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Keep your Kodak busy: monuments of the Great War

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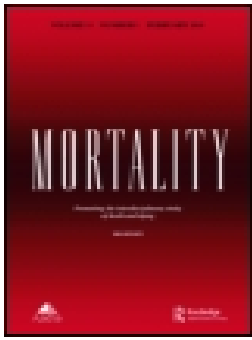
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Mortality

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Keep your Kodak Busy: monuments of the Great War

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ABSTRACT

This paper draws together two elements of the Photography strand in an extensive interdisciplinary research project looking at memorialisation: (i) a literature review (Hutchinson) that explored the significance of photography and photographs to processes of loss and mourning, remembrance, commemoration and memorialisation during the Great War and throughout the years of pilgrimage and battlefield tourism that follow, and (ii) a sequence of photographs, 'Keep Your Kodak Busy' (Nicol). The article integrates discussion from the literature with presentation of a selection of the photographs to show how photography as creative practice contributes to an understanding of the economic, social and cultural influences impacting on loss, grief and remembrance, and forms of commemoration and memorialisation in relation to World War One. The article offers a different experience of photography in this context to its more usual and familiar illustrative and documentary role. The research explored how photography and photographs facilitate and mediate the experience of memorialisation, commemoration and remembrance, the role of photographs as vehicles for mourning and remembering and how, in addition to their role as documents of the processes of memorialisation, commemoration and remembrance, photographs are also sites of memory.

KEYWORDS

Loss; rephotography; the missing; war memorials; sites of memory; battlefield tourism

Introduction

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the West, photographs have been associated with remembrance: 'Though we take most photographs to capture and preserve the present, the stillness of the photographic image simply emphasises the untouchable distance of everything as it recedes into the past' (North, 2006, cited in Reineman, 2011, p. 1252). The photograph as an object is described both as a visual referent for mourning and remembering and a reminder of death. As Sontag states in her critique *On Photography*, 'All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability' (1971, p. 15, italics in original). In a review of an exhibition of photographs taken of a young woman during her final few weeks before dying from cancer, the curator and writer Judith Goldman wrote, 'Death pervades the landscape of photography, for cameras are weapons that steal life and magical machines that defy death. They can preserve the past, promise the future, and transpose yesterday into tomorrow' (1976, cited in Ruby, 1995, frontispiece).

This paper is one of the outcomes of an interdisciplinary enquiry that brought together two different sets of methodologies: creative photographic practice and a comprehensive literature review, which it summarises. This interdisciplinary approach, comprising arts practice and a synthesis and evaluation of academic literature, examines photography and loss, and photography's role in the processes of remembrance, commemoration, and memorialisation. It evolved as a reflective and responsive process, through shared research and especially, attention to the materiality of the photographic processes used, and examination of the language and meaning of the photographic object. The research took place as one strand of the interdisciplinary research project, 'Remember Me. The Changing Face of Memorialisation', funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council UK.

In this paper, we will discuss the role of photography as a process intrinsically associated with loss in practices associated with remembrance, commemoration and memorialisation during and throughout the years since the Great War. We consider rephotography as a practice, which foregrounds change that is almost imperceptible in the landscapes of military cemetery. We also consider the use of photographs and the practice of taking photographs during activities associated with remembrance, commemoration and memorialisation. This has led us to explore the significance of the photograph as a liminal site of memory where both public and private processes of memorialisation can take place.

These themes developed throughout the research. The creative photographic work responded to concepts and material evidence of remembrance, commemoration and memorialisation in public settings. It was informed by visits to military cemeteries and memorials in France, and Belgium that raised questions about the monuments that define them as 'sites of memory', as indicators of national identity, and the role of photographs and photography for those pilgrims and tourists who visited them.



The Canadian National Vimy Memorial. Box Brownie. 2017. Liz Nicol.

Method: developing a direction

The literature review and photography developed as a dynamic interaction in which each element shaped new directions in the other. Visual languages of photography were used to explore the traces of the Great War and the memorials that have been constructed for its commemoration; here we investigate how the war-time cameras, The Kodak Box Brownie No.2 and the Vest Pocket Kodak, depict the scene. The first handbook for the Kodak Brownie camera, published in the 1880s, suggested that its photographs made it possible to 'go back [...] to scenes that would otherwise fade from memory and be lost'. (Eastman Kodak Company, in Batchen, 2004, p. 8) These cameras were simple to use and without technical sophistication. The waist-level viewfinder translated the world through a misty glass, very different to today's methods with their emphasis on detail and sharpness. To choose cameras that were contemporary to the Great War was an obvious, perhaps clichéd idea, yet the resulting photographs seem to evoke glimpses of the past in the present. The combination of their optical qualities and black and white film resulted in an unfamiliar visual language.

In June 1859, the daguerreotype, a fragile photographic image upon a polished metal plate, was described by Oliver Wendell Holmes in the American periodical, *The Atlantic Monthly*, as 'the mirror with a memory'. More recently the camera has been described as 'a machine of memory' (Dillon and Batchen, 2004), so shifting the place and production of memory from the image to the process of its production. These photographs, taken along the Western Front during the centenary years of the Great War, are presented here as a photo-essay, a sequence of photographs selected to elucidate meaning. Some sites photographed were well-known and much visited, others less so. These memorials have become the focus of the photographic work that produced images taken by looking through the lens of a camera that could have belonged to a battlefield tourist, pilgrim, or someone photographing their growing family as they waited for their loved one to return.

Photographs present ambiguity of time. Although these photographs were taken throughout 2016, 2017 and 2018 they evoke a feeling of nostalgia and may even appear to have been taken many years ago. After all, they were taken with a camera made in the early 1900s and with out-of-date film. But clues to their currency may be discovered in the images; the memorials and cemeteