The development of British First World War remembrance on the battlefield from 1914 to 1929

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Abstract

This thesis explores the role of Western Front battlefield landscapes between 1914 and 1929 in shaping memories of the First World War. It asks who visited the battlefields during the conflict, what impressions they formed, how they communicated these to others, and what influence these initial views had on post-war conceptions of the battlefield landscape. It explores how post-war visitors were guided to and through the battlefields, both by guidebooks and by tour operators, and how these sought to influence individual experiences. It examines how individual visitors sometimes went outside the framework of tours and published itineraries, and made their own attempts to connect with personal memories enshrined in the landscape.

Section A of the thesis examines the itineraries offered by published guidebooks – firstly in the well-known Michelin guidebooks translated from the French, and secondly in the less widely-recognised British-authored guidebooks of the 1920s. Section B explores writing about the battlefields during the conflict itself, both through short articles in an Anglo-American periodical, and through full-length wartime books published by four influential authors – Rudyard Kipling, Edith Wharton, John Masefield and Harry Lauder. Section C turns to the experiences of individual travellers, and the extent to which they followed or departed from the itineraries and experiences to which these published sources directed them.

The thesis argues that over the period 1914-29 there was a gradual but significant shift in what visitors focussed on within the battlefield landscape

as it was tidied and reconstructed – a shift from battlefields themselves towards cemeteries and memorials. However, it argues that alongside this trend, visitors experienced a growing urgency, notwithstanding the clearing of battlefields, to find moments of reconnection with an authentic battlefield landscape which was seen as enshrining deeply personal memories. It shows that for veterans, this often involved connecting with sites which held real wartime memories, whilst for non-combatants it was much more about connecting with a landscape of the imagination. In particular, this thesis challenges the conventional narrative that the most important changes to landscape in the post-war period were the construction of cemeteries and memorials, arguing that just as important in the formation of cultural memory were the organic changes to the wider battlefield landscape.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

Imagination and memory are but one thing, which for divers considerations hath divers names.

Hobbes, *Leviathan*[1]

This thesis is about memory and its interaction with landscape. People frequently imbue landscapes with meanings, interpretations and explanations which convey the memories they attach to them; sometimes these memories are articulated in a building or memorial within the landscape, while at other times they are implicit. The notion of landscape being associated with memory is well-established in historiography, most famously in Simon Schama's *Landscape and Memory*;[2] in this thesis, the analysis will be extended specifically to the landscapes of battle in the First World War.

There is another more subtle interplay of landscape with memory, however, which is not about what humans do to their landscapes, but rather what landscapes do to them. Landscapes are not static – they change, both organically and in response to what is imposed on them. Landscapes can both express and conceal meaning – put simply, what is visible in a landscape at a particular time and place determines what is available to memory, and also what is hidden (or at least less accessible). To understand fully the interaction between landscape and memory, one must examine both what humans do to their landscapes, and what those

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[1] Tuck, Richard (ed.), *Hobbes: Leviathan* (Cambridge, CUP, 1996), p. 16; also cited in Fussell, Paul, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford, OUP, 2000), p. 205.
[2] Schama, Simon, *Landscape and Memory* (New York, Knapf, 1995).

landscapes offer up to the human gaze. This thesis will consider both sides of this equation in relation to the landscape of First World War battlefields between 1914 and 1929.

Central to this thesis is the notion that memory is malleable.[3] In the quote above, Thomas Hobbes reflected on the theme of memory in *Leviathan.* Paul Fussell, who cited Hobbes more than 300 years later in his own seminal work *The Great War and Modern Memory*, included another even bolder reflection on the same theme from the novelist Wright Morris, lecturing at Princeton University in 1971: 'Anything processed by memory is fiction.'[4] Since its publication in 1975, Fussell's work has been debated, criticised and finally largely refuted. His approach to the war was driven more by literary criticism than by historical analysis; he recognised as much himself in an 'Afterword' written for the 25th anniversary edition of his book, acknowledging that those expecting a work of history 'encountered something else: a book in which historical data was called on to enhance the elegiac effect.'[5] Elegy first, and history second - this certainly explains those sweeping ahistorical statements that memory is synonymous with the imagined or fictional world of the novels, poems and plays on which Fussell based much of his thesis. If by contrast one foregrounds history, then few serious academics would accept such statements about memory and fiction as robust. Nonetheless, Fussell made an early attempt at academic analysis, however flawed, into

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[3] On the malleability of memory, see also Winter, Jay, *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Centur*y (London, Yale University Press, 2006), p. 4; and Thacker, Toby, *British Culture and the First World War: Experience, Representation and Memory* (London, Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 249.
[4] 1971 lecture cited in Fussell, *Great War*, p. 205.
[5] Ibid., p. 338; from the 'Afterword' of the 25th anniversary edition, published in 2000.

how memories of the First World War were shaped from 1918 onwards.[6] Lurking behind unsubstantiated aphorisms were important principles which have underpinned the study of what has come to be called our *cultural memory* of the conflict ever since. These include not only the well-established principle that memory is incomplete and partial, but also that individuals and wider societies are highly selective in what they remember. Further, precisely which memories are thus selected is influenced and even changed quite radically over time by the prevailing culture and environment – including the physical landscape - in which remembrance takes place. Put crudely, what was remembered as the First World War in 2019 looked very different from what was remembered as The Great War in 1919. This does not make either set of memories into fiction; but both are selective views of the conflict, and to understand them we need to understand better the processes and pressures which underpinned their selection.

Writing nearly forty years after Fussell, David Reynolds explored this theme in his work *The Long Shadow*, arguing that the First World War has been reshaped and reinterpreted in Britain throughout the twentieth century, and that British interpretations have differed markedly from those in other countries. Reflecting on the memory of the conflict as it approached its centenary, he argued that shifts in perspective were ongoing: ‘Its vexed interpretation is wrapped up with many ongoing debates, including the United Kingdom’s troubled relationship with the European Union.’[7] In forty years,

[6] Though he was not the first. See also, for example, Falls, Cyril, *War Books* (London, Lionel Leventhal Limited, 1989 [first published 1930]).
[7] Reynolds, David, *The Long Shadow: The Great War and the Twentieth Century* (London, Simon & Schuster Ltd, 2013), p. 421.

the debate has come a long way from the sweeping generalisations of Fussell; but the constant has been a recognition that memory is malleable and needs to be analysed and contextualised in order to be understood. This introduction will examine the historiography of memory of the First World War, and will set out how this thesis builds on it. It will consider the perceived roles of modernism and tradition in cultural memory of the war, before exploring the existing scholarship on key elements of commemoration: memorials and graveyards; participants and rituals; and topography. It will explain the contribution which this thesis makes, in particular by suggesting that the landscapes of battle on the Western Front have been undervalued as an influence on memory. Such landscapes have been seen primarily as a canvas on which post-war generations inscribed their memories through cemeteries, memorials and other commemorative activity. That is certainly true, and this thesis will extend and develop that analysis; but it will also argue that the landscapes themselves, changing over time from an era of wartime detritus to post-war restoration, have shaped those who visited them and influenced what is accessible to memory.

Modernism or tradition?

A key debate in the analysis of memory of the war has been about modernism and tradition, and this frequently draws on literary or artistic sources for evidence. It asks on the one hand whether the conflict represented a decisive break with the past and an acceleration in growth of the pre-war seeds of modernism, a terminal fracture which led to the creation

of a distinctive, new and modern set of memories; or on the other if the devastation caused people instead to look back to traditional tropes from the past as a way of offering comfort and meaning in the face of a conflict which seemed to deny both. Paul Fussell, the title of whose work contains the phrase ‘modern memory’, positioned himself firmly in the former camp, believing that the war instigated a seismic shift not just in the way war was remembered, but in a more general understanding of the world:

> I am saying that there seems to be one dominating form of modern understanding; that it is essentially ironic; and that it originates largely in the application of mind and memory to the events of the Great War.[8]

Irony may seem a light term for such a conflict, but Fussell explored the concept in detail, beginning with Thomas Hardy’s *Satires of Circumstance*. This collection of poems was published in late 1914 and was largely written before the war began, but used situational irony to point up discrepancies between what people expected to happen, and the hand that the world actually dealt them. In doing this, Fussell believed that Hardy unwittingly provided ‘a vision, and action and a tone’ wholly suitable to the First World War.[9] He went further:

[8] Fussell, *Great War*, p. 35. Hynes later made a similar argument about a radical break with the past; see Hynes, Samuel, *A War Imagined: The Great War and English Culture* (London, Bodley Head, 1990), p. ix & pp. 235-253.
[9] Fussell, *Great War*, p. 6.

> Every war is ironic because every war is worse than expected. Every war constitutes an irony of situation because its means are so melodramatically disproportionate to its ends.[10]

Here Fussell indulged in more of those sweeping statements which have provoked such criticism from historians since – is *every* war really worse than expected? Do *all* wars in fact use means out of all proportion to their ends? At the very least, these are questions for debate, but Fussell presented them as statements of fact. He did, however, address the obvious question which arises from them: if all wars are ironic, why was the First World War rather than some previous conflict the one which created this ironic form of understanding?

Fussell offered two answers. The first was anchored firmly in the landscape of war: the specific circumstances of the conflict, its scale, scope and geography, amplified the opportunity for irony. The relatively static nature of the front lines on the Western Front created a war-ravaged landscape which could be ironically contrasted with the rural idyll of home which was being defended.[11] For over four years, the battle lines of France and Belgium were such a short distance from home that British men could travel comparatively speedily from one to the other, heightening the sense of irony.[12] And the industrialisation of the war meant that in Fussell's eyes the military effort expended was in stark contrast to the futility of the objectives pursued, at

[10] Ibid., p. 7.
[11] Ibid., pp. 235-9.
[12] Ibid., pp. 64-9.

least on a day-by-day basis.[13] The second factor was what Fussell referred to as a pre-war innocence, a belief that the Edwardian world prior to 1914 was an idyllic one where certainties about life were intact and there was a relentless post-Enlightenment trend towards progress.[14] The evidence he used to support this position was largely linguistic – he cited the innocence of the language used in early wartime propaganda, or the heightened diction used to describe the early battles, or even just the innocence of certain words used pre-war which he asserted were more loaded in its aftermath (such as erection or ejaculation).[15]

So for Fussell, the situational irony of the war itself, amplified by its contrast with the perceived innocence of the pre-1914 world, led to a fracturing of cultural memory and the creation of a mode of understanding which was essentially new, modern and ironic in character. Over the last 40 years Fussell's work has been challenged. Although it is still widely referenced on the subject of memory and the First World War, this is principally as a major piece of late twentieth century scholarship in this field. In terms of its argument, most consider it largely obsolete. The most thorough-going rebuttal was from Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson in 1994.[16] They asserted that Fussell's argument was fundamentally flawed. First, there is scant historical evidence for an Edwardian pre-war idyll – even if the world was idyllic for a comparatively small group of the well-off (and that is debatable),

[13] Ibid., pp. 7-18.
[14] Ibid., pp. 18-27.
[15] Ibid., p. 23.
[16] Prior, Robin and Wilson, Trevor, 'Paul Fussell at War', *War in History*, vol. 1, no. 1, March 1994, pp. 63-80.

there was grinding poverty, poor housing and disease for many, in a society which had its fair share of smut and pornography.[17] Secondly, Fussell's focus on the Western Front to the exclusion of all other theatres of conflict gave a partial view of the war, and ignored other experiences (such as the air war or the home front) which might have challenged his underpinning theme of futility. Thirdly, in his analysis of the ironies driven by landscape, Fussell assumed that the predominant experience of men on the Western Front was in the trenches, and that this 'troglodyte' existence fuelled ironic perceptions.[18] This was not the case, with soldiers often spending months away from the trenches in between spells of a few weeks near the front line.[19] Finally, although the men who went to war in 1914 constituted the most literate army in British history, this did not make them an army of soldier-poets. By focussing much of his analysis on a small group of highly literate and literary men such as Siegfried Sassoon and Edmund Blunden, many of whom were officers, Fussell presented a very partial view of the war.[20]

Prior and Wilson's critique was thorough, and represents the dominant historical view of Fussell's work today. It is worth reflecting, however, on the focus of their critique. Some of it, certainly, is based on Fussell's factual errors – about the amount of time men spent in the trenches, or about the

[17] Reynolds also takes issue with the notion of an Edwardian 'golden age'; see Reynolds, *Shadow*, p. 264.
[18] Fussell, *Great War,* pp. 36-74.
[19] Prior, 'Paul Fussell', p. 67.
[20] And this despite the fact that just a few years previously, Corelli Barnett had cautioned against just such a partial view of the conflict, dominated by literary soldiers. See Barnett, Corelli, *The Collapse of British Power* (London, Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1972), pp. 428-30.

basic chronology of the conflict. Other elements of the critique are based not on error, but on incompleteness – there is no suggestion, for example, that Sassoon and Blunden's view of the war was invalid, rather that it was but one of many and not representative of the whole experience.[21] This thesis does not intend to form a defence or apology for Fussell's work. However, it will argue that we must guard against throwing out the historical baby with the literary critical bathwater. Fussell's work on landscape raised important questions which have not been comprehensively examined since. For example, in talking about the scenic impressions created by the conflict, he referenced Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War,* a book in which the famous soldier-poet tried to express his experience of the conflict: 'The slow pace at which the soldier of those days had to move and the long months spent in the same areas, helped to engrave the picture on the mind.'[22] Fussell signalled a link between the landscape of war and the formation of memory. This may not be exclusively the landscape of the trenches, nor indeed the landscape as viewed by the soldier-poet, which is largely where Fussell positioned his argument. A more complete analysis of the interaction between battlefield landscapes and the formation of memory is necessary - an analysis which to date has not been comprehensively undertaken, and which will form a key part of this thesis.

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[21] More recently, historians have examined the impact of other less well-known or 'middlebrow' writers on the memory of the conflict. See Bracco, Rosa, *Merchants of Hope: British Middlebrow Writers and the First World War 1919-1939* (Oxford, Berg, 1993); and Cecil, Hugh, *The Flower of Battle: British Fiction Writers of the First World War* (London, Secker & Warburg, 1995).

[22] Blunden, Edmund, *Undertones of War*; cited in Fussell, *Great War*, p. 220.

Fussell's work identified landscape as an important mediator of memory. Two decades later, another seminal work on the formation of memory was Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*,[23] which seemingly took a radically different approach. On first reading at least, Winter appears not to be looking forwards to the creation of a new and pervasive modern memory, but looking back and reaching into the traditions and motifs of the past. In his introduction, he wrote:

> The Great War brought the search for an appropriate language of loss to the centre of cultural and political life. In this search, older motifs took on new meanings and new forms …This vigorous mining of eighteenth and nineteenth-century images and metaphors to accommodate expressions of mourning is one central reason why it is unacceptable to see the Great War as the moment when 'modern memory' replaced something else [24]

Far from looking forward to a new language of modernism, Winter saw the war as instigating a look backwards to older, traditional tropes. He explicitly rejected 'modern memory' as a legacy of the conflict (his use of this wording from Fussell's title being no coincidence).[25] This contrast to Fussell was driven by Winter's belief that remembrance of the war was essentially consolatory in focus. He identified three key terms: 'bereavement' which is a condition occasioned by the loss of a loved one; 'grief' which is a state of mind that develops in response to that condition; and 'mourning' which is a

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[23] Winter, Jay, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge, CUP, 1995).
[24] Ibid., p. 5.
[25] Winter is not unique in this. In his book on children's literature of the First World War, for example, Michael Paris also argues for considerable continuity with pre-war tropes. See Paris, Michael, *Over The Top: The Great War and Juvenile Literature in Britain* (London, Praeger, 2004), pp. xii-xiii & xxi.

process of expressing that grief and hopefully moving to a state where some form of consolation is possible.[26] Commemoration, both collectively (such as at war memorials) and privately, accompanied consolation as a stage of the mourning process. It was necessary for imagery, metaphor and language to assist in this consolatory and commemorative process, and whilst the tropes of modernism might have lent themselves well to *describing* the war, it was only the older and more traditional motifs which could be mined for these *mourning* purposes.[27] Winter explored the tools which aided the mourning process, and showed how they drew on tradition. He explored the notion of 'fictive kinship', in which people came together to support each other through that process, forming close (and pseudo-familial) groupings which helped to fill the gaps left by the losses of war. He discussed the support network offered by the Red Cross in this capacity. After the war, battlefield pilgrimage was often conducted in a group setting, further cementing these fictive kinship groups. He discussed how war memorials and the ritual around them became a way of helping people to grieve and move on, drawing on existing religious and classical motifs in their design.[28]

Winter was not alone in seeing a reaching out for traditional motifs from the past. Writing in 2007, Stefan Goebel also described people across Europe engaging in what he terms 'temporal anchoring':

[26] Winter, *Sites*, p. 29.
[27] Brophy and Partridge note that men at the front during the war also reached for the familiar as a form of reassurance in an unfamiliar world, including through the adoption and adaption of slang and music hall songs. See Brophy, John and Partridge, Eric, *The Long Trail: Soldiers' Songs and Slang 1914-1918* (London, Sphere Books, 1969), particularly pp. 22-3.
[28] Winter, *Sites*. Kinship and support networks are discussed in detail in Chapter 2, and memorials in Chapter 4.

Looking to a misty past in order to understand the war-torn present, they enveloped recollections of the First World War in an imagery derived from interpretations of native, pre-industrial history, particularly the Middle Ages.[29]

Like Winter he saw the role of remembrance as less about recalling the conflict (as Fussell would argue) and more as consolatory, seeking both to understand the war and help manage grief. In Goebel's analysis, it was medieval tropes which offered such consolation, and he examined how these were adopted and adapted in Germany and Britain, taking into account the nations' differing journeys during and after the war.[30] If Fussell's challenge is to re-examine the role of landscape in the formation of memory, then Winter and Goebels suggest that this thesis needs to examine the extent to which landscape functioned as a form of consolation for those who visited it during or after the war.[31] Subsequent chapters will explore this theme, and will argue that consolation is just one of many roles which the landscape played for battlefield visitors – grieving and 'closure' (to use a modern term) were not the only functions of battlefield landscapes, and visitors had many and varied reasons for their journeys to them.

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[29] Goebel, Stefan, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War and Remembrance in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940* (Cambridge, CUP, 2006), p. 1.
[30] See also Carden-Coyne, Ana, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism and the First World War* (Oxford, OUP, 2009), pp. 22-58, for the use of classical motifs as a way of providing meaning and consolation in the face of the war's destructive power.
[31] Sherman also looks at the role of landscape and place as a mediator for memory in French commemorative practice. See Sherman, Daniel J., *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 215-234.

Winter's work, like Fussell's, has been the subject of subsequent criticism. His argument rested on the fact that a large proportion of the population was affected by grief, necessitating widespread use of motifs of consolation. Adrian Gregory has pointed out that whilst the loss of human life in the war was terrible and unprecedented, the vast majority of fighting men survived. Using death data and estimates of numbers of close relatives, Gregory concluded that whilst everyone in Britain might have known someone who died, it was actually about 10% of the population who lost a *close* relative – a staggering statistic in itself, but one which places them in a firm minority.[32] The second major criticism of Winter's approach is that it assumed a broadly consistent grieving process amongst those who were bereaved. This is challenged by Alex King, who suggested that memorials could mean different things to different people, with more or less value as part of the mourning process. Indeed, he went further, saying that in some cases:

> Commemoration … played on the pathological aspects of grief, and set out deliberately to prolong them, in order to improve, morally and politically, post-war society.[33]

Winter acknowledged that commemoration could have a political role, reminding people of wartime sacrifices and urging them to behave in a moral way which enhanced and improved society. But he saw this as sitting alongside and flowing from the consolatory role. In King's analysis,

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[32] Gregory, Adrian, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge, CUP, 2008), pp. 252-3.
[33] King, A, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford, Berg, 1998), p. 221.

commemoration played a very different role – far from consoling people, the deliberate prolongation of grief kept the pain of sacrifice in the public eye as a spur to greater civic responsibility. That the political element of remembrance might be as strong, or stronger, than the impulse to console was explored by Bob Bushaway. He argued that the upsurge of revolution and nationalism which occurred in some combatant nations in the post-war period was contained in Britain, and that commemoration played its part in this. The rituals of remembrance which emerged in the inter-war years in Britain:

> resulted in the denial of any political critique of the Great War or of post-war society from the perspective of popular expectation or aspiration which, elsewhere, took the form of revolution or nationalism.[34]

This is a simplistic analysis – many factors besides commemorative practice influenced the relative social stability of Great Britain in the inter-war period including the rise of the moderate left, coalition government, and electoral reform. But taken as it stands, Bushaway's statement goes further than King, seeing commemoration not just as encouraging people to respect the dead by forging a better society, but implicitly or by design, seeking to circumscribe people's ability to challenge the civic and social norms. Whether such a model is imposed from above or grows from below out of the expectations of the majority (or indeed some combination of the two) is open

[34] Bushaway, Bob, 'Name upon name: The Great War and Remembrance' in Porter, Roy (ed.), *Myths of the English* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1993), p. 137.

to debate. Bushaway himself sees 'Establishment' imposition fashioning it, arguing towards the conclusion of his essay that:

> Through the annual act of remembrance the demons of discontent and disorder were purged and the mass of British society was denied access to a political critique of the war by Kipling's universal motto 'lest we forget'.[35]

It seems fairly clear that, for Bushaway at least, it was establishment figures such as Kipling who restricted the discourses of remembrance open to the wider mass of society. Mark Connelly has explored the theme of who controlled remembrance in the context of a specific locale: East London, which encompassed both the well-to-do 'Establishment' (in the City of London) and the East End poor of Poplar and Stepney. Like Bushaway, he saw commemorative activity as having a strongly unifying force, but from a much more nuanced perspective. Talking about the evolution of commemoration in the 1920s, he wrote:

> The Armistice message was thus one of teamwork and hierarchy. Everyone had a place and it was wise not to question the political make-up of England, after all the sacrifices which had been made to protect that very form of existence.[36]

As with Bushaway, motifs of remembrance shored up the status quo of English society, but here teamwork as well as hierarchy was involved,

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[35] Ibid., p.161

[36] Connelly, Mark, *The Great War, Memory and Ritual: Commemoration in the City and East London, 1916–1939* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2002), pp. 172-3. See also Ceadel, Martin, *Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945: the defining of a faith* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980).

indicating that this was driven both from below and above. Multiple agendas were in play, and there was no single unified voice or commemorative purpose. As an example, Connelly reflected on the rise of pacifism in the 1930s, and how this occupied a significant place alongside the existing commemorative motifs. He observed that in 1935 Bethnal Green changed its war memorial to a 'peace memorial' apparently without much opposition, suggesting a degree of openness to new or competing ideas of commemoration.[37] The core question posed by all these historians is who controls commemoration, and to what end. This thesis will show that several people interpreted battlefield landscapes and articulated their commemorative meaning: guidebook authors, wartime writers, soldiers, non-combatants and private travellers. It will suggest that they all had their own, sometimes conflicting, perspectives; and will analyse the interplay between these, and how they changed with location and time.

Dan Todman's *The Great War: Myth and Memory* appeared in 2005, and like Connelly admonished against simplistic interpretations of the formation of memory and the purpose of commemorative activity.[38] He reviewed the evolution of British memory of the First World War until the end of the twentieth century. The existing view had been of monolithic shifts in attitude to and memory of the First World War as the century progressed – from the idea of sacrifice in a just cause in the 1920s; through to a desire for peace in the 1930s; followed by a sense of futility once the war was viewed through

[37] Connelly, *Great War*, p. 184.
[38] Todman, D, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (Hambledon Continuum, London, 2014).

the lens of the 1939-45 conflict; with that sense of futility being amplified from the 1960s onwards as the 'lions led by donkeys' critique of the Allied generals took hold.[39] Todman pointed out that these shifts were not as monolithic as they seemed, with debate and ambiguity being maintained even once an apparently dominant viewpoint had been reached. For example, the tendency had been to view the production of the play *Oh What a Lovely War!* in the early 1960s as the manifestation of a seismic shift towards the anti-establishment view of the conflict, cementing the reputation of military leaders as bungling fools.[40] In fact, Todman pointed out that public reaction at the time was as much about nostalgia for the war and its songs (heavily featured in the stage play) as it was about anti-war feeling. It was not until the 1980s, and the screening of *The Monocled Mutineer*,[41] that the trope of incompetent leadership could be said to attract little or no questioning.[42]

Todman built on Connelly's idea that rather than a single view of commemoration and memory of the war, memory of the conflict shifted over time. Furthermore, at any given point in time there might be multiple voices speaking and multiple perspectives in play – whilst one or more might dominate, we cannot fully understand the evolution of cultural memory

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[39] See in particular Clark, Alan, *The Donkeys* (London, Hutchinson & Co Publishers Ltd, 1961).
[40] Littlewood, and Theatre Workshop, *Oh What a Lovely War!* The stage play was first developed in 1963; the film version (*Oh! What a Lovely War*) appeared in 1969.
[41] Bleasdale et al, *The Monocled Mutineer*. The TV series was first screened by the BBC in 1986.
[42] Todman, *Great War*. Chapter 3 covers changing attitudes towards the military leaders, while the narrative of futility and the response of the church is explored in Chapter 4. For more on the development of this and other tropes, and their challenge by more recent historians, see Badsey, Stephen, *The British Army in Battle and Its Image 1914-1918* (London, Continuum, 2009), pp. 37-54.

without recognising a spectrum of views. This thesis will explore multiple views of battlefield landscapes on the Western Front, examining both how 'Establishment' figures like Kipling sought to create a coherent narrative of the battlefield landscape, and also how individual travellers themselves reacted to those landscapes, often in widely differing ways. It will argue that it was, in fact, perfectly feasible for individual visitors to arrive with competing or even conflicting impulses. The 'pilgrim' engaged in a journey of consolation might at one point be focussed on a grave or battle site with a particular connection to a loved one; the same traveller might, just minutes later, shift into a 'tourist' mode and buy postcards, sip tea at a café, attend a concert or watch a firework display. Recognising that multiple perspectives characterised experience of the battlefields, and that competing perspectives could be held by the same people at the same time, creates a new understanding of what visiting the battlefields meant to people during and immediately after the conflict.

Timothy Ashplant and colleagues categorised existing studies of cultural memory along largely personal and political lines, but argued that historians need to rise beyond such structural divisions if they are to understand the evolving nature of memory:

> in order to escape the dichotomies and polarizations analysed here, it is necessary to theorize the inter-relations between the elements which have been separated out in these competing models.[43]

[43] Ashplant, T. G., Dawson, Graham and Roper, Michael 'The politics of war memory and commemoration: contexts, structures and dynamics', in Ashplant, T. G., Dawson, Graham

For Ashplant, memory could only be fully understood if one examined how different voices related to each other and to the circumstances in which they were expressed. More challengingly, one must also consider what happens to the strands of memory which are spoken quietly, or even not at all, as the pressures of the environment dictate. The nature of memory is determined not only by what is remembered but also by what is, or appears to have been, forgotten. The argument was put more clearly by David Cannadine in his essay on war, death, grief and mourning in modern Britain. He noted the danger of basing an analysis of changing attitudes towards the First World War purely on the best-documented reactions, not least as they tend to be those of the socially privileged. He cautioned against assuming that different elements of the memory of war, death, grief and mourning would all necessarily tell the same story:

> the history of dying, of death, of grief, of mourning, of bereavement, of funerals and of cemeteries are all distinct subjects, the relationship between which is at best complex and at worst obscure.[44]

Having examined the overall architecture of academic inquiry into cultural memory of the war, this chapter will now turn to a detailed consideration of five key aspects of memory which are investigated in this thesis: memorials, graveyards, participants, rituals and topography.

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and Roper, Michael (eds.), *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (Routledge, London, 2000), p. 12.

[44] Cannadine, David, 'War and death, grief and mourning in modern Britain' in Whaley, J. (ed.), *Mirrors of Mortality. Studies in the Social History of Death* (London, Europa Publications, 1981), p. 242.

Memorials and graveyards

There have been numerous studies of the evolution, construction and purpose of war memorials, both within the United Kingdom and on the landscapes of the Western Front. Some, such as Winter's work, set the evolution of memorials in the wider context of mourning and the formation of cultural memory of the war.[45] Others, such as King and Gregory, have analysed the development of memorials as physical objects, and the rituals which grew up around them.[46] At its most granular, research has focussed on the processes, people and pressures which shaped the creation of individual war memorials, as in Connelly's forensic study of commemoration in the City and East London.[47] Memorials were not an invention of the First World War. Bushaway looked back to earlier conflicts of the nineteenth century and the Boer War in particular, and found two key differences from First World War memorials.[48] First, earlier memorials tended to be rich in patriotism and focussed on communicating national morals and values as much as on commemorating the dead; following the First World War, the emphasis shifted to more supranational and spiritual values, with any sense of patriotism rooted firmly in the locality in which the memorial was constructed rather than the nation as a whole. Secondly, previous wars had tended to privilege the commemoration of groups of men, with individuals

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[45] Winter, *Sites.*
[46] King, *Memorials*; and Gregory, Adrian, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day 1919–1946* (Oxford, Berg, 1994).
[47] Connelly, *Great War.*
[48] Bushaway, 'Name upon name', p. 142.

being named only if they had performed particular acts of heroism, were senior in rank, or were (by First World War metrics) relatively small numbers of regular soldiers. The 'name upon name' of Bushaway's title to his essay reflects the significant change of emphasis to individual commemoration of vast numbers of volunteer or conscript soldiers which followed the First World War.

It is common to think of First World War memorials as developing in the 1920s, but as Connelly has pointed out many started to take shape during the war itself, particularly in 1916 after the battles of Jutland and the Somme.[49] Street shrines were one of the earliest manifestations, in which the names both of men serving and of those who died were memorialised in rolls of honour on the street or in the neighbourhood where they lived:

> the shrines reflected a desire to turn the sublime and abstract emotions of grief, pride and hope into tangible symbols; and the precedents and patterns set at this time provided the blueprint for the permanent memorials erected at the end of the war.[50]

Connelly's statement echoes Winter's theory of memorials forming a concrete expression of grief to assist in the mourning process, but the notion of a blueprint should not be taken too far. Street shrines largely faded after the war (though some remain, most notably in St Albans in Hertfordshire); and the majority of post-war memorials named only the dead rather than all

[49] Connelly, *Great War,* p. 25.
[50] Ibid., p. 25.

who served. Wartime commemoration may have set a tone, but did not set in stone the memorials of the future. Plans for larger memorials sometimes originated in the war too, but the majority of them took shape in the post-war years. Goebel has examined another example of wartime memorialisation – the exhibition.[51] France, Britain and Germany all mounted wartime exhibitions of military materiel and artefacts, including some captured from the enemy, to educate people about the conflict and to reflect the experience of participants. In Germany, such exhibitions tended to be militaristic in focus and commercial in organisation; while in Britain and France they usually focussed on notions of good citizenship and were more often privately run.[52] Despite these differences, Goebel highlights interesting parallels between the British and German experience, citing the examples of Tank Banks in Britain (which used touring tanks in major cities as a way of raising funds for the war) and iron nail memorials in Germany (in which citizens could hammer a nail into a wooden sculpture in return for making a donation). Both highlighted ideas of civic participation, and played on ideas of iron and endurance, some of which would become important in post-war commemoration.[53]

Many commentators have argued that, in the post-war period, key themes in memorialisation emerged, not least the privileging of the experience of the

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[51] Goebel, Stefan, 'Exhibitions', in Winter, Jay and Robert, Jean-Louis (eds.), *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914–1919 Volume 2: A Cultural History* (Cambridge, CUP, 2007), pp. 143–87.
[52] Ibid., p. 148. It is of course difficult to say how much official backing was behind such ostensibly private ventures. For more on the grey area between official and private propaganda, see the introduction to Section B of this thesis.
[53] Ibid., pp. 152-62.

bereaved over the experience of veterans themselves.[54] Connelly believed that a largely unified discourse rapidly emerged within church memorials:

> An amazing degree of homogeneity of approach among the churches can be seen, which led in turn to a remarkable consensus on the meaning and value of the war.[55]

This to some extent mirrors Bushaway's argument of a single dominant discourse which excludes or constrains dissenting views, and certainly the press coverage and contemporary commentary which Connelly and others cite shows a remarkable degree of consistency in describing memorials and the rituals which accompanied them, and in stressing the importance of the bereaved.[56] There are, however, three important caveats to this notion of homogeneous commemoration. First, one should not conclude that the homogeneity was simply imposed from above. Although the committees which created memorials inevitably tended to include church and civic leaders, these people were expected to be well in touch with the needs and views of ordinary people. In addition, as King has shown in his comprehensive study of British war memorials, there were plenty of examples of public consultation, sometimes leading to bitter dispute.[57] The pressure for homogeneity could come from below as much as from above. Secondly, the fact that there is great similarity between the basic physical form of some memorials need not equate to a homogeneity of interpretation.

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[54] See also Connelly, *Great War*, p. 48.
[55] Ibid., p. 74.
[56] Ibid., pp. 150-76.
[57] King, *Memorials*, pp. 86-105. Controversies over the commemorative policies of the Imperial War Graves Commission are covered in Longworth, *The Unending Vigil: The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (London, Constable,1967).

In fact, the comparative simplicity of many memorials permitted personal and alternative interpretations to flourish. King argued that war memorials 'were things which required sense to be made of them, offering opportunities for people to express the varied senses which they were making of the war and its aftermath.'[58] Far from imposing consensus about the meaning and value of war, memorials could permit multiple interpretations; if there was homogeneity, it was perhaps around the need and nature of memorialisation itself rather than the meaning of war. Finally, it is important to note that Connelly's assertion of homogeneity was about church memorials, and he identifies many other kinds – civic memorials, school memorials, workplace memorials, regimental memorials and of course the battlefield memorials on which this thesis will focus. Connelly examined examples such as the Gas Light and Coke Company memorial in Beckton or the London Society of East Anglians memorial at Liverpool Street station. It is not that the needs of the bereaved were absent from these memorials, but rather that their location in places associated with the fighting men themselves meant that they also stressed values of teamwork, camaraderie and comradeship. Their role 'as substitute grave or as a symbol of consolation was far less overt.'[59] However, the fact that these memorials were sometimes in private locations, behind workplace or school doors, perhaps explains why the discourses of teamwork and comradeship faded over time in comparison to those of sacrifice and loss which were more publicly visible. Some memorials erected by veterans were effectively 'tidied away' in the post-war period: for example,

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[58] King, *Memorials*, p. 12.
[59] Connelly, *Great War,* p. 91.

three crosses erected in memory of Durham Light Infantry soldiers on the Somme battlefield at the Butte de Warlencourt were removed in 1926 and given to three different churches in the Durham area.[60]

The dominant themes around memorials were loss, sacrifice and support for the bereaved; and this discourse became more pervasive as time went on. But although this may have been the loudest voice, it was never the only one – less public memorials often emphasised slightly different values, and the sheer simplicity of many memorials permitted multiple interpretations, irrespective of whether these interpretations were publicly voiced. This thesis will examine such varied reactions to memorials within the context of the battlefield landscapes of the Western Front. It will argue that visitors responded to memorials in different ways, but also that memorials themselves changed over time. Some memorials, especially in the war years and immediately afterwards, were improvised from battlefield detritus, offering a form of commemoration not dissimilar to Goebels' wartime exhibitions. Later in the 1920s, memorials became more formalised, but at the same time visitors sought harder for what they perceived as original and authentic relics of wartime activity. For some visitors, it was a portion of battlefield landscape rather than an edifice in marble or stone which became their focus for commemoration. It was not just the interpretation of a memorial which was in the eye of the beholder; visitors themselves could

[60] 'Somme crosses together in Durham after 80 years', http://www.culture24.org.uk/history-and-heritage/military-history/first-world-war/art38372, retrieved 12 September 2016.

determine their primary memorial site, and it was not always a formal physical structure.

The literature on the burial of war dead is smaller in scope than that on memorialisation. Cannadine considered wartime burials, and identified tensions between the risks taken in burying dead comrades, and the fact that the dead were often left unburied for long periods owing to the dangers of the battlefields. Both experiences were underpinned by a strong strain of black humour, with dark trench wit contrasting with the sobering personal reflections sometimes contained in memoirs and letters.[61] Most historians, however, focus on the period after the war, and on very specific subject areas. Winter initially focused almost exclusively on the subject of repatriation of the war dead, and the debates and controversies which accompanied the decision by some combatant nations not to bring the dead home.[62] When he went on to discuss war cemeteries themselves, it is striking that the examples he chose were often not actually cemeteries at all: Thiepval (where he focused on Lutyens' memorial far more than the cemetery); the Trench of the Bayonets at Verdun (which is not a typical French cemetery and is in fact contested as a burial site); Käthe Kollwitz' sculpture of the grieving parents (which is located in a German cemetery but is discussed as sculpture in its own right); and the Cenotaph, which is not a

[61] Cannadine, 'War and Death', pp. 206-8; see also Wilson, Ross, 'The Burial of the Dead: the British Army on the Western Front, 1914-18' in *War and Society*, Vol. 31, No. 1, March 2012, pp. 22-41.
[62] Winter, *Sites*, pp. 22-8. Bourke also explored burial and commemoration of the dead, and attitudes towards repatriation, see Bourke, Joanna, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London, Reaktion Books Ltd, 1996), pp. 210-52.

cemetery.[63] Where historians discuss British military cemeteries in detail, it tends to be through the vehicle of the organisation which created them, the Imperial (and later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission. Philip Longworth's seminal study from the 1960s (subsequently republished) badged itself explicitly as a history of that body.[64] The more recent work by David Crane was positioned by its title as a biography of Fabian Ware, the Commission's founder, as much as about the cemeteries themselves.[65]

The majority of accounts of the evolution of British war cemeteries therefore look at how far they serve as an extension of the domestic commemoration narrative, in particular in relation to the needs of the bereaved; or as a product of the work of the Commission which created them. This is underscored in the extensive literature on battlefield pilgrimage, which tends to focus more on how such travel could support the mourning process rather than on the actual individual experiences of visiting either a battlefield or a graveyard.[66] The exploration of battlefield burials in their own right, from the wartime experiences of soldiers and visitors, through the post-war years, the emotional and practical experience of individual cemetery visits, and on to the modern day phenomenon of battlefield tourism to these sites, is comparatively thinly researched. This thesis makes an original contribution

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[63] Winter, *Sites*, pp. 98-112. Notwithstanding its content, this section of the book is entitled '*War cemeteries*, abstraction and the search for transcendence' [emphasis added].
[64] Longworth, *Vigil.*
[65] Crane, *Empires of the Dead: How One Man's Vision Led to the Creation of WWI's War Graves* (London, William Collins, 2013). See also Gibson, E. and Ward, J. K., *Courage Remembered: The Story Behind the Construction and Maintenance of the Commonwealth's Military Cemeteries and Memorials of the Wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945* (London, HMSO, 1989).
[66] See, for example, Lloyd, David W., *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada 1919-1939* (Oxford and New York, Berg, 1998) and Ryan, Chris, *Battlefield Tourism* (Oxford, Elsevier, 2007).

to research by exploring how reactions to gravesites varied between people and across time, and also how gravesites functioned not just as a single point of commemoration, but as part of a wider landscape of memory encompassing other elements of the battlefield.

Participants and Rituals

The bereaved, veterans and wider society have all participated in commemoration since the end of the war. A number of scholars have addressed the question of which groups formed the key focus – in essence answering the question 'who is remembrance for?'. As indicated above, many commentators argue that by the mid-1920s, it was the bereaved (and in particular women) who were at the centre of commemorative events. This was not inevitable. The relatively late formation of the Royal British Legion in 1921 from a variety of other organisations meant that veterans had less influence than they might have done. Gregory has pointed out that in France the voice of veterans was much stronger and overtly political, which influenced the form and shape of commemorative activity – not least in securing Armistice Day as a French national holiday, which never happened in Britain.[67] By contrast, Todman has observed that politicisation of British veteran groups was often frowned upon,[68] with one newspaper in the mid-1920s referring to the Legion as a semi-fascist 'White Guard' for Haig.[69]

[67] Gregory, *Silence*, p. 51. On the voice of veterans in commemorative practice, see also Higbee, Douglas, 'Practical Memory: Organized Veterans and the Politics of Commemoration' in Meyer, Jessica (ed.), *British Popular Culture and the First World War* (Leiden, Brill, 2008), pp. 197-216.
[68] Todman, *Great War*, p. 90.
[69] Barr, Niall, *The Lion and the Poppy: British Veterans, Politics and Society 1921-1939* (London, Praeger, 2005), pp. 79-80.

Nonetheless, Gregory noted that in the years immediately following the Armistice many veterans did participate in parties and other festivities on 11th November, to celebrate the bonds between them, and the spirit of camaraderie which grew up during the war. It was only in the mid-1920s that such social activities came to be frowned upon, illustrated most clearly in the conversion of the Armistice Day Ball at the Royal Albert Hall into the Festival of Remembrance between 1925 and 1927.[70] The driving force behind this was the feeling that festivity and parties were insensitive, but even in this the needs of the veterans were not entirely side-lined. As Gregory pointed out, it was as much the feelings of unemployed veterans as those of the bereaved which it was feared the festivities would offend; and the new Festival of Remembrance still aimed to cater to veterans' needs, not least in the inclusion of numerous wartime songs, both cynical and celebratory in tone. It is not that the voice of the bereaved suddenly drowned out that of veterans; instead 'the spontaneous "carnivalesque" celebrations of veterans in the early 1920s had been channelled into respectability'.[71]

Veterans' voices did not disappear, they were merely channelled, and surfaced again very publicly in the late 1920s with the so-called war books boom, in which many veterans started to publish memoirs or works of fiction based on their experiences. As Todman argued, the vast majority of these works were not in fact anti-war, nor is their appearance unique to the late 1920s, with similar works appearing from the end of the conflict, albeit not in

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[70] For these changes and the controversies surrounding them, see Todman, *Great War*, pp. 66-84.
[71] Ibid., p. 84.

such concentrated numbers; but the no-holds-barred realism and horror of many of them meant that they were frequently interpreted as anti-war, a view which took firmer hold in the 1930s as fear of another global conflagration grew. Consequently the more positive celebrations of the veterans' experiences receded even further. This interpretation is supported by a finding from the Mass Observation project in relation to Armistice Day at the Cenotaph in 1938 – a variety of views were expressed on whether the event should be discontinued as too painful for the bereaved, or continued as an act of empathy, a lesson to the young, or an advocate for peace. Comparatively few interviewees expressed the view that it should be continued as a way of remembering the dead, or because of the needs of veterans.[72] Veterans did not disappear physically from remembrance events, where they remain key participants through until the present day. But as Gregory argued 'they were moved to the margins as recipients of Haig Fund relief, as celebrants at the British Legion Festival of Remembrance and as a group who laid wreaths on Remembrance Sunday.'[73] This thesis will show that changes to the battlefield landscape itself, whether curated or emerging organically over time, served to push the experience of surviving veterans further from centre-stage, and to privilege the dead and the bereaved; but that veterans continued to find ways of accessing the battlefield landscape which they remembered, even when this brought them into tension with the emerging mainstream of commemorative activity.

[72] Gregory, *Silence*, pp. 165-8.
[73] Ibid., p. 104.

What participants – whether veteran or non-combatant – establish as appropriate commemorative ritual also needs to be examined. Both Winter and Fussell described the evolution of mourning rituals – for Fussell creating a complete break with the past and ushering in a new and contrasting modernism, and for Winter appropriating and adapting traditional rituals to a new purpose. The contemporary experience of death was summarised by Cannadine:

> [in 1914] The English were less intimately acquainted with death than any generation since the industrial revolution. The death rate had fallen markedly. The ostentation of mourning had been in decline for over thirty years. Dying was increasingly associated with old age. At the same time, death on the battlefield was seen as something noble, heroic, splendid, romantic – and unlikely.[74]

We must not view the Edwardian era with nostalgia. The conditions in which many lived were very poor, and industries like mining experienced high fatality rates, but the contemporary experience was generally one of improvement in survival rates, notwithstanding living conditions. If there was a reaching back for traditional forms of dealing with death as Winter suggested, it was not so much to an immediate past, as to an earlier one.[75]

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[74] Cannadine, 'War and Death', p. 196.

[75] Jalland also referred to improvements in living conditions and a decline in early mortality in the period before the conflict, see Jalland, Pat, *Death in War and Peace: Loss and Grief in England 1914-1970* (Oxford, OUP, 2010), pp. 1-11. By way of international comparison, in her study of the Australian experience, Damousi also noted that the war stripped away grandiose Victorian rituals of death. Soldiers struggling to find words tended to reach back instead to notions of chivalry, heroism and Christian self-sacrifice. Damousi, Joy, *The Labour of Loss: Mourning, Memory and Wartime Bereavement in Australia* (Cambridge, CUP, 1999), p. 25.

In addition, the notion of the noble and romantic death in battle was challenged by the scale of casualties. That is not to say that death became viewed as futile, but the language had to change. Bushaway observed a subtle but important change from these pre-war principles of duty to an emphasis instead on sacrifice – a shift from something owed to something given.[76] It is tempting from a modern standpoint to see this ideal of sacrifice being imposed by church and state as a way of justifying loss, but Cannadine went on to argue that many of the rituals of war grew as much from spontaneous public reaction as they did from imposition.[77] In fact, the Church of England had significant problems in responding to the scale of death – in part, because the consolation of prayers for the dead was less common in Anglican liturgy; and in part because the language of sacrifice was problematic for an institution which saw the only true redemptive sacrifice as that of Christ.[78]

It is not just the Church which found itself in such a position – so too, at times, did the political elite. The committee organising the Victory Day parade in summer 1919 originally agreed reluctantly to The Cenotaph as a temporary monument for taking the salute of the parade.[79] However, it rapidly caught the public imagination as a focus for remembering the dead, and 'it was the people and not the government who made it such an

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[76] Bushaway, 'Name Upon Name', pp. 148-9.
[77] Cannadine, 'War and Death', p. 219.
[78] For the resurgence of prayers for the dead during the war, see Wilkinson, A, *The Church of England and the First World War* (London, SPCK, 1978), pp.176-8. For religious issues with the language of sacrifice, see Gregory, *Silence*, pp. 186-7.
[79] Homberger, Eric, 'The Story of the Cenotaph', in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 12 November 1976, Pp. 1429-30.

unparalleled object of respect.'[80] In the face of such an overwhelming public expression, both the purpose and permanence of the memorial and its accompanying rituals were reshaped. Over time, then, both the State and the Church of England came to an uneasy and at times contradictory position to accommodate these tensions with the wider populace. It is clear that the establishment here, as elsewhere, was as much responding to as directing the evolution of ritual; and this thesis will argue that the shifting nature of the battlefield landscape itself played its own part in helping to shape emerging commemorative ritual. The relationship between landscape and ritual was not one-way, with a defined set of practices being conducted within a given setting; instead, the landscape itself shaped the ritual, with what was available within the landscape at least in part determining the commemorative practices which could most readily find form within it.

Topography

At least since the publication of Fussell's 1975 work, landscape has been viewed as an essential component of wartime experience, and of the memory of war.[81] Even in the refutation of Fussell's thesis, the notion of landscape as a central motif survived intact – it is not that Fussell was mistaken to recognise landscape *per se*, but he was wrong to base his analysis so strongly on the trench experience which formed only a part of military life. Although critics of Fussell have refuted his emphasis on a highly

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[80] Ibid., p. 1429.
[81] Fussell, *Great War*, see in particular pp. 36-74.

literate officer class, there is no doubt that literary anthologies and English pastoral writing were popular with the troops and that concepts of landscape were important to civilian and military populations in the war years. Keith Grieves took an unusual perspective on this in his essay on Leith Hill in Surrey, a highly managed landscape which was threatened by deforestation for military needs during the war. He quoted a correspondent to *The Times* on 3 April 1918, arguing for the preservation of the landscape in striking terms:

> while we are all ready to give everything that is needed for the quicker winning of the war, we think it not unpatriotic to plead for order in the taking, and to endeavour to protect as much as possible the beauty of that England for whose honour our men are splendidly fighting.[82]

It is unclear – perhaps deliberately – whether it was England or its beauty for whose honour the men were fighting; but what is clear is the centrality of the domestic landscape in the vision of what is at stake in the war. The comparisons flowed the other way as well, from home to the battlefront. Melanie Tebbutt examined how the landscape of Kinderscout was explored by local men in the pre-war years, including the urban population from nearby Sheffield. Once the war had started, rambling books served as a way of supporting and comforting troops stationed overseas by enabling them to vicariously re-experience the landscape. This is underscored most strongly

[82] Grieves, Keith, 'Leith Hill, Surrey: Landscape, Locality and Nation in the Era of the Great War' in *Landscapes* (2008), 2, p. 62. Fletcher has also explored the role of domestic landscapes, in his case for the morale and consolation of soldiers at the front; see Fletcher, Anthony, *Life, Death and Growing Up on the Western Front* (London, Yale University Press, 2013), especially pp. 46-51.

in a 1915-16 ramblers' handbook, the front cover of which showed two men hiking through a ditch, with the caption 'Not in Belgium – but a trench on Kinderscout'. Tebbutt noted that after the war, arguments about public access to land became bound up with repaying the sacrifices of war, and that there were instances (for example in the Lake District) of land being opened up as memorials to the fallen.[83]

Turning to the battlefield itself, Bruce Prideaux reflected on the significance of landscape for the twenty-first century visitor:

> The ultimate paradox of the battlefield is the freedom of the tourist to wander through a once dangerous place where the agony of the combat has given way to the tranquillity of peace.[84]

Although he eschewed Fussell's 'irony' in favour of 'paradox', the parallels are clear – the power of the landscape of battle, this time to the modern tourist, lay both in its ability to co-locate the visitor with events and people in the past, and simultaneously to distance them through the paradox of the experience. So while Fussell's view of landscape, dominated by highly literate soldier-poets and the mud of the trenches, has been refuted, a variety of landscapes both at home and in battle did indeed shape the experience and memory of war. From the literary elegy of poets like Rupert Brooke, through the letter columns of the wartime period and the rambling

[83] Tebbutt, Melanie, 'Landscapes of Loss: Moorlands, Manliness and the First World War' in *Landscapes* (2004), 2, Pp. 114-127.
[84] Prideaux, Bruce, "Echoes of War: Battlefield Tourism" in Ryan, *Battlefield Tourism*, p. 17

guidebooks of the Sheffield urban population, and on to the modern battlefield tourist, landscape is a recurrent and complex motif of war.

Visiting battlefield landscapes itself is nothing new – there are many examples from before the First World War, but large-scale battlefield 'pilgrimages' (at least for British tourists) really came to prominence with trips to France and Belgium in the 1920s. The term 'pilgrimage' became well-established, alluding to the idea of a journey with a purpose and with a strong reflective element; it was often positioned in contrast to more casual sightseeing and 'tourism', though as has been seen already, individual travellers often moved seamlessly between the two modes of activity, while still maintaining for themselves the label of the devout pilgrim. Battlefield tourism consisted of two key elements. The first was the process of making the journey – the actual act and experience of travelling in a group. 'What mattered most is the way it drew upon and added to the kinship bonds already forged by war victims and their families', argued Winter.[85] Whether or not this element of pilgrimage is really what matters most, it has certainly been the best researched in relation to the First World War, whether in Winter's own work, or in that of others such as Lloyd. The second element was the actual physical co-location of oneself with the landscape of battle. Ryan touched on this in his introduction to *Battlefield Tourism*, which ranged temporally and geographically well beyond the First World War. Ryan identified a number of factors which affect one's experience of visiting a battlefield, including how the events there are interpreted, who 'authorises'

[85] Winter, *Sites*, p. 52.

that interpretation, what shapes the experience of being there, and how the site is managed. Crucially, he recognised that emotional responses can form part of this analysis.[86] More recently, Connelly and Goebel have examined how different cultural and national narratives helped to shape interpretation of the landscape around Ypres.[87] It is in particular on the detailed individual experience of being on the battlefields of the First World War that this thesis will focus, and on how the changing topography of those landscapes shaped visitors' responses. Stephen Miles has recently considered it in his examination of early twenty-first century tourism to the Western Front, noting that visitors to the battlefields bring differing interpretations to the landscape, creating 'a complex and multi-layered palimpsest of meanings'.[88] This thesis aims to identify some of the layers added to that palimpsest during and immediately after the conflict, complementing Miles' analysis of more recent trends around the time of the centenary of the conflict.

Aims and research questions

'Cultural memory' or 'national memory' of the First World War has been a growing area of academic interest over the last thirty to forty years. Ashplant and colleagues argued:

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[86] Ryan, *Battlefield Tourism*.
[87] Connelly, Mark and Goebel, Stefan, *Ypres* (Oxford, OUP, 2018).
[88] Miles, Stephen, *Western Front: Landscape, Tourism and Heritage* (Barnsley, Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2016), p. 132.

> War memory…is first of all the possession of those individuals, military or civilian, who have experienced war. The crystallization of that experience into war memories is in part shaped through pre-existing cultural narratives…But the memories thus laid down are also formed from the specific, immediate personal experiences themselves; these experiences are not simply the product of, nor totally absorbed into, extant or newly created social discourses, but exist always in (a potential) tension with them.[89]

They went on to outline three levels of memory: personal, sectional (the shared memory of distinct groups within a society, such as groups of veterans), and national (cultural) memory. War memory arises not from the dominance of either personal, sectional or cultural memory, but from the interplay of personal and shared memories with pre-existing and developing cultural narratives. This does not mean that there are not dominant expressions of cultural memory at different times within the same society. In Britain, there is a fairly clear trajectory of dominant cultural memories of the First World War, most comprehensively articulated by David Reynolds.[90] This might include the privileging of the viewpoint of the bereaved in the late 1920s, or of various broadly pacifist movements in the 1930s, or of those who saw the war as futile in the 1980s. But as Todman and others have argued, these are not monolithic views that exclude all others; and the temporal breakpoints between one set of views and another tend to be more fluid, and the transition more prolonged, than first glance might suggest.[91]

[89] Ashplant et al, 'Politics', p. 18.
[90] Reynolds, *The Long Shadow*
[91] See Todman, *Great War*, especially pp. 73-152.

If we are fully to understand the evolution of British cultural memory of the war, then we need to understand this multiplicity of voices and places, the shouted and the whispered, the remembered and the forgotten. In the academic writing to date, there has been comparatively little research into the creation of memory on the battlefield itself, both at the time of war and in the years immediately afterwards. Fussell's middle-class literary landscape of the trenches has been challenged, but has not been replaced with a thorough reappraisal of the impact of a more varied set of landscapes on a much wider range of wartime and post-war visitors. The cemeteries of the Imperial War Graves Commission have been widely studied, but less attention has been paid to graveside rituals in the course of the war itself, and what happened to those personal rituals in the early 1920s. What people remembered after the war has been well studied; but what combatants and others committed to memory during the war, and conversely what they forgot in its immediate aftermath, has been explored far less - despite the fact that these memories helped to furnish the materials available for later commemoration. The fictive kinships of battlefield pilgrimage have been widely studied; but the diverse personal experiences of those who chose, during and after the conflict, to participate in such pilgrimages and stand beside lost comrades or loved ones on the battlefields have attracted far less attention.

