

First World War Seminar Series, 2018-19

In Flanders Fields Museum, Gateways to the First World War and the University of Kent present a series of eight seminars in Canterbury and Ieper, free and open to all.

Canterbury seminars will take place in Eliot Lecture Theatre 2, [Eliot College](#), University of Kent, Canterbury, CT2 7NS, from 6pm.

Ieper seminars will take place in Reading Room, In Flanders Fields Research Centre, Sint Maartensplein 3, 8900 Ieper, from 7pm.

Thursday 25 October 2018, Canterbury

Georgina Boyes, Independent Researcher

The Great War and the English Folk Revival: Class, Gender and the Souls of Dead Warriors

A Folk Revival – the conscious performance of folksongs, music, customs and dances – is the product of a cultural transfer. It arises when a new and aware body of enthusiasts decide to reproduce expressive culture associated with ‘The Folk’, defined as a failing and marginalised group. The motive for this reallocation is usually a last-minute attempt to save a threatened and irreplaceable embodiment of national identity and restore it to its rightful place at the forefront of culture.

Coming into being at the start of the twentieth century, the English Folk Revival was even more than usually shaped by nationalism and the competing political ideologies current in England before and during the Great War. For all its contrived rusticity, the Revival’s existence as the expression of the perceived culture and social cohesiveness of the pre-industrial village had a power beyond the fashionable and quaint. What was at stake was actualising Englishness - a battle to restore “the true soul of the nation”.

The Great War brought about decisive changes in the Revival’s development. Despite the emergence of possibilities for innovation during the War, within the Revival movement peace confirmed the supremacy of a deeply conservative approach to cultural traditions. The role of women as participants in the Revival was increasingly limited, whilst male dancers were reconfigured as a “peculiarly fitted and trained elite”. Externally, meanwhile, general attitudes began a change –

These old songs and dances have a certain antiquarian interest,... But when we get a ‘revival’ of them, when we have pale-faced intellectuals warbling and capering under the delusion that they are restoring the simple gaieties of Old England, the thing becomes ludicrous.... Morris dancing had undoubtedly its value as a healthy recreation for school children. But it would be much better left to children.

Anon., “Current Topics: Morris Dancing,” *Sheffield Telegraph*, 28 Sept 1926, p. 6.

This paper examines the ways in which the Great War and its consequences were dynamics in these changes and how they continue to influence culture today.

Thursday 8th November 2018, Canterbury

Prof. Toni Lerut, KU Leuven
Harvey Cushing In Flanders Fields

The name of Dr Harvey Cushing (1869-1939) is inextricably linked with the homonymous syndrome and disease. But the merits of Harvey Cushing reach out much further than that.

In fact he was a surgeon worldwide known as the father of Neurosurgery through the development and application of his numerous innovative surgical techniques. On top of this he was during his life recognized as one of the greatest experts, if not the greatest, on the life and works of Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564) the father of Anatomy.

Less known however is that this American surgeon in his capacity of Head of the American Base Hospital 5, the Harvard University Hospital, witnessed from close distance the 3rd Battle of Ypres in the summer of 1917.

Thursday 22nd November 2018, Ieper

Professor Mark Connelly, University of Kent
The Imperial War Graves Commission, Princess Beatrice and the grave of Prince Maurice of Battenberg

Prince Maurice of Battenberg was the only direct member of the British Royal Family to be killed in the Great War. He was buried in the main city cemetery of Ypres in October 1914. His mother appealed for the right to repatriate his body, which she followed up with a concerted campaign to erect a headstone of her choice over his grave. These demands coming from such an influential person made Prince Maurice's body, and the memory of him as a person, a test case for the authority of the newly-forged Imperial War Graves Commission. Determined to uphold the principles of non-repatriation and equality of treatment, the IWGC had to fight a delicate battle in which an individual's body was subsumed into wider arguments about class, identity and the very meaning of the war itself.

