

Institution: University of Kent		
Unit of Assessment: UoA28 - History		
Title of case study: The First World War Centenary: increasing knowledge, enhancing experiences, and providing multiple opportunities to engage, contribute, reflect and learn.		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000 - 2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Mark Connelly	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Modern British History	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1999 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Connelly's research on the First World War (FWW) and his commitment to engaging the public with his research, made a demonstrable contribution to the UK's nationwide FWW Centenary commemorations. Collaborations with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the Church of England, and the UK's national battlefield schools programme promoted greater understanding, awareness and interest in the significance and relevance of the conflict. Connelly's work throughout the centenary increased participation and engagement in community and voluntary activities; improved knowledge sharing and educational opportunities for young people; promoted public reflection on the causes and consequences of the FWW and enhanced the visitor experience and contributed to the preservation of FWW cultural, archival and architectural heritage in Ypres.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Connelly's research has focussed on the military, social and cultural aspects of the FWW and how these were experienced by frontline units, people on the home front, veterans and the bereaved. A key feature of his work has been understanding the aftermath and legacy of war. The research was conducted between 2000 and 2019, in a range of national and international archives, and drew upon an extensive range of primary and secondary sources.</p> <p>Building on this extensive research expertise, Connelly gained over £1m from the AHRC for projects aimed at using research expertise to enrich public understandings of the FWW, and engagement with the centenary. These projects allowed Connelly to reflect on the nature of contemporary commemoration and memory processes, and ways of reaching out to a wide range of audiences. These findings have fed into his recent research (see especially R6).</p> <p>The key research findings and arguments, which underpin this case study, are that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The commemoration of the conflict is extremely complex, and culturally and time-specific. What is commemorated and remembered today is often very different from the immediate post-war period: both in terms of themes and sites of memory [R1, R3, R5-R6]. • Commemoration was, and is, used to create a sense of community and identity, which makes it a useful tool for nation states and grassroots organisations and bodies [R1-R2, R4-R6]. • Study of battlefields as memory sites is crucial to understanding the remembrance culture of the conflict [R6]. This also informs Connelly's current research on reconstruction, memorialisation and battlefield tourism. • Remembrance and commemoration in the post-war period were as much bottom-up practices as top-down [R1-R6]. • Study of commemoration should not only look at sites of memory, but also how they fit into the wider physical landscape, their inter-relationships, and, crucially, how people access, move across and between memory sites. The navigation around and between the sites and across the landscapes is as important as the sites themselves [R1, R6]. • Cultures of memory existed in two very different registers. The 'higher' register of moral duty to remember and commemorate leading to spiritual enhancement, and the 'lower' 		

one of commercialism which made the war something that could be consumed, particularly as part of a pleasure culture [R1, R5-R6].

- Britain and the Empire often commemorated the war as a highly necessary endeavour which, although intensely bloody, was justifiable and should be remembered with pride [R1-R5].
- 'Revisionist' understandings of British military performance have been overstretched and need to be contextualised more closely against the roles played by both allies and enemies [R2-R3].
- The war needs to be understood as a multi-media event which was presented to people in a complex manner [R1, R4-R6].

3. References to the research

[R1]: Connelly, Mark, *The Great War: memory and ritual. The commemoration of the Great War in the City and East London, 1916-1939* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2002; new paperback edition 2015). Link: <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/50926/>

[R2]: Connelly, Mark, *Steady the Buffs: a regiment, a region and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Link: <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/30126/>

[R3]: Connelly, Mark and Tim Bowman, *The Edwardian Army: recruiting, training, and deploying the British army, 1902-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Link: <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/50930/>

[R4]: Connelly, Mark, 'Trench warfare: Britain and the memory of the Great War' in Gislinde Seybert and Thomas Stauder (eds.), *Heroisches Elend. Der Erste Weltkrieg im intellektuellen, literarischen und bildnerischen Gedächtnis der europäischen Kulturen*, Vol. II Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main, 2013), pp. 317-332. Link: <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/50942/>