These are the areas with which this thesis will concern itself. It will examine how post-war visitors were guided to and through the battlefields, both by published guidebooks and by organised tours, and how these sought to

shape their experiences. It will argue that these post-war interpretations were foreshadowed during the conflict itself, by exploring who, besides soldiers themselves, visited the battlefields, what impressions they formed, how they communicated these to others, and how they related to post-war conceptions of the battlefield landscape. The thesis will also examine how individual post-war visitors sometimes kicked against such 'authorised' itineraries and interpretations, and made their own attempts to connect with memories enshrined in the landscape. In particular, it will try to get below the surface of the official narratives of battlefield pilgrimage and uncover what ordinary, private visitors to the battlefields made of their experiences. This will not be without its challenges, as inevitably these experiences, lying as they do somewhat below the dominant cultural narrative, are less well-documented. Battlefield guidebooks published at the end of the war and shortly thereafter will be a key source. Evidence is also found in unpublished private accounts, or in the fringes of material published with other purposes in mind. Even in comparatively private materials, individuals may have self-censored views which they felt others might not want to hear, or which did not sit easily with the emerging cultural memory. However, by focussing on materials created during and immediately after the war, it is possible to tap into some of the insights of the battlefield, and of the war era itself.

In terms of scope, two key constraints have been necessary to keep this thesis to a manageable size: one of geography, and one of time. In relation to geography, the primary focus is on the battlefields of the Western Front in France and Belgium: as the principal theatre for British land forces it was the

area best known to the largest number of British troops. This also meant that it was the most frequently visited by post-war pilgrims, helped by the fact that it was a relatively easy location to visit in the 1920s (although as will be shown cost meant that it was still outside the reach of many unless their travel was subsidised). Other theatres of conflict will be included where they provide useful context or comparison, but the dominant focus will remain the Western Front. The self-imposed time constraint on the thesis is the period 1914 through to 1929. The start date was relatively straightforward to set, as it is the intention to look at how perceptions of the battlefield landscapes started to be formed during the conflict itself. The end date runs the risk of seeming more arbitrary, but the logic behind 1929 is that it encompasses the creation and tidying up of many of the war cemeteries, the opening of the Menin Gate as the first large Western Front memorial to the missing close to the UK mainland, and the large pilgrimages of the 1920s (including in particular the British Legion pilgrimage of 1928), before the threat of a fresh global conflict made its presence felt on the pilgrims.

Contents and sources

This thesis is divided into three sections, each including two chapters. Every chapter focuses on a discrete set of source materials, the value and limitations of which will be examined in detail within the introduction to each chapter. Section A looks at battlefield guidebooks in the immediate post-war period, chapter two focussing on the Michelin guidebooks and chapter three on British battlefield guidebooks of the same era. Some of these are well-

known, providing a familiar jumping off point into the landscapes of battle as they appeared – or at least, as their authors wanted them to appear – to the post-war reader. Others are less well-known, and provide novel insights into how visitors in person, or armchair readers at home, were expected to interact with the battlefields. It will be argued that certain tropes and motifs came to the fore very early on, while at the same time British and French guidebooks had a recognisably different tone and emphasis, and that this was in large part communicated through their attitude to landscape. In all cases, the authors of guidebooks sought to shape visitors' attitude towards and interpretation of what they saw.

The thesis therefore begins at the mid-point of its timeframe. The rationale for this is that these guidebooks are the most transparent attempt to shape understanding of the battlefield amongst visitors, and include some of the best-known sources and the most widely studied, albeit from a different perspective than that taken here. The thesis will establish their view on the battlefield landscapes as a hinge-point around which the argument turns, before tracking back to examine to what extent wartime writings foreshadowed them, or took a different approach. Section B therefore shifts back in time from the relatively familiar environment of the guidebooks to the experiences of non-combatants who visited the battlefields during the 1914-18 period. Chapter four examines a wide range of contributors to *Harper's* magazine during the war who wrote about their travels to these landscapes of battle. Chapter five homes in on four writers in much more detail, looking at how they elaborated on the landscapes of battle through extended

wartime publications. In particular, this section explores how writers struggled with finding a language to explain the unprecedented sights they saw, and also how they dealt with a privileged position as spectators which was, notwithstanding that privilege, far removed from the viewpoint of combatants. Their writings sought to shape post-war perceptions of the landscapes of battle, and create memories of them amongst readers who had never visited; their legacy can be clearly seen post-war not just in guidebooks, but also in the viewpoints of individual visitors.

Section C turns to those experiences of individual visitors in the post-war period, and asks what they actually made of the experience in the light of, and at times in spite of, the descriptions offered by wartime writers and guidebook authors. Chapter six examines the published experiences of pilgrims with the St Barnabas organisation during the 1920s, while chapter seven explores private accounts written by individual visitors over the same period. The thesis will argue that whilst individuals certainly participated in structured tourism, visiting key sites and memorials which were identified in tour itineraries and guidebooks, it remained important for them to access moments of personal interaction with the landscape, and that they sometimes went to great lengths to achieve this. The idea of the non-combatant in the battlefield landscape, first explored in the wartime writings of section B, finds a new expression here, as both combatants and non-combatants sought space to articulate their emotions within a shared post-war landscape.

In his seminal work, Simon Schama observed that:

> …although we are accustomed to separate nature and human perception into two realms, they are, in fact, indivisible. Before it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock.[92]

The relation is one of symbiosis – landscape shapes our experience of the events that take place in it and moulds our memories of them; and in turn landscape itself is shaped by our perceptions and expectations of what has happened and should happen within it. Schama cites the apparent contradiction of Yosemite National Park in the USA: on the one hand a natural paradise and on the other a heavily managed and controlled landscape, a tension that makes much more sense when we consider it as part of this symbiotic interplay. In the context of the First World War, landscape provides a thread which runs through the seismic changes wrought both to the physical geography of the battlefield, and to the 'emotional geography' of those who fought on it. However shell-pocked, mine-blown or entrenched the landscape becomes, it is still essentially the same physical space. One can return to remember it (and to remember in it) as many did on the regular pilgrimages of the 1920s and beyond. This is not to say that landscape provided any answers or resolution to the upheavals of war, or indeed even consolation – but as this thesis will show, a study of the interactions of landscape and memory sheds a new light on the experiences of those who visited these dramatic battlescapes between 1914 and 1929,

[92] Schama, *Landscape*, p. 7.

and the way in which landscape itself has shaped the subsequent commemoration of the war.

Section A: Battlefield guidebooks in the postwar period

The best-known attempts to shape understanding of the battlefields in the immediate post-conflict period are the guidebooks produced by various publishers in the late 1910s and early 1920s. The large number of original copies still circulating, together with the proliferation of reprints during recent years and particularly during the First World War centenary, are testament both to their popularity 100 years ago, and to their enduring legacy. Chapters two and three of this thesis will therefore focus on guidebooks produced between the end of the conflict and the mid-1920s. The best-known guidebooks are undoubtedly the Michelin series, the first volume of which, focussing on the Marne region, was produced in English as early as 1917. A comprehensive review of this suite of guidebooks will form the focus of chapter two. Slightly less well-known, but just as important in shaping British conceptions of the battlefield landscape, were guidebooks produced by a variety of British authors and publishers between 1919 and 1929. Lacking the unifying structure of the Michelin volumes, these are much more varied in layout and scope than their French counterparts, but like them they sought to direct the visitor to the parts of the battlefields they deemed most interesting, and to help the visitor unlock and understand the meanings contained within the often chaotic and war-damaged landscape. A consideration of a selection of these British guidebooks will form the focus of chapter three.

This thesis will argue that the guidebooks were far from neutral texts. They sought not just to provide practical information and itineraries, but also to

guide the reader to particular interpretations and understandings of what they were viewing. Landscapes were not just to be seen, they were to be understood, and that meant encouraging the visitor to engage at a profound level with the city or countryside they were passing though. However, exactly what interpretation the visitor was expected to form depended to a large extent on place, author, and timeframe. While for the Michelin guides the meaning of the landscape was enshrined in such pre-war culture and history of France as had survived the conflict, for the British guidebook writers it was enshrined in the wartime landscape itself, with which the battlefield visitor was urged to acquaint themselves intimately. It will be shown that attitudes to the battlefields shifted between 1917 and 1925, and that to a significant extent this was driven by actual and perceived changes to the landscape of the Western Front during this period.

Chapter Two: The Michelin Guides - exploring the early landscapes of battlefield pilgrimage

Introduction

Over the last twenty years, several scholars have explored battlefield visitation. Ryan's 1998 study examined the logistics of tourism to a number of battlefield sites, and in particular how the modern-day curation of such sites shapes the visitor's experience of them.[1] Carman and Carman cast their net more widely, ranging over nearly a thousand years of battlefields; though stopping short of the twentieth-century's conflicts, they examined how an appreciation and understanding of the landscapes chosen for battle can help illuminate changing cultural assumptions about warfare.[2] Reader and Walter gave specific attention to First World War battlefield tourism as 'pilgrimage', locating it within the wider sweep of pilgrimage as a historical phenomenon. They traced common themes, such as a sense of purpose or a desire for enlightenment, amongst pilgrims as diverse as those travelling to Graceland or Glastonbury.[3] This thesis will examine a number of sources which illuminate the experience of visitors to the battlefields between 1914 and 1929; and this chapter will begin by examining the English-language Michelin battlefield guides, the majority of which were published between 1917 and 1920. Press notices from the time suggest that the publications were well-received in Britain; they showed 'admirable practicality' even

[1] Ryan, Chris, *Battlefield Tourism* (Oxford, Elsevier, 2007).
[2] Carman, John and Carman, Patricia, *Bloody Meadows: Investigating landscapes of battle* (Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 2006).
[3] Reader, Ian and Walter, Tony (eds.), *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture* (London, Macmillan, 1993).

replacing the ‘once indispensable Baedeker’, (which perhaps also suffered in the reviewer’s eyes from being German in origin). The number of copies which have survived into the twenty-first century together with the recent facsimile reprints of many of the volumes is testament to their enduring legacy.[4] Daniel Sherman has looked at the impact of these guides, and in particular the guide to the Marne battlefields, on the evolution of French cultural memory in the interwar years, but there has been little comprehensive analysis of the Michelin guides in English, and into how their presentation, interpretation and navigation of the battlefield landscape in the immediate post-war period began to shape British remembrance of the conflict.[5]

The French *Centre National du Livre*, along with *L’Etablissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Defense*, collaborated to produce digitised versions of 31 of the French guidebooks in the Michelin battlefield series for the centenary of the First World War. In the introductory comments, the 2014 editors observed that:

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[4] Press reviews cited in the Ypres guide (see Anon, *Ypres and The Battles of Ypres* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, 1920)). In the late twentieth century, facsimile copies of various Michelin guides in English were produced both by Naval and Military Press, and by GH Smith & Son; online searches with second-hand book dealers readily point to large numbers of original copies for sale (though certain individual volumes are now becoming rare).

[5] Sherman, Daniel J, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 35-49.

> Each guide is made up of three parts: a historic overview of the town or region since antiquity…a presentation of The Great War in the area…[and] a tourist area which the reader can drive.[6]

This is an accurate overview of the content and intention of the various books which, notwithstanding their different geographic focuses, tend to follow this basic structure. However, what this factual summary does not capture are the rich nuances of the text: the patterns which emerge across the volumes in the portrayal of different battlefield landscapes, the depiction of the different participants' impact on the landscape (whether ally or foe), or the descriptions of the varied and at times still haphazard resting places of the dead. By analysing the text in detail, this chapter will show that in the early post-war years, there were significant differences in the appearance of battlefields across various regions of the front, the manner in which the writers interpreted those differences and the way in which they sought to guide visitors' responses to the landscape. This means that, far from being formulaic in their approach, the guidebooks varied to reflect these nuances, and these variations are at least as important as any similarities. Documenting hundreds of miles of the Western Front from Belgium to St Mihiel in the immediate post-war period, the English-language Michelin guides present a unique opportunity to track the battlefields' legacy inscribed in the landscape of the French and Belgian countryside. Section C of this thesis extends the analysis to sources written later in the 1920s, when the landscape was changing further, and examines how visitors responded to

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[6] Anon, *Compiegne/Pierrefonds* (Google Books/Michelin, 2014), https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=hjsSAwAAQBAJ, pp. 4-5 [accessed 5 October 2016; translation by current author].

some of the expectations set by the Michelin guides, at a time when many of the battlefields had been cleared or modified.

The Michelin Guides – an overview

The Michelin tyre company had published touring guidebooks to France before the war, and began producing a large range of battlefield guides in four languages, mainly between 1917 and about 1921. Despite the intensity of work which went into the generation of these thousands of pages of text and images, or perhaps because of the very urgency of that activity, little background material about them survives, the Michelin archives today regretfully acknowledging that they do not hold much information about them; nor do they have sales or distribution data.[7] This is not the only factor which makes them problematic sources. As the English-language guides were all produced during and immediately after the war, there was little opportunity for considered reflection on the recent history, and as the guidebooks themselves acknowledged, parts of the landscape were in the throes of rapid change as battlefield clearance and the partial restoration of daily life took place. In terms of production, too, the guides are challenging sources. They were written for the French market and then translated into English; as popular guidebooks they influenced British views of the battlefields, but with

[7] Personal communication from Ms Christine Reynolds, Michelin Corporate Image Specialist & UK Heritage Manager, 22 Feb 2016. All of the information included in this chapter from the Michelin archives was supplied via Ms Reynolds, and I am most grateful to her and to her colleagues in France for supplying me with such information as they have. Miles, Stephen, *The Western Front: Landscape, Tourism and Heritage* (Barnsley, Pen and Sword, 2016), p. 15, observes that Michelin sold 850,000 copies of guidebooks in the seven months to January 1920; though he attributes this figure to a 2013 report.

this provenance it is at least questionable as to how far they represented British interests or preoccupations. In addition, the very act of translating French language text into English potentially confounds meaning.[8] Finally, the Michelin guides were frustratingly silent on the question of authorship. Although occasionally photographic images depicted an anonymous figure who was perhaps one of the compilers, or a parked motor car which was possibly their means of transport, the precise identity of the authors was always opaque. The reader was not even told if the author was from a military or civilian background, and what (if any) personal connections they had with the battlefields through which they travelled. The silent authorship arguably strove towards a degree of third-person objectivity, but this becomes problematic as analysis will show that the works are far from objective in their commentary.

Turning from the unknown to what is ostensibly known, the digital editions of the French guides produced for the centenary refer to thirty-one titles in French, twenty in English, one in German and four in Italian.[9] The Michelin archivists themselves state that 'Between 1917 and 1918, 49 guides in French were published, 19 in English, 1 in Italian and 1 in German.'[10] To obscure the picture further, listings of the publications provided by the Michelin archives suggest different figures, with, for example, four guides in

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[8] In his English-language analysis of French interwar cultural memory, Daniel Sherman examines the original French-language Michelin battlefield guides. In doing so, he offers his own English translations of parts of the text, which diverge in places from the published Michelin translation. An analysis of these divergences is beyond the scope of this thesis, but the divergence itself throws into relief how the choice of words used in translation can affect the impression given of the battlefield landscape. See Sherman, *Construction of Memory*, pp. 35-49.
[9] *Compiegne/Pierrefonds*, pp. 6-8.
[10] Personal communication from Ms Christine Reynolds, 22 Feb 2016.

Italian all produced in 1919.[11] Even this simple matter of how many guides were produced is hard to pin down. This is not only due to the passage of time and loss of records; the very manner in which the guides were published complicates the picture. The French volume on Verdun and the Argonne went through no fewer than nine editions between 1925 and 1938, becoming shorter in length on each occasion; meanwhile two separate German editions of the same volume appeared in 1929 and 1939, both of identical length. To what extent any of these constitutes a new volume as opposed to a revision is clearly open to interpretation. The earliest Michelin guide, to the *Battlefields of the Marne*, appeared in three volumes in French in 1917 and 1918; the English editions comprised Volume One (in 1917), and then a single composite volume for the entire battlefield (perplexingly published in the same year). Another short volume, entitled *Pages of American Glory* and produced only in English, is not a battlefield guide but a day-by-day account of US involvement in the conflict. Some of the printed volumes contain no publication date, and there is no record of the date in the Michelin archive's data tables.

For practical purposes, this analysis has limited itself to those publications produced in English, and which would therefore have been those most readily accessible to British readers of that period.[12] All of these appeared between 1917 and about 1920. Figure 1 provides an overview of these,

[11] Tables of data supplied in personal communication from Ms Christine Reynolds, 7 Mar 2016; it is these tables which inform the numerical analysis which follows.
[12] Some editions were developed for the American market, though this seems to have been simply a question of printing existing English-language titles in the US; no titles were produced exclusively for the American market.

based on the Michelin tables and supplemented where necessary by a close reading of the texts; it should be noted that there is a degree of uncertainty about the information, for the reasons given above. What is clear is that the guidebooks were produced initially in French, by a French company and for the French market, with certain volumes being selected for translation into English.[13] In many cases, this led (as will be argued below) to a somewhat Franco-centric account of the war, even in those volumes ostensibly about the American involvement.[14] In some cases, however, there is a complex layering of perspectives, as in the two guides to Ypres and to the Yser: these are written from a French perspective, about the Belgian battlefields, covering French, Belgian and British military engagements, and were then translated into the English language.[15]

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[13] *Compiegne/Pierrefonds*, pp. 6-8.

[14] Anon, *The Americans in The Great War, Volume 1: The Second Battle of the Marne (Chateau-Thierry, Soissons, Fismes)* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, 1919); Anon, *The Americans in The Great War, Volume 2: The Battle of Saint Mihiel (St Mihiel, Pont-a-Mousson, Metz)* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, 1919); Anon, *The Americans in The Great War, Volume 3: Meuse-Argonne Battle (Monteaucon, Romagne, St. Menehould)* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, 1919).

[15] *Ypres*; Anon, *The Yser and The Belgian Coast* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, uncertain [1920])

Figure 1: Michelin Guides for the English Market

Source: Michelin Archive,
personal communication from Christine Reynolds, Michelin UK Heritage Manager,
7 March 2016

Title	Year	Michelin Code	Pages	B/S
The Americans in the Great War, Volume 1, The Second Battle of the Marne, Chateau-Thierry, Soissons, Fismes	1919	XV-2117-9-19-5	132	B
The Americans in the Great War, Volume 2, The Battle of Saint Mihiel, St Mihiel, Pont-a-Mousson, Metz	1919	XIX.2124-20	144	B
The Americans in the Great War, Volume 3, Meuse-Argonne Battle, Montfaucon, Romagne, St Menehould	1919	XXIII-2132-20	112	B
Amiens Before and During the War	1919	VII-2.111-5-1930; and 1-10.373-9-265; and VII-2.111-6-1925	56	S
Arras, Len-Douai and the Battles for Artois	n/k ?1920	XXX bis 2.138-11-2015	128	B
The Battlefields of the Marne 1914, 1, The Ourcq, Chantilly-Senlis-Meaux [area also covered in the longer Marne volume]	1917	n/a	120	B
Battlefields of the Marne 1914	1917	n/a	264	B
Battlefields of the Marne 1914 [1919 version 5 pages longer than 1917 version]	1919	Vc-2.109-6-1925	269	B

Clermont-Ferrand, Royat and Surroundings	n/k	11658-10-18 et dos: 1832-2-19	40	S
Lille Before and During the War	1919	X-2.114-6-1920; and X-2.114-6-19-25	56	S
Pages of American Glory	n/k	1-2090-12-18100	16	S
Rheims and the Battles for its Possession	1919	XII-2.116-8-19-25	176	B
Soissons Before and During the War	1919	VIII bis-2.112 bis-6.1920	64	S
The Somme Volume 1, The First Battle of the Somme (1916-1917), Albert, Bapaume, Peronne	1919	XXI Bis.1-2.133-3-2020	136	B
The Somme Volume 2, The Second Battle of the Somme (1918), Amiens, Montdidier, Compiegne	n/k ?1920	XXIII bis 2.133-10-2015	128	B
The Yser and the Belgian Coast	n/k ?1920	XXXI-bis.2137-7-2020	128	B
Ypres and the Battles for Ypres	1920	XVIIa 2122-6-2020; and XVII-2.122-25	144	B
Verdun, Argonne-Metz, 1914-1918	1919	1-4-932-5-258	192	B
Verdun, Argonne, 1914-1918	1931	3-4.932-5-318	176	B
Verdun and the Battles for its Possession	1919	XIV.-2120-7-19-25	112	B

Notes on Figure 1:

B/S: Bound or stapled

Where years are officially unstated, an estimate is provided based on the text of the volume

Versions were also produced for the US market and printed in New Jersey; these are not listed here, but the US list contains only variants on these titles rather than entirely new volumes.

The guides were clearly intended to be used as a comprehensive suite of books, as well as standalone volumes. The first US volume cross-refers to the Soissons guide, the second volume to the Verdun guide and the Nancy guide (the latter never actually produced in English), and the third volume once again to the Verdun guide and to the previous two US volumes.[16] All of the guides provided a strong visual record, with photos often taking up half or more of the available page space. It is uncommon for these photos to be included purely as directional aids to show the traveller the way to go next (though some examples of this occur); in most cases they and their captions are designed to provide a clear visual record of the battlefield. This was partly to cater for the armchair tourist who was unable or unwilling to visit the battlefields. The Marne guide, produced before the war ended and while travel remained highly problematic, specifically states that 'The wealth of illustration in this work allows the intending tourist to make a preliminary trip in imagination'.[17] The wording here is telling: it was only the preliminary trip which was imagined, and touring to the battlefields was encouraged as soon as it was viable. The visual record was part of the lure to draw the prospective tourist in, and the plethora of adverts at the beginning and end of each guide for maps, hotels, the French tourist office and the delights offered by various French regions reinforced the message.[18] In an advert for the

[16] *Americans 1*, p. 96, *Americans 2*, pp. 20 & 87, *Americans 3*, pp. 29-30 & 110-1; see also Anon, *Arras: Lens-Douai and the Battles of Artois* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, ?1920), pp. 126-7; Anon, *The Somme Vol 2: The Second Battle of the Somme (1918)* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, 1920), pp. 54-5 & 127; *Ypres* p. 134; *Yser* p. 23.
[17] Anon, *Battlefields of the Marne 1914* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, 1917), p. 2.
[18] A particularly comprehensive set can be found in Anon, *Lille Before and During the War* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, 1919), unnumbered pages, start and end inserts. It seems that the advertising inserts were changed over time, so it is not always possible to pin a particular advert to a volume of the guides.

Touring Club de France, the tourist was told: 'You will thereby help France and, at the same time, yourself.'[19] Touring was, in part, a patriotic duty for Frenchmen and their allies, supporting as it did the reconstruction of France, particularly in areas deliberately destroyed by the enemy as will be shown later.

On the question of whether that visitor was a veteran, a bereaved relative or some other interested party, the guidebooks are silent. However, building on the idea of travel as patriotic duty, all the guides expressed a profound desire to commemorate and take pride in French military achievement, and to some extent that of France's allies. As the first guide to be produced, the Marne volume once again set the tone with a reference to the heroes who had fallen to defend the heritage and history of France.[20] Adverts frequently extolled the contribution made by the Michelin company to the war effort whether in supplying reliable tyres or providing hospital facilities at Clermont-Ferrand.[21] Every volume opened with a dedication to 'the Michelin employees and workmen who died gloriously for their country'[22]; and the visits were seen as 'a pilgrimage, not merely a journey across a ravaged land. Seeing is not enough, one must understand.'[23] Although the notion of pilgrimage is not expounded at length, and in fact the term is rarely used in the guidebooks,

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[19] Anon, *Verdun and the Battles for its Possession* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, 1919), unnumbered page, end insert.
[20] *Marne*, p. 2.
[21] *Americans 1*, unnumbered page; *Arras*, unnumbered page.
[22] Anon, *Rheims and the Battles for its Possession* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, 1919), p. 1. The dedication is identical across all the English volumes.
[23] *Marne*, p. 2.

the sense of journeying with a sense of profound respect and with a desire to learn is clear.

The Michelin guides in English were designed to provide a detailed overview of large sections of the fighting front, both as a record and as an inducement to visit. Such visits were not a conventional tour, but something more, a journey with a purpose and with a wish for enlightenment, of the kind described by Reader and Walter in their analysis of pilgrimage.[24] Whilst travellers might not necessarily procure or use the whole set of guides, the books were clearly designed to interlock and cross-refer, so that by consulting multiple volumes, the visitor could build up a nuanced and detailed picture of the battlefields.

Landscapes of battle – themes emerging across the Michelin Guides

In analysing the presentation and interpretation of the battlefields in the Michelin guides, it is possible to identify themes which emerge in common across a number of different volumes, as well as striking differences between volumes covering very different areas of the conflict. This chapter will explore these themes, teasing out how the documented appearance of the battlefield, and its interpretation, sought to shape British notions of remembrance. In particular, it will flag up a foregrounding of French (as distinct from British, American or Belgian) military experience; a focus on collective rather than individual commemoration of the dead; and the

[24] See footnote 3 above.

perception that landscapes damaged by the Germans, whether deliberately in 'scorched earth' campaigns or accidentally, should be interpreted differently and more negatively than battlefields scarred by Allied activity.

Of the 3,500 Michelin employees to whom the guidebooks were dedicated, none was singled out in the text in a region in which they served or died, and this set a collective tone to the commemorative purpose of the works. In general, the guides tended to focus on collective action, and it was very rare for any individual's action to be praised or commemorated. On the few occasions where this did occur, the focus was on senior military commanders, or figures notable for other reasons such as Lt Quentin Roosevelt (son of the former US president), the French Senator Raymond, or the French Lieutenant de Courson whose men named a bunker after him, onto which his name was subsequently engraved.[25] Individual burials were also rarely cited, with cemeteries simply being referred to as a collective entity. Roosevelt was one exception; another was a group of four tank drivers who were buried beside the remains of their vehicle near Pont-a-Mousson, but even here the men remained anonymous.[26] This contrasts strikingly with modern battlefield guidebooks, where individuals and their memorials are frequently singled out for mention.[27] In the immediate aftermath of war there were few individual memorials; the resting places of

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[25] *Americans 1*, p. 122; *Americans 2*, p. 79; *Americans 3*, pp. 107-8. Lieutenant de Courson came from a Breton family with a long military history; he was killed in the opening engagements of the war in September 1914. The bunker was in woods west of Verdun..
[26] *Americans 2*, p. 84; see below for a more detailed analysis of the burial arrangements for the dead.
[27] Holts guide to the Yser region, for example, names at least 15 different individuals in only 40 pages. Holt, Tonie and Valmai, *Major and Mrs Holt's Battlefield Guide to Western Front - North* (Barnsley, Pen & Sword Military, 2014), pp. 61-100.

men who had been buried were not yet reliably recorded and, with many reburials taking place, often not finally settled. The genesis of the Michelin guides in the immediate aftermath of the war tied them, of necessity, to a collective memorialisation; however, the brevity of the text devoted to those individuals or groups who could be identified suggests no great effort to strain against this. The collective commemorative tone set by the dedication of each volume was reinforced by practicalities, but does not seem to have been driven by them.

At the same time, there was a strong focus on a distinctly French commemorative agenda. The actions of other nations were mentioned – the Somme, Ypres, Yser and American guides in particular have substantial passages relating to Belgian, British and US military endeavours. Frequently however, and unsurprisingly given the origin of the books, the French perspective was privileged. In referring to the second Battle of the Marne, the inter-Allied nature of the offensive was emphasised, including the role of a small contingent of Italian troops, but at the same time:

> In paying this just tribute to the valour of all the Allies, it should not be forgotten that the second victory of the Marne, like the first, was a glorious manifestation of French genius and heroism.[28]

Setting aside any debate about the accuracy of the military assessment expressed here, it is significant that the writers qualified their praise for the

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[28] *Americans 1*, p.37.

inter-Allied offensive in this way, and set the French contribution apart. A similar approach was taken in the third of the volumes on *The Americans in the Great War* where, notwithstanding the title, large sections actually cover the fighting of the French troops in 1914 and 1915, the only link being that they were fighting over the same ground which the Americans would take on in 1918.[29] The British fighting at Loos in the autumn of 1915 was covered in no more than three pages in the volume on Arras[30] – a major battle for the nascent British army, for the French a diversionary attack for their own main assault further south. Even when the Americans came in for substantial praise for their actions, it was expressed through the evidence provided by French Army Orders of the Day.[31] To what extent this reflected an explicit or implicit desire on the part of the writers to privilege the French perspective; and to what extent it reflected the documentary sources most readily available to them between 1917 and 1920 is impossible to surmise in the absence of records on the method of compilation. Whatever the reasons, it is clear that these early battlefield guides focussed on collective memorialisation; and, whilst far from ignoring other nations' contributions, provided a strongly French slant to their commentary.

Close attention to the detritus of war is also common:

> On the left are the ruins of a large spinning mill. In the fields: numerous small forts of reinforced concrete, which commanded all the roads into Lille. The road passes through a small wood, in the right-hand part of which are the ruins of Premesques

[29] *Americans 3*, pp.53-7, 98-106.
[30] *Arras*, pp. 110-12.
[31] *Americans 1*, pp. 3-38.

> Chateau, of which only the façade remains. Further on, to the left, is Wez Macquart, whose church was badly damaged. Trenches lead to the road, while in the fields, traces of the violent shelling are still visible.[32]

This description of the landscape on leaving Lille through what is today the suburb of Lomme can stand for many which appear throughout the Michelin guides. An overwhelming impression was of landscape littered with the detritus of war – ruined buildings, shell holes, barbed wire, gun emplacements, trenches, concrete blockhouses, shelters, discarded machinery and even corpses were referred to. In this early post-war period, battlefield clearance was limited, and the physical legacy of war still remained in most locations for the traveller to view. This detritus of war was interpreted in many and varied ways. Frequently, it was used simply as evidence of the passage and the ferocity of the fighting. In the first American volume, the touring itinerary spoke of 'deeply moving traces of the fierce fighting' which were visible all along one part of the route; while further along the road a German howitzer and other debris 'remind one of the fierceness of the struggle in this region.'[33] In Arras, a city largely destroyed in the war, photos showed the extent of the damage, which one caption described in almost Biblical terms as the 'desolation of Arras'.[34] The two city itineraries exploring Lille referred in pictures and text to the war damage to the city, particularly at the Dix-Huits Ponts where an ammunition store had exploded.[35]

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[32] *Ypres*, pp. 48-9; many similar examples appear throughout the guides.
[33] *Americans 1*, pp. 40 & 69-70.
[34] *Arras*, pp. 22-5.
[35] *Lille*, pp. 24-48.

The notion that traces of fighting could be 'moving' alludes to another role of ruins, which was to provoke a strong emotional response, as part of the journey with a purpose which separated pilgrimage from simple travel. Indeed, just after the deeply moving traces of the combat to which the attention of the traveller above was drawn, the ruins of Vaux were seen: 'in the bottom of the valley, to the right of the road, [these] are most impressive.'[36] A little later, the Castle and Park at Corcy were 'pictures of desolation'.[37] The sense here is of ruins which were perversely picturesque, engaging the viewer deeply in spite of, or because of, their dilapidated state. The geography of the landscape itself was sometimes described in this way too, with the Vauquois Crest, decapitated by shells and mines, also being described as 'impressive', with the same word applied to the view from Thiepval Wood of the shell-damaged trees and marshland of the Ancre valley.[38] With the word being liberally used, new superlatives had to be found, and so Arras cathedral was described as 'one of the *most impressive* ruins of the war', as if the ruins were competing for the strongest emotional response.[39] It is striking that the word 'impressive' is so frequently chosen in preference to others which might have been used – horrific, disturbing, or awful, for example – suggesting an anticipated grandeur and depth of emotional response. Sometimes, the superlatives ran out and the text of the

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[36] *Americans 1*, p. 40.
[37] Ibid., p. 73. Not to be confused with Coucy castle which was deliberately destroyed by the German army in 1917.
[38] *Americans 3*, p. 57; Anon, *The Somme Vol 1: The First Battle of the Somme (1916-1917)* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, 1919), p. 39. Vauquois was one of the most heavily mined sectors of the Western Front, while the Ancre flowed through the heart of the 1916 and 1918 Somme battlefields.
[39] *Arras*, p. 50 (emphasis added).

guides collapsed under the pressure to find new modes of description for what was, essentially, another set of ruins. In these cases, a form of shorthand was used: '…keep straight on. Numerous shell-holes and trenches'[40], or even more starkly:

> Beyond Heudicourt, the road passes through Buxieres (ruined houses); Buxerulles (slightly damaged), containing German cemetery; Woinville (German cemetery with a monument in the middle (see photo below), on the right, before entering the village, and a roofless church); Varneville, entirely in ruins. Leaving the village, the tourist passes several concrete shelters and blockhouses.[41]

Although there was clearly some hierarchy of destruction from slight damage through to entire ruination, the explicit emotional charge of desolation or impressive sights was absent. Instead, the expected emotional response built up across the successive villages, turning into an exhausted disbelief at the relentless catalogue of war-damaged communities.

In other locations, the destruction was so absolute that the writers struggled not to find superlatives, but to anchor the viewer in the formless chaos of war's aftermath. This was particularly striking when the destruction affected previously grand public buildings, such as the Hotel de Ville at Arras, where three facades were reduced to 'shapeless ruins with, here and there, fragments of architecture and ornamentation'; while the cathedral at Soissons was a 'shapeless mass' and later 'shapeless chaos with a quantity

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[40] *Americans 1*, p. 73.
[41] *Americans 2*, pp. 40-1; see also *Americans 3*, pp. 31-5 & 42. The area described in the extract is close to the St Mihiel salient.

of architectural and sculptured motives [sic]'.[42] The greatness of the original building was testified to by the architectural fragments, the survival of which served, by juxtaposition, to heighten the emotional impact of the surrounding chaos. The landscape itself could lapse into formlessness. At Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, the plateau was portrayed as devoid of life, composed merely of shell-holes and craters, 'with no interesting remains of the old German defences.'[43] The German positions, seen as brutal and threatening elsewhere in the guidebooks, here seemed to be missing – there was no focal point. The chaos of the landscape had an emotional impact, but it was one of horror at its emptiness. This reached its apogee in Ypres, where between Poelcapelle and Langemarck 'there is a confused heap of rails and broken trucks in the middle of a piece of shell-torn ground.'[44] The reader expects an explanation to follow as to why these are here, but it never comes: the chaotic heap remained just that, lacking in explanation or rationale. Although these forms did still have some shape, their relative formlessness was used as a motif for loss of structure, purpose and meaning.

The importance of photographic imagery in the guides has already been highlighted, and the before-and-after photo had a particular role to play in tracking the destruction of the pre-war landscape, sometimes through

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[42] *Arras*, p. 37; Anon, *Soissons Before and During the War* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, 1919), pp. 21-4; see also *Somme 1*, pp.40 & 89; and for the destruction of more utilitarian architecture see *Rheims*, p. 158.
[43] *Arras*, p. 76; see also *Somme 1*, p. 47. The Lorette spur was a scene of fierce fighting for the French army between 1914 and 1916, when the British took over the sector; post-war, it became the location of the world's largest French military cemetery.
[44] *Ypres*, p. 66.

multiple photos taken at different points in the conflict.[45] These images enabled the armchair reader to see both the post-war ruination and the pre-war beauty; for the battlefield visitor, they allowed the current state of destruction to be more meaningfully compared to what had gone before, whilst also acting as a reference point against the time when the ruins were repaired. In either case, the effect of these photos was to stress the scale of the destruction. At times, the text of the guide focused almost entirely on the pre-war condition and heritage of the area, allowing the photos to speak of the war damage, the juxtaposition of the two being yet another tool for heightening impact (figures 2 and 3).[46]

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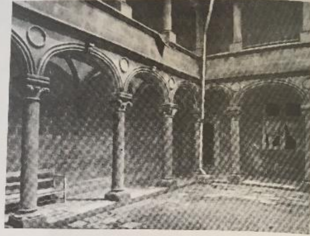
[45] See *Rheims*, pp. 76-7, 89 & 138-9; *Soissons* pp. 14 & 33; *Somme 1*, pp. 34 & 133; *Verdun* pp. 40 & 42-51; *Ypres* pp. 50-1, 73-5, 92 & 125-7. Unfortunately no credit was given to the photographers, so it is often unclear except from context as to their provenance.
[46] *Americans 3*, pp. 60-2 & 83; *Somme 2* pp. 70-5, 79-81, 103-6 & 114.

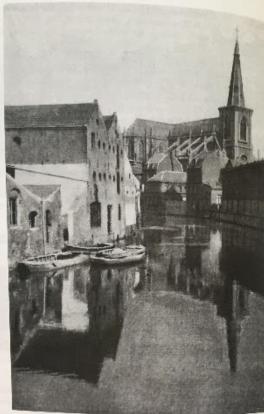


THE PRINCERIE CLOISTER (*hist. mon.*) BEFORE THE WAR.

mented on two of its sides with two-storied Renaissance galleries (*hist. mon.*). Although of 16th-century construction, the decoration of this cloister was inspired by the Middle Age or Transition Period (*note the crocketted capitals of the pillars and the bases of the latter*).

The house was destroyed by the bombardments, and the cloister is almost entirely in ruins.

THE PRINCERIE CLOISTER IN 1916.



VIEW OF ARMENTIÈRES (*before the War*)
THE RIVER LYS AND ST. WAAST CHURCH

Belfry, churches, schools and houses are all in ruins.

In everything connected with the spinning and weaving of linen Armentières, like Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, and the whole of Northern France in general, was considerably in advance of Germany. Consequently, the Germans destroyed all the mills, factories and metallurgical works, and what machinery could not be taken to pieces and sent to Germany they ruthlessly smashed.

ARMENTIÈRES. ST. WAAST CHURCH AS THE GERMANS LEFT IT
(*Compare with photo, p. 50*)

ARMENTIERES AND THE RIVER LYS

Figures 2 and 3: Before and after pictures: of the cloister in the archdeacon's residence in Verdun
(Verdun, p. 40); and of Armentieres (Ypres, pp. 50-1).

Through a variety of means, both textual and visual, the guides employed the detritus of war to provoke a strong and varied response of awe, exhaustion, disbelief or sadness. The notion that the desolation of war should have a central role in communicating the emotional message of the battlefields was being clearly established. This may seem self-evident, but as later chapters

will explore, it posed significant challenges in later years, as the detritus of war was removed.

Views of the battlefield

Being amongst the ruins was one thing; looking over them from above was equally important. Good viewing points were a regular motif of the guidebooks, as the writers led the tourist to the positions with the best views over the battlefield, often as a climax to a section of the itinerary. At Chateau-Thierry, the visitor was led first through the destruction of the town itself, its ruined bridge and the German defences as well as the surviving architecture, before being directed to the castle for commanding views of the whole. In Rheims, the city tour wove extensively through the war-damaged town, before rewarding the visitor with panoramic views from one of two 'eminences' in the St Nicaise Square. Ypres, with its flat Flanders landscape, presented more of a challenge, but even here the tourist who had been exploring the ruined town was urged to climb the ramparts 'from which there is a magnificent panorama.'[47] This was clearly meant to be a breath-taking experience – both literally and figuratively. Reader and Walter have argued that the difficulty of the journey is a key feature of pilgrimage[48], and

[47] *Americans 1*, pp. 44-8; *Rheims*, p. 102; *Ypres*, pp. 100-1; labelled panoramic photos are sometimes included to help the tourist interpret the landscape, see *Americans 3*, pp. 40-1. In his essay on the importance of local domestic landscapes to First World War poets, Keith Grieves suggests that hill-top panoramas experienced a renaissance during the conflict. See Grieves, Keith, 'The Propinquity of Place: Home, Landscape and Soldier Poets of the First World War' in Meyer, Jessica (ed.), *British Popular Culture and the First World War* (Leiden, Brill, 2008), pp. 33-5.
[48] Reader, *Pilgrimage*, pp. 220-45.

for the Michelin tourist the greatest exertions often accompany the climb to viewpoints. The visitor was urged to go as high as possible: at Pernant, the castle terrace had a fine view, but climb the hill further to the plateau and one was rewarded with the superlative '*very* fine view'. At the abbey of Mont St Eloi, health and safety concerns were set aside, as the visitor was urged to climb the 104 steps of the ruined tower before walking along a platform to peer through a gap in the wall.[49] Attaining these commanding positions was not just about the impact of a wide view; it also served a variety of practical purposes. Sometimes it provided the opportunity for a high-level description of the battles fought over the ground being viewed, talking in general terms about the ebb and flow of battle, without necessarily relating it to the specific features of the terrain.[50] At other times, the view provided the context for a detailed operational review of the action fought on that ground, more closely related to the topography which the tourist could see.[51] In either case, the viewpoint was used as a tool to help inform and educate the viewer. Again, the desire for good viewpoints may seem inevitable, but it has the effect of privileging those sections of the battlefield whose topography, usage and development facilitate panoramic views. Where such views are absent, the text tended to rely much more exclusively on the detritus of war as a means of communicating the passage of the conflict across the landscape. As the battlefields were later cleared, this would raise challenges in navigating and interpreting those sections of the battle front where viewpoints were absent.

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[49] *Americans 1*, p. 93 (emphasis added); *Arras*, p. 62. Penant is just west of Soissons on the Aisne battlefield; St Eloi is a couple of miles behind the Allied lines north of Arras, and was used as a command post during the war.
[50] *Somme 2*, pp. 66-8 & 75-7; *Verdun*, pp. 84-7.
[51] *Somme 2*, pp. 83-5; *Americans 2*, p. 38.

Indeed the siting of many post-war monuments on prominent high-ground addressed not just the need to commemorate very visibly sites of fierce fighting, but also tapped into this desire for an overview of the battle area.

When it comes to the German enemy, the guidebooks provided a vivid and usually condemnatory portrayal. To some extent, this was the continuation of a historical theme, linking back to brutal Prussian atrocities in earlier wars.[52] Indeed, history itself was seen as being under attack, with the Germans in 1914 blatantly disregarding the glorious history of France: their destructive impact, whether deliberate or accidental, was literally tearing apart the fabric of the nation; and their brutality was written in the French landscape, or at least in those things which were missing from it. According to the guides, a fine altar screen and tomb were carried off by the Germans at Hattonchatel church, and elsewhere they made off with a statue of the nineteenth century French general Antoine Chaunzy. The pipes of a church organ in Douai were smashed to pieces with hammers, while in Soissons the museum was not only pillaged, but some of the pictures were 'lacerated'. Looting was widespread: when the Germans evacuated Arras they took a great number of the treasures of the city.

Such looting was seen as systematic and organised, with a photo in the Soissons volume even showing the German direction-sign 'Zur

[52] See *Arras*, p. 23 for a description of C15 German atrocities; and *Soissons* pp. 47 & 59 for the war of 1870.

Beutesammelstelle', translated as 'To the booty collecting centre.'[53] The very treatment of history was seen as disrespectful, with historic artefacts being carted off in grocery bags, a photographic dark room being set up in a church sepulchre, and the replacement of a pilfered civic statue with a crude dummy.[54] Atrocities were portrayed as a deliberate attack on French culture, and were not limited to artwork and cultural artefacts. In the northern industrial areas of France, the Germans deliberately ran down or destroyed the infrastructure. The Lille guidebook spoke of the industries of northern France having been 'ruined, not so much by the war, as by the systematic pillaging and destructions carried out by the Germans.' The text went on to reference German documents found in Brussels which testified to the existence of organisations set up specifically to cripple French industry and sell off its assets.[55] It is striking that there is often little distinction in tone between accidental damage, careless neglect of infrastructure, or 'scorched earth' campaigns: destruction was portrayed as intrinsic to the German character. The broken industrial landscape was not simply the legacy of conflict; it was testament to German atrocities.

French citizens were themselves the target of atrocities. Evidence of official enquiries was used to support the claims about German mistreatment of the civilian population: two women had been badly treated after accusations of spying; civilians had been used as a human shield; and an innocent civilian

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[53] *Americans 2*, p. 35; *Americans 3*, p. 45; *Arras*, p. 121; *Soissons*, p. 40; *Arras*, p. 116; *Soissons*, p. 8; for apparently wanton destruction of cultural artefacts see also *Arras*, pp. 26 & 45; *Rheims*, pp. 16, 20 and 31; *Soissons*, p. 5.
[54] *Lille*, p. 38; *Rheims*, p. 151, *Somme 1*, pp. 103-4.
[55] *Lille*, p. 24; similar allegations are repeated in *Ypres*, p. 50.

man had been executed.[56] Local people in an asylum had been threatened by the German occupiers, or elsewhere taken as hostages.[57] In Chatel-Chehery, a document in the Germans' own hand was produced as evidence for maltreatment of the local population.[58] It was not just the *actions* of the German soldiers which the guidebooks condemned; it was also their *intentions* and state of mind. Repeatedly, their approach was seen as ruthlessly systematic and methodical. The devastated landscape of their retreat from the Marne in 1918 was not an inevitable consequence of battle, but evidence of their methodically effected withdrawal and 'systematic pillage'.[59] In Lens, the mines were flooded and 'with the aid of technicians, the enemy carried out methodical destructions with all their native thoroughness.'[60] A brutal system was seen not only as native to the German mindset (and by inference, profoundly un-French), but was aided by the presence of technicians whose machinations amplified the barbarous military activity of the soldier.

The perceived efficiency of the German Army and its impact on the landscape was the source not only of disgust, but at times of baffled wonder. The careful construction and design of their blockhouses prompted not just horror, but a degree of marvel: 'veritable village[s]' of concrete blockhouses were referred to, with amazement on one occasion at the terraces, flowers,

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[56] *Somme 1*, pp. 40-1 & 58-60.
[57] *Americans 3*, pp. 59-60; for hostages see *Amiens*, insert page and *Yser*, pp. 120-6.
[58] *Americans 3*, pp. 82-3. The village would become particularly relevant to US audiences as being close to the site where American war hero Sgt. Alvin York likely won his Medal of Honor.
[59] *Americans 1*, p. 28; see also pp. 42-3; *Americans 2*, pp. 52 & 141; *Ypres*, p. 11.
[60] *Arras*, p. 105.

tapestries and woodwork which adorned them. Trenches and shelter systems were 'remarkable'.[61] On very rare occasions, marvel lapsed into admiration. At Trones Wood on the Somme, the battered landscape was seen as testament to the 'greatest bravery' shown by both sides, while in the same region in 1918 the German army was seen as having might as well as cunning.[62] But these were exceptions rather than the rule, with the behaviour of German soldiers generally seen as swarming and animalistic, fuelled by drink or drugs, and leading to disrespectful outcomes such as urination in the church font at Bray.[63] Frequently, cunning superseded might, with Germans concealing shelters in churches or other ostensibly innocuous buildings, resorting to prohibited weapons of war, or donning French uniforms to confuse the Allied troops.[64] Brutal vengefulness characterised the choice to attack Rheims on a public holiday, so as to maximise civilian casualties.[65]

In all of these cases, the guidebooks provide a clear and robust interpretation of the battlefield landscape. Some destruction was simply the unavoidable result of warfare, however lamentable that might be. That perpetrated by the Germans, however, was deliberate, systematic and wanton, traits portrayed as being intrinsic to their national character. The war-torn landscape was a reminder not just of the horror of the conflict, but of the barbarous world view

[61] *Americans 2*, pp. 43 & 77; see also pp. 33-4 & 109; *Americans 3*, p. 80; *Somme 1*, p. 83.
[62] *Somme 1*, p. 85; *Somme 2*, p. 9. It is perhaps significant that in both examples, the Germans were at the time opposed by the British rather than the French forces in those sectors.
[63] See *Americans 3*, pp. 98 & 101; *Yser*, p. 123; *Marne* p. 102; *Somme 1*, p. 68; *Verdun* pp. 63-4.
[64] *Americans 2*, p. 26; *Verdun*, pp. 73 & 77, *Ypres*, p. 14.
[65] *Rheims*, p. 22.

which the Allies were fighting against. Nowhere was this clearer than in the guidebooks' focus on and treatment of pre-war history.

The sweep of history – French civilisation vs German Kultur

Although the guidebooks were ostensibly about the battlefields, large swathes of text referred not to the period of the conflict, but to the pre-war history of the towns and villages being travelled through, building on the content of Michelin's pre-war publications. The twenty-page description cataloguing the architecture and treasures of Amiens cathedral is the most striking, but St Mihiel, Pont-a-Mousson, Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing and others all received similar, if somewhat less exhaustive, treatment.[66] On closer reading, it is clear that these pages were very much about the war and its interpretation, testifying as they did to the Allied history and civilisation being fought for, as distinct from the ruthless German *Kultur* being fought against.[67] Where the history had been preserved, as was largely the case in Amiens cathedral, it was testament to an enduring legacy which was worth fighting for.[68] At Metz, victory in the First World War was seen as righting the wrong

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[66] Anon, *Amiens Before and During the War* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, 1919), pp. 9-31; *Americans 2*, pp. 53-67 and 87-95; *Lille*, pp. 26-9 and 55-63; see also *Americans 3*, pp. 64-7.

[67] On the use of 'kultur' as a pejorative term for the German approach to life, see Doyle, Peter and Walker, Julian, *Trench Talk: Words of the First World War* (Stroud, The History Press, 2012), p. 19. For the conflict between civilisation and *Kultur*, see Windsor, Tara, 'Between cultural conflict and cultural contact: German writers and cultural diplomacy in the Aftermath of the First World War', in Martin, Nicholas et al, *Aftermath: Legacies and Memories of War in Europe, 1918-1945-1989* (Farnham, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), pp. 109-27.

[68] Becker adds another layer of interpretation, suggesting that the conflict was perceived by the French (and Americans) as a holy war against the diabolical inhumanity of Germany. See Becker, Annette, *War and Faith: The Religious Imagination in France 1914-1930* (Oxford, Berg, 1998), pp. 7-10.

of 1870-1871 and restoring historical continuity, and praise was given to the Academy of Metz for preserving French traditions during the extended period of German occupation.[69] At times, the lengths gone to by the French populace to save their cultural history were expounded, further underscoring that history's importance.[70]

Often, though, the devastated battlefield landscape spoke of the loss of French pre-war civilisation and history. Introducing the itinerary around Chateau-Thierry, Soissons and Fismes, the text lamented:

> Before the War this part of the country was one of the prettiest and most interesting in France. In nearly every village there was either an old church, a castle, or ruins of archaeological interest.[71]

The itinerary went on to explain how vast tracts of that history had been ruined by the war, including at Varennes. Louis XVI had been apprehended there on his flight from Paris, so the town was a significant location in French Republican history. The guidebook noted that the historic buildings associated with this incident had been compromised by the passage of war.[72] At Amiens, whilst the cathedral was relatively unscathed, the church of St Germain was more seriously bomb-damaged:

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[69] *Americans 2*, p. 124.
[70] See *Amiens*, pp. 32-4 and 39; *Rheims*, pp. 58-60, 67 and 79.
[71] *Americans 1*, p. 40.
[72] *Americans 3*, pp. 72-3.

> Although the main body of the building remained standing, most of the ornamental carving was broken and the doorway torn open, while all the stained glass was destroyed, together with the greater part of the mullions of the windows. Inside, the vaults were pierced in several places.[73]

The language was Biblical and apocalyptic, the torn door echoing the rent curtain in the temple following the Crucifixion, and the piercing hinting at the Crucifixion itself. Whereas many modern battlefield guidebooks tend to refer to casualty figures as indicators of the scale of destruction,[74] for the Michelin guides the loss of historical and cultural heritage was the key evidential marker, with casualty figures highlighted much less frequently. Arguably, this focus on French cultural history was likely to have most resonance with French nationals, but clearly there was sufficient shared cultural heritage for this to be seen as of potential interest in the English translations as well. Whatever the nationality of the reader, the pre-war history and architecture of the battlefield areas were portrayed as underscoring precisely what the war was about; its ruins a reminder of what was lost, and its survivors a testament to what was being fought for. British writers of the 1920s, as chapter three explores, took a rather different approach to landscape.

Cemeteries, memorials and battlefield clearance

In the twenty-first century, the immaculately manicured military cemeteries of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission along with the well-tended burial sites of other nations' war dead are a key part of virtually all battlefield

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[73] *Amiens*, p. 48.
[74] The Holts series of guides, already referred to above, regularly provide casualty figures for specific battles and actions.

tours, with school parties frequently including two or three cemeteries as central elements in a day-trip to the Ypres Salient.[75] In the Michelin guidebooks, burials were presented in very different terms. Leaving Gruerie Wood, the guide noted that ‘The road passes beside two large French cemeteries, then a row of dug-outs’, the cemeteries being simply part of the wider battlefield landscape.[76] At Hill 154 near Ginchy, numerous graves were seen as illustrating the violence of the struggle, and at Chaulnes Wood the same idea of graves as an indicator of ferocious fighting was reinforced by a photo.[77] Near Meaux, the progression of lines of troops under fire could be traced by looking at the pattern of the graves.[78] At Mousson, conversely, it was the destruction of graves in the cemetery which was noted as evidence of the passage of war, while near Hooge some fourteen abandoned tanks were seen as forming their own kind of ‘tank cemetery’.[79] Elsewhere, cemeteries were referenced simply as part of the itinerary directions, as a turning point, as a feature to reassure the tourist that they were still on the right route, or even as a good viewpoint.[80] This is not to suggest that there is any lack of respect for the resting places of the dead, of either side; but they were very much a part of, and often subordinated to, the battlefield itself. There are many reasons for this approach. As has already been stated, the comprehensive cataloguing and organisation of cemeteries was still some years off when the Michelin guidebooks were produced, so offering more

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[75] Based on the author’s own experience of battlefield guiding for school groups.
[76] *Americans 3*, p. 101. It is clear from the context that these are military rather than civilian cemeteries, though often the guides do not specify, not least perhaps because civilian cemeteries were often extended for military purposes.
[77] *Somme 1*, pp. 87 & 129.
[78] *Marne*, p. 89.
[79] *Americans 2*, p. 96; *Ypres*, p. 106. Postcards were produced of this Tank Cemetery outside Ypres, near where the Bellewaerde theme park is today located.
[80] See *Americans 1*, pp. 53, 64 & 83; *Arras*, p. 63; *Somme 2*, p. 74.

detailed information about the cemeteries would have been problematic and frequently liable to error. The cemeteries themselves were often unnamed – a passage in the Ypres volume referred to a succession of cemeteries simply by their code number – and this related less clearly to battlefield nomenclature than the named cemeteries of later years.[81]

It is also significant that, at this point, military cemeteries were by no means the dominant location of burials. Quite apart from unmarked bodies lying scattered under the battlefields, there were numerous isolated graves referred to, those of men who had simply been buried where they fell. The Lochnagar mine crater at La Boisselle is today a preserved battlefield site, but in 1919 it was also an impromptu graveyard, complete with grave markers shown in a photo.[82] At Bazoches, the communal [ie civilian village] cemetery contained the graves of US soldiers who fell in the vicinity – men who would later either be repatriated or brought together into one of the vast American military cemeteries.[83] Whether simply by the roadside, in the corner of a civilian graveyard, or in a primitive military burial site, cemeteries were simply not the obvious focus for the battlefield visitor that they are today, and the apparently passing references in the battlefield guides reflect this. It is telling that the emotive word 'pilgrim', used so rarely in the text of the Michelin guides, appears in the Yser volume for visitors not to graves, but to destroyed villages and battle-scarred landscapes.[84]

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[81] *Ypres*, p. 57.
[82] *Somme 1*, p. 37.
[83] *Americans 1*, p. 109.
[84] *Yser*, p. 114.

