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## Contemporary Britain and the Memory of the First World War

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# Contemporary Britain and the Memory of the First World War

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In British modern memory the Western Front of 1914-18 has been widely accepted as a symbol for tragedy and suffering. This had a profound effect on the ways in which the First World War has been remembered, and Britain's memory of the conflict has always been contentious. However, as we enter the centenary period there are signs that Britain's contemporary memory of the First World War is beginning to change. At the turn of the millennium it was asserted that in British modern memory the First World War was a 'forgotten victory', and that there are two Western Fronts: the Western Front of literature and popular culture and the Western Front of history.<sup>1</sup> However, in 2014 these views do not reflect the multiplicity of ways in which the nation is commemorating the centenary of the conflict 2014-2018. Indeed, the centenary commemorations provide an ideal opportunity to reassess how the First World War is remembered in contemporary Britain. This article will outline some of the main developments at the start of Britain's centenary commemorations, and explore how elements of the war are being re-represented and re-remembered in contemporary Britain.

The most prominent war-related subject to reach government level in the contemporary period was the 'Shot at Dawn' campaign. In 1992, the Labour politician Andrew Mackinlay re-ignited a debate in the House of Commons which argued that the British Government should issue pardons to the 306 British men who were executed by Courts Martial during the First World War. This proved to be extremely contentious. In February 1993, the Conservative Prime Minister, John Major, rejected the request for pardons, saying that the sentences passed were based

on the values of the time and could not be overturned. However, in 1998, a year after Labour's general election victory under Tony Blair, the 'Shot at Dawn' campaign re-opened the debate in the hope that a Labour government would be more sympathetic to the cause. Indeed, Dr John Reid, Labour's Minister for the Armed Forces, said that 'those executed were as much victims of this war as the soldiers and airmen who were killed in action or died of wounds or disease'.<sup>2</sup> However, a blanket pardon was problematic. Dr Reid surmised that the government 'did not wish, addressing one perceived injustice, to create another [...] eighty years after the events [...] we cannot distinguish those who deliberately let down their country and their comrades in arms, and those who were not guilty of desertion or cowardice'.<sup>3</sup>

In the year 2000 the 'Shot at Dawn' campaign gathered momentum, encouraged by news that the New Zealand government had pardoned five of its soldiers executed between 1916 and 1918. In February a monument to the 306 executed soldiers was unveiled at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, and in November campaigners took part in the official Remembrance Day march past London's Cenotaph for the first time. By 2005 the family of Private Harry Farr, who was executed for cowardice at the Somme in 1916, had taken their case against the government to the High Court. While the Ministry of Defence advised against issuing pardons to any executed soldier, in August 2006 the Defence Minister Des Browne cut short a review of the subject and announced that all 306 soldiers would receive a posthumous pardon. On 6 November 2006, members of parliament agreed to the motion, and conditional pardons were issued. In the National Archives, at the front of each available file of British soldiers executed during the conflict, an official certificate confirms that the soldier 'was one of the many victims of the First World War and that execution was not a fate he deserved'.

The emphasis on British soldiers as victims has remained strong in Britain's contemporary memory of 1914-1918. Alan Clark's *The Donkeys* (1961) was one of several published works in the post-1945 era which popularised the idea that the British Army was led by incompetent and out of date generals. Field Marshal Douglas Haig has commonly been portrayed as an inept commander who exhibited callous disregard for the lives of his soldiers, repeatedly ordering tens of thousands of them to supposedly useless deaths at offensives such as the Somme and Passchendaele. Haig's relatively premature death from a heart attack in 1928 meant he was unable to defend his reputation against his wartime detractors, particularly the former Prime Minister David Lloyd-George whose published memoirs launched blistering attacks on Haig. Nevertheless, a monument to Earl Haig was erected in Whitehall and unveiled on Armistice Day 1937.

