

**Evaluating the Experiences of British Tourists and Their
Consumption of Extra-Territorial Heritage in Ypres,
Belgium**

Andrew Mooney

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Summary

This thesis will explore British tourist experiences in the town of Ieper (Ypres), Belgium. This analysis will be centred around two research sites, the In Flanders Fields Museum located in the central square of the town and Tyne Cot cemetery, situated in the fields to the East of the town. It will utilise qualitative interviews to unpack the British tourist experience, focusing a number of themes that are outlined in the surrounding literature's methodological base. These will include visitor motivation, expectations, emotion and feelings of nationality. In analysing these experiences, I aim to investigate the ways in which their experiences in Ypres cause them to reflect on their own nationality, engage with transnational memory and think about modern justifications of war and civil-military relations.

The three primary literature bases from which this thesis draws are memory studies, heritage studies and dark tourism all, in essence highlight the same interaction; how do visitors at certain sites 'make meaning'? What is it about this interaction that causes people to venture back to the same or different sites time and time again. Here, this interaction will be demonstrated to allow and encourage tourists to layer their experiences with their existing memory culture and allow for a productive exchange of these national perspectives. These exchanges are not antagonistic, but neither are they truly cosmopolitan. Rather they represent a form of multi-perspectival, transnational memory in which each national view is distinctly different, but still important and interesting. It will also be shown that these sites encourage visitors to question contemporary and historical justifications for war, placing the blame for these conflicts squarely at the feet of politicians and national leaders.

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1. Introduction

Ypres, Belgium is a small city in the region of West Flanders, with roughly 35,000 inhabitants. However, this small city was the epicentre of one of the most hotly contested areas of the Western Front during the First World War. Since the end of the War, it has emerged a popular tourist destination for British tourists and a centre for British commemoration. These tourists are the very core of this thesis. I will be looking to investigate their experiences in the city of Ypres in two separate case studies. These two sites, the In Flanders Fields Museum located in the city centre on the market square, and Tyne Cot Cemetery located in the neighbouring fields. The differences between these two research sites are not just geographic: they vary in ideology, form and function. Where the In Flanders Field Museum is run by the city of Ypres, the Tyne Cot Cemetery is run by the UK's Commonwealth War Graves Commission. They are both, however, internationally recognised and are staples of the tourist experience in Ypres. As I will set out in my methodology, these contrasting sites allow me to assess the response of British tourists to two very different kinds of messaging about the meaning of the war.

A number of aspects of the tourist experience will be analysed throughout this study, such as motivation, expectations and emotion. However, the most crucial insights lie with their experience of feelings of nationality and the possibility of shared or transnational memory. These experiences will need to be established in the context of the changing socio-political contexts that contemporary British visitors find themselves in.

In this introduction, I will first establish why Ypres is a suitable and productive location for research in this field of study, looking at historical context and the development of British visitation to the area. Following this will be a quick examination of the history of British visitation to Ypres and the Western Front. Then I will highlight three important aspects of the centenary commemorative celebrations of the First World War, which speak to the development of British memory of the conflict. Next, I will outline the three primary research questions that will be answered in this thesis and explain their significance. Finally, the structure of the thesis will be outlined, setting expectations for the reader and guiding them through the project.

1.1 Ypres as a research location

The Ypres Salient was a crucial stretch of the front line that saw conflict throughout the war, characterised by confrontations between German and primarily British and Commonwealth forces, with the French and Belgians as contributors (Prior & Wilson 2016, p.5). Whilst the first and second battle of Ypres in 1914 and 1915 had been defined by German offensives, the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917, also notoriously known as the Battle of Passchendaele, was a mass offensive led by the British in an attempt to liberate occupied Belgium and its resources (Prior & Wilson 2016, p.6). This conflict, both its scale and nature, defined the Ypres Salient as one of the most important sites of the First World War for the British, both in military and symbolic terms. Prior to the offensive the salient had settled into a stalemate, however in 1917 the mud, poor weather, and futile offensives of the Battle of Passchendaele would emerge as iconic in the British memory of the First World War (Warner 2005, p.252.)

After the war, Ypres was immediately recognised as an important site for the British army and the British nation. It was described in the press as 'Holy ground of British arms' (Wilson 1919). The article, written in 1919, states 'Ypres! Those five letters might stand for the whole Great War itself – the name of the city which never knew defeat, the soul of the British resistance, the symbol of British triumph.' Wilson went on to say '[t]hat [this] ground is for ever England... It will be for us the most hallowed spot on earth, for it holds our bravest dust' (Wilson 1919). Famously, this cause was championed by the future Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, who stated that 'a more sacred place for the British race does not exist in the world' (Dendooven 2001, p.12). Churchill even led an effort to buy the ruins of Ypres, in service of a permanent memorial to the grounds where more than 200,000 of his countrymen lay dead or missing (Dendooven 2001, p.11). Whilst this idea was dismissed, Ypres remained a symbolic centre for British commemoration of the First World War. It is for this reason that commemorative sites in Ypres, especially those maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, can act as extra-territorial heritage as will be explored later. British people flocked to the Western Front in the aftermath of the war, for some an act of pilgrimage to mourn their dead, whilst others were drawn in by the spectacle of the battlefield.

British tourists today continue to visit Ypres in significant numbers. More so than any other front that was involved in the First World War. In 2019, 33% of the visitors that were measured at tourist sites in West Flanders, most of which are in and around Ypres, were British: a staggering 136,800 visitors (Westtoer 2021). Westtoer, a Belgian tourist organisation, conducts a series of surveys across a number of tourist sites in West Flanders, sharing their results each year, detailing total visitation, the share of domestic and international tourism, as well as a breakdown of this foreign tourism by nationality. Before and during the years of centenary the share of commemorative international tourism in West Flanders mostly remained between 55% and 56%, with British tourists occupying the majority share of this (Westtoer 2021). With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 international tourism to the area understandably plummeted, which threatened the survival of businesses in Ypres that rely on the tourists for their customer base. Ypres is full of cafes, bars and hotels that are designed to appeal to British and other international tourists. Not to mention the direct tourism industry, a number of tour guides and commemorative sites such as the museums struggled to survive. As an aside, it also proved to be a significant obstacle for the carrying out of this research project and the original planning for the primary data collection fell in this period. However, British tourism to Ypres had recovered by 2022, when visitation numbers were up to 322,400, matching the lowest pre-centenary years, and in 2023 the 360,000 visitors matched the highest of those pre-centenary years. Whilst the share of British visitors, 22.2% and 26.3% respectively fell short of the 32.9% recorded in 2019, British visitation to the area remains strong (Westtoer 2023).

A number of research projects concerning First World War tourists have taken place in Ypres, either partially or wholly conducting their data collection in and placing the focus of their studies on the city. Quantitative studies such as Vandaele & Monballyu's (2008) investigation of tourist activity in the region or Caroline Winter's (2011a) 'insights from visitor books' and exploration of visitor motivations (2011b), have aimed to gather a large-scale picture of a number of aspects of tourist activity, with Ypres serving as one of their primary locations. Winter (2015) also authored a paper that utilised quantitative methods to scrutinise forms of ritual remembrance present in visitor book entries at Tyne Cot specifically. Additionally, qualitative studies such as Jennifer Iles' 2008 ethnographic study of British coach tours in Ypres and the Somme region in France and the study by Dunkley et al.

(2011) that followed a similar methodology were carried out in this area. Additionally, two of the First World War Remembrance Trails investigated by Stephen Miles (2017) have their starting point in Ypres. Just as researchers have investigated contemporary tourist experiences, historians have also explored the historical development of pilgrimages and tourist trips to the Western Front following the First World War. Most recently, however, Eleanor Rowley's (2023) PhD thesis has investigated young people's heritage experiences in three museums on the Western Front. One of these sites was the In Flanders Fields Museum, a site that her study and mine share. Rowley (2023) focuses on the experience of young visitors and commonalities between discourses at differing museums on the Western Front. My study focuses on adult visitors who have chosen to visit the area, and their experiences with more of a focus on their negotiation with the national and the transnational at contrasting sites. With this focus I aim to uncover if and how these experiences are felt differently at sites with varying form, function and history. I will be utilising themes such as Extra-territorial heritage and civil-military relations which, I believe can contribute to our understanding of British tourist experiences in Ypres.

1.2 The Development of British Tourism to Ypres and the Western Front

The impact of the First World War felt in Britain was unprecedented. A profound scar on British society that remains to this day (Miles 2016, p.13). Remarkably, however, tourism to the Western Front had begun during the conflict itself. In 1915, at Plorgsteert Woods, south of Ypres, in what was, at that time, a quiet zone, a 'tourist line' was established behind the front line 'where journalists, politicians and other curious, yet distinguished, visitors could observe the conflict' (Miles 2016, p.13). Not only this, but civilians also began to arrive on the Western Front in 1915, initiating the practice of seeking out war souvenirs. The first of many *Michelin* guides to the Western Front was published in 1917 (Miles 2016, p.13).

However, it was the ceasing of hostilities in November 1918 that prompted dramatic growth in the number of British visitors that were making their way to the Western Front. Battlefield tourism was hugely popular in the 1920s and 1930s. As the government had decided against the repatriation of the bodies of the fallen soldiers in 1915, families travelled to the former battlefields in order to visit the graves of their deceased loved ones

in droves (Miles 2016, p.14). Of the holidays to France in 1919 organised by British visitors, as many as 75% requested arrangements for visiting of war graves and battlefield sites (Lloyd 1998, p.68). In the seven months leading up to January 1920, the aforementioned *Michelin* guide published 850,000 copies of its Western Front guidebook. This popularity was relatively consistent until the outbreak of the Second World War, despite other factors such as the Great Depression affecting the financial feasibility of the journeys. It was not until the 1980s that significant numbers of visitors were again traveling to Flanders. In the early 1970s there were 50,000 annual visitors, but this increased to 250,000 in 1984. According to Todman (2005, p.68), this surge can be explained by a rise in the popularity of family history and genealogy. As widespread knowledge of, and direct familial connections to, the First World War fell away, touristic practices provided a route to learning about the war that is both accessible and enticing (Pennel 2018, p.90; McCartney 2014, p.305). This growth continued, and by 1991 six tour companies were offering a total of 200 battlefield tours annually; by 2004, this number had grown to 1000. In an interview with *The Times* in 2003, David Bartlett, the founder of Bartlett's Battlefield Tours cited the dramatic growth of interest in family history as the driving factor behind the continued boon of popularity, stating that 'every village in Britain has a genealogy society now' (The Times 2003). Todman (2005, p.70) claims that this growth in interest and visitation in a conflict that was now beyond the realms of living memory, denoted a transition of the First World War into a key element in what he termed as 'heritage culture', in which the British public sought an emotional engagement with the past.

The centenary of the First World War again provoked a spike in growth in the visitation to the Western Front. In that period, as many British tourists were visiting areas such as Flanders and the Somme as they ever have. The number of commemorative tourists in West Flanders, as collected by Westtoer (2021), grew dramatically, from a pre-centenary range of 327,000 to 359,000 annual visitors from 2006-2012, to a range of 447,600 up to the heights of 789,500 visitors in 2014. Roughly 50-55% of these visitors were international visitors, and again not all of these were British, however Britons do represent the majority, accounting for almost two thirds of the sample (Westtoer 2021). The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic following the centenary has made it difficult to make judgements about the

visitation numbers following the centenary. However, a substantial increase can clearly be seen in the centenary period.

An important facet of this visitation is the substantial increase in the number of school visits in this period. School trips to the Western Front were common in Britain in the 2000s, but this only grew with the coming of the 100-year anniversary of the breakout of the First World War. The centenary saw the creation of a government sponsored initiative called the Equity Travel First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme (FWWCBTP). Between 2014 and 2019, the FWWCBTP provided an ‘opportunity for a minimum of between two and four students and one teacher from every state-funded secondary school in England to visit battlefields on the Western Front’, allowing 8-12,000 teachers and young students the chance to visit the battlefields (Pennel 2018, p.84). This initiative aimed to ‘support greater awareness and understanding of the contemporary significance’ of the First World War, both in the young students and the teachers who would take their experiences back to the classroom (Malan, Lale-Demox & Brady 2019, p.29; Rowley 2023, p.14). This targeted teacher development aimed to facilitate educators in the development of their own bespoke educational packages, and further tours of the battlefields for future cohorts. Initiatives like this, combined with an already substantial flow of school trips to area, meant that in 2019 Westtoer (2021) recorded that 58% of all recorded British tourists in West Flanders were school visitors. This dramatic number has prompted an increase in studies that look at the effectiveness of these trips and their place in the memoryscape of British remembrance (Pennel 2018, 2020; Rowley 2023).

Visitation to Ypres and other areas of the Western Front has changed dramatically over time, in number, purpose and meaning, yet it has remained a popular form of tourism. Not only has its popularity shown consistency, but as we will see in the collected data later in this thesis, so has the perceived cultural value. Indeed, understandings of such value were central to the centenary celebrations in the UK.

1.3 The Centenary and Brexit

In June 2016, right in the middle of the four-year centenary of the First World War, the British public voted to leave the European Union, a divide that had been felt by some

since the close of the Second World War. The political-intellectual establishment in Britain were affected significantly by the 'wave of deconstruction (radicalism, populism, socio-economic strife and ideological upheaval)' that emerged in Germany in the inter-war period and in postwar France (Claval 2019, p.65). In Britain it was felt that the distinction widened with the emergence of London as 'one of the three major cities in the world' as a result of globalisation (Claval 2019, p.65). Britain maintained strong global connections to its colonies through the commonwealth and, unlike its European partners, had successfully resisted German invasion throughout both world wars. For many voters in 2016 the choice of remaining in the Union represented better economic prospects, yet it also meant an increased risk of terrorism (which would supposedly be reduced with a reduction in immigration), erosion of British sovereignty and general harm to 'Britain's cultural life' (Edwards 2021, p.25). In the 40 years since the inception of the EU, the economic and cultural development of the UK has diverged significantly from many of its continental counterparts (Claval 2019, p.65).

The Brexit campaign and fallout encouraged the British public to think about their position relative to Europe. They were forced to confront the issue of their sense of nationality and sovereignty in the face of a European Union and whether they wanted to be a part of the European project at all. Just as Brexit served to define the divisions between Britain and Europe, in many ways so did the centenary.

The centenary was a wide-ranging and high-profile event and there is not the scope to cover all aspects of it here. Instead, I will focus briefly on three aspects that are particularly important for this study. The first aspect is the decentralised nature of the commemorations, the second is the civil-military tensions felt during the period and the third concerns new memorial practice and its focus on loss and suffering.

In Britain, the centenary of the First World War was marked by an array of commemorative activities. As mentioned earlier, school excursions to the Western Front, but also documentaries, museum exhibitions and art installations all attempted to encourage the public to reflect on and engage with remembrance of the conflict (McCarthy 2016, p.505). Not only were the celebrations broad in scope, but they were also met with substantial support from the public, demonstrating the emergence of what Quinault (1998) terms the 'cult of the centenary'.

Prior to the centenary period, in 2012 the Prime Minister David Cameron announced that £50 million would be available for the 100-year anniversary of the beginning of the war in 1914. Todman (2016, p.522) claims, however, that this number is at least £100 million, far more than any other nation, save 'Anzac-obsessed Australia'. Most notably, the Heritage Lottery Fund 'awarded more than £70 million to First World War related projects' in the 5 years leading up to May 2015 (Todman, 2016, p.522). This substantial funding was part of the centenary plans that Cameron termed 'a truly national commemoration' (Cameron 2012). He continued to express his expectations for the centenary, and the creation of 'national' moments similar to those expressed during the Olympics, or the Diamond Jubilee, whilst warning against any misrepresentation of 'the complexity and unpleasantness of the past' (Kidd & Sayner 2018, p.70; Cameron 2012). These sentiments were part of a broader impetus from academics towards the official commemorative agenda that encouraged the avoidance of 'reductive essentialisms' and the broadening of perspectives surrounding the First World War (Kidd & Sayner 2018, p.70).

An important aspect of the Heritage Lottery Fund spending, however, was that independent, nondepartmental bodies were tasked with carrying out the majority of the projects. These institutions undoubtedly worked towards their own varied priorities and agendas. This allowed a decentralised model of spending, and therefore, of 'centenary making' (Todman 2016, p.523). As a result, the lack of a clear national vision in terms of the funding and activities has enabled what Todman (2016, p.523) names a 'swirling cultural blizzard' that passed many completely by, whilst serving to allow 'the already fascinated to confirm their existing beliefs'. Whilst this may be a slightly pessimistic outlook on the concept of decentralised national commemoration, the point remains that, whilst the government may have had a clear aim and a coherent narrative in 2012 and in the lead up to the centenary, they did not overtly control its execution wholesale. Therefore, the output of this varied funding lacked a single clear direction. Despite the national framing established by Cameron, the government failed to both produce the outcome they had advertised, while equally failing to acknowledge the important multinational context of the conflict.

Individual installations, such as the *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* display of ceramic poppies at the Tower of London and subsequently at different locations around the UK, were met with framings that repeatedly resorted to problematic nationalist

essentialisms (Kidd & Sayner 2018, p.79). Attitudes that are congruent with antagonistic memories of the First World War blunted the critical potential of these installations. As described by Kidd & Sayner (2018, p.71), a clear tension emerged between a 'persistent national framing and a parallel impetus to diversify the focus of the commemoration'. The centenary in Britain, therefore, despite its importance and scale of funding, continues to present a fragmented and distinctly layered form of commemoration, which was unable to confront problematic nationalist or antagonistic messaging still present in the popular British memory of the First World War (Mycock 2014, p.161).

Similarly, there were tensions between 'the perceived historical significance of the event' and the 'desire of the government and armed forces to underscore the national importance of remembering – celebrating even – service in the armed forces' (Jeffrey 2015, p.564). Due to the importance of the First World War in British remembrance culture and the view of military personnel, it is difficult to hold a clear position on the first issue without acknowledging its ramifications for the latter. The centenary took place in a period, as will be explored more thoroughly later, in which there was a continuing debate surrounding the legitimacy of military deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan (Jeffrey 2015, p.564).

Britain, as a post-imperial nation, finds itself at a crossroads where its society requires a recalibration of a number of national narratives in response to the 'societal division over the Brexit referendum' (Sörgel 2021 p.187). An effective official commemorative agenda established before and during the centenary could have been an effective tool in the rebuilding of British identity with its new place outside of the EU. However, as shown above, this did not occur: it was a fragmented attempt to establish a national commemoration that was limited by its diversification, rather than embracing the potential strengths of multi-vocal storytelling.

Continental European experiences of the centenary were very different from those in Britain. Whereas in the UK nationhood and national identity were emphasised by political leaders, European leaders placed their focus on aspects of remembrance that were transnational, peace-focused and drew people and nations together. For example, Emmanuel Macron, the French president, stressed the importance of Franco-German relations and the joint role of the two nations 'at the core of a united Europe' (Le et al. 2021, p.4). The German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, highlighted the same issues, participating in a

number of ceremonies with Macron, reasserting the importance reconciliation for peace and for Europe (Le et al. 2021, p.6). Luciana Radut-Gaghi (2021, p.42) has also demonstrated the role of media discourse in Europe during the centenary in 'designing common features in Europe and common aspirations of belonging'.

Experiences of the centenary in Europe and in the UK were notably divergent, which indeed reflected more long-standing divergence in terms of commemoration of the First World War. In venturing to Ypres, British tourists are voluntarily entering this alternative memory context. Whilst Ypres is certainly influenced by and somewhat representative of British remembrance culture, it is ultimately a home for European modes of memory. This nexus provides a unique commemorative experience for British visitors, a mixture of comfortable, established narratives and a European experience that may be alien to them.

Some of these aspects of European transnational memory, however, can be seen in the British centenary. With the centenary came a new movement for memorialisation in Britain (Harvey 2016, pp.107-8). New sites of memory or activities of remembrance were created that 'seek[ed] to affirm the significance of the war for contemporary society' (Wilson 2018, p.234, Jeffrey 2015). At these events and in these spaces, people were invited to experience and feel the impact of the First World War, bearing witness to the 'sense of loss, suffering and dislocation wrought by the war' (Wilson 2018, p.134). This pain, this loss and suffering, is the focus for large-scale memorials and small-scale commemorative plaques alike, emphasising themes of bereavement and mourning. Wilson (2018, p.234) suggests that this focus 'reveals how these new memorials are concerned with contemporary issues regarding identity across Britain', rather than being rooted in 100-year-old history. Just as the monuments constructed in the 1920s provided a sense of meaning and solace for the bereaved, those being constructed in the modern era serve the needs of the contemporary population, reflecting meaning for contemporary society. The construction of new monuments, spurred on by the centenary, ensured that the First World War was granted another iteration of memory, another layer of social framing. Through reiteration, commemoration stays relevant, continuing to bear meaning for modern society (Winter 1998). Later in this study I will explore how the material memorial culture of the First World War in Britain continues to be adapted to contemporary issues of British identity. I will determine how the civil-military relations and conceptualisations and justifications of war

are underlying themes in the tourist experiences and how those experiences cause British visitors to reflect on the roles of different actors in war and conflict.

Arguably, since the national myth of the First World War has long focused on loss, death and pity, these expressions of bereavement and mourning are not entirely new, nor is their 'function and use within identity politics' (Wilson 2018, p.245). These primary themes, discussed here by Jeffery (2015) and Wilson (2018), of loss, suffering and displacement continue to act as important basis for the redefinition of social, moral and political identities. However, they are also key tenets of transnational and cosmopolitan approaches to memory, a conceptualisation of memory that eschews traditional antagonistic ways of thinking about the past. As I will demonstrate, this approach is particularly significant for the In Flanders Fields Museum, so that British visitors find themselves confronted there with an alternative framing of the conflict that potentially both connects and remains dissonant with its framing in the British context.

Additionally, the factors that divide the British and European experiences of the centenary are primarily state-led. The variance in official commemorative agendas, leads to a variance in experiences. However, as Elisabeth Le (2021, p.242) has demonstrated in her Lexicometric analysis of 3 popular newspapers in Britain, France and Germany during the centenary, there was a common absence of European transnationalisation in relation to First World War memory. Le (p.241) points to the fact that in all three nations, the three publications that are inherently pro-European, needed to 'follow and reflect what was happening in their respective national contexts', which limited their ability to present a transnational picture of memory for the First World War. Any cultural interchange takes place mainly at the inter-state level, between official and dignitaries, whereas 'ordinary citizens' are permitted to exchange views within the national context (Le 2021, p.242). In Le's (2021, p.242) study the national divisions between the papers did not lead to a marked difference in the reader experience. With the aforementioned aspects of the British centenary and this understanding, there are clearly factors at play during this period of time in Britain that point to a move towards a European style, cosmopolitan remembrance. However, there are also aspects that vehemently suggest the opposite. This study will attempt to uncover if and how transnational remembrance is being experienced by British

visitors in Ypres. It has been highlighted at the centenary, as have many issues with the First World War, but how does it manifest in the everyday visitor experience?

These three aspects of the centenary (the move of the UK government away from a single, state-driven and designed, national remembrance, civil-military tensions, and the emergence of key tenets of transnational and cosmopolitan memory in the European context), may cause some to question the British public's adherence to their traditional definitions of national memory. In combination with the euro-scepticism perpetuated by Brexit, the failings of the official commemorative agenda, the emergence of a number of transnational and cosmopolitan aspects of memory during the centenary and developments in the British civil-military relations give the British public a lot to consider when reflecting on the First World War. These themes will run throughout this study, and as a result will be discussed in the following section outlining the research questions.

1.4 Research Questions

In this study, I will be asking the following research questions. First of all, I am asking in what ways are British tourists prompted to reflect upon their own national identities in Ypres? This question aims to scrutinise how, in an arena of extra-territorial heritage (Beaumont 2009, 2016), the layered framings of Britishness impact tourists' views of their own national belonging, contemporarily and in relation to the First World War? These views will be understood in relation to the dual context of Brexit and the centenary, the former of which raised questions about the relationship of Britishness to Europe, and the latter of which promised a unified narrative but ultimately failed to deliver a 'truly national commemoration' (Todman 2016, p.523; Mycock 2014, p.161). Being encouraged to embrace a unified national narrative that the fragmented centenary celebrations have failed to embody may leave British visitors with some ambiguity as to what 'British' memory is. At the same time divisions driven by Brexit have left the nation in need of a recalibration of national narratives. The relationship between individual and nation is not only an important aspect of memory of the First World War in its own right, but it is also a significant framing for any discussions of transnational remembrance.

Secondly, how are British tourists negotiating transnational memory during their time in Ypres? Whilst one case study in this project will be more representative of transnational memory than the other, it will later be established that transnational memory is present at both sites, and in fact most remembrance sites in Ypres. In the UK the official commemorative agenda for the centenary foregrounded the idea that First World War remembrance was carried out in the service of nationhood and should be celebrated with a 'truly national commemoration' (Cameron 2012, Jefferey 2015, p.562). In Europe however, British tourists encounter an altogether different commemorative culture that emphasises peace and cooperation, perhaps prompting them to consider these aspects of memory in relation to their own national experience. This question will investigate how the British visitors are interacting with, reflecting on and integrating understandings of transnational memory into their own view of the conflict. My study will explore what aspects most resonate with British visitors' experiences, allowing the respondents to highlight what they thought was important and what aspects of their experience stood out to them.

Finally, the third primary research question asks how British visitors in Ypres are reflecting on civil-military relations and justifications of war. This question aims to uncover an underexplored aspect of the visitor experience at British remembrance sites. My study investigates contemporary visitor understandings of the role of the armed forces in Britain and the impact this has on the way they view, and therefore commemorate, the fallen of the First World War. Similarly, visitors were often prompted during their commemorative experiences to reflect on justifications of war, both contemporary and historical. The public's understandings of the role of the military and of the role of individual soldiers were critical to these reflections. The centenary highlighted an underlying issue that has been growing in the UK for decades, one that was found during the course of this study, to be present in British tourist experiences in Ypres.

My research questions can therefore be summarized as follows:

RQ1 - In what ways are British tourists prompted to reflect upon their own national identities in Ypres?

RQ2 - How are British tourists negotiating transnational memory during their time in Ypres?

RQ3 – How are British visitors are reflecting on civil-military relations and justifications of war during their time in Ypres?

1.5 Structure

This thesis will follow a relatively simple structure. Firstly, the introduction has explored the importance of Ypres as a research setting, the development of British tourism in this area and considered the importance of the centenary celebrations in British remembrance of the First World War. It has laid out the argument that will be presented throughout the thesis, identifying key research questions and presenting the appropriate context and concerns.

This will be followed by the literature review, which will examine a number of research areas and traditions, presenting appropriate theoretical backing for the ideas and identifying key insights that will be carried forward into the data analysis. In this review the fields of Memory Studies, Heritage Studies, Museum Visitor Studies and Dark Tourism will be navigated, as well as a focus on the development of memory of the First World War.

Next, the methodology will detail how the research was carried out. In this section, I will aim not only to provide a justification for the case studies and research methods that were utilised, but to establish my own epistemological approach to the project and to scrutinize the difficulties that arose during the research process. This will allow the reader to best understand the research journey that this thesis represents.

Then the first of two data analysis chapters will focus on the In Flanders Fields Museum and the experiences of its British visitors. After an analysis of the permanent exhibition, and a brief exploration of the key theoretical underpinnings, the analysis breaks down the questions posed to the visitors during their interviews into a small number of categories. A number of thematic aspects of the visitor experience will be evaluated, culminating in a more detailed understanding of British tourists' interactions with and understanding of the transnational memory on offer at this site. A number of key aspects of the visitor experience identified at the In Flanders Fields Museum will carry over to the second analysis chapter.

Here, it is tourist experiences at Tyne Cot Cemetery that will be subject to analysis. After investigating the history, construction and maintenance of the cemetery, and again highlighting some key theoretical concepts important to this chapter, the data analysis will take a similar form to the first analytical chapter. However, a new aspect of the visitor experience will be given more focus in this section: one that emerged, unexpectedly, during the data collection itself. Building on the visitor interactions with nationalities, both their own and others', and the potential for transnational commemorative experiences, this chapter will highlight the importance of civil-military relations and justifications of war for the British tourist experience in Ypres.

In my conclusion, I will reflect on the findings established in the analysis chapters and their place in the established research traditions that were detailed in the literature review and methodology, summarising my research findings in relation to the research questions posed in the introduction.

2. Literature Review

This literature review chapter will address the academic fields that serve as the theoretical base for this project. Important theoretical tools and concepts will be discussed from a number of fields, each with a unique and insightful position and perspective. First, however, there will be a brief discussion of First World War memory in Britain and its associated academic literature, following on from the details mentioned in the introductory chapter.

In the introductory chapter of this thesis, the history of British visitation to the Western Front was outlined and there was some analysis of the importance and execution of the centenary celebrations. Here I will build on this and provide a frame of reference for the reader in terms of what British memory of the First World War means. This will outline the importance of First World War remembrance in Britain and look at some aspects of the centenary as examples of popular forms of remembrance. The primary focus, however, will be on the popular 'myth' of the war that has become so established in the UK.

The first theoretical field to be considered is memory studies, which deals with the interplay between memory and culture, including consideration of the roles of individuals, smaller and larger collectives, and institutional actors including governments, as well as the relevance both of the nation-state and 'transnational' memory trends. Scholars have discussed the importance of social framings, in many forms, on the development and maintenance of memory (Halbwachs 1980, 1992). This academic field is the primary source of inspiration for this project: it was during my undergraduate history degree at that I was first introduced to the concept of memory and collective memory. Ever since, the ways in which people today interact with the history that I was so passionate about offered an interesting and inviting form of research.

Heritage studies, the next field to be discussed, is valuable to this study as it focuses on the role of heritage institutions as well as paying attention to the experiences of heritage tourists and visitors. These concerns have led to the development of a number of useful theoretical tools for understanding the visitor experience, especially in the cases of heritage tourism where emotion and affect play a significant role. The study of dark tourism has developed in parallel with the field of memory studies, but has focused on issues of supply

and demand in a touristic context, in which different scholars underlined the importance of visitor motivations vs the role of dark tourist sites in attracting visitors. Again, in dealing with these contrasting approaches, the field has managed to develop its own theoretical base.

The fields of memory studies, heritage studies, and the field of dark tourism clearly have overlapping concerns. Taken together, they help me to develop a nuanced investigation of the visitor experience. The keywords that they utilise may differ, as well as their methodology or research conventions, but in many ways the core issues are very similar. Visitor experiences at heritage sites, sites of memory and sites associated with death and mourning, at home and away, prompt people to reflect on their own identity, negotiating a number of overlaying factors and framings that determine their view of themselves and their process of meaning making.

Museum visitor studies, however, finds its origin in a research tradition that is far more positivistic, focusing on empirical studies of visitor behaviour and the characteristics of museums. Modern museum visitor research has embraced the usefulness of qualitative research methods, with scholars from a range of ontological perspectives contributing. Whilst the other academic fields mentioned above provide complex theoretical bases for the considering the visitor experience, museum visitor studies has a robust methodological base that can be used for a wide spectrum of research styles.

2.1 British Memory of the First World War: Myth and Memory

The First World War is the most commemorated conflict in British history (Hanna 2009, p.7; Wilson 2014, p.43). All of society was touched by a conflict that affected the inhabitants of almost all villages, towns and cities. Small shrines on street corners were made permanent during the 1920s with memorials crafted from stone and bronze (Hanna 2009, p7). This ‘public organisation of private grief’ meant that the public memory of the First World War on Britain was closely associated with death (Hanna 2009, p.7). The conflict altered the way that everyday citizens thought about war, and in fact the world. After its conclusion, ‘no thinker or planner, no politician or labour leader, no writer or painter – could ignore its historical importance’ or frame their thought in way that would have been possible before the war (Hynes 1992, p.ix). It was a radical force for change in both society

and 'consciousness'. So much so that the discontinuity between the years preceding and following the war was so stark that it became part of 'English imaginations' (Hynes 1992, p.ix).

Not only did the First World war have a lasting impact on thinking in Britain, but it has also established the precedence for all memorial and remembrance culture since (King 1998, p.13). Remembrance practices established following the war are still present today. Immediately after the war a wooden cenotaph was erected at the centre of Whitehall in 1919. The symbolic empty tomb was replaced by the stone version the following year, that remains today. The service of remembrance held annually at the cenotaph has been broadcast every year since 1923, first on BBC radio, the televised since 1937 (Hanna 2009, p.7). Observing the two-minute silence is widespread even a century on, with many organisations observing the custom each armistice day. Following the Second World War there was a regression in the adherence to interwar remembrance practices as customs such as the two-minute silence became less often practiced. It was not until the 1980s that memory practices like the silence returned to their previous prominence (Hanna 2009, p.10). Much like the popularity of battlefield visitation, the popularity of these practices only increased throughout the 1980s and 1990s. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the traditional two-minute silence was more widely observed than at any time since the 1930s (Hanna 2009, p.10). This popularity continued through the centenary, where large public displays captured the public's attention. The earlier mentioned installation titled 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red' featured 1,888,246 ceramic poppies 'planted' in, and cascading down from the window of, the Tower of London (London 2022, p.10; Kidd & Sayner 2018, pp.1-2). As Bette London (2022, p.10) commented, 'it was a theatre not so much of war, as of the war's memorialisation; as the ever-present poppies signalled'.

In Britain, the Western Front dominates conceptions of the First World War. The intensity of the violence has caused this front to become widely accepted as a symbol of suffering and tragedy (Hanna 2014, p.110). An emphasis on the role of British soldiers as victims has persisted in contemporary memory of the war. A number of published works, including Alan Clark's *The Donkeys* (1961), propagated the idea that incompetent generals damned the soldiery to death and suffering (Hanna 2014, p.111). The contrast with the clear morality of the Second World War only further damned the view of 1914-18 military

leadership. Field Marshall Haig had, by the 1960s, assumed his role as the ultimate villain of the First World War. His character was pilloried by a number of historians, as well as in a stage production (and later film production) *Oh! What a lovely war* (Hanna 2014, p.111). These assumptions have dominated British conceptions of the First World War and have been foundational in the creation of the popular 'myth' of the war in Britain.

In order to understand tourist experiences it is important to first establish what the general understanding of the British myth of the war experience is and how it came to be. This myth has its origins rooted in the multi-vocal emotions and events of inter-war Britain. In time, some voices have faded, and others grown ever stronger; as Todman (2005, p.221) states 'the tune we now hear uses the same notes, but it sounds very different to that of 1918. A single melody has emerged and all the voices now audible sing along to it.' In Britain, during the 1930s a memory culture was emerging; however these understandings were obliterated with the onset of another global conflict. Therefore, it has become the orthodox understanding that the modern British myth of the First World War had its origins in the 1960s in reaction to nuclear war and cultural radicalisation. Todman (2005, p.221), however, suggests that the shift towards a narrative of 'stupidity, futility and slaughter' was much more gradual. He traces this development throughout the course of the twentieth century and the growth of temporal distance between new generations and the conflict. Arriving in 1998, Todman (2005, pp.xi-xii) encapsulates the modern British war myth and continues to demonstrate how Britons, at large, think about the First World War:

Britons in 1998 also shared a clear set of ideas about what the First World War meant and what it had been like, ideas which enabled commentators across the political and social spectrum to discuss the war in shared terms. The war was depicted as a tragedy and a disaster. In 1914 the nations of Europe had stumbled into a struggle that no one really wanted, sparked off by a murder in the Balkans that had little relevance to Britain. In response to their country's call to arms, a generation of eager young Britons joined up to fight a war they didn't understand. They marched off to France and Flanders, leaving behind an idyllic Edwardian age that would never be recaptured. Once there, they fell under the command of a group of incompetent commanders, asinine aristocrats obsessed with cavalry. Safely ensconced miles behind the lines, these generals were unable to grasp the realities

of the new style of warfare they were facing. Their men were stuck, for four years, in the most appalling conditions, living in trenches scraped into the ground, surrounded by mud, rats and decaying corpses. Time and again they were thrown forward in ill-conceived assaults that achieved nothing. They were destroyed almost to a man; those who survived going over the top were crippled, went mad, or were shot by their own side for desertion. [...] Their sacrifices had accomplished nothing. They came home to unemployment and destitution. Worse still, twenty years later another war, spawned from the legacy of the first, ravaged the world again.

The essential function of the political myth is that it offers a coherent vision of society, with a collective purpose and an established hierarchy of understandings and facts (Reszler 1981, p.216; Acanfora 2021, p.978). The power and importance of this myth lies not in its historical accuracy, but rather in 'its efficacy as a mobilising force for masses and individuals and in its capacity to generate faith' (Acanfora 2021, p.978). This myth creates a consensus around its own ideas.

The myth of the First World War in Britain, as described above, permeates representations and understandings of the conflict across Britain. Despite the designs of state agents of memory, such as the CWGC, to portray a unifying national sacrifice, the approach of many Britons to the conflict conforms more closely to Todman's description cited above. This will be demonstrated in Chapters 4 and 5 with the demonstration, by the visitors, of the continued importance of the British national myth in their understanding of the First World War. As mentioned earlier, however, this has markedly changed over time. Just as facets of the national myth change, so do the real visitor experiences. Not only do visitors to remembrance sites such as war cemeteries experience changes in memorial culture, in commemoration and remembrance, they form them.

This is the background with which many of the British visitors in this study will conceptualise the First World War. In order to analyse their experiences, understanding their frame of reference is key. How will these ideas align or differ with the themes with which they are presented in Ypres?

2.2 Memory Studies

2.2.1 Development of the Field

Since the early 1980s the interplay between memory and culture has become a key issue of interdisciplinary research; the natural sciences, humanities and the social sciences have been brought together as historians, psychologists, sociologists, literary scholars and neuroscientists work on the concept of memory (Erll 2008, p.1). There has been a significant growth in publications across these disciplines since the late 1980s that focus on specific family, social, religious, or national memories. This growth has been labelled as a 'memory boom' and has been attributed to the postmodernist turn in the humanities and social sciences (Gensburger 2020, p.70). Although there has been growth among a number of disciplines, it is amongst Historical Studies and the Social Sciences, in which the foundations for interdisciplinary memory studies were laid, where the most active forms of memory research can be found (Erll 2011, p.38). The increasing salience of the concept of 'memory' in academic research led to the founding of the *Memory Studies Journal* in 2008. The emergence of this new journal recognised and consolidated these studies into an emerging field; one that examines the functions and forms of representing the past through an array of disciplinary traditions (Roedinger & Wertsch 2008, p.9; Radstone 2008, p.31). Similarly, there have been a number of handbooks published: in the same year as the founding of the *Memory Studies* journal, *Cultural Memory Studies* edited by Astrid Erll (2008) was published, followed by the *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies* edited by Bill Schwarz (2016), and *The Routledge Handbook of Memory and Place* (De Nardi et al. 2020). Additionally, according to Fortunati & Lamberti (2010, p.127) memory studies has come to play a pivotal role in the reformation of traditional approaches to cultural, sociological, historical and political issues.

The powerful quote from Michael Roth highlights the importance of memory and as such the need to study it: 'in modernity memory is the key to personal and collective identity... the core of the psychological self' (Klein 2000, p.135; Roth 1995). Or as Sue Campbell suggests, memory is 'the ethical grounding on which our sense of identity is forged' (Brown 2008, p.264; Campbell 2008). Another factor that has driven the expansion of contemporary memory studies is the increased importance attributed to specific historical events in the public sphere. The most powerful impetus for the growth of interest in memory, identity and trauma throughout the twentieth century has proven to be the

Holocaust, which has given rise to a so-called 'era of the witness' (Clarke & Wawrzyniak 2019). The Holocaust is often understood as one of the worst catastrophes of human history and as such draws interest from scholars and the public alike. The First and Second World Wars are the other major areas of interest for a large number of memory scholars. The prominence given to these conflicts, at least in Western European society, has prompted researchers to ask questions about the function of these memories and about the institutions, discourses and media that shape them.

The interdisciplinary nature of the field allows a wide range of research traditions to come together and perpetuate the concept of memory, exploring it in new and novel ways. Furthermore, the prominent position in the scholarly lexicon that memory has enjoyed is, in part, due to its flexible range of meanings, allowing the concept a higher degree of accessibility (Cubit 2007, p.5). A wide array of research methods is also a result of the range of disciplines that are active in memory studies; from historical discourse analysis and archival work to rigorous experiments in psychology and neuroscience (Roedinger & Wertsch 2008, p.18).

However, there are also a number of issues that arise from the nature of the field, if indeed it can be accurately described as a coherent field. First, as the dynamic concept of memory gains new meanings among different disciplines, it is in danger of conceptual stretching. In other words, as it comes to have a number of different meanings, its salience in its primary function can be lost (Sartori 1970). Subsequently, there is a critical demand for a systematic, theoretical base for the discipline (Roedinger & Wertsch 2008, p.19). A systematic and rigorous set of methodologies that can allow a wide range of analysis on a single theoretical base are important for the consolidation of the field. However, as Roedinger and Wertsch (2008, p.18) have argued; 'memory studies is too broad a field to have overarching theories to unify and attempt to explain the huge number of phenomena of interest'. This proves especially difficult with the growing difficulties arising from the fragmentation of the field, along disciplinary lines. According to Segesten and Wüstenberg (2017, p.479), the constituent fields themselves and their perceived rivalries and the threats posed by a 'newcomer to the established academic institutions' are institutional obstacles.

Any attempt to summarise the field in a general survey is going to be undoubtedly bounded by the home discipline of the author, and will soon become outdated (Cubit 2007,

p.3). The field has few forums for exchange across disciplinary and regional borders, limiting its coherence. However, institutions such as the journal *Memory Studies* are filling important roles for the community (Segesten & Wüstenberg 2017, p.475). Whilst problematic and diverse, the field is yet to implode, and as such the potential problems that are brought about by the interdisciplinary nature of the field shape the research that is carried out in the name of memory and are key to our understanding of the concept as it moves forwards. As Sutton (2009, p.300) stated: 'memory studies requires both experiment and ethnography, so as both to home in on processes at single dimensions, and explode out to attend to interaction and spread'.

Maurice Halbwachs is seen as the founding father of the field (Gensburger 2016, 2020, p.69 Schwartz & Schuman 2005, p.183). He invented the term 'collective memory' and has paved the way for the vast number of memory scholars that have followed (J. Assmann 2010, p.109). Halbwachs demonstrated that, similarly to our general consciousness, memory depends on communication and socialisation, and that it needs to be considered in this social context. In short, the presence of communities and social groups enables and shapes the construction of memory. Halbwachs was careful to separate his concept of 'collective memory' from the realm of transmissions, traditions and transferences, which has come to be identified under the term of 'cultural memory' (J. Assmann 2010, p.110). The institutional character of cultural memory does not apply to Halbwachs' concept of collective memory, which we now recognise to be 'communicative memory'. Communicative memory cannot be found in symbols, but in the everyday communications and interactions of a people (J. Assmann 2010, p.111). Although modern scholars understand the importance of cultural memory in memory research, Halbwachs' distinction is respected in the divide of 'cultural' and 'communicative' memory (J. Assmann 2010, p.111). As the horizon of communicative memory is constantly shifting, there is a historical timeline in which objects of cultural memory are fixed (Verovšek 2020, pp.211-3). The other 'founding fathers' of memory studies are seen to be, especially amongst cultural historians, as Pierre Nora (1989) and Jan Assmann (1995). Nora negotiated the relationship between memory and history in his infamous 1989, *Les Lieux de Mémoire*. He stated that 'the passage from memory to history has required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalisation of its own history' (Nora 1989, p.15). Assmann brought to light the idea of an epochal threshold,

characterised by the importance of the transmission of remembrance into institutionalised forms, in order to perpetuate memories after the death of contemporary witnesses (Meyer 2010, p.178). In other words, this characterises the transition from a shared 'communicative' memory to an institutionalised 'cultural' memory.

Among historians especially, Jay Winter's (1995, 2008, 2010) work on 'sites of memory' has been important in the understanding of remembrance sites and what impact they have. 'Sites of memory' are places where a collective shared knowledge of the past is expressed by a group of people in a public activity. This shared knowledge is often based on a group's sense of distinctiveness and unity (Winter 2010, p.312). Those that visit these sites, such as memorials, cemeteries or museums, inherit meanings that have previously been attached to the site, but they also add new meanings, in effect keeping the memory alive (Winter 2008, 2010). As Winter (2008, p.62) states:

The critical point about sites of memory is that they are there as points of reference not only for those who survived traumatic events, but also for those born long after them. The word 'memory' becomes a metaphor for the fashioning of narratives about the past when those with direct experiences of events die off. Sites of memory inevitably become sites of second-order memory, that is, they are places where people remember the memories of others, those who survived the events marked there.

New backgrounds, recollections and biographies recontextualize the same facts with each act of remembrance, meaning that each time the past acquires new meanings (Fortunati & Lamberti 2010, p.128). Collective memory is not a stagnant measurable thing, it is an ongoing dynamic process, constantly reshaping; Jeffrey Olick states that 'collective remembering, rather than collective memory, would be more accurate' (Olick 2007a, p.42; Olick 2007b). In the early 2000s, there was a tendency among sociologists (Olick 2007a, 2007b) and anthropologists (Berliner 2005), among others, to treat memory as an object that a group could possess. Olick's intervention reminds us, however, that memory is a process, and asks researchers to pay attention to the social forces shaping that process.

2.2.2. Identity and Influence

The Holocaust, in particular, has been very influential in the ways that scholars select new approaches to nationhood and the construction of a nation's past (Confino 2010, p.79; Beaumont 2015). The origins of the 'memory boom' can be found in the cultural repercussions of the Holocaust (Winter 2000). Winter (2000, p.58) has noted that there were numerous social, cultural and economic factors that have come together to form the impulse behind the 'memory boom', preferring to consider a multiplicative impetus for the boom, as 'the impulses behind it add up to a whole greater than the sum of its parts'. Examples of this include a 'postmodern culture of nostalgia' and the rise of a 'heritage industry' (Winter 2000, p.58). There were undoubtedly a plethora of reasons for the existence and magnitude of the 'memory boom', however, the cultural repercussions from the major international events of the twentieth century were the focus of much of the scholarship dedicated to memory studies. Just as memory studies has influenced the manner in which academics view these events and the effects they have had on nations, and peoples, the events themselves have influenced the way that scholars build their understanding of memory studies. Therefore, they are intimately connected.

Winter (2000, p.58) points to the significance of the Holocaust as a preeminent European memory that has in turn shaped understandings of the First World War:

A second concentric circle of remembrance surrounds both the Holocaust and the Second World War. It is the commemorative moment which preceded it, addressing some of the complex issues of victimhood and bereavement during and after the First World War. Taken together, these intersecting commemorations litter the calendar.

Approaches that seek to recentre marginalized voices have often mobilized the notion of trauma. The Holocaust is one of the most stark examples of the importance of individual and collective trauma in the construction of culture and memory. These approaches stem from the theory of 'cultural trauma' that has emerged from the post-war writings of the Frankfurt School (Kansteiner 2004). According to J.C. Alexander (2004, p.1), '[c]ultural trauma occurs when members of a collective feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness', in turn marking memories and altering their continuing identity in irrevocable ways. This cultural trauma is the result of a collective's own sense of identity being intruded on by a specific

acute discomfort (Alexander 2004, p.1). This understanding of cultural trauma follows the development of the understanding of trauma on an individual level. There are a number of symptoms such as guilt, depression and anxiety, however the key for trauma is that it overwhelmingly impacts the victim's ability to cope with their experiences (Aydin 2017, p.125; Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995, p.60). In this view, culture and society can be traumatised similarly to an individual.

The transgenerational transmission of cultural trauma is linked by the inability of the experiencing generation to effectively mourn their losses (Volkan 2001, p.87). This continued collective trauma 'can pose a direct assault on the continuity of individual and social identity' (Aydin 2017, p.129). Subsequently, the struggle to find meaning, place blame and identify remedies is passed beyond the original witnesses (Eyerman 2011; 2015; Eyerman et al. 2017, p.14). This impacts their understanding of their own identity; it shapes the way in which the 'traumatised society' considers its own history, with the filter of the 'collective image of the past' (Hunter 2019, p.13). According to Alexander (2004, p.24) as members of the wider public experience and participate in the pain of others, new avenues for social incorporation are provided. Trauma theory has played a vital role in the development of Holocaust studies and has in turn informed a number of memory scholars due to the continued importance of the event in European memory especially (Felam & Laub 1992; Cento Bull & Hansen 2016, p.395).

Trauma theory has a range of critiques, however. For example, proponents of agonistic memory highlight problematic treatments of perpetrators and victims. To them trauma theory allows for a construction that places all victims as trauma sufferers and, as such, unable to recount their past, being stripped of their ability to act as agents (Kansteiner 2004, p.214; Cento Bull 2016, p.396). Wulf Kansteiner has been a significant voice for critiques of trauma theory. He states that 'the writings on cultural trauma display a disconcerting lack of historical and moral precision' (Kansteiner 2004, p.193). This leads to a conflation of the experiences of spectators, victims and perpetrators and effectively aestheticizes violence. However, the notion of trauma, individual, collective and cultural, in memory is one that has to be considered. This is especially true for conflicts such as the First World War in Britain, where there was a significant traumatic impact on culture and society that also affected non-combatants.

Just as critics of trauma theory highlight a de-politicisation of perpetrators and victims, the same critique can be found in debates surrounding the role of sites of memory and remembrance at large. These debates centres on the potential of these sites as an instrument of the state, used to establish the dominant state narrative of remembrance. The CWGC is an organisation that holds a royal charter, having been established in response to the needs of a grieving nation (Longworth 1967). The British state created this body, and with its charter, it remains firmly connected to the state and is iconic for British remembrance as a whole. Therefore, understanding the importance of state influence at a site such as Tyne Cot will be significant for this thesis, especially in contrast with the In Flanders Fields Museum. The second case study is inherently connected to the state and can be seen to be representative of remembrance of an entire nation. Whilst the first is also government funded, however, by the city government rather than the state government. It represents Ypres and Flanders more than it represents Belgium as a whole. How these differences manifest in the visitor experience will be an important finding.

The first school of thought with regard to the nation state's influence on collective memory follows Nora's (1989) view that public events and commemorative sites are very useful for political elites in an attempt to legitimise their rule. This approach, noted by Winter (2008, p.63) as the 'top-down' approach, emphasises the role of sites of memory as a materialisation of political and national identity (Mackenzie 1986, Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). Memory is considered in terms of its use as a political tool, and its effectiveness for myth making and nation building, and 'binding its citizens into a collective national identity' (Ashplant et al. 2000, p.7). The importance of commemorating a shared national history in the process of nation building is highlighted in this scholarship, as the ritual commemorations of specific historical events assist in the selection and articulation of what is considered important by the public (De Regt et al. 2017).

This approach to remembrance and sites of memory has been challenged by a second school of thought. This school proclaims the importance of the way that these sites and the commemorative acts that are carried out at them hold potential as an arena in which dominated groups can publicly contest their subordinate status (Winter 1995; Gregory 1994). This alternative interpretation highlights the 'multi-vocal character of remembrance' and the potential this allows for new groups with novel causes to 'appropriate older sites of

memory' (Winter 2008, p.64). By de-centralising the history of commemoration, Winter's approach aims to recognise the idiosyncratic, regional and local character of these remembrance activities. This 'bottom-up' approach supplements the 'top-down' approach, ensuring that commemorative sites in provincial cities, small towns and villages considered in addition to those in the 'centres of political power' (Winter 2008, p.64). This approach is well encapsulated by Winter's (2007, p.370) assertion that 'collective memory is a term that should never be collapsed into a set of stories by or around the state.' Similarly, Kurchinski et al. (2015) note, in relation to the First World War, that many analyses of the construction of memory suffer from a disproportionate focus on official state commemorations. Nevertheless, attempts to de-emphasize the state and the agendas of elites have been criticised for their tendency to 'de-politicise... a field in which political commitment and scholarly research were inextricably combined' (Radstone 2008, p.32).

Understanding where power lies, and how it is exerted by varying actors, is important in all aspects of memory. Each site of memory has a myriad of influences at any one time. In better understanding these influences, we can better understand the nature of the tourist experience. Both debates highlighted above demonstrate the importance of identity and influence of commemorative agendas.

2.2.3. Transnational Memory and the Agonistic Critique

The focus of memory studies on inherently international events such as the Holocaust and the two world wars has also led to a reconsideration of the potentially simplistic understanding of culture and cultural memory as a territory-based nation-centred concept that drove memory studies earlier in its development (Feindt et al. 2014; Wüstenberg 2020, p.5). This has led to the 'third phase' of memory studies, which has attempted to build on a more fluid understanding of cultural memory that is not confined within national borders. This new understanding opened the door to new research agendas and called in to question some of the existing conceptual limitations of the field (Wüstenberg, 2020, p.7). With this 'third phase', however, critical voices in the field have warned of the potential for memory studies to fall into an additive empirical exercise, adding case studies from a wider range of national contexts, that fails to achieve much theoretical

improvement (Feindt et al. 2014, p.24). Historically, the concept of memory has been 'more practiced than theorised' (Confino 2010, p.79; Roedinger & Wertsch 2008). At every stage of modern memory studies there have been calls for further theoretical advancement (Klein 2000; Roedinger & Wertsch 2008; Olick 2008; Feindt et al. 2014). This began with the understanding of the split between history and memory. Klein (2000, p.129) argued at the turn of the millennium that the relationship between the two was that of antonyms, rather than the synonymous nature in which they were being used at the time. He warned against using 'public memory' or 'collective memory' in place of simply saying 'history', as there was no theoretical basis and the only purpose was to 'soften our prose, to humanise it, and to make it more accessible' (Klein 2000, p.129). Remembrance shapes the historic analogies that aid individuals in their interpretation of contemporary events, and as such they are connected but not synonymous (Khong 1992; Verovšek 2020).

The main feature of the 'third phase' of memory studies has been the emergence of 'transnational memory'. Since the dawn of the new millennium there has been a growing new convergence in the field of memory studies: 'global memory studies' (Erll 2011). Erll (2011, pp.61-2) has identified three strands of this research: the first, 'global memory studies', asks what happens when present day forms of memory are presented with the effects of contemporary cultural and economic globalisation; the second, 'transcultural memory' considers the transnational, translocal and the global circulation of mnemonic practices, media and contents, focusing not on static sites, but 'the dynamic movement of memory across time and space'; and the third focuses on increasing scope of the field in general, attempting to turn memory studies into a research field that can truly be considered international. All of these strands identified by Erll (2008; 2011) challenge the 'methodological nationalism' that has characterised much of the previous literature.

Of the three strands identified by Erll 'transcultural' or 'transnational memory' has emerged as the most prominent in the field. A 'transcultural lens' allows researchers to consider the 'many fuzzy edges of national cultures of remembrance', and the multitude of shared sites of memory, with colonialism, trade, travel in addition to other forms of cultural exchange being responsible for these connections (Erll 2011, p.65). For transnational memory the concept of 'travelling culture' or 'travelling memory' is essential. This concept embraces the transmission of memory across entities, persons, borders and contexts (Olick

2016, p.50, Clifford 1992). And as such transnational memory has been defined as ‘practices or narratives of remembrance that extend across or beyond borders’ (Wüstenberg 2019, p.4). Sites of transnational memory are still grounded in concrete locations; however, the practices of transnational agents and cross-border linkage give them their transcultural meanings (Wüstenberg 2019). This apparent contrast between the ‘travelling’ nature of memory and its ‘groundedness’ is what fascinates a number of scholars about the field (Wüstenberg 2019, p.371). But in reality, there is a change in perspective in transnational memory; moving away from static sites of memory to ‘understanding the locatedness or remembering through relational conceptualisations of *place and space*’ (Wüstenberg 2019, p.374). Another important process in the creation of transnational memories has been migration. Inglis (2016, p.145) states that as populations become ethnically mixed to a higher degree, and individuals’ sense of what constitutes ‘home’ somewhat diminishes, they are more ‘heavily involved in the creation and experience of trans-national memories’. This links to Creet’s (2011) argument that migration has displaced location as the primary condition of contemporary memory. This is not to downplay the importance of national contexts in negotiations of identity and memory, both in the nation one has arrived in and the one left behind (Inglis 2016, p.151). However, they have *a* role in this process, not *the only* role.

