**Project Report: AHRC network ‘The Significance of the Centenary’**

**Steering group:** Dr Joanne Sayner (PI), Dr Jenny Kidd (CI), Sam Cairns, Alex Drago, Prof. Lorna Hughes, Amy Ryall.

The main project ran from February 2013 to May 2014, having been extended beyond the initial pilot period due to significant impact activities, several of which are still ongoing. The project examines what makes a centenary event different to any other. It investigates why and how we commemorate or celebrate one hundred years and why it is possible to talk about the ‘cult of the centenary’. The project involves collaboration between academics and practitioners within the museum and heritage sector.

Four workshops were held as planned in the original bid. They were attended by twenty academics and practitioners, plus additional invited speakers from the heritage sector. In these workshops we investigated centenaries past and present, examining who or what is being remembered and how. Academics and practitioners presented their work on Friedrich Schiller, Jane Austen, Charlemagne, the Mexican Revolution, The King James Bible, Galvanise Sheffield and Swansea City. Our discussions have taken place against the backdrop of the conversations and controversies about the commemoration of the centenary of the First World War. At a workshop at the Tower of London we addressed these directly with presentations on the new galleries at the Imperial War Museum, the Cymru 1914 project, and a discussion with the Yeoman Warders about their role in commemoration (For workshop reports and discussion see: <http://thecentenary.wordpress.com>)

In the light of a recent government initiative to set up an ‘Anniversaries Fund’ to mark significant national anniversaries, we extended our project. The focus of the additional workshop was on the evaluation of the success of such events, work led by Museum and Heritage Learning Consultant, Sam Cairns. Entitled ‘Happy Anniversary? Measuring the Impact, Success and Legacy of Centenary Events’ it was attended by 81 delegates (including DCMS, HLF, HET, U3A, National Archives, British Museum, Imperial War Museum, Now 14-18, 20 academic institutions, and 25 local and regional museums). See workshop report: <http://www.voicesofwarandpeace.org/portfolio/happy-anniversary/> This workshop not only led to increased interest in the project itself but also to an invitation to participate with a HLF publication on ‘Cultural Trends’. During the course of the project Joanne Sayner, Jenny Kidd and Nick Martin (network members) became CIs of the WWI Engagement Centre ‘Voices of War and Peace’ hosted by the University of Birmingham. Ideas for cross-sector workshops to be run under the auspices of this Centre, in collaboration with Alex Drago, arose during the course of the fifth workshop. It also provided impetus for HLF to link up more closely with the WWI Engagement Centres.

The **key results** of the project to date:

1. Focussing on the preparations of the centenary of the First World War, Joanne Sayner and Jenny Kidd carried out an analysis of print and social media between August 2012 and August 2013 to provide insight into the controversies surrounding the preparations and the role of museum and heritage sites within them. Their work highlights the changing rhetoric, the different expectations on a local, regional and national level and how these intersect with international dynamics of power. They will continue this work to look at the changing role of such sites as the commemorations progress. A publication is intended to result from this work.
2. Explorer Manager at Historic Royal Palaces, Alex Drago, collaborated with schoolteachers Rocky Haines and Phillipa Prince and animators John Harmer and Shelly Wain to produce an animated film on remembrance of the First World War with students of The Grey Coat Hospital (Gwyneth Tambe-Green, Isabelle Parker, Isobel Gotobed, Imogen Edwards, Rosa Mylne, Martha Button, Sophie Ikonyak, Florence Marling and Tara Baukovic). The film was shown at the start of all classes at the girls’ school on 11 November 2013. This film was also used at the launch of the AHRC-funded WWI Engagement Centre ‘Voices of War and Peace’ as part of Joanne Sayner’s contribution to an expert panel discussion. The launch event was attended by 200 people and the viewing prompted requests for the film to be shown at local events. Further work still remains to be done on the impact of the showings at these events. See: <http://www.voicesofwarandpeace.org/2014/04/01/commemorating-film/> The film was subsequently shown at the AHRC Connected Communities in Cardiff in May 2014 event.
3. The blog (run by postgraduate Alida Payson, <http://thecentenary.wordpress.com>) was primarily set up as a discussion forum for participants in the network as opposed to an outward facing driver to content and the network’s activities. Nevertheless, it has had 2,686 views from 42 countries since the launch.
4. Working with steering group member Amy Ryall and academic supervisor Dr Jane Hodson, history undergraduate Lydia Rollinson used ‘History Pin’ to virtually map multiple centenary events. This work was sponsored by a University of Sheffield undergraduate research studentship (see report on blog).
5. Funded by a University of Birmingham undergraduate summer research grant, and supported by Alex Drago and Joanne Sayner, Chloe Howard carried out visitor research during the opening week of the ‘Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red’ exhibition at the Tower of London. There is still further work to be done on the analysis of the results.
6. Through a focus on centenaries in practice, strategies for learning projects and an examination of institutional constraints, we have drawn up a provisional framework for investigating centenary events. It focuses on issues of ownership, audience, sustainability, accessibility, and the role of the media.
7. The network’s key research questions were embedded into a national educational programme run by Historic Royal Palaces (see impact and engagement activities below).