In the wake of the Second World War, the memory of 1914-1918 began to change. The earlier conflict suffered by comparison to the second which was seen as a 'good' war which had defeated the tyranny of Nazism while suffering proportionately fewer British casualties. By the 1960s Field Marshal Haig had become the ultimate villain of 1914-1918, his character pilloried by a number of historians and also in the satirical 1963 stage play (and later film in 1969) *Oh! What a Lovely War*. At the eightieth anniversary of the Armistice, the *Daily Express* newspaper called for Earl Haig's statue to be removed from Whitehall. The historian Julian Putkowski, a prominent figure in the 'Shot at Dawn' campaign, said that he 'would like to see the statue melted down and the metal used to mint medals for the families of those executed as deserters and mutineers'. Niall Ferguson said 'There is nothing heroic about what Haig did - the heroes were the badly trained Tommies who carried out what were at times completely deranged orders.'<sup>4</sup> Haig's statue remains in place in London, but twelve years later his statue at Edinburgh Castle, once in full public view near the Castle entrance, was moved to a back courtyard at the entrance to the National War Museum.<sup>5</sup> This is perhaps emblematic of the ways in which the British High Command has taken a metaphorical back seat in Britain's modern memory of the First World War.

As Britain approached the centenary period, the British government announced its plans. At a press conference at the Imperial War Museum in October 2012, the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, announced a national programme of commemorative events to mark the anniversaries of the First World War. This programme was to receive £50 million in government funding, and the government

appointed an advisory board to be chaired by the Secretary of State for Culture. This body was tasked with overseeing that programme of national commemorations on specific anniversaries such as the outbreak of war, Armistice Day and major battles such as the Somme and Passchendaele. The facilities at the Imperial War Museum would be upgraded, and funds were allocated for education projects involving every school in England, in addition to a range of local heritage schemes. Making his announcement in front of Paul Nash's wartime painting 'The Menin Road', the Prime Minister underlined that the First World War is 'a fundamental part of [British] national consciousness' and that our duty is 'to ensure that the lessons learned live with us for ever'. He also expressed his hopes that the centenary of the First World War would be an event which unified the country and compared the commemorations with the spirit of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.<sup>6</sup>

However, a number of First World War specialists were quick to criticise the government's centenary plans. Shortly after David Cameron's announcement, the Western Front Association, a prominent society for First World War study and remembrance, aired their concerns in the national press. While they welcomed the funding and the emphasis on education, the military historians leading the WFA were disappointed 'so little emphasis is placed on the events of the "Hundred Days" of August to November 1918. In that period, in concert with Allied forces, the British Expeditionary Force (which included Australian, Canadian, New Zealand and South African troops, as well as soldiers from other parts of the Empire) won what were, in terms of scale, the greatest military victories in our history.'<sup>7</sup> They underlined that while 'it is right and proper to remember the failures in the earlier part of the War, it is highly appropriate that in the centenary period the United Kingdom should commemorate the battles that won the war. This is not a call for triumphalism, but for proper recognition that the sacrifices of the dead of the First World War were not in vain.'<sup>8</sup>

In March 2013 the House of Lords debated the centenary commemorations. The debate was led by Labour's Lord Clark of Windermere, who said the war was "divisive then and it is divisive now" but that everyone agreed on "the bravery, the courage and the valour of the men who suffered the horror and the deprivations of that war". Lord Clark also warned against triumphalism, underlining that the focus of the government's plans to mark the centenary is on commemoration not celebration. Labour's culture spokesperson, Baroness Jones of Whitchurch, told peers that "we

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*L'inauguration au cimetière de Tyne Cot du monument au mort de l'armée britannique, Meurisse, s.d., Coll. BDIC*

should not allow the commemoration to be commandeered” by associating it with the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, since “this is about something much darker. We need to find a way to shine a light on the human judgments and failings without taking anything away from the bravery and the sacrifice of the million or more Britons that died.”<sup>9</sup> It is in this vein that anti-war activists and pacifists are challenging the narrative of the official programme marking the centenary of the First World War. The ‘No Glory’ campaign is backed by a number of high-profile supporters, such as the actors Jude Law and Alan Rickman, the musician Billy Bragg, the poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy and the artist Anthony Gormley.<sup>10</sup> The campaign’s supporters reacted against the government’s plans to spend so much money on the centenary, and that ‘Mr. Cameron has quite inappropriately compared these to the “Diamond Jubilee celebrations” and stated that their aim will be to stress our “national spirit”. That they will be run at least in part by former generals and ex-defence secretaries reveals just how misconceived these plans are. [...] In a time of international tension we call on everyone [...] to join with us to ensure that this anniversary is used to promote peace and international co-operation.’<sup>11</sup>