The concept of cosmopolitan memory has emerged to denote a particular kind of transnational memory, assumed to be shared by individuals in different international contexts. Cosmopolitanism is a term that ‘refers to a process of “internal globalisation”’ (Levy & Sznajder 2002, p.87), whereby increasing levels of globalisation and the interconnected global media, among other factors, create new cosmopolitan memories that are shared by people living in different nations. The media have long been recognised as ‘significant mnemonic devices’ that can link a community with a certain historical experience. Therefore, a global media can form the basis of ‘globally shared memories’, in turn, contributing to ‘the construction of a postnational and cosmopolitan memory’ (Kyriakidou 2017, p.93.) This process allows for new ‘epistemological vantage points and emerging moral-political interdependencies’ (Levy & Sznajder 2002, p.87). Inherently, these developments highlight the concept of a ‘shared consciousness’ across linguistic and territorial borders, raising moral questions that are hard to ignore (Levy & Sznajder 2002,

p.91). These cosmopolitan memories 'enable us to identify the components and problems of a culture and politics of globalised memory' (Baer & Sznajder 2015, p.329).

The 'transnational turn' in memory studies proves promising for the field as it provides new perspectives on the larger cultural and political contexts in which memories are selected, contested and constructed, are stimulated (A. Assmann 2014). Rather than assuming the emergence of globally shared memories, as in the cosmopolitan model, this new research is allowing scholars to consider global memory dynamics without forgetting the continued salience of national and local categories (Wüstenberg 2020, pp.3-7).

The concept of agonistic memory has developed in reaction to what its authors have perceived as the increasingly depoliticised and cosmopolitan nature of memory studies. Cento Bull & Hansen (2016, p.393) highlight the tendency of scholars of cosmopolitan memory to prioritise a 'depoliticised cosmopolitan mode of remembering' and to underrepresent the significance of neo-nationalism and its connections to specific territories (Kansteiner 2002, p.189). Additionally, they do not consider the foundational role that memory itself accounts for in the popularity of these movements (Cento Bull & Hansen 2016, p.393). The search for the clear boundaries of a community, a separation between 'us' and 'them' remains an integral feature of society today as demonstrated partially by these movements (Bauman 2001; Bull & Hansen 2016, p.393). Agonistic memory does not promote the highly politicised antagonistic mode that is characterised by the 'Euro-sceptic neo-nationalist movements', it simply aims to highlight the inability of cosmopolitan remembrance to 'stem the growing success of the antagonistic mode of remembering' and 'address the experiences of many people who feel the pressure of socio-economic change' (Cento Bull & Hansen 2016, p.394).

The main features for practicing agonistic memory are stated as follows: (1) acknowledging the potential for evil amongst humans in specific historical and socio-political contexts, without resorting a dichotomous understanding of 'good' vs. 'evil'; (2) considering testimony of the bystanders, traitors and spies alongside as well as that of both the victims and most importantly the perpetrators; (3) allowing victims to remember the past in ways that promote and facilitate critical understanding, by promoting empathy and recognising the importance of emotion; (4) reconstructing the socio-political struggles, historical contexts and the narratives that began the path to mass atrocities (Cento Bull & Hansen

2016, p.399). In essence, this leads to a contextualising of the significance of conflict, and a redefinition of simplified understandings of the roles of helpless victims and monstrous perpetrators (Cento Bull et al. 2019). This allows scholars of agonistic memory to work towards the construction of a 'conflicting consensus', where opposing political ideas and projects compete through their alternative accounts of the past (Cento Bull & Clarke 2020, p.5). Agonistic memory offers an alternative opposition to antagonistic memory in European museology. For this project the criticisms put against cosmopolitan memory help measure the effectiveness of the In Flanders Fields Museum. Only by judging it against its criticisms can the effectiveness of the exhibition truly be understood. As such, agonistic memory is becoming an increasingly important consideration for any discussion of First World War museology. It also allows projects like mine, that analyse visitor experiences at cosmopolitan memory sites, to speculate on how aspects of the visitor experience might be different with input from different memory regimes. Ultimately, both cosmopolitan and agonistic memory scholars wish to combat antagonistic interpretations of the past, but with different approaches. As such, more value can be found considering them together.

To conclude, although memory studies is a field that allegedly struggles to find a central identity, it has shown itself to be remarkably innovative and responsive to societal developments. There are number of key debates surrounding the purpose of memory itself and the role that national histories and cultures play in the development of memory. As alternative approaches such as agonistic and multidirectional memory have come to challenge the cosmopolitan paradigm of contemporary memory studies, they have encouraged further useful discussion, especially in terms of the use of 'trauma theory' in memory studies. The wide scope and interdisciplinary nature of the field prevents coherence as one discipline. This has not prevented profitable academic work from being carried out under the name of memory studies.

These concepts of transnational memory and cosmopolitan memory will frame a number of the interactions that British tourists will experience in Ypres. As memory breaks traditional barriers, travelling across boundaries, borders, peoples and contexts, it can be experienced and shared by a larger group of people (Olick 2016, p.50). Consequently, more points of view are brought to the discussion, enriching the discussion and widening its base. For many Brits, the significant transnational nature of memory in Ypres, will differ from their

domestic experience. The criss-cross of varied perspectives, in close proximity and on full display is, for many, a novel experience. Similarly, the moral messages inherent to cosmopolitan memory that are especially clear at the In Flanders Fields Museum may contrast their experiences in similar institutions in the UK. As demonstrated by the theory of 'cultural trauma' and the debate surrounding the politicisation of sites of memory, identity and influence are two key factors for memory. A transnational space poses new questions of visitors' national identity, asking them to experience framings of the past that may be more challenge those they are used to the in the UK. How the visitors feel that their experiences align to, or react with these framings, whether they recognise them or not, speaks to the debate between cosmopolitan sites such as the museum and their critics, allowing for the application of alternative concepts in these spaces, such as agonistic memory. Ypres as a site of extra-territorial British heritage, contrasted with the centre of peace-focused cosmopolitan thought expressed in the In Flanders Field Museum, which is itself surrounded by an arena of transnational commemoration, will raise new issues for British visitors. For these and many other reasons, the British tourist experience in Ypres is a unique experience. From this point of view, a research project focusing on these new experiences can generate unique findings, and that is what this thesis hopes to achieve. Without an understanding of these concepts, any analysis of visitor experiences would lack a strong theoretical foundation.

2.3 Heritage studies

2.3.1 The Emergence of Heritage Studies

Heritage studies has a relatively recent claim for a disciplinary status (Albert 2013b, p.9). The field only emerged as a cohesive area of study in the 1980s. This is not to say that the concept of heritage or many of the underlying assumptions and understandings of the field arose exclusively in this period. Rather, heritage studies as an academic concern also responded to the political and thematic discourses that had been produced by the heritage practitioners following the adoption of the UNESCO conventions in 1972 (Albert 2013a, p.3). Heritage studies is a field that is very much, at least for one of the humanities, embroiled in professional practice, as well as just academic debate. This is due largely to the further

recognition of the economic and political benefits of the articulation of heritage. Since the 1980s, the field has experienced a dramatic growth in academic publications. However, just as importantly, the term 'heritage' is used by a plethora of institutions and practices alongside its use in academia (Carman & Sørensen 2009, p.11). Whilst the concept of heritage is used productively in both the professional and academic spheres, there is a growing divide in the field; as Logan (2013, p.43) suggests 'we may be moving towards a dual system based on conflicting rather than complementary approaches.' As the academic sphere has moved further into the realm of what has become known as critical heritage studies and the politically engaged work associated with it, heritage in the professional sphere has tended towards an increased emphasis on skills training and the functional needs of the World Heritage System (Logan 2013, p.43; Waterton & Watson 2015, p.6). With the republication in 2010 of Patrick Wright's seminal work of the 1980s, *On Living in an Old Country*, the author stated that:

A lot of attention has gone into the question of 'heritage' in the years since those books came out, much of it quite detached from the broader political questions that interested me and more concerned with questions of museum management. I don't object to the practical or 'vocational' orientation, and yet some of the 'heritage studies' courses I've seen appear to systematically uninterested in the cultural ramifications of their subject matter (Wright & Davies 2010).

This suggests a split between cultural scholars and those that prioritise 'heritage management', which becomes even more evident when the reality of heritage practice is considered: the practice of heritage is not necessarily shaped by academics in lecture theatres, but rather by government policy and the practice of heritage professionals (Dull 2013). It may be better to consider them separately as 'critical heritage studies' and the heritage industry itself.

The roots of 'heritage' as a distinct intellectual engagement are difficult to define. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there was a 'qualitative shift in attitudes to the past' that followed the development of heritage management and practice (Carman & Sørensen 2009, p.13). Carman and Sørensen (2009, p.13) identify this timeframe as the stage that heritage emerged as an expression of the responsibilities and interests of civic societies. Heritage no longer belonged to individuals; it was instead held in trust. The

contours of heritage surfaced following the Second World War, however it was not until the 1980s that it became clearly and explicitly identified (Carman & Sørensen 2009, p.13). The 1972 World Heritage Convention informed and motivated much of the interest that emerged in the following decade, prompting the growth of social awareness and the understanding of heritage as a source for continuously developing identities has been transformed since the 1970s (Albert 2013a, p.3).

In 1985 and 1987 a number of key texts were published by historians concerning the role of the past in the present. Lowenthal's *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985) outlined the evident discrepancies between the efforts to preserve places and objects from the past and study and dissemination of their history. Emphasising these anachronisms, he highlighted the fact that political and economic imperatives often came before attempts to understand the past (Carman & Sørensen 2009, p.13). Wright's journalistic collection *On Living in an Old Country* (1985) criticised the growth in Britain of 'heritage' as a tool for nationalistic politics, highlighting 'an image of universal middle-class respectability grounded in property ownership and free enterprise' (Carman & Sørensen 2009, p.18). These seminal works allowed for the possibility of critiquing uses of the past by modern actors that are in service of promoting their own ideals. In 1987, Hewinson went a step further with his *The Heritage Industry*, analysing 'the emergence of 'heritage' as a response to economic and political decline' (Carman & Sørensen 2009, p.18). Hewinson (1987), questioned the heritage industry for presenting a version of Britain's past that was too 'safe', one that was free of political unrest or class divisions in the dominant arenas for heritage presentation – the industrial landscape and the country house. In the wake of these key publications the main themes of the emergent field of heritage studies were recognisable by around 1990 (Carman & Sørensen 2009, p.20). By this point, the individual case study was already emerging as the distinctive trope of the field. The highly particularistic and nationalistic discourse that surrounds 'heritage' tends to limit the effectiveness of generalising and comparative approaches. Accordingly, case studies with a singular focus, in a single context assumed their position as the norm for the field (Carman & Sørensen 2009, p.20). The first dedicated academic journals to heritage studies again emerged in the 1990s: in 1992 the *International Journal of Cultural Property*, and in 1994 the highly reputable *International Journal of Heritage Studies*. As the academic field developed, its influence on professional practice

grew accordingly; by the late 1990s institutions that were responsible for heritage practices began to take note of the academic debates (Carman & Sørensen 2009, p.21). These early advances were often greeted with either institutional interest for the use of academic ideas for training and recruitment, or, alternatively, a general hostility to academia and its entry into the professional's work. Later however, the work of academics began to be valued by those in the professional sectors (Carman & Sørensen 2009, p.13).

Heritage studies is inherently a multidisciplinary field. As Watson and Waterton (2015, p.528) remark in their concluding thoughts from *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research*, 'heritage research has grown piecemeal over the last 40 years from a wide range of disciplinary sources'. This prompted Uzzel (2009, p.326) to name it 'the archetypal interdisciplinary study area'. Many of the key texts were written by historians (Lowenthal 1985; Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983) or geographers (Ashworth & Larkham 1994; Ashworth & Howard 1999). As a result, heritage studies enjoys the usual benefits of interdisciplinary work such as methodological and epistemological variety that come with varied points of view (O'Brien 2008; Uzzell 2009). Conversely, the familiar problems associated with interdisciplinary study are present such as differences in language (jargon), differences in approaches towards research and it can often be time consuming (O'Brien 2008; Uzzell 2009, p.327). As such, the methodological and theoretical basis on which the field is built is subject to debate in terms of appropriateness, as Uzzell (2009, p.332) states: 'heritage studies is a rich and stimulating area of research because it requires a multidisciplinary and, even better, an interdisciplinary approach. This is its great strength but also its potential weakness.'

It was widely stated that heritage studies is insufficiently theorised and as a result heritage practice can be naïve in its cultural or political significance (Witcomb & Buckley 2013, Waterton & Watson 2013, 2015, Holtorf & Högberg 2015). As a result, there have been attempts to provide a more effective theoretical framework and the field has grown to appreciate a number of complex, less Euro-centric, cases of heritage practice. Firstly, on theorisation, there have been valiant attempts to contribute theoretically to heritage studies and the 'global cultural commons' (Arizpe 2000, Kirshenblatt-Gimlett 1995). Additionally, some theoretical tools have been imported, such as Mobilities Theory from sociology and Actor-Network Theory from both sociology and the natural sciences in order to develop

heritage theory (Waterton & Watson 2013). However, by this point the damage was already done in terms of the split in the discipline. In the 1990s and early 2000s, the absence of an appropriate theoretical toolkit and a resultant tendency among academics to 'privilege the insights of the critic above any need to understand institutional contexts' (Witcomb & Buckley 2013, p.566) prompted a wider discussion in which scholars attempt to allow academics and practitioners to work together productively. However, the conclusions produced by such discussions are often that more theoretical work needs to be done. Whilst key scholars such as Waterton & Watson (2013) have proposed theoretical advancements, such as their framing theory, they also acknowledge that that same problems still exist in the field at large (Witcomb & Buckley 2013, p.572). As a result, theories are imported from the home disciplines of the authors, which in essence is not a problem. However, these theories need 'to be fully interrogated and adapted prior to their adoption' (Waterton & Watson 2013, p.547). Some of these theoretical bases do not facilitate institutional practice into their models, which undoubtedly results in friction with some heritage practitioners. There has been a similar problem with methodologies. As Carman & Sørensen (2009, p.23) have noted:

Having developed as an in-between subject and with its practitioners working in academic institutions, governments and 'in the field', heritage studies, despite its long gestation and substantial and complex scope, has paid scant attention to methods. This does not mean that methods have not been used, but rather that methods borrowed from a range of disciplines have been imported and the forms and relevance assumed rather than critically assessed.

This has both challenged researchers and facilitated new lines of enquiry that may not have been possible with a central, established set of methodologies (Andrew 2009, Uzzell 2009). Overall, however, it has contributed, alongside the lack of a solid theoretical base, to divide the discipline.

2.3.2 Critical Heritage Studies and the 'Discursive Turn'

The field has been through a paradigmatic change with the advent of 'critical heritage studies.' Understandings of the multi-faceted role of heritage have developed; the

use and protection of heritage is believed to have a potential for shaping identities and building peace (Albert 2013b). Additionally, with the widespread academic shift towards accounts of globalisation, there was a reorientation of not just heritage studies, but cultural studies at large, to 'continue research on the dynamic forces of economic, political and cultural exchange' (e.g. Hannerz 1992; Appadurai 1991; Koch 2013, p.169). There has been progress in the consideration of the past of the working class and disenfranchised groups (Smith 2006; Smith & Waterton 2009), the role of heritage in the process of reconciliation and peacebuilding (Ashworth & Graham 2005; Moore & Whelan 2007), and the process of the reconstruction of cultural heritage following violent conflict (Baille 2009; Viejo Rose 2007). However, the most important encouragement of 'critical heritage studies' has been the turn of significant research to different communities, identities and heritages. This reflects wider socio-political shift towards a politics of inclusion and representation and away from the nineteenth century vision of a homogeneous nation-state (Dull 2013, pp.4-10).

In this increasingly globalised world, the regular reinforcement of ethno-national identities by heritage practice has been noted by a number of scholars (Tomlinson 1999; Labadi & Long 2010). The challenges of a large number of non-western indigenous and other minority peoples are now being applied to the methods of management of both natural and cultural heritage (Harrison 2013, p.8). At the same time heritage academics and practitioners have distanced themselves, increasingly, from a concern with the preservation of objects. Instead, the concept of heritage discourse has come to dominate the field. Harrison (2013, p.9) names this the 'discursive turn' in heritage studies. Ideas about heritage have undoubtedly been historically shaped by the socio-political debates raging in settler/colonial states such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US, between heritage managers and archaeologists and the indigenous peoples (Zimmerman 1998; Smith & Wobst 2005; Waterton & Watson 2015, p.5). Knowledge of these debates emerged in the 1980s with requests for the claims of returning ancestral remains from global museums (McNiven & Russell 2005, p.6). This brought issues of social justice and human rights and triggered 'new understandings of heritage, in terms of... power, ethics ownership and control' (Waterton & Watson 2015, p.6).

Following the 'discursive turn' the realisation that discourse and discursive practices have always been entwined with heritage has become apparent. Heritage as an entity needs to be constructed and constituted, it is not an objective thing waiting to be identified (Wu & Hou 2015, p.39). As a result, heritage discourse has material as well as conceptual consequences, in that it shapes the way that heritage is interpreted, conserved, constructed, identified, managed and used. Contemporary heritage conceptions around the globe are dominated by the Western 'authorised heritage discourse', to the point where this discourse has emerged as the 'universal truth' (Smith 2006; Wu & Hou 2015, p.41). The heritage discourses in non-western settings, although historically neglected, are now being explored by contemporary scholarship, most importantly by non-western scholars (Wu & Hou 2015, p.44). For example, Hou & Wu (2012) champion the use of discourse analysis in the exploration of Chinese heritage and the indigenous meanings it holds. It is important however to remember that a discursive approach to heritage is more than a critique; exploring historical and cultural heritage discourses and delineating how the past is utilised in a variety of cultural settings is more important than critiquing 'authoritative heritage conceptualisations and constructions' (Wu & Hou 2015, p.47).

Heritage interpretation, as defined by Silberman (2013, p.21), concerns 'the constellation of communicative techniques that attempt to convey the public values, significance and meanings of a heritage site, object or tradition'. This interpretation, as with all public endeavours, is key for the understanding heritage itself. In 1957 Freeman Tilden published *Interpreting Our Heritage*, which has since been the 'most important single source of the philosophy of heritage interpretation' (Silberman 2013, p.22). Tilden laid out six guiding principles that highlighted the connection between the visitor and the heritage and the unique role of the heritage interpreter in that context.¹ Tilden's principles were, whilst

¹ The six principles in full are as such:

- (1) Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
- (2) Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based on information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
- (3) Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical, or architectural. Any art is to some degree teachable.
- (4) The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
- (5) Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole person rather than any phase.

informative, 'more methodology than theory' and, as such, there have been contemporary challenges to Tilden's assumptions. Uzzel (1998) suggests that this view of heritage interpretation portrays the audience as an unquestioning receptor for the items of heritage, and that the audience will be easily persuaded and that an act of interpretation that follows the principles with vigour and ingenuity will result in its intended effect (Silberman 2013, p.22). As heritage studies has become increasingly globalised and culturally sensitive these issues become more prominent. The 'Tildenian' ideal of 'heritage' as a true good has been replaced with a recognition of the ongoing conflicts, both inter- and intra-national, over what can be considered as heritage, over ownership of heritage, and over its interpretation (Silberman 2013, p.23).

This has prompted Ablett & Dyer (2009) to propose the use of hermeneutics in order to understand heritage interpretation and its function within the wider field. This approach moves beyond the traditional concepts of one-way communications, positing two additional interpretive actions: first, the interpreter should relate the heritage in question to the experience or personality of the heritage consumer; and second, the active efforts of the consumer to interpret and understand the interpreter, and the interactions that they experience with their understandings of history and human nature (Silberman 2013, p.24). By moving beyond the concept of passive consumption, heritage interpretation transcends 'the confines of the tour and the site to become a form of discourse within the wider community' (Silberman 2013, p.30). The paradigm of heritage interpretation has shifted from a unilateral, hierarchical relationship to an ongoing public discourse. This conflict can also be seen in wider heritage studies as Urry (1990) criticised Lowenthal by stating that tourists at museums are socially differentiated and cannot be 'lulled into blind consumption by the "heritage industry"' (Urry 1990; Harrison 2013. P98).

Another important concept in heritage studies that is relevant for this thesis is that of Extra-Territorial Heritage, this refers to sites of national heritage that are not within the borders of the nation that recognises it. Joan Beaumont is the key scholar in the founding of this concept. She focuses on the role of Australian extra-territorial heritage largely from the

(6) Interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of 12) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program

Second World War. Beaumont (2009) identified Changi Prison on Singapore as one of these heritage sites. At sites such as Changi there is not a sense of transnational heritage, as 'heritage that is shared between two or more nations sits awkwardly between the pillars of sovereign control of national heritage and world heritage' (Beaumont 2009, p.300). At sites of extra-territorial heritage 'ownership' can often be a contentious issue. In this example, whilst the prison itself was in Singapore, was under the jurisdiction of the Singaporean government and occupied some place in their popular memory of the war and heritage planning, it is likely that Changi prison as a far more important site to Australians, as the site had become 'the focus of regular "pilgrimages"' for the POWs that were interred there (Beaumont 2009, pp.299-300). For nations such as Australia these sites are incredibly important as their sites of war memory are generally overseas (Beaumont 2015). The material heritage at sites such as these provide unique problems of management and definition, symbolically they are transnational, but as previously stated this is rarely the case (Beaumont 2016). The fact that an item of heritage is more connected to a people that live outside of where the item resides marks it as an item of extra-territorial heritage. Those who 'feel an emotional 'ownership' of it, have none of the controls and means of protection normally afforded by national legislation and political processes' (Beaumont 2016, p.355). This brings international diplomacy to the fore as intergovernmental cooperation is key for the effective preservation of these sites (Beaumont 2016, p.356). For British visitors, Ypres is full of national heritage sites. Everywhere they look they can find items of extra-territorial heritage. The potentially contentious nature of these sites has been managed by the cooperation between Belgium and Britain, with the former allowing the latter a significant remit for the establishment of its memorials and cemeteries.

2.3.3 Heritage Tourism

Tourist activity at heritage sites is often considered as heritage tourism and the significant economic impact of heritage means that this form of tourism has found itself at the forefront of the industry across the globe (Timothy & Boyd 2006, p.2). Scholars of this concept have been examining the ways in which tourists understand, participate in, and value items of heritage. Much of the existing research focuses on the interactions that occur at these sites and how that challenges the prioritization of the visual as a means to

understand visitor experience. Both heritage and tourism are fields that have long been considered inherently visual, typified by John Urry's work on *The Tourist Gaze* (1990; Waterton & Watson 2014, p.4). However, as heritage tourism increasingly becomes a globalised phenomenon, 'replete with a variety of experiences and cultural productions', it demands sophisticated forms of analysis (Waterton & Watson 2014, p.2; Jaworski & Pritchard 2005, pp.5-7). Waterton & Watson (2014, p.7) express this in their introduction, where they state that their work intends to take 'account of more recent thinking, in both visibility and performativity', in order to understand the 'sensual, emotive and embodied aspects of heritage tourist experiences.'

The process of 'meaning and sense-making' dominates contemporary research on heritage tourism. Experiences and exhibits are said to 'prompt and provide opportunities for reflection' and aim to 'facilitate the creation of identity' (Packer, Ballantyne & Uzzell 2019, p.107; Poria & Ashworth 2009, p.524). As Miles (2016, p.84) has stated 'heritage has the power to valorise the past and infuse it with new vigour.' Visitors are understood as using items of heritage in their construction of self-meaning, meeting their own needs and chasing their own agenda (Packer, Ballantyne & Uzzell 2019, p.107). In other words, the importance of the agency of the visitor follows the wider trend of the 'discursive turn' in heritage studies. This is an important development and brings the field into alignment with its close neighbours such as Memory Studies and Dark Tourism.

It has been long argued, in light of Resinger & Turner's (2003) Contact Hypothesis theory, that tourism is an important vehicle for social exchange that results in decreasing inter-group conflict, tension and prejudice (Poria & Ashworth 2009, p.522). Nevertheless, the fact that heritage attractions are purposed to either create or facilitate the creation of national identity, has to be considered. Just as they aim to inform tourists of their social belonging, and present and legitimise a particular ideological framework, it is important to remember that many of these heritage sites are maintained by donations and subsidies from the elite. This financing allows the elite to exhibit their own agenda, either directly or indirectly under the guise of philanthropy and preservation (Poria & Ashworth 2009, p.523).

A significant contention of the field is the role that heritage sites play in the theatre of both national identity and the growth of transnationalism or cosmopolitanism. Poria & Ashworth (2009, p.522) build on their understanding of the vested interests of the elite to

present heritage attractions as an obstacle to the development of understanding between social groups. They view heritage sites as a political resource, one that encourages divisions between 'us' and 'them' by displaying and entrenching social differences (Poria & Ashworth 2009, p.522). The ideas of national identity that these attractions present can lead to an increased feeling of security due to the very fact that 'by having identity a national will feel secure' (Pramanik et al. 2017, p.27; Botterill et al. 2016). The security provided by these messages and the idea of nationhood that they provide further provoke divisions and differences. By enhancing cultural identity and regional pride, a strong sense of national pride can be maintained (Pramanik et al 2017, p.27; Vana & Malaescu 2016, p.643).

However, since then, Packer & Ballantyne (2019, p.113) have found that war heritage interpretation does exclusively, have a narrow, nationalistic, focus. They present 'encouraging' findings from their analysis at the Gallipoli battlefields, which demonstrated that in their interpretation of the heritage attractions visitors often adopted a more inclusive perspective (Packer & Ballantyne 2019, p.113). This is not necessarily opposed to national identity and a sense of belonging, 'especially when the narrative depicts that country as one that values freedom, restraint and open mindedness' (Packer & Ballantyne 2019, p.113). Similarly, Jansen-Verbeke & George (2013, p.285) have suggested that as war sites transform into memorial landscapes, heritage attractions can become a 'driving force for sharing values for education... and for the passing on the torch of peace'. At Gallipoli, Packer & Ballantyne (2019, p.113), noted, crucially, an 'openness to difference' and the consideration of national, cultural and racial differences may characterize the experience of visiting these sites, alongside the 'reinvigoration of existing forms of national social solidarity.' Note the similarities here between this avenue of research and transnational memory in memory studies.

The scope of the 'discursive turn' in heritage studies has been expanded by analysing the role of emotion and affect in visitor experiences. This development has been championed most prominently by Laurajane Smith (2006; 2014; 2021) and Margaret Wetherell (2012; 2013). Their arguments are built on the developments discussed with heritage tourism, namely the idea that through interactions with sites of heritage visitors negotiate not only the surface level of the 'meaning of the past' but also the political efforts that aim to reconstruct or legitimise certain cultural narratives and values (Smith 2014,

p.125). However, rather than restricting this meaning-making to the discursive level, these authors argue for a consideration of role of emotion and affect in shaping the ways that visitors make sense of sites. In the introduction to their edited collection with Gary Campbell, Smith and Wetherell argue that emotion is 'historically and culturally contingent and bound up in power relations and politics' (Campbell et al. 2018, p.2). These authors use the terms affect and emotion as an avenue for inquiry in these tourist interactions. Carrying out data collection in places that can aptly be described as heritage sites, extra-territorial heritage, sites of memory and sites of mourning means that emotion is an important part of any visitor's experience. As such, this mode of understanding holds particular relevance to this study and will be discussed further in both analysis chapters.

An evolving field, with another split academic base, Heritage Studies has emerged from its 'discursive turn' and borne a number of important considerations for this project. Heritage interpretation allows for a more sophisticated understanding of individuals' interactions with heritage. Additionally, extra-territorial heritage has also come to prominence, considering the needs of visitors in a foreign nation both for the host and visiting nationalities. This concept is especially pertinent to this study, with Tyne Cot being a prime example of the phenomenon. Heritage tourism, however, is a development in the field that draws focus to the minutia of visitor interactions at sites of heritage. Wherein, ideas surrounding the construction of meaning and 'sense making' demonstrate the potential of heritage sites as arenas for cultural exchange; a conflicting, overlapping mesh of identities, nationalities and affiliations. In this pursuit the field has most closely aligned with the concept of social framings present in its close neighbour memory studies. Again, identity is at the centre of the academic pursuit, visitor experiences and the questions it raises about identity. These development in heritage studies not only provide us with the concepts to better understand this, but also a number of tools to unpack it. Visitor affect and emotion is one of these tools. Using this tool to unpack these experiences provides a novel avenue of inquiry and will prove to be an important aspect of the visitor experience throughout this thesis.

2.4 Dark Tourism

2.4.1 The Building Blocks of Dark Tourism

In its earliest conceptions, dark tourism was considered as a motivational category for tourists, who had ventured to a location with the desire for an encounter with death, either real or symbolic (Seaton 1996, p.240). In their seminal article Lennon & Foley (1996, p.195) proposed a trio of motivations for dark tourists; 'remembrance, education and entertainment.' Tourist motivation (demand) has been a foundation for dark tourism research ever since. However, in the monograph published by the two influential authors shortly after (Lennon & Foley 2000), the focus was not on motivation, rather the sites of dark tourism themselves (Supply) were analysed. The commemorative sites that were analysed represented a number of twentieth century tragedies and atrocities, reflecting two of the core assumptions of the book. Their first assumption was that validation was key, and as such dark tourism was inherently tied to the remaining memory of those who are still alive (Seaton 2018b, p.10; Lennon & Foley 2000). The second follows from this – events that were not contained in living memory do not 'posit questions, or introduce anxiety and doubt about modernity and its consequences' and as such could not constitute dark tourism (Lennon & Foley 2000, p.12). These assumptions consider dark tourism as a product of late modernity, and as such, explain the brief history of the research area (Seaton 2018a, p.10).

This attitude has proven pervasive in the field, as even 20 years after the emergence of the field a single monograph length history of dark tourism has yet to surface (Seaton 2018b, p.2). Until the 1990s tourism studies lacked a historical element in general, tourism history was seen as a 'Cinderella subject in tourism discourse' (Seaton 2018b, p.1). It was only in the 90s, as tourism became an established course of study in academic programmes, that sustained interest in the history of tourism studies was present. Consequently, there was a 'minor renaissance in tourism history', beginning with Towner's (1996) history of European tourism. Dark tourism works, scattered in both tourism and non-tourism journals (Seaton 2018b; Hartmann et al. 2018), have included historical content, yet it has not been consolidated, perhaps due to the fact that there are no scholars working exclusively with the history of dark tourism (Seaton 2018b, p.2).

The study of dark tourism has become a popular subject in contemporary academia, at the University of Central Lancashire's Institute for Dark Tourism Research has been founded, along with the publication of the *Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism Studies* (2018) and the launch of the journal *Current Issues in Dark Tourism Research*. There has also been significant enthusiasm for the subject outside of the academy, in July of 2018 a Netflix show named *Dark Tourism* debuted, seeking out 'the mad, the macabre, and morbid' across the world (Hartmann et al. 2018, p.269). As the research area becomes more established perhaps a much-needed full length historical study will arise and in turn answer the questions that Stone posed in 2013 (p.308):

What are the academic and conceptual origins of dark tourism? Is dark tourism simply the result of a creative research branding exercise by academics in an ever-challenging global higher education market? And, what are the consequences and contributions of studying dark tourism to broader society?

This is not to say that dark tourism scholars neglect anything that occurred before the twentieth century: pilgrimages to places of death 'have occurred as long as people have been able to travel' (Stone 2013, p.312). Subsequently It has always been an identifiable form of tourism, however the historically changing socio-cultural contexts have prevented, as of yet, the integration of these historical journeys into the theory of contemporary dark tourism.

The underpinning claim that dark tourism is an inherently post-modern idea has come under scrutiny. Casbeard & Booth (2012, p.2) identify a belief of the 'exceptionalism of the present' that is the foundation for this idea, this places post-modernity as its own distinct epoch, which separates itself from earlier historical periods. Similarly, Hartmann et al. (2018, pp.271-2) posit that the emotional attraction provided by sites of dark tourism are 'neither new nor culturally straightforward.' This post-modern framework can also neglect the psychological issues, on an individual scale, of the tourists, their motivations and their experiences as well as the managerial aspects of these sites (Light 2017, p.279). Whilst some subscribe to Lennon & Foley's assertion, most scholars do not, reflecting the general trend of post-modernism falling out of fashion (Light 2017, p.279). In a similar vein, the Western focus of Lennon & Foley (2000) has come into question, scholars have come to challenge this Eurocentric approach (Cohen 2018, p.157). Cohen (2018, p.159) has suggested that in the

literature thanatourism and thanatourist sites have become increasingly evident in emergent regions, for example, in South America (Wyndham & Read 2012), China (Tang 2014), Japan (Yoshida 2004), India (Verma & Jain 2013) and Africa (Werdler 2012, Strange & Kempa 2003). Throughout Asia, a number of thanatourist sites were established in the wake of major events in the twentieth century such as the Vietnam War, the Second World War, and the Cambodian atrocities (Cohen 2018, p.164). Whilst some of these memorials were created by Western powers for their own war dead, a significant number were constructed on the initiative of the Asian authorities and attract both national and international visitors. Yet, the literature for these dark sites remains unbalanced and scarce with focus largely falling on structure and history rather than their conduct and customs (Cohen 2018, p.164).

Although the terms dark tourism and thanatourism are often used interchangeably, there are important distinctions. Thanatourism is a specified concept that focuses on a specific encounter with death and the long-standing travel practices that accompany these interactions (Light 2017, p.279). Whereas dark tourism is more of an umbrella term that includes forms of tourism that are related to atrocity, crime, suffering or death (Light 2017, p.277). The terms were introduced in the same year; Seaton (1996) focused on thanatourism, whilst Foley & Lennon (1996) chose dark tourism and the theoretical and applied differences have remained. Moreover, both terms have not yet found universal acceptance and substantial bodies of tourism research that investigate sites of death and suffering do not recognise the importance of either concept (Light 2017, p.279). Some researchers remain unconvinced of the effective distinctions between heritage tourism and thanatourism and dark tourism (Light 2017, p.279).

Tourism studies, by and large, has left psychoanalysis aside as a tool for the interpretation of tourist desires and experiences and as such dark tourism consumption is seldom considered with psychoanalytical tools (Iliev 2021, p.968). According to Buda (2015, p.49), these are promising theoretical and methodological prospects. Critical social theories such as poststructuralism and feminism are influenced by psychoanalytic methodologies, and these theories, to some extent, influence the world of tourism. By utilising concepts such as free associations, (counter)transference and active listening during the research process in interpersonal situations, a deeper understanding of the methodologies of dark tourism and tourism studies in general could be achieved, it is claimed (Buda 2015, p.49). Other

disciplines such as geography have experienced a 'psychoanalytic turn', and whilst theoretical contributions of psychoanalysis are influencing tourism studies and dark tourism studies, as evidenced by the work of Podoshen et al (2015, p.325), Buda (2015, p.40) argues that it has more to offer in its methodological contributions.

2.4.2 Visitor Motivations – Supply vs. Demand

The understanding of the role of motivation in dark tourism, known as the demand-orientated perspective, continued to evolve with the beginning of the twenty-first century, whilst maintaining the 'hidden assumption' that the tourists' presence at sites related or connected to death reflects at least partly thanatouristic motives (Biran et al. 2011, p.822). Scholars such as Ashworth & Hartmann (2005) & Tarlow (2005) developed theories concerning visitation to dark sites. These theories emphasised the 'forming and developing of social and personal identities' that occur at these sites, and highlighted the curiosity and empathy that often drove visitors to the sites (Raine 2013, p.243). Additionally, a view, most prominently championed by Philip Stone, describes the individualistic nature of these dark visits and the chance it allows for tourists to consider their own mortality through interactions with the death of 'significant others' despite the impacts of a society that sequesters dying and death (Raine 2013, p.11).

Motivations research in dark tourism has come to understand the similarities that the field has with other research areas. These similarities come from the 'secondary' reasons for visitation, these are factors such as national identity, remembrance and curiosity, basically anything that is not the primary fascination with death. As Iliev (2021, p.971) states; 'the motivations for visiting places of death and suffering are very similar to those for participating in heritage/cultural tourism.' The emotions that dark tourism can evoke are not exclusive to this area, in other words there is significant overlap, which has prompted even further discussion (Iliev 2021, p.971). This is especially true due to the increasingly diverse range of heritage sites around the globe that host exhibitions and attractions the showcase death, even despite the protracted debates surrounding what may constitute dark tourism (Roberts 2014, p.10). For example, the question of pilgrimage and whether dark tourists can be classified as secular pilgrims has been asked. Collines-Kreiner (2016, p.1187) has

suggested that pilgrims and dark tourists share ‘modes of an emotional desire and quest to visit meaningful sites that lie beyond the regular tourist experience’, yet responses suggest that the experiences of the two groups are in no way homogenous and that they comprise separate subgroups (Ileiv 2020, pp.11-2). These changes in understanding have helped dark tourism to not be a ‘one dimensional’ endeavour (Podoshen et al 2015, p.325).

The ‘blunt categorisation of all war-related tourism as “dark tourism”’ has also come to be seen as a misconception (Stone 2013, p.312). This is especially true with the dramatic expansion of war-related tourism in the twentieth century, to the point where ‘the memorabilia of warfare and allied products... probably constitutes the largest single category of tourist attractions in the world’ (Smith 1996, p.248; Baldwin & Sharpley 2009, p.186). Scholars such as Vanneste & Winter (2018, p.443) have argued that Great War sites ‘point away from the dark aspects of death, and seek to enlighten and uplift.’ The reinvigoration of interest that Great War sites have experienced does not seem to move towards aspects of dark tourism, however, for the majority ‘it has tended to emulate some of the post-war pattern of pilgrimage and its notions of quiet respect, peace and remembrance’ (Vanneste & Winter 2018, p.443). Additionally, especially in the British case, the battlefields were promptly transformed, and the evidence of war was removed, which ‘reconstructed, smoothed and redeemed, enclosed and ordered’ the landscapes, the bodies interred in them, and the narratives that they represented. (Morris 1997, p.428; Vanneste & Winter 2018, p.448). In this process these mass graves took on a greater meaning and cultural significance and have been the bedrock for entire academic disciplines such as Memory Studies, in a way eclipsing their identity as a site of death, and becoming a site of nationhood, family and culture. As Light (2017, p.288) states, ‘the collective identity most closely linked to sites of death, tragedy or suffering is national identity.’

The supply approach, however, has proven to be the prevailing perspective in the discipline (Biran et al 2011, p.821). It emphasises the role of the spaces associated with death, or ‘deathscapes’ that the visitors find themselves in, and adopts a descriptive understanding. Lennon & Foley’s (2000) seminal monograph laid the foundation for much of the supply approach, by emphasising the importance of the sites themselves in the process of dark tourism. This is not to say that visitor motivations were ignored: Stone (2006, p.146) stated, ‘no analysis of dark tourism supply can be complete if tourist behaviour and demand

for the dark tourism product are not acknowledged.' He goes on to say that in order to systematically address the question of motivation, a structured and recognised framework of supply is crucial (Stone 2006, p.147). Typologies and 'shades of darkness' have been key features of dark tourism supply, beginning with Miles (2002) and his classifications between attractions due to their 'darkness'. However, the most significant has proven to be Stone's (2006) typology of dark tourism. He posits a continuum which at one end identifies sites of suffering and death as the 'darkest form of dark tourism' and at the other end, sites which do not hold the same emotional intensity and have a less direct focus on death, constituting the 'lightest' form of dark tourism (Light 2017, p.281; Stone 2006, p.157). This spectrum has a number of levels, is 'fluid and dynamic' and 'anchored by various, though not necessarily exclusive, product features and characteristics' (Stone 2006, p.157). Stone (2006, p.158) wished to use this framework as a foundation from which to properly study dark tourist motivation. However, this typology has not been universally accepted and has been subject to criticism due to its Western focus, as it is an 'inappropriate model for dark tourism in Asian contexts', as the relationship between the dead and the living differs significantly in non-western contexts (Light 2017, p.281; Yoshida et al. 2016).

Raine (2013) established that dark tourism typologies were not exclusive to supply-side research in her spectrum for the motivations of dark tourists. She suggested that the concept of 'shades of darkness' is not bound to the suppliers, it can just as aptly be applied to the consumer. This typology was built on the foundation of the work by Tarlow (2005), his theories of dark tourist visitation and the importance of 'forming and developing social and personal identities' (Raine 2013, p.243). Also, it follows the precedent set by Sharpley's work, which applies shades of darkness to the tourist (Sharpley 2005, 2009). Sharpley set out four metaphors of consumption; experience (autotelic-object action), play (autotelic-interpersonal), integration (Instrumental-object action) and classification (instrumental-interpersonal) and attempted to integrate them with a typology of dark tourism supply (Sharpley 2005, p.226). For Raine (2013, p.248), one end of the spectrum is represented by visitors who are characterised by their 'devotion', i.e. mourners and pilgrims, whilst at the other end of the spectrum we see passive recreationists whose engagement is 'incidental.' 'Devotion' reflects the spiritual and personal connections that visitors feel with the sites they are visiting, whereas those on the lightest end of the motivation spectrum do not

meaningfully engage with the sites and their visits are often impulsive and unplanned and as such are termed 'incidental' (Raine 2013, p.251).

Important scholars of the field have embraced the fact that dark tourism is neither an issue of supply nor demand, rather it is a product of the inter-relation of these factors (Sharpley 2005, p.9; Stone 2006, p.158). While the understanding of one factor is fundamental to the understanding of the other, their relative importance in terms of driving dark tourism is still a subject of debate (Stone & Sharpley 2008, p.575). Both approaches have been criticised for their inability to 'bring the heterogeneous variety of different behaviours and sites under a plausible, common banner' and their tendency to cause a swell in the literature with 'little conceptual unity' (Seaton & Lennon 2004, pp.74-78; Seaton 2018b, pp.11-12). A third approach has been identified, termed the 'integrated supply-demand perspective', perhaps most prominently championed by Sharpley's (2005; 2009) dark tourism matrix. However, this has yet to remedy the theoretical and conceptual divides that plague the field. The research tradition remains split along the supply-demand axis.

Biran et al. (2011, p.823) have proposed that an alternative approach should be developed, one that draws on heritage tourism studies. They suggest that it may allow a 'more meaningful understanding of tourist experiences at dark sites', specifically 'the multifunctional nature of sites presenting death' (Biran et al. 2011, p.823). Heritage tourism scholars recognise dark sites as a space for spiritual experience, educational experiences, and demonstrations of national identity; a space for mourning and remembrance as well as a 'random stop' (Biran et al 2011, p.823). This contrasts with the common descriptive approach that has been prevalent in dark tourism studies, which tends to overlook tourists, simply assuming their fascination with death, due to the continue dominance of supply perspectives.

2.4.3 Adaptations in the Field

The field has adapted in order to understand and integrate the importance of cultural and other experiences in the process of dark tourism in general. According to Stone (2013, pp.309-310), 'dark tourism exposes diverse cultural experiences of death and dying in a simple discourse', and in turn this allows it to offer a bridge with which to 'scrutinise modern

socio-cultural complexities of mortality, as well as examining the contemporary commodification of death and the dead.' Dark tourism scholars have come to recognise that sites of dark tourism are often heritage sites where tourists have a plethora of varying experiences, and as such, come away with diverging conclusions (Iliev 2021, p.975; Ashworth & Isaac 2015, p.321). This is reflected in the progression of literature in the field, where the entirety of the process is considered, with the various cognitive and emotional features in addition to a physical presence, and this generates new experiences (Iliev 2021, p.975). In Stone's (2013, p.309) words 'dark tourism offers a multi-disciplinary academic lens through which to scrutinise a broad range of social, cultural, geographical, anthropological, political, managerial, and historical concerns.' This can be seen at the battlefields of the great conflicts of the twentieth century, where Baldwin & Sharpley (2009, p.193) highlight the capability of the British public to experience a string of emotions due to the 'deaths of distant figures', and the propensity of the battlefields for exposing these emotions. Whilst some of the underpinning conceptions of the motivational aspects of dark tourism have come into question, significant research has continued that focuses on motivation and there are still calls for more work as the area has not yet been fully explored (Podoshen et al. 2015, p.325). Dark tourism today, in its darkest form, challenges not just the 'affluent white middle-class individuals' who dominate visitation, but rather also challenges the 'collective narratives of nation and of modernity'. The response of tourists to this stimulus must be considered, rather than just framing tourists' understanding of these sites as related to their own mortality (Walter 2009, p.52).

An example of the development of the field is the growth in recognition of the emotional complexity at play with battlefield tourism and pilgrimages (Baldwin & Sharpley 2009; Vanneste & Winter 2018). With the reinvigoration of interest in battlefield tourism, the visitors have 'tended to emulate some of the post-war patterns of pilgrimage and its notions of quiet respect, peace and remembrance', rather than a fascination with death (Vanneste & Winter 2018, p.443). Immediately following the First World War, battlefield tourists were diametrically opposed to the bereaved pilgrims, with the former accused of indulging ghoulish desires to experience places of death and at the time of trivialising the war (Vanneste & Winter 2018, pp.443-7). These early tourists were challenging the established taboos of the time for behaviour at sites of the war dead. However, over time,

with temporal distance and the development of visitation towards a wider form of pilgrimage, tensions have eased (Vanneste & Winter 2018, p.447). Modern organised tours and the presence of others in a 'pilgrimage' of sorts can be comforting and therapeutic for visitors, allowing them to reflect on a number of issues such as family nationhood and for some their own mortality. (Baldwin & Sharpley 2009, p.195)

New conceptual contributions have also reflected and contributed to this change; Engineered Orchestrated Remembrance (EOR) conceived by Tony Seaton (2018a, p.13) highlights the fact that dark tourism experiences are encounters with remembrance, a symbolic representation of death, not with death itself. The effects of this are time bound, memorial services are forgotten, gravestones are neglected, and obituaries are discarded. However, remembrance may be maintained or 'engineered and orchestrated... on a larger, more durable scale' (Seaton 2018a, p.14). Public memorials in Britain dedicated to the fallen from the two world wars are maintained, promoted and inventoried by the government. As a result, dark tourism encounters will happen incidentally or accidentally, and as such attempting to effectively distinguish between tourists that engage with dark sites as a motivated, premeditated choice and those that do not, is not the best way to consider dark tourism interactions. Further distinctions are needed, and Seaton (2018a, p.16) proposes a categorization in terms of 'premeditated voluntary, involuntary, accidental, and incidental encounters.' This approach questions the long-assumed supply and demand paradigm that is inherently linked to death. Instead, EOR involves three protagonists; orchestrators and engineers of remembrance, those who encounter the representations (attractions), and the 'represented dead' who have a 'shifting afterlife they have no control over' (Seaton 2018a, p.17).

In conclusion, dark tourism emerged in the 1990s as a form of study that focused specifically on tourist motivations to and the nature of tourist sites that emphasise death, either real or symbolic. The developments in understandings of tourist motivations at dark tourist sites, known as the demand perspective, have emphasised the 'forming and developing of social and personal identities' (Raine 2013, p.234). The nexus of identity navigation has again been highlighted in a similar manner to the fields of study mentioned before it. The repeated identification of this identity negotiation only further highlights the importance of its examination in this study. At sites of heritage, sites of memory and sites of

death this negotiation has been shown to be a key part of the tourist experience. The case studies selected for this project embody aspects of all three of these places, Tyne Cot especially.

Tourist experiences at these sites are recognised to be individualistic and unique, whilst occurring in a social group that undoubtedly impacts these experiences. 'Secondary' motivations such as asserting feelings of national belonging, remembrance and curiosity are viewed alongside the fascination with death that defines the field. Whereas the supply approach highlights the role of the sites themselves, placing visitors in an evolving 'deathscape', this has led to the development of a typology and a spectrum of 'shades of darkness' to be established, in which varying sites are rated due to their emotional intensity and focus on death. Tyne Cot cemetery sits at the very extreme of this spectrum, visually quantifying the scale of loss for its visitors. This loss provokes a sincere emotional resonance for many of its visitors. It will be important in this project to understand the differences between the tourist experience of a site such as the museum and the cemetery. Whilst the museum strives to show people the scale of suffering and death, being surrounded by the fallen offers a unique tangibility.

2.5 Museum Visitor Studies

The experiences of museum visitors are central to the function of the museum as institution. A museum that does not facilitate an informative and entertaining visitor experience is not likely to thrive commercially, nor will it command respect as an institution as many great museums do. This project is centred around British tourist experiences in Ypres, and with one of the significant sites of data collection being the In Flanders Fields Museum, I will be directly analysing the experiences of British visitors in a museum setting. The focus in this field is on the visitor experience, rather than the efforts of the museum itself, allowing researchers to give attention to what the visitors place importance on (Packer & Ballantyne 2016, p.137). This focus on the visitor is central to this research project as it is the British visitors, the research participants, and their expectations, experiences and reflections that will drive it. As a foundation for my analysis of British tourist experiences in

the In Flanders Fields Museum, I will give a brief overview of some of the important developments in the growing field of museum visitor studies.

2.5.1 Personal Context

In the 1950s David Abbey and Duncan Cameron carried out visitor surveys at the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada. These surveys are largely acknowledged as the first systemic visitor surveys to take place in a museum setting (Black 2005, p.9). Whilst the development of visitor studies has been seen to occur in the 1960s in the US, and in the 1970s in the UK and Australia, yet the First Annual Visitor Studies Conference was not held until 1988 (Black 2005, p.9). The journal *Visitor Studies* was also first published in 1988, however *Curator: The Museum Journal* has been publishing regularly since 1958. The most significant development in the field of museum visitor studies has been the development of Falk & Dierking's (2000) 'contextual model of learning' and the distinguishing of factors such as why people choose to visit museums, how they go about their visits, and what they take away from their experiences (Kirchberg, V. & Tröndle 2012, p.438). Falk & Dierking (2000, pp.137-40) identify three important contexts for the analysis of every visitor experience: the personal context, which covers the factors that are unique to each individual; the sociocultural context, the impact of the social setting that the visitors find themselves in; the physical context, the exhibition that the visitors interact with and the space in which they find themselves. These three contexts contain 8 main points that need to be considered when analysing visitor experiences at museums (Falk & Dierking 2000, pp.137-40):

Personal Context

1. Motivation and expectations

When expectations are fulfilled, learning is facilitated. When expectations are unmet, learning suffers. Museums succeed best when they attract and reinforce intrinsically motivated individuals.

2. Prior Knowledge, interests and beliefs

The meaning that is made of museum experiences is framed within, and constrained by, prior knowledge, interests and beliefs. Because of the

constructed nature of learning and the heterogeneous nature of museum-visiting populations, the prior knowledge, interests and beliefs of museum visitors vary very widely across, and even within, museums.

3. Choice and control

Learning is at its peak when individuals can exercise choice over what and when they learn and feel that they control their own learning.

Sociocultural Context

4. Within-group sociocultural mediation

All social groups in museums utilise each other as vehicles for deciphering information, for reinforcing shared beliefs, for meaning making.

5. Facilitated mediation by others

Powerful socially mediated learning can occur with strangers perceived to be knowledgeable.

Physical Context

6. Advance organisers and orientation

When people feel disorientated, it directly affects their ability to focus on anything else. Similarly, providing conceptual advance organisers significantly improves people's ability to construct meaning from experiences.

7. Design

People go to museums to see and experience real objects, placed within appropriate environments. Appropriately designed exhibitions are compelling learning tools, arguably one of the best educational mediums ever.

8. Reinforcing events and experiences

People learn by accumulating understanding over time, from many sources in many different ways. The public comes to museums with understanding, leaves

(hopefully) with more, and then makes sense of this understanding as events in the world facilitate and demand.

This contextual model has laid the groundwork for a number of subsequent studies that establish more facets of the visitor experience (Packer & Ballantyne 2016, p.137). Falk and Dierking (2013) have also since acknowledged the fourth dimension of this model: time. As individuals, museum visitors experience personal development. The personal context for the visitors will change, thus 'personal development influences personal interests and expectations' (Heuken et al. 2021, p.167). This concept of a visitor's personal context can be taken from visitor studies and applied to visitors from both case studies used in this project. The points raised in this 'contextual model of learning' demonstrate a number of important considerations for the researcher, this 'personal context' shapes visitor experiences. Discussion surrounding expectations, motivations and identity are present in all of these research areas for good reason.

2.5.2 Motivations & Expectations and Repeat Visitors

Visitor motivations and expectations is one aspect of visitor studies that has provoked perhaps the most intense and lengthy discussions of any issue in the field. This aspect of visitor experiences has been highlighted since the turn of the millennium. In 1999 two articles authored by Doering (1999) and Pekarik, Doering & Karns (1999) observed visitor expectations in a museum setting and what impact these expectations have on visitor satisfaction (Kirchbgerg & Tröndle 2012, p.438). Motivations and expectations are the first aspect of Falk & Dierking's (2000, p.137) contextual model. They mention that '[m]useums succeed best when they attract and reinforce intrinsically motivated individuals' and that 'when expectations are fulfilled learning is facilitated' (Falk & Dierking 2000, p.137). This conversation surrounding motivations has only grown since then with the most important developments coming from Falk's identity-related visitor motivation model (Falk 2006; 2009, Falk et al. 2008). This model identifies how the forever morphing identities of museum visitors impact their experiences. Similarly, there has also been the rise of Packer's motivational factors (Packer 2004; Packer & Ballantyne 2002). Building on these developments, other scholars have established their own 'short-scale' of visit motivations

categories, which have been used in subsequent empirical studies of the visitor experience. (Phelan et al. 2018; Phelan et al 2020). In this time, the tendency of museum visitor research to oversimplify its visitor definitions has also been criticised (Falk 2009, p.73; Dawson & Jensen 2011, p.128). Visitor identities and motivations are complex, and demographic descriptors are limiting dividers, if used exclusively (Dawson & Jensen 2011, p.132; Rowe & Nickels 2011, p.172). These definitions, rather than be understood as 'representations or measures of things that actually exist a priori', can be utilised as psychological and cultural tools, that researchers and visitors use in order to articulate identity and motivations (Rowe & Nickels 2011, p.172). Studies concerning visitor motivation continue to populate the field. For example, Hanafiah et al. (2021) further explored the role of motivation and exhibited its connection to the emotional reactions elicited by the Aceh Tsunami Museum, In Banda Aceh, Indonesia. They state that their study confirms that motivation is a vital influence for visitors' emotional reactions in a museum setting (Hanafiah et al. 2021, p.626).

A development of the study of visitor motivations has been the focus on the study of repeat visitors and why they visit museums time and time again. Everett & Barrett (2009, p.3) argue that given the fact that understanding the motivations, expectations and experiences of museum visitors is one of the main imperatives of visitor research, asking repeat visitors why they come back is a key resource. At the time they noted that there were surprisingly few studies that place their focus on regular visitors and fewer still consider visitors who make repeated visits to a particular museum (Everett & Barrett 2009, p.3). In 2005, Black (2005, pp.24-8) did identify repeat visitors and regular visitors amongst his traditional groupings of visitors. Everett & Barrett (2009, p.3) however, argue that studies such as Black's (2005) that do consider repeat visitors exist fail to consider the dynamic ways in which visitors engage with the museum and their visitation patterns. Heuken et al.'s (2021) article is a clear example of what Everett & Barrett (2009) were calling for. They examine the intricacies of the motivations and experiences of repeat visitors, stating that the primary cause of repeat visitors is a fundamental interest in the museum as well as an inherent curiosity and desire to learn (Heuken et al. 2021, p.169). The visitors 'often consider the museum visit to be culturally valuable' and their attention is not only held by the draw of new content (Heuken et al. 2021, p.169). From this Heuken et al. (2016, p.178) conclude that repeat visitors have a deep and genuine underlying interest in the museum's contents, more

so than visitors on their first visit. Their findings seemingly confirmed those of Brida et al. (2013), which stated that the interest level is generally higher amongst repeat visitors.