[R5]: Connelly, Mark, *Celluloid War Memorials. The British Instructional Films Company and the Memory of the Great War* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2016). Link: <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/50951/>

[R6]: Connelly, Mark and Stefan Goebel, *Ypres* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Link: <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/44676/>

[G1]: Connelly (PI) **2013-14**: 'Our Place in the First World War'. AHRC (collaborative programme with BBC for researching stories for use by BBC Regions [Radio and TV]). Value: £30,541,

[G2]: Connelly (PI) **2014-16**: Gateways to the First World War. AHRC (programme to create collaborations between universities to work in partnership with the NHLF to encourage public participation in the First World War centenary). Value: £597,162, (Phase 1)

[G3]: Connelly (PI) **2017-21**: Gateways to the First World War. AHRC. Value: £501,239, (Phase 2).

4. Details of the impact

Promoting remembrance and reflection on the contribution of the FWW generation to the modern world

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) drew extensively on Connelly's research expertise to 'shape our commemorative activity' [a] of the centenaries of the Battle of the Somme (held in Manchester on Friday 1st July 2016), and the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) (held at Zonnebeke in Belgium between 29th July and 1st August 2017).

For the Somme Centenary, Connelly extensively briefed the DCMS team and its partner organisations on the significance and historical context of the battle; identified central themes for exploration; advised on available archival resources; briefed the Parliamentary All Party War Heritage Group on outreach activities; and assembled a team from the AHRC Gateways to the FWW Centre to support the commemorations. Connelly also provided a historical account for the commemorative service booklet and worked closely with the Church of

England's Liturgical Committee to develop the Westminster Abbey service marking the centenary of the outbreak of First World War (4th August 2014) and the Manchester Cathedral service marking the centenary of the Battle of the Somme (1st July 2016) [a]. More than 19,000 ticket holders attended the Manchester commemorations, and both cathedral services were broadcast live by the BBC.

For the Passchendaele Centenary, Connelly worked closely with the DCMS team to broaden the appeal of the commemorations by looking beyond the battle itself and incorporating the impact of the fighting on local people in Belgium and on the way the battle was commemorated in its immediate aftermath. As part of this, Gateways (led by Connelly) provided a series of presentations in the main arena (Experience Field) and a dramatisation co-written by Connelly with Dr Helen Brooks, was performed ten times on the main stage during the commemorations. The Passchendaele Memorial Museum estimated that 39,000 visitors attended over the three-day period. The DCMS evaluation of the Centenary reported that this combination of traditional commemorative events integrated with the innovative use of arts and culture in the First World War Commemorations (FWWC) was particularly effective in promoting engagement [h, i].

The DCMS' Somme Centenary Project Director noted that 'Gateways to the First World War proved to be an invaluable resource. We couldn't have done it without them.' [a]. Similarly, the Director of Culture, Tourism and Sport at DCMS (responsible for delivering the Passchendaele Centenary) noted Gateways' 'outstanding contribution to the national commemoration' which provided guests with a 'rewarding and unforgettable experience' [b]. YouGov tracked public knowledge and attitudes towards the FWWC over the course of the commemorations and found that the FWW programme had a considerable impact in raising awareness and understanding of the FWW and also helped people to commemorate the sacrifices that were made [h]. According to the BBC's audience research, almost half those who engaged or experienced any of the FWWC content learnt something new [h].

Preserving FWW cultural and architectural heritage in Ypres: improving access and understanding of records and archives, enhancing the visitor experience and sustaining a legacy for future generations,

Connelly used his expertise on the significance of the West Flanders city of Ieper/Ypres in a number of ways. Firstly, he briefed representatives of the British media and travel businesses on the importance of the Third Battle of Ypres as part of the regional government's tourism and heritage office campaign to encourage tourism. Building on this, in 2017 he launched an initiative which further improved the visitor experience and led to greater public engagement. In collaboration with St George's Memorial Church, built as a memorial to the British and Commonwealth forces who fought and died around the city, Connelly designed new walking tours of the city's main remembrance sites and trained University of Kent students to act as guides. By drawing parallels between the modern visitor and the first wave of visitors, the new tours showed tourists that they were also part of a rich heritage of battlefield pilgrimages to the Ypres Salient. The Vice-Chair of the St George's Memorial Church's Friends stated that 'this was a unique project in the history of St. George's ... started from scratch by Mark [Connelly]' and resulted in 'extremely positive' visitor feedback [c].

