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Battlefield tours to the former Western Front. What do young people experience?

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Declaration of Authenticity and Author's Rights

This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

Signed: 

Date: 1 September 2023

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Abstract

This research uses qualitative methods to consider the experiences of twenty-eight young people during a visit to the former First World War battlefields of Belgium and France. Data was collected using participant diaries and semi-structured interviews, followed by a process of thematic analysis to identify themes in the young peoples' written and verbal responses. Two themes were identified, analysed, and discussed, with relevant subthemes;

Landscape (remembrance and commemoration): *walking in the footsteps of others (a vicarious experience)*, *understanding the war (a century removed),* and *duality of war and commemoration of the dead.*

Understanding death through the context of conflict: c*omprehension through empathy* and f*ace-to-face with human remains.*

The findings of this research suggest that young people who visit the former First World War battlefields of Belgium and France are likely to experience a form of emotional dissonance as they interpret and process the landscape(s); catalysed, in part, by their existing historical knowledge and understanding of what happened [from classroom learning] and their response to exploring these locations in the present day as commemorative sites.

This research also suggests that there is, for educators, an opportunity to challenge conventional perceptions of conflict beyond existing popular narratives; as young people on battlefield tours are likely to shift from viewing the First World War from a nationalistic perspective to instead recognising it as a shared human experience.

Lastly, this research acknowledges that for young people who participate in battlefield tours there is a contemplation of mortality, a deep introspection about loss and its resonance with their lives, families, and friends; an emotional impact that was compounded for the participants of this research when they were [unusually] witness to the recovery of First World War casualties at an archaeological dig.

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"We passed their graves: The dead men there, winners or losers, did not care. In the dark, they could not see who had gained the victory."

- Langston Hughes

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Motivation for the research

At the time of submitting this thesis, I had been a secondary school history teacher for thirteen years and a university teaching fellow in history education for one year. Yet, my interest in history, and in particular the First World War is something that was nurtured long before my career in teaching began; instead, it is something that was developed as a teenager in standard grade history lessons, as I followed with fascination to my teacher explaining the intricacies of the Schlieffen Plan, the catastrophic events of the first day of The Battle of the Somme, and the diplomacy (or lack thereof) of the Treaty of Versailles. For me, the First World War was a window into a world that seemed so distant, but perhaps was not actually that distant. People who once attended the very school I was studying at or lived in the same street I lived in, were, historically speaking, propelled into a conflict that was not of their choosing, it was instead for 'King and Country' - or so history tells us.

It was somewhat inevitable then, that during 1999 when my school's history department organised a trip to the former battlefields of the First World War in Belgium and France that I had to go; travelling by coach and ferry, we left Scotland for the continent, I was fifteen years old and to say I was feeling excited about the experience would be an understatement. Being able to travel with my friends, getting to go overseas and of course getting to visit some of the places that had captured my imagination in the history classroom for the past two years; Ypres, Pascchendaele, Vimy, The Somme - what was there not to love?

Even now, some twenty-five years later, I would not and could not downplay the significance of the experience for me. Being able to visit those former battlefields for the first ever time affirmed in me what would become a lifelong personal and professional interest in conflict history. Through walking the landscape, visiting the cemeteries and memorials, and listening to the words of my history teacher, I was captivated by what had happened in those places; the choices made by people, their

eventual fates, and how they are now remembered. Doing all this in the company of my friends and with teachers who were not in their normal classroom context was special, it was something I will never forget.

Figure 1

Vimy Ridge

Note: By, P. Hamilton, May 1999

Forward to the present day and having now travelled to the same former battlefields of Belgium and France on numerous occasions as a secondary school history teacher, it was entirely inevitable to me that these visits would form the motivation and ultimately my focus for the completion of a doctorate in education; with my intention being that I hope to utilise the data/knowledge gathered in the completion of this thesis to serve as a contribution to the field of historical battlefield education, specifically in relation to the pedagogy of teaching conflict.

1.2 Research topic, structure, and significance

This research, whilst having its foundations in education, is interdisciplinary, with aspects of history, archaeology, citizenship, and psychology all integral to the research setting, as well as the experiences of participants. With a uniqueness in terms of its

scope, this research is somewhat different in comparison to other studies that have a similar focus. Being able to analyse the experience of a battlefield tour through the lens of a young person offers a fresh perspective to an area of study that is far from saturation point. Where many studies have typically looked at aspects of battlefield tourism from a cultural perspective, this research is interpretive through the experiences of young people and their considerations of remembrance, commemoration, and memorialisation. In terms of the structure of this thesis, the research has been carefully presented in a manner that is hopefully articulate and methodical to the reader. Following this introductory chapter, I focus on literature that is relevant to the research question and provide a critical analysis of what has already been written. Chapter three then introduces the research methodology, its justification, as well as ethical considerations, data collection, and subsequent analysis. Within chapter four, the findings of the data are presented and discussed thematically; with voice given to the participants and their experiences shared vividly. Finally, chapter five presents the conclusions of the research and the implications of what was voiced by participants; including, importantly, suggestions for practice that are relevant for educators who visit the former battlefields of the Western Front with young people. The thesis then concludes with both references and appendices.

This research aims to contribute to the field of historical battlefield education and the pedagogy of teaching conflict. In particular, the experiential analysis that is at the core of this research will attempt to provide a greater understanding in terms of the purpose and impact of visiting the battlefields of the former Western Front with groups of young people. Through this research, I hope to provide insight into what, in my opinion, is a worthwhile and powerful experience for many young people when they are afforded the opportunity to engage with the history of conflict in a manner that is both tangible and tentative.

1.3 The phenomena of battlefield tourism

Battlefield tourism offers visitors emotional and transformative experiences, enabling them to forge a profound connection with the human stories and sacrifices that are so

often associated with historical conflicts (Stone, 2006). In visiting former battlefields there is, for some, a deep level of personal significance. The visits are a way of paying respect and/or honouring the bravery and sacrifice of those who lost their lives, and in doing so, perhaps helping individuals to develop a deeper understanding of what it is that happened in these places. Places where an authentic historical experience can be had and the past is both tangible and visceral, but also where visitors can confront their mortality and reflect on the fragility of life (Lloyd, 1998). Visitors who embark on journeys to former battlefield sites are driven by a variety of motivations, seeking a blend of education, commemoration, and emotional connection. Lennon and Foley (2000) argue that battlefield tourists are "motivated by a desire to learn about historical events and their impact on individuals and societies" (p. 42), whilst Winter (1995) emphasises that "battlefields serve as powerful repositories of historical memory, offering visitors the chance to forge a tangible connection with the past" (p. 95).

Yet, former battlefields are not places without controversy, they are in essence part of a thriving industry where there is arguably a commodification of historical violence. There is therefore, to some extent, a need to better understand the tensions that exist between education, commemoration, and commercialisation as part of battlefield tourism. A balance that arguably exists between commercial interests and the preservation of the historical and cultural significance of former battlefields, ensuring that there is still scope for the effective interpretation of former battlefield sites; places that promote critical thinking, reflection, and the exploration of multiple perspectives for visitors - where there is a move beyond the glorification of war and a more nuanced understanding of historical conflict (Lloyd, 2009).

In visiting former battlefields and engaging with the phenomena of battlefield tourism, the visitor plays a part in the fostering of remembrance, where they can, if they wish to, honour the fallen and be a part of dialogue that not only spans the passing of time but also communities and nationalities. Former battlefields are, after all, places where visitors are confronted with the realities of war, where reflection can be inspired, and where a commitment to peace can be nurtured - contributing to reconciliation efforts by promoting dialogue, empathy, and a deeper appreciation of the human cost of war

(Stone, 2006). They are places that have immense educational potential, particularly for young people. Winter (1998) asserts that "battlefields provide a profound and tangible educational experience, enabling students to grasp the complexities of war beyond textbook narratives" (p. 119), with battlefield tourism facilitating a deeper understanding of the human experience during times of conflict.

1.4 Historical context

Between 28 July 1914 and 11 November 1918, the First World War was the collective term for a series of self-contained conflicts (Strachan, 2013). More commonly referred to now as campaigns, they are remembered in terms of their geographical locations: Western Front, Palestine, Gallipoli, and Mesopotamia to name a few. A war of innovation, it introduced new technologies and advances in military combat. It was a war that resulted in the deaths of at least nine million people, and the collapse of empires. It shaped the global politics of the early twentieth century and its resolution, or lack of, planted the seeds for the Second World War.

Of all the places where the war was fought, from a British perspective, it would be hard to deny that it was on the Western Front where our indelible impression of the First World War was formed. A landscape dominated by trenches, shell holes, and underground tunnels, it was on the fields of Belgium and France that the war was won and lost. From the North Sea to the Swiss Border, a zig-zagged line of trenches was home to warfare on an industrial scale; a war of attrition made frustrating through stalemate. It was on this landscape that over six million people from all sides lost their lives, with a further fourteen million wounded; making this a unique environment in terms of its connection to mortality.

A war that will quite possibly be forever synonymous with trench warfare and its much-argued futility or tactical genius/necessity, with countless narratives and perceptions of what happened in the trenches taught, discussed, and debated in classrooms throughout the world - “an impasse, with opposing armies entrenched in elaborate trench systems, leading to an unprecedented loss of life” (Keegan, 1976, p.

102). With some soldiers in those trenches enduring unimaginable hardships, but remaining resilient, obedient, and in dutiful service to their 'king and country' - "demonstrating the indomitable spirit of the human condition in the face of adversity" (Holmes, 2000, p. 78); and yet, from those very trenches, to what extent did false and exaggerated narratives emerge? Narratives that promoted patriotism and gave valour and dignity to things that were entirely redundant of any honour - "the experiences of soldiers on the Western Front shattered prevailing ideas of war as heroic, giving rise to a collective disillusionment that reverberated throughout the post-war era" (Fussell, 1975, p. 112).

Undoubtedly, the way in which the general population has engaged with the First World War and in particular the former battlefields of the Western Front has intensified during the past few decades. In part, due to the centennial focus of commemoration and remembrance, but also with the passing of the last remaining veterans. Nora (1989) discussed that with the end of 'true' memory, there exists a form of memory that passes from people to places and objects. Perhaps nowhere is this truer than on the former battlefields of the Western Front that are now home to memorials, cemeteries, and museums which all have a focus on those individuals who served, fought, and died.

1.5 Teaching the First World War

In teaching the First World War to young people, there is a necessity for a nuanced and thoughtful approach that considers age-appropriate content, effective pedagogical strategies, and the cultivation of critical thinking skills. It is imperative that the teacher establishes a robust foundation of historical context, where learners are invited to try and make sense of the war's complex causes, major events, and intricate geopolitical dynamics. To try and humanise the war, therefore engendering empathy among young people, it is helpful if personal narratives and diverse perspectives are incorporated; through integrating accounts from soldiers, civilians, and marginalised groups who themselves were profoundly affected by the war. By doing so, the learning that takes place has the potential to transcend a mere statistical analysis, more fully

comprehending the human impact and far-reaching consequences of the conflict. Through engaging with primary sources that are relevant to what happened, there is potential for a learner's understanding of past events to be enriched, whilst developing a degree of criticality as they intrinsically analyse for accuracy, purpose, and meaning; for example, through incorporating letters, diaries, photographs, and other artefacts into the pedagogical approach. By closely analysing and interpreting these types of primary sources, students not only develop the capacity for critical analysis, but also gain an insight into the experiences and perspectives of individuals from that time period.

The study of the First World War also offers opportunities to explore diverse disciplines, encouraging students to engage with history through literature, art, music, and science. Through adopting a multidisciplinary approach, it is not only possible to enrich the learning experience but also to cater for the varied interests and strengths of those learning. For example, by analysing war poetry, young people can consider the emotional impact of the conflict through gaining a deeper understanding of the human experience during wartime. Similarly, studying art and music from the era could provide insights into the cultural expressions and responses to the war. Science can also play a role, if students are afforded the opportunity to explore the technological advancements of the time, such as the development of new weapons or medical innovations; taking such an interdisciplinary approach can allow learners to gain a comprehensive understanding of the war's multifaceted nature, promoting a more holistic view of history.

Crucially, providing historical context is essential for young people to try and comprehend the causes, consequences, and global impact of the First World War. By contextualising the war, educators can enable students to connect the dots between historical events, developing a broader perspective of the consequences of conflict on people and society. By exploring the social, political, and economic factors leading to the First World War learners can be helped to better understand both the alliances and rivalries that ultimately contributed to the cessation of peace. Furthermore, when asked to consider the global impact of the First World War, learners are empowered

to try and understand how the conflict ultimately shaped so many of the geopolitical decisions that went on to play such a formative role for world nations throughout the 20th century. By contextualising the war, learners are therefore better placed to try and perceive the continuity and interdependence of historical events - fostering a deeper understanding of history as a dynamic and interconnected discipline.

Lastly, while teaching the First World War, it is crucial to emphasise the importance of peace, diplomacy, and global cooperation; highlighting the significance of empathy, tolerance, and respect. Educators can, if they choose, encourage learners to reflect on the consequences of war, potentially fostering a sense of empathy for those affected by conflict. By examining the human toll, the destruction caused, and the long-lasting ramifications of the First World War, it is reasonable to assume that young people could develop a greater appreciation for the value of peace. Moreover, teachers can empower learners to explore ways to prevent future conflicts; encouraging critical thinking and discussing strategies for conflict resolution.

1.6 History, First World War, and the Scottish curriculum

Scottish education sits separate from the education systems of its United Kingdom neighbours (following the devolution of certain political powers during 1999). As such, Scotland has its own curriculum - Curriculum for Excellence[1]. Within the Curriculum for Excellence, the acquisition of historical knowledge and understanding is acknowledged as a crucial foundation for students' engagement with the past. According to Arthur (2012), it is historical knowledge that "enables learners to critically engage with a wide range of sources and interpretations, challenging existing ideas while constructing new ones" (p. 12). Consequently, Curriculum for Excellence underscores the importance of establishing a chronological framework and comprehending key historical concepts, such as change, continuity, and causation. Furthermore, one of the central tenets of Curriculum for Excellence is the

[1] Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is Scotland's national curriculum framework, introduced in 2004 with the aim of providing a more flexible and inclusive approach to education. It emphasises the holistic development of learners, focusing on their knowledge, skills, attributes, and capabilities rather than just academic achievement.

promotion of inquiry-based learning, which enables students to actively interact with historical sources and cultivate essential historical skills. The Scottish Government Building the Curriculum 3 document (2008) asserts that students should be able to "interpret historical evidence, construct informed responses, and communicate their findings effectively" (p. 5). Through historical investigations and research projects, students are often afforded the opportunity to develop their capacity to critically evaluate sources, analyse various perspectives, and construct reasoned arguments.

Critical thinking is also a fundamental objective of history education within Curriculum for Excellence. Carr and Lee (2012) highlight that historical literacy entails the ability to "read historical texts critically, to ask appropriate questions of them, and to apply them to other historical contexts" (p. 27). By engaging with diverse historical sources, students are encouraged to evaluate bias, assess reliability, and to again develop their critical thinking skills; helping them to navigate the complexities of historical interpretations as well as developing a more nuanced understanding of the past, all whilst recognising the significance of Scotland's history and its place within the global landscape; with the hope that the study of Scottish history can help learners develop a sense of cultural identity and an understanding of Scotland's interconnectedness with other nations - “studying Scotland's past contributes to the development of a confident, knowledgeable, and thoughtful citizenry” (Priestly & Humes, 2010, p. 349).

With specific reference to the study of the First World War, there are strong recommendations within Curriculum for Excellence that ask for pedagogies to be experiential, active, and where possible incorporate skill-based learning (Education Scotland, 2009). An expected consequence of these recommendations is that there are now an increased number of opportunities for informal education and outdoor learning through outsourcing certain curriculum [and extra-curricular] activities to external organisations, thus, for history educators, creating an opportunity for the expansion of collaborations between schools and heritage organisations; even though, since its inception, Curriculum for Excellence has appeared to reflect ambivalent understandings of Scottish identity (Danilova & Dolan, 2020):

> The main point of controversy has been the balancing efforts of the Scottish National Party (SNP)-led government between 'inward' and 'outward'-looking nationalisms. Ahead of the 2014 Independence Referendum, the Scottish government attempted to resolve this conundrum by introducing Scottish Studies as a means of strengthening associations with Scotland as a unique political entity. An outcome of this was the placement of WWI by the Scottish Qualification Authority and Higher and Nationals syllabuses within Advanced Higher Scottish History rather than 'British' and 'World' history, now alongside such topics as 'Scotland and the Great War' and 'Scotland and Remembrance' (p. 501).

The First World War is a commonly taught topic in Scottish secondary schools, from S1 to S6. Within years S1-S3 it forms part of what is referred to as the Broad General Education, allowing it to be taught in a manner that is autonomous - meaning teachers can use their own judgement to decide which aspects of the war feature within the syllabus; "where curriculum adaptations or autonomy are granted at the local or school level to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of students and local communities" (OECD, 2021, p. 58). In years S4-S6, the autonomy in terms of content does not exist however and the teaching of the First World War becomes prescriptive. At National 5 level (predominantly S4), the teaching of the First World War is referred to as the Era of the Great War and is a study of the experiences of Scots involved in the 'Great War' and the impact of the war on Scotland. The topic considers the impact of technology on the Western Front and considers the ways in which the war changed life for people at home, comprising four compulsory units:

1. Scots on the Western Front	Recruitment; experience of life in the trenches; military tactics; technology of war (gas, tanks, machine guns, aircraft, artillery).

2. Domestic impact of war: society and culture	Defence of the Realm Act[2]; rationing; changing role of women in society; propaganda; conscription and conscientious objectors; casualties and deaths.
3. Domestic impact of war: industry and economy	War work including women's war work; reserved occupations; post-war decline of heavy industry; impact on fishing and agriculture; new industries in the 1920s.
4. Domestic impact of war: politics	Impact of campaigns for women's suffrage; rent strikes; extension of the franchise; homes fit for heroes.

At Higher level (predominantly S5-S6), the teaching of the First World War is referred to as the Impact of the Great War and is a study of the conflict in terms of its political, social, economic, and cultural effects on Scotland, comprising four compulsory units:

1. Scots on the Western Front	• Voluntary recruitment • The experience of Scots on the Western Front, with reference to the battles of Loos and the Somme • The kilted regiments • The role of Scottish military personnel in terms of commitment, casualties, leadership and overall contribution to the military effort
2. Domestic impact of war: society and culture	• Recruitment and conscription • Pacifism and conscientious objection • Defence of the Realm Act (DORA)

[2] The Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) was legislation passed by the British government in 1914 during the First World War, granting extensive powers to the state in times of national emergency. DORA aimed to ensure the security and efficiency of the war effort by allowing for censorship of the press, control over public gatherings, regulation of food supplies, and the ability to requisition buildings or land for military purposes. It also gave authorities the authority to arrest individuals suspected of espionage or actions deemed detrimental to the war effort. DORA significantly expanded the government's control over civilian life and was a key tool in managing the challenges posed by war.

	• Changing role of women in wartime, including rent strikes • Scale and effects of military losses on Scottish society • Commemoration and remembrance
3. Domestic impact of war: industry and economy	• Wartime effects of war on industry, agriculture and fishing • Price rises and rationing • Post-war economic change and difficulties • Post-war emigration • The land issue in the Highlands and Islands
4. Domestic impact of war: politics	• The impact of the war on political developments as exemplified by the growth of radicalism, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and Red Clydeside • Continuing support for political unionism • The crisis of Scottish identity

1.7 Significance of the centenary

To mark the centenary of the First World War, the United Kingdom placed considerable emphasis on ensuring commemorative events were able to take place locally, nationally, and internationally during the years 2014-2018. In October 2012 (in advance of the centenary during a speech at the Imperial War Museum), then Prime Minister David Cameron explained the significance of the approaching centenary when he said:

> For me there are three reasons. The first is the sheer scale of the sacrifice [...] Second, I think it is also right to acknowledge the impact that the war had on the development of Britain and, indeed, the world as it is today [...] There is a third reason why this matters so much. It is more difficult to define, but I think it is perhaps the most important of all. There is something about the First World

> War that makes it a fundamental part of our national consciousness. Put simply, this matters not just in our heads, but in our hearts; it has a very strong emotional connection.

In planning for the centenary David Cameron and the then Culture Secretary, Maria Miller, announced a programme of commemorations that included national commemorative events for the start of the war, the Battle of the Somme, and Armistice Day, the refurbishment of the galleries at the Imperial War Museum London, an educational programme to allow schoolchildren the opportunity to visit the former battlefields, and funding for the National Heritage Lottery Fund to support community projects which would mark the centenary. With no surviving veterans, the aim of the commemorations during the centenary was to connect new, younger audiences to the legacy of the war through arts and education initiatives. In Scotland, the WW100 programme was launched in collaboration with 14-18 NOW, coupled with a range of initiatives in conjunction with organisations such as PoppyScotland and Legion Scotland.

However, it would appear that, for the centenary period, from the perspective of the government, remembrance was not intended to be a mere symbolic act, but instead more of a practice that enabled people in society to develop a greater understanding of the experiences of previous generations, in doing so perhaps attempting to cultivate a form of collective memory; "the act of gathering bits and pieces of the past, and joining them together in public... collective memory is constructed through the action of groups and individuals in the light of day" (Winter & Sivan, 1999, p. 6). The centenary period also underscored, through remembrance and commemoration, integral components of collective memory; the practices of acts such as wearing poppies, attending memorial services, and visiting war memorials which all continued to be commonplace during 2014-2018, for individuals and organisations who were willing and/or keen to participate. Experiences, that when young people were involved, potentially instilled in them not just a deepening of historical comprehension, but also a sense of past consciousness.

For commemorative events, in an educational context, there is an opportunity to try and provide young people with a deeper understanding of not just what it was that happened, but also to consider the long-lasting impact. In this instance, with the centenary of the First World War, there was the potential for young people to be empowered to the extent that they could try not just to navigate the complexities of the past, but the present too - critically examining the impact that conflict has on society and the steps that are required for resolution. In doing so, perhaps even questioning whether there is ever a glorification of war, and if so, where does the glory come from? By critically examining war narratives and challenging perceptions of armed conflict, young people can be encouraged to explore alternative approaches to conflict resolution. These types of discussions could have the potential to foster an understanding of what the devastating human toll of war can be, as well as the importance of peaceful dialogue, diplomacy, and nonviolent means to address conflict. In discussing the impact of battlefield tours to the former Western Front, Professor Hew Strachan wrote the following:

> In its ideal form, remembrance leads to engagement and then to enlightenment. As a result of the four-year centenary, the public has acquired a deeper and more nuanced knowledge of the First World War than it possessed in 2014. School children returning from trips to France have challenged the knowledge of their parents; analyses of the names of local war memorials have raised awareness of other theatres. The notion of a single 'memory' of the war has been replaced by the realisation that there were many memories because the war contained multiple events, experienced in divergent ways (British Academy Review, 2018, p. 47).

The centenary of the First World War also brought about an opportunity to discuss with young people the profound impact that the conflict had on society and culture, as it catalysed transformative changes in gender roles, art, literature, technology, and societal norms. Including and not limited to the role of women in the war effort, shifts in gender roles, the emergence of new artistic expressions, and the technological advancements of warfare, such as the use of tanks and aeroplanes that revolutionised

military tactics and strategy - “technological advancements such as machine guns, artillery, and poison gas transformed the battlefield” (Keegan, 1976, p. 72). This type of discussion, prompted by centennial events, has the potential to allow young people to gain a deeper appreciation of not just the historical context, but also the enduring legacies that help to shape contemporary society. Furthermore, the centenary period also served as a poignant reminder of the necessity for international cooperation and unity. By reflecting on the lessons of the First World War and subsequent conflicts, young people were perhaps better able to recognise the importance of learning from history to prevent future global conflicts; through learning about the mistakes of the past - when international cooperation failed and diplomatic measures were critical:

> In Europe, however, the memory of the First World War has become a vehicle for international reconciliation. France and Germany have seen Verdun as a focus for joint ‘remembrance’ since 1984; not until the centenary was Anglo-German commemoration of the Great War formalised, most movingly at the service for the battle of Jutland in 2016. In Ireland, where the memories of the Easter Rising and the battle of the Somme were appropriated for sectarian purposes, the decade of conflicts from 1912 to 1923 has today been reworked to create a joint ‘remembrance’. We may be right to remember in ways which meet our own needs more than they honour those who have gone before (Strachan, 2018, p. 47).

1.7.1 Impact on tourism, remembrance, and commemoration

The centenary of the First World War undeniably left its mark on the realm of battlefield tourism, with understandable emphasis placed upon existing locations in Belgium and France, coupled with the creation of new historical, educational, and commemorative sites in both countries, there was an imperative for involved nations to ensure that they not only observed the centennial anniversary, but made provisions for many of their citizens to travel the former battlefields of the Western Front.

However, as will be mentioned repeatedly in this study, the phenomenon of First World War battlefield tourism is by no means a recent trend. In the aftermath and during the decades that followed, veterans, family members, and curious visitors sought to experience the former battlefields for themselves, in doing so paying homage to the fallen - thus establishing battlefield tourism as a significant societal and cultural phenomenon during the interwar period; accompanied by a flourishing industry that provided transportation, accommodation, and guided tours (Connelly, 2015). Yet, throughout the latter half of the 20th century, interest in the First World War and battlefield tourism did wane considerably. Subsequent conflicts and the loss that they gave rise to demanded commemoration too, all at a time when the passing of those directly involved in the First World War was increasing significantly. However, a resurgence in First World War battlefield tourism was notable in the 1990s, particularly with increased numbers of school groups visiting with greater frequency. The momentum continued into the 2000s, but it was undoubtedly the centenary period, for many, that sparked a new level of enthusiasm for First World War battlefield tourism.

For the centenary period, it was arguably the countries in which the First World War played a significant role in the shaping of their national narrative who made the most substantial financial contributions - according to data from 1914-1918 Online (2021). For example, the Australian government allocated approximately 210 million euros for centenary commemorations, whereas the German government allocated 6 million euros. In terms of expenditure per soldier killed, Australia spent around 3,500 euros per each of its 60,000 fallen soldiers, while Germany allocated 3 euros for each of their 2 million deceased soldiers. Although the Australian contingent represented only 0.6 percent of all First World War soldiers, the combined government and private sector funding for Australia's centenary was estimated at 360 million euros, making Australia the largest funder of the centenary on a per capita and per dead soldier basis.

In contrast, nations such as the United Kingdom (with 5.2 million soldiers), France (8.4 million soldiers), and Italy (5.6 million soldiers) announced government spending of 63 million euros, 30 million euros, and 28 million euros respectively throughout the

centenary period. Conversely, and again according to information from 1914-1918 Online, countries where the First World War arguably held less significance in terms of collective memory, such as the United States, Russia, Japan, and Germany, there was a minimal allocation of funds for the centenary. For example, the United States World War One Centennial Commission received no appropriations from Congress and relied solely on donations. Similarly, countries that did not exist in 1914 and were previously part of larger empires, including Austria, Ukraine, and the Czech Republic, dedicated limited funding to the centenary despite their significant involvement in the war.

France emerged as the country that experienced the greatest financial benefits from centenary-related battlefield tourism, positioning itself as the conductor of the commemorative symphony. The Mission du Centenaire, France's main body for centenary commemorations, aimed to organise a transnational centenary. However, most ceremonies held in France by other countries maintained a national focus, with each country honouring its own fallen soldiers and emphasising its national character (Fathi, 2019). It is estimated that France attracted over 3.9 million site visits to former First World War battlefield locations during 2018; a total of 1.5 million visitors, of these 63% were individuals and 21% were school groups, a further 16% belonging to other groups (1914-1918 Online, 2021).

For Scotland, during 2013, there was an announcement from the Scottish government in advance of the centenary period that every secondary school in the country was to be offered financial assistance to carry out educational visits to European battlefields as part of the Scottish Government's plans to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. As such, a £2,000 grant was made available to every secondary school in the country to help them meet the costs of trips to the former Western Front battlefields. The fund, that totalled at one million pounds and administered by Historic Scotland, now Historic Environment Scotland, also allowed for the provision of additional subsidies for groups that were travelling from outwith the Scottish mainland. The then First Minister Alex Salmond (Scottish Government, 2013) unveiled the funding by stating:

> The sacrifice made by the many thousands of Scots and those fighting for Scottish battalions during the First World War must never be forgotten, and it is absolutely crucial that we take the opportunity presented by the centenary to help young people develop a deeper understanding of the causes, consequences and horrors of war and the devastation wrought by the conflict on communities in all corners of the country.
>
> Many of the soldiers who were sent to War in 1914 were not much older than school age and educational trips to see WWI battlefields provide an unforgettable experience for our young people, giving them a powerful insight into the trench warfare endured by millions on the Western Front.
>
> Many schools already run educational trips to the European battlefields, but this additional 1 million in funding will ensure that every secondary school in Scotland is offered financial help to take pupils and teachers to Europe during the centenary of the War, broadening the pupils' knowledge of the conflict and ensuring that a new generation of Scots never forgets the unimaginable price paid by their forebears a century ago.

Now, as there was before the centenary, there exists a multitude of battlefield tour providers[3]; each of them providing, at cost, the opportunity for school-aged children to visit some of Europe's former battlefields. A selection of extracted quotes from company websites;

- Using documents, music, drama, and archive film we transport you to the past and make you feel what it was like to live during both World War I and World War II. (Mercat Tours International)

- We inspire, we explore, we care. (Zeitgeist Tours)

[3] Based throughout the United Kingdom, there are a number of tour providers/operators who, for a cost price, offer school groups the opportunity to visit the former Western Front. Broadly speaking, the providers/operators facilitate educational experiences to some of the most frequently visited and historically significant sites in both Belgium and France.

- ...students of all ages can gain an unprecedented understanding of the real, human cost of war. Learning not just about the fateful battles between German and Allied forces, which saw the town virtually wiped out in the space of just four years. But also, about the individual experiences of the soldiers who nicknamed the town 'Wipers'. (Anglia Tours)

1.8 Summary

In this chapter, my intention was to lay the foundations for an exploration of the experiences of young people during visits to the former battlefields of the Western Front. Through articulating my own personal motivation for this research whilst simultaneously attempting to introduce the reader to the dynamics of battlefield tourism, particularly where young people are concerned, my hope is that I have underscored the significance of this research and the space it occupies within an under-researched area of history education.

The phenomena of battlefield tourism will, within this thesis, be contextualised within specific settings, circumstances and during a specific time period [centenary: 2014 - 2018]. Through understanding the historical context of the First World War, including its representation in the Scottish curriculum, a lens has also been provided through which the experiences of young people when visiting sites relevant to the conflict are examined. In this research, it has always been important to remain cognisant of the multifaceted nature of battlefield tourism and its implications for historical consciousness, educational practices, and collective memory. By investigating the experiences of young people, the aim of this research is to contribute to the field of historical battlefield education and the pedagogy of teaching conflict, with, as the thesis develops, the reader hopefully gaining a more nuanced appreciation of how these visits can, for young people, shape perceptions of the past and influence attitudes towards conflict, remembrance, and reconciliation.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Design of the literature review

"The literature review showcases researchers' expertise, underscoring their ability to critically analyse and contribute to the scholarly discourse." (Brown and Lee, 2017, p. 92)

Within this chapter, I provide the reader with an overview of the literature that exists relating to both historical battlefield education and the pedagogy of teaching conflict. The literature review, for me, was a significant stage in my research, serving as a foundational pillar, helping me to assume a critical role as I attempted to synthesise the findings of existing research, as well as helping me to identify research gaps - gaps that I tried so very hard to fill. Yet, amongst all this, worth noting is that despite my description of the literature review as a "stage", it was not simply one part of a chronology, instead it was something that I returned to during various parts of the research process - the task of writing it was an iterative one.

One of my aims in writing this literature review was to position my research within the existing body of knowledge related to the pedagogy of teaching conflict and historical battlefield education. By undertaking a thorough examination and analysis of the existing research literature I attempted to discern where gaps existed; "the literature review provides a snapshot of the current knowns and unknowns in the field, thereby enabling researchers to venture into uncharted territories" (Jones, 2018, p. 42). Furthermore, in writing the literature review (and the methodology section), I found the process helpful in allowing me to establish a theoretical foundation. By reviewing pertinent theories, models, and frameworks, I developed a conceptual framework that steered my study; "a comprehensive literature review empowers researchers to establish a theoretical framework, providing a lens through which to interpret their findings" (Smith and Johnson, 2019, p. 73).

In preparing to write this chapter, I was not entirely sure as to whether there was sufficient relevant literature in existence - a concern that soon proved to be erroneous. Beginning, first of all, with the University of Strathclyde online database (SUPrimo), I began to collate journal articles, books, and book chapters that were relevant to my topic of research. In a relatively short time, I began to note the occurrence of repeated words, issues, and themes. A process that, despite being repetitive, was reassuring as it allowed me to become increasingly knowledgeable and comfortable within the research area (Hart, 2003); all the time, remembering that a good literature review "does not just summarise the literature, but rather it provides a synthesis of ideas, perspectives, and arguments, it is a creative process that requires the researcher to carefully craft the design to address the research questions and objectives effectively" (Hart, 1998, p. 4).

2.1.1 Methodology of literature review

The process of conducting a literature review for any research requires careful consideration and deliberation as to which sources to include and which to exclude (Tranfield et al, 2003). This subsection therefore outlines the methodology that was employed in selecting relevant literature for this study, elucidating the criteria applied and the rationale behind these decisions.

For literature to be included, the following criteria, adhering to the importance of selection and exclusion criteria (Higgins & Green, 2011, p. 155) applied;

Relevance to research area: Priority was given to literature with relevance to the topic areas most pertinent to this research [appreciating that there is an undoubted multi-disciplinary aspect to this research], focusing on topics pertaining to former battlefield visitation, difficult and uncomfortable histories, remembrance, memory, and commemoration. Literature that addressed peripheral or tangential topics were only considered if they provided contextual understanding or theoretical insights relevant to the study.

Currency and recency: To some extent, preference was given to recent publications to ensure the incorporation of the latest research findings and advancements in the field. However, seminal works and foundational literature were of significance to this literature review in order to provide historical context and theoretical grounding.

Scholarly authority: Emphasis was placed on sourcing literature from reputable journals, academic books, and conference proceedings. Works authored by recognised experts and scholars in the field were, to some extent, accorded greater weight, considering their established credibility and expertise.

Diversity of perspectives: Efforts were made to incorporate a diverse range of perspectives, theories, and methodologies to enrich the literature review and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research area. This included considering literature from interdisciplinary fields that offered unique insights relevant to the study.

