

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Exeter		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 28 History		
Title of case study: The First World War Centenary and Beyond: Transforming Education Practice, Curatorial Approaches, and Public Discourse		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Sept 2003 – Dec 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Professor Catriona Pennell	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor in Modern History and Memory Studies	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: Since September 2009
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Aug 2013 – Nov 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The First World War centenary was the largest multi-sector heritage project in modern British history, aiming to transform public understanding – especially amongst young people – of lesser-known histories of the war, and challenge the dominant popular perceptions of the war, deeply rooted in ideas focused on British experiences on the Western Front. Research by Professor Catriona Pennell has significantly influenced the content and quality of centenary programming and commemorative strategy for both the First World War and forthcoming war anniversaries by government departments and national and international media, heritage, cultural, and educational organisations. Her work has delivered impacts on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The knowledge and understanding of UK policymakers, including the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, the Prime Minister's Special Representative for Commemoration of the Centenary of the First World War, and the British Council • Teaching and learning about the world wars across the UK through direct engagement with over 500 teachers, and educational associations with almost 7,000 in membership • The design and delivery of the award-winning First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme that saw participation from 2,800 schools and 10,500 students and teachers • Curatorial practice in museums in the UK and Canada • Award-winning creative outputs, broadcast by the BBC 		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>In 2012, <i>A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland</i> was published by Oxford University Press (3.1). Based on Pennell's PhD research, the monograph was completed during the first three years of Pennell's position as full-time Lecturer in History at the University of Exeter. The book is the first comprehensive public opinion survey of British and Irish popular reactions to the outbreak of war, challenging outdated assumptions of popular jingoism (in Britain) and anti-English apathy (Ireland). It is part of a regeneration in the historiography of the First World War that has seen a growth in new topics, such as the global reach of the war, and a reinvigoration of established debates, particularly the role and experience of civilians and non-white troops in the conflict.</p> <p>Yet despite this significant new research, on the eve of the centenary of the First World War, British popular perceptions of the conflict remained largely rooted in traditional perceptions</p>		

of 'blood, mud and futility' reiterated (and consolidated) by popular cultural outputs such as *Blackadder Goes Forth* and *War Horse*. Many historians, journalists, and politicians argued that these media were popular because they echoed the image of the war taught in secondary-level History and English Literature classes across the UK. However, these accusations were being made without evidence of what was actually happening in secondary schools in the UK.

In 2013, Pennell and Ann-Marie Einhaus (Northumbria University) were awarded AHRC funding for 'The First World War in the Classroom: Teaching and the Construction of Cultural Memory' (**WW1Classroom**). This was the first serious study into the way the conflict was taught via the subjects of History and English Literature. It sought to establish, rather than assume, how and why teachers taught the First World War and the links between education and the formation of cultural memory. Research findings were published in a Routledge edited volume and in *History & Memory* (**3.2** and **3.3**). The research highlighted which narratives of the war were included in and excluded from secondary-level classroom History and English Literature teaching. The study raised important questions relating to the 'memory messages' that were being communicated to young people and the consequences of such narratives regarding the replication of power relations in commemorative practices, and a continued inability to deal with Britain's colonial legacy.

The project launched in the same year that UCL Institute of Education (IoE) and Equity Travel were awarded the Department for Education's contract to run the First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme (**FWWCBTP**). Existing partnerships between Pennell (now Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Exeter), Einhaus, and the IoE enabled the above AHRC-funded project to shape the FWWCBTP. Pennell was invited to join its Academic Advisory Board and, in 2015, was appointed Academic Lead for pupil evaluation to assess the impact of the tours on the young people involved. Research findings were published in *Cultural Trends* and *Childhood* (**3.4** and **3.5**). The former article (**3.4**) revealed the inherent tension within attempts to blend History education and remembrance and the degree to which educational initiatives during the centenary of the First World War preserved and perpetuated certain national tropes, shaped around sacrifice, duty, and loyalty. The latter article (**3.5**) expanded this argument to highlight the ways in which children and young people are inherent to discourses and practices of remembrance and demanded a more ambitious rendering of the figure of the child, one that acknowledges the political utility of conceptions of 'youthfulness' and 'innocence' in contemporary remembrance discourse and that understands contemporary remembrance practices as an attempt to re-cast 'aged', historic and temporally distant memorial spaces as multi-generational in order to retain their meaning and relevance.