2.5.3 Methodological Concerns

Museum studies is an established academic field, yet Kirchberg & Tröndle (2012) claim that the bulk of the literature in that field regards critical, historical or cultural analyses of the roles of museums as institutions; its management and political issues, its role in society and 'its function as a place for learning, leisure and self-actualisation' (Kirchberg & Tröndle 2012, p.436). They suggest that 'audience visitation is one of the core purposes of the museum' and that empirically oriented studies of the visitation experience have been lacking (Kirchberg & Tröndle 2012, p.435). They argue that in the German-speaking countries where they work, theoretical inclination dominates museum studies and that the same can be said in the UK and US (Kirchberg & Tröndle 2012, p.435). They cite the two significant volumes edited by Macdonald (2006) and Carbonnel (2007), identifying that these two collections contain 86 articles and that among them, only two directly address visitor studies, both being authored by Hooper-Greenhill (2006, 2007). Shettel (2008, pp.367-371) identifies a number of reasons why the empirical analysis of museum exhibitions, and the experiences of their visitors, is not highly regarded. He mentions that the methods and analyses employed by visitor studies methods are still new and that they may prove to be too obtrusive in a museum context (Shettel 2008, pp.367-371; Kirchberg & Tröndle 2012, pp. 436-7). There has been a shift to a focus on the overall impact on the well-being of the visitors rather than necessary 'emphasis from the exhibit-visitor interaction level' (Shettel 2008, p.369).

There have been influential empirical works that explore the interactions between museum visitors and exhibitions, and the factors that inform visitor satisfaction before Kirchberg & Tröndle's (2012) writing (Doering & Pekarik 1999; Doering & Karns 1999; De Rojas & Camarero 2006). However, they argue that although these works have been important, they are inherently limited by the disciplinary biases underlying them and the research questions and methods are shaped by these biases (Kirchberg & Tröndle 2012, p.448). This perceived limitation, however, is to some degree inevitable in a field such as

museum visitor studies. Similar to some of the other academic fields analysed in this literature review, the field attracts scholars from a number of base disciplines and has been criticised for not having a solidified methodological and theoretical foundation. There have, however, been a number of empirically focused studies published recently with rigorous scientific methods (Phelan et al. 2020; Hanafiah et al. 2021; Heuken et al 2021; King et al. 2023). For example, the work of Phelan et al. (2020, p.155) utilises empirical methods to build upon the 17-item short scale developed by Phelan et al (2018) and determine the link between visit motivation and visit strategy.

There has historically been some discontent between research traditions in the field. Jones (2015, p.539) has argued that the charge that some research in visitor studies lacks credibility and is anecdotal in nature is 'often unfairly levelled at qualitative research due to misunderstanding of its value'. Everett & Barrett (2009) investigate sustained relationships between visitors and museums by utilising a narrative approach. They argue that by utilising a narrative methodology, they were able to achieve a 'deeper understanding of the museum experience' and more effectively highlight the 'unique qualities of each visitor's engagement with museums' (Everett & Barrett 2009, p.12). Everett & Barrett (2009, p.3) begin by stating that the majority of the existing body of work in the field of visitor studies utilises survey research to either measure the effectiveness of programs and exhibitions or to collect demographic data, citing the examples of Goulding (2000) and Roberts (1997). According to Everett & Barrett (2009), few of these studies have managed to unpack the true complexity of the museum experience. They go on to criticize the fact that much of the knowledge that has been generated about the museum experience is 'derived from studies that have focused primarily on cognitive engagement and learning outcomes' (Everett & Barrett 2009, p.3). Their third critique is that much of the research is 'conducted with single-visit participants', providing a somewhat limited 'snapshot' view of the visitor experience. (Everett & Barrett 2009, p.3). Despite the fact that some researchers have explored 'long term' impacts (Anderson, Storksdieck, & Spock, 2007) relatively few studies have adequately analysed the complexities of the visitor experience (Everett & Barrett 2009, p.3). These different approaches may be examples of the variance of disciplinary biases that Kirchberg & Tröndle (2012, p.448) describe, yet they are unpreventable in a discipline such as this and they offer alternative means to reach the same ends, to better understand visitor

experiences in museums. And as Scott et al. (2014, p.27) suggest that the discourse in visitor studies is shifting from contested to conversational, 'value and significance are now discussed alongside impact and effect' (Selwood 2010, p.11).

The contestation described above was most prominent in writing in the late 2000s, but as shown here by Schiele, it continued to be an issue. Schiele (2016, p.351) describes the ways in which splits such as this and the lack of a single methodological and theoretical base, or as Schiele describes it a corpus, is weakening the field as a whole. He states that (Schiele 2016, p.351):

Calling on research and development or survey consultancies to conduct occasional studies (market studies, audience inquiries, front-end evaluations, and so on) can only partially solve the problem because the questions that need to be asked, as well as the answers to those questions, are generally out of context. The result is that the very same studies are forever being reproduced. Even when the studies are based on earlier work conducted by contracted firms, the results cannot be linked to a pre-existing corpus of knowledge.

Therefore, any results that are obtained are often interpreted independently, outside of referential context, preventing them from being included in a pre-established corpus. This in turn usually limits studies to empirical work as they are 'conducted without a foundation of pre-acquired knowledge' (Schiele 2016, p.351). To rectify this, he suggests that researchers should focus their efforts on the creation of 'the correct criteria' for visitor studies so that all contributions, even if sourced from exterior consultancies, can interact with and contribute to a shared pool of knowledge (Schiele 2016, p.351). Jones (2015, p.539) echoes the sentiment, suggesting that the development of visitor studies has had little coherence and whilst there has been a 'great diversity in approach', the field suffers fragmentation and 'in some areas, a frustrating lack of rigour.' He goes on to claim that without a comprehensive sense of the field, which is difficult to quantify without a systematic approach, large gaps in our knowledge emerge. For example, as Scott, Dodd & Sandell (2014) highlight, 'we know relatively little about how the museum audiences value their experience and how these might impact their life outside the museum' (Jones 2015, pp.539-40). Whilst this is a damning view of the field from Schiele and others, visitor studies is not unique in terms of its demands a further consolidation of its knowledge base.

To conclude, museum visitor studies is a field that can be characterised by its methodological debate and the establishment of tools for the assessment of the visitor experience. The 'personal context' for a visitor is a concept that is discussed in all academic fields that concern tourism and visitation. However, here it finds its most succinct and clear definition. The establishment in Falk & Dierking's (2000) contextual model of learning of the personal context and its developments across the field allow for concise, measurable aspects of the visitor experience to be recorded. The methodological debate in the field has pushed scholars to establish validity, appropriateness and applicability in their research.

In Falk & Dierking's (2000) 'contextual model of learning' the personal context, sociocultural context and physical context look at a number of similar themes to the other academic fields reviewed in this chapter. Whilst museum visitor studies finds its origins in a different place, growing from practicality, rather than theory, the re-appearance of these themes further highlight their importance. In a similar vein to dark tourism, an important balance between the role of the institution and everything the tourist brings with them needs to be understood. Overlap between the different fields has been highlighted throughout this review, but specialism is also important. Museum visitor studies can find its outcomes more focused on a practical assessment of the learning experiences of its visitors. But it understands the importance of the complexity of the visitor interaction too. This study will naturally lean towards this latter aspect with the majority of its foundational literature and the background of the researcher aligning with that approach to visitor experiences. However, paying attention to the practical considerations that are the everyday lifeblood of a site such as the In Flanders Fields Museum can only serve to enrich the discussion.

2.6 Literature Review Conclusion

This chapter began by briefly outlining the state of memory of the First World War in Britain, in order to better familiarise the reader with the popular conceptions of the war and its relevance in society. These understandings will be important framings for the visitor responses quoted in the later analysis chapters. It then highlighted a number of important theoretical tools throughout the relevant fields of literature. It has also spoken briefly to the

journeys of each of these fields, discussing why how the strengths of each area of study have come to be.

Memory studies is at the core of this study, the very conceptions of what memory is and how people reflect on and give meaning to a collective past. Memory studies provides me with the theoretical tools to understand the importance of the iterative process through which such memory is maintained and to understand how social framings impact the way individuals and societies remember (Halbwachs 1980; 1992). In order to answer my research questions, the concepts of transnational, cosmopolitan and agonistic memory are key understandings. It is an important task of this thesis to investigate British tourists' negotiation of transnational memory through their exposure to displays of transnational or cosmopolitan memory, which may cause them to reflect differently on their own national identity. Alternate framings of the concept of a nationally framed identity, or the perceived importance of that belonging, may prompt the tourists to ask new questions. Additionally, looking towards the third research question and the reflections on civil-military relations and justifications for war, these memory concepts are not apolitical. The case studies evaluated in this project have an agenda, whether that be a state-led commemorative agenda (CWGC) or a passion for promoting peace from a cosmopolitan perspective, as will be demonstrated later in the In Flanders Fields Museum.

Whilst heritage studies and dark tourism have been characterised by their internal divisions, both fields of study have emerged from these debates with a greater understanding of the phenomena which they investigate. In heritage studies the concepts of extra-territorial heritage and the use of emotion and affect in the investigation of the visitor experience are key takeaways for this project. Having a better understanding of how visitors balance the overlapping belongings of a site with national meaning to them on foreign soil is an undercurrent for all British tourist experiences in Ypres. Additionally, the museum is a purposefully emotional experience, designed to emphasise humanity and suffering, and war graves have always been evocative emotional sites. Therefore, investigating and analysing the emotionality that visitors demonstrate is an important aspect of the identity negotiation taking place (Smith 2006; 2014; 2021). These tools can be used to speak to this nexus of identity negotiation, this interplay of national, transnational and cosmopolitan memories at

play. Investigating these interactions is at the core of this study; the research questions demand an understanding of the tourist experiences with, and reflections on, this nexus.

Dark tourism, through its supply vs. demand tourist motivation dichotomy has significantly developed understandings of the concept, with modern scholars coming to understand the importance of combining the two approaches (Stone & Sharpley 2008, p.575). Additionally, the field is unique in its focus on death and visitor perceptions of death, both on its own, and as part of any political messaging. Being able to establish the research sites on a 'spectrum of darkness' helps quantify the differences of the sites and the reactions they are likely to provoke. Whilst heritage studies provides the tools to analyse visitor emotion, dark tourism delves further into the why, especially in terms of the influence of the site itself. It explores more thoroughly why these sites, through a negotiation with war and death are emotionally laden. In order to examine the tourist experience, understanding the sites they are visiting is crucial. The questions of identity that form the research questions need to be established in their proper context.

Similarly, museum visitor studies has also been characterised by its most significant divide. This methodological split has encouraged the field to more thoroughly explore, explain and validate their research methodology. This focus is something that has been found lacking in the other fields mentioned above. This methodological maturity and development of a number of 'short-scales' or breakdowns of aspects of the visitor experience provide solid tangible points of analysis that will prove useful in the research methodology for this project.

Using the short-scales for the visitor experience established in visitor studies as an effective breakdown and clarification of its constituent aspects has helped form both the methodology and analytical structure of the analysis chapters. Breaking down the questions, and analysis in themes groups that are based on a developed understanding of the visitor experience aids both the researcher in laying out their finding, and the reader in understanding them. Whilst the field of museum visitor studies was far from the only influence in these decisions, it did provide the clearest examples of this in effective studies of the visitor experience. Additionally, the field focuses on the specific needs and quirks of the museum experience. The academic fields reviewed in this chapter share significant overlap in places. However, visitor studies is unique in its specialisation and its

methodological background. Utilising a field that leans more towards the practical outcomes of its research of the visitor experience enriches and balances the discussion, whilst providing support for claims of rigour and validity. An important part of all of the research questions is how the interactions at the heart of their questions of identity work in a museum context.

3. Methodology

This methodology chapter will describe, explain and critically reflect on the research design that I have implemented in my study of British tourist experiences in the town of Ypres. Building on the overviews of the supporting academic fields on the previous chapter, the first section will set out at the methodological conventions of these areas of inquiry, speaking to how they inform the selected research design. It will then establish the balance of theoretical and practical decisions and considerations that were made in the process of choosing an effective research methodology. The second section focuses on the process of the data collection itself, exploring the initial research contacts and aspects of the research design, such as primary and secondary participants. As well as the practical implementation of the research interviews, and the challenges that I met along the way. It will end with an explanation of the data analysis process for the collected data.

3.1 Theory and Method

3.1.1 Research methods in situ: memory, heritage & museum visitor studies

Qualitative interviews are often discussed in isolation from their field of application, presenting them from a generalist perspective as a social science method. Yet it is clear that the individual researcher's agenda shapes the interviews in a very real way (Sørensen 2009, p.164). Moreover, different social science fieldwork traditions have particular impacts on aspects of the interview process, such as the conduct of the interviewer and aims of the interview itself. For example, anthropological interviews tend to 'become a matter of listening: emphasising the importance of the interviewer actively avoiding influencing', which is influenced by the long history of participant observation in the field (Sørensen 2009, p.164). Archaeological interviews, in contrast, usually aim to gather factual information (Sørensen 2009, p.164).

Memory studies has been categorised as an emergent and multidisciplinary field and as such is home to varied enquiries into widespread memory phenomena. The flexible nature of memory means that it has enjoyed a prominent position in the scholarly lexicon and as such it has a high degree of accessibility (Cubit 2007, p.5). Some of the contributing streams are psychology, history, philosophy, drama and literary studies and cultural and

media studies, to name but a few (Keightly & Pickering 2013, p.2). Despite the prodigious growth of the field, there have been criticisms of the attention paid to the questions of methodology and research methods, which has been highlighted by a number of scholars across a significant timespan (Confino 1997; Cubitt 2007; Drozdewski and Birdsall 2019; Kansteiner 2002; Keightly 2010; Keightly & Pickering 2013; Roedinger & Wertsch 2008). This is partly due to the multidisciplinary nature of the field and the range of inputs that these disciplines bring, stemming from a variety of epistemological and ontological approaches, and the difficulties of combining or reconciling them. Another contributing factor, however, is the field's emphasis on critical commentary or theoretical scene setting (Keightly & Pickering 2013, p.2; Rowley 2023, p.74; Segesten and Wüstenberg, 2016), which results in a relative neglect of methodological questions. While critics have argued for a systematic, theoretical base for the discipline with a systematic and rigorous set of methodologies, Roedinger & Wertsch (2008, p.18) have argued 'memory studies is too broad a field to have overarching theories to unify and attempt to explain the huge number of phenomena of interest.' It is nevertheless important for methodological dialogue to accompany conceptual and theoretical dialogue (Keightly & Pickering 2013, p.2). As such, it can be useful to consider methodological approaches in other related fields, such as heritage studies and dark tourism, which have already been highlighted in the literature review.

Heritage studies also suffered in the past with a lack of analytical precision when it comes to methodological concerns. It is plagued with similar problems to memory studies: the field has been in its formative stages and it has a comparably multidisciplinary background and, as a result, lacks a clear overview of its tools and its remit (Sørensen 2009, p.165). This once again leaves the field without a concrete theoretical and methodological basis from which to comprehensively build (Uzzell 2009, p.332). Similarly, the study of dark tourism shares a multidisciplinary makeup and has also emerged only relatively recently as a field of enquiry, leading to similar methodological issues. However, scholars in that field do not stress the importance of the issue as much as those in memory or heritage studies. In his paper on the progress of dark tourism, Duncan Light (2017, p.292) noted that a 'wide range of methodological approaches have been adopted', presenting a table exhibiting the most common methods, from which it emerged that the most common approach involved qualitative methods, usually a mixture of observations and interviews. However, Light (2017,

p.292) does go on to state that the academic backgrounds of researchers usually determine the use of research methods, in a similar way that they do in the other fields mentioned.

The areas of memory studies, heritage studies and dark tourism are important foundations for the theoretical foundation of this project. However, the methodological concerns of museum visitor studies are more directly related to significant aspects of this project. One of the two main sites of data collection is a museum. Heritage sites and sites of memory have quite a broad definition, whereas museum visitor studies is focused on particular kinds of spaces, which enables a more direct comparison between them. Nevertheless, museum visitor studies faces a number of the same problems as the other research areas. As has been noted in the literature review, the field is fragmented and there has been little coherence in its development (Jones 2015, p.539).

This fragmentation has again prevented a strong unified methodological base from being laid out and there has been a significant debate between those who advocate the use of empirical methods, which focus on the visitor experience and others that focus on the role of museum as an institution (Kirchberg & Tröndle 2012; Everett & Barrett 2009; Jones 2015). Kirchberg & Tröndle (2012, p.436) claim that whilst museum studies is an established field, it is dominated by critical, cultural and historical analyses of the roles of museums as institutions, lacking empirical investigations of the visitor experience. Shettel (2008, pp.367-71) highlights that the rise of empirical methods and analyses that are still new to the field and may prove too obtrusive to the museum context. The focus on the empirical visitor experience central to visitor studies collides with the established paradigm in the museum space. Whereas, Everett & Barret (2009, p.3) have argued that a narrative methodology allows the researcher a 'deeper understanding of the museum experience', more effectively highlighting the 'unique qualities of each visitor's engagement'. They criticise the limited 'snapshot' of the visitor experience that other research methods provide (Everett & Barret 2009, p.3). Nevertheless, there have recently been a number of empirical studies published that rely on quantitative, as well as qualitative empirical approaches that investigate the visitor experience (Phelan et al. 2020; Hanafiah et al. 2021; Heuken et al 2021; King et al. 2023).² Whilst the field might not be able to agree on the best way to carry out their

² This debate is explored in more detail in the museum visitor studies section of the Literature Review.

research, the consensus has emerged that the visitors are at the heart of it, however the approach remains divided. Whilst this means that an established set of methods in museum visitor studies cannot simply be imported straightforwardly into this study, this methodological debate in the field highlights the need for all studies to effectively demonstrate their academic rigour, and effectiveness of their methods, in order to contribute effectively.

The potential of qualitative research methods for deeper and more complex analysis of visitor experiences, as proposed by Everett & Barrett (2009), provides a researcher with important tools. However, it is important to maintain academic rigour when using these tools, maintaining a level of visibility and pragmatism to the proposed solutions or suggestions (Kirchberg & Tröndle 2012; Jones 2015). It is important to keep qualitative research grounded: when exploring theoretical nuances in a developed field of study, it is possible to become detached from the true experiences of the visitors. With this rigour, the researcher is actively demonstrating the bridge between their theoretical understandings and the applicability of their findings. Whilst this has been demonstrated above in museum visitor studies, it is applicable to all research conventions in which qualitative methods are utilised.

Whilst the fields of literature that this project is based on do not necessarily have their own methodological and theoretical traditions to fall back on, there are trends that can be followed, or more excitingly, new methodological approaches to be attempted. A wide array of methodologies and approaches is one of the main problems of the four fields of literature, especially so with memory and heritage studies but, it is also one of their biggest selling points. Researchers from varying disciplines are brought together, with different approaches, definitions, and limitations. Whilst this creates problems for harmony and unity in the fields it does open up their potential. Also, without a predominant research tradition to lean on, researchers must be more creative, but also more diligent with their research design in order to generate useful insights. They must be clear about their theoretical and epistemological foundations and how they link to their methodological choices in a productive and cohesive way.

3.1.2 Method Selection: Theory and Practicality

When considering research methods for a project the researcher must always consider the suitability of the research design, the traditions of the field and the practicality of the planned study. There is a balance between exploring the sophisticated social interactions in the most thorough and extrapolated way with countless sources of data, on the one hand, and the realistic constrictions of time and funding in a world still recovering from Covid-19, on the other. The mixture of informative conversations and semi-structured interviews utilised in this project functions to satisfy both the theoretical demands and practical limitations presented.

In the early stages of research design, it was clear that qualitative methods would be most suitable for this project. Qualitative research methods are generally considered to provide depth, detail and flexibility, compared with the often more general and rigid picture offered by quantitative methods (Edwards & Holland 2013, p.91; Mihelj 2013, p.62). With these methods, however, a significant effort must be made by researchers to demonstrate the rigour of their analysis, which can be initially less visible than other methods, especially if the reader is not familiar with the use of qualitative data. A good example of this can be found in museum visitor studies wherein the use of qualitative research methods has been misunderstood in the past (Jones 2015, pp.539-40). Claims that qualitative research in the field of museum visitor studies 'lacks credibility and is anecdotal in nature' were 'unfairly levelled' at a number of research projects that were misunderstood in a field that is dominated by quantitative methods (Jones 2015, pp.539-40).

Interviewing is one of the most common of these methods of data collection in the Social Sciences at large and consequently has generated significant discussion in the academic community. From the 1960s onwards, qualitative interviews have been recognised as a resource that is able to effectively elicit accounts that 'eschew researchers' expectations and reveal authentic emotions and attitudes', in addition to establishing a new and more equal relationship between interviewers and interviewees (Mihelj 2013, p.62). More recently, the notion established in the twentieth century that interviews were 'privileged windows onto reality' has been brought into question, and a body of work has grown examining interviews in their own right. This body of work has come to consider interviews

for the communicative or social occasions that they are, in which different versions of reality are constructed by individuals (Silverman 2006, pp.118-9,127-33; Mihelj 2013, p.62).

A defined epistemological position is important when considering the roles and uses of research methods. David Silverman (2011) has outlined three approaches to interviewing (Yeo et al 2014, p.181):

- Positivism – interview data is structured and perceived to represent objective accounts of what is being explored
- Emotionalism – interview data is in-depth and exploratory but viewed romantically and uncritically
- Constructivism – interview data is in depth and exploratory but the process itself is recognised as part of the representation of that which it seeks to explore

Whilst this outline from Silverman (2011) is far from comprehensive, it does illustrate the underlying assumptions that generate differences in interview practice and aims.

Norman Denzin & Yvonne Lincoln's (2000; 2011) views on the development of the interview have been 'especially influential in the qualitative field' (Edwards & Holland 2013, p.12).

They state that qualitative social research has 'operated within eight or nine historical moments from 1900 onwards' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Edwards & Holland 2013, p.12).

These moments are 'successive waves of epistemological theorising', moving from positivist rigour to constructionist ideas (Edwards & Holland 2013, p.12). Qualitative interviewing has different meanings and aims in each epistemological movement.

For example, one of these movements generated an interpretive approach, which sought to generate knowledge about how others make sense of and interpret their everyday interactions. Starting from the premise that human interaction is the basis for the understanding of social life, this approach understood the interactive co-construction of knowledge between the participants and the researcher as key (Edwards & Holland 2013, p.17). Critical realists, by contrast, assert that there is an objective world, independent of people understandings and perceptions (Bhaskar 1978). However, that world is only accessible through people's senses, an inherently subjective interaction. The objective structure of reality cannot be perfectly comprehended but, with the use of qualitative interviews, the manifest interactions of the social world can be uncovered and are then

‘subjected to the transcendental process of theory generation to infer the structural condition of the interactions’ (Edwards & Holland 2013, pp.22-3; Porter 2002, p.65). As the above examples make clear, the same methodology (in this case, qualitative interviews) can be utilised by researchers with a range of positions on epistemology. It is therefore important that any researcher opting to utilise qualitative interviews makes their epistemological understanding clear and approaches the data appropriately in light of that understanding.

Throughout this research project, this critical realist understanding of human interactions and its relevance to the data collection has been maintained. An objective reality exists, but the interactions with, and experiences of it are all inherently subjective. All interactions, personal, physical or even in memory are unique to each person. Not only that but each of their successive interactions has divergences from the ones before or after. The existence of something objective does not remove the nuance and meaning that can be derived from a myriad of interactions that we as human beings have in each passing moment, each passing day. The ‘transitive world of knowing’ has differences with the ‘intransitive world of being’ (Scott 2010, p.4). Analysing and unpacking the varied interactions of British visitors, recognising the ontological depth of their experiences and of reality in general drives this thesis (Scott 2010, p.4). The visitor experience is based on layered social framings, group experiences, new knowledge and reflection; these are all very human interactions, with the self, with a social group, with a national group, with the physical landscape and with institutions. Critical realism is built on the examination of the ‘reality constructed by the group studied’, rather than claiming to know the truth of the group itself (Cruickshank 2003, p.1).

From a critical realist standpoint, using interviews as a primary method of data collection is an effective tool ‘if the research purpose is to learn about people’s beliefs, perspectives, and meaning-making’ (Roulston & Choi 2018, p.243). These aspects of the human experience are expected and acknowledged with a critical realist approach to the epistemological questions about how society and knowledge are created. Whilst this may pose difficulties to a neo-positivist researcher, to whom a variety of interpretations and experiences would be problematic in their objective understanding of human interactions, the research in the critical realist tradition is interested precisely in the individuality and

subjectivity of these experiences. It is in the understanding of these subjective visitor experiences that drive this project forward.

‘Phenomenological interviews’ are a style of qualitative interviewing that ‘focus on the experiences of participants and the meanings they make’ of their experiences (Roulston & Choi 2018, pp.234-5). These interviews heavily draw on the lived experience of their respondents. This establishes a ‘detailed description of participants’ experiences about a phenomenon through asking open questions concerning the participants’ feelings, perceptions, and understandings’ (Roulston & Choi 2018, p.235). It is with these descriptions that researcher can begin to understand the ‘reconstructed interpretations’ or ‘manifestations’ of the phenomenon in question (Roulston & Choi 2018, p.235; Vagle 2014). As established, these participants’ experiences, or interactions, are at the core of this study’s understanding of human experiences. Therefore, a phenomenological approach to interviewing suits the nature of inquiry into a lived human experience in Ypres and has been adopted for this research project.

Recognising research conversations and interviews as unique social interactions brings with it a swath of influencing factors that need to be considered when deciding the feasibility of a research method in any theoretical setting. The versions of reality constructed and negotiated during these research processes depend on the respective social positions of interviewer and respondent, the conventions available for discussing certain topics, the broader socio-political environment and even the phrasing of the questions (Mihelj 2013, p.62). For some, this means that data generated in an interview or conversation is only relevant to the time and place which it occurred (Wengraf 2001, p.1). It is important to remember, however, that this does not mean that the data is not generalisable in any way or has no potential for extrapolation. Instead, the process of drawing meaning from this data, and constructing and carrying out the research interaction in the first place, must be done carefully and rigorously, in a way that always considers the preconditions of the interaction itself and the effects these may have on the data (Mihelj 2013, p.63).

Having discussed the theoretical appropriateness of the selected research methodology, the practical benefits of this style are more obvious. A semi-structured interview, preceded by a brief research conversation with the respondents, allows for a flexible approach to my research themes. This flexibility manifests in the form of being able

to adjust some of the questions slightly and allows for follow up questions or prompts introduced by the researcher. This flexibility is balanced with the ability of the interview format to allow the respondents to explore their answers further than the restricted nature of a quantitative questionnaire. Additionally, the relatively short time span of an interview allows for interactions with more British visitors than would be allowed by a longer form qualitative research methods, such as ethnographic interviews.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Ypres as a Research Setting

The plan for this project was always to be based in Ypres (Ieper). It is the home of the organisation that is collaborating on this project, the In Flanders Fields Museum, and has long been a centre for British tourist visitation on the Western Front. The museum holds a central role in both the tourist experience and vibrant research community in Ypres. This community consists of researchers working at the museum who have, alongside their personal projects, designed the exhibitions in the museum, as well as enthusiastic local practitioners such as tour guides, whose passion for the era is often reflected in their own research. Both groups have been keen to not only share their research and resources but their time and support. This has provided access to tourists, a wealth of personal knowledge and other data sources.

3.2.2 Initial Research and Key Contacts

Data for this project was collected between December 2021 and September 2022. A short initial research trip was made in December of 2021 in order to meet a number of individuals in the tourism community in Ypres. They consisted of museum staff and researchers and tour guides; most of the latter were British, but one was from the local area. These were a series of informal meetings, where we discussed their time in the field, my research and their thoughts on the tourist experience in Ypres. These interactions were not recorded to be used as data for analysis, rather the aim was to develop a working

relationship moving forward. Without exception they agreed to be formally interviewed, either virtually or in person with the return to Ypres in the following year. Alongside the wealth of knowledge that these providers presented on tourism on Ypres they also agreed to provide access to tourists in their avenues of work. The tour guides offered to allow me to accompany some of their tour groups and introduce me to the tourists. Additionally, the museum staff put me in contact with the museum director in order to organise activities within the museum itself. Alongside this, those that I met with, both the museum staff and a number of local tour guides provided additional contacts for me to reach out to that they believed would provide useful insight. This has been referred to as 'snowball sampling'; this is where initial respondents (insiders) identify other potential respondents based on their familiarity with others in the area (Atkinson & Flint 2001). This method was developed for use with 'hidden' and 'hard to reach' populations, and whilst British tourists in Ypres are very visible, direct access to them during activities such as tours is much harder to come by. However, during the initial research trip it emerged as a very productive access point for both access to tourists and to other providers (insiders). The shortcomings of this method reside in the fact that research elements 'are not randomly drawn but are subjective choices of the respondents first accessed' (Atkinson & Flint 2001, p.2). By speaking with a range of tour guides and museum staff, both British and local, I attempted to avoid this narrowing of the range of respondents that Atkinson & Flint describe. As I will discuss further on in this chapter, these plans made with the tour guides ultimately did not come to fruition. Whilst this was frustrating, there were still a number of contacts that I established during these meetings. This meant that, despite the original research design not coming to fruition as planned, these meetings were not wholly irrelevant to the data collection process.

3.2.3 Primary & Secondary Participants

For this project primary participants will be defined as British tourists in Ypres speaking about their experiences. This definition is necessary due to the data that was also collected from what will be termed secondary participants who were comprised of museum staff and local tour guides. The experiences of the primary participants are the key for this research project, their responses will inform the analysis and drive the conclusions. Data from the primary participants was therefore the priority, and this took up the bulk of

my time during the data collection period. In this period there were a total of 81 interviews with 136 primary participants split between the two research sites:

	Interviews	Participants
Museum	58	96
Tyne Cot	23	40
Total	81	136

Figure 1 – Table of interviews and respondents

A number of the research participants undertook the interviews alone; however, many also took part in small groups of two or three. There was one instance where a group of four was interviewed. However, this was generally avoided, in order to allow each respondent time to develop their thoughts. For the interviews conducted at the museum, there were 58 interviews with 96 participants, meaning that there was an average of 1.66 respondents per interview. Whereas at Tyne Cot the 40 participants in just 23 interviews meant that there were 1.74 respondents per interview. Therefore, the size of the groups across the two sites did not differ to a significant degree.

Interviewing the respondents in small groups represents a balance of practicality and efficacy in the research setting. Many of the respondents mentioned in the initial conversations that they would be more comfortable completing the interview together. Additionally, it was a matter of time. Visitors, especially in the case of the In Flanders Fields Museum, are often on a tight schedule, making sure to make the most of their time in Ypres, sometimes as part of a larger travelling group. Making sure that these interviews could be completed as promptly as possible meant that more respondents were happy to take part. Whilst each respondent would undoubtedly have been able to explore their experiences more in an individual interview, having them contribute as part of a joint interview was far more valuable than no contribution at all.

As Maurice Halbwachs (1980) has shown, the construction of memory and the act of remembering is an inherently social process. Therefore, the recollection and processing of commemorative experiences in an interview setting undoubtedly follows the same logic. Because of the influence of the group on the thoughts and provided answers of each

individual, it would have been more effective to collect data from each respondent separately.

Additionally, as can be seen in the table above, there were over twice as many interviews and participants at the museum than there were at the Cemetery. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, the museum allowed for easier access to a larger number of visitors. The directed nature of the museum meant I was able to approach more visitors as they passed through the gates at the end of the permanent exhibition. This ease of access meant that naturally more interviews were carried out in the same amount of time at the museum site. Secondly, Tyne Cot Cemetery was, at least in my observations, a far more emotional experience for many of its visitors and there was a higher degree of refusal from potential participants. This was far less common at the museum, only occurring once or twice. Thirdly, and most importantly, as will be discussed in the following section, there was a significant change in the research plan once the data collection had begun in Ypres. This meant that the selection of Tyne Cot Cemetery as the 2nd data collection site occurred during my primary research trip. As such, I was able to collect data effectively from the In Flanders Fields Museum throughout the visit, whereas the opportunities to collect data at Tyne Cot were more limited. As the two sites in this thesis are not here to serve as a comparison for the other, rather, just as two facets of the visitor experience, this imbalance in data was not seen to be problematic. The data that was collected in both sites was more than sufficient for the research project to proceed, and for suitable conclusions to be drawn.

Secondary participants were members of the local commemorative community, comprising of two of the museum curators at the In Flanders Fields Museum as well as the museum director in addition to two local tour guides, one British and one Belgian. This data will be useful in providing context for the primary data.

For the primary data collection, upon agreement to participate all participants provided written informed consent following the guidelines provided by Cardiff University, ensuring their anonymity and confidentiality and were presented with an official letter with information regarding the project. All audio recordings that were taken during interactions with participants have been stored according to the University's Data Protection Policy. The only difference for secondary participants is that they agreed for their names to be used in the thesis.

3.2.4 Interview Design & Changes in the Research Plan

Shaping the interview questions and adapting them as needed were a crucial part of my overall research design. This section will outline the process of the interview design, the difficulties that were met in the field and the necessary adaptations that were made to the project in order to maintain its efficacy.

In the process of deriving the interview questions ahead of the primary research trip, it became clear that the two sites would require different sets of questions. This was reflected in the two sets of interview questions. They share a number of key themes, but are worded differently, and have specificities that are more relevant to their own subject matter.

The interview questions (Appendix 1 & 2) cover themes of motivation, expectation, emotionality, feelings of nationality, and the transnational. Motivations and expectations are key aspects of the tourist experience that have been highlighted in all of the significant academic fields from which this thesis draws its inspiration. In museum visitor studies these two aspects represent part of Falk & Dierking's (2000, pp.137-40) 'personal context' in their 'contextual model of learning' that is central to the field. Early considerations for visitor motivation to the Western Front tended to understand visitors either as pilgrims or as tourists (Lloyd 1998, p.109), and the dark tourism field of research formed the demand and supply approaches to tourist motivations (Biran et al. 2011, pp.821-2). The agreed importance given to these aspects of the visitor experience amongst these fields warranted their place in this study, as understanding the motivations and expectations (personal context) of the visitor better allows the researcher to position their responses. Similarly, the questions relating to the visitor's sense of nationality also establish their personal context, in Falk & Dierking's (2000) model it would come under their second point 'prior knowledge, interests and beliefs'.

The following questions dealt with themes of emotionality (at the museum), nationality and transnational practice. 'Emotion and affect' is a concept in heritage studies that encourages the fact that museums and heritage sites are 'places where people go to feel, to be emotional', and that by embracing the importance of these emotions, research can transcend the limited learning/recreational research paradigm (Smith 2014, p.125). A

question geared towards this analysis was present in the interview questions put to the museum visitors, and as will be shown in that chapter, provided useful insight into the visitor experience. However, a similar question was not included in for the interviews carried out at Tyne Cot. This was due to my fear of the question appearing to be insensitive in such an obviously emotionally charged space for many of its visitors. This turned out to be a regret of the data collection process, emotion and affective practice was still a productive point of analysis for the responses in this chapter. However, perhaps a delicately worded, dedicated question to that end would have provided an opportunity for further analysis.

The other questions concern different aspects of feelings of national belonging, and the transnational themes such as shared remembrance. These questions most directly reflect the needs of RQ1 and RQ2. These research questions were established early in the research process. RQ3 however, was unintentionally born from the visitor responses to these questions. The interview questions concerning nationality ask the research participants about their feelings of national belonging and if their time in Ypres has encouraged them to reflect on that at all. Those aimed more at RQ2 and the experience of transnational memory, are more concerned with the integration of national memories and its appropriateness in regard to the First World War.

Appendices 1 and 2 contain the questionnaires that were prepared before the primary research trip. However, soon into the data collection it was realised that questions that had been intended for one site could also provide useful insights for the other. It became clear that in the museum questionnaire (Appendix 1) did not provide enough scope for the respondents to explore their feelings of national belonging as much as would be necessary for the project. Therefore, I decided to include a number of the questions from the Field questionnaire (Appendix 2) that were proving to be effective in encouraging the respondents to reflect on this research theme. The modified set of museum interview questions can be seen in Appendix 3. As will be covered in the following section, participant interviews were preceded by research conversations with the respondents, this informed the choice of what questions to include in each interview. Appendix 3 demonstrates the full list of these questions, which is representative for the majority of interviews conducted at the museum, but not all of them.

As mentioned above, every research project faces difficulties at some point. Most notably, the primary data collection for this project was initially scheduled to take place in the summer of 2021. This was rendered impossible with the travel restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 global pandemic. International tourism numbers in the region struggled to return to their pre-pandemic state. As such the data collection was delayed by a full 15 months, occurring instead in September of 2022. This undoubtedly stretched the research plan, however, in waiting until that time British visitation to Ypres had recovered enough to allow for adequate data collection in a reasonable timeframe. Initially, this project was not meant to feature Tyne Cot Cemetery as a specific case study at all. The counterweight for the museum was meant to consist of interviews taken with visitors in the process of, or directly following, a guided tour from a local guide. As mentioned above, in my initial research trip to Ypres in December of 2021, after meeting a number of local tour guides in person, they enthusiastically agreed to allow me to accompany them on tours throughout the duration of my stay. In the lead up to the primary research trip I contacted these tour guides again, with little response. In the preceding weeks and upon arrival to Ypres I was met with frustration as two of the four tour guides did not respond to my communications in any way, and another was prevented from carrying out any significant number of tours by external factors. This meant that whilst I was in Ypres, a new site had to be selected: somewhere that was relevant to the preparation I had been working on in the months prior, but also, somewhere practical, where I could access British visitors whilst disturbing their experiences as little as possible. I landed on Tyne Cot Cemetery, which ultimately produced excellent data, turning what could have been a disastrous setback into an alternative case study.

3.2.5 Collecting Data

Initial interactions with the primary participants were conversational in order to build a rapport between the tourists and the researcher. Rapport between researcher and participant is important, allowing for a 'free-ranging and full' response from the interviewees (Yeo et al. 2014, p.182). During these conversations participants would be asked about their initial thoughts of their trip, the area and the tour/museum exhibit in which they were present. Research questions were raised during this process, but it was not as structured or directed as an interview, rather it was an opportunity for the participants to

explore and explain their experiences briefly. The responses in these conversations allowed me to better insert follow-up questions during the interview. This bore some resemblance to the 'creative conversations' utilised by Dunkley et al. (2011, p.862). This technique combines creative interviews (Douglas 1985) and interactive interviewing (Ellis et al. 1997). This adaptive approach aims to collect 'oral reports' from the individuals in much the same spirit as oral history research (Dunkley et al 2011, p.862, Fontana & Frey 2000, p.657). Traditional structured research interviews tend towards an unequal research dynamic between participant and the interviewer, as the interviewer controls the direction of the interview and decides what answers are important or unimportant. 'Creative conversations', in being less structured and open ended, are more likely to touch on issues that the participants deem important or relevant (Dunkley et al 2011, p.862, Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p.109). This provides useful insight for the researcher, if participants tend to emphasise different issues than the researcher may have initially thought, it could not only influence future conversations and interviews but the findings altogether. Additionally, this method was more appropriate for the setting where initial meetings with participants were taking place; in Tyne Cot Cemetery and inside the In Flanders Fields Museum, as in both cases there were other tourists around and it was not in a private setting.

Following these initial conversations, participants were asked to remain with the researcher for a semi-structured interview, often moving to a more private place where the audio recording would begin. Interviews were influenced by the contents of the conversations beforehand, with the semi-structured approach allowing me to draw the focus more towards important themes that I felt were emerging. These in-depth interviews are 'a powerful method for generating description and interpretation of people's social worlds' and that is why they have been a mainstay of qualitative research for decades (Yeo et al. 2014, p.178). However, when considering semi-structured interviews, acknowledgement of their interactional nature is important. Recollections or insights that are generated in the interview process are not born in the 'context of everyday life' (Mihelj 2013, p.61). The two methods of data gathering balanced well as one was more researcher led and the other less so. It was important for the participants to feel as if their voices were heard and not dismissed by the researcher in favour of their own agenda (Dunkley et al. 2011, p.862). Also, the conversations are much closer to the 'context of everyday life' for a tourist as they took

place in the midst of tourist activities, not in an isolated space with a researcher. These interviews were completed in a number of quiet areas of the museum and cemetery at the choice of the participants, wherever they felt most comfortable.

Audio recordings were utilised in order to allow for transcription of the conversations and interviews. This allows for more detailed analysis and reflection and has become standard research practice (Edwards & Holland 2013, p.69). Audio recordings also have benefits during the course of the interview or conversation as the researcher can be fully present, not preoccupied taking notes. Interviewers can 'focus on listening, probing and following up and maintaining eye contact with their interviewee' (Edwards & Holland 2013, p.69). Listening is a key qualitative interviewing skill; it is the foundation for probing and expanding on information already provided by the participant in the moment. The transcriptions were initially carried out by a software named Descript that transcribes the audio data collected during the interviews. This method does not provide perfect transcriptions, so the transcriptions were manually edited and formatted after the fact. The researcher made sure not to add or omit any information during this process, as a misinterpretation of data can easily follow (Pavlekno 2007, p.173).

Not only did I collect data from the participants during my time in Ypres, but also from the sites themselves. As you will see later in Chapters 4.2 & 5.4 I will utilise an analysis of the research sites as important context for my visitor analysis. These analyses will be primarily based on my experience of those sites during the course of my research. This includes visual analysis and any available information boards or exhibits. Tyne Cot Cemetery has a number of information boards and plaques at the site, as well as the visitor's centre that holds exhibits and further information. This data was of course supplemented with information from the website of both institutions and where so, is referenced accordingly.

3.2.6 Data Analysis

Interview data that was collected at both research sites, including the longer form interviews with the museum staff and the local tour guides was identified and annotated in the transcription software itself, allowing it to serve as both a transcriptional and analytical tool. Descript allows its users to annotate, categorise and compare different documents. In

combination with the use of Microsoft Excel I was able to code and analyse the dataset effectively in this format.

This coding related to the different of the aspects of the visitor experience set out in Falk & Dierking's (2000) 'contextual model of learning', highlighted in the analysis chapters. As established earlier, certain questions asked of the research participants were aimed at certain aspects of their experience. This allowed the responses to each of these themes to be coded accordingly for each interview. The first pass of coding, known as 'initial coding' is a technique that serves to 'open up' or break down the dataset in order to provide categories, through examination and comparison, for its constituent parts (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p.61). In this study, this determined the categories for each aspect of the visitor experience that I would place the respondents into. For example, the first aspect of the visitor experience analysed in both case studies is motivations. The initial coding allowed for the establishment of the 4 categories of motivations in which the responses fit; the categories being familial connection, national duty, historical interest and accompanying another visitor. This process was carried out for research themes, establishing useful groups throughout. The second stage of coding requires the researcher to be able to take the wide dataset, and the emergent categories established in the first pass of coding, and begin to draw connections, highlighting important aspects of visitor responses. Here this took the form of placing the responses from each interview into the correct category, for each aspect of their experience. Looking in more detail at these categories, I could then explore the themes that formed them, considering the varying ways visitors approached, recalled or perceived aspects of their commemorative experience. This process also confirmed the importance of an aspect of the British visitor experience that I had not considered, civil-military relations. During the data collection, I had noticed the emergence of this theme, noting how it was mentioned multiple times by the respondents despite the lack of a question directly aiming at that area. However, it was in these coding stages of data analysis that I realised how important this aspect of the visitor experience could be, and how important it would be prove to be for my findings. This encouraged me to explore literature on the state of civil-military relations in the UK (Strachan 2003; Danilova 2015; Whetham 2017) and envisage how this could be connected to the commemorative visitor experience in Ypres.

Each interview was titled by its location and chronology, i.e. the first interview that was carried out was labelled Interview 1, and having taken place at the museum, it was labelled Museum Interview 1. Interview 86, however, may have taken place at Tyne Cot, and as such was labelled Field Interview 86. Throughout the thesis, when referring to these interviews, just the interview number will be used, rather than the distinctions of Museum or Field interviews for the sake of succinctness. This distinction was more useful during the analysis process itself. Additionally, this numbered naming system preserves the anonymity of the respondents, rather than using their name or other discernible characteristics.

3.3 Reflections

This project was, from the beginning, intended to utilise what would most likely be a form of qualitative inquiry in order to investigate British tourist experiences in Ypres, Belgium. Having completed a BA in History, discourse analysis and other forms of qualitative research methodology were familiar to me. In beginning this project, it became soon apparent that to answer my research questions I would want to speak to tourists on the ground. By drawing the focus of this thesis to the moment of interaction between a tourist and their surroundings, to the site they have come to visit, this work must live in the depth of that moment, rather than the breadth of any individual's experience. The requirements for navigating this depth are a robust theoretical base, and a research design that allows research participants the room to live and explore that moment. Situated phenomenological interviews naturally emerged as the best way to explore this depth with a number of tourists in a timely manner. It was important to balance the need for depth and the aim to disrupt the tourist experience as little as possible and to respect the time of the respondents.

The data generated from the research methodology applied in this project has supplied both a useful breadth and depth of inquiry. The research questions for this project aim to cover British tourists' sense of nationality, view of transnational memory and thoughts of civil-military relations and justifications for war. The breadth of the collected data allows for a variety of approaches to the highlighted issues to be identified, and the depth allows the theoretical tools from an expansive literature base to be applied to these experiences.

The weakness of this chosen research methodology very much mirrors its strength: whilst it allows a good degree of depth and breadth, it fails to specialise in either. Other qualitative research methods may have been able to generate a deeper account of the visitor experience, covering the same research themes, yet, this study will continue to analyse a rich and varied dataset, drawing its conclusions from a base larger than would be allowed by alternative approaches. Importantly, the third research question that emerged as an important concern for this project during the data collection process itself, did so as a result of the number of times these themes were highlighted by the respondents. Its repeated appearance allowed me to comfortably incorporate it into the research questions.

One critical reflection on the data collection itself would be a desire to better balance the data collection between the two sites. Whilst this imbalance was caused by purely practical issues, as mentioned above, the research participants at Tyne Cot Cemetery provided a number of useful insights, most importantly the focus on civil-military relations. These insights, especially if gathered earlier on in the research trip may have allowed me to slightly alter my research design during the data collection process itself and generate more findings on the matter, especially in the case of the museum visitors. As the practical issues that led to Tyne Cot serving as the second case study in this project were resolved during my time in Ypres, it meant that the visitor responses collected there were more weighted towards the end of the data collection period, whereas data was collected at the museum throughout. The reflections that the Tyne Cot interviews prompted for me as a researcher could have been more effective for the project as a whole if they had happened earlier on in the data collection process.

4. British Tourist Experiences in the In Flanders Fields Museum

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Structure

This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of British tourist experiences at the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres, Belgium. The museum is a focal point in Ypres for the local commemorative culture of the First World War, sitting on the main square at the very centre of the town. I will begin by considering the literary discussions surrounding the relationship between museums and memory to appropriately contextualise my analysis. This analysis of the museum will start with examining the interviews I carried out with two of the museum curators and with the museum director, in order to better understand the development of the museum, what it is the staff at the museum are trying to represent, and what they would like the visitors to take away from their museum. This will be followed by a descriptive analysis of the museum exhibit. Drawing on these interviews and my analysis of the museum design, I will identify some of the concepts that run throughout the permanent exhibition and highlight some of the important examples of museography that exemplify the museum's message. My analysis of the visitor responses will explore how the key messages of the museum are received, how they are being interpreted by British visitors and, most importantly, what significance this has for their experiences. Finally, I will analyse a number of themes that emerged during the primary data collection in the In Flanders Fields Museum in order to analyse the experiences of British visitors to the museum, how they are reacting to the exhibition, and if their immediate interpretations are in line with the intentions of the museum curators.

The key themes of the visitor experience have been identified and are represented by the subtitles. These key themes are as follows: Motivations, experiences, integrated exhibits and the balanced approach, emotion, nationality and finally, importance of visitation. By analysing the visitor experiences at the museum with these themes, I aim to be able to draw conclusions about the significance of these interactions with a significant site of both memory and heritage in Ypres. Some aspects will have a particular focus in the museum, such as transnational memory, as this is the arena in which they are more present. In contrast the other research site, Tyne Cot cemetery, is steeped in national imagery and

tradition. It is one of the most iconic sites of British remembrance of the First World War, and is significantly nationally charged.

4.1.2 Museums and Memory

In this section I will explore the relationship between museums and memory; how they interact with each other and what this means for my data collection and research project as a whole.

Museums mediate the future, the present and the past, representing authorised past narratives as a form of 'institutionalised public memory' (Davison 2005, p.186).

Consequently, museums act as an anchor for official memory. Approaches to museum visitation, design and theory are all informed by the personal and cultural experience of remembering (Crane 2000, p.5). Museums can be viewed as a memory repository, and this idea has informed museological studies that focus on the collecting and presentation of museum displays (Crane 2000, p.4). Susan Crane (2000, pp.4-5) states, 'the museum-memory nexus forms one of the richest sites of inquiry into the production of cultural and personal knowledge'. Museums are filled with collisions between history and memory, objectivity, and subjectivity. According to Crane (2000, p.7), however, in museums, these collisions are not destructive; rather, the confrontations between the subjective and objective create a 'highly energised relationship between museums and memory'. This is not a one-way interaction: visitors bring their histories and memories with them when they visit museums, although perhaps not consciously (Kavanagh 2006, p.2). These personal memories may be stirred by the contents of the museum, potentially dominating the 'formal' history on display.

In simple terms, this is the relationship between historical museums and their visitors. Museums commit to collecting, documenting and conserving material from the past, and they commit to making it publicly accessible. Therefore, through the process of selection they define what is considered to be history (Black 2011, p.415). In the preservation, interpretation and display of their collections they function as a permanent memory store that pieces together and transmits meaning. In the process of being experienced by visitors, the 'history' that is being presented by the museum becomes

something else, each individual gets a 'historical sense' of what happened that is independent of the 'true' history that is presented (Black 2011, p.415). These alternative interpretations are based on the personal memories and histories of the visitors, which is why each is so unique (Kavanagh 2006, p.2).

Museums will present information about social practices alongside physical evidence, but as Black (2011, p.417) has stated, specific types of 'material culture' – most notably physical remains – more readily persist in order to reflect past cultures. These items of material culture, sometimes remains from a building or other hardy small items, were largely those chosen by museums to be stored and presented. In this preservation of material culture, museums act not only as a store for cultural memory, but as mentioned above, they play a direct role in creating and shaping his memory. By selecting what deserves to be remembered, kept and treasured, museums can fix 'the memories of entire cultures through representative objects' (Black 2011, pp.415-8; Crane 2000) The retention of material culture by a museum is likely linked to collecting policies of the past, which is to at least some extent reflective of the tastes and priorities of the community's elites. (Black 2011, p.421). As Davison argues, museums could just as aptly be named as places of 'selective memory' rather than collective memory (Davidson 2005, p.186; Black 2011, p.421).

Wolfgang Ernst has suggested that museums have the potential to 'foster myriad random encounters' with 'objects of knowledge', rather than simply craft singular narratives (Ernst 2000). But Crane (2000, p.4) asserts that the institutional nature of the museum dissuades this and encourages 'the construction of narratives that inhibit random access in favour of orderly, informative meaning-formation.' She suggests that in the process of creating meaningful narratives by associating objects with memories, the multitude of possible subjective meanings or interpretations of that object may be stifled (Crane 2000, p.4).

In the recognition of their ethical responsibility, contemporary museums are increasingly aware of the need to utilise the past to address the needs of the present, in an effort to act in an inclusive manner to the communities they serve (Black 2011, p.425). Black states that this shift in the meaning of 'history' for both the museum and the communities they serve can unearth some tensions between historians and historical museums. In their

attempts to meet the needs of a modern museum and the 'changing picture of what "history" means', Black (2011, p.425) argues that these institutions are sometimes finding themselves at odds with what historians may define 'history' to be. They argue that academic input is crucial for museums and that historians and other academics can greatly benefit from museum driven projects. In the case of the In Flanders Fields Museum, however, both the of the curators that I spoke to, as will be seen later, would identify themselves as active historians, alongside their roles as curators. This suggests that at this museum, academic and museum professionals are not just working together harmoniously, but are actually one and the same, with Dominiek Dendooven especially publishing a number of research projects and being an active member of the academic community.

Silke Arnold-de Simine (2013) argues that museums can continue to function as a catalyst for social reform and as a public educator. She cites a shift in aesthetics and policies in museums with the adoption of new 'representational strategies' (Arnold-de Simine 2013, p.8). The need for a space in which controversial viewpoints can be contested and discussed is an important role for many new museums. In being provided with a voice, wide ranging and, even sometimes incompatible, narratives have supposedly found a home in the museum that leaves the goal of total synthesis aside (Arnold-de Simine 2013, p.8). Arnold-de Simine (2013, p.8) states that, whilst museums may be trying to prevent the presentation of a 'grand or master narrative', varying smaller narratives are often selected and presented in a way that additively form an 'uncontested account of the past.' This account of the past that museums present, despite the variance in the narratives that they incorporate, will be integrated somewhat into their interpretation of the past and their aims as a commemorative, but also commercial actor. As Beger et al. (2021, p.10) state 'multi-perspectivity does not prevent cosmopolitan museums from scripting a strong memory narrative', a narrative that serves to guide visitors to a consensus view on the narration of the memory of war. The In Flanders Fields Museum is a good example of this and is one of the museums considered by Berger et al. (2021) in their analysis. The museum favours individual stories and narratives to larger national narratives for a number of reasons, as will be explored later. Yet, there is a consistent undercurrent of the museum's messaging throughout the exhibition despite the range of narratives that it presents.

This shift from the presentation of a singular 'grand narrative' to the utilisation of a number of smaller narratives has been described as a shift from antagonistic narratives to a cosmopolitan mode of thinking (Berger et al. 2021, pp.69-70). Museums have traditionally highlighted national tales and 'exclusionary conceptions of citizenship and belonging' that present an overarching national narrative that can promote antagonistic perspectives (Berger et al. 2021, pp.69-114). However, the New Museology approach, which was proposed in a 1989 collection edited by Peter Vergo (1989), advocated for these institutions to play a new role, challenging their established missions. It was argued that museums should embrace alternative views and voices and foster social justice (Berger et al. 2021, pp.69-70; Vergo 1989) This approach aligns with the concept of cosmopolitanism, encouraging tolerance, curiosity, empathy and creativity (Levitt 2015, p.8). Whilst some antagonistic discourses are still prevalent in some areas of Europe, cosmopolitan memory is undoubtedly the dominant force in European war museums today (Berger et al. 2021, p.103). It is, therefore, important to consider, how the landscape of museums of war, and more specifically the First World War has changed since their inception, sometimes over a century ago. Many of these museums were founded either during, or immediately after, the conflict. Therefore, these institutions have transitioned from a display of what is more current affairs, than it is history, to the recording and interpretation of events that fall beyond the realms of living memory (Cornish 2023, p.4).

Jay Winter (2012, p.156) identifies the change as the beginning of museums in 'privileging non-combatant victims of war alongside civilian and military mobilization in the war efforts of combatant countries.' He suggests that this development was based on the emergence of the Holocaust as a vital aspect of the history of the Second World War. Winter (2012, p.158) suggests that by the close of the twentieth century 'the shadow of the Holocaust was indirectly evident in new representations of the First World War', citing the style of the opening of the exhibit opened in 2008 at the Imperial War Museum. This exhibition was titled 'In Memoriam: Remembering the Great War' and was placed its focus more on the loss and suffering of the conflict, as well as being 'much more international' than the older, neighbouring, Second World War galleries.