The success of this innovative scheme led to its adoption by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) supported by UK government funding. Connelly collaborated with the CWGC to embed the tours into its new intern scheme by leading training sessions for the interns and providing them with the historical and geographical knowledge needed to lead the tours as well as to interpret the main sites of the Ypres battlefields where they were based. The CWGC's chief historian stated of these sessions: 'the feedback has been incredible – you were an absolute hit!'. He went on to describe how Connelly's 'expertise and hands-on support [...] formed the basis of the bespoke training programme for our guides' and how the scheme which this training underpinned 'has proved a pioneering project which has contributed to a significant cultural shift within the organisation' [d]. It has reached hundreds of visitors and similar tours elsewhere are being considered [d]. This scheme featured as a case study in the Centenary Programme Evaluation conducted by DCMS. The evaluation

describes the internship scheme as ‘a tangible legacy of the FWWC for the CWGC, since the scheme is still ongoing and will continue in the future’ [h].

Drawing on his extensive experience of the CWGC records, and working in partnership with CWGC’s archives team, Connelly also helped improve knowledge of its collections for both staff and visitors, encouraging interaction and exploration. He created two projects for volunteers to explore archival holdings and understand cataloguing processes and held a series of public events in the UK and Belgium to highlight the nature of the archival holdings. This contributed to the increase in visitors to its website and an increased engagement with its social media platforms.[h, i] In 2018, Connelly was called upon to act as an expert witness for the CWGC’s successful application for UNESCO World Heritage listing for its casualty database, which is used by approximately 32 million visitors annually [d]. The CWGC’s Chief Historian stated that Connelly’s ‘collaboration and work with us has... had a real and tangible benefit to the Commission and to the wider public ... interested in the history and work of our organisation, and added that , ‘Connelly’s research has had a substantial influence on the development of our public engagement and outreach programmeno other historian’s research has had a greater impact on knowledge and understanding within the CWGC over the period of the FWW centenary than that of Professor Connelly’ [d].

Enhancing understanding of the impact and legacies of FWW by engaging young people with innovative programmes and accessible educational resources

The Schools Battlefield Tours programme was a £6.3 million award-winning programme central to the national centenary commemorations. It provided the opportunity for students and a teacher from every state-funded secondary school in England to visit the Western Front battlefields and to develop associated projects within their school and local community. Connelly, a member of the Advisory Board, informed and shaped the programme; checked and advised on materials; and also shared ‘his extensive knowledge of the battlefields...[and] contributed significantly to the programme’s student tour booklet ... to ensure this became a first-class publication’. The booklet has since ‘been used by more than 8,000 students and teachers’ [e]. The scheme engaged with more than two-thirds (2,350) of all English secondary schools between 2014 and 2020. Teachers reported that almost all (99%) of their pupils developed a deeper and broader understanding of the FWW. The British Future participant surveys suggest that there were lasting effects in terms of remembrance and awareness. Illustrating the longer-term impact on the teaching of history in secondary schools, 92% of teachers reported they would review their approach to teaching the FWW as a result of their participation in the programme [h].

Through Gateways, Connelly further strengthened the capacity of schools to teach the FWW, by designing and managing a programme of study in 22 schools in Kent and neighbouring counties (of which 95% of the schools were non-selective). This programme directly engaged nearly 1,600 students, with 55% of the students coming from areas of high socio-economic deprivation. The project encouraged schools to explore key humanities skills through the prism of the FWW. This was achieved through a series of special sessions focusing on history, literature and the visual arts. On completion of the project, 92% of students reported an increased interest in, and knowledge of, the conflict, while 75% stated an enhanced interest in the Humanities more generally [f].