Memorials in this period frequently fused with the battlefield. French sappers used barbed wire from the German positions at the Croix des Carmes as part of a memorial in their military cemetery, while in Lille a sculptor made a bas-relief memorial from a huge fragment of stone blown into his studio when an ammunition dump exploded.[85] An American monument to the crossing of the Meuse appeared somewhat more substantial and conventional, but even here the photo showed elements of battlefield detritus being worked into the base of the memorial; while another US memorial was constructed from shell cases and discarded rifles.[86] German memorials, frequently solid and conventionally built, were by contrast seen as unusual, crude, massive, and in one case even as a nefarious concealment for an Observation Post.[87]

Burial sites and memorials were not without importance, as the frequency with which they are mentioned in the guides testifies. However, they were usually a part of the wider battlefield landscape rather than a destination in their own right. Memorials, in particular, sometimes grew literally out of the detritus of war, and anything more elaborate was uncommon and, particularly if German, liable to be viewed with suspicion or hostility.[88] At this early post-war stage, it was the battlefield itself which took centre-stage, with the organised structure of cemeteries and memorials still in early development. With so much focus on battlefield detritus and landscape, the

[85] *Americans 2*, p. 105; *Lille*, p. 22.
[86] *Americans 3*, pp. 38 & 43.
[87] For German monuments as curious, see *Americans 3*, p. 106; and *Lille*, p. 44. For rudimentary carving, *Rheims*, p. 163. A monument seen as almost indecently massive, *Somme 1*, p. 43. For memorial as a decoy, *Ypres*, pp. 61-2.
[88] For negative British attitudes to perceived 'Teutonic' motifs in memorials, see King, Alex, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford, Berg, 1998), p. 158.

guidebooks might be expected to take some view on the restoration of the battlefields to something like their pre-war state. Where the volumes touched on this, they tended to be in firm favour of the clearing of the battlefields – adverts in the guidebooks focused on ease of travel, and restoration of roads and infrastructure supported this. Many of the volumes contain information on local hotels and motor agents, and occasional reference was made to the ease or difficulty of procuring provisions in a particular region. The Lille guide pointed out, with no sense of regret, that the temporary bridges in the city, present in April 1919, might be gone by the time tourists arrived. In Soissons, the ruins were being cleared, and this was making 'room for the new life which is springing up', even if total clearance would take some time. The destruction of the Somme agricultural lands was fervently lamented, with photos suggesting just how long any restoration was likely to take; but in the Somme village of Frise, residents were at least returning, and living in huts on the square.[89]

While welcoming these early signs of restoration, there was occasionally a nod to the losses in the battlefield landscape. The remains of 20 burned out aeroplanes at a US air park near Chaudun were noted as being present in May 1919 – with the clear inference that they might soon be gone. At the massive crater in Lille where the ammunition dump had exploded, the sides of the bowl were no longer crisp and grass was starting to grow through;

[89] *Lille*, p. 49; *Soissons*, p.14; *Somme 1*, p. 11, with aerial images p. 4; and for Frise see *Somme 1*, p. 72; see also the reconstruction of the railway station, *Arras*, p. 27; a temporary school, *Arras*, p. 93; the tidying up of a cemetery, *Arras*, p. 93; plans for the redevelopment of Lens, *Arras*, p. 101; and even the advent of guided tours of the Dourges mines, *Arras*, p. 114. The Marne guide documents, in photos, reconstruction under way as early as 1917, *Marne*, p. 180. Frise, near Corbie on the Somme, was immortalised by the French poet and writer Blaise Cendrars who was stationed there in winter 1914-15.

while camouflage netting, so clear in a photo near Ormes, was reduced only to traces by the time of writing.[90] This underscores one of the reasons for the inclusion of so many photos in the guides – in part, as insurance against such time as the battlefield landscape faded.

Given the French genesis of the guides, it is no surprise that the writers welcomed the first signs of the post-war rebirth of France. Nonetheless, the references to the impact of clearing the battlefields reflect just how important the destruction, chaos and brutality of the battlefield landscape were to these early interpretations of the war zone. Later French-language editions of the Michelin guides would have to grapple with this issue, but no further English-language guides were produced by the company, and so the task of interpreting the legacy of the cleared battlefields in English would fall to British writers, whose work will be considered in chapter three.

Diverging landscapes

No traveller along the Western Front today could fail to be struck by the varied topography as they move from the coast to the Swiss border: the flatlands of Belgium and Flanders give way to the ridges of Picardy and the lightly rolling hills of the Somme, the gentle symmetry of the Champagne vineyards and finally the mountainous reaches of the Vosges. Land use changes too, from the industry of the north, through agriculture, to the comparatively untended lands of the rocky mountain-scape. The battlefield

[90] *Americans 1*, p. 80; *Lille*, p. 45; *Rheims*, p. 126.

visitor of a century ago could see these variations too, but the battlefield guides bore witness to other distinctions which time has softened: those of the impact of battle. The varied nature, timing and length of fighting in different parts of the front meant that, in the immediate post-war period, a very different story could be read into the many battlefield landscapes, and the Michelin guides capture these distinctions clearly. By the mid-1920s, the passage of time would start to mask these important differences.

The Ypres guide made this explicit: ‘In this region, with its essentially maritime climate, the war assumed a character entirely different from that of the rest of the front.’[91] The text went on to explain the impact of the waterlogged ground on the fighting and fortifications, and the importance of even relatively low-lying ridges in the combat which beset the area. The itineraries acquainted the traveller vividly with the muddy legacy of this type of warfare. At the other end of the ground covered by the guidebooks, St Mihiel was a relatively stable position throughout the war, as the Germans held their ground until dislodged by US troops in September 1918. When they did evacuate, they did so rapidly, meaning that their fortifications had generally survived well. Indeed, the survival of the German blockhouses was contrasted unfavourably with the destruction of French heritage in the area.[92]

Lille, by contrast, was occupied throughout the war, so the focus in the guidebook was on the pre-war history of the city and then its life under

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[91] *Ypres*, p. 3.
[92] *Americans 2*, see in particular pp. 33-4, 40-3, 47-50, 68, 70-5, 84-6, & 138-43.

occupation, in particular German attitudes, atrocities and deportations.[93] Nearby Arras was much more in the front line, and the tone of the work was different again – the main actions took place over a relatively well-defined area, meaning they could be tracked in some detail across the landscape. Unusually for a Michelin guide, there was liberal quotation from the account of Captain Charles Humbert (who was in fact a journalist and French Senator for the Meuse region rather than a front-line soldier at the time of the war), which sought to add humanity, drama and colour to the story. Most importantly, the landscape itself with its high ridges like Vimy and the Lorette Spur enabled the visitor to trace the ebb and flow of actions from a single viewpoint, in a way which would have been impossible in a city or in the flat landscape of Flanders.[94] The Yser region was different again. The coastal fortifications and actions formed a significant part of the itinerary. For large parts of the war, the flooded terrain meant that land actions were uncommon, and those involving the French army (which was generally further south) even more so. The focus here was therefore on visiting the German fortifications, and marvelling in horror at their ingenuity. There was occasional reference to refugees and, given the commercial value of the ports, to relatively advanced post-war restoration.[95] At times, the landscape seemed simply too confusing to be able to follow at all. The landscape in the Argonne region, the reader was informed, was notoriously challenging in military terms with thick forests, natural valleys, narrow ravines and muddy

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[93] *Lille*, pp. 12-21.
[94] Captain Humbert's account, titled *La Division Barbot*, is often quoted in the course of the Arras volume.
[95] For visits to fortifications, war detritus etc see *Yser*, pp. 37, 42, 55-8, 64, 70-2, 83-5 & 112-3; refugees p. 66; and post-war restoration pp. 52 & 82.

rivulets. The fighting in this region had been confused, the reader was warned, often without clear and continuous trench lines, and quite mobile.[96] As a result, large parts of the itinerary focussed on the area immediately surrounding the visitor, rather than trying to piece together the broader ebb and flow of battle.

Both the distinctive geography of each battle zone, and the type of combat which took place in it, left a legacy which influenced the way in which that battlefield was visited, described and interpreted for the tourist. Put simply, the way in which the guidebooks were able to 'remember' the battlefields immediately after the war was, to a significant extent, informed by the interaction between the pre-war landscape and the impact of the conflict on it. The nature of this interaction was much more obvious in the immediate aftermath of war than it would be once the battlefields had been cleared; and it is more difficult to trace these patterns in later works.

Finally, it is worth stressing that war damage was viewed differently depending on the attitude of the writers towards it. Verdun had, by the end of the war, acquired an almost mythic status in French history by virtue of its longstanding symbolism as a frontier fortress, the huge numbers of French soldiers killed there, and the duration of the battle which persisted for most of 1916.[97] As such, the Verdun guide has a number of unusual features. The city itself was described almost entirely in the present tense, even those

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[96] See *Americans 3*, pp. 8-17.
[97] President Poincare's comments when decorating Verdun after the war, quoted in *Verdun*, p. 30, testify powerfully to this interpretation of Verdun's significance.

parts which had clearly been destroyed; while in the surrounding battlefields, the text frequently focused on the actions fought by the French soldiers rather than any war damage, leaving the photos as silent but eloquent witnesses to the devastation.[98] It was almost as if Verdun summed up the whole war: the entire sweep of French history and civilisation being upheld by the heroism of the French poilus against the brutish *Kultur* of the German army. It was telling that while the cover of the Verdun guide titled it as *Verdun and the Battles for its Possession* (in keeping with the title-format of the Rheims guide), the frontispiece rebadged it simply as *The Battle of Verdun 1914-1918*, encapsulating the entire conflict in one battle and one volume. Elsewhere, the writers' interpretation was more nuanced. The village of Vienne-le-Chateau 'was shelled by the Germans. The greater part of the village was wiped out.'[99] The blame for the destruction was laid clearly at the door of the German army, which as has been argued above was characterised in the guidebooks as vindictive and brutal. In the same volume, Montfaucon was almost entirely ruined too, but this time by the Allied guns trying to drive the Germans out: of the five photos of the village, three show German observation posts, tacitly suggesting why the Allied bombardment was necessary.[100] Other guidebooks go further, stating that the Allies 'had literally to pulverise each house' in Neuville owing to the strength of the German resistance; while at Ostend the Germans wilfully damaged the town during their occupation, but 'British shells and aeroplane

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[98] *Verdun*, see in particular pp. 36, 38, 67-71, 73-8, 81-3 & 108-10.
[99] *Americans 3*, p. 95.
[100] *Americans 3*, pp. 76-9; in the next village German 'stubbornness' is presented as partly responsible for the Allied bombardments.

bombs *unavoidably* increased the damage.'[101] The availability of the battlefield for remembrance, as influenced by its geography and the nature of the fighting over it, was therefore modified by the explicit and implicit judgments of the writers as to how that battlefield landscape was created. Allied actions were celebrated where successful, and tolerated where they were destructive; with German actions being almost universally condemned.

As the first of the battlefield guides opined:

> Seeing is not enough, one must understand; a ruin is more moving when one knows what has caused it; a stretch of country which might seem dull and uninteresting to the unenlightened eye, becomes transformed at the thought of the battles which have raged there.[102]

A reading of the Michelin guides shows that a ruin is indeed not simply a ruin – the way it was presented, understood and remembered was being shaped as early as 1917 by the landscape it sat in, the fighting which created it, and the interplay of foe and ally.

Conclusion

The Michelin battlefield guides in English, published as they were in the final years and immediate aftermath of the war, represent some of the first attempts to interpret the battlefields of the Western Front for visitors and

[101] *Arras*, p. 94; *Yser*, p. 59 (emphasis added).
[102] *Marne*, p. 2.

armchair tourists, and as such are amongst the earliest influences on British commemoration on the battlefield. They are a richly nuanced set of historical sources, drawing distinctions between different landscapes and different types of wartime destruction which would be much harder to trace in later years, once battlefield clearance and time had done their work. In general, they had a strongly French slant to their military history, though did not ignore the role of their Allies. Their approach to commemorating the dead was largely collective in its focus, eschewing individual commemoration partly through choice and partly owing to the lack of collected and catalogued data on the final resting places of the dead. In general, cemeteries have a much less prominent role in the hierarchy of the battlefield than would be the case in later years, with the emphasis being on placing the tourist amidst the detritus of war, or at commanding positions where an overview of the fighting can be secured. The guidebooks also devoted a significant amount of space to establishing a negative view of the German enemy, enshrined in their destruction of the landscape, and only very rarely leavened by any sense of shared humanity amongst the soldiers. Indeed, the German character in general was seen as ruthlessly modern, disrespectful of history and culturally (or '*Kultur*'-ally) opposed to the heritage of French civilisation. Those vestiges of French history which had survived the destruction were seen as emblematic of precisely what France and her Allies were fighting to protect.

This approach to interpreting and remembering the battlefields was only partly mirrored by British guidebook writers in the 1920s, reflecting cultural differences and different experiences of the conflict. Many of the early British

guidebook writers would have been aware of the Michelin guides, particularly those published in the 1917-1919 period, and to some extent may have been influenced by them. However, as the next chapter will explore, they each chose to plough their own furrow, advocating a very different relationship with the post-war landscape from their French counterparts.

Chapter Three: British battlefield guidebooks in the 1920s

Introduction

Chapter two argued that the Michelin guides of 1917-1920 provide a more nuanced account of the battlefields than might at first be apparent. There are undoubtedly similarities across the suite of guidebooks: the structure of each of the guides is similar, the use of photographic imagery and illustration is rich in all the volumes, and numerous themes and ideas recur consistently. At the same time, there are significant differences in the way the battlefields are presented, varying with such factors as the landscape of the region, the profile of the fighting which took place there, the level of wartime destruction, and even the perceived cause of battlefield ruins. This chapter extends the analysis to battlefield guidebooks written and produced in Britain in the period immediately following the war, and shows that these further disrupt the idea of a unified and coherent battlefield narrative.

It argues that there are some important parallels between these British works and the Michelin guides: a shared interest in visiting locations where the legacy of war was clearly expressed in battlefield detritus, and a perception of the traveller as a pilgrim with a clear sense of purpose and reflection. At the same time, British guidebooks developed their own perspective on the war. They privileged those locations associated with the British forces (or those of the British Empire), in contrast to the French focus of the Michelin guides. They took a different view of the destruction of the landscape and

how that should be interpreted, and were more ambivalent about the restoration of the landscape than the French publications. They struck a less condemnatory tone in relation to the Germans, and were less overtly judgmental about the difference between German and Allied destruction of the landscape. They elaborated on the idea that the battlefield landscape was changing as it was cleared, and that the legacy of the war was increasingly visible in cemeteries and memorials rather than in the detritus of battle. This latter trend was not a neat and linear progression, but it was particularly pronounced by the mid-1920s, which is outside the timeframe of the English-language Michelin guides which largely ceased being revised around 1920.

In these guidebooks a distinctly British approach to the landscape of battle emerged. Their Michelin counterparts saw much of the value and meaning of the landscape in the pre-war history of French *civilisation*, which the war had been fought to protect. Whilst British visitors could certainly understand that message, it was less relevant to them as it was not *their* history. Instead, these British guidebooks challenged the visitor to engage directly with the wartime landscape of the British soldier, walking the battlefield terrain and trying as far as they could to understand the perspective of the front-line combatant. Experiencing the landscape of battle was critical, ideally accompanied by a degree of hardship or discomfort. As a consequence of this, the clearance of the battlefield landscape was much more concerning to British writers, leading as it did to a perceived lost connection with wartime memories. By 1925, the battlefields had become for

these guidebooks a confusing and at times distressing place, where wartime events could no longer be reimagined as easily, and where ever greater efforts had to be made to connect with the landscapes of battle and the memories they enshrined.

An overview of British battlefield guidebooks

The Michelin guides had some important limitations as sources.[1] The sources for this chapter on British battlefield guides address some of those confounding factors. The selection is limited to guides produced in Britain before 1929, written in English, and aimed primarily at a British market and interests. They cover a slightly broader timescale than offered by the Michelin guides, though in Britain as in France there appears to have been a small surge in battlefield guidebooks in the immediate post-war period. Of the five guides analysed in detail here, one was produced in 1919, three in 1920, and one in 1925. Defining and selecting battlefield guidebooks is problematic – what actually constitutes a guidebook? The Michelin suite of books, for all its limitations, does at least provide a clearly defined set of sources with certain common characteristics; no such clarity existed across the Channel. John Masefield's 1917 publication on the Somme battlefields was arguably a guidebook of sorts, striving to describe the positions of the British front lines in summer and autumn 1916.[2] However, its tone was one of descriptive memoir rather than practical field guide; published in wartime

[1] See chapter two.
[2] Masefield, John, *The Old Front Line* (London, William Heinemann, 1917).

when travel to the battlefields was problematic, it was aimed more at the armchair reader at home contemplating some future visit, than to the post-war battlefield visitor. Masefield himself acknowledged as much, describing Albert as 'the centre from which, *in time to come*, travellers will start to see the battlefield…'.[3] For the purposes of this chapter Masefield and writers like him are excluded, and source selection has been confined to publications which present themselves as field guides, devoting some part of their pages to practical guidance on visiting the battlefields, outline itineraries, travel directions, advice on hotels and so on.[4] Also excluded from this analysis are guides prepared primarily to support a particular organised excursion to the battlefields. Some of the most famous of these were organised by the travel company Thomas Cook, but visits or 'pilgrimages' were also run by charitable organisations such as the Royal British Legion or St Barnabas. Often, a souvenir brochure was produced to accompany these programmed itineraries.[5] Though these are fascinating sources in their own right, they are often closely tied to the promotion or recording of their own specific itinerary; for the purposes of this chapter, only guidebooks of a generic nature, with a longer shelf-life and aimed at the independent tourist are included.[6]

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[3] Ibid., p. 14, emphasis added; see also p. 26.
[4] Masefield's work nonetheless provides a fascinating insight into the experience of one person's wartime battlefield visit, and as such forms part of the analysis of pilgrims' experiences in chapter five.
[5] For Thomas Cook tours, see Brendon, P, *Thomas Cook: 150 years of popular tourism* (London, Secker and Warburg, 1991), p. 258; the brochures produced by the Society of St Barnabas following their battlefield pilgrimages in the 1920s form the basis of chapter six of this thesis.
[6] The experience of individual pilgrims on organised itineraries will be discussed in chapters six and seven.

Taking into account all of these factors, five key guides form the core sources for this chapter, chosen to reflect a variety of authorial voices, stylistic approaches, geographical areas and dates of publication. The first of these, Captain Atherton Fleming's *How to See the Battlefields,* was published in 1919.[7] Fleming described himself as a Special Correspondent for the *Daily Chronicle* in 1914; he went on to serve in the army during the war.[8] The volume takes a systematic approach to the battlefields, comprising seven sections each covering a different sector of the Western Front.

The Pilgrim's Guide to the Ypres Salient was produced in 1920 for Talbot House, the institution set up behind the front lines in Belgium to give British troops a place to relax, and which gave rise to the Toc H movement after the war.[9] Although Toc H later organised battlefield pilgrimages, this guide bore no relation to those group trips, and was aimed at the individual traveller. It claimed to be written entirely by ex-servicemen[10], and comprised a central section with practical advice on travel, book-ended by essays on different aspects of the conflict. It was designed both as a practical field-guide, and as an armchair guide for someone unable or unwilling to travel.[11] Unlike the

[7] Fleming, Capt. Atherton, *How to See the Battlefields* (London, Cassell and Company Ltd., 1919).
[8] For reference to his journalistic background, see Ibid., unnumbered introductory page; after the war Fleming went on to marry the writer Dorothy L. Sayers.
[9] Anon, *The Pilgrim's Guide to the Ypres Salient* (London, Herbert Reiach Ltd. for Talbot House, 1920).
[10] Ibid., Editorial Note, p. v.
[11] Ibid.

other guides, it contains a large number of adverts, included to defray the cost of publication.[12]

The Reverend John Ogden Coop published *A Short Guide to the Battlefields* in 1920.[13] An Anglican priest in the Liverpool area, he served as Senior Chaplain to the 55th West Lancashire Division during the war, and subsequently wrote that Division's history. His guide opened with an introductory section on the practical issues of travel, with subsequent chapters each dealing with a different sector of the western front, and an appendix with suggested itineraries.

The Western Battlefields was published in the same year (1920) by Lieutenant-Colonel T.A. Lowe, who had commanded the 1st Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers during part of 1918.[14] The first edition appeared in March 1920, with a reprint in June, testifying to the early popularity of the work. Lowe made it clear from the outset that he would cover 'only those bits of the line in which the author served and fought',[15] although this comprised quite a wide area of the front, covered in a series of chapters preceded by sections with practical travel information. Lowe's work is distinctive in its rich use of imagery, including both hand-drawn illustrations (often graphic in content) and official photos.

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[12] Ibid., supplementary end pages, pp. i-xxxii; for the explanation of the inclusion of the adverts, see Editorial Note, p .v.
[13] Coop, John Ogden, *A Short Guide to the Battlefields* (Liverpool, Daily Post, 1920).
[14] Lowe, Lt.-Col. T. A., DSO, MC, *The Western Battlefields: A Guide to the British Line, Short Account of the Trenches and Positions* (London, Gale & Polden Ltd., 1920).
[15] Ibid., p. x.

The final volume considered in detail in this chapter is *The Immortal Salient*, published in 1925 by the Ypres League. The League was formed in the early 1920s by Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Beckles Willson, a Canadian veteran and former Town Major in Ypres. Supported by high-profile figures like Lord French and Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle, it was committed to supporting the memory of the town and what had happened there.[16] Its guidebook featured input from a number of well-known wartime figures.[17] Its co-authors were Lieutenant-General Sir William Pulteney, commander of III Corps on the western front for most of the conflict; and Beatrix Brice, a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse during the war who was also a published war poet, and is the only credited female contributor to any of the volumes.[18] The preface was written by Field Marshal the Earl Haig, and the introduction by Sir Philip Gibbs, the famous official British war correspondent. Its format is quite similar to the Michelin guides, with an opening commentary on the history of the war around Ypres, followed by an itinerary; supplementary sections cover the naval attacks at Zeebrugge and Ostend in 1918, and also the role of the Belgian army. Published later than any of the other guidebooks, it shows how the battlefield came to be interpreted further on in the post-war clearance process.[19]

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[16] For a good overview of the work of the Ypres League, see Connelly, Mark, 'The Ypres League and the Commemoration of the Ypres Salient, 1914-1940' in *War in History*, 16 (1), 2009, pp. 51-76.
[17] Pulteney, Lt.-Gen. Sir William and Brice, Beatrix, *The Immortal Salient: An Historical Record and Complete Guide for Pilgrims to Ypres* (London, Ypres League, 1925).
[18] Brice later produced her own book on the Ypres Salient, though this is more in the nature of a glossary of places than an itinerary and travel guide. See Brice, Beatrix, *The Battle Book of Ypres* (London, John Murray, 1927).
[19] Other guidebooks were produced in Britain in the 1920s, and some are referenced in the bibliography. The five examined here have been chosen as a good cross-section in terms of style, content and date of publication; as well as all being published/sponsored by well-known publishers. For ease of reference, the five selected guidebooks are hereafter noted as 'Author, page reference'.

The format of these sources varies much more than the Michelin guides. No two books were produced by the same publisher, and although all have the same core content of battlefield itineraries, other elements such as practical travel guidance, contextual history, ordering of information and the inclusion of illustrations differed widely. The variety of form enabled the articulation of sometimes quite different interpretations of the battlefield landscape, whilst at the same time masking similarities of themes and motifs between the volumes. Unlike the ostensibly anonymous Michelin guides, all of these works had named authors. More importantly, the credentials of those authors were explicitly associated with the authenticity of the writing. Rather like Lowe, who claimed only to write about the areas he served in, Fleming prefaced comments about the destruction of the landscape around Neuville-St-Vaast with the observation that he had been stationed there with a gun battery.[20] The apparent detachment of the Michelin guides is absent, and value is instead grounded in the text having been written largely by people who were there.

At times the authors make personal observations. Fleming was a master of the wry aside, perhaps reflecting his journalistic background: commenting that the ruins of the chateau were virtually all that was left to mark the site of Gommecourt village, he observed that it 'is noticeable only owing to the fact that it is the biggest heap of stones in the neighbourhood.' Gently teasing the visitor to the battlefields near Arras, he noted that 'You will see a lot more

[20] Fleming, p. 24.

of the country than Tommy did, because you will be able to put your head up without being sniped at.' And with a biting irony aimed perhaps at the stay-at-home civilian, he commented that to the post-war visitor 'parts of the front will look quite as if a really comfortable sort of war could be carried on with a minimum amount of trouble and inconvenience.'[21] Such levity is poles apart from the serious tone of the Michelin guidebooks, but the authorial intrusions are not always light-hearted. Just a few paragraphs after his aside about the 'really comfortable sort of war', Fleming commented on the difficulty for the British troops of advancing in the Somme offensive. 'They could not go forward, so they died. My own brother was one of them. He lies near Pozieres.'[22] It is a starkly personal observation, all the more so for lacking further elaboration, and a distinct contrast with the impersonal tone of the Michelin guidebooks.

Coop, for his part, reflected wistfully on a print he saw in a hotel in Bailleul in 1915 and which he had wanted to buy: 'I wonder where it is now.'[23] The authors' credentials as individuals with experience of the conflict are crucial, and the rawness and authenticity of their own impressions and memories of the front underpin the perceived veracity of the volumes. Powerful visual imagery, by contrast, whilst not altogether lacking from the British guidebooks, is generally far more sparingly used than in the Michelin versions. When Coop mentioned the variety of photo opportunities for the

[21] Ibid., pp. 38, 36, & 41. Gommecourt was the location of a costly diversionary attack on the opening day of the 1916 Somme battle.
[22] Ibid., p. 42.
[23] Coop, p. 38.

traveller in Peronne, his comment is striking because it is so unusual[24] – the visual record is simply not stressed as strongly in these works. Lowe's work was the notable exception, with imagery frequently used to underscore Allied superiority in battle – cartoon-style illustrations depicted a variety of wartime activities including British heavy guns in action, or a faceless German being bayoneted by a British soldier (see figure 4 below). Indeed, his work opened with a grinning photographic group portrait of Marshal Joffre, President Poincaré, King George V, Marshal Foch and Field Marshal Haig, captioned 'The Victory Smile'.[25]

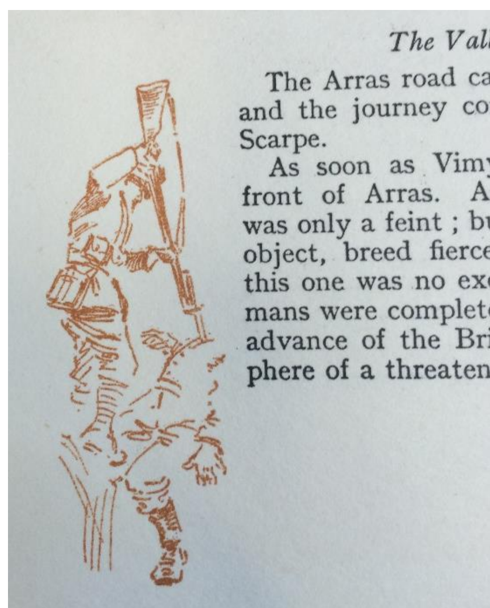

Figure 4: illustration from Lowe's book.

The British guidebooks provided detailed practical advice on travel. The Michelin guides had been produced originally for the French who would have

[24] Ibid., p. 83.
[25] Cartoon-style illustrations appear liberally throughout the text, and indeed on the front cover; the group photo is an unnumbered frontispiece.

been travelling largely within their own country; although they frequently included adverts for the Michelin Touring Office, local hotels and car garages, there was rarely more practical detail than that. The *Pilgrim's Guide*, by contrast, provided several pages covering passports, visas, money-changing, the eccentricities of the 24-hour clock, converting from kilometres to miles, train and boat times, travel fares, customs duties and hotels.[26] Coop covered similar ground, adding advice on the paperwork needed by motorists, details of roads passable by car, the requirement for waterproof clothing, the difficulties of sourcing food, the need for packed lunches and even the importance of carrying a corkscrew for picnics.[27] Although veterans of the conflict might be used to dealing with foreign officialdom, civilians might not, and so expectations had to be managed around the behaviour of customs officials: 'The officials are all polite and suave, but they are firm – especially the French.'[28] These guides underscore just how novel foreign travel was for many British tourists, with such travel further complicated when visiting a recent war-zone. The thrust of this advice suggests a clear view about readership: a British visitor, probably with little or no experience of travel to France, and hence almost certainly civilian rather than military.

However, a more detailed analysis of the guidebooks betrays a much more confused attitude to readership. In the first place, while all the books are positioned as field guides, many of them entertain the possibility of 'armchair'

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[26] *Pilgrim's Guide*, pp. 45-52.
[27] Coop, pp. 9-14.
[28] Ibid., p. 95.

readers at home, who are unable or unwilling to travel; and this is sometimes made explicit.[29] Moreover, there is uncertainty as to whether the reader will be a veteran of the conflict, or a civilian. Implicit in the status of the writers as veterans is often a sense that they are making up for deficiencies in non-combatant readers. In the *Pilgrim's Guide*, the chapters on the 'various branches of the service…should help Pilgrims to picture the life of those whom they go forth to honour.'[30] Yet the very first such essay concludes 'And here's to you all, men of all ranks who lived in those cellars…here's to you all, living and dead.'[31] The clear implication is that some readers would be veterans. Although the commercial status of many of the guides indicates that the publishers foresaw a buying public, there is a sense of uncertainty over exactly who the purchasers and readers might turn out to be. Vagaries abound: 'many persons' or 'many thousands of people' will be intending to visit the battlefields, but there is no clarity on who they are.[32] Sometimes statements of readership become circular: 'this Guide goes forth to the many Pilgrims for whom it is intended'.[33] In terms of gender, Coop and Lowe generally use the male pronoun for their readers – though whether this reflects an insight into their readers, or simply the writing conventions of the era, is difficult to say.[34] The *Pilgrim's Guide* and Fleming both refer at least once to male and female visitors, though only in passing.[35] The most we can conclude is that writers and publishers envisaged a mixture of visitors from

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[29] *Pilgrim's Guide*, p. v.
[30] Ibid., p. v.
[31] Ibid., p .4.
[32] Coop, p. 8; Fleming, foreword [unnumbered page].
[33] *Pilgrim's Guide*, p. vi.
[34] Coop, pp. 32, 34, 43, 46, 50, 55, 58, 62-3, 91; Lowe, pp. 9, 16, 23, 32, 36, 43.
[35] *Pilgrim's Guide*, p. vi; Fleming, pp. 2 & 88.

varied backgrounds, but that the precise composition of touring groups remained uncertain at the point of publication.

In terms of format, structure and style, therefore, these British guidebooks are more diverse than the Michelin offerings, and point to a readership for whom foreign travel was novel and challenging. If, as has been argued, a journey is made a pilgrimage in part by its hardships and difficulties, there are ample examples in these volumes of the practical challenges of post-war travel. Most importantly, these British guides suggest (often explicitly) that their authors' personal involvement with the war is a guarantee of their authenticity, in contrast to the anonymously-penned Michelin guidebooks. A distinct British approach to the battlefield guidebook genre emerges in the style and structure of these volumes, a distinction which continues in their treatment of the landscape.

Battlefield visiting: geography and purpose

Despite these significant differences from the Michelin guides, British guidebooks show some similarities to them in the way they explore the geography of the battlefield landscape. The Michelin preoccupation with finding high ground is common, even in unpromising flat landscapes such as those of Flanders. The *Pilgrim's Guide* recommended a trip to Kemmel to view the Salient, and provided a 360° panoramic diagram of what could be seen from the summit.[36] Coop also suggested that the views from Kemmel

[36] *Pilgrim's Guide*, pp. 59-61.

and the Scherpenberg are ‘probably the best way to gain a true perception of the Salient and of the whole battle line south of it.’[37] The aim was a commanding view similar to that of wartime generals, and therefore an enhanced understanding of the battlefield; indeed, when recommending a viewpoint over Gommecourt on the Somme, Coop observed that the reader was positioning himself at a military as well as a tourist vantage point: ‘A fine view of the bombardment preliminary to [the Somme] battle was presented from this road in the closing days of June, 1916…The view at night-time was one never to be forgotten.’[38] Thiepval, for its part, ‘should certainly be visited in order to appreciate the strength of the position which for over two months held up our attack…’[39]. The progression is one from wartime military strongpoint to post-war civilian viewpoint; the genesis of positioning many post-war British memorials on high ground had the earliest beginnings.[40]

Sometimes, however, these guides betrayed a less intimate connection with the landscape than their French counterparts. As with the wartime Tommies themselves, there was occasional confusion about exactly where things were. A Dunlop tyre advert in the *Pilgrim’s Guide* opined that the French would never forget the role played by British Dunlop tyres in defending Ypres.[41] Ypres is in Belgium and not in France; whilst wartime soldiers often

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[37] Coop, p. 35; see also Lowe, p. 23, who recommended a climb up to Kemmel. It is one of the highest points in the Ypres area, held by the Allies and taken in the German spring offensive of 1918.
[38] Coop, p. 66; this passage, of course, again underlines the importance of Coop’s own military credentials and experience on the front.
[39] Ibid., p. 71.
[40] A third layer of interpretation would be added to Coop’s when Sir Edwin Lutyens’ Thiepval memorial was opened in 1932; on the Somme the Ulster Tower, Villers-Bretonneux memorial and the tank memorial are also all on high ground.
[41] *Pilgrim’s Guide*, p. xxxi.

used ‘Somewhere in France’ as a shorthand for anywhere on the Western Front[42], there is no reason for a post-war guidebook to maintain the confusion. Lowe suggested that the pilgrim who climbed the hill at Villers-Bretonneux would be rewarded with a view of the sea; whilst the location is certainly a high point, it is quite impossible to view the Channel from it.[43] Whether these anomalies arise from confusion or from ‘poetic licence’ is impossible to tell. What is clear, however, is how little space in British guidebooks is given over to the pre-war history or culture of the areas covered, in marked contrast to the Michelin guides. There are several potential reasons: unlike Michelin, the publishers did not have a pre-war catalogue of regional guidebooks from which to draw information; there is no reason why the writers should have had intimate knowledge of French or Belgian regional history; and such content was of less interest to the British battlefield visitor. Both in minor errors and deliberate editorial choices, there is less emphasis on the wider geography and history of the regions covered.

The emphasis on British Empire sections of the line was also clearly deliberate, with Ypres, Arras and the Somme being clear focuses. It was rare for anywhere further south than Amiens to be mentioned other than in passing, and whilst other nations do get referenced occasionally, the emphasis in these British guidebooks is on areas where the countrymen of their readers were fighting. Fleming wrote that, ‘When all is said and done, I think the average Britisher, male or female, will be more interested in that

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[42] See Doyle, Peter and Walker, Julian*Trench Talk: Words of the First World War* (Stround, The History Press, 2012), p. 81.
[43] Lowe, p. 17.

section of the Western Front which was held by the British Army; just as the average Frenchman or woman would flush with pride at the mention of Verdun and be comparatively unaffected by the mention of Ypres – it is but natural.'[44] As early as 1919, national areas of interest within the battle lines were seen as inevitable, and places like Ypres and Verdun were cementing their place in nations' memories.

Whether it is the French visiting Verdun, or the British visiting Ypres, the guidebooks did suggest some shared sense of purpose with their Michelin counterparts. Fleming acknowledged that while some visitors will come 'out of pure curiosity, others [will have] a much more pathetic object in view. To the latter their journeyings will be more in the nature of a pilgrimage than a mere round of sightseeing…'[45] Coop, in his introduction, had in mind 'those who will be contemplating a trip to the battlefields not for pleasure or for curiosity, but as a pilgrimage to some sacred spot where all that was mortal of some relative or friend lies buried.'[46] Both writers privileged the pilgrim over the simply curious tourist, suggesting that travel with a personal, emotionally receptive purpose is superior to the idle curiosity of the ordinary tourist. However, unlike the Michelin writers who suggest that any visit '*should* be a pilgrimage'[47], they are not so quick to condemn the simple tourist, recognising that they are an inevitable part of the post-war tourism industry and indeed amongst the purchasers of their volumes. Keeping the

[44] Fleming, p. 2.
[45] Ibid., Foreword, unnumbered page.
[46] Coop, p. 8.
[47] Anon., *The Michelin Guide to the Battlefields of the Marne* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, 1917), p. 2, emphasis added.

pilgrim as the primary focus of their interest, however, what many of the British writers stressed was the importance of trying to really understand the battlefield landscape. Often this involved making a physical effort to get to where the action had been fought. Fleming advocated ‘foot-slogging’ as being the only way to fully understand the battlefields: ‘if you want to see the really interesting parts of the lines you must do quite a lot of foot-slogging over rough ground; in other words, go to a certain amount of trouble.’[48] As ‘foot-slogger’ was trench slang for an infantryman[49], the emphasis is clearly on trying to get as close as possible to the fighting soldier’s perspective. The language suggests a moral duty to make some effort in order to build understanding – which has parallels with other forms of pilgrimage, in which effort is rewarded by enlightenment. Coop was even more emphatic about the need for significant effort, and its moral and educational benefit, stating that ‘Unless the tourist is contented with a very superficial view of the battle area he will be compelled to do a considerable amount of walking, and this over rough and broken country, often at least ankle deep in mud.’[50]

These volumes, then, have a complex relationship with the landscape – they seek out high ground both as a viewpoint to aid understanding, and as an opportunity to locate oneself in positions favoured by military commanders of the time. They privilege those sections of the lines which were manned by British Empire troops. Whilst in some ways they betray a less intimate

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[48] Fleming, p. 124; see also p. 36. *The Pilgrim’s Guide* suggests that most of the tour is undertaken on foot, by specifically referencing the section where a car should be used instead, p .61.
[49] Brophy,John and Partridge, Eric, *The Long Trail: Soldiers’ Songs and Slang 1914-1918* (London, Sphere Books, 1969), p. 101.
[50] Coop, p. 13, see also p. 60 and Lowe, p. 43.

knowledge of the region and its history than their Michelin counterparts, they urge the visitor to strike out on foot and try to understand intimately the geography of the wartime landscape they are exploring. This emphasis on wartime geography rather than pre-war history is a theme which, it will later be argued, is evident in the descriptions of the battlefield itself and was a connection which would become very important for many post-war visitors.

Civilian and veteran perspectives

Intended audience as well as authorship affected the presentation of information in these guidebooks. British non-combatant citizens generally had less direct experience of the impact of war on the landscape than their French counterparts, as the majority of war damage was across the Channel. In his wry style, Fleming admonished the civilian reader: 'All you British people who visit Arras now that the war is over, ponder well what it must have meant to stay in that town for four years of war, and thank God for your island home and the Navy that preserved it.'[51] Perhaps this is simply the veteran addressing the non-combatant, but it also points to the detached position of the British civilian compared to their continental counterpart. Coop made a similar point in guiding the visitor around the shell-damaged remains of Gheluvelt, urging him to use imagination so that 'he will then understand something of what those fellow-countrymen endured in order that the present peace might be secured for him and his.'[52] British civilian

[51] Fleming, p. 31.
[52] Coop, p. 33. Gheluvelt was the scene of a critical British counter-attack involving the 2nd Worcester Battalion in the First Battle of Ypres (1914).

readers are left in no doubt of their own ignorance of battlefield conditions, and are encouraged as far as they can to gain a sense of the soldiers' perspective. French civilians in the battle areas had a better idea of what had occurred, and Fleming encouraged his readers to talk to local inhabitants to find out about places of interest and the location of burials.[53]

So in authorship and tone, many of these guides positioned the veteran's own direction and experience as central to non-combatant understanding of the battlefields, in contrast to the ostensibly objective, impersonal voice of the Michelin guides, which quoted only infrequently from veteran accounts. Lowe ended his volume with a eulogy to fallen comrades, where:

> little crosses on the hillside mark the rest billets of our comrades of the trenches. They haven't really left us; they are only on ahead, like scouts, finding out the way…Let us not forget.[54]

Although his book was addressed as much to civilians as to fellow soldiers, this ending stresses the importance of the fighting man's experience and sacrifice.

The itineraries themselves reinforced this, with the visitor frequently encouraged to follow as closely as possible in the footsteps of the soldiers. Coop acknowledged that while the Channel crossing from England to Ostend was the most convenient, some travellers would opt for the less convenient

[53] Fleming, pp. 109-10.
[54] Lowe, p. 61.

Boulogne crossing, wishing ‘to make their way to the front by the route which the vast majority of our soldiers made it [sic], and to gain their first impressions of the battle area as our soldiers gained them.’ Similarly, in Arras, the Hotel du Commerce was recommended despite its battered condition, as the hotel favoured by the troops.[55] Writing later in 1925, Pulteney still highlighted the benefit of approaching Belgium from France in the same direction as the troops, such a route having ‘the feeling of being the right avenue of approach to the Holy Ground of British Arms.’[56] Lowe wrote evocatively of the experience of walking in veterans’ footsteps, and again urged the visitor to talk to the locals to enhance understanding of what the wartime battlefields were like:

> …the tourist may find himself occupying the same quarters in many cases that the troops occupied when resting behind the lines; he will dine in the same little restaurants, at small cost, in exactly the same manner that officers and men used to do; he will smoke his cigarette or cigar in the evenings with the same friendly inhabitants who so cheerfully endured the occupation of a huge army in their midst for five weary years, and hear from them much that will interest and amaze him.[57]

Whilst for the Michelin writers, the pre-war history of the places visited was central to understanding the course and consequences of the war, for the British writers it was the wartime history, and in particular the fighting man’s view of the landscape, which was paramount, with pre-war culture and artefacts unmentioned or relegated to second place. For the Ypres pilgrim,

[55] Coop, p. 17, p. 60; see also p. 20.
[56] Pulteney, p. 80.
[57] Lowe, p. 9.

the aim of the tour was to help 'understand the conditions of life in Ypres during the four years when it was occupied by British troops…and, *incidentally*, to visit some of the more famous places in the city.'[58] The wartime history was central; anything else was a sideline. When the same guidebook later touched on the possibility of a visit to the largely undamaged city of Bruges, it positioned the history of that city as firmly out of scope, simply stating 'No attempt to describe the wonderful old city can be made here.'[59] Coop took a similar approach in St Omer, noting that it 'is worth a visit, both from its historic and sentimental associations, but most people will be contented to view it from the train, as the majority of our soldiers did.'[60] This is far removed from the detailed descriptions of the historic fabric of towns in the Michelin guides.

In addition to understanding the soldier's perspective, the visitor was encouraged to develop an elementary understanding of military tactics, and in this respect the guidebooks mirror some of the battlefield overview sections in the Michelin volumes. In Ypres, the location of artillery on a reverse slope was used to explain how this topography provided protection from observation; on the ridges of the Salient, the visitor was urged to use a map and binoculars to assess the advantage offered by high ground; Lowe suggested that even the unobservant could rapidly appreciate the tactical importance of the Yser canal.[61] In the area between Ypres and Armentieres, fought over principally in the more mobile combat of 1918, Coop urged the

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[58] *Pilgrim's Guide*, p. 53, emphasis added.
[59] Ibid., p. 62.
[60] Coop, p. 20; see also his description of Poperinghe as a rest town, p. 22.
[61] *Pilgrim's Guide*, p. 56; Coop, p. 34; Lowe, p. 19.

visitor to note the different legacy left by open rather than trench-based combat; at Epehy he related in detail the action fought there to the ground which the tourist could see.[62] The British guidebooks, like their French counterparts, tried to help the visitor to understand the battles that were fought, including by relating actions to the ground being viewed. The British developed a distinctive place, however, for the voice and experience of individuals who fought there, through the experience of veteran writers and by encouraging interactions with local French citizens who had experienced the war more intimately than British non-combatants. The interplay and tensions between combatant and non-combatant perspectives were also played out in the accounts of both wartime and post-war visitors to the battlefields, as sections B and C will explore.

By the time of Pulteney's 1925 volume, the emphasis had changed; the veteran's voice was still important, though now it was a Corps commander rather than a front-line officer who was writing. The stated aim of the book was also quite different, for as Haig wrote in his introduction it was 'primarily intended to serve as a guidebook for pilgrims visiting the graves of their relatives'.[63] The focus was now very much on the bereaved as distinct from veterans; for although veterans themselves might have been amongst those who visited the graves of relatives, it was in the aspect of the bereaved rather than as comrades that they were cast here. By 1925 the emphasis was very much on graves; an examination of the earlier volumes will show

[62] Coop, pp. 40 & 87. Epehy, south of Cambrai, was the scene of a battle in September 1918 during the final Allied offensive, the so-called 'Last Hundred Days'.
[63] Pulteney, p. 5.

that it was the detritus of war which preoccupied the writers of the earlier British guidebooks, as indeed it had the Michelin authors.

From battlefield to grave

In the 1919-20 guidebooks, the focus (as it had been for the Michelin writers) was on depositing the visitor in the areas of the battlefield where war damage was most evident. Sometimes, this was done with less precision than in the Michelin guides. Fleming simply directed the visitor to the general area around St Omer and Bailleul where 'In all these back area towns and villages will be found traces of British camps and billets.' The visitor was to be left to explore independently in these back areas, as they were in the landscape around Arras.[64] Elsewhere, the viewer's gaze was directed from a specific to a more general view: at Amiens, Lowe began inside the station with the damage to the station roof, before guiding the traveller out into the street where 'he will be able to realize how the whole neighbourhood of the station suffered too.'[65] Coop could be similarly vague, suggesting that 'It is unnecessary to give any description of La Bassee, as the tourist will see for himself what remains of it.'[66] In Ypres, he gave up on directions altogether, declining to describe the town at all and offering instead a map from which tourists could find where they wanted to go –cemeteries were not marked on the map, so the clear inference is that their destination was a site of battle.[67] Writers did not, however, envisage tourists wandering aimlessly. Many

[64] Fleming, pp. 15 & 33.
[65] Lowe, p. 16.
[66] Coop, p. 46.
[67] Ibid., pp. 26 & 29.

recognised that the visitor would have particular spots of meaning to them which they wanted to visit. Lowe stated at the outset that 'The great thing to aim at is to get to the spot one wants to see, and to lose no time in getting there.' The spot is envisaged in 1920, however, not as the grave of a loved one, but as a scene of action such as a working party, a patrol or an attack.[68]

Although British writers were less interested in tracing the loss of cultural heritage than the French, they were conscious of being surrounded by the detritus of war. The section of the *Pilgrim's Guide* relating to Hill 60 and the eastern part of the Salient was full of the visible aftermath of war, while an advert for deluxe battlefield tours in the same volume listed the detritus on a tour map, almost as an attraction, with 'Ypres … now a heap of ruins … ; Bailleul … totally destroyed by British gunfire … ; Arras … a much battered city … ; Butte de Warlencourt … still thickly strewn with war debris.'[69] At times, the text of the itinerary took a similar tone, listing examples of detritus almost in passing: a reserve trench by the roadside, a cage for prisoners of war, a telephone connector, a water point, and finally three tanks, all in the space of a few miles in the tour around St Julien.[70] Fleming went further, celebrating the preservation of war materiel as a work of importance and interest in its own right. He recalled a dump of captured German equipment near Soissons, thirty acres in size, which an artillery captain had arranged, numbered and labelled as if it were a museum. He hoped that this would be

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[68] Lowe, p. 1.
[69] *Pilgrim's Guide*, advert section, p. xxxii.
[70] Ibid., pp. 58-9.

preserved for others to look at.[71] Coop also covered Arras, in more detail than the advert, but in the same vein, encouraging the visitor to look out for large dumps and huts on the road into town.[72] Of all the 1920 writers, he was most alert to the clearance of the battlefields, though sometimes this was implicitly expressed. Between Poperinghe and Ypres there 'were once miles of camps, hutments, wagon-lines, hospitals, dressing stations and battery positions', the inference being that even as early as 1920 he had noticed their absence. Bethune was now so tidied that its condition in 1918 could not be envisaged, while at Cambrin the trenches bore 'but slight resemblance' to those of wartime.[73] In his introduction, Coop pointed out that the landscape was changing so rapidly that facts published now might be out-of-date within a few months; and later referred to the organised work of battlefield clearance.[74]

Others, whilst not documenting the changing landscape so explicitly, anticipated its loss, and conversely welcomed attempts at preservation of the wartime legacy. Fleming wrote positively of the Belgian decision not to rebuild Ypres, and was pleased that the French government was preserving the ruins of Gommecourt.[75] At times the language became oxymoronic, as when Coop talked of ruins between Bethune and La Bassee being 'still in fairly good state of preservation', subverting the normal use of preservation

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[71] Fleming, p. 82; the fact that he is the earliest of the writers, in 1919, is significant in relation to the existence of this dump.
[72] Coop, p. 59. For further detritus of war, see also pp. 61, 74, & 76.
[73] Ibid., pp. 23, 43 & 46.
[74] Ibid, pp. 7 & 18; the *Pilgrim's Guide* also refers to the impact of the rapidly changing environment on the accuracy of the factual information it contains, see p. v.
[75] Fleming, pp. 7 & 38-9. Both Ypres and Gommecourt were, of course, subsequently rebuilt.

as something which prevents rather than maintains ruin.[76] Preservation was, however, the exception rather than the rule. Boyd Cable, a writer and war veteran, in his chapter on the role of the artillery in the *Pilgrim's Guide* feared that gun-pits around Ypres would be overgrown by the time visitors arrived, and harder to spot. It was a fear echoed in the itinerary of the guidebook, which commented on the transformative effect of natural regrowth throughout the Salient.[77] At points, writers explicitly described how the peaceful post-war landscape might be accompanied by a loss of memory and respect for the sacrifices made:

> To-day you may walk in peace where it was death to show a hand. The war seems a distant thing and the brave dead only a symbol of impersonal sacrifice – yet I warn you, tread carefully and think reverently, for you owe to those who fought at Ypres a personal undischarged debt.[78]

In general, British writers had a more ambivalent attitude to the regeneration of the landscape than the French, who generally welcomed it. Fleming commented on the caves used by troops around the Chemin des Dames, and felt sure that the local French citizens would by now be back on their land and cashing in on the historic value of this wartime landscape. 'Nor would I grudge them a franc or two; they have five very lean years to make up for…'. He may not have borne a grudge, but the tone has a definite air of regret; a tone which was more explicit elsewhere in the book where Fleming

[76] Coop, p. 48.
[77] *Pilgrim's Guide*, p. 21 for Boyd Cable; p. 58 for comments in the body of the itinerary.
[78] Ibid., p. 16. The poem "High Wood", written in 1918 by Lt J S Purvis under the *nom de plume* Philip Johnstone speaks to very similar themes.

wrote resignedly of the ‘inevitable conducted tour’ of the battlefields.[79] Commercialisation might be essential to the regeneration of France, but it was not entirely welcomed. In places, this tension led to decidedly odd juxtapositions: an advert for the Chateau des Trois Tours in Brielen presented a deluxe image with a smart photograph and a reference to refurbished rooms for the visitor, while at the same time stressing that the grounds had been left in their original battlefield state, complete with duckboards, dug-outs and gun positions.[80] Presumably the visitor could foot-slog over the preserved battlefield and get ankle-deep in mud, before returning to the comfort of the refurbished hotel. Coop, ever sensitive to these changes, was the most critical, warning the visitor to Ypres that they might be ‘exasperated by the numerous restaurants, souvenir shops and touts which hold possession of sites and ground regarded almost as sacred by British soldiers.’[81] It seems Coop shared that exasperation.

Amidst all the descriptions of battlefield detritus, and the concerns about its loss, graves and cemeteries also figure, and more prominently than in the Michelin guides. The *Pilgrim’s Guide* stated that it aimed ‘at giving those who desire to visit the Graves and Battlefields a dependable and comprehensive Guide…’, giving burial and battle sites equal billing.[82] Once again, though, these burial sites were often presented primarily as aids to navigating and understanding the battles which they ‘represented’; advice on

[79] Fleming, pp. 88 & 7.
[80] *Pilgrim’s Guide*, advert section, p. v. Brielen is just to the north-east of Ypres, and would have been an ideal base for touring the Salient.
[81] Coop, p. 25.
[82] *Pilgrim’s Guide*, p. v.

finding the burial place of an individual is rare, not least because most of the books were written before definitive lists were available. Coop acknowledged that many people would be visiting the battlefields to find a particular grave, but stressed that information about burial sites given in good faith could rapidly become outdated.[83] Burial sites were frequently seen, in fact, as testament to the ferocity of the fighting in a given area, particularly as battlefield clearance removed other evidence of the conflict. Cautioning the visitor against that arch observation that the battlefields might look quite comfortable to the untutored eye, Fleming advised that a visit to the nearest big cemetery would rapidly correct such an erroneous impression, the dead bearing witness to the intensity of the conflict.[84] At Loos, Coop saw the cemeteries as evidence of the fierceness of fighting, while at Gommecourt the condition of the village sat alongside the 'great forest of little crosses' as witness to the action there.[85] Lowe used similar language, with the 'tiny forests of white crosses' writing the history of Allied efforts more eloquently than the historian.[86]

The guidebooks did not always approach burial sites in a consistent way. At Delville Wood, little of the woodland itself remained, and for Coop it was 'only the cemetery [which] tells the tale.'[87] Lowe looked at things the other way, suggesting that the shredded woods of the Somme 'can best be described

[83] Coop, pp. 15-16.
[84] Fleming, p. 41.
[85] Coop, pp. 50 & 80; see also a similar reference to the fighting at Foucaucourt, p. 82.
[86] Lowe, p. 20.
[87] Coop, p. 75.

as monuments to the numerous graves which surround them'.[88] For both writers, burial sites were important, but there is some uncertainty over which was the primary site of commemoration. And to confound matters further, burial sites fulfilled many other functions. Sometimes they were presented aesthetically, the cemetery at Gorre being one of the most beautifully situated in the country. At Villers-Guislain, a walk up to the cemetery provided an excellent view of the surrounding country and a good overview of the November 1917 battlefield.[89] Overlaid on these varied interpretations of cemeteries were concerns that the work of the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) in tidying them up was further confusing the picture, however well-intentioned it might be. Coop, who seemed most concerned about the impact of battlefield clearance, was especially vocal:

> The work of our Graves Commission has been splendid, but the exhumation of the bodies of the men who were buried where they fell fighting has prevented the after-the-war traveller from realising to the full the titanic struggles which these one-time plentiful crosses so pathetically indicated.[90]

Coop was referring to the IWGC's work in exhuming men from isolated graves or small battlefield cemeteries into larger and more manageable plots; this was designed in part to make the cemeteries easier to maintain. It also addressed the concerns of French landowners about having multiple small pockets of land fenced off as cemeteries, and the impact on land

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[88] Lowe, p. 46. Woodland fighting in areas such as High Wood, Bazentin Wood, Delville Wood and Trones Wood characterised the battles in the July-September 1916 phase of the Somme battle.
[89] Coop, pp. 45 & 88.
[90] Coop, p. 56.

cultivation and management. Coop appeared to recognise the importance of this work, but felt that it disrupted the more coherent narrative which the original progression of battlefield burials told. He also clearly felt that there was something morally questionable about disturbing the burial of men who had been laid to rest next to the comrades with whom they fell.[91] By contrast, Fleming was unqualified in his praise of this aspect of the Commission's work, seeing it purely as a means of paying due respect to the fallen.[92] *The Pilgrim's Guide* gave most attention to grave visitation, providing a lengthy section listing and mapping all the cemeteries in the Salient at the time of writing (1920), to assist the pilgrim in finding the grave they were looking for. Even here, though, caveats warned that information was changing all the time as new graves were discovered or reburials made; and the section on graves is only one small part of a much larger guidebook, and one element in a much more nuanced battlefield narrative. As Reverend Philip Clayton, the driving force behind Talbot House and the subsequent Toc H movement wrote in the closing chapter: 'To-day the Salient as you see it is a place of graves. But to us it was a big arena full of fine life and strong men who laughed and sang and trudged along and toiled, lifting great weights and digging great ditches, and man-handling great guns.'[93] Graves were important to the veterans' narrative, but were only one element in a much wider picture.