Thursday 6th December 2018, Ieper

Dr Chris Kempshall, University of Sussex
Fighting among friends? Relations between British soldiers and their allies 1914-1918

When the men of the British army reached the Western Front during the First World War they were placed into close proximity with soldiers in their allies' armies. The relationships between these men swung between hostile and comradely. The interactions between

British and French soldiers in particular would undergo many changes with its highest point coming around the Somme in 1916. The battles of 1918, however, would leave the British isolated and spurned by their allies. In this talk Dr Chris Kempshall will examine the various ways that British soldiers interacted with their allies and the effect this would have on the war effort.

Thursday 10th January 2019, Canterbury

Prof. Dr. Jan Schmidt, KU Leuven

Lessons Learned - Japan's Military and Bureaucratic Elite and the First World War

Japan declared war on Germany on August 23, 1914. After occupying the German leased territory around Qingdao in China and the German island colonies in Micronesia, Japan's direct military involvement in the war was limited—apart from sending a squadron to the Mediterranean in 1917 and, later on, its major involvement in the “Siberian Intervention” from 1918 onward. What is less known is that one of the many dimensions of impact that the First World War had on Japan lies in the implications of intensive studies of various aspects of the war that were undertaken by the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy as well as by the influential ministerial bureaucracy. Temporary research committees sent dozens of young officers and bureaucrats to Europe and later to the United States, who later compiled voluminous reports on their findings. The participation in these efforts became part of the “space of experience” (Reinhart Koselleck) of an entire generation of young officers and bureaucrats in their formative years and had a long-lasting impact on a wide range of policy fields in the Interwar Period, arguably driving army and navy officers as well as their counterparts in the bureaucracy to become proponents of what they called the necessity for “a general mobilization of the nation” in the 1930s.

Thursday 24th January 2019, Ieper

Professor Lucy Noakes, University of Essex

Poppy Petals: The Meaning of the Great War in 21st Century Britain

In 2014 Britain embarked on four years of commemorative activity to mark the centenary of the Great War. This talk considers what the past four years tell us about the meanings of this conflict in 21st century Britain, where, far from being universally established and agreed upon, symbols of remembrance such as the British Legion poppy are contested and fought over, demonstrating the political nature of remembrance. Drawing on a range of material, including political debates, commemorative activities and a Directive on individual understandings of the Great War, commissioned by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council, the talk will discuss both the meanings of the Great War in 21st century Britain, and what these might tell us about the country today.

Thursday 7th February 2019, Canterbury

Prof Marysa Demoor & Dr Cedric Van Dijck, Ghent University
Trench Journalists in Belgium, Britain and France

This paper traces a history of the phenomenon of trench journalism across national and linguistic borders. While scholars have examined how trench journals allow us access to the lifeworlds of soldiers in the First World War, very little is known about how and where magazines were produced. In this paper, we look at the practicalities of magazine production in wartime, and pay particular attention to how production methods, materials and places—including ad-hoc editorial offices set up in trenches and mailing rooms in military hospitals—may differ across the three allied armies under consideration here. In a second step, the paper profiles the trench journalist himself (or, occasionally, *herself*): from anonymous voices now lost to history to established authors like Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling.

Thursday 21st February 2019, Ieper

Professor Alison Fell, University of Leeds, and Dr Christophe Declercq, University College, London and KU Leuven

Tracing the Belgian Refugees: research project and database

'Tracing the Belgian Refugees' is a project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and run by colleagues at the Universities of Leeds, Antwerp and UCL. The aim of the project is to trace and record some of the Belgian refugees who came to the UK during the First World War, in order to improve our knowledge and understanding of their experiences and legacies. Part of this project involves building a database in collaboration with some of the individual and community projects investigating Belgian refugees that have taken place during the Centenary of the First World War. For this talk, Christophe Declercq and Alison Fell will introduce the project and share some initial findings.

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