For literature to be excluded, the following criteria applied;

Irrelevance: Literature that deviated significantly from the research objectives or failed to contribute meaningfully to the study was excluded. This included sources addressing unrelated topics or lacking relevance to the research focus.

Outdated or obsolete sources: Literature deemed outdated or superseded by more recent research was excluded to ensure the review reflected current knowledge and understanding in the field.

Poor methodological quality: Literature characterised by weak methodology, insufficient rigour, or questionable validity were excluded to uphold the standards of academic integrity and ensure the reliability of the literature review.

The selection process for the literature review involved a systematic application of criteria aimed at identifying, evaluating, and synthesising relevant scholarly sources. By adhering to rigorous selection and exclusion criteria, this literature review aims to

provide a comprehensive and authoritative analysis of the existing pertinent literature; facilitating a deeper understanding and contextualisation of the overall research findings.

2.2 Visiting a former battlefield

"Anyone who has ever looked into the glazed eyes of a soldier dying on a battlefield will think hard before starting a war." (Otto Von Bismarck)

It could be argued that former battlefields are representative of something unique, pivotal moments that Winston Churchill referred to as being the "punctuation marks of history". Perhaps then that is why visits to them are so popular. The visitor seeks a sense of place and purpose by walking in the footsteps of those who lived and died in what are now (tourist) sites of remembrance and commemoration. Battlefields are sites of victory, loss, triumph, and defeat, they can be emotive – an expression of grief and sympathy (Braithwaite & Lee, 2006). To visit a former battlefield is to try and understand what happened there. History is littered with examples of this phenomenon. For example, Alexander the Great is alleged to have put a halt to his march on Asia to commemorate the fallen of the Trojan War (Arrian, 1958) at memorials that had been constructed across various battlefields. Also, in the decades after Waterloo (1815), there was a surge in visits to the area, as well as to sites in South Africa following the Boer War, and at Gettysburg they welcome more than three million visitors per year (Piekarz, 2007). At these places, the present can be considered in relation to the past; places where the landscape offers up its stories, giving an insight into a history where normality and convention are absent, replaced with retellings of loss and suffering, making them, for some, hallowed places - made special through remembrance and commemoration.

It is inescapable that in visiting a former battlefield the visitor is at a location of death; an aspect of an individual's mortality that cannot be experienced with any degree of lucidity, something that for the visitor can cause a fascination with their own temporality. Yet, philosophical discussions on the subject of death have been

commonplace for centuries, with Montaigne (C. 16th) describing a situation in which there is no reason to concern ourselves about death as before our conception it was never a concern, and Socrates (399 BC) stating that death might be some form of blessing that we mistakenly regard as being evil. However, it could be said that it is our collective comprehension of death that plays a significant motivating factor in why people visit battlefields; the perception of death as being something that was forced upon those who lost their lives in conflict; something unnatural and untimely (Feuerbach, 1980), caused by violence and lacking in mercy and/or logic. Former battlefields are after all sites of mourning and loss, they are spaces that are "greater than just the sense of sight" (Oxley, 1994, p. 60) - battlefields allow for unique psychological experiences, complex in their existence with mortality (and brutality) at their core. They are locations where visitors can experience a sense of danger coupled with a curious form of excitement (Buda, 2015; Yankowska & Hannam, 2014), where the desire to better understand the nature of death occurs through the creation of a transitory-experiential environment (Podoshen et al., 2015).

Regardless, individuals visit former battlefields for lots of reasons, from "pure entertainment to cultural education" (Leopold, 2007, p. 49). In France and Flanders, at the sites of the First World War, "all kinds of people are attracted to this area (the Western Front), ranging from military enthusiasts and family historians, right down to the merely curious who want a different type of holiday" (Iles, 2001, p. 236). Also, the opportunity to engage in commemorative practices, driven by a sense of patriotism (or guilt) might well be an influencing factor in the decision to visit a battlefield (Panakera, 2007, p. 134); something considered by Prideaux who stated that battlefield visitors express a need "to remember comrades; to rekindle memories of loved ones who fell in battle; to ponder on the feats of those who they will never know; and to gloat on victory or lament over defeat (2007, p. 17).

Amongst all this, what role, if any, does affirmation play? It has been suggested that some individuals visit battlefields to validate their knowledge (Kugelmass, 1994; McCain & Ray, 2003); perhaps even, as an opportunity for them to celebrate their understanding of history (Seaton, 1999, p. 152); something Keil (2005) highlights as

the link between visiting battlefields and an individual's comprehension of past events. Regardless, the allure of the battlefield for many people is a significant factor, with many finding the opportunity of going to where something happened a temptation that is too hard to resist (Rojek, 1997, p. 58). When Ashworth and Hartmann (2005) discussed the motivations of battlefield visitors they suggested that there is a curiosity, for some people, to engage in experiences that are out of the norm. Furthermore, there may be motivations that are empathetic in nature, given that the visitor (in some capacity) attempts to relate to the experience of an individual(s) connected to the battlefield in some way. Also, Ashworth and Hartmann (2005) cite the influence of horror as a motivating influence for battlefield visitation; an uncomfortable proposition perhaps, but difficult to ignore. Rojek and Urry (1997) have discussed this with reference to peoples' desire to visit the sites of disaster and loss in the aftermath of events taking place; something that was given attention and highlighted in an Independent newspaper article by Maya Oppenheim titled 'Grenfell Tower[4] residents urge visitors to stop taking selfies - "you want to slap the phones out of their hands" (Oppenheim, 2017). Within the article, the contentious issue of visiting Grenfell as part of an organised tour is discussed - proof as suggested by Rojek and Urry (1997) that there can be a need/desire to visit sites of loss and suffering.

Visiting sites associated with warfare has long been a strong fascination for many and it may well be that certain individuals are motivated by the more morbid aspects of what happened at a given location. However, this does not necessarily mean that such visits are voyeuristic, instead they can have the potential to be empathetic and educational. Mosse (1990) suggested that visits to the former battlefields of the First World War have both purpose and meaning as they "make an inherently unpalatable past acceptable" (p. 7). Today, the distance between the First World War and the

[4] The Grenfell Tower disaster occurred on June 14, 2017, in North Kensington, London, when a fire broke out in the 24-storey Grenfell Tower residential block. The fire rapidly spread due to the building's exterior cladding, which was highly flammable. Tragically, 72 people lost their lives in the fire, and many more were injured. The incident prompted widespread outrage and raised concerns about fire safety standards, inadequate regulations, and social inequality. Investigations revealed a series of failings, including deficiencies in building regulations, inadequate fire safety measures, and poor management of the building. The disaster sparked inquiries, policy changes, and ongoing debates about housing safety, social housing, and the responsibilities of authorities and developers in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of residents.

present day is such that no living veterans remain. Therefore, the interpretation of 'their' battlefields is reliant upon primary and secondary source information that is usually presented to visitors in the form of a story-telling narrative. As such, the recounting of battlefield history may be something that the visitor finds as opaque or disconnected from their present lives - sanitised for commercial purposes (Mosse, 1990) - making it unrecognisable to those who were there during the period 1914-18:

> Our war, the war that seemed the special possession of those of us who are growing middle-aged is being turned by time and changed into something fabulous, misunderstood and made romantic by distance (Mottram, 1936, p. 44).

It may also be the case that former battlefields tell a story of human interaction; of people who fought, died, and survived there. They can be places that are open to interpretation without necessarily trying to be that way. That is why when people visit them, they more often than not want to learn about the people who influenced the landscape and not the other way around. Their provocative influence promotes thought and contemplation in what Tilden described as "reverence and understanding" (1977, p. 34). Depending upon the landscape however, there can be difficulties with interpretation for visitors. Leopold (2007, p. 51) described some battlefields as being unable to "speak for themselves", placing an onus upon the site owner to ensure there is a suitable opportunity for accurate comprehension of the location. Roles that Cohen (1985) described as being similar to gatekeepers with choreographic responsibilities. A point that was also discussed by Ryan (2007) who described the role of the guide as being directive in that they manage the landscape to provide a narrative. Yet, visits to former battlefields are often structured in a particular way; perhaps chronologically or thematically. Either way the participant trusts the person guiding them will manoeuvre them in such a way that there is optimal opportunity for interpretation and understanding. As participants, they are a "captive audience" with little autonomy in choosing where they go (Iles, 2008, p. 146). Also, there is the issue with battlefield tours, in terms of structure and content, that they are often conducted

by educators with limited understanding of military history or military educators who have little understanding of pedagogy (Lloyd, 2009).

2.3 Battlefield tours as dark tourism

Our shared tendency to look towards the past to understand the present is a fascination popular in our discussions and media output. Television, cinema, radio, books, and news satisfy the majority of our curiosities about history, but it is through discourse with one another that assumptions are voiced, connections are made, and viewpoints are laid-bare. But what happens when our engagements with the past are experiential? Going to 'where things happened' can be a powerful experience, particularly when visiting locations associated with conflict, loss, or mourning. Demand to visit such places is so popular that there exists, across the world, a thriving 'dark tourism' industry. The combination of conflict and tourism may seem strange to some, but it is now a popular method for engaging with the past: "...despite the horrors of death and destruction... the memorabilia of warfare and allied products... probably constitutes the largest single category of tourist attractions in the world" (Smith, 1996, p. 248).

The dark tourist "seeks encounters with death" (Seaton, 1996, p. 240) and "dark tourism is a commodity available for purchase" (Lennon & Foley, 2000, p. 5). R.H. Mottram, after the First World War, commented that "post-war" was "murder on show, with a small price for admission" (Spanish Farm Trilogy (1927), quoted in Lloyd, 1998, p. 63). By definition, dark tourism can be regarded as exploitative, given that it is reliant upon the macabre (Stone, 2006, p. 148). Dark tourists, if they want, can visit sites of mass murder, extermination, and military disaster. The question is, why though? What motivates an individual to seek out and visit a location so culturally dissonant from their normal day-to-day lives?

Seaton (1996) categorised the motivations of dark tourists by first of all suggesting their movements fall into one of the succinct groupings below;

1. Travel to witness death as it happens.
2. Travel to sites of individual and mass death (post-occurrence).
3. Travel to sites of memorialisation and commemoration.
4. Travel to sites that represent death symbolically.
5. Travel to sites of simulated death.

It has also been suggested that people are motivated to visit sites of death as a place to contemplate their own understanding of life and death (Gatewood & Cameron, 2004, p. 213); something that Stone and Sharpley (2008) described as being the sequestration of death from public space. In other words, death is commemorated and memorialised within its distinct geographical landscape - separate from the familiar happenings of day-to-day life. This is no doubt why our interactions with dark tourism can also be leisurely. For example, whilst on holiday in New York many people visit the 9/11 Memorial Museum or the concentration camp at Auschwitz whilst in nearby Krakow. They are indeed places of loss and suffering, but they are also tourist attractions. This is why it has been suggested that these types of sites are often overlooked in terms of academic study, as they are perhaps an embarrassing niche (Tarlow, 2005).

Diversity in terms of location has also resulted in the formation of a dark tourism spectrum with shades of darkness (Miles, 2002). This is something Miles suggested when differentiating between places of death and suffering and places which are death and suffering; for example, the distinction between a museum and the exact location of where something happened. Time can also be a significant factor according to Lennon and Foley (2000) in relation to 'distances of memory' when one considers the potential for an emotional connection to a twentieth-century battlefield, as opposed to one from medieval times. Perhaps then, there is a connection fostered by living memory, a level of empathy that diminishes over time. A realisation that those involved in the battlefields of recent memory are more connected to our everyday lives than those of the more distant past.

In the aftermath of the First World War when the first tourists began to visit the former battlefields of Belgium and France, they were accused of trivialising the conflict (Mosse, 1990), in contrast with those who were motivated to visit through their own feelings of grief and loss. A potential source of animosity that was resolved over time through what Connelly (2009) described as being the softening of the tension between those who were bereaved and those who were tourists - through consensus at what constituted socially acceptable conduct. Particularly relevant when you consider that in the years following the war, there was what could be described as a considerable hush about what had just taken place and perhaps not enough questioning about the exact nature of loss; an arguable lack of critical thinking. Todman (2005) has suggested that it was not actually until the 1960s and 1970s that any significant form of questioning began to take place, with the passing of the parents of the deceased.

2.4 A difficult history

As battlefields are places of loss and suffering there are often difficult decisions for the teacher/guide to make on educational tours; perhaps none more so than how the truth of events should be told. Pertinent when you consider the explicit or graphic nature of what, at times, took place; discussing this issue in relation to holocaust education, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in their teachers' resource book raises the argument that students are essentially a captive audience; if they are assaulted with images of horror for which they are unprepared, a basic trust can be violated. With that in mind, how far can the teacher/guide push the boundaries? Zembylas and McGlynn (2010, p. 43) stated that "if a major purpose of teaching is to unsettle taken-for-granted views and emotions then some discomfort is not only unavoidable but may also be necessary". Whilst Barnett (1997, p. 173) suggested the concept that learning should be based upon "...critical being" and should be at the exclusion of values and emotions. However, in contrast Short (1998, p. 60) stated that, "...whilst the ethical dimension of inflicting pain has constantly to be borne in mind, teachers need also to take cognisance of the pedagogic implications of painful material. In other words, they should appreciate the relationship between the infliction of pain and the ability to learn."

To experience something emotionally has been described as a conscious and subjective experience, expressed through mental and physical states (Turner, 2009). Emotions may be positive or negative, and in visiting former battlefields there is potential for a wide range of emotional responses from individuals. For example, Miles (2014) discussed the nature of battlefield tours as being drivers of negative emotions through the places visited and the events discussed. Furthermore, Chronis (2005) noted that individuals who visit battlefield locations can form a type of connection with those who fought and died as if memory is being shared and passed on. Iles (2008) discussed the ritualistic actions of many visitors to the Western Front in terms of the behaviours they perform - at cemeteries and monuments, despite significant numbers lacking any family connection to the people and/or places visited. Instead, a form of historical cognition is formed through the emotional engagement of participants with the places being visited and the stories being told (Kang et al, 2012). This 'emotional engagement' is prevalent amongst those who participate in battlefield tours and is perhaps a specific psychological reaction to the constructed and choreographed stimuli that are a common feature of tours.

By visiting the former battlefields of the Western Front as part of an educational tour there is an expectation that young people will gain an understanding of what happened, when it happened, and why it happened. Young people have a unique opportunity to place the First World War within the context of a century that witnessed cataclysm on a global scale, as well as being afforded the time and space to consider the morality of warfare through the analysis of key individuals, judgements, and decisions - exposing them to an aspect of human history that is undoubtedly alien to their everyday experiences of life; meaning that some aspects of a battlefield tour may be invasive and/or offensive. It, therefore, falls to the teacher/guide to make appropriate, reasonable, and justifiable decisions about both content and methodology. Young people do not need to be exposed to content in a frivolous or insensitive manner, yet there exists a level of acceptance that what took place on the Western Front during the First World War is a complex and difficult period of history. Difficult histories are a challenge for the educator, but they are unavoidable in the realm of the humanities - instances of conflict, genocide, violence, and colonialism are after all indicative of the

human experience. In visiting places such as former battlefields, Lee (2016, p. 698) described those who visit as being able to "perceive about history and imagine the historic battlefield and develop a sense of the past". Places that promote unique responses for those who visit, as they find themselves contemplating danger from a position of safety (Causevic & Lynch, 2011). Places where meaning can be interpreted from an individual's own perspective, related to their identity, expectations, and personal experiences (Strange & Kempa, 2003); and places where anger (Israfilova & Khoo-Lattimore, 2018), disgust (Podoshen et al., 2015), hope (Koleth, 2014) and pride (Cheal, & Griffin, 2013) are all commonly felt emotions amongst visitors. So, how does the teacher/guide ensure that in visiting a place of such discomfort and trauma there remains the opportunity for meaningful learning? One suggestion by Tarc (2011, p. 369) is through the creation of a space that is conducive to learning, one that facilitates a receptive audience, free from emotional barriers:

> Curricular mourning spaces of remembrance consist of violently dehumanised human existences. Yet, they hold the imaginative means of psychosocial production by which a devastated official knowledge and human relation might find repair and rest, might find peace and, with it, the justice-seeking bodies of suffering living and violently dead.

A transformative form of pedagogy that makes difficult aspects of history palatable and the realisation of uncomfortable truths a worthwhile endeavour (within the context of learning and teaching).

2.5 The Relevance of the (former) Western Front

"This war, like the next war, is a war to end war." (David Lloyd George)

After the signing of the armistice in 1918 it did not take long for people to begin visiting the former battlefields from the victorious nations (Brown & Cook, 2011), followed by German visitors in considerable numbers about a decade later (Eksteins, 2000). In fact, throughout the entire inter-war period of 1918-1939, there was a

significant amount of visitation to the Western Front, with France even offering its citizens free transportation (Sherman, 1999) followed by an understandable post-World War Two decline in visitor numbers that continued into the 1950s and 1960s (Eksteins, 2000), before being followed by an increase again during the 1980s when visitors from Commonwealth nations such as Canada and Australia started to make the journey in considerable numbers.

In 1915, in one of his letters, Second Lieutenant Alexander Douglas Gillespie (Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders) wrote that when the war ended there would not be any need for memorials and/or monuments. Instead, he said, "*I would make a fine broad road in the 'No Man's Land' between the lines, with paths for pilgrims on foot, and plant trees for shade, and fruit trees, so that the soil should not be altogether waste*". Not at all surprising he wrote this when you consider that following the war there was left behind an approximate 333 million cubic metres of trench, along with barbed wire capable of stretching 375 million square metres, surrounded by over 800,000 destroyed/damaged houses and 17,466 ruined schools, town halls, and churches (Clout, 1996).

Yet, initial visitors to what was once the Western Front had little to see in comparison to modern-day visitors, meaning their experiences were perhaps more imaginary (Lloyd, 1998) with one early guidebook (Lowe, 1920, p. 9) describing the visitor experience as:

> ...touring the battlefields is a different thing altogether to touring for the purpose of sightseeing, in fact I can safely say that the mere sight-seer will probably be disappointed with the devastated zones of France and Belgium. But combined with 'atmosphere' and imagination they will draw the tourists like magnets and he will probably return to them again and again.

As such, it was perhaps the landscape that was more important for the early visitor; the absence of memorials and monuments was, at that time, unlikely to have been a consideration for those travelling to the former Western Front. Winston Churchill for

example, in talking about the ruins of Ypres, said that "*a more sacred place for the British race does not exist in the world*" (Longworth, 1967). Arguably nowhere else, from a Commonwealth perspective, was more fiercely held than Ypres, with popular British opinion regarding the place as a "*great and sacred repository of all the scattered dead*" (ibid). A point developed by Heffernan (1995, p. 313) when writing about the lack of repatriation for the dead in stating that those killed were now "*...official property', to be accorded appropriate civic commemoration in 'solemn monuments of official remembrance*". With that in mind, a somewhat obvious obligation fell upon the many nation countries involved in the conflict to, if permitted, purchase areas of land that would allow them to both bury and commemorate their war dead.

With national narratives and focused commemorations eventually playing their part in motivating people to visit the Western Front; coupled with books, documentaries, movies, and podcasts (Clarke & Eastgate, 2011) playing their part, the modern visitor is perhaps more likely to be visiting as part of a cultural educational experience. A study by Hough, Ballinger, and Katwala in 2016 revealed that there existed a shared sense amongst the British public that the First World War was still of significant interest, with only 15% of those asked stating they had learned all they needed to know about the First World War.

Yet, it could be said that the former battlefields of the Western Front hold a significant place in the hearts and minds of individuals who embark on pilgrimage-like journeys to Belgium and France (sometimes semi-regularly). In doing so, satisfying a desire to establish a tangible connection to the past and gain a deeper understanding of the human cost of war (Smith, 2018). For these visitors, there is an opportunity to confront the scale of human suffering and sacrifice - a visceral experience that textbooks and documentaries cannot replicate. By walking the battlefields, witnessing the physical remnants of war, and engaging with memorial sites, they are confronted with the profound consequences of armed conflict. A place where those who wish to can pay tribute to the soldiers who fought and died, by physically walking the same ground

(Jones, 2016), at landscapes that are capable of inspiring profound reflection (Baker, 2017).

Furthermore, being able to engage with the physical remnants of war, such as trenches, bunkers, and war cemeteries, compels visitors to confront the harsh realities and horrors of conflict (Adams, 2015). The unique, and sometimes sombre, atmosphere coupled with the access to tangible artefacts found on the battlefields are poignant reminders of the violence, destruction, and human suffering that occurred during the First World War. By experiencing these sites, visitors can gain a deeper appreciation of the nature of war, challenging stereotypes, perceptions, and romanticised notions; fostering empathy for those who lived through and experienced what happened there. Turner (2019) argues that the emotional impact of experiencing former battlefields has the potential to prompt reflections on the futility of war. By confronting the devastating consequences of armed conflict, visitors are inspired to think critically about warfare and the steps that need to be taken to ensure peace in and across societies. Perhaps even providing a unique opportunity for individuals to connect historical events to contemporary global issues (Harrison, 2020). By contextualising past conflicts, visitors can gain insights into the complexities of war and the far-reaching consequences they give rise to. A broader understanding that could foster a heightened awareness of present-day conflicts, encouraging, as already mentioned, critical thinking about the causes and consequences of conflict.

2.6 Remembering conflict

"Silencing the past is a form of violence that leaves history at the mercy of those in power." (Trouillot, 1995, p. 20)

Unsurprisingly, in the lead-up to the centenary of the First World War (2014-18), there was considerable interest in remembrance and commemoration throughout the United Kingdom with people, places, institutions, and organisations all keen to connect with their individual heritage(s) of the conflict. Several decades ago, when it was time for eighty years since the cessation of the war to be commemorated, Dan Todman (1998,

p. 160) commented that despite the war falling from memory, it was unlikely to ever be "shelved". Fast-forward twenty-plus years and it is clear that Todman was correct, given the undeniable emphasis that existed to ensure the centenary was commemorated by as many people as possible from across all parts of the United Kingdom. But why does there still exist [for so many] a need to remember the events of a war that ended a century ago? Perhaps it has something to do with our common identity as a nation, our desire to never forget heroic acts, selfless bravery, and sacrifice with "arresting emblems" as part of our "modern culture of nationalism", Anderson (1991, p. 9). Or maybe as Renan (1990, p. 19) put it, our national reliance on "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories", a legacy composed of both glory and suffering. In 2012, then Prime Minister David Cameron cited the three most significant reasons for a national commemoration of the First World War as being: the scale of the sacrifice; the impact the war had on the development of Britain (and the world); and because it remains a fundamental part of the national consciousness.

But perhaps our desire to commemorate past events, such as the First World War, is for other reasons, including our collective desire to learn from the lessons of the past and in doing so avoid future conflict, with Peter Englund (2011, p. 3) suggesting that the memory of the First World War in contemporary Europe serves "as the supreme cautionary example of the horrors of war". Or maybe it is that remembrance and commemoration have little to do with history, but are more relevant to present-day politics, helping governments to harness the support of their electorate(s) for current and potential conflicts, or to try and promote unity in the face of referendums (Mycock, 2014). Whatever it is, questions rarely seem to go away about the relationship between the nation and remembrance, as people wonder whether we sentimentalise, celebrate, or even glorify war as opposed to remembering its harsh realities (Harrison, 2012).

Without a doubt, the passage of time from the conflict plays a crucial role in the transformation of memory. As Winter (2014) suggests, the gradual temporal distancing from a conflict allows for reinterpretations and mythologisation to occur. Memories become detached from the immediacy of the events, enabling new perspectives and narratives to emerge; with Halbwachs (1992, p. 54) arguing that

“memory is a flexible construct, adjusting itself to the present context each time it is evoked”. Thus, “memories of conflict are continuously shaped by evolving socio-political landscapes, historical interpretations, and the changing needs of society” (Winter, 2014, p. 79). Furthermore, the construction and control of memory is also intricately tied to power dynamics within societies. Misztal (2003, p. 125) asserts that “those in positions of power possess the agency to shape historical narratives, educational curricula, and public discourse, thereby influencing collective memory”; meaning that memory can be manipulated by those looking to enforce power structures, legitimise particular ideologies, or perhaps marginalise dissenting voices. As Assmann (2006, p. 72) contends, “memory politics is never innocent but entwined with power struggles”.

In post-conflict societies, memory also assumes a critical role in the pursuit of justice and reconciliation. Transitional justice mechanisms such as truth commissions, reparations, and memorialisation efforts seek to address past atrocities and in doing so navigate the complexities of memory. Hayner (2011, p. 87) emphasises the importance of memory in truth-seeking processes, arguing that “acknowledging and confronting the painful memories of conflict are prerequisites for genuine reconciliation” - “memory plays a pivotal role in establishing historical truth, ensuring accountability, and offering closure for victims and societies scarred by the past”. Memories of conflict are inextricably intertwined with personal and collective trauma. LaCapra (2004, p. 109) explores the deep emotional and psychological impact of war, violence, and loss, asserting that trauma shapes how individuals and communities remember the past; with “the wounds of conflict often transcending individual experiences, reverberating through the collective, leaving an indelible mark on the memory landscape”.

In an era of globalisation, memories of conflict are also increasingly influenced by global narratives and mediated representations. Nora (1996, p. 56) underscores the transformative power of the media, stating that “images, documentaries, and digital platforms play a significant role in shaping how conflicts are remembered and understood across borders”. The circulation of information and narratives through

global media networks creates a global memoryscape, shaping international perceptions, fostering transnational communities of memory; something Levy and Sznaider (2002, p. 118) discuss when they state that global media, with its ability to transcend temporal and spatial boundaries, contributes to the formation of "a cosmopolitan memory, transcending national frameworks and fostering cross-cultural dialogue".

2.7 Places of memory and loss

> *"Their very flowerfulness and calm tell the lingerer that the men beneath that green coverlet should be there to enjoy such influence; the tyranny of war stands all the more terribly revealed." (Edmund Blunden, 1937)*

In visiting a former battlefield and its associated monuments and memorials, visitors are provided with an opportunity for tangibility; the chance to physically (as well as emotionally) engage with the surroundings. During October 1914 Fabian Ware (founder of the Imperial War Graves Commission, now the Commonwealth War Graves Commission) and others became concerned about how fatalities of war were not being properly recorded; whilst efforts were being made to provide suitable burial, there was limited evidence of actual record-keeping. Furthermore, it was soon realised that the process of burying war dead in local cemeteries was neither appropriate nor feasible, hence the creation of the large (dedicated) cemeteries we recognise today - places of memory and loss.

In thinking back to the latter part of the First World War, Edmund Blunden in writing the introduction Fabian Ware's The Immortal Heritage (1937, p. 18) discussed his view of the place where he served and what it would become, regardless of the passing of time:

> The idea that these battlefields would themselves ever become pasturelands with grounds and lakes and garden walls would have appeared sheer fantasy. Those who experienced the horror of the trenches on the Western

> Front lived from day to day and those who stopped to reflect often felt that their death would be nothing short of a complete and final disappearance.

Upon first sight of a CWGC cemetery in Belgium and France (and throughout the world), they are instantly recognisable. Generally featuring a large Cross of Sacrifice designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield and in larger cemeteries the sarcophagus-shaped stone with the words 'their name liveth for evermore' from Ecclesiasticus, chosen by Sir Edwin Lutyens. With headstones 2ft 8in high made usually of white limestone or portland stone, the graves include information of those commemorated such as name (if known), rank, regimental number, regimental crest, age, date of death, and religious emblem (if applicable). Often most poignant for visitors (and for the participants of this research) however are the inscriptions at the bottom of headstones; chosen by the families of those killed in conflict, offering an insight into the grief experienced by many families, leaving the modern-day visitor with something to contemplate. Also, there are those headstones that mark the burial of the unidentified, simply engraved 'a soldier of the great war, known unto god'; a poetic statement, one of many chosen for the Imperial War Graves Commission by Rudyard Kipling; leaving the visitor with a feeling of satisfaction that burial has occurred and remembrance can happen, but a dissatisfaction that identity is undiscovered. It was also Kipling who first referred to CWGC cemeteries as 'silent cities', possibly taken from the Urdu for cemeteries: Shar-e-Khamosham.

The landscape of Northern Belgium and rural France is, in places, dominated by sites of commemoration, including CWGC locations - the setting for both individual and collective remembrance - where generations of visitors have and continue to engage in acts of remembrance. Mosse (1990) argued that it is memory that serves as the motivating factor amongst those who choose to visit former battlefield locations as they attempt "to make an inherently unpalatable past acceptable" (p. 7); not too dissimilar to Walter (1993) who described visits to former battlefields as "being an attempt at creating order in a place where order does/did not exist" (p. 82). And yet, what is the value of remembrance if it occurs out with human memory? After all, the former First World War battlefields are places where no one who served remains alive

today, nor is the landscape strikingly similar to how it would have been during 1914-18. Visits today are what Graburn (1989) referred to as being a form of "kinetic ritual or non-ordinary experience" (p. 25). For some a "sacred journey" (Graburn, p. 25) that removes them from the ordinary situations of their day-to-day lives to an immersive experience based upon a sense of shared memory. On most occasions, an experience that is not even directly connected to the lives of those visiting - instead an experience of remembrance based upon empathy and curiosity. Something Iles (2008) discussed about battlefield visitors having the desire to "empathise with their symbolic and commemorative spaces" (p. 140). The act of remembrance is experiential, one that can be felt both physically and emotionally; paradoxical in the sense that the experience is disembodied given that the ones being remembered are long from living memory (Heffernan, 1995). Yet, remembrance can take many forms - unique to both the individual and the collective - whether it be the type(s) of traditional remembrance that occur on an annual basis or those we might view as being more intimate and private, dictated by personal preference or localised routine; giving rise to a level of fluidity and therefore an array of interpretations about remembrance and what is/should be remembered.

Anyone visiting Ypres will be struck by the architecture of the Menin Gate which bears the names of 54,609 Commonwealth soldiers who have no known grave as a result of their involvement in the fighting that took place on the Ypres Salient. As a structure, it is an impressive one, designed as a triumphal arch with a roadway underneath deliberately ensuring its dual purpose - as both a thoroughfare for road and pedestrian traffic and as a memorial to the missing. Like all war memorials the Menin Gate serves as an aide-memoire with notable features commonplace amongst the iconography of memorialisation, whether it be the names of those remembered scrolled upon the walls of the memorial or prominent examples of religious symbology; features that are part of the cultural vocabulary of war remembrance curated over hundreds of years and now part of western European history (Borg, 1991; King, 1998; Winter, 1995).

Figure 2

Menin Gate

Note: By Paul Hamilton, November 2017

First World War memorials, like most war memorials, are a partial attempt to convey the scale (and emotion) of conflict - they are instantly recognisable with their common aspects and features. But exactly who is their intended audience? Were they designed with longevity in mind? Or were they designed for the (then) present generation, those who had experienced loss and were able to more appropriately contextualise what had just occurred? If designed for previous generations, then that undoubtedly has an impact on any future interpretations in terms of meaning and narrative (Foote, 1990). Yet, in the majority of places where we live, socialise, and work, war memorials are commonplace, but they are largely unnoticed. Marshall, 2004, p. 40:

> This is particularly true in busy places where the flow of people passing a memorial makes acknowledgement and contemplation almost impossible; the memorials located in railway stations are a striking example of this. Plaques on walls passed at speed may as well be written in an ancient and forgotten language unnoticed and unknowable.

Making the argument (perhaps) that memorials are on the whole built for and by the generation of the time, a repeated attempt by war-victorious societies to remember their fallen in perpetuity (Halbwachs, 1992; Schwartz, 1982; Winter, 1995). In discussing the dissonance between both site and memory, Morrison (1990, p. 305) described the following:

> ...they straightened out the Mississippi River in places, to make room for houses and livable acreage. Occasionally, the river floods these places. 'Floods' is the word they use, but in fact it is not flooding; it is remembering. Remembering where it used to be. All water has a perfect memory and it is forever trying to get back to where it was.

Romantic as it might well be from Morrison, there is an undeniable truth to what she says, significant aspects of societal remembrance are undoubtedly attached to geographical locations - manifested through the interpretations of those who visit. But what if the very memories that these sites are designed/intended to evoke are dominated by the context of their surroundings? Lefebrvre (1990) argued that the process of commemoration is something that raises issues of territorial domination and even the control of memory, while Mumford (1938) decades before described the interpretations of monuments as problematic, saying how they can in some instances blend into an undifferentiated landscape. Perhaps it was to be expected then that following the cessation of conflict in 1918, and again in the years after 1945, that significant discourse would take place across Europe about remembrance and commemoration (Gregory, 1994). But when little (physically of the battlefield) is left, what is to be done? The construction of monuments and memorials across entire tracts of land? Land that was previously arable or lived upon and now as a result of conflict is the final resting place of the missing along with the various wreckages of war. Lacquer (1996) in discussing this very issue talked about a developing commemorative strategy, one focused on the preservation of landscapes, as seen at former battlefields such as Gettysburg, Verdun, Normandy, Oradur, and Hiroshima. Whilst Gough (2004, p. 237) describes former battlefields as places where "the moral resonance of the site itself is seen as paramount. Ditches, mounds, ruins

and apparently barren tracts have been maintained because they are seen as 'historical traces' which have an authority that now eclipses the untenable artifice of the commemorative object". This however is not always straightforward as Bender (1983, p. 276) points out when discussing physical spaces as being "political, dynamic and contested" and therefore repeatedly open to renegotiation. Regardless, Halbwachs (1950) offers perhaps the most definitive account of place and in doing so the semiotics associated with former battlefields in describing their potential to create realities that endure, where groups of individuals can unite, concentrating and moulding the character of the place to theirs.

In describing commemorative spaces as being evolutionary, Winter (2000) set out a time-lapsed process with three distinct phases. In the first instance, a phase that is creative where the commemorative form is constructed, marked perhaps by the building of monuments/memorials and the creation of ceremonies. Secondly, the creation of a form of ritualism through the establishment of routine, typically through the attachment of past events to particular calendar dates. And then finally, a phase involving the need for a subsequent generation of mourners to adopt the initial meanings of remembrance and commemoration associated with the space, and if appropriate add their own meanings. Without this, Winter argues, the memory of the space would simply fade away. Similarly, Rainey (1983) describes those who visit former battlefields in the present day as being reconstructive in their behaviour when they participate in choreographed commemorative practices - "spectacles of memory" (p. 76), and Johnson (1999, p. 254) describes the rehearsal and repetition of commemorative acts as bringing about a "consensual collapsing of time into place… where the sites are not merely the material backdrop from which a story is told, but the spaces themselves constitute the meaning by becoming both a physical location and a sight-line of interpretation".

