

Institution: Edge Hill University		
Unit of Assessment: D27 - English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: Cultural Capital in Remembering and Commemorating		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014 - 2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Helen Newall	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Theatre Praxis	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2004-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 - 2018		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact The work has enhanced cultural opportunities for participants and local audiences, ensuring that quality, home-grown and innovative work has been available between the closure of Chester Gateway Theatre (2009) and Storyhouse opening (May 2017). It has increased cultural awareness, public knowledge and understanding of local histories and places and enriched audience and participant experiences in its facilitation of individual emotional connection with, and intergenerational community commemoration and celebration of, ordinary things which otherwise tend to be overlooked.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research Overarching practice-research imperatives were: to make new connections between audiences and familiar local places, artefacts and heritages; to make innovative and extraordinary cultural provision; to bridge the gap between the closure of the Gateway Theatre and the opening of Storyhouse; to investigate commemorative and celebratory community cultural practices.</p> <p>Some of the practice-research happened under the auspices of Newall's work as a writer with Theatre in the Quarter (TiQ), funded by Arts Council England (ACE) and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. TiQ's remit concerns finding innovative ways of engaging with new and hard-to-reach audiences and participants. The project thus continued work detailed in REF2014 ICS, 'Cultural Capital in Telling Tales' (ID: 19082). As preparations for the centenary commemorations for WW1 began, Newall's work refocused to seek original and imaginative ways to engage audiences in commemorative practices in a culture soon to be saturated with WW1 references. Her investigation concerned how memories (community and individual) and forgotten histories might be re-animated (sometimes literally) and made relevant and accessible in innovative and emotionally affecting ways. Practice-research involved investigating how to bring resonance to archival artefacts, or those discovered through the Grosvenor Museum's WW1 Roadshow in which people brought in family-owned WW1 items for cataloguing (including photographs, postcards, letters and diaries). Work also involved restoring and animating vintage photographs of unnamed World War I soldiers sourced on eBay (RM), and who Newall categorised as a new kind of missing, because those who knew their names are now also gone, taking this knowledge with them.</p> <p>Finally, this work sought to bring a renewed sense of community pride to places that are so familiar we no longer notice them. It aimed to enable audiences to see "a familiar site [or object] through the lens of artistic imagination, experience a re-vision of what seemed established or permanent" (Haedicke in Birch & Tompkins, 2012: 103). For example, this defamiliarisation is evident in <i>Over By Christmas</i> (OBC) in which actors performed on heritage railway stations foregrounding the role of rail networks during WW1; and in <i>Lost Morecambe</i>, in which the dilapidated Winter Gardens hosted a miniature installation depicting its heyday. The often-forgotten histories of familiar places were thus revived and given new local awareness. Practice-research questions included: how might historical events/locations be made meaningful via commemorative performance and site-specificity? How might an historical archive (documents, artefacts, images) be made meaningful in a performative context of commemoration, and how might those depicted via commodified and valuable objects be re-subjectified? What performance formats might best communicate factual and emotional information to audiences in non-traditional theatre settings?</p>		
<p>3. References to the research</p> <p>1 Scripting Location for Community Commemoration (PaR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newall, H. (2008; rewritten: 2014) <i>Silent Night</i> [playscript; digital scenography]. TiQ. Dir. Emma Lucia. Performed: NW tour. 		

- **Newall, H.** (2014) *Over by Christmas* [playscript; co-direction]. TiQ. Performed: NW Tour; Manchester Piccadilly; London St Pancras. Award: Cheshire West Community and Voluntary Arts Award, 2015; WW1 Commemoration Special Award, ACoRP National Community Rail Awards, 2015. Nominated: Marketing Cheshire Annual Awards, Tourism Experience or Event of the Year.
- **Newall, H.** (2014) *Honour* [playscript for large outdoor projection event] Dir. M. Baker, C. Morrison, Quays Culture, Salford. Performed: Green Square, MediaCity, Salford Quays.
- **Newall, H.** (2014) *For the Fallen* [playscript; direction; digital scenography] Performed: St Mary's Creative Space, Chester.
- **Newall, H.** (2015) *Preston Remembers* [playscript]. Outdoor performances: Preston Remembers Festival, Preston Railway Station. (Commissioned after *Over By Christmas*.)
- **Newall, H.** (2015) *Your Country Needs You!* [playscript]. Outdoor performances: Warrington Festival. (Commissioned after *Over By Christmas*.)