Carbone (2022, p.572), similarly, identifies this change in museology as being identified by the construction of narratives that represent 'a plurality of lived experiences,

histories and identities aimed at supporting more progressive and ethically informed ways of looking at societal issues'. In doing this heritage organisations, galleries, and museums 'are engaging with global social challenges and the need to construct fairer and more just societies' (Carbone 2022, p.572). As a consequence, the focus is drawn away from modes of representing war that have been more traditional, such as technological development, military strategy, and sacrifice, towards an approach that is focused on individuals, on their suffering, emotions and experiences (Cercel et al. 2019, p.196). As Cercel et al. (2019, p.196) argue, this approach to museology is connected with the 'institutionalisation of a cosmopolitan mode of remembering', wherein the stories of the "hero" are replaced with the 'experience and suffering of the victim' (Cento Bull & Hansen 2016, p.391). Examples of this development of the museology can be seen in the Historial of the Great War in Péronne, which opened in 1992, and the Military History Museum in Dresden, which was reinaugurated in 2011. Both museums hold human beings, and their experiences at the centre of their exhibitions, and as such, represent the 'cosmopolitan mode of remembering', although to different extents (Cercel et al. 2019, p.208). These museums are just two examples of the presence of New Museology and its cosmopolitan ideas in War museums in Western Europe. As will be explored in the following section, the In Flanders Fields Museum is also a strong example of this approach to representing the past.

This transition has had marked effects on the memory of war in museums across Europe. Museums of the First World War present a number of unique challenges to museum curators, as the public consciousness and memory of the war changes from nation to nation, the museology must mirror this and adapt to the changing its changing nature (Cornish 2023, pp.3-4). As Whitmarsh (2001, p.2) states 'memory of war often forms part of a nation's self-image.' It is important therefore, to look further at how these developments have directly impacted museums of war across Europe, but more specifically in the UK and Belgium.

4.1.3 Museums of War in the UK and Belgium

In Britain, there was a clear shift in 1917 towards 'official control over the collection and display of representations and remnants of the war', from a smattering of privately

sponsored exhibitions (Wellington 2017, p.27). The increasing 'war weariness' that was at its zenith in the period from October 1917-February 1918, drove the government to 'initiate an ongoing "broad-fronted campaign to sustain civilian morale for outright military victory"' (Wellington 2017, p.37, Gregory 2008). The remobilisation of public support for the conflict, and the increased cultural and social control that entails, became a matter of great urgency. The war museums that were established in that time and the next decade or two in a number of countries were therefore intended to be tributes to those that suffered the tests of war. During these years 'appropriate' representations of war were displayed, in which the depiction of the conflict was often sanitised and there was little room for histories of anti-war movements (J. Winter 2012, p.153). This was influenced by the desire of museum curators to avoid offending those still in mourning (J. Winter 2012, p.153).

This style of museology set the standard for most of the twentieth century, and it was not until the 'fourth quarter of this century' that there was a notable change in First World War museums (J. Winter 2012, p.156). Its legacy, however, could still be seen in places into the twenty-first century. Writing in 2001, Whitmarsh (2001, p.12) identifies the tendency of the Imperial War Museum in London to 'use traditional forms of commemoration, formed by society in order to deal with an often traumatic past and create "an appropriate memory"'. Therefore, the cosmopolitan mode of remembering is not quite so dominant in the British landscape as it might be in western continental Europe.

Specific reflections on the Belgian museology are less commonly found, especially in English, with what research that is available largely focusing on the In Flanders Fields Museum. Whitmarsh's (2001) comparison of the Imperial War Museum and the In Flanders Fields Museum (IFFM) was based on the old IFFM layout, before the 2013 renovation. Similarly, the IFFM's old layout was the focus of Julie de Nys's 1998 M.A. thesis, that was submitted at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. There have been a few studies since, such as Benvindo & Vanraepenbusch's (2016) assessment of the Royal Museum of the Army and Military History's '14-18, this is our story!' and '14-18 Brussels in German Time' at the Museum of the City of Brussels. In 2017 Karen Shelby published a monograph named *Belgian Museums of the Great War*. In this book she explores a number of Belgian museums that are all positioned along the Western Front in Flanders and provides invaluable context for this project (Shelby 2017, pp.1-7). These museums include the In Flanders Fields

Museum and the Museum Memorial Passchendaele, 1917 alongside a number of other exhibitions in the area.

In the lead up to the 2014-18 centenary commemorations, a split in the commemorative perspectives became apparent in Flanders and Wallonia. The geographical relationship that Flanders and the front lines of the conflict shared meant that the history of the fighting front takes centre stage, in all of the museums and commemorative programs in the region, whereas, in Wallonia far less attention was paid to the history of the front (Shelby 2017, p31). Whilst the Belgian government identified the demonstration of the commonalities of the conflict as holding the utmost importance, seeking to unite the two cultural and language groups, a clear split can still be seen in the museology (Shelby 2017, p31). From the outside looking in, the Flemish mode of memory seems to dominate, however this is likely due to its very nature as a battlefield site and a subsequent tourist attraction. Visitors are experiencing this paradigm more frequently and in larger numbers. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Flemish view on commemoration and museology is more prominent not only in the sphere of tourism, but also in academic study. Shelby (2017, p.6) states that the museums in Flanders all place their emphasis on peace, the futility of war, and 'de-emphasising the experiences of those who embraced the conflict', insisting on the visitor's obligation to learn about the war. These institutions participate in 'historical remembrance', and as such draw on both memory and history, as well as first-person accounts and narratives of the past (Shelby 2017, p.33).

The museums that are the subject of Shelby's work are undoubtedly propagating the cosmopolitan mode of museology and commemoration as described by Berger et al. (2021, pp.69-70). The history is written 'from "below"', drawing focus to the experiences of ordinary participants rather than emphasising the actions of military and political leaders, in a classic 'top-down' manner (Shelby 2017, p.2). Shelby (2017, p.153) presents an eloquent summary of the mechanics of the presentation of this message in museums on Flanders:

Visitors participate in undermining the expected dominant canon of the war museum that formerly highlighted narratives of battle strategy from the perspective of high command. In the visceral connection between visitor, object, and living historian, the previously invisible soldier, refugee, or townspeople living in occupied

Belgium becomes the means through which a larger and more inclusive story of the war is understood.

Museums have enjoyed a complicated relationship with memory throughout the life of memory studies, moving from acting as simple storehouses for defined, authorised national narratives, to being part of a larger nexus of memory, in which the museum is an actor. An actor that among others, allows agency to its visitors and their interpretations of the exhibits. The trend of moving away from 'grand narratives' and moving towards a collection of smaller stories, from which the visitors can draw their own conclusions, can be clearly seen in the In Flanders Fields Museum. However, whilst the issues that define 'selective memory' may have been reduced by this approach, a selection process still remains. To consider this museum, or any museum for that matter, an objective independent actor, with no motive, or agenda, no matter how pure of heart, would be a mistake. As will be explored in the following section the In Flanders Fields Museum also reflects the shift from antagonistic perspectives that were often represented in the 'grand narratives' of the past towards a cosmopolitan attitude that is representative of the new museology approach (Berger et al. 2021, pp.69-70). Being conscious of the inherent preferences of the In Flanders Fields Museum, both in terms of its role as an institution in a changing world, is paramount when discerning its visitor's experiences. Analysing the way in which the Museum's ideology is presented allows a researcher to frame their visitor responses and to identify whether the curators and visitors of the museum agree as to what the most important aspects of the exhibition are.

4.2. The Representations of the First World War in the In Flanders Fields Museum

4.2.1 Museum Introduction

The In Flanders Fields Museum finds itself in the very heart of Ypres. Located on the *Grote Markt*, the main square in the centre of the town. The square is a hub of tourist activity, surrounded by bars, restaurants, gift shops and hotels. The Cloth Hall, which is the building in which the museum is located, dominates the square with its striking architecture.

The historic building has been almost completely rebuilt following the devastation that the town suffered during the First World War and, is now part of the iconography of the town, representing wartime hardship and recovery.

The museum was first established in 1998 under the Stewardship of Piet Chielens. Since then, it has undergone numerous changes to its permanent exhibition and many temporary exhibitions. Chielens served as the museum director for many years and has only recently stepped aside, in 2021, allowing a new museum director to assume the position for the first time in the museum's history. Therefore, the museum in its current state owes its present state to Mr Chielens, which the curators were keen to emphasise.

The In Flanders Fields Museum undoubtedly embodies a cosmopolitan discourse, that 'promotes empathy and compassion for people of all origins caught up in cataclysmic world events and rendered victims by forces beyond their control' (Berger et al. 2021, p.98). The permanent exhibition explores the effects of war on combatants, people, society and the landscape, concluding by considering post-war reconstruction and commemoration. The approach of the museum reflects the state of the museum-memory relationship in the era of new museology, utilising a number of smaller narratives, often in the form of individual stories, to represent a cosmopolitan display that favours tolerance, empathy, and creativity over the antagonistic narratives of some traditional museum displays (Levitt 2015, p.8).

The museum is very open about its message: on their website they state that 'the museum considers presenting this war story to be a universal and contemporary message of peace, and therefore an important social mission' (inlandersfields.be). The cosmopolitan, peace-focused nature of the museum is well known, and this pro-European focus on cohesion in the face of war and conflict is more common in continental Europe than it is in Britain. The phrase 'important social mission' demonstrates the way the museum approaches its role as an institution: they believe that the message of peace is an essential one, and they do their best to propagate it, not just within their own walls, but in the larger commemorative community in Ypres, at the very centre of which the museum finds itself.

This cosmopolitan ethos has been criticised, however. For example, Berger et al. (2021, p.104) argue that adopting this approach does not prevent the formation of a prominent narrative that limits, rather than encourages, controversy and debate, in favour of

a 'consensus view on how the memory of war should be narrated'. This, they argue, depoliticises the memory of the First World War, which in turn prevents the formation of a 'memory politics that may more effectively confront and engage the antagonistic memory discourses' that remain in the First World War museum space and have been growing throughout Europe in recent years (Berger et al. 2021, p.107).

The In Flanders Fields Museum often hosts temporary exhibitions alongside its permanent exhibitions. For the duration of the period in which the data was being collected for this project the Museum was host to the temporary exhibition titled 'The First War in the Middle East: Aftermath and Legacies' which explored the often-neglected wake left by the First World War in the Middle East. This study, however, focuses on the experiences of British tourists in the permanent exhibition. As such, tourists were interviewed at the end of the permanent exhibition and before the beginning of the temporary exhibition. The layout of the museum dictates that the entrance to the temporary exhibition is opposite the stairs that lead to the exit at the end of the permanent exhibition. Meaning that many of the tourists did not visit the temporary exhibition and in order to have allowed all of the research participants equal opportunity to have experienced the museum, the interviews were conducted before the entrance to the temporary exhibition. Additionally, the permanent exhibition holds the flagship displays of the museum and is what embodies the lasting message of the institution. This focus also allows for analysis that can be more easily aligned with studies or surveys that may have been carried out at the museum in the past, or may be in the future, with that permanent exhibition serving as a commonality.

4.2.2 Interviews with the Museum Curators and Director

During my time at the In Flanders Fields Museum I spoke to two of the curators for the museum, Dominiek Dendooven and Pieter Trogh, as well as the museum director, Stephen Lodewyck, in order to better understand their aims for their exhibits as well as some of the influences or foundational ideas for the exhibitions. My prepared questions can be seen in Appendix 4. In these interviews other aspects were sometimes brought up by the curators and director, and I sometimes asked clarifying questions (often purely out of

interest). However, the questions listed in Appendix 4 formed the backbone of the conversation.

In speaking to the Museum Director, I was given some insight into the commercial aspects of the decision-making that the museum has to negotiate. A common theme amongst these three, despite differences in experience at the museum, was a clear passion and dedication for the history of the First World War in Flanders and their ability to share it with others and promote peace. The two curators to whom I spoke are both historians by trade, with Dendooven receiving his PhD from the University of Kent in the UK and Trogh completing a Masters in Archival Studies at the Free University of Brussels. Dendooven has been working at the museum since 1998 and his research is focused on the non-European presence in Belgium during the First World War. His book, which was largely based on his PhD thesis, is named *Asia in Flanders Fields: Indians and Chinese on the Western Front, 1914-1920* (Dendooven 2021). He has published a number of works since 2001 detailing the historical experiences in Ypres and international experiences in Flanders during the war (Dendooven, 2001; 2011; 2017; 2021; Dendooven & Chielens 2008; Dendooven & Chhina 2017; Dendooven, Chielens & Dewilde 2020). With Trogh starting at the Museum in 2010, both collaborated with others at the museum for the opening of the new permanent exhibition in 2012 (which is still the permanent exhibition today). They helped curate the content for the displays and aided in the development of the message alongside the previous director of the Museum, Piet Chielens.

Dendooven's wealth of experience at the museum meant that he could provide insight not only to the contemporary state of the museum but also the ideas and developments that have brought the museum to where it is today. For example, he mentioned that the museum first took shape in 1998, and in that period the generation that experienced the war directly were in the process of dying out. With this their first concern was how to pass on stories that they've known from first-hand accounts to the next generation 'that will have never known these people nor their stories firsthand' (Dendooven 2022). Early in its life the curators of the museum recognised the partnership that the museum must have with the local commemorative sites: 'the cemeteries are[...] solemn places. So, the idea was let's make a tool that sticks a face to each of those headstones so that people understand this was a real-life person' (Dendooven 2022).

Both curators stressed the transnational approach of the museum and the desire to present an account of the First World War in which 'there is attention to all different nationalities' with stories that 'are intertwined or presented in a transnational perspective' (Trogh 2022). This goes hand in hand with the exhibition's socio-cultural approach and focus on individual war experiences. Dendooven mentions that 'if you focus on individual war experience, one's nationality is actually of lesser importance' (Dendooven 2022). The museum tries to show the impact of war both on human beings and on the landscape, and, with this, demonstrate that 'war is always the worst solution to solve [...] international conflicts' (Dendooven 2022; Trogh 2022). Here the curators are demonstrating the approach of the museum as described by Chielens et al. (2014, p.93), wherein the emphasis that is placed in shared experiences, prompts the visitor to reflect on the fact that 'the individual was only a tiny cog in a vast military fighting machine' (Berger et al. 2021, p.99).

When asked what they would like visitors to take away from their experience at the museum the two curators mentioned that 'every good war museum should show what war does to people' and that 'if you are a good museum of war, then the visitors would understand that war is never good' (Dendooven 2022). Additionally, Trogh stated that when visitors who perhaps visit the museum with a 'very national perspective or... narrative[...] in their head and they walk away with a more nuanced picture of what happened, then I would be very happy as a curator' (Trogh 2022).

I also asked the curators about the balance of the national and transnational in the town of Ypres generally. Both being active members of the local commemorative community, they were able to present some interesting opinions on the commemorative experience that Ypres provides but they also touched on the role the museum plays in the wider memoryscape. Dendooven stated that Ypres is 'the most international or transnational place in Belgium' due to the vast amount of shared history it offers to nations across the globe. He went on to say that 'if you commemorate together, if you have common history to share' this can bring people together (Dendooven 2022). Trogh, however, contrasted the focus on transnational thought that runs through the museum with a focus outside of the walls of the Cloth Hall that tends towards national modes of commemoration. He mentions that this is more obvious with the commonwealth countries; 'you can see that every night at the Menin Gate' (Trogh 2022). Whilst there may be a slight difference in philosophy, he

recognises the role that the museum plays: 'we try to see the exhibitions as an introduction to the history that lies outside the walls,[...] in the landscape' (Trogh 2022).

Ypres as a town is a centre of British and commonwealth commemoration due to the significant presence of commonwealth memorials and cemeteries in the surrounding area due to the decision of the Imperial War Graves Commission after the war not to repatriate the bodies of fallen commonwealth soldiers. The Menin Gate, and the last post ceremony that take place underneath it, are key aspects of Ypres' iconography, and these commemorate the fallen soldiers of the Commonwealth. The Flanders poppy that is adopted by the museum for their wristbands has been a powerful and enduring symbol of remembrance in the United Kingdom ever since its adoption by the newly formed British Legion in 1921 (Iles 2008, p.201). I asked Dendooven if this anglo-centric commemorative atmosphere gives the British tourist a sense of home away from home. He mentioned that 'this is enhanced by the cafes and the restaurants[...] there are not many other places where a hotel is called Old Tom' (Dendooven 2022). The town even has an Anglican church, that is a 'part of the town fabric' (Dendooven 2022). Trogh also brought up an interesting point concerning the way in which different nations view Ypres as a site for commemoration. He stated that 'the French are starting... to be more open to the transnational history[...] especially on this part of their battlefields' (Trogh 2022). He mentions that the fields surrounding Ypres have always been on a 'second level' compared to the battlefields like Verdun and The Marne, sites that are steeped in national mythos. In those places the national perspective or narrative is much stronger (Trogh 2022).

The Museum director Stephen Lodewyck started at the museum relatively recently, in August of 2021. He formerly worked at *Westtoer*, a tourist company that is managed by the province of West Flanders. Whilst Lodewyck may be relatively new to the museum, he has been active in the commemorative space, as the *Westtoer* were key in the centenary preparations for the province. Whilst he did not contribute to the creation of the permanent exhibition, I did ask Lodewyck his thoughts on the message of the exhibition. He mentioned that 'the most important part is that we're not only a military historical museum', stressing the importance of communicating the impact that the conflict had on society (Lodewyck 2022). This aligns well with the sentiments expressed by the curators of the museum. I also asked Lodewyck his thoughts on the museum's balance between national and transnational.

He mentions that they are 'trying to be a post-national museum' and that they are 'convinced that war is only about loss' (Lodewyck 2022). He also recounts the fact that there are 'almost 600,000 victims of the First World War, from more than 100 nations,' in the area, and that without a 'global, transnational perspective on the fighting then you don't get the reality of the history' (Lodewyck 2022). I asked Lodewyck about the transnational balance in Ypres as a whole as well and he acknowledged the importance of national or imperial symbols such as the Menin Gate and that their 'mission and vision' inside the museum is far more global than what occurs under the Menin Gate. But he also mentions that it is what visitors take away from the sites that matter and that he thinks that their perspective has broadened. These sites may have different messages but they both play a crucial role in the local memoryscape, Lodewyck mentioned that sites such as the Menin Gate are important because 'they keep memory alive' (Lodewyck 2022). Whilst this may only be 'some perspectives of the total memory', at the museum they endeavour to provide these other perspectives.

Both the curators and the museum director had their passion for the museum's mission on full display, describing the ways in which they are attempting to broaden the horizons of the tourists that visit their exhibit. This mission, as earlier explained is to present the stories of the First World War as a 'universal and contemporary message of peace' (inlanders.be). The ways in which the museum achieves this will be explored in the following section, the analysis of the permanent exhibition. However, an important point to consider is that the museum does not exist in a vacuum; it plays a part on the larger commemorative experience in Ypres. As a result, its exhibition has to be considered in that context and the museum staff are very aware of this. Whilst their message may differ from the narratives that may dominate some of the commemorative sites outside the Cloth Hall, they have profound respect for these sites and view them as an important part of the remembrance. Furthermore, as the museum director Lodewyck mentioned, they 'keep the memory alive' (Lodewyck 2022). Trogh even described the museum exhibition as 'an introduction to the history that lies outside the walls' (Trogh 2022). The museum works to provide perspectives that are not necessarily offered at other commemorative sites in Ypres, in a complimentary fashion. By examining the permanent exhibition, I will analyse how the museum achieves its goals and what this means for the visitors.

4.2.3 Analysis of the Permanent Exhibition of the In Flanders Fields Museum

In preparation for the 2014-2018 centenary the permanent exhibition was extensively remodelled into the display that tourists continue to visit today. The exhibition is long and thin, offering a directed and largely chronological experience. The exhibition opens with details of the situation in which Europe finds itself in the lead up to the First World War and some characteristics of society at the time in a number of the belligerent nations. The museum highlights the growing economic rivalry and militaristic antagonism in Europe in the year leading up to the war, presenting information about the arms race. This, in effect, shares the responsibility for the breakout of the war, rather than pinning the blame squarely on one nation. This does not mean that the actions of specific nations are ignored, before and during the war, as this 'build up' display quickly transitions into the invasion of Belgium and the aggression of Central Powers troops. However, these events are viewed through the lens of the individuals that experienced them, rather than from the perspectives of states interacting on an international scale.

From the very beginning the focus on geography and landscape that is a strong theme of the museum is prevalent. On the floor of the section entitled 'The Invasion of Belgium', the floor is covered by a large-scale map of Belgium and its borders with Germany, France, The Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Following this theme, in the subsequent section titled 'The First Battle of Ypres and the Inundation of the Yser', there is a model landscape onto which the movements of the active armies are projected onto for a dynamic expression of the flowing state of battle in the area during this period. Later in the museum there are four large touch screen interaction points at which visitors can view aerial photographs of Ypres and the surrounding area, both in the aftermath of the war and in the modern day. This allows the tourists to appreciate the scale of destruction and the scars of the conflict that remain imprinted on the landscape today.

Throughout the permanent exhibition, there are several displays with a focus on the military and the experiences of soldiers during the conflict, but there are also a number of displays with a social and cultural focus. This reflects the sentiments of the museum staff that I interviewed; it is a conscious effort to foreground the impacts of war on people and

society. The ethos of the museum shines through here, as Dendooven stated 'every good war museum should show what war does to people' (Dendooven 2022). Military equipment, weapons and tactics are an important part of the story of the First World War and are on show, but they are supplemented with children's toys of the era and other cultural artefacts. From the very beginning social and military history are presented together, working together, but also in some cases it can provide a thought-provoking contrast.

As the visitors approach the exhibit, they see a large screen through which they have to proceed to enter the exhibit. This screen displays footage of the 'euphoric atmosphere of the *Belle Epoque*', which is the period before the First World War in which industrialisation had led to increasing economic growth and optimism ruled the day (Inlandersfields.be). This screen is accompanied by a number of small display cases featuring some everyday items from the various European nations. This space is open and calm, with few features to draw the eye. After proceeding through the gap in the video display, however, the visitors arrive straight at the section entitled 'The invasion of Belgium'. This section is far busier, it uses bolder colours, strong reds, oranges and yellows, and information is presented at many different levels, from floor to high up on the walls. The fact that the floor itself is a large, boldly coloured display adds to the relative chaos, which is a stark contradiction to the space before it. As the museum mention on their website: 'On the large map of Belgium you step into the Great War' (inlandersfields.be). The relative euphoric atmosphere in the *Belle Epoque* is contrasted with the chaos that was seeded by economic rivalries in the early 1900s and that exploded in war are shown from the very start. But the importance of social history is not forgotten even in the chaos of war: in 'The Invasion of Belgium' display space is made for children's toys, and the effects that were felt by real people by the outbreak of the war are explored. The societal impacts, the way this war affected people, accompanies the military information.

This focus on the socio-cultural impacts of the war can be seen in a number of the other displays as well. As museum director Stephen Lodewyck (2022) highlighted, the In Flanders Fields Museum is not only a military history museum, it draws focus to the social and cultural impacts of the conflict. The exhibition, in the section concerning the Second Battle of Ypres, explores the impacts on the local population in both occupied territory and behind the allied lines. Acheil Van Wallegghem was a village priest who was located behind

the allied front lines, he recorded his experiences and alongside his image is a display case featuring artefacts and stories from territory near the front lines, where relations between the soldiers and civilian populations were often strained (IFFM 2021). These stories serve to ground the conflict from the point of view of real people, not just soldiers but also civilians, whose lives were completely disrupted. Similarly, the striking display slightly later in the exhibit that is comprised of a projection onto the inside of a large half-dome, accompanied by amphitheater style seating, shows a video of the lasting effects the war had on Ypres itself and the people who lived there. This display is one of the most prominent in the whole exhibition in that it stands completely alone in its section and draws the attention of all who walk by. The long and thin, directed nature of the museum means that it is the only display in its direct vicinity, which inherently makes it stand out.

Throughout the exhibit the stories of the conflict are sometimes defined by nationalities, as this is an inevitable part of presenting information about the First World War. The displays of military uniforms and common kit for a soldier to carry are in nationally designated display cases, and for the display of troop movements being projected down onto the model landscape, the armies of each nation are clearly distinguishable. These national labels, however, do not encourage national narratives. The national uniforms may be held in separate cases, but they are displayed side by side, without one taking preference or prominence over the other, the forces of the central powers and the allies are presented together, not as adversaries.

The permanent exhibition is home to several nationally defined displays such as the aforementioned uniforms and equipment of the respective fighting nations, yet there are also a number of integrated displays that tell the stories of the fighting men together, rather than these being kept apart. One notable example of this is a large video presentation concerning the alleged Christmas truce of 1914. The video features actors portraying four fighting men of the First World War of different nations, recounting their experiences in the trenches in 1914 and of the Christmas truce. A powerful part of this display is that the soldiers all sing the popular Christmas carol 'Silent Night' in their native languages. This is a clear example of the attempts made by the museum to consider the combatants of the First World War as individuals, as people, as human beings, with stories to tell. Each soldier is given equal time, their nationalities or their allegiances do not define their message, it is

simply four men telling their story, separately but together. This reflects Dendooven's (2022) sentiment when he mentioned that 'if you focus on individual war experience, one's nationality is actually of lesser importance', and it shows those sentiments of the curators in the permanent exhibition. Additionally, this display, depicting the Christmas Truce shows that the museum recognises the importance of creating lasting memories. As Knackmuhs (2022, p.153) and Bitgood (1994) have suggested, during leisure experiences visitors are 'not likely to dedicate sufficient energy to learn and later recall much factual information'. Therefore, it is more productive in museum environments to focus on the creation of exhibits that are memorable (Knackmuhs 2022, p.153, Bitgood 1994). The Christmas truce display is visually striking with the men being shown life-size on large screens, and the inclusion of the recognisable nature of the song 'Silent Night' is designed to add to this memorability. Additionally, this is a festive song that will be known by many of the visitors, with their own memories of Christmas time, which inherently draws them to consider the experiences of those soldiers at the time. This is an example of how the museum utilises emotional displays of equality and individual narratives to present its cosmopolitan view.

This Christmas Truce display, however, is not alone as an example of the attempts of the museum curators to step away from national definitions and the narratives that may dominate the preconceptions of its visitors. As Trogh (2022) mentioned, many visitors arrive with preconceived 'national narratives' and that the museum aims to allow its visitors to see past those narratives and come away 'with a more nuanced picture of what happened'. A number of the individual display cases present information and artefacts in a way that integrates the nationalities instead of dividing them. For example, the section that details the realities of trench combat displays artefacts that were used during the war, weapons and tools used by soldiers on both sides of the conflict are presented here, together, with their uses and functionality dictating their place in the display, not their country of origin. Similarly, the exhibit's overview of the war is intentionally bookended by displays of children's toys of the era, wherein toys from nations across the western front are shown together. These displays show not the nationalistic attitudes towards other nations, but rather the larger socio-cultural impact that the conflict had on people and their society, drawing focus to the inherent innocence of childhood and the act of playing with toys. Towards the end of the exhibition, the latter set of toys, which comprise of a number of

‘machines of war’ such as tanks and military vehicles, show the way in which war had come to dominate life and how that even with the coming of peace, war remained a constant presence. The English audio-guide states that ‘After the war the latest war machines find their way into people’s living rooms. Souvenirs and miniature models for the adults and toys for children’ (IFFM 2021). The visitors are then left with a powerful rhetorical question by the audio-guide: ‘Is it our fascination for technological developments, even in terms of weaponry? Or does our society give each new generation a taste for war?’ (IFFM 2021).

The museum utilizes video presentations and other media in a variety of ways to demonstrate the brutality of the war and the consequences it brought both for those who were unfortunate enough to experience it and for the very ground itself. Two video presentations, that of the Christmas truce and the presentation concerning the lasting effects on Ypres and its people have already been mentioned. Another memorable video presentation tells the story of medical professionals, a male doctor and female nurse, recalling their gruesome experiences treating the wounded. Here visitors are seated in a secluded area, allowing them to rest and take in the longer form video in a similar manner to the aforementioned video on the effects of the war on Ypres. Near the end of the exhibit, in the reconstruction section there are four touch screens for visitors to use in which they can examine aerial photographs of the Ypres landscape following the war, comparing the images to modern day and, as a result, witnessing the true magnitude of the destruction that was caused by the fighting. This is another example of the museum drawing the focus of the visitors away from any singular national narrative and pointing it elsewhere, in this instance to the landscape of the war and how it was impacted, and how ultimately this must have impacted the people who live there. In the other instance the focus is drawn to the suffering that war causes, on both sides, and the experiences of the people that dealt with the fallout, which is a cornerstone of the cosmopolitan approach to memory (Cento Bull & Hansen 2016, p.390, Berger et al. 2021 ,p.17). The museum also draws from the stories of individuals throughout the museum, as a way to ground the visitors in the conflict, seeing it from a human perspective. These are clear cut examples of the ‘cosmopolitan mode of remembering’, as described by Cento Bull & Hansen (2016, p.390), at work. The emphasis is placed on atrocities and suffering, with the concepts of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ being represented only in abstract terms as opposed to these being assigned to particular actors.

Upon entry into the museum guests are given a white wristband adorned with the iconic poppy. This wristband serves two purposes, the first being to allow visitors through the gates at the entry and exit of the exhibition. The second function of the wristband is representative of the approach that the museum takes to telling the stories of the First World War as a whole. After receiving the wristband and passing through the entry gate, visitors climb a staircase and are met with a number of consoles with a highlighted sensor, to which they present their wristband. On these consoles the visitors are then asked to choose an individual whose story they would like to learn about. They pick from a large map view of Europe, with a number of stories from many countries involved in the conflict. This allows many of the visitors to zoom to their home location and pick an individual that perhaps lived close to home. If they choose to do so, visitors can then follow the story of their chosen individual at a number of additional consoles or interaction points throughout the museum, which are again to be activated with the poppy wristband that they were presented with on entry.

Alongside the selected individual, each visitor is also assigned another to learn about a different story, often that of a soldier from a different country or locality. With this the museum is attempting to achieve two things. Firstly, the focus on two individuals is reflective of the museum's emphasis on personal stories and the ability of these stories to remind the visitors about the real human impact of war. Both of which were aspects that were raised by the museum curators and the museum director as being central to their message (Trough 2022, Dendooven 2022). Secondly, by providing the visitors with one individual story they choose and another that they did not choose, the museum is familiarising the visitors with more than just their selected perspective. These alternative perspectives may be from different nations or even different sides of the conflict altogether. This is an example of how the museums utilises multi-perspectivity, and how it is used to present narratives or perspectives that visitors have not necessarily selected according to their personal preference and which do not fit into their own national perspective. Here the museum acknowledges the fact that the visitors will have preconceived preferences and allows them to explore what they are interested in, but also reinforces the importance of the alternative perspectives from outside their area of interest, furthermore, emphasizing that each of

these personal stories holds the same weight as the one a visitor might select for themselves.

In the final section of the exhibition, the focus shifts to reconstruction and remembrance. Here remembrance activities and burial processes of multiple combatant nations are shown, as well as some details of the rebuilding process for Ypres itself. These processes are shown by the museum to be inherently interlinked; in the rebuilding of Ypres and the *Westhoek*, some cemeteries had to be embedded into the landscape and other memorial sites had to be established. These sites and the continued visitation and pilgrimages that they inspire have alongside their own physical presence, shaped the town of Ypres from the conclusion of the war in 1918 to today. As visitors approach the exit terminals for the exhibition they are met with a final, visually striking display titled 'the end of all wars?'. After the conclusion of 'The Great War', as it was known at the time, this conflict was considered to be the 'War to End All Wars'. The massive physical, societal, and economic damage that was inflicted globally by the conflict was assumed to be enough of a warning against further conflicts. The display details the name and duration of each significant war that has occurred globally, since the end of the First World War on large flowing banners that fall from the high ceilings of the Cloth Hall down to the floor. This is the sentiment that the visitors are left with as they leave the exhibition. Throughout the exhibition they have detailed the catastrophic consequences that the First World War brought to bear, and with their final display they have shown that war continues to affect people around the globe in more places and in many different ways. Alongside this message that criticises war and violence and propagates peace throughout the exhibition the museum also shows how everybody who was touched by the war suffered and the ways in which national boundaries should not define the way we think about the conflict. Trogh's statement sums this up nicely: he says that if visitors who perhaps visit the museum with a 'very national perspective or... narrative... in their head and they walk away with a more nuanced picture of what happened, then I would be very happy as a curator' (Trogh 2022).

By providing a descriptive analysis of the permanent exhibition of the museum and looking at the interviews with two of the museum curators and the museum director, I have attempted to demonstrate the context in which the visitor analysis, which will constitute the rest of this chapter, is taking place. The first key takeaway is that the museum aims to

provide visitors with a meaningful insight into the personal stories of the First World War. This use of personal stories reflects the efforts of the museum team to focus on the human aspects of war and its impact on people and society. Another assumption that informs this design is that, as Dendooven mentioned, 'if you focus on individual war experience, one's nationality is actually of lesser importance' (Dendooven 2022). This is most clearly shown in displays such as the Christmas Truce display, wherein individual stories and moving beyond national divides are key themes. Moving beyond national modes of memory is the second key takeaway. As Lodewyck, the museum director, mentioned 'we are trying to be a post-national museum' (Lodewyck 2022). This approach is clear in throughout the exhibition and by leaving national narratives aside, the museum is able to display its message of peace more effectively by showing the realities of war for the individuals and landscape that experienced it, instead of valorising the fighting, or propagating any one national myth. Whilst the aim of presenting a 'post-national museum' is hard to achieve, due to the fact that nationality is a key descriptor for any retelling of the First World War, the IFFM has clearly attempted to leave national narratives aside.

4.3 Analysis of the British visitor experience at the Museum

4.3.1 Introduction

In this section I will analyse the experiences of the primary participants, British tourists, in the permanent exhibition at the In Flanders Fields Museum. I will do this by breaking the data into a number of research themes, which will each be considered in their own sub-section. This allows the data to be split into manageable chunks as each theme is attached to a question or two that was asked to the participants during data collection. The main conclusions from each theme will be collated and discussed further in order to explore the relationship between these different themes at the end of the chapter, providing a more comprehensive account of the visitor experience at the museum. At the beginning of each section, I will present some of the key information from the literature base, looking at how researchers have investigated these concepts and what I will be taking from these research areas. Following that I will evaluate the participant responses and pick out notable

trends or examples that either seem to confirm or deny a concept from the literature, or that relate to my research questions.

4.3.2 Motivations

I will begin by looking at the motivations of tourists in their visits to the In Flanders Fields Museum. Visitor motivation is an important aspect of the experience at any tourist location, none more so than at emotionally charged commemorative site. The 'why' of their visit speaks not only to their expectations for the area but also their preconceptions and will, undoubtedly, impact how they may interact with and experience the world around them. This is key for any level of analysis of the touristic experiences in any arena. As a result, motivation has been a major point of contention in a number of academic fields. Namely, for this project, Dark Tourism (Thanatourism), Museum Visitor Studies and Memory Studies.

In this study, participants were asked about their motivations through the lens of their connection to the First World War. This prompts the participants to explore their relationship with the conflict, asking not only specifically why they are at that specific site, but also why they care about the war at all. As Gaynor Kavanagh (2006, p.2) states:

When people visit museums, they can do no other but bring their life histories and memories with them, maybe not ostentatiously nor even consciously, yet within reach. Personal memories may be stirred by the images, objects or words made visible and may dominate over any 'formal' history offered.

The relationship between the visitor and the subject matter and the memories that they carry with them are a significant factor in how they view the content, what they deem important and what they will take away from it (Dunkley et al. 2011, p.866). Understanding this connection and these memories is an essential framing for any insights the participants could provide concerning their experiences in Ypres.

In the field of Dark Tourism, the interpretation of visitor motivations has been championed by the demand perspective. This approach has considered why tourists are driven to sites of death, emphasising the curiosity and empathy of the visitors at these sites. It is also understood as an opportunity for tourists to consider their own mortality in their

interactions with the significant deaths of others (Raine 2013, p.11). According to Dark Tourism research, there are a number of 'secondary' reasons for visitation at dark tourist sites, these being concepts that can be anything aside from the primary fascination with death, such as remembrance, curiosity, or national identity. As a result, the motivations that are common in places of dark tourism are similar to those found for tourists participating in cultural and heritage tourism (Iliev 2021, p.971). With an increasingly wide range of heritage spaces and cultural sites globally that have death as a core feature in their displays this is becoming more prevalent. This development in the Dark Tourism academic space has meant that the 'blunt categorisation of all war-related tourism as "dark tourism"' is coming to be seen as a misconception' (Stone 2013, p.312). It has been argued that sites of the First World War in particular seek to 'enlighten and uplift' rather than focus on dark aspects such as violence and death (Vanneste & Winter 2018, p.443). However, as described in the above analysis of the permanent exhibition of the In Flanders Fields Museum, violence, brutality and death were used to provoke reflects on war and conflict. To state that these displays were designed to 'enlighten and uplift' would be, in my view, a misrepresentation of their goal and of their effect. The emotions that visitors experience and their reflections on the displays will be unpacked further throughout this chapter. But violence and suffering are important aspects of the cosmopolitan message of the museum, and heritage and remembrance spaces that embody a cosmopolitan memory may continue to embrace that darker side of tourism. However, in CWGC cemeteries, there is a very different story.

The ability of heritage sites to 'enlighten and uplift' is something that is seen to be especially true in the case of Britain and the Commonwealth due to the significant presence of the CWGC and the manner in which they shaped the physical and commemorative landscape following the conflict. This landscape was 'reconstructed, smoothed and redeemed, enclosed and ordered' (Morris 1997, p.428; Vanneste & Winter 2018, p.448). As will be discussed in the following chapter Tyne Cot and other CWGC sites utilise imagery, symbolism and design to create a space that could move beyond the stark brutality of death in war. As quoted by Frederick Kenyon (1918, p.12), the director of the British Museum and author of the Kenyon Report, it was intended that 'the restfulness of grass and the brightness of flowers in fitting combination would appear to strike the proper note of brightness and life.'

In the field of Museum Visitor Studies, the importance of motivation has been well established since the development of Falk & Dierking's (2000) 'contextual model of learning'. Their model distinguishes factors as to why visitors decide to go to museums, how they go about their visits, and what they might take away from the experience (Kirchberg & Tröndle 2012, p.438). Motivation and expectations are the first of Falk & Dierking's (2000, p.137) three points that constitute what they name a visitor's 'personal context'. These points represent the needs of visitors that must be considered by the museum curators in order for the visitors to learn and make meaning. In the case of motivation and expectations, they state: 'When expectations are fulfilled learning is facilitated. When expectations are unmet, learning suffers. Museums succeed best when they attract and reinforce intrinsically motivated individuals' (Falk & Dierking 2000, p.137). The work of Hanafiah et al. (2021, pp.625-6) highlights the direct interplay between motivation and emotional reactions in the museum. They conclude that visitor motivations 'could be an essential element that affects the emotional reaction' (Hanafiah et al. 2021, pp.625-6). There is also an important observation from Heuken et al. (2021, p.168); in the consideration of visitor motivation, it is important to keep in mind that people usually visit museums for a number of reasons. These reasons are often 'complex and depend on the individual visitor' (Heuken et al. 2021, p.168). This is an important consideration, not only because each individual may have a number of reasons that they chose to visit the museum, but also because the motivations and experiences of those around them facilitate their process of meaning making. The importance afforded to the expectations and motivations of visitors in the literature informs the focus that this project will have for the museum visitors on these aspects of their experience, speaking to their frame of mind coming in.

Another facet to the question of motivation is that of repeat visitors. Why is it that people will choose to visit the museum time and time again? Heuken et al. (2021) published an article breaking down these differences in the journal *Visitor Studies*. *Visitor Studies* does not regularly feature war museums and often has its focus set on scientific museums, but their work is still relevant in this context. They begin by stating that most exhibitions contain far too much information for an individual to reasonably accommodate in a single viewing (Heuken et al. 2021, p.168). This was reflected by a number of the research participants in this study: one mentioned, in reference to the exhibition at the museum, that 'It's huge. It's

almost, there's far too much to take in one go, really' (Interview 78). In a similar vein, one participant mentioned that 'you see different aspects each time' and that this time they had noticed 'one or two small parts' that they had previously missed (Interview 8). Another respondent highlighted the significant amount of focus that was required to take in all of the information: 'There was a lot of reading though. Yeah, a lot of reading' (Interview 59). Visitors can be inspired to revisit an exhibition or a museum due to this abundance of information (Heuken et al. 2021, p. 169). Yet Heuken et al. (2021, p.169) state that the most significant reasons for repeat visitors are a 'fundamental interest in doing so, as well as curiosity and the will to learn'. Nevertheless, it is not always learning that is at the foreground of their minds on repeat visits; rather, it is important for them to feel that the museum is culturally viable. In other words, they need to feel that their interest goes beyond the draw of new content or information and finds itself with a 'deeper and more genuine underlying interest in (and connection to) the contents of an exhibition' (Heuken et al. 2021, pp.169-78). In their study Heuken et al. (2021, p.178) agreed with the findings presented by Brida et al. (2013), namely that repeat visitors were categorially more interested in the subject matter than their first-time counterparts.

The In Flanders Fields Museum, however, needs to be seen in its local context when considering these assertions. The research participants in this project are British, which suggests that they have travelled specifically to Ypres for one reason or another. Due to this fact, repeat visitation to the museum is likely not derived solely from the individuals' opinions of the museum itself. Factors that are external to the museum are likely to be prevalent, as British visitors would have to travel internationally to reach the museum. This does not serve to question the findings of Heuken et al. (2021) and Brida et al. (2013), as repeat visitors to Ypres may well not choose to be repeat visitors of the museum, and the reasoning they have provided is an important consideration for their motivations. In order to be a visitor that is enjoying the IFFM for the 2nd, 3rd or more times, due to its location, they must also be repeat visitors to Ypres. The museum is not the only factor in determining if a visitor is likely to return to Ypres. Whilst it is possible that a visitor may have arrived in Ypres solely to visit the museum, due to the fact that a British visitor would have to travel abroad to do so, it is highly unlikely that they would not participate in any other remembrance activities whilst in the town.

The first question that was asked to the interviewees at the In Flanders Fields Museum was ‘To what would you say you feel connected to the First World War?’ This question was designed with tourist motivation in mind, and it often prompted the participants to reflect on the reason for their visit and, in some cases, some follow up questions were required to focus on the motivational aspect. There were four examples of visitor motivation that appeared consistently throughout the interviews: Familial connections, historical interest, national duty, and that of a spouse or friend accompanying another individual.

	Family Connection	Historical Interest	National Duty	Accompanying Another Respondent
No. of Participants	31	44	21	7

Figure 2 – Table of responses to questions for visitor motivation - Many participants represented more than one of these categories, therefore there are more indicated responses here than there were participants at the Museum.



Figure 3 – Pie chart for responses to questions for visitor motivation

Dan Todman in his 2005 monograph *The Great War: Myth and Memory* paints a detailed picture of the progression of memory of the First World War in Britain with the generations that followed it (Todman 2005). Todman (2005, pp.223-7) details the changing relationship that each generation in Britain has with the First World War, whereby each successive generation has three factors influencing the changes in popular mythology. The first of these factors is the political and cultural context in which the myths of the war are produced and consumed. This context defined what could be said and not said about the war and was affected by the inevitable shifts in fashion and politics and, more importantly, 'shifts in population which saw the extinction, first of bereaved parents of the First World War veterans' (Todman, p.222). The second factor that Todman described was the simple 'combination of human behaviour and chance' (Todman 2005, p.222). The natural variance that human beings bring to the development of any narrative or myth. The final, and most important factor for the maintenance and alterations to the mythology, according to Todman (2005, p.223), was their ability to remain useful. This has led Todman's most contemporary generation, the great grandchildren of those who fought, termed the 'fifth generation', to grow up in a society where the evidence of the conflict is present in several forms, but with very little personal connection to it (Todman 2005, pp.223-7). In family units, stories of the involvement of family members or mementoes may have been relayed through the generations, but their impact is no longer what it once was. These tales have moved beyond the 'boundary of lived experience', and perhaps more importantly, may have found the end of their relevance (Todman 2005, p.226). The First World War mythology highlighted a number of issues such as 'global war, military service, and national identity', however these issues may not be as relevant as they once were in the modern world (Todman 2005, p.226). If this is the case then the mythology will have little use, and whilst not abandoning it consciously, by failing to preserve the myths, modern society will condemn it to irrelevance. Todman was conducting his research in the early 2000s, and since then a whole new generation has emerged to engage with memory of the First World War, and the potential relevance of its mythology. Nevertheless, what is of interest here is the trend, rather than the generational specifics, that Todman describes throughout the course of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

The First World War has inevitably faded as a point of visceral emotion for many in Britain. The interviewees that participated in this study covered a significant age range and as a result, a significant range of the generations described by Todman (2005). Therefore, the strength of the familial connections range as well. Participants often described a long-past family member who they may have found through an ancestry project, or someone whose story was passed down through their family (Interviews 1, 59). There was one respondent with an amazing story in which her father had served in the First World War and the impact that it had on him for the rest of his life (Interview 52). This particular story is a good example of how family connections can be the most emotional motivations for visitation to both the Museum and Ypres in general. As such, to consider familial connection a single motivation that is shared equally amongst respondents would be an over-simplification of the relationship that many of the participants in this study had with the First World War.

As mentioned earlier, some of the participants did mention that they had family that were involved in the conflict, but not necessarily an emotional connection. For example, one respondent stated, 'some of my family members fought and died in it. But it's several generations ago now' (Interview 1). Another participant stated: 'Direct relatives, I don't have any that have been. There has been some indirect relatives who fought in the war' (Interview 7). Others highlighted particular family members, but they still did not emphasise a particular emotional attachment; one respondent, when asked if they felt connected to the War answered: 'Partially with a grandfather that fought in it and was wounded' (Interview 2). This often accompanied a feeling of a partial or 'loose connection'. Similarly, another respondent mentioned their 'grandfather and five great uncles all fought in the first war' (Interview 15). Another example of this was an individual who said that they were connected 'only by grandparents, so a little bit' (Interview 48). Finally, there were other respondents that did have a visceral and emotionally charged connection to family members that served in the First World War. These participants mentioned that they had a sense of being very connected to the war, one stating that they felt 'very connected. I had three great uncles that served and all three died' (Interview 29). Another mentioned that they felt 'greatly connected' and that their 'whole library is the First World War' and that they 'wrote a book about (their) grandfather in the First World War' (Interview 21). There were often more details given about the fallen family members: 'My grandma's brother died in the First

World War at Dozinghem, which I believe was a clearing station' (Interview 5). This respondent also mentioned that they had 'been to the cemetery, two or three times, and found his grave'. Similarly, another respondent recalled the fact that their 'grandfather was buried in Northern France' and they had spent years searching for the grave; 'My mum didn't know where her dad was buried, and I took a long time to manage to find him' (Interview 3). In this scenario the emotional ramifications are clearly strong, considering not only the fact that this was the respondents' grandfather, but also working together with their mother to find her lost father. It is clear why they would feel 'very connected' to the First World War and why they would come to visit the Western Front. The very act of interacting with the grave of a long-fallen soldier 'can serve as a proxy interaction with the deceased' and preserve the connection through generations (Winter 2011, p.466).

A point to consider is that the familial connection between the respondent and their family that had served did not always correlate fully with the emotional connection to that person who was affected by the war and, consequently, to the war itself. The respondent in Interview 48 mentioned that they were connected by grandparents, and this made them feel 'little bit connected' to the First World War. Whereas a different pair of respondents felt 'very close' to the First World War as they both had grandfathers who had served in the war, and both survived (Interview 60). Another participant stated that they 'feel fairly connected with an uncle that died in it' (Interview 49). This variance could be due to any number of factors, but what is important to recognise is that each participant's familial connection to the First World War does not follow a simple formula whereby the closer the relation, the more connected they feel. From this, two key findings can be drawn. Firstly, it shows that the motivations of no two individuals are the same, despite how they may seem similar on first glance, re-affirming Heuken et al.'s (2021, p.168) assertion that the motivations of each visitor are complex and dynamic. Two respondents who have the same relation that had served in the conflict may have a different perspective on their own relationship with the First World War. It would be easy to categorise these responses together as an equal family connection, but this would be a misrepresentation of the motivations of the visitors. Secondly, the same relation with a family member that served in the conflict meant very different things to the respondents described above. One of them felt very closely linked to their grandfather and the experiences of that grandparent made them feel very connected

to the war as a whole, whereas the other was much less passionate about their relationship with their grandfather and their connection to the war.

Other prominent forms of motivation mentioned by the research participants were historical interest and national duty. These forms of motivation were often mentioned in lieu of familial connections, for example, one respondent responded to the first question; 'Connected. Not really. I mean just through the history of it, but I'm not actually personally connected' (Interview 59). Other respondents had a similar thought process. For instance, one mentioned: 'So it's not necessarily a familial connection, but I do think it kind of influenced so much of our lives that we should take some interest' and when asked in response to that if there was an obligation of sorts to remember they replied, 'Yeah absolutely. Similarly to the Second World War' (Interview 7). Another respondent stated that (Interview 31):

I don't. Not at all. Well, no, that's, that's wrong I suppose. I respect the history, but there's nobody in my family that I know experienced anything of the First World War, probably because of my age or would think of their age because it's so long ago.

This suggests that whilst these participants' motivations are obviously enough to convince them to visit the area it did not provide them with a sense of connection to the First World War. This was not necessarily true for all respondents who named these themes in their motivations. One respondent suggested that their interest has developed into an important connection (Interview 54):

Participant: Very (connected), yes.

Researcher: Why is that?

Participant: Because I'm really interested in it. I started off being interested in the Second World War, and then while I was in France, I saw there was a crossover in some places to the First World War, so I thought I'd come to Belgium to find out more about that. And yeah, for the last 10 years I've been coming here and, uh, volunteering at the research centre.

Another respondent described their connection to the First World War as a national connection. They mentioned that 'It's something that connects all of our past' and they emphasised 'the sheer number of names. It's everywhere... I think that we have to keep being actively involved in remembering it' (Interview 43). Whilst often cited as motivation in lieu of the strongest perceived familial connection, these themes can, for some, form an important connection to a conflict long gone by. This reaffirms the point made earlier that each individual that is citing these motivations has a unique relationship with them and differing levels of importance that they weigh them with. This is true for the opposite of these points of close connection as well, one respondent had a very casual interest in the First World War and was only at the museum due to circumstance; 'I do a little bit of history reading and we were meant to be cycling, but the weather's pretty atrocious... It's just been more of a looking interest' (Interview 77).

These themes of motivation were also often paired together, as opposed to familial connection that mostly stood on its own. For some their national history and national duty were firmly interwoven; 'I suppose I feel connected insofar as I'm British. It's part of my history. It's part of the history of the country' (Interview 57). Similarly, another respondent stated that they thought the First World War is something that is important to learn about and remember: 'It's something that is connected to all of our pasts' and 'it's still something that society's been very heavily impacted by' (Interview 43). In response to this answer, I asked the participant if they felt that they had a national connection to the conflict rather than a personal connection and they answered: 'I think my connection is more national... I don't have a family member that was involved' (Interview 43).

These examples line up very well with Maarten Van Alstein's (2014) views of the politicisation of memory and the nature of British memory in Ypres. He states that commemorations of war are inherently political in nature and that this remains to be true in the current memory boom (Van Alstein 2014, pp.36-7):

The intimate links between war commemoration and national identity politics have not disappeared at all in the current memory boom. In times of fragmentation and globalisation war memories are still being used to strengthen a sense of national community and cohesion. Besides its strong personal and familial characteristics (centred on mourning the loss of relatives), the remembrance tradition of the

British Commonwealth, which is very visible in Flanders Fields, still invokes elements of a national, imperial and military idiom.

The combination of historical interest and national duty displayed by these respondents fits neatly with the narrative constructed by Van Alstein (2014) and could be seen as evidence of the prominence of the success of the constructed narrative by political elites as originally theorised by Nora (1989).

A final point to mention concerning visitor motivation is that the respondents that participated together in the same interviews were often couples, friends or were part of a larger group. This, however, did not mean that they necessarily shared the same motivations. One respondent mentioned that they were just accompanying their father and did not have any connection to the war: 'Not really, I'm just here with my dad' (Interview 17). Varying motivations even among small groups and couples was common: in an interview with a pair of young friends the male participant stressed their familial connection stating that they 'feel quite connected because I've got a relative (great-grandfather) on the Menin Gate' (Interview 31). By contrast, the female participant mentioned that she wasn't sure if she had relatives that were involved, but she did express a keen historical interest: 'I have always had a great interest with the world wars because I've done it within history... so I like to do my own research' (Interview 31). In another interview, this time with a couple the female participant described her motivations as being based on the history of the First World War and a connection with national identity (Interview 57):

I suppose it's something that I've known about all my life, but because I've had no known relatives involved in it. I don't know. It's always been a relatively objective thing rather than a subjective thing. I enjoy history, so I have an engagement with it and I can see its relevance... I feel connected insofar as I'm British. It's part of my history. It's part of the history of the country.

In contrast, the male participant only mentioned his family connections to the war: 'both my grandparents, grandfathers anyway, served in the First World War on my mother's side, in the Royal Navy' and that his 'grandfather, on my father's side was in East Africa' (Interview 57). In this instance a couple that were travelling together had a significant variance in their reported motivations for being there. The presence of one motivation, i.e.

family connections, does not deny the existence of other potential motivating factors such as historical interest or national duty. However, it is important to recognise the fact that, for the male participant mentioned above, familial connection was clearly the most prominent factor and he felt no need to expand upon or agree with the statements of the female participant concerning her motivations. His priority was clear. This priority was largely consistent amongst the respondents, even the ones who did not cite familial connections, but prefaced their answers with a lack of them. In doing this they demonstrate that in their mind that is the first consideration for any connection to the conflict, or at least they think that they should say it is.

To conclude, visitor motivations for the visitors at the In Flanders Fields Museum had generally aligned into 4 main categories: family connection, historical interest, national duty and accompanying a friend or partner. Of these, historical interest was cited as the most common visitor motivation, followed by familial connection, national duty and, with only 7 mentions, accompanying a friend or partner. These groups are not rigid, however: there was variance in the importance that the visitors attached to their motivations and the intensity of emotions that these motivations provide. Of the 31 respondents that identified familial connection as a point of connection between themselves and the First World War there was significant variance in the intensity of the emotions that they attached to the conflict. For some it was a passing comment, someone who they never met who happened to share their name, but for others the emotionality of their connection was clear, with a respondent even breaking into tears talking about their family's experience with the First World War. This variance was present amongst the other motivation groups as well, but was most apparent in the family connection group. These responses also demonstrated that family connection did not just have the highest emotional potential, it was the first consideration for a connection to the conflict. Respondents who did not identify this connection would often acknowledge it before moving on to describe their own motivations. Whilst historical interest was the most common connection to the First World War that the participants described, further analysis of the answers has shown those who identified familial connection displayed the most intense emotional connections and that for many of the visitors, even those who did not identify it for their own motivations, it was the most important connection to the conflict.

4.3.3 Expectations

Another aspect of a visitor's 'personal context' and their visit overall is their expectations (Falk & Dierking 2000). Visitor's expectations are undoubtedly linked to their motivations, and as such Falk & Dierking frame them together in a single point in their explorations of visitor experience. They are linked, but they are also separate and in this project, they will be used as two separate points of analysis. Whilst motivations have been shown to have a more direct correlation with emotionality in the museum, the relationship between expectations for the museum and the interactions and interpretations that the visitors had and have come away with will be further explored.

The participants were asked whether the museum met their expectations and then, in most cases, as a follow up question, they were asked what those expectations were. This line of questioning was intentionally simple, it simply aimed to establish what the visitors' expectations for the museum had been and if they had been met. As mentioned earlier expectations are a part of Falk & Dierking's (2000) personal context for museum visitors. Expectations may change the way visitors perceive certain information or affect the priority they afford to different exhibits (Kirchberg & Tröndle 2012, p.438). They have emphasised the fact that expectations and experiences cannot be detached and for repeat visitors, that memories of past visits cannot be separated from the actual experience of the current visit (Kirchberg & Tröndle 2012, p.438; Falk & Dierking 2000). For this reason, the research participants were also asked if this visit was their first to the museum.

The research participants often took these questions as an opportunity to give their feedback on their experiences as a whole, alongside their specific expectations. A good example of this can be seen with a couple that were interviewed together (Interview 40):

Researcher: Would you say that the museum met your expectations?