2.8 History, memory and commemoration

"History is perpetually suspicious of memory." (Nora, 1989, p. 9)

History is the past that is non-psychological, something defined and determined through the systematic research of academic historians (Hunt, 2010). The distant and non-rememberable past, with no psychological relevance to those who study it because there is, quite simply, no one left alive who remembers the time period or those who lived through it. That is why memory should be regarded as something quite different, something that is narrative and reinterpretable. History is the telling of memory, the bringing together of lived experience, a discipline of social science in its own right, with Favorini (2003) distinguishing between history as a chronological record of significant events affecting a nation or an institution, and memory as a set of recollections, repetitions, and recapitulations.

Commemoration on the other hand is that junction between history, sociology, and political science (Wilson, 2005). Memorials are perhaps the most significant way in which we, individually and collectively, remind ourselves of war - they are "examples of 'lieux de memoire', 'meaningful entities of a real or imagined kind, which have become the symbolic elements of a given community as a result of human will or the effect of time" (Nora, 1989, p. 7); and when memory fades there is a deliberate choice on the part of society as to what archives should be created, whether anniversaries should be maintained, and if symbolic events ought to even be held, because without these things "history would sweep away" (p. 12).

War has always been memorialised, but with time it can become forgotten, with significance appearing to be focused upon those past conflicts where living memory still exists - where we have living veterans and those who remember them. Take the Crimean War for example, just sixty years before the outbreak of the First World War, involving around 100,000 British service personnel, of which 20,000 lost their lives. Not forgotten about, but not necessarily remembered either. Fought at a time when death would rarely result in the production of a death certificate, at a time when

the British Army fought in redcoats, entirely different from the 'Tommy' in the trenches whose appearance is far more similar to that of a modern-day soldier. At a time when there was no Cenotaph and no standing to silence on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. And when for some families, it would have been perfectly normal for a mother to give birth to a dozen children with only half of them expected to survive beyond early adulthood. Maybe, therefore, it is our willingness to remember that is, in part, based upon our ability to empathise - with people we regard as being more similar to ourselves.

Yet, Maurice Halbwachs (1925) suggested that memories are not single-person constructs, instead that they are socially constructed and influenced by the thoughts of wider society (collective memory). With this in mind, Halbwachs maintained that memorials play a significant role in the formation of collective memory, through their ability to shape the perspectives of society and the understanding/appreciation of people in society towards past conflict. Memorials for Halbwachs are representative of shared experiences, objects that seek to ensure the remembrance of both individuals and events. Halbwachs's research underscored what he maintained was the crucial function of memorials as being able to preserve the collective memory of a community or society, as well as their ability to promote a sense of shared identity and belonging. Similarly, Hinchman and Hinchman (1997) highlighted the centrality of narrative in shaping memory and fostering community. They argued that memorials can facilitate the formation of collective identity by providing a shared narrative. Through encapsulating stories, memorials contribute to the preservation and transmission of memories across generations.

However, there have been those who caution against the narratives that memorials provide, in that by their very design they can be selective in perpetuating only certain ideologies or perhaps even excluding marginalised perspectives (Edensor, 2011). Memorials are, after all, not static entities, they are influenced by social and cultural contexts, with individuals actively opting to engage or not engage with them to construct their own personal and collective memories (Keightley, 2012). Memorials undoubtedly evolve, reflecting the attitudes of society. Their dynamic nature more

than certainly suggests that their meaning and significance can and does vary from person to person and generation to generation, or as Winter (2010) suggests, the malleability of memories and the interpretive nature of memorials inevitably leads to historical inaccuracies or distortions.

Furthermore, and relevant to section 4.2 of the findings and discussions chapter of this thesis, Sheldrake (1988) proposes that memories elicited by memorials are not confined solely to individuals or physical artefacts, but that they are also embedded in the environment itself. Memorials, Sheldrake suggests, evoke a sense of presence and are therefore able to facilitate connections with the past. For example, natural landscapes, serene settings, or contemplative spaces that are integrated into memorials can have the ability to create a conducive environment for reflection, remembrance, and perhaps even contemplation. Bryant and Peck (2003) explored the role of memorials as part of the grieving process. They emphasised that memorials are spaces for individuals and communities to remember and honour the deceased. They are focal points, where individuals and communities can attempt to focus their grief. A physical space for mourning and remembrance, "material markers of the dead" (Hertz, 1960, p. 89), a place where those who visit can attempt to gain a sense of closure, catharsis, and support. Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) in their research went on to highlight the restorative effects of natural environments in the context of memorial spaces, arguing that memorial spaces that incorporate natural elements help to promote reflection and a sense of connectedness with what/who it is that the memorial seeks to commemorate. Whilst Fulton and Raphael (2013) who similarly advocate for the psychological benefits of memorialisation, state "that engaging with memorials can provide emotional wellbeing and a sense of connection to the deceased" (p. 462).

Symbols, architectural design, and personalisation also play a pivotal role in memorialisation, shaping how individuals and communities experience and interpret loss. Kellerman (2019) explored the role of architectural design, stating that "architecture can evoke emotions and provide solace" (p. 205). The use of symbols on monuments and gravestones provides for tangible expressions of grief and remembrance, allowing individuals to remember and connect with those they have lost

and those they wish to remember. Particularly true when you consider Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstones that are designed in a very specific way.

Figure 3

Berks Cemetery Extension

Note: By P. Hamilton, November 2017

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) is responsible for the design and maintenance of war memorials and headstones for members of the Commonwealth forces who died during the First and Second World War. The design process for CWGC headstones involves several considerations around uniformity, dignity, and perpetuity. There is a standardised design for headstones, with consistency across all cemeteries and memorials throughout the world. With the principle being that each casualty is entirely equal in death, regardless of rank, race, or religion. The headstones, as already mentioned, are typically made of Portland stone, a durable and easily carved material, with standard dimensions of approximately 76 centimetres in height, 38 centimetres in width, and 7.5 centimetres in thickness - ensuring a consistent appearance no matter the location of the cemetery. The headstones have a rectangular

shape with a slight curve at the top and the choice of whether the headstone features an inscription or religious symbol largely depends on the religious beliefs and personal preferences of the deceased and their family.

"The Commission's cardinal principle stipulates that each grave should epitomise an equal and uniform tribute to the men who lie beneath it" (Osborn, 1967, p. 32); this, a principle that not only underscores the profound reverence upon which the CWGC is built upon, but also the sense of unity and shared humanity that is promoted across their various sites and in the work that they do. An unswerving commitment to the perpetual maintenance of graves and memorials remains, in the present day, as a testament to the enduring nature of remembrance as embodied by the Commission. Arguably, the CWGC's meticulously curated cemeteries and memorials have played an indispensable role in the intricate process of healing and reconciliation following the cessation of war. Van Den Eijnde (2009) expounds that CWGC sites "serve as poignant arenas for introspection and remembrance, providing solace and solace to families and individuals afflicted by the atrocities of war" (p. 47). Perhaps helping to provide some type of closure and maybe even some form of emotional restoration, where societies can try to find a route towards a more collective understanding of the profound human cost of conflict. With the CWGC's memorials and cemeteries also bearing an intrinsic architectural and artistic significance, something Van Den Eijnde (2009) discussed, asserting, "the visual representations adorning these sacred spaces serve as a potent testament to remembrance and unity" (p. 72), given that they contain artistic and architectural elements that seek to poignantly encapsulate the collective grief, sacrifice, and fortitude of those who served and lost their lives, immortalising their memory in both a tangible and evocative form.

Beyond their primary function of remembrance, it could also be said that the CWGC's cemeteries and memorials serve an educational purpose too, imparting historical lessons for those who visit - “the CWGC's tireless efforts serve as an educational conduit for future generations, ensuring that the annals of the past remain etched in our collective consciousness" (Osborn, 1967, p. 104), with the majority of headstones bearing information about a person's name, rank, as well as a personal inscription;

something that tells a story and provides context for those who visit, regardless of location. In fact, the CWGC's multifaceted work necessitates robust international cooperation that transcends geopolitical boundaries and cultural disparities. Through collaboration with diverse nations and communities, the Commission epitomises the inherent power of collective efforts in preserving shared history; emphatically affirmed by Longworth (1985) in asserting that "the mission of the CWGC underscores the transformative influence of international cooperation in nurturing understanding, fostering unity, and cultivating a collective responsibility for the solemn act of remembrance" (p. 117).

2.9 Conclusions

The significance of place:

Place is an entirely significant aspect of historical battlefield education and the pedagogy of teaching conflict. Numerous studies and writers have emphasised the emotional and intellectual impact of being present [physically] on a former battlefield where historical events took place; to "engage physically and emotionally with the past, understand the challenges faced by soldiers, and grasp the human cost of war" (Winter, 2006, p. 89), participants can immerse themselves in a way that allows them to develop a profound connection to history, gaining a visceral understanding of the terrain, the tactical struggles, and the experiences of those who fought.

Historical context and interpretation:

Visits to former battlefields are significant for those who participate in that they provide historical context and interpretation that otherwise might not have been there or might not have been as prevalent - “comprehending a battle requires knowledge of strategic objectives, strengths and weaknesses of opposing forces, geopolitical context, and societal dynamics of the time" (Keegan, 1995, p. 42). Through research, well-crafted interpretive materials, and expert guidance, participants can attempt to grasp

the intricate complexities of historical conflict as well as their far-reaching consequences, enabling a deeper understanding of conflict.

Personal stories and human perspectives:

The incorporation of personal stories and human perspectives is hugely important in historical battlefield education. As a pedagogy, by sharing individual experiences, participants can forge a profound emotional connection with those from the past - "the face of battle is more than an abstract concept, it embodies the lived experiences of individuals caught in the horrors of war." (Keegan, 1976, p. 176). Through integrating personal narratives, diaries, letters, and memoirs into the educational experience participants are provided with a tangible link to the past - humanising history, making it more relatable, poignant, and memorable.

Respect, integrity, and memory:

Jay Winter (1998) emphasised that "battlefield sites should be treated as sacred spaces, honouring the memory of those who fought and died" (p. 75). Memorialisation, he argued, should avoid glorification or trivialisation of war and instead foster critical reflection, remembrance, and contemplation. A belief that is apparent in various writings throughout the literature review, not entirely surprising given what has already been discussed about the significance of place - advocating for sensitivity during visits to memorials and cemeteries, ensuring visitors are afforded an experience that allows for a solemn engagement with the past.

Learning from history:

In many cases, former battlefield sites are reminders of the consequences of war, they urge visitors to reflect on the choices of people from the past and perhaps even ask them to aspire towards peaceful resolutions in the present day. The study of military strategy, diplomacy, and the societal impact of warfare can provide those who visit former battlefields with valuable insights - boldly aiming to foster a more informed

and peaceful world. As Tuchman (2012) asserted, “history serves as a guide for navigating perilous times, shedding light on who we are and why we are the way we are” (p. 14).

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Constructing a methodology

The methodology chapter forms a crucial part of any doctoral thesis by establishing and outlining the approach taken. It serves “as the roadmap for the intricate research process" (Creswell, 2014, p. 15). It intricately delineates the methods, techniques, and precise procedures employed to both collect and analyse data, providing a coherent and judicious framework that underpins the entire study. As stated by Johnson and Christensen (2014), the methodology chapter provides researchers with the opportunity to "demonstrate how the research objectives will be astutely accomplished, justifying the chosen approach" (p. 72).

Within this chapter, I intend to provide the reader with an overview of the methodological landscape that underpins the research design, the data collection methods, the data analysis techniques, and the ethical considerations that very much governed how the research was conducted. Whilst addressing matters relevant to participant selection/involvement and measures that were undertaken to augment the fidelity and robustness of the collected data; ensuring potential biases were identified and their impact minimised. Ethical considerations are also discussed, including careful consideration of consent, privacy, and confidentiality.

3.2 Forming a rationale

As already mentioned in the introduction, I developed a professional and personal interest in the history of the First World War during a history teaching career that has, so far, spanned fourteen years; as someone who is a fairly regular visitor to the former battlefields of the First World War (Belgium & France), frequently accompanying groups of young people in my capacity as both a history teacher and also as an occasional guide for a battlefield tour company. I, therefore, approached this research with an understandable amount of interest in the experiential nature of battlefield tours, their niche complexities, and the pedagogical challenges faced by teachers with regard

to both interpretation and representation of the history as well as the historical landscape; having personally observed the unique ways in which battlefield tours and the history taught are experienced and subsequently interpreted by young people, I developed a growing professional interest and wanted to gain a deeper knowledge of what was actually happening for young people on battlefield tours - what are they learning and what are they experiencing?

I have taught the history of the First World War to countless young people of various age groups and now, in the past year, having recently been appointed to the role of a university Teaching Fellow, I am responsible for the initial teacher education of history teachers. In this role, I am presented with the difficulty of not only explaining that teaching the First World War truthfully and faithfully is a challenging prospect, but also how that challenge can be addressed in a manner that is pedagogically appropriate - not becoming lost in myths and clichés of a 'lost generation' and 'lions led by donkeys'. Instead, a truthful testimony, one that is not loaded with jingoistic narratives, proclaiming messages of triumphalism and glory, when in fact for those who were there and for all they experienced, maybe what is important is that their story simply be told properly.

3.3 Research question

As someone who, at least once a year accompanies school pupils on battlefield tours, sometimes several times a year, I am repeatedly struck by the emotions that the experiences of the tour can provoke. From moments of elation to downright despondency, battlefield tours, for young people, can be a rollercoaster of thoughts and feelings; and it is undoubtedly this multitude of emotions that acted as the prompt for this research. Years and years of accompanying young people to the former battlefields of the First World War has meant I have witnessed the very best (and the very worst) that these types of tours have to offer for those who participate; I have comforted those who are upset and I have shared a smile with those who are happy. I have had meaningful discussions about life and death, right, and wrong, virtue and

honour; in no other aspect of my professional life am I involved in anything as cathartic as a battlefield tour - they are in my opinion a unique phenomenon.

This research is, therefore, an attempt to capture and analyse the unique pedagogical challenges of battlefield tours to the former Western Front, with a parallel focus on the experiential nature of these visits, resulting in the following question:

Battlefield tours to the Western Front: What do young people experience?

3.3.1 Research sub-questions

The research sub-questions are;

1. What do young people understand about the First World War through their participation in a battlefield tour?
2. How are young people affected by their participation in a battlefield tour?

3.4 The research and the literature review

This research aims to contribute to the field of historical battlefield education and the pedagogy of teaching conflict. In particular, as previously mentioned, the experiential analysis that is at the core of this research will attempt to provide a greater understanding in terms of the purpose and impact of visiting the battlefields of the former Western Front with groups of young people - acknowledging, that for those who participate, these tours can be unique educational experiences.

To provide context, during the early stages of the research process, the literature review (chapter two) was necessary to develop my understanding of how former battlefields have been studied within existing research. The content of my discussion in the literature review helped me better comprehend the nature of present-day visits to former battlefields and their perception (as places to visit) in both academic research and the public domain. The literature review was essential in recognising the

methodological issues integral to this thesis. Through a review of existing research, I was able to position this study in a manner that complements and builds upon previous research, examining specific areas of 'experience' that as of yet have not been too widely explored.

The most significant aspect of the literature review was to consider the uniqueness of former battlefields as places of remembrance, commemoration, and education. In doing so, I was able to frame the research in a particular manner, allowing for focus and direction; bearing in mind that from the outset the research could have been analysed and theorised from multiple fields, for example from the perspective of 'sense of place' (Hawke, 2010), 'militaristic geography' (Woodward, 2004) or 'visited places' (Graham, Mason & Newman, 2009). For this research however, participant experience was realised as being the most suitable focus, given that it allowed for an analysis of how former battlefields are interpreted and comprehended by those who visit them in the present day; from the perspective of adolescents where there has been (in research and discussion) a lack of study despite the popularity of school battlefield tours.

3.5 Approaching the research

In approaching this research, I felt it important to reflect upon my philosophical stance in terms of justifying/explaining my chosen methodology. As a doctoral researcher (and full-time teacher/teaching fellow) I accept there is a uniqueness in terms of how I position myself within the framework of this research; I am someone who was not only immersed in the experience, but I was also a participant-observer - a role that requires a unique blend of immersion in the research setting while maintaining a degree of detachment for analytical observation. As a participant observer in this study, my positionality is multifaceted, navigating between insider perspectives gained through active participation and the critical distance necessary for unbiased analysis. My immersion in this research setting facilitated a deep understanding of the participants' experiences, perceptions, and emotional/experiential responses (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 82). By actively engaging in the daily activities

and interactions that were specific to this research context, I gained access to rich, context-specific data that might have been less accessible through other research methods (Adler & Adler, 2012, p. 115).

However, I acknowledge that my positionality as a participant-observer was capable of presenting challenges related to objectivity, reflexivity, and potential bias; as my own subjective interpretations and personal experiences had the potential to influence the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 223). Hence why I have always felt it important to critically reflect on my own biases, assumptions, and preconceptions throughout the entire research process in an attempt to mitigate their impact on data collection and analysis (Holliday, 2016, p. 105).

The research, that was conducted as a case study, examines the experiences of young people who participated in a battlefield tour to Belgium and France to learn about the First World War. As the experience of participants is the most crucial element of this research, there were no assumptions about the response of individuals, but instead there was a deliberate effort to see the world through their eyes (Bryman, 2008).

In this research, I needed to determine my philosophical positioning with respect to both ontology and epistemology. Described by Grix (2004) as being akin to building blocks, ontology and epistemology are pivotal in terms of research design and completion. With ontology being concerned with that which exists, in this case the battlefield tour and the effect it had on participants, I was aware from the outset that certain 'realities' would inevitably be a factor within this research, but equally aware that there would be variances (by participant) given that whilst there were shared experiences, there was no reason why there would be shared reactions and emotions. It was the varied reactions and emotions which when woven together amalgamated to form a composition of experience; reflective of individual participants and the participant group as a whole - subject to almost constant change (Bryman, 1995). Ontology though does not merit authenticity to research findings alone; it is instead from the epistemology that "...what is assumed to exist can be known" (Blaikie, 2000, p. 8) - epistemology, after all, is rooted in theoretical perspective and its status

could perhaps be regarded as coming from the intellectual reckoning. In education research, it would be fair to assume that the intent of what happens is to inform a wider audience in some purposeful manner (Sikes, 2004) through the creation of useful knowledge. Types of knowledge of the kind described by Burrell and Morgan (1979), that which is tangible and that which is experiential - with the knowledge generated by this research deriving from the latter.

This research does not intend to present an infallible representation of an absolute experience, instead, it seeks to give voice and meaning to what has been experienced by a particular group. There is acknowledgment from myself that inaccuracies or misrepresentations are wholly possible as mistakes in research are always possible; something I certainly did not shy away from at any time during either my research and/or write-up. Every effort was taken to mitigate against inaccuracies (described later in this chapter) and my potential influence over participants as their teacher/guide is well documented throughout this thesis. I fully acknowledge that I was an active participant in this research and that my dual role as teacher/guide had an overwhelming influence on what the young people experienced during their visit to the former Western Front, but ultimately this was a study of both the individual and the collective - an exposition of multiple experiences woven to form a holistic narrative.

This research sits comfortably within the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm as it analyses 'lived experience' through interaction with an experience that was engaging in nature; recognition on my part was also given to the context of this study through which the interpretations of participants were able to occur with such fluidity (Crotty, 1998). I also acknowledge that in researching within this paradigm I attempted to find clarity through an attempted understanding of participant consciousness, or as Crotty (1998, p. 9) explained, "...meaning does not come out of an interplay between subject and object but is imposed on the object by the subject". As such, my interpretation of participant meaning sat at the very heart of what is presented within this thesis, meaning that subjectivity is undoubtedly an issue - a dilemma experienced by all who research within the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm:

> The interpretivist's concern with 'subjectivity', with 'understandings', with 'agency' and the way people construct their social world, introduces complexities that involve elements of uncertainty. There is even the possibility of contradictions and internal inconsistencies arising as part of the explanations that interpretivists produce... To caricature things a little, interpretivists' explanations are likely to be messy rather than nice and neat. They might be open-ended rather than complete. (Denscombe, 2002, p. 21)

This research never sought to present a whole truth, instead, an attempt at understanding was made - to try and understand what was experienced by participants and how that experience was interpreted through their individual and collective cognition. This research deals with thoughts that were at times cathartic, complicated, and emotive; "...a mess of a diversity of social constructions as viewed by a variety of players… and their realities as they experienced them" (Richardson, 2012, p. 60).

In conducting the research, I was aware of the following;

- **Diversity**: Much of this was out of my control, given that participants were secondary school pupils who themselves chose to participate in the battlefield tour. Regardless, the participant group was diverse to some extent. The participants (28 pupils) were aged 11-17 years old (mainly female) and varied in terms of their knowledge and whether they studied history as a subject at school.

- **Rapport**: I was familiar with the participants in my role as a history teacher. This was useful in terms of establishing trust, empathy, and understanding, but I was aware of the potential issues that could have arisen from this too (discussed later in this chapter).

- **Inductive Research**: Participants were afforded every possible opportunity to explain their thoughts and feelings. What they said was not used to justify or

prove my opinions or preconceptions. This research was inductive - theory generating, not theory testing.

- **Landscape**: The physical landscape of the battlefield tour was considered as being significant to the research. Not only were the participants in an unfamiliar environment, but they were visiting sites of loss and grief; it was therefore expected that surroundings were likely to have an impact on the experience.

3.5.1 Research Context

The research participants attended a school where I was a history teacher. The participants consisted of twenty-eight secondary school pupils, ranging from S1 to S6 (11-17 years old), the majority of whom studied history. The school that the participant pupils attended is a non-denominational, fully comprehensive six-year secondary school with (at the time) a roll of around 1,150 pupils. The school is located within the Greater Glasgow area and has a diverse population in terms of deprivation and affluence.

For this research, it should be explicitly known that I had almost no persuasion or autonomy in-terms of a young person's ability or willingness to participate within the battlefield tour; meaning that in terms of the sampling methodology for this research my default position was one of convenience sampling - a methodology that is employed in academic research when researchers face constraints and lack control over participant selection. As an approach it involves selecting individuals who are easily accessible or readily available to participate in the study; with Bryman and Bell (2019) defining convenience sampling as "a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher" (p. 266).

However, I do acknowledge that convenience sampling comes with inherent limitations that can, if not careful, compromise the validity and generalisability of

research findings. One major concern is the potential for sampling bias, as individuals who are easily accessible may not represent the broader population accurately. Bryman and Bell (2019) caution that convenience sampling "may result in the sample not being representative of the population from which it is drawn" (p. 266). This bias can arise due to factors such as self-selection, as participants who volunteer to take part in the study may differ systematically from those who do not, leading to skewed or unrepresentative samples.

For this research however, convenience sampling allowed for a practical, purposeful, and efficient data collection process; where I always attempted to acknowledge and address any instances of potential bias, by transparently documenting sampling procedures and interpreting findings within the context of the research limitations.

3.5.2 The battlefield tour

The battlefield tour that formed the basis of this research was a three-night/five-day experience that allowed participants to visit both Belgium and France.

Day One: The first day was a positioning day that consisted of coach travel to Hull for an overnight ferry to Rotterdam. Departing around 10am, participants arrived in Hull at 4pm to board their overnight ferry.

Day Two: The second day of the tour focused upon what is referred to as the northern lip of the Ypres Salient (the line held by British and Commonwealth forces for the duration of the First World War). Participants visited Hooge Crater Museum for a guided tour, trench experience (including rifle-firing), and their lunch. The museum itself is situated within a former church and is directly opposite Hooge Crater CWGC Cemetery (one of the largest military cemeteries in Belgium). It has a large collection of First World War artefacts and its own fascinating history partly due to it being located in a position of former strategic importance. After Hooge Crater Museum, participants were guided through the preserved British trenches at Hill 62: Sanctuary

Wood; one of the few places on the Ypres Salient where an actual semblance of trench warfare is both visible and tangible.

Figure 4

Recovered ordnance at Hooge Crater Museum

Note: By P. Hamilton, November 2017

Day Three: The third day of the battlefield tour was by far the busiest and was spent in France mainly visiting locations of significance connected with the Battle of the Somme (1916). Participants visited the sunken lane at Beaumont-Hamel where the details of the British and Commonwealth advance on German lines at Hawthorn Ridge during 1 July 1916 was explained to them. This was followed by a guided walk-through of Newfoundland Park across what was once 'no-man's land' before a visit to the Thiepval Memorial. Standing at over 45 metres in height, the Thiepval Memorial is the largest Commonwealth memorial in the world, commemorating approximately 72,000 British and South African forces who lost their lives during the Battle of the Somme and have no known grave. After Thiepval, participants visited Lochnagar Mine Crater and were able to walk the circumference of the 330ft wide crater which was created as a result of an underground mine detonation on this former German position during the opening minutes of the Battle of the Somme. This was followed by a visit to Vimy Ridge, the memorial to those who lost their lives fighting with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Stood upon a ridge, the monument is an imposing structure carved from a single block of 35 tonne portland stone. Lastly, participants

visited Le Touret Memorial and CWGC Cemetery where one of the pupils paid their respects to a relative who had been killed in action fighting in that geographical area.

Figure 5

German war graves at Le Touret

Note: By P. Hamilton, June 2018

Day Four: The fourth day of the battlefield tour saw the participants return to Ypres, first of all visiting the structural remains of an Advanced Dressing Station located on the edge of Essex Farm CWGC Cemetery. Whilst there, participants also visited the grave of Valentine Strudwick who is regarded as being one of the youngest British soldiers to have been killed during the First World War (fifteen years old when he died). This was followed by a visit to Tyne Cot CWGC Cemetery and Memorial - the largest Commonwealth military cemetery in the world with 11,900 individual graves and 35,000 names on its memorial wall. This was then followed by something of a juxtaposition when participants visited Langemark German Cemetery to learn about the differences between the commemoration of German war dead and Commonwealth war dead - something that is regularly misunderstood (appendix seven). Later that evening, participants attended the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate (Ypres) followed by their own private ceremony of remembrance at Ypres Reservoir Cemetery in respect of a former pupil of their school who was killed in the defence of Ypres.

Figure 6

Memorial wall, Langemark German Cemetery

Note: By P. Hamilton, November 2017

Day Five: The fifth day of the battlefield tour was departure day from Belgium, with a visit to Dig Hill 80 in the morning. This visit was a unique experience as it was a live dig site with archaeologists and forensic anthropologists excavating a former German stronghold on a ridge-top position. The participants had full guided access to the site, including the excavation of human remains which had been recently discovered in the days before the participants' visit (refer to 3.6.3). After Dig Hill 80, the participants had free time in the city of Bruges before heading to the port of Zeebrugge for an overnight ferry to Hull.

Day Six: The final day of the battlefield tour was the coach journey from Hull to the participants' school.

Figure 7

Excavation work at Dig Hill 80

Note: By P. Hamilton, July 2018

3.6 Qualitative methods

Teaching is a highly interactive profession and when you require information or need to gauge opinion, you simply talk to those involved (Drever, 2003). Perhaps then, that was why a qualitative approach seemed most appropriate for this research. Located within the interpretivist paradigm, qualitative methods are structured by way of interactions between the researcher and the participant; meaning is constructed through access to participant experience (Sikes, 2004). Rooted in ethnography, psychology, and social history, qualitative research has its unique limitations though. Largely because it is structured around interpretations which Erickson (1985) discussed as potentially leading to assertions, rather than findings. Qualitative research is an intensive process that often creates questions, as opposed to answering them (Lee, 1989). Regardless, it is the opportunity to interpret data through qualitative methods that, I feel, brings strength to this research. Through qualitative methods, the experiences of young people have been more appropriately captured, for my research purposes, than they would have been using quantitative methods, as such I found

myself better positioned to understand aspects of the participant experience(s) - most importantly their perceptions and viewpoints (Robson, 2011). In adopting a qualitative approach for this research, I acknowledge as Banister (1994) did that what is being observed is likely to be affected by my interpretations, biases, and cultural values; because in qualitative research it is highly likely the researcher will become immersed in their surroundings as they attempt to apply understanding to the meanings behind the experience of participants.

As such, qualitative research is deeply rooted in various philosophical perspectives, emphasising the recognition of subjectivity and contextual influences. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that qualitative research should be understood as a situated activity that acknowledges the presence of the researcher in the world. Their work highlights the significance of researcher positionality and engagement throughout the research process, with trustworthiness, a fundamental aspect of any research, being established by ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290).

Yet, designing qualitative research can be a complex endeavour, one that requires flexibility, adaptability, and openness to emergent possibilities (Merriam, 2009). Through qualitative research, the researcher can begin to explore and try to understand individuals' lived experiences and the meanings that they attach to them (Smith et al., 2009), and “by conducting in-depth analyses of individual cases, researchers can identify common themes and patterns” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 3).

3.6.1 Reflexivity within the research

Reflexivity stands as a vital component of academic research, demanding self-awareness, critical reflection, and acknowledgment of the researcher's role, biases, and subjective position within the research process. The incorporation of reflexivity into my research process enabled me to navigate my biases, values, and assumptions, exerting a profound influence on the research design and execution (Finlay & Gough, 2020); being reflexive also ensured that I embraced an introspective stance, where I

considered the potential impact of my subjective perspectives on both the research process and outcomes.

One key aspect of reflexivity is self-awareness. As stated by Gubrium and Holstein (2009), "reflexivity requires the researcher to take stock of their own positions and interests and to assess how these may shape what they see and hear" (p. 27); a self-awareness that can prompt researchers to critically reflect on their assumptions, values, and perspectives as the research is being conducted. As such, through reflexive journaling, I created a space for introspection, recording my own thoughts, experiences, and biases throughout almost the entire EdD journey; allowing me to consider carefully my position, privilege - giving rise to a heightened self-awareness [for me] that I feel enriched the research process.

Furthermore, reflexivity can encourage transparency in the research process, with researchers documenting and disclose their biases, conflicts of interest, and methodological choices. As highlighted by Nowotny, Scott, and Gibbons (2001), "reflexive researchers are transparent about the process of knowledge production, making explicit the context, assumptions, and limitations of their work" (p. 89); for me, an opportunity to critically examine my positionality within the research context, acknowledging the potential power imbalances that existed between myself and the research participants. By being reflexive, I was therefore more confidently able to navigate ethical considerations, ensuring fairness, respect, and ultimately protecting and respecting the thoughts, feelings, and rights of participants - fostering a more ethical and equitable research environment.

Reflexivity also helped me to discover and explore existing paradigms, be curious about dominant theories, and propose frameworks that would adequately capture the complexity of what I was researching. It was an essential element that sought to enhance the quality, rigour, and ethical considerations of my study. It helped me realise that the practicalities of completing this research were at times extremely challenging - given that this study was completed whilst I worked full-time as a secondary school history teacher, part-time associate tutor, seasonal battlefield tour

guide, and in the latter stages a full-time university teaching fellow (not to mention family life). Writing days were often long and by necessity, there were extended periods when almost no writing was possible (hence the importance of a reflexive journal as a prompt for my thinking during those short and occasionally prolonged gaps). Regardless, the process was ultimately achievable as no matter how distant I sometimes felt from my research - I never actually was.

3.6.2 Case study approach

Described by Denscombe (2007, p. 36) as helping to understand how "...the many parts affect one another", the choice of a case study for this piece of research was, for me, obvious. Through an examination of individual and collective participant responses a holistic interpretation of experience was gathered - free from complexities and based upon a desire to understand. However, case studies as with all methods are not without their criticisms; "fuzzy generalisations" as Bassey (2000, p. 20) described them whilst both advocating and (to an extent) criticising their use; arguing that findings from case studies contribute to "the truth ethic of research" through a unique ability to position knowledge by context and circumstance so that if transferred similar findings will also be discoverable (Bassey, 2000, p. 52).

As a case study, my research deliberately focused on the experience of the individual, before examining the impact on the collective. With that in mind, the context of the battlefield tour as the setting for the research was the influential factor in creating the experience upon which participants could reflect upon. Therefore, the importance of the context to this piece of research cannot be stressed enough, with some researchers stating it is the provision of context that lends credibility to a case study (Cohen et al, 2007, Thomas, 2011, Robson, 2004).

> A case-study is a restriction or narrowing of focus to one or more towns, individuals, organisations, etc. which are studied in great detail... with the aim of shedding light on the object of study... involving empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Grix, 2004, p. 162).

In this research, one entity was being examined - the battlefield tour. By using a case study to discover themes within the experience, I explored aspects of the participants' shared phenomenon to answer the research questions as accurately as possible. As described by Denscombe (2007, p. 36) when discussing the use of case studies "…there is obviously far greater opportunity to delve into things in more detail and discover things that might not have become apparent through more superficial research". In terms of choosing a case study approach for this research, I am confident that I made the right decision, however, I am aware of the debate that surrounds case studies (more discussion later in this chapter). The argument put forward by Denscombe (2007, p. 36) is perhaps my main justification for the use of case studies though when he stated that "…what a case study can do… is study things in detail".

> The basic idea is that one case (or perhaps a small number of cases) will be studied in detail, using whatever methods seem appropriate. While there may be a variety of specific purposes and research questions, the general objective is to develop as full an understanding of that case as possible Almost anything can serve as a case, and the case may be simple or complex. But ... we can define a case as a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. Thus, the case may be an individual, or a role, or a small group, or an organisation, or a community, or a nation. It could also be a decision, or a policy, or a process, or an incident or event of some sort, and there are other possibilities as well (Punch, 2005, p. 144).

Stake (1995) stated that "a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case… Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. 21). Bassey (2000) described case studies as empirical enquiries "conducted within a localised boundary of space and time… looking at "interesting aspects of an educational activity, or programme, or institution, or system" (p. 58).