2 Scripting Location for Memory and Community Self Esteem (PaR)

- **Newall, H.** (2015) *Best Days of Our Lives* [playscript], TiQ. Performed: Chester Cathedral. Award: CWAC Community Arts, 2015.

3 Reanimating Subjects via Digital Immersion in Memory and Commemoration (PaR)

- **Newall, H.** (2015-2018) *Remember Me* [one-to-one immersive installation]. Exhibited: EHU; Ansdell Library, Lythm St Annes; St Mary's Creative Space (2015); Narberth Museum; Festival of Ideas, EHU; Chester Military Museum (2017); TaPRA, Salford University; Halton Mill, Lancaster; Storyhouse, Chester: EHU, Catalyst opening ceremony.
- **Newall, H.** (2016) *Lost Morecambe* [immersive installation for audience-of-four]. Morecambe Variety Festival; Pound Arts, Corsham, Magic & Mayhem Festival.
- **Newall, H.** (2017) *Salonica* [digital scenography]. dir. L. Haughey, Equal Voices Arts. Toured: UK; Balkans; NZ.

4 Commemoration (Book Chapter)

- **Newall, H.** (2018) 'Commemoration: Sacred Differentiation of Time and Space in Three World War I Projects', in Pinchbeck, M., & Westerside, A. (2018) *Staging Loss: Performance as Commemoration*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

4. Details of the impact

These practice-research performances were presented in the Chester region which until 2017 lacked a local producing theatre. In this gap, they offered cultural provision and opportunity for arts engagement, for audiences and participants. Performances also extended beyond the North West and brought quality arts to new and hard-to-reach audiences as well as opportunities for interaction in commemorative arts practices. Beneficiaries included: local audiences impacted by the closure of the Chester Gateway; those who would not otherwise seek out ticketed, theatre-space performances (including passers-by in Preston, Warrington, and on stations in Cheshire and the North West, Manchester Piccadilly and St Pancras International stations); ticketed audiences on the National Rural Touring networks in Cheshire, Merseyside, Lancashire and Yorkshire. Beneficiaries also include participant-schools and hard-to-reach audiences (e.g. *Salonica*'s inclusion of Deaf audiences in Ormskirk, Manchester, Leeds; Belgrade, Vitek in Montenegro; and in Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland and Hamilton, New Zealand).

Increased opportunities to experience excellent and innovative art practices

As the Artistic Director of TiQ states, this practice has ensured, '*increased opportunity to experience innovative art practices in a region that lacked such opportunity*' (source 3). As a testament to quality, some works were commissioned after organisations saw previous work: RM resulted in commissions from Morecambe Variety Festival for *Lost Morecambe* (LM), and the digital scenography for *Salonica* (Sa) commissioned by Equal Arts NZ; while *Over By Christmas* (OBC) resulted in *Preston Remembers* (PR) for the Preston Remember Partnership Project, and *Your Country Needs You!* (YCNV) for Warrington Museum. *Honour* (H) was commissioned after recommendation by ACE to Quays Culture.

