all. So as I see it, we've just spent four years marking



Image courtesy of the Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth: The Louis and Antoinette Thuillier Collection.

the centenary and talking about how a global war impacted everybody, but now we see how quickly people are able to pivot and walk past something because they don't want to stir up anything uncomfortable.

The centenary was great because it allowed us a voice to highlight the stories without the usual obstructions and challenges that come when people say 'what's your evidence?', 'it's not true'. The centenary engaged a lot of people to become citizen historians and look at their own family histories. But what was really key for me, it created that space where you could say, Look, I know stories of Black soldiers fighting and people will be like, Okay, tell us. I always say at my talks, when you leave here today, tell another person and ask them to tell somebody else. And that's one way that I see, we can actually get these stories out there further.

Further Resources:

Stories of Omission video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diiMJStDNVw>

Stories of Omission book: https://www.voicesofwarandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/storiesofomission-guide_rd.pdf



When you leave here today, tell another person and ask them to tell somebody else.

Acknowledgements



Children on a Birmingham Co-operative Society float at the May Day parade, 1920, MS 4616/1. Reproduced with the permission of the Library of Birmingham.

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*Policy Statement and Lessons from
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Welcome to this
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and ideas linked
to the centenary of
the First World War

**VOICES OF
HERITAGE, COMMUNITY**

Cardiff
5-6 July 2019

Welcome to this
Festival of Research
and ideas linked to
the centenary of the
First World War

**SHARED
HERITAGE**

Living Legacies
Belfast
18-22 May 2019

“

When you leave here today,
tell another person and ask
them to tell somebody else.

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