The adaptability and flexibility of case studies in terms of both their design and purpose have a strong appeal for me and are very much suited to the aims of my

research - “case studies are flexible and versatile research designs” (Yin, 2018, p. 23); meaning that other methods within the context of a social constructivist paradigm were, for me, intentionally not chosen. For example, ethnography (within a different setting) was not a feasible option due to the realities and practicalities of working full-time as a secondary school teacher; making it somewhat obvious, and sensible, that I would contextualise the study within the setting of my professional working environment (Hammersley, 2007). Also, an action-research project was considered (to some extent) as I did want to be able to reflect from a ‘distant’ stand-point about the experiences of participants; meaning that elements of action-research, as opposed to the whole, were implemented for this research - perhaps most notably when reflections from participant diaries informed (partially) the content of follow-up semi-structured interviews; allowing me to critically analyse the experiences of participants (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

3.6.3 Unanticipated data

As part of the battlefield tour, participants made a planned visit to Dig Hill 80 (section 4.3.2 and appendix eight), an archaeological excavation of a well-preserved German strongpoint at a ridge-top near the village of Wijtschate, Belgium. What was not planned about the visit however was that during their time at the location the participants would be present as work was being carried out to recover bodies from a recently discovered comrades’ grave (Kameradengrab). I knew the archaeologists and historians on-site personally and two days prior (whilst in Belgium) to visiting Dig Hill 80 I was informed about the discovery and excavation of the grave, inevitably leading to the question of whether I would wish for the pupils to see this part of the site. My initial reaction was one of hesitancy and uncertainty as I did not want to expose the young people to something that could be harmful. To help me decide, I was able to visit the excavated grave accompanied by the chief historian of the dig site (during the first evening of the battlefield tour). I, afterwards, came to the decision that the young people should be given the opportunity to visit the mass grave whilst at Dig Hill 80, but only under the following conditions and with the following safeguards in place;

- The young people were not informed about the grave until the morning of the visit to Dig Hill 80. This was to try and prevent any 'over-fascination' about the grave which I feel would have been to the detriment of other locations being visited beforehand whilst in Belgium and France. Also, it was an attempt on my part to avoid any hype around what the grave was, what it looked like, and what it may or may not contain.

- When told about the grave, no details were withheld and there was no exaggeration. Upon arriving at Dig Hill 80, using the PA system on the coach I informed the young people that a grave with multiple bodies had recently been discovered and that it was in the process of being excavated. Reminding the young people that this was a live archaeological dig site, I informed them that within the tent there was a small team of archaeologists and forensic anthropologists excavating several skeletal remains - remains that had been in situ since the time of death a hundred years previously.

- For the entire duration of the battlefield tour, including the visit to Hill 80, I had (if required) a direct line of communication with school leadership and emergency/welfare contacts at the pupils' school/local authority.

- Parents/carers of the young people were kept regularly updated about the schedule of the battlefield tour, with posts on social media and a daily e-mail with updates about places visited and places to be visited. All parents/carers had my mobile telephone number and I had their contact details. As well as this, young people were regularly encouraged to communicate with their parents/carers at various points of the battlefield tour.

- After the visit, I also communicated (by e-mail) with the pastoral care department at the young peoples' school to inform them about where they had been and what they had seen. This was to ensure that, if, following the visit there were any concerns from any of the young people then the relevant support networks had been briefed and were well-positioned to offer assistance.

- Lastly, and a point worth stressing with considerable emphasis, there was no coercion from me or any member of staff that any of the young people should visit the area of the dig site where the grave was located; it was entirely their choice and their choice alone.

Unanticipated data can be a critical component of academic research, perhaps challenging assumptions and leading to new insights and discoveries - "unexpected findings are transformative opportunities that challenge and enrich our understanding" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 123). Data of this type has long been recognised as a rich source of knowledge, with Glaser and Strauss (1967) highlighting the importance of remaining open to unanticipated data, as it can shape emerging theories and can propel ground breaking discoveries.

Yet, that is not to say that unanticipated data does not pose a unique challenge to researchers, given that is capable of exposing inherent assumptions and biases - "unanticipated data often reveals the hidden assumptions and biases embedded within the research process" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 45). In some ways, forcing the researcher to adopt an iterative research process; one where an unanticipated finding can inform data analysis - enhancing the rigour of their study by recognising that the iterative nature of research allows for the incorporation of unanticipated data into an evolving research framework, where emerging insights and unexpected discoveries are integrated and appropriately explored. Furthermore, as already considered and relevant to this research are ethical considerations that can arise from unanticipated data - “ethical implications arising from unanticipated data demand appropriate approvals and adherence to ethical guidelines" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 345).

3.6.4 Data collection

I had access to the participants during the battlefield tour, as I accompanied them, and afterwards because I am a teacher at their school. In terms of a process, data collection was completed as shown below:

Participant diaries	Each evening time was allocated for the completion of participant diaries. The location for this daily write-up was the hostel dining area where pupils were able to sit down at a table. For secure storage and confidentiality of writing, participant diaries were (where possible and practical) stored in a secure bag in my room within the hostel accommodation. * *Pupils who wished to write their diaries later in the evening whilst in their rooms were permitted to do so. There was no compulsion for them to be completed as a group - just an invitation.* ** *On the final day of the battlefield tour, participant diaries were completed in the dining area of the ferry whilst on the return journey home.*
Semi-structured interviews	All interviews were conducted within my classroom. They were conducted on a one-to-one basis and recorded using a dictaphone. All interviews were arranged in advance for a day/time that was mutually convenient. As previously mentioned, all recordings were uploaded as a matter of priority to StrathCloud in advance of data analysis.

3.6.5 Participant diaries

Participant diaries are a useful source of data for the qualitative researcher. Despite them lacking the nuances that are a more common feature of face-to-face interviews (Begley, 1996) they can tell of a participant's experience in a manner that is highly reflective; something that biographers and historians use to assist them in their telling of people, places, and events. Diaries also, in terms of their format, are versatile and

allow participants to record entries with a degree of immediacy, and therefore clarity, by limiting the time between the participant experience and the writing of the diary itself, hopefully resulting in a more accurate recalling of events (helpful for the researcher).

The use of diaries as a method of recording aspects of daily life is something that social researchers frequently use to capture participant experience (Bolger et al., 2003, p. 579). Their use as a research method allows the researcher to study change and differences over time (Bell, 1998). Diaries can collect data that is both qualitative and quantitative, making them popular for both single-method and mixed-method studies. Their form and usage are as varied as the research they support, from solicited diaries that are structured in some manner (Corti, 1993), those which require less structure in the form of memory books (Thompson and Holland, 2005), narratives that are autobiographical (Bell, 1998) and those that can record emotional reactions about participant experiences (Thomas, 2007).

Diaries do not merely offer narrative descriptions of events, they, perhaps more importantly, offer an insight into the interpretations of participants; how they were made to feel and their emotional responses to experiences. Through diaries, the researcher can make sense of participant interpretations, rationalisations, and understandings in a manner that is perhaps less easily captured through the use of other research methods. Diaries, for this research, were one of the two research methods utilised; they were, in essence, a prelude to semi-structured interviews, helpful in determining relevant and important issues (Carter, 2002) as well as assisting with the development of interview questions.

There are potential barriers to the use of participant diaries, which if not addressed properly, will have an impact upon the data gathered. Meth (2003) highlighted these barriers, including literacy. The participant must be literate for their experience to be recorded. If they cannot read or write to a sufficient level in the language in which the research is being carried out, then how can they be expected to participate? Furthermore, there is physical capacity. The participant must have the

vision and hand coordination required for reading and writing. However, with regard to the participants involved in this study, there were no such barriers to overcome.

For this study, participant diaries (appendix one) were used to gather the experiences of the twenty-eight secondary school pupils (aged 11-17 years old) who accompanied me on a visit to the former First World War battlefields of Belgium and France. Each participant was asked to complete a diary over three days. These were completed during the allotted time in the evening at the end of each day (after all battlefield sites for that day had been visited). The diaries contained three open questions for participants to answer. However, to ensure there was no limitation to the responses that participants could provide, extra space was available for additional comments. Participants were provided with all the materials they require (the diaries and pens/pencils). They were completed by participants during an epilogue session each evening (two examples available in appendices). The open-questions that participants were asked to answer each day were;

1. Where have you visited today? (**Mention what you saw and what you learned**. **Be descriptive about the locations and your experience of visiting them**.

2. Did anything today make you feel a certain way? (**Happy, sad, surprised, unsure etc… Explain how you felt and why you think you felt this way**.)

3. Was there anything today that you did not fully understand and you would now like to learn more about? (**This might include doing your own research when you return home**.)

3.6.6 Semi-structured interviews

In addition to participant diaries, semi-structured interviews were conducted with consenting participants (after the battlefield tour). Each interview was conducted face-to-face with several predetermined questions being asked, they took place within the participant's school and each interview was audio recorded for eventual transcription. Every effort was made to ensure transcriptions were recorded as

accurately as possible; through a process of repeated checking (Maxwell, 2013) and also by sharing electronic copies of transcriptions with individual participants for them to each check and approve. No researcher bias was knowingly permitted in terms of how the interviews were transcribed; therefore, upholding the integrity of the data collected (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In terms of logistics, practicality, and efficiency there were many considerations that I had to make in advance and during the conducting of interviews - these considerations took the form of the process outlined below:

Process	Considerations	Additional
Recording the interviews	Decision was made to record audio interviews using a dictaphone. MP3 files provided a complete recording of each participant interview for transcription (soon after). The venue for interviews was my classroom with only myself and the participant in the room during the interview. Interviews were uploaded as a matter of priority to StrathCloud (secure server) and erased from dictaphone.	Equipment tested (and charged) in advance to ensure clarity of recordings. Notes were taken by myself during interviews allowing for annotations of thought (on my part). Notes were uploaded to StrathCloud (secure server) and paper copies were securely shredded. Pen and paper were crucial in the event of any technical issues.
The interviews	Interviews were semi-structured and the questions were pre-determined (outlined later in this chapter).	Planning and preparation for all interviews was essential to ensure they were purposeful and ethical.

	Interviews were scheduled through communication with participants. They were scheduled in advance and participants were aware of the date, time, and location.	
Participant experience of the interview	At all times participants were treated with respect and courtesy. Given the nature of my role in this research as teacher, guide, and researcher it was important to articulate to all participants that I was interviewing them in my capacity as a doctoral student from the University of Strathclyde.	Rapport was already established with participants in my role as a teacher, but I was aware of how I could easily become complacent and make assumptions about whether the participant was comfortable speaking to me. I tried to always remain conscious of this.

The use of semi-structured interviews was appealing to me for this research as they have a certain amount of adaptability which the researcher (me) was able to utilise purposefully. Described as an organic instrument for data collection (Bell, 2005), interviews are perhaps less rigid than other methods. As Bell stated, "…a skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings" (p. 157). This is particularly useful when interpreting the reasoning behind intonation, body language, or gaps in speech. Furthermore, conversations can be clarified in the moment, with little need for post-interview comprehension. However, with such flexibility there is the potential for over interpretation; in other words, the data gathered is so subjective that there could potentially be an array of interpretations (Bollen & Pearl, 2013). That being said, interviews are not without their limitations in terms of qualitative research; for this research, information was needed with regards to personal experience - an experience which at times was unsettling and difficult for participants. Therefore, due care was always taken by myself never to be intrusive,

disrespectful, or harmful in the pursuit of engaging with participants' thoughts and emotions. The interviews were the re-telling of a story for participants (about what they had experienced) and at times (for them) this was evocative of emotions they had felt whilst on the battlefield tour. As an interviewer, it was my responsibility to interpret participant responses appropriately to ensure the interviews were focused and not exploitative. At all times I was aware of the unequal nature of the interviews I was conducting (Kvale, 1996), which could result in the occurrence of certain ethical risks (Stake, 1995, p. 45). This is due to the semi-structured interviews being highly constructed environments that are defined by the interviewer and subsequently accepted by the interviewee. As the researcher of this study, I remained aware of this imbalance and the ethical responsibility that came with it - "...ethical considerations pervade the whole process of research" (Cohen et al, 2007, p. 57).

Studies conducted within the paradigm of qualitative research should take into consideration the importance of values (Creswell, 1998) and the interviews conducted in this research were no exception. The findings gathered from participant interviews during this research were an elicitation of personal experience; therefore, individual bias and value-laden statements were a likely factor, but as the researcher I was well aware of this and attempted to mitigate against this through my own general (thematic) interpretation of statements made. The interviews allowed participants "to say what they think and to do so with richness" (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 81). The design of the interviews was therefore crucial, allowing for a logical structure and gainful conversation between myself and the participant. Also, there was always consistency through the use of predetermined open questions and a clear frame of reference through which participants were able to offer an answer (Kerlinger, 1970). Supplementary closed questions were used to direct particular open questions. For example:

Me: *During the battlefield tour, was there anywhere where you felt as though you were able to experience what trench warfare was really like?* (Closed question)

Participant: *At Hill 62, Sanctuary Wood.*

Me: *Can you tell me a bit more about what you experienced at Hill 62?* (Open question)

Interviews followed the structure below, modelled on the format suggested by Robson (2004);

Introduction

- *Includes an explanation about participation.*

Understanding World War One

- *What do you understand about the First World War?*
- *Specifics of location, landscape, sites: impact on understanding.*

Effect of Participation

- *Were you affected by participation?*
- *Emotion, empathy, apathy…*

Close

- *A chance for participants to add/ask.*
- *Thank you and close.*

3.7 Ethics

This research was approved and is subject to regulations, guidance, and advice set out by the University of Strathclyde's Ethics Committee. As such, due care and consideration were taken to ensure no harm could occur to participants as a result of their involvement. The process of gaining ethical approval is standard practice for any piece of academic research, especially in instances where information will be directly gathered from participants. There was a very definite need to ensure that the wishes of the researcher did not in any way harm or disadvantage the participant(s) - ethical approval helped to stop this from ever happening.

With this in mind, a thought-provoking suggestion was made by Opie (2004) that researchers should consider how they would feel if it were their family participating. This is perhaps one of the many positives of submitting an ethics application, the committee scrutinised the proposed research to such an extent that any personal bias or 'blind spots' could be highlighted before subsequent removal. This is because ethics committees are objective in their role and seek to consider the impact the proposed research will have upon participants, whilst ensuring good ethics are at the heart of research (Denscombe, 2007). For this research, specific ethical considerations were made:

Honesty and transparency: A full and open statement of what the research is about was provided to participants explaining their role and involvement. The participant information sheets (appendix two) provided to participants outlined the steps taken to store data securely on the StrathCloud platform. Personal information is being retained no longer than is necessary and electronic information will be securely deleted within five years. Research is being conducted openly and honestly. Participants were made aware of how their involvement contributes to the research. Participants' names are pseudonyms within the research and participants have access to transcriptions/recordings of their interviews should they request them. The participant school and the local authority have also been anonymised and not named within the research.

Consent: This was sought from all participants, parents/carers of participants, and the tour operator to ensure they were aware of the research being conducted. No participation occurred without consent. This applied to all aspects of the research being conducted (participant diaries and semi-structured interviews). Participant information sheets clearly outlined/explained the process of involvement and the significance of consent.

Potential Coercion: For this research, there is an acknowledgement that I was a teacher at the participant's school and therefore have an existing familiarity with the participants. However, there were no incentives or inducements used to encourage participants to participate or for any particular type of information to be elicited. It

was made clear to all participants that they can opt out of having their data used at any time. In such an instance, participants would have been made aware that such a decision would have no impact on their school work or their study of history. Consent was always paramount.

Privacy: Covert observation and/or eavesdropping did not occur under any circumstances. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in an appropriate environment, out with earshot of others. Data collected for research was only ever gained through consent. The use of audio recording was clearly explained on all participant information sheets. If, on the day of the interview, participants were uncomfortable with this then note-taking would have been offered as an alternative. It was made clear that no names of participants would be released to any other organisation, nor will participants be identified in any reports or publications arising from the study. The same level of privacy and confidentiality applied to both the school and local authority, all information relating to identity was anonymised.

Multiple roles (positionality): At no point have I ever hid from the fact that my role in this research has a duality, as the researcher, I was also a history teacher at the participants' school as well as assuming the role of guide for the battlefield tour. As such, Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) assertions around what is familiar have always felt relevant to me, in that any views and/or opinions I have regarding the research are always visible and therefore never covert amidst any interpretation of the data collected and analysed.

In particular, my role as both the researcher and the teacher of the participants warrants a critical reflection on my positionality within the research process. As a researcher I acknowledge the inherent complexities and potential biases that arise from these dual roles. Firstly, my position as a teacher establishes a pre-existing relationship with the participants, which could influence their responses and interactions during the research process (as previously mentioned). Being their teacher may have engendered a sense of familiarity and trust, facilitating open communication and participation in the study (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003, p. 45). However, it is equally essential to recognise that

familiarity could also lead to bias or reluctance in expressing dissenting views (Smith, 2008, p. 76).

Moreover, I acknowledge that my role as a teacher might have inadvertently shaped the research agenda and framing of questions based on my prior knowledge, experiences, and assumptions about the participants' educational context. While this insider perspective can offer valuable insights and facilitate a deeper understanding of what is that is under investigation, I understand that it is imperative to remain vigilant against any form of confirmation bias that would have simply supported my own preconceptions (Charmaz, 2014, p. 27).

Additionally, acknowledging that my positionality as a teacher-researcher inherently implies a power dynamic that could influence the participants' willingness to disclose sensitive information or challenge dominant narratives (Foucault, 1977, p. 112); aware of this power differential, I aimed to create a supportive and inclusive research environment that encouraged participants to express their perspectives freely while ensuring confidentiality and ethical conduct throughout the study (see section 3.7).

3.8 Data Analysis

For this research, Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic analysis was the initial inspiration. In using their model of thematic analysis, I was able to organise the data in such a way that patterns (themes) could be identified and reported within the data. A theme according to Braun and Clarke is "...something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p. 82); interesting to note about Braun and Clarke's definition of a theme is their reference to importance "in relation to the research theme", something which they further suggested has implications for instances of themes. In doing so, they stressed that importance is not dictated by the number of times a theme appears, as "...the 'keyness' of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures - but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question" (p. 82).

Worth noting however, is that whilst I cite Braun & Clarke (2006) as the inspiration for the model of thematic analysis utilised in this research, their thinking and discussion of thematic analysis has undoubtedly evolved over the course of the past two decades. Since 2006, Braun and Clarke have published several articles and book chapters, as well as their own book (2021), all of which make considerable contributions to further delineating their approach to thematic analysis (Byrne, 2021).

Furthermore, in academic research, thematic analysis stands as a pivotal qualitative method, it provides a structured approach to analysing qualitative data by helping to discern recurring patterns or themes within the data gathered. As highlighted by Nowell et al. (2017), "thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 123); something that serves as a robust qualitative tool for uncovering underlying patterns and themes within research data. Through engaging in continual cycles of data immersion, coding, and theme development, the researcher permits a deeper exploration of emergent patterns and themes (Saldaña, 2016); an iterative process which can, if necessary, help to foster a nuanced understanding of data, blending empirical observations with theoretical insights to construct meaning.

It could also be said that thematic analysis extends beyond a mere methodological tool to become a dynamic process for sense-making and knowledge construction, with Guest et al (2012) highlighting the applied nature of thematic analysis, emphasising its utility in informing theory, practice, and policy. It is, they say, through the identification and exploration of themes that the researcher can contribute to a deeper understanding of what it is that is being studied - "thematic analysis serves as a powerful means of extracting meaningful insights from qualitative data" (p. 87).

As a researcher, it is plausible that I had preconceptions and interests that related closely to the research being undertaken - I do not shy away from this and accept the potential effect this could have had on data analysis and results. It is therefore acknowledged that I will have analysed the data in a manner that was matched to the research question. As such, there may have been a latency to the data analysis as participant responses were carefully scrutinised to discover meaning and validity

related to the research question; with validity representing a cornerstone in rigorous academic research, helping to ensure that findings are reliable, trustworthy, and applicable beyond the confines of the scope of the original research. As Trochim and Donnelly (2008) assert, "validity is the cornerstone of meaningfulness in research. If a study is not valid, it is of little value" (p. 65); with the significance of validity therefore appearing to be in its ability to provide assurance that the research accurately measures or reflects what is under investigation, thus helping to enhance the credibility and usefulness of the research findings.

As for the process of conducting thematic analysis for this research, the following steps were adhered to:

Process	**Description of process**
Familiarisation with data	*Transcription of data (participant diaries & interviews), carefully reading and re-reading the data, noting thoughts and ideas.*
Generation of codes (appendix three)	*Discovery of interesting features within participant diaries and interviews, collating data relevant to each code.*
Searching for themes	*Collation of codes into potential themes, gathering data relevant to potential themes.*
Review of themes	*Checking if the themes are suitable in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.*
Defining of themes	*Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.*

Familiarisation with data:

Data, in the first instance, was collected through participant diaries, which following the battlefield tour were transcribed (by myself) to an electronic word document. As such, I became familiar with the data through the process of transcription that naturally generated thoughts and preconceptions (before analysis) about what had been gathered. I felt it was important to conduct the transcribing personally, despite the time it took, as it allowed for familiarity with the data which in turn assisted with the process of analysis. Furthermore, the research was highly immersive from the outset as I had accompanied the participants on the battlefield tour, and therefore it seemed most appropriate that I be the one to conduct the transcription; during the process of transcribing the data, initial thoughts were realised and potential codes were generated.

Generation of codes:

Codes were generated somewhat naturally as a result of familiarising myself with the data. The codes were varied and resulted from features such as prominence, emphasis, significance, and occurrence. They ranged from mentions of the physical landscape and surrounding environment to aspects of common experiences amongst participants; there was no intentional limit on the number of codes generated (examples feature within the appendices).

Searching for themes:

Having thought about and organised the data in terms of codes, I began the process of defining themes. As such, patterns within the data were examined and a loose thematic structure was created. This was achieved through a process of repetition, by frequently referring to the transcribed participant data and noting features that had been discovered whilst coding. At this stage, six thematic areas were established:

Landscape and surrounding environment	The perspective of those who fought in the First World War	Shared experience as a group travelling together	Relating to the past through connections with local area and family	The duality of war and commemoration of German dead	Sense of guilt for what was done by a previous generation

Review of themes:

Having got to this stage in the process a considerable deal of 'clutter' was removed from my data collection/analysis, whilst very careful consideration was put into the aims of the research and what should/could be considered. There was a definite narrowing of my objectives in terms of what was achievable, purposeful, and meaningful.

Defining themes:

Two themes (with sub-themes) were decided upon;

- **Landscape (remembrance and commemoration)**
  - *Walking in the footsteps of others (a vicarious experience)*
  - *Understanding the war (a century removed)*
  - *Duality of war and commemoration of the dead*

- **Understanding death through the context of conflict**
  - *Comprehension through empathy*
  - *Face-to-face with human remains*

3.9 Unexplored dimensions and research gaps

Research into visiting former battlefields has had significant attention across various academic studies, with the experiences of young people perhaps receiving slightly less attention than the experiences of adult visitors, with the exception of notable works by Pennell (2018) and Baldwin & Sharpley (2009); yet, understanding the motivations

and experiences of young visitors is essential to comprehend their engagement with former battlefields. While previous studies have explored the motivations of tourists in general, limited research appears to have specifically focused on the motivations of young people in this context. Through examining the expectations, emotional connections, and the narratives of young people, it seems possible to try and shed light on the experiential nature of battlefield tours. Jones et al. (2018) emphasise the importance of understanding the personal connections and motivations of young visitors, highlighting their desire for a deeper understanding of history and the emotional impact of visiting battlefields. They suggest that battlefield tourism can hold a significant appeal for young people as they seek meaningful connections with their study of the past and a desire to grapple with the complexities of historical conflict. Furthermore, it is of interest to consider how young visitors engage with the historical narratives of battlefields, particularly how they navigate sensitive and complex topics such as violence, sacrifice, and heroism. Brown (2017) argues that understanding young visitors' interpretations of historical events can provide valuable insights into the ways that they make sense of conflict and its consequences. By analysing the interpretations of young people, researchers can identify how they construct historical understanding and navigate the moral complexities that are so associated with conflict.

Also, there is the question of to what extent can visiting former battlefields offer the potential for educational enrichment, its impact on the educational development of young visitors remains largely unexplored. Research could investigate the influence of these visits on historical knowledge acquisition, critical thinking skills, and empathy toward past conflicts. Taylor (2020) suggests that battlefield tourism provides a context for experiential learning, enabling young visitors to engage with historical narratives in a tangible and immersive manner. By examining the role of battlefield tours in cultivating historical consciousness among young visitors, researchers could assess the potential of such visits to shape future generations' understanding of conflict and resolution. Moreover, research could explore the long-term educational impact of young people visiting former battlefields. Is the experience capable of leading to sustained interest in history, activism, or altered perspectives on war and

peace? Longitudinal studies tracking the educational trajectory of young visitors could provide valuable insights into the lasting effects of battlefield visitation. Such research could inform educational initiatives aimed at promoting both historical understanding and citizenship.

Understanding the socio-cultural dimensions of visiting former battlefields and their impact on identity formation among young visitors could also be an important area for further research. The exploration of how young visitors perceive and construct their national, regional, or personal identities through visits could provide insights into broader societal implications. Garcia (2020) suggests that visits to former battlefields can contribute to the shaping of collective memory and the construction of individual and group identities. Analysing the intersection of battlefield tourism, collective memory, and identity formation could paint a picture of how the experiences of young people on these types of visits understand their history, heritage, and whether they form a sense of identity [belonging]. Additionally, research could focus on the representation and inclusion of diverse perspectives in battlefield tourism narratives and experiences. Baker (2018) argues the importance of engaging young visitors in critical discussions about the representation of marginalised groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, and indigenous populations. By incorporating these voices and narratives, visits to former battlefields could, for young people, provide a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of historical events, challenging dominant narratives and fostering a more inclusive historical consciousness.

Lastly, ethical considerations surrounding battlefield tourism, particularly concerning young visitors, does necessitate further exploration. Memorialisation of conflicts and the interpretation of violent historical events for younger audiences does pose significant challenges; engaging young visitors in critical discussions about the ethical representation of conflict, violence, and sacrifice is crucial to ensure sensitivity, accuracy, and appropriate levels of engagement. Smith and Johnson (2020) highlight the importance of involving young people in the process of interpretation and memorialisation, allowing them to actively contribute to the construction of historical narratives.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Chapter outline and overview

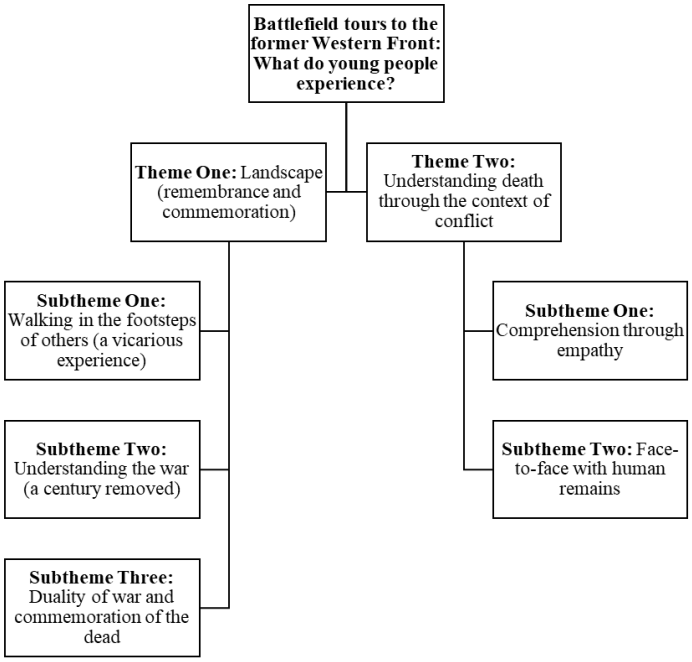
Having identified my theoretical position and explained the methodology used in this study, this chapter will present findings, gathered thematically, from the data collection and analysis process, as well as discussing the significance of the data gathered.

As previously mentioned, my hope is that this thesis will make a contribution to the field of historical battlefield education and the pedagogy of teaching conflict. The experiential analysis that is at the core of this research seeks to provide the reader with a greater understanding of the impact that visits to the former battlefields of the former Western Front have on young people.

Two broad themes, each with subthemes, emerged during my research, as shown in the diagram below:

Figure 8

Research question and themes (after thematic analysis)



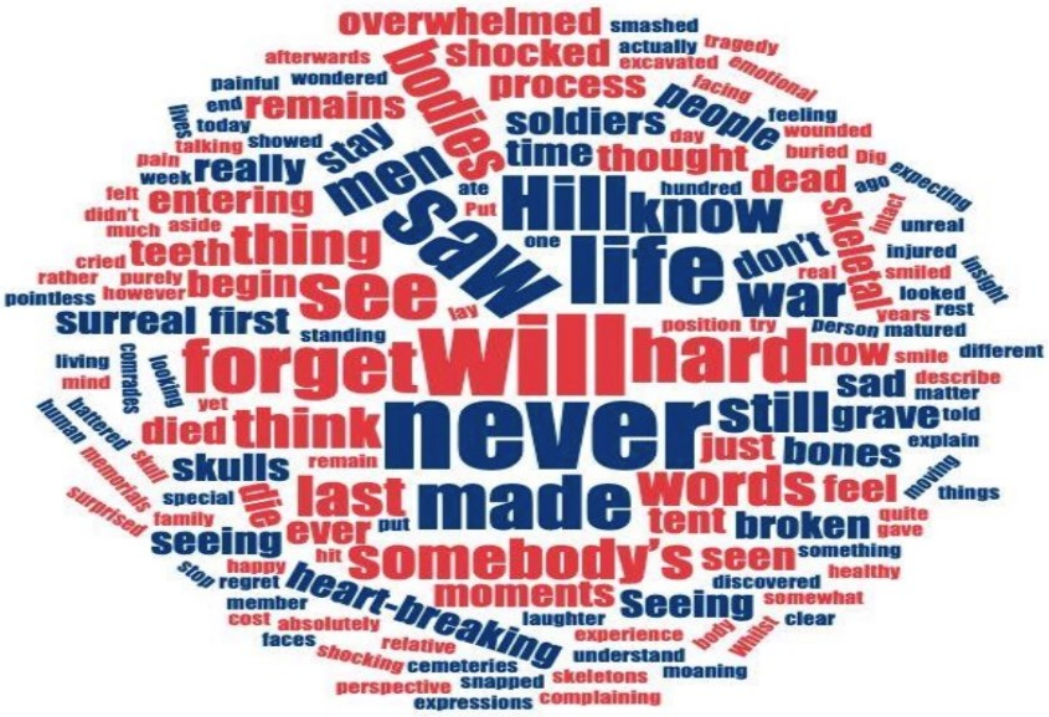
This design of this chapter is such that the reader will be purposefully navigated through an exploration of each of the two identified themes ('landscape and commemoration' and 'understanding death through the context of conflict'), with, in turn, their respective subthemes discussed too. Additionally, the discussion of subthemes includes explicit delineation of key areas for consideration, hopefully enhancing the clarity and depth of analysis, for example;

Theme One: Landscape and commemoration
Subtheme One: Walking in the footsteps of others
Key Areas: Realism, place, and attachment

From the outset of this chapter, it is also important to note the significance of both the diaries and participant interviews in terms of the repeated terms and phrases they offered me as the researcher; terms and phrases that offered an insight to how the participants were reacting to the battlefield tour experience [during and afterwards]. Descriptive words such as 'overwhelmed', 'heart-breaking', 'surreal', 'sad', and 'shocked' were among those that dominated the discourse, offering the researcher [me] an opportunity to comprehend the views of both the collective and individual experience(s). Furthermore, the lexicon of the battlefield tour experience also suggested that, at times, there were strong emotional attachments formed between participants and the places they had visited and/or the stories of the person(s) they were learning about. To represent this visually, I [early on during the analysis process] inputted the transcribed texts of both the diaries and interviews into an online word cloud software program, allowing me to identify common/repeated words:

Figure 9

Word cloud (diaries and transcribed interviews)



This analysis of commonly used words offered, for me, valuable insights into not just the participants' linguistic preferences, but also the salient themes that were beginning to emerge. Within the interview discourse and in diaries too, words such as ‘saw’, ‘will’, ‘see’, ‘made’, ‘last’, and ‘process’ were recurrent. These words appear as indicative of a temporal dimension that encompasses both past experiences and future possibilities. The participants' inclination to reflect upon previous events, consider prospective scenarios, and engage in cognitive processes aligns with a temporal orientation that is often observed in narrative accounts (Bamberg, 2004; Riessman, 2008). It is also possible that these temporal markers serve a dual purpose. Not only reflecting the participants' efforts to make sense of their past experiences, but for them to contextualise their present circumstances too. The use of words such as ‘made’ and ‘last’ suggest a retrospective evaluation of events, potentially indicative of a cognitive process aimed at understanding the chain of causality; something that aligns with Bamberg's (2004) notion of considering counter narratives and the role of temporality

in constructing coherent life stories - with the employment of future-oriented terms such as ‘will’ ‘see’ and ‘process’ implying not just a sense of anticipation, but also proactive engagement with their current experience, perhaps even a forward-looking perspective that is being shaped by the experience of the battlefield tour.

Several emotionally charged terms also emerged from the words of the participants, including, ‘forget’, ‘hard’, ‘broken’, ‘heart-breaking’, ‘surreal’, ‘shocked’, ‘overwhelmed’, and ‘sad’. These words revealed a profound emotional intensity that was embedded within the narratives of their diaries and interviews; with the participants revealing how, at times, they struggled to cope with their emotions (Pasupathi, 2003; Neimeyer, 2010). The use of words such as ‘surreal’ and ‘broken’ are also strong indicators of emotional intensity, suggesting a sense of disorientation or distress experienced by the participants. The word ‘surreal’ signifies a feeling of disbelief or unreality, possibly indicating a deep emotional impact that disrupts the participants' sense of normalcy (Burke et al., 2014); with the word ‘broken’ carrying a metaphorical weight, alluding to emotional vulnerability and a sense of fragmentation (Lazarus, 1991). Furthermore, the use of words such as ‘heart-breaking’, ‘shocked’, ‘overwhelmed’, and ‘sad’ appear to signify the depth of emotional impact that was felt by the participants. These words seem to denote profound sadness, intense emotional reactions, and a feeling of being emotionally overwhelmed (Fredrickson, 2001; Frijda, 1986).

Similarly, the words ‘moments’, ‘ever’, and ‘pointless’ denote a propensity for contemplation and existential inquiry within the discourse of the interviews and diaries. Participants reflecting upon specific instances or occurrences they label as ‘moments’ reveals how they question both significance and purpose, perhaps a hint that, on their part, there was a search for meaning on these former battlefields - a place that for them was both distant and near. The word ‘moments’ could also indicate the participants' inclination to isolate specific instances within their narratives of what they experienced, in doing so highlighting what they felt was perceived importance or impact. This focus on ‘moments’ might also be an attempt by participants to make sense of their experiences and perhaps even extract some type of meaning from them;

something that resonates with McAdams' (2001) concept of narrative identity, where individuals construct stories by emphasising salient events that shape their sense of self. The word ‘ever’ also carries a sense of perpetuity and suggests a broad temporal scope, its usage within the interviews and diaries indicates the participants' contemplation of their experiences on the battlefield tour within a broader existential framework; suggestive of a deep sense of reflection and an openness to exploring the long-term implications of their experiences. Additionally, the word ‘pointless’ suggests an exploration of existential dilemmas, a pondering of life's intricacies and potential futility (Yalom, 1980; Frankl, 1946). It is a word that signifies a profound existential questioning of the meaning and purpose of their experiences. The participants' use of the word ‘pointless’ could also imply a sense of disillusionment or a struggle to find reasoning and logic in their processing of conflict.