Originality is evident in innovative approaches to sharing narratives of heritage, community self-esteem and commemoration. OBC, for example, was performed on railway platforms to audiences standing on the opposite platforms, and between train arrivals and departures. It was not always safe nor possible to gather written audience feedback, but where so, predominant themes demonstrate audiences frequently perceived quality and innovation. For

example, RM, LM, Sa and *For the Fallen* (FtF), applied new technology and digital scenographic re-presentation of collectible, valuable vintage photography to shift audience perceptions of identity. All used projections of animated photographs of long-dead, and now nameless, people: as these identities fade in memory, the monetary value of the photographic objects that depict them increases. Re-presenting these, using narrative strategies and animation techniques, has reversed this de-personalisation and enabled audiences to see the human subjects afresh. Many commentators, in both RM and LM guest books, reflect on the originality of this technique in the overall experience and speak of 'bringing them back to life' (source 1).

Quality is also evidenced in comments. A radio presenter, talking about RM on his show, described it as '*an absolute work of art*' and that he was '*enthralled by it*' (source 12). Similarly, in the guest books, by far the largest theme concerns quality. For RM, in 246 viewer comments, there are 526 references to the work as beautiful, powerful, haunting, stunning. For example: '*Beautiful and inspiring work. Absolutely gorgeous, thank you*'; '*chilling and meaningful*'; '*unnervingly beautiful*'. RM was also deemed original and effective, with comments including: '*the one-to-one experience personalises it*'; '*an unusual and moving experience*' (source 1). There are similar responses to LM, and an Arts Council England Officer wrote after viewing: '*Beautiful work. Top quality commission. Perfect for the Variety Festival & lovely to see Morecambe in its heyday – very innovative digital artistic film,*' and others that it is: '*beautiful & so unique*'; '*Absolutely exquisite!! So original & haunting – more please!*'; '*Have never seen anything like it*'. FtF was also deemed innovative: it was constructed from oral history, diaries and photographs submitted to the Chester Grosvenor Museum's WWI Roadshow, 2014. This was underscored with a specially composed Requiem sung by a community choir; live sound effects (blown bottles, vocal effects); an acousmatic soundscape; and Newall's projected digital scenography of animated photographs and letters. It was rehearsed in a week and performed in front of, behind, around and within its static seated audiences, breaking down conventional barriers between them. Post-show comments include: '*spellbinding*'; '*Cast moving through audience gives a fantastic connection between audience and cast, drawing them to the centre of the performance*'; '*the changing of scenes to the back was a surprise but it was effective and different*' (source 9).

What began as initiatives to offer local access to innovative, quality cultural events, became more widely cast: OBC attracted audiences of over 20,000. Both FtF and LM had audiences of over 200 people each; and RM, installed in museums and art centres, was seen by over 300 individuals; H played outdoors at Salford Quays to over three thousand people; SN toured to Cheshire, Lancashire, Merseyside and Yorkshire on the National Rural Touring network to non-traditional theatre settings, while Sa played for three performances in the UK, two in the Balkans, and 10 in New Zealand. All works resulted in extensive local and some national press coverage over a wide range of localities.

Feedback suggests impacts have been lasting: for example, the adjudication statement for the ACoRP Award won by OBC states: '*over six months later people still remember last September - whether as an audience member, in a support role or performer – and are still talking positively and enthusiastically about seeing OBC and being part of it.*' Adjudicators also note, '*the scale of the project Over by Christmas was simply breath-taking*' (source 6). Commentators on RM assert: '*will stay in my memory*'; '*it was an experience I'll never forget*' and '*I will also REMEMBER this*' (source 1).

Public knowledge and Understanding

The works have increased knowledge and understanding of local, national and international histories, and reinforced the significance of artefacts and local landmarks. Commentators note the experiences made them think: '*My thoughts fled between Victorian portraiture of the dead as memorialisation and this very intimate moment*'; '*my own granddad is slipping away with Parkinson's, so it really impacts me. It has made me think very differently about my own pictures*'; '*this remembrance made me think of...all the unknown faces in those photos and who they were and whether they survived*'; '*For a moment I had a sense that two of my uncles – who both died in the first world war – had come back to life*' (source 1).