These projects highlighted the opportunity to broaden the research scope both in terms of chronological remit (to incorporate both world wars) and geographical focus. In 2017, Pennell and Mark Sheehan (Victoria, University of Wellington, New Zealand) were awarded an AHRC Research Networking Grant for their project 'Teaching and Learning War Research Network: Education and Modern Conflict in an International Comparative Perspective' (**T&L Network**). The project has so far produced an article in *History Education Research Journal* and a special edition of *War & Society* (**3.6**) as well as a widely circulated stakeholder report 'Bringing the Marginal into the Mainstream: "Hidden Histories", Public Engagement and Lessons Learned from the Centenary of the First World War' (November 2018). The special edition (**3.6**) reflected on public commemorative events in Britain and the Commonwealth as focus shifted from the anniversaries of the First to the Second World War, including the Holocaust. Not only did it showcase exciting and cutting-edge research, but it also stimulated conversation and 'forward-thinking' about commemorative cycles over the next two-and-a-half decades (2025–2045) regarding the question of 'hidden histories' in the expectation of a need to ensure that diversity, multi-perspectivity, complexity, and contention remain at the heart of 'national' commemorative processes in Britain and elsewhere.

3. References to the research

Publications:

- 3.1 Pennell, Catriona, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (OUP, 2012)
<http://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199590582.001.0001>
- 3.2 Einhaus, Ann-Marie and Catriona Pennell, 'Teaching and Remembrance in English Secondary Schools' in *Remembering the First World War* edited by Bart Ziino (Routledge, 2015), pp. 74–89. *Available on request.*
- 3.3 Pennell, Catriona, 'Learning Lessons from War? Inclusions and Exclusions in Teaching First World War History in English Secondary Schools', *History & Memory* 28:1 (2016), pp. 36–71 <http://doi.org/10.2979/histmemo.28.1.36>
- 3.4 Pennell, Catriona, 'Taught to Remember? British Youth and First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours', *Cultural Trends* 28:2 (2018), pp. 83–98
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2018.1453449>
- 3.5 Pennell, Catriona, "'Remembrance isn't Working": First World War Battlefield Tours and the Militarization of British Youth during the Centenary', *Childhood: A Journal of Global Child Research* special edition 'Children, Childhood and Everyday Militarisms' (2020) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568220908307>
- 3.6 Pennell, Catriona and Daniel Todman (eds.), Special Edition of *War & Society: 'Marginalised Histories of the Second World War'* (2020)
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07292473.2020.1786896>

Funding:

- 2012–13: AHRC 'Care for the Future' Exploratory Award, **£29,933** awarded to Catriona Pennell (Principal Investigator) and Ann-Marie Einhaus for 'The First World War in the Classroom: Teaching and the Construction of Cultural Memory'.
- 2017–20: AHRC Networking Grant, **£44,950** awarded to Catriona Pennell (Principal Investigator) and Mark Sheehan for 'Teaching and Learning War Research Network: Education and Modern Conflict in an International Comparative Perspective'.

4. Details of the impact

Pennell's research into changing perceptions of the First World War has been a cornerstone of educational, cultural, and heritage activity between 2014 and 2018. It has provided young people and teachers with opportunities to learn about and remember the war at its centenary moment, while further serving as a platform for planning future commemorative strategies as we approach the major anniversaries of the Second World War and the Holocaust. In particular, Pennell's research provided policy makers, educationalists, and heritage stakeholders with evidence-based insights into how the war had been taught and learned about previously, and of the significance of commemorative strategies in shaping contemporary perceptions of past conflicts.