Also, worth discussing at the outset of this chapter is the term ‘emotional attachment’ and how it corresponds well with some of the existing scholarly work contained within the discipline of environmental psychology, in particular how people form emotional bonds with places/locations (Lewicka, 2011); an attachment that is clearly visible in this research through the wide range of different emotional responses experienced by participants such as sadness, joy, and pride (to name but a few). However, it is important to stress that at no point in this research do I either suggest or imply that any of the emotional responses should be divided into categories whereby they could be simply placed on a sliding scale of sadness/happiness; that would be a misrepresentation. For me, the emotional responses of participants were more complicated than that, they were to some extent blended, for example the sadness experienced while visiting a soldier’s grave mixed with the pride felt regarding the perceived dignity of the final resting place. In this way, emotional responses of participants were fluid, responsive to particular circumstances, and context.

Also, what must not be forgotten is that this research, at its core, is a study of how young people react to loss and suffering; loss and suffering that was state-sanctioned given that the killing and injuring that happened was committed during a time of war. A time when ordinary citizens, similar in many ways to the participants of this

research, found themselves in extraordinary situations carrying out and witnessing acts that would have seemed wholly alien to them prior to the onset of conflict. We are, in the majority, socialised to regard the killing of another individual as the worst form of transgression, hence why we typically advocate the maximum punitive sentences for those who deny someone of their 'right to life'. Equally, the religious teachings of the majority denominations regard the deprivation of life as the principal form of sin, giving weight to the belief that human life is precious and that to deny an individual of their life is abhorrent and unacceptable. Yet, in times of war, this perception is challenged when enemy soldiers are expected to kill one another in the name of virtuous defence; something that is encouraged, expected and glorified (Malešević, 2020). This ethical switching, while undoubtedly difficult for those involved, is equally challenging for the participants of educational battlefield tours as they themselves have to try and get to grips with the concept of killing and/or injuring in a context that is justifiable. Through participation, individuals are faced with the visceral realities of death, harm and adversity, with them assuming the role of spectators of history - those who are spatially and temporally transported to a world that is very different to their own.

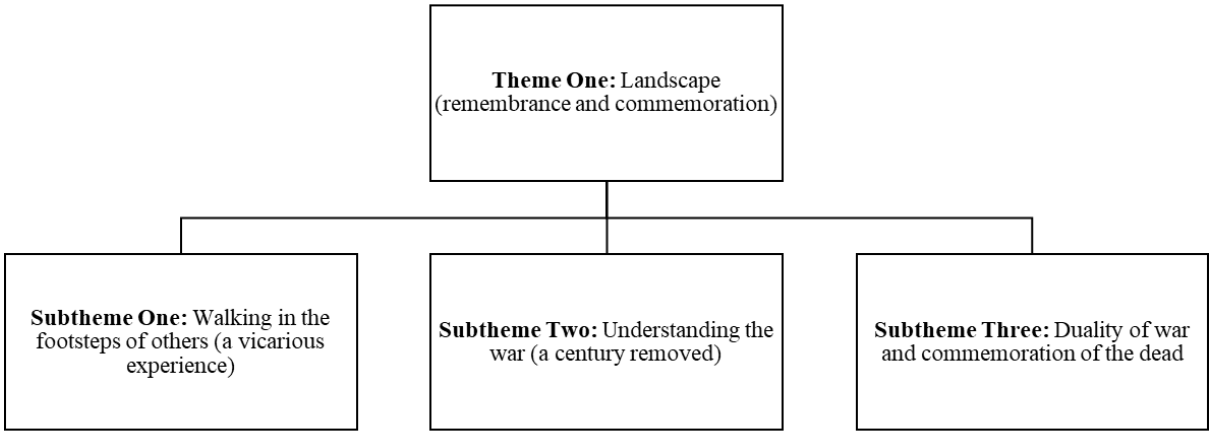
Having said all this though, it is worth remembering too that educational battlefield tours are framed environments through which the teacher/guide provides a lens for participants to view experiences of death, comradeship and loss; where depending on the stories told, the places visited and the shaping of the discourse, participants are able to arrive at their own collective and individual judgements, conclusions, and feelings in terms of their own emotions.

4.2 Theme one: Landscape (remembrance and commemoration)

The significance of landscape in relation to remembrance and commemoration was evident from participant responses, both in diaries and at interview.

Figure 10

Theme one and subthemes (after thematic analysis)



4.2.1 Subtheme one: Walking in the footsteps of others (a vicarious experience)

The very nature of a battlefield tour allows participants to 'walk in the footsteps' of others. For the participants of this research, a chance to walk in the footsteps of those who served with nation-forces on the former battlefields of the First World War in Belgium and France. In both diaries and during interview, participants conveyed a feeling of having experienced something that was vicarious in nature - that in some way they had shared a reality (or gained an insight to what had happened to others a century before). For example, Ben (S3) in his diary wrote that *"it made me feel like I was reliving the memories of those who fought in World War One"*. When asked about this comment during the post-tour interview he stated *"it was as if we were travelling like our ancestors to a country we had not been to before, feeling a bit nervous, but wanting to do well for our King and country"*; a potential example of how imaginative thought and relatability can be embraced by individuals as part of learning about the

past. Similarly, Angelina (S5) wrote in her diary after visiting Hooge Crater Museum and viewing preserved photographs that *"...this gave me more of a personal connection with the soldiers of the First World War as it had that aspect of relatability, showcasing the humanity of those who are regularly only thought of as part of a number".* A statement that when combined with Ben's comments appears to show how participants seek [intentionally or unintentionally] to relate and/or empathise with those who served during the First World War. In doing so, their efforts at comprehension arguably become far more visceral than academic - something that is less likely to happen within the context of the classroom, with participants making comments such as, *"...he was even closer to home. A man I could relate to."* - Chloe (S4), and *"it was very hard-hitting to hear about the death of a young man my age, I could never imagine it being me or one of my friends."* - Shannon (S5), as well as "*we laid a wreath to show we are thinking about him. This was an emotional experience because he was in reality one of us."* - Emily (S6).

In her diary, Chloe (S5) wrote about visiting Hill 62 (appendix four) and stated it *"...was important and I felt honoured to be there. We got to see real places where soldiers were and got to see first-hand what soldiers experienced".* Chloe's mention in this situation of being "*honoured*" at visiting Hill 62 was interesting, and not unique, throughout the research there was strong evidence of appreciation on the part of participants who regarded themselves as being fortunate to visit places they viewed as being significant; something that fits closely with existing literature around battlefield tours as being a form of modern-day 'pilgrimage'; very different from those that were undoubtedly more personal in nature when relatives sought to connect with the [immediate] dead of their own families during the 1920s and beyond. With Connelly (2009, p. 75) describing the situation for those first early visitors as:

> The vast majority of these visitors saw themselves as pilgrims on a journey of spiritual enhancement as they attempted to imagine something of what the soldiers went through in the holy land of British arms. Christian and patriotic language and imagery combined to permeate these pilgrimages, which provided the visitors with a heavily ritualistic and controlled experience.

Relevant to this, and as discussed in the literature review, Baldwin and Sharpley (2009), described pilgrimage as having a focus on spirituality and modern-day tourism/education as being something different altogether; while Walter (1993), Digance (2003), and Bremer (2006) have all acknowledged that there are clear distinctions between tourists and pilgrims – and a blurring with the passing of time. Nowhere is this more evident than on the present-day battlefield where the majority of participants are not seeking individual graves with an immediate family connection, but instead are following a structured itinerary that follows a particular narrative - designed to tell the story of the conflict through the stories of those who experienced it.

Ciara (S5) wrote about her experience of visiting Hill 62, stating *"at Hill 62 we went into a trench from World War One which had been preserved. There were craters on the ground from artillery shells and tunnels we could walk through, this made the experience realistic"*. Ciara's comment perhaps emphasises the significance of tangibility for participants in battlefield tours; the ability to physically interact with a preserved landscape and therefore gain a more vivid understanding of past events. With that in mind, during her post-tour interview I asked Ciara if she felt that learning about the First World War in the classroom was different from what is learned whilst visiting the battlefields? She replied, *"when you are in the classroom you are only thinking about it; but when you visit the battlefields, you are there, you are standing where they fought and where they died"*. A point similarly made during a post-tour interview with Faith (S3) who stated that *"lots of people don't get to go on trips like this. You may get taught about the war in the classroom, but you don't get to see what it looked like and where it happened. We did though, we got to see where soldiers were one hundred years ago, where they fought and where they died"*. Again, stressing the sensory aspect of battlefield tours as being immersive in the way they allow participants to engage with the past in a manner they simply never could within the context of the classroom.

Figure 11

Remains of shells at Hill 62

Note: By P. Hamilton, June 2018

Visiting the preserved trenches at Hill 62 is something that many of the participants discussed in their diaries, including Chloe (S4) who wrote that *"I went through the trenches and was at first surprised as this was where people stayed for a long time. I then later felt shocked as I came to the realisation that this is how life was during the war"*. Comments like this one made by Chloe (S4) were not made in isolation, as there was a sense of epiphany for the participants when they took time to comprehend the significance of the places they had been visiting. Caitlin (S6) wrote in her diary that Hill 62 *"was a particularly challenging place to visit as the maintained trench was extremely realistic"* which made her feel *"particularly emotional as it really showed me the reality of living in a trench"*. A comment that is not too dissimilar to the one made by Ben (S3) at the beginning of this chapter, through the display of empathy (and even sympathy) towards individuals he had never met or had no prior knowledge of (or connection to).

Jodie (S4) in her diary commented after visiting Hill 62, *"...for me to stand on the ground that soldiers fought for their lives and where bodies could still be laying underground made me feel what was really going on and what had happened one*

hundred years ago, which made our experience more realistic and, in a way, understand what they were going through". Once more suggesting that there is a significance to the visiting of a former battlefield in terms of the ability of a participant to feel in some way connected - not just to time and place, but to those who were once there; a visceral form of historical comprehension. Angelina (S5) also wrote in her diary that *"It felt rather odd to be stood on the grounds in which the Battle of the Somme was fought, as well as slightly upsetting due to the fact that many were killed in the area"*, and Linzi (S5) after visiting the preserved trenches and museum at Hill 62 wrote that *"...we visited Sanctuary Wood which had craters from shells exploding. It was clear how powerful the shells were. Seeing the trenches and how small and narrow they were, it would have been hard to run through, especially in bad weather. When I looked at the slides with photographs from the war [in the museum], I felt horrified. The images were absolutely horrendous. It made me feel uneasy and angry at what I saw. There was one photograph which stood out to me. It showed corpses. I could see their feet in a line. This made me feel many emotions such as angry, sad and uneasy that this even happened in the first place. I left Sanctuary Wood feeling really shocked. I didn't realise the impact. This has changed my perspective forever"*.

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, there are delineated key areas for consideration, relevant to subthemes, that have been identified as being of significance to the findings and discussion of this research. Within this first subtheme, 'walking in the footsteps of others (a vicarious experience)', realism, place, and attachment are recognised as being the relevant key areas, with the aim of adding depth and providing for a more comprehensive discussion of the subtheme:

Realism:

It could be argued that unfamiliar historical landscapes have the potential to wake the imagination as far as visualising the past is concerned, but to what extent does imagination differ from reality? After all, you can read about what happened at a certain place or listen to someone talk about it, but until you are standing on the 'spot' there is always the potential for it to seem somewhat abstract. Equally, it could be

argued that through visiting a historical landscape, events from the past are afforded credibility not previously possible through prior/existing knowledge. As Malpas (1999, p. 180) stated, "*the past cannot be grasped independently of location in place*".

When thinking about realistic experiences as a motivation for participants, it is worth noting that tourism has itself often been described as stemming from the search for an authentic experience (Wang, 1999). A desire to get closer to the conflict perhaps, where the participant is confronted with war history and its consequences also. Lowenthal (1996, p. 25) in fact described heritage sites as being places that allow people to "mourn worlds known to be irrevocably lost, yet more vividly felt, more lucid, more real than the murky and ambiguous present". Which, as I would argue too, suggests the existence of emotional experiences created through interacting with an environment that is historically accurate or simply perceived to be historically accurate.

However, a tension will always exist given that by its very nature the past is, of course, irrevocably gone, meaning that realism will never be wholly possible; almost like the interpretation of a two-dimensional shape when in fact the third-dimension would offer greater accuracy. As a modern-day battlefield tourist, it is highly unlikely that visitors to places such as the former First World War battlefields of Belgium and France truly believe they will ever be able to seek out an authentic experience of exactly what it was like to be there more than a century ago. Instead, they look for an opportunity to try and comprehend what happened through their interpretation of the places they visit. In the case of participants of this study, cemeteries, monuments and memorials are symbolic of the absence of the people associated with the landscape and yet still representative of their experiences - telling stories of who they were and in some instances what they experienced.

For battlefield and historical tourism in general, it seems that realism is derived from;

- **Authenticity**: The authenticity of the places visited. Places that are well-preserved, therefore offering a credible learning opportunity for those who visit.

- **Accuracy**: The accuracy of information that is passed to visitors through guides, museum staff, interpretations, displays and interactive/audio-visual equipment.
- **Locale**: The surrounding community and its culture, whether it interacts and/or promotes the history of what happened.
- **Physicality**: The impact of the landscape in terms of accessibility. Have features been removed? If not, is the location inclusive to all in terms of physical capability/mobility.
- **Expectations**: What does the visitor expect? Do they appreciate the passing of time and the impact that will have had on the place(s) to be visited?

Place:

At the former battlefields of the Western Front, in those locations where no visitor centres exist and coach loads of visitors rarely go, the casual traveller could be forgiven for placing almost no historical significance to the plethora of rural vistas that exist on the flatlands of Ypres or the rolling hills of Picardy. Yet, it is in these places, to this day, that the traces of shell holes, gun emplacements, bunkers, once well-beaten tracts, and trench systems can still be found; tangible connections to the past, where those who visit can 'walk in the footsteps', stare directly across what was 'no-man's land' or perhaps even hold a piece of history in their hands. In doing these types of things, the visitor is engaging in a form of remembrance that is only possible through 'place'; depending on the location on the Western Front, a visitor can be presented with the past in a manner that is not scripted, sanitised, or choreographed. A type of experience where the 'place' allows for them to make their own interpretations, as opposed to the 'place' doing this for them.

As previously mentioned in the literature review, Winter (1995, p. 98) discussed the parallels of 'place' between sites of battle, sites of memory and sites of mourning as being something of an evolutionary process. He identified three phases of commemoration with regards to 'place'. Firstly, a creative phase that allows for the construction of a commemorative form, usually marked by the building of monuments and the creation of ceremonies. Followed by the firm establishment of

commemoration as being something that happens on a set calendar date before a final [crucial] stage of reinscription that can prevent memory from disappearing. However, it is completely reliant on whether future generations are able, knowingly or unknowingly, to inherit the memory of what actually happened at a set 'place', as without regular reinscription, the memory of the date and place will simply fade away. This was something already discussed in the literature review with Rainey (1983, p. 76) describing former battlefields as 'places' where people are challenged to recall the basic realities of historical experience through participation in choreographed commemorative practices, and Lowenthal (1979, p. 110) describing the landscape of the former battlefield as memory's most serviceable reminder, something that firmly resonates the experience of war and in doing so has the potential to evoke profound reflections.

Attachment:

During November 1916, Lord Derby, Secretary of State for War, approached the storyteller and journalist Rudyard Kipling to draft a new message of condolence to be sent on behalf of the King to relatives of fallen soldiers. It was composed as follows:

> The King knows/has heard/has been informed that your… has given his life for his country and joins with the Nation in pride and gratitude for the sacrifice he has made in the course of freedom/liberty and justice/rights. His Majesty commands me to send you his own and the Queen's deep sympathy with you in your loss.

Rudyard Kipling's only son, John, enlisted as a Second Lieutenant in the Irish Guards in September 1914, aged 17 years old. After training, he was sent to France during 1915 and on the 27th September that same year, John was injured during the Battle of Loos. He was last seen with an injury to his leg and face and although his body was never recovered, he was officially listed as deceased in May 1919. Following his son's disappearance, Kipling became an adviser to the Imperial War Graves Commission (present-day Commonwealth War Graves Commission) where he wrote literature on

their behalf, such as 'The Graves of the Fallen[5]' during 1919. He sought to reassure bereaved families, like his, that their sacrifice had been for something, and had been respected. For Kipling, it would appear that pride and grief were both personal and collective. He grieved for the loss of his own son as well as all those who lost their lives; for him the sadness was shared, passed out and part of the nation's conscience.

I mention the above, because what Kipling felt for the victims of the First World War still resonates today. The collective effort to remember the war dead and attach pride and reverence to their loss through memorials, cemeteries, and preserved battlefields means that each generation of society has an implied obligation to remember, whether they choose to or not (Winter, 2006). Historians tell us about past events not just through dates, places, and numbers, but through the stories of people who were there. As participants, we perhaps cannot help but relate to these people we are learning about, whether through similarities of age, gender, locality, or physical appearance, we make emotional attachments with people from the past, both good and bad, attaching ourselves in some form to their lived experiences - "for the dead and the living, we must bear witness" (Wiesel, p. 3, 1986). Crucial when we consider the disconnect that exists in the present day from any lived experience of the First World War; substituted now with a form of cultural memory that is perhaps most visible in villages, towns, and cities as memorials, plaques, and monuments.

This transition to cultural memory has been discussed by Wydra (2013) who referred to new generations as approaching cultural memory in a manner that involves them learning "habitual acts of performance" (p. 15); something that is very apparent during battlefield tours when participants are likely to find themselves attending official ceremonies such as The Last Post where they will become involved in standardised acts of remembrance, including moments of silence or repeating lines such as "we will remember them"; consolidated acts of remembrance that have been formed over time - a currency of memory that is symbolic of past events through sorrow and gratitude. Because, after all, the form of remembrance that is assumed today, in a

[5] Rudyard Kipling wrote this article at the Commission's request. Originally published in The Times in 1919, it was quickly republished as an illustrated leaflet, Graves of the Fallen.

cultural sense, is not lived, it is passed down from generation to generation. Becker and Audoin-Rouzeau (2002) described the loss of our living-link with the First World War as being a type of critical moment where part of society's connection to the past was diminished, "then the 1970s and 1980s swept away that version of the war for good. Like it or not, the umbilical cord was severed". But, for the participants of this research, they were not part of the 1970s and 1980s generations, for them there was no pivotal moment when lived-connection was suddenly lost; giving rise to the question of whether it is possible to remember what you yourself have not experienced? To put it more bluntly, is it actually remembrance if you yourself were born after the time of what actually happened?

Winter (2006), in his work, suggests a distinction between remembrance and memory - specifying that memory is for those who were there and have the direct experience of what happened, whereas remembrance is the act of remembering. An environment in which the past can be constructed or reconstructed for present day generations to make their own connections with what has previously happened; described by Winter as 'historical remembrance'. Arguably then, engagement with 'historical remembrance' forms a crucial part of the battlefield tour experience with participants learning about the past through their interactions with the materials they are exposed to, including but not limited to physical spaces, battlefield remains, archival footage, diary extracts and literary interpretations such as poetry and song. It is, generally speaking though, the story of the soldier that dominates the narrative of remembrance for the battlefield tour, with a now familiar sense of victimhood attached; the perception of the soldier as being someone worthy of appreciation for the wrong they have suffered alongside their contemporaries - sent to a war that in many places is taught and therefore popularly perceived as being a folly.

Also, worth noting is that, on this battlefield tour and as part of many others, there are frequent attempts to tell the stories of participants' relatives who served in the First World War and also if applicable the stories of those who are connected with the school that the young people attend. Strengthened by archive material such as personal papers, photographs, and other memorabilia, drawing out a sense of connection to the

individuals that are being remembered. Therefore, giving credence to the argument that a feeling of connection is entirely possible with regards to remembrance on battlefield tours where circumstances are beyond lived-experience; something Ziino (2015, p. 8) discussed when he stated that “we are now obliged to grapple with the ways in which generations without direct connection to those who fought are reconstructing their relationship with the war.”

War is undoubtedly a delicate, emotive, and controversial subject and the memory of war is arguably formative in the shaping of nations. For citizens, to be critical of past wars, it could be construed as ungrateful and/or unpatriotic, while support and/or empathy for past wars could be viewed as jingoistic and perhaps even political should groups or individuals participate in practices of commemoration that are perceived as being nationalistic in nature. These attitudes are nothing new however and have developed over time, but perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in the construction of memorials as presented both in and outside of museums - “not only the superficial gesture towards remembrance and the dead but a wealth of information about the priorities, politics, and sensibilities of those who built it. A memorial will tell us more about its builders than about those to whom it is dedicated" (Heathcote, 1999).

For most however, it is worth remembering that the experience of military service is an unfamiliar one, something that is usually imagined through portrayals in film and television, in literature, the history classroom and in some cases through past-family experience(s). Yet, war, for many people, is a moral issue, something that challenges conscience, faith, and personal convictions. As such, those museums that have war as their focus tread something of an uncertain path in terms of what they exhibit and how they present it. They are challenged with deciding how best to display the inescapable dark reality of conflict, coupled with the unavoidable cultural/societal view of war as being something that is glorious and/or despicable.

And yet, the memory of war and commemoration are [usually] constructed in such a manner that it befits social, cultural, and political trends (Winter, 1999) as well as the

needs and wishes of the society and the individuals to whom it is presented. However, attitudes to commemoration do change with the passing of time and it would be naive to suggest that the ways in which individuals regarded the First World War a century ago are exactly the same as they are now. Memory and the meaning of commemoration is ultimately something that is contested, even when memorials and museum exhibits have been put together in such a way that they attempt to bring meaning to war for those left alive (King, 1998). In fact, military museums could even be described as surrogate in terms of the experiences they offer to their visitors, transporting them to a reality that they are completely unfamiliar with (Young, 1993).

4.2.2 Subtheme two: Understanding the war (a century removed)

With the passage of time, visualising history becomes complicated, yet, that is not to say it is by any means impossible. While visiting the former battlefields of the First World War, participants of this research described experiences that were both expected and unexpected. In her diary, Angelina (S5) after visiting a recreated trench at Hooge Crater, wrote that it *"...allowed me to get an idea of the structure of the trenches. As well as this, some people had the opportunity to fire blanks from a pistol. Despite not doing this myself, it let me understand the sounds of gunfire contributing to the environment of a trench"*, and at Hill 62, Angelina (S5) further wrote in her diary that "*I saw a real British trench which had been maintained over the past century. This gave me an insight to the environment of the trenches and how the soldiers may have felt in those surroundings"*, and while visiting Sunken Lane (appendix five) on the Somme battlefields, Angelina (S5) wrote in her diary that "*it looked peaceful and beautiful, a sharp contrast to its history. It felt rather odd to be standing on the grounds in which the Battle of the Somme was fought, as well as slightly upsetting due to the fact that many were killed in an area which is now peaceful".* A point similarly made by Chloe (S5) who after visiting Sunken Lane wrote in her diary that *"being there on a nice peaceful day made it difficult to imagine all the fighting that took place there".*

This serenity of the present-day Somme locale was mentioned by several participants who appeared to struggle with the comprehension aspect of separating the carnage of

what had happened there one hundred years ago, and visiting now as modern-day tourists. Chloe (S4), in her diary, while reflecting about her experience of visiting the Somme, wrote that *"going to the Newfoundland Park made me realise that although I thought the place was clean, quiet and beautiful, it was saddening to think that this was all the opposite when the war was going on".* Lisa (S3) stated in her diary that she was "*surprised at how pristine the places are, when one hundred years ago there was fighting*" and Emily (S6), in relation to Newfoundland Park, wrote that *"the peace and tranquillity in the place seemed unreal"*, whilst Linzi (S5), writing in her diary about visiting Y Ravine Cemetery, mentioned *"the cemetery was looked after really well and was almost peaceful until you think about how they died. It was horrific and there is such a contrast between how chaotic their deaths were to the peacefulness of the cemetery now".*

The many Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemeteries in both Belgium and France, sometimes referred to as cities of the dead, play a prominent role on a First World War battlefield tour. Their origins, during and after the First World War, can be traced back to a man by the name of Fabian Ware. Ware was selected by the Imperial War Council to devise a consistent and respectful method of burying and commemorating the war dead of the [then] British Empire. His efforts and lasting legacy through the cemeteries and monuments across the Western Front (now cared for by the CWGC) were an attempt to bring order to a disordered world. A comprehensive system, under his leadership, was devised to bury and and/or record the name of every single fatality of the First World War, regardless of military rank. The cemeteries, which are vast in number across the former Western Front, are a deliberate attempt to deal with both the individualist and collectivist nature of commemoration. Designed in uniformity, their aesthetic is deliberate and intentional; even if the relatives of the deceased had the financial means to exhume and repatriate a loved one, it was strictly prohibited - because in the eyes of Ware, the fallen died together and in death they should remain together. As previously discussed in the literature review (Lloyd, 1998, p. 124), the cemeteries of the CWGC were planned in such a way that they communicated sacrifice in three different ways. First of all, through the standardisation of graves, instilling a sense of equality in death. Secondly,

through religion (in particular, Christianity) with the memorial cross and stone of sacrifice as a focal-point in most cemeteries, and thirdly through patriotism with cemeteries deliberately designed in the style of idyllic English country-gardens. As a final resting place, CWGC cemeteries are part of our social memory of the First World War. They are a physical connection with the past and they have the ability to help us better understand both the individual and collective experiences of the people they commemorate (Laquer, 1994).

Figure 12

CWGC headstones

Note: By P. Hamilton, June 2018

Participants of this research visited several CWGC cemeteries that varied in terms of their size and design. One visit was to Tyne Cot Cemetery, the largest CWGC cemetery in the world (appendix six). After visiting, Caitlin (S6) wrote in her diary *"Tyne Cot really made me emotional as it showed the insane volume of death commemorated in one graveyard, and the effect that this had on me was surprising"*, while Shannon (S5) in her diary remarked, *"...we visited Tyne Cot Memorial. I was baffled when I walked in. I was overwhelmed by the amount of headstones I could see, it was so beautiful, but I didn't know where to look first"*.

Shannon (S5) made further mention of her astonishment and confusion about Tyne Cot during her post-tour interview when she said "*...we went to Tyne Cot, there were thousands of headstones and I couldn't fathom that, even though this was only a handful of the people that died during the war"*; with Kai (S5) similarly writing about his feelings of confusion when he stated that *"...the cemeteries and monuments opened my eyes to the vast amount of deaths in the battles and made me think why what happened, happened. It made me think about their final moments, who they were, what they did and who they knew. It made me sad to know that many wives, parents, siblings and children were not able to visit their graves, or to make it worse, not even have a place to go if their bodies were not found"*.

Charlie (S5), after visiting several cemeteries wrote that she *"found the whole day pretty emotional and hard-hitting as hearing the numbers of the fallen in the classroom is hard to comprehend, but seeing all of the graves and names on the memorials, seeing how many cemeteries there are just put into perspective the vast amount of bloodshed over the world wars"*, while Ciara (S5) remarked in her diary that *"When you are in the classroom you are only thinking about it; but when you are at the battlefields, you are there, you are standing where they fought and where they died. At some points I felt sad, and sometimes overwhelmed. Also, I felt grateful. Some people don't get to go there and are only able to learn about the First World War in the classroom, but we got to go there"*. This was coupled with Michael (S6) commenting in his diary that *"... being able to see the remains of a trench had a major psychological impact on me as I was able to relive the horror experienced by the soldiers in that very trench. Being able to see the remains of craters/bomb holes was sad to witness, as you realise that soldiers could have died where you were standing"*.

Figure 13

Headstone of an unknown soldier

Note: By P. Hamilton, June 2018

As with subtheme one, subtheme two also has delineated key areas for consideration. Within this second subtheme, 'understanding the war (a century removed)', accuracy, harm, and visitation are recognised as being the relevant key areas, with the identical aim of adding depth and providing for a more comprehensive discussion of the subtheme:

Accuracy:

One line of thought is that participants on battlefield tours are witnesses to the narratives that are offered to them. They are not just individuals who happened to be present on a certain day or at a certain geographical place, they are someone who by virtue of what they experienced will potentially recount what they have learned by means of the testimony they create. As Ricoeur (2004, pp. 164-165) reasoned, visitors to historical places ask to be believed and in doing so allow themselves to be questioned. In doing so, it could therefore be argued that they assume a certain amount

of responsibility for the future telling of history - “the fundamental transitional structure between memory and history” (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 21) as “testimony is inscribed in the relation between past and present, in the movement of understanding the one by the other” (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 164).

On the other hand, there is a need to be realistic that the majority of visitors to locations such as former battlefields are not by definition professional historians, placing into question whether or not it is actually in any way their task to be accurate transmitters of past events. It would also be fair to assume that the participants of this study and visitors to former battlefields in general will accept what they see and hear on tour as being believable; yes, they may have preconceptions or might even hold true some of the well-held myths of the conflict they are learning about, but generally speaking will be receptive to the tour as an authentic learning experience. In the specific case of the First World War, it is in fact the well-held myths that have the potential to alter the narrative of the tour, with the guide [and, if applicable, teachers too] frequently having to dispel popular opinion;

- **The First World War resulted in the greatest loss of life in history to that point**: An estimated 17 million soldiers and civilians (less than 2% of the global population) were killed during the First World War, but by comparison during the English Civil War of the mid-17th Century around 4% of the global population lost their lives. Also, again by comparison, in China during the Taiping Rebellion an estimated 20 million to 30 million were killed.

- **The majority of soldiers who served in the British Army during the First World War were killed**: From the United Kingdom, around six million troops were mobilised, with just over 700,000 losing their lives (11.5%).

- **Soldiers spent years in the trenches**: The British army rotated men in and out of the trenches frequently. An average soldier would spend ten days a month in the trench system, and of those rarely more than three days on the front line.

- **Progress was rarely made due to tactics never changing**: The First World War was a time of tremendous innovation. Tactics and technology changed dramatically between 1914-18. At the outbreak of the conflict, soldiers were in many parts of the front-line charging into battle on horseback without steel caps and any degree of covering fire. Four years later, steel-helmeted units were attacking, protected by more commonly accurate artillery fire and significant innovations in machine guns, explosive propellants, airplanes and tanks.

- **The war was a miserable experience**: As with any experience in life, individual circumstances will always dictate what happens and to what extent the situation is enjoyable or unenjoyable; the First World War was no different. Some who served were subjected to unimaginable horrors, while others would have witnessed or experienced very little in terms of harm and/or trauma. Also, for some, it is entirely feasible that conditions were better than at home with cigarettes, tea, and rum, all part of a daily diet of more than 4,000 calories.

Harm:

Teaching past events that are potentially traumatic in nature is not without its challenges, particularly when the emotions of learners are considered. Simon (2011, p. 434) discussed the emotional responses of learners as having the potential to cause a breakdown in their ability to properly understand a past event, suggesting that "difficulty happens when one's conceptual frameworks, emotional attachments, conscious, and unconscious desires desettle one's ability to settle the meaning of past events". Zembylas (2014), as discussed in chapter two, argues that there is a need for teachers to be mindful of the emotional limits of students when they are presented with difficult history - "the hegemonic pedagogies of emotion" (p. 406).

From a sociocultural perspective, learning about past events happens in collaboration with others and meaning is established through discourse (Gaudelli et al, 2012);

something that Simon and Eppert (1997) refer to as "communities of memory". Classrooms where "peers build community through discussion of past atrocities… the rationale being to create transformative spaces where moral response and action are supported and encouraged through communities of memory" (p. 187). But what if learners are faced with a past that they regard as extreme, offensive, or oppressive? Something that results in a breakdown of understanding and has "the potential to resist and deflect" from what it is that they are supposed to be learning (Levy & Sheppard, 2018, p. 382). A complex issue, no doubt, where uncertainty of reaction is understandable from the perspective of the teacher. With learners requiring what Garett (2012) refers to as responsible pedagogy and Tarc (2011) as a reparative curriculum "that supports the production of historical accounts in pedagogical encounters and asks students to encounter the unknown other's experiences of violence and loss in order to better understand their own social and political realities" (Levy & Sheppard, p. 383).

Why do it though? Why teach death and suffering? Perhaps it is an attempt at transformative pedagogy, where learners are moved from emotional response to critical analysis (McKnight, 2004). By placing them in a position that forces them to confront and engage with testimonies of suffering. Where "the aim of learning from, not just about, trauma is central to the classroom experience, and it is this dialogue or relationship with those who have suffered, via their testimonies, which creates an opportunity for students to be shocked and possibly moved to action by what they learn" (Levy & Sheppard, p. 369); with LaCapra (2001) arguing that "opening oneself to empathetic unsettlement is… a desirable affective dimension of inquiry" (p. 78).

The teaching of difficult past events is, after all, not only a matter of imparting historical knowledge, but also of promoting critical thinking, empathy, and ethical reflection (Loewen, 1995). One of the main reasons that death and suffering is so prominent on the history curriculum is that learning about it helps students to better understand the complexity of human experiences. Through learning about death and suffering, young people can gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of people

in the past and the diversity of the world they live in (Friere, 1970), which is a powerful way to promote historical consciousness and global citizenship.

Visitation:

Throughout Belgium and France there are a considerable number of Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries. Visits to these cemeteries are nothing new as far as tours of the former battlefields of the First World War are concerned, but what are the motivations for those who visit them and what purpose can they serve for those who visit?

CWGC cemeteries are designed in such a manner as to evoke a sense of sacrifice - something achieved through the promotion of equality in death, with the standardisation of graves, regardless of the deceased's age, rank, and circumstances leading to their death Lloyd (1998, p.42). Equally, through the CWGC's intentional use of symbolism that is so prominent at their locations, with many cemeteries featuring a large cross of sacrifice and altar stone, both powerful reminders of Christianity. They are, we should remember, "not mere gardens" but "part of a geographical imagining of the British Empire, and the making of a tangible imprint of British presence" (Morris, 1997, p. 42).

As the final resting place of the dead and missing, military cemeteries are crucial to the memory of the First World War. Located in close proximity to where the fighting took place, they tell a story that has been written by the deceased - of where they travelled to, where they fought, and where they died. Those who visit cemeteries will react to the presence of the dead, there is "an emotional, social and cultural effect" (Sørensen, 2009, p. 130). With Lacquer (1994, p. 161) too exploring this, suggesting that it is not actually the dead, buried beneath the ground, out of view, who give meaning and presence to memory. It is instead the headstones, a key feature of cemeteries, that assume the role of keeping actual memory alive.