The project also resulted in two **further, successful funding bids**:

1. Dr Jenny Kidd was awarded a £15000 grant from REACT (Research and Enterprise in Arts and Creative Technology 2013) to create *With New Eyes...* This explores whether documentary can become an experience or a journey beyond the screen. The partnership between Cardiff-based academic Jenny Kidd and creative marketing agency yello brick, researched a site-specific documentary using torches, projection and RFID to trigger content as participants walked around Cathays Park in Cardiff. The aim was to test the user value of empathetic engagement within a locative, pervasive and social documentary experience, with an emphasis on avoiding 'empty empathy' (Kaplin 2011) or, conversely the 'empathy paradox' (Jackson & Kidd 2008, 2011). This initiated continued collaboration with the creative enterprise ‘yello brick’ as well as a partnership with the National Museum Wales. There will be at least one published output from the project. The production was ‘staged’ at the Museums Association Conference 2014 in Cardiff. See: <http://www.react-hub.org.uk/with-new-eyes/>
2. Amy Ryall was involved in the Arts Enterprise Bid (Higher Education Innovation Fund), ‘Sheffield 1914: Lives and Headlines’, University of Sheffield, which was awarded £2500. The project initially ran between September 2013-14 and involved archival work on the preparations for war in Sheffield and the publication of reports in the *Sheffield Star* newspaper. The project is still ongoing, supported by MA placements. See: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/artsenterprise/projects#LivesandHeadlines

In addition, members of the steering committee have been involved in the following **additional engagement and impact** activities:

1. Alex Drago and Joanne Sayner, presented at the Museums and Heritage Show, May 2014. ‘Museum Learners and Anniversaries: A Happy Marriage?’, 55 professional practitioner attended. See: <http://www.museumsandheritage.com/show/visiting/free-talks/learning>
2. Amy Ryall spoke on the ‘Sheffield History Panel’ event (2014, 60 attendees), which resulted in audience members becoming actively involved in the Twitter ‘Pity of War’ debates.
3. Amy Ryall facilitated a WWI Day at Weston Park: Museums Sheffield (2014, 237 attendees) in which members of the public brought in objects related to the war. Ryall was involved in the recording of oral histories at this event.
4. Joanne Sayner was involved in discussion with Mary-Anne Geary, Department of Business Innovation and Skills, about the effect of AHRC funding on research priorities and used this project as a case study.
5. The learning programme for the First World War centenary at Historic Royal Palaces has arisen out of the ‘Significance of the Centenary’ network. The Explorer Manager, Alex Drago, created a campaign called ‘Why Remember?’ inspired by three questions from the project (Why should we remember? Why is 100 years so significant? How would you like to remember?), and which has been embedded in all HRP’s offers and across audiences. The purpose of the campaign is to transform understanding of First World War by encouraging everyone to engage in more meaningful discussion about remembrance. It includes:

1. Uncover (Adult Learning) Talks and Workshops:

(i) 'Curious connections: spies' (58 delegates);

(ii) 'Curious connections: war and friendship' (46 delegates);

(iii) 'War declared: the Tower and the First World War '(24 delegates).