Female Participant: It would have been nice to do the interactive side of it. That's not working today.

Male Participant: Yeah. There's nothing we could do about that. But no, it was lovely, it's amazing. Bigger than I thought it would be.

Female Participant: And the building it's in is amazing as well

Researcher: What about the content? Would you say it covered everything you expected it to cover?

Male Participant: Yeah I think so

As can be seen in that excerpt, in some cases I attempted to draw their focus on their specific expectations for the exhibit with follow up questions. However, some of the research participants, especially those that were visiting for the first time, did not have specific expectations for the content. One respondent stated that 'we didn't know what to expect really. We've been pleasantly surprised' (Interview 60). Another participant, when asked what their expectations were, simply stated that they 'didn't have any really' and that they just thought it would be a museum about Ypres (Interview 49). Therefore, these respondents have been given their own classification for analysis.

The participant responses can be classified into four common groups: did not have any expectations; did not have their expectations met; had their expectations met and had their expectations exceeded.

	Did not have expectations	Did not meet expectations	Met expectations	Exceeded expectations
No. of Participants	9	5	57	19

Figure 4 – Table of responses to questions for visitor expectations



Figure 5 – Pie chart for responses to questions for visitor expectations

Overwhelmingly, visitors were leaving the exhibition satisfied with the museum in term of their expectations, which is a significant marker for their overall enjoyment of the exhibition, and for how they interpret the information altogether (Kirchberg & Tröndle 2012, p.438). Only five of the respondents expressed negative sentiments, whilst 9 respondents mentioned that they did not have any particular expectations for the museum. This spread suggests that as a whole visitors' experiences line up with their expectations, which creates an environment that facilitates learning (Falk & Dierking 2000, p.137).

For the respondents who indicated that their expectations had not been met, there were two issues that were mentioned. Firstly, there were some concerns with the content; one respondent mentioned that the approach of the museum towards the conflict took them by surprise (Interview 79):

Researcher: Did it meet your expectations?

Participant: Uh, that's a hard one. It's not what I expected it to be, but it was. It was okay. But it was just different. I think I'm saying that because we went to Caen, we went to the big second World War Museum in Caen. Yeah. And that's very, not just anti-Nazi. It's anti Anti-despot. Anti dictator. Anti cruelty to man.

And it was a bit broader really. So that that was my only kind of benchmark really.

Yeah. So, I thought it was good. It broadly, yes.

This respondent was clearly surprised by the approach taken by the museum and their expectations were more in line with other museums that they had attended in the past that presented a similar subject matter. They still expressed a somewhat positive overall experience, however, their primary expectation was clearly subverted by the exhibition. Another respondent mentioned that they also found that their expectations for the content were not met, however, more in a physical sense, than the change in approach mentioned by the previous respondent. They stated that 'I thought [...] we'd see, would be a mock-up of a trench [...] in Vimy [Ridge], they've got actual trenches. Yeah. And all the paraphernalia' (Interview 4). The respondent clearly expected that the museum would have included a recreation of a trench. Scenarios where the content of the museum failed to meet the expectations of the visitor are limited to these two examples in this dataset, which suggests that overall, the respondents in this dataset felt that the museum content was roughly in line with their expectations.

Secondly, some respondents indicated that their expectations for the museum had not been met, but in terms of how the information was presented, and the construction of the exhibition rather than the content itself, this will be termed the 'execution' of the exhibition moving forward. One respondent indicated that they found the design of the museum confusing, and that the technological aspects of display made it more difficult for them to enjoy the exhibition (Interview 3):

Researcher: So the museum today, would you say it meet your expectations?

Participant: Um, no, I don't think I would. Hmm. In the sense that I found it a bit confusing. Um, you didn't know what to look at next or which order to do it in and.

I have been here before actually, and it's quite different from the last time I came and it's, it's much more sort of technological now, which is the modern thing, but I'm not a modern person due to age. Um, so in that sense, no, some of the display boards was too high to read in the English and some of them are wrong.

The respondent mentioned themselves that this was largely due to their age and their lack of familiarity with some of the technological aspects of the display. Their criticism of the museum was limited to this execution, however. As a follow up question they were asked what they thought of the museum content to which they replied (Interview 3):

Oh, I think, I think that, um, is absolutely fine. You've not just got. Uh, the battle explained in detail, which you've got all the artifacts there. You've got personal statements from people reported to be personal statements from people. So, I think it does cover all aspects. Really the destruction. And even the aftermath with peace.

Expectations of execution are, however, just as important as those of content, and this subversion of those expectations will have a similar impact on the individual's ability to interact with, and learn in, the museum environment (Falk & Dierking 2000, p.137).

Another pair of respondents that were interviewed together felt that their expectations of the execution and the content of the display were not met (Interview 50):

Researcher: Did it meet your expectations?

Participant 1: Uh, no it didn't. No, I don't like interactive. It's too, I prefer a proper museum. Okay. I don't like all the touchy stuff. You prefer. I prefer it to be well lit so I can see what I'm doing.

Okay. And, uh, I don't need a lot of touchy, well, like interactive things. Yeah. Cause it hardly ever works. Yeah. A lot of it didn't work. Yeah. Don't need it.

Participant 2: It's dimly lit. There's some big writing, some small writing, some very large, some very small. And you're, with your glasses on them all the time.

Participant 1: And to be fair, it's a lot of nothing spread out. There's a much better one further up, which I've been to where you can actually go in the trenches.

These respondents found that their expectations were not met in a number of ways. Importantly, on the day on which this interview was conducted the museum was facing some technical difficulties and most of the interactive portions of the museum were not operational, which was an isolated incident during the time period in which the research

interviews for this project were being carried. This speaks to some of the frustration expressed by the respondents, as these elements are key elements of the museum experience. However, this is a risk that is taken by the curators when they chose to utilise tools that have a technological base. Also, the respondents mentioned issues that would have been present on any other day such as the reading difficulty and low level of lighting. One of these participants also mentioned that their expectations for the content had also not been met. They suggested that the display was 'a lot of nothing spread out', instead preferring a more tactile experience, again identifying the importance of a trench recreation (Interview 50). Trenches continue to be an image of the First World War, that is most evocative and ubiquitous in popular culture (Epsley 2008, p.325). The trench has fulfilled this role from the time of the conflict, until today, and has played a key role in representations and the memory of the war (Epsley 2008, p.325). For some British visitors, the lack of its importance, certainly defied their expectations for what a First World War display requires.

Only 5 participants across 4 interviews mentioned that that expectations for the museum had not been met, all of which have been analysed here. The fact that their expectations for the exhibition contrasted with their experiences undoubtedly influenced their feelings towards the museum, what they might take away from the experience and the memories that they form. However, all of the participants identified in this category continued to engage well with both the interview process and the message of the museum. These respondents still identified key aspects of the museum's ideology (Interview 4):

Researcher: What kind of emotions would you say it (the permanent exhibition) elicits?

Participant 1: Um, I could become tearful if I could start talking back, but, but also, um, well, sad futility and cross that these people, you know, the, the leaders, especially the certain Kaisers and things.

Participant 2: Yeah. I'm, appalled. Uh, the cost will be in, in terms of, of, of, of actual physical things or the cost in human lives.

Whilst assigning blame to the leaders of the time is not the goal of the museum, demonstrating the futility and immense physical and personal toll of war in order to generate an emotional response from their visitors is exactly what the cosmopolitan

approach of the curators is trying to do. Similarly, another respondent, who was previously identified as having their expectations subverted somewhat but still enjoying the museum, recognised the multi-perspectival approach of the exhibit and commented on its usefulness for the preservation of memory and the importance of 'keep[ing] it alive and keep the younger generations interested in realising the relevance' (Interview 79). They also went on to identify, when being asked about the importance of nationally integrated displays, that this approach was new to them and that it was an effective tool (Interview 79):

I thought it was useful. I think it's quite an innovative way of doing it and a clearly difficult thing to do. So, I thought that was done very well actually. That's something that I will remember.

In their interview this respondent identified that the approach of the museum caught them off guard slightly and was not in line with what they thought a First World War Museum would be. They then went on, however, to identify the multi-perspectival approach of the museum, comment on its effectiveness for themselves and their opinion on its effectiveness for others, both in terms of generating emotional responses and preserving the memory of the First World War. Despite that fact that their initial expectations were somewhat subverted they embraced, understood, and reflected on the information the museum presented. Not all expectation subversions are equal however, this specifically mentioned that they 'think you come with an open mind anyway', and as such the small subversion in tone of the museum did not have a markedly negative impact on their experiences (Interview 79).

For the respondents that stated that they did not have specific expectations coming into the museum, their responses followed a very similar structure. They say that they weren't sure what to expect and then they give a brief thought on their overall experience of the museum:

Interview 60

Researcher: Did [the museum] meet your expectations?

Participant 1: Well, we didn't know what to expect really. It's better.

Participant 2: Pleasantly surprised.

Participant 1: Yeah

Interview 37

Researcher: Did [the museum] meet your expectations?

Participant: Well, I don't know what, I don't know exactly what my expectations were, but I've been very impressed with what I've seen here. It really tells a story.

In these two examples, this structure is evident, from the 9 respondents in this category, seven matched this structure. One didn't express any opinions; 'I didn't have any really, um, it was just a museum. It's about, um this place' (Interview 49), and another balanced both some positive and negative thoughts (Interview 2):

Researcher: So did the museum meet your expectations?

Participant Oh hell, I don't know what I was expecting. Um.

Researcher: That's fine.

Participant: I think I, on reflection, uh, it was satisfactory enough to give, give one the information that one would've expected.

Yes. I think if I was to be critical, it's a little dark mm-hmm and I'm not very firm on my legs. And I think that there should have been, um, fluorescent markings on the floor where the floor changed height, because I nearly tripped on two occasions.

For this respondent, whilst their answer states that they did not have specific expectations, their sentiment is far more reflective of that which is common to the expectations not met group, especially those that criticised the execution of the museum. Overall, this group of participants, despite their initial response of not having expectations, express sentiments that lines up with either the group that stated that their expectations were met, or those that stated they were not.

A number of the research participants indicated that their expectations for the museum had even been exceeded. These expectations were exceeded in two main ways, some mentioned that they were surprised by the quality and abundance of information and artefacts on display (Interview 57):

Researcher: Did [the museum] meet your expectations?

Participant 1: It was much better than I thought it would be actually. Yeah. I mean we talked beforehand and said, oh, we won't need more than an hour to go round. No, and I dunno, we've probably been here two and half hours.

Participant 2: [...] I enjoyed the [...] changes in uniform, the more ancillary stuff, I found quite informative, and interesting rather than the direct battle information.

Some other respondents identified that they were expecting to learn, they were expecting to see artefacts and information, but they were not necessarily expecting it to be 'such an emotional experience with so much insight' (Interview 19). Another respondent simply stated that it was 'more than that', more than the presentation of information (Interview 36). The balance between these two responses indicates that the museum, in general, is succeeding in presenting an exhibition that not only meets, but exceeds some of its visitors expectations for the information it presents and its emotional weight. For the presentation of information respondents identified both the content (Interview 57) and execution (Interview 58) as exceeding their expectations.

The respondents who identified the emotional weight of the museum highlight the efficacy of the museum's use of its cosmopolitan message in presenting narratives that relate to the visitors on an individual level. It also suggests that not having these emotional, personal stories as part of their expectations for a war museum speaks to what they consider a war museum to be. This was similar for one of the respondents who stated the museum had not met their expectations, because the style of the museum was not what they had expected (Interview 79). That respondent specifically identified a different museum, the Second World War Museum in Caen. Clearly, the cosmopolitan approach and the emotional stories that characterise it were not what a number of the research participants expected to find in a war museum. They responded to it, however, in different ways, with some defining the emotional weight of the museum as a good thing, whereas the other respondent found it more difficult to move beyond their initial expectations.

A large proportion of the respondents identified that their expectations had been met by the exhibition. Many of these respondents simply stated that their expectations had been met: 'Yeah. Yeah. It's good' (Interview 55). A follow up question was often introduced

by the researcher in these circumstances, asking the respondents what their expectations had been. To which information and learning was a very common response, one participant stated that they expected ‘just to get a picture of what happened, life around here during the First World War’ (Interview 35). Similarly, another respondent expected ‘interesting information from all the displays’ (Interview 15).

Other respondents followed their statement of met expectations with a brief positive affirmation and, sometimes, picking out an aspect that particularly impressed them (Interview 77):

Researcher: Did [the museum] meet your expectations?

Participant 1: Yeah. I thought it was really good actually [...] Really good. Yeah.

Participant 2: The audio guide I think was very good. Yeah.

This was a common response. Many of the respondents were generally pleased with the museum, finding that their expectations had been met, and that they had a pleasant experience. These two types of responses characterise the majority of the ‘met expectations’ group of respondents.

More than half of the respondents simply stated that their expectations for the museum had been met, which was the largest group of responses by a factor of 3, with the second largest being the group that indicated that the museum exceeded their expectations, together constituting 74% of the responses. Additionally, a number of the respondents who mentioned that they did not have clear expectations still stated that they had been ‘pleasantly surprised’ (Interview 60).

	First Visit	Repeat Visit
No. of Participants	58	27

Figure 6 – Table of responses to questions for repeat visitors

Repeat visitors constituted almost a third of all of the respondents interviewed. As Heuken et al. (2021, pp.169-78) state, these visitors often have a ‘deeper and more genuine

underlying interest in (and connection to) the contents of an exhibition' than their counterparts that are visiting for the first time. In terms of asking these visitors about their expectations it is unreasonable to expect them to be able to think back to their first visit and the expectations they had, however, they generally expressed a positive sentiment about the previous visit. These visitors on the whole mentioned that the museum either met or exceeded their expectations, which is not surprising due to the fact that their expectations for the museum are shaped by their previous experiences. This is not a given however: as has been established by Falk & Dierking (2000), a visitor's 'personal context' is as much of a determining factor for the experiences of each visitor as the museum is itself. One participant explicitly mentioned how a change in their personal context left them with a different experience. They mentioned that they had visited before, in a larger group of 'lads', but were now visiting again with a friend who is 'a bit more in tune with things' (Interview 38). Due to this change they were able to spend longer in the exhibit and take more away from it. In addition to this, the museum has gone through many changes over the years, especially its major refurbishment in 2012. Despite these changes visitors continue to find their expectations met, time and time again (Interview 34):

Researcher: Is this your first time to the museum?

Participant: No, no. We came about 20 years ago we think.

Researcher: Was it in the current iteration?

Participant: No, no.

Researcher: Does the museum meet your expectations?

Participant: I think so. I think because I had a memory of it as a, as a young kid.

Yeah, it's different[...] I remember it being very different.

In their study concerning repeat museum visitors Heuken et al. (2021) identify a number of issues that need to be considered for these visitors and their findings are somewhat reflected here. They state that 'most exhibitions are too extensive and contain too much information to be accommodated in the course of a single visit' (Heuken et al. 2021, p.168). One participant who was on their third visit mentioned that 'I've seen a lot

more things today [...] I've taken in a lot more today than I had last time' (Interview 38). However, as mentioned earlier, the In Flanders Fields Museum has a key difference from the museum that was used by Heuken et al. (2021). The museum's local context, and the very fact that it is located abroad, in a place which is usually a holiday destination slightly alters the relationship between the museum and its visitors. The In Flanders Fields Museum is seen to be part of the experience of Ypres. When people choose to visit Ypres, the museum is often recommended as a must-see. The museum therefore will be experiencing some repeat visitors by the virtue of its context amongst other sites of heritage for the visitors. This is not the only factor at play, and it is not even the most important factor for repeat visitor motivations and expectations as a British tourist returning to Ypres may choose simply not to visit the museum again. However, it is a circumstance that separates In Flanders Fields from other museum sites, which are not part of a similar geographical context.

To conclude, British visitors to the In Flanders Fields Museum who participated in this study stated overall that they had either had their expectations met or exceeded with 74% of respondents belonging to one of these two groups. The confirmation of expectations is a key factor for the interpretation of visitor experiences in museums, as stated by Falk & Dierking (2000). The positive experiences and meeting of expectations is seen to be conducive to an environment that fosters learning and discussion (Falk & Dierking 2000, p.137). Additionally, this study featured a significant number of repeat visitors to the museum, with around a third of the visitors interviewed stating that they had visited the museum before. The sentiment expressed by these visitors did not differ significantly from that of other visitors that can be classified in the met or exceeded expectations groups. Whilst their experiences of the museum have changed over time due to a number of factors, the main factor that is often seen to differentiate repeat visitors from first time visitors, the degree of interest or feeling of connection, cannot be found in any substantial differences from the rest the first-time visitors. Finally, the most pertinent finding of this sections pertains to the smallest group of respondents, those that stated that their expectations had not been met. The respondents in this group identified as such for a number of reasons across the content and execution of the museum. However, these respondents also generally continued to engage well with the museum exhibition, the message it was portraying and the discussion that was present during the interview process. Whilst the

negative aspects of their experience that were caused by the lack of fulfilment for their expectations for the museum may leave a mark on their recollection of the experience, it did not, in any substantial way impact their ability to engage with, learn from and discuss the museum exhibit.

4.3.4 Emotionality and the Visitor Experience

In this section the aspects of emotionality demonstrated by the visitors at the In Flanders Fields Museums will be analysed. A large majority of the respondents in this data set indicated that their experiences were influenced by some form of emotionality, with only a minority suggesting otherwise. These responses will be explored, with particular focus being afforded to the way the participants are reflecting on aspects of the museum that are examples of the museum's cosmopolitan approach. It will also briefly consider the effects of repeat visitation on visitor's emotionality in the museum. Emotionality is a key aspect of the visitor experience, and it has been explored in the Heritage Tourism space for its potential in propagating and legitimising narratives.

In the field of Heritage Studies, the emotionality of visitor experiences at heritage sites has been explored most prominently by Laurajane Smith (2006; 2014; 2021). The foundations for her arguments are built from the growing discussion that surrounds Heritage Tourism, and the ability of tourists at heritage sites to interact and negotiate meaning. In this process they negotiate both the 'meaning of the past' on the surface and the political ambitions of reconstruction or legitimisation of potential cultural narratives and values (Smith 2014, p.125). Smith (2014, p.125) argues that museums and heritage sites are 'places where people go to feel, to be emotional', and that through understanding the emotional nature of visits to these sites, research can break free of the limited learning/recreational research paradigm. This paradigm has caused studies of museums, history and heritage to tend towards a 'privileged modernist view of the rational subject', and as a result, issues associated with emotion and affect have been met with suspicion or neglected completely (Smith & Campbell 2016 p.455). McKernan & Mcleod (2018, p.59) have argued that as the growing emphasis placed on feeling and effect in exhibition design 'is linked to the museum's heterotopian role' – as such, they are viewed as potential strategies 'employed to

encourage visitors to feel in particular ways to support specific interpretations of the past'. Augoustinos et al. (2018, p.107) explore the importance of controlling the 'emotions and passions of citizens' for the building of national narratives. This investigation of the exploration and provocation of national narratives at museums and heritage sites is commonplace in Heritage Tourism (Packer & Ballantyne 2019, p.113). However, the potential for these sites to act as 'driving force[s] for sharing values for education... and for the passing on of the torch of peace' has also been identified (Jansen-Verbeke & George 2013, p.285). The In Flanders Fields Museum is a site where the emotions of its visitors are being harnessed, through the focus on human experience, personal stories and the devastation caused by conflict, in order to express and legitimise the institution's cosmopolitan approach.

In order to examine the visitor's views on the emotional weight of the museum they were primarily asked if they thought that the museum was thought provoking. Intended to prompt the respondents to reflect on the museum, this question allowed them an opportunity to mention their emotions independently. Yet, this question was often met with short answers that simply stated the affirmative, such as 'Yes. Absolutely' (Interview 87). In these cases, the participants were asked a follow up question that simply asked what emotions were evoked by the exhibition. Here the respondents were able to expand on what emotions stood out to them from their experience. Finally, they were asked how the museum compared to other commemorative activities in Ypres. This question was purposely placed directly following the questions concerning emotionality, in order to encourage the respondents to consider the emotional differences between visiting the museum and other sites. Therefore, the visitors are simply showing their opinions on its prominence with their selection of topics.

Overwhelmingly the respondents identified an emotional response to the museum, highlighting negative emotions such as sadness and realisation about the reality of the conditions during the war. These emotions were identified in 54 of the interviews conducted. Whereas in eight of the other interviews respondents described the museum as solely an informative, rather than an emotional, experience.

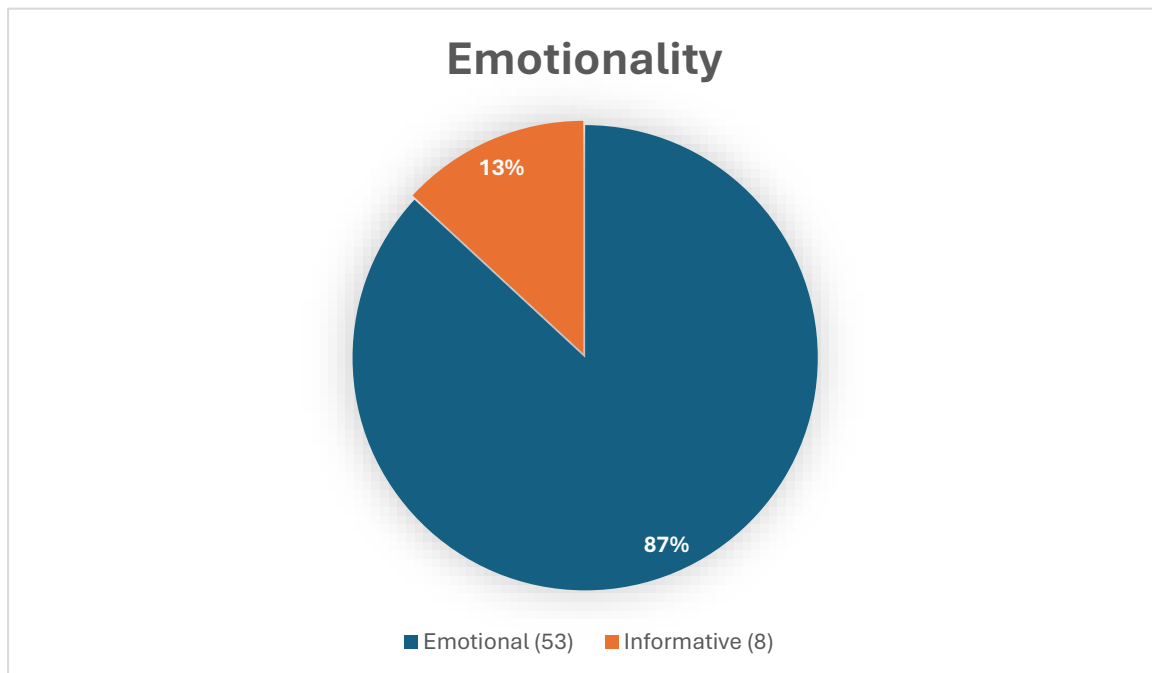


Figure 7 – Pie chart of response to questions for visitor emotion

In these eight interviews the respondents did not highlight the emotional impact of the displays, instead identifying their experiences as informative. This is not to say that the respondents in the other interviews where emotionality was discussed did not consider the museum to be informative. Rather, in the eight interviews in the Informative category, the respondents kept their focus on purely on the educational and informative value of the exhibition in response to the questions that explicitly asked them to reflect on the museum, with the terms 'thought provoking' and 'emotions' (Interview 56):

Researcher: Would you guys say that the museum is thought provoking?

Participant: Um, I dunno much about thought provoking. It presents a very good picture of the things happening at the time.

The respondents in these interviews still, at times, identified aspects of the museum that demonstrate the effects of the conflict on people and the landscape, which are key drivers of their message, and the interactions between visitor and exhibition that the cosmopolitan approach is built on (Interview 79):

Researcher: Do you think that the museum is thought provoking?

Participant: I think you come here looking, looking to be. What's the word?

Educated and informed[...] Seeing how it was, how it sort of got burnt down. Yeah.

How it was pre-war. I mean, that's quite, that's quite striking really, the relative prosperity of the place and then, and then what it turned into.

Mm-hmm. So, yeah, I thought it was, I thought it was very informative.

Here this respondent identifies the effects of the conflict on the landscape, but instead of processing this information through an interaction that generates an emotional reaction they state that they considered to be more of an educational or informative exchange. Whereas interactions that other respondents have had with these same aspects of the museum have generated emotional interactions that defined their museum experience as an emotional one. This is demonstrated in a starker manner in another case where two respondents in an interview identify the educational value of the museum, not mentioning its emotionality and then going on to discuss some aspects of the exhibit that were the primary emotional drivers for a number for other visitors (Interview 57):

Participant 1: I think we were both aware of the horrors of trench warfare. You know, we've, we've seen, uh, photos and, and film and everything beforehand.

So in a sense, I didn't find myself shocked by that. Uh no. But nevertheless, I, I, I feel much better informed at a detailed kind of level.

[...]

Participant 2: Mm-hmm. It's just, no, I was just gonna say that section, particularly on. Um, life in the trenches was, was probably for me the most, um, informative part of it.

This pair of respondents identified a number of aspects of the museum that other visitors also identified as driving the emotionality of the museum, however for these respondents it was simply more educational than emotional. They do state that 'we were both aware of the horrors of trench warfare' and that they were not shocked by what they found. They saw the museum exhibition as a purely information-oriented exchange. They even related the human stories of the soldiers to their own experience (Interview 57):

Participant 1: At one point it really struck me that, uh, we've, we've been camp camping in a camper van, and, uh, one day it was rained all day, you know, and we kind of felt sorry for ourselves.

And yeah, those guys were waiting around in mud and it must have been absolutely horrendous really with the, the equipment that they had and, and the weather and, uh, the cold and, and always the possibility if you were at the front that the sniper might, uh, pick you off sort of thing, or a shell might come your way, you know?

Finding stories from the war that resonate with visitors' personal experiences is often the driving force behind emotional experiences. But in this case, it did not prompt the participants to explore the emotional impact of the museum, just the informational value that the displays provided. These respondents and the others from the eight interviews in the Informative category indicated that they had engaged with museum content in the way that the curators intended, however they had just not felt the emotional resonance that the majority of the visitors had. Another pair of respondents repeated the sentiment that for visitors that are coming into the museum prepared for what they are going to see, that emotionality of the museum is not as prominent (Interview 34):

Researcher: Would you guys say that the museum is thought provoking?

Participant 1: I'm gonna repeat my answer from the last question, which is yes. If you are coming here fresh. If you didn't know that much about it. Not so much, if you do.

[...]

Participant 2: Well, it was personal testimony though wasn't it? Yeah. That I think, and I think lots of that really gets across what it was really like and how awful it

was. So I thought, I think it got that across. But yeah, you know, you're talking to the wrong person if you want emotional things to be absolutely honest.

Here, these respondents in interview 34 echo the sentiment of those from interview 57. Having knowledge of the First World War and being prepared for what they were going to see lessened the emotional impact of the museum display. Both pairs of these visitors identified aspects of the exhibition that often are the biggest points of emotionality, but found that their interactions were focused on information, rather than emotion. As will be shown later, this was not the case for all visitors that were either repeat visitors to the museum or had knowledge of the 'horrors' of the First World War coming in.

The majority of respondents indicated that they had found the museum exhibition to be an emotional experience. Respondents in 87% of the 61 interviews either mentioned their emotional experiences when asked whether they thought the museum was thought provoking, or when asked what emotions the museum elicited. Many of the respondents identified a particular item or display that highlighted their emotional experience and, as a result, stuck in their minds. One respondent mentioned the 'doctors and nurses' video, reflecting on the struggle their struggle with the mental battle of helping these wounded men so that they can be sent back to the front lines (Interview 29). Other examples of this throughout the museum included the displays of mutilated bodies posed in reflections and varying uniforms and equipment, seeing 'real people's belongings, real shells, bullet cases, everything like that, it, it's very moving' (Interview 43, 32). The examples throughout the dataset shows the effectiveness of the museum in generating emotion with its core cosmopolitan values. This demonstrates the potential of the museum to act as a 'heterotopia' as identified by McKernan & Mcleod (2018, p.59). In doing this, the museum is successfully eliciting emotional responses from their visitors that align with the values of their cosmopolitan approach.

The link between emotionality and the dominance of the museum's cosmopolitan narrative is more explicitly on show in a smaller subset of the visitors that highlighted the emotional impact of the visit. Amongst the respondents that identified the emotionality of the museum, sadness was a constant, however the concept of the futility of war, and the intense suffering of those that fought, was highlighted in 11 separate interviews. The association of these emotions and the First World War is very common in the British

collective memory. These ideas are also highlighted by the cosmopolitan approach of the museum, which draws attention to these elements of warfare. As museum curator Dominiek Dendooven (2022) stated 'every good war museum should show what war does to people'. They achieve this with a focus on human experience, human suffering, and the effects of war on society and the landscape throughout the exhibition. The participant responses in these 11 cases directly reflect that, demonstrating the museum's efficacy in generating emotionality and guiding the narrative (Interview 88, 77):

Interview 88

Participant: And the world hasn't learnt its lesson. You know for all the sacrifices those young fellas gave, you know, they were a son, a brother. In some cases a father, families back home, no matter where it was, uh, you know, here in Belgium or France, or even on the German side, you know. It was kind of futile in a way, he sacrificed his life for what.

Interview 77

Participant: The futility of it all is really very clear. You kind of think what a waste of people, time, material, land.

As mentioned earlier, a number of respondents who indicated that they found the museum to be more of an informative, rather than emotional experience, suggested that prior knowledge of the First World War and the content of the museum circumvented some of the exhibition's emotional potency (Interview 34, 57). Another respondent in this group mentioned that they were a historian and that prior knowledge again muted the emotional responses to the museum (Interview 28):

Researcher: Would you guys say that the museum is thought provoking?

Participant: I, I don't think so for me, because, I, I know quite a lot of it, it's not for me. I don't think so, although it's nice to see.

However, this was not reflected amongst repeat visitors generally. The respondents in Interview 34 had visited before, albeit 20 years prior. However, of the 27 respondents that mentioned that they were repeat visitors, only the respondents in Interview 34 were both repeat visitors and are part of the group that stressed the informative aspect of the

museum, rather than its emotional impact. Therefore, repeat visitors in this sample were, if anything, more commonly having emotional interactions with the museum exhibition. One respondent who had been regularly visiting the museum and volunteering at the Researcher centre for 10 years reflected on the struggles of those involved in the War and related it to her own life (Interview 54):

Researcher: Would you say the museum is thought provoking?

Participant: Yes

Researcher: What kind of emotions would you say it elicits?

Participant: For me, it makes me think how lucky we are today.

Mm-hmm. Uh, the things that we take for granted. We have absolutely no idea how difficult things must have been a hundred years ago in all wars. But you know, the ones that I sort of know about, um, yeah, I couldn't imagine living through them, let alone fighting in them. And I think though we moan about everything, we have so much, so easy now.

This was a common emotional response throughout this dataset and shows that even those with the most experience with the museum and the exhibition can interact with the museum in an emotionally meaningful way.

Overall, in the Heritage Tourism literature, the ability of the museum to stir its visitor's emotions has been briefly explored (Smith 2014, p.125; McKernan & Mcleod 2018, p.59). In this dataset, the exhibition is shown to drive emotional responses for 87% of the responses. The participants have been shown to identify a number of the aspects of the exhibition that demonstrate the cosmopolitan approach of the curators, engaging with them in meaningful ways and reflecting on the content they have viewed and relating it to their own experiences. In 11 of these interviews the respondents specifically highlighted central themes of the cosmopolitan approach such as suffering and futility. These interviews alone were more numerous than the 8 interviews in which participants did not recognise the museum as an emotional experience overall. This minority, constituting 13% of the interviews, identified the same aspects of the museum in their reflections in a number of cases. However, they just did not experience the same emotional intensity as a number of

the other respondents. This study also briefly considered the role of repeat visitors, due to the statements from the participants in that group that suggested that their knowledge of the subject area meant that they were not surprised by what they saw, and that they were not as emotionally invested (Interview 34). However, the respondents that made this statement were the only repeat visitors that did not describe their experience as an emotional one and, in this dataset at least, the ratio was actually more in favour of emotional responses in the repeat visitor group. Overall, this dataset suggests that the museum succeeds in provoking emotional responses in their visitors and that these emotions are ones that facilitate a cosmopolitan reflection on the conflict. Themes such as suffering and individuality appeared throughout (Interview 54, 57, 77, 88)

4.3.5 Nationality

In this section the respondents' views on both the transnational style of the museum and their own nationality will be examined. An important caveat to the data presented in this section, especially in terms of the participants' views on their own nationality, was the death of Queen Elizabeth II, who passed on the 8th September 2022. The primary data set for this project was collected in the period from the 5th-27th September 2022. The loss of the nation's longest reigning monarch, and perhaps the most prominent symbol of Britain and 'Britishness', weighed heavily on the minds of a number of the participants. Speaking to British nationals in Ypres throughout that period, it became evident that many visitors cut their trips short, or delayed their trips altogether, in order to be in the UK for the funeral. The Queen's passing was also mentioned by a number of the participants in their responses as will be seen throughout this section. Whilst the death of a reigning monarch, especially one with as much cultural significance as Queen Elizabeth II, may not change the way people think about their country, the idea of 'Britishness' was likely to be more present in people's thoughts during that period.

In order to uncover the respondents' relationship with their nationality in the setting of the In Flanders Fields Museum, they were asked two or three questions, depending on their responses. All respondents were first asked if they thought that their nationality was important to them, and in most cases, this was followed up by a short question that inquired

as to whether they thought being British was a big part of their identity. Here the respondents explored their feelings towards their nationality, with a variety of responses, across the spectrum of strong national identity and patriotism and strong European cosmopolitanism. All respondents were then asked whether they thought that it was important for British people to come to Ypres in general. This question aimed to encourage the visitors to reflect on the relationship between Ypres and the British people, or 'Britishness', and whether, in their view, the mythical status of Ypres and its sites of remembrance is still as important in the British national consciousness.

The responses to the primary question can be broken down into three distinct categories; those that felt their nationality was important to them, those that felt it was somewhat important to them and that felt it was not important to them:

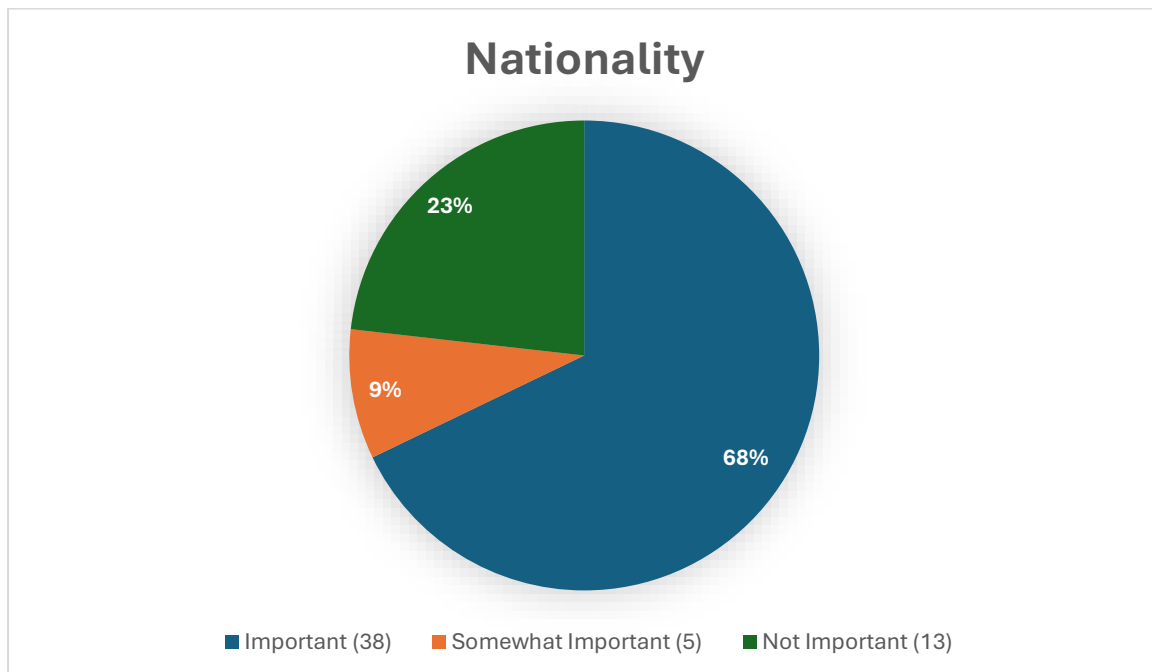


Figure 8 – Pie chart for responses to questions on nationality

The most common response amongst the respondents was that of the affirmation of the importance of their nationality to them, with responses of this kind being found in 38 (68%) of the interviews. These responses came in multiple forms however, for some the connection between being a 'Brit' and national pride is a simple one (Interview 15, Interview 61):

Interview 15

Researcher: Would you say that your nationality is important to you?

Participant: Yes. Yeah

Researcher: Why so?

Participant: Well, British, being British, I suppose, I was brought up in a period just after the Second World War, or 10 or 15 years and, especially at this point in time with having lost the Queen mm-hmm. [...] But yes, I'm proud to be British, to know who you are.

Interview 61

Researcher: Would you say that your nationality is important to you?

Participant: Mine, yes. Yeah, absolutely.

Researcher: Why?

Participant: Because that's how I've been brought up.

Researcher: It's an important part of your identity?

Participant: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely

These two respondents both indicated that, for them, their national identity is not a complicated issue, and that by the very virtue of being British, and being raised in Britain, they associate importance to their national identity. Another respondent in this category placed the emphasis on the importance of individuality in nations (Interview 80):

Researcher: Would you say that your nationality is important to you?

Participant: Yeah, it is actually. I voted Brexit.

Researcher: Why is it important to you?

Participant: I think historically, um, every nation's different[...] you can't just make a melting pot of people, you know. Literally border to border, you cross France to Belgium, there's a different house. There's different styles of houses, different

languages. People look different. [...] So, um, it's important to keep your own individuality.

This respondent directly mentioned 'Brexit' and their voting preference. Their response echoes the importance of national individuality and sovereignty that was highlighted by prominent actors in the space such as Nigel Farage and the official representatives of the 'Leave' campaign in the lead-up to the 'Brexit' referendum (Mortiaux 2018, p.22).

The participant in Interview 15 used a phrase, 'I'm proud to be British', that would prove to be a common theme amongst many of the respondents. This phrase can be found in number of the other responses from the respondents in the category that determined their nationality to be important to them (Interview 64 & 78). However, it was also mentioned by some of the participants in the other categories (Interview 31):

Researcher: Would you guys say that your nationality is important to you?

Participant 1: No, no.

Participant 2: I, I wouldn't push it out there being like a big thing. Well, obviously I respect where I live [...] I'm proud of it.

Participant 1: But I wouldn't say it's a...

Participant 2: Doesn't matter.

Participant 1: Yeah. Like, I'm proud to be British, but it doesn't make me who I am.

These respondents state that their nationality is not of high importance to them, but that does not necessarily mean that it is not a component of their identity. To them, it has a role in their identity, just not a defining one.

This balance of the importance of national identity can be seen throughout the 5 interviews with the 'somewhat important' category of respondents. These respondents are considering the innate national pride that was present amongst a number of the 'important' category responses, alongside other issues such as European identity and what it really means to be British (Interview 16, 87):

Interview 16

Researcher: Would you say that your nationality is important to you?

Participant: Don't know on that one.

Researcher: Would you say it's an important part of who you are?

Participant: I think I, yes and no. I'm, yeah sort of mixed about it. Yes, it is important I think 'cause of obviously my background and obviously with the story of, uh, the World Wars and the involvement of my, um, predecessors. Um, but on the whole, no, I think people should have, you know, actually get on as a whole.

Yeah. And I don't like conflict.

Interview 87

Participant: Yeah, I'd like... I'm, Welsh, but I call myself British. Unless it's sporting[...].

It's important, but I don't think it's vital. It's not a huge thing.

Researcher: It's not a massive part of your identity?

Participant: I quite like being over here, being a European, I like, so I don't know.

These excerpts from two interviews from the 'somewhat important' category echo the same issues that were highlighted by those that felt more strongly about their nationality, they just weighted these aspects differently. Some feeling of national pride was consistent, or at least a sense of belonging to a nation. Concepts such as shared history, the experience living and growing up in Britain and in British society and the positioning of Britain against the 'other' of Europe are all mentioned.

Stephen Grosby (2005) has identified these themes as being central to the idea of nationhood and nationalism. He identifies the role of 'shared self-awareness', and the ways in which the everyday conduct of the individuals who constitute the nation are expressed, through the language they speak, the clothes they wear, the religion they observe and the songs they sing (Grosby 2005, p.26). This concept of a social or cultural sense of nationhood can be seen in the participant interviews. Phrases such as 'that's how I've been brought up'

(Interview 61) imply that there is a collective understanding amongst people that have grown up in Britain. There is an understanding of what that phrase means and of the values they have had instilled in them through the process of becoming embedded in British culture and society; values which they assume are shared with other British people. However, as shown in the interview excerpts, the value of this shared understanding is unique to every individual who has experienced it. It is undoubtedly shaped not just by their own experiences, but by the experiences of those close to them. Consequently, every individual has their own relationship with this 'shared self-awareness'. As shown with Interviews 15 & 61, their relationship with this sense of belonging is strong. The statement from interview 15 demonstrates this, 'But yes, I'm proud to be British, to know who you are'. To them they find a home in this shared self-awareness, the label of 'British', and the connotations that it brings applies to them. The phrase 'to know who you are' not only applies to their own understanding of themselves and their values, but a presentation of these things to others. This respondent sees themselves in their understanding of what it means to be British. This can be seen explicitly in the word of the respondent in Interview 26:

Researcher: Would you say that your nationality is important to you?

Participant: Yes.

Researcher: Why so?

Participant: Um, because I'm British... Yeah. And, that's an important part of who I am.

The respondents often referred to British history as a reason for their feeling of nationality, and this idea of shared history is often seen as a binding agent for nationhood. Grosby (2005, p.23) argues that there a number of historical processes that cause nations to emerge, and that there are historical antecedents for all nations. These antecedents, however, 'are never merely just facts, because the key to the existence of the nation are memories that are shared among each of the many individuals who are members of the nation' (Grosby 2005, p.23). From this it can be inferred that the shared history of Britain that the respondents are referring to can be more aptly understood to be collective memories of Britain and its history. They are referring to their understanding of British

national myths and their resonance with these myths as one of the factors that drives their feelings of nationhood.

The First World War in general is a conflict that, in Britain, has assumed an 'almost mythical status' (Wilson 2014, p.43). The dominant public narrative of futility has remained impenetrable to scholars, wherein the innocent fallen were led to slaughter by misguided and ineffectual generals (Wilson 2014, p.43; Edwards 2004, p.123). This national myth is an example of how memories have taken the place of history in the minds of many. It is important to note that the approach the museum takes in presenting their peace-focused, cosmopolitan approach to storytelling also focuses on the suffering of the individual soldier. The museum therefore presents some themes that for British tourists will resonate with this deep-rooted national myth. These memories are part of the formation of the 'shared self-awareness' that was mentioned earlier and impact the way individuals view themselves in the frame of a nation (Grosby 2005, p.24):

These memories also form a part of the conception that one has of oneself. As the mind of the individual develops within various contexts, such as the family or different educational institutions, it seeks out those various and fluctuating traditions that are 'at hand'. The child learns, for example, to speak the language of his or her nation and what it means to be a member of that nation as expressed through its customs and laws. These traditions become incorporated into the individual's understanding of the self.

As an individual develops during their early years, as they come to recognise these patterns, these aspects of life, and building their understanding of self, they are also recognising the same process happening in others around them (Grosby 2005, pp.24-5). This forms a social relation of a large number of individuals, simply as a result of those individuals experiencing a shared evolving tradition.

The juxtaposition of one's nation against an 'other' is one of the most common forms of nation-building and galvanising national spirit. This can often be seen most clearly in times of war and with the coming of major international political change, i.e. 'Brexit'. The presence of the 'other' is foundational in the modern sense of British nationality. Linda Colley (1992) has argued that in the early-eighteenth century the sense of 'Britishness' was

built upon the twin pillars of trade and Protestantism. Protestantism provided both a common religion and an 'other' in the form of the continental Catholics. This relationship with the 'other' of France and continental Europe has been a contentious issue of 'Britishness' ever since. There have been alternative views presented, that instead focus on issues of class, presenting the great 'other' to be 'not Catholic France, but the English pauper, the feckless Irishman, the effeminate Bengali' (Koditschek 2002, p.397). However, in this study, the research participants repeatedly identified Britain's relationship with Europe as a factor when discussing their nationality. This is, of course, encouraged by the context of the current political climate and the fallout of 'Brexit', as well as the fact that they are in Ypres, a town in Europe, that holds many sites of British extra-territorial heritage and bears the scars of the collective struggle of the British, French and Belgians fighting on the Western Front.

Respondents often used the 'other' of Europe as an example for their views towards their own nationality. 'Brexit' was mentioned by research participants in all 3 categories. In Interview 80 the respondent stated that he voted 'Brexit' as a supporting argument for how important his nationality was to him. To him, that was enough of a qualifying statement to describe his views on his own nationality. Both in terms of the role of Europe as the 'other' and of the themes of the importance of sovereignty and individuality that were parts of the 'Leave' ideology (Mortiaux 2018, p.22). However, the 'other' of Europe was more often mentioned by those in the 'somewhat important' and 'not important' categories, despite interviews with responses in those two groups only constituting 31% of the total combined. Some respondents mentioned their affinity for Europe and their approach to life (Interview 87 & 39):

Interview 87

Researcher: Would you guys say that your nationality is important to you?

Participant: I'm Welsh, but I call myself British. Unless it's sporting, I'm Welsh[...]

It's important, but I don't think it's vital. It's not a huge thing.

Researcher: It's not a massive part of your identity?

Participant: I quite like being over here, being a European[...] So I don't know.

Interview 39

Participant: These days, I'm losing faith in Britain big time. I mean, our leaders aren't exactly [...] great, and I'll leave it there [...]

Researcher: Is it important to your identity?

Participant: To me, I've always sort of moved around Europe. My job before retirement was Europe. And we go away quite a bit, [...] but their systems seem to have left us a bit third world you know? It just seems that way.

Researcher: Would you say, in that sense, that you identify as much as a European?

Participant: Oh, I would say more as a European than a British subject in a lot of ways.

Definitions of 'Britishness', or what it might mean to be British, undoubtedly change over time. New issues constantly come to prominence in the theatre of national identity. Christina Julios (2008, p.161) identifies one issue that has become increasingly relevant in contemporary Britain, suggesting that with the turn of the twenty-first century, 'the accelerated transformation of Britain into a modern multicultural, multiethnic and multifaith society has brought into sharp focus the difficulties inherent in living with diversity and difference.' Facets of national identity in Britain will rise and fall, however, as Julios (2008, p.161) suggests there is one certainty: 'in a hundred years from now, our descendants will still be grappling with this fascinating, yet elusive concept.' The definition of British identity will continue to be debated far beyond our lifetime. As such, the qualifying factors that this study has used for the respondent's relationship with their nationality has been driven largely by the responses themselves.

As can be seen above, the museum exhibition itself and the themes that it raises were absent from the respondents' thoughts on their own nationality. A number of the respondents were also explicitly asked if their experiences in the museum and in Ypres had encouraged them to reflect any differently on their nationality, and the responses were unanimous (Interview 77, 79 & 80):

Interview 80

Participant: Uh, nah. I can't say so, to be honest.

Interview 79

Participant: No, not really. Not for me

Interview 77

Participant: For me it's more personal. So, I don't kind of connect it with nationality

Reviewing the interview responses, it is clear that the personal stories presented in the museum resonated with British visitors rather than any thoughts on their nationality. This could be viewed as a success for the museum. The premise of its cosmopolitan message is that these national viewpoints are left behind in favour of an integrated view of war that focuses on collective suffering, across national boundaries. The respondents highlighted this very thought process in their answers to this question: 'it kind of shows the, the bad side of nationalism' (Interview 77). However, these observations on the concept of nationality had no bearing on their view on their own nationality. This suggests that their views on their own nationality are seen as separate from the themes of nationalism that the museum is attempting to discredit.

To conclude, nationality continues to be an issue that the respondents deem to be important to them, with 68% indicating that it was important and another 9% that it was somewhat important. When discussing their feelings towards their nationalities, the respondents mentioned concepts that academics have used to explain feelings of British nationality such as, shared history, shared 'self-awareness' and the concept of an 'other' (Colley 1992, Grosby 2005). The thoughts that were expressed by the respondents were informed by the very concepts discussed above and have developed over the course of their lives. However, the museum itself did not prompt its visitors to critically reflect on their own nationality. Throughout the interview process the respondents consistently demonstrated an ability to interact with and reflect on the cosmopolitan ideals of the museum, even if they did not explicitly realise what they were seeing. However, this failed to translate into self-reflection with regard to their view of their own nationality. The respondents did not use their reflections on the museum's approach to nationality and nationalism to question or

revise how they viewed their own sense of national belonging. They continued to experience their own nationality as unproblematic, compared with the historical nationalism of other nations in the past. It was seen as a different issue. The respondents identified the folly of nationalism, the suffering that it caused, but it did not prompt them to problematize their own sense of belonging and loyalty to the nation. It was even explicitly stated by a number of the participants that their experiences in the museum and Ypres had not caused them to reflect any differently on their own nationality.

4.3.6 Views on the Transnational

The In Flanders Fields Museum, however, is an arena for far more than just the visitor's relationship with their own nationality. The experience of their own countrymen and women is woven into the wider transnational narrative, reflecting the importance of the experiences of the people from other nations alongside their own. It has been well established that the IFFM is an institution that embraces, believes in, and propagates cosmopolitan thought earlier in this chapter and by a number of academic contributions (Berget et al. 2021; Shelby 2017). This will undoubtedly impact the visitor experiences. How this happens, how they react, and how it impacts the way they might think about the First World War, and war overall, is really the crux of this project.

In order to explore how the respondents interpreted the transnational exhibits, and their thoughts on the efficacy and message of these displays, they were asked two main questions, with follow-up questions in many cases, in order to get the respondents to expand upon their thoughts. These main questions were firstly, 'Do you think that the museum successfully incorporates the perspective of multiple combative nations?', and secondly, 'Do you think that nations from different sides of the conflict should be remembered together in integrated exhibits as they are in the museum?' The first question aims to gauge the visitor's recognition of that aspect of the exhibition, its cosmopolitan design, and their interpretations. The second question aims to unpick the participants' thoughts on this mode of remembrance, and why they thought it might have been effective or ineffective.

Overwhelmingly, the respondents identified transnational integration throughout the museum, and they identified this as an appropriate and productive method of presenting information about the First World War. In response to the first question, in almost every interview the respondents recognised the effort of transnational integration, and whilst there were some variances in thoughts pertaining to the amount of space dedicated to displays containing Germans, the style of the exhibition was recognised. In response to the second question there was, again, an almost unanimous statement, affirming the choice of integrated exhibits, citing the benefits of a balanced perspective on the conflict.

As mentioned, the respondents as a whole (98%) were significantly in favour of transnationally integrated exhibits. For some, this was a simple affirmation, to be taken as given (Interview 87):

Researcher: Do you guys think that the museum successfully incorporates perspectives from multiple nations?

Male Participant 1: Yeah.

Male Participant 2: Yeah.

Researcher: And do you think that's the right way to present information about the First World War?

Male Participant 1: Has to be.

Researcher: In integrated exhibits?

Male Participant 1: Has to be. Has to be. Can't be one-sided.

This sentiment was common amongst the participants. Whilst the importance and usefulness of the integrated exhibits were acknowledged consistently, there were variances in what the respondents identified this importance or usefulness to be. In Interview 87, shown above, the participant clearly states that the exhibits help provide a balanced view of the conflict, preventing the dominance of antagonistic narratives that may be favoured in nations that formed the Allies. This was taken further by other research participants, such as in Interview 43:

Researcher: Do you think that the integrated style of exhibits here, do you think that's the right way to present information about the First World War?

Or do you reckon that they should be separated by nation?

Male Participant: I think when you separate by nation, it's very easy to start ignoring one. So, for example, Germany [...], politically they were in the wrong, so to speak, but I think it's one we understand they were still people. They still had stories, and the, the day-to-day lives of those people, they were changed.

[...]

Yes, that they were the enemy, but they were still people. And it's important to remember their stories, which is why I think the way it's done. Cultures are combined is a very good way of doing it. 'Cause it doesn't give the people the chance to ignore one side.

This respondent highlights what they believe the importance of transnational displays to be. They mentioned the importance of seeing the people on the other side of the conflict as just that, as people, as well as the importance of making sure that their stories are not ignored.

This is an example of the visitor experience reflecting the aims of the museum curators. (Dendooven 2022, Trogh 2022). A part of the cosmopolitan message that the exhibition embodies is that when you view each soldier, or person involved as an individual their nationality becomes less of a factor in the retelling of their story (Dendooven 2022). Another respondent highlighted this explicitly after being asked a follow up to the original two questions, simply asking how they felt about the focus on individual stories (Interview 29):

Participant: I like that. Yeah. Because that's what we like to do, the individual stories rather than the written history of a, of an...

The individual story. So, you can relate to that individual person. And if you do this and that guy, he's got a grave within the area, you can go and visit his grave no matter what nationality it is.

Here they were referring to the individuals that the visitors choose with their poppy bracelets at the beginning of the exhibition, whose stories they see develop throughout the museum. This is likely an extreme example in terms of the ability to think about the war in individualistic and cosmopolitan terms. No other respondent mentioned visiting a specific grave of a soldier from another nation, and the couple that participated in this interview later expressed their passion for the individual stories of the soldiers of the Great War. They mentioned that in their village there are 25 soldiers who are listed on their First World War memorial, and they have visited all of their respective graves or memorials, bar one, whose name is inscribed on the North Gate in Baghdad (Interview 29). This level of interest is not representative of the general audience of the museum. But what it does is demonstrate the ability of the exhibition to encourage its visitors to consider the stories of those from other nations, and other sides of the war in a way that is no less important, than one that may even be from their own locale.

An aspect of the exhibition that was specifically mentioned many times by the respondents was the attention paid to the Germans and soldiers of the Central Powers. This suggests that their inclusion was perhaps more notable to the respondents, as it was mentioned in 11 separate interviews. However, amongst those interviews, some remarked at the scale of the presence of German stories, suggesting that it exceeded their expectations; whilst others indicated that they were underwhelmed by the German inclusion, and that Germans were perhaps underrepresented. Of those 11 interviews, the respondents in 8 of them felt that the Germans were underrepresented, whilst the other 3 suggested otherwise. This is somewhat surprising due to the established cosmopolitan narrative. Although, in general this did feed into the visitor reflections. One pair of these respondents highlighted the fact that these Germans soldiers were individuals (Interview21):

Researcher: Do you think that the museum successfully incorporates the perspectives of multiple combative nations?

Male Participant: Oh, yes. Yes, Germans as well, yeah, absolutely.

[...]

Female Participant: Because people didn't, people went because that as their duty and the government required them to do it.

Mm-hmm. Clearly some didn't want to do it, but had to. And I think you see the person behind the uniform.

In this interview the respondents highlight issues that are central to the cosmopolitan ideal, specifically the idea of looking beyond the uniform, beyond the nationality to see the plight of the individual. They also, however, highlight aspects of the museum and the cosmopolitan mode of remembrance that have come under criticism. Proponents of agonistic memory have suggested that cosmopolitan approaches can serve to de-politicise memory and remove the individual's agency in memory narratives, by consigning them to a wider experience of collective suffering (Cento Bull & Hansen 2016, p.393).

Another pair of these respondents mentioned the effective balance of national narratives, and how it made them more aware of the experiences of the soldiers, the individuals from other nations (Interview 57):

Male Participant: So I, I was surprised how much there was, uh, from a German perspective.