By visiting the First World War cemeteries of Belgium and France and potentially taking part in commemorative activities, the significance of 'place' is crucial. Acts of remembrance for the dead and missing do indeed happen in visitor's home nations, but they offer a very different experience when compared to those that take place on the former Western Front. By being present at the place where the war dead are, a co-presence is established, a sense of being there with them. Hence, the feeling of CWGC cemeteries as sacred places. Something Duncan (1995, p. 20) makes reference to in describing military cemeteries as a "marked off, 'liminal' zone of time and space in which visitors, removed from the concerns of their daily, practical lives, open themselves to a different quality of experience".

Perhaps, the perception of the military cemetery is drawn from our own interactions and experiences of cemeteries from our day to day lives. Places of sadness, grief, and despair that we have come to associate with reverence and ritualistic traditions, where certain standards of behaviour and etiquette are expected. Places that are deserving of our respect for the "sacredness, cultural significance, social support, heritage, and commemorative values" they offer (Bachelor, 2007, p. 413). With some even regarding them as places through which they can connect with the war dead, through "a commonly held belief that the deceased are 'still there', and that they can somehow hear or see the activities of the visitors" (Francis, Kellaher, & Neophytou, 2000, p. 44).

4.2.3 Subtheme three: Duality of war and commemoration of the dead

As part of the battlefield tour, particular emphasis was placed on ensuring the duality of war was appropriately conveyed to participants. This was undoubtedly boosted by the fact that the battlefield tour was, in-part, put together by a European tour company and assisting me in the role of associate guides were two German historians who were in a position to offer insightful commentary that was both a contrast and complement to the more standard Commonwealth narrative. As such, there was no intentional jingoism or triumphalism within the design of the itinerary; instead, there was an honest attempt to tell the story of what had happened at the places being visited as fairly and as accurately as possible. Meaning that at all the locations visited the accounts of all nations were told (where possible) and perhaps nowhere was this more

impactful for participants than when Anglo-German accounts were compared and analysed at Langemark German Military Cemetery (appendix seven).

At Langemark German Military Cemetery, participants found the architecture of the location to be in direct contrast to the CWGC locations they were visiting, and this generated a significant amount of reflection. Ben (S3) in his diary wrote *"...but Langemark had an impact on me because it was a German cemetery and it wasn't as glamorous, or as beautiful as the British, French and Canadian cemeteries; but the German cemetery meant a lot more, each detail had a reason for being there".* A point similarly made by Chloe (S5) during the post-tour interview when she stated *"the British graves are so well kept and nice to look at, but the German ones are different – but I now realise this is a preference of German people who prefer their graves to be kept differently".* In fact, this sentiment was widely shared by participants who initially felt a level of sorrow for German casualties upon visiting Langemark, but after learning about cultural (and historical) differences with regards to Anglo-German commemoration, their attitudes changed. As stated by Holly (S4) in her diary when she wrote "*at the German war graves, I felt sad. The British graves are so well kept and nice to look at, but the German ones are not as well kept – but I now realise this is a preference of German people who prefer their graves to be kept differently".* Also, Angelina (S5) in her diary who wrote *"in Langemark, I felt happy knowing that German soldiers from the war were still being treated with respect and dignity, with a unique, yet equally caring cemetery and memorial"* and Charlie (S5) who commented in her diary that *"I felt sad and almost angry at the sight of how different the cemetery was. I originally thought it was disrespectful towards them [Germans] and thought that wasn't fair. However, I soon learned that the cemetery is actually meaningful to Germans and in fact very sentimental, which completely changed the mood I felt. With an understanding of different views and beliefs, the cemetery seemed more beautiful and peaceful once I understood".*

So significant was the reflection of certain participants, that there was a questioning of traditional practices with regards to the commemoration of Commonwealth war dead and missing. Lucy (S5), in her diary wrote *"when visiting Essex Farm, I got an*

overwhelming feeling of uncertainty towards the cemetery. To me, it was much more of a public attraction, rather than a place to mourn… I found the German graveyard really upsetting, but in another way, also nice. I thought that the German graveyards were much more personal, and more of a place that I would want to go to mourn, rather than a British graveyard. I felt as though the Brits main focus was to create a tourist attraction and focused more on the people who came to visit, rather than those who they were burying". Without a doubt, the design of Langemark Cemetery did not happen by accident, its architecture and layout were guided by principles of 'simplicity' and 'uniformity'. With its inception inspired by the trench camaraderie that had been experienced by those who are now at rest within its boundary walls. A camaraderie that fostered a community spirit placing soldiers from all walks of life on an equal-footing; even after death. At the time of Langemark's construction, Karl Heicke (Secretary for Gartenkunst), when referring to the German war dead made his feelings clear that anything other than a "unified closeness of warrior graves" would contradict the whole essence of the army and of the war itself (Ebbinghaus, 1918, p. 81). A point made similarly by Storck (1915, p. 331) when he wrote, "here to rest are all of the same value. There are no longer any differences in rank here. Every individual has become equally valuable through his sacrifice, and the highest and most beautiful thing they had was comradeship".

Langemark, was for many of the young people, an exercise in comparison and reflection as the location challenged previously held perceptions about how casualties of war can and should be commemorated. Angelina (S5) remarked in her diary that *"at Langemark, I felt happy knowing that German soldiers from the war were still being treated with respect and dignity, with a unique, yet equally caring cemetery and memorial"*. While Ciara (S5) stated that *"there was a clear difference between the different memorials, as the CWGC ones were white and colourful with flowers and the German memorial was dark"*, along with Linzi (S5) who wrote similarly in her diary that, *"at the German cemetery, my first thought was this is dull. It was dark and gloomy. I always thought this was because they were "bad", but* [redacted] *reassured us that this is not the case and it changed my perspective a lot. The headstones were black*

and dark, this seemed strange after seeing bright, clean and white graves with flowers at CWGC cemeteries".

Figure 14

Comrades' grave at Langemark Cemetery

Note: By P. Hamilton, June 2018

4.2.4 Summary of theme one

Theme one reveals that for some of the participants of this research, there was, for them, an experience that provoked a sense of vicarious connection towards those who served in the First World War, feelings as if the participants were somehow reliving the experiences of others. Diaries and interviews also revealed that participants sought to relate and empathise with the past, often feeling a personal connection to the soldiers they were learning about. Furthermore, visits to certain locations were regarded, by many of the participants, as both significant and honorific, akin to modern-day pilgrimages.

Theme one further tells us that the emotions experienced by young people during visits to sites of remembrance and commemoration on the former Western Front are varied and complex. Undoubtedly prompted by the experience of being there - where history

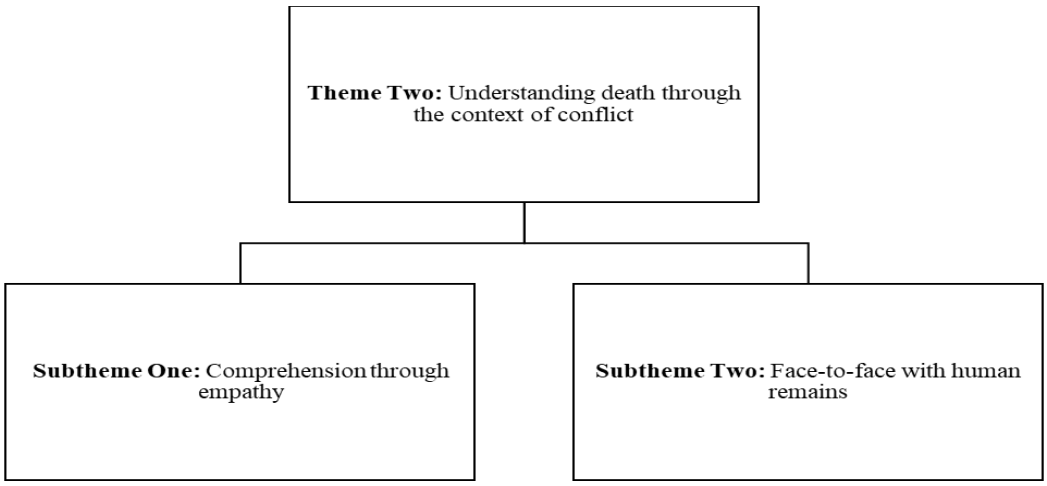
happened - on the former Western Front; with participants discussing feelings of sadness, of being overwhelmed, as well as gratitude for the opportunity to visit places that they seem to regard as being of historical significance, thus highlighting the transformative and emotional impact of visiting former sites of historical conflict, places where the gap can be bridged between historical knowledge and visceral understanding.

4.3 Theme two: Understanding death through the context of conflict

Throughout the battlefield tour, participants were repeatedly exposed to instances of death resulting from conflict. In understanding and reflecting upon death as an outcome of war, participants expressed feeling of both empathy and sympathy for those who lost their lives.

Figure 15

Theme two and subthemes (after thematic analysis)



4.3.1 Subtheme one: Comprehension through empathy

In their diaries and during interviews, participants reflected in a manner that was empathetic. This empathy was often as a result of similarities they identified with their own selves, for example while visiting the grave of Valentine Strudwick at Essex Farm

Cemetery (a fifteen-year-old soldier killed in action) there were multiple instances of participants identifying with the loss of a teenage life. Angelina (S5) in her diary wrote that *"seeing the grave of Valentine Strudwick made me feel rather sad due to his death at such a young age – only a year younger than I am; as well as feeling sympathetic to the grief of his Mother"* and Chloe (S5) commented in her diary that *"it was also upsetting to see the grave of a young boy as it felt more personal as he was younger than me"*. Chloe (S4), in her diary remarked "*another time it was emotional was at Valentine's grave, as I got to live longer than this boy"* while Emily (S6) wrote that *"there was a grave at Essex farm of a boy named Valentine Strudwick who died at the age of fifteen. The story of how he went against his Mother's wishes by joining the army, even though she didn't want him to, made me think about how short and cruel life really is*". Interestingly, there were also observations from participants who were concerned with the nature of popular commemoration at Valentine's grave. In her diary, Holly (S3) wrote that *"I felt kind of sad and angry, because so many people visited Valentine Strudwick and left gifts, crosses, money and teddies. It was the most visited in the whole cemetery which isn't really fair, because every other person in the cemetery fought for their country and they weren't being treated like that. Also, Valentine joined the war to be like every other man and is treated differently because of his age"*.

Difficulties in understanding the loss of life associated with the First World War were a feature of both participant diaries and interviews. Charlie (S5), after visiting locations concerned with the Battle of the Somme wrote in her diary that *"I found the whole day emotional and hard-hitting as hearing the numbers of the fallen in the classroom is hard to comprehend, but seeing all of the graves and names on the memorials and seeing how many cemeteries there are just put into perspective the vast amount of bloodshed. At the end of the night, I sobbed like a baby because seeing the number of names and headstones broke my heart"*. Ben (S3), also mentioned difficulties with comprehension whilst being interviewed stating that *"especially when we were visiting the sites where people had died and knowing that someone's remains were below you. Not just because I was in a graveyard or a cemetery, but because someone had been killed. Every single one of those people that you are walking*

amongst were killed; and whether that be British or German, it is knowing that they had been killed not because they hated each other, but because their governments had fallen out. They were not enemies; they were men fighting each other in a war". Emily (S6), in her diary remarked that "*every cemetery we visited triggered anger and sadness. I felt angry because all I could see from war was death and pain",* while Kai (S5) commented that *"the cemeteries and monuments opened my eyes to the vast amount of death and made me think about why it all happened"* and Linzi (S5) wrote that while *"at the Thiepval Memorial, it made me feel stunned, I couldn't believe just how many names were on the memorial. It didn't feel real, I can't comprehend how many soldiers had died".*

Figure 16

Tyne Cot CWGC Cemetery

Note: By P. Hamilton, June 2018

While on their battlefield tour, participants attended commemorative activities including the Menin Gate for the Last Post Ceremony. Their reflections after this ceremony were insightful in terms of their attitudes to mortality. In her diary, Jodie (S4) wrote that *"it was hard to hold back the tears, it made me think of home and to be grateful for what I have; because it is easy for things to change and life might not be as long as people think".* Linzi (S5), in her diary, commented that *"once it started and the bagpipes started playing, shivers went through my body. The feeling was*

powerful in every way. I felt the tears in my eyes as people went up to put remembrance wreaths at the stairs. It was emotional and powerful at the same time. My body was still. I couldn't think about anything else but the names on the wall. I couldn't stop looking. This was a very important moment in my life and I am happy I got to see this".

While visiting CWGC locations, time was allocated for participants to explore the cemetery or memorial at their own pace: allowing participants the freedom to consider the significance of where they were and to generate their own thoughts and questions. After visiting Le Touret Cemetery and Memorial, Lucy (S5) wrote that *"we wandered through the cemetery, where I found the grave of Walter Brown, a Royal Engineer who died on 11th January 1915, aged 28. Engraved on his headstone was "he now lays with his comrades; brave love is strong and will never leave him". Reading personal messages on headstones helps me create a picture image of who this person was, and especially helps me imagine the impact the soldier's death had on those they left behind. When reading the messages, I often imagine a grieving mother or girlfriend who personally wrote it for them".* Also, after visiting Le Touret Cemetery and Memorial, Linzi (S5) wrote in her diary *"the cemetery was very peaceful, but seeing "known unto god" on so many headstones made me feel heartbroken. It made me realise that some soldiers' families will not ever be able to visit them, which seems so unfair. Everybody should have their name on their grave".* While, Shannon (S5) after visiting Y Ravine Cemetery and contemplating those commemorated there remarked in her diary that *"I walked around reading every single name I could while the sun hit my face, the air seemed so peaceful, but as I read the names of the individuals, I was deeply saddened trying to fathom how they spent their last moments, how can I possibly imagine the chaos they were experiencing, while where I stand everything is so quiet and peaceful. Nothing like their last moments would have been. It then saddened me more when it dawned on me that I could be reading the name of a soldier with a mother, sister, daughter who never had the opportunity to visit and say their final goodbyes to their loved one".*

Personal stories played a prominent role on the battlefield tour, and it was no surprise that participants reflected about the actions of individuals who had experiences at locations they were visiting. One such example was the experience of Eric Rupert Heaton who was injured and killed in the area of Beaumont-Hamel, and in particular the letter (28 June 1916) he wrote to his parents (prior to his death):

> I am writing this on the eve of my first action. Tomorrow we go to the attack in the greatest battle the British Army has ever fought. I cannot quite express my feelings on this night and I cannot tell you if it's God's will that I should come through, but if I fall in battle then I have no regrets save for my loved ones I leave behind. It is a great cause and I came out willingly to serve my king and country. My greatest concern is that I may not have the courage and determination to lead my platoon well. No one had such parents as you have been to me, giving me such splendid opportunities and always thinking of my welfare at great sacrifice to yourselves. My life has been full of faults, but I have tried at all times to live as a man and thus follow the example of my father. How have I learnt to love my men; my great aim has been to win their respect which I trust I have accomplished and hope that when the time comes, I shall not fail them. If I fall, do not let things be black for you, be cheerful and then you will be living then always to my memory.

Chloe (S4) in her diary wrote that *"the acceptance of Heaton in thinking he may never return to his family: his words impacted me a lot as he thanked them for the life he had, that it was amazing, and they gave him what he needed. He also told them that if he doesn't return, don't be upset, but to celebrate his life"*.

As with previous subthemes, this subtheme also has a delineated key area identified as requiring consideration. Within this subtheme, 'comprehension through empathy', death and age as a single discussion point is recognised as being a relevant key area, with the continued aim of adding depth and providing for a more comprehensive discussion of the subtheme:

Death and age:

At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was common for parents to give names to their children that were a reflection of nationalism. In fact, between five and ten percent of all children born in the United Kingdom during 1900 were given names associated in one way or another with the Boer War (Emden, 2021, p. 2). In doing so it seems that adult patriotism was able to filter its way downwards to children, with school headmasters even ensuring that notable dates in British military history were earmarked for children to dutifully stand in silent respect of Waterloo and the defence of Rorke's Drift (Emden, 2021, p. 3). Coupled with the frequent adornment of school walls with portraits of commanders, explorers and adventurers that contributed to the perception of duty, service and death as something that is glorious.

Furthermore, following the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, her birthday [24 May] that had already been celebrated as a public holiday went on to become Empire Day. A day that was pitched as a showcase for all the country's achievements, observed in schools across the United Kingdom, with children participating in parades, displaying banners, all to the sound of brass bands and rousing patriotic speeches. In a society where military service, the monarchy, and religion were so entwined, it is therefore not at all surprising that in so many children there was a difficult to suppress sense of duty and a longing for adventure. Perhaps exacerbated through their membership of organisations such as Boy's Brigade and the Scouts. Learning about self-reliance, cooperation and discipline, learning routines and drills, and being awarded badges and medals certainly had comparisons with military life (Emden, 2021):

> They were taught to march, wave banners, and win medals. They were taught camping, signalling, tracking; they learnt first aid, morse code and semaphore. In camp they frequently slept in bell tents and deployed sentries; they built fires and cooked, and in the evening, they sang songs. (p. 4).

So, with the benefit of hindsight, how should history teachers discuss the matter of underage soldiers in the First World War? Should they teach it as an exploitation of

vulnerable young people or simply that it was the performance of some kind of patriotic duty? We know full well that propaganda was used to encourage young men to enlist, depicting them as heroes, [perhaps] willing to lay down their lives for their country; with Brittain (1933) writing about "the procession of young men… going to enlist in the British Army… so familiar a sight to us all" (p. 91). Yet, what about the trauma of war? Were these boys emotionally capable of coping with what they saw and heard at the 'front line', an environment where they were exposed to the uncensored brutalities of conflict; with some undoubtedly suffering from physical as well as mental injury, including PTSD, and yet they all of them still being expected to maintain discipline and carry out their service diligently. An issue that seems to be slightly addressed and/or realised in the decades after the First World War when there is an "enormous increase in the number of war books after 1914… [indicative of] an acute need for reassurance and explanation" (Fussell, 1975, p. 5); suggestive of a desire for reassurance and understanding surrounding the underlying anxieties and uncertainties of wartime recruitment and participation between 1914-1918.

So, did boyhood cease to be? Or was it that the transition to adulthood became lost amidst the chaos of war? I would argue, it is neither of these. The reality is, in part, perpetuated in the rhetoric of military senior officials that were hellbent on boosting numbers of recruits for what was an ever-escalating conflict. Despite the fact that from 1875 it had become a legal requirement to register a birth in Britain, meaning that the army had "to permit a little creativity where birth dates were concerned" (Holmes, 2012, p. 273); something that this recorded exchange of when George Coppard enlisted in the Queen's Royal Regiment in 1914 at the age of sixteen years old displays:

> I presented myself to the recruiting sergeant at Mitcham Road Barracks, Croydon. There was a steady stream of men, mostly working-types, queuing to enlist. The sergeant asked me my age, and when told, replied 'clear off, son. Come back tomorrow and see if you're nineteen, eh? So, I turned up again the next day and gave my age as nineteen. I attested in a batch of a dozen others and, holding up my right hand, swore to fight for King and Country. The sergeant

> winked as he gave me the King's shilling, plus one shilling and ninepence ration money for that day. (Holmes, 2012, p. 278)

Our view of the time is what seems to shape the narrative though. As with many aspects of the First World War there is a resounding rhetoric about what happened that is, generally speaking, perhaps different from what actually happened. Including, a desire to judge those from the past, in particular the officer class of the First World War who are all too often reduced to the caricature of unsympathetic, foolhardy men, more intent on winning the war than the wellbeing of the troops they commanded - "in the hard fighting of the autumn [1916], soldiers had begun to regard the officer class with a detachment born of long familiarity. They criticised the conduct of officers with unaccustomed freedom" (Graves, 1929, p. 186). And somewhere in amongst all of this are the young boys who are perhaps regarded by some as folly, poor innocent children who were manipulated and fooled into participating in a war that they were never ready for. Yet, that is not the story of the time. The motivations for joining the army at that time would have been no different whether you were fifteen or nineteen; with Putkowski and Sykes (1960) referring to the vast number of underage recruits by saying "the scale of the problem was huge" (p. 67). So, maybe, the discussion in the present day should be about capacity and legacy and less about motivation and circumstance. Did a boy under the age of eighteen in 1914 have the capacity to know what he was doing when he was joining up? And what should the legacy of these boy soldiers be? Should it be teddy bears and toys left at headstones, remembered as children who had their adulthood taken from them? A contentious matter of opinion, possibly.

4.3.2 Subtheme two: Face-to-face with human remains

It should never be forgotten that in walking the former battlefields of the Western Front, participants walk above, close to, and beside a never-ending source of lost memory. Beneath the ground, those who died are buried where they fell, near to where they fell, or in many cases scattered violently as unidentifiable remains. This, despite the fact that in the years following the cessation of conflict (post-1918) there was a considerable attempt by the British Army to seek out single graves and makeshift

battlefield cemeteries through a process referred to as 'concentration'. When discovered, graves were exhumed, remains examined and an effort at identification was made before reburial in newly constructed Imperial War Grave cemeteries - arguably one of the first attempts at forensic archaeology for humanitarian purposes (Martin, 2020). In fact, where a person was during the final moments of their life during the First World War would inevitably dictate the nature of their burial (Taylor, 2015). Whether killed in a location held by their own sides, by the enemy or in 'no-man's land', geographical factors gave rise to difficult decisions between compassion and necessity. Those killed in friendly territory were typically buried in graves that were marked and recorded (Longworth, 1985), but for those killed on the battlefield this was not always possible, meaning that many were buried in shallow graves and in crater holes, usually alongside other bodies (Hanson, 2011). Or in some instances, not buried at all.

As part of this tour, participants visited Dig Hill 80 (appendix eight), an excavation of a former German strongpoint. The visit was unique, as whilst there the participants were given the opportunity to witness the work being carried out to recover bodies from a comrades' grave (*Kameradengrab*); an experience that was very different from anything else they had seen or heard while visiting the Ypres Salient or Somme battlefields. Notable in this chapter though is the use of the term comrades grave and not mass grave - a deliberate decision on my part. There is, I am sure, an argument to be made about the interchangeability of these terms; no doubt manifested largely by aspects of Anglo-German culture and respective considerations of each nation's war dead. Further complicated by the many conflicting definitions around mass graves, typified usually by the composition of the grave (number of bodies contained) and the motivation for the grave; in other words, why the grave was actually required. With Mant (1987) claiming that for a grave to be classified as a mass grave it need only contain a minimum of two bodies, but they must in some way be in contact with one another and Skinner (1987) suggesting that a mass grave is simply any single burial unit containing at least six tightly-packed (indiscriminately placed) bodies. A ghoulish prospect perhaps, but one still encountered in modern times, particularly in the aftermath of disastrous events where significance is placed upon identification of the

dead, mainly for reasons of compassion and legality though (Buck & Briggs, 2016). Yet, the desire to identify the dead was no less strong a century ago after the First World War when units charged with exhumation duties repeatedly made arduous attempts to identify human remains, mainly through examinations of the neck and wrists for braces or identity discs; with, of course, present-day methods of fingerprint, DNA or dental analysis not at their disposal.

In her diary, Angelina (S5) wrote that *"I was rather overwhelmed after seeing the grave at Hill 80, it was quite shocking yet somewhat unreal in my mind to see the skeletal remains of men who were once living healthy people"*, and in her diary, Charlie (S5) commented that *"seeing the skeletons at Dig Hill 80 was surreal and hard to process. I never cried because it never really hit me what I was seeing until afterwards. It was emotional and moving – a feeling hard to explain"*. This feeling of not quite being able to comprehend what was in front of them was a common feature in participant reflections, with Chloe (S5) commenting during her interview that "*I feel shocked, it was such a surreal thing to see. It is still hard to put into words how it made me feel. I do not regret entering the tent, it is just hard to process what I saw. It was the first time I had ever seen a dead body"* and in her diary when she stated *"at the end of the visit we were shown human remains from a grave that had been found. I was taken aback by this and found it extremely difficult to take in and process what I was seeing. All week we had seen cemeteries and memorials for those who died, but actually seeing real people who were there was heart-breaking. I thought about each person and the journey they experienced and the trauma that their family and friends at home would have experienced. It made me feel grateful for what I have and grateful to those who fought in the war. I will never forget what I saw today, it will stay with me for the rest of my life"*.

The nature of death was also of significance to participants with comments considering the brutality that the German soldiers may have been exposed to prior to their demise. Chloe (S4) remarked in her diary that *"while at Hill 80, it was sad to see the expressions the men had on their faces when they died. You felt their pain"*, and Emily (S4) wrote that *"it was emotional at Dig Hill 80 seeing the skeletons and how much*

trauma they had been through". Emily (S6) commented that *"seeing the skeletal remains gave an insight to the tragedy of war and the cost that war has on human lives. The battered bodies made it clear that these soldiers had a painful end to life – which was heart-breaking"* and Olivia (S3) stating *"I was surprised when I saw the dead bodies. I was not expecting it and I don't know why, because I was told there were bodies, but I was still shocked. I didn't have words because I was really sad to see their skulls smashed and their bones snapped"*.

The experience of being present at such a sensitive stage of an archaeological dig was, as already mentioned, unique, eliciting thoughts from participants that were reflective in nature. Ciara (S5) in her diary wrote that *"Hill 80 made me think about life in a different perspective, to stop moaning and complaining about pointless things in life. I think it has matured me as a person. I was overwhelmed to begin with when entering the tent, however when I thought about those soldiers being buried with their comrades and how they have now been discovered, it made me happy. It was an experience that will remain with me, and I will never forget it"*. While Linzi (S6) in her diary commented that *"I don't know where to begin talking about this. The grave which was being excavated, I will never forget. It will stay with me until the day I die. The emotions I felt were stronger than anything I have ever felt and will ever feel. As I walked into the tent, a shower of sadness and anger took over me. What I saw in front of my eyes made this real. Yes, we can think about it, but seeing it, this makes everything a reality. As I looked below me, I saw a skull facing me. The teeth were still intact. The first thing I thought was, this is somebody's relative. This was somebody's family. I saw the teeth and all I could think was this was somebody's smile. This is what they showed during laughter and special moments in their life. This is them. Put war aside just now, this is purely them and they would have smiled during happy times. Their smile defines them. Not where they are laying just now. Their smiles may be the only thing their families would have remembered, and would have cherished these moments. I couldn't help but think that when looking at their teeth, all of the memories that would have been good for them. This really impacted me. I know I remember the smiles and laughs from my past relatives, and their smile will be what their family would have remembered"*. In her diary, Shannon (S5) was similar in her level of

thinking when she stated *"however, something I have never seen or experienced before, which completely flooded me with emotion and made me think was actually seeing the remains of German soldiers still in the ground. Standing over them, looking at them was surreal. How can I be standing looking at the remains of men who were actually buried there after their death in the First World War over 100 years ago. Someone's son, father, husband or brother never got to know where they fell and say their final goodbyes. Yet here I am standing looking at them. In the same position they lay over 100 years ago, injured and wounded with broken bones, some broken skulls. The position of them still intact, buttons still lying in the same position they would have been, but on a uniform. There are absolutely no words to describe it, no one will ever understand, no matter how much I try. It is something I will never forget. These are men I wondered what they were doing in their last moments, how did they die? I looked at the teeth, what was the last thing they ate, or last time they smiled? I will never know. No one will"*.

Kai (S5), commented in his diary that "*...seeing those remains side by side was something else. Looking down towards my feet, I saw the skull. A skull of a man who had been put in there and left. Seeing the way the eyeless skull looks at you affected me in a way I did not think would have happened. Thinking over the days and hours, that could have been me one hundred years ago, gets to you*". A further example of a participant empathising in a manner that was sympathetic as they contemplated their existence (and fate) had they been born during an alternative period of history. Michael (S6) wrote in his diary that "*the fact it was a mass grave with the bodies piled and nameless, you could see the injuries. It was not a nice thing to see. It highlighted the true horror of the war and it had a big impact on me. After seeing the grave, I was a different person, I had never seen human remains before. Knowing that their deaths were horrific and they were probably not medically assisted had a big impact on me. I don't regret seeing it though, it was something I had to see for myself. If I had seen that in a photo it would not have had the same effect on me. Being where those soldiers had their last moments was meaningful*".

Figure 17

Skeletal remains, image (1)

Note: Image with permission of Ruben Willaert Archaeology (appendix fourteen)

Did I do the right thing?

Never in my life did I think I would ever have to make a decision as to whether I should allow school pupils to be there as human skeletal remains were being excavated from the ground. And why would I? Even years later, typing this, it still feels implausible. Not because death and dead bodies are taboo, not that at all, but because this was in no way a typical situation for a history teacher.

The plan had always been that the pupils would visit Dig Hill 80 on the final afternoon of their tour before travelling to Zeebruge for the overnight ferry to Hull. The opportunity for school pupils to visit the dig site was a unique one. Thanks, in part, to the fact I knew many of those involved in the management of the project, not to mention the networks facilitated by the tour provider. All in all, it was set to be an exciting and interesting end to the tour for both pupils and staff. A rare opportunity to see First World War archaeology in action. So, what actually happened?

Figure 18

Skeletal remains, image (2)

Note: Image with permission of Ruben Willaert Archaeology (appendix fourteen)

On the evening of arrival in Belgium I received a phone call from the chief historian of the project, a call that was in-part to finalise plans for the upcoming visit by the young people in a few days, but also to inform me of the recent excavation work that had been taking place. That work being the discovery and subsequent recovery of a number of bodies in one concentrated section of the dig-site. The bodies of German soldiers, who as the fighting of the time necessitated, had been buried together in one large singular grave. And then to ask me whether I wished for the pupils to see this work in-progress, therefore placing them in close proximity to the skeletal remains as the archaeological work was in progress.

To say I was hesitant in my instant response would be an understatement. A multitude of thoughts were springing to mind. Can I do this? Is it ethical? Will it inflict psychological damage? What would their parents think? Will it jeopardise my research? The questions kept coming and it seemed, in the moment, as if there were no easy answers. But I did have to make a decision and time was against me with the visit to the site taking place in two days. To help me reach a decision though, I was

grateful to be invited to see the excavation for myself that evening [without the young people]. Due to the fact it was located not far from the accommodation, I was able to visit with a fellow teacher, with the other teachers remaining behind to supervise the young people. Having another teacher with me was invaluable, whether I realised it or not at the time, having a colleague with me to voice their opinion and collaborate with me on this decision was incredibly helpful.

Upon arriving at the site that evening I was informed that the work to recover the remains was taking place within a large tent and was therefore concealed from view; meaning that should I have decided that the young people were not to see the excavation of the bodies, then this would have been entirely possible. Prior to entering the tent, I was and was not sure what to expect. I am, after all, a historian with a strong interest in conflict history and death in the context of war is not something that is alien to me. But it does not mean that I am immune to shock, empathy, or feeling either.

When I entered the tent, there they were. A number of skeletal remains, visible both above and through the soil. Clustered together, somewhat unceremoniously, perhaps in haste, not in neat rows or in any kind of organised manner. My thoughts immediately took me to the ferocity of conflict and the manner in which these soldiers were buried. Was it that they were buried by others in peril, mindful of their own mortalities, or by those who were numbed by their experiences of death? Fellow soldiers who viewed burial not through a lens of dignity and ceremony, but as an inevitable process, part of their war experience, one that had to be done repeatedly, efficiently and with more regard for practicality than for reverence.

Figure 19

Skeletal remains, image (3)

Note: Image with permission of Ruben Willaert Archaeology (appendix fourteen)

Regardless, there they were, in situ for over a century, clearly identifiable as German soldiers due to the non-degradable objects that surrounded them - including a pickelhaube that raised a few questions for the on-site archaeologists and

historians. This was because it was not easily attributable to the regiment of soldiers supposed to be buried there. With further investigation revealing that it belonged to a soldier who was assisting with the burial of the bodies; their hat falling into the grave and their understandable unwillingness to retrieve it. The condition of the skeletons was varied, with some having what appeared to be some traumatic, life-ending injuries and others with little visible damage. Leaving me with questions about the manner of their deaths. Was it quick? Did they suffer? Questions, I thought at the time, and still feel were completely natural given the situation I was in.

I had to think about what I was seeing and what I was being told - how did it make me feel? I knew I was not traumatised, far from it. If anything, I felt humbled. Here were former-living soldiers who as a result of this archaeological excavation would be put to rest in perpetuity with their comrades at a German military cemetery. Through forensic and anthropological examination, their identities might also be revealed and their descendants, if they existed, would have a place to pay their respects. Important to state is that nothing about what I was seeing felt gruesome or horrific, this was not the immediate aftermath of injury and death, nowhere were there ghastly sights, smells, or sounds. Instead, the experience felt solemn. In the moment, there was almost a lack of words on my part, the same way a person may feel when they visit a place of religious or cultural significance. For me, it felt visceral, as if I had to consider carefully where I was, what I was witness to, and what this would mean for the young people on the battlefield tour should they experience this too.

I returned to the accommodation that evening along with the teacher who had accompanied me and inevitably on the journey back we discussed whether it was appropriate for the pupils to enter the tent and see the excavation for themselves in a few days. My feeling was, and remained, that it would be appropriate, but I wanted to speak with all of the staff members together and gather their thoughts and opinions. And that is exactly what happened. Round a table, later that evening, myself and the colleague who visited too, explained in detail where we had been, what we had seen and perhaps most importantly, how it made us feel. The resulting unanimous decision was that it would be appropriate for the young people to enter the tent, meet

with the archaeologists and see for themselves the remains as they were being recovered. But there were questions about the lead-up to the visit. For example, should the pupils be informed prior to the day of the visit? Should the information be withheld until the day of the visit? And when telling them about it, how would I explain it to them?

For me, it felt obvious not to tell them anything about the excavation work until the day of the visit. My belief was that if I told them that in a few days they would be witness to the excavation of human remains then that would have a detrimental impact on the tour itself. My concern was that if they were given that information then they might perhaps dwell on it and in doing so potentially detract from the experiences of other places to be visited. Also, to what extent might the power of imagination and hyperbole have been a factor? I absolutely did not want exaggerated images running through their heads, potentially giving rise to fear and apprehension.

I therefore waited until the morning of arrival at Dig Hill 80. Using the PA system on the coach, I was concise, truthful and honest in what I said. Informing the pupils that there had been a recent discovery of German skeletal remains in one concentrated area of the site and that excavation work was now ongoing for eventual reburial at a German military cemetery. I further informed them that this archaeological work was taking place within a large tent and as such was concealed from public view. Lastly, telling them that they had been invited to enter the tent should they wish to do so, but the decision was theirs and theirs alone.