The leading British First World War historian, Professor Hew Strachan, a member of the British government’s centenary committee, also expressed his concerns.<sup>12</sup> Strachan asked ‘what is it we are going to “remember”?’ He emphasised that the centenary ‘must not be Remembrance Sunday writ large. [...] If it simply reworks the familiar themes of remembrance, it will be repetitive, sterile and possibly even boring. If we do not emerge at the end of the process in 2018 with fresh perspectives, we shall have failed.’<sup>13</sup> He called upon universities to provide the framework within which these debates enhance knowledge and understanding – both of the First World War and of war more generally, identifying that ‘the major challenge is to produce an educational legacy that lasts and is more pervasive, originating in the classroom and stimulated by big and new ideas.’ Overall he was worried that ‘the plans for the centenary are still conceptually empty.’<sup>14</sup> Perhaps in response to these concerns, in June 2013 a major call was issued by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), for proposals from consortia of research organisations to support the extensive interest in exploring the World War One and its leg-

acy among communities across the UK. In February 2014 five Engagement Centres were announced, each hosted at the universities of Belfast, Birmingham, Kent, Hertfordshire and Nottingham. The centres will form a part of the First World War Centenary Partnership, led by Imperial War Museums, and will complement other AHRC activities related to the centenary, including its collaboration with the BBC's World War One at Home Project.<sup>15</sup>

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as national broadcaster is taking a leading role in Britain's centenary commemorations. In October 2013, the BBC announced an unprecedented broadcasting project in its commemoration of the First World War: 2500 hours of programming across all platforms, to be transmitted throughout 2014-18. Certainly 'it is pertinent to consider how commemoration of events key to national identity are [filtered] through broadcaster's preconceptions of audience preferences and their own institutional identities.'<sup>16</sup> One historian has asserted that 'this self-billed "4 year-season" is far more than the BBC's fulfilment of its Public Service Broadcasting charter in the Reithian<sup>17</sup> sense of informing, educating and entertaining. Coming as it does after a tumultuous period of crisis where trust in the BBC has been quantified as declining, and when the corporation remains under extended assault from the competing media that have proliferated in the digital era, the commemorative season is the BBC's attempt to bolster and secure its own place as a repository for public history and public memory.'<sup>18</sup>

It has been suggested that the BBC's four-year-long project is excessive, and that the commemoration will be longer than the war itself. But perhaps the BBC is comfortable doing what it does best because 'war [is] its safe zone'.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, television is still the site where the two Western Fronts – one of literature and popular culture, and the other of history – continue to clash. While new programmes are made it remains that televisual output about the First World War still refers back to images and ideas which resonate with the accepted stories of the conflict. Since the 1960s British television programmes about 1914-18 have largely been produced, broadcast and received as memorials, small screen alternatives to stone and bronze.<sup>20</sup> From the landmark epic series *The Great War* (BBC, 1964), British television programmes have continued to be made and broadcast to mark various anniversaries of the war, and the act of making and watching a programme about the conflict is an act of remembrance in its own right. This commemorative impulse - the visceral need to remember the war at

significant points in time - means that small screen representations of the conflict are expressions of grief and consolation which continue to utilise established tropes of remembrance in their visual, aural and historiographical design. The scale of the BBC's commemorative season represents the creation of a new archive of programmes. There are documentaries, debates, dramas, children's programmes, radio series, special editions, commemorative ceremonies and regional content.