Yeah. I mean, maybe that's coming at it, well, it shows the sort of history we've, we've had really, and all the, um, history we've been taught and the resources that have been available to us in terms of textbooks and, and what have you. Um, I found it interesting [...] that there were people coming and speaking from a German perspective, I, I, thought that was really good.

Female Participant: Mh-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yes. And the, the, the individuals who featured the individual soldiers, there seemed to be a deliberate, um, attempt to have someone from each nationality where, where they could.

Male Participant: And that it affected the Belgians really, you know, it was fought over, Belgian territory.

This is exactly the kind of introspection that the museum curators mentioned that they were trying to elicit from their visitors (Dendooven 2022, Trogh 2022). By combining the stories of individuals across national lines, the impact of the war on the combatants, on the civilians and on the landscape can be seen with its true emotional weight. This is where the emotional power of the museum, and its message of peace resides.

The respondents who highlighted the lack of the presence of information surrounding the Germans, in most cases, linked that fact to the geographic location of the museum itself, suggesting that the very fact that it was a Belgian museum justified the lack of a display of German stories of the war (Interview 20):

Interview 20

Participant: It's heavily weighted on Belgian, French, British. [...] There was some generalisation of both sides, but I would say it's heavily, uh, in favour of Belgium, France, Britain.

There was a couple of bits and bobs [...] which is fair enough when you're, I think, you're in Belgium, you know?

Interview 1

Participant: Yeah, it doesn't have much that I've seen, the perspective of the Germans, which is quite natural, 'cause it's a Belgian museum, but I would say it doesn't fully explore their experience or their reasons for being there.

Interview 77

Male Participant 1: Um, it probably doesn't capture the German perspective.

Male Participant 2: Yeah, I was thinking the same. It's obviously, it's kind of Belgium centric.

Male Participant 1: And then the French and the British, I suppose, who, who fought alongside them. But, but yeah, I've got no issue with that. I mean, we are in Belgium.

In only one interview that was held in the IFFM during the data collection for this study were responses given by those being interviewed that indicated that they were not in favour of integrated exhibits. In this response the female participant explicitly states that she feels that national exhibits should be separated, and her partner, the male participant, suggests that the people of each nation would have their own views on that matter, and finds it difficult to provide a concrete yes or no (Interview 20):

Researcher: Do you think these exhibits should be integrated? Do you think stories from both sides should be told together or do you think they should be separated?

Male Participant: I suppose that's a very pertinent question. Depending on your nationality and your [...] feelings.

Female Participant: I feel separated.

Male Participant: Yeah, but I think, to give [...] somebody [...] [an] initial introduction to [this], you need to have a little bit from the other side to give perspective. Um, but I suppose again, your location is [...], I would imagine your French, Belgians [...] to a degree, uh, I mean it's difficult [...]. I don't have that knowledge. So, it's difficult to suggest anything you know.

In this excerpt, the male respondent is explicitly reflecting on what the reality of transnational remembrance is to him in that moment; he is giving thought to how members of different nationalities may think about the war, and how they may interpret the museum despite his partner's relatively hard stance. As a follow up to this answer the couple were asked how they think remembrance should be separated, if at all (Interview 20):

Researcher: You mentioned that you think they should be separated. Do you reckon that's like each nation should have its own thing or do you reckon it more kind of Allies, Central Powers thing?

Male Participant: Yeah. I think Allies again, because...

Female Participant: Allies. 'Cause if they're allies, they're classed as one, it's their story. The war there, there's two sides to the story. Um, I don't think it gave you much of the German side. Yeah. For that story. But then our, the people who are coming here as all says, are they really interested in the German side?

They're really interested in our countrymen and, you know, the French and the Allies and how they actually won rather than Germans being the baddies. But if you were German, you might want to see the other side. Why you, why this was started and why you wanted to do it.

As can be seen above the objection to integrated displays was not based on any explicit importance placed on nationalism, rather the integration of the enemy with the nations that formed the Allies. The integration of national narratives did not serve as a sticking point, however, the 'side' of the conflict did. This fundamentally antagonistic viewpoint, does not align with the museum's cosmopolitan approach. A fixed 'us' and 'them' denies the ideals of collective suffering and shared experience that are the pillars of a transnational exhibition. However, as was mentioned, this viewpoint was very much a minority.

In conclusion, the respondents were overwhelmingly in favour of transnationally integrated exhibits with respondents in 98% of the interviews affirming this. They highlighted the benefits of this presentation style, suggesting that it allows visitors to have a more rounded and balanced view of the First World War. It allows them to see beyond their traditional national narratives; the role of individual's stories in this was mentioned by the respondents almost across the board and cannot be understated. There was some disagreement amongst the respondents in terms of the inclusion of the perspective of the Germans and soldiers of the Central Powers, in that some felt they were underrepresented, whilst others commended the scale of their inclusion. Overall, however, the majority of participants were in favour of their inclusion in integrated exhibits.

The visitors were almost wholly in favour of an inclusive and multi-perspectival style of remembrance. However, a sticking point between them and the true cosmopolitan vision of the museum is the importance of the idea of national perspectives as a basis for the telling of these stories. The museum is attempting to move beyond these national categories, however for the British visitors it is such a fundamental categorisation for differing war experiences. They consistently mentioned the importance of the Belgian perspective, the French perspective, and the German perspective. They recognised the importance of understanding these perspectives alongside their own and suggested that it enhanced the overall learning experience. However, they still view those perspectives as being fundamentally different from their own, British perspective. They are recognising the value of individual stories, shining a light on the plights of other national groups in a way that makes them relatable, however, by definition they still belong to that other national group and as such are inherently different. These other perspectives are seen as additions to

their British-based understanding of the First World War, rather than viewing commemoration and remembrance for the conflict in a new way.

This could be as a result of a point of commonality between the collective suffering that embodies the cosmopolitan approach and the British war myth that has permeated British public culture of 'lions led by donkeys'. There is not a substantial jump from collective suffering to collective sacrifice, which is a concept on which British views on the First World War are built. In framing the experience of the individual soldiers as one of shared suffering, the museum picks up an important theme that resonate with dominant British understandings of the war. This helps to explain why British visitors recognise the importance of alternate perspectives, as they are recognising in these displays the same foundations of their own understanding of the First World War for their own nation, namely that the war caused unnecessary suffering. Therefore, the British visitors take the view that these perspectives are important and that they deserve to be heard on the basis of that suffering. They also note that integrating these stories can provide a balanced and nuanced discussion about a complicated topic. However, these other national perspectives are experienced and perceived as fundamentally different viewpoints, no matter what respect is accorded to them. Just as stated in the previous section, where the research participants viewed their own sense of national belonging as unproblematic, they had the same approach to the national belonging of others. Here the respondents have drawn a clear line between the sense of national belonging of today and the ideals of nationalism of the past, which is where they believe the museum's criticism lies.

In this, these visitors are showing that a truly cosmopolitan understanding of the First World War is not congruent with their belief systems. Whilst the museum has prompted its visitors to consider these new issues and move towards a multi-perspectival and transnational viewpoint, it fails to bring them beyond their fundamental framing of the First World War as conflict between nations and to therefore lead them to question the importance of national identifications. Multi-perspectival thinking and the sharing of memory across national borders can be seen as a stop along the road to a cosmopolitan approach. However, in the century that has elapsed since the First World War, the understanding of British visitors has not been able to make that leap, suggesting that it

might not necessarily be a linear path with a pre-determined destination with cosmopolitanism at the end.

4.3.7 Civil-Military Relations

The issue of civil-military relations was not initially a focus for this project. As discussed in the Methodology, it was during the data collection at Tyne Cot Cemetery, which took place towards the end of the fieldwork, that this theme emerged. Therefore, this issue was not as readily identified and explored in the majority of the data considered in this chapter, which was collected earlier in the fieldwork.

Nevertheless, there are a couple of points worth discussing here. Civil-military relations and the ways in which British visitors adopt memory frames to conceptualise historical and contemporary events is a theme that runs in multiple aspects of the tourists experience in Ypres.

In brief, the relationship between the British public and the Armed Forces has experienced significant shifts in the past 25 years especially. Unpopular conflicts such as the Iraq War led to a growth of negative sentiment towards them (Walgrave & Rucht 2010, p.xiii). This led to a marked effort by the Ministry of Defence to improve their public image in the 2010s. This manifested in the re-design of the National Army Museum and a range of other ways (Clarke 2023, p.86). The ways in which this changing relationship has influenced the attitudes of British tourists to contemporary conflict will prove to be one of the key takeaways for this thesis.

As will be shown in the following chapter, it is the layering of a dominant memory frame with new concerns about contemporary conflicts that brings this changing relationship to the fore. The concern with civil-military relations has proven not to be the dominant frame during the visitors' experiences at the In Flanders Fields Museum, at least in the short term. Rather, the experience of another current dominant memory frame, in this case cosmopolitan memory is causing the visitors to reflect differently in the moment.

The focus of the respondents can be found more on the individual experiences of those fighting, and being directly impacted by the war, rather than those that may have

been deemed to have caused it. Where the dominant memory frame in the cemetery caused the visitors to highlight the culpability of political leaders, here in the museum an alternate frame keeps the focus on the soldier, on the civilian. This is one of the stated goals of the museum designers and should come as little surprise.

In their interviews the respondents mentioned that ‘the effect on the civilians was, uh, you know, made prominent’ (Interview 28). Another respondent highlighted the plight and suffering of the soldiers that fought the conflict (Interview 60):

Researcher: What kind of emotions does it [the exhibition] bring up?

Male Participant: Well it’s sad. Makes me feel glad I didn’t have to go through it. Yeah, relief.

Female Participant: Yeah. Sad... for all those lives.

Male Participant: I mean, they were young kids... they never had their life, did they? No. Sad. Really sad. Had families.

Female Participant: Well, I mean, well will never happen. It will never happen like that again. Hopefully, and hopefully it never happened, but to die in such a horrible way.

In the immediate present, the dominant cosmopolitan memory frame focuses their attention to the issues it highlights. This does not penetrate all aspects of memory and remembrance, as shown in the previous section. One visit will not necessarily impact a century-old remembrance tradition, but it will add another layer. A layer that is, at least in the immediate present, encouraging its visitors to reflect somewhat differently to other sites in Ypres.

Even in an example where political leaders are mentioned and aspects of the national memory framing shine through, the focus is brought back to the soldier (Interview 76):

Soldiers don’t start wars, soldiers fight wars. Politicians start wars. So it doesn’t matter what side you’re on. Yeah, it’s, it’s the same rules.

But I would imagine if you speak to any , uh, Germans, they would feel that, that national pride as much as we do, which is absolutely fine.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter's aim was to investigate and analyse British visitor experiences at the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres. An important part of this process is establishing the context in which these experiences are happening; both in terms of their physical context, i.e the exhibition itself, and the context of wider museum culture and its relationship with remembrance. This consisted of, first, exploring how museums, as spaces of remembrance, interact with, and engage their visitors with issues of history and memory. This includes how presentations of memory have developed across Europe, with a specific focus on Belgium and the UK. Then, in analysing the primary exhibition of the In Flanders Fields Museum and interviews that were carried out with two of the curators, the analysis focuses on how the IFFM understands memory, and the role of a museum in the sphere of remembrance. This informs the understanding of their 'message', both in terms of the researcher understanding their approach but also how this impacts the visitor experience. Analysing the exhibition itself, allows context for the responses that are analysed later in the chapter, and describes not only what the 'message' or 'purpose' of the museum is, but how this is manifested, how its visitors will come to see it.

The relationship between museums and memory, has been an ongoing development since the early twentieth century, however, on the approach to and beginning of the twenty-first century, changing values have identified a somewhat novel role for war museums in western Europe. Depictions of the First World War, in many museums, have shifted towards a series of more 'representational strategies' (Arnold-de Simine 2013, p.8), presenting a plethora of varying smaller narratives rather than one grand narrative. This has been described as a shift from an antagonistic to a cosmopolitan mode of memory. In this shift, national narratives have been displaced with multi-perspectival narratives that focus on collective suffering and peace. This style is more prevalent in general, in continental Europe, than in the UK, and this is especially the case in Flanders (Shelby 2017, p.6).

The IFFM is a strong example of an institution that embraces and propagates a cosmopolitan mode of remembering the First World War. This can be seen, on their website, in their exhibition, in published material by the museum curators, and by the interviews

carried out with the curators for this research project. The museum is very open with its stance, stating on its website 'the museum considers presenting this war story to be a universal and contemporary message of peace, and therefore an important social mission' (inlandersfields.be). The curators highlighted the importance of paying 'attention to all different nationalities' with stories that 'are intertwined or presented in a transnational perspective' (Trogh 2022). This message also shines through in the permanent exhibition at the museum, throughout the displays, the focus is consistently drawn to the experiences of individuals and the impacts of the conflict on people and the landscape.

How visitors are interpreting and making sense of this message, and their potential integration of this mode of remembrance with their own thoughts is the crux of the analysis of visitor experiences in this chapter. The aspects of the visitor experience that I have analysed both demonstrate the overall effectiveness of the museum as a conduit of information, and as a centre of transnational thought. These purposes are inextricably linked, and the focus of this project and others (Berger et al. 2021) on the museum's transnational merits are somewhat at odds with the average British visitor's expectations.

Visitor motivations recorded in this study, at the IFFM, generally fell into one of four categories: family connection, historical interest, national duty or accompanying a friend or partner. Whilst historical interest was the most common response, it was discovered that family connection, as a motivation, had the highest emotional potential for the visitors and that for many of the visitors, even those who may not have had this connection themselves, it was the first consideration when being asked about their connection to the First World War. It was identified across the board as being the most important visitor motivation.

In terms of visitor expectations, 74% of the respondents suggested that their expectations had either been met or exceeded. As Falk & Dierking (2000, p.137) have identified, the meeting of expectations, fosters an environment that is conducive to discussion and learning. However, among the respondents that were involved in this study, the most pertinent findings came from those that stated that their expectations were not met. There were a number of issues that covered both the content and execution of the exhibition identified by the participants. This denial of expectations, however, did not serve as an impediment to the respondents' ability to engage with, learn from and discuss the museum exhibit. Whilst their reflections on the experience may be soured due to this failure

to meet expectations, in the moment they were still able to engage effectively with the museum displays, in an interactive learning experience. This is a testament to the effectiveness of the museum design. It is also important for the museum's social mission; this engagement is a prerequisite for the transmission of their message and ensuring that all their visitors have this interaction is key to both their informational and ideological function.

Emotion is a powerful tool for museums, both in terms of making the displays more memorable, but also utilising emotional messages to demonstrate their ideology. The IFFM exhibition effectively drives emotional responses from its visitors, with 87% of the participants identifying it as an emotional experience. In their responses, the participants identified a number of aspects of the exhibition that they deemed to be especially emotional, often with cosmopolitan messaging, and engaged with them in meaningful ways. In 11 of the research interviews conducted at the museum, respondents specifically highlighted themes that are core tenets of the cosmopolitan approach such as suffering and futility. Not only is the museum exhibition successfully provoking emotional reactions from its visitors, but these emotional responses, by and large, facilitate a transnational reflection of the conflict. The museum is creating an experience for their visitors that, in general terms, satisfies their expectations and engages them in meaningful ways. The respondents demonstrated that they understood the issues that were being presented to them, they appreciated the impact of the conflict on people, individuals, and the landscape. They used the information around them to reflect on their own life, their own experiences, and the world today. A phrase that was repeated many times during the interviews, 'it makes me think how lucky we are today' (Interview 54), summarises this. British visitors compare the experiences of those unfortunate enough to have been touched by war to their own, seeing the destruction and difficulties that war causes. This is exactly what the peace-forward voice of the museum is trying to achieve, and it is clearly effective in terms of encouraging its visitors to consider these aspects of war.

Two of the final aspects of the visitor experience considered in this chapter, views on the transnational aspects of the museum and reflections on their own nationality, are focused on how the research participants are applying this message from the museum to themselves and their own belief systems. The research participants had varying perspectives on their nationality, whilst the most common response was one of the importance of

nationality, with this being mentioned in 68% of the interviews, it was far from being a universal view. There were a number of issues raised by the respondents in relation to their nationality. However, there was one perspective that was lacking. In this discussion there was not one example of critical reflection on their national identity that was prompted by the museum exhibition, any of its themes or the learning process they had just been engaging with. Despite that fact that the one of the primary goals of the museum is to get their visitors to put their nationality aside in their reflections on the First World War and consider the conflict on a purely human level, this had little to no spill over into the visitors' considerations on their own nationality even stood in the same hall, moments after finishing the exhibit. Even the respondents that identified their nationality as not being important to them, or being somewhat important to them, again did not engage with messaging of the museum in regard to this question. They did mention things that could be considered cosmopolitan, such as an affinity for Europe, and feeling themselves to perhaps be more of a European than British (Interview 87 & 39). However, these feelings are based on more than their visit to the museum, and the museum could not be said to have provoked reflection that led to this self-perception.

This is not to say that the museum expects its visitors to cast aside their nationality, a belief system and sense of belonging that has been formed throughout their life, due to the impact of cosmopolitan thinking presented to them in the exhibition. The displays at the IFFM, whilst attempting to subvert the national narratives of the First World War, are presenting a subject that, to many British visitors at least, is one that is nationally charged. However, this is not carrying over into the respondents' reflection onto their own nationality, it is not an issue that they would critically reflect on, despite the circumstance in which the interview was taking place. They do not identify their own sense of nationality with the concept of nationality or nationalism that the museum is opposed to. The visitors are fundamentally removing themselves and their feelings towards their nation from the discussion that the museum is trying to engage them in.

This removal of their own experience, the British experience, is shown again in relation to the respondents' thoughts on the transnational exhibits in the In Flanders Fields Museum. The respondents overwhelmingly highlighted the importance and efficacy of nationally integrated exhibits, highlighting the benefits of a rounded and more balanced

view of the First World War. However, the British tourists viewed this integration in a fundamentally different way from the museum curators. Rather than a cosmopolitan narrative in which nations and nationality are displaced by the plight of collective suffering, the respondents recognised a multi-perspectival arena in which no singular narrative was more important than another and that shared storytelling in the same space encouraged a balanced view and a more nuanced understanding of the First World War. The important distinction here is between a truly cosmopolitan approach, in which national loyalties fall away, and the perspective of British visitors, which shows respect for the experiences of different nations, but assumes that each nation continues to frame the meaning of the war in national terms. Just as the visitors viewed their own sense of national belonging as unproblematic, they, on the whole, afforded the same status to the nationalities of others. In appreciating and valuing the experiences and narratives of other national groups, despite their allegiances during the war, they are separating contemporary national belonging from the problematic concept of historical nationalism. Whilst British visitors to the In Flanders Fields Museum may not be fully adopting the belief systems of the museum and its approach, it is certainly broadening their horizons and incorporating certain aspects of that belief system into their own.

This is, in reality, likely to be an aim for all war museums, never mind just the IFFM. As one of the museum curators, Pieter Trogh (2022), stated: if a visitor who might visit the museum with a 'very national perspective or ... narrative [...] in their head and they walk away with a more nuanced picture of what happened, then I would be very happy as a curator.' The respondents in this study are certainly noticing and understanding the merit of the museum's approach and applying it to their own belief systems. British visitors demonstrated a continued engagement with the cosmopolitan themes throughout the exhibition and applied what they had learnt to their own memories of the First World War, in order to draw potentially new conclusions, even if those might not be the conclusions that museum-makers would prefer.

The dominant memory frame presented by the museum is influencing the way British visitors reflect on the conflict in the immediate timeframe as shown in the final section. However, it cannot penetrate the longstanding socially entrenched belief system for issues as central as national belonging and control over their own remembrance narrative.

5. British Tourist Experiences at Tyne Cot

5.1 Introduction

In order to explore the British tourist experiences at Tyne Cot Cemetery, this chapter will be broken down into three distinct sections. The first, introductory, section will outline how the chapter will be structured and introduce the theoretical underpinning of the posited argument. It will explore the ways in which memory is experienced and, importantly, created on past battlefields and military cemeteries from the time of their creation to now. Then it will explore the development of civil-military relations in the UK, looking at how this issue shaped the ways in which civilians view soldiers in contemporary society. The chapter will contribute to existing understandings of contemporary battlefield tourism by emphasising shifts in visitors' understanding of the role of national identity, but also by highlighting how questions of civil-military relations are reflected upon by visitors in the context of battlefield tourism.

Firstly, this chapter will look at the ways in which the First World War national cemeteries across Europe were imbued with meaning, both by the established policymakers and by society at large, and how this relationship has developed since the conflict. Secondly, it will look at the development of contemporary civil-military relations in Britain. This begins with the blurring of the lines between civilian and soldier that occurred in Britain and other combatant nations during the First World War and ends with the reflections on how military personnel are considered in society in Britain today.

Then I will focus on Tyne Cot itself; its design, its place in British remembrance culture and its development since its construction. The physical and symbolic properties of the cemetery will be analysed in order to better understand the information that tourists are presented with in their visit to the cemetery. Additionally in this section the ways in which the social framing of Tyne Cot has changed over time will be discussed, making sure to emphasise the ever-changing nature of the live site that it is.

The rest of the chapter will compromise of the analysis of the visitor responses at Tyne Cot. This analysis will be broken down into various aspects of the visitor experience, such as visitor motivations, feelings on nationality, transnational remembrance and the role

of the British war myth and civil-military relations. This section will explore that ways in which tourist experiences are shaped at Tyne Cot today, building upon the analysis of the site and exploration of the role of military cemeteries in European cultures of remembrance for the First World War. This chapter will suggest that British tourist experiences at Tyne Cot can represent a number of the aspects of cosmopolitan memory, but that national belonging and distinct national framings are still the key drivers for interactions at the site. These visitors are happy to engage in a multi-perspectival, discussion amongst different national groups, in a productive and peace-focused dialogue. However, these differing national approaches and narratives are understood as remaining inherently separate from one another, demonstrating transnational, rather than cosmopolitan remembrance.

Furthermore, national framings such as civil-military relations and the British national war myth will be shown to impact the ways in which Tyne Cot cemetery encourages its visitors to consider justifications for war, for some in historical terms, but for many in contemporary terms. It is with this development that this chapter and this thesis aim to further the existing understanding of tourist experiences in Ypres. Aspects of cosmopolitan memory are making their way to Ypres. However, for British visitors at least, an increasing understanding of the importance of multi-perspectival and transnational memory remains imbedded in a national framing, while moral lessons are also drawn in relation to present-day conflicts that suggests a critical stance on civil-military relations in the UK context.

5.2 Memory on the Battlefields

There are two key aspects of memory on the battlefields that will be addressed in this section: firstly, the reconstruction of the past, narratives and meaning driven by and created in war cemeteries and on battlefields in Europe immediately following the First World War; secondly, the interaction with and performance of visitors today on the Western Front at these sites. The first aspect will be explored using the example of George L. Mosse's (1979; 1990) work on the Cult of the Fallen Soldier as a demonstration of the political and cultural power that these sites can hold and as a mirror to the British development its culture of remembrance.

5.2.1 Mosse and the Historical Power of First World War Cemeteries

There are a number of similarities between the language and presentation of commemoration in First World War cemeteries. Religious symbology and an ordered presentation can be found in British and Commonwealth, French, Belgian and German cemeteries surrounding Ypres. Nevertheless, how these sites were framed and mobilised differently exhibits the power and versatility of these remembrance sites in service of the nation. Mosse is a scholar who throughout his long and prestigious career explored many aspects of nationalism and fascism. What is most pertinent to this study, however, is the demonstration by Mosse of the symbolic meaning that national war cemeteries specifically can represent, and the political and cultural potential of these sites.

In Great Britain in the 1920s and 1930s battlefield pilgrimages were an important aspect of public remembrance. Visits to battlefield sites, geographical landmarks, cemeteries and final resting places served to combine the 'individual experiences and memory of the bereaved and ex-servicemen with a public act of commemoration' (Lloyd 1998, p.109). Bereaved relatives embarked on a journey to see the headstone or name of a family member, as part of the process of consigning the dead to memory and coming to terms with grief. Whereas ex-servicemen were more often 'drawn back to the battlefields in search of their past' (Lloyd 1998, p.109). Large scale pilgrimages such as the one organised by the British Legion in 1928 were large scale public demonstrations of this (Baldwin & Sharpley 2009, pp.187). Notably, King George V made his own, widely reported pilgrimage to France and Belgium in 1922 (*The Scotsman* 1922; *The Times* 1922; *Leeds Mercury* 1922; *Aberdeen Press and Journal* 1922; *Birmingham Daily Gazette* 1922). His journey was widely reported on and seen as a symbolic 'quickening [of] the feeling of kinship which is the empire's very lifeblood' (*The Scotsman* 1922). For the King it was an intensely personal experience, visiting graves of his friends, reading poems at their graves on a mission of 'gratitude and remembrance' (Fox 1922, Part 1). Acting as a representative for the British people, the King bridged the gap between national and personal feeling, combining his national symbolism with a deeply personal journey of mourning.

In the inter-war period these battlefield pilgrimages were an important part of the ongoing debate that surrounded the memory of the First World War. Pilgrims and their acts of remembrance were 'part of an alternative reconstruction of the memory of the war which

emphasised the achievement of the dead and the traditions of service and sacrifice' (Lloyd 1998, p.110). This aligns with the approach taken by the CWGC and resultant messaging inherent to their sites and Tyne Cot specifically, which will be explored further later in this chapter. The religious concept of sacrifice merged with the secular value of duty during these pilgrimages. There were questions as to whether the war was "worthwhile", whether the phenomenal sacrifices were deserved by what was ultimately achieved (Lloyd 1998, p.110).

Similarly, the design and symbolism of the IWGC cemeteries prompted public debate. Whilst some were impressed with the uniform nature of the cemeteries, others found the IWGC's shaping of the war's meaning offensive. One angry reader of *The Times* (Wolmer 1920) stated that the Commission was dishonouring the bereaved, 'using the dead bodies of their loved ones to pave barracks yards of milestones [...] as if they were nothing but the cannon fodder of a triumphant militarism'. Another fervently disagreed with the ideal of 'making the cemeteries merely regiments of stone as perpetuating the military ideal which our sons sacrificed themselves to crush' (Cecil 1919).

War graves and visits to them were at the centre of the memory debate in Britain for the First World War in the inter-war period. The IWGC brought to life a vision of 'idealised political community through headstone uniformity' that was justified on grounds of practicality, taste and equality (Stice 2020, p.154). It was this principle of equality that prompted the public, mostly, to embrace the Commission's vision. Whilst the public and the IWGC did not align on all matters, there existed a shared 'vision of an idealised military community which was level, at least in sacrifice' (Stice 2020, p.154). The public engagement with the IWGC and the war graves and battlefields themselves display the importance of their establishment of the status quo of First World War commemoration and memory in Britain following the First World War. However, these public debates also demonstrate the emergence of issues surrounding the roles of civilians in wartime. As Elizabeth Stice (2020, p.144) states, the questioning of the ideals of the IWGC and its practices raises issues beyond the subject of cemeteries; it reveals underlying debates 'about democratic participation in Britain and the memory of civilian wartime citizenship.'

Just as war graves were an important factor in the emerging form of commemoration in Britain, they played a similar role across Europe. The nations involved in the conflict each

had a slightly different approach, but they were all met with the same problem: the sheer scale of death provided a logistical, political and ideological challenge for all involved. The most explicit demonstration of the role of war graves and the cultural and political potential that they hold can be seen in George L. Mosse's (1979; 1990) work on the cult of the fallen soldier in Germany.

The work of Mosse (1973; 1975; 1979; 1990) on nationalism and the confrontation between men and modern war in the twentieth century has been foundational in the growing understanding of the relationship between war and nationalism in Europe. Born into a 'prominent liberal Jewish family in Berlin that was committed to the defence of the Weimar Republic', Mosse's views on nationalism, and his view, its extreme form, fascism were 'refracted through his personal witness of the attractions of fascism' (Hutchinson 2021, p.879). Mosse has studied many facets of nationalism and European history, and his primary contribution to the field, as identified by John Hutchinson (2021, p.878) has been 'the exploration of [nationalism's] distinctive cultural politics.' Mosse developed these thoughts in his 'mature formulation of nationalism' with his 'Mass politics in the political liturgy of nationalism' (Mosse 1973), and his *Nationalization of the Masses* (Mosse 1975) (Hutchinson 2021, p.880). Mosse is seen as a 'pioneer in recognising the importance of the emotions in explaining the capacity of nationalism', however, it is his later work on the 'constitutive and changing character of war and military institutions in the formation and erosion of national identities', that are key for this study (Hutchinson 2021, p.894)

In his analysis of the Cult of the Fallen Soldier in Germany (Mosse 1979; 1990), Mosse has provided an early example for the understanding of the role of war cemeteries and remembrance in modern society. Mosse explores how, in Germany, this 'national myth' emboldened soldiers who were going to war and aided the rest of society in dealing with the grief inspired by their loss. But Mosse's work also clearly displays the political uses for war graves and the myths that surround them. The Cult of the Fallen Soldier was a social phenomenon that grew from the wars of liberation in the early 19th century and was embraced during the First World War and then utilised by the Nazi regime during the interwar period (Mosse 1990).

The Cult of the Fallen Soldier was embedded in the enthusiasm of the volunteer soldiers of the First World War. It was built on the foundation of the ideal that death in war

brought meaning to one's life, that the 'sacred moment' of dying imbued a belonging and purpose to their entire life (Mosse 1979, p.2). These volunteers were emboldened in the belief that they were a 'consecrated elite', both during the wars of liberation and the First World War soldiers were blessed in church. With this 'fighting and dying became a sacred duty' (Mosse 1979, p.2). When these soldiers were met with the reality of fighting on the front lines, they often became cynical and disillusioned, so that very spirit of the volunteers itself became a myth. This myth survived the First World War and continued into postwar German society.

Mosse (1979, p.2) states 'such a patriotic myth could never have lasted so long unless it had not met a real need'. This need can be seen twofold: firstly it helped the soldiers march into 'unparalleled slaughter'; secondly, with the aftermath of defeat, violence and revolution, it brought comfort to the civilians, showing them why their soldiers 'had not fallen in vain and why the veterans had made their sacrifice' (Mosse 1979, p.2). This myth reinforced the importance of dying for your country, the acts of fighting and dying for the fatherland becoming a sacred duty, both in preparation for war and after death.

Once the fallen had fulfilled their mission, they had not achieved this sacrifice as individuals, but rather as a 'community of comrades' (Mosse 1979, p.6). The purpose given to the soldiers and achieved by the fallen transcended their individuality and gave them a common goal. German war cemeteries, fulfilling their pivotal role in the cult, highlight this in the way they present the fallen. By design they were made to be simple, making an effort to symbolise wartime camaraderie and the collective effort of the fallen: 'Gravestones through their simplicity and uniformity like soldiers in battle, lead into a serious and reverential mood' (Hogg 1915; Mosse 1979, p.9). The defined space, both physically by the borders of the cemetery, and ideologically by the symbology and meaning of the site with its serried graves allowed the death of individuals to be subsumed by the larger national cause. Denying the fallen their rightful resting place as part of this collective was frowned upon. The actions of families of the fallen transferring their remains of their loved ones to family crypts was often viewed as an action of betrayal against those who had been 'comrades amongst comrades' (Mosse 1979, p.10).

These military cemeteries, alongside other war memorials became 'shrines of national worship which in many ways eclipsed the traditional national monuments' (Mosse

1979, p.16). Military graves were deliberately separated from civilian graves, even if they were interred in a shared location, in order to give them the appropriate respect. Even the design choices for the cemeteries were a balance of nationalist mystique and tradition and the preservation of places of worship (Mosse 1979, p.12). Both the forest and park cemeteries aimed to 'dissolve thoughts of death into soothing and uplifting myths and symbols' (Mosse 1979, p.13). These surroundings that bring 'calm to the restless human spirit' provide a place of rest for the fallen (Mosse 1979, p.13). Mosse states that these memorialised public spaces are a key factor in facilitation of the cult of the fallen soldier (Mosse 1990, p.80):

The role assigned to the fallen as German heroes was crucial for their symbolic value. But the fallen as symbols would have had much less impact if it were not for the public spaces and memorials which bore witness to their deeds and their heritage. The purpose which the fallen were made to serve was given true meaning when their resting places became shrines of national worship and when monuments erected in their honor became the focus of the public's attention. The fallen were transformed into symbols which people could see and touch and which made their cult come alive.

War cemeteries and other public memorials helped elevate and concentrate the individual soldier's symbolic value to a more lasting collective sacrifice. Whilst all war cemeteries following the First World War symbolised wartime camaraderie, the German cemeteries stood out with their absolute commitment to uniformity, which dominated their entire design (Mosse 1990, p.85).

Another impact of the new style of war cemeteries and monuments following the First World War, not just in Germany, but in France and Britain too was equality of treatment for the fallen, despite their class or rank. For the cult of the fallen soldier, each soldier that fell had become a notable individual due to their collective mission that all fallen share, a mission that 'paid no heed to rank or status' (Mosse 1990, p.99). This resulted in a 'democratic' Myth of the War Experience that 'centred upon the nation symbolized by all of the war dead'. Only in this manner could war myth transcend the encounters with death common to all soldiers, 'cleansing their memory of the dread of war' (Mosse 1990, p.99).

Mosse provides a concise encapsulation of the Cult of the Fallen soldier in the conclusion in the so titled fifth chapter in his 1990 monograph *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, in which he states:

The cult of the fallen was at the centre of the Myth of the War Experience, supplying it with symbols which refocused the memory of war. The enthusiasm which youth had once felt for war as adventure or personal fulfilment was difficult to sustain after experiencing the reality of war, but the nation, using the Myth of the War Experience, was able to keep the flame alight. The Nazis knew what they were doing when they made the cult of the war dead and the cult of their own martyrs central to their own political liturgy[...]. The Myth of the War Experience helped to transcend the horror of war and at the same time supported the Utopia which nationalism sought to project as an alternative to the reality of postwar Germany.

The cult of the Fallen soldier was heavily utilised and built upon by the Nazi party, stressing the continuity between the glorious past and the promise of the present: 'The blood of the best (of our people) has planted seeds which are now ready for that harvest which is spread so splendidly before us' (Mosse 1979, p.16). They used the perceived glory of sacrifice of the fallen as a galvanising force for their ideology and the mobilisation of the nation in the lead up to the Second World War. The Nazis were not alone in this, this annexation of war experience was common to all fascism, which saw itself as 'inheriting the unity between the fallen and the living, the martyrs of the past and the party elite of the present' (Mosse 1979, p.16). In fascist Italy fallen soldiers were presented as role models in official propaganda, in an effort to encourage patriotism (Malone 2022, p.35). In both nations, the dead were used as examples, designed to 'foster nationalism, militarism and imperialism' (Malone 2022, p.35). In 1939, with the breakout of war, there was an attempt in Italy and Germany, to evoke the 'spirit of 1914' as a tool for mobilisation (Mosse 1986, p.493).

The importance of national war cemeteries in the development and sustaining of national memories and myths was not limited to Germany and other fascist nations. Organisations were founded in all combatant nations that were tasked with the design and upkeep of war cemeteries. In the victorious nations, these organisations were

often appointed by the government, such as the CWGC (Mosse 1991, p.82). By contrast, in the defeated nations, such as in Austria and Germany, private associations embraced the undertaking. However, universally these sites displayed the potential to act as a centre of and galvanising force for public memory. The German cemeteries promised a further purpose for the fallen and the raising of the dead 'to exhort the living to resurrect Germany after defeat' (Mosse 1979, p.15). In a similar fashion Mosse states that through their basic design the cemeteries of the CWGC brought the link between the fallen and Christian sacrifice to life, with its symbols of resurrection. There were commonalities between the cemeteries of all nations: pastoral settings and Christian symbols were omnipresent in the design process, and crucially the focus on wartime camaraderie encapsulated with the uniformity of the graves and the graveyards (Mosse 1991, p.84).

Mosse's work on the Myth of the War Experience and the cult of the fallen soldier are specifically relevant to this study as they demonstrate the power of military cemeteries in the creation and maintenance of national myths and memory. As stated, these cemeteries were key elements of the national 'self-representation' and the defining symbol of the cult of the fallen soldier (Mosse 1990, p.74) that became part of the fabric of inter-war German society. This myth, which spans every individual soldier and the ruling elite, finds its home in the war cemeteries and heroes groves of the First World War, in the remembrance of the fallen.

Mosse has demonstrated the power and reach of a remembrance myth in Germany in the lead up to and following the First World War. Germany may provide the most striking example of the galvanising political and social potential of war cemeteries and the role they play in national myth due to the circumstance before and after the conflict. However, Mosse also shows that these themes, both in terms of physical design and symbolic meaning were not unique to Germany. Specifically, he mentions that the cemeteries of all nations share a number of commonalities. Importantly, the CWGC utilised similar ideals to reinforce the collective identity of the fallen Commonwealth soldiers. Whilst the same intentions may have had differing results, similar tools were being utilised for ultimately the same goal, potential for the mobilisation of public memory. The intent and effectiveness of this

mobilisation of memory varied from nation to nation, but universally war graves became a site where death and sacrifice are imbued with political and national meaning.

5.2.2 Contemporary Experiences at First World War Cemeteries

The second part of this section looks not to the symbols of the past, but to the experiences of today, asking how are these sites that are inherently imbued with historical meaning experienced by contemporary visitors. The creation of war cemeteries, the choices made by its designers and their role within a grieving society all position these vast memorials as symbolic centres of individual and collective mourning and commemoration. This creation and positioning of Tyne Cot cemetery will be explored thoroughly later on in this chapter. However, another crucial aspect of memory, and the meaning that sites hold is the continued interaction with and rehearsal of this very meaning that happens each and every day. This can take the form of organised ceremonies and remembrance activities, or even an individual visiting a grave. These actions today both maintain and potentially modify the potent symbolic value that war cemeteries can hold.

The importance attached to military cemeteries needs to be understood from the point of view of collective memory. Memory that is related to war cemeteries and other war memorials is a way of looking at and reconstructing the past, and as a result is influenced by the way people want to remember these events (Jacob & Pearl 2019, p.3). This means, as demonstrated by Winter (2010, p.11), that the very performance of memory involved in visiting a military cemetery has become a mnemonic device, and a way for individuals to not only relive their memories, but to revive and refashion them.

The French sociologist Maruice Halbwachs lay the foundation for this understanding of the interaction between memory and place. Halbwachs explored how objects and artifacts can 'hold' collective memories, suggesting that objects can act as both symbolic tokens onto which people may project their group desires or concerns, but also that these very objects are 'mediators of relationships between people' (Middleton & Brown 2011, p.43). In this fashion, places and objects can serve as the 'means of coordinating and stabilising social practices and the remembering activities that are threaded through them' (Middleton & Brown 2011, p.43). The stability and solidity of a physical object or space

support the inherent fluidity of the social relationships around them. With Halbwachs' concept of memory being 'localised', he goes beyond the assertion that a sense of place shares a relationship with the contents of its memory. He goes on to show that when social relationships 'are slowed down and crystallised around objects', only then is collective memory possible (Middleton & Brown 2011, p.43). Just as Mosse highlighted the elevation of war cemeteries to sites of national worship following the First World War in Germany, Jacob & Pearl (2019, p.4), building on the work of Winter (2010) and Halbwachs (1980), highlight the importance of continued acts of remembrance in this process: 'the commemoration of past events, especially of wars and the losses and sacrifices related to them, takes place in spaces that become sacred by the act of remembrance by a group. Profane places might therefore be transformed into sacred ones by the act of remembrance.' Seen from the point of view of Halbwachs's theoretical model, war cemeteries can be understood as acting as the spaces, and headstones the objects, around which social relationships are 'crystallised' and collective memory is formed (Middleton & Brown 2011, p.43).

Regular commemorations, performances and celebrations maintain both the inherent meaning of any particular site, i.e. Tyne Cot, but also the wider collective British memory of the First World War altogether. This is especially true at sites such as Tyne Cot and other CWGC cemeteries that are so central to the British myth and memory of the First World War.

In order to understand tourist experiences it is important to first establish what the general understanding of the British myth of the war experience is and how it came to be. As described in Chapter 2.1 this myth has its origins rooted in the multi-vocal emotions and events of inter-war Britain. However, its gradual development throughout the twentieth century adapting to the expansion of the temporal distance between new generations and the conflict (Todman 2005, p.221).

As previously discussed in Chapter 2.1, the essential function of the political myth is that it offers a coherent vision of society, with a collective purpose and an established hierarchy of understandings and facts (Reszler 1981, p.216, Acanfora 2021, p.978). The power and importance of this myth lies not in its truth, rather 'its efficacy as a mobilising

force for masses and individuals and in its capacity to generate faith' (Acanfora 2021, p.978). This myth creates a consensus around its own ideas.

The myth of the First World War in Britain, as described in Chapter 2.1, permeates representations and understandings of the conflict across Britain. Despite the designs of state agents of memory, such as the CWGC, to portray a unifying national sacrifice, the approach of many Britons to the conflict conforms more closely to Todman's (2005) description. As mentioned earlier, however, this has markedly changed over time. Just as facets of the national myth change, so do the real visitor experiences. Not only do visitors to remembrance sites such as war cemeteries experience changes in memorial culture, in commemoration and remembrance, they form them.

The First World War represents a watershed for battlefield tourism, a practice that has proven to be hugely popular in Britain (Baldwin & Sharpley 2009, p.186; Pennel 2018, p.173). Existing research has shown that these visitors 'are not simply passive observers', with scholars exploring the 'embodied and performative nature of tourist practices' (Pennel 2018, p.181, see also Coleman & Crang 2002; Franklin 2003). The tourists that visit the Western Front every year are a powerful force in the fashioning of the memory that war cemeteries such as Tyne Cot embody, in the very act of visiting they 'uphold their importance and validity and afford them renewed significance' (Miles 2016, p.135). Tourism drives attendance to commemorative events, and as a result, becomes one of the key factors in the perpetuation of these memorial practices that have been demonstrated to be so crucial for the existence of a collective memory (Miles 2016, p.135).

Jennifer Iles argues, as others have, that the draw for tourists on the Western Front is not one based on sightseeing, but rather a 'wish to identify and empathise with its symbolic commemorative spaces' in order to better connect with the experiences and lives of their predecessors that were faced with the brutal violence of the First World War (Iles 2011, p.156; Iles 2008, p.140, see also McPhail 2005, p.16). Their experiences are often dominated by an 'intense degree of emotional engagement' (Iles 2008, p.147). As a result, Iles states that the visitors' imaginations and emotions are their most powerful engagements with the world around them (Iles 2011, p.157). This interaction, at war cemeteries, and sites across the Western Front, both physical and emotional, continues to propagate the memories that these sites represent.

Caroline Winter has also investigated this phenomenon specifically in war cemeteries on the Western Front. She argues that tourists and tourism itself engage in the very creation of social memory, through its participation in the 'process of selection, articulation and rehearsal of information about the Great War' (C. Winter 2009, p.608). Winter (2009, p.608) aimed to move beyond the polarising pilgrim vs. tourist motivation dichotomy, wherein visitors of the Western Front have been historically divided due to their motivations and supposed reverence, towards an understanding of visitor experiences wherein they are active participants in creating social memories. In her study of war cemetery visitor books published in 2011, she argues that the everyday activities of cemetery visitors are part of the rehearsal of social memories and ritual performances (C. Winter 2011, p.466). In that study she notes that 'the social memory of the First World War is perpetuated through the ongoing visitation of many tourists, family members, national citizens and for those for whom the sacrifices of a generation are to be respected and remembered' (C. Winter 2011, p.477).

In 2015, Winter published an article where she specifically analysed Tyne Cot Cemetery's visitor book data, looking for themes and patterns from the entries of visitors to the site. She concluded that the Tyne Cot Cemetery 'facilitates the performance and rehearsal of memory as ritual practice' (C. Winter 2015, p.26). She identified the very act of writing in a visitor book as a linguistic ritual, characterised by a high level of formality: 'Individual acts of writing particular words and phrases in the visitor books are socially shared, and together they form a linguistic ritual' (C. Winter 2015, p.27). In sharing this ritual, the visitors come together to define the meaning of Tyne Cot. This ritual is also used as an example of cosmopolitan memory in action by Winter (2015, p.27), suggesting that through this ritual national identity was not the primary criteria. Whilst some national preferences were evident in the data sample, the global experience of the war was strengthened in the sharing of ritual acts. She concludes that Tyne Cot, in its very design, encourages ritual performance, the enactment of which is a key part in the creation, maintenance and propagation of memory over time (C. Winter 2015, p.27).

In performing these rituals, and visiting these sites both Winter (2015, p.17) and Iles (2008, p.150) have argued that the majority of modern visitors attend to honour the fallen soldiers, not necessarily as a national force but as a human loss. Iles (2008, p.180) identifies

that whilst the commemorative landscape of the Western front is 'certainly conducive for British visitors to reaffirm their heritage and feel pride in the specific contributions of their ancestors', most tourists treat it with an appropriate reverence, whilst the few may be demonstrating a 'dubious sentimentality'. Winter (2015, p.17) more explicitly states in her study at Tyne Cot that whilst some presence of national preferences still remained, 'national affiliation was not the primary criteria through which tourists shared the ritual of Tyne Cot.' Winter (2015, p.17) goes on to note that the sacrifice of the nations whose soldiers are interred in the cemetery is not discounted, rather the 'sharing of ritual acts heightens the global experience of war', and in turn reinforcing a form of transnational memory. This study will support those findings. As will be explored in this chapter the visitors advocate for a productive exchange of memorial culture and remembrance. They demonstrate the want for a shared multi-perspectival experience. National framings and separation remain important; they remain definitive, but memorial narratives and practices are extending beyond borders. Whilst the complete dissolution of national boundaries and a move towards cosmopolitan memory is unlikely, given the current attitude amongst the respondents, the experiences of the visitors in Ypres demonstrate Wustenberg's (2019, p.4) definition of Transnational memory almost explicitly. Whilst physical borders and antagonistic understandings of the war no longer serve to divide those remembering it, the shared understanding of the conflict inherent to national groups, at least in the case of the British, continues to define their commemorative practices and interpretations. It has now become a form of travelling memory and is taking part in productive exchange.

To conclude, as shown by the Mosse's work on the Cult of the Fallen Soldier, war cemeteries have significant potential for the embodiment and galvanisation of public memory. He has shown the growth of this commemorative style in Germany during and after the First World War and the political potential it held (Mosse 1979, 1990). They stand as one of the most crucial concentrations of memory and symbols of national myth. It also demonstrates the importance of the First World War in the development of the role of war cemeteries in Society. Another aspect of memory in war cemeteries that has been highlighted in this section is the importance of continued ritual and commemorative practice. The work of Jennifer Iles (2008; 2011) and Caroline Winter (2009; 2011; 2015) demonstrates the levels to which visitors to the Western Front, even today, engage with

their surroundings in meaningful, emotional ways. Winter (2015, p.17) has explicitly shown how these performative rituals at sites such as Tyne Cot are now propagating a transnational mode of remembering. These visitors enact and participate in small- and large-scale rituals and remembrance activities, a crucial step in the maintenance of the powerful 'sites of memory' that war cemeteries such as Tyne Cot represent. Mosse's work has been highlighted as well due to his focus on the ways in which everyday people, i.e. the soldiers and their families laid the foundation for the Cult of the Fallen Soldier, it was their sacrifice and grief that turned war cemeteries into 'shrines of national worship' (Mosse 1979, p.16). Throughout their history, it has been the activities of everyday people that has played as significant a role as the designers in defining what war cemeteries stand for, how their messages continue to be interpreted and how they continue to be remembered, over a century on from the First World War. These commemorative rituals have, however, changed over time and are now representative of an ethos that cannot be seen in the foundational cult of the fallen soldier as described by Mosse, instead contemporary visitors are actively sharing their commemorative rituals across national boundaries.

As the focus of these commemorative rituals has shifted beyond a strictly national framing and a view that is more considerate of the individuals, a new contention in the identity and function of these fallen soldiers comes to bear. Negotiating the experiences and sacrifices of the soldiers interred in these cemeteries, as both an individual and part of a national collective, allows the dynamics of their dual role as a citizen-soldier to be brought into view. Whilst scholarship has traced this trend, this project aims to provide the added context of the considerations that the visitors in this dataset are making towards the role of military in society and the justifications of war.

5.3 British Civil-Military Relations

In this section there will be a look towards the nature of civil-military relations in the United Kingdom since the turn of the century and what impacts this might have on the way visitors think about the soldiers buried under their feet. The question of civil-military relations has been central to the history of the First World War since its conclusion. Historically, the British Army had been characterised as a modestly sized professional

fighting force of professionals. However, with the outbreak of war in 1914, the mobilisation in Britain of a 'huge volunteer citizens' army' marked a new type of armed forces, with over 750,000 men joining up in just eight weeks (iwm.org.uk). Large numbers of untrained civilian volunteers bolstered the ranks of the standing professional army. This change became only more apparent with the onset of conscription in 1916 which brought a larger contingent of civilian fighters into the British Army. Not only were the armies of the First World War largely comprised of 'civilians in uniform' but these very forces 'were also selected, shaped, armed, fed, housed, nursed, rehabilitated, transported, entertained, and buried by civilians' (Proctor 2010, p.38). The further the war dragged on the more the importance of civilian contribution grew and the line between civilian and soldier blurred. (Proctor 2010, p.38). With this shift came the question, how should these individuals be commemorated? Should they be remembered as triumphant heroes or as a terrible sacrifice? This is the problem which the IWGC found itself facing upon its formation. As Stice (2020, p.156) states:

The Commission's power and decisions simply emphasized a sad reality for many families. The men that families had known as civilians and sons and fathers had been swept up and lost in a great and terrible war. Their primary identity was no longer familial or geographic within the empire, but as soldiers of empire, primarily distinguished by religion and regiment. Fallen soldiers were never again out of uniform and the dead were not demobilized.

The line between civilian and soldier, between society and military had been blurred. Ultimately, grieving families were met with the harsh reality that not only had their beloved sons, fathers and brothers been taken from them but so too had the control over the meaning of their identity and their sacrifice. On a large scale, civilians had become military and state actors. Jay Winter (2022b, p.202) has cited the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 as the true definition of the 'civilianisation of war', wherein an exchange of civilian populations was agreed as a condition for the ending of hostilities for a conflict that was begun with the outbreak of the First World War. Across Europe civilians were closer to industrial warfare than ever before.

This question maintains its relevance even a century on. How do British visitors to the Western Front and conceive the very individuals that they have ventured to

commemorate? As triumphant soldiers, innocent civilians, or something more ambiguous? The First World War first exposed this uncertainty, in Britain at least, and the way in which the British people view the members of the armed forces today is still influenced by these developments. The nation's views on the soldiers that serve them are an important aspect of civil-military relations as a whole, and in tracing the path of this relationship from the First World War to contemporary Britain, this has significantly changed.

The role of the British Armed Forces changed with the First World War, and for much of the twentieth century with the Second World War, the Cold War and the occupation of Germany, the armed forces maintained, at least in the eye of the public, a position of clear defence of the nation (Strachan 2003, p.45). It was not until the 1990s that the British found themselves wanting for a clear role in home defence or in Western Europe with the end of the Cold War. Their major arenas of operation were once again far flung, much like the global reach of the British Empire in 1914, but as a contributor to the United Nations Security Council rather than the head of an empire (Strachan 2003, p.46). Additionally, the armed forces were forced into the adaptation of a low profile at home by a significant threat of terrorist action from the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the 1980s. Military establishments kept their doors closed to visitors and increased security during that period created both cultural and physical barriers between the armed forces and the citizens they defend (Strachan 2003, p.47). Similarly, military personnel were ordered not to wear their uniform in public which remained in place until 1998 (Strachan 2003, p. 46; Whetham 2017, p.189). These factors combined, enforced a low social profile for the armed services in the public eye. However, moving into the next decade, their re-emergence into public consciousness was met with problems.

In the mid-2000s there was a growing atmosphere of criticism surrounding the armed forces in Britain, with the UK's involvement in conflicts in Afghanistan (starting in 2001) and the Second Iraq War in 2003 proving unpopular with the general public (Wetham 2017, pp.187-190; Clarke 2023, p.86). Following the entry of Britain into the Second Iraq War, there was a global coordinated day of protests, held on 15 February 2003, in which many cities in the UK took part. With more than 600 cities globally holding protests, these demonstrations were described as the 'largest protest event in human history' (Walgrave &

Rucht 2010, p.xiii). In London the turnout was over 750,000, making it the largest protest London had ever witnessed (Whetham 2017, p.189).

Although this popular mood of criticism of the armed forces did ease slightly from approximately 2007, concern remained that unpopular government policy, especially in regard to Iraq, had caused public support for the armed forces to be damaged (Clarke 2023, p.86). This results from the demands of contemporary conflicts, in which many leaders have acknowledged the fact that victory, in a simple sense, is not necessarily a realistic goal. These same leaders have proven ineffective in explaining how an objective that 'fall far short of this rather archaic concept can still be considered a goal worth losing blood and treasure fighting for' (Whetham 2017, p.176). These conflicts do not demand the defence of the public's homeland and are not associated with an obvious and imminent threat. As the military continue to become a smaller and smaller percentage of the population, a disconnect becomes more likely and these factors just compound that issue (Whetham 2017, p.176). The Ministry of Defence recognised the damaged relationship in an official publication stating that 'cohesion between what is referred to as the Clausewitzian trinity of Government, Armed Forces and Society, has been weakened by misunderstanding over the UK's involvement in unpopular conflicts, and the absence of an existential threat' (Ministry of Defence 2011, p.10, Whetham 2017, p.190).

Additionally, this disparity was acknowledged in the major re-design of the National Army Museum, London (NAM) and its permanent exhibit in the 2010s. David Clarke (2023, p.86) has suggested that in shifting its focus towards an 'engagement with the politics of the Army and its public image' (Bates 2018, p.200), the NAM is recognising and responding to the context of a perceived strain on civil-military relations. Clarke (2023, pp.98-9) argues for the potential of army museums to move beyond a mode of 'simply offering opportunities for the bolstering of national identity', instead becoming spaces in which the nexus of the civil-military relationship, with both institution and soldier, can be explored. Through this argument, the desire of the NAM to encourage its civilian visitors to better consider their role as they see it, as an instrument of civilians, is clearly shown. As Clarke (2023, p.89) suggests, the museum consistently focuses on 'persuading civilians of their responsibility not only for deploying the army, but also for reflecting on their own relationship to it.'

Another key development of the civil-military relations is not just between the public and the armed forces but between society and the soldiers themselves. Whilst the public may have become disconnected with the military at large, they still demonstrated a touching reverence to the fallen soldiers themselves. This was demonstrated most famously in the small English town of Royal Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire. David Whetham's (2017) article unpicks the phenomenon that emerged in the town after a shift in the RAF base used for the repatriation of fallen British soldiers from both Iraq and Afghanistan in 2007. In this town, as the bodies of the fallen soldiers were taken through, citizens began to congregate at the known time of the passing through of a repatriated soldier (Whetham 2017, p.177). This display of reverence gradually grew in profile, attracting visitors such as the 'massed motorbikes of the Royal British Legion Riders Branch' (Whetham 2017, p.178). The ceremonies and the town itself attracted significant media attention and became known nationally. These displays exhibited that whilst a sentiment of frustration, or discontent may still have been present for the armed forces as a whole, public attitudes towards those who were sent to fight it had definitely softened (Whetham 2017, p.189).

In a similar period, the development of the UK charity for military veterans, Help for Heroes, had a marked effect on the common perceptions of the military, with its new organisational discourse. The charity was established in 2007, which as mentioned earlier, was a time when there was a considerable strain on the civil-military relationship in the UK. Yet the charity raised £674,000 in its first year, growing to £46.7m in 2011 (Whetham 2017 p.189). The charity utilised institutions such as the media, politicians and the Monarchy, as well as influential celebrities in their sustained transmission of their dualistic discourse, encouraging a 'widespread public acceptance of military veterans as a valid focus of social benevolence' (Thompson 2018, p.39).