Feedback suggests that ideas and information have contributed to cultural awareness, public knowledge and understanding: post-show comments for FtF include: '*Brilliantly explained and really put the history over and made me feel the emotions of the nurses and soldiers*'; another that, '*I felt the whole work was breath taking – [the] young people communicated the*

ideas and stories giving it a very different dynamic and quite unexpected realism' (source 9). A newspaper review of *Silent Night* (SN) states: *'Even a century later, many are confused as to how the killing of one archduke could lead to "the war to end all wars". You won't be after seeing Silent Night - it contains a brilliantly clear and concise account of how two shots ringing out in Sarajevo could result in the deaths of up to 15 million people in four years'* (source 10). In the RM guest book, a viewer notes: *'I couldn't have connected with the experience of World War I tales in any better way'*; and another, *'I felt connected to history and to the strangers presented in the photos'* (source 1). The Waikato Times writes that the digital projections in Sa provided *'a connective tissue which drew the audience through potential obscurity and provided remarkable opportunities for direct address to the audience'* (source 10).

RM increased understanding of the role photography played in WWI. For example, comments include: *'One sees so many photos and film clips that you can become immune to what they show and represent. This re-awakens you'*; *'Made me excited at the prospect of never looking at a picture of a soldier in the same way (including modern pictures)'*; *'Made me think differently about the use of photography and even social media – what we now do to be remembered'*; and another that he learned, *'a great deal about the popularisation of photography at that time and now the commodification of these images in our time'*; another noted: *'Affecting, thought-provoking, new perspectives on familiar images and ideas'*. A ten-year old viewer of LM states: *'It was interesting to find out about the world of theatre before the new electrics were invented.'* Other viewers expressed sentiments such as: *'excellent thought-provoking installation which has made me want to learn more'* (source 1).

Many of these works featured site-specificity: LM connected its audiences with the heyday of the dilapidated Winter Gardens Theatre which it depicted in miniature: as part of the experience, viewers were escorted by torchlight, four at a time, to the derelict backstage area to see it. Comments include: *'very enjoyable to watch it in such a fantastic building'*; *'Absolutely worth waiting for. An amazing journey to a lost world recreated in miniature – I loved the tight space – enhanced the experience'*; *'Magical, loved the intimacy and the nostalgia.'* The street theatre show, *Preston Remembers*, was purposefully performed besides the newly refurbished war memorial to foster renewed public awareness of it; OBC, performed on heritage railway station platforms, foregrounded the role of railway networks in WWI, while SN's tour included two Cheshire buildings repurposed as WWI hospitals which featured in the script. The power of this site-specificity is emphasised in the judges' adjudication for the award won by OBC: *'It really was community theatre as it should be and of course the site-specific nature added to its impact'* (source 6). A local journalist who covered OBC commented, *'performed at railway stations in the region...it brought home to participants and audience alike, the reality of waving farewell to loved ones heading for an unknown future'* (source 5).

Emotional impact on audiences

As the director of Pound Arts states: *'evaluation has repeatedly revealed that audiences have not just learnt something with this art, but that they have felt something, they have been moved'* (source 4), and emotional impact is a common feedback theme. In an email, the director of *Honour*, states: *'Without your input it would have had little connection to the audience. And very little emotional power'* (source 11). As stated above, where possible, audiences took the opportunity to process their experiences of shows by exchanging family stories with casts (OBC; SN; PR; YCNY! FtF), or by writing in guest books or questionnaires (RM; LM; FtF). These encounters invariably revealed emotional impact was huge. One commentator states: *'[RM] made me care for these men, feel for their families and mourn their death'* (source 1). This connection became a significant part of the cultural experience itself, for, as Brook (2017: 59) reports, post-performance reflection *'can increase the impact by providing audience members with the opportunity and structure for reflection on their experience'* and that *'casual conversation - for example, in the car on the way home—may play a large role in impact as audience members process their artistic experience'*. This is borne out by the many long entries in the RM guest book where visitors processed ideas, memories and sometimes grief. Some state they wept or were *'overwhelmed'*. Thematic analysis reveals that by far the most prevalent individual response was that viewers were *'moved'* or that the work was *'moving'*. Others state: *'I feel bereft to be honest'*; *'My second viewing and if anything, the intensity and impact was greater this time'*; and another that, *'I wasn't expecting to have an overwhelming outburst of emotion, but that's exactly what happened'*; *'filled with so many levels of meaning, I feel I will be*