The flagship series of the BBC's commemorative programme is *Britain's Great War*, a four part series presented by Jeremy Paxman, broadcast in a primetime slot in January 2014. A BBC press release in October 2013 underlined that the aim of the series was to explore 'how Britain and the lives of British people were transformed by the Great War.' It was designed to attract attention in its content and telling: the emphasis on Britain, *our* story, a story for all our ancestors. Most notably this series shows how television continues to be consumed as a form of public history.<sup>21</sup> The use of Paxman in presenter-mode delivers a 'knowledge brand' – where persona and authority converge to create a particular style of delivery and sense of authorship.<sup>22</sup> The occasional pronouncement from the cantankerous former *Newsnight* anchor, such as his assertion that conscientious objectors were 'cranks', gained for the series additional and predictable attention in the press, and one reviewer said that Paxman 'goes over the top more than the infantry' and described the series as 'a theatrical documentary'.<sup>23</sup> The series received largely positive reviews. The reviewer for the *Spectator* went further in her response, underlining that 'A retrospective of the first world war is not about these people a century ago, but about us. [...] I can't speak for everyone who'll watch this documentary, so I can only say how I felt – a complicated mixture of horror, sadness and... yes, some excitement. There was something galvanising in the air. Might this have been what at first stirred so many people to answer the call to arms? Surely this early exhilaration can't be a total mystery to us, even from our comfortable 21st-century perches?'<sup>24</sup>

In its title, *Britain's Great War* references the BBC's 1964 landmark series *The Great War*, and it is unsurprising that the BBC is once again showing the established national televisual memorial. As a precursor to this the BBC has released extended versions of the veterans' interviews filmed for the original series, titled *The Great War Interviews*. This asserts the veterans' testimonies as *the* oral history of the conflict, especially given that the last surviving veteran of the

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- war, Harry Patch, died in 2009. This also places the BBC in the role as custodian of this valuable first-hand material: television has preserved the veterans for posterity, and the authority of the voices of what one historian called ‘the nation’s grandparents’ is still a powerful force weighted with authority of men who witnessed the war first-hand.<sup>25</sup>

British history documentaries are different to those shown on the continent which are more likely feature a small group of historians sitting round a table in a studio discussing a subject. This historian-focused format was attempted by *The Pity Of War* (BBC, 2014) and presented by Professor Niall Ferguson. Ferguson argued that Britain’s decision to enter the war was a tragic error, and during the final 30 minutes of the programme he debates these views with some leading First World War historians. Viewers then had the opportunity to interact with the debate via a live blog which ran before, during and after the broadcast, and the audience could join the conversation and voice their opinions on Twitter in real time. This demonstrated how television as public history has, with the help of contemporary social media, started to move towards a less demotic and more democratic model.

A significant number of television dramas and adaptations have already broadcast in the run up to the centenary. British television has produced a number of dramatic series such as *The Village* (ITV, 2012), *Downton Abbey* (ITV, 2011-present) and *Peaky Blinders* (BBC, 2013) which have all featured wartime storylines which resonated with the established themes of loss, futility and trauma. There have also been series which have focused on the war itself. The BBC’s *37 Days* (BBC, 2014) was reviewed as ‘a political thriller that grippingly uncovers the countdown to war’<sup>26</sup> and *The Wipers Times* (BBC, 2013) was described as ‘funny, sad and peculiarly British’.<sup>27</sup> Literature has continued to take a leading role in televisual representations of the First World War. Dramatic adaptations of novels such as *Birdsong* (BBC, 2011) and *Parade’s End* (BBC, 2012) have been well received, and *The Crimson Field* (ITV, 2014) a drama about VAD nurses in Belgium in 1915 brought a more female perspective to the foreground. However, with their emphasis on grief and trauma, these programmes continue to feed Britain’s long-held modern memory of the First World War in terms of loss and futility.