2. Uncover Community Engagement:

(i) Blackfriars residential home reminiscence work (80 delegates).

3. Explorer (Children and Young People):

Informal:

(i) 10,000 Soldier’s Small Book – a family trail – printed and distributed between 4 August – 11 November 2014;

(ii) 2,500 contacts during half-term covering a range of activities including object handling, story-telling, costumed-interpretation;

(iii) Echoes & Traces: The Tower at War, performances by Arcola Youth Theatre took place at the Tower of London on 4 November in a site-specific performance based on real-life people who lived or worked at the Tower during the First World War. 500 estimated contacts.

Formal:

(i) Partnership with Discovery Education who broadcast a national assembly from the Tower of London on 10 November 2014 with content based around the ‘Why Remember?’ questions. It featured poetry originally written by students for the Commemorating the Centenary of the Great War film from Grey Coat Hospital School. Discovery marketed this to all schools in the UK, USA, and Canada and it was broadcast free online at: http://www.discoveryeducationuk.com/remembrance. 925,000 students from 61 countries watched the broadcast. Two teacher CPD webinars were broadcast before and after which together reached approximately 500 teachers;

(ii) ‘Why Remember?’ schools campaign and fundraising day. Resources available online and CPD delivered. 100,000 people are involved in the fundraising campaign. It is not yet possible to estimate how much will be raised for the six service charities;

(iii) Two animation projects with Pakeman and Mayflower Primary, numbering around 500 contacts and the output of two short movies. Mayflower was previously known as Upper North Street School and was the first known civilian air raid casualty in the world. German planes dropped bombs on the school on 13 June 1917 and 18 students were killed;

(iv) 1,000 teacher guides to the poppies and the First World War at the Tower distributed by 11 November 2014.

Digital:

(i) #whyremember campaign has reached approximately 100,000 people. We asked people to respond to the three questions and send us their photos;

(ii) Both Curious Connections talks have been recorded and will end up on HRP’s iTunesU account. Numbers of downloads are difficult to estimate, but are probably around 1,000 each over the next 12 months.

Attitudinal Analysis:

(i) Physical and online survey to encourage everyone to communicate their responses to the three questions with a long-term view to doing some attitudinal analysis revealing a snapshot of our attitudes to the FWW during the centenary year. Estimated responses around 2,000.

Finally, two of the sculptures from the poppies installation will be going on a national tour until the close of the centenary in 1918.  Locations are yet to be determined (and reach too) but the ‘Why Remember?’ campaign is likely to become an integral part of the tour to help visitors understand the purpose of the sculpture and what it represents.

**Conclusion:**

This project has enabled academics and practitioners from the museum and heritage sector to work together to examine how centenary events work. It gave us the space to investigate what past commemorations and celebrations of people, places and events can tell us about why we find present centenaries so significant. It provided the opportunity to create a virtual map of centenary commemorations, to examine how different centenary events intersect, and to think about the preparation and implementation of the commemorations of the centenary of the First World War. The project has created a network for sharing information about the controversies, constraints and contradictions of centenary work, and has enabled groups of adults and young people to reflect on their own connections to the First World War and the processes of remembering. The ‘Blood Swept Lands and Seas’ exhibition at the Tower of London has become one of the most iconic symbols of the First World War commemorative activities of this year. The attendant ‘Why Remember?’ campaign arose directly from the network but was not originally envisaged when our project began. It is the intention of the group to continue to examine the impact of this installation in relation to the way the public has remembered the significance of this centenary.