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[91] For the moral dimension of this, see Coop, p. 75.
[92] Fleming, pp. 95-6.
[93] *Pilgrim's Guide*. For the section on cemeteries, see pp. 63-76; for Clayton's comment, see p. 86.

In general, then, the fact that visitors wanted to visit individual graves was given greater prominence in the British guides than in the Michelin publications, even if practical assistance in locating them was limited owing to uncertainty over burial locations and rapidly changing information. Within the guidebook itineraries themselves, however, burial sites fulfilled a variety of other functions including as sites of more general commemoration, markers of combat and its ferocity, viewpoints, or simply sites of beauty. Different writers took distinct and sometimes divergent views of their purpose, but there was an underlying sense that as the battlefields faded, burial sites formed a proxy marker of the conflict. By the time of Pulteney's guide in 1925 (as has already been noted) pilgrims visiting the graves of relatives had very much taken centre-stage, with battlefield visiting taking second place as the vestiges of war were cleared. As section C will argue, this development in perceived priorities was not always shared by individuals visiting the battlefields.

Depicting the enemy

Chapter two argued that the Michelin guides presented an overwhelmingly negative view of the German enemy. The British guides – perhaps because the mainland was never actually invaded or occupied by the enemy – took a more nuanced approach.[94] German memorials are more favourably viewed

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[94] During the later 1920s, the British commemoration narrative also came to focus increasingly on peace and on the futility of war, which also helped to lessen the focus on the Germans as the enemy. To trace these changes, see in particular Connelly, Mark *The Great War, Memory and Ritual: Commemoration in the City and East London, 1916–1939* (The Boydell Press for the Royal Historical Society, Woodbridge, 2002) and Todman, D, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (Hambledon Continuum, London, 2014).

in British guidebooks than in their French counterparts. On the road from Noyon to Ham, Fleming commented on the German cemeteries and memorials at some length:

> …on the right-hand side of the road, opposite the wall which surrounds the cavalry barracks…will be found a very substantially stone-built enclosure, a Hun graveyard, inside of which may be found some fine specimens of the stonemason's art. One thing the Germans never failed to do, and that was to pay due honour to the fallen. Massive and ornate monuments were numerous in all his cemeteries behind the line. No doubt it was part of a well-thought plan, calculated to make the soldier feel what a great man he was – even when dead. It was also the fact – at least so far as my own observation goes – that the enemy treated the dead of any nation with the same respect as his own. I have seen many of these cemeteries, and have been struck with this fact again and again.[95]

The argument is tortured, torn between positive and negative views. On the positive side, the monuments were well-made and crafted, almost admirable; but then that was the *only* thing which the 'Huns' got right. To their credit, they never failed to do it; but then again, perhaps it was all part of a plan to delude their troops with images of greatness even in death. In the final analysis, though, there are repeated examples of them treating enemy dead well, which is presented as a positive.[96] Fleming is clearly uncertain as to how far he could or should go in giving credit to the Germans, and clearly

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[95] Fleming, pp. 70-1; Fleming is presumably describing Ham German cemetery which still exists today with over 1500 graves, immediately adjacent to a cemetery of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.
[96] See also Mosier, John, *The Myth of the Great War* (New York, Harper Collins, 2001), p. 344; Mosier opines that an alien visitor to the Western Front examining the cemeteries would conclude that the Germans had won.

positions their commemoration as distinct from Allied approaches – but however one interprets the final balance he has struck, this is a more complex and nuanced view of the enemy than in the Michelin guides.

In terms of military prowess, there was sometimes admiration for the skill of the German troops. Coop admired the thought and engineering skill in the defences at Thiepval, while Lowe had a grudging admiration for the elaborate trench systems defending Lille.[97] When it came to the business of who destroyed what, there was a less cut-and-dried judgment than enemy destruction as bad, and allied destruction as unavoidable. Coop condemned the German bombing of the hospitals at Etaples as an atrocity, dismissing the German excuse that the medical facilities were near the railway and reinforcement camps; but then immediately acknowledged that the various camp sections were indeed in close proximity. Later, he condemned the German scorched earth policy around Peronne, and insisted on reparation for this crime; but still acknowledged that a small part of the destruction was warranted by the exigencies of war.[98] There was even a degree of sympathy for Germans subjected to years of artillery fire in La Bassee: 'the town must have been to the enemy a place of evil repute, such as Ypres was to us.'[99] The British writers were far from being voices of moderation when it came to German actions – their tone is clearly that of the victor condemning the behaviour of a barbaric enemy. At the same time, the language and syntax suggests a nuanced undertone – not one which excuses the enemy, but one

[97] Coop, p. 71; Lowe, p. 26.
[98] Coop, pp. 53 & 84.
[99] Ibid., p .46.

which recognises that (with the exception of deliberate destruction such as the 'scorched earth' policy) some of what happened was the inevitable consequence of war, and not always so different from the actions of the Allies.[100] As such, it represents a more measured view when set against the unremitting condemnation of the foe in the Michelin guides.

Monuments and the imagined landscape

Like sites of burial, battlefield monuments were in a state of flux and development during the 1920s, and their relationship to the landscape was described in a number of different ways. Often, when they were noted, it was very much in passing, and as part of the battlefield landscape, rather than as a site of intrinsic architectural interest. The *Pilgrim's Guide* noted simply that at Polygon Wood 'A monument has been erected here upon a slight rise in the ground', with no further commentary or indication as to whom it was for.[101] At High Wood, Coop referred to a series of memorials to units involved in the wood's capture in 1916, but was more concerned about the commanding views from the area which would help the visitor to understand the various phases of the battle.[102] Vimy Ridge provides an interesting case study, both as a scene of ferocious fighting, particularly in April 1917; and as a site of significance to the Canadians, whose Corps

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[100] Bracco traces a similar change in fictional portrayal of the Germans during the 1920s, with anti-German feeling giving way to a more nuanced depiction of shared suffering. See Bracco, Rosa, *Merchants of Hope: British Middlebrow Writers and the First World War 1919-1939* (Oxford, Berg, 1993), pp. 72-6.
[101] *Pilgrim's Guide*, pp. 61-2; this presumably refers to the Australian Imperial Force 5th Division memorial, erected on the butte towards the north-eastern end of the wood.
[102] Coop, p. 78.

fought there in that month. Coop noted the existence of a Canadian memorial there as early as 1920 (this was a temporary structure until the opening of Walter Allward's towering construction in Dalmatian marble in 1936). However, again he seemed much more preoccupied with the land itself, curiously lapsing into the present tense, stating that despite repeated attempts by the Germans to retake the ridge 'it *has* remained in our possession ever since [1917].'[103] Two years after the war, mastery of the land remained more important than memorialisation. Lowe took an almost identical approach, briefly referencing the memorial, but stressing the tactical significance of the landscape: 'If the tourist will stand under Vimy Ridge and imagine the Germans to be holding the top of the hill, he will realize that our position there was at one time anything but satisfactory.'[104]

By the time Pulteney's volume was published in 1925, the work of monument construction was more advanced. His introduction envisaged memorials as a significant element in the itinerary, though he focussed on those erected by the Ypres League who were the publishers of his volume. 'The landmarks erected by the Ypres League indicate historical places, and although only forty in number, they will be an invaluable aid to posterity, be they visitors or military students [sic].'[105] In the same work, the war correspondent Philip Gibbs expressed a slightly different view, suggesting that in years to come it would be the stones of the battlefield ruins which 'will be memorials of brave hearts who came here in the darkness.'[106] It is significant that Gibbs chose

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[103] Coop, p. 61.
[104] Lowe, pp. 36-8.
[105] Pulteney, p. vi.
[106] Ibid. p. 7 .

the word ‘memorials’ to describe these ruins, setting them in tension with the formalised memorials of the Ypres League – in 1925, both clearly had a role to play. And though the formal monuments were becoming more widespread, Pulteney noted that ‘Considerable uncertainty exists about War memorials which, though planned, have not actually been erected. There is much delay over some, and others may never actually materialise.’[107] The balance between battlefield ruin and formal monument as sites of commemoration was still not settled in the mid-1920s. Pulteney also provided a striking insight into the relationship between battlefield and memorial at the site of the Menin and Lille Gates. By 1925, the Menin Gate had been chosen as the site of Blomfield’s imposing memorial, but the structure had not yet been completed and opened.[108] Today, battlefield guides regularly explain the choice of site for this memorial by stating that it was the main route for troops heading out to the Salient. Pulteney presented a conflicting view, stating that it was in fact the Lille Gate with which troops were most familiar, being used by most of them to avoid the exposed position of the Menin Gate to enemy artillery. Perhaps foreseeing the focus which the Menin Gate would attract once opened, Pulteney drew attention to the soldiers’ focus rather than the memorial focus. By the late 1920s, the Menin Gate was firmly established as a site to visit, and today the Lille Gate rarely features on battlefield itineraries other than in passing.[109]

[107] Ibid., p. 22.
[108] The Menin Gate was formally opened on 24 July 1927.
[109] Pulteney, p. 40; observations on current battlefield guiding practice based on this author’s own experience.

The attitudes towards monuments, burial sites and battlefield detritus illustrate how the landscape of battle was gradually changing over the 1920s. As other signs of the war began to fade, the organised and manicured cemeteries of the IWGC and the monuments of the Ypres League came to have a more central role. There was not, however, a simple linear progression over time, or a single break-point where change occurred. Pulteney's 1925 guide shows how things had altered since Fleming's 1919 publication – but it is a change of emphasis rather than a wholesale shift. Pulteney still gives space to the detritus of war, just as Lowe, Fleming and particularly Coop could spot the early signs of battlefield clearance, and express anxiety as to what that might mean for the tourist. As these changes took place, the role of the visitor's imagination grew, and they were called upon to use the power of their mind to recreate the landscape of conflict. Once again, though, this was not something which suddenly emerged in the mid-late 1920s; its seeds could be found in the immediate post-war publications, where the non-combatant was asked to use their imagination to recreate the world of the fighting man. The opening essay in the *Pilgrim's Guide*, about life in Ypres during the war, invites the reader to imagine '… a journey to Ypres in January, 1917: we will start in a field ambulance', this marking the beginning of a journey in the mind.[110] The second essay urged the reader to 'try to conjure up in these days of Peace some slight picture of how your fighting foot soldier came to the Salient in the days of war', after

[110] *Pilgrim's Guide*, p. 1; the essay is by Dr C. J. Magrath who served in the British army during the war, and went on to be headmaster of King Edward VII School in Sheffield, as well as playing a prominent role in the TocH movement.

which the writer uses his wartime experiences to create just such an impression.[111]

Certain tropes, which would later become established elements of the memory of the war, featured very early as part of this imagined landscape. One was wet weather. Coop opined that around Ypres, 'if the day be wet, the tourist will still have some slight idea of [the Salient's] appearance in 1914, -15, -16 and 17'; despite the fact that the area enjoyed spells of prolonged dry weather, rain and mud were already being imagined as characteristic of the true wartime landscape. Near Monchy on the Somme, Coop used the same approach to mud and rain, although the first part of the 1916 Somme campaign was characterised in large part by bright, dry and hot weather conditions.[112] Night-time was also viewed as a period when accessing the imagined landscape of the past was easier: 'A battlefield or an old trench line or billet, when viewed by moonlight, will bring back old times and old scenes which fail to grip in the light of day.'[113] The generic approach here is striking –as mud helps to make any battlefield landscape more real, so any trench or billet is rendered more clearly when viewed by night. There is also a tendency to homogenise the landscape into well-recognised motifs

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[111] Ibid., p. 6; this essay is by Capt Hugh Pollard who served as an officer in the Great War, going on to develop an expertise in firearms and intelligence; he was later one of the men responsible for flying General Franco from the Canary Islands to Morocco in 1936, helping to trigger the Spanish Civil War. The anonymously penned essay later in the Guide on the role of airmen in the Salient uses another journey, this time in an airplane, to conjure up a sense of the war years, see pp. 36-7.

[112] Coop, pp. 31 & 62-3; see also p. 32 for imagining a muddy landscape. Meyer also comments on the emergence of such tropes in wartime memoirs, see Meyer, Jessica, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 130-2. Much earlier, in 1930, see Falls, Cyril, *War Books* (London, Lionel Leventhal Limited, 1989 [first published 1930]), pp. xiii-xx.

[113] Lowe, p. 54.

– on a photo of a shell-torn wood, Lowe's caption states 'A communication trench through a wood. The name of the wood does not matter, all the woods of the Somme are in much the same condition.'[114]

While the tourist is invited to use their imagination to access certain powerful motifs of war, the writers at the same time admonished their readers that imagination would always fall short of reality for anyone who had not been there. Fleming's slightly barbed comments to the civilian visitor have already been noted, but sometimes the reflections are much more prosaic. Coop simply notes that 'no power of imagination can conjure up the picture as our troops saw it.'[115] In the aftermath of war, these guidebooks saw imagination as a critical tool in reconstructing the wartime landscape, but one which is intrinsically limited, particularly for those who never saw the real thing. By 1925, veterans were struggling to reconnect with the landscape. Pulteney lamented that:

> to travel along and explore the battlefields soon after the Armistice was to bring sudden and vivid realisation of all that had been imagined during the war. To visit them now is to feel balked and bewildered.[116]

As chapter seven demonstrates, it was paradoxically becoming easier by the late 1920s for battlefield visitors who had not experienced the war to key in to imagined tropes of the battlefield, than it was for veterans to re-connect with their own wartime memories in the vastly altered landscape.

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[114] Ibid., pp. 46-7.
[115] Coop, p. 55.
[116] Pulteney, p. 20.

Conclusion

There is clearly common ground between the British guides and their Michelin counterparts. The importance of travel with a purpose, the interest in landscape as a means of providing an overview of the battlefield and enhancing understanding, and the focus on finding areas where the legacy of war is clearest are themes shared in volumes produced on both sides of the English Channel. At the same time, these British volumes developed their own perspective on the battlefield landscape and the approach to exploring it. They recognised the particular travel issues facing the British visitor in continental Europe, and the relative ignorance of wartime realities amongst British non-combatants when compared to their French or Belgian counterparts. Visitors were encouraged to speak to the locals to enhance their understanding. Even more importantly, all of the guidebooks privileged the veterans' perspective of the conflict and made much of the fact that they were authored by military men, in contrast to the anonymity of the Michelin guides. With the notable exception of Lowe, photos and pictures were sparse, the words of the veterans instead being used to enhance the experience of visiting the sites of conflict. The sites chosen were those distinctly associated with British Empire troops, and clear national focuses of interest were emerging as early as 1920. The most celebrated reason for visiting these sites is – as in the Michelin guides – one of pilgrimage, that is travel with a clear emotional and educational purpose. Whilst such travellers were viewed as superior to the casual tourist, the latter were not as explicitly

condemned as in the Michelin volumes, and indeed the inevitable commercialisation of parts of the erstwhile battlefields was foreseen and also noted in practice.

When it comes to the landscape of the battlefield itself, these guidebooks were much less concerned with the pre-war culture and history of the areas traversed, focussing instead on the experience of the men who fought there. The primary interest was in the wartime geography of an area, and the visitor was encouraged to make real efforts to get intimately acquainted with the landscape, even (or especially) when that meant some hard walking in muddy conditions. The battlefield landscape was not static though – all the writers were conscious at some level of the changes which it was undergoing, as battlefield clearance removed the detritus and evidence of war. This was not a linear process, with some writers being profoundly conscious of its effects much earlier than others, and taking different views on its impact. The necessity of exhumation and reburial received mixed responses, sometimes as a sign of respect and on other occasions as a disruption both to the moral rectitude of leaving the dead where they fell, and the historical legacy of graves telling the story of battle. What was clear in all the volumes, however, was a fear that restoration and commercialisation of the battlefields risked losing the landscape of battle, and with it the memory of the war and the sacrifices made. Throughout the period, there was tension between the role of the battlefield and the role of graves and memorials as the primary site of commemoration, and this was played out in all the volumes. By the mid-1920s and the time of Pulteney's guide,

however, the focus was becoming fixed. Whilst battlefields were still very much sites of pilgrimage, the emphasis was now much more firmly on graves and memorials, and the suggestion was that this trend would continue. As Pulteney himself lamented, the landscape of the battlefield was now confusing and bewildering; and consequently the imagination of the visitor was coming to play an even more dominant role.

This thesis will now examine the role of such visitors. Battlefield guidebooks – whether French or British in origin – sought to guide the battlefield visitor both in their itinerary, and in their interpretation of what they saw. However, that was no guarantee that the visitor would comply with their guidebook's view of the world. What, in practice, did civilian and military visitors make of the battlefields? How did they perceive the interplay between battlefields, graves and memorials as sites of commemorative focus? And what more can they tell us about the evolving battlefield landscape between 1914 and 1929?

Section B: Wartime accounts of the battlefield landscape

Chapters two and three focussed on guidebooks to the battlefields which were produced towards the end of and shortly after the First World War. These guidebooks sought to shape battlefield tourism and commemorative practice through their choice of locations, the artefacts to which they directed the reader's gaze, and the interpretations they offered of the battlefield landscape. The guidebooks examined were largely post-war productions. Although the Michelin guide to the Marne battlefields was produced during the war, it referred to a landscape where fighting had ended in 1914, and from which it had receded. The authors were not to know that, even as they produced the work, the tide of battle was about to surge back over the Marne battlefields once more. The guidebooks therefore examine the battlefield landscape from a perspective which is essentially post-conflict. There were of course numerous visitors to the battlefields during the conflict, including writers, hospital inspectors, Red Cross representatives, and entertainers. Under the watchful eye of military or government minders, these individuals were taken to the battle-zone in the hope and expectation that they would write or share appropriate reflections with those at home. By the time larger numbers of visitors arrived at the battlefields after the war, sometimes with guidebook in hand, these wartime descriptions had already contributed to framing expectations of the landscape. The next two chapters of this thesis will examine responses to the battlefields published during the war, and suggest how visitors and combatants tried to shape the wider public's impression of the landscapes of the front. Chapter four will examine *Harper's* magazine; while chapter five will consider more detailed wartime

explorations of the battlefields in the books of Edith Wharton, Rudyard Kipling, John Masefield and Harry Lauder.

The erstwhile deputy editor of the *Manchester Guardian* C. E. Montague served in the British infantry and became an intelligence officer at GHQ, working particularly as an escort officer for VIPs and journalists visiting the battlefields. In his biography of Montague, Oliver Elton described his wide range of charges, which included:

> (besides Britons and Irishmen) Canadians, Australians, Americans, Frenchmen, Italians, Spaniards, Roumanians [sic], Brazilians, Norwegians, and Japanese. There were officers, naval and military, attaches, Ministers, diplomats, M.P.'s [sic] of all parties and brands, Miners' Federation delegates and owners of newspapers. Many writers and artists came too. In Montague's diary are jotted down the names of Bernard Shaw, J.M. Barrie, H.G. Wells, John Masefield, Spenser Wilkinson, Louis Raemaekers, Muirhead Bone and Francis Dodd.[1]

As sources, accounts by such visitors are problematic, subject as they were to the exigencies of censorship and propaganda. It was impossible, at least legally, to visit the battle zone without military permission and an escort. This meant that the areas of the front visited, the nature of any conflict witnessed and the people with whom visitors met were subject to considerable military control. A trench in the frequently quiet Ploegsteert sector of the Belgian front was often used for visitors – close enough to the action to feel

[1] Elton, Oliver, *C E Montague: A Memoir* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1929) pp. 133-4; many others also served as escort for visiting dignitaries, including the writer and propagandist John Buchan, see Messinger, Gary, *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War* (Manchester, MUP, 1992), p88.

authentic, and yet quiet enough to minimise the risk of injury to important guests. The trench was nicknamed the 'Tourist Line', suggesting that it was far from representative of a soldier's real experience.[2] H. G. Wells' tour of the Italian and Western Fronts in summer 1916 was also orchestrated so that most of his time was spent in the Alps, where the fighting was considered less brutal at that point.[3] To form a balanced view of wartime accounts, one must set them in the context of British (and French) propaganda between 1914 and 1918.

Propaganda in the First World War

The mechanisms of British propaganda during the First World War were many and complex, evolving during the conflict to address the perceived needs of the day. The bodies responsible included the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, the Official Press Bureau, the Neutral Press Committee, the Foreign Office News Department, MI7 at the War Office, the War Propaganda Bureau (better known as Wellington House) which in 1917 became part of the Department of Information and then in 1918 a consolidated Ministry of Information. The roles, evolution and interplay of this propaganda infrastructure is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is important to pick out salient themes which underpinned British propaganda,

[2] Spagnoly, Tony and Smith, Ted, *A Walk Around Plugstreet* (London, Leo Cooper, 1997), pp. 111-21.
[3] Messinger, *Propaganda*, p. 191.

and which influenced the writers whose works are considered in this section.[4]

In 1914, the term propaganda lacked the negative connotations which it acquired later. A mechanism by which people were kept informed on topical issues, the key actors in propaganda before the war were not generally governmental, but rather individuals and organisations with a message to communicate. The war brought changes. The role of government in propaganda increased, although it was by no means the only player.[5] The perceived quality of propaganda also changed, so that by 1918 people were more willing to question what they heard, although even at the war's close the pejorative perception of propaganda was largely absent. It was in the inter-war period that negative associations sprung up, principally when the exaggeration of German atrocities during the war was revealed. Ironically, although the government had allowed these atrocity stories to circulate, the prime movers behind them had in fact been the press and private individuals.[6] Propaganda, therefore, was not the preserve of government during the war: as Sanders and Taylor observed, 'Amateur propagandists were…in abundance and there was also the enormous propagandist role played by the British press.'[7] Indeed, the boundary between official and non-government propaganda is frequently impossible to define, as the

[4] For a more detailed review of British propaganda, see Messinger, *Propaganda*; Sanders, M. L. and Taylor, Philip M, *British Propaganda and the First World War, 1914-1918* (London, The Macmillan Press, 1982); Buitenhuis, Peter, *The Great War of Words: Literature as Propaganda, 1914-18 and After* (London, BT Batsford Ltd, 1989); and Reeves, Nicholas, *Official British Film Propaganda during the First World War* (London, Croom Helm, 1986).
[5] Messinger, *Propaganda*, pp. 1-2.
[6] Sanders and Taylor, *Propaganda*, pp. 246-65.
[7] Ibid., p viii.

government worked with and encouraged leading contemporary figures to write and speak about the war. On 2 September 1914, the government propagandist Charles Masterman (then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and head of the newly created Wellington House) convened a meeting of influential writers to encourage them to write supportively about the conflict. As Buitenhuis observed of this meeting, 'With the exception of George Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, and a few lesser-known authors, British writers of all persuasions were at this time uncritically united behind the Allied cause.'[8] Notwithstanding the exaggeration, the thrust of Buitenhuis' argument is clear, and whilst this support declined during the war, it never collapsed, Messinger observing that 'Up to 1914, and even to some extent during the war, non-governmental actors were quite effectively doing most of what was wanted by political leaders in the field of persuasion.'[9] The writers considered in this section were operating under the auspices of official propaganda, particularly if they made visits to the front; but one should recognise the influence of their personal views of the war as well, and not assume that government influence is the only, or even the main, motivation of their presentation of the conflict.

Insofar as official propaganda did influence these writers, however, there are some key themes to highlight. First, for a large part of the war (and certainly the earlier years) the key focus of British propaganda was on allied and neutral nations, and in particular on the United States, with a view to

[8] Buitenhuis, *Words*, p. xv. He goes on to point out that US writers like Edith Wharton and Henry James were also influential advocates.
[9] Messinger, *Propaganda*, p. 253.

preventing them from supporting the Central Powers, and later to persuade them to join the Allies. The US was therefore the main target of British propaganda for much of the conflict.[10] Secondly, in pursuing this agenda, government officials were acutely conscious of avoiding heavy-handed or obvious propaganda, which had let down the German cause early in the war. Propaganda needed to be subtle, and if possible mediated through trusted third parties. It was normally light-touch and based on factual information, allowing others to form their own interpretation of the facts presented. As Buitenhuis observes, 'Nothing could more strengthen the neutral or pro-German elements [in the US] than obvious attempts by the British government to work upon American opinion.'[11] Thirdly, the priority, at least in the first half of the war, was on reaching opinion-formers rather than the general public: propaganda was carefully targeted rather than mass communication. This changed somewhat in the second half of the war, as concerns about domestic UK opinion arose, and then made a subtle shift in 1918 when the German armed forces and population were also more heavily targeted, but throughout the war opinion formers in general, and in the US in particular, remained a prime target of propaganda. In this drive, visits to and descriptions of the front came to occupy a critical position, so much so that in 1917 the Department of Information financed four chateaux for authorised visitors to the front.[12] Fourthly, censorship, such as it was, began largely

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[10] See Reeves, *Film*, p. 12; Sanders and Taylor, *Propaganda*, p. 167. For the way in which the US took on many of the British propaganda techniques once they had entered the war in 1917, see Prieto, Sara, '"War song of America": The Vigilantes and American Propagandistic Poetry of the First World War', in *Anglica*, Vol 27/3, 2018, pp. 33-49.
[11] Buitenhuis, *Words*, p. 55; see also Sanders and Taylor, *Propaganda*, pp. 32-4 & 58-9.
[12] Sanders and Taylor, *Propaganda*, p. 113. Micheal Neiberg examines the impact on American public opinion of newspaper coverage of the conflict, including from journalistic

with a view to preventing information falling into enemy hands, and only later aimed to shape public opinion. It was self-policing, with journalists submitting articles as they deemed necessary. The degree of self-censorship is indicated by the relatively small number of prosecutions for publishing prohibited material under the Defence of the Realm Act.[13] As Sanders and Taylor observed, the press, at least in Britain, exhibited a willing acquiescence to the official agenda, rather than being a victim of coercion.[14] The most telling consequence of censorship in the articles considered here is the striking absence, when compared to post-war guidebooks, of detailed descriptions of identified military actions.

Finally, many of the writers who visited or wrote about the front did so in relation to French sectors of the battlefield. There are many similarities between the French and British propaganda systems: a rapid assembly and evolution of propaganda organisations during the war, a focus on the US as a key target (with Britain also a significant recipient), an emphasis on elite opinion-formers, and a provision of factual information for commentators to interpret. Key differences from Britain included a greater emphasis on the atrocities of German *Kultur* as distinct from French *civilisation* (which of course also characterised the French-produced Michelin guides), a playing on the perceived cultural links between the US and France forged in their

battlefield visitors; see Neiberg, Michael, *The Path to War* (Oxford, OUP, 2016), especially pp. 9-38.

[13] Sanders and Taylor, *Propaganda*, pp. 9 & 18-32.

[14] Ibid., p. 31.

respective revolutions, and a willingness to maintain propaganda structures after the war's conclusion.[15]

The writers considered in this section wrote about, and in many cases visited, British and French sectors of the battle front. In reviewing their work, it is important to take into account the official propaganda apparatus which guided them: an emphasis on elite opinion formers, particularly within the USA; a concern to avoid sensitive military information falling into enemy hands; and a desire to ensure that visitors (and their subsequent readers) were not exposed to the full horrors of the battle lines. At the same time, these writers were influenced in their selection of material as much by their own preconceptions and ideas, and those of their publishers: their own patriotism, willingness to self-censor and desire to report facts as they saw them were at least as important as any externally-imposed restrictions.

[15] An excellent English-language analysis of French propaganda can be found in Young, Robert J, *Marketing Marianne: French Propaganda in America, 1900-1940* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2004).

Chapter Four: Wartime visitors to the battlefields – the coverage of the First World War in *Harper's Magazine*

Harper's Magazine in the nineteenth and early twentieth century

Harper's publishing house was established in the United States in 1817, and began publishing a monthly magazine in 1850.[1] Originally known as *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, the '*New*' was later dropped as the magazine became established. The periodical's initial focus was on literature, and it took advantage of the absence of international copyright agreements to re-publish articles from English journals without permission. This later changed to put the magazine on a more legitimate foundation, and by the time of the American Civil War, its remit included not just literature but also politics, economics, social issues and labour.[2] There is some uncertainty amongst publishing historians as to when the magazine first appeared in its London-based European edition. The *Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals* dates the London edition to 1899, although appears to contradict itself by referencing Layton's *List*, which puts the date at 1880.[3] Another assessment is provided by the *British Union Catalogue*, which indicates that a European edition began in London in 1881, with volume 1 being the same as volume 62 of the New York edition.[4] This numbering system fits closely

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[1] Shackleton, Robert, *The History of Harper's Magazine 1850-1917* (London & New York, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1916), p. 1.
[2] Lapham, Lewis H and Rosenbush, Ellen (eds.), *One Hundred and Fifty Years of Harper's Magazine* (New York, Franklin Square Press, 2000), pp. viii-ix. For ease of reference, this chapter will refer to *Harper's Monthly Magazine* simply as *Harper's* throughout.
[3] *The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals 1800-1900, Series 1 of 5* (Waterloo, North Waterloo Academic Press, 1997), pp. 2185-6. See also Layton, Charles and Edwin, *Handy Newspaper List* (London, Charles and Edwin Layton, 1914), p. 42.
[4] British Union Catalogue of Periodicals (London, Butterworths, 1964-1980), p. 376.

with the extant copies in the Cambridge University Library, which have the European and US volume number on them, with the first edition in December 1880.[5] Other than the front cover/numbering, the text of the US and European editions is identical. Andrew King et al concur with an 1881 start date, noting that Sampson Low were licensed as European publishers and that other US publications also embarked on European editions at about the same time, including the *Detroit Free Press*. They argue that 'While these transatlantic business ventures played an important role in shaping the emergence of a new Anglo-American public sphere, they have received little attention from historians.'[6] This thesis will start to address this deficiency, drawing on *Harper's* coverage of the First World War.

It is difficult to quantify the readership of *Harper's* magazine in Britain by the early twentieth century. Robert Shackleton testified to its global reach, and wryly related the story of an English woman who sang its praises to him, erroneously believing it to be a British journal.[7] His comments need to be treated cautiously, as his book is *Harper's* own centenary celebration of their company. However, the thrust of his comments is clear: by 1917 this was a magazine of influence, and with a very well-established London-based edition. Robust circulation figures for the UK are non-existent. The British Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) was only established in 1932,[8] and in any case *Harper's* included relatively little advertising, removing any strong

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[5] Cambridge University Library, Shelf Reference P900:1.c.1.
[6] King, Andrew, Easley, Alexis and Morton, John, *The Routledge Handbook to Nineteenth-century British Periodicals and Newspapers* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2016), p. 173.
[7] Shackleton, *Harper's*, pp. 1-2.
[8] *Willings Press Guide 1932: 59th Annual Issue* (London, Willing Service, 1932), p. ix.

commercial incentive for establishing circulation. HarperCollins Publishers in the UK (the current company) hold no information on the subject, and although some of *Harper's* US-based documents are held by various American archives, HarperCollins are unaware of where the relevant European archives ended up, if indeed they survive at all.[9] In the US, Lewis Lapham states that circulation stood at 107,940 in 1915, falling to 76,675 in 1921, before rising again to almost 125,000 by the end of the 1920s (at which point popular magazines were selling in their millions).[10] In the UK, the magazine sold in 1914 at 1s per issue, putting it on a par with high-end publications like *Scribners*, while *Tatler* and *Graphic* were half that price at just 6d, with the popular *Tit-Bits* magazine selling for just 1d per issue towards the end of the nineteenth century.[11] In the absence of a robust circulation audit, anecdotal evidence coupled with US circulation figures and UK pricing suggest that *Harper's* was a well-established and respected journal on the London publishing scene by 1914, with a limited, elite, urban and metropolitan circulation.

This makes *Harper's* articles a fertile ground for analysing emerging views of battlefield landscapes during the war itself, and whether these foreshadowed post-war commemoration. Given a primary market of elite US readers, the magazine reached precisely those audiences which British and French propaganda wished to target, and this is reflected in the rich quantity and

[9] Personal communications from Dawn Sinclair, archivist for HarperCollins Publishers, 17 and 28 March 2017.
[10] Lapham, *Harper's*, pp. xxi-xxiii.
[11] See Layton, *List*, for prices of journals. 1s (one shilling) in pre-decimal British currency comprised 12d (12 pence).

quality of articles related to the war, and battlefield visitation in particular. A complementary elite UK readership provided a significant opportunity for both American and British writers to influence high-level domestic opinion in Britain, including by trying to shape perceptions of the battlefield landscape. Many of the writers were influential people within the US and the UK, some of whom did indeed go on to be involved in shaping post-war commemoration – *Harper's* authors included the writers John Galsworthy, Henry James, Frances Hodgson Burnett and John Masefield (later poet laureate), the philanthropist Mrs William Vanderbilt, the writer and propagandist Gilbert Parker, Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice who was a founding member of the British Legion and who held a senior position at the War Office (until his departure amidst a scandal in 1918), and William Beach Thomas, the British official war correspondent much-parodied in the trench newspaper *The Wipers Times*. Articles by these and other authors form a hitherto largely unmined source of insight into elite British wartime depictions of the conflict in general, and the battlefront in particular. This chapter will examine how writers and the government propagandists who guided them sought to portray the landscapes of battle to readers, using the June 1914 - November 1918 editions of *Harper's* as a cross-section of wartime articles. It will argue that many landscape motifs of the post-war guidebooks had their genesis in these wartime writings; but that visitors during the conflict struggled much more explicitly to find appropriate language to describe the battlefields, and often exhibited more complex emotional responses. Non-combatant writers were also acutely conscious of their inability fully to comprehend the battlefields, and of their difference from the fighting men

they were visiting; and as such foreshadowed some of the tensions between combatant and non-combatant perspectives in the post-war period.

Distinctive features of wartime writing

Harper's appeared on the 25th of each month during the war.[12] Each edition comprised around fifteen substantive articles, along with a small number of short items such as poems. Lapham, in his 150th anniversary history of the publication, erroneously asserts that there was no early coverage of the war: 'The First World War began in August 1914; during the next twelve months *Harper's Magazine* refrained from publishing so much as a single paragraph about the unpleasantness on the Western Front.'[13] In fact, as Figure 5 shows, the magazine published an editorial on the conflict (November 1914), as well as a couple of oblique references to the war, and a poem entitled 'Spring in War-Time'.[14] Unsurprisingly for a US-based journal, the volume of articles started as a trickle, growing slowly by 1916, and building through 1917 (when the US entered the conflict) to a crescendo in the final ten months of the war. In his editorial of July 1918, the editor Henry Mills Alden observed that 'Our war literature is far more abundant than all other varieties combined. Our magazines are full of it.'[15] Of the 158 war-related articles

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[12] Layton, *List*, p. 42.
[13] Lapham, *Harper's*, p. xxi.
[14] 'Editor's Study' in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 68 [European edition], Vol. 129 [US edition], No. 773, Nov 1914, pp. 962-4. For ease of reference in this chapter, all references to *Harper's* will use the format: Author (where known), Title, Date, Page Number. The oblique references to the war are therefore Harrison, Rhodes, 'Baden Baden', Oct 1914, pp. 651-60; and 'Editor's Easy Chair', June 1915, pp. 148-51. The poem is Nesbit, E, 'Spring in War-time', June 1915, p. 82.
[15] Alden, Henry Mills, 'Editor's Study', July 1918, p. 294.

during the period in question, the most common treatment was fictional short stories, which account for a fifth of the coverage, unsurprisingly for a publication with literary roots. Following close behind were political and economic analyses and articles dealing with military or industrial activities. Editorial pieces accounted for nineteen of the articles. Of particular interest to this thesis are those articles which report on the experiences of civilians and combatants who had travelled to the battle zones, or which describe the battle-front without making a visit. Twenty-one such articles appeared in the magazine (amounting to over one in ten of the total), more than half of them in 1917, reflecting a perceived desire amongst the American population to know what their soldiers were going to experience. This chapter will draw particularly on these articles and the images they offered of the battlefields, though it will also refer to material from other types of article where relevant.[16]

[16] In particular, it will reference the fictional short stories, which have generally been less well studied than poetry emerging from the conflict. See Maunder, Andrew and Smith, Angela K. (eds.), *British Literature of World War One: Volume 1, The Short Story and the Novella* (London, Pickering and Chatto, 2011), pp. xxxiii-xxxvi.

Figure 5: Distribution of war-related articles in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, June 1914-November 1918.

		Passing Mention	Editorial	Poem	Political/ Economy	Fiction	Military/ Industry	Travel/ Account of land-scape	Other	**Total**
1914	J									**0**
	J									**0**
	A									**0**
	S									**0**
	O	1								**1**
	N		1							**1**
	D									**0**
1915	J									**0**
	F									**0**
	M									**0**
	A									**0**
	M									**0**
	J	1		1						**2**
	J									**0**
	A									**0**
	S									**0**
	O	1								**1**
	N	1								**1**
	D									**0**
1916	J									
	F	1				1	1			**3**
	M									**0**
	A	2								**2**
	M									**0**
	J	1					1			**2**
	J				1					**1**
	A							1		**1**
	S									**0**
	O	1			1					**2**
	N				1			1		**2**
	D									**0**
1917	J							1		**1**
	F							1		**1**
	M		1					1		**2**
	A							1		**1**
	M							1		**1**
	J				2	2				**4**
	J			1	1		2	1		**5**
	A		1				1	2		**4**
	S		2		1	2		1		**6**
	O		1	1	1	1	2			**6**
	N		2		2	1	2			**7**
	D						2	2		**4**
1918	J		1			1	2			**4**
	F	1	1	2	1	3	1	1		**10**
	M		1	1	3	3		1		**9**
	A		2	1	2	1	1	1	1	**9**
	M		1	1	2	3	1		1	**9**
	J		1		2	2	1			**6**
	J		1	2	2	4	1	1		**11**
	A		1	2	2	4	1	1		**11**
	S		1	1		2	2	1	1	**8**
	O			1	2	1	3	1	1	**9**
	N		1	2	2	2	2	1	1	**11**
TOTAL		**10**	**19**	**16**	**28**	**33**	**26**	**21**	**5**	**158**

Magazine publishing sometimes involves long lead-times, so the articles would usually have been commissioned and written many months earlier than they appeared, thereby reflecting an earlier view of the conflict. It is often unclear precisely when articles were written, but in a few the text makes it obvious. A footnote to the article on the Marne region published in April 1916 referred to the German invasion taking place shortly after it was written, and references to wild flowers in the text suggest late spring or early summer 1914, as much as two years before publication.[17] More usually, the lead-time was around six months: Mrs Vanderbilt's article published in January 1917 referred to a trip taken in August the previous year, as did Louise Hale's article of a couple of months later.[18]

Whilst the focus of this thesis is on the Western Front, writers for *Harper's* visited many war theatres, and (whilst the US was neutral) the Central Powers as well. Articles covered a visit to Constantinople, a report on the Serbian army in Macedonia, a short story set in Aden, the Russian Revolution, and even the experiences of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman armies.[19] Frequently, the motifs here mirrored those of the Western Front

[17] Gibbons, Herbert Adams, 'An Ancient Village on the Marne', Apr 1916, pp. 674-84.
[18] Vanderbilt, Mrs WK, 'My Trip to the Front', Jan 1917, pp. 175-86; Hale, Louise, 'Revisiting the Marne', Mar 1917, pp. 495-508. See also Hale, Walter, 'My Two Visits to Verdun', Feb 1917, pp. 305-21, based in part on a visit made in October 1916; and Hegan, Edith T, 'The Russian Revolution from a Hospital Window', Sept 1917, pp. 555-61, which refers to the period 7-22 March of the same year [Russian calendar]. One of the shortest identifiable lead-times is Malleterre, General, 'How Battles are Fought Today', Oct 1917, pp. 593-607, which appears to have been written about three months before publication.
[19] See Reyher, Ferdinand, 'The Adventure of the Many Dishes', Nov 1916, pp. 826-40; Corey, Herbert, 'The Serbian Tragedy as I Saw It', Aug 1917, pp. 327-37; Anderson, William Ashley, 'Aden of Araby', Sept 1917, pp. 449-62; Hegan, Edith T, 'Russian Revolution', Sept 1917, pp. 555-61; Atkinson, Richard Orland, 'Watching the Russian Army Die', Oct 1918, pp. 618-31; and Schreiner, George Abel, 'Threads by which Nations Hang', Apr 1918, pp. 665-74.

landscapes, and examples will be highlighted where they are relevant. On the Western Front itself, the focus on sectors associated with the author's national army was not nearly as pervasive as in the post-war guidebooks.

Early references to battlefield landscapes in *Harper's* were superficial. The earliest articles in which the war appeared were those about pre-war travels, where the main focus was on the landscape before 1914. Herbert Gibbons' article about Chateau-Thierry was all about its pre-war days and its association with the writer La Fontaine, the war meriting no more than a footnote.[20] Even as late as February 1917, Walter Hale was writing about his two visits to Verdun, only one of which was during the conflict; the other took place in 1910, and insofar as war featured, it was the Franco-Prussian War.[21] Early *Harper's* coverage, in both volume and content, reflected a degree of US detachment from the war, and in general an optimism about the war's outcome and the positives which might ultimately flow from the conflict. As the war progressed, and US economic and military investment increased, the volume, tone and detail of the coverage changed, and it is this more detailed coverage which provides significant insights into how British and American authors presented the battlefields to readers on both sides of the Atlantic. Even as the coverage built, writers remained acutely conscious of the propaganda and censorship rules under which they were operating. This was frequently acknowledged and sometimes even framed as a virtue. John Masefield's article about the work of an American medical unit was prefaced

[20] Gibbons, 'Ancient Village' , Apr 1916, p. 681.
[21] Hale, Walter, 'Two Visits', Feb 1917, pp. 305-321.

by a paragraph which could almost be a statement of British propaganda principles, at once focussing on the importance of the US contribution, whilst also making it clear that any attempts at 'spin' are eschewed:

> Deeply interested in and grateful for the work done by Americans in this European conflict, which is the struggle of democratic civilization against aggressive and barbarous militarism, the British Government suggested that Mr. Masefield should go and see the American Ambulance men at work ... Mr. Masefield received no instructions from the British Government further than that he was to set down honestly and fairly the result of his observation, and his opinions.[22]

The American novelist, travel writer and editor Harrison Rhodes provided a positive US perspective on British propaganda, saying that whilst the German press accused the British of buying off the American media, 'it is well to balance against these stories the testimony of men who have been trying to have the British embassy at Washington publicly defend the British policy, only to come up against a stone wall.'[23] The inference is that the British were trying to be dispassionate and objective and, in line with their propaganda policy, leave influential Americans to make up their own minds once presented with the facts. Most striking of all is an article from March 1918 by Sir Gilbert Parker, a Canadian novelist and British MP who earlier in the war had led British propaganda efforts in the US. Following US entry into

[22] Masefield, John, 'The Harvest of the Night', May 1917, p. 801.
[23] Rhodes, Harrison, 'The Myth of Anglo-American Antipathies', Oct 1917, pp. 697-8.

the conflict but while war was still raging, Parker wrote openly about his earlier propaganda role.[24]

Amongst those writers who travelled to the front, censorship was sometimes acknowledged. On the Egyptian front, the defeat of an Ottoman attack on the Suez Canal 'was all explained to me in detail, but I cannot explain it to you'.[25] In Verdun, Walter Hale's sleep was disturbed by a noise which was not that of shellfire: 'There was another reason for it, but, being a military reason, it may not be disclosed.'[26] To some extent, these references were part of the controlling apparatus itself, serving to underscore the supposed transparency of the propagandist. Mentions of the system of control under which the writers were working sought to give the reader the impression that what they were being presented with was honest and real, albeit subject to the exigencies of wartime reporting. As will be argued later, they also positioned the writers as having privileged access to an understanding of the war.

In addition to references to censorship, wartime writers established other themes which were distinct from those of the post-war guidebooks. While the latter tended to look (sometimes ambivalently) towards post-war regeneration, there is a sense of apocalyptic degeneration in some of these

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[24] Parker, Sir Gilbert, 'The United States and the War', Mar 1918, pp. 521-31. For a similar though more implicit perspective on French propaganda, see Klein, Abbe Felix, 'The Truth About Alsace-Lorraine', May 1918, p. 769.
[25] Anderson, William Ashley, 'Soldiers, Sand and Sentiment', Aug 1916, p. 353.
[26] Hale, Walter, 'Two Visits', Feb 1917, p. 317.

wartime articles.[27] The first short story on the war to appear in *Harper's*, by Katharine Gerould, is in this vein. Published in February 1916, it postulated an end to the war at a Congress held in 1917; but the end of one conflict was followed by another even worse, where rape and murder were widespread, and where supernatural powers brought about a complete degeneration of global society. The enduring landscapes of war presented an unrelenting dystopian vision starkly at odds with post-war assessments of the gradually restored battlefields.[28] Another theme of wartime writers which was not available to the post-war guidebooks was that of capturing the precise moment at which a landscape changed from peace to war. This is the theme of the journalist William G. Shepherd's 'When the Enemy Comes', which captured that moment when the war arrived by looking at how change was enshrined in the battlefield landscape. Shepherd visited a lace factory in the battle zone, and noted poignantly how the environment had been left exactly as it was when the workers departed. 'This last moment marks the fine hair-line between peace and war … It marks the instant when the individual realizes that the wave of war has, at last, touched *him*.'[29] Shepherd sees the moment as most powerfully inscribed in the landscape itself:

[27] Jenkins noted a similar apocalyptic strain in both pre-war and wartime art; see Jenkins, Philip, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I changed religion for ever* (Oxford, Lion Books, 2014), pp. 135-62. Also Winter, Jay, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge, CUP, 1995), pp. 145-77 on apocalyptic art and pp. 178-203 on literature.

[28] Gerould, Katharine Fullerton, 'The Eighty-Third', Feb 1916, pp. 428-36. See also Deland, Margaret, 'Beads: War-Time Reflections in Paris', Jul 1918, pp. 169-77 which depicted a bleak world where officially-sanctioned polygamy may be required to sustain populations; and Sara Teasdale's poem 'There will come soft rains', Jul 1918, p. 238, which suggested that the world might be better off were mankind to perish entirely.

[29] Shepherd, William G, 'When the Enemy Comes', Jul 1917, p. 154 [emphasis in original].

> Every ruined town, every shattered house, every shuttered window tells of these things; and, more than this every home in Europe from which a man has gone to war is a token of the terrible transition of this 'last moment'.[30]

The battlefield landscape, seen in wartime, captured not just the general history of the conflict, but the moment of transition. As the conflict progressed, layers of meaning were built up in the landscape – the pre-war era, the moment of transition, and then the ebb and flow of battle. This was ironically and powerfully expressed when Shepherd met a local man selling before and after ('*avant et après*') photographs of Ypres, from pre-war and early 1915 (rather like some of those used in the Michelin guides). After the Second Battle of Ypres had taken place a few months later in April and May 1915, Shepherd asked the man what he would do – only to be told that he will now create '*Avant et après et après*' images.[31] Paradoxically, as destruction ravaged the landscape, new layers of meaning were built up.

The notion of taking a guided tour of the battlefront was established in wartime writing, but the conditions were entirely different from the post-war guidebooks. A battlefield tour was first mentioned in the philanthropist Mrs Vanderbilt's visit to an American Ambulance Unit. A volunteer guided her around the ambulance base at Pont-a-Mousson, but unlike the post-war guidebooks, the sites he highlighted were not the ones of greatest strategic significance in the war; instead, they were ones of supreme relevance to the

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[30] Ibid., p. 162.
[31] Ibid., p. 156. See also Hewitt, Ethel M, 'Bois Etoilé', Oct 1917, p. 607, a poem which looks at the pre-war, wartime and post-war life of a woodland; and Sayre, Francis B, 'The YMCA at the Front', Feb 1918, p. 361, which looks at houses abandoned at the moment conflict arrives.

unit itself, such as where one colleague was killed, or where another won a medal. '[This] made me understand, as I had never understood before, the life and work of the American corps at the front.'[32] Understanding is built from an appreciation of the minutiae of wartime experience, which would be difficult to capture in post-war publications. The Michelin guides, as already noted, rarely described the actions of individuals. The American writer and actress Louise Hale wrote articles for March and April 1917 which reported her own visits to the battlefront. The motifs of being on a guided tour were clear, such as a driver pointing sites out with his whip, but unlike her pre-war tours, she was observing the very recent past rather than much older history. The experience also set her apart from those who were to follow post-war: 'We were – to crystallize our thrilling position – the Adam and Eve of trippers.'[33] At the same time, she had a prophetic realisation that post-war itineraries would be very different, singling out locations which have the most visible legacy of war: 'Some of my "tripping" fraternity may not be tempted to Meaux and the vicinity, when the battle-grounds become show-grounds preferring to plunge at once to some harvest-place of grimmer garnering.'[34] Though this appears judgmental, in fact Hale's articles were largely sympathetic to the post-war tour industry they envisaged, recognising that this was an inevitable (if not entirely wholesome) part of regenerating the landscape.[35]

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[32] Vanderbilt, Mrs W.K., 'My Trip', Jan 1917, p. 179.
[33] Hale, Louise Closser, 'Revisiting', Mar 1917, p. 499. It is interesting that the casual term 'tripper' appears at this point to have none of the negative connotations of the post-war era.
[34] Ibid., p. 501. Meaux is today the site of a large French war museum though, as Hale foresaw, not frequently visited by English-speaking battlefield tourists.
[35] See Ibid., p. 504; and also Hale, Louise Closser, 'French Battlefields of Yesterday', Apr 1917, pp. 646, 648, 654. See also Brewster, William T., 'A Corner of Old Europe', Jul 1918, p. 209, which envisages battlefields dominating the post-war tourist trail.

So, some of these wartime articles developed motifs which were distinct from the post-war guidebooks: an apocalyptic tone, the notion of capturing the moment of change in a landscape, or of being part of living history, the privileged first viewer in a longer line of post-war visitors whose experience would be very different. But in detailed descriptions of the battlefield landscape, what aspects do these writers single out, and do they foreshadow post-war experiences?

Emerging motifs of the battlefield

Many *Harper's* contributors took a writer's delight in exploiting the novel vocabulary of war. The Suez Canal is graphically (and somewhat oddly) described as 'the big trench'.[36] When Gibbons witnessed a prayer service for fighting men far from the front in southern France, it was to the same word that he turned to indicate the presence of war: 'The trenches were not far away!'.[37] In an article on the perfumes of Grasse, the same author challenged a perfumier's use of the term *eau de cologne*, advocating the wartime and anti-German alternative of *eau de liège*.[38] Beyond these simplest references, however, contributors found the language and imagery of the battlefield problematic. Photographs and illustrations in the magazine struggled to capture the scope and scale of war. The trenches in which Lord

[36] Anderson, 'Soldiers', Aug 1916, p. 352.
[37] Gibbons, Herbert Adam, 'The Confusing City of Cagnes', Aug 1917, p. 415.
[38] Gibbons, Herbert Adam, 'The Perfumes and Perspectives of Grasse', Oct 1916, pp. 759-69. See also Kelland, Clarence Budington, 'Simeon Small, Militarist', May 1918, pp. 800-11, a story in which a man seeks to collect battlefield idioms.

Kitchener and General Joffre were photographed look rather too perfect, located as they no doubt were behind the very front lines.[39] When Walter Hale contributed sketches for his wife's article in March 1917, he chose simple pastoral landscapes, each counterpointed with just a single element of war such as a plane, military vehicle or grave, as if the full panoply of warfare was too overwhelming to capture.[40] Where written descriptions were attempted, the featurelessness of the landscape was often highlighted, as it would be in post-war guidebooks. For the artillery officer Arthur Chute, the darkness and obliteration were a military challenge, 'a baffling task for the officer in charge.'[41] For Richard Atkinson, attached to the YMCA (albeit on the Russian front), the 'occasional graves, numerous gaping holes, and stray ditches which seemed to lead nowhere combined to give the field the appearance of a hopeless jigsaw puzzle.'[42] The healing effects of nature were sometimes highlighted, particularly poppies, which softened the harsh landscape, but also pointed symbolically to the bodies of dead soldiers beneath them.[43]

Within this shattered landscape, the post-war guidebooks would use battlefield detritus as a focal point, a means of making sense of the otherwise

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[39] Lady St Helier, 'Lord Kitchener', Oct 1916, p. 647.
[40] Hale, Louise, 'Revisiting', Mar 1917, pp. 495-508.
[41] Chute, Arthur, 'With the Guns', Jan 1918, p. 251.
[42] Atkinson, 'Watching the Russian Army Die', Oct 1918, p. 618. Atkinson was one of a group of 11 men sent by the US Root Commission at the request of the new Russian Kerensky government in a final attempt to boost morale in the Russian Army. Atkinson's title speaks to the lack of success of this mission.
[43] See Duryea, Nina Larrey, 'The Soul of Fighting France', Sept 1918, p. 466; Vanderbilt, 'My Trip', Jan 1917, pp. 178 & 183; Curran, Edwin, 'The Healing of the World', Oct 1918, p. 607, a poem on the same theme; and the short story, Eaton, Walter Prichard, 'The Boy who was Bored', Nov 1918, p. 767. For writers confronted with formlessness see Hynes, Samuel, *A War Imagined: The Great War and English Culture* (London, Bodley Head, 1990), pp. 99-108.

inaccessible, and there is evidence that this had its origins in wartime writing. Mrs Vanderbilt included the damaged cathedral at Rheims on her itinerary:

> The famous cathedral – noted architects to the contrary – is for me more wonderful than ever. It still stands in all the grandeur of its magnificent outlines. Its burned roof, its pierced walls, its broken statues envelop it with a new nobility, because these scars tell and will tell forever of the great tragedy through which France is passing.[44]

The cathedral was as valuable in its destroyed state as it had been before, offering a morally instructive lesson in what the war was being fought over – as in the Michelin guidebooks, it was the greatness of French history and civilisation which endured, revealed in the skeletal remains of the church. There was even the suggestion that the building was more valuable in ruins, its underlying structure and meaning rendered more visible.