Certain approaches and personalities and were targeted at specific audiences, for example supporters such as General Lord Dannat and Lady Victoria Leatham appealed to the professional officers class, whereas popular figures such as Ross Kemp and Andy McNabb were more suited to influencing the 'mass market' (Thompson 2018, p.38). Similarly, Help for Heroes appealed to the 'professional class' in *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Times* (Thompson 2018, p.38). There were figures that crossed these boundaries such as Prince

William and Prince Harry, as well as Jeremy Clarkson and James Blunt. These individuals were seen to appeal to both professional markets and the masses (Thompson 2018, p.39).

In the 10 years following its creation the charity played a key role in the re-working of the image of military veterans in the UK, which served to further allow the British public to separate the bravery of their soldiers from the sins of those who command them. Gareth Thompson (2018, pp.25-6) argues that the organisational discourse and dualistic approach of Help for Heroes contributed significantly 'to the emergence of a new orthodoxy of veterans as heroes, and that this discursive legacy (Coy et al 2008, p.61) permeated society to exist as part of a wider metanarrative.' They achieved this with the combination of distinctive visual symbols and accepted rhetoric with 'synchronicity with societal supra-discourses on veterans' (Thompson 2018, p.39). The dualistic approach allowed the Help for Heroes message to 'cut through political affiliations, anti-war sentiment, social class and media consumption patterns', facilitating its wide and deep distribution (Thompson 2018, p.39).

Commemoration of war and soldiers in the UK reflects these sentiments. A new memorialisation wave in the UK 'exposes the pluralisation of memorial practices and identities of fallen soldiers' (Danilova 2015, p.83). This pluralisation recognises the importance of the individual in 'the well being of the nation', and in this way, leans towards a sympathetic view to all that have felt the affects of war, veterans and bereaved families alike (Danilova 2015, p.83). Members of the armed forces that have fallen in campaigns from the 2000s and 2010s are recorded as either 'soldiers killed on duty' or the 'glorious dead'. Both the utilisation of this language and the physical inclusion of their names on First World War memorials serve to integrate their experiences of war with the national tradition of war commemoration (Danilova 2015, p.83). Danilova (2015, p.113) identifies a significant 'continuity in the ritual and meaning of commemorative ceremonies in the UK.' Just as civilians were reminded of their commitment to the 'glorious dead' of the First World War in the 1920s, Armistice Day continues to represent a 'moral obligation to remember the fallen of wars, share national values and support the armed forces' in contemporary Britain (Danilova 2015, p.113). Encouraging society to commemorate the fallen in this manner encourages a separation of the participants of the conflict and its cause, allowing for a supportive stance towards the British armed forces (Danilova 2015, pp.113-114).

This framing of civil-military relations in Britain is an important lens to consider when looking at how visitors in Tyne Cot are considering the fallen soldiers before them. The ways in which they view and understand the roles of soldiers of today will likely influence their reflections on the soldiers of the past. Their interpretations of the site reflect the British public's reverence for the soldiers themselves in the face of critical perspectives on the politicians who ultimately send them to war. Nevertheless, this perspective is complicated at Tyne Cot by the role of civilians in the armed forces during the First World War, as opposed to the professional structure we know today.

5.4 Remembrance in Tyne Cot Cemetery

5.4.1 Presentation and History of Tyne Cot

Tyne Cot Cemetery, positioned 9km to the west of the town of Ypres, is the largest Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemetery in the world. The cemetery contains 11956 graves, 8300 of which are unidentified, according to the information boards at the site in September 2022. This sets Tyne Cot apart from other large CWGC cemeteries such as Etaples (almost 11000 graves) and Lijssenthoek (almost 11000 graves) which, as sites of former large field hospitals, are able to identify the majority of their burials, recording them as they fell (C. Winter 2015, p.20). Where these sites were built out from a specific source, Tyne Cot was formed by the centralisation of field burials throughout the region after 16 August 1917 (C. Winter 2015, p.20). As remains are discovered with the passage of time more graves have been added to Tyne Cot. As shown in November 2021, when nine British soldiers of the 11th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers were laid to rest with full military honours, after losing their lives in the First World War, more than a century ago (Drummond 2021). Due to burials such as this the number of those interred at Tyne Cot has slowly grown since its opening in 1927.

The architect, Sir Herbert Baker, drew on the conventions of English collegial and ecclesiastical architecture, stating that he wished for the cemetery to resemble a 'well-ordered English churchyard' (Edwards 2018, p.262). The Poplar and Yew trees breaking up the Portland stone headstones help achieve this aesthetic, which is typical of CWGC cemeteries. The design philosophy of the CWGC desired to replicate an English garden with

neat and ordered headstones. It was intended that 'the restfulness of grass and the brightness of flowers in fitting combination would appear to strike the proper note of brightness and life' (Kenyon 1918, p.12). As Frederick Kenyon, the author of the 1918 Kenyon Report that informed much of the initial workings and designs of the then Imperial War Graves Commission, the ordered headstones give 'the appearance of a battalion on parade' (Kenyon 1918, p.8).

The overwhelming sea of gravestones are arranged around the central Cross of Sacrifice, which was placed, at the suggestion of King George V, in place of the German blockhouse that was present at the site (Edwards 2018, p.262). As can be seen in the picture below (Figure 9), the headstones below and to the sides of the Cross of Sacrifice are ordered in rectangular, regimented groups, with the central path looking out through the archway towards the town of Ypres. Immediately surrounding the Cross of Sacrifice itself is a smattering of headstones that are not organised as coherently. These were some of the original graves that were placed at the dressing station during the conflict, that served as the foundation for the larger project that became the Tyne Cot cemetery we know today. There are even a small number of burials in the cemetery of individuals that do not belong to any of the commonwealth nations. There are four German burials at Tyne Cot, three of which are unknown, with one identified grave. These graves stand close to the Cross of Sacrifice, as they were part of the original burial site. Above the Cross sits the Stone of Remembrance, which unlike the omnipresent Cross of Sacrifice, can only be found in cemeteries that contain 1000 or more graves. Then there are the semi-circle of again ordered graves at the top of the site, that point their focus to the original burials at the centre of the cemetery. These headstones are backed by the striking Tyne Cot Memorial, which consists of two long walls, bisected by the cemetery car-park entrance that display the names of 34,857 (according to the information boards at the site) fallen soldiers in the area who have no known grave. The organisation of the cemetery is recorded and publicly available, in order to aid the public in the locating of the graves or memorialisation of family members, or any particular individual. Each section of headstones and each panel on the memorial wall is assigned an identifying number, and a number of the tourists that were interviewed for this

project were utilising these numbers to find the memorialisation of a particular individual during their visit.



Figure 9 – Photograph of Tyne Cot Cemetery - <https://oldfrontline.co.uk/2020/08/08/flanders-tyne-cot/>

5.4.2 Cemetery Design

Not only is Tyne Cot the largest, but it is also the most well-known CWGC cemetery in the world. Its proximity to Ypres, which is one of, if not the, predominant centres of British remembrance for the First World War and its significant presence in tourist advertising materials contribute to this visibility (Winter 2015, p.20). Guided tours will not fail to include Tyne Cot in their itinerary and there is a bus route that connects the centre of Ypres to a stop that is a five-minute walk away from the cemetery. Therefore, Tyne Cot is immediately accessible for most tourists that visit Ypres. By design, Tyne Cot is consistent with other CWGC sites in both form and function; however it is this size, scale and accessibility that have secured its central place in the commemorative landscape of the region.

As Lemay (2018, p.160) states ‘war cemeteries have endured to become among the most symbolic of war’s costs.’ They are the medium of remembrance that makes the scale of loss most readily apparent. Each headstone planted in the ground, each name on the wall, despite their numbers, represents an individual. This combination of scale and individuality allows these sites to reflect ‘the sacrifices made by an entire generation, by individuals and the nations and empires they represented’ (C. Winter 2011, p.462). Through this

combination of scale and individualization, it was the CWGC that 'established the architecture, language and landscape of remembrance which were to become ubiquitous symbols' for society in post-war Britain. The landscaped gardens that housed Stones of Remembrance, Crosses of Sacrifice, and most importantly, the Portland stone headstones carry great symbolic meaning in British culture (Bushaway, 1992, p.144).

The Cross of Sacrifice and the Stone of Remembrance are the two features that stand out from the ranks of headstones in any large Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries (all cemeteries have a Cross of Sacrifice). The Cross of Sacrifice, designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield, takes the form of a large stone cross, often mounted on an octagonal multi-level platform in order to raise it above the rest of the cemetery. Bronze longwords are mounted to the front and sometimes the back of the cross. The symbol of the cross has its own religious connotations; however, the Commission were keen to keep its interpretation somewhat subjective. Sir Fabian Ware, the founder of the CWGC suggested that the Cross of Sacrifice's symbolism can be 'open to various interpretations; to some the sword is itself the cross and the stonework merely the frame, to others the sword symbolises [...] all those who perished by the sword. [...] For all who accept the cross seem to have found in it something which responds to their feelings' (Ware 1924, p.347). In its very name the Cross of Sacrifice highlights the concept of sacrifice, rather than the idea of patriotism (Barlow 2013, p.316). Sacrifice has proven to be a permanent fixture in the British remembrance culture for the First World War.

The Stone of Remembrance, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, the architect of the ominous Cenotaph in Whitehall, was intended to provide a focal point for the commemoration of 'all faiths and none'. Where others focused on Christian religious symbolism, Lutyens favoured a more abstract approach (Summers 2010, p.25). Again, made of Portland Stone, in the same fashion as the headstones, the Stone of Remembrance's form is physically large, 3.5 metres long and 1.5 metres tall, sitting on a platform with three small steps (cwgc.org). Each stone is inscribed with the same message: "Their name liveth for evermore". The Stone of Remembrance is meant to act as the 'unifying symbol for the cemeteries [...] its purpose was to provide for all but the smallest cemeteries a single point of focus monumental enough to embody all those commemorated in the cemetery' (Barlow 2013, p.321). The Stone of Remembrance, in its role as a 'unifying symbol' can connect with

many forms of religious feeling. As Kenyon (1918, p.10) stated, '[t]o some it would merely be a memorial stone [...] to others it could be an altar, one of the most ancient and general of religious symbols.' It has since been argued by George L. Mosse (1990, p.84) that the Stone of Remembrance, which was sometimes referred to simply as "the altar", can be seen to confer a religious significance, equal to that of the Cross of Sacrifice. With this, he suggests that, by design the CWGC cemeteries 'brought to life the link between the fallen and Christian sacrifice with its hope of resurrection' (Mosse 199, p.84). The IWGC designers at the time did not invent these myths about the war, however, what they achieved was the 'cultural spaces in which they took on their most persuasive physical and permanent expression' (Crane 2013, p.130).

5.4.3 Remembering Individuals

Individuality or the role of the individual is an issue that has always been at the forefront for the CWGC. From facing accusations of repressing the commemoration of individuals domestically in the immediate aftermath of the war, the CWGC is celebrated today as the war graves organisation that most identifies and distinguishes the individuals whose memory it tends. Whilst the CWGC's main aims were to establish a form of collective remembrance with its cemeteries, it is their considerations for bereaved families during the design process that has given them this lasting image.

The characteristic that sets Tyne Cot and all CWGC cemeteries apart is the preservation of the memory of individual soldiers, allowing inscriptions chosen by the families on the headstones, for a fee (Lemay 2018, p.163; Jones 2007, p.9). This aided their purpose as focal points for commemoration, just as Kenyon laid it out in his formative report: 'the individual headstone, marking the individual grave, will serve as centre and focus of the emotions of the relatives who visit it' (Kenyon 1918, p.8). Whereas American headstones only display national signifiers, and the French and German dedications only declare the date of both birth and death of the fallen, CWGC headstones include each individual's regimental badge, name, rank, regiment, date of death and, as mentioned earlier, sometimes a short inscription chosen by the family (Longworth 1967, p.33; Lemay 2018, p.163). It was decided that the individual graves 'must also meet the wishes of the

relatives who want to focus their emotions on one person and not on a whole army' (Geurst 2010, p.42).

These characteristics were rooted in the early decisions made by the founding members of the CWGC during the late stage of and immediately after the First World War. One of the first decisions the Commission made was no to repatriate the bodies of the fallen soldiers. It was decided that the fallen should be buried as they fell, with their comrades without distinction of rank or race. This was part of the CWGC's effort to present a 'solid and united effort of the whole British Empire without distinction of race or colour or creed, fused and welded into one, ready to die, and dying in common for the great cause that all understood' (CWGC/1/1/5/20)³. In Kenyon's (1918, p.7) report he stated that:

The sacrifice of the individual is a great idea and worthy of commemoration; but the community of sacrifice, the service of a common cause, the comradeship of arms which has brought together men of all ranks and grades – these are greater ideas, which should be commemorated in those cemeteries where they lie together, the representatives of their country in the land in which they served.

There was a distinct effort in the Commission to use this collective to demonstrate the unity and resolution of the British Empire in the face of war and struggle, as demonstrated in this document from the CWGC archive based at their headquarters in Maidenhead, which details the selection process for the headstones (CWGC/1/1/5/19):

The object of the commission is to represent, in a foreign land and to future generations, the whole British Empire joining as one great unit to defend by arms, and if necessary to die for, the freedom of nations and the freedom of man [...].

So in years to come, as travellers from all nations move from cemetery to cemetery the impression of this ideal will be cumulative in its effect, and will tell the world with simple but overpowering force the story of the unity and devotion of the British Empire.

³ This is the naming scheme that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission uses for its archive and is the most succinct and easily recognisable way of referencing the documents. The numbers denote the respective categories of the CWGC Archive catalogue. Many of its documents can be accessed online, but many more can only be accessed at the archive in Maidenhead.

The CWGC had a clear objective, utilising the fallen soldiers as a collective, as a mythic ideal of the British Empire and the 'freedom of nations and the freedom of man' that would 'bear a message to future generations as long as the stone of which they are constructed endures' (Ware 1924, p.353).

These decisions were initially met with backlash in Britain from those who felt they had been denied that chance to properly grieve for and commemorate their loved ones. This caused tension between the Commission as an actor of the state and the individual family (Oliver 2012, p.115). This opposition was likely most significantly propagated, especially in the public sphere, by wealthy families who could have afforded to have given their loved ones more ornate or bespoke burial circumstances. There were a number of mentions of people's displeasure in the newspaper *The Times* (1919 & Mckenna 1918):

13 November 1918 – 'The views of the Commission[...] are all admirable and right. But when one learns from the official statement how these ideals are to be carried out, I can only express my deepest repugnance.'

'The result I say will be terrible. It will convert what should be beautiful resting places for loved and honoured dead into dreary expanses of unlovely headstones, and will make these military burial places a blot on the countryside.'

18 December 1919 – But it is equally surely repugnant to British feeling that even in death the family should surrender all rights over to the individual to the state, and that private memorials should therefore be prohibited.

It was these concerns in Britain that ensured that the CWGC would allow those elements of individuality to the headstones, which today sets them apart from their national contemporaries. However, they still remain innately a collective tool used by the state to guide commemoration. In such a large cemetery as Tyne Cot, the scale of the collective is truly on show. Understanding why the CWGC have chosen the form they have and what they are trying to portray is an important framing for the visitor experiences, even over 100 years on. As Bushaway (1992, p.144) suggests, these sites established the 'architecture, language and landscape of remembrance' that persist into contemporary views on the First World War. This landscape of remembrance is one that frames its fallen soldiers as sacrificed citizens that gave their lives for the nation and the Empire.

This aspect of individuality highlights the presence of the balance between civilian and soldier that the IWGC established in the aftermath of the conflict. Their desire to establish the war graves as a uniform, collective reminder of the sacrifice of the British Empire was balanced with the novel complications of a massive army primarily comprised of civilians. Society demanded representation, these civilian soldiers were to be individually recognised and commemorated for the first time in the nation's history. As a result, the line between civilian and military becomes blurred. These graves are both individual memorials for civilians, and a political tool of remembrance for the military and the state. As the contribution of the civilian population became integral to the military functionality of the state, so too did their needs in the aftermath. As armed forces have again become smaller professional entities during the twentieth and twenty-first century, especially in Britain, the traditional lines of definition have re-emerged. The ways in which the public view the individual soldiers that serve their country has become an important aspect of civil-military relations today. Therefore, as I will show in the analysis of the fieldwork interviews conducted at the site, the combination of the emergence of this issue in the First World War and the importance placed on it today by the modern armed forces is a lens through which the visitors are interpreting the role of the soldiers interred beneath their feet.

5.4.4 Tyne Cot as a Live Site

As shown earlier, the cultural, collective and individual memory that war cemeteries such as Tyne Cot hold, reflect or embody is constantly renewed and re-shaped by the commemorative acts and rituals taking place at these sites. Despite the fact that the site appears quite literally to 'set in stone' the meaning of the deaths of the individuals commemorated there, that meaning undergoes a constant process of renegotiation through the practice of visitors. Circumstances change for people around the world, especially over the course of a century. Additionally, the cemetery itself has changed, the construction of a new Visitors Centre in 2007 brings with it new perspectives and additional facets to the visitor experience.

The building work for the new Tyne Cot visitors centre was completed in 2006, but it was not until 12 July 2007, that the display was officially opened by Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom and Queen Paola of Belgium on 12 July 2007 in a ceremony that was part of the build up to the 90th anniversary of the battle of Passchendaele (Dawe 2007). The need for a Visitors Centre was prompted by the dramatic growth in visitation to the Ypres Salient and Tyne Cot itself in the late 1990s. The problem of large numbers of coaches parked near the front gate, meant that a dedicated car park for the cemetery, with a Visitors Centre needed to be built (Greatwar.co.uk).

The Visitors Centre is a dark grey building with displays in the centre of the room and the walls, apart from the wall looking down the slope towards Ypres itself, which instead is comprised of floor to ceiling windows. This allows for a panoramic view of the battleground, as the *Sunday Express* correspondent R. Ford (2007) stated 'On one side, the spire of Ypres cathedral; on the other, that of Passchendaele church. I could walk between them in a couple of hours.' The display panels, video and items on display in the Visitors Centre explain the history of this area of the battlefield, for the men on both sides of the conflict that gave their lives. As the visitors walk to and from the building, positioned to the side of the cemetery, they will hear names spoken by a female voice continuously, every few seconds. These are the name of the near 35000 names of the soldiers inscribed on the Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing (Greatwar.co.uk).

An important facet to the new Visitors Centre is that it was designed by the Director of the Passchendaele Museum, Franky Bostyn, and is maintained by that museum's team, not by the CWGC (Barber 2007, Passchendaele.be). The Visitors Centre presence on the site intrinsically integrates it into the Tyne Cot experience as a whole. Visitors to the site have another facet to their experience that will impact their interpretation, recollection and ultimately memory of the cemetery. Yet the Visitors centre, with its placement and alternative form of information, serves to provide context to the visitor and frame their experience of Tyne Cot. Being next to the car park, the Visitors Centre can easily be seen as the first stop on the experience by visitors.

The Passchendaele Museum team have clearly made an effort to again highlight the importance and gravity of each individual loss. The calling out of the names of the fallen and the displays of individual stories and artifacts again direct the focus to those individuals. This

in effect, primes the visitors to consider the individuality of each grave, each inscription, rather than their power as a collective. Individuality was a concern of the IWGC during the construction of Tyne Cot, but also the wider infrastructure of British memorialisation of the First World War. However, as will be explored in the following section, the CWGC maintained the importance of the fallen as a collective, just as the Cult of the Fallen Soldier did in Germany at the time. Clearly the ideals of the founders of the IWGC in the late 1910s and in the 1920s differ from those at the Passchendaele Museum today. The combination of these views impacts every visitor experience at Tyne Cot, and it shows in no uncertain terms that the meaning of sites can change over time. The philosophy of the CWGC has inevitably changed over time and by working with other agents of memory, they have allowed through a material change, a shift in the way visitors may view the symbolism and myth that they continue to uphold.

This in essence is Jay Winter's (2022) concept of a transnational site of memory in action. He states that 'transnational sites are those which were constructed or designated as significant by people from different places or different states, who worked together to represent the past from a transnational perspective' (Winter 2022a, p.195). It could be argued that the initial construction of the cemetery, despite being carried out abroad, was done so by the inherently national CWGC, and as a result the site is a stronger example of extra-territorial heritage than it is a transnational site of memory for many British visitors. However, Tyne Cot contains burials of soldiers from throughout the commonwealth, as well as four German graves. Additionally, the design and maintenance of the Visitors Centre by the staff of the Passchendaele Museum fulfils Winter's (2022, p.195) definition explicitly. This development at Tyne Cot has actively shaped the site to be more transnational in nature, due to the international contributions.

Just as the site of Tyne Cot can change, so does the world around it, affecting how people may interpret its messaging, view its symbolic mainstays, or experience its atmosphere. As Hanna Smyth explores in her 2019 contribution, titled 'Identity and memory at First World War British Imperial Memorials on the Western Front', traditional dichotomies of individual-collective and national-imperial are not clear cut at the CWGC memorials across the Western Front. India, South Africa, Canada and Australia have incorporated parts of their once British imperial identities within their own national self-conceptions and in

their memorial practice (Smyth 2019, p.181). However, there were inherent complications between the IWGC and the Dominion representatives of the time. Behind the unity that these memorials project lay disjunctions in nations identities that were often a direct result of the war, in one way or another (Smyth 2019, p.181). Thus, these remembrance sites across the Western Front, have 'significant representations of multiple identities, with complex and shifting relationships' (Smyth 2019, p.181). For example, there have been frequent clashes of opinion between the UK and South Africa as to who should be commemorated and how this should be executed (Baines 2019, p. 41). As a result, these cemeteries and memorials represent varied meanings, reflecting different memories or aspects of grief. These relationships can also change over time, as individuals' relationship with their own national identity changes, as their attitudes to their nation's imperial past changes.

Another frame that is constantly changing is not only the individual's relationship with their nation, but with their military. Military cemeteries undoubtedly have an element of civil-military relations, and this is a relationship like any other, its changes and shifts over time. This very shift in Britain in the 2000s and 2010s has been explored above. As will be argued in this chapter, this relationship and the ways its framings shift impact British tourist experiences at Tyne cot.

Through the changes to the cemetery itself, and the public's understanding of its role, and relationship to British memorial culture, Tyne Cot has experienced a series of overlapping interpretations and understandings; in other words, social framings, such as those proposed by Halbwachs (1992). He highlighted the importance of social framings on the memories of individuals, stating that '[i]t is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognise, and localise their memories' (1992, p.38). As such, memory is formed according to social framings in which an individual experiences their life; the groups to which an individual belongs are significant factors in 'even the most apparently individual remembering' (Olick et al. 2011, p.18). As a result, for Halbwachs (1992), studying memory is more an exercise in identifying the shifts of social framings than reflecting on 'inherent properties of the subjective mind' (Olick et al. 2011, p.18).

These changes at Tyne Cot represent a series of overlapping social frames that have continued to imbue Tyne Cot with a forever evolving palimpsest of historical interpretations. These framings layer with the intended messaging of the designers and the meaning imbued by the emergence of remembrance culture at the time. As a live site, new social framings are a certainty, and priorities are changing, politically and socially constantly. Resultantly, so is the visitor experience.

5.5 Visitor Experiences at Tyne Cot Cemetery

5.5.1 Visitor Motivations

Visitor motivations have been a much-discussed topic in studies of battlefield tourism and in the fields of Memory Studies, Tourism Studies and Heritage Studies. The tourist-pilgrim dichotomy, that was born immediately following the First World War, has been the lens through which visitor motivations to the Western Front have been primarily understood. As time has moved on and the clear distinctions between the two groups have eroded, scholars such as C. Winter (2008, p.608) have suggested that this distinction is no longer productive, and that these roles now occupy the same role in the performative maintenance of memory. Similarly, in the field of dark tourism, the question of tourist motivation has been at the forefront of academic discussion. The study of visitor motivation in this field is significant enough to earn its own name, the 'demand' perspective, which has been seen in opposition to the predominant 'supply' approach that emphasises the importance of the sites themselves (Biran et al 2011, pp.821-822). This chapter will not attempt to divide its participants into tourists and pilgrims, nor will it attempt to compare the merits of the two aforementioned approaches in dark tourism in the case of Tyne Cot. However, it will draw on the vast literatures that surround these debates in order to best analyse the visitor motivations.

Therefore, understanding visitor motivations, much like in the In Flanders Fields Museum in the previous chapter, is a key facet for the understanding and analysis of the wider visitor experience. In the case of a cemetery where ancestors of these visitors may potentially be buried or represented in memorial, these motivations can be far more intense

and emotional than at other sites. Respondents at Tyne Cot in general displayed a higher degree of emotionality in their connection to the First World War in their responses as a whole compared to those in the Museum.

Understanding the importance of emotion in the visitor experiences at heritage sites has been pioneered by Laurajane Smith (2006; 2014; 2021). Smith, as mentioned in the previous chapter, has built her arguments from the growing discussions in Heritage Tourism wherein the ability of tourists at heritage sites to interact and negotiate meaning is being recognised; much like the developments of Memory Studies, in which visitors have become active participants in the forming of memory. Smith (2014, p.125) has identified that sites of heritage, such as Tyne Cot, are 'places where people go to feel, to be emotional' and that in embracing the emotional aspects of the visitor experience, research can move beyond a limited paradigm that practises learning/recreational experiences. As such, the concept of affective practice has been developed by Wetherell (2012; 2013) and Smith (2021; Wetherell et al. 2018). This approach is based on the position that emotion and affect impact the way in which people experience and interpret the world around them (Wetherell 2013, p.351). Where the term 'affect' refers to the 'embodied and initial registering of events', the term 'emotion' refers instead to 'the processing of affect into cultural and linguistic categories' such as joy, anger and fear (Smith 2021, p.55). Importantly as well emotions are not experienced in isolation, they have consequences not just for the self, 'but occur in relation to culturally situated others, and it is this tension that ignites emotions with an 'energy' that motivates and underpins social actions and relationships' (Smith 2021, p.55). Therefore, feelings and emotions are important aspects of the visitor experience for each individual and the groups that they constitute. It is often when discussing their connection with the conflict, and their motivations for participating in remembrance, when the visitors most expressed their strong emotions.

How then, specifically, will the visitors' emotions or emotionality at sites be understood? Smith (2021, pp.66-7) explicitly aims to analyse her research participants as independent beings, actively participating in but not defined by the practices or performances they are contributing to, that have been defined by the museum or heritage professionals at these sites. She attempts to focus on 'what individually and collectively visitors are *doing* and how they emotionally invest in the meanings constructed by their

visit' (Smith 2021, p.65). In order to do drill down on the emotional and affective aspects of the tourist experience, Smith (2021, p.66) defines registers of engagement as aspects of the response through which it is best to understand emotional and affective responses. Firstly, intensity; both significant and low levels of intensity can demonstrate emotionality. Secondly, valence; whether the visitors' experiences of the site affirmed positive or negative, whether it prompted good or bad emotions, or if it was simply an ambivalent or neutral process (Smith 2021, p.66). Third is the unavoidable 'tensions between conservative versus progressive/liberal social and political values' (Smith 2021, p.66). This register helps the identification and exploration of heritage performance and its consequences, that are prompted by the very engagement of its visitors. Affective and emotional responses, each with a unique combination of valence and intensities, 'underlay all forms and registers of engagement' (Smith 2021, p.68). These registers, the emotionality or affective nature of a research participants words, are not 'derived against an arbitrary scale, but were all measured *relatively* within the range of engagements' in the dataset (Smith 2021, p.5). Just as Smith defines her registers of engagement and emotionality in relation to the dataset, so too will this study.

The first question that the participants were asked related to their motivations for visiting. They were asked: To what extent would you say you feel a personal connection to the First World War? Just as at the In Flanders Fields Museum, this question was intended to prompt the respondents to reflect on their connection to the conflict and what brought them to Tyne Cot. In some cases, brief follow-up questions were used to focus in on the motivational aspect. The responses to this question can be categorised into the same four groups: Familial connection, historical interest, national duty and accompaniment of a spouse, friend or family member.

	Family Connection	Historical Interest	National Duty	Accompanying Another Respondent
No. of Participants	18	10	6	2

Figure 10 – Table of responses to questions for visitor motivation - Many participants represented more than one of these categories, therefore there are more indicated responses here than there were participants at Tyne Cot

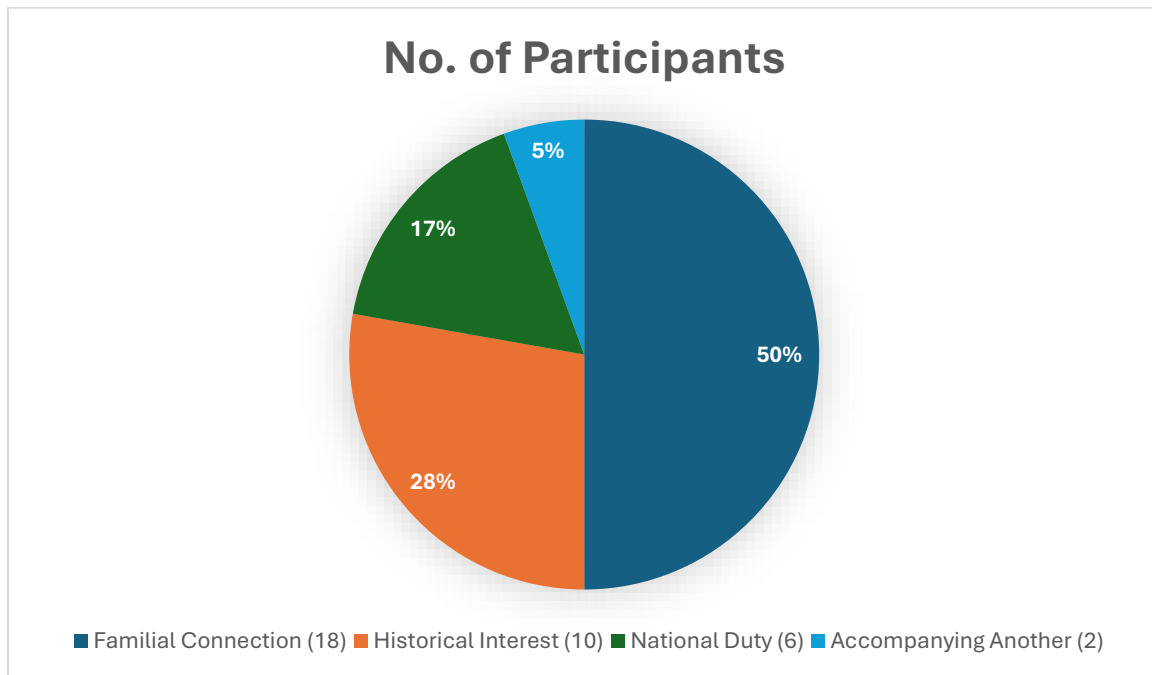


Figure 11 – Pie Chart for responses to questions on visitor motivation

Familial Connection was the most common visitor motivation that was identified among the researcher participants. With 50% of the responses, it was identified 18 times. Historical interest was the second largest group with 10 responses, accounting for 28%, followed by National Duty with 6 responses, or 17%, with the 2 accompanying respondents constituting the final 5% of the participants.

However, it is important to once again highlight a number of the same understandings that were established for visitors' motivations at the In Flanders Fields Museum. Namely, the importance of avoiding the homogenisation of motivations in the process of categorising them. Earlier, this study traced Todman's (2005) generational road map of the British people's changing relationship with the First World War. The research participants varied significantly in age, and as a result having significantly different relationships with the First World War and their potential ancestors who may have fought and died in the conflict. For example, some respondents were able to identify a distant family member who fought or died during the conflict, but displayed little emotional connection. In contrast, there were also respondents who displayed a deep emotional

connection to their family's involvement in the war and the individuals who perished (Interview 70):

Great Uncle Joe... Yeah, we used to have his picture on the mantle piece in a frame... they don't discuss it. He'd lost his brother. My granddad. I've actually got... his wallet here. I brought a picture of my grandfather. Yeah. And that's my sister and me. So I wanted to bring his brother back to him, where he's buried. 'Cause he never just had the chance to say goodbye did he? But I kept his wallet.

Therefore, whilst categorising these responses is useful, considering each respondent's views as a unique insight is just as important.

This range of intensity and emotionality was present throughout the sample. One participant simply stated that they were aware that they had family on both sides that served, with a English father and a German mother without identifying anyone in particular, and they went on to equivocate their historical and familial interest; 'So it's just, but again. It's just having that interest' (Interview 83). However, the respondents at Tyne Cot who identified familial connection as their primary motivator felt very connected to the conflict by this link, often with stories of individuals that fell, or specific memorials to see. As two participants stated (Interview 85):

Participant 1: I have relatives that I know died in the First World War

Participant 2: We've done some research and we have found where relatives are and where their memorials are, so we've gone to see those as well.

Similarly, another respondent was actively searching Tyne Cot cemetery for the grave of his great uncle when they spoke about their experiences (Interview 70). Another respondent mentioned that their great uncle was on the Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing, and that they felt a distinct connection to the conflict through this (Interview 44). Others could identify multiple family members who fought and died, again visiting their specific memorialisations (Interview 75):

Oh, very, uh, uh, um, I'm of an age where I don't suppose many people are, but my, my grandparents were in the trenches, so seven members of our family were in the

trenches and only four of 'em never came back. So yeah, we've visited the war graves of, of my great uncles.

Both my granddads were in trenches, so it's the first of all, war is very close to our family.

Another group of respondents that displayed an intense emotional connection almost across the board was the group that identified National Duty as one of their motivations. One participant identified the overall effect of the First World War on society and its impact of Britain and British Identity (Interview 76):

Researcher: To what extent do you guys feel a personal connection to the First World War?

Participant: Yeah, because it, what happened during the First World War had a huge knock on effect... on British, British identity.

This was the only response in this category where there was not an aspect of emotionality attached to the response by the participants. The rest had elements, both national and often a mix of national and familial that drove the emotional nature of their connection to the conflict and reasoning for visiting Tyne Cot. One pair of respondents identified a national connection and a specific feeling of duty towards the individuals that fought and died in the conflict and a desire to thank them for their sacrifice (Interview 74):

Participant 1: So there is that connection, the Scottish connection, but...

Participant 2: I feel we owe so much to the people that died in the First World War and the Second World War, that, um, you need to just say thank you really.

That's what I feel anyway... and, um this is just something we wanted to do just to say [thank you].

Identifying emotionality in the responses is derived from a mixture of the recognition of words that suggest an emotional engagement and the considering the registers of engagement, as deployed by Smith (2021). Participant 2 in Interview 74, twice mentioned how they 'feel', which is a word related to affect. This, in combination with the intensity and valency, as described by Smith (2021, p.66), identify aspects of emotionality

in the participant responses. Judging the tone of the respondents and the subsequent registers of engagement is aided by the ability of the researcher not only to read the transcripts of the interviews, but to be able to listen to the recordings as well.

These respondents and their degree of emotionality are demonstrating the 'appropriate' affective and emotional responses at a site like Tyne Cot. Visitors to heritage sites make active choices about how and where they wish to express their emotions. This emotional management 'will be influenced by their personal, social, cultural and political contexts' (Zembylas 2018, p.197). As Smith (2021, p.59) states, social structures such as race, gender, age, class and so forth 'have consequences for the legitimacy and authenticity attributed to particular emotions and feelings and the affective practices they underwrite and inform.' The social structures at play for these responses are family and nation. These are the two primary structures through which the respondents conceptualise the First World War and identify their own connection with it. Therefore, strong emotions related to these structures are legitimised by these social groups and societies understanding of their interplay with the conflict. Smith (2021, p.243) specifically states that museums and heritage sites provide an arena that actively 'facilitates engagement with personal and collective memories of community and nation' as well as those of family. Tyne Cot is a space where visitors can 'feel' and embody these 'emotions that underpin and affirm those memories' (Smith 2021, p.243).

This emotion, in some cases here tied to service and national duty, is a 'critical aspect of [the] heritage performance', it becomes a key part of perpetuating remembrance being 'bound up with the legitimisation of identity, sense of place and belonging' (Augoustinos et al. 2018, p.107). National narratives are built on these emotional performances; 'national history and identity as objects are continually reconstructed through their everyday use as discursive resources and practices' and these visitors are demonstrating emotional discursive practice in an arena which highlights the national framing (Augoustinos et al. 2018, p.107).

All other respondents in the National Duty motivation group share a significant detail. All of them identified that they are ex-military and are part of a strong military family. Therefore, at times feeling of national duty and family overlapped. As a result, these

responses were amongst the most intense and emotionally charged motivations recorded in this study. For example one respondent stated (Interview 11):

Researcher: To what extent do you feel a personal connection to the First World War?

Participant: An incredible amount. Indeed. For one of my relatives names is just on the panel up here. Yeah. That's what I've come to see. Who share the same name as my dad. Yeah. Um, we lost Grandparents and Great Grandparents in the First World War, so Yeah, there's a, a real link.

Yeah. I'm ex Royal Air Force as well. So, um, yeah, we're a service family. My dad was a pilot. I was a pilot. My wife's dad is in the Army. Um, my grandpa was in the Navy, um, in first War and Second War. Yeah. So we've got a good, a good link. Yeah.

Another pair of respondents identified that these factors gave them an intense connection to the First World War (Interview 44):

Participant 1: Um, so yeah, a, a big connection and from a, a military family, generations of family have, have served our country and, um, I did myself for 32 years. So yeah, it's big, big connection

Participant 2: To me. It would be more where we come from, Ulster, 36th Ulster division.... We commemorate the battle of the Somme every year. Very, very important.

The respondents in interviews 11 and 44 clearly displayed a strong link between the importance of family, service and duty in their relationship with the First World War. However, another respondent from a similar background gave an answer with less intense aspects of family and duty, incorporating historical interest into their motivations as well (Interview 83):

Um, personally, uh, history. We're British, we're taught that at school, so, you know, and all about, you know, for those who gave their lives today, for our tomorrow, so, maybe that's what's. And my, my, you know, I'm fifth generation military, so Yeah, I suppose you are, but in some ways you're not. It's history.

In this response the themes of national duty and familial connection to both the First World War and duty and service are less intense, and they are supplemented with historical interest. This is again demonstrating that individuals can experience the same motivations but at different intensities at the same site. For the first two sets of respondents, duty and family were significant enough motivations to fully explain their connection, whereas the third respondent, who shared their qualifiers as 'fifth generation military' did not share their emotional intensity. Additionally, being ex-soldiers their relationship with the military and with the nation is markedly different from the lifelong civilians interviewed in this study. Individuals' relationship with soldiers and with the military is an important theme in this chapter, it is an important part of the way they perceive the soldiers interred beneath their feet and resultantly, the way they experience a war cemetery.

These two groups of respondents contained the responses that had the most intensity and emotions as would be expected. However, the frequency of these intense connections and motivations was much higher than at the other research site in this project. Additionally, the distribution was different, in that family connections were relatively more common at Tyne Cot than at the In Flanders Fields Museum. Whilst the change in intensity was expected by the researcher, the change in distribution was a surprise. The participants demonstrated that Tyne Cot provokes emotional responses, and that the site holds a level of significance to its visitors due to its form and function.

However, what retained its role throughout both research sites was the Historical Interest motivational factor. Whilst only represented explicitly here by 28% of the respondents, in both settings this factor was seen as an appropriate motivation in the absence of Familial Connection or a sense of National Duty. A common sentiment was shown in Interview 13:

Participant: Uh, very little. Yeah. Um, yeah, I have no relatives or anything, uh, that serve. In the First World War, and I don't know if it goes back that much. Um, I like to try and explore the, how it did affect people my age and stuff, and what it would've been like to serve with your brother or whatever like I have here.

But beyond that, not much. Not much.

Likewise, another respondent stated (Interview 68):

I think, uh, it's difficult. This is not the first time I've been here, so I've been to Tyne Cot lots of times. I've been to salient lots of times. Um, there's no real personal connection....

Um, although I say I've always been interested in history, military history in particular, and, um, I, I've been going on tours with Ledger Battlefield Tours for the 25 years since they first started. Um, and I started with the First World War and then moved to the Second World War. But my main interest is the first World War.

Historical Interest as a motivation was not seen to be a significant connecting factor by the respondents. The main points of connection were Familial Connection and National Duty. Similarly, those who identified their motivations to be simply accompanying their spouse, family member or friend felt no real connection and were just there to support another as demonstrated in Interview 73:

Participant 1: Um, well I have a, a relative, uh, my great uncle who was killed on the Somme, so, uh, that's, um, the nearest relative that I have. Yeah.

Participant 2: Not especially, dunno, any family history

Researcher: So just kind of an interest thing?

Participant 2: More of a supportive role

Participant 1: Yes. Yes. I'm quite interested in World War I history

Overall, the groups of Familial Connection and National Duty constituted the majority of the respondents, with Familial Connection representing half of the entire sample. These groups represented the most emotionally intense visitor motivations, although not all respondents in those groups necessarily reflected that intensity. Interest in history and the First World War accounted for most of the other respondents, often seen as the appropriate motivation in the absence of a 'real connection'. The emergence of National Duty as a representative of intensity amongst some of the respondents was unique to Tyne Cot in this research project, and it is significant that the respondents who invoked this sense of duty were service personnel or former service personnel who also came from a military background. However, family history and Familial Connection continue to be the primary connection that British visitors in Ypres attribute their

motivation to. It is seen by the majority as the first consideration for connection and for motivation; those who demonstrated other motivations felt the need to first clarify that they had no familial connection.

5.5.2 Nationality

First World War cemeteries are sites that are inherently nationally charged. As shown earlier in this chapter Tyne Cot cemetery is designed to house and represent the sacrifice of thousands of British and Commonwealth soldiers. In the previous chapter a number of themes concerning the formation of national identity and 'Britishness', that were identified by scholars such as Stephen Grosby (2005), were discussed and applied to the responses taken from the visitors of the In Flanders Fields Museum. The same themes will be used here to understand the way British tourists at Tyne Cot frame their own nationality in the face of prominent national symbols and monuments.

As stated in the previous chapter, respondents' references to national identity need to be seen here in the context of the death of Queen Elizabeth the Second, which may have made the topic more salient

In order to investigate the respondents' thoughts on their nationality, both in general and in terms more specific to Ypres and the First World War, interviewees were asked two planned questions. First, they were asked if their nationality was important to them and secondly, they were asked if they felt it was important for British people to come and visit Ypres or the Western Front. The first question was designed to simply allow the participants to reflect on their nationality in a way that felt most appropriate for them, whereas the second was meant to focus on its relationship with the First World War and places like Ypres. A third question was asked in 14 of the 19 interviews, this question was added in by the researcher part way through the data collection, as a result the respondents in the first five interviews were not asked. This question further inquired into the relationship between their experiences of battlefield tourism and their nationality; the participants were asked if their experiences in Ypres and at Tyne Cot caused them to reflect on their nationality at all.

The responses to the first question can be categorised as following:

	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
No. of Respondents	18	8	5

Figure 12 – Table of responses to questions for nationality

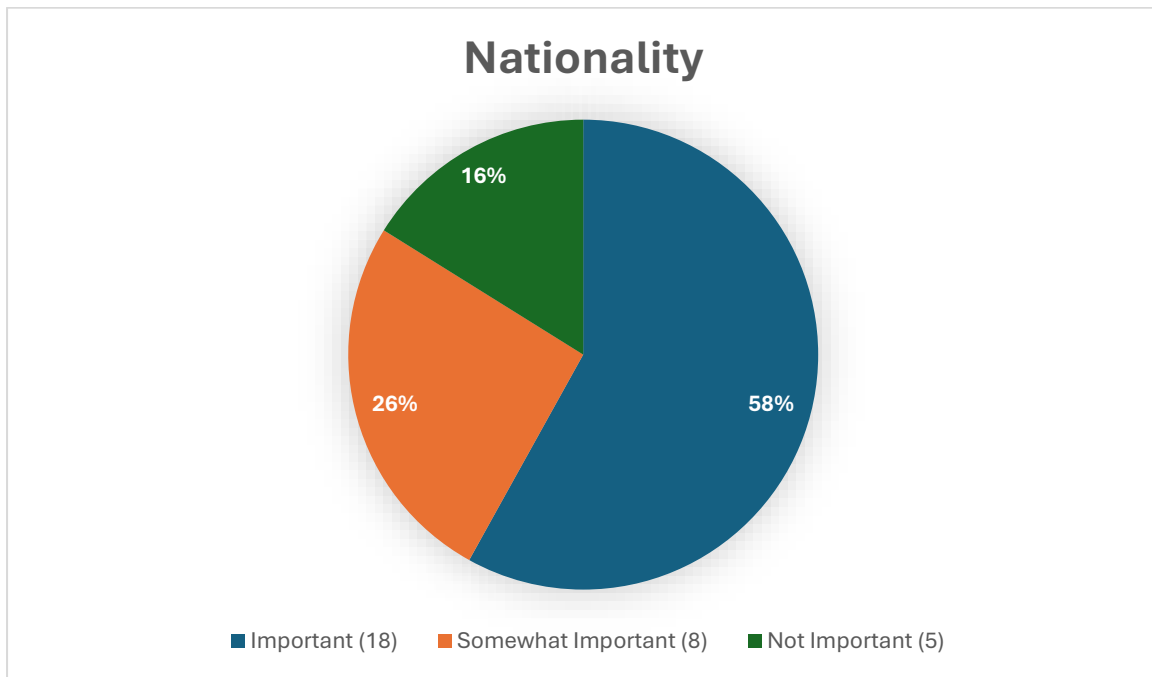


Figure 13 – Pie Chart for responses to questions for nationality

The most common response to the first question was a clear affirmation that their nationality was important to them with 58% of participants identifying this. A number of these respondents just made clear statements they were proud of their nationality (Interview 71, 76):

Interview 71

Participant 1: Uh, yes. It, it is. And that doesn't make mean make it superior to anyone else, but it is. It is important to me....

Participant 2: Yeah. I, I would, I would say it's, it's important to me, um, not, it isn't necessarily totally, you know, it doesn't define me, but, um, um, yeah, I'm, you know, British and proud of it.

Interview 76

Researcher: How important is your nationality to you?

Participant 1: Very, yeah, Very.

Researcher: How would you describe your nationality?

Participant 1: British, British.

Participant 2: Yeah... always.

Researcher: Why would you say it's important to you?

Participant 1: Because its part of our identity.

Participant 2: Yeah. A big part.

Participant 1: Got a huge part. Yeah, absolutely.

These responses indicate the participation of these British tourists in what Grosby terms 'shared self-awareness' (Grosby 2005, p.26), as discussed in the previous chapter. The participants are aligning themselves with this collective understanding of the world and their place in it that is a defining factor of being 'British'. Each individual has their own relationship with and understanding of this 'shared self-awareness', but it is instantly recognisable and comforting. We can see this in Interviews 71 and 76, with respondents saying that 'I'm you know British and proud of it' or that it's a 'part of our identity'. This can also be seen in Interview 81:

Your identity more than anything. Yeah. Your identity with the country. I think that's important across the world. Uh, no matter where you, you are from or where you live, you should, should still have your identity with your place of birth and where your family come.

Similarly, respondents highlighted the importance of British history and their pride towards it in their relationship with their national identity (Interview 10, 85):

Interview 10

Researcher: Would you say that your nationality is important to you?

Participant: Very.

Researcher: What does it mean to you?

Participant: I think it, a lot of it is values, it's history. Uh, you know, I'm a, I'm a joint citizen of Australia as well.

Yeah. And the influences that we had, some of it bad, some of it good, but. We're an influential country and, and race and, uh, yeah. I, it just, I have a degree of pride Yeah. On some aspects of what we did

Interview 85

Participant: Yes. Yes.

Researcher: Why?

Participant: Because I feel proud of our, well, yeah, I do feel proud of our country.

Yeah. Yeah. We're a liberal country and I feel very proud of it.

With these two responses, the first expressly exhibits pride at the nation's history and the second leans towards what this history has led the nation to become. The concept of shared history is often seen as a binding agent for nationhood. However, as Grosby (2005, p.23) has pointed out, the content of this perceived shared history is arguably less important than the fact that it is understood to be shared. That content is 'never merely just facts, because the key to the existence of the nation are memories that are shared among each of the many individuals who are members of the nation' (Grosby 2005, p.23). Therefore, it is the general understanding or memory of what British history is and what it represents that these individuals are citing as the reasoning for their sense of national identity. This again leans into the concept of 'shared self-awareness'.

Another response that represents the concept of a shared sense of self-awareness mentioned raised a pertinent point about the concept of nationality especially in the space of First World War remembrance (Interview 75):

Participant 1: I dunno. Are we British now or English? Yeah. Welsh. Scottish. Yeah

Participant 2: We're a mixture, aren't we? But I suppose British is a British, I think the unions should stick together and think, Yeah, I think British is an important thing.

Researcher: Do you think it's an important part of your identity?

Participant 2: I think it is. It defines who you are, isn't it? And how you, how you live your life and how you react to things, but definitely, and, and, and every different, you know, every different country has different, different ways of, of living and that I think it does.

Yeah. Being British is something. It's, it's, it's changed over years, definitely. But, still means something.

In this answer the second participant raises the point that for them, the idea of being British or the idea of 'Britishness' has changed over time. Understanding that definitions of all nationalities have changed since the foundational building blocks of said nation, or at least national narratives and myths, were established is crucial when establishing their continued relevance to individuals' understanding of themselves and their own sense of national belonging.

As established earlier the meanings that visitors can derive from remembrance sites can change over time with the adaptation of ritual practice and new ideals. Just as these meanings can change so too does the individual's own sense of nationality, whether related specifically to this experience or not. Therefore, this relationship between visitors and 'national' remembrance sites is constantly in flux. As David Cesarani (1996, p.67) has stated in his tracing of British nationality through time, 'Englishness and Britishness have had changing components depending upon the territorial expanse of the state and its dominant religion'. Whilst this respondent suggested that their nationality was important to them, this concept of the changes in national identity over time might be more relevant to the members of the Somewhat Important and Not Important groups.

The participants that indicated that their nationality was Somewhat Important to them constituted 26% of the sample, which was the 2nd largest group. This differs from the data collected at the IFFM where the Not Important group was significantly larger than the Somewhat important group, representing 23% and 9% of the collected data respectively.

Respondents in this group often balanced an inherent sense of belonging with the circumstances of a changing world (Interview 69, 72):

Interview 69

Um, yes and no. I mean, I, I, I feel as though I'm a citizen to the world, but certain aspects of my nationality, uh, give us the freedoms that, um, uh, that we enjoy today and the freedoms that we enjoy today is that we have a difference of opinion...

So, going back to your question, I'm very proud of these young men. Uh, and my connection to these young men being British English, call it what you like, Commonwealth Empire, Uh, all people that fought for, uh, freedom.

Interview 72

Participant 1: Yeah. I, it is important to me, um, because I guess it's, it's part of our identity, our nation, where we're from. Uh, so yes, but it's, it's, I mean, the human experience is, I think the big thing about being here and, you know, we were in the German cemetery earlier today, and obviously people from all over the world.

So actually, you know, human experience is more important than our individual national identity.

Participant 2: happy to say I'm proud to be British. Uh, but, you know, always conscious that you've got to, you know, not let that bleed into, you know, xenophobia biases, et cetera. So, um, you know, be proud and support your country, et cetera, but, uh, not to the detriment of the others around you.

In both of these interviews the respondents demonstrate a balance between aspects of national belonging and aspects of a modern inter-connected world wherein national boundaries and nationalistic beliefs may be limiting or problematic. This lends itself to the concept mentioned earlier in this chapter that the idea of nationhood is constantly changing. Whether this form of national belonging will adapt or fade is yet to be seen, however its shift is definitely being recognised by these research participants.

Another issue that arose in the Somewhat Important group was that of individuals with dual citizenship. Four research participants identified that they had dual citizenship. Two of these respondents can be grouped into the Somewhat Important category (Interview 12, 13):

Interview 12

I think there's a sense of pride and, um, belonging from your nationality, but still at the same time, you're kind of conscious in the new world and this time that you want to, you know, nationalism isn't necessarily the way for humanities to move forward. Yeah. So that.

Interview 13

Uh, it used to be quite important. Yeah. In recent years, I've distanced myself from putting too much importance on if I am Australian or I am British because of connotations of imperialism.

These responses are again, examples of the negotiation between the positives of national belonging and the negatives of nationalism. However, the dual citizenship status of the respondents impacts this view on both of their nationalities. This is not to say that all participants with dual citizenship felt this way, as stated only 2 of the 4 were in this category, with the other two split in both the Important and Not Important groups.

The group of five participants that stated that their nationality was Not Important to them represent 16% of the responses collected. This was the smallest group and as a whole they tended to look outward rather than for a sense of national belonging. Often Europe was the ideal, or even 'citizens of the world' (Interview 68, 74, 82):

Interview 68

Participant 1: I'd say it's there, but I wouldn't say I think about it or refer to it a lot. Yeah. So not like significant, I would say.

Participant 2: Yeah. Okay. Me, I tend to see myself as British? Although we talk in terms of English, don't we?

Um, well, we have been, but yeah. Um, I mean, it's not actively important to me. I prefer that we were European and I prefer that we remain in Europe, but we are what we are. I see myself as, as British English, um, and that I refer to things either way, but similar to, I, I don't think it's a central important part of my life.

Interview 74

It's, it doesn't matter whether I'm British, French, German, Belgium, We're all just people. Yeah. So, I, I, if someone says, What's your nationality? Unless I have to put it on a piece of paper, I just say, I'm European

Interview 82

Well, my grandmother was Irish. My other grandmother was French. I've done quite a bit of traveling and I find people are people wherever I go. It is to a certain degree. I'm not embarrassed to be British. I'm not proud to be British.

Yeah. It's an accident at birth. Yeah. So it's not something I'm passionate about.

These respondents consistently identify that a sense of national belonging is not something that they value. The presence of Europe and being European rather than British was mentioned by 4 out of the 5 research participants in this group.

Continental Europe has long been an 'other' with which the British could juxtapose themselves against. In contemporary British politics the relationship with Europe has also been highlighted by 'Brexit'. Therefore, the presence of Europe as a potential alternative to being British is not surprising. Historically the role of an 'other' in British nation building has prompted a negative view outwards, reinforcing the importance of superior 'British' qualities (Colley 1992). However, in the data collection for this study at Tyne Cot, the European 'other' was mentioned only in positive terms by those who feel disaffected by their British national identity.

As a follow up to this initial question, however, the respondents were also asked if they felt that it was important for British people in general to visit Ypres and the Western Front. In essence this question aimed to prompt the respondents to reflect on the importance of First World Remembrance, both the nation and to individuals in general. It provides another opportunity for the research participants to either search for or look away from national meaning in their tourist activities.

Universally, the respondents stated that it was important for British people to visit the Western Front. This is not surprising considering the participants in this study were interviewed abroad actively participating in remembrance activities. However, the reasons

given for this view tell us more about the relationship between nation, individual and remembrance. There were a few key takeaways that were mentioned in response to this question: first of all, the importance of the role of battlefield visits in historical education; second, warning against the dangers of war; and third, emphasising the importance of the First World War to the building of Britain, both in terms of British national identity and in the very real contribution to British society. These responses were very much not mutually exclusive: many of the respondents identified more than one of these themes.

One of the key insights from their battlefield experiences is the danger and destruction that war brings and efforts to prevent it (Interview 11, 12, 72):

Interview 11

I think it's important for people to visit sites like this because if Putin and Co., who walked around here, and their relatives were on the war, they might think twice about whether war is worth it or not.

Interview 12

Yeah, I think a lot of it is learning from the past. Yeah. Yeah. How brutal it was, how inhumane it was.

Interview 72

Yes. I, I will make sure that my child, he has been to either these, and if he hadn't, I would've brought him here... I think these are really, reminders of what the thin veneer of civilization can crumble to if, if you let it.