Did I get it right? I believe I did. Nothing about the experience of the participants at Dig Hill 80 was horrifying or trauma-inducing in my opinion. That is not to say it was not upsetting however, of course [for some] it was. But I maintain and I am sure I always will, that in the context of a battlefield tour, in the midst of the centenary period and with such a focus on cross-border reconciliation and friendship, that morning [there in that tent] was about as powerful an experience a history teacher could ever wish for.

4.3.3 Summary of theme two

In reviewing theme two, the participants of this research appeared to display strong feelings of empathy towards those who had lost their lives in conflict. Many of the participants expressed sadness and sympathy, reflecting on the brevity and cruelty of life. Some were also concerned about the differential attention given to some of the deceased compared to others, noting that all soldiers deserved equal recognition.

Understanding the scale of loss in the First World War also posed considerable challenges for participants, as strong emotions were clearly evoked during visits to certain locations, with participants, at times, struggling to comprehend the vast number of casualties; prompting an introspection of mortality that was underscored by a gratitude for life and a recognition of the fragility of existence.

Finally, the participants experience of being present during the excavation of human remains at Dig Hill 80 resulted in considerable reflection. The experience, as described by some participants, was regarded as unique and transformative, with perspectives on life clearly considered. There was, for some, feelings of sadness, despair, and anger while strong feelings of connectedness with the remains was also apparent - a perceived sense of humanity that compelled participants to reconsider history, mortality, and the significance of what it means to be present at such moments.

4.4 A local story

The decision whether or not to include this section was one I made fairly late on in the writing-up process; I always knew that the information herein had strong relevance to the research conducted, but I was not always entirely sure how best to structure it within the overall schematic of the thesis - meaning its inclusion was for some time open to debate. However, to not include this section, I decided, would be omitting information/analysis that by its very nature afforded additional context to the experiences of participants on this particular battlefield tour.

In this section, I will frequently refer to a soldier. A soldier who was once a pupil at the same school attended by the participants in this study. However, in order to maintain the confidentiality of participants, the soldier will not be referred to by name, and instead only as an abbreviation (JHP).

In the months leading up to the battlefield tour, many of the participants were already familiar with the biography of JHP (appendix nine) through research they had conducted in class as part of their preparations for the visit. As such, for some of the participants there was a certain level of expectation/anticipation that they should, in acknowledgement of their research efforts, be afforded an opportunity to visit JHP's grave at some point during the battlefield tour. This request was understandably granted, and in truth had already been planned as an integral part of the tour. As such, participants visited Ypres Reservoir Cemetery during the late evening of their final full day, having just attended the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate. While at the cemetery the pupils were asked to gather around the headstone of JHP where his image was shown and his story told. Volunteers from within the participant group then took turns to recite several pieces of poetry, before a minute of silence and time for them to reflect/contemplate. For various reasons outlined in this section, the experience of many of the participants at JHP's grave was a cathartic one - *"everyone was emotional and nearly everyone cried*", Lisa (S4). Visiting JHP's grave towards the end of the tour meant that there was an emphasis on the participants to try and comprehend all that they had experienced during the previous few days; the places, the people, and the stories - perhaps learning about JHP's experiences at his graveside, more than anything else, afforded them the opportunity to make links with their own lives, those of their families, and also of their home community.

Chloe (S5) wrote in her diary that "*...we visited the grave of a former pupil… This visit was extremely emotional, and it felt so personal as JHP had gone to the same school as us and JHP had gone on the same journey we did, but the difference was that we were able to come back, whereas JHP didn't. This visit really hit home because it was so close to home it made me realise that it could have been my friends or my brother*". And then during her interview, Chloe (S5) went on to say that, "*the evening of the*

Menin Gate Ceremony and visiting the grave of JHP; he went to our school and was just like us. It was special to visit because it was such a personal thing, focusing on one person who we have a connection with". While Charlie (S5) in her diary remarked that "*we visited JHP's grave where I said a poem and we laid a wreath. I cried so hard*" and Ciara (S5) commented that visiting the grave of JHP "*was very overwhelming*".

Chloe (S4) in considering the visit to the grave remarked that "*our tribute to JHP made me emotional, as he was even closer to home. A man I could relate to. A pupil and aspiring teacher. I wrote a thank you to a man I never met and told him I'd never forget"*. With similar sentiments from Faith (S4) who wrote, "*...it was emotional as it was about JHP, a man from our school. I felt so attached as if he was one of us"*, and also Kai (S5), who commented that "*he was one of us and what made it sad was that we got to go home and he didn't*". In fact, there was no shortage of empathetic thoughts of JHP that indicate the participants would liken him as being one of them with Emily (S4) commenting that "*we went to pay our respects to a former pupil. We laid a wreath to show we were thinking about him. This was an emotional experience because he was in reality one of u*s" and Holly (S4) writing that it was "*really sad when we visited JHP's memorial. Knowing that he went to our school and was from where we live was really sad to think about*". While Olivia (S4) reflected that "*thinking about JHP made me the most upset, because he was one of us and he gave his life so that we could live*" and during her interview after the tour, Holly (S4) stated that "*the most memorable part was visiting the grave of a former pupil. Knowing he walked the same streets as me really made me think about the war. It was so upsetting that he never got to return home*".

When reflecting more widely in her diary about JHP, Jodie (S4) remarked that, " *what really hit home for everyone, especially me, as I got quite upset, because I found it hard to believe that one day, he was doing a job that he loved, then the next minute he was in the war, to then be killed during the war. That makes me proud of him, because good people and innocent people came from there, and still do to this day*"; While Lucy (S5) wrote that "*something that made me feel sad, but in a weird way happy, was*

visiting JHP. It made me feel happy as we had been researching JHP for so long now. It came as such a closure to have learned so much detail about someone and to finally see his final resting place".

As she had done throughout the entirety of the tour, Shannon (S5) reflected upon the experience of visiting JHP's grave in considerable detail. "*To conclude the night and what completely changed everything for me was when we visited the cemetery where a former student at our school, JHP, lay after being killed during the war. While I looked down at the picture of him in my hand and looked at his grave, I just thought of this man, the man I am looking at, his fragile body lying beneath the grass I am standing on. Someone who left from the same town I did, saw the same things I did, walked the same streets I did, learned where I learned. "He is one of our own" ran from my ears straight to my heart. He is, he is one of us and he always will be. We were then reading a poem and while listening to the words, my throat started closing, started to hurt from trying to hold in the tears. Once the poem came to its end, we stood in silence remembering JHP and at that very moment the sun started to set, it beamed in between the buildings and hit us precisely where we stood. I felt no coincidence. He was there with us. The silence suddenly became not so silent. Now there wasn't even an effort in me to hold back the pain I felt. Tears left my eyes faster than I could try to stop them. I took a breath and sat down, I looked at the ground and the only thing on my mind was, if he is here, I wonder if he is proud. Proud that people from the school he once came to remember him and appreciate his bravery. Wondering if he could see us. I really hope so, I hope he is proud of himself."*

4.5 Summary

In this chapter and throughout this thesis, the research presented is through the lens of an educator rather than that of the historian. In exploring the themes of 'landscape (remembrance and commemoration)' and 'understanding death within the context of conflict' my aim has always been to better understand the practice of historical battlefield education, the pedagogy of teaching conflict and the impact that landscape has for young people who visit these locations.

Through consideration of both themes, it is clear, that for some participants, they found themselves at locations they regarded as being historically significant. For educators, there is insight and opportunity to be had in battlefield tours as the physical terrain is a powerful medium for conveying the stories of the past - a living, breathing testament to the stories and experiences of both individuals and nations; something that when coupled with the visceral exploration of the human experience of conflict can foster empathy and a profound appreciation for peace amongst young people.

In the next chapter, these themes will be further discussed, drawing upon both the literature reviewed and the data gathered from this research. In doing so, assessing what the educational impact of battlefield tours to the former Western Front are; how do they shape young people's understanding of history, their relationship with the landscape, and their perspectives on deaths that result from conflict.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

5.1 Chapter outline

The focus of this chapter is to present an overview that is linked to a consideration of future practice, presenting an eventual summary in two separate parts; with section 5.4 presenting findings that are drawn from the study, based on the data collected and the existing literature in relation to battlefield tourism and section 5.5 discussing the implications of this research.

5.2 Journey's end

"The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek". (Joseph Campbell, 1949)

The entire process of this EdD journey, from when it started to where I am now (at the time of writing this section), has taken a lot longer than I ever anticipated. When I started, it would be fair to say I was indeed the bright eyed and bushy tailed student - excited at the prospect of what lay ahead. Throughout the two-year initial taught stage of the EdD there were various incarnations of what I thought my research and eventual thesis might be; from examining holocaust education, uncomfortable histories, and at one point even the impact and changing nature of bereavement for young people - meaning that my ideas have shifted both slightly and significantly.

Many long hours and of course long days were spent writing this thesis, all the time absorbing the wisdom of those who have contributed so much that is relevant to both historical education and the pedagogy of teaching conflict, reminding me of Isaac Newton's quote, "if I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants" (1675, p. 374); and to be honest, that is exactly how I have felt at times. Through being able to engage in scholarly discourse, attend conferences, and collaborate with other researchers I have been able to build upon my existing knowledge whilst hopefully contributing to the collective understanding of the subject matter. Beyond the academic realm, this thesis journey has been an exercise in personal growth and

resilience. My family, friends, and supervisors have consistently provided invaluable support, underscoring the importance of social networks in fostering academic and personal well-being (Granovetter, 1973).

As I stand at the intersection of this chapter's conclusion and the path that lies ahead, I am also reminded of the words of T.S. Eliot (1943, p. 18), when he said, "what we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from". This thesis marks the end of a journey that has undoubtedly moulded me into a more confident and capable researcher, but it also signifies the beginning of new opportunities and endeavours in the pursuit of knowledge - with this thesis hopefully making a contribution to existing academic discourse.

5.3 Strengths and limitations

Embedded at the heart of academic research is an unwavering commitment to rigorous methodologies - methodologies that are capable of bestowing both credibility and reliability upon research findings; something that Booth, Colomb, and Williams discuss in The Craft of Research (2008) when they write that "a well-designed research project, conducted with appropriate care and diligence, will produce results that can be trusted" (p. 25). However, it is crucial to acknowledge that there is something of an intricate dance between objectivity and subjectivity in research. In conducting this research, I attempted, as previously set out in the methodology chapter, to construct my inquiry in such a way that it would be difficult for biases and limitations to inadvertently seep into either the design, data collection methods, analysis, or interpretation; whilst acknowledging that "objective assessment is possible, but the subjectivity of researchers always leaves room for error" (March, 1994, p. 108).

Important to mention also is that this academic research, like any other academic research, can encounter inherent limitations, particularly concerning the potential generalisability of what it discovers and subsequently claims. The interplay between context, cultural nuances, and the uniqueness of human experiences engenders

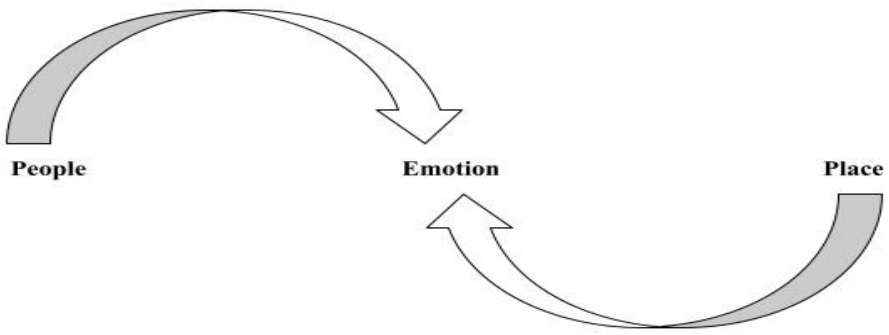
complexities that transcend universal applicability; meaning that I have always aimed to strike a delicate balance between creativity and rigour when interpreting findings (Eco, 1990); by contextualising the discoveries I have made in this research, I have attempted to discern the intricate web of factors that shape the phenomena under scrutiny - embracing the multidimensionality of the knowledge that is being produced.

5.4 Summary of findings

In visiting the former First World War battlefields of Belgium and France, young people experience an emotional response to past events through their imagination and visualisation of the conflict, whilst they process information about both 'people' and 'place'. It is 'people' and 'place' that are drivers of emotion for young people on battlefield tours. Being able to learn for themselves, and with others, about those who were involved in the First World War - discovering how tragic circumstances all too often resulted in loss of life, serious injury, or psychological suffering. The ability to empathise, make connections, and give a very real human face and voice can and does evoke an incredible amount of emotion in young people; something that would be far less likely to happen in the context of the history classroom. Coupled with the participants being in the very landscape where things not only happened, but where individuals are commemorated and memorialised. For the participants, the opportunity to step vicariously into the shoes of others, walk in their very footsteps, and pay respects at their final resting place was an incredibly emotive experience.

Figure 20

People, place, and emotion



Young people who visit the former First World War battlefields of Belgium and France are likely to experience a form of emotional dissonance in terms of how they interpret the landscape(s); catalysed, in part, by their existing historical knowledge and understanding of what happened [from classroom learning] and their response to exploring these locations in the present day as commemorative sites.

There is, on visits to the former First World War battlefields of Belgium and France, an opportunity to challenge preconceptions of conflict as often taught through popular narratives. As such, some young people will for the very first time find themselves considering the First World War not through a lens of nationhood, but instead as a mutual human experience.

When visiting the former First World War battlefields of Belgium and France, young people consider mortality through their comprehension of historical events at places where individuals are buried/commemorated. As such, many begin to consider mortality as it relates to them, their families and their friends - a considerable deal of thought/reflection about the loss of life through conflict takes place.

When young people were afforded the opportunity to witness the recovery of the dead from the First World War, the emotional impact for them was very apparent; their reaction to the excavation of human remains was not that they were aghast, but instead that they showed high levels of sympathy and sorrow towards the dead (and their loved ones).

In summary, this research suggests that battlefield tours to the former Western Front prompt both an imaginative and a very real response to historical events in young people, fostering an intricate interplay between both the past and the present; highlighting the disjunction, at times, between their comprehension of what happened and the juxtaposing contemporary landscape that surrounds them - influenced by their existing knowledge and preconceptions. Through contextualising the battlefields of the former Western Front as commemorative sites, this research further suggests that

there is, for educators, an opportunity to challenge conventional perceptions of conflict beyond existing popular narratives; because young people on battlefield tours are likely to shift from viewing the First World War from a nationalistic perspective to instead recognising it as a shared human experience.

For young people on battlefield tours, there is also, for those who participate, a contemplation of mortality, a deep introspection about loss and its resonance with their lives, families, and friends; an emotional impact that was compounded for the participants of this research when they were [unusually] witness to the recovery of First World War casualties at an archaeological dig. An experience that gave rise to feelings of sympathy and sorrow, further highlighting the profound emotional journey that young people find themselves on as part of the battlefield tour experience – an experience that asks them to connect with history and humanity on landscapes of [historical] loss and suffering.

5.5 Implications

5.5.1 Contextualising the battlefield tour

Within these final sections, I will attempt to outline and justify a way of contextualising the battlefield tour experience that is useful for educators, in doing so making recommendations for best practice.

5.5.2 The emotional response

As already mentioned, in visiting the former First World War battlefields of Belgium and France, young people experience an emotional response to past events through their imagination/visualisation of the conflict, as they process information about both people and place. Through visiting former battlefields, young people can develop a visceral connection to the past, fuelling a deep sense of empathy for those who endured something that may seem unimaginable to them; a place where young people can perhaps “feel the weight of the tragedy" (Seaton, 2009, p. 57). Such emotional

experiences foster a profound sense of perspective, allowing young people to comprehend the human cost of war beyond what might have previously felt like detached words in history books. As they walk through preserved trenches, cemeteries, and visit memorials, young people can confront the stark realities of conflict, in doing so forging an emotional bond with individuals from the past.

Furthermore, the narratives presented at battlefield sites are often laden with complexities and divergent perspectives, resulting in a mosaic of emotional responses from young people. This emotional tumult arises due to the multifaceted nature of historical events, where the boundaries between good, bad, right, and wrong become blurred, leaving young people grappling with conflicting feelings of sorrow, admiration, and indignation. To address this, teachers and guides must curate narratives that offer a balanced, nuanced understanding of history, fostering critical reflection and dialogue among the young people. By providing tangible connections to the past, battlefield tours can nurture a desire for historical knowledge, empowering young people to attempt to grasp the complexities of conflict and the impact that historical events have on global society. The emotional resonance of battlefield tours deepens the educational impact, which can in turn foster lasting memories for young people and a desire for continued learning.

In considering the emotional responses of young people on battlefield tours, sensitivity should also be exercised in the crafting of tour experiences, recognising that former battlefields are not ordinary tourist attractions but that they are sites of reverence and, for many, pilgrimage. Ethical considerations therefore extend to the sympathetic and accurate portrayal of history, ensuring that narratives are reflective of what actually happened, in doing so giving emphasis to the diverse perspectives of historical conflict and the multifaceted nature of past events; ensuring that young people are not knowingly exposed to a telling of history that is one-sided, jingoistic, or triumphalist, thus making the experience a personal and collective odyssey for them and the peers they travel with, interweaving familial stories and national narratives, infusing the journey with an even deeper emotional significance.

5.5.3 The vicarious experience

Young people who visit the former First World War battlefields of Belgium and France are likely to experience a form of emotional dissonance in terms of how they interpret and react to the landscape(s); catalysed, in part, by their existing knowledge and understanding of trench warfare and their responses to exploring these locations in the present day as commemorative sites. For young people, battlefield tours can be an extraordinary means to forge not just emotional connections with historical conflicts, but also intellectual ones.

The emotional resonance of battlefield tours is by no means a newly discovered phenomenon though, as evidenced by Foley and Lennon's observation that visits to former battlefields go beyond mere sightseeing, instead becoming "a form of emotional pilgrimage" (1996, p. 29); meaning that the experience for young people is that they can develop a profound sense of connection with the past, through engagement in a form of empathetic identification with the individuals they are learning about. With young people feeling compelled to contemplate the emotional realities of those who fought and endured the tribulations of war (Seaton, 1996, p. 42).

The significance of battlefield tours as bastions of collective memory has also not gone unnoticed in this research. With Lloyd (1998) emphasising the role of these tours as modern-day pilgrimages, offering young people a tangible link to the past and a platform for collective remembrance. Through their embodiment of historical remembrance, battlefield tours play a vital role in keeping the memory of past conflicts alive and relevant in the present (Waterton & Smith, 2010). Through participation, young people are offered a unique opportunity to actively participate in the preservation of historical events, thus contributing to the shaping of collective memory; something that should never escape the mindset of the teacher/guide in both the shaping and sharing of the narrative that they convey throughout the entire battlefield tour experience. Whilst bearing in mind that the educational value of battlefield tours is potentially immeasurable, as they offer an immersive and embodied

experience of history, affording young people the opportunity to comprehend the human experience and far-reaching consequences of conflict (Stone, 2006).

For young people who visit the former battlefields of the Western Front, many of them realise that the landscapes they visit can offer a form of emotional pilgrimage, a platform for collective memory, and a place to contemplate the past. - "the vicarious nature of battlefield tours transcends time, providing a powerful bridge between history and the present, inviting visitors to engage in an empathetic dialogue with the past, thus fostering a deeper understanding of the human cost of war" (Seaton, 1996, p. 42).

5.5.4 The global perspective

There is, on visits to the former First World War battlefields of Belgium and France, an opportunity to challenge preconceptions of conflict as often taught through popular narratives. As such, some young people should for the very first time find themselves considering the First World War not through a lens of nationhood, but instead as a mutual human experience. This is because, for young people and adults alike, visiting former battlefields should be an experience that transcends borders.

Whilst, accepting that battlefield tourism is a commercial entity, that does not mean it should exist without responsibility. The commercialisation of historical sites demands a cautious approach that ensures the events of the past are not exploited for commercial gain, or exploited in terms of the narratives that prevail. Responsible battlefield tourism requires sensitive interpretation that acknowledges multiple narratives and diverse perspectives, avoiding the perpetuation of one-sided historical accounts; something the teacher/guide should be very careful to bear in mind when planning which locations to visit and which stories to tell. Young people should have confidence that the battlefield tour is a powerful educational tool, a window into the past that is inclusive of all nations and not simply the telling of one.

In visiting former battlefields, for young people, there is also a tremendous opportunity to consider conflict and reconciliation. The landscape, coupled with the history of what happened, provides an ideal setting for dialogue and understanding between young people about how nations not only become engaged in conflict, but how they are able to settle differences and find peace. By visiting what were once places of death and suffering on the former Western Front, teachers/guides can facilitate a process of reconciliation, encouraging understanding and empathy. The physical act of walking on common ground that was once a site of conflict can perhaps help to redefine relationships and emphasise the importance of mutual understanding and peaceful societies; because the global nature of battlefield tourism presents a remarkable canvas for understanding and commemorating historical events that have shaped the course of human history. In navigating the ethical considerations and educational opportunities offered by former battlefields, it becomes apparent that the experiences they offer young people are more than just an act of travel - they are experiences that have the potential to explore the interconnectedness of humanity's shared history.

5.5.5 Considering death

When visiting the former First World War battlefields of Belgium and France, young people consider mortality through their comprehension of historical events at places where individuals are buried/commemorated. As such, many begin to consider mortality as it relates to them, their families, and their friends - a considerable deal of thought/reflection about loss of life through conflict takes place. Visiting the former Western Front for young people can be a transformative experience, one that encourages them to confront and/or consider the sombre reality of death.

John Keegan, the prominent military historian, once wrote that "battle is an orgy of disorder" (1976, p. 103) in describing the chaos and violence that once engulfed the landscapes of former battlefields; places where those who visit cannot help but confront the fragility of human existence and the immense human cost of war. "We lay there, covered with mud and someone else's blood" (Fussell, 2003, p. 28) is but

one portrayal of the harrowing aftermath of battle - a reality that does not easily escape young people during their visits to the former Western Front. A reality that they are stepping foot on grounds, sacred to some, places where the soil beneath their feet witnessed the loss of countless lives, lives perhaps not too dissimilar to theirs; remembering therefore not just the victories of war, but the losses that so severely impacted families, friends, and communities.

As participants on battlefield tours, young people frequently encounter the narratives of soldiers through what the teacher/guide tells them and also through their interpretations of the physical landscape. They quickly realise that war exacts a heavy toll on those who fought and the societies that sent them into conflict. As such, a significant amount of critical and reflective discussion/thinking can and does take place, with young people questioning the logic of the history that is being presented to them. With, in many circumstances, them wishing that things had happened differently; a prevailing feeling of futility towards death in conflict, coupled with a sense of sorrow and gratitude for those who many of them feel have so tragically lost their lives - "the soldier's heart... may cry out for another way" (Grossman, 1996, p. 271).

Battlefield tours are, I would argue, multi-purposed, to some extent they are academic endeavours, but they equally are a means to preserve the memories of those who lost their lives in conflict. On an almost daily basis, through battlefield tours, the stories of the dead are told repeatedly, subsequently discussed/considered, and then perhaps even remembered. Through the stories of individuals from the First World War, young people on battlefield tours to the former Western Front are encouraged to remember that the fallen were not just soldiers, but sons, daughters, friends, and lovers. Such narratives ultimately bridge the gap between past and present, evoking a profound sense of empathy for those who fought and ultimately lost their lives. As O'Brien wrote about participants on battlefield tours, they carry “all the emotional baggage of men who might die" (1990, p. 20); words that transcend academic and educational motivations, resonating instead with the visceral aspect of battlefield tours - places where young people undoubtedly carry emotional baggage, pondering not only the

magnitude of past death and suffering, but also the impact these events from the past have on them in the present.

For young people, battlefield tours offer much more than a mere historical lens. They stir the conscience, urging them to consider the broader implications of war on individuals, families, and nations. The memorials and cemeteries they visit stand as symbols of collective grief and remembrance, compelling them to remember and commemorate those who lost their lives. The narratives of the conflict they learn about interweave, transcending national borders, reminding them of the interconnectedness of human history. As visitors, they stand on what they may perceive as solemn grounds, contemplating the tragedies that unfolded a century beforehand. In the end, the encounters with narratives of death that young people have on battlefield tours have the potential to leave an indelible mark on memory; they are profound experiences that offer not just a glimpse of the past, but an opportunity to learn valuable lessons from the tragedies of history. They encourage young people to reflect on the human cost of war, the preciousness of life, and the enduring responsibility of society to work towards a more peaceful and conciliatory world.

5.5.6 Death as a realisation

When young people, for this research, were afforded the opportunity to witness the recovery of the dead from the First World War, the emotional impact for them was very apparent; their reaction to the excavation of human remains was not that they were aghast, but instead that they showed high levels of sympathy and sorrow towards the dead (and their loved ones). This very specific part of this research has been discussed extensively in previous chapters, but I still feel it is important to emphasise its relevance, purpose, and uniqueness. It was by no means a normal experience for the young people involved as a visit to an archaeological dig is not likely to form part of the average battlefield tour, yet it happened nonetheless and the data it produced could not be ignored.

There is an acceptance within this research that archaeological fieldwork that involves the recovery of human remains is likely to be an emotionally charged experience; even when, as it was in this instance, participants reacting to the death of individuals that they could not ever have personally known. Yet, young people's emotional reactions to the death of unfamiliar individuals can go beyond mere superficiality. According to Corr, Balk, and Danoff-Burg (2009), "children's grief is not restricted to people they had direct contact with" (p. 38). Meaning that, as this research suggests, it is entirely possible for young people on battlefield tours to forge a deep emotional connection and a sense of mourning when they consider the death of those they encounter as part of the battlefield tour [or archaeological dig]. Similarly, Lamb and Weinberger (2002) emphasise the profound impact that loss can have for young people when it is someone they admire or respect - saying it "can trigger feelings of grief, sadness, and confusion similar to losing a close friend or family member" (p. 117). Whilst acknowledging that young people's emotional responses to death can and will differ depending on their developmental stage; particularly relevant to this research, given the participants were of mixed age (11-17 years old), with an expectation that adolescents, with a more mature understanding of mortality, may engage in introspection and contemplation about the legacy left behind by the deceased (Lamb & Weinberger, 2002).

What is perhaps most significant though, is the unexpected or unanticipated evocation of emotion and reaction; for example, the extent to which the experience of viewing human remains is capable of causing unresolved grief to resurface in young people - with Worden (2002, p. 98) stating that "previous experiences with loss, even if distant, can resurface, intensifying their emotional reactions". Grief is, of course, an inevitable response to loss, and can assume a profound significance in the lives of young people. When left unresolved, it can be a pervasive force, potentially impacting the emotional wellbeing of a young person - as Helen Fitzgerlad (1992) writes, "unresolved grief can manifest as a spectrum of emotional turmoil, from acute sadness and anger to confusion and detachment" (p. 43). These manifestations can then explicitly and implicitly permeate various aspects of a young person's life, affecting their cognitive functioning, social interactions, and overall psychological wellbeing; all of which is likely to come to the surface during a battlefield tour, which by its very

nature is focussed upon themes of loss and suffering. That is why, particularly for the teacher, it is so crucial to try and support young people to cope with and attempt to process their unresolved grief and feelings of sadness, despair, and hurt on battlefield tours. Through the cultivation of empathetic relationships where young people can express their emotions freely (Wolfelt, 2002), the battlefield tour environment can be a place of support and compassion, where young people can find solace in shared experiences, developing resilient coping mechanisms with both their peers and the teacher/guide.

The emotional reactions of young people to death on battlefield tours can be complex and they are undoubtedly deeply rooted in the previous emotional experiences of the individual, yet the environment of the battlefield tour is one that should be appropriately suited to responding to complex emotions. An environment where there is acknowledgment from all involved in the experience that the multifaceted nature of grief is best supported in an open, safe, and nurturing environment that allows for expression and healing. By recognising the potential of battlefield tours as environments where constructive coping mechanisms can be fostered, the teacher/guide can help young people navigate their emotions and find solace during times of encountering loss and suffering; cultivating empathy and promoting resilience in the face of grief.

5.6 Recommendations

In the pursuit of advancing knowledge and understanding, research plays a pivotal role in uncovering new insights, addressing existing gaps, and opening doors to new possibilities; something that reminds me of Flexner (2017) when he discussed academic research in terms of "the understanding it confers, …the beauty it reveals, … [as] the purest form of research" (p. 13). However, the very nature of research is that it is ever-evolving, with each study often leading to new questions and avenues for exploration. As such, it is only proper that I should identify and outline recommendations for future research that can potentially build upon this study's findings and hopefully contribute to an even greater body of knowledge.

The recommendations presented in this section are based on the insights and conclusions derived from this study. They reflect both the limitations of my research and the potential for future advancements. They are suggestions that are intended to be thought-provoking and open-ended, encouraging innovative thinking and creativity among future researchers. By embracing these recommendations and pursuing further inquiry, future researchers have the opportunity to advance knowledge, address unresolved questions, and contribute to the ongoing development of both conflict pedagogy and battlefield education;

- **Nationhood**: Research could be conducted to explore the extent to which there are diverse narratives of nationhood on battlefield tours for young people to the former Western Front. In doing so, aiming to better understand the motivations and perhaps even pedagogical justifications of tour programmes - where is visited, in what sequence, which stories are told, and from what perspective (nation)?

- **Myths and Narratives**: As part of the above, or in accompaniment, there is also scope for a study that more carefully examines the narratives that are taught on battlefield tours. As mentioned previously in this study, there are a number of well-held myths surrounding the First World War and it would be useful to better understand how they feature on battlefield tours and with what justification, if any.

- **Sanitised Mortality**: Prevalent in this research is the contrast between the commemorative sites of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the experience that was had by participants at Dig Hill 80. Thus, leaving me as the researcher contemplating to what extent young people on battlefield tours are being presented with a sanitised form of death; whilst acknowledging, of course, that cemeteries and memorials are places of remembrance and commemoration. But if they are used as key locations on battlefield tours, are guides/teachers/young people merely 'cemetery hopping' and detracting from

the truth of what actually happened; and therefore, not confronting the historical reality that conflict is violent, brutal, and therefore not glorious or magnificent. This, I feel, warrants further research.

These recommendations, whilst not exhaustive, aim to inspire future researchers in the hope that they can build upon the existing knowledge base that I and others have contributed to; deepening the shared understanding of conflict pedagogy and battlefield education.

5.7 Concluding remarks: Nothing but memory

In this final section, I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the entire research process and the journey that has brought me to this point. The completion of this study represents the culmination of several years of intense inquiry, exploration, and dedication [sometimes painful]. As I look back, I feel a sense of pride and accomplishment, but also humility, knowing full well that the path to understanding is never truly complete; a dual sense, recognising that the quest for knowledge is an ongoing, perpetual endeavour (Smith, 2019, p. 76).

From the outset of the research process, my intention has always been to try and better understand the phenomenon of the battlefield tour, as experienced by young people; what is it that they experience and what is it that they learn? In doing so, identifying and seeking to address the gaps in existing literature, with the hope of contributing my own novel insights to the field of battlefield education and conflict pedagogy. As a doctoral researcher (and now, full-time teaching fellow) I have always accepted that there is a uniqueness to how I positioned myself within the framework of this research; never shying away from the fact that I am someone who was not only immersed in the experience, but I was a participant-observer too - with my influence recognised and acknowledged in the research process (Smith, 2017, p. 45). Also, as mentioned previously in the methodology chapter, this research never attempted to present some kind of infallible representation of an experience, instead, I sought to give voice and meaning to what was experienced by a particular group - attempting to understand

experience from the perspective of those directly involved (Giorgi, 2009, p. 45); fully accepting that I was an active participant in this research and that my dual role as teacher/guide had an overwhelming influence on what the young people experienced during their visit to the former Western Front.

The entire research process that has brought me to this point has, for me, been a transformative experience on both a personal and professional level. Not only has it helped me to hone my critical thinking skills and analytical capabilities, but also it has helped me to further appreciate the imperative nature of rigorous research methodologies and, of course, the significance of interpreting data objectively. It has deepened my passion for studying the First World War, inspiring me to further advocate for the promotion of effective teaching in relation to battlefield tours and historical conflict. I remain committed, more than I ever could have imagined, to applying the insights I have gained from this research to the continued scholarship of what I consider to be a crucial area of education; an area of academic study that, to me, means so much.

"Only those who actually march back from the battle line on 11th November 1918, can ever know or realise the mixed feelings then in the hearts of combatants. We are dazed. When Germans, Frenchmen, Belgians, and British rise and stretch at 11am, in the presence of each other, with an inner feeling of insecurity, lest someone may do the dirty, and be tempted to fire off a parting shot, they are dazed - for no fighting man worth his salt desired at that moment to do anything but forget the past and forge the future."

- Brigadier General Frank Percy Crozier

Appendices

Appendix One (participant diary: example one)

Day One: 22 June 2018

Where have you visited today?

Hooge Crater, Hill 62. In the Hooge Crater we visited the museum where we saw a lot of shocking and interesting things. There were real things collected from soldiers and trenches which was upsetting to see. There were also realistic mannequins. In Hooge Crater, we shot rifles which was a great experience as it put everything into perspective and it really showed us how soldiers lived and what they experienced during the war. In Hill 62, we were able to see real trenches which soldiers fought in, which was very upsetting.

Did anything today make you feel a certain way?

I think going to Hill 62 was important and I felt honoured to be there. We got to see real places where soldiers were and got to see first-hand what soldiers experienced.

Was there anything today which you did not fully understand, and you would now like to learn more about?

NO COMMENTS WRITTEN.

Do you have any additional thoughts or feelings about your time spent visiting the battlefields today?

NO COMMENTS WRITTEN.

Day Two: 23 June 2018

Where have you visited today?

Sunken Lane, Hawthorn Ridge, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, Newfoundland Park, Thiepval, Vimy Ridge and Le Touret. Sunken Lane was where no man's land was. Being there today on a nice peaceful day made it difficult to imagine all the fighting that took place there. At Sunken Lane we also saw Hawthorn Ridge. Rob told us a lot about how German soldiers aren't commemorated in the same way the British are. This made me angry and also upset. In Newfoundland Park we saw the Argyll & Sutherland monument, which felt personal.

Did anything today make you feel a certain way?

Seeing Thiepval was shocking as it was so big and it made me realise the number of people

that actually died. It was also upsetting as it showed how many bodies were still missing. We also found the name of a man who lived beside the school. This was very upsetting as he left from the same place we did, but he wasn't able to come home.