Exposing the reader to scenes of destruction was a trope of these writers; at the same time, the restoration of the landscape was often viewed positively, in contrast to the post-war British guidebook writers who were frequently ambivalent. Walter Hale introduced his readers to the 'blackened ruins' of villages, and trees which were 'shredded stumps against the sky like sentinels.'[45] (An advertisement for the YMCA in the November 1918 edition included a line drawing which replicated some of these features). Like the post-war guides, Hale differentiated between levels of damage,

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[44] Vanderbilt, 'My Trip', Jan 1917, p. 186.
[45] Hale, Walter, 'Two Visits', Feb 1917, p. 311.

distinguishing the 'completely gutted' from the 'quite unharmed', and even offering the reader a description of the scene from the best viewing point over the destruction, to which visitors were normally escorted.[46] Where it was possible to see the legacy of the pre-war civilian landscape amongst the ruins, the emotional temperature was raised by these signs of pre-war life and the potential for restoration at which they hinted. Shepherd highlighted this when he referred to the 'pots and vases, bric-a-brac, old mirrors, and rare furniture [that] now lie crushed under the fallen timbers.'[47] Nina Duryea went further, speaking to a military surgeon who reflected:

> The first time I saw a battle-field cleaned up under the stars I seemed to see, above the pieces of rent human flesh, radiant angels trying to make me understand that the death of the body was a perfectly unimportant and insignificant thing – that it was not *how* a man died, but what he died *for*, that mattered.[48]

Here, the surgeon clearly saw the cleaning up of the battlefield as redemptive, an act which, far from diminishing the meaning of the landscape, in fact gave the death and destruction a clear purpose. The focus on detritus of war, so prevalent in the post-war guidebooks, can therefore be traced in wartime writings about the battlefield landscape, albeit with a sometimes slightly different reaction from the writer.[49] As has been shown, the post-war

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[46] Ibid., p. 313; the association of panoramic viewpoints with understanding the thrill of battle is also in Chute, 'Guns', Jan 1918, pp. 249-50.
[47] Shepherd, 'Enemy', Jul 1917, p. 160; see also Masefield, 'Harvest', May 1917, p. 804, where he also describes degrees of ruination within a single village; the large number of postcards sent home by soldiers depicting ruins echo this theme.
[48] Duryea, 'Soul', Sept 1918, p. 460.
[49] Michael Roper argues that the post-war disillusionment of the so-called war books boom had its origins in wartime feelings of fear and nostalgia, and this thesis extends the idea of post-war tropes having wartime origins to motifs of landscape. See Roper, Michael,

experience of battlefield landscapes at night-time was seen as a peculiarly powerful way of getting closer to wartime experience. The artillery officer Arthur Chute used his experience of the battlefields at night as an introduction to both of his articles, opening his first with 'It was that hour of the night when the darkness was deepest and the sentries were keenest…'[50] as a way of inviting the reader in. His follow-up article a month later was even more explicit in suggesting that darkness made the battlefield especially memorable:

> to stand in the darkness of the night behind a battery, listening to the sighing of the winds and the rustling of the trees, then out of silence to hear a voice, imperious and sharp, ring out, 'Battery, fire!' and to see the lightnings leap and feel the earth reverberate, is a memorable experience.[51]

The sights and sounds of night cemented the scene in his memory and in the reader's imagination. Walter Hale also used the uncompromising blackness of France at night to evoke a scene powerfully, at the same time tapping into what would become a post-war motif of bad weather as characteristic of the battlefields, the overnight fog periodically parting to expose the strange activities of war.[52]

'Nostalgia as an Emotional Experience in the Great War' in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 2, June 2011, pp. 421-51.

[50] Chute, Captain Arthur, 'The Real Front', Dec 1917, p. 124.

[51] Chute, 'Guns', Jan 1918, p. 249.

[52] Hale, Walter, 'Two Visits', Feb 1917, p. 308. Some fictional writers even transpose the motifs of the battlefield back to the domestic setting, to imbue the home front with additional meaning, as when striking miners march past the blackened stumps of a fire-swept country in Mary Heaton Vorse's 'The Laugh', Jul 1918, p. 208.

Moving from the landscapes themselves to the soldiers shaping them, these writers tell us about emerging attitudes to the Germans and the perceived impact of German troops on the landscape; in doing so, they again prefigure attitudes seen in the post-war guidebooks. There are many examples of German barbarism and brutality. Mrs Vanderbilt, marvelling at the intact condition of Epernay and its champagne cellars, concluded that this must have been because the Germans were too busy, or thought that they would have future opportunities to loot. The notion that they might simply have shown restraint is entirely absent.[53] Other writers were much more explicit, dwelling as Howell did on the supposedly bestial nature of German *Kultur* and its excesses, railing against:

> the barbarism which harnesses women with dogs in the German cities and primally [sic] values them as the mothers of murderers born into the world to sink peaceful ships at sea and to shower bombs on unarmed towns as acts of lawful hostility.[54]

William Beach Thomas argued that it was vital for the destructive impact of the Germans on the landscape to be recorded.[55] Collectively, Harper's authors' tone is stronger than even the most virulently anti-German sentiments in post-war guidebooks, at least those of British provenance. However, further analysis shows a more nuanced set of reactions. Walter Hale certainly reflected on how German *Kultur* had 'drilled the soul out of' its soldiers. Yet when his wife Louise finally met some German prisoners, she

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[53] Vanderbilt, 'My Trip', Jan 1917, p. 175.
[54] Howell, WD, 'Editor's Easy Chair', Apr 1918, p. 756. He is referring to the German policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, as well as to air raids and long-range shelling.
[55] Thomas, W Beach, 'The Supreme Commanders of the Allies', Jun 1918, p. 53. See also Parker, 'United States', Mar 1918, pp. 523-4; Duryea, 'Soul', Sept 1918, pp. 457 & 461-2.

described feeling awkward and staring rudely.[56] It is instructive to compare her description of the execution by the Germans in 1914 of Monsieur Odent, the mayor of Senlis, with that in the Michelin post-war guide.[57] The Michelin guide provided a very brief factual note, which nonetheless made it clear this was an atrocity of war. Louise Hale provided a detailed and evocative half-page description of the execution. However, in the same article she reflected on the mawkishness of commemorating this event, reporting uncomfortably that a street had been named after Odent, and postcards of his grave had been produced in anticipation of post-war tourists, with the clumsy English caption 'Here is shoot and bury the mayor'.[58] The reactions are complex – on the one hand, this was as an atrocity of war, while on the other the attempt to enshrine it in the landscape for those who were not there was problematic. At one level, this reflects a tension: that atrocities could be of greater concern to civilians than to soldiers, a point made by Henry Mills Alden in his March 1917 editorial.[59] But this neat dichotomy proves inadequate when we find the soldier Arthur Chute opining that he is 'ever learning more of our beastly foe, until the knowledge of their atrocities produced in my soul not a mere spirit of opposition but a flaming passion.'[60] He may have been writing for a civilian readership, but his view is still clear. While post-war guidebooks express some diversity of views about the

[56] Hale, Walter, 'Two Visits', Feb 1917, p. 310; Hale, Louise, 'Revisiting', Mar 1917, p. 502.
[57] Odent was shot by the German Army as part of reprisals for alleged *francs-tireurs* incidents; see http://www.picardie1418.com/fr/transversales/senlis-dans-la-grande-guerre.php [in French, accessed 12 Aug 2020].
[58] Hale, Louise, 'French Battlefields", Apr 1917, pp. 646-7; see also Anon, *Battlefields of the Marne 1914* (Clermont Ferrand, Michelin & Cie, 1917), p. 41.
[59] Alden, Henry Mills, 'Editor's Study', Mar 1917, pp. 598-600. Deland takes up the theme in 1918, quoting a soldier who told her that 'The longer I fight the Germans the better I like them' see Deland, 'Beads', Jul 1918, p. 170.
[60] Chute, 'Guns', Jan 1918, p. 249.

enemy, in these wartime writings there was a welter of strong emotional reactions.

This complexity of reaction referred as much to the landscape in general, as it did to the impact of the Germans upon it. The British writer and poet John Masefield, whose two seminal wartime books on the Somme and Gallipoli battlefields are considered in chapter five and who was appointed poet laureate after the conflict, described the grim final approach to a First Aid Post, in which he drove over dead horses, scattering rats in his wake. But then: 'At the moment it is more *beautiful* than words can say. With the light of the moon upon them the walls of the ruins are like obelisks in some *garden of the gods*.' The mood had shifted to one of beauty – and again the night-time setting heightened this response. It was a fleeting impression, however, as Masefield then returned to the funereal feel of the square in which the aid-post was located.[61]

The sight of cemeteries and burials, frequently mentioned in post-war guidebooks, is common in *Harper's* too. Here, though, they are more chaotic and distressing than in the post-war period. Masefield observed that 'Shells have dug up the graves and broken the memorials on them; they lie scattered here and there, little wooden crosses and wreaths of coloured wire…'; while Vanderbilt wrote of graves raked by the enemy guns until they had given up their dead.[62] Dorothy Canfield wrote of the earth of the freshly

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[61] Masefield, 'Harvest', May 1917, pp. 807 & 808 [emphasis added].
[62] Masefield, 'Harvest', May 1917, p. 807; Vanderbilt, 'My Trip', Jan 1917, p. 182.

dug graves contrasting with the 'lovely green setting' of the nearby village.[63] Nonetheless, these improvised burials, for all their brutality, were sometimes seen as more poignant and honest than the cumbersome attempts at formal memorialisation: 'I wish there were no such monuments, for the white flags waving in the fields of grain which bespeak the French and English soldiers' resting-places are much more eloquent.'[64] Chute hinted that the grand memorials of the ancient world were not relevant when some soldiers had been blown into fragments.[65] Whilst wartime writers were generally more positive than their post-war British counterparts about the tidying up of the battlefield landscape, their anxieties about the nature and appropriateness of commemoration foreshadow the concerns of some post-war visitors about formal memorialisation, a theme which will be explored further in Section C of this thesis.

Post-war guidebooks called on readers to exercise their imagination in order to place themselves in a battlefield setting; these wartime writers, through their vivid use of imagery, believed that the experience of the battlefield was so alien to most civilians that imagination was critical. The need for imagination was compounded because, during the conflict, they could not encourage readers to visit for themselves. This may explain the prevalence of short stories, in which the writers were free to use imagery to prompt an emotional connection. Even in the fictional stories, however, many of the

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[63] Canfield, Dorothy, 'Khaki Confidences at Chateau-Thierry', Nov 1918, p. 784.
[64] Hale, Louise, 'Revisiting', Mar 1917, p. 501. Improvised white flags were sometimes used by both sides as a means of marking the locations of soldiers' bodies, pending potential reburial by the official grave registration units.
[65] Chute, 'Front', December 1917, p. 126.

same images of the battlefield landscape appeared. In 'Mothers of Men', the middle-aged Evelyn Carse sent Jim, who was effectively if not literally her adopted son, off to war. When Evelyn tried to conceive what lay ahead for him, this was mediated entirely through imagined motifs of the battlefield landscape:

> All she visioned for him in that instant of realization was blood-soaked filth and crawling garments soggy with gore and slime – by day the nerve-shattering roar of the guns and by night the scurrying of rats – everywhere rats – squeaking humanly in a burrowing world gone mad...And for her, a stretch of silent hours, beating upon her fecund imagination to insanity.[66]

The suggestion was that her fertile imagination was emphasising these motifs of battle, at the expense of other unknown, unimagined and less gripping realities of the front-line experience. But given the emphasis on these motifs in factual writing such as that of Chute, Masefield, Hale and others it is hardly surprising to find civilians, fictional or real, basing their imaginings of the battlefield upon them. As will be shown in Section C, when post-war pilgrims did finally visit the battlefields, these tropes had sometimes become more powerful than the landscape in front of them.

[66] Aldrich, Darragh, 'Mothers of Men', Jun 1918, p. 122.

The distinctive voice of the wartime author

It is argued above that wartime writings often foreshadowed post-war guidebooks. However, some important distinctions were noted, and nowhere are these more apparent than in the distinctive voice of the wartime writer. Notably, there is the presence of female voices. Several of *Harper's* authors were women: amongst those articles about travel to the front or presenting factual depictions of the battlefields, about one third were by women. This is in contrast to the post-war guides, which were generally either anonymously authored, or written by men.[67] Female writers presented their gender as both a benefit and a limitation. Mrs Vanderbilt wrote that her visit to an American ambulance was made 'with the assurance that a woman's eye might see and a woman's experience might help to provide some needed comforts for them and for the wounded soldiers they carry.'[68] Being a woman here was a benefit, giving her a valuable perspective; but that value was almost entirely defined by her position as an outsider, someone whose presence was unusual. Louise Hale, touring the Marne with her whip-wielding driver-guide, told the reader she would spare them details of the battle, partly as 'a woman like myself' had limited understanding of it.[69] The role of the female civilian on the battlefield was tightly circumscribed – commenting on nursing care was acceptable, but it was unwise to stray into

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[67] The most notable exception is Beatrix Brice, who collaborated with Lt-Gen Sir William Pulteney on his Ypres guide, and later wrote her own.
[68] Vanderbilt, 'My Trip', Jan 1917, p. 175. On the tensions surrounding gender close to the battlefront in wartime, see Noakes, Lucy, ' "Playing at Being Soldiers"?: British Women and Military Uniform in the First World War' in Meyer, Jessica (ed.), *British Popular Culture and the First World War* (Leiden, Brill, 2008), pp. 123-45.
[69] Hale, Louise, 'Revisiting', Mar 1917, p. 502; censorship was presumably also a key factor.

military strategy and tactics. It might be tempting to ascribe this purely to contemporary gender expectations, but as will be argued in the coming pages, male civilians visiting the battlefields experienced similar challenges navigating the acceptable boundary between civilian and military perspectives.

The wartime writers were also acutely aware of the difficulty of finding language to describe what they witnessed. The post-war guidebooks asserted that non-combatants could never really understand the battlefront, and in these wartime accounts the writers' consciousness of their own limitations was stated just as explicitly.[70] Mrs Vanderbilt referred to a visit to a hospital near the front which she found profoundly moving, so much so that 'I still feel too deeply to talk about this.'[71] Words literally failed her in describing her experience. Later in the same article, as she passed through the vast troop and supply columns moving up to Verdun, she explained that 'My eyes could not take it all in, my mind could not digest what I saw.'[72] She could not even get close to setting down her impressions, as one mind could not comprehend the vastness of the battlefield landscape. Louise Hale prefaced her March 1917 article with an acknowledgment of this: 'One of the world's tremendous events, and one of the humblest of earth's creatures is trying to put it down in an arrangement of black lettering on white paper.'[73] A

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[70] See Bergonzi, Bernard, *Heroes Twilight: a study of the literature of the Great War* (London, Constable & Company Ltd., 1965), p. 41. In relation specifically to Rupert Brooke, but drawing wider conclusions, Bergonzi argues that 'The literary records of the Great War can be seen as a series of attempts to evolve a response that would have some degree of adequacy to the unparalleled situation in which the writers were involved.'
[71] Vanderbilt, 'My Trip', Jan 1917, p. 183.
[72] Ibid., p. 185.
[73] Hale, Louise, 'Revisiting', Mar 1917, p. 495.

September 1917 editorial tackled this issue head on. The editor – ironically, in light of the growing volume of war coverage in the magazine – explained that he had been trying to keep the war out of his publication. One of the key reasons proffered for this was that the war was simply too vast to talk about meaningfully – the most one could do was give an impressionistic, composite sense of some of the horrors of the conflict.[74] Many of the articles over the ensuing months reflected this, including a series which used line drawings to try to illustrate the scale of manufacturing, shipping, air and sea power.[75] Writers too used such techniques, listing a series of isolated impressions which collectively gave a sense of the landscape. Walter Hale's description of Verdun used a cinematic style which shifted across the scene like the roving lens of a film camera:

> Out of the inky pall figures in uniform appeared, took shape, and then faded away. On a siding near the railway station a few lights concealed from above by shades showed through the mist. I stood near the siding in the rain. Artillerymen were preparing the runways for a battery of '75s' that had just arrived on flat-cars. The nose of each gun leaned over the breech of the one ahead, like the bristling quills of a porcupine.[76]

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[74] Howells, WD, 'Editor's easy Chair', Sept 1917, pp. 578-82. The film director D. W. Griffith, visiting the Western Front to research his own planned movie *Hearts of the World*, made a similar observation about the impossibility of capturing the scale of the war, in his case on film. See Badsey, Stephen, *The British Army in Battle and its Image 1914-1918* (London, Continuum, 2009), pp. 176-7.

[75] Bailey, Vernon Howe, 'Forging America's Weapons of War: A series of drawings', Nov 1917, pp. 793-800; Harding, George, 'On Admiralty Service', Dec 1917, pp. 28-42; Bailey, Vernon Howe, 'The War in the Air: A series of drawings', Dec 1917, pp. 95-100; Oakley, Thornton, 'The Greatest Shipyard in the World', Oct 1918, pp. 657-64.

[76] Hale, Walter, 'Two Visits', Feb 1917, p. 308; for a similar effect, see Masefield, 'Harvest', May 1917, p. 802.

Masefield, who used similar impressionistic techniques, also struggled to interpret the landscape. 'The earth lies scooped up in lines and heaps and hillocks, paler than the grass in this light, but all irregular and meaningless and useless.'[77] The post-war guidebooks, in their quest to guide the traveller to the most war-torn destinations, often referred to the formlessness of the landscape; for wartime writers this was explicitly connected to a perceived loss of meaning, and to an inability of mind and language to encompass it.[78]

It is well-established that some First World War soldiers saw themselves as having a perspective which civilian non-combatants could never understand. In chapter 3, this view was clearly articulated by some of the military authors of battlefield guidebooks, and it is writ large in some of the best-known works of the soldier-poets.[79] The same tension is clear not just in the wartime accounts in *Harper's*, but also in the short stories. The young Tom Dana in 'The Boy who was Bored' returned home to the US on leave, and was conscious of the huge divide between himself and life back at home:

> After sleeping in a life-preserver, and by day swapping anecdotes with other returning drivers, or with men who had been close to that red dike [the front], it was uncanny to walk up Broadway and see the theater signs ablaze, the Gargantuan

[77] Masefield, 'Harvest', May 1917, p. 805, see also p. 809.
[78] Roper's psychoanalytical approach supports this, suggesting that even combatant writers struggled to describe certain wartime experiences, not just because language was inadequate, but because the emotional experience of warfare could not be encapsulated by thought. See Roper, Michael, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 265-6.
[79] See, for example, Sassoon's 'Suicide in the Trenches' and 'Blighters', or Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum Est'. More generally on the perceived distinction between soldiers and non-combatants, see Eksteins, Modris, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (London, Bantam Press, 1989), p. 228.

> electric beer-bottles popping, the cabs rolling by filled with jewelled women and fat men. Here was not the reality of life, but the unreality.[80]

At the story's conclusion, Tom tried to explain to his girlfriend that he felt a form of gladness to be going back to the front, not least because it felt more real than home, and asked if she could understand – but she could not. The chasm between civilian and military experience was just too wide. In 'Marchpane', a soldier and his pre-war sweetheart faced a similar gulf between them, which in their case led to a separation; while in 'Their Places' a French *poilu* on leave decided to go to Paris rather than home, as his previous spells of leave had served only to underscore the widening gap in experience between him and his family.[81] In these stories, the divide in experience was presented without condemnation – it was simply the reality of wartime life.

This distance from the realities of war was ascribed not just to civilians, but also to military personnel yet to face combat. The letters of the US pilot-aviator Lieutenant Jack Wright provided a window onto this issue. In July 1917 he wrote to his mother expressing frustration that he was still a comparative spectator, not yet exposed to action. 'it is aggravating always to be *just behind* the action. You practically are as safe as though driving through Massachusetts, if not safer.'[82] It is telling that he used an American mainland (entirely civilian) location as his basis for comparison. A few days

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[80] Eaton, 'Boy', Nov 1918, p. 768.
[81] Gerould, Katherine Fullerton, 'Marchpane', May 1918, pp. 781-9; Mackay, Helen, 'Their Places', Feb 1918, pp. 410-5.
[82] Wright, Jack, 'A Poet of the Air: Letters Written in the Aviation Service, Part 1', Aug 1918, p. 332 (emphasis in original).

later, he was pleased to walk through a trench to a gun emplacement, bringing himself closer to the action. But the sea-change came when he finally flew solo, for 'at last I was one of them. No longer an embusqué, but a defender, even of the poilu himself.'[83] Exposure to the landscape of battle was a key delineator between civilian and military experience – the difference between Tom Dana's red dike of the front line and the glowing neon of Broadway. As early in *Harper's* coverage as October 1916, this dichotomy was flagged up in the sharp contrast between the UK and the front, geographically close but in other ways worlds apart:

> while life goes on apparently little changed in our insular security, the greatest tragedy in the world's history is being enacted only a hundred miles from our shores.[84]

Henry James made the link with the landscape the centrepiece of his story, the very title of which, 'Within the Rim', alludes to the rim of the horizon which bounds one's experience of the world:

> Just over that line were unutterable things, massacre and ravish and anguish, all but irresistible assault and cruelty, bewilderment and heroism all but overwhelmed; from the sense of which one had but to turn one's head to take in something unspeakably different and that yet produced, as by some extraordinary paradox, a pang almost as sharp.[85]

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[83] Wright Jack, 'A Poet of the Air: Letters Written in the Aviation Service, Part 2', Sept 1918, p. 536.
[84] Lady St Helier, 'Kitchener', Oct 1916, p. 641.
[85] James, Henry, 'Within the Rim', Dec 1917, p. 58. James in fact renounced his American citizenship to show his sympathy with the Allied cause, see Neiberg, Michael, *The Path to War* (Oxford, OUP, 2016), p. 91.

Even when experiencing air-raids in Paris, Margaret Deland was conscious that the ‘frightfulness [of war] is outside of our experience and our minds do not know how to believe it.’[86]

What is striking about all these accounts was how conscious the non-combatants were of their distance from the realities of war as experienced by their combatant counterparts, and the way in which these distinct experiences are associated with different landscapes. Far from being the jingoistic madmen of Owen’s and Sassoon’s poetry who think they understand the war and support it, many of these writers seemed acutely aware of the limits on their understanding of the war they were writing about. On the one hand they had privileged access to the battle-zone and wanted to give an engaging and thrilling account; on the other, they remained conscious of the temporary and controlled nature of their exposure. As Michael Roper and others have argued,[87] this civilian-combatant divide should not be over-emphasised: in this case, it is not an impermeable division, rather a difference in intensity and perspective of which the civilian writers themselves seem aware. The concluding section of this chapter will examine some of the tools and approaches they used to navigate this divide. In particular it will show that they used motifs of landscape as a way of doing

[86] Deland, ’Beads’, July 1918, p. 171.
[87] See Roper, Michael, ‘Nostalgia’, pp. 421-51; and also his *Secret Battle*, pp. 7-9. Laura Ugolini notes that, in wartime, home and fighting fronts were often seen simply as different perspectives on the same conflict; see Ugolini, Laura, *Civvies: Middle-Class Men on the English Home-Front, 1914-1918* (Manchester, MUP, 2013), p. 92. Hugh Cecil notes that in fiction relating to the conflict, a consciousness of civilian-combatant divide is just one of many different, and often contradictory, reactions to the conflict, see Cecil, Hugh, *The Flower of Battle: British Fiction Writers of the First World War* (London, Secker & Warburg, 1995), especially pp. 269-337.

so, and that in the process they continued to develop many of the tropes which would figure in post-war writing.

Civilians at the battlefront

Charles Montague, whose experience guiding civilians around the battlefields has already been highlighted, sometimes found his task of managing them enervating. Writing to his wife in September 1916, he shared some of the frustrations of chaperoning a small party when the German artillery opened fire:

> Nothing fell near us, but the guileless civilians imagined they had been in a real hot place, and were talking about having been in the gates of hell, etc., for a long time after … One feels ashamed to be going about with visitors who excite themselves if for two minutes in one day of their lives they run the quite small risk which every man in the trenches is running – and thinks nothing of – all the time.[88]

Montague's judgment was harsh –many soldiers described similar reactions when under shellfire for the first time, before experience taught them otherwise.[89] But Montague's message was clear – there was a vast chasm between the civilian and front-line military experience which only the combatant could know. Arthur Chute made a similar point in *Harper's*, when he lamented that 'Now and again one meets with a war correspondent who

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[88] Elton, *Montague*, p. 145.
[89] See Fletcher, Anthony, *Life, Death and Growing Up on the Western Front* (London, Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 98-118; and also Meyer, Jessica, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 25 & 42.

has been “at the front”. But being at the front on a quiet day is quite different from being at the front in the midst of battle.’[90] In fact, unlike Chute’s war correspondent, the *Harper’s* civilian writers were, as argued above, conscious of this distinction; indeed, many made it a key feature of their accounts. Arriving at Port Said amongst the military hubbub, William Anderson was suddenly conscious of ‘making an ass of myself, and a general nuisance to people engaged on a mighty serious business.’[91] Mrs Vanderbilt’s reaction was one of genuine fear as she came close to shellfire; and later when she visited Verdun, she wrote of being somewhere in which she had never in her wildest dreams expected to find herself.[92] Part of the reason for such passages is to position the writer as having privileged access. But it is telling that one of the mechanisms used was explicitly to articulate this distinction between the civilian and the combatant experience. In the apparently fictional story ‘Aden of Araby’ the narrator went further, claiming that to retell war stories shared with him by fighting men would be a form of lying – presumably as he could not vouch for them from his own experience.[93] This at once establishes his credibility (he knows things which the reader does not), and sets his limitations (although he knows them, he can never fully understand them).

Many of the writers were also conscious of coming to the battlefield landscape, as their readers would, with imagined preconceptions of what it would be like, based on what they had previously read or heard. At times,

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[90] Chute, ’Front’, Dec 1917, p. 125.
[91] Anderson, ’Soldiers’, Aug 1916, p. 350.
[92] Vanderbilt, ‘My Trip’, Jan 1917, pp. 183-4.
[93] Anderson, ‘Aden’, Sept 1917, p. 460.

this imagined landscape got in the way of the real one. Mrs Vanderbilt visited an aid-post near the front lines, but had trouble relating to the reality of where she was:

> I was conscious of no sense of fear, not because I am brave, but because I had to take sharp hold of my thoughts to remember I was at the front, on a road only about fourteen hundred yards from the German trenches. I don't know what my conception of the front could have been. I know I always thought of it as one thinks of another world or rather of another age, as we must think of any place that has long been vividly in mind and yet only realized in books or through the description of others.[94]

Her imagination had positioned the front as somewhere 'other' – another place or time – so much so, that she struggled to relate to the real thing. She reiterated the point later in the same article, writing that 'it was very hard to think of myself as within sight of the German lines.'[95] Walter Hale, struggling to view the Voie Sacré leading to Verdun through heavy mist, instead claimed to be able to envisage it 'as I had dreamed of it.'[96] In the struggle to communicate something outside their experience, the landscape as they imagined it in advance provided a welcome visual structure. This is not to argue that civilians felt entirely without authority on the battlefront, particularly those who had experience working or living in the country in question. Dorothy Canfield's March 1918 article had as its central premise her role in educating newly arrived US men (mainly ambulance workers) on the realities

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[94] Vanderbilt, 'My Trip', Jan 1917, p. 177.
[95] Ibid., p180.
[96] Hale, Walter, 'Two Visits', Feb 1917, p. 309.

of French rural life. In this, she was clearly the authority. And yet, even here, the tone changed as soon as the focus shifted, in this case to a memorial service for the dead:

> And once there is a mass said for the regimental dead in the old, old church. All Crouy goes there, too, all Crouy lost in the crowd of soldiers who kneel in close ranks on the worn stones … The acolytes at the altar are soldiers in their shabby honorable uniforms; the priest is a soldier; the choir is filled with them singing the responses.[97]

The civilians, including Canfield herself, were lost amongst the crowd of military uniforms, the entire event dominated by the soldiers as congregation, acolytes, celebrant and choir. With the military perspective to the fore, the trivialities of village life, of which Canfield was mistress, had fallen into shadow.

In this alien world, the writers nonetheless had to establish their credentials and authority with the reader.[98] Sometimes, as has been shown, this was done by emphasising access to privileged information. In other cases, credentials were more literal. Mrs Vanderbilt's article was illustrated with photos which purported to show her in landscapes or locations near the front,

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[97] Canfield, Dorothy, 'Young America and Old France', Mar 1918, p. 502. Crouy was behind the Aisne battlefront, near Soissons. It would be severely damaged shortly after this article appeared, in the German 1918 offensive.

[98] Dann has analysed late twentieth century tourism and has argued that 'ego-enhancement' is a key push factor in making people travel; part of this is being able to recount one's travels and the new perspective they have given. The "privileged viewpoint" of the wartime civilian visitor to the battlefields is an earlier example of a similar phenomenon. See Dann, G., 'Anomie, ego-enhancement and tourism' in *Annals of Tourism Research*, 4, 1977, pp. 184-94.

while Walter Hale included a photograph showing his passport to the front from the Verdun commandant.

Notwithstanding Charles Montague's lament, being under shellfire (or at least the appearance of being so) was another way of adding authenticity to their accounts. Walter Hale at Verdun is a case in point, and he built up the sense of risk he endured as his article progressed. Initially, his party climbed to a high-point to watch a bombardment, like spectators at a show; that night, his sleep was disturbed by shellfire, and he felt in increased danger. The following day they went to take some moving images on location, and came under shellfire directly:

> The [camera] operator regretted exceedingly that the shell had not arrived before we had gone beyond the reach of his lens. He said that the apprehension on our faces and our sudden ducking as the bomb exploded would have lent a fine touch of realism to the picture.[99]

Perhaps Hale himself also regretted this turn of events, as a still from that movie would have added further to his credentials of having been exposed to the battlefield. At the same time, he was at pains to underscore that he is no soldier, testifying to a great 'feeling of relief' when the whole experience was over.[100]

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[99] Hale, Walter, 'Two Visits', Feb 1917, p. 318.

[100] Ibid., p319. Schreiner recounts an experience of being under naval bombardment with the Turkish army at Gallipoli, and a similar feeling of this not being the place for a war correspondent, 'Threads' Apr 1918, p. 667.

Some writers went further to qualify their front-line experience, adopting a self-deprecating tone. Louise Hale's tendency to play down the significance of her visits as a 'tripper' rather than a pilgrim has already been noted; in addition, she made it clear that her tour was '"toward" the front. I cannot in all honesty say "to" the front.' In her later article, she expressed awkwardness at taking afternoon tea under a tree when the war was going on so close by.[101] Masefield took a very different approach – for him, the focus was on the soldiers and ambulance workers themselves, and he wrote his article entirely in the third person, as if removing himself from the picture altogether. In contrast to Louise Hale, he exploited the image of the pilgrim, but for him the term referred to the soldiers themselves, and not the visitor:

> a company of foot-soldiers marching in column of twos, each man bent under his load, which makes him twice the size of a man, and all walking slowly, many of them with walking staffs, like pilgrims.[102]

Visitors in the war saw themselves as Louise Hale's trippers, outsiders gaining a necessarily incomplete view of the battlefield. But some visitors really did push the boundaries:

> The ground is as tossed and broken as the surface of a storm-beaten ocean. The stench of the dead is still in the air; the horror is indescribable. We pass the remains of a body; a can of beef and a clip of shells [sic] is still beside it. The ground, plowed [sic] and churned by titanic forces, is a terrible mass of twisted barbed-wire

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[101] Hale, Louise, 'Revisiting', Mar 1917, p. 495; Hale, Louise, 'French Battlefields', Apr 1917, p. 657.
[102] Masefield, 'Harvest', May 1917, p. 803.

> entanglements, steel shell fragments, timbers and bits of concrete emplacements, pieces of clothing, shrapnel, broken rifles, unexploded bombs, rifle-shells, human blood and bones – all shattered and ghastly and horrible.

Sayre, the YMCA worker, provided this gruesome and graphic description of crossing No Man's Land, again drawing on many of the motifs of battlefield detritus and shattered landscape which would be reused by post-war writers. But even here, for the writer who was there at the time, the description is from the aftermath of battle and after the fighting lines had moved.[103] Nina Duryea claimed, somewhat implausibly, to have entered the space between the lines – but even assuming her story is true, it is in a quiet period, under cover of thick fog, and in an area which superstition holds to be unassailable by the Germans.[104] For the most part, it was only the combatants who could claim to be pilgrims, following their *via sacra* to the real front line experience under the heat of an attack. As will be argued in section C, after the war the battlefield visitor could begin to claim the pilgrim's mantle for themselves.

[103] Sayre, 'YMCA', Feb 1918, p. 362.
[104] Duryea, 'Soul', Sept 1918, pp. 460-1.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the wartime content of *Harper's* magazine between 1914 and 1918, with a particular focus on those articles which detail visits to the front line, or which attempt to describe the front line even in the absence of first-hand experience. It has shown that a number of motifs of the battlefield landscape which appeared in post-war guidebooks were prefigured in wartime writings – the emphasis on destruction and formlessness in the landscape, battlefield detritus, viewpoints over the landscape, and night-time as a period of heightened emotional response were all there in wartime articles. At the same time, these writers from the conflict period have their own distinct voices and themes. They struggled much more explicitly with the inadequacy of language and imagery to express their views, and exhibit more complex and at times contradictory emotional responses to the battlefield and the enemy. Some seek to capture in their description of the landscape the moment when peace collapsed into war – something which would be far more difficult in post-war writings when many layers of conflict had been superimposed on the pre-war environment. The female voice is prevalent and at times privileged in a way which was almost entirely absent in the post-war guidebooks; but all writers, male and female, worked under rules of censorship and limited access, and some chose to make this explicit in their writing, as a symbol of their privileged access to the war zone. Notwithstanding this privileged access, and the importance of communicating it as part of their credentials and authority to their readers, what is most striking about these (usually) civilian writers is

how acutely aware they were of the distinction between their own experience and that of soldiers, and the lengths they went to in order to spell out that fault-line in their experience, often drawing on landscape motifs to do so. In the next chapter, we shall see how this and other themes are explored in the wartime writings of Rudyard Kipling, Edith Wharton, Harry Lauder and John Masefield, all of whom wrote longer works which described the battle-zones in much more detail than was possible in a short magazine article.

Chapter Five: The wartime battlefields in depth – the writings of Kipling, Wharton, Masefield and Lauder

Introduction

Michael Howard argued that military history should encompass width, depth and context.[1] Chapter four analysed more than a hundred articles about the war, and about the battlefields in particular, published in *Harper's Magazine* between 1914 and 1918. It identified a number of themes which characterised the way in which the war was presented to the reader, and the manner in which wartime battlefield visitors interpreted the landscapes they saw. Each of these articles was, of necessity, brief: the average length of a *Harper's* article in this period was about ten pages, including photos or illustrations where appropriate. Even the most prolific contributors penned only a handful of articles across the four-year period, limiting their ability to expand on themes, to go into more depth about what they saw, or to compare different areas of the battle front or even different theatres. In addition, *Harper's* was an elite publication, and whilst useful to analyse in relation to targets for British and French propaganda, any impact it had on the wider population would have been indirect. This chapter will therefore turn from Howard's 'width' to 'depth' and 'context' by considering more extended wartime works by Rudyard Kipling, Edith Wharton, John Masefield and Harry Lauder. These authors were highly influential and well-known figures before the war, with established reputations, whose writings attracted immediate interest. All were part of the coterie invited by the British or

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[1] See Howard, Michael "The Use and Abuse of Military History', Royal United Services Institution Journal, 107:625 (1962), pp. 4-10.

French governments to help with wartime propaganda, as outlined earlier, which is further testament to their profile. All went on to influence post-war society and commemorative practice: Kipling as a writer, public figure and Commissioner and literary adviser to the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC); Wharton as a public supporter of French imperialism and a Pulitzer-prize winning novelist; Masefield as one of the longest-serving Poet Laureates of the United Kingdom; and Lauder as a popular variety entertainer, parts of whose act were inspired by the war, and who performed into the 1930s.

The works of Masefield and Lauder considered in this chapter were first published as books during the 1914-18 period. Those by Wharton and Kipling were initially commissioned as newspaper articles, but two key factors set them apart from the *Harper's* offerings. First, the articles in question all appeared as part of a series in close proximity of time (usually spread over as little as a few weeks), allowing for the detailed development and exposition of themes. Second, the articles were within a few months anthologised into single standalone volumes, enabling both new readers and those who had read the original articles to (re-)experience them as a single, coherent body of work. Just like the *Harper's* articles, these books were circumscribed by propaganda and censorship. They nonetheless opened up the authors to a wider readership, particularly when priced affordably (many

of Kipling's books considered below sold at just 6d, half the price of an edition of *Harper's*).[2]

This chapter explores how these more extended accounts develop the themes that have already been identified, in particular amplifying and graduating the distinction between civilian and combatant perspectives, and the importance of the detritus of war as a means of accessing the battlefield landscape. It will suggest that these writers approached the battlefield landscape in distinctive ways, with no 'one size fits all' approach, using variously mythology, complex emotional responses or even their own bewilderment to communicate their impressions. By comparing the wartime writings with post-war publications by the same authors, the chapter will argue that certain motifs such as vengeance and unbridled grief came to be silenced in the 1920s, a subject which will be considered in more detail in the closing chapters of this thesis.

Kipling's battlefields: mechanised landscapes and the brutality of warfare

Rudyard Kipling was approaching fifty years old when war broke out in 1914. His literary career, begun as a journalist and short-story writer in India, had blossomed in Britain in the 1890s, so that by the turn of the century he was a

[2] For more on pricing of Kipling's wartime books, see Ricketts, Harry, *The Unforgiving Minute: A Life of Rudyard Kipling* (London, Pimlico, 2000), pp. 314-340. As an illustration, a bricklayer in 1914 might expect to earn about 40s per week, making Kipling's works relatively affordable for those who wanted to read them (see Hansard, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1925/jul/30/average-weekly-wages [accessed 26 April 2019]).

well-established figure on the British and international literary scene.[3] His reputation as champion of the ordinary British soldier was strong, having initially been secured by his poetry collection *Barrack Room Ballads*, published in 1890. He also had a fascination with the Royal Navy, doubtless prompted by his own extensive sea travels, and by his time as a child being fostered in Southsea by a retired naval captain who had been a midshipman at the Battle of Navarino in 1827.[4] His perspective on the military, while largely sympathetic, was very much one of the civilian observer – ironically, his own enlistment as a young man in the 1st Punjab Volunteers had ended ignominiously, with his forced resignation after repeatedly failing to attend parade.[5] The First World War was not Kipling's first experience as a battlefield tourist: during the Boer War he had travelled to South Africa, visiting soldiers at the front and in hospital, and writing about his experiences including as a propagandist. This period between 1899 and 1902 was a high-watermark of Kipling's reputation as a staunch British imperialist. Over the next decade these imperialist views became less fashionable, and his critical reputation at home ebbed, though his popular and international standing remained high, not least when he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907. The advent of the war and the requirement for positive propaganda played to his strengths as a poet, a writer and as a speaker addressing recruitment drives.[6]

[3] For a detailed assessment of Kipling's reputation in 1899, see Ricketts, *Kipling*, pp. 252-6.
[4] Kipling, Rudyard, *Something of Myself* (London, Macmillan and Co, 1937), pp. 1-20.
[5] Ricketts, *Kipling*, p. 61.
[6] Ibid., pp. 314-5; see also Green, Roger Lancelyn (ed), *Kipling: The Critical Heritage* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 1-33.

Kipling published a number of factual books about the war during the period of the conflict, often at the request of the military or government. The first, *The New Army in Training*, explored the experiences of early recruits, and was originally commissioned as a series of articles for the *Daily Telegraph* in December 1914. It was rapidly anthologised as a 6d book in February 1915. Six months later, in August 1915, Kipling visited the battlefields of France as a guest of the French Army, again submitting a series of articles to the *Telegraph* which were collected as another 6d book, *France at War*, by the end of the year. *Fringes of the Fleet* saw his attention turn from the army to the Royal Navy, in a series of *Telegraph* articles published at around the time of the Battle of Loos, when his own son John was declared missing in action. These articles were anthologised as a book in December 1915, and some of the accompanying poems were set to music by Edward Elgar and performed around the UK in 1917, further testament to the impact and popularity of these works. 1916 saw another anthology, *Sea Warfare*, which republished the *Fringes of the Fleet* articles with new ones about submarine warfare (*Tales of 'The Trade'*) and the Battle of Jutland (*Destroyers at Jutland*). Kipling's final wartime offering was about the Isonzo front in Italy, originally published as a series of articles (again in the *Telegraph*) in June 1917, and turned into a book entitled *War in the Mountains* later that same year. Kipling also published a large number of fictional works about the conflict, in particular short stories and poems.[7] Kipling's use of domestic and battlefield landscapes in those works merits investigation, and would be a thesis in its

[7] Most famously, perhaps, 'Mary Postgate'; see Bergonzi, Bernard (ed.), *Rudyard Kipling: Tales of East and West* (Avon, The Limited Editions Club, 1973 [story first published 1915]).

own right. The fiction form makes it harder to distil what is based on genuine experience of the battlefield, and what is embellished for narrative purposes – a conundrum which is hard enough to disentangle even in some of his factual writings. For these reasons, this thesis limits itself to Kipling's factual wartime publications.

Landscape was critical to Kipling's work. As a seasoned traveller, he repeatedly stressed the need fully to experience a landscape and the culture associated with it in order to understand it. Although he had an ambivalent attitude to the United States as a nation, he felt that the few years he spent living there were essential to his understanding of it:

> Better than all, I had known a corner of the United States as a householder, which is the only way of getting at a country. Tourists may carry away impressions, but it is the seasonal detail of small things and doings…that bite in the lines of mental pictures.[8]

He also felt that landscape retained the memory of what had happened in it and that by exploring landscapes one could connect with those memories. This is an idea which he expressed not just in his fictional writings like *Puck of Pooks Hill,*[9] but also in his factual writing, as in this contribution to *The Complete Motorist* from 1904:

[8] Kipling, *Something*, p. 132.
[9] The eponymous sprite in this collection of short stories, published in 1906, uses the contemporary English landscape as a way of accessing tales and characters from its history.

> …in England the dead, twelve coffin deep, clutch hold of my wheels at every turn, till I sometimes wonder that the very road does not bleed. That is the real joy of motoring – the exploration of this amazing England.[10]

In this light, his frequent visits to the former Western Front battlefields in the 1920s, whilst a duty of his role as an IWGC Commissioner, were also a way of reconnecting with the experiences of the men who fought, not least his own son. It is unsurprising that his wartime accounts of the battlefields are rich in detail about the landscape, and draw links between that landscape and the battles which raged across it.

France at War, the first Kipling work to detail a battlefield visit, described an intimate engagement with the landscape, as Kipling climbed a tree to a French observation post:

> Here one found a rustic shelter, always of the tea-garden pattern, a table, a map, and a little window wreathed with living branches that gave one the first view of the Devil and all his works. It was a stretch of open country, with a few sticks like old tooth-brushes which had once been trees around a farm. The rest was yellow grass, barren to all appearance as the veldt.[11]

This thesis has shown how numerous writers privileged such commanding views of the battlefields, and portrayed the war in general, or the enemy specifically, as devilish. Kipling went further, introducing a sense of intimacy as he entered into the private world of the observation post, noting the rustic

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[10] Filson Young, A.B., *The Complete Motorist* (London, Methuen and Co, 1904), p. 286.
[11] Kipling, Rudyard, *France at War* (London, Macmillan and Co, 1915), pp. 8-9.

details, and juxtaposing the domestic, homely feel of the tea-garden pattern with the entrenchments he was looking over. This familiar imagery was carried over into the 'tooth-brush' stumps of trees, and the appearance of the yellowed grass (presumably from exposure to gas) as looking like the veldt, with which Kipling was familiar from his own travels to Africa. In forging these intimate links with the minute details of the setting, Kipling helped the reader position themselves in an unfamiliar landscape. In other passages, he used a sense of movement or even of smell to reinforce the experience of being within the alien battlefield environment.[12]

Like other writers, Kipling was confronted by the scale of the war, its impersonal nature and its industrialisation, and had to find ways of expressing these elements of the battlefield as well:

> A lone, low profile, with a lump to one side, means the field-gun and its attendant ammunition case; a circle and slot stand for an observation-post; the trench is a bent line, studded with vertical plumes of explosion; the great guns of position, coming and going on their motors, repeat themselves as scarabs; and man himself is a small blue smudge, no larger than a foresight, crawling and creeping or watching and running among all these terrific symbols.[13]

This richly layered account used the motif of a map complete with familiar symbols to explain the complex reality of the battlefield – only here the 'symbols' were in fact the real thing, just viewed from afar. At the same time,

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[12] Ibid., pp. 10 & 16.
[13] Ibid., p. 25. The 'blue smudge' refers to the *horizon bleu* French uniforms which had recently been introduced.

the sense of the view being like a diagram emphasised the depersonalisation and mechanisation of war; this is further reinforced by man himself being compared with, and in line with, the foresight of a gun. The industrialised, brutal battlefield also came through in Kipling's naval writings. He seemed to lament the fact that submarines, rather than bearing classic names like their surface counterparts, had anonymous 'letters and numbers on their skin'.[14] And when ships were damaged, he resorted to organic metaphors to make sense of the destruction, referring to 'lame hounds' or vessels hit in the 'vitals'.[15] By shifting between intimate views of the battlefield which stressed its human and organic qualities, and impersonal detached views of the mechanisation of warfare, Kipling painted a vivid picture of battle.

Like other writers, Kipling used the damage and detritus of war as a proxy for the brutality of the conflict. He noted, for example, the presence of isolated graves as opposed to the post-war organised cemeteries.[16] He described the destruction of towns and cities, viewing the damage to the cathedral at Rheims by German shelling as a particularly shocking illustration:

> The gargoyles are smashed; statues, crockets, and spires tumbled; walls split and torn; windows thrust out and tracery obliterated. Wherever one looks at the tortured pile there is mutilation and defilement, and yet it had never more of a soul than it has to-day.[17]

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[14] Kipling, Rudyard, *Tales of "The Trade"* (London, Macmillan and Co, 1916), p. 95.
[15] Kipling, Rudyard, *Destroyers at Jutland* (London, Macmillan and Co, 1916), pp. 161, 155 & 170.
[16] Kipling, *France*, pp. 31 & 43. By 1919, Kipling was arguing that for reasons both of practicality and aesthetics, such isolated graves needed to be grouped together; see Kipling, Rudyard, *The Graves of the Fallen* (London, HMSO, 1919).
[17] Kipling, *France*, p. 25.

The damage illustrated the depths of German depravity and defilement, whilst the exposed ribs of the cathedral spoke more eloquently than ever of the soul of French civilisation, over which Kipling (like the later Michelin authors) suggested the war was being fought. But Kipling went further than others in relating a story which underscored German war-guilt: a German major, he explained, died in the cathedral while his colleagues were shelling it, and fell 'with his back against a pillar. It has been ordained that the signs of his torments should remain – an outline of both legs and half a body, printed in greasy black upon the stones.'[18] Not only did this sign of German atrocity endure, but was literally burned into the battlefield landscape in an oily black stain, a testament to the damnation of the *Kultur* against which the war was being waged.[19] Kipling's portrayal of the enemy in general was brutal, even by the standards of other writers considered. While the Royal Navy spared neutral shipping, Kipling noted, 'the enemy does not. He blows them up, because that cows and impresses them'.[20] The German infantry were variously devils, animals, beasts or lacking in humanity.[21] Whereas many other writers mellowed in their attitude when confronted with disarmed prisoners of war, Kipling veered the other way in his description of German captives, drawing on the widely reported German atrocity stories of 1914-5:

[18] Ibid., p. 26.
[19] This is not mentioned in the Michelin guide to Rheims, suggesting either that the marks were removed after the war; or perhaps that Kipling was engaging in dramatic hyperbole here.
[20] Kipling, Rudyard, *The Fringes of the Fleet* (London, Macmillan and Co, 1915), p. 53. Kipling is referring to the German policy of unrestricted submarine warfare in 1915.
[21] Kipling, *France*, pp. 8, 25, 28, 40 & 64; Kipling, *Tales*, p. 112.

> They were the breed which, at the word of command, had stolen out to drown women and children; had raped women in the streets at the word of command; and, always at the word of command, had sprayed petrol, or squirted flame; or voided their excrements on the property and persons of their captives. They stood there outside all humanity. Yet they were made in the likeness of humanity.[22]

For Kipling, the moment of the enemy's greatest potential humanity, when disarmed, demoralised and captured, served only to underscore his essential lack of humanity, his complete 'otherness' when compared to his Allied captors. The word 'breed' also positions the enemy as utterly different.[23] At the same time, however, there was a curious synergy between Kipling's description of Allied and enemy soldiers, at least in terms of their raw animal energy. This is how Kipling described seasoned French infantry being inspected by Kitchener and Joffre:

> We went down the line and looked into the eyes of those men with the used bayonets and rifles … One could feel the strength and power of the mass as one feels the flush of heat from off a sunbaked wall …The speed, the thrust, the drive of that broad blue mass was like a tide-race up an arm of the sea: and … filled one with terror.[24]

The sense of an almost inhuman, elemental and unstoppable force was palpable, as was the fear of it. This is not to suggest that Kipling viewed

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[22] Kipling, *France*, p. 51; he is referring particularly to the Germans being the first to use flamethrowers on the Western Front. For more on Kipling's view of the cultural corruption of the Germans, see Brogan, Hugh, 'The Great War and Rudyard Kipling' in Montefiore, Jan (ed.), *In Time's Eye: Essays on Rudyard Kipling,* p. 85. Adams notes that, unsurprisingly, Kipling's invective against the Germans increased after the death of his son; see Adams, Jad, *Kipling* (London, Haus Publishing Limited, 2012), p. 171.
[23] Compare Kipling's use of the same word in his 1897 poem 'Recessional'.
[24] Kipling, *France*, pp. 36-7.

allies and enemies identically – far from it, his condemnation of the Germans was more absolute than many other writers. Nonetheless, he went further than many others in emphasising the way in which this conflict dehumanised both sides.

This all suggests that Kipling gave himself a privileged position as a civilian observer of the battlefields, but a more detailed analysis shows a strong strain of humility in his own perspective, especially when confronted with front-line service. He often referred to his own position as that of the amateur outsider, or the uninitiated visitor.[25] This sentiment was at its strongest towards the end of *France at War*:

> We edged along the still trench, where the soldiers stared, with justified contempt, I thought, upon the civilian who scuttled through their life for a few emotional minutes in order to make words out of their blood.[26]

Not only was Kipling the contemptible outsider dipping temporarily into the life of the infantry, but there was a sense of guilt at the very act of inscribing his highly partial experience in words, and making his living from their sacrifices. The poet and war veteran Edmund Blunden believed that Kipling did 'not perfectly…understand the pandemonium and nerve-strain of war'.[27] Kipling may not, as Blunden opined, have understood the chaos of war, but

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[25] Kipling, *France*, pp. 11 & 23; *Destroyers*, p. 211.
[26] Kipling, *France*, p. 57.
[27] Blunden, Edmund, 'Mr Kipling Reconstructs' in *Nation and Athenaeum*, Vol XXXIII, 28 April 1923, pp. 122-3.

he seems highly aware of that shortcoming. The brutality he described is something he had observed, but in which he was not a participant.

Although the focus of this thesis is on the Western Front, it is worth briefly comparing Kipling's writing on the Italian Front. Certainly, there are similarities in the depiction of detritus, battlefield destruction, isolated and unmarked graves, and the use of high points to gain views over the battlefields. This is unsurprising in a war which featured extensive use of heavy artillery, and was fought over large swathes of countryside. At the same time, a number of distinctive features can be identified in Kipling's portrayal of Italian battlefields. He wrote that the Italian soldiers were more familiar and at ease with their landscape than their Western Front counterparts.[28] Cemeteries tended to be concentrated more quickly rather than being left as isolated graves, presumably owing in part to the difficulties of burying the dead in the hard rock of the mountainside.[29] The predominance of green and brown as colours on the Western Front was enriched with others, including the black, grey and white of the mountain rock and snow.[30] The axis of advance was quite different, often being vertical rather than horizontal, as troops fought for the peaks.[31] Most strikingly of all, the barren landscape of the Italian mountains being fought over did not represent *civilisation* in the same way that ancient French or Belgian towns and cities did, and so its destruction was less emblematic of what was being

[28] Kipling, Rudyard, *The War in the Mountains* (London, Uniform Press, 2017), [first published 1917], p. 10.
[29] Ibid., p. 11.
[30] Ibid., p. 8.
[31] Ibid., p. 37.

fought for. Instead, on the Italian Front, Allied victories were seen as imbuing the erstwhile barren landscapes with meaning.[32] A more detailed comparison of the treatment of landscape in different theatres is outside the scope of this thesis but, for Kipling at least, the portrayal of landscape did vary notably between these different theatres of war. The significance for this thesis is that Kipling's writing suggests that there are specific landscape motifs for the Western Front which are distinct from those of other theatres in the conflict.

Writers communicate by what they do not say as well as by what they do, and in Kipling's work there is one deafening silence – the death of his own son. Nowhere in these works is his son even mentioned, nor does his death figure in Kipling's 1937 memoir, which stops in 1907, safely short of the First World War. Even Kipling's detailed two-volume history of the Irish Guards, in which his son served, barely mentioned John.[33] As Ricketts argued, any frankness on this issue would have struck Kipling senior as 'tasteless, tactless and self-indulgent'[34], but its total absence is striking. As will be argued when the work of Harry Lauder is considered, post-war silences can be as telling about commemorative practice as vivid wartime descriptions.

[32] Ibid., p. 18.
[33] Kipling, Rudyard, *The Irish Guards in the Great War, Volumes One and Two* (London, Macmillan, 1923).
[34] Ricketts, *Kipling*, p. 387.