Impact on knowledge and understanding amongst policy makers

Pennell's role as Historical Consultant during the centenary enabled her to raise awareness amongst policy makers (and thus a wider public audience) on the latest research relating to the First World War and its commemoration. Between 2013 and 2014, she was Historical Consultant to the British Council's *Remember the World as well as the War* report. The report was launched at the House of Lords on 14 February 2014, attended by approx. 50 'parliamentarians, parliamentary researchers and stakeholders from the arts, education and civil society sectors'. As John Dubber, then Head of Policy and External Relations at the British Council, explained, the aim of the report was to 'increase the knowledge of policymakers in the UK, as well as stakeholders and the general public regarding the global aspects of the war and the way it shaped many contemporary issues in international relations'. He stated that the research undertaken by Pennell 'was invaluable to the success of the project and was a key enabler of the impact that we achieved with the report'. Following the launch, Helen Grant, former Minister for Sport, Tourism and Equalities,

commented that it would 'broaden awareness of the scale of the war, and the significance of its aftermath, across international borders. As such, it sits well with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office-led international engagement work flowing from the First World War centenary' (5.1).

Pennell's contribution to the official First World War centenary programme has also been recognised. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), the lead government department for centenary programming, cited Pennell and Einhaus' **WW1Classroom** report in the development of a 'theory of change' for the evaluation of First World War Centenary Programme (5.2). The Prime Minister's Special Representative for Commemoration of the Centenary of the First World War, Andrew Murrison MD MP, also attested to having 'benefitted from the insights provide[d] by Professor Pennell's research' naming her and her work 'a constant throughout the Centenary'. He acknowledged that her research 'will influence government thinking...as plans are made for future significant anniversaries including, ultimately, the Centenary of the Second World War' (5.3).

Impact on educational professional associations and teaching practice

The processes of developing **WW1Classroom** led to a deep engagement by over 500 secondary-level English and History teachers in the content of the research and a re-evaluation of their approach to teaching the cultural legacy of the First World War. The Chief Executives of the English Association and the Historical Association (with a combined membership of almost 7,000 teachers and educational practitioners) both attested to the benefits to their members (5.4, 5.5). The benefits to teachers have been immediate: a PGCE student in English Literature who participated in **WW1Classroom** reflected on a lesson she delivered as part of her training that had been directly inspired by the project report and especially its emphasis on cross-curricular working. A secondary-level teacher from Greater Manchester was encouraged 'to be more critical when analysing and reviewing our schemes of work [i.e. syllabus]'. In the 2019 follow-up feedback survey to **WW1Classroom**, the majority of respondents said that the project helped them make positive changes to their teaching practice, such as making a 'concerted effort to teach about the differing perspectives of the conflict' (5.6). In addition, the Historical Association drew inspiration from this approach to develop and launch a Teacher Fellowship Programme in partnership with Historic Royal Palaces in 2019 (5.5).

Impact on design and delivery of flagship government educational programme

The British government's flagship centenary youth activity was the **FWWCBTP**. The programme aimed to take two students and a teacher from every state school in England to major memorial sites on the Western Front. According to the Executive Director of the programme, Stuart Foster, **WW1Classroom** laid the groundwork which allowed **FWWCBTP** to be successful. The partnership with **FWWCBTP** that continued via the **T&L Network** 'compelled colleagues [in education and policymaking] to engage with important historical debates, discourse and communities'. Foster testified that Pennell's 'research into pupils' experience of the battlefield tours has been hugely beneficial'. She has 'operated as a "critical friend"...ensur[ing] that as a programme we were constantly looking to improve on our practice'. Simon Bendry, Programme Director, confirmed that Pennell's research was 'instrumental to allowing the programme team to reflect on the student experiences and reconsider which sites we visit and how we use them'. The programme, which launched in 2014, has since won seven national educational awards and, at its close in March 2020, approx. 2,800 schools and 10,500 teachers and students had participated. Feedback in March 2019 confirmed that 99.7% of students 'developed a deeper and broader understanding of the First World War' and 84% of teachers rated the educational value of the tours as 'excellent'. In December 2018, Jeremy Wright QC MP, Secretary of State for DCMS, praised the 'outstanding work' of the programme. The programme was deemed so successful that, in the October 2018 budget, Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond announced £1 million renewed funding until 2020 (5.7).