This sentiment was very common among the respondents. It seems a very natural reaction to the scale of death and destruction that visitation to the Western Front presents. This scale, the physical demonstration of such catastrophe, is often the aspect of battlefield visits that most shocks its visitors. Therefore, warning against future conflict seems a natural response. Whilst war memorials may have previously sought to inspire antagonistic feelings towards an enemy, the framing for CWGC cemeteries have never explicitly sought to do so. The creators wanted to express the collective weight of sacrifice of the British Empire. Avoiding any new unnecessary sacrifices, therefore, is a priority for some of the visitors. These responses are also connected to the next group. Part of

understanding the dangers of war includes a proper understanding of the history of the conflict and the nations involved.

For those that emphasised education, there was both a concern that people misunderstand history and an excitement for the learning potential for children (Interview 69, 71):

Interview 69

I think the big problem with the British is that they don't understand their own history, right? They don't understand the relevance of their history and their connection to it.

Interview 71

I think it is. And I think school visits in particular are excellent. We were at the Langemarck German Cemetery earlier today, and there was a big school party there, a hundred kids and so on. It's excellent bringing, uh, doing, doing that, and, and.

You can teach in a classroom all you like, but there's no substitute for just coming and seeing, you know, whether it's rank upon rank of thousands of graves or the, the land and how, you know. And yeah, I think it's, uh, it really drives it home and it's important to remember.

These respondents clearly value history and the importance of understanding the history of one's nation but also the First World War in general. The respondent in Interview 71 highlighted the importance of school visits and education about war at a young age. They also linked this to the dangers of war talking about the 'rank upon rank of thousands of graves'. Whereas the research participant in Interview 69's views align more with the following group that highlight the importance of understanding of what it means to be British and what the nation owes to this conflict.

The building blocks of what Britain is today and what being British means to people were identified by a number of respondents as an important reason for the continued visitation to the Western Front (Interview 12, 44, 71):

Interview 12

I think it is. Cuz you need to understand where you come from. Yeah. Um, and what's happened in the past and what shapes the culture that you've grown up in.

Interview 44

Participant 1: Even if you have no connection, um, if you have no family. You live under the blanket freedom that these men provided.

Participant 2: Fought and died for.

Interview 71

This is an important sacrifice for our imperfect democracy

These responses repeatedly brought the theme of sacrifice to the fore, both national and individual. It was implied that understanding these sacrifices, and the history of British Involvement in the conflict was a part of 'Britishness' itself. This can be viewed as part of the 'shared self-awareness' proposed by Grosby (2005).

To conclude, national identity and the feeling of national belonging varied in importance and intensity throughout the responses to both questions. When asked if their nationality was important to them, 58% of the respondents stated that it was, highlighting aspects of 'Britishness' that fit into Stephen Grosby's (2005) concept of 'shared self-awareness'. The 26% that suggested their nationality was somewhat important generally balanced a concept of national belonging with the needs of a modernising world. This leads to a discussion centred on the relevance of the nation-state in the modern age with an increasingly inter-connected global community. The 16% of respondents that felt their nationality was not important to them suggested that the concept of being nationally agnostic would be preferred to them than being British. Here the 'other' of Europe, a historical opposite force for British nationality, was being presented as a beneficial alternative by a number of these tourists. Not only do the views of the research participants in this project on their own nationality vary, also the way they view the impact of the acts of remembrance in which they are participant. When viewing the importance for British people of visiting the Western Front the respondents highlighted themes that: investigated the dangers of war, emphasised the importance of historical education and highlighted an

importance in the understanding of the national and individual sacrifices that the First World War extracted from Britain. A true spectrum of views of nationality and nationhood were presented in this dataset, from cosmopolitan ideals of a borderless society and warnings of the dangers and violence of war to the importance the collective sacrifice of British soldiers to the physical and ideological integrity of the nation. Importantly, however, this variation was consistently aimed inwards. The individuals were holding themselves to a standard and expecting it of their countrymen and -women. It was not posited in an exclusionary or negative manner, with respondents focusing on what is important to them.

5.5.3 Transnational Perspectives

For British visitors Tyne Cot is often perceived as a nationally charged space. As shown earlier in this chapter, CWGC cemeteries have been at the heart of the formation and driving of British remembrance of the First World War. They were explicitly designed to serve as a collective reminder of the sacrifice of the British Empire. Whilst other nations of the commonwealth share these cemeteries they were conceived, designed, constructed, and are maintained by a British- based and backed organisation. Yet, as Caroline Winter (2015, p.27) has shown, in her analysis of the commemorative linguistic ritual of writing in the visitor book at Tyne Cot, for most of the site's visitors' thoughts of the nation, whilst present, were not their primary concern. Rather, Winter (2015, p.27) identified a cosmopolitan aspect to this practice, in which tourists from multiple nations were participating in a global ritual of remembrance. With the establishment earlier of the importance of visitor performance at war cemeteries, how do British visitors feel about transnational remembrance at their own sites of remembrance and those of other nations?

In order to explore their feeling on transnational remembrance, and the potential role of the war cemetery in this, the participants were asked 'Do you think that cemeteries and other remembrance sites should be areas of reconciliation for the nations that fought in the conflict?' This question was simply aimed to encourage the visitors to discuss their thoughts on shared remembrance at cemeteries and remembrance sites, looking both inwardly at their own national sites and outward, to others. There is a second question that was posed to the respondents that will be discussed in this section, the question asked:

‘Have your experiences here caused you to reflect on your nationality at all?’ This question was originally intended to be included in the section concerning nationality, however, due to the nature of the responses to this question across the board it has been included here instead. The intention behind the question was to get the research participants to reflect on whether the omnipresence of the British framing of the CWGC and commemorative atmosphere in Ypres had prompted them to consider their own nationality, and if not, what had their experiences encouraged them to consider?

In response to the first question the response was almost universal. Only two respondents (8%) in the same interview suggested that they didn’t think cemeteries should be arenas for transnational remembrance. The overwhelming majority (92%) agreed that reconciliation and multi-perspectival remembrance was positive and served the meaning of the cemeteries.

	Transnational	National
No. of Respondents	24	2

Figure 14 – Table of responses to questions on transnational remembrance

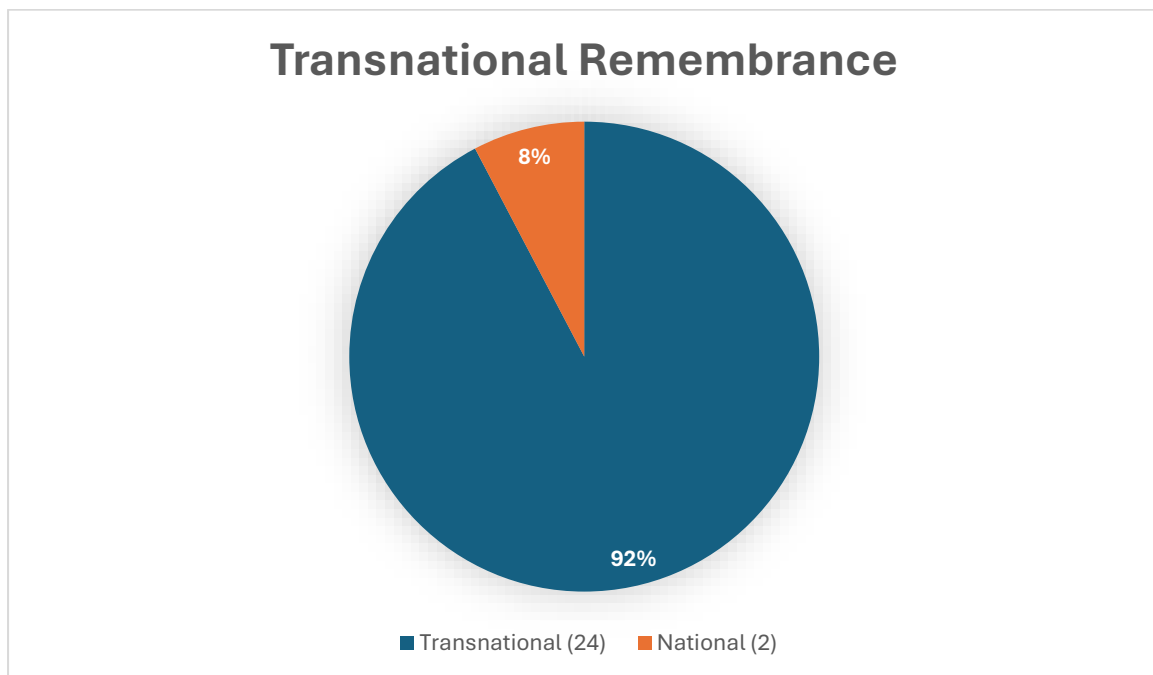


Figure 15 – Pie Chart for responses to questions on transnational remembrance

In some cases, interviewees responded to the question very directly in terms of reconciliation, stating that the nations involved had, for all intents and purposes already

reconciled. As a result, reconciliation was not necessarily relevant one hundred years on, in a European landscape with little division over the Allied and Central Powers lines. This may have been a failing of the question, which specified this aspect of transnational remembrance, as in many ways, these participants are correct. Nations now are largely not divided by the legacy of the First World War. In order to bring these conversations back towards transnational remembrance these respondents were asked 'So do you think Ypres and the surrounding area is now a place for shared remembrance?' This prompted answers from many of these participants that was more in line with the desired effect of the first question, causing them to reflect on transnational remembrance in the memoryscape of Tyne Cot and Ypres (Interview 10):

Researcher: Do you think remembrance sites such as this should be areas for reconciliation between the, you know, the nations involved in the conflict?

Participant: Um, I think, I think those nations are reconciled.

Yeah I don't think there's a need for it any longer. [...]

Researcher: So do you think that Ypres and the surrounding areas is, is now a place for kind of shared remembrance?

Participant: It is for all visitors. And, and to reinforce the history of it.

[...] I think from our perspective, it is important to come and, and also to come here and understand the German sacrifice as well.

Yeah, 'cause these, all these people buried here are like you and I... They were people.

Yeah. And they didn't want to be here

This also occurred in the one interview where the respondents identified that they were not in favour of transnational remembrance at war cemeteries. They stated first that they felt the nations were already healed, and then they went on to say that they had not been to a German cemetery and that they had no desire to do so (Interview 86):

Researcher: Do you think remembrance sites such as this, such as the Menin Gate in town. Do you think they should be areas for reconciliations between the nations that are involved in the conflict?

Participant 2: Mmm, no, I think it's good as it is. [...]

Participant 1: Time's been a great healer, hasn't it?

Participant 2: Yeah, I think now we're quite well healed, I'd say.

[...]

Researcher: But, even in terms of, uh, I don't know if you guys have been, but, lots of people go to see the German Cemetery [...] and Germans come to visit this cemetery.

Participant 1: Yeah, no, we haven't. [...] I haven't ever taken in a German, uh cemetery.

Participant 2: I don't, to be honest, I don't think I'll go to it. [...] Yeah I wouldn't go and see a German cemetery. It would typically be out of my way to visit. I'd rather come to yeah, here.

The follow up question did prompt the respondents to reflect on their views on transnational commemoration, at least between belligerent countries on opposite sides of the war. The respondents, across the board, were able to articulate their opinions on transnational remembrance effectively with this line of questioning.

The research participants raised a number of issues surrounding the commemoration of the war dead. The first of which, as mentioned twice, simply asks what is the alternative to reconciliation? (Interview 72, 73):

Interview 72

What's the alternative? If it's, if it's not gonna be used for reconciliation, is it gonna be used for division and blame? Because I don't see anything positive about that. So I think it's got to be, these have got to be used as opportunities for reconciliation because they remind us, you know what price you have to pay.

Interview 73

Researcher: Do you think remembrance sites such as this and other similar cemeteries, [...] do you think there should be areas for reconciliation between the nations that were involved in the conflict?

Participant 1: Absolutely. Yeah.

Would be wonderful. Yes

Participant 2: Yeah. Especially why, why, why not use them for that?

[...]

Participant 1: People reflect, but just not on a national level.

The respondents in these interviews highlight their desire for the potential of these sites for bringing people together. Just as the political potential for war cemeteries in the hands of state actors was discussed earlier in the chapter, this is a clear example of an understanding of the potential galvanisation of a reconciliatory and transnational form of remembrance. Participant 1 in interview 73 goes on to specifically state that ‘people reflect, but just not on a national level’ and bringing these people together at remembrance sites encourages this.

This concept of bringing people together was, for many of the respondents an important part of the role of Tyne Cot and other remembrance sites. They suggested that there is an importance in the visitation of other nations cemeteries and monuments, both from themselves and people from their nation, and from others. In visiting the remembrance sites and performing the rituals of remembrance of other nations, all tourists are participating in and therefore perpetuating a cosmopolitan form of remembrance (Winter 2015, p.27). Whilst this data does not specifically show this interaction taking place, as these interviews were taking place in a CWGC cemetery with British tourists, it does indicate a propensity for this style of remembrance at other sites amongst these visitors. They also demonstrated an encouragement for others to come and visit their sites of remembrance and join them in commemorating the fallen, just as they would do at others (Interview 85):

Interview 10

I think from our perspective, it is important to come and, and also to come here and understand the German sacrifice as well.

Interview 68

I think it is important that, um, we visit the German cemeteries and the Belgian cemeteries and the French cemeteries. And similarly, um, the Germans visit our cemeteries. [...]

It does give you that kind of understanding, reflection. And, um, also, you know, reconciliation in the sense that it's not only British Empire soldiers who dies, it was also the German soldiers.

Interview 75

I think they should be open to all nationalities, and I think it should be, you should be open to talk about it and what went wrong. Yeah. I don't think it should be a private thing. If, if, you know, if we want to visit a German cemetery or Germans want to visit here, it should be open to all.

Interview 85

Participant 1: We've done the Menin Gate a few times and we've stood with every nationality.

[...]

Researcher: Do you think it's important for people to go and visit other than just their grave sites?

Participant 2: Yeah, yeah, I think so. Yeah, yeah, people may have been fighting the Germans, but I very much doubt that those young German people wanted to fight any more than our young British people wanted to fight, so, yeah, they weren't the ones that sort of mastered the war, were they?

These respondents are arguing that people from all nations should come together in a form of multi-perspectival shared remembrance. There are aspects of remembrance at play here that represent the cosmopolitan ideal for memory, however what these visitors at Tyne Cot are describing is the importance of people coming together to better understand each other's perspectives. These perspectives nevertheless remain inherently nationally defined and are built upon national myths and narratives.

The language used by the respondents highlights this. In Interview 85, one of the participants mentions that during commemorations at the Menin Gate they had 'stood with every nationality'; in Interview 75, the respondents states that the military cemeteries 'should be open to all nationalities' and that visiting the remembrance sites of other nationalities is important. However, national boundaries are still implied. National experiences can be shared, and as many participants have highlighted, and it is important that they are, but they remain defined by their nationality.

In the words of the research participants there appears to be a disconnect between problematic nationalism and the inherently national boundaries and framings that inform the way they think about the First World War. This can be seen succinctly in Interview 86 where the participant states, in response to being asked if their experiences in Ypres had caused them to reflect on their nationality:

Oh, I, I've, not nationality, that's the wrong thing for me. I reflect on [...] the actual commitment that these people had to their nation... and, you know, the loss, it's, it's phenomenal.

Contemporary nationalism was rejected across the board by the respondents, in the arena of public remembrance at sites like Tyne Cot. However, the sacrifice of the soldiers interred at Tyne Cot as symbolising the 'commitment that these people had to their nation' represents an unproblematic national myth that is disconnected from the pitfalls of modern nationalism. This messaging was consistent despite the participants' stated relationship with their own nationality; even those visitors that eschewed their feelings of nationality, demonstrated, with their language, an identification with a 'British' perspective of the First World War. Whilst this is an arena that is nationally defined, and one that serves as a direct warning of the dangers of nationalism, to many it is not a space within which the visitors are encouraged to consider their own sense of national belonging as problematic, this is both in terms of one's feelings of 'Britishness' and an identification with the established British myth of the First World War. This then begs the question, what conclusion are Tyne Cot's visitors coming to, when confronted with an expression of national grief and remembrance?

War and conflict itself can be posited as the true enemy. Which is an important aspect of the cosmopolitan framing of First World War memory. As discussed in the previous chapter, the curators of the In Flanders Fields Museum highlighted in their cosmopolitan messaging that ‘war is always the worst solution to solve [...] international conflicts’ (Dendooven 2022; Trogh 2022). This cosmopolitan approach also frames each individual soldier as ‘only a tiny cog in a vast military fighting machine’ (Berger et al. 2021, p.99). This peace-focused ideology puts the cost of war and human suffering at the front of its considerations, posing the question that is this primary output of war, death and suffering worth it? War is positioned as the direct antagonist. A number of the research participants mentioned that sites such as Tyne Cot are a permanent reminder of the cost of the war. This interpretation is evident in responses such as the following:

Interview 44

Researcher: Do you guys think that remembrance sites such as this should be areas for reconciliation between nations that were involved in the conflict?

Participant: Yeah, I do. Because, you know, you see this and you see the cost of, of war and you wonder, you know, is it worth it?

Interview 69

Participant: I mean, basically it's like, uh, over in the Ukraine at the moment. I mean, it's not, it's not a war against, Russia in the Ukraine, it's, it's, it's just young men being sacrificed for no reason whatsoever.

Uh, which really, with with good diplomacy and, and good, uh, statesmanship, these things should never happen. And, uh, but it boils down to these young men like the Russians, Russian conscripts. I feel so sad for them, them others, as much as I do for the Ukrainians.

This aspect of cosmopolitan memory was mentioned, however, it was not a common approach to this issue. For many of the respondents, the cost of war is directly attributable to the failure of national leaders, rather than placing the fault with war itself. There is even a suggestion of this in the participants word in Interview 69, ‘with good diplomacy [...] and good, uh, statesmanship, these things should never happen.’ This was an aspect of the

dataset that was unexpected by the researcher going into data collection and will be explored in more detail in the following section.

5.5.4 British National Myth and Civil-Military Relations

In the aftermath of the First World War the IWGC established a landscape of remembrance wherein the sacrifice of the individual, the civilian-soldier, was in service of the nation and the Empire. Whilst modern day interpretations of combatants, both contemporary and historic, continue to accept the role of a civilian-soldier, the purpose of their sacrifice has shifted. Rather than serving as a collective reminder of the strength and unity of Britain and the British Empire in the face of great adversity, these individuals are seen to be sacrificed at the whims of politicians. This can be seen to reflect the development of the British national myth of the First World War and changes in civil-military relations in the 2000s and 2010s.

In Britain, the national myth of the First World War that has come to be accepted emphasises the culpability of politicians and military leaders, in a pointless, fruitless war in which men and women were sacrificed for nothing as a result of misguided incompetence, as discussed in Chapter 2.1. Similarly, as established earlier, civil-military relations in Britain have taken a significant turn since the early 2000s and the onset of the unpopular Iraq war. In the 2010s the military has been making visible efforts to establish the public perception of their role, and that of their soldiers as a tool of politicians, leaving the accountability of the military's actions to them. The re-design of the National Army Museum that was curated in this period encourages its visitors to reflect on the role of civilians and politicians in the actions of the military in order to reconsider what was deemed to be a problematic view of soldiers and the military (Clarke 2023, pp.98-9). This re-framing has been hugely popular with movements such as Help for Heroes, which highlight that soldiers are indeed still heroes and should not be villainised for their service to their country. These sentiments were reflected in the participants' views on remembrance of the First World War (Interview 11):

Interview 11

So, the relatives that survived had nothing against the people that they were fighting against. Yeah, against their leaders, most definitely. But they were doing the same as. Yeah. Why should they hate them? Individuals. They were ordered to do what they were doing. There was no hate and no animosity for the Germans or the Japanese. Um, no. They, they were ordered to do what they did. We were fighting a politician's war.

Interview 44

Researcher: Do you guys think that remembrance sites such as this should be areas for reconciliation between the nations that were involved in the conflict?

[...]

Participant: Yeah, definitely. It should be. It should be a place, I think most world leaders should come here. Yeah, and see this because this, this is the result.

Interview 70

I would make, uh, this place, uh, uh, where leaders have to have discussion about making decisions. Yeah. Yeah. Uh, even if it's just here in this grass where they bring a table here and bring the leaders here and, uh, uh, like Russia.

You should bring them. If you want to talk about it. Let's talk about it here. Yeah. Don't talk about it in your nice little ivory tower. In your nice little warm room. You should bring them here. Do you want to make the decisions? No. Yeah. Yeah. They'd probably change their mind!

The responses above demonstrate the ways in which many of the visitors attributed the loss caused by both the First World War and modern war to politicians. This interpretation appears to draw both on both contemporary discourses on British civil-military relations and the popular myth of the First World War in Britain. These issues are continuing to frame the way they view remembrance of the First World War in meaningful ways.

The crux of contemporary British Civil-Military relations, the unpopularity of the Iraq war was even explicitly mentioned by one of the respondents (Interview 82):

I want to get on, I'd rather get on with people.

Obviously you can't get on with everybody [...]. I went on the anti-war marches for Iraq and I think Blair bent over backwards to take us to war when you should bend over backwards to stop all this. It's rather like the sing song. I hope the Russians love the children too and I'm sure they do.⁴

This is clearly showing that their experiences at Tyne Cot are causing British visitors to reflect on contemporary justifications for war. The attempts by the armed forces and organisations such as Help for Heroes have succeeded in their attempts to re-frame the ways in which the British public view their soldiers.

This interpretation does not dominate to the point of exclusion of aspects of cosmopolitan memory, as excerpts from Interview 44 cited above have shown. There is a balance of these approaches at play. The 'British' perspective is still influencing the way visitors are viewing the conflict and those that fell in it. Shared remembrance is becoming more important with time and with a changing world. But this is an active sharing of their perspectives and the understanding of other perspectives. As was also the case for the visitors to the In Flanders Fields Museum, national perspectives are not falling by the wayside. Whilst forms of antagonistic nationalism were largely absent and peace and the prevention of war were important for many of the visitors, the British framing remained their key point of reference for their experience at Tyne Cot. This national framing is, to these visitors, natural and unproblematic. It is a perspective that can be shared with others yet is inherently different. Whilst most visitors suggested and demonstrated that they were in favour of transnational or shared remembrance, their national framing still predicates their interactions with the site. Therefore, the form of commemoration cannot be fully cosmopolitan, rather it represents a shared, multi-perspectival form of remembrance, in which national narratives are still at play, although not in a traditional antagonistic sense. Other national groups are no longer acting as an antagonist, rather the popularity of a national myth of the First World War and domestic social and political changes have

⁴ A reference to Sting's Cold War hit 'Russians'

identified politicians, both historical and contemporary, as the ones to blame. The consequences of previous wars being laid bare before the British tourists at Tyne Cot is causing them to question justifications for war and the loss and violence that it brings in the modern age.

5.6 Conclusion

To conclude, both in Britain and across Europe, military cemeteries were foundational structures in the establishment of national cultures of remembrance following the First World War. In Britain, this can be seen with the surge of battlefield tourism and the controversy surrounding the creation and designs of the CWGC cemeteries. George L. Mosse's (1979, 1990) work on the Cult of the Fallen Soldier in Germany has demonstrated the cultural and political potential that cemeteries can hold. They were a significant aspect of a galvanising ideology that was utilised by the Nazi regime in mobilisation in the lead up to the Second World War. In Britain the interpretation was more a message of peace, however, in both countries the potential for social and political power was evident.

Therefore, it is important to look at how these sites are experienced contemporarily as well. The creation of war cemeteries, the choices made by their designers and their role within a grieving society all position these vast memorials as symbolic centres of individual and collective mourning and commemoration. A key aspect in the interpretation of the contemporary tourist experience is the understanding that continued ritual practice and commemorations have gradually, and will continue to, reshape the meaning of historical commemorative sites. The very act of visiting a site and performing acts of commemoration layers the social framings of each visitor onto their experience as an individual, and as a collective, these framings evolve the very understanding of what a cemetery and its associated conflict comes to mean. Remembrance is an active process that is constantly changing, being shaped not only by the institutions that maintain commemorative sites, but by the visitors themselves. Some scholars (Winter 2015) have traced the development of commemorative practice as a move towards a form of cosmopolitan memory on the Western front: a form of remembrance in which national boundaries are becoming less relevant and the aspects of cosmopolitan remembrance that were described in the previous

chapter have become more prevalent in visitors' commemorative experiences. However, something that has not been considered in these viewpoints is the continued presence and importance of national framings and narratives. To many visitors, a 'British' perspective is fundamentally separate and unique to perhaps a French or a German perspective. Whilst these perspectives are being shared productively in a way that aligns with many of the ideals of cosmopolitan memory, the separation of these viewpoints is crucial to their continued importance. In a way, the very cause for which the soldiers interred in Tyne Cot gave their lives was, to many visitors, the continued existence of a 'British' viewpoint itself.

An important lens through which British visitors view the First World War and conflict in general that was uncovered during this project was the importance of civil-military relations and its combination with the established popular myth of the conflict in Britain. Civil-military relations experienced a significant shift in the 2000s following the unpopular Iraq War. Whilst there had been long term causes that built up to this friction, it was the conflict in the Middle East that ignited the passion of the public. In response the military and associated organisations made significant efforts to re-frame their image and their role in service to the nation. With activities such as the re-design of the National Army Museum in London and the hugely popular Help for Heroes movement, the armed forces actively encouraged a view in which the politicians are held liable for the deployment of the British armed forces. Political and military leaders had long been criticised in the popular British myth of the First World War. Recently, however, this culpability for the violence and loss caused by war falls on the shoulders of political leaders, both historic and contemporary, in the minds of many visitors.

As mentioned earlier, however, remembrance and commemorative practices change over time, adapting to and shaping the memorial sites they attend and the very memory that they represent. As such, Tyne Cot is very much a live site. Just as social framings have developed since the conclusion of the conflict, so has the cemetery itself. In 2006 a new Visitors Centre was completed, prompted by a dramatic growth in visitation in the late 1990s. The new centre allows for a panoramic view of the battleground and display panels, items and videos that recall the history of the area, and the stories of men on both sides of the conflict that gave their lives in the area. However, the most important development, in terms of the changing nature of Tyne Cot, is that the Visitors Centre was designed by the

Director of the Passchendaele Museum, Franky Bostyn and is maintained by the museum's team. This is a significant separate influence on Tyne Cot that has traditionally been designed and maintained solely by the CWGC. Whilst they were undoubtedly involved in the design process, the very presence of other actors layers interpretations in a new way through material change. Whilst considering that framings of the First World War in general will undoubtedly shift over time, it is important to remember that the site itself is not fixed. It is a live site that has experienced changes since its inception and will again, and this contributes to the layered social framing.

The first aspect of the visitor experience at Tyne Cot that was investigated was their motivations; the respondents were asked why they were visiting the cemetery and if they felt a connection to the First World War. Familial Connection and National Duty emerged as the most common responses, together representing a large majority of the responses. It was also noted that visitors in these groups displayed the most emotionally intense reactions to the site. Not every participant necessarily displayed significant emotional engagement, but the respondents that did experience such engagement held these motivations to a very high importance. The importance placed on national duty, both in terms of the number of responses and their emotional intensity was much more significant at Tyne Cot than at the other case study investigated in this study, the In Flanders Fields Museum. Often these respondents identified themselves as either active or former service personnel. Familial connection, however, remained as the largest group in both case studies and just as it did in the museum, it served as the default connection to the First World War for many of the visitors. Their first consideration when a connection to the conflict was mentioned consistently contained mention of this link.

When asked about their nationality, 58% of the respondents identified that it was important to them, 26% said that it was somewhat important and the final 16% suggested that it was not. The largest group repeatedly identified aspects of 'Britishness' that align with Stephen Grosby's (2005) concept of 'shared self-awareness', described as somewhat of a set of social framings or understandings that are unique to a national group. The second group, who categorised nationality as 'somewhat important', sought to strike a balance between the importance of these aspects of nationality that were highlighted by the first group and what they termed as the needs of a modernising world. In doing so they suggest

that with the increasingly inter-connected and globalised community, national affiliations and identities were becoming less relevant. This trend continued with the final 16% of respondents, who suggested that the idea of being nationally agnostic felt more appropriate to them rather than being British. The historical 'other' of Europe was often presented here as an alternative, with multiple visitors stating that they felt more European than British. These concepts of 'Britishness' or nationhood in general were consistently presented in a way that avoided exclusionary, negative or antagonistic feelings. The respondents focused on what was important to them as members of an imagined national community. To some the importance of their relationship with the nation-state remained, whereas for others this concept has become less relevant, or even wholly irrelevant.

The respondents consistently identified the importance of a multi-perspectival shared remembrance when asked about their feelings towards transnational remembrance at war cemeteries. Aspects of cosmopolitan memory were mentioned, however the ideal of borderless remembrance was far from a reality at Tyne Cot. The participants identified the importance of people coming together to share their nationally defined and strictly separate perspectives in a respectful and productive manner. However, the independence of these perspectives remained important; distinct views on the First World War that are built upon national myths and narratives. This was present across the dataset, regardless of the visitor's identification with being British, which indicates that the social framings of the conflict which every British person has experienced in their lifetime influence their views on how it should be commemorated. The sacrifice of the soldiers interred at Tyne Cot that symbolises 'the commitment that these people had to their nation' represents an unproblematic national myth to British visitors that is, in their view, disconnected from the pitfalls of modern nationalism. On the Western Front, an arena that serves as a direct warning against the dangers of nationalism, as respondents recognized, visitors do not feel encouraged to consider their own sense of national belonging as problematic. For some this is expressed in terms of their feeling of 'Britishness', and for the majority it expresses itself as participation in a nationally defined form of remembrance.

A perspective that manifested in the visitor experience and that very much came as a surprise was the specific focus on the ineffectual role of politicians in preventing conflict and war. This reflected aspects of the popular British national myth of the First World War that is

built upon a foundation of 'lions led by donkeys'; a conflict where brave soldiers were needlessly sacrificed by incompetent generals and politicians. However, the respondents placed the responsibility for war solely with politicians, the violence and suffering that is inherent to war falls to them, not the military leaders that carry it out. This is where the shifts in British-military relations in the 2000s and 2010s come into play. The British armed forces and associated organisations such as Help for Heroes made great efforts to re-frame the public's relationship with the military. As I have shown, a significant aspect was the emphasis of absolving military personnel from the responsibility of the violence they were carrying out on behalf of the ruling politicians. The sacrifice and loss that comes from war and violence therefore sits solely at the feet of political leaders, who decide and condone violence and war. Visitors at Tyne Cot, when they are presented with the stark consequences of historical conflicts question modern justifications for war and the efforts of politicians to prevent it. The development of this view can be seen clearly in the development of the national myth and changes in civil-military relations, these social frames are actively being both experienced and enacted by the British visitors.

There is clear evidence here that the ongoing adaptive performance of remembrance is alive and well at Tyne Cot. Some social framings and material changes may encourage the visitors to think about cosmopolitan concepts; an increasingly globalised society, some visitors questioning the need for national belonging altogether, and the presence of organisations from outside the UK such as the Passchendaele Museum actively contributing to the design and maintaining aspects of Tyne Cot can be seen through this lens. However, national framings remain important in visitor understanding, the road to borderless remembrance is not yet paved. This is shown by the importance placed by the research participants on the separate, but equally important and valuable, national perspectives. An exchange of memory across borders is alive and well, but national definitions of those memories remain. Antagonistic framings are absent, but these national perspectives express themselves in other ways. Here the focus on the culpability on politicians reflects prominent narratives in Britain that have always been close to the First World War. These framings, both cosmopolitan and national, are not contested, but layered. This is why describing British tourist experiences at Tyne Cot Cemetery in Ypres as a form of multi-perspectival, or transnational, remembrance, rather than a form of cosmopolitan remembrance is most apt.

Each unique perspective holds value, exchanging them with others only increases their value, however, they remain separate.

Looking back to the primary research questions, British tourists in Ypres may not be actively reflecting on their nationality during their time in Ypres, but it is nonetheless influencing their experiences. It continues to frame their experiences in a way that is likely more subconscious than conscious. In terms of how the visitors are negotiating transnational memory, they are finding and participating in a fruitful exchange of experiences and perspectives, but they maintain the importance of their definitions. They apply aspects of cosmopolitan memory to their own belief systems and emerge with a positive and emotional experience of remembering and togetherness. Finally, in terms of civil-military relations and justifications of war this chapter has demonstrated how British visitors continue to be prompted to reflect on the role of politicians, generals and soldiers both historical and contemporary. These themes are embedded in the memory culture in Britain and looks back to a war over a century ago continue to influence the way Brits see conflict today.

6. Conclusion

This conclusion has been broken down into a number of small sections. The first section focuses on the important insights for Research Question 1 (RQ1), drawing on the concept of extra-territorial heritage and its impact on the heritage landscape of Ypres to demonstrate the ways in which British visitors are reflecting on their nationality during their visits to the two sites studied. The second section addresses the transnational memory experiences that are at the heart of Research Question 2 (RQ2), using the concept of travelling memory to demonstrate how the national identities and boundaries highlighted by RQ1 interact with the memoryscape of Ypres. The third section summarises the findings relating to the final Research Question, considering the effects of engagement with the heritage landscape on visitors in light of shifts in civil-military relations in the past two decades. The final section looks at the academic context for studies such as this in Ypres, both in terms of how this project has built on these writings but also what questions it could hope to inspire for future researchers.

6.1 Extra-territorial heritage – heritage landscape of Ypres

RQ 1 - In what ways are British tourists prompted to reflect upon their own national identities in Ypres?

British visitors to Ypres find themselves in a space with many familiarities. British style pubs, an Anglican church, the widespread accessibility of English, both spoken and written, all provide a sense of homeliness. Most importantly, however, is the omnipresence of British material remembrance and heritage culture. These are items of national heritage found in another sovereign land; British extra-territorial heritage (Beaumont 2009). These are heritage sites and their associated remembrance culture straddle the purely national and the global. This situates these sites 'between the pillars of sovereign control of national heritage and world heritage' (Beaumont 2009, p.300). Not only this, but these signifiers of national remembrance find themselves embedded in a centre of international and transnational remembrance. A number of nations have memorials of some sort in or around Ypres as its position at the centre of a particularly intense stretch of the Western Front

demanding the attention of many of the combatant nations. Additionally, Ypres is the home of institutions, such as the In Flanders Fields Museum, that has been demonstrated to be a centre of cosmopolitan approaches to remembrance.

Many of the potentially controversial issues that might have arisen over the management of extra-territorial heritage have been smoothed over due to the close working relationship of the Belgian state, and Britain and the CWGC. Those with the feeling of 'emotional ownership', or at least their state-sponsored agencies, are allowed to tend to their heritage sites in the way they would like (Beaumont 2016, p.355). This, however, is not a permanent state of affairs, as international relations change, so too may the status of British extra-territorial heritage in Ypres.

This contrast between one of the most iconic examples of extra-territorial heritage in Tyne Cot and a cosmopolitan centre of remembrance is a point of difference that serves to further complicate the negotiation of national identity in Ypres. At Tyne Cot, 58% of the respondents identified that their national identity was important to them, whereas this was higher at the museum, with 68% of participants saying the same. However, the real insight to be gained from this inquiry is not how people feel about being British. It is instead in how their experiences in Ypres cause them to reflect on nationality and the nation when being posed with questions by a researcher in situ.

Through these conversations, the visitors in this study were able to demonstrate the relevance of both the presence and absence of extra-territorial heritage. At the In Flanders Fields Museum, a space in which national framings of memory are dissuaded, the visitors maintained the importance of national definitions. The continued importance of a 'British perspective', a 'Belgian perspective' and a 'German perspective' were consistently implicit (and often explicit) in the responses. The visitors favoured integration and shared remembrance - with 98% of respondents affirming that they were in favour of nationally integrated exhibits – but whilst these viewpoints could be effectively shared and layered, they were understood to be inherently different. When being faced with a cosmopolitan message and integrated memory, they highlighted the importance of their existing conceptions of what the First World War means from their own national perspective, even while welcoming that exchange with other national perspectives. British visitors engaged meaningfully with the content provided by the museum throughout the permanent

exhibition and the cosmopolitan message that it embodies. However, for these visitors, the erosion of national framings of the memory of the First World War is not happening in any meaningful way. This is not to say that this could never be the case, just that it is not the case here.

The respondents highlighted some of the similarities between the cosmopolitan message of the museum and the British war myth that has permeated First World War remembrance in Britain. In her doctoral thesis Rowley (2023, p.263) highlighted the potential of the cosmopolitan approach at the IFFM to depoliticise the conflict, only further encouraging the 'lions led by donkeys' aspect of the British national myth. The jump from collective suffering to collective sacrifice is not a big one. In recognising and celebrating the emphasis of the exhibition placed on individual stories, the visitors engage with cosmopolitan remembrance, yet they ultimately draw different conclusions. These conclusions find themselves rooted in unproblematic understandings of the conflict in national terms. Visitors were able to draw a line between what they perceive to be a modern sense of national belonging and problematic nationalistic ideals of the past. In doing this they negotiate the messaging of the museum, layer it with their preconceptions of the First World War and emerge with an understanding of the conflict that is not meaningfully changed. They are able to effectively map different aspects of cosmopolitan memory to their own belief system. In the face of cosmopolitan memory, in the face of a lack of explicitly 'British' remembrance, the visitors themselves reinforce its importance and apply it to their experiences. Though not fully embracing a cosmopolitan style of thought, the visitors are demonstrating advocacy for multi-perspectival and transnational memory. The perceived importance of this multi-perspectivity was consistent at both research sites and there is clear evidence of cross-border memory exchange.

Where the lack of a British framing of memory at the museum caused its visitors to introduce this layer of memory, the omnipresence of this very framing at Tyne Cot encouraged the visitors to further emphasise the importance of multi-perspectival and shared remembrance. Overwhelmingly they expressed the importance of bringing people together, sharing commemorative sites and remembrance with others. In the midst of this site of predominantly British extra-territorial heritage, a smaller share of the respondents identified that their nationality was important to them: 58% compared to 68% at the

museum. In the context of collective suffering and shared experience the visitors reinforced the idea of defined national perspectives, and in the context of a defined national space of remembrance they reinforced the importance of shared experience and a variety of perspectives. The fact that Tyne Cot, as with most CWGC cemeteries, features not just British gravestones but those from across the Commonwealth only helps emphasise the importance of multi-perspectivity and transnational memory. This is only further highlighted by the presence of a small number of German graves on the site. Antagonistic memory practice is largely absent, and aspects of cosmopolitan memory have been demonstrated by the participants, but they are not embraced fully. The same national definitions for the conceptualisation of the First World War remain. Sharing these memories and participating in the commemoration of others does not, in the eyes of the participants, present any tensions with strict boundaries in terms of a distinctly British experience. A meaningful transnational exchange is appropriate, but the 'national' definitions in that exchange remain important.

At both sites the conclusion was the same: multi-perspectival and transnational memory defines modern memory of the First World War for British visitors in Ypres. These perspectives can be productively shared and celebrated, but they are understood as inherently separate. In the eyes of the visitors studied in this thesis, each nation has a level of responsibility to remember the sacrifice made by its own population at the time. This concept of collective national sacrifice is one of the key tenets in the British war myth and it seems that this understanding is permeating British tourist experiences in Ypres.

Extra-territorial heritage can serve as a focus for this nationally defined memory but is not a prerequisite. In Ypres, British visitors' experiences are all filtered through this implicit understanding of what memory of the First World War is. The respondents are arriving at similar conclusions in terms of the most appropriate or important forms of memory despite the site which they are visiting. There are undoubtedly different prompts, however, the visitors fill the gaps with their existing understanding of death, sacrifice and war. At the museum, the participants took the cosmopolitan ideals of the museum and mapped its messages onto a pre-existing, nationally defined memory framework. At Tyne Cot, in contrast, they used this same memory framework, the British national myth and the importance of sacrifice, as a basis for the emphasising the importance of multi-perspectival

memory. Maintaining the perceived importance of these sacrifices as part of a 'British' struggle means that whilst lessons can be learnt that may fit aspects of cosmopolitan thinking, moving beyond nationally bounded memory structures would not be perceived as demonstrating the appropriate reverence for the fallen. The CWGC endeavoured to present structures and monuments that represented a great national sacrifice, for the British and for the nations of the commonwealth, in service of the British Empire. The war myth further emphasises this virtue of sacrifice, by the individual, for the nation. Entrenched memory culture does not allow British visitors to truly move beyond the national frame of mind, meaning that whilst they may appreciate and understand cosmopolitan values, they continue to draw multi-perspectival, transnational conclusions.

The visitors are able to remove themselves, their own sense of national belonging and their belief in a nationally defined belief system in relation to First World War remembrance from those criticisms of antagonistic memory and nationalism levelled by the museum. When faced with the consequences of the forces of nationalism at Tyne Cot, the respondents continued to eschew antagonistic modes of memory, or feelings of aggressive nationalism despite the maintenance of a continued nationally defined concept of memory.

6.2 Travelling Memory

RQ2 - How are British tourists negotiating transnational memory during their time in Ypres?

In the process described above, where an entrenched memory culture is carried with a group of people to sites in another country, you can see travelling memory in action. The alternative narratives that visitors are being exposed to in these new arenas of memory are being understood using the framework of an existing dominant national narrative. Memory has always lived through its movements, yet accelerated globalisation and global media cultures have changed the form of 'travelling memory' and mnemohistory (Warburg 2000; Erll 2011, p.11). As emphasised by Olick (2016, p.50) the concept of travelling memory embraces the transmission of memory across entities, persons, borders and contexts and is a key facet of transnational memory.

This study draws attention to the way in which tourism, itself an important form of globalisation, supports such travelling memory. People travelling to a foreign destination to visit memorial and remembrance sites bring with them a dominant memory culture. The engagement of the dominant memory culture with extra-territorial heritage maintains its status as exactly that. Without the continued visitation, the ritualisation, the pilgrimages to these sites of British heritage, their importance and relevance would wane. Similarly, visiting such striking and monumental icons of that dominant memory culture, that Tyne Cot and the Menin Gate represent, reifies its importance to the visitors. Both sites ask the visitor different questions about nationhood and loss, and at both sites they highlight the importance of shared remembrance. Visitors bring their memory culture with them, and it helps them recognise this, but it also prevents any concept of a fully integrated, cosmopolitan memory, it keeps the national framings strong, but still encourages transnational exchange.

This travelling memory culture also interacts with alternative forms of memory; the visitors have to find a way to interpret this alternate viewpoint and in doing this they find commonalities. Through interpreting the cosmopolitan exhibition of In Flanders Fields Museum, they exercise and test that memory culture against their own, building the longevity of both in the process. As Erll (2011, p.15) states, these outcomes cannot be predicted, but they can be observed and described. The process of memory travelling to stay alive is never inherently good or bad, it is neither automatically reconciliatory nor destructive. Whilst the conclusions that visitors draw may have a moral judgement made against them, the process of memory travelling across borders, contexts and entities cannot (Olick 2016, p.50).

Jenny Wüstenberg (2019, p.371) has identified one of the key questions of the field of memory studies: how do we reconcile the apparent contrast between a constantly shifting and travelling 'memory' and the continued importance of the 'groundedness'? These tourist experiences in Ypres display the process of this interaction. How visitors bring with them a travelling dominant memory culture, and how the 'grounded' sites of memory and heritage prompted the respondents to highlight different aspects of this memory culture in order to better understand the space they were in. Wüstenberg (2019, p.374) describes a move away from a focus on static sites in transnational memory to an 'understanding of the locatedness

or remembering through relational conceptualisations of *place and space*'. This study has contributed to such an understanding of the relational nature of locatedness as applied to tourist engagements with memory of the First World War.

Some scholars writing on transnational memory such as Inglis (2016, p.151) have emphasised the importance of not downplaying national contexts in negotiations of identity and memory. The findings in this project support this wholeheartedly. National framings and entrenched memory cultures are central to the British visitor experiences in Ypres. However, as mentioned throughout the thesis, memory and remembrance are constantly in a process of re-negotiation, and as such, even a memory culture as deeply entrenched as the British war myth is subject to change, if only little by little.

6.3 Importance of Civil-Military Relations in First World War Memory Spaces

RQ3 – How are British visitors are reflecting on civil-military relations and justifications of war during their time in Ypres?

As mentioned throughout the thesis the theme of civil-military relations was one that arose organically from the respondents during the data collection process. It was not something that I had planned for, but it was one of the most striking takeaways that I came away with. This was especially apparent at Tyne Cot, where the weight of loss and sacrifice was more tangible. The respondents were clearly prompted to question the justifications for war. For both historical and contemporary conflicts the respondents placed the blame at the feet of politicians with statements such as 'I think most world leaders should come here' (Interview 44). Famously the British war myth highlights the culpability of political and military leaders for the vast losses in the First World War with the iconic line 'lions led by donkeys.' However, since the discontent that the armed forces were facing from the public in the 2000s, caused in large part by the unpopularity of the Iraq War, there has been a marked effort to improve their relations with the public (Clarke 2023, pp.98-9; Whetham 2017, p.176). Efforts such as the re-design of the National Army Museum and the galvanisation of the Help for Heroes movement, have attempted to transform the image of the armed forces in the eyes of the public (Clarke 2023; Thompson 2018, p.39). Even continued ritual practices

such as Armistice Day continue to represent 'a moral obligation to remember the fallen of wars, share national values and support the armed forces' (Danilova 2015, p.113).

As a result, contemporary opinion towards the armed forces and the soldiers themselves has softened, as shown by the phenomenon that emerged in the small English town Royal Wooton Bassett (Whetham 2017). As the repatriation of fallen British soldiers temporarily moved to a new RAF site, the local community gathered to commemorate the soldiers as they passed through the town. This gathered media attention and grew significantly, with groups from across the country travelling to the town in order to pay their respects.

Through visiting this memorial site and the continued memory practice British tourists identify a space for reflection. In this reflection they formulate views on current events through the reconsideration of the role of military and political class in war today. Opinions towards the armed forces and its leaders have improved combined with the already established importance of the British war myth meant that whilst historically military leaders had been just as culpable as politicians, this balance is shifting. The military have made great efforts to improve the public's conception of them; this has been reflected by the respondents in this project. Politicians, not military leaders are at the centre of the public conceptions of justifications for war. The dominant memory frame is being applied to the memorial in front of them. This physical embodiment of wartime sacrifice draws out a critical engagement with war and conflict itself but also with those who are seen to bring it about.

6.4 Research context – Looking forwards and back

What this project looks to contribute to the field is a greater understanding of the role of factors such as extra-territorial heritage and civil-military relations in British visitors' transnational experiences in Ypres. I have utilised two sites with somewhat conflicting ideologies, and vastly different histories. The In Flanders Fields Museum is often seen to be representative of cosmopolitan memory culture and Tyne Cot Cemetery is one of the most iconic representations of the war effort for Britain and The Commonwealth. I have explored

these how the experiences of the visitors, at these sites, layer with the pre-existing understanding of what the conflict is and what it means to them. I demonstrate the continued importance of the prevalent national myth in their considerations for the conflict and the fact that, for now, cosmopolitan memory and the dissolution of national boundaries are not something that British tourists are ready to embrace.

Just as the above paragraphs have attempted to demonstrate the strengths and value of this project, the limitations are also an important consideration. The methodological choices for this study have allowed it to access a relatively large number of participants in the time available for data collection and allowed for a level of depth with each. To achieve both, there must be compromise. Therefore, I would encourage others to investigate these sites that clearly affect their visitors with the focus allowed by focused studies at either end of the spectrum of research methodology. Additionally, if I had been aware of the role that civil-military relations would take in this thesis, then having some prepared questions to further discuss these themes with the visitors would have been a valuable addition. But the role of these civil-military relations at war cemeteries and sites of remembrance is, I believe a bountiful avenue of research that could uncover much about the visitor experience.

A point to highlight here is the discourse surrounding First World War remembrance and heritage sites. It has been argued that these sites seek to 'enlighten and uplift' rather than to focus on dark aspects such as violence and death (Vanneste & Winter 2018, p.443). Part of this can be seen in the design philosophy for the CWGC. During the design process, decisions were made with an effort to 'uplift' and provide a sense of peace and homeliness as demonstrated in Chapter 5. Additionally, the importance of the idea of extra-territorial heritage that has been demonstrated by this study, shows the further function if remembrance sites, rather than just an association with death. By looking beyond individual deaths, and elevating the fallen to a collective sacrifice, visitors are able to impart a degree of separation from tangible death and violence.

In the In Flanders Fields Museum however, face to face experiences of death and violence are an important part of their cosmopolitan message. As such, 'dark tourism' continues to be an important part of what they provide to their visitors. These aspects of the museum have been shown to elicit responses from visitors, and whilst they make no effort to draw in visitors with promises of violence and death, it is an important part of the

demonstration of their message. In the museum, violence is a part of war that cannot be forgotten. On reflection this distinction between the two sites makes sense, one was designed to soothe a grieving nation and highlight the collective sacrifice of the nation, whereas the other focuses on the horrors of war. This could lead to further research surrounding the importance of 'darker' visitor experiences and motivations at First World War remembrance and heritage sites. Stone (2013, p.312) stated in 2013 that the 'blunt categorisation of all war-related tourism as 'dark tourism' is coming to be seen as a misconception.' This study has demonstrated that claim and shown how there can be a wide variance in sites, even in a close geographical proximity.

Scholars such as Iles (2008; 2011) and Caroline Winter (2008; 2009; 2011; 2015) have established that In Ypres and Western Flanders the majority of modern visitors attend to honour fallen soldiers as individuals, rather than as national actors. This study builds on but also complicates this understanding of the role of national feeling in tourist experiences at Ypres. While its findings align with the conclusions of Iles (2008, p.180) in saying that the Western Front is 'certainly conducive for British visitors to reaffirm their heritage and feel pride in the specific contributions of their ancestors', this thesis has also demonstrated that this manifests not in celebrations of, or even feelings of nationalism. Such antagonistic understandings of remembrance find no home in Ypres. National framings of memory remain, however, alongside strong feelings of national identity. Whilst a number of the respondents may not like what Britain may represent, contemporarily or historically, they still feel that its history is their history.

Caroline Winter, in her 2015 article about ritual remembrance at Tyne Cot stated:

While some national preferences were evident, it was also clear that national affiliation was not the primary criteria through which tourists shared the ritual of Tyne Cot. This is not meant to suggest that the sacrifice of those nations whose countrymen lie in the cemetery is lessened, but rather that the sharing of ritual acts heightens the global experience of war, thus creating a cosmopolitan memory as Levy and Sznajder (2002) suggest.

In many ways, the findings of this research project support Winter's findings. On the surface, national affiliation was not preoccupying the thoughts of the visitor's experience. When

asked if their time in Ypres had made them reflect on their nationality, they often mentioned that it had not been on their mind. Most participants were advocates of shared remembrance and the 'sharing of ritual acts' that Winter describes. She is also correct in her suggestions that these shared experiences heighten the global experience of the war, which the respondents in this thesis highlight time and time again. There are a number of themes present that could be identified as being cosmopolitan, such as collective suffering and the unnecessary violence that war brings. However, the entrenched memory culture prevents celebrations of a borderless memory. The visitors place a lot of value on the existence and history of a defined British identity, and as a result on British memory. But by moving beyond antagonistic understandings of the conflict, meaningful transnational exchange is taking place.

Proponents of agonistic memory have criticised the tendency of European cosmopolitan war museums to script 'a strong memory narrative that aims at closing debate and controversy' (Berger et al 2021, p.104; Cento Bull & Hansen 2016, p.393). Through their analysis of the In Flanders Fields Museum, among others, these authors observe the importance placed on multi-perspectivity and its ability to demonstrate to the visitors the fact that a variety of perspectives on historical events are common (Berger et al 2021, p.104). Similarly, Rowley (2023, p263) suggests that this depoliticization of individual experiences at the In Flanders Fields Museum further encourages the 'lions led by donkeys' aspect of the British national myth. The respondents in this study have reflected the importance placed on multi-perspectivity, engaging with individual stories. However, as mentioned throughout the thesis, national definitions remain important in British visitors' conceptions of the First World War. The multi-perspectivity that British visitors conceive is one that acknowledges the importance of different national perspectives on the conflict. However, the boundaries between these national experiences remain clear. They can be layered, shared and integrated effectively in transnational museum displays, but they remain distinct for visitors. This suggests a disconnect between the museum's ideal of a multi-perspectival, cosmopolitan experience and perhaps the one that its visitors are coming away with. This then begs the question, can agonistic interventions help bridge this disconnect?

Berger et al (2021, p.105) want to contribute to a 're-politicisation of memory discourses about war in contemporary societies.' The agonistic movement wishes to utilise

this politicisation as a tool against the 'growing success of the antagonistic mode of remembering', which it claims cosmopolitanism has failed to curtail (Cento Bull & Hansen 2016, p.394). Perhaps this 're-politicisation' of war memory and the establishment of a 'conflicting consensus' in which opposing political ideas can have open discussions about their accounts of the past can be more conducive to challenging British visitors' conceptions of their own memory (Cento Bull & Clarke 2020, p.5). Whilst important boundaries imparted by feelings of identity, shared history and a 'shared self-awareness' remain, cosmopolitan memory is unlikely to make a significant impact on the way British people remember the First World War. Therefore, further studies need to observe these 'agonistic interventions' in action and view how they may more effectively negotiate the entrenched memory culture that visitors bring with them.

The potential of the study of civil-military relations in alignment with war memory provides a wealth of opportunities for interesting research. Whilst scholars such as Danilova (2015) have explored the interplay of civil-military relations and commemoration on the national scale, empirical studies focusing on its impacts on everyday commemorative activities could provide useful insight in a number of contexts. How do shifts in geopolitics impact these ideas of the justifications for war? For example, in this study, respondents often pointed to the Ukraine war when vocalising their opinions on loss and war in general. There is a wealth of potential interplay between memory scholars and those that focus on the relationship between society and the armed forces. Whenever there has been a war, there have been soldiers that paid the price, soldiers that can be commemorated (or forgotten). Undoubtedly contemporary understandings of what a soldier is and the standing of the armed forces in society will impact if and how these individual combatants are remembered. Opening up this potential field of research has been one of the key contributions of this thesis. Seeing this relationship explored in different geographical, chronological and political contexts could expand upon the preliminary analysis presented in this thesis in the context of one important memorial site.

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Museum Questionnaire

- 1) To what extent do you feel connected to the First World War?
- 2) Did the Museum meet your expectations?
- 3) Do you think that the Museum successfully incorporates the perspectives of all the combatant nations?
- 4) Do you think that nations from different sides of the conflict should be remembered together in integrated exhibits as they are in the museum?
- 5) Do you feel that the Museum is thought provoking?
- 6) Do you feel that the Museum provides a similar experience to your other commemorative activities in Ypres?

Appendix 2 – Field Questionnaire

- 1) To what extent do you feel a personal connection to the First World War?
- 2) Has your visit to the region met your expectations so far?
- 3) How important is your nationality to you?
- 4) Do you feel that it is important for British tourists to visit Ypres, or the Western Front in general?
- 5) Have your experiences here caused you to reflect on your nationality at all?
- 6) Do you think that remembrance sites should be areas for reconciliation between the nations involved in the conflict?

Appendix 3 – Modified Museum Questionnaire

- 1) To what extent do you feel connected to the First World War?
- 2) Did the Museum meet your expectations?
- 3) Do you think that the Museum successfully incorporates the perspectives of all the combatant nations?
- 4) Do you think that nations from different sides of the conflict should be remembered together in integrated exhibits as they are in the museum?
- 5) Do you feel that the Museum is thought provoking?
- 6) How important is your nationality to you?
- 7) Have your experiences here caused you to reflect on your nationality at all?
- 8) Do you feel that the Museum provides a similar experience to your other commemorative activities in Ypres?
- 9) Do you think that remembrance sites should be areas for reconciliation between the nations involved in the conflict?

Appendix 4 – Museum Curator Questions

- 1) What is your position and how long have you been working at the In Flanders Fields Museum?
- 2) What would be the ideal experience that you would like tourists to take away from the museum?
- 3) Do you think the museum successfully balances the national and transnational?
- 4) What do you think about the balance of national and transnational throughout Ypres?
- 5) Do you think the significant presence of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission gives British tourists a sense of home away from home?