Edith Wharton and the shifting meanings of landscape

At 52 years old, Edith Wharton was a similar age to Kipling at the outbreak of the war. Born in 1862 in the United States, she had left for Europe with her family at age four. She returned to America in the 1870s, but went back to Paris as a married woman in 1907, living there for at least part of each year until 1920. By the time of the war, she had developed a strong affinity with Europe and with France in particular, and after the war was a supporter of French imperialism.[35] As her autobiography made clear, the conflict was a seminal moment in Wharton's life, as it was for many others, in her case at a point when she was already a well-established writer and public figure. The war is covered in chapter thirteen which is titled simply 'The War'. The remainder of her life, from 1918-34, is covered entirely within chapter fourteen, entitled 'And After', positioning the conflict as a hinge-point in her life-story. Indeed, she referred to the war as a 'chasm' between pre-war society, and the sweeping changes which followed the conflict.[36] Wharton was in Spain when the war broke out, and immediately returned to Paris where, like many others, she found herself short of funds and unable to access more money from the bank. She relocated to the United Kingdom for a period, before securing a position with the Red Cross in Paris, amongst other roles as an inspector reporting on the needs of military hospitals. At a time when foreign correspondents' access to the war zones was heavily restricted, Wharton became an early reporter on conditions at the front – an

[35] See Wharton's autobiography, *A Backward Glance* (London, D Appleton-Century Company Inc, 1934).
[36] Ibid., p. 259.

outsider three times over as a woman, a non-combatant and a neutral American.[37] During the course of 1915, she made six expeditions for the Red Cross to French and British sectors of the front, and published accounts of these in *Scribner's* magazine (a competitor to *Harper's*). By the end of that same year, these articles had been published as a single volume entitled *Fighting France*.[38] Two other war-related books appeared during the conflict: *The Book of the Homeless* (1916), an anthology of poems, articles and drawings by various contributors to raise relief funds; and *The Marne: A Tale of the War* (1918), a fictional account of a young American man who fought in the Second Battle of the Marne. *A Son at the Front* (another fictional work about the war), although begun in 1917, was not completed and published until 1923, its appearance delayed by work on Wharton's most famous novel, *The Age of Innocence* (1920). *Fighting France* forms the focus of this analysis, being Wharton's factual wartime account of her battlefield visits.

Like Kipling, Wharton believed that inhabiting a landscape provided privileged access to understanding it. Writing about her rambles in the American countryside as a young girl in the 1870s, Wharton noted:

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[37] On Wharton's gender and its impact on her perspective of the front, see Prieto, Sara, '"Without Methods": three female authors visiting the Western Front', in *First World War Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 171-85. Prieto explores how women visitors to the front were positioned as 'other', though tends to overlook the fact that male non-combatant writers experienced a similar, if less acute, outsider perspective. Wharton's wider charitable war work with the sick and with refugees in particular is explored in Blazek, William, 'Wharton and France' in Rattray, Laura (ed.), *Edith Wharton in Context* (Cambridge, CUP, 2012), pp. 275-84.

[38] For the logistics of publication, see Califano, Sharon Kehl, 'Composition and Publication', in Rattray (ed.), *Wharton*, p. 57.

> what I recall of those rambles is not so much the comradeship of the other children, or the wise and friendly talk of our guide, as my secret sensitiveness to the landscape – something in me quite incommunicable to others, that was tremblingly and inarticulately awake to every detail of wind-warped fern and wide-eyed briar rose.[39]

The landscape and its tiny details could communicate in powerful and emotive ways, but these impressions were deeply personal, and hard (or even impossible) to communicate to others. Wharton's wartime writings bore out both the powerful impressions and memories formed by battlefield landscapes, but also the difficulties of understanding and then communicating those impressions in words, especially to anyone who was not there.

Wharton's wartime landscapes reflected the transitions between different locations that were more or less distant from the fighting front. Briefly exiled to England during the early months of the war, Wharton became frustrated by the lack of real news – in particular, that the papers were often late or irregular.

> The loneliness of those days … was indescribable … it was too far from London and the news, and there was something oppressive, unnatural, in the serene loveliness of the old gardens, the cedars spreading wide branches over deserted lawns, the borders glowing with unheeded flowers.[40]

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[39] Wharton, *Glance*, p. 54.
[40] Ibid., pp. 342-3.

Wharton felt cut off from reality, and her isolation was inscribed in the landscape: here, it was not the tortured landscape of battle which was oppressive, but the landscape of the rural civilian world, rendered false and unnatural by its distance from the harsh truths of the war. Back in Paris, Wharton saw more evidence of the war in the constraints on day-to-day life and the presence of refugees.[41] But this merely served as a prelude to a further transition, this time from the civilian life of France to the rear positions of the war zone:

> Paris, a few months ago so alive to the nearness of the enemy, seems to have grown completely oblivious of that nearness; and it is startling, not more than twenty miles from the gates, to pass from such an atmosphere of workaday security to the imminent sense of war.[42]

What previously seemed real had shifted down the 'pecking order', replaced by a new level of wartime reality, characterised by isolated graves and villages which, unlike the merely muted Paris, seemed 'not figuratively but literally empty.'[43] Yet another transition followed, as Wharton saw her first completely ruined village at Auve,[44] where all the symbols of civilian and domestic life were reduced to an almost unrecognisable 'brick-heap and some twisted stove pipes.'[45] At every stage, the transition between different environments was powerfully communicated by changes in the landscape;

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[41] Wharton, *Fighting France: From Dunkerque to Belfort* (London, Hesperus Press Ltd, 2010), [first published 1915], pp. 3-20.
[42] Ibid., p. 21.
[43] Ibid., p. 22.
[44] One of the so-called *villages détruits* in post-war France.
[45] Wharton*, Fighting.*, p. 26; see also the powerful image of embroidery abandoned before completion, p. 73.

and Wharton experienced a realisation that each perspective on the war, however powerful at the time, was incomplete.

Wharton was acutely aware of the limitations of her perspective as a civilian, albeit one who had visited the front. Taken to watch part of the Battle of Vauquois in February-March 1915,[46] she used just a few impressionistic motifs to sketch out the ebb and flow of battle: 'the rush of French infantry up the slopes, the feathery drift of French gun-smoke, and, high up on the wooded crest along the sky, the red lightnings and white puffs of the German artillery.'[47] Ultimately, however, Wharton's reaction to the scene as a civilian was simply 'dumbfounded'.[48] By contrast, the post-war Michelin guide described this attack in much more detail over three pages, with information on regimental movements, the times of attacks and counter-attacks and so on;[49] but even there, the reader is brought no closer to the feeling of the attack than Wharton's mute bewilderment. Elsewhere, Wharton depicted herself in a similarly self-deprecating way, as alternately clumsy or simply unable to comprehend.[50] Wharton not only struggled to comprehend the

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[46] The hill at Vauquois was one of the most battle-torn landscapes in France, its crest blown apart by many hundreds of mines.
[47] Wharton, *Fighting*, p. 29.
[48] Prieto highlights the bewilderment and disorientation in Wharton's descriptions; Prieto, 'Methods', p. 179. Neiberg explores how wartime visitors to the battlefield were often confronted by the inadequacy of language to describe their experience, and suggests that this phenomenon is observable from very early in the conflict; see Neiberg, Michael S, *Dance of the Furies: Europe and the Outbreak of World War One* (London, Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 188-91.
[49] Anon, *The Americans in the Great War Volume 3: Meuse-Argonne Battle* (Clermont-Ferrand, Michelin et Cie, 1919), pp. 54-6.
[50] Wharton, *Fighting*, pp. 93, 97 & 100. Buitenhuis notes Wharton's close observation of the landscape, but also the absence of 'the horror, the fear and the filth' in her work. It is an unfair critique, as not only is she clearly aware of her distance from the true realities of war, but is also in a similar position to many other non-combatant writers. See Buitenhuis, Peter, *The Great War of Words: Literature as Propaganda, 1914-18 and After* (London, B T Batsford, 1989), p. 62.

scene, but suggested that, notwithstanding her literary powers, she could not fully explain it to the reader either. One of the oddest metaphors in Wharton's book attempted to describe the sound of a heavy artillery piece being fired: 'the air was filled with a noise that may be compared – if the human imagination can stand the strain – to the simultaneous closing of all the iron shop-shutters in the world.'[51] At one level, this was a powerful comparison, pointing to the overwhelming volume of the sound. But it was also, as Wharton recognised, a pointless metaphor – the reader was no better able to imagine the sound of the shutters than the sound of the gun. Even if the author was able fully to comprehend the war – and Wharton frequently acknowledged she was not – language could never describe it to those who were not there. Of all the writers considered so far, Wharton came closest to articulating an anxiety about non-combatants being able fully to understand the landscape of battle.

In struggling with this seemingly impossible task, Wharton (like others) used ruination and the detritus of war to communicate impact. At Gerbeviller,[52] between Nancy and the Vosges mountains, Wharton believed she had seen the worst desolation yet. 'as a sensational image of havoc it seems improbable that any can surpass her. Her ruins seem to have been simultaneously vomited up from the depths and hurled down from the

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[51] Wharton, *Fighting*, p. 75. Roper, citing Robert Graves in particular, highlights the impossibility of describing in words the sound of war; see Roper, Michael, *The Secret Battle: Emotional survival in the Great War* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 17.

[52] In August 1914, 80% of this village was systematically destroyed by the German army in retaliation for its earlier strong defence. Gerbeviller was subsequently awarded *La Légion d'Honneur*. See https://histoire-lorraine.fr/index.php/monuments-1914-1918/173-gerbeviller-la-bataille-du-pont [accessed 12 Aug 2020].

skies'.[53] Yet even in this superlatively apocalyptic landscape, Wharton felt it important to identify its apogee: 'we saw no worse scene of destruction than the particular spot in which the ex-mayor stood while he told [us] his story.'[54] A close analysis of Wharton's writing, however, shows that was *not* the climax of desolation in her work. Indeed, sometimes it was not ruins that spoke most powerfully of the war. In a snowstorm south of Verdun, it was the sheer emptiness of the depopulated landscape which struck her: 'Nothing can exceed the mournfulness of this depopulated land'.[55] In Belgium, it was Ypres which formed the zenith of her experience: 'We had seen evacuated towns … but we had seen no emptiness like this'[56] Revigny-sur-Ornain, near Verdun, was in fact less badly damaged than some other towns owing to its sturdy construction, but that made it 'a spectacle of *more* tragic desolation, with its wide streets winding between scorched and contorted fragments of masonry'.[57] At Dunkirk, the destruction was made more powerful by the fact that the bombardment had taken place in the two day period since their last visit, making its impact that much more immediate.[58] Rather like the post-war guidebooks, Wharton engaged on a quest for the most poignant ruins – but in doing so, the battlefield landscape became intoxicating. The exploration of the landscape itself, with all its confusions and contradictions, was the most powerful mediator of war. Being present in the landscape was the best approach to gaining even a limited understanding of it, with literary portrayals coming a poor second. This anxiety about conveying the meaning

[53] Wharton, *Fighting*, p. 45.
[54] Ibid., p. 47.
[55] Ibid., p. 35.
[56] Ibid., p. 71.
[57] Ibid., pp. 37-8 (emphasis added).
[58] Ibid., pp. 81-2.

of battlefield landscapes was also experienced by the next writer to be considered, John Masefield, who tackled it head-on by openly mythologizing the landscape he was describing.

Masefield and the creation of mythic landscapes

John Masefield was born in Hertfordshire, England in 1878. As a young man he trained with the Royal Navy before spending time at sea, and then worked in New York State; throughout which time he was a voracious reader. Returning to England in 1897, he began to get his poetry published, with his first volume of poetry, *Salt-Water Ballads*, appearing in 1902. His literary career blossomed from there, and by the outbreak of the war he was another well-established figure on the British literary scene. He was 36 years old in 1914. His biographer, Constance Babington Smith, suggests that this made him too old for the Army, though in reality such an age would have been no bar to enlistment in summer 1914.[59] At any rate, Masefield signed up in early 1915 to work as an orderly for the Red Cross in a British military hospital caring for French wounded at Arc-en-Barrois, and later briefly provided medical support as part of the Gallipoli campaign.[60] Returning to the UK, he embarked on a government-sponsored lecture tour of the United States, which alerted him to negative feelings amongst some Americans towards the Allies and their conduct of the war, in particular at Gallipoli.[61] His first extended wartime volume, *Gallipoli*, was written (with government

[59] Babington-Smith, Constance, *John Masefield: A Life* (Oxford, OUP, 1978), p. 119.
[60] Ibid., pp. 122 & 132-3.
[61] Ibid., pp. 138-157.

backing) as a direct counter to this; and his subsequent more famous volume on the Somme battle of 1916, *The Old Front Line*, was its successor. The main focus of this analysis of the Western Front will naturally be on *The Old Front Line*; but *Gallipoli* also exposes the problems of Masefield's work as a historical source, and his particular contribution to the portrayal of battlefield landscapes. First and foremost, Gallipoli is not a first-hand account. Masefield became ill with dysentery while with his Red Cross ambulance launch at Mudros, and spent only about a week there, with only the briefest of exposures to the peninsula itself.[62] He was reliant for *Gallipoli* on limited written accounts, which as he acknowledged in his preface to the Eighth Edition, were 'some roughly sorted brigade and battalion diaries', along with accounts of men who had been there, and he stated that even these were subject to censorship.[63] Compounding these limitations is the purpose of the volume (made explicit in the 1923 edition) – which was in large part to address American and domestic criticism of the campaign. Indeed, the volume was dedicated to the commander, officers and men who fought, and became largely a celebration of the spirit and determination with which the campaign was conducted, and a hagiography of the men who endured it.

Faced with the challenge of not having been there, at least for any length of time, Masefield was confronted with an even more acute contrast with combatants than other writers considered so far. He tackled this head on, in large part by entirely overlooking the fact that he was not there. Describing

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[62] Ibid., pp. 132-3.
[63] Masefield, John, *Gallipoli* (London, William Heinemann, 1923), [first published 1916], p. xi-xii.

the initial land assault on 25 April 1915, he wrote: 'They left the harbour very, very slowly; this tumult of cheering lasted a long time; *no one who heard it will ever forget it*, or think of it unshaken.'[64] Masefield cannot possibly have witnessed this scene, having only arrived in Mudros in the autumn;[65] and yet here he obscured his reliance on second-hand narrative. This obfuscation raises particularly acute questions about how reliable Masefield can be as a historical source; certainly, to rely on his writings for first-hand details of what actions took place where, or even on the long-term impact of particular military engagements, would be unwise. Where his writings are helpful, however, is in casting light on the way in which landscapes were imbued with meaning by writers during the period of the conflict itself, and how landscapes were 'mythologised': that is to say, how layers of interpretation were added to wartime landscapes in order to convey particular meanings about sacrifice, nationhood or commemoration. One final example from *Gallipoli* will serve to illustrate this, before considering in more detail the Western Front. In the Dardanelles theatre, Masefield was able to use the layers of history embedded in the landscape to heighten the perceived heroism of what happened there. The location itself was in many ways a gift to him, as it allowed him to make regular references back in time to the heroic legends of the Trojan War. Here again, on 25 April 1915:

> It was a day of the unmatchable clear Aegean spring. Samothrace and Imbrosa were stretched out in the sunset like giants watching the chess, waiting, it seemed,

[64] Ibid., p. 35 (emphasis added). For a similar approach, see also p. 166.
[65] Smith, *Masefield*, p.133.

> almost like human things, as they had waited for the fall of Troy and the bale-fires of Agamemnon.[66]

The actions fought in 1915, which Masefield went on to describe, are given heightened meaning by these pre-existing Trojan legends inscribed in the same landscape, and also (he suggested later) by the souls of the English dead of past aeons.[67] The effect is to build a mythical line from the imagined future battlefield visitor, through the many actions fought at Gallipoli, to the imagined English dead of previous generations right back to the Trojans themselves. Although occasional elements of such mythologizing have been identified in other writers considered in this thesis, Masefield's attempt to make sense of the chaos of war for non-combatants by building up a mythical landscape is bold and sustained.

It is a tool which he used to powerful effect in his more famous work on the Somme battlefields of 1916. In part this was deliberate – *Gallipoli* had been deemed by the government a successful publication, and *The Old Front Line* was to be its sequel.[68] However, the sense of mythologizing the landscape was also amplified by historical accident. In the closing lines of the work, Masefield described the morning of 1 July 1916, with the men waiting in the trenches, and the mines exploding; and then

[66] Masefield, *Gallipoli*, p. 82; see also p. 33.
[67] Ibid., p. 146.
[68] Messinger notes that the Somme work was widely distributed, selling 20,000 copies in Britain and 4,000 in the US. See Messinger, Gary S., British *Propaganda and the State in the First World War* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 57.

> The men of the first wave climbed up the parapets, in tumult, darkness and the presence of death, and having done with all pleasant things, advanced across the No Man's Land to begin the Battle of the Somme.[69]

There the text falls silent – there is nothing more, and the men have marched off into the mists of legend. In fact, the intention was for this passage to mark the transition to a second volume on the detailed history of the battle. The first volume described the landscape, the second would have covered the actions fought over it. The sequel was never produced as Masefield was not given access to the necessary unit records – and the effect of this lacuna is to amplify the emphasis on the landscape itself.[70] However, it does not *create* that emphasis - as will be shown, it was strongly present all along, as it had been in the *Gallipoli* volume.

Masefield articulated a complex attitude to the landscape from his opening chapter:

> This description of the old front line, as it was when the Battle of the Somme began, may some day be of use. All wars end; even this war will some day end, and the ruins will be rebuilt and the field full of death will grow food, and all this frontier of trouble will be forgotten.[71]

The sentiments expressed here are in tension – on the one hand, Masefield welcomed the end of the war and the healing hand of time upon the ruins

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[69] Masefield, John, *The Old Front Line, or The Beginning of the Battle of the Somme* (London, William Heinemann, 1917), p. 128.
[70] Ibid., p. 12; and Babington Smith, *Masefield*, pp. 172-3.
[71] Masefield, *Line*, p. 11.

and damage of the conflict, representing as they did a brighter future. At the same time, there was regret that the passage of time might obliterate or obscure the legacy of the conflict which had been inscribed in the landscape, and against which to some extent Masefield's work is an insurance. Masefield had a similarly ambivalent attitude to post-war tourists, seeing them walking easefully and peacefully on quiet country roads, but at the same time contrasting this with the brave men who once dodged enemy fire there; the tourist, for all their enviable ease, would never really understand what it was like to be there.[72] Faced with his fear that the battlefield landscape would fade, and that the tourist would never understand the reality of the conflict, Masefield's approach was to document as clearly as possible how the conflict had left its mark on the landscape he saw when touring the area in 1917. At its simplest, this involved noting features of interest which indicated the presence of soldiers or of fighting: the names of soldiers carved into an old barn, the trench-ladders still in place where soldiers had gone over the top, or the way in which small clusters of graves marked the passage of an advance.[73] In adopting this approach, he was very similar to the authors of the post-war guidebooks. But as well as this literal legacy of battle, Masefield also imbued the landscape with symbolic meaning. The Albert-Bapaume road, a key axis of the Allied advance on 1 July, 'was one of the prizes of victory, and points like a sword through the heart of the enemy positions…' The road is transformed from a straightforward military

[72] Ibid., pp. 26 & 31. Thacker highlights the fact that Masefield's work anticipates later battlefield tourism (even as the landscapes fade). See Thacker, Toby, *British Culture and the First World War: Experience, Representation and Memory* (London, Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 250.
[73] Masefield, *Line*, pp. 27, 55 & 81.

objective, to a powerful symbol of victory, and one which Masefield suggested 'will stay in the memories of our soldiers as the main avenue of the battle.' This was in literal terms unlikely, as most of the troops were spread over fields for many miles on either side of the road and would never even have seen it; but Masefield was using the landscape feature as emblematic of the stoicism and determination of the Allied soldiers driving forward. It was not just pre-war landscape features like the road which Masefield used in this way. The detritus of war, noted by so many other wartime and post-war writers, was elevated to a greater significance, becoming the stuff of legend:

> The sandbags of the English works have now rotted, and flag about like the rags of uniform or like withered grass. The flint and chalk laid bare by their rotting look like the grey of weathered stone, so that, at a little distance, the English works look old and noble, as though they were the foundations of some castle long since fallen under Time.[74]

The decaying sandbags were not just an historic indicator of the passing of battle over the landscape, but emblematic of something noble which linked into the history and mythology of England – by drawing in the comparison of an old castle, Masefield achieved a layering of meaning similar to that which he achieved by referencing Troy in his *Gallipoli* volume. Indeed, he went on to see these decaying trenchworks as the real memorials in the landscape,

[74] Ibid., p. 39.

‘the marks of a famous place’; ‘such monuments must be as lasting as Stonehenge’.[75]

For all his mythologizing, Masefield could be critical of historical infelicity: he criticised the press’s over-emphasis on the fortifications at Fricourt which, although significant, were in his view no better than at other places. At the same time, he was not averse to introducing highly questionable accounts of his own. Between Beaumont Hamel and the Ancre, Masefield described an incident in which the bodies of two men, buried and then disturbed by heavy rainfall, were found lying with their pocket bibles open at the page of highly symbolic texts.[76] This incident seems improbable, but is presumably included to imbue that area of landscape with its own powerful historic myth, true in spirit if not in historic actuality. The ultimate irony is that Masefield’s entire project was to some extent an exercise in mythology. He wrote towards the close of the work that ‘Such was our old front line at the beginning of the battle, and so the travellers of our race will strive to picture it when they see the ground under the crops of coming Julys.’[77] The landscape Masefield toured was in fact the one of 1917, after the battle had moved east – it was no more the landscape of July 1916 than the one which future travellers would see. In trying to recapture the spirit of that July day, Masefield used the detritus of war, the landscape itself, and dramatic embellishments of his own to create layers of myth which sat on top of the actual geography of the battlefield, and which sought to shape readers’, and

[75] Ibid., pp. 39 & 102.
[76] Ibid., pp. 55-6.
[77] Ibid., p. 112.

subsequent visitors', experiences and understanding of the Somme.[78] In writers like Masefield one finds the earliest layers of Stephen Miles' palimpsest of meanings being layered over time onto the landscape of the Western Front.[79]

Harry Lauder: intellectual and visceral responses to the battlefields

Harry Lauder was born in Scotland in 1870, and following the early death of his father, grew up in relatively straitened circumstances. To support his family, as a young man he worked in a mill and as a miner, but cultivated his talent for singing. He started to perform professionally, and was able to give up mining work; he built a career as a music-hall singer, finding fame first in Scotland, then in London, and ultimately internationally including in the United States and Australia. By the time of the war, he was an established celebrity, and was used by the government for a variety of propaganda tasks: recruitment of soldiers, influencing American public opinion, and entertaining the troops. His son Jack, a subaltern with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, was killed at the end of 1916, and this prompted Harry to embark on a performance tour for troops on the Western Front the following year. His book *A Minstrel in France* was published in 1918 and described both his experiences on this tour and the landscapes of battle in which he found himself, albeit under the usual exigencies of censorship and

[78] On mythologizing, Muriel Spark suggests that some of Masefield's wartime writing is characterised by a higher diction even than some of his later state-sponsored poetry once appointed poet laureate. See Spark, Muriel, *John Masefield* (London, Macmillan & Co. Ltd.., 1962), pp. xi-xii.
[79] See above, chapter one.

propaganda.[80] This work will form the main focus in this thesis, with occasional reference to Lauder's later autobiography, *Roamin' in the Gloamin'*, published in 1928 and covering his wider career.[81]

As for the other writers above, landscape was important to Lauder. Beginning his 1928 autobiography, he described struggling to tease out a narrative strand to his life, and heading out on to the balcony of his Scottish home to look over the landscape for inspiration.[82] In the prologue to his wartime work, he used the shifting view over the Clyde to point up the sharp contrast between pre-war and wartime life.[83] Like Masefield, he thought the detritus of battle left a strong legacy for generations to come, imbued with historic meaning in much the same way as ancient archaeological remains dug up in the present day are.[84] It is therefore unsurprising that his account of visiting the battlefields was rich in landscape imagery.

Lauder was quite explicit about his reasons for visiting the Western Front. Whilst there is no doubt that he was genuinely keen to meet the troops, and to boost morale by performing for them, he stated that his primary purpose for going was to visit his son's grave.[85] This is a striking admission, as this was not the reason he gave to the War Office when seeking permission to go, and the conflict was still ongoing when this first book was published. There is an emotional honesty here, which also showed in his self-

[80] Lauder, Harry, *A Minstrel in France* (London, Andrew Melrose, 1918).
[81] Lauder, Harry, *Roamin' in the Gloamin'* (London, Hutchinson & Co, 1928).
[82] Ibid., pp. 23-4.
[83] Lauder, *Minstrel*, pp. 10-11.
[84] Ibid., p. 179.
[85] Ibid., p. 289; see also *Roamin'*, p. 188.

consciousness as a civilian visitor, being told to don his steel helmet for the first time; and becoming conscious that everything he thought he knew about the war paled into insignificance when confronted with the real thing : 'But until my tour began, as I see now, easily enough, I knew nothing – literally nothing at all.'[86] Lauder's growing understanding is communicated in landscape descriptions, often grounded in familiar pastoral motifs which are then inverted or twisted to convey a sense of the battlefield:

> The face of the earth had been cut to pieces. Its surface had been smashed to a pulpy mass. The ground had been ploughed, over and over, by a rain of shells, German and British. What a planting there had been that spring, and what a ploughing! A harvest of death it had been that had been sown, and the reaper had not waited for summer to come, and the harvest moon.[87]

Many of the images are ones which would have been familiar to any reader of pastoral prose or poetry: ploughing, rain, planting, sowing, harvest, and the phases of the moon. Yet here they are twisted to reflect the brutal mechanics of the battlefield, with the rain falling as shells, the ploughing representing the upheaval of the landscape, and the reaping being that of human lives. In a mixed metaphor, the landscape is also personified, its surface becoming a pulped, lacerated human face, like that of a badly battered pugilist. Lauder built on tropes with which readers would have been familiar, but distorted them to paint an emotionally-charged picture of something alien.

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[86] Lauder, *Minstrel*, p. 118; see also pp. 158 & 164.
[87] Ibid., p. 165.

Such powerful emotional responses characterise his work, and can be studied by focussing on two particular moments in his tour: his visit to Vimy Ridge (which occupies a full four chapters), and his visit to Jack's grave (in Chapter 25). At Vimy, Lauder's emotional response was multi-faceted. To begin with, '…one overpowering emotion mastered every other. It was a desire for vengeance. Yon were the Huns, the men who had killed my boy.'[88] He described a single raw and unsurprising emotion, the desire for revenge, with which many of his readers might have empathised. But almost immediately, that emotion passed, to be supplanted by another: 'My madness was passed now, and a great sadness had taken its place.'[89] Within the space of a page, the initially overpowering desire for revenge had been passed off as a moment of madness, and been replaced, or at least tempered, by grief for those who had fallen. Having described this initial emotional reaction to the landscape, Lauder shifted to a more intellectual appreciation of what he was viewing, indulging in an early piece of battlefield tourism. Atop the Pimple (the highest point on Vimy Ridge, then in Allied hands), he smoked a pipe with an infantry major, who used the commanding viewpoint (as many post-war guidebooks did) to point out sites of significance in the April 1917 battlefield, and to explain the narrative of battle. 'I saw and understood better than ever what a great feat it had been, and how heavily it had counted.'[90] From the visceral reaction to the landscape, Lauder had now shifted to a new perspective in which a cerebral

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[88] Ibid., p. 168.
[89] Ibid., p. 169.
[90] Ibid., p. 171.

understanding of what had happened was prioritised. Lauder went on, however, to describe a powerfully emotive experience he was offered which, if true, was certainly something not available to post-war visitors, or even to most wartime ones – that of firing an artillery piece at the enemy. It seems improbable that Lauder would have invented the entire episode, though it does have the feel of an account embellished for the reader's enjoyment. The most likely explanation is that Lauder was simply invited to pull the firing lanyard on an artillery piece which had been pre-loaded. He took up the opportunity, and the reader was exposed to a gamut of emotions: '…it pleases me to think that that long-snouted engine of war propelled that shell, under my guiding hand, with unwonted accuracy and effectiveness. Perhaps I was childish, to feel as I did; indeed, I have no doubt that that was so. But I dinna [sic] care!'[91] Here there was no clear sequencing of the emotions – they were all felt together. There was a pleasure in firing the gun, a sense of guilt at what seemed a childish response, and at the same time a stubborn dismissal of any sense of regret or shame. The passage suggests that emotional response to being on the battlefield, for Lauder at least, defied simple categorisation.

These complex responses were mirrored in the description of his visit to Jack's grave, positioned as the climax of his battlefield tour, and of his book; it is a focus which makes Lauder unique amongst the writers in this chapter. On first approaching the cemetery near Ovillers, passing through the gently rolling landscapes and gazing across the extensive burials, Lauder's reaction

[91] Ibid., p. 201.

was relatively cerebral, as he located his own grief within the wider context of losses in the war:

> It was a mournful journey, but, in some strange way, the peaceful beauty of the day brought comfort to me. And my own grief was altered by the vision of the grief that had come to so many others. Those crosses, stretching away as far as my eye could reach, attested to the fact that it was not I alone who had suffered and lost and laid a sacrifice upon the altar of my country. And in the presence of so many evidences of grief and desolation a private grief sank into its true proportions.[92]

It is not that emotion was absent here: grief, mourning, suffering and loss were all referred to explicitly. But these emotions were subjugated to the more cerebral logic imposed by the landscape, the rows of crosses reminding Lauder that he was not alone, that his grief was one amongst many losses, and that this realisation might even provide some comfort. The role of the landscape was initially to assuage the intensity of emotion. On reaching the grave itself, though, the emotional temperature changed entirely, to something much more visceral. Lauder flung himself down on the brown mound of earth, and his powers to remember or describe deserted him. 'My memories of that moment are not very clear, but I think that for a few minutes I was utterly spent, that my collapse was complete.'[93] What he was later able to form into words remained raw:

> I thought of all the broken-hearted ones at home in Britain. How many were waiting, as I had waited, until they, too – they, too, - might come to France, and cast

[92] Ibid., pp. 290-1.
[93] Ibid., p. 292.

> themselves down, as I had done, upon some brown mound, sacred in their thoughts? How many were praying for the day to come when they might gaze upon a white cross, as I had done, and from the brown mound out of which it rose gather a few crumbs of that brown earth, to be deposited in a sacred corner of a sacred place yonder in Britain?[94]

The imagery was of unbridled emotion, casting oneself down into the mud to embrace the brown hummock which stood in for the body of the deceased, and scraping up a tribute from the soil with one's bare hands. This almost primal reaction to the scene was, as will be argued, in stark contrast to what would be possible in the manicured greensward of post-war military cemeteries; indeed, it is telling that when Lauder came to describe this scene in his later 1928 autobiography, he was largely silent on it, referring to it in just a couple of simple sentences.[95] By the late 1920s, the time for such raw expressions of emotion had passed, along with the landscapes in which they had originally been experienced.

Like the other writers, Lauder used landscapes and their features to convey what he saw as the meaning of his battlefield visit. As a result of his very personal reasons for making the visit, Lauder's uses of landscape were complex and multi-layered, reflecting constant shifts between an intellectual appreciation of battle, a cerebral processing of his grief, and a visceral experience of the emotions of sorrow, anger and vengeance.

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[94] Ibid., pp. 293-4. Lauder also writes of wanting to reach down into the grave to hug his son.

[95] Lauder, *Roamin'*, p. 193. Wallace notes that in fact Lauder makes no reference in his writings to ever visiting John's grave again; though whether this reflects a lack of visits, or a desire not to publicly record them is of course uncertain. See Wallace, William, *Harry Lauder in the Limelight* (Lewes, The Book Guild, 1988), p. 84.

Conclusion

The analysis of articles in *Harper's Magazine* showed how a wide range of different writers approached the business of describing the battlefields for their readers, and picked out the tools they used to tackle the challenges of portraying an entirely new and unfamiliar environment to people who had not seen it, and were unlikely ever fully to understand it. By focussing in detail on four writers, all of whom were influential figures during and after the conflict, this chapter has shown that many of the challenges and features identified in the *Harper's* analysis were mirrored in longer published works. Landscape itself remained a critical way of conveying meanings – about the war itself, about the enemy, about the nature of grief, and about wider emotional responses to the conflict. Moreover, it has argued that different writers, when presented with an extended opportunity to describe the battlefields, employed the tools available in their own distinct way to communicate what they each individually saw as the essential messages of the landscape; whilst there are themes in common, there was no single approach to describing the battlefields, or unpacking their meaning.

Kipling used landscape to convey the modernity of this war, its mechanisation and its brutality in comparison to the fragility of the human form. Whilst Kipling saw the German foe as having a monopoly on the worst excesses of this brutality, as expressed through their obsession with national *Kultur*, he also saw the war as intrinsically brutalising for all participants.

Some critics have characterised Kipling's writing as having a streak of cruelty, and whilst this is too superficial a view of his works as a whole, there is certainly a strong sense of cruelty conveyed through landscape in his wartime works.[96] For Wharton, the landscape was often only partly understood, or an understanding which one thought had been pinned down suddenly slipped away, to be replaced by a new but equally incomplete interpretation. Landscapes of battle reflected the uncertainties of the war in general, and of the civilian spectator in particular; the unclear and shifting meanings of the battlefield landscape reflected the tensions and unknowns of the war itself. For Masefield, landscape was a way of building understanding, by imbuing it with mythological meaning – that is, by adding meaning to what was physically present, by anticipating how landscape features might be viewed in years to come and by referring back to earlier events which had taken place within the same landscape. Whilst he sometimes indulged in blatant factual inaccuracies, he sought to uncover a deeper truth about the events which occurred in the conflict. His work is mythologizing in the sense of creating 'historical myths', of the kind that Winter and others have described.[97] For Lauder, travelling with the primary purpose of visiting his son's grave, landscape was the vehicle for mediating a very complex range of emotional responses, from visceral anger and a desire for revenge, through to a more cerebral processing of his grief. His writing has in places a brutal rawness to it, notwithstanding some of the more

[96] See Green, *Kipling*, p. 31.
[97] See in particular Winter, Jay, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge, CUP, 1995); and Winter, Jay, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (London, Yale University Press, 2006).

overtly propagandistic passages, and describes an experience of the battlefields which would, as will be argued later, prove much less accessible to the battlefield visitor of the mid-late 1920s.

The approaches taken by these writers were not unique or mutually exclusive: for example, there are elements of Masefield's mythic approach in Kipling, or of Kipling's brutality of war in Lauder. But there is a distinct difference of emphasis, showing that in these more extended works, different writers used the same landscapes in different ways to foreground different messages. All were writing as outsiders, visitors to the battlefield from the civilian world. Chapters four and five have considered how wartime writers who had the privilege of visiting the battlefields tried to capture their experiences, and communicate them to readers back at home. In some instances their writing was targeted at an elite readership, in others at the more general reader, but in all cases their writings sought to shape wider perceptions of the landscapes of battle. After the conflict many of the readers of these works began to visit the battlefields themselves, carrying with them the impressions they had formed. When they arrived, they were confronted not with the landscape these writers had seen, but with a post-war landscape from which conflict had receded and to which order and restoration were being rapidly introduced. The final section of this thesis will explore these post-war experiences, and how the landscape was perceived and interpreted by individual visitors in the 1920s.

Section C: Individual experiences of the battlefields

> Tourists must speak for themselves and we can learn a great deal from what they say – this is a fundamental aspect of any professional study of tourism. This goes beyond what the expert investigator thinks these experiences might mean…The Western Front is not just a geographical or topographical space but an area of imagination.[1]

These comments from Stephen Miles preface his own analysis of tourism on the Western Front in the early twenty-first century; they could equally apply to the historian's investigation of battlefield landscapes a century earlier. This thesis has argued that both post-war guidebooks and wartime writers presented and interpreted the landscape in a way which not only described its physical shape, but imagined its significance. These writers directed the viewer's gaze, whether that viewer was an armchair tourist, or someone visiting the battlefields in person. At the same time, they sought to help the viewer interpret, imagine or re-imagine the landscape as it was during the conflict. However, if we are fully to understand how remembrance developed in relationship to the battlefields, then (as Miles indicates) we must look to the experience of the tourists themselves.[2] Guidebooks may have tried to direct their gaze, and wartime writers to shape their imaginings of the battlefield; but once they were on the ground, where did they actually go,

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[1] Miles, Stephen, *The Western Front: Landscape, Tourism and Heritage* (Barnsley, Pen & Sword Books Ltd., 2016), p. 120.
[2] Eksteins also stresses the importance of the spectator/reader in formulating modern cultural responses to any phenomenon (see Eksteins, Modris, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (London, Bantam Press, 1989), pp. xiv-xv). A greater focus on the individual in the aftermath of war is urged in Haughton, Tim and Martin, Nicholas, 'The Long Shadows and Mixed Modes of History: Concluding Reflections on the Aftermath and Legacies of War' in Martin, Nicholas et al (eds.), *Aftermath: Legacies and Memories of War in Europe*, 1918-1945-1989 (Farnham, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), p. 209.

what did they see, and how did they interpret it? Establishing what individual tourists really thought is problematic. Miles himself recognised this, identifying that 'public meanings of tourist sites are far easier to determine than what these sites mean to the private visitor'; but at the same time he asserted that cultural attitudes are most fully understood by looking at where public and private responses intersect.[3] Mark Connelly, in an article on the Ypres League, noted 'a degree of divergence between individual and public practices and beliefs', while at the same time recognising that, by definition, it is almost impossible to find evidence of private beliefs.[4] Nevertheless, failing even to attempt to examine such individual responses, however problematic that might be, runs the risk of looking only at a partial segment of the full spectrum of responses to the landscape. David Lloyd, in his seminal study of battlefield tourism, cautioned against accounts that simply focus on the appropriation of remembrance by socio-political elites, even if these are often the best documented.[5]

This thesis will argue that whilst battlefield visitors often followed established itineraries, particularly when going with an organised group, they also sought ways of finding personal, spontaneous moments within their tour. In doing so, they tried to capture the uniqueness of the battlefield experience often

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[3] Miles, Stephen, 'From Hastings to the Ypres Salient: Battlefield tourism and the interpretation of fields of conflict', in Butler, Richard and Suntikul, Wantanee (eds.), *Tourism and War* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2013), pp. 221-231; see in particular p.222.
[4] Connelly, Mark, 'The Ypres League and the Commemoration of the Ypres Salient, 1914-1940' in *War in History*, 16 (1), 2009, pp. 51-76; see in particular pp. 52-3.
[5] Lloyd, David W., *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada 1919-1939 (Oxford and New York, Berg, 1998),* pp. 1-11. See also Robb, George, *British Culture and the First World War* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002), pp. 68-74; and Meyer, Jessica, 'Introduction' in Meyer, Jessica (ed.), *British Popular Culture and the First World War* (Leiden, Brill, 2008), pp. 5-6.

referred to by wartime writers, or by the creators of the guidebooks. As the battlefield landscapes were tidied up, the importance of discovering something authentically wartime in origin increased, and huge emotional importance could be attached to having such experiences; at the same time, veterans in particular were highly attuned to the risk of 'fakery', in which something created was presented as something authentic. For almost all visitors, veteran or civilian, being located at the point of battle was seen as very significant, adding a new dimension to commemoration which would be impossible to experience at home, and for civilians in particular providing a moment of understanding or catharsis.

Before analysing post-war pilgrimage, it is necessary to take stock of the tourism industry on the battlefields of the Western Front, which started to spring up very early. Thomas Cook & Sons, whose first wartime tourism contract in 1914 was bringing home stranded British citizens abroad, actually started taking curious tourists back to the battlefields during the first months of the war. By 1915 Cook had, however, announced that no further expeditions of the kind would be organised until after the conflict, although as late as spring 1915 it was being reported that a few travel agents were still organising trips.[6] Cook were quick off the mark after 1918, laying on five 'popular' and four 'deluxe' coach tours per week to the Western Front by 1920, though after the initial demand this declined to two per week by the

[6] Brendon, P, *Thomas Cook: 150 Years of Popular Tourism* (London, Secker and Warburg, 1991), pp. 254-7; 'Trips to Battlefields, No "Conducted Tours" Until the War is Over', *The Times*, 31 March 1915, p. 5.

mid 1920s.[7] The Canadian League Pilgrimage to the opening of the Vimy Memorial in 1936 was also organised by Cook.[8] They were not the only commercial operator: other smaller specialist outfits existed including the Franco-British Travel Bureau, the Battlefields Bureau Ltd (Association of Officers), and individuals setting up their own businesses such as the veteran Captain R.S.P. Poyntz.[9] In addition to commercial players, there were several not-for-profit or semi-charitable operators, aiming to offer reduced price (or even fully subsidised) travel to those otherwise unable to visit. The YMCA were involved in this, as was the Ypres League which organised a free trip for 97 women in the late 1920s.[10] The Salvation Army was another similar operator.[11] The role of the British Legion in organising pilgrimages has been well-studied by Lloyd, who suggests that they were particularly associated with upper- and middle-class battlefield visitors, who in his opinion would provide a relatively elite view.[12] In addition there were individual travellers or family groups who made their way to the battlefields independently.[13]

Chapters six and seven of this thesis will examine the experiences of individuals visiting the battlefields between 1914 and the end of the 1920s.

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[7] Brendon, *Cook*, p. 258; Walter, Tony, 'War Grave Pilgrimage' in Reader, Ian and Walter, Tony (eds.), *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture* (London, Macmillan, 1993), pp. 63-91, see in particular pp. 66-9.
[8] Brendon, P, *Thomas Cook*, pp. 270-4.
[9] Anon, *The Pilgrim's Guide to the Ypres Salient* (London, Herbert Reiach Ltd. for Talbot House, 1920); see the advertisements section for details of tour operators. More on some of the operators can also be found in Miles, *Western Front*, p. 15.
[10] Connelly, Mark, 'Ypres League', p. 63.
[11] 'Pilgrimages of Remembrance: The Salvation Army Guide to War Graves on the Western Front' (undated, mid 1920s), in the archives of the CWGC, Add.8/2/4 Orders of Ceremony.
[12] Lloyd, *Tourism*, pp. 35-9.
[13] The Bickersteth family are a good example of this, and their battlefield pilgrimages are considered in chapter seven.

Chapter six will look at group pilgrimages organised by The Society of St Barnabas, which were documented by the charity and by journalists in a way which sought to reflect personal experiences of the battlefields; while chapter seven will look at individuals' own accounts of making pilgrimages, both as a part of organised groups and individually.

Chapter Six: Experiencing the battlefield landscape - the St Barnabas Pilgrimages of the 1920s

The Society of St Barnabas

The role of the Society of St Barnabas[1] in running pilgrimages is less well-known than that of the British Legion, although it organised several such groups between 1923 and 1928.[2] By contrast, the British Legion nationally organised just one (in 1928), though individual branches organised numerous smaller group trips over this period. The Society was a charity which provided affordable or subsidised trips for loved ones to the graves of the deceased, often including some form of religious ceremony (particularly on trips with large numbers of pilgrims). In doing this, it opened up travel to those who might otherwise be unable to visit the battlefields, and who therefore provide a different view from more affluent middle- or upper-class travellers. The pilgrimages were also, as will be shown, richly documented, and perhaps influential: Lloyd suggested that the Society's 1926 Gallipoli pilgrimage inspired three other independently published books.[3] This chapter will explore the documented experiences of these pilgrims, with a

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[1] Hereafter, 'the Society' or simply 'St Barnabas'.

[2] The bulk of the documentation on the St Barnabas Pilgrimages is contained in the published yearbooks for 1923-1927. These are *St Barnabas Pilgrimages 1923: Ypres, Somme* (St Barnabas, 1923); *St Barnabas Pilgrimages 1924: Empire Pilgrimage, Scottish Pilgrimage* (St Barnabas, 1924); *St Barnabas Pilgrimages 1925: The Croydon Pilgrimage, The Second Scottish Pilgrimage, The Italian Pilgrimage, The Smaller Pilgrimages* (St Barnabas, 1925); S*t Barnabas Pilgrimages 1926: Gallipoli, Salonika* (St Barnabas, 1926); *St Barnabas Pilgrimages 1927: Menin Gate Pilgrimage* (St Barnabas, 1927). For simplicity, these will be referenced simply as Barnabas [year], page number.

[3] Lloyd, David W., *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada 1919-1939 (Oxford and New York, Berg, 1998),* p. 98.

view to starting to unpick what individual travellers made of the battlefields in the 1920s.

The Society of St Barnabas no longer exists, and unlike for example the Royal British Legion or the CWGC, it has no organisational archive.[4] However, their volumes of published information in the 1920s allow one to construct a clear view of their activities, and their market. By way of comparison, one London travel bureau was charging £35 for a battlefield tour to Loos in the 1920s; St Barnabas initially charged £14 for their tour, dropping to as little as £4 by 1923, presumably as economies of scale developed, and difficulties of travel reduced.[5] This suggests that the Society provided more affordable travel, and indeed it explicitly stated in its published materials that it aimed to provide cheaper travel options than commercial operators.[6] The Society offered two options for visitors – or 'pilgrims' in its language - to the battlefields. The first was to join one of their large group pilgrimages, of which they organised between one and three each year. The second was to embark on what they called a 'smaller pilgrimage' perhaps with friends or in a family group – in such cases, the prospective visitor was asked to contact the Society with a proposed itinerary for which a cost would then be quoted.[7] It is clear from the various yearbooks and correspondence therein that some of the visitors, particularly on the group pilgrimages, were

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[4] A St Barnabas Society is still listed on the Charity Commission's database, but it is a different organisation focussing on helping clergy who have converted to Roman Catholicism from other denominations.
[5] Winter, Jay, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge, CUP, 1995), p. 52 for comparative data.
[6] *How to Reach 'The Hallowed Areas' in France and Belgium, by the Organising Secretary* (France, The St Barnabas Hostels, 1924), pp. 3-4.
[7] Ibid., p. 5.

heavily subsidised by the charity to enable them to travel. In addition to visiting personally, it was possible to have a wreath placed at a grave, either as a one-off event or annually at Easter; and even to have a photograph taken of a grave or cemetery.

Between 1920 and 1927, the Society estimated that it took around 7000-7500 pilgrims on visits to the battlefields.[8] A search of The National Archives Discovery catalogue, which includes lists of many holdings in local record offices around the country, produced no personal accounts of any of these travellers; nor did the Imperial War Museums archive.[9] However, detailed documentation survives in three key primary sources, which form the focus of this chapter's analysis. The first, and most substantial source are the 1923-27 yearbooks, each a hardback volume of around 40 pages of about A4 size published by The Society itself. These yearbooks focus almost exclusively on the group rather than smaller pilgrimages. They contain mainly newspaper articles from the time, a few specially commissioned articles, photos, and a brief selection of letters and personal reflections from individual travellers. As a historical source they are not unproblematic, not least as their use of journalistic accounts means that travellers' experiences are mediated through a third-party writer. The purpose of the volumes is partly as a souvenir for those who travelled, which suggests that the choice of material included would at least need to resonate reasonably well with the

[8] Barnabas 1927, p. 2.
[9] In *Sites of Memory*, Jay Winter references a personal account by the Wakeman family in the archives of the Imperial War Museum, but all traces of the Wakemans and of the file reference he provides seem, frustratingly, absent from the IWM catalogue. Indeed, three other documents relating to battlefield pilgrimage are either temporarily inaccessible or lost according to the IWM archivists..

actual experiences of those who went. However, this is complicated by the other purpose of the volumes – to raise funds for future pilgrimages – which means that the material must also have been selected with an eye to what prospective donors might want to read. However, provided these limitations are borne in mind, the yearbooks provide a detailed and unique account of the development of battlefield pilgrimages to various theatres of the First World War in the mid-1920s, some rich insights into what people on those tours actually did, and what they thought about it all (or at least, what they were prepared to tell a journalist they thought). Two other sources supplement the yearbooks. *How to Reach the 'Hallowed Areas'* was a promotional brochure setting out the *raison d'etre* for the Society.[10] Finally, a small number of documents in the CWGC archives refer to the work of St Barnabas and provide some valuable context.[11]

From these various sources, it can be concluded that the following group pilgrimages were organised by the Society, in addition to an unknown number of smaller
pilgrimages (see Figure 6):

[10] See note 6 above.
[11] 'Visits, Gallipoli, St Barnabas, 1928' at CWCC, CON149, Box 2065.

Figure 6: St Barnabas group pilgrimages

Year	Date	Key location	Number of pilgrims
1923	Easter – two days	Ypres	850
1923	September – day trip	Somme	n/k, 19 separate groups
1924	27 April	Terlincthun cemetery[12]	750
1924	29 June	Ypres	550
1925	10 May	Ypres	n/k, 3 separate groups
1925	5 July	Somme	700
1925	10-15 Sept	Italy	60
1926	25 Aug – 12 Sept	Salonika and Gallipoli	275
1927	24 July	Ypres (Menin Gate)	700
1928	23 Aug – mid Sept	Salonika and Gallipoli	242

Some of these events were organised in collaboration with other organisations such as Toc H or the Red Cross. Although the total number of pilgrims above falls short of the 7000-7500 estimate previously cited, it must be remembered that the final tally would include those group pilgrimages for which numbers are not provided; and the numerous smaller pilgrimages run during the 1920s. It is important to note both the wide spread of locations over the years, and also the dominance of Ypres, a popular battlefield destination today and one which already accounted for 40% of the St Barnabas group pilgrimages in the 1920s, reflecting both its significance for British Empire troops, and its relative proximity to Britain. By analysing the accounts provided in the yearbooks for each of these pilgrimages, it is possible to identify themes which cut across all the years and locations, as well as changes and trends over time.

[12] This is a Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery near Boulogne. It contains almost 4,500 First World War burials, mostly from base hospitals in the area, and mainly from 1918.

The St Barnabas mission: visiting graves and cemeteries

In *The Hallowed Areas*, the Society made graves and cemeteries its focus. The opening sentence of the volume paid tribute to 'the wonderful work of the Imperial War Graves Commission', while the front cover bore no title, instead showing a captioned artist's impression of Forceville Military Cemetery and Blomfield's Cross of Sacrifice.[13] At the time of the Armistice, the Society noted, there had been a distinction between the 'over 3000 cemeteries' which had at least some limited degree of organisation, and the thousands of scattered 'isolated graves', where just one or a few men were buried by a roadside, in a field, or in an existing village cemetery.[14] Although it was recognised that the situation had markedly improved since then, with cemeteries tidied up and graves gathered in, it was still the case that many cemeteries were hard to find without knowing the locality – and the booklet states that the Society was set up to help relatives in finding the graves of loved ones.[15] This was borne out in the yearbooks themselves, the *Liverpool Post* opining that the Terlincthun pilgrims in 1924 'had come from all parts *to see the graves of men killed in action* in the Great War.'[16] The language used places the focus firmly on sites of burial within the battlefields, rather than the broader battlefield landscape; although St Barnabas mentioned that people could buy photographs of battlefields as well as graves, the former

[13] *Hallowed Areas*, p. 1.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., p. 3.
[16] Barnabas 1924, p. 12 (emphasis added). Ironically, Terlincthun cemetery is a Base Hospital cemetery, meaning that men buried there almost certainly 'died of wounds' in First World War parlance, rather than being 'killed in action'.

reads somewhat as an afterthought, appearing only towards the end of their brochure, and presumably aimed at those less able to travel.[17]

Whilst the Society commended the IWGC on its tending of war graves, the yearbooks painted a more mixed picture of the reality of the war cemeteries, especially in the earlier 1920s. Some cemeteries, though covered in manicured turf, were photographed with rough wooden crosses in place pending the arrival of the white headstones, and articles described cemeteries where the work of erecting headstones was yet to begin.[18] The progress of the IWGC's work was clearly seen as very positive, but at the same time the photos and descriptions suggested that as late as 1925, there was rough battlefield left for visitors to see amongst the verdant greensward, at least in some of the cemeteries. This is not to downplay the growing sense of neat, well-planted and manicured cemeteries to which the opening of *Hallowed Areas* pays tribute. Beautiful green turf 'as smooth and level as a billiard table' was clearly becoming the norm, even if it was amongst wooden grave markers.[19] The ground was completely level – there were no mounds of earth above the graves, providing the substitute body on which Harry Lauder had thrown himself down in 1917 on visiting his son's grave.[20] The decision to flatten the cemeteries appears to have been a deliberate one by the IWGC: Captain A.W. Hill, botanical adviser to the Commission,

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[17] *Hallowed Areas*, p. 11.
[18] Photos in Barnabas 1923, p. 28 and Barnabas 1925, p. 24; descriptions in Barnabas 1923, p. 34 and Barnabas 1924, p. 11. For a review of the work of the IWGC in this period, see Longworth, P., *The Unending Vigil: The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (London, Constable, 1967), pp. 56-81.
[19] Barnabas, 1923, p. 30.
[20] For Lauder's experience, see chapter five.

pointed out that this was not just a question of easier mowing and maintenance, but also that the mounds of earth were 'unsightly'.[21] The hummocks were seen as disrupting the beauty and parade-ground order of the cemeteries;[22] perhaps also their approximation of the shape of a human body seemed a little too visceral. Certainly the brown of the battlefield was eschewed in favour of green grass or bright flowers: 'The brown earth in front and behind each [headstone] is almost covered with growing flowers and herbaceous plants'.[23] George Mosse claimed that later pilgrims to the battlefields often 'deplored' the order of the cemeteries; it is hard to be certain what era 'later pilgrims' refers to, but there is no evidence of such profoundly negative responses in the St Barnabas yearbooks in the 1920s.[24]

At times, the relationship between the grave site and the pilgrimage ceremony which framed it was a complex one. For a *Glasgow Herald* journalist writing in 1924, the 'deepest impression of a day that will live in the memory of all who came here is of the service held in commemoration of the glorious dead' – in this instance it is neither the battlefields *per se*, nor even the graves which dominate, but rather the words and ritual of the service.[25] However, the *Yorkshire Evening News* provided a quote from a pilgrim at the same event, with a rather different perspective: 'I can't remember the hymns

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[21] Hill, A.W., 'Our Soldiers' Graves', Lecture to Royal Horticultural Society, 25 February 1919, in the CWGC archives, Add3/1/3, p. 13. By contrast, mounds are known to have existed in British civilian cemeteries at the time; for example, the war artist Stanley Spencer talked about 'flopp[ing] down among the grave mounds' in the cemetery at Cookham in 1911, and indeed depicts them in his painting 'The Resurrection' [1924]. See Haycock, David Boyd, *A Crisis of Brilliance* (London, Old Street Publishing, 2010), p. 132.
[22] For cemeteries looking like parade-grounds, see Barnabas 1925, pp. 10 & 15.
[23] Barnabas 1924, p. 20.
[24] See Mosse, George M., *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York, OUP, 1990), p. 113.
[25] Barnabas, 1924, p. 16.

we sang, and I don't remember what the clergyman said in that lovely sermon; but I do know that we prayed; yes, kneeling on the grass, among the beautiful flowers, we prayed – and we cried.'[26] The words and the vast majority of the ritual had been forgotten, and what was remembered instead was a private moment of prayer and communion with the dead, kneeling on the grass amongst the graves. Whilst ritual may have been important to some, for others it was a connection with the ground in which the dead were buried which was the dominant memory.