Was there anything today which you did not fully understand, and you would now like to learn more about?

NO COMMENTS WRITTEN.

Do you have any additional thoughts or feelings about your time spent visiting the battlefields today?

NO COMMENTS WRITTEN.

Day Three: 24 June 2018

Where have you visited today?

Essex Farm, Tyne Cot and Langemark. When in the dressing station, it made me feel uncomfortable and sad to think about the horrible things that had happened there. It was also upsetting to see the grave of a young boy and it felt more personal as he is younger than me. Seeing Tyne Cot was shocking as it put into perspective the number of men that were killed. It was also interesting talking to the CWGC Interns as they told different peoples' stories and made it personal.

Did anything today make you feel a certain way?

When we first entered Langemark, I felt upset and angry for [redacted] *and* [redacted] *as there was a very clear difference between the British and German memorials. The British memorials have plants and are kept clean, but the German was dark and very different. However, after* [redacted] *and* [redacted] *told us how they felt about the cemetery, my perspective completely changed and I felt different about everything.* [redacted] *and* [redacted] *told us how proud they were of their country and the men that fought for them. They also said that they didn't mind that the graves were not always cleaned and kept shiny and new, as everything is part of nature and they use German soil in the cemetery, so letting the graves have plants growing on them is just part of nature. Meeting the German historians completely changed my perspective as I was always told that Germany were the bad and evil people, but I now realise that both the British and German side were the exact same and were fighting for the same reasons. The German and British soldiers both deserve to be commemorated and remembered equally*.

Was there anything today which you did not fully understand, and you would now like to learn more about?

I'd like to learn more personal stories, like the Victoria Cross ones.

Do you have any additional thoughts or feelings about your time spent visiting the battlefields today?

NO COMMENTS WRITTEN.

Day Four: 25 June 2018

Where have you visited today?

Menin Gate, Ypres Reservoir and Hill 80. We saw the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate. The service was extremely moving and seeing the bagpipes being played made me feel emotional and patriotic. There were also very young people laying wreaths which was moving. After the ceremony we visited Ypres Reservoir where we visited the grave of a former pupil called [redacted]. This visit was extremely emotional, and it felt so personal as [redacted] had went to the same school as us and [redacted] had went on the same journey we did, but the difference was that we were able to come back to [redacted], whereas James didn't. This visit really hit home as because it was so close to home it made me realise that it could have been my friends or my brother.

Did anything today make you feel a certain way?

At Hill 80, we were shown around the archaeological dig which was very interesting, and it it was great to see all the work being done. At the end of the visit we were shown human remains from a mass grave that was found. I was taken aback by this and found it extremely difficult to take it in and process what I was seeing. All week we had seen cemeteries and memorials for those who died, but actually seeing real people who were there was heart-breaking, and it made it so much realer. I thought about each person and the journey they experienced and the trauma that their family and friends at home would have experienced. It made me feel grateful for what I have and grateful to those who fought in the war. I will never forget what I saw today, it will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Was there anything today which you did not fully understand, and you would now like to learn more about?

I would like to do more for Hill 80, such as fundraising so that they can keep doing the amazing things they are doing.

Do you have any additional thoughts or feelings about your time spent visiting the battlefields today?

NO COMMENTS WRITTEN.

Appendix One (participant diary: example two)

Day One: 22 June 2018

Where have you visited today?

We first went to Hooge Crater, a museum displaying objects and information from the First World War. Mannequins were featured in the majority of the displays, and for me this helped me understand the struggle men as well women had to suffer during the time of the war. After packing my brain full of information we headed to a trench where we had the opportunity to shoot rifles and handguns. The noise was piercing and incredibly loud. Every time the rifle especially went off it was a frightening experience, where I jumped almost every time. This helped open my eyes to how much torture the soldiers must have been going through, for months or years on end. Sanctuary Wood was an eye-opening experience. This part of the day was perhaps the most emotional, because realising the reality of how hard the soldiers had to fight was gut-wrenching.

Did anything today make you feel a certain way?

The journey through the trenches made me feel a whole mixture of emotions; shock, intrigues and sadness. I was shocked at the conditions in which the soldiers were forced to fight in.

The muddy trenches and the tiny trenches that you could hardly fit two people in, never mind an entire army. Intrigue was brought about when we noticed shells which were actually fired during the war. Sadness was triggered by the graphic photos we looked at towards the end.

Was there anything today which you did not fully understand, and you would now like to learn more about?

It would be interesting to learn more about the people who designed and carved the shells in the Hooge Crater Museum.

Do you have any additional thoughts or feelings about your time spent visiting the battlefields today?

It was a life-changing experience and completely eye opening. This trip to the trenches in Sanctuary Wood in particular made the reality of trench-life a whole lot clearer.

Day Two: 23 June 2018

Where have you visited today?

Sunken Lane was the first place we visited. We learned about the place where German and British troops dug tunnels in order to escape fire more effectively. We watched a video of a mine explosion, approximately a few feet away from where we

were standing. Newfoundland Park brought us into Canada. The peace and tranquillity in this place seemed unreal. The two cemeteries we visited were the most emotional. The true reality of just how many unnamed soldiers there were, and the number of unmarked graves made me speechless. Thiepval was the most astounding building. I couldn't quite believe that there were 72,000 names carved into the building's walls. Lochnagar Crater was formed by a shell explosion. The size of the crater was terrifying. Vimy Ridge was made to commemorate the Canadian losses in the war. Le Touret memorial was another cemetery where we went to commemorate Thomas Fox, who was killed by a shell explosion at the age of 17.

Did anything today make you feel a certain way?

Every cemetery we visited triggered anger and sadness. I felt angry because all I could see from war was death, pain and sadness.

Was there anything today which you did not fully understand, and you would now like to learn more about?

NO COMMENTS WRITTEN.

Do you have any additional thoughts or feelings about your time spent visiting the battlefields today?

This day was perhaps the most powerful and moving. It was an eye-opening experience and I felt speechless at every place we visited. At the cemeteries I couldn't shake the feeling of disrespect when walking through the graves – I know there was no need to feel this way. However, I felt guilty at how many unnamed graves there were, and it was a gut-wrenching moment.

Day Three: 24 June 2018

Where have you visited today?

Essex Farm was the first place we visited. We saw different medical stations where soldiers were treated as well as the cemetery. Next we visited Tyne Cot – the largest cemetery in the world. Over 13,000 graves and 35,000 names. The last place we visited was Langemark, the German cemetery where they buried 32,000 German soldiers in the same grave.

Did anything today make you feel a certain way?

There was a grave at Essex farm of a boy named Valentine Strudwick who died at the age of 15. The story of how he went against his Mother's wishes by joining the army even though she didn't want him to made me think about how short and cruel life really is. It made me appreciate my parents a lot more and listen to the advice they give me more in depth. Langemark proved that there always two sides to every story – where the German were labelled as the bad guys, when in reality it was both sides who were fighting for the same reasons. It was eye-opening for me.

Was there anything today which you did not fully understand, and you would now like to learn more about?

NO COMMENTS WRITTEN.

Do you have any additional thoughts or feelings about your time spent visiting the battlefields today?

Visiting the grave of Valentine Strudwick made me appreciate life a lot more and has made me look at the things my parents advise me not to do in a different way. Whereas before I may have believed they were talking rubbish, I realise now that they want to do what's right by me and keep me on the right path. The visit to the Menin Gate was the most emotional part of this experience. As the band started to play, I felt an immediate flood of emotions. I tried not to cry, however as I looked around and I gazed at the names that filled the walls, suddenly I couldn't stop the tears. The emotional journey the trip had already been took over everything from the days before began to rush back to my memory. Menin Gate was an emotional but incredible service and commemoration to the soldiers who fought and died for us. After Menin Gate, we all went to Ypres Reservoir to pay our respects to a former pupil and teacher at our school. We laid a wreath to show we are thinking about him. This was an emotional experience because he was in reality one of us. We got the opportunity to write on our own crosses and place it on any grave in the cemetery. I chose a grave of a 19-year-old man who died. I cried all the way back to the hostel.

Day Four: 25 June 2018

Where have you visited today?

Dig Hill 80 was the first place we visited where we got to meet some archaeologists and a bomb disposal expert.

Did anything today make you feel a certain way?

Seeing the skeletal remains was very scarring. It gave an even bigger insight into the tragedy of war and the cost that war has on human lives. The battered bodies made it clear that these soldiers had a painful end to life – which was even more heart-breaking.

Was there anything today which you did not fully understand, and you would now like to learn more about?

NO COMMENTS WRITTEN.

Appendix Two (participant information sheet)

Participant Information Sheet for Pupils, Parents & Carers

Dear pupil & parent/carer,

Battlefield tours to the Western Front: What do young people experience?

Further to my role as a History Teacher at [redacted], I am also a postgraduate doctoral student within the School of Education at the University of Strathclyde. Under the supervision of Professor Ian Rivers and Dr Philp Tonner I will be researching the above question and would welcome your consent in permitting your son/daughter to assist me with my research.

What is the purpose of this research?

The research aims to discover what young people experience when they visit the battlefields of Belgium & France to learn about World War One. Each year, thousands of young people visit these battlefields, but little to no research has been conducted into what is actually gained from the experience.

Is participation compulsory?

Participation is not compulsory. Participants are free to decline. Even if you initially agree to participate, you can change your mind and opt out at a later date. Non-participation will not have a negative impact or effect upon the experience of the battlefield tour. Participation is entirely voluntary.

What will you do in the project?

If participating, you will be asked to complete a reflective diary at the end of each day during the battlefield tour. This diary will ask you a small number of questions about what you experienced each day. For example, where did you visit, what did you learn, were you surprised etc… All comments within the diary will be treated as confidential and will be anonymised. The diaries will be returned to participants after being scanned/typed up and uploaded to a secure data storage system at the University of Strathclyde.
Following the battlefield tour, some participants will be invited to be interviewed by myself. This will take place within the school property and will last between 30-60 minutes. Interviews will seek to further understand what was gained (if anything) from

participating in a battlefield tour. These interviews will be audio recorded and later transcribed before being stored securely with the University of Strathclyde.
At all times, you are entitled to ask for copies of any information which relates to you.

Are there any potential risks from taking part?

Participation will not impact upon your experience of the battlefield tour, nor will it impact upon your school work. At all times, participants will be treated with dignity and respect. Confidentiality is assured.

What happens to the information gathered during the project?

The information gathered from participants will contribute to a thesis I am due to complete during 2020.

Participant identity and information will remain anonymous within the thesis and upon completion of the research project, all information will be securely destroyed.
The University of Strathclyde is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the Data Protection Act 1998. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

What happens next?

If you are willing to participate in the research project, I would ask that you complete the attached consent form and return it to myself at the earliest convenience.
If you do not wish to be involved in the project, no further action is required and I thank you for taking the time to read this.

Upon commencement of the project, you are free to request a copy of the thesis or any sections within.

Contact:

Apart from myself at [redacted], should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Professor Ian Rivers or Dr Philip Tonner at the University of Strathclyde: Lord Hope Building (Level 5), 0141 444 8100.

Chief Investigator:

As principal supervisor for this research, Professor Ian Rivers can be directly contacted at:

Ian.rivers@strath.ac.uk
0141 444 8117
University of Strathclyde
Lord Hope Building (Level 5)
141 St.James Road
Glasgow, G4 0LT

This research was granted ethical approval by the University of Strathclyde Ethics Committee.

Appendix Three (thematic analysis: coding examples)

Diary or Interview Extract	Codes
Today, we visited the Sunken Lane, which was interesting to see. After this we made our way to Newfoundland Park. This gave us an insight of the front line trenches. We visited Y Ravine Cemetery. The cemetery was looked after really well and was almost peaceful until you think about how they died. It was horrific and there is such a contrast between how chaotic their deaths were to the peacefulness of the cemetery now. One thing that stood out to me was the writing on the graves which said "known unto god". This stood out to me as they weren't identifiable which goes to show the effect the war had on young men. I think everybody deserves to be able to have their name on their own grave, but this just shows how badly wounded they were. This made me feel sorrowful. Not only for those who were unidentifiable, but for everybody who was killed. Another place which stood out to me today was the cemetery which was in the shape of a circle where a shell hit. It was almost as if you felt appreciative that they were all kept together and remembered. I also felt it was good to know that they were not buried in any particular order or rank.	Environment Comparisons Reality of war Emotion
Yeah, that is what I said to somebody whilst on the way to the boat. It was as if we were travelling like our ancestors to a country we had not been to before, feeling a bit nervous, but wanting to do well for our King and country.	Perspective and connection with past generation
To conclude the night and what completely changed everything for me was when we visited the cemetery where a former student at our school, [redacted], lay after being killed during the war. While I looked down at the picture of him in my hand and looking at his grave, I just thought this man, the man I am looking at, his fragile body lays beneath the grass I am standing on. Someone who left from the same town I did, saw the same things I did, walked the same streets I did, learned where I learn. "He is one of our own" ran from my ears straight to my heart. He is, he is one of us and he always will be. We were then read a poem and while listening to the words, my throat started closing, started to hurt from trying to hold in the tears. Once the poem came to its end, we stood in silence remembering [redacted] and at that very moment the sun started to set, it beamed in between the buildings and hit us precisely where we stood.	Emotion Perspective and connection with past generation Environment
When you are in the classroom you are only thinking about it; but when you are at the battlefields, you are there, you are standing where they fought and where they died. I used to think of the Germans as being the enemy, and now hearing from a German perspective too you realise all sides were fighting for the same cause.	Physical environment Duality of war

Today we went to Hill 80, I don't know where to begin. This made me feel something I have never experienced in my entire life. Everything hit me. I could not believe what was in front of me. It all hit me at once. It was an overwhelming wave of emotions that will stay with me for the rest of my life. Firstly, we made our way to an explosives expert. He was incredibly charismatic for the job which put him in danger every day, but I find it amazing he keeps a positive attitude which changed my perspective of everything. It just reminded me to stay positive. I was shocked and looked at how long it took to excavate. I just did not realise how much patience you needed and how safe you had to be. It almost makes me look up to them, as he was doing this whilst not being paid. As I turned around, I noticed poles in the ground with blue and orange markings on them. I could not help but wonder what it meant. [redacted] *then said that blue meant skeletal remains were taken out and orange meant skeletal remains were still in the ground. At this moment, it all hit me. I really couldn't believe that the ground below us which we were standing on had people buried underneath. My brain could not comprehend this information and all the emotions took over me.*	Emotion Comprehension Physical environment

Appendix Four (description of Hill 62, Sanctuary Wood)

Hill 62, also known as Sanctuary Wood, holds immense historical significance as a site that witnessed intense fighting and played a pivotal role during the First World War. Situated near Ypres in the Flanders region of Belgium, it stands today as a reminder of what happened there. During the conflict, Hill 62 held strategic importance due to its elevated position. It was a fiercely contested area, with both Allied and German forces engaging in various battles to gain control. The site was at the centre of the Third Battle of Ypres (Battle of Passchendaele in 1917, one of the costliest battles of the war. The battle was marked by extensive artillery bombardments, the release of poison gas, and the onset of relentless rain, which transformed the battlefield into a muddy quagmire. Soldiers had to endure significant hardships as they fought for every inch of ground, often finding themselves trapped in waterlogged trenches and exposed to enemy fire.

Figure 21

Tunnel at Hill 62

Note: By, P. Hamilton, June 2017)

When the fighting stopped, farmers began to reclaim (and clear) their land(s) that for the previous half-decade had been battlefields. At Sanctuary Wood, the majority of debris was cleared by the farmer with the exception of a section of a British trench system he decided to leave exactly as it was. The site is now one of the few examples on the Ypres Salient where something close to an original trench can be walked by those who visit. In most other locations trenches were filled in and ploughed over. About forty years ago, at Hill 62, when some ground collapsed a small section of tunnel was revealed. The tunnel, which is about four feet in height, was built during the war by British Army Engineers and is now accessible (with caution) to those who visit.

The location is also home to a number of battlefield relics, including a British Army cook's wagon, German stone grave markers that were removed from original burial locations (presumably during the period of post-war battlefield clearance) and an indoor museum home to a considerable number of pieces, including 3-D stereoscopic photographs. Its significance lies in its preservation, as a living testament to the experiences of soldiers who fought and died there. Despite the surrounding area being rebuilt and developed over the years, Hill 62 has been maintained to retain its historical integrity. It is a tangible link to the past, allowing visitors to walk in the footsteps of those who served during the war.

Appendix Five (description of Sunken Lane & Newfoundland Park)

The sunken lane is exactly as it sounds, a lane that has sunken into the ground. Positioned in what was 'no-man's land', between the opposing front lines, it was a significant location on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme (1 July 1916). Sappers from the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers dug their way out to the lane, allowing cameraman Geoffrey Malins to follow them and take what is now widely regarded as one of the most iconic pieces of footage ever captured during the entirety of the First World War, the mine explosion under a German held position at Hawthorn Ridge Redoubt.

"The ground where I stood gave a mighty convulsion. It rocked and swayed. I gripped hold of my tripod to steady myself. Then for all the world like a gigantic sponge, the earth rose high in the air to the height of hundreds of feet. Higher and higher it rose, and with a horrible grinding roar the earth settled back upon itself, leaving in its place a mountain of smoke" (Malins, 1920).

"... there was a terrific explosion which for the moment completely drowned out the thunder of the artillery. A great cloud of smoke rose up from the trenches of No 9 Company, followed by a tremendous shower of stones.... The ground all round was white with the debris of chalk, as if it had been snowing and a gigantic crater, over fifty yards in diameter and some sixty feet deep gaped like an open wound in the side of the hill" (Edmonds, 1993).

Following the explosion, the men of the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers advanced from the Sunken Lane. Their attack, despite the detonation, was unsuccessful. Most were killed by machine-gun fire and it was not until four months later that their bodies were able to be safely recovered for burial.

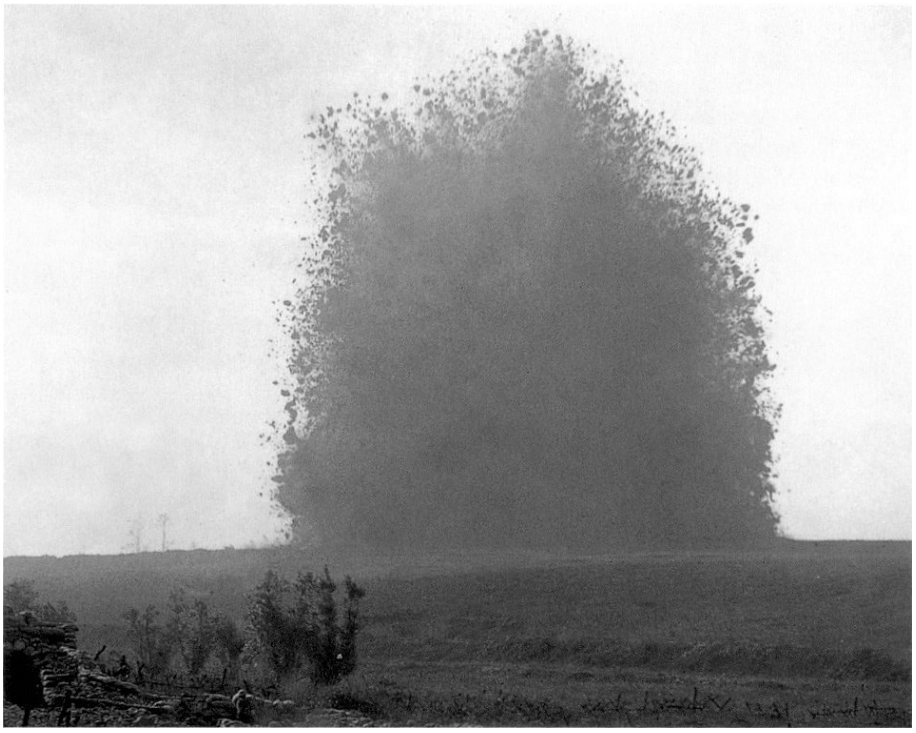
Newfoundland Park is a memorial site in France dedicated to the commemoration of the Newfoundland regiment who suffered severe casualties on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme. Encompassing 74-acres of preserved battlefield, the park has

been largely untouched, with the exception of maintenance, since the end of the First World War.

Of the 800 Newfoundlanders who went ‘over the top’ on 1 July 1916, approximately 700 were killed within about 30 minutes of fighting. Purchased in 1921 by the people of Newfoundland, it is the largest location on the Western Front dedicated to a battalion, and the largest area of the Somme battlefield that has been preserved. The park remains a significant symbol of sacrifice and source of identity for Newfoundland, Canada and the Commonwealth.

Figure 22

Explosion at Hawthorn Ridge Redoubt



Note: By E. Brooks, July 1916

Situated near the village of Beaumont-Hamel in the Somme region of France, it holds profound historical significance as a memorial to the memory of the Newfoundland Regiment's sacrifice and valour during the First World War. Spanning an area of approximately 30 hectares, Newfoundland Park is a meticulously landscaped

memorial site, yet it manages to encapsulate the tragedy and heroism of the Battle of the Somme, in particular those first few tragic hours.

Figure 23

Memorial to 1st Lancashire Fusiliers at Sunken Lane

Note: By P. Hamilton, June 2018

At the heart of the park stands the Caribou Monument, a striking bronze statue of a Newfoundland caribou, serving as an enduring symbol of the regiment's bravery and resilience. Unveiled in 1925, the monument overlooks the battlefield, offering visitors who can access the base of the Caribou, a focal point for reflection and remembrance. Inscribed upon it are the names of the soldiers from the Newfoundland Regiment who lost their lives advancing from where the memorial stands today. Beyond its role as a memorial, Newfoundland Park is a serene and contemplative space, inviting visitors to pay their respects, reflect upon the sacrifices made, and consider the devastating impact of war. The park's green fields and tranquil surroundings create an atmosphere of solemnity, encouraging visitors to pause, remember, and commemorate the fallen.

Figure 24

Caribou monument at Newfoundland Park

Note: By P. Hamilton, May 2017

Appendix Six (description of Tyne Cot CWGC Cemetery & Memorial)

The Tyne Cot Memorial and Cemetery is a poignant and historically significant site located near the town of Passchendaele in West Flanders, Belgium. It mainly commemorates the soldiers who lost their lives during the infamous Battle of Passchendaele, known properly as the Third Battle of Ypres, which took place from July to November 1917. The cemetery and memorial were established by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) in response to the high casualty rate and immense loss of life that occurred during the battle. Tyne Cot itself was a fortified stronghold held by German forces during the conflict. The area witnessed some of the bloodiest fighting of the war, characterised by heavy artillery bombardment, mud-soaked trenches, and futile attempts to capture strategic positions.

Tyne Cot Cemetery is the largest Commonwealth war cemetery in the world, and is the final resting place for over 11,900 servicemen from the British Empire. The cemetery was named after a nearby communication dugout that was referred to as "Tyne Cottage" due to the large number of troops from the Northumberland Fusiliers, who came from the area around the River Tyne in northeastern England. The cemetery is impeccably maintained, with rows upon rows of white Portland stone headstones marking the graves of soldiers from various units and nations. The sheer scale of the cemetery serves as a stark reminder of the staggering loss of life that occurred during the First World War.

Dominating the site is the Tyne Cot Memorial, a monumental structure designed by renowned British architect Sir Herbert Baker. The memorial, completed in 1927, is an imposing curved wall made of Portland stone. It stands as a symbolic representation of a Roman fort, serving as a tribute to the soldiers who fought and died during the First World War. Inscribed on the memorial are the names of over 34,000 Commonwealth soldiers who have no known grave, including those who perished in the wider Ypres Salient. The historical significance of Tyne Cot Memorial and Cemetery lies in its representation of the immense sacrifice and suffering endured by

soldiers during the First World War. It stands, for some, as a powerful testament to the futility of war whilst also serving as a place of remembrance and reflection.

Appendix Seven (description of Langemark German Military Cemetery)

At Langemark, around 44,000 German soldiers are buried, including a comrades grave with the remains of 24,917 (7,977 of which are unidentified) - a purpose built ossuary. Langemark is one of four concentrated German war cemeteries in the Flanders region and has long been associated with myth and propaganda. Including exaggerated accounts that the cemetery is the final resting place of a disproportionate number of young, inexperienced soldiers, claims of German troops loudly singing "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles" as they charged into battle at Langemark, and a visit to the cemetery by Adolf Hitler during the Second World War.

Figure 25

Memorial plaque at Langemark Cemetery

Note: Memorial plaque at Langemark Cemetery, translates as "Germany must live, even if we should die". Image, permission of Giles MacDonogh

Situated near the town of Langemark in Belgium, the cemetery's historical context is rooted in the Battle of Langemarck, also known as the First Battle of Ypres, which

took place in October and November 1914. During this battle, the German Army, as part of its wider offensive in Flanders, aimed to break through the Allied lines and reach the ports of Calais and Dunkirk. Langemark, which was a strategically important area, witnessed intense fighting between German and Allied forces, resulting in heavy casualties on both sides, with the German army suffering significant losses, particularly among its young, inexperienced soldiers. These soldiers included university students, volunteers, and members of various youth organisations.

In the aftermath of the battle, the fallen German soldiers were initially buried in comrades graves near Langemark. Over time, the site transformed into an official military cemetery. Its design, planned with meticulous attention, reflects the architectural style of the era. The cemetery features symmetrical rows of graves, each marked by simple, uniform headstones. The serene ambiance of the cemetery, enveloped by tall trees and lush greenery, fosters an atmosphere of contemplation and remembrance.

Langemark German Military Cemetery also gained prominence due to its association with the concept of the ‘studentenfriedhof’ or ‘student cemetery’; an emblematic representation of the sacrifices made by young German soldiers during the First World War. The cemetery has served as a focal point for both government and military propaganda during the 1930s and 1940s, promoting the ideals of nationalism and collective memory. The architecture and monuments within the cemetery, including the imposing Comrades' Cross monument at its centre, further reinforce a narrative of sacrifice and martyrdom.

Today, the cemetery, like so many others, stands as a site of commemoration and reconciliation. Visitors from all over the world come to pay their respects, contemplating the horrors of war and the necessity of peace. The burial site serves as a constant reminder that beyond national boundaries, the tragedy of war deeply affects individuals, families, and communities. Langemark German Military Cemetery, as both a burial ground and a historical landmark, encapsulates the complex facets of memory, sacrifice, and the enduring consequences of war - it provides a perpetual

reminder of the human toll of conflict and emphasises the imperative of striving for a more peaceful world.

Yet today, for many, the cemetery remains steeped in misunderstanding and misconceptions. So much so, that an entire section was devoted to the subject of myths and legends in Roger Steward's (2021) book about the cemetery; with discussion devoted to commonly made statements and questions such as "the Germans don't care about their war dead" (p. 137), "is the mass grave a burial pit" (p. 138), and "the wooden crosses in German cemeteries were to be painted black as the Germans were the guilty party" (p. 139). All of which can be refuted as rumour and poor communication of the true story and purpose of Langemark German Military Cemetery.

Appendix Eight (description of Dig Hill 80)

During 2015, a team of archaeologists discovered a well-preserved German strongpoint at a ridge-top near to the village Of Wijtschate (also known as Wytschaete - or 'Whitesheet' to the British). With the support of an international team of experts an excavation of the site was carried out, executed by professional archaeologists and supported by universities and governments (financed by crowdfunding).

Figure 26

Crowdfunding poster for Dig Hill 80

Appendix Nine (biography of JHP)

Figure 27

Portrait of JHP

Note: Image with permission of University of Glasgow Story

JHP was born on 3rd March 1890. James was educated at [redacted] School, where he attained the Junior Student's Certificate in July 1909. The Junior Student's course involved a set number of hours of instruction in the art of teaching, and was a standard qualification for entry to teacher training college.

During the autumn of 1909, JHP enrolled at the Glasgow Provincial Training College (forerunner of Jordanhill College of Education, now the University of Strathclyde) for a three-year course of teacher training offered in conjunction with the University of Glasgow.

During 1912 JHP qualified for the Teacher's General Certificate in the summer of 1912. He became a Teacher at the Dalmuir School under the Old Kilpatrick School Board, and was involved in the St James' Parish Church Company of the Boys' Brigade.

JHP was quick to sign up to join the war effort, and was made a 2nd Lieutenant on the 2nd September 1914, and served with the 6th Bn. Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Captain JHP was killed in action on the 22nd August 1917, and is buried at Ypres Reservoir Cemetery. His gravestone reads "A secret thought, a silent tear, keep his memory ever dear".

Captain JHP is remembered on the University of Glasgow Roll of Honour, on the Roll of Honour of the Glasgow Provincial Committee for the Training of Teachers, and on the Glasgow Provincial Training College War Memorial, located in the David Stow Building on the former Jordanhill Campus.

Appendix Ten (email to CWGC & Volksbund)

Van: Paul Hamilton <p.hamilton@strath.ac.uk>
Verzonden: maandag 2 december 2019 10:50
Aan: mel.donnelly@cwgc.org; erik.dm@hotmail.com; karl-heinz.voigt@volksbund.de
CC: simon@rubenwillaert.be; Ian Rivers <ian.rivers@strath.ac.uk>
Onderwerp: Hill 80 (Images)

Hello,

My name is Paul Hamilton and I am a doctoral researcher at the University of Strathclyde. As part of my research, I am examining the impact of the archaeological dig which took place at Hill 80 during 2018 (Dig Hill 80).

In particular I am analysing the experience of a group of young people who as part of their visit to the dig-site were witness to the excavation of a comrades grave.

After speaking to Simon Verdegem (ccd into this e-mail) and Prof. Ian Rivers (ccd into this e-mail), we are in agreement that it would be suitable for me to include selected images of the skeletal remains excavated within my thesis. However, we are seeking your consent to do this.

The thesis is an entirely academic piece of work and will be stored digitally by the University of Strathclyde. Copyright of images (from Dig Hill 80) will not transfer to me, and I will fully credit all relevant individuals/organisations - including VDK and CWGC.

Prof. Ian Rivers who I mentioned earlier is my academic supervisor and I can confirm I have received full ethical approval from the university for this research to be conducted. Simon has also consented to the use of images for my thesis, but like myself would not proceed without your consent/recommendations.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Paul Hamilton

Appendix Eleven (permission for use, Volksbund)

erik.demuynck@volksbund.de
Wed 04/12/2019 00:27

Dear Paul,

As far as VDK is concerned we do not object to the appropriate use of relevant images of remains considered as unknown German war casualties found during the mentioned project Hill 80, under following strict conditions:

- for exclusive academic use
- with restricted storage and limited non-transferable distribution to in the academic community, under no circumstances made public
- signs of personal details must be adjusted

For your particular inquiry, we believe you have addressed those aspects and we consent to the use of relevant images as described.

With kind regards.

Erik.

Erik DE MUYNCK
Ehrenoberst - Erekolonel - Colonel honoraire

Appendix Twelve (updated permission for use of images, Volksbund)

Envoyé : dinsdag 4 juni 2024 14:07
À : Demuynck, Erik <erik.demuynck@volksbund.de>
Objet : Hill 80: Images

Dear Erik,

My name is Paul Hamilton and I e-mailed you several years ago (screenshot of your e-mail reply below). I have since completed my EdD thesis and it is now eligible to be uploaded to the University of Strathclyde's digital collections as an open access resource and also to British Library's online collection of doctoral theses (EThOS). I wish to seek your approval that uploading a digital copy of my thesis to these sources with the images we previously discussed would meet with your approval. I appreciate there has been quite a passing of time since we communicated and I am, of course, more than happy to send you any further information to assist your decision.

Appendix Eleven (permission for use, Volksbund)

erik.demuynck@volksbund.de
Wed 04/12/2019 00:27

Dear Paul,

As far as VDK is concerned we do not object to the appropriate use of relevant images of remains considered as unknown German war casualties found during the mentioned project Hill 80, under following strict conditions:

- for exclusive academic use
- with restricted storage and limited non-transferable distribution to in the academic community, under no circumstances made public
- signs of personal details must be adjusted

For your particular inquiry, we believe you have addressed those aspects and we consent to the use of relevant images as described.
With kind regards.
Erik.

Erik DE MUYNCK
Ehrenoberst - Erekolonel - Colonel honoraire

Kind regards and best wishes,

Paul Hamilton

From: Demuynck, Erik <erik.demuynck@volksbund.de>
Sent: 04 June 2024 17:10
To: Paul Hamilton <paul.hamilton@ed.ac.uk>
Subject: RE: Hill 80: Images

Dear Paul,

Many thanks for this update.

Please upload the digital copy as suggested in accordance with our existing agreement.

Best Regards.

Erik.

De Muynck, Erik
Ehrenoberst • Erekolonel • Colonel honoraire

Appendix Thirteen (permission for use, CWGC)

Mel Donnelly <mel.donnelly@cwgc.org>
Wed 04/12/2019 07:59
To:Paul Hamilton
Cc:karl-heinz.voigt@volksbund.de; simon@rubenwillaert.be; Ian Rivers; erik.demuynck@volksbund.de

Dear Paul,

Thank you for requesting permission for the use of the images from the Hill80 excavations.

CWGC do not object to your use of the images for the purposes you have outlined and with the same caveats as specified by the VDK.

With kind regards

Mel Donnelly
Commemorations Policy Manager

Appendix Fourteen (permission for use, S. Verdegem)

Hamilton, Paul <paul.hamilton@ourcloud.buzz>
6 December 2019 at 09:53
To: simon@rubenwillaert.be

Hello Simon,

I am delighted both the VDK and CWGC have given their approval for the use of images. Are you now able to forward me those images you feel are relevant? The young people visited the tent where German bodies were being excavated - it was the grave with the hat that caused some slight confusion (wrong regiment etc...).

Thanks,

Paul

Simon <simon@rubenwillaert.be>
9 December 2019 at 13:42
To: "Hamilton, Paul" <paul.hamilton@ourcloud.buzz>

Hi Paul

You should be able to see pictures via this link.

[redacted]

Let me know if it doesn't work. If you had anything else in mind, let me know.

As said before, this is in full confidence that you will only use them for the purpose stated in previous emails.

Best wishes

Simon

Appendix Fifteen (permission for use, University of Glasgow)

Dear Paul

Thank you for your Permission to Publish form.

On the basis of the information you have given, the Senior Archivist is willing to grant permission for you to go ahead with the publication of this material.

There will be no charge.

The items should be referenced as follows:

University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections, University Chapel collection, GB248 CH4/4/2/2/222 .

University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections, University Registry collection, GB248 R8/5/30/6, R8/5/31/6, R8/5/32/6.

Best wishes
Claire Daniel

Archives & Special Collections
University of Glasgow

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