Impact on curatorial practices

Pennell's more recent research into marginalised histories of the two world wars as part of the **T&L Network** has had a direct impact on approaches to curatorial practice in regional and national museums in both the UK and abroad. The network involved heritage stakeholders in the co-production of research at a series of workshops hosted by Pennell between 2017 and 2018. A Youth Engagement Officer at a West Yorkshire museum described the first event of the network as 'brilliant because it has allowed me to see my own practice within a wider national and academic context and really understand what it is that I am doing, and how it is I can better that'. Vikki Hawkins, Curator of the Second World War Galleries at Imperial War Museums, was inspired to strive 'to challenge dominant narratives of war' in her curatorial practice and to help visitors to the museum 'to see complexities and hidden histories within the galleries'. She now encourages her curatorial team to apply the same principles to their work in the £30.5 million expansion and update of the museum's Second World War and Holocaust galleries (5.8). For Tim Cook, Chief Historian at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, involvement in the same network helped him in 'reimagining... the act and idea of marginalization'. He and his curatorial team have now applied this approach in the development of a new exhibition on Canada and the Second World War, due to open in November 2020 (5.9).

Informing new creative outputs

In addition to her extensive impact on policy makers and educational and curatorial practices, Pennell acted as Historical Consultant on multiple further occasions, directly framing the content of national-level centenary programming such as *BBC World War One At Home* regional radio and television broadcasts. Somethin' Else productions sought Pennell's expertise twice. Executive Producer, Russell Finch emphasised the way Pennell's research into British and Irish popular responses to the outbreak of the First World War brought 'an important new perspective' to their BBC Radio 4 documentary *1914: Day by Day* (broadcast June to August 2014), enabling them to 'tell a rounded history of the period'. Meanwhile Charis Young, Content Producer for their internationally award-winning online BBC iWonder docudrama *Footballers United*, confirmed that Pennell's involvement ensured 'that it was as authentic as possible...provid[ing] depth to the characters and their conversations' (5.10).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Email and internal evaluative data from John Dubber, former Head of Policy and External Relations, British Council, 4 March 2019
- 5.2 Email from David Evans, Policy Advisor, First World War Centenary Team, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 3 April 2019
- 5.3 Letter from Andrew Murrison MD MP, Prime Minister's Special Representative for the Commemoration of the Centenary of the First World War, 8 March 2019
- 5.4 Letter from Rebecca Fisher, Chief Executive, English Association, 11 March 2019
- 5.5 Letter from Rebecca Sullivan, Chief Executive Officer, Historical Association, 28 February 2019
- 5.6 Reflective essay by Alice Chalder, PGCE student in English Literature, 2015; WW1Classroom Impact Survey, 2019
- 5.7 Letters and email from Stuart Foster, Executive Director, and Simon Bendry, Programme Director, of the First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme, 7 and 14 March 2019, 30 March 2020
- 5.8 Feedback from T&L Network workshop on 15 September 2017; letter and email from Suzanne Bardgett, Head of Research and Academic Partnerships, and Vikki Hawkins, Second World War Gallery Curator, Imperial War Museums, 28 February and 7 March 2019
- 5.9 Email from Tim Cook, Chief Historian, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa, 29 September 2020
- 5.10 Emails from Russell Finch, Executive Producer, and Charis Young, Content Producer, Somethin' Else, 28 February and 4 March 2019