The yearbooks did not merely catalogue visits to cemeteries, they also offered insights into the experience of the pilgrims, and the reasons they gave for (or the benefits they claimed to derive from) visiting the grave of a loved one. The preface to the first volume claimed that the pilgrimages 'leave in the minds of the pilgrims a sense of peace and of joy that will last until their lives' end.'[27] Notwithstanding the likely bias in this preface, crafted by the St Barnabas organisation itself, it suggested that some sort of catharsis was central to grave visitation. Some of the letters included from travellers corroborated this: 'What a lovely quiet place; it done me good [sic]; and I am very grateful to you all' or 'the beauty of our cemerteries [sic] satisfied us and healed to a great degree our wounded hearts.'[28] Curiously, a similar cathartic experience is reported by at least one traveller who had no

[26] Barnabas 1924, p. 9.
[27] Barnabas 1923, p. 2.
[28] Barnabas 1923, p. 39; Barnabas 1924, p. 31. St Barnabas includes testimonials like these, complete with the syntax and spelling errors of the original writer, perhaps for authenticity, or perhaps to underscore the fact that they were supporting the less privileged. Winter talks of similar cathartic moments in relation to war memorials, see Winter, *Sites*, pp. 113-5.

specific grave to visit. Writing in 1923 for the *Daily Graphic* about the St Barnabas Pilgrimage to the Somme, the journalist, author and broadcaster Petre Mais reported that 'As I stood over the grave of a soldier unknown to me, I felt as if my hands were being pressed, as if some load of disquiet was falling from my soul like the burden from Christian's back.'[29] Arguably Mais could have been indulging in some journalistic hyperbole, but at the very least his article suggests that by 1923 the trope of catharsis at the First World War graveside was becoming well-established and powerful.[30]

Grave visitation was a key focus for St Barnabas pilgrims. Although individuals emphasised different aspects of the experience, with some more focussed on collective ritual and some on personal aspects of the visit, common elements appear to have been emerging in the early 1920s. These include an admiration for the work of the IWGC, and in particular the modification of the landscape to introduce neatness, order, symmetry and greenery into the previously dun-coloured battlefields; and gradually, the replacement of rough wooden crosses with white stone grave markers. Similarly, many people reported a significant cathartic experience associated with being within the conflict landscape, and alongside the body of their loved

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[29] Barnabas 1923, p. 26. The reference, of course, is to Christian's burden in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; Fussell also highlights the significance of this work for soldiers in the conflict, see Fussell, P. *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford, OUP, 2000), pp. 137-44.

[30] Walter notes that, in modern parlance for the late twentieth century battlefield visitor, a sense of 'closure' at the graveside was not uncommon. See Walter, Tony, 'War Grave Pilgrimage', in Reader, Ian and Walter, Tony (eds.), *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture* (London, Macmillan, 1993), pp . 70-78. Wilson highlights the fact that during wartime, although many soldiers reported finding burial duty distressing, some also experienced a degree of catharsis; see Wilson, Ross, 'The Burial of the Dead: the British Army on the Western Front, 1914-18' in *War and Society*, Vol. 31, No. 1, March 2012, p. 29. On consolation at the graveside for postwar pilgrims, see Fletcher, Anthony, *Life, Death and Growing Up on the Western Front* (London, Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 256-9.

one – some through the shared ritual of the cemetery service, others through personal prayer at the graveside.

Within the broad formula of visiting the grave and experiencing some form of catharsis, however, there was considerable scope for making the experience more personal.[31] This was not necessarily something offered by the Society, but instead was fashioned when individuals took matters into their own hands, albeit within the parameters offered by the Society and other organisations like the IWGC. Whilst today the Commission does not permit interference with its cemetery planting plans,[32] in 1923 many pilgrims took their own plants with which to personalise the loved one's grave. So many, in fact, that 'in many cemeteries the English gardeners awaited the pilgrims and helped them to find the sacred spot without delay or lent a trowel for the work of planting.'[33] A letter from a grateful pilgrim in the same volume related that a gardener promised to plant a red rose on her son's grave.[34] The following year, one traveller took a different tack, and was tempted to pluck a flower from the grave, but feeling this was inappropriate took a couple of stones from beside the grave with her instead.[35] The sentiment is similar to Harry Lauder's scraping up soil from the mound of earth on his son's grave,

[31] Stephen Miles suggests that there are as many experiences of the battlefields as there are visitors; see Miles, Stephen, *The Western Front: Landscape, Tourism and Heritage* (Barnsley, Pen & Sword Books Ltd., 2016), p. xi. He goes on to say that recognition of this is a modern phenomenon (see p. xix), though this thesis suggests it was at least implicitly recognised in the 1920s. Reader and Walter identify an individual or individualising element as a key feature of pilgrimage; see Reader, *Pilgrimage*, p. 21.
[32] Personal communication from the CWGC, 19 Aug 2019.
[33] Barnabas 1923, p. 31. Hill, 'Graves', envisaged planting one's own flowers as very much a part of early IWGC policy, albeit only when in keeping with the wider planting plan for the cemetery.
[34] Barnabas,1923, p. 39. Hill implies official sanction for visitors to plant appropriate flowers in IWGC cemeteries, see Hill, 'Graves', p. 12.
[35] Barnabas 1924, p. 10.

although in the manicured regime of the post-war cemeteries it was less visceral.[36] The visitor need not in fact have been so concerned for propriety: the following year there were reports of IWGC gardeners wrapping dug-up roots of forget-me-nots for one visitor and cutting bunches of flowers from the cemeteries for others.[37] Visiting the battlefield and seeing the grave was one thing – leaving something or taking something away also seemed to be a critical part of the experience for some, thereby making their own post-war inscription on the landscape.[38]

One final factor sets the St Barnabas experience of visiting the battlefield landscape apart from any descriptions considered so far in other writings. That is the notion that by visiting the battlefield landscape, and the grave site or memorial in particular, the burial process which had begun in the war itself, and subsequently tidied up and ordered by the IWGC, was finally completed. This sense of completion was not just for the visiting relative, but for the deceased as well – the burial process was concluded and sanctified by the visit of a relative. This metaphor is particularly strong for the missing on the Menin Gate in 1927, when one pilgrim writing a short article for the *Brighton Argus* observed that having read the relevant name on the memorial, 'we knew they were now "buried".'[39] Ian Hay, writing for St

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[36] The closest to Lauder's own raw emotional experience probably comes in 1925, when a mother is described hugging a wooden cross and weeping; see Barnabas 1925, p. 22.
[37] Barnabas 1925, pp. 9-10; see also p. 22 for someone taking graveside earth home.
[38] Fathi comments on the ongoing importance of inscribing oneself on the landscape for twenty-first century ANZAC pilgrims. See Fathi, Romain, "Connecting Spirits: The commemorative patterns of an Australian school group in Northern France", in *Journal of Australian Studies*, 15 July 2014, published online at http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14443058.2014.921635, accessed 4 August 2016.
[39] Barnabas 1927, p. 39. Winter, *Sites*, p. 113, observes the importance of people reaching out and touching names on the memorials to achieve closure.

Barnabas, extended this concept to all burials, arguing that 'no grave on the Western Front, or farther afield still…can be regarded as truly consecrated until it has been visited by its rightful warden.' [40] Grave visitation is positioned as providing emotional catharsis for the visitor, and a sanctification for the burial of the deceased.

So far, then, the St Barnabas approach to battlefield landscape seems clear. Pilgrims were helped and supported in visiting the gravesite or memorial of their loved one. Individuals visited cemeteries which were increasingly ordered and manicured as the years went on, and engaged in personal or public rituals at the graveside which often provided various forms of catharsis. Some chose to leave plants, or take material home with them, by way of an ongoing connection with the landscape and the memories it enshrined. For one woman at least, in 1926, the parameters were far less neat. In Salonika, this visitor on the St Barnabas Pilgrimage wanted to do something more individualised than simply visiting the memorial to her missing husband – she wanted to leave her wreath at the place where he was last seen. However, the nature of group travel and its timetables meant there was no time to do so. Someone suggested, apparently rather arbitrarily, that the nearby Jumeaux Ravine might be an alternative, being the final place he crossed (it is unclear why a crossing was suggested as an appropriate site, other than expediency). Perhaps because of its rather arbitrary nature, this was rejected by the female pilgrim, who instead kept her wreath back for the memorial to the missing. This story is recounted without

[40] Barnabas 1927, p. 2. Ian Hay was a *nom de plume* for Major-General John Hay Beith.

comment in the *Westminster Gazette*, and reproduced in the 1926 yearbook:[41] no insight is given into the feelings of the woman about these conflicting options for commemorative site, nor about her being unable to undertake her act of commemoration at the site of her choosing. It is to situations like this, when individual pilgrims' experiences do not fit the neat gravesite narrative of the St Barnabas Pilgrimage model, that this chapter will turn next. Inevitably, as the official St Barnabas publications are the main source of information, such incidents are less common than those which fit the mould, but where they do occur it is possible to learn as much about pilgrims' experiences and expectations of the battlefields as it is from those which more precisely fit the narrative.

Beyond the gravesite: pilgrims' individual experiences of the battlefield

Not all St Barnabas pilgrims had a grave to visit, so such individuals had to carve out their own niche within the battlefield tour. As memorials to the missing opened, this provided a convenient alternative focus, but the Menin Gate in Ypres was not unveiled until 1927, and the Thiepval memorial on the Somme was not opened until 1932.[42] Before then, a degree of improvisation was needed to find a spot on the battlefield that meant something to the pilgrim with no cemetery to visit. In 1925, one boy 'was being taken by his mother to see the site of a memorial on which his father's name would

[41] Barnabas 1926, p. 12. It is presumably the site of the Doiran memorial where she left her wreath; although not officially open until later in September 1926, it would have been completed by the time of the St Barnabas visit.
[42] The Gallipoli and Salonika memorials, by contrast, would all have been complete by the time of the St Barnabas visits (dates at cwgc.org).

appear'.[43] Here, the building site of the memorial – presumably either at Tyne Cot or the Menin Gate – provided the alternative to a grave.[44] For still others, the same journalist wrote, the wider battlefield had to serve as the focus for remembrance: 'Touching, too, is the knowledge that some joined the party just to go to the district in which a loved one was last heard of and there wander round and seek some sort of communion of spirit.'[45] There seems almost a note of pity in here – whereas some of the early guidebooks celebrated hiking across the countryside to experience the battlefields the soldiers knew, here the sense is of a poor but necessary substitute for the preferred option of the grave visit. Nonetheless, whatever the perceived limitations of the wider 'district' of battle compared with the known resting place of the grave, being on the same battlefield landscape as lost loved ones was seen as having a powerful effect. In his address to the Scottish Pilgrimage at Ypres, the preacher asked: 'is it not well to forge anew the link of remembrance here, close by the scenes where they laid down their lives and where they now rest?'[46] In this instance, the site of burial and the site of battle were given equal billing, and co-location with both is seen as a critical part of commemoration. A pilgrim is quoted by a journalist after visiting the Menin Gate in 1927, saying 'I feel so happy to have seen that name [inscribed on the Gate]. He was killed in 1914 – thirteen years ago – and ever since I have wanted to tread where he trod. I am happy.'[47] Once again,

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[43] Barnabas 1925, p. 5.
[44] For memorials as substitutes for graves, see Connelly, Mark, *The Great War, Memory and Ritual: Commemoration in the City and East London 1916*-1939 (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2002), p. 44.
[45] Barnabas 1925, p. 5.
[46] Barnabas 1924, p. 19.
[47] Barnabas 1927, p. 34.

it is both the memorial and the sites the pilgrim walked that share significance here; so whilst the emphasis of St Barnabas might be on grave sites, pilgrims found consolation from a wider set of locations within the battlefield landscape.

As earlier chapters have indicated, a recurrent theme of notions of pilgrimage is the idea of undergoing hardship as part of the journey, and for some St Barnabas pilgrims a literal rather than a figurative walking of the landscape was important. The Society may have tried to make grave visiting as easy as possible, but a few pilgrims refused such help in favour of embarking on their own *via dolorosa*:

> One broken-hearted father from Aberdeenshire, who was over seventy years of age, insisted on walking the three miles' journey to and from a cemetery near Ypres. I pointed out to him that the effort would overtax his strength, but he was obdurate. Asking why he insisted upon walking instead of taking advantage of a waiting motor-car, he replied that he would never pass that way again, and he wanted to feel that he had traversed the same road that his son had traversed on his last journey on earth.[48]

For this pilgrim, walking the battlefield landscape and treading in his son's footsteps was at least as important in re-connecting with the deceased as visiting the grave itself, irrespective of the solicitations of fellow travellers or trip organisers. In Gallipoli, it was reported, a mother walked four miles in intense heat so that she could 'walk the way [her son] went, and…share a

[48] Barnabas 1925, p. 22.

little of the hardship.'[49] If wartime writers were conscious of how distant their experience was from that of the combatants, for these post-war visitors physical exertion and commitment was seen as a way of trying to narrow that gap.

The reported experiences of these pilgrims point to a common feature of many of the St Barnabas Pilgrimages – the need for pilgrims to find personal rituals amidst the organised collective ceremony, or at the very least a private moment of reflection, with these often being as or more important than the organised events. It appears that St Barnabas permitted, or even encouraged, such moments. From the very outset in 1923, the formal event at Lijssenthoek cemetery 'was followed by many other individual ceremonies which were less formal but *even more poignant*.'[50] In an article on the 1923 'Michaelmas Pilgrimage', the author described the spectrum of ways in which the pilgrims he had observed chose to reflect:

> There we must leave them, some kneeling in silence, some weeping, some busily placing plants or wreaths on their grave, and one apparently enjoying a last pipe with his brother in a spirit of casual camaraderie.[51]

Many writers, like these, reflected on the intensely powerful and personal nature of these visits. After cars had set down mourners at cemeteries on

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[49] Barnabas 1926, p. 18. Jay Winter observes that relatives of the dead often wanted to 'know what he knew…feel what he felt' as part of the grieving process; see Winter, *Sites*, pp. 35-6.
[50] Barnabas 1923, p. 8, emphasis added.In the 1924 Scottish Pilgrimage, over 130 cemeteries were visited privately or in small groups, to make individual grave visits; see Barnabas 1924, p9. 19-20.
[51] Barnabas 1924, p. 55.

the Scottish Pilgrimage, 'they would drive a little apart and wait'[52], giving the mourners time for solitude at the graves of their loved ones. The writers also often fall silent on the subject of personal reflection. 'These are not moments that an observer should attempt to describe' proclaimed the *Liverpool Post* in 1924,[53] at once suggesting that to write any details would intrude on the sanctity of the moment, whilst also pointing up the difference between the pilgrim on the one hand, and the tourist observer on the other. After making their individual private pilgrimages, pilgrims were described as having 'passed through a sacred experience which was too intimate for questioning', again both sanctifying and separating them.[54] Even at the grand ceremonial of the unveiling of the Menin Gate in 1927, one contributor at least still saw the formalities of the ceremony as less significant than the private rituals by the graveside. His writing was pointed in displacing the dignitaries at the Gate from centre-stage:

> These mothers of Ypres had listened with wounded hearts while a King, a famous general, and men of high estate spoke of their sons who had been engulfed in the maelstrom of high explosive during four years of war.
>
> They came back yesterday, a new light in their eyes, because they had looked upon the fields which had embraced their boys. They had stood in a vast and uncharted graveyard, but they had been close to their children for some hours of unknowable intimacy.[55]

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[52] Ibid., p. 7.
[53] Ibid., p. 14. See also Barnabas 1925, p. 10 and pp.16-17.
[54] Barnabas 1924, p. 24.
[55] Barnabas 1927, p. 38. On the Menin Gate and its significance, see Connelly, Mark, and Goebel, Stefan, *Ypres* (Oxford, OUP, 2018), especially pp. 78-83.

The King, generals and other speakers at the ceremony were clearly important, but it was the visit to the battlefields that was positioned as having the strongest emotional impact, and providing the greatest catharsis. Whatever the power of the Menin Gate may have been as a focal point for those mourning the missing, the real pilgrimage lay in the private moments on the 'vast and uncharted graveyard' of the battlefield itself.

Pilgrims' experience of the changing appearance of the battlefields

As pilgrims sought solace, either at formal memorial ceremonies or privately on the wider battlefields, the nature of the landscape they saw was changing, the battlefield detritus of the early 1920s giving way to rebuilding and restoration. As the battlefield guidebooks anticipated, some sought to find and view such destruction as was left: 'As they [the pilgrims] stood facing the Cloth Hall there can have been few…who did not feel a thrill at this material evidence of the dangers their dead had been called on to face.'[56] This passage saw the ruins not just as a means of connecting pilgrims with the battlefield landscape, but as evidence which linked them directly to the experiences of their lost loved ones; detritus was a powerful mediator between the living and the dead. The idea of the remnants of wartime landscape forming a powerful connection with the past occurs frequently in the yearbooks. At Lijssenthoek, shell-cases were used in 1923 as part of the altar ornamentation for the Eucharist, appropriating the power of the

[56] Barnabas 1923, p. 9.

battlefield in support of the religious ceremony.[57] On the Croydon Pilgrimage of 1925, one writer observed near Calais 'A derelict gun, truckloads of barbed wire, rough wastes that were the "dumps" of war, [which] caught the eyes of the observant as the train moved on.'[58] Here, by 1925, the sense was that the detritus was more isolated and easier to miss, accessible only to the observant in a fleeting moment of personal communion. The change in the landscape between the early and mid-1920s was sharply articulated at Beaumont-Hamel memorial park, a section of preserved battlefield landscape on the Somme dedicated to the memory of the men of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. The Second Scottish Pilgrimage visited the site in July 1925, and a photo showed a service around the Highland Memorial located there: the hard landscaping for the monument was in place, and some planting, but the impression of the surrounding landscape is still something of a battlefield wasteland.[59] However, some of the text betrayed anxieties about the authenticity of the landscape, or at least pilgrims' experience of it. The tour started well enough:

> groups of bereaved relatives passed in single file through the narrow, winding trenches. Here and there were lying about broken and rusty rifles, tin hats, and bits of shell cases, all grim reminders of the terrible experiences that the sons of Scottish fathers and mothers had had to bear.[60]

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[57] Ibid., p. 11; for use of shells as trench art, including as lamps and candlesticks, see Saunders, Nicholas J, *Trench Art: a brief history and guide 1914-1939* (Barnsley, Leo Cooper, 2001), pp. 64, 116-7 & for a battle-zone altar made of shells, p. 115.
[58] Barnabas 1925, p. 7.
[59] Barnabas 1925, p. 11.
[60] Ibid., p. 13.

The tone here is one of neutral observation, though it is possible to see implied doubts here about the reality of the experience, as the relatives pass in neat single file through what would have been a chaotic fighting position, or in the apparently neat checklist of battlefield items they tick off. The article went on to be much more explicit:

> What were the thoughts of these old people as they threaded their way through the labyrinth? And yet they saw the trenches in a far more cheerful aspect than in the dark days of the war … Passing on the way Lewis gun posts and many other interesting relics of the fighting days, the pilgrims followed the winding path through this realistic memorial park.[61]

The sense is not so much to judge the pilgrims, whose genuine reactions are not doubted; rather, it is to suggest that there is curation and manipulation of the landscape, the relics of war potentially being exploited for dramatic effect. Indeed, the use of the word 'realistic' is telling – it suggests something pretend which has been contrived to look like the real thing, and questions the idea that the memorial park functions simply as a preserved section of authentic battlefield landscape.[62]

Concern about the battlefields being tidied up or sanitised was in fact widespread. Sometimes this was connected to simple, practical issues such

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[61] Ibid., p.13.
[62] By contrast, Miles suggests that many 21st century tourists consider authenticity less important than understanding and an empathic response when visiting the Western Front; see Miles, *Western Front*, p. 80. For a detailed consideration of the concept and challenges of authenticity in tourist trench experiences, including one in Blackpool in 1916, see Espley, Richard, ' "How much of an experience do we want the public to receive?": Trench Reconstructions and Popular Images of the Great War' in Meyer, Jessica (ed.), *British Popular Culture and the First World War* (Leiden, Brilll, 2008), pp. 325-49.

as the loss of useful information. The work of the IWGC was generally highly commended, but it was with slight regret that one writer noted the new headstones all contained the same information, while the old wooden crosses provided more detail, such as indicating which men died of wounds.[63] But the same writer noted a wider loss of wartime landscape, even as early as 1923, commenting that in the villages behind the lines 'all trace of war was being rapidly effaced'.[64] Much of Ypres, even as early as 1923, was not conducive to connecting with its wartime past: 'Ypres is not the Ypres of your memory. It is new and shining and progressive.'[65] The yearbooks enable the reader to track these changes over time. In 1923 there was still plenty of evidence of wartime damage. At Neuve Chapelle there had been a good deal of tidying up, but:

> crumpled walls and ruined churches enough still remained to prove conclusively how false are the pretensions of English politicians who say that France has entirely recovered.[66]

Albert was similar, with the occasional new house, but heaps of rubble all around and the great square still a ruin.[67] By the following year, at least one writer was forming a very different impression:

> Passing through the battlefields one could scarcely credit that they had been the scene of so much bloodshed and tragedy. On every side of the road to the

[63] Barnabas 1923, p. 7.
[64] Ibid., p. 8.
[65] Ibid., p. 19.
[66] Ibid., p. 34.
[67] Ibid., p.36.

> cemeteries were fields of waving corn with rebuilt homes scattered about or gathered in little hamlets. Only very occasionally could evidences of war be seen, and these took the form of great black walls – the remnants of buildings which had been shattered by shell fire.[68]

Naturally, yearbook contributors were influenced by their exact itinerary, and by their own prejudices and expectations, so it is difficult to make a precise assessment of how quickly the visible battlefield landscape faded. However, the trajectory is clear over the course of 1923-27: by 1925 the cemeteries were seen as the only real marker of the Ypres Salient, while dug-outs in the Ypres ramparts had been filled in.[69] D.G. Somerville, one of the engineering contractors on the Menin Gate, was able to write that between 1924 and 1927, he had seen the landscape change from a 'sombre, stricken countryside, with gaunt trees and naked branches' to a scene where 'no sign of war's havoc meets the eye.'[70]

Equally, over the course of this period, the loss of the battlefield landscape is paralleled by the creation of a mythologised landscape in its place, harking back to the approach of John Masefield. The vital strategic importance of Ypres to The Allies is generally accepted by most military historians, and indeed was summarised in the 1927 yearbook in an extract from *The Times*: a junction of roads to the Channel ports and into the heart of France, it was also a point where early in the war the British and French armies could have been driven apart and, critically, was also a gateway to the ports used to

68 Barnabas 1924, p. 27.
69 Barnabas 1925, p. 7.
70 Barnabas 1927, p. 5

resupply the British army.[71] The veteran and propagandist Ian Hay,[72] who was also a leading light in the St Barnabas movement, dismissed this entirely in 1927, focussing instead on the purely symbolic nature of the city, as the British equivalent of Verdun. However, unlike Verdun, Ypres had for Hay no strategic importance whatever, barring the way to 'nothing save a few barren sand-dunes and the North Sea.'[73] Hay's apparently bizarre dismissal of any military importance attached to Ypres has a clear purpose: to bolster instead the symbolic importance of the town as the last remaining corner of Belgium, which British honour had pledged to defend. Ypres' symbolic, spiritual significance far outweighed its military one. To what extent this perception may have been driven by the loss of visible battlefield landscape is hard to establish from the evidence, but there is no doubt the two developments ran in parallel during the mid-1920s.

It was not just for Ian Hay that Ypres had a sacred, symbolic significance: many tourists clearly felt it too, and were offended by the way in which commercialisation was intruding on their sacred space. Mark Connelly has observed that, as early as 1920, visitors were upset by market stalls trading in Ypres, and by the return of the town's annual fair.[74] The St Barnabas Yearbooks underscored how rapidly Ypres was redeveloping, initially in relatively neutral terms, noting that 'some of the shops would not disgrace Regent Street, and the hotels are rapidly rising in the Grand Place'.[75] The

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[71] Ibid., p. 26.
[72] Ian Hay was a *nom de plume* for Major-General John Hay Beith.
[73] Barnabas 1927, p. 2.
[74] Connelly, Mark, 'The Ypres League and the Commemoration of the Ypres Salient 1914-1940' in *War in History*, 16(1), 2009, pp. 70-1.
[75] Barnabas 1923, p. 16.

mention of hotels was clearly a nod to the rise of the battlefield tourist industry in the town, reinforced the following year with reference to the rejuvenated town of Ypres as a 'Mecca' for pilgrims.[76] By 1927, the tone had decisively shifted from neutral or even admiring, to something more critical. Ian Hay again provided some of the most outspoken commentary, referring to the 'company of other bodies, many of them mere holiday makers, with but little sense of the beauty and solemnity of the occasion.'[77] His view may have been influenced by the problems St Barnabas faced with its own Ypres pilgrimage that year, when a commercial tour operator tried to outbid them for the use of a cinema space they had secured for the St Barnabas pilgrims to rest and eat in.[78] The battlefield landscape of Ypres was being replaced by a post-war commercial cityscape, with spaces contested between different agencies with different claims, and also as Hay suggested between different visitors with varying outlooks on their visit. John Buchan was even more damning on the redevelopment of Ypres.[79] He observed, like many others, that 'It is not easy to find the spots which once played so great a part in our life.' But he also offered a more direct critique, describing Ypres as 'a snug little bourgeois town, the market once again of a pleasant countryside, and with a new trade in souvenirs and picture postcards'.[80] Although he went on to acknowledge that even these developments could not conceal the

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[76] Barnabas 1924, p. 23.
[77] Barnabas 1927, p. 2. Such concerns were not unique to the battlefields; Thomas Cook tourists were being criticised for spoiling the very culture of the places they were visiting as early as the mid-1800s. See Brendon P, *Thomas Cook: 150 Years of Popular Tourism* (London, Secker & Warburg, 1991), pp. 81-100.
[78] Barnabas 1927, p. 2.
[79] The author (and later politician) John Buchan played a critical role in the British propaganda effort, including in 1917 as Director of Information.
[80] Ibid., p. 8. Although Buchan probably does not use 'bourgeois' with quite the edge it would have later in the century, his point about the comfortable tourist environment of Ypres compared to its wartime nature is clear.

potent memories of the battlefield, the clear inference was that the redevelopment of Ypres, particularly as a tourist destination, ran counter to the dignity of commemoration. Sometimes, even the most devout pilgrims to the battlefront were viewed in ambivalent terms, at odds with the history of the landscape they were travelling through. The journalist and veteran H.V. Morton,[81] writing in the *Daily Express*, commented on the incongruity of so many mothers at Ypres in 1927. 'They sat in special enclosures, and watched the hot sunlight fall on the white stone and on the sitting lion who gazes out over the Salient. They thought he was a "nice" lion … They did not know they were sitting on the road to Hell Fire Corner'.[82] The bathos of the word 'nice' is set up at odds with the real symbolism of the lion, and suggested a somewhat biting critique of the women's attitude, which was only compounded by their lack of knowledge of where they really were in relation to the Salient battlefield. To some extent, this reflected merely the tension between civilian and soldier perceptions which has been identified many times in this thesis; but there is a peculiarly sneering tone to the language here.

If both pilgrims and tourists were sometimes seen as out of place in Ypres, then what of the erstwhile enemy? Largely, the Germans were absent from the accounts in the St Barnabas yearbooks. In the early years, the idea of vengeance surfaced once – in early remembrance ceremonies held in IWGC cemeteries, the custom was to turn to face the Cross of Sacrifice when The

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[81] Morton went on to find fame for reporting on the news of the opening of the tomb of Tutankhamun.
[82] Barnabas 1927, p. 15.

Last Post was played. One writer described this moment at Lijssenthoek in 1923, and in so doing spoke of the assembled gathering turning to face the 'inspiring sword of the avenger'.[83] Indeed, Reginald Blomfield, who designed the cross, in fact referred to it in his memoirs as a 'War Cross', and clearly saw its symbolism as being as much about war as about sacrifice.[84] However, this unusual reference to vengeance is passing and isolated; if anything, the reaction to former foes was neutral or positive. In 1926, two veterans sat down for lunch with a Turkish farmer at Gallipoli, and were amused to discover that he had fought against them a mile away from their picnic spot.[85] Even in the sanctified surroundings of the Menin Gate, the presence of 'some hundreds of Germans from Ostend, Blankenberghe and other Belgian resorts' was merely noted, in neutral if not welcoming tones.[86]

This thesis primarily focuses on the Western Front, but the fact that the St Barnabas pilgrimages visited so many different locations does enable a comparison of theatres of war. In fact, the issues explored in this chapter are largely consistent across the different battlefronts. Where differences did occur, they were generally ones of detail. In Italy, the verticality of the landscape of battle, where Alpine peaks never seemed to get any closer, was highlighted, as it had been by Kipling during the war.[87] In the hot, dry

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[83] Barnabas 1923, p. 10. .
[84] Blomfield, Reginald, *Memoirs of an Architect* (London, Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1932), p. 179.
[85] Barnabas 1926, p. 18.
[86] Barnabas 1927, p. 24; this contrasts with the more common presence of anti-German feeling in UK Armistice Day ceremonies even in the 1930s, see Connelly, *Great War*, pp. 187-8. German presence on battlefield visits appears to have been unusual, Walton suggesting that pre-war German tourism to Ostend, for example, largely collapsed after the war. See Walton, John, 'War and Tourism: the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' in Butler, Richard and Suntikul, Wantanee (eds.), *Tourism and War* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2013), p. 68.
[87] Barnabas 1925, p.26; for Kipling, see chapter five of this thesis.

climate of Gallipoli and Salonika, the cemeteries were maintained well, but the turf often appeared to be brown rather than green, and the clearance of the battlefield detritus in some of the remote locations was inevitably much slower.[88] The reality, however, as can be seen by the table above, was that only a minority of battlefield pilgrims visited these locations: the emphasis, for St Barnabas as for other tour operators, was on the more accessible locations of Belgium and northern France.

The end of the St Barnabas pilgrimages

The origin of the pilgrimages, in supporting pilgrims struggling with both the costs and logistics of visiting the battlefields, has been discussed above. Almost from the outset, however, there was a sense that the programme of visits offered by the charity might not last long. The Empire Pilgrimage in April 1924 was already being described at the time as 'one of the last parties to be taken to the battlefields' by St Barnabas, while another article in the same year opined that it would probably be the last of all such pilgrimages, at least to France.[89] In reality, many more followed, both to France and elsewhere, but by 1927 Ian Hay concluded that the job was done, and described the Menin Gate pilgrimage as the 'final adventure'. His reason for asserting this is curious but unsurprising given his strong focus on the symbolism of Ypres: namely, that the mission of sanctifying graves with the visit of a loved one was almost complete.

[88] Barnabas 1926, pp. 2, 7, 8, 11, 12 & 26.
[89] Barnabas 1924, pp. 6 and 13.

> By the beginning of this year our task seemed to be approaching its end. Almost every known grave had been visited, and the unforgettable memory of a well-loved name preserved for all time upon a white headstone in a reverently-tended overseas cemetery had lightened and comforted many a sad heart.[90]

Hay provided no evidence at all for this data-defying assertion. Even with the most generous interpretation, there is no way that the 7,500 pilgrims helped to visit the battlefields by St Barnabas could have represented a visit by a loved one to every known grave; nor could the same be said even if the pilgrims supported by other organisations such as the British Legion were added in. Indeed, to this day battlefield guides regularly take descendants to graves on the Western Front which, to the best of the modern-day pilgrim's knowledge, have never been visited by family members before, particularly when those members came from the further reaches of the British Empire.[91] Hay was clearly engaging in dramatic hyperbole, which served once again to underscore the centrality of grave visitation to the charity's vision.

As it transpired, 1927 was not the final St Barnabas pilgrimage; although there are no further yearbooks, a document written by Lord Stopford, one of the IWGC commissioners, described a final pilgrimage the following year, to Gallipoli and Salonika in August and September 1928.[92] Unlike the yearbooks, this account is a private document, the primary purpose of which

[90] Barnabas 1927, p. 2.
[91] Observation based on author's own experience.
[92] 'St Barnabas Pilgrimage to Salonika and Gallipoli, 1928', in the archives of the CWGC, reference CON 149.

appears to be reporting back to the Commission on the condition of cemeteries and memorials, but at the same time it provided some incisive comment on the reality of late 1920s battlefield pilgrimage in a way which would never have been possible in the very public yearbooks. Stopford indicated a rather more prosaic reason for the end of the St Barnabas pilgrimage movement than that given by Hay. The intention, he explained, had been to run the 1928 trip purely as a pilgrimage to graves, but insufficient demand meant that 'it was opened to anyone who was prepared to take a ticket'. As a consequence, only 4 of the 242 travellers were pilgrims supported by St Barnabas; others were self-funded pilgrims or veterans; while some were 'going out on a purely pleasure cruise', and were thus exactly the sort of holidaymakers whom Hay had criticised in Ypres the year before.[93]

In the comparatively barren battlefield landscapes of these theatres, there was sometimes a degree of confusion which was absent from the reportage in the formal yearbooks. On 29th August, an advance party went ashore at Skyros to prepare for a ceremony at Rupert Brooke's grave. Unfortunately, no one was quite sure where the grave was, despite the fact that one of the party had been involved in the poet's burial in 1915. With the expedition presumably threatened by chaos, they were lucky enough to find a Greek merchant who was spending a shooting holiday on the island, and who knew the location of the grave. Even then, bad weather threatened to derail the

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[93] Ibid., p. 1; for the interests of different elements of the party on the tour, see also pp. 4-5. Mosse argues that the reasons St Barnabas pilgrimages stopped was due to both the completion of grave visits, and commercial competition; see Mosse, *Fallen*, pp. 152-6.

ceremony by preventing the main body of pilgrims from reaching the shore, though in the event a break in the windy conditions enabled plans to go ahead. Behind the carefully orchestrated ceremonial portrayed in the yearbooks, the uncertainties of fading or confusing battlefield landscapes played a part, as did inclement weather.

Stopford also provided a candid and at times biting take on the ceremonies and memorials. At the Doiran memorial, a local official gave ‘a long and impassioned speech in a language which no one understood, but no doubt it was very fine’.[94] The memorial itself was looking fairly sorry, surrounded by a rusty barbed wire fence to keep the shepherds out, while the more ornamental hedge had been consumed in a conflagration caused by a spark from a passing train. ‘I understand there is no redress from the Railway.’[95] Notwithstanding this, Stopford generally concurred with the yearbooks in observing that the cemeteries were typically in good condition. Stopford’s words have to be interpreted with care. Clearly a man predisposed to wry observation and an arch turn of phrase, he was writing an internal report for the IWGC rather than something for public consumption. The IWGC did not always have an entirely easy relationship with those organising battlefield tours, as various files in their archives testify, so to some extent Stopford may have been expressing a degree of corporate frustration with the pilgrimage itself. However, his report underlines two important themes. First, that the choreographed view of rituals and ceremonials presented by

[94] ‘St Barnabas Pilgrimage’ [CWGC], p. 2.
[95] Ibid., p. 2.

the yearbooks, whilst an important part of understanding the battlefield landscape in the 1920s, does not necessarily tell the whole story. Secondly, that by the late 1920s, for St Barnabas at least, the market for the type of battlefield pilgrimage they had been running was changing, and as foreseen in the yearbooks themselves, becoming decidedly more commercial.

The expectations of pilgrims were changing too. In Stopford's account, they seem much less willing to comply with expected behaviour, and much more willing to take matters into their own hands to achieve their desired ends. At Pink Farm Cemetery at Cape Helles, Stopford gets drawn into an argument with Mrs Beddy, the mother of a certain Lt Beddy buried there. A personal plaque had been put up on Beddy's grave, contrary to IWGC rules, and Mrs Beddy 'rather flaunted it in my face.' Toeing the corporate line, Stopford explains that it cannot be allowed to stay there, and the argument becomes more heated. '[Mrs Beddy] was highly indignant and threatened to haunt me to the end of my days if it was interfered with in any way.'[96] Stopford does not record the resolution, but did observe that there was a second personal plaque in the same cemetery. These sort of tensions are a long way from the helpful gardeners of 1923 and 1924, aiding pilgrims in planting their own flowers, or taking cuttings for them to go home with. A similar tension emerges at the Helles memorial, where visitors started pencilling (or even painting) in the names on the memorial to make the taking of photographs easier, much to Stopford's intense irritation.[97]

[96] Ibid., p.6
[97] Ibid., p.5

With the passage of time, and the candour of a private account, a more tense negotiation of commemorative practice within the battlefield landscape is revealed than in the published yearbooks.

Conclusion

The St Barnabas yearbooks provide a unique resource for tracking changes in the perceptions of battlefield landscapes experienced by a particular group of pilgrims during the 1920s. The very clear remit of the charity was to help people, especially the poor, to visit the graves and later memorials of their loved ones; as such, they placed the emphasis of their pilgrimages very much on cemeteries and the final resting places of the dead, rather than on the battlefields themselves. From the outset, however, the dominance of graves as a focus was challenged by the prevalence of battlefield detritus, and the desire of pilgrims to experience the battlefield landscape trodden by their loved ones. It was not enough simply to see the site of burial, though this could provide an important sense of catharsis; for many, it was also important to walk in the footsteps of their loved ones, across the fields of battle. Even within the defined geography of cemeteries and memorials, many pilgrims sought to carve out their own personal rituals. For many, this was simply a quiet moment at a graveside; for some, bringing something to or taking something away from the landscape was significant; while for others, actions such as mounting a plaque, taking a photograph, or sharing a personal memory of the loved one were important. Public ceremonial had its

place, as did the collective experience of travelling with a pilgrim group; but so too did the moment of private reflection.

As the 1920s progressed, new issues emerged. Commercialisation changed the nature of battlefield pilgrimage – affecting both the constituent elements of touring parties, and re-shaping the battlefield landscape itself. Nonetheless, even as the battlefields were cleared, travellers continued to try to find both gravesites and authentic battlefield locations, resulting in tensions – between simple tourists and those who perceived themselves as 'pilgrims'; between commercial and charitable operators; and between individuals and authorities such as the IWGC. As the legacy of the conflict faded in the landscape, new tensions about the curation and interpretation of that landscape arose – Ian Hay may have wanted to think that 1927 represented a 'job done' in terms of commemorative practice, but in reality there was much more to come.

Unique as they are, the yearbooks as a source have a key limitation in that they represent the official or published accounts of pilgrimage, rather than the views of individuals in their own words. The final chapter will consider a number of personal accounts of visiting the battlefields from across the period 1914-1929, told in the words of individual travellers. Far from resolving these tensions - between organisers and travellers, between curators and visitors of the landscape, between graves and battlefields, between public ceremony and private space – the personal accounts will show just how important and enduring these dichotomies were.

Chapter Seven: Beyond guidebooks - the response of individual visitors to the battlefield landscape

Introduction: from collective to individual accounts

> Survivors of the Great War have within them an instinct unpossessed by those who did not share that experience; it is an instinct that stimulates a longing to return to those regions that inspired it. As the exile is drawn back to the land of his birth, there for a brief space to imbibe again something he long ago abandoned, so is the veteran moved to seek that indefinable something which can be derived from nowhere but in France and Flanders.[1]

Written almost two decades after the end of the war, this description of veterans' experience on a pilgrimage to Vimy testifies to the intimate connection between ex-servicemen and the landscapes in which they fought. Its sentiments are far from unique, with many post-war accounts associating powerful emotions with returning to the landscapes of conflict.[2] But it raises important questions: what happened to this personal link between landscape and emotional response, as the battlefields softened with time, or were systematically cleared in the 1920s? How did the experience of non-combatants visiting the battlefields for the first time compare to that of veterans? And were any visitors able to describe that 'indefinable something' which the experience offered?

[1] 'The Vimy Pilgrimage' in *Canadian Geographical Journal*, Dec 1936, Vol. XIII, no. 8, pp. 407-9.

[2] See the account of a pilgrimage to Salonica, in 'The private papers of Ithel Davies', 1936, in the archive of the Imperial War Museum [Documents.16065], p. 1. More recently, Leonard suggests that the very nature of the conflict, driving men down into the ground, cemented a particular relationship with the battlefield landscape. See Leonard, Matthew, *Poppyganda: The Historical and Social Impact of a Flower* (London, Uniform Press, 2015), p. 35.

The previous chapter examined the experiences of pilgrims themselves, and noted that these could differ from those highlighted by the guidebooks and tour operators of the period. In doing so, it drew largely on official publications of the St Barnabas organisation, which necessarily offer a somewhat corporate view framed by the fundraising and reputational priorities of that organisation. The vast majority of the accounts were written by journalists or professional writers reflecting on what they thought or were told that other pilgrims were experiencing; and were further refracted through the lens of what the St Barnabas trustees deemed fit for inclusion in the annual yearbooks. They provide a rich source of information on changing pilgrim experiences over time, but remain one step removed from the personal experience of individuals, except on those rare occasions when the authors reflected on their own private responses. This final chapter focuses on the accounts of individual pilgrims to the battlefields in the period 1914-1929. The catalogues of the Imperial War Museums (IWM) and of The National Archives (TNA) were searched for archival holdings related to battlefield pilgrimage during that period; the latter catalogue includes not just materials at TNA, but also in a number of local record offices around the country. The focus was on identifying accounts which had not been published at the time, and as such might be expected to reflect personal views without the overlay of commercial or fundraising priorities.[3]

[3] John Pegum's review of veterans' experiences of returning to the Front, by contrast, focuses mainly on published accounts. He highlights many examples of veterans' bemused reactions to changed battlefields; but his analysis suggests that the published accounts are less nuanced in reflecting veterans' ongoing ability to connect with the wartime landscape. See Pegum, John, 'The Old Front Line: Returning to the Battlefields in the Writings of Ex-

Such sources are not without their own limitations. Although none of those considered here were published at the time they were written, some were evidently crafted with a public in mind, for example as *aide memoires* for public talks. As such, they were liable to self-censorship or framing to bring them into line with the format and content expected by the envisaged audience.[4] Many of the accounts, though reading like diaries, were not written contemporaneously; some appear to have been written many months after the pilgrimage, and are therefore subject both to recall bias and errors. Whilst in some accounts it is possible to ascertain whether the traveller was alone, on a private family tour, or on an organised group pilgrimage, this is not always the case, and so contextualising the experiences can be difficult. Those who committed their pilgrimage experiences to paper tend to be a self-selecting group, with well-educated middle-class travellers over-represented, as the group with the time and with the writing skills to be able most readily to document their experiences. Finally, the number of personal accounts identified in the archives is small, though whether this reflects a tendency not to record, a failure to preserve such accounts, or limitations in cataloguing is unclear.[5] Notwithstanding their limitations, these archival accounts provide powerful insights into personal impressions of the battlefields by individual travellers; and a detailed analysis makes it possible

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Servicemen' in Meyer, Jessica (ed.), *British Popular Culture and the First World War* (Leiden, Brill, 2008), pp. 217-36.

[4] For the handling of personal memories which potentially conflicted with wider social narratives, see Ashplant T.G. et al 'The politics of war memory and commemoration: contexts, structures and dynamics' in Ashplant, T.G. et al (eds.), *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (London, Routledge, 2000), pp. 18-20.

[5] Veterans' association journals are another potentially rich source of accounts, though they are excluded here on the basis that again they were, by definition, published.

to track points of intersection and divergence both between individual accounts, and between these accounts and other historical sources. This chapter will focus on six principal sources.

The first is the 'Diary of Charles Hunt', held in Durham Archives.[6] Hunt was born in 1898 in Bishop Auckland, and was brought up in County Durham by his mother and step-father.[7] He worked as a miner both before and after the war, but despite his working-class background, he had what his grand-daughter described as 'a good education' which is reflected in his evocative writing style. During the conflict he served with the 1/6th Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry, and after the war both he and his wife were active in the Swallwell branch of the British Legion. Hunt's account relates to the British Legion Pilgrimage of 1928, at which he appears to have represented his branch, and seems to be the text of a talk for branch members written in 1929.[8]

Edith Smith provided a different perspective on the same British Legion Pilgrimage in her account, written in autumn 1928. Born in 1890, she was a teacher at Long Sutton School between 1924 and 1950. She referred to her husband in her account, but there is no indication of what Mr Smith did in the war, and it seems they attended the pilgrimage from general interest rather than to commemorate a lost loved one. Like Charles Hunt, her handwritten

[6] 'Diary of Charles Hunt', 1929, in Durham Archives [D/DLI Acc: 8873]. Hereafter: Hunt.
[7] Personal communication from Liz Bregazzi, County Archivist, 20 March 2018.
[8] Personal communication from Carol Hunt, Charles' grand-daughter, 20 March 1918.

account appears to be in the form of notes for a talk, perhaps to her school students.[9]

Tom Sams, a First World War naval veteran, made a pilgrimage to the grave of his brother Jim at Villers-aux-Bois in August 1926. He left no account of his visit, but a file at the IWM contains photos of the pilgrimage, and a postcard which he wrote to his father shortly before visiting Jim's grave.[10]

The private papers of C. Royston (Roy) Jones include a scrap-book kept by his mother.[11] Jones served in the 1/15th Battalion, The London Regiment (Civil Service Rifles), and was killed in the fighting around High Wood in September 1916. The scrapbook includes letters, maps and other documents sent home by Roy, interspersed with newspaper reports, commentary, and consoling quotes presumably chosen by his mother as part of her grieving process. Mr and Mrs Jones made a visit to Roy's training barracks in autumn 1918, before the conflict had ended; while Mr Jones, perhaps travelling without his wife but probably with a wider group, visited the battlefields of France in 1920. Accounts of both journeys are given in the scrapbook.

[9] 'Personal account of Mrs Edith Annie Smith's attendance at the Battlefields Pilgrimage, 1928' in Somerset Heritage Centre archives [DD/X/SIM 4]. Biographical information included with the archival holding. Hereafter: Smith.
[10] 'Private Papers of J Sams', 1914-1926, in the archives of the Imperial War Museum [Documents.12541]. Hereafter: Sams.
[11] 'Private Papers of C R Jones', 1914-1920, in the archives of the Imperial War Museum [Documents.13273]. Hereafter: Jones.

The Imperial War Museums' photographic archive also contains a variety of image collections related to battlefield pilgrimages across the 1920s. Some are part of wider image collections, such as the British Empire Service League's photo library.[12] Others are in private collections, sometimes organised in albums or books with text; some in amongst collections which are otherwise related to wartime service; and in one instance in a set of lantern slides used for public presentations.[13] Although the photos are not always captioned, and so their locations and dates can be problematic, they provide a visual counterpoint to written descriptions in the other sources.

Finally, this chapter draws on the Bickersteth diaries.[14] Although these have been widely used for studying religious changes during and after the war, they have been less comprehensively exploited as a source on battlefield landscapes.[15] The compiler of the diaries, Ella Bickersteth, was married to the influential clergyman Samuel Bickersteth. The family were a well-connected upper-middle-class clerical family (one of their sons was at Rugby School with Rupert Brooke). They had six sons, five of whom served in the war; the diary draws principally on the letters of Julian (an army chaplain)

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[12] Imperial War Museum [Q47900-47915], various dates.

[13] See Imperial War Museum: collection of Capt. W. Scobell [2005-03-08]; collection of Capt. T. P. Watson [8408-13]; collection of temporary Lt.Col. Leslie Parkin [2014-01-10]; collection of Lt. E. A. R. Bousfield [8207-3]; collection of Maj-Gen J. C. Latter [PC1213]; collection of Mr Ken Williams [2008-01-30]; collection of J. N. Maas [8911-28]; collection of Miss Kathleen Lamb [HU98272-98288]; collection of Mrs Ethel Somers [2011-02-15].

[14] 'Bickersteth Diaries' in the archives of Churchill College, Cambridge [Bick 1/1-1/10]. Hereafter: Bick.

[15] The most comprehensive review is in Jalland, Pat, *Death in War and Peace: Loss and Grief in England 1914-1970* (Oxford, OUP, 2010), pp. 60-82. Jalland references changes to the battlefield landscape, though her particular interest is in the varying responses of men and women, and to how responses to military deaths differ from those to civilian deaths.

and Burgon (a cavalry officer in the 1st (Royal) Dragoons).[16] It is not unproblematic as a source: Ella selected and edited the letters before they went into the diary, and interspersed them with her own editorial comment. In addition, although unpublished at the time,[17] given the social standing of the family there must be the possibility that it was envisaged as a potentially public record. Although it falls outside the collections catalogued in the IWM or TNA archive, it is included here as a rich source of information on changes to the battlefield landscape. One or more Bickersteth family members made battlefield visits in 1915, 1917, 1919 (twice), 1921, 1926 and 1929, always including the area around Serre where Morris Bickersteth fought and died; as such, the diary provides a unique commentary through time on how one small portion of battlefield landscape changed.

This chapter uses these sources to show that the experience of individual pilgrims changed significantly between 1914 and 1929, as the battlefields were tidied up and the detritus of war disappeared, to be replaced in some locations by the neat cemeteries and memorials of the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC). It argues that reactions to these changes in the landscape were not uniform – sometimes being celebrated and sometimes mourned. It will also show that, whilst it became more difficult to find preserved sections of authentic battlefield, some visitors (and in particular veterans) made concerted attempts to access particular parts of the

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[16] For biographical information, see Bickersteth, John (ed.), *The Bickersteth Diaries 1914-1918* (London, Leo Cooper, 1995), pp. ix-xx.
[17] Bickersteth, *Diaries*, was first published in 1995, but represents a highly abridged version. In fact, it contains very little of the information related to pilgrimage as it focuses on 1914-1918.

landscape significant to them – and that these, often unmarked by memorials, continued to carry an emotional charge.

Wartime visits to the battlefields

As argued in section B, perceptions of the battlefields were being shaped during the war by journalists and others who had the opportunity to visit. Though it was generally impossible for ordinary civilians to make the same journey before the end of the war, some got close to the battlefields. In 1915, Ralph Bickersteth (one of Ella and Samuel's boys), was taken seriously ill in the trenches with appendicitis, and was evacuated to Le Tréport. Ella and Samuel set out on a journey to visit him in hospital, which was far from easy. There were visas and bureaucracy to be negotiated, which was tricky even for a well-connected family such as theirs; a potentially difficult crossing of the Channel to make; and complicated onward transport arrangements from the coast to the hospital itself. If pilgrimage as a concept is partly characterised by difficult journeys, then the Bickersteth journey of 1915 is a case in point.[18] It might be assumed that the motivation for enduring such a journey would be concern for their sick son, and the fear that this might be a final meeting. This would certainly be in keeping with the higher purpose of travel envisaged in post-war guidebooks like the Michelin guides. In fact, by the time they travelled, the Bickersteths already knew that Ralph's operation had been successful, and the worst was over.[19] A key

[18] Bick, pp. 719-742.
[19] Ibid., p. 747.

motivation seems to have been seeing the war at close-hand, be it the submarine nets in the Channel or the chats with officers which allowed Rev. Bickersteth to draw some personal conclusions about the conduct of the war.[20] Real concern about the survival of sick loved ones was a motivation for many wartime visitors – indeed, the diary refers to some such visitors whom Ella and Samuel encounter. But the diary suggests that these were not the only experience: the spectrum of prosaic and higher motivations existed comfortably side-by-side, with pilgrimage and sight-seeing overlapping as motivations. It was not just civilian visitors who combined prosaic realities with pilgrim-style journeys. Julian Bickersteth, while still serving as an army chaplain in October 1918, visited the ruins of Cambrai, then well behind the lines. He and his colleagues walked through the largely deserted city to the Cathedral, where the debris of war was mixed up with the desecrations of the Germans. But having paid their respects, very much like ordinary tourists they 'went and sat on comfortable garden seats and ate our sandwiches – the war might have been, and really is, of course, now far away.'[21] Even while the war was still raging, albeit some distance away, the sacred experience of the ruined church rubbed shoulders with the profanity of a picnic, though this experience may have been conditioned by the fact that these were military men.

This is not to argue that wartime pilgrimages were without moments of intense emotion. In September 1918, Mr and Mrs Jones, who had lost their

[20] Ibid., pp. 742, 762-3.
[21] Bickersteth, *Diaries*, p.287.

son Roy at High Wood in 1916, made a pilgrimage to his former training barracks in Putney and Wimbledon. Mrs Jones compared in her mind's eye the sad scene of 1918, with the one of elation which Roy had described on his deployment in 1915. Where his barracks used to be, 'the men of the infantry come no more, unless it be the ghost of the dear departed drawn to sweet [indecipherable] in these shady lanes.'[22] After listening to a military band made up in part of wounded soldiers, they made their way 'sadly home to remembrance and regret'.[23] Although they had not visited the site of their son's death or even left the British Isles, Mrs Jones described a profoundly emotional experience associated with being located somewhere he knew well. Out on the battlefields in spring 1917, Julian Bickersteth reported a similarly emotional experience, also in a location which was only tangentially associated with the man he was mourning – in this case, his brother Morris, killed on 1 July 1916 at Serre. Although Morris' body had been recovered, Julian was unable to get to the location of its burial, so stood instead 'within a few yards of where [he] must have been when he was struck.'[24] There, as an army chaplain but also as a grieving brother, he conducted an impromptu burial service, concluding by casting earth to all four corners of the compass. 'It was a privilege to be allowed to do even this, exactly nine months after the day [of his death].'[25]

Post-war guidebooks and published accounts often sought to position visiting the battlefields as a journey with a higher educative, spiritual or emotional

[22] Jones, entry for Sept 18th 1918.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Bickersteth, *Diaries*, p. 169.
[25] Ibid., p. 169.

purpose. But during the war itself, those visiting the battlefields seem to have moved along a spectrum from the elevated to the everyday, without obvious problems or sense of impropriety.[26] It is a theme which was to continue in post-war activity as well.