The centenary has reignited older debates about how Britain remembers the First World War. In January 2014, the Education Secretary Michael Gove wrote an article about the history and memory of the First World War in which he made reference to the only British

comedy about the conflict, *Blackadder Goes Forth* (BBC, 1989). Gove asserted that the conflict was a ‘just war’ to combat aggression by a German elite bent on domination ‘[b]ut it’s important that we don’t succumb to some of the myths which have grown up about the conflict in the last 70 or so years. The conflict has, for many, been seen through the fictional prism of dramas such as *Oh! What a Lovely War*, *The Monocled Mutineer* and *Blackadder* as a misbegotten shambles – a series of catastrophic mistakes perpetrated by an out-of-touch elite.’<sup>28</sup> Mr Gove turned his fire on ‘Left-wing academics all too happy to feed those myths by attacking Britain’s role in the conflict’ and that *Blackadder Goes Forth* shouldn’t be shown in history lessons at school. This debate shows that the memory of the First World War is still contentious, and a situation-comedy from 1989 still finds itself in the thick of these arguments.

One of the most contentious centenary activities is Britain’s plans to recreate a football match played against German troops to mark the Christmas truce. The alleged fraternisations between British and German troops at certain points along the Western Front at Christmas 1914 remains one of the most poignant memories of the conflict and it is unsurprising that this event catches the public’s imagination. The minister in charge of overseeing the commemorations, Andrew Murrison, said he believed football had an important part to play in the centenary commemorations, and that children from the UK and Germany may be involved in any match, or tournament, staged in December 2014. Murrison confirmed that the government has been working with the Football Association and the National Children’s Football Alliance and that staging a football match in Belgium on the battlefields where soldiers had briefly put down their weapons was ‘a no-brainer in terms of an event that is going to reach part of the community that perhaps might not get terribly entrenched into this. [...] It is clear the Christmas truce is going to be commemorated in a very significant way. It had no real relevance to the outcome of the war but at that deeply, intensely, personal level, it is something that people really do latch on to.’<sup>29</sup> The use of football as a way into encouraging children to study the First World War has been supported by the British Council who have produced an educational resource based around the history of the so-called Christmas Truce.<sup>30</sup> ‘Football Remembers’, which has been endorsed by Prince William as Patron of the Football Association, has been distributed to many British schools and has been translated into a number of languages. However, some historians are uncomfortable with the ways in which the war is being remembered through the lens of football and have called for the ‘brochure’ to be withdrawn.<sup>31</sup>

Historians have been keen to publish their work as the centenary period heightens the British public's interest in the First World War. The online book retailer Amazon's website lists that the most popular books about 1914-1918 centre on the reasons why Britain went to war such as Christopher Clark's *The Sleepwalkers: How Britain Went to War in 1914* (2013) and Max Hastings' *Catastrophe: Europe Goes to War 1914* (2014). David Reynolds' *The Long Shadow: The Great War and the Twentieth Century* (2014) is among the most popular for sales which may be due in part to the fact that Professor Reynolds presented a television series of the same name on BBC2 in the autumn of 2014.

British schoolchildren continue to learn about 1914-1918 in both English Literature and History. The National Curriculum for History outlines that at Key Stage 1 (ages 5-7 years) pupils should learn about events which are being commemorated, and the executed British nurse Edith Cavell is featured on the list of 'significant individuals' suggested for study, in addition to people and events in their own localities. By Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14 years) all pupils can learn about the 'First World War and the Peace Settlement' in addition to the history of the Holocaust which is now compulsory.<sup>32</sup> Wilfred Owen's poetry has featured on British exam syllabi since the early 1960s, and Owen's poem 'Exposure' still features in one of the main exam board's syllabus for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) which is taken by all 16 year olds in Britain. British school pupils continue to visit museums and the national institutions such as the Imperial War Museums and the National Army Museum ensure that school groups are well provided for with teacher's information packs and activity sheets to be completed during their visits.