processing this for a long time'; *'Probably one of the most moving and evocative portrayals of WWI I have ever seen*'; *'it is more powerful than any film or book about the Great War*'; *'you managed to invoke memories in me about loved ones I have never met*'; *'It may be a presentation in miniature, but its impact is huge'* (source 1).

Emotional impact is also evident in the FtF post-show questionnaires with such comments as: *'haunting scenes with young people had a big impact which will stay in people's memories*'; *'The content was so moving and the fact that it was real Cheshire people who lived, worked and walked the areas/streets we do today. Outstanding*'; *'This really hits me where it hurts*'; *'Didn't expect to cry on my birthday!*'; *'very moving. The diary extracts really brought the story to life.'* A comment on Facebook about OBC states: *'many people are saying they were moved to tears and had never seen a WW1 commemoration like it'* (source 2).

Enriching the lives of participants

Through intergenerational, professional and community performance, the work has made significant contributions to individual and community self-esteem and well-being by celebrating local histories and family stories for a wide number of people: OBC involved over 350 community participants, and more than 1200 children from schools over Cheshire. FtF had a youth theatre cast, and an intergenerational community choir of about 100, while SN toured with a professional cast of four, and a community choir of over 60 people performing in rota. It has thus enriched not only the cultural offer, but the lives of community participants. For example, BD celebrated memories of Blacon, a large council estate outside Chester, and an area often defined by deprivation. For example, *A Story about George*, a mini-documentary (source 6), is offered here exemplifying the wider social and educational impacts participants gain: George, a BD participant, is described as being disconnected from school after the break-up of his parents' marriage. Both he and they credit the turn-around in his outlook on his participation: *'when I first joined Theatre in the Quarter, I felt like a different person,'* and his father states *'if he wasn't doing Theatre in the Quarter, he'd just be an angry lad'* (source 7).

Other community participants (in source 8) note the pleasures had, and friendships made: *'Being involved in all these projects has had a massive positive affect on my life, it's allowed me back into the joy of singing ...and gave me the courage to join a choir...It's brought me a huge amount of good friends'*. Another notes: *'despite the subject matter often being of a sombre nature, there was always plenty of fun and laughter too. In fact, rehearsals and performances alike were an absolute joy... [the] distinctive blend of community and street theatre has provided a whole new range of experiences for me and has for sure developed not only my performing skills, but also my self-confidence'*. Another participant was inspired to conduct her own family research: *'I felt honoured to play...the great Vesta Tilley and that in itself sparked conversations and memories with my mum, who was 81 at the time...So that was a ripple effect, which also inspired me to find more about my great gran'*. A few note that: *'Not only has drama both professional and community brought me new friends, but it has also given me a new career. Admittedly I don't earn as much as I used to, but I am so much happier'* (source 8).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Guest book transcripts: *Remember Me, Lost Morecambe*.
2. Collated Facebook comments and feedback: *Over by Christmas*.
3. Testimonial: Artistic Director, TiQ.
4. Testimonial: Artistic Director, Pound Arts.
5. Testimonial: local journalist.
6. Adjudication statement: ACoRP Award: *Over by Christmas*.
7. George's Story: PDF Newspaper article: 'Theatre group helped turn my life around'; mini-documentary: 'A Story About George': <https://vimeo.com/161242152>
8. Feedback from TiQ community participants.
9. Feedback: *For the Fallen*, audience questionnaires.
10. Newspaper reviews: SN; Sa.
11. Email: from artistic director for Quays Culture, *Honour*.
12. Radio Merseyside Interview: RM. (Audio file available on request)