Increasing capacity for voluntary groups to participate and engage in community activities

Gateways to the First World War Centre, led by Connelly, encouraged and supported public interest in the centenary, enabling communities across Britain to explore and share their FWW heritage. Two major aspects of Gateways’ work were to provide guidance and support for community groups developing applications to the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF); and to provide training, networking, and showcasing opportunities for projects which were awarded funding. Gateways directly assisted 73 NHLF applications from groups in 53 separate UK parliamentary constituencies (the furthest being in the Outer Hebrides). In total these groups gained over £2.3million in funding [f]. Ten groups went on to make follow-on applications having gained experience and confidence by working with Gateways. Through

Gateways, Connelly directly increased the capacity of both individuals and organisations to engage with the FWW and the heritage in their communities.

Using his research knowledge and the network he had built up over many years Connelly recruited a diverse team of collaborators to deliver the project. The diversity of expertise and interests in this team was central to Connelly's aim of developing a public engagement methodology which encouraged different perspectives and interpretations of the FWW and which promoted effective collaboration between the academic world and the wider community. Gateways hosted over 150 training days and archive visits and supported 79 open days in partnership with the NHLF [f]. By working with collaborators Gateways enabled a wide variety of historical topics to be explored by an equally wide range of groups. Topics researched included: international experiences (particularly those of the British Empire); studies of women and children; people with disabilities; industrial and workplace experiences; and the fighting services. The findings were then expressed in an equally diverse range of innovative outputs including exhibitions, performances, films, websites, databases, apps, and booklets.

Demonstrating Gateway's educational impact, a survey for The National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2018, found that 99% of respondents reported that engagement with the AHRC FWW Centres had improved their knowledge of the FWW and 80% reported that the projects had changed how people viewed the FWW's impacts on the local community [h, i]. Feedback from Gateways' collaborators reveals how the projects enhanced knowledge and research skills while also having positive effects on social wellbeing and inclusivity: a recently retired man who had found the adjustment difficult stated, 'It revitalised [me]... I felt really buoyed up by it' [g] while community groups described how '[participation] has helped us and local residents to... reduce social isolation – [it has] brought people of all ages together,' Another project leader reported that 'our volunteers have grown in terms of skills learnt and also developed outcomes in terms of increased confidence and self-esteem' [f]; Amongst participants in Gateway's projects, knowledge, self-confidence and self-esteem were improved while general transferrable skills were also developed and augmented.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[a] Project Director, National Commemoration of the Battle of the Somme, DCMS. Letter details contributions of Gateways and Connelly to the success of the Somme Centenary Commemorations in Manchester.

[b] Director of Culture, Tourism and Sport at DCMS. Letter describes contributions of Gateways and Connelly to the Passchendaele Centenary commemorations in Ypres.

[c] Vice-Chairman of the Friends of St George's Memorial Church, Ypres. Letter corroborates Connelly's role in the design and development of popular city walking tours in Ypres.

[d] Chief Historian, Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Email and letter describe Connelly's role in the development of the CWGC intern scheme and the ways that the organisation benefitted more widely from Connelly's knowledge, expertise and engagement.

[e] Programme Director, Battlefield Tours Programme, First World War Centenary. Letter details Connelly's role in informing and shaping the UK's school battlefield tour programme.

[f] Research Retold, A Gateways AHRC evaluation report, October 2019. Highlights the extent to which Gateways contributed to voluntary and community activity and the impact this had on both organisations and individuals.

[g] *Visiting and Revisiting the Western Front*. A short film produced for Gateways which shows how a public history project (led by Connelly) impacted on volunteer learning, skills and social wellbeing.

[h] The People's Centenary: Tracking public attitudes to the First World War Centenary 2013-2018, Report by British Future in partnership with the BBC, DCMS and CWGC, April 2019. This report describes the extent to which engagement with FWW Centenary initiatives and events led to improved public knowledge and understanding.

[i] First World War Centenary Programme: Legacy Evaluation. Report for DCMS, September 2019. This report details the social, cultural and educational impacts of the UK's Centenary Programme on teachers, pupils, organisations, volunteers, community groups and the wider public.