The ways in which the First World War has been taught in British schools has for the first time been the subject of academic attention. In 2013, with funding from the AHRC, Catriona Pennell and Ann-Marie Einhaus sought to investigate if the long-held assumption that the First World War was being mis-taught in schools through a reliance on the canonical poetry of writers such as Wilfrid Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. However, Pennell and Einhaus did not find that teachers were peddling the dated view of the conflict which has been dominated by mud, blood and poetry. Nor are happy to show television sitcoms and present them as factual accounts of the war. Some materials, for example *Blackadder Goes Forth*, is being used as a window into deeper, more critical discussions. Overall they found that 'Teachers know how to use material.'<sup>33</sup> This study has shown that in many British schools the time of the

'Two Western Fronts' has passed and the war is now being taught in ways which appreciate the historical and representational complexities of the conflict.

The commemorative impulse is strong in contemporary Britain, and the war is being re-remembered in a number of different ways. The Royal British Legion organised a national 'Lights Out' suggesting that householders turn off their lights between 10pm and 11pm on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2014 – leaving only a single light or candle for a symbolic act of reflection and hope. There is also a greater interest in local histories of towns and villages during the war. A significant number of projects based around the lives of local soldiers are now at work in many areas of Great Britain, suggesting that the centenary is generating an increased interest in the wartime lives of local people and places.<sup>34</sup> Some of the events are re-remembering and recalling established rituals of remembrance, such as the unveiling of new war memorials. On 4<sup>th</sup> August 2014, a contemporary memorial was dedicated at Folkestone, Kent, at a ceremony attended by Prince Harry. Organised by the Folkestone-based educational charity Step Short, the town marked the centenary of the First World War and saw many servicemen and women, and veterans of subsequent wars, mark the occasion. The memorial takes the form of a metal arch which has been placed at the top of the Road of Remembrance, the route taken by the six million troops who passed through the town during the First World War on their way to the troop ship which would take them to France and Flanders. This traditional ceremony was also marked by 3000 red crochet poppies which were attached along the waterfront railings by a local craft group. As part of their centenary programme the Royal British Legion is planting a 'Flanders Field' of poppies by the Menin Gate memorial at Ypres. In a nation-wide mail campaign a cardboard poppy-shaped postcard has been sent to every British household to raise money for the charity. A copy of the wartime poem 'In Flanders Fields' by John McCrae, a verse which helped to establish the significance of the poppy in British culture, is also included.

Poppies are still the most powerful trope of Britain's memory of the First World War. At the Tower of London, an art installation called *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* by ceramicist Paul Cummins offered members of the public to buy one of 888,236 ceramic poppies (for each British casualty) planted in the Tower's moat with the proceeds going to charity.<sup>35</sup> This public art work captured the imagination of the British public. By 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014 over 8 million people had visited what is now regarded as a contem-

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*Les douves du château de Londres recouvertes de 888 200 coquelicots pour chaque soldat britannique mort, août 2014, Wikimedia Commons*

porary, albeit temporary, war memorial. The poppies took centre stage in the marking of the signing of the Armistice on Remembrance Day as the BBC broadcast live the last ceramic poppy being planted shortly before the playing of the Last Post and the two minute's silence at 11am. However, the poppies at the Tower have ignited a debate about nationalism, patriotism and the ways in which Britain should remember 1914-1918. Jonathan Jones, a left-wing art critic writing in *The Guardian* newspaper slated the memorial as 'a fake, inward-looking Ukip-type memorial'. Referring to the right-wing UK Independence Party, which made significant gains in the recent European elections as well as by-elections in Britain, Jones criticized the poppies' 'fake nobility' and asked why were only commemorating British dead and not mourning German, French or Russian casualties. He suggested that a far more fitting memorial would be for the moat of the Tower 'be filled with barbed wire and bones.' A *Daily Mail* journalist was astonished that 'anyone could politicize this magnificent project, any more than someone might quibble with the Cenotaph.'<sup>36</sup> The history of 1914-18 had already been utilised in political debates in the period prior to the referendum on Scottish independence from the United Kingdom, which was held in September 2014. The former Prime Minister John Major was just one of

the public figures who referred to the centenary in his arguments for keeping the Union: 'This year is the 100th anniversary of the First World War. As we honour those who fought together, then would it not be extraordinary if the SNP [Scottish National Party] broke up the most successful union and partnership in all history in any part of the world?'.<sup>37</sup>

