

<b>Institution: University of Wolverhampton</b>		
<b>Unit of Assessment: 28 History</b>		
<b>Title of case study: Military History in Public Commemoration and Professional Military Education</b>		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2001 to 2018</b>		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
John Buckley	Professor of Military History	1992 to the present
Spencer Jones	Senior Lecturer in Armed Forces & War Studies	2013 to the present
Gary Sheffield	Professor of War Studies	2013 to the present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2019</b>		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N</b>		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>  <p>Research by the Military History Group has examined the development of Armed Forces using historical case studies to analyse and explain military performance and effectiveness, including command and leadership, performance and participation, and technological development.</p> <p>This research played a role in shaping the UK commemorative agenda during the First World War Centenary with considerable impact on public understanding of that conflict. Initially, the Centenary of the First World War did not include the battles of movement in 1918, and would have conveyed a narrative of unremitting attrition. Sheffield was able to include in the Centenary the Battle of Amiens and subsequent actions in 1918, which were characterised by movement. This is important because it both overturned the narrative of attrition and demonstrated the existence of a “learning curve” among the British generals and General Staff of the period.</p> <p>Research done by the Military History Group (MHG) has also had significant pedagogical impact upon the professional education of militaries through its use in training exercises and course development, contributing to the strategic aims of contemporary militaries as well as influencing individual understanding amongst military personnel.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>  <p>The group substantially advanced existing interpretive concepts regarding strategic and tactical development amongst allied forces in Twentieth Century conflict through three major contributions. Firstly, the MHG’s research included an expansion of the “learning curve” model, that term having been initiated in the 1970s by revisionist historians of the First World War. The second contribution derived through the study of adaptation and innovation within the British Army officer corps 1914-1918. The third is the relative importance of technological development in the implementation of air power by the RAF. Their work in each of these areas is central to the Findings [F] described below:</p> <p><u>a) Command &amp; Leadership</u></p>		

The narrative had taken hold that the First World War had been fought only in trenches, in static formations, and that nothing had been learnt throughout its course. This has been comprehensively disproven yet the narrative persists. Indeed, the beginning and the end of the war on the Western Front were characterised by movement and, in the case of the latter, by considerable tactical and technological innovation.

F1. Sheffield has produced a nuanced re-interpretation of Douglas Haig's generalship. This refutes the perception that he was callous and incompetent, situating Haig's command in the context of the military, technological and political realities of 1914-18, and establishing his generalship as central to the 1918 victories [R1].

F2. Jones' work demonstrates that professional standards, training, and planning amongst of the British Army officers in 1914 were considerably higher than has been previously recognised by historians. He attributes this to experience gained on campaign in South Africa (1899-1902), pre-war training, and a generally embraced meritocratic system of promotion. The result was much higher level of battlefield effectiveness in 1914 than has been previously recognised [R2 and R3].

#### b) Performance & Participation

The group have re-assessed the performance of allied forces during the First World War, considering their effectiveness and cultural significance.

F3. Sheffield's revisionist stance calls for a shift in interpretation to recognise the British Army's decisive role in the war. He has emphasised the difficulties in transforming a mass citizen army into a militarily effective force that made a decisive contribution to victory [R3].

F4. Jones has published a reassessment of Britain's experience of the Battle of the Somme, arguing that it embraced 'Total War' principles to a hitherto unrecognised level. The 'totality' of the experience contributed to the enormous cultural significance of the battle in British consciousness [R4].

#### c) Technological Development

The group have achieved new insights around military technological development notably in connection with air power. Buckley has re-examined the use and importance of technology in the development and implementation of air power, British inter-war air and defence policy, inter-service and international co-operation, and air power and 'Total War'.

F5. In light of the centenary anniversary of the formation of the RAF (2018), Buckley synthesised this research on a hundred years of British Air Power, examining seminal moments in that history and, crucially, anchoring that history in future challenges facing the RAF in a new century of cyber challenges and space flight innovations [R5 & R6]. Throughout, Buckley has demonstrated the close relationship between government policy, defence doctrine, and equipment procurement and integration.

### **3. References to the research**

The following references have been through a rigorous peer-review process and have been reference points for further research beyond the original institution. For example, Jones [R2] is cited in Ian Beckett, Timothy Bowman and Mark Connolly – *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

R1. Gary Sheffield *Douglas Haig from the Somme to Victory*: (London: Aurum, 2016).