Pilgrimage in the early post-war years

Visitors arrived on the battlefields almost as soon as the war ended.[27] It is difficult from the available evidence to establish what range of expectations they had, but it is clear that they certainly had some preconceptions. Charles Jones, Roy's father, visited France in the first half of 1920, and commented almost with disappointment on arriving in Boulogne that '[it] did not seem much knocked about by the bombardments, air raids etc & there were no ruined buildings noticeable'.[28] Clearly what he expected to find and what he saw were not the same thing. Later in his journey, he witnessed plenty of destruction as he toured the former front lines, and between Arras and Bapaume, and again approaching Peronne, he commented on how the landscape 'looked like Nevinson's picture',[29] suggesting that war art had

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[26] Lennon and Foley suggest that, for dark tourism in general, a more pronounced phasing is usually evident, with a respectful/mourning phase followed only later by visits for the purely curious. This thesis challenges that interpretation, at least in relation to the battlefields of the First World War. See Lennon, J. J. and Foley, M., *Dark Tourism: The attraction of death and disaster* (London, Continuum, 2000), p. 10.
[27] Walton compares the speedy onset of tourism with similarly rapid interest in visiting Waterloo. Walton, John, 'War and tourism: the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' in Butler, Richard, and Suntikul, Wantanee (eds.), *Tourism and War* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2013), p. 70.
[28] Jones, account of 1920 pilgrimage [unnumbered pages].
[29] Jones, account of 1920 pilgrimage [unnumbered pages]. Presumably he is referring to Nevinson's 1917 oil painting 'The Road from Arras to Bapaume', now in the collection of the Imperial War Museum (see figure 7). Nevinson had first-hand experience of the battlefields during the war from his time working with the Friends' Ambulance Unit and later the Royal Army Medical Corps. See Haycock, David Boyd, A *Crisis of Brilliance: Five Young British Artists and the Great* War (London, Old Street Publishing Ltd., 2010), pp. 206-8 & 233.

some impact on what he expected to see, and became a way of validating the authenticity of his experience (Figure 7).

[Image redacted, unable to obtain copyright]

Figure 7: 'The Road from Arras to Bapaume' by C.R.W. Nevinson (1917), Imperial War Museums [IWM.ART.516].

For the Bickersteths too, making a family visit for the first time to Morris' grave on 1 July 1919, certain tropes were already established. On the battlefield at Serre, Ella wrote that the onset of rain during their visit 'made the scene all the more realistic, as three years ago the rain had been

persistent.'[30] In fact, 1 July 1916 had been sunny, but the image of rain and mud in the trenches seems to have influenced her impressions. Later, the family visited Monchy-Le-Preux where Burgon had served in April 1917 and Ella reported that 'she lived over again in imagination those awful days in the open, subject to a blizzard of snow, through which Burgon had passed.'[31] Whilst this time the weather conditions are borne out by historical accounts, it is nonetheless striking how a vivid image has implanted itself in her mind from previous imaginings, so that she could readily call that image to mind when standing on the spot where it happened.[32]

Notwithstanding Charles Jones' mild disappointment at the intact cityscape in Boulogne, most visitors quickly encountered the detritus of war. Capt Scobell's image from summer 1920 (figure 8) shows not only a damaged barn and a discarded duck-board, but also huge quantities of thick barbed wire with which the battlefield visitor was confronted. Presented finally with similar scenes of wreckage in Arras in 1920, Charles Jones suggested it 'presents the most desolate & numbing spectacle it is possible to imagine … a feeling of depression.'[33] There is a visceral emotional response to the wreckage, which here at least is not tempered by any sign of rebuilding or regeneration.[34]

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[30] Bick., p. 3329.
[31] Bick., p. 3332. Carden-Coyne observes how such 'repeated visual languages' (in her case of dismemberment) became part of cultural memory in the post-war years. See Carden-Coyne, Ana, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism and the First World War* (Oxford, OUP, 2009), p. 83.
[32] Revd Bickersteth describes a similar experience at Serre, Bick., p. 3347. For 'imaginative precursors' to battlefield visits, see Miles, 'Hastings to Ypres', p. 228. For Ypres as an imagined landscape, see Connelly 'Ypres League', p. 43.
[33] Jones, account of 1920 pilgrimage [unnumbered pages].
[34] Julian Bickersteth also noted a lack of any significant rebuilding in Arras, Bick., 11 Feb 1919.

[Image redacted, unable to obtain copyright]

Figure 8: The detritus of war – a barn, barbed wire and duckboard. Collection of Capt W Scobell (June 1920), Imperial War Museums [2005-03-08]

Given the devastation in some parts of the battlefields, such strong reactions are unsurprising. The photo of Hulluch in the collection of Lt.Col. Parkin (figure 9) shows a desert-like landscape in which it is difficult to gain much sense of perspective; it echoes the passages in the Michelin guides which describe formlessness and chaos. Such landscapes were still regularly yielding up bodies in the early 1920s, and Ella Bickersteth described being prevented from visiting one corner of the cemetery at Vermelles, because 'bodies, brought in from the surrounding battlefields, were being re-interred.'[35] Her diary is silent on how she felt about this prohibition, but the fact that the horrors of war were close to the surface (metaphorically and in this case quite literally) is palpable.

[35] Bick., p. 3335.

[Image redacted, unable to obtain copyright]

Figure 9: 'Hulloch'[sic]. Collection of Temporary Lt.Col. Parkin (May 1922), Imperial War Museum [2014-01-10]

Battlefield visitors, however, seemed equally ready to note and approve of restoration of the landscape where it was taking place. Mr Jones on his 1920 visit commented on fields under cultivation on his train journey from the coast to Arras, while in the Lens area there were 'no mines working yet but everywhere building going on fast.'[36] As early as July 1919, the Bickersteths noted people living in their cellars in Albert, where townspeople together with German prisoners were busy clearing up the debris.[37]

In the years immediately after the conflict, travellers' narratives described landscapes which varied greatly with time and location, and which were

[36] Jones, account of 1920 pilgrimage [unnumbered pages].
[37] Bick, p. 3325.

sometimes difficult to interpret. While occasionally there were signs of regeneration, often there were few, and in some locations the brutality of war was reflected in its grim legacy of bodies or formless landscapes. Often, preconceptions formed by wartime writers or artists explicitly shaped their accounts.[38] In this context, the relationship of pilgrims to graves is equally complex. Julian Bickersteth, who had been unable to get to his brother Morris' grave in 1917, was able to do so in spring 1919, when he made a reconnaissance visit ahead of the family pilgrimage in the summer. He commented on the war-torn landscape, and how difficult it was to pass through it, noting that it took ten minutes to walk from the four copses at Serre to the cemetery, a walk which today would take just a couple of minutes.[39] The cemetery was a mess, 'many of the crosses are destroyed by shrapnel and the cemetery has evidently not yet been reached by the Graves Registration people since the Armistice.'[40] The cross on Morris' grave, he said, was broken part way up the stem, and he pushed it back into place as best he could, not so much as a sign of respect as to ensure that in the evident chaos 'there is no fear of it being removed' and the location of burial lost.[41] In fact, Julian refrained from photographing the cemetery, partly as it was raining, but also because 'the spot does not lend itself as yet to being photographed.'[42] The landscape of the cemetery, he went on to note, had transported him momentarily back to the horrors of war; he valued

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[38] For a good overview of the work of war artists such as Nevinson, Nash, Spencer and Gertler, and how they depicted the front, see Haycock, *Crisis*.
[39] Bick., 28th April 1919.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.

visiting his brother's grave, but his feelings towards the disordered cemetery wavered between respect and disquiet.

His reluctance to photograph the scene was not to spare the family's feelings – as a few months later he was back there with his mother, father and brother Burgon. Little had changed. Ella herself commented on the overgrown and neglected nature of the cemetery, while her husband Samuel went so far as to acknowledge that the cross might not even mark Morris' resting place.[43] Visiting the grave was an important part of the family pilgrimage, and they conducted a short ceremony and laid flowers they brought from home. But what they did next was equally significant:

> We turned away and tried to find the actual spot where Morris fell … The trenches were filled in but we could trace Warly trench and what must have been the assembly trench. The long pollarded willows (our front line) were still there and so we identified our bit of holy ground.[44]

Two features are striking here. First, that in the chaos of 1919, where cemeteries were crude and the marked sites of burial were not even definitive, the likely place of death exerted an equally strong pull. Second, that the location where Morris died, rather than the one where he was buried, is accorded the term 'holy ground', one which would not have been used lightly by a religious family. In 1919 at least, the place of combat and death

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[43] Ibid., pp. 3329 & 3349.
[44] Ibid., p. 3329. For more on the transformation of battlefields to 'Holy Ground' during the war, see Bushaway, Bob, 'Name upon name: The Great War and Remembrance', in Porter, Roy (ed), *Myths of the English* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1993), Fig. 2.

seemed at least as important as the place of burial. It is significant that when the family visited again in 1921, the graveyard (though still with wooden crosses) was tidy, and they were led there by an IWGC worker; by this later date, the focus of the account was firmly on the gravesite: 'Mother laid her flowers on Morris' grave and we stayed there about 20 minutes.'[45]

Whether it was graves, sites of combat, or other locations, visitors in this early period of battlefield tourism often attached great importance to locating themselves at a site of personal significance – and that was particularly true of veterans. The caption on a photograph sent to J. N. Maas by a wartime colleague (figure 10) is at pains not just to indicate that the photographer stood at the exact spot of their erstwhile billet, but to make sure the viewer could also accurately identify where that was, using the obligingly positioned workman on the roof as a marker. The photograph shows a scene which would be entirely unremarkable were it not for the wartime significance. The Bickersteths also undertook a very similar exercise in July 1919 when, before visiting Morris' grave, they located his billet in a small farm building, and even peered through the window to see the mess and bedroom.[46]

[45] Bick., Untitled account of the 1921 visit to France, written by Burgon, p. 4.
[46] Bick., p. 3326.

[Image redacted, unable to obtain copyright]

Figure 10: 'Feuchy – The cottage where our mess was for some time. Stood where the cart is standing. The man on the roof is on the exact site.' Collection of J N Maas, Imperial War Museums [8911-28]

Previous chapters have noted the varying attitudes taken to the Germans at different points and by different writers. These very early battlefield visitors themselves sometimes experienced conflicting emotions. Revd Bickersteth passed through Albert in his summer 1919 visit and saw:

> Hun prisoners of war marching hither and thither to get their mid-day meal under the control of two or three armed British Tommies. Such forced labour satisfied the instincts of outraged freedom[47]

[47] Ibid., p. 3344.

There is a clear sense of righteous vengefulness in his words, as the Germans are both physically and financially forced to make good the damage of the war. But by Burgon's account of the 1921 visit, the focus of restoring the French landscape had shifted entirely: German prisoners had now gone home, and instead he focused on the aid being given by Canterbury to Morval and Lesboeufs through a twinning project.[48] Restoration was now about post-war healing and alliances, rather than punishment and enmity.

The complex motivations and reactions seen in the examples of wartime pilgrimage which opened this chapter continued into the visits of 1919 and the early 1920s. Visitors' experiences of battlefields were still highly varied. They encompassed total destruction and formlessness of landscape, as well as areas of gradual reconstruction; the beginnings of carefully tended cemeteries with others where improvement was slower, and all against the background of regular burials of newly discovered or moved bodies. Co-locating oneself with a site of personal significance was important, and in the early days such sites were only sometimes gravesites; they also included battlefields, billets, training grounds and others. As time passed, and these other sites were erased or repurposed, graves came to occupy a more dominant place on the itinerary. Reactions to the gradual transition and tidying of the landscape were complex: Julian Bickersteth, for example, did not condemn the chaos of the 1919 cemetery even while he declined to photograph it, nor did Mr Jones pass a negative judgment on the chaos of

[48] Bick., Untitled account of the 1921 visit to France, written by Burgon, p. 3.

Arras, for all that it provoked strong emotions. On the other hand, Burgon seemed to welcome the degree of order which was brought to Morris' grave by 1921, and the assistance of the IWGC worker in finding the grave. What is clear is that, even as early as 1919, there were concerns that in the future, if not in the present, the increase of tourism posed a threat to the authenticity of the battlefield experience. As Ella Bickersteth noted in Ypres towards the end of her summer 1919 visit to the battlefields, 'We were thankful to be there before tourists invade the place.'[49] It is a concern which continued and grew during the 1920s.[50]

Pilgrimage in the mid-1920s

By the mid-1920s, the IWGC's work was proceeding at pace, both in the creation of ordered cemeteries with uniform headstones, and in the erection of memorials. As was apparent in the St Barnabas yearbooks, the larger cemeteries used for acts of remembrance on their tours were certainly well-ordered and maintained by this point, as the numerous references to rows of white headstones, manicured turf and teams of gardeners testified. Two photos in the Sams family pilgrimage file also reflect this. The first shows Jim Sams' grave as it originally appeared immediately after the war, with a rough earth mound over his body, and a simple wooden cross.[51] The second, taken on the occasion of his brother's pilgrimage in 1926, shows a figure

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[49] Bick., pp. 3337-8.
[50] As indicated above, in reality the distinction between pilgrim and tourist was often largely in the mind; one was a pilgrim, it was others who were tourists. See Lloyd, David, *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada, 1919-1939* (Oxford, Berg, 1998), pp. 40-7.
[51] Sams, loose photo. Unfortunately there is no date given on the image.

kneeling by a grave which is marked by a standard headstone in a well-tended IWGC cemetery.[52] The cemeteries that visitors experienced were often very different in 1926 from a few years earlier.[53]

The Bickersteths encountered another startling change on their 1926 pilgrimage (their most recent previous visit had been in 1921). Arriving in Ypres in the late afternoon, they 'were amazed to find the Grand Place entirely rebuilt. The postcards and photographs accompanying these notes will shew [sic] how complete the resurrection has been.'[54] Only the Cloth Hall remained in ruins, though even that had been 'tidied up and made safe'.[55] Burgon went on to comment on the restoration of the landscape in the wider Salient as well, stating that 'it is more than a resurrection. It is a complete transformation.'[56] What is significant here is not just their surprise at the scale of the restoration, but also that it is evidenced in part by tourist postcards. The tourist invasion foreseen by Ella in 1919 was now clearly established. However, although they were surprised, there is no sense of condemnation anywhere in Burgon's description – he merely noted the change.[57] Indeed, the family were clearly willing to engage in tourist

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[52] Sams, loose photo, captioned 'At Jim's grave, Aug 1926'.
[53] Sidney Hurst's 1929 survey of IWGC cemeteries in France and Belgium, for which photos were presumably taken during the mid-late 1920s, still shows some cemeteries partially incomplete, though all seem well-ordered and curated, with little evidence of battlefield detritus. See Hurst, S.C., *The Silent Cities: An Illustrated Guide to the War Cemeteries and Memorials to the "Missing" in France and Flanders 1914-191*8 (London, Methuen, 1929).
[54] Bick., 'Short account of a tour of part of the battlefields by Monier, Kitty, Julian and myself [Burgon] from Tuesday 29th June to Friday 2nd July 1926', unnumbered pages.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.. Similar observations are made elsewhere in his account, for example on the disappearance of trenches and dug-outs at Souchez.
[57] Mosse suggests that many pilgrims to the battlefield deplored such changes; these accounts would appear to suggest a more nuanced reaction. See Mosse, George, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York, OUP, 1990), p. 113.

activities, buying postcards, and later diverting from their battlefield itinerary for a morning of sightseeing in Bruges.

Alongside the physical transformation of the battlefield, there was an emerging mythologization of it: this was seen occasionally in the guidebooks, where a description of the landscape was patently untrue in a literal sense, but pointed to a deeper emotional interpretation of what was being viewed. Pausing outside West Roosebek, just north of Passchendaele village, Burgon described a stunning view of the battlefield landscape, itemising in a long list all the places he could see, including places as far spread as Poperinghe, Boesinghe, Cassel, Zandvoorde and Hill 60. He described this as if it were a literal view: 'It was a perfect evening and the view was one of the most moving I remember ever having seen.'[58] And yet it is entirely implausible – even on a clear day and on the high ground of the Passchendaele ridge, it would not be possible to see all these locations. The reason for this unlikely description is perhaps provided by the commentary that follows:

> Every village shone spick and span and new in the evening sun. Every now and again shining white among the amazing crops or a group of red roofed farms we could catch sight of cemeteries with their white cross and headstones, or some great War Memorial like that at St Julien or the Australian obelisk near Hill 60. What memories! They were too deep for words.[59]

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[58] Bick., 'Short account of a tour of part of the battlefields by Monier, Kitty, Julian and myself [Burgon] from Tuesday 29th June to Friday 2nd July 1926', unnumbered pages.
[59] Ibid.

Several different layers of landscape are encapsulated in this description: the rebuilt domestic landscape of the shining Belgian villages; the emerging commemorative landscape of the cemeteries and memorials; and the wartime landscape of Burgon's own memories. His description, though literally implausible, reads as an attempt to unite in a single glance present and past experiences of the Ypres Salient. So to some extent, by 1926, accounts suggest that a more homogeneous experience of the landscape is being described by pilgrims than in earlier years. Memories still framed the views for those who fought there; but the physical environment is characterised by increasing reconstruction and tourist infrastructure, and the history of the war is increasingly being told by the pristine cemeteries and memorials.

However, whilst that structured narrative of cemeteries and memorials was starting to dominate, it was by no means the only one. Alongside the two photos of the contrasting grave in the Sams papers is a postcard from Tom to his father, sent during his 1926 pilgrimage to his brother's grave. The postcard shows a memorial to the Canadian artillery at Vimy, and on the back are the simple words:

> Dear Dad, Your friends and myself are spending a week here. I am taking up a wreath to lay on poor Jim's grave. It does bring it home very forcibly. Will write again. Love from Tom.[60]

[60] Sams, postcard to Mr J Sams, 9 Ellingfort Road, Hackney.

To some extent, this note is entirely in keeping with the emerging landscape narrative set out above. Tom used a commercially produced postcard; it featured a memorial, part of the nascent commemorative landscape; and it referred to a grave visit which, as we know from the separate photograph, would involve leaving a wreath at a perfectly maintained IWGC grave. And yet, the brief, clipped phrase 'It does bring it home very forcibly' seems to allude to a welter of unwritten emotional responses.[61] These responses *precede* the grave visit, which is still to come; the graveside may be the focal point of the visit, its emotional apogee, but whatever wider experience of the landscape Tom had undergone had also prompted an emotional response. Sadly, there is no more detail in the file as to the itinerary; but what is very clear from these few brief words is that the grave visit was only a small part of their week-long travels, and that there was much in the wider landscape to prompt an emotional response.

In fact, it is clear from the Bickersteth diaries that the landscape of 1926, though substantially restored, did not yet represent the curated and organised landscape which visitors see today, or experienced in the later 1920s and early 1930s. Burgon went to Vermelles in 1926 to visit the grave of his uncle, Gordon Jelf. The cemetery in many ways fitted the now emerging pattern, 'perfectly lovely with well kept grass and beds filled with bright coloured English flowers.' But it was not yet a finished picture: 'the Cross of Sacrifice was not completed nor were some of the boundary

[61] Fletcher similarly underscores the importance of 'reading between the lines' in soldiers' wartime letters in order to find the emotional content. See Fletcher, Anthony, *Life, Death and Growing Up on the Western Front* (London, Yale University Press, 2013), p. 75.

walls.'[62] It is striking here that Burgon did not simply observe that the cemetery was unfinished; rather, he was now sufficiently familiar with the design of the cemeteries that he was able to identify what was not there. The pattern for the future landscape may have been very clear, but it was by no means yet ubiquitous. The same is true when the party went on to visit Morris' grave at Serre: 'Little had been done to cultivate the soil in the immediate vicinity of these small isolated cemeteries…The grass is long, and bushes and weeds grow at will.'[63] Here again there was a wire fence rather than a wall, and no headstones. Whilst some of the cemeteries, particularly the large ones, were now organised, it seems that many of the smaller ones, to which individual pilgrims seeking a loved one might travel, were still little changed from the immediate aftermath of the war. In addition, whilst the battlefield near the cemetery was also being overgrown, it was still recognisable: 'The shell holes are gradually filling up but are still visible.'[64]
By 1926, then, these reports of visiting the battlefields suggest a range of experiences of the landscape. In some areas repair and regeneration were visible, and in some cemeteries the IWGC design had been implemented; but it was still not uncommon to discover cemeteries which had changed little, and sections of battlefield still recognisable as such. By the late 1920s the trend towards restored towns, organised cemeteries, and curated battlefield areas had continued; while at the same time it became increasingly important, for veterans in particular, to strike out themselves and discover authentic sections of wartime landscape.

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[62] Bick., 'Short account of a tour of part of the battlefields by Monier, Kitty, Julian and myself [Burgon] from Tuesday 29th June to Friday 2nd July 1926', unnumbered pages.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

The British Legion pilgrimage of 1928

In summer 1928, the British Legion organised a pilgrimage for all its branches to commemorate ten years since the war's end. Falling in early August, it also enabled a commemoration of the outbreak of the war, and the opening of the Battle of Amiens which finally brought the conflict to a close. Thousands of veterans, war widows and others among the bereaved travelled in parties from across the country, organised with military efficiency and in military style (for example travelling groups were referred to as 'companies').[65] The pilgrimage was comprised of two strands. The first was a series of set-piece visits which everyone attended: these included Beaumont Hamel memorial park (preserved and curated at this point by the government of Newfoundland); Vimy Ridge (where the preserved trenches had been opened up to the public, though the Canadian memorial was still only at the level of foundations); and the culmination of the pilgrimage, an act of remembrance under the Menin Gate, which had opened the previous year.[66] The second strand was more personalised: pilgrims were able to visit graves, and to this end hugely complex travel arrangements were laid on to

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[65] Ashplant et al argue that since the 1980s, a growing public and media interest in marking anniversaries of conflict has fuelled commemorative activity. Whilst it is perhaps true that there was a decline in such interest at points in the twentieth century, the Legion pilgrimage suggests that people were attuned to a number of significant anniversaries as early as 1928, if not before. See Ashplant et al, 'Politics', pp. 3-85.

[66] The IWM has a number of files which shed light on the arrangements for the pilgrimage, including "British Legion Battlefield Pilgrimage" [K.80840]; "Battlefields Pilgrimage 1928" [60002]; "Papers relating to the British Legion Battlefield Pilgrimage to the Western Front Battlefields in August 1928" [Documents.8652]. For the organisation of local parties, see "Battlefields Pilgrimage Correspondence File" in Cheshire Archives and Local Studies [CR 164/274]. For a more recent analysis of the pilgrimage, see Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism,*, in particular Chapter 4.

facilitate transport, often for very small numbers of pilgrims, to whichever cemeteries they had expressed an interest in visiting. Charles Hunt and Edith Smith were amongst the participants.

The journey was billed as a pilgrimage, and so it is unsurprising that the language and ideas of pilgrimage carry through to the personal accounts. On his opening page, Hunt wrote that he was travelling 'in the spirit of a true pilgrim';[67] if pilgrimage involves effort on the part of the travellers, he certainly made huge exertions on his journey, often getting up early or staying up late to visit cemeteries on behalf of colleagues unable to make the journey.[68] Pilgrimage was not a politically neutral act for Hunt: he suggested that many of the social problems affecting veterans and others at home were caused by the loss of the comradely spirit of the war, and that if only every person in England could visit the battlefields in the spirit of a pilgrimage, then the social situation would improve.[69] These two notions of pilgrimage – the quiet reflection on the battlefield, and the commentary on social problems back in Britain – were not in tension. Rather, Hunt slipped easily back and forth between these two levels of commentary. It is a more nuanced view of

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[67] Hunt, p.1.

[68] Hunt, pp. 10-11, 24 & 30-31. Bushaway argues that pilgrimage was about remembering for oneself, as well as for those unable to make the trip; see 'Name upon Name', pp. 151-2.

[69] Hunt, pp. 9 & 28-9. The notion that pilgrimage could help address domestic social problems deserves further study, but is outside the scope of this thesis. For emerging links at home between Armistice Day events and social issues in the 1920s, see Connelly, Mark, *The Great War, Memory and Ritual: Commemoration in the City and East London 1916-1939* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2002), pp. 150-76. For the role of UK memorials as advocates to good citizenship, see King, Alex, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford, Berg, 1998), pp.195-200. For how lessons learned in the war could help address social and class tensions, especially via the clergy, see Parker, Linda, *Shellshocked Prophets: Former Anglican Army Chaplains in Inter-War Britain* (Solihull, Helion & Company, 2015), especially pp.47-88, 191-204. For problems experienced by veterans' associations in recruiting members and retaining wartime camaraderie, see Bourke, Joanna, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London, Reaktion Books Ltd, 1996), pp. 153-6.

'journey with a purpose' than was seen in some of the post-war guidebooks, with their emphasis on travelling in the right frame of mind and understanding the moral lessons of the battlefield.

For Edith Smith, as a non-combatant, pilgrimage seems to have been partly about sharing in the wartime hardship of the soldiers. Commenting on how tough the itinerary was for some of the participants, she suggested that 'Power must have been given to these men and women who sort of felt "Well, they stuck it, & so must we," & so, on they trudged.'[70] But unlike other accounts, where the focal point was the visit to a particular grave, Smith concluded her account by citing a different motivation: 'Not a pilgrimage to visit the tomb of <u>one</u> man as in olden times, but to pay homage to the <u>hundreds</u> of <u>thousands</u> who gave their lives…'.[71] Again, this is not a simple view of pilgrimage related to visiting an individual grave; it is about a desire to understand the wider conflict, and to engage in a collective act of commemoration. If, as the Michelin guides argued, visiting the battlefields was about travelling with a purpose and seeking to understand as well as see, then by 1928 the perceived purposes of pilgrimage were many, and the understandings which pilgrims sought and experienced were varied, encompassing individual grave visits, wider commemoration, building an understanding of the conflict, or relating the lessons of that conflict to contemporary social problems.

[70] Smith, p.20.
[71] Smith, p. 34, emphasis in original.

These purposes were not at odds with more prosaic activities. Hunt enjoyed a firework display laid on in Arras, which had little to do with commemoration; indeed, he wryly noted the irony of using explosives as a form of entertainment, opining that 'it was fun to hear the ZIPP and Bangs & to know that you needn't duck.'[72] The IWM file on the south-western pilgrimage party refers to a cricket match between the IWGC and a Brussels team as part of the programme,[73] while a travelling show laid on for the pilgrimage by The Ganders included humorous songs very much in the spirit of a wartime concert party.[74] An official flyer from the Cheshire archives even suggested that participants in the pilgrimage would be able not only 'to revive the memories of those trying days' but also, rather more casually, 'to have a three days holiday in France and Belgium which is three or four times cheaper than if the trip was made independently.' [75] Varied ideas of pilgrimage seem to sit easily alongside notions of tourist amusement and holidays; and responses to the changed landscape of battle by 1928 are equally nuanced. Like earlier pilgrims, Hunt and Smith highlighted changes since the immediate post-war period. Hunt found Albert very much altered, while Ypres 'wasn't the Ypres we knew'. There is a greater implied judgement than in the 1926 accounts, as Hunt lamented 'We were disappointed at Ploegsteert, things were so changed.'[76] Even the non-

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[72] Hunt, p. 23. Todman comments on the easy co-existence of apparently competing impulses in commemorative activity during the 1920s; see Todman, Dan, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London, Hambledon Continuum, 2014), especially pp. 17-22.
[73] "British Legion Pilgrimage: South Western Party" in the IWM archives [K.82702]
[74] "The British Legion Battlefield Pilgrimage: Souvenir Programme to be given by the 'Ganders' Concert Party" in the IWM archives [K57998].
[75] "Pilgrimage to the Battlefields August 1928; British Legion organises Grand Tour", in Cheshire Archives and Local Studies [CR 164/274].
[76] Hunt, pp. 29, 33 & 45. The Cheshire leaflet referred to above commented on how much the landscape had changed, as if managing pilgrims' expectations before they travelled.

combatant Smith expressed shock at the changes in Ypres, though in her case it was triggered as much by the men looking aghast as they exited the train, as by any preconceptions of her own.[77]

By 1928, both accounts positioned cemeteries as central to the pilgrimage. For Hunt, as has been mentioned, cemetery visiting was a vital part of his itinerary, often on behalf of comrades back at home. Being able to stand at the grave side had a cathartic quality, as seen amongst some of the St Barnabas pilgrims, Hunt taking time to thank those 'who made it possible for me to stand a while at the spot [near Arras] where lie the remains of one of the dearest chaps I knew.' Later, at Oxford Road cemetery near Ypres, he returned to the theme, highlighting the grave as somewhere to reconnect with fallen comrades: 'It was hard to leave this cemetery, so many of our pals lay there.'[78] He welcomed the now almost ubiquitous neatness of the cemeteries, expressing no sense of regret at the loss of the wartime burials articulated by some of the British guidebook writers.[79] Indeed, his only expressed concern about the cemeteries was the fact that some of the headstone engraving was already fading.[80] Smith takes a very similar stance, praising the IWGC cemeteries for their neatness, planting and careful maintenance.[81]

Hanson also touches on the theme of disappointed visitors, see Hanson, Neil, *The Unknown Soldier* (London, Corgi, 2007), p. 492.
[77] Smith, p. 23.
[78] Hunt, pp. 10-11 & 43.
[79] Ibid.,, pp. 12, 22 & 51.
[80] Ibid., p. 26.
[81] Smith, pp. 9-10.

When it comes to memorials and preserved battlefield landscape, the responses were more complex. By 1928, the Grange Trench system at Vimy Ridge had been preserved and opened up to visitors. A photograph in the British Empire Service League collection shows a very neat, almost sanitised section of trench system at Vimy.[82] Hunt referred to it in his account as 'reconstructed as it was in April 1917',[83] suggesting a degree of artificiality which is only amplified when he later recorded that the trench system at Beaumont Hamel 'as an insight into the actual thing is much superior to Vimy.'[84] As it was a set-piece on the itinerary, Smith's group also visited Beaumont Hamel, and she was particularly struck by the thickness and brutality of the barbed wire. At the same time, she expressed a clear sense of the site being managed, with information being provided on the plans that the government of Newfoundland had for it, and a small Canadian log hut erected near the entrance, 'exactly as one sees at the cinema'.[85] Smith paused on the veranda of the log hut and tried to imagine the scene during the Somme battle of 1916. Initially she struggled to overlay this on the sunlit scene, with the bright greenery and the lightly attired pilgrims strolling and chatting. But finally she was able to call up an imagined picture in her mind:

> A stretch of land where sunshine seemed unknown, a pitiless rain driving in sheets as it would do on that ridge, a vast expanse of mud, & shell holes which would have

[82] 'Members of the British Legion Pilgrimage to the Battlefields visit the famous Vimy Ridge section of the battle line' in the IWM archives [Q47903]
[83] Hunt, p. 19.
[84] Ibid., p. 25. Frustratingly, he does not elaborate on the differences he perceived between the two sites.
[85] Smith, p. 19. For the impact of curation on the narrative of the site, and in particular the privileging of one regiment's perspective, see Gough, P.J., 'Sites in the Imagination: the Beaumont Hamel Newfoundland Memorial on the Somme' in *Cultural Geographies*, 11, 2004, pp. 235-258.

> been filled with water, & men fighting for their lives in this seething morass, amidst the fury of the guns, gas, barbed wire & every other fiendish invention.[86]

Standing amidst an increasingly managed environment, and with no personal experience of the location in battle, Smith overlaid an entirely imagined landscape of battle onto the sunlit scene of 1928, presumably drawing on reports she had read or perhaps seen at the cinema, or maybe from one of the war exhibitions (Sanders and Taylor note the prevalence of imagery of trenches, bombardments and tanks in war scenes depicted at exhibitions).[87] The pilgrimage had allowed her to co-locate herself with a scene of battle which, though significantly changed since 1916, nonetheless provided the backdrop for an intensely personal, but imagined, act of commemoration. Smith's 1928 experience is the logical successor of Ella Bickersteth's visualisation of rain at Serre, or her imagined battle in the snow at Monchy. But it is what happens next which is most striking. Smith was interrupted from her reverie by a group of male veterans, with their own perspective on the scene, and who were 'discussing the position'. These pilgrims had a very different experience:

> The scene had so changed from deadly dull grey to brilliant colours, that although they had taken part in this engagement of [1916], they couldn't seem to place the position at all.[88]

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[86] Smith, pp. 19-20
[87] Sanders, M.L. and Taylor, Philip M., *British Propaganda and the First World War 1914-1918* (London, The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), p. 155.
[88] Smith, pp. 19-20

So changed was the landscape and the context, that those very men who fought over the space in 1916 seemed unable, as far as Smith could tell, to locate their memories within it. The tropes that emerged in some of the early battlefield accounts – of rain and mud, for example – have moved through Burgon Bickersteth's mythic description of the landscape of the Ypres Salient, to an almost entirely imagined one in 1928. It is as if the imagined landscape was as strong for the non-combatant, if not stronger, than the increasingly vanishing real one.[89]

For some veterans, however, it seems it *was* still possible in the late 1920s to get off the beaten track of the main itinerary and to reconnect with the original landscape of battle, even if this was becoming harder.[90] Indeed, the promotional leaflet in the Cheshire archive, while acknowledging that the landscape was much changed, pointed out that 'there still remain a few places where the scars of the great conflict can be seen in their entirety, and the Organisers of this Pilgrimage have rightly decided that it is such places the pilgrims wish to see, and not the reconstructed villages and towns.'[91] In fairness, the leaflet was probably referring to locations such as Vimy and Beaumont Hamel, but as Hunt attested in his account, it was possible to get

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[89] Connelly argues that in Ypres, the work of the Ypres League was central to creating an 'imagined landscape' of this kind, which successfully encapsulated a constructed meaning for visitors and the town's inhabitants. See Connelly, Mark, 'The Ypres League and the Commemoration of the Ypres Salient, 1914-1940' in *War in History*, 16 (1), 2009, pp. 43 & 61.
[90] It is a common experience even today for veterans to take a little time to reorientate themselves on a battlefield they are re-visiting [anecdotal feedback from guiding colleagues]. Lennon and Foley have explored how media and other depictions of dark tourism sites, from the First World War to the Kennedy assassination, can influence the tourist gaze; see Lennon, *Tourism*, pp. 3-4, 77-98.
[91] 'Pilgrimage to the Battlefields August 1928; British Legion organises Grand Tour', in Cheshire Archives and Local Studies [CR 164/274].

even more off the beaten track. On the ascent of Vimy Ridge, Hunt and his companions decided to make their own way up the ridge, or in his own wartime parlance, ‘do a bit of scouting’:

> Five or six of us left the main party, scrambled through the old German gun pits to the Petit Vimy Cemetery…we left the cemetery by way of La Folie Wood. Here one sees shell-holes galore and trenches too. Taking away the foliage, and one is back again, with a vengeance…[92]

The landscape may have changed – the foliage was masking the features – but in this trip away from the main group and back in an un-curated environment, there was a moment of powerful reconnection with the reality of war. Later on, at Beaumont Hamel, the group engaged in a similar exercise: ‘Although we were warned against exploring we felt that we could find a short cut over Jerry’s lines and we did.’[93] It is not that Hunt generally condemned the memorials or preserved sections of battlefield – indeed, he described the foundations of the Vimy memorial as magnificent[94] – but rather that he and his veteran colleagues wished to connect personally with what they clearly saw as more authentic wartime landscape.

This sense of the deeply personal was carried over even to some of the set-piece commemorative ceremonies. Unlike Siegfried Sassoon, who as a

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[92] Hunt, pp. 15-16.
[93] Ibid., p. 24.
[94] Ibid., pp. 17-18. Jorgensen-Earp similarly distinguished individual, vernacular memorialisation from official memorialisation in relation to the Dunblane air crash and the Oklahoma massacre; see Jorgensen-Earp, C., and Lanzilotti, L., ‘Public Memory and private grief: The construction of shrines at sites of public tragedy’, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Vol. 84, May 1998, pp. 150-170.

veteran famously loathed the Menin Gate,[95] Hunt wrote positively of it and saw the ceremony there as an emotional climax to his trip.[96] But at the same time, whilst participating in a collective act of remembrance, he described a powerfully personal experience in which he retreated, as on the battlefield at Vimy, into wartime memories:

> The address given by the Lord Archbishop of York, Archbishop elect of Canterbury, was very inspiring but I'm afraid we only heard parts of it. We saw and heard [undecipherable] things. We were back again in the mud & filth of War & finding consolation in the company of pals who the Preacher was telling us of.[97]

Hunt, it seems, though inspired by the event did not fully engage with it as listener; instead it provided a stimulus to leave the organised event and travel, this time in his mind, back into wartime memories shared with comrades. Smith, by contrast, provided a factual view of events at the Gate. Although she was not unmoved, speaking of the impressive two-minute silence, she focussed much more on the emotional reactions of others, particularly in what she saw as the uncharacteristic breaking down of some of the men.[98]

By the late 1920s, non-combatants could access both the preserved or curated landscape as it appeared at the time of their visit; and also a powerful imagined landscape, gleaned from pre-visit expectations. There is

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[95] Sassoon, Siegfried, 'On Passing the New Menin Gate' [1927-8] in Kendall, Tim (ed), *Poetry of the First World War* (Oxford, OUP, 2013), p. 101.
[96] Hunt, pp. 36-8.
[97] Ibid., p. 36.
[98] Smith, pp. 25-28.

little evidence to suggest that veterans rejected these: Burgon indulged in his own mythologizing of the landscape, and outright condemnation of the curated sites was rare. But if we can learn anything from the experience of Hunt and his colleagues, it is that veterans were keen to access a deeper connection with the un-curated landscape, finding meaning in locations off the beaten track where they could reconnect with their wartime experiences. In the early 1920s it was easier to access such locations, not least as they were widespread, and often overlaid on or adjacent to cemeteries. By the late 1920s they had become harder to find, and greater efforts were needed to identify and connect with them.

It would be too simplistic to conclude from this limited sample of accounts that veterans sought out such places, and non-combatants did not. What is clear from these accounts, however, is that by 1928 there was a clear divergence between veteran and non-combatant experience of the battlefield landscapes, though this was by no means always antagonistic. Sometimes it was a matter of different natural groupings, as when Smith described men and women splitting into distinct groups to discuss different areas of interest on the train journey: the men to relive battles, and the women to discuss the battlefield sites they were most interested in.[99] At other times, the difference in attitude is explained by a particular relationship to a location: at Poperinghe, Hunt described all the men diving out of the train, much to the

[99] Smith, p. 2.

bemusement of the women, until it was explained that this is what was necessary in wartime if one wanted to get one's rum ration.[100]

Both groups used the landscape as a way of walking in the footsteps of comrades or loved ones; not just Hunt and his colleagues, but Smith too spoke of the relief of women to be following in the footsteps of soldiers.[101] Hunt described a mother who lost her son at Vimy being determined not to take a car up the hill: ' "No, my lad was missing at Vimy Ridge. He marched this road on a Pilgrimage of War. His mother is well able to follow his steps in a Pilgrimage of Peace."'[102] The veterans knew differently: they were in fact walking up the hill in the direction the Germans took, but the observation here is benign, and no one pointed out to the mother her inauthentic interaction with the battlefield landscape. The difference in perspectives is not always so benignly expressed, however. Towards the end of the pilgrimage, when perhaps tempers were wearing thin, a woman commented on the beautiful landscape she could see from the train window, suggesting that it must have been one of the rest camps where there was no fighting.

> Quite right, Madam, said one chap, See that Corner House. I was in Hospital there, just over 10 years ago. Jerry shelled it despite the fact that the Red Cross flag flew. 20 nurses were killed in getting the wounded out. Oh, No, one only dreamt of War here.[103]

[100] Hunt, p. 32.
[101] Smith, pp. 10-11.
[102] Hunt, p. 16.
[103] Hunt, p. 47. There is no evidence that such a large loss of nurses took place on a single occasion, so presumably the speaker was engaging in some dramatic hyperbole to underscore his point.

The biting sarcasm of the response from the veteran suggests not only a very different understanding of the landscape driven by wartime memory, but also a real anger at the imagined overlay placed on it by a non-combatant. Admittedly, this type of interaction is the exception rather than the rule in accounts from the 1920s, but it does point up the increasing divergence between veteran and non-combatant perspectives on the battlefield, albeit one which is usually more benignly expressed. These accounts suggest that as real, un-curated battlefields became harder to see as the 1920s wound on, so the divergence between the remembered landscapes of the veterans and the imagined or curated landscapes accessible to non-combatants widened.

Conclusion

By the time of the final documented Bickersteth pilgrimage in 1929, the landscape had changed markedly from the early 1920s. The very title of the document, 'An account of Ralph and Alison's visit to Morris's grave and other parts of the battlefield during their holiday in Belgium in 1929', now puts the grave first, and the battlefield second, and positions the entire visit as part of a Belgian holiday.[104] Tourists were now an established feature in Ypres, so much so that the travellers arrived early to beat the rush. Rebuilding and restoration were a common theme, with detritus of war only occasionally seen. The cemetery where Morris was buried had been tidied up and properly laid out; Ralph and Alison clearly saw it as the finished product, and made diagrams of the layout for inclusion with their report, and took photographs, making good the lack to which Julian had referred in 1919.[105] Notwithstanding all that, they plunged off the beaten track and looked for Morris' front-line trench, as all previous family visitors had done.

> We were amazed to find the place untouched, after all these years, and it must be just as you and Father saw it. It has never been touched and I don't think they can do anything with it – I suppose it is so far from the track of the ordinary tourist and souvenir hunter. We walked along the first line trench as far as we could and tried to imagine the scene as it must have looked to Morris.

[104] Bick., 'An account of Ralph and Alison's visit to Morris's grave and other parts of the battlefield during their holiday in Belgium in 1929 (written by Alison)'. Compare the 1926 title which begins "Short account of a tour of part of the battlefields…".
[105] Carden-Coyne notes that responses to battlefield landscapes changed over time, and emphasises this role of cemeteries and memorials as facilitating 'vicarious experiences' by the mid-1930s. See Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing*, p. 118.

Still, in 1929 they were keen to find some authentic battlefield landscape, though whether this was driven by Ralph (the veteran) or Alison (the non-combatant) is not divulged. For all the emphasis on how little had changed, however, the tone of the last sentence reflects the increasing role of imagination in accessing wartime landscapes. Indeed, elsewhere in the account of the 1929 visit, Alison observed how hard it was for Ralph to locate himself in the ‘entirely unrecognisable’ landscape.

For reasons discussed above, the range of accounts considered here is limited, and conclusions necessarily tentative. However, taken together and viewed alongside the sources considered in other chapters, these accounts from across the 1914-29 period highlight significant changes in the battlefield landscapes seen by visitors. During the war and its immediate aftermath, battlefields and cemeteries were both visited, and the demarcation lines between the two were not clear-cut. Cemeteries still showed the scars of war; and battlefields continued to yield up their dead. The emphasis in accounts shifts gradually over the 1920s, with cemeteries, memorials and curated sites coming to have an increasing importance on the pilgrimage itinerary. However, there are important qualifications to this apparent trend. The signs of wartime damage persisted throughout the decade, and the experience of many travellers included witnessing unreconstructed cemeteries well into the 1920s. By 1928, the organised programme of the British Legion pilgrimage might appear to suggest that a structured itinerary focussed on memorials, cemeteries and curated sites had emerged; but the experiences of Hunt and his colleagues suggest an active interest, at least

among veterans, in accessing battlefield sites which are off the main tourist route.[106] It is difficult to assess from the accounts available whether non-combatants also did this; but it certainly appears from the accounts examined that imagined and curated landscapes came to dominate their experience of the battlefields by the late 1920s.

As indicated in the opening chapter of this thesis, the first Michelin battlefield guide to the Marne articulated the principle that seeing the battlefields was not enough, one must understand. Guidebooks like the Michelin series and its British rivals sought to guide that understanding with their commentary; and to some extent they helped shape the expectations of those visiting the battlefields. Personal accounts, however, have shown that individuals' actual experiences of visiting were highly nuanced – able to express their own experience while acknowledging that of others, accepting changes to the landscape whilst still searching for authentic experiences of the battlefield, and in some cases moving without apparent problem between sober commemorative ceremony and celebratory tourist activity.

[106] Even much later, in 1976, Green (a First World War veteran) described in his battlefield guidebook the moment when he rediscovered a shell-hole in which he had been medically treated on the opening day of the Third Battle of Ypres. It is, of course, questionable whether he would recognise the exact location; but it is significant that he thought he could, and felt it important to document. See Green, H, *The Cockpit of Europe: a guide to the battlefields of Belgium and France* (London, David & Charles, 1976), p. 118.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

The Nottinghamshire Archives hold a fragment of a handwritten document which sheds light onto the state of battlefield pilgrimage as the 1920s turned into the 1930s. It consists of single-sided handwritten text, with no accompanying information as to its provenance or subject matter. Written at times in an opaque note form, it does not appear to have been crafted for public consumption, but rather as a means of recording events for the author's own benefit; and it is incomplete, stopping tantalisingly mid-sentence on its fifteenth page. Titled 'The Pilgrimage of Padres to Talbot House, Poperinghe & Ypres, April 27- May 1st 1930', the text indicates that it was penned by Neville Talbot.[1] Talbot was an army chaplain during the conflict, becoming Bishop of Pretoria after the war and later the vicar of St Mary's Nottingham. During the war, Neville and his fellow chaplain Philip 'Tubby' Clayton set up a rest house for troops behind the lines near Ypres, and named it Talbot House in memory of Neville's brother Gilbert who had been killed in the fighting. The house was a place where troops could go for a brief taste of home – tea and biscuits were available, a library book, a warm room, a listening ear and (for those who wanted it) a chapel. It became a building of huge emotional significance to many of the tens of thousands of soldiers who passed through it on their way to or from the front lines in the Ypres Salient. The document describes a pilgrimage made by Talbot, Clayton and others to revisit Talbot House in early 1930, an experience which, in light of some of the pilgrim experiences examined above, one might

[1] 'The Pilgrimage of Padres to Talbot House, Poperinghe & Ypres, April 27- May 1st 1930' in Nottinghamshire Archives, Ref DD 1332/198.

expect to be a profound and moving moment of reconnection. And yet the whole event seems riven with complications, tensions between members of the party, disagreements and disappointments. The following short extract, describing a tour of the house led by Clayton, is indicative of the issues:

> Tubby – overtired – did it rather in a mood of resentment at the House, painted & repapered (hideously) & mended by the owner, not looking the same as it did. At every point in garden, & hall & at each floor he tried, in his own unique fashion, to reconstruct for us what had been…I felt the going round the garden & house was rather pathetic & futile, for such as couldn't see it by memory, & Tubby was prolix & off at tangents.[2]

A number of features of this account characterise what was clearly an unsatisfactory experience. The landscape of the conflict has changed, here most visibly embodied in the redecorated house which looks nothing like what it once did. Attempts to overcome the changes using language to describe the original experience failed - those who were not there in wartime seem to have been unable to connect, and Talbot's words suggest that even for someone like himself who had been present during the conflict, the experience was far from satisfying. And yet, at the same time, there is a tangible yearning both in this passage, and throughout the document, as the writer tried to find moments to reconnect with the wartime environment.[3] Through all the changes of the 1920s, that desire had endured – and even

[2] Ibid., p. 5.
[3] A full analysis of the document is beyond the scope of this thesis, but there are a few moments on the pilgrimage when such connection does seem to take place, often associated with times of prayer or worship. Parker touches briefly on these moments, see Parker, Linda, *Shellshocked Prophets: Former Anglican Army Chaplains in Inter-War Britain* (Solihull, Helion & Company Limited, 2015), pp. 201-2.

as it became harder to find locations where such connections were possible, the impetus to do so remained.

This thesis has considered the evolution of the battlefield landscape from the outset of the war until the end of the 1920s, and examined how changes to that landscape affected what was 'available' to commemorative activity. It has examined what visitors to the battlefield were directed to look at, either by guidebooks, by tour organisers, or by preconceptions established in wartime reporting of the battlefields; and considered to what extent they followed that guidance, and to what extent they made their own explorations and drew their own conclusions.

As has been argued, the most obvious and public attempts to shape early understanding of the battlefields were the guidebooks published between 1917 and the mid-1920s. Most of these shared clear aspirations for the battlefield visitor – he or she was not to be a mere tourist, but a pilgrim embarking on a journey with a profound purpose, focussed not just on viewing the battlefields but making an intimate connection with the landscape which would enhance their understanding of the conflict. But beneath this broad consensus lay wide differences in approach. For some guidebooks, particularly the French Michelin series, the prime means of connecting with the landscape was through the pre-war French history embodied in it, which reflected the conflict between Gallic *civilisation* and Teutonic *Kultur*. For British guidebook writers, the focus was instead on an intimate connection with the wartime landscape of the British Tommy, visitors being encouraged

to foot-slog across the fields as the wartime infantry had done, and to consider the mud on their boots an indicator of how closely they had connected with the real battlefield landscape. The landscape through which they were hiking was rapidly changing as it was tidied up, and many of the guidebooks commented on this, in the case of Michelin making liberal use of photographs as insurance against such time as the wartime legacy vanished. Some guidebooks (especially the French) broadly welcomed this tidying up as evidence of the regeneration of the battlefields; others (especially some of the British volumes) lamented it as the loss of a landscape which enshrined the memory of the war. The focus within the landscape privileged areas where the legacy of war was still most visible; but as early as 1920, there is also strong evidence for landscapes being singled out for their relevance to a particular nation's forces, or for the fact that their topography lent itself to a helpful overview of a particular battle or engagement. Layered on top of this were interpretations of the landscape which reflected the sort of fighting which took place over it, and whether allies or foes were seen as having created it. What began to emerge was a landscape richly imbued with often quite carefully nuanced meanings – the visitor or reader was not simply directed to a certain set of places, but was guided towards a particular set of interpretations of the places visited. Notwithstanding the tidying up of the battlefields, the focus of these early guidebooks is very much on battlefields rather than graveyards, memorials and cemeteries. Finding the place with the greatest concentration of battlefield detritus was a common theme across many of the guidebooks considered, as were other tropes such as viewing

the battlefields by night, or experiencing a degree of discomfort through long walks or wet, muddy conditions.

During the first part of the period considered by this thesis, the guidebooks were therefore encouraging visitors to connect in a meaningful way with the landscape of battle. To do this, they were directing the visitor's attention to particular locations which by virtue of history, position or extant conditions most directly connected one with the period of the conflict itself. Once there, the interpretative text sought to guide the viewer to the correct, informed understanding of the meaning of the landscape. The guidebooks were not produced in isolation, and many of the seeds of their approach were sown in wartime writing about the conflict. Journalists and writers who got close to the conflict between 1914 and 1918 were keen to stress their sense of privileged access to something which non-combatants back home had no experience of, and it is therefore unsurprising that post-war guidebooks sought to give visitors access to a similar experience, at least insofar as was possible in peacetime conditions. For many of the journalists, accessing what were seen as 'authentic' wartime conditions was important – for example, getting closer to the front line than anyone else, experiencing more extreme conditions than anyone else, or placing oneself in more apparent danger. Paradoxically, though, the closer they got to these conditions, the more they struggled to find ways of expressing their experience, despite being (in most cases) professional writers. In response, a variety of different tools were used to try to make sense of a landscape which was alien to the writer, and would be even more so to the civilian back home. Some (like

Masefield) mythologised the landscape, for example by trying to relate it to previous conflicts fought over the same ground in antiquity, or by describing it in ways which while not literally true, sought to draw out a perceived deeper meaning. Others (like Wharton) used the sheer incomprehensibility of the landscape as a way of trying to draw out the scale of what they witnessed, while still others (like Kipling) focussed on tropes which would surface very explicitly in the post-war guidebooks: formlessness and chaos in the landscape, detritus of war, or the impersonal and mechanistic nature of the battlescape.

At the same time as trying to connect with and describe these wartime landscapes, all these writers were acutely aware of their own non-combatant status. However close they got to front-line dangers, and however privileged their view was compared to the civilian back at home, they were always at pains to stress their distance from the experience of the real front-line soldier. They implied, and sometimes stated, that the non-combatant could never really understand the experience of the fighting man. Many of these themes explored by the wartime writers carried through into the post-war guidebooks: not least the use of the landscape as a way of accessing an understanding of the past, whilst at the same time acknowledging that for the non-combatant, such understanding would always, necessarily, be incomplete.

Almost as soon as the war ended, individuals started to visit the battlefields, some with guidebook in hand, and all influenced to a greater or lesser extent

by what they had read, heard and seen reported about the battlefield during the war; and in the case of returning veterans, what they had experienced directly. Initial responses from individual visitors seem to be quite similar to those foreshadowed in the guidebooks and wartime writings – a fascination with the detritus and destruction of war, with rough and unkempt graveyards, and with battlefields as much as the nascent cemeteries and memorials. Like the guidebook writers, some lamented the tidying up and commercialisation of the battlefields, seeing themselves as pilgrims and trying to avoid the crowds and trippery of the mere tourists. And yet the distinction seemed to be more in the mind than in reality, as even those who positioned themselves as pilgrims bought postcards, used accommodation, went on organised tours, or made time for excursions not associated with the war itself. Indeed, many pilgrim accounts seem to shift effortlessly between what might be called a high register (engaging with sites of battle or commemoration) and a low register (going to concerts, watching fireworks, general sightseeing and having fun). What is striking, however, for virtually all post-war pilgrims, is how central the landscape was to their experience, as it had been for wartime writers and the creators of the guidebooks. Being located on the landscape of battle, standing at a site connected with a lost loved one or walking in their footsteps could be powerfully cathartic experiences. Many pilgrims reported an intimate connection with the landscape itself, some bringing something to embed in it (such as plants for a cemetery) or taking something from it home with them (such as earth, stones, or cuttings). For non-combatants, the landscape with which they connected was frequently an imagined one; and in that imagined landscape,

the tropes established by wartime and guidebook authors were writ large. For veterans, the ambition was to connect with a real wartime landscape which they remembered, and some would go to great lengths to reach particularly significant spots, though even they would sometimes struggle to position their wartime experience amidst the reconstructed post-conflict landscape.

By the late 1920s, much of the wartime battlefield landscape had disappeared; a few preserved and curated sites remained, but even as early as the mid-1920s quiet concerns were being articulated about the authenticity of these. At the same time, the landscape of cemeteries and memorials was becoming more established, though up until the late 1920s it was still comparatively common to experience rough and unreconstructed battlefield cemeteries. As this trajectory played out, the focus of visitors inevitably shifted from battlefields themselves to graves and memorials, from the place of conflict and death to the place of burial or commemoration – from blood to bones.[4] Organised tours like those of St Barnabas in the mid 1920s, or the Royal British Legion in 1928, constructed a programme almost entirely based on curated sites and cemeteries. Yet even within the apparent confines of these structured itineraries, it is clear that individual travellers went to great lengths to find their own personal and intimate connection with the wartime landscape – whether that was simply a quiet moment looking out over the fields across a cemetery wall, forcing oneself to

[4] I am grateful to Dr Matt Neal of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, for suggesting this way of encapsulating the shift in emphasis.

walk the final journey of one's loved one rather than travelling by car, or abandoning the main tour party and trekking off piste across farmers' fields to find a site of personal significance.

This thesis has sought to position the landscape of the Western Front itself as a central influence on the development of remembrance between 1914 and 1929. Earlier analyses have argued that the creation of cemeteries and memorials shaped commemorative practice in the aftermath of the First World War, and that is certainly an important part of the story. But the wider landscape was equally important and has too often been neglected as an influence on how we remember, what we remember, and what we forget. As this thesis has shown, even as it was tidied and reorganised in the aftermath of the conflict, the landscape of the Western Front remained something which visitors, both combatant and non-combatant, had a strong desire to connect with. The landscape of battle was, and remains, a critical mediator for memory of the First World War.

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