British people continue to visit the battlefields of the former Western Front. They are drawn to the old front line in order to visit the last surviving witness to the conflict – the landscape itself. Approximately thirty battlefield tour companies operate from the UK, including Remembrance Travel, a subsidiary of the Royal British Legion, and more operatives are based in France and Belgium.<sup>38</sup> There are numerous published guidebooks, and organizations like the International Guild of Battlefield Guides have been formed to promote best practice in field. The value and importance of visiting the battlefields was certainly a factor in the First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme – a key part of the Government's plans to commemorate the Centenary of the First World War by encouraging two pupils from every British school to visit the battlefields by 2018. Integral to this is the provision of tools to help secondary school pupils to actively engage in genuine

historical enquiries about different aspects of the War. Run by the Institute of Education, the scheme provides free face to face and online CPD sessions focused on teaching and learning about the First World War, which teachers access in the months leading up to their Battlefield Educational Visit to the Western Front.<sup>39</sup>

The centenary period has only just begun. The refurbishment of the First World War Galleries at the Imperial War Museum in London, which reopened in the summer of 2014, was completed at a cost of approximately £40 million. A further £5.3 million has been allocated

to fund two schoolchildren, plus a teacher, from each maintained school in England to visit First World War battlefields in France and Belgium, and to undertake research on local people who fought in the War.<sup>40</sup> In December 2014 there will be numerous events commemorating the Christmas Truce, and a major British supermarket will be basing its advertising campaign for Christmas 2014 around the Christmas Truce. The year 2015 will feature the Gallipoli campaign, the battles of Jutland and the Somme will receive a great of attention in 2016, as will the battle of Passchendaele in 2017. Only time will tell if, by the end of 2018, the British are still arguing over *Blackadder*. ■

## Notes

1. Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War, Myths & Realities* (Headline: 2002); Stephen Badsey, 'Blackadder Goes Forth and the Two Western Fronts Debate', in Graham Roberts & Philip M. Taylor (ed), *The Historian, Television and Television History*, Luton, Luton University Press, 2001, pp.113-126.
2. *The Guardian*, 26<sup>th</sup> July 1998, p.5.
3. *The Guardian*, 26<sup>th</sup> July 1998, p.5.
4. *The Daily Express*, 6<sup>th</sup> November 1998.
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33. 'The First World War in the Classroom: Teaching and the Construction of Cultural Memory' was a study led by Dr Catriona Pennell (University of Exeter) and Dr Ann-Marie Einhaus (University of Northumbria) - <<http://wwiintheclassroom.exeter.ac.uk/>> .
34. In the south east of England alone there are a number of projects and exhibitions focussing on local wartime histories. Many of these are being funded the by the Heritage Lottery Fund, for example Screen South's 'Kent in WW1' which is collecting wartime films. The Kent History and Library Centre's exhibition *In Their Own Words* uses soldiers' letters as a way into understanding the war, and a related exhibition of letters at Godinton House (near Ashford) also places the 'voices' of the soldiers at the heart of its wartime story.
35. Tower of London Remembers - <<http://poppies.hrp.org.uk/>>.
36. Robert Hardman, 'Why do the Left Despise Patriotism?', *The Daily Mail*, 30<sup>th</sup> October 2014, p.15.
37. John Major quoted in Simon Johnson, 'Scots have not thought through 'foreigner' independence implications', *The Telegraph*, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2014, (<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/scottish-independence/11086452/John-Major-Scots-have-not-thought-through-foreigner-independence-implications.html>> - accessed 24/09/2014).
38. <<http://www.greatwar.co.uk/organizations/battlefield-tour-companies.htm#companies>> (accessed 5/11/2014).
39. Institute of Education Battlefield Tours: <<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/research/87073.html>> (accessed 5/11/2014).
40. The contract for the First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme scheme was awarded to the Institute of Education. The programme provides free face to face and online CPD sessions focused on teaching and learning about the First World War, which teachers access in the months leading up to their Battlefield Educational Visit to the Western Front. See <<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/research/87073.html>>.