R2. Spencer Jones, 'The Demon: Brigadier General Charles FitzClarence VC', in Spencer Jones (ed.), *Stemming the Tide: Officers and Leadership in the British Expeditionary Force 1914* (Solihull, Helion & Co., 2013), pp. 240-64.

R3. Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War – Myth and Realities* (London: Headline, 2018).

R4. Spencer Jones, 'XIII Corps and the Attack at Montauban, 1 July 1916', in Spencer Jones (ed.) *At All Costs: The British Army on the Western Front 1916* (Solihull, Helion & Co., 2018), pp. 270-92.

R5. John Buckley & Paul Beaver, *The Royal Air Force: The First One Hundred Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). (REF 2 Output)

R6. John Buckley, 'Coastal Command in the Second World War', *Air Power Review*, volume 21, no.1, Spring 2018, pp. 178-201. <https://www.raf.mod.uk/what-we-do/centre-for-air-and-space-power-studies/documents1/vol-21-no-1-raf100-special-edition/>

#### 4. Details of the impact

The research findings from the MHG at Wolverhampton have led to two main areas of impact [I]. The first concerns a significant policy change regarding the centenary of the First World War and the second relates to impacts in pedagogy, of which there are three.

##### I1. Policy Change: UK Commemorative Agenda and the First World War Centenary

The application of the group's research has influenced the UK Government's policy on the First World War Centenary. This has given rise to further impacts on public understanding of the conflict, for example understanding the relevance of Amiens, as well as pedagogical impacts on professional military education.

Central to changing policy regarding the First World War Centenary has been the ability to persuade public and politicians that the "futility" narrative had been a flawed one, that Haig's generalship encompassed a process of learning from its mistakes, and that the British Army that ended the war was considerably more advanced than the one that entered it [F1]. Political acceptance of that version of events came from Michael Gove in 2014 and he cited Sheffield as an influence on his thinking [C1].

The official programme of commemoration first announced in 2012 had omitted the 1918 Allied victories, thus endorsing the "futility" narrative refuted by Sheffield [F3]. The subsequent addition of a major ceremony to commemorate the Battle of Amiens re-balanced that view. Significantly, Sheffield helped persuade Andrew Murrison, The Prime Minister's Special Representative for the Centenary of the Great War, to include Amiens [C2] [F1].

Sheffield was also influential in the policy debate in Parliament in July 2017 and his work was cited extensively by Dr Julian Lewis, MP, to support the addition of Amiens to the programme [C3]. Lewis was Chair of the Defence Select Committee at the time and his voice was an important addition to those advocating the inclusion of Amiens in the programme. Lewis stated that:

"A book called "Forgotten Victory" [R3] is a study of the western front battles that rightly draws attention to the 100 days campaign in which the allied coalition won a sequence of decisive victories between mid-July and early November 1918. Its author, Professor Gary Sheffield, regrets the extent to which the British success in those battles at the end of the first world war has been disregarded. ... So it is absolutely right that, as well as commemorating all the disasters of world war one, one of which we are commemorating today, we will next year recognise the triumph of the battle of Amiens in August 1918. Like others who have spoken in the debate, I pay the warmest tribute to my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison) for all the great work he has done on this rolling series of commemorations of the events, failures and successes of the first world war." [C3]

This was a significant change to the original programme and was accepted as such by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in their evaluation report of the Centenary [C4].

## I2. Pedagogical Impacts: Professional Military Education

The group's findings have shaped military training policies and practices, and these have impacted upon the successful delivery of strategic priorities and influenced the understanding of serving personnel.

I2a. The British Army's major contribution to the Centenary was Operation REFLECT. A core aim was to learn 'lessons that will enhance our own professional understanding'. There were three REFLECT Staff Rides to France and Belgium (2014; 2016 & 2018), to study "how the character of warfare was transformed by the combined mass citizen armies, industrial production and new technologies" [C5]. Jones and Sheffield were central to delivering these aims [F1-F4]. Sheffield's research shaped the structure of all three tours, collaborating with Major-General James Cowan, GOC 3 Division (Director of REFLECT 2014) and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Lead Military Advisor on Staff Rides). Sheffield influenced the route, key points of interest, the themes to be discussed, the recommended readings and the selection of supporting historians. Sheffield's and Jones' research were included in the research guide issued as preparatory reading [C5]. As a senior historian, Sheffield provided historical analysis on REFLECT 2014, and was the Lead Historian on REFLECT 2016, giving presentations on the battlefields to the entire party and providing context and analysis of operations. He acted as a roving mentor during syndicate discussions that considered how the lessons of 1914-18 could inform the modern military. REFLECT 2016 involved 200 military participants mainly from the British Army, with representatives from French, German, Commonwealth and US Armed forces, the RAF and the MOD. Jones led a syndicate of eight officers (five British, three overseas). This group's feedback noted a deepened understanding of the Somme Campaign [C6], demonstrating fundamental change to the way the First World War has been understood by the British military.

I2b. Jones' research achieved pedagogical impacts in the professional education programmes of the Portuguese and Australian militaries. In 2015, Jones' work on leadership in the British Army [F2] resulted in an invitation to address officers at the Portuguese Military Academy. Jones' research spoke to contemporary debates on problems facing the modern Portuguese Army and offered lessons as to how these might be overcome. The Academy noted the 'importance of his research' to their contemporary activities [C7]. In 2018 Jones developed a webinar for the Australian Defence Force's professional military education service, *The Cove*, used by c.5,000 members of that force. Aired on 20 July 2018, Jones' research was deployed to illustrate the use of pre-emptive adaptation and innovation [F2 and F4]. Major Andrew Banks, Force Provost Marshal, testified how this had directly enforced the ADF's "mantra that individuals should seek innovative methods to achieve their aims" [C8].

I2c. Buckley's research on air power has been utilised by the MoD, as part of the Chief of the Air Staff's Trenchard Fellowship Scheme for serving members of the RAF. Working in conjunction with Buckley and the University of Wolverhampton, the MoD has invested £700,000 into an MA in Air, Space and Cyber Power Studies that started in September 2019. The course included the work of Buckley [R6], which was also adopted as a core text on the Chief of the Air Staff's Reading List [C10]. New appointments (Air Commodore Pete Gray (retired) and Dr Maria Burczynska), enabled the development and improvement of the 'intellectual capital of the RAF' [C9]. The programme is directly linked to the Strategic Priorities detailed in the RAF Command Plan and the RAF Strategy 2017 and expands the horizons of the MOD's current provision to "meet the challenges of the future by incorporating space and cyber power" [C9]. The award and delivery of the course demonstrate Buckley's research impact in relation to shaping the policies of professional military education [F5]. Air power has long been an essential component in modern warfighting and the research findings have had strategic value as they have influenced how RAF officers are trained.

In terms of impact overall, attitudes to the First World War have changed and research findings have actively informed and shaped the way the British and other militaries educate their forces.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

### Corroborating Evidence for Impact 1

C1. Citation by Michael Gove in Great War Debate, 2 January 2014,  
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2532930>

C2. Testimonial Evidence from Dr Murrison.

C3. House of Commons, Hansard, 13 July 2017, Vol. 627, Col, 497. Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East, Con) <<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-07-13/debates/69871535-88DE-4EF8-AE0C-9653C8E1B045/Passchendaele?highlight=%22professor%20sheffield%22#contribution-A813B880-0E4C-4355-968C-DB89C26101CF>>.

C4. Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport - First World War Centenary Programme: Legacy Evaluation Report, September 2019,  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/832231/DCMS\\_FWWC\\_Legacy\\_Evaluation\\_Report\\_CSES\\_17\\_Sept\\_2019\\_1\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/832231/DCMS_FWWC_Legacy_Evaluation_Report_CSES_17_Sept_2019_1_.pdf)

### Corroborating Evidence for Impact 2a

C5. 'The First World War Battlefield Guide: Vol 1. The Western Front' June 2015.

C6. Testimonial Evidence from senior Major General.

### Corroborating Evidence for Impact 2b

C7. Letter of thanks from the Portuguese Staff College to Dr Spencer Jones.

C8. Testimonial by Force Provost Marshal, UNDOF.

### Corroborating Evidence for Impact 2c

C9. Contract for the delivery of the MA Air, Space and Cyber Power Studies by the University of Wolverhampton for the Ministry of Defence, UK.

C10. Adoption of *The Royal Air Force: The First Hundred Years* as a source on the Chief of the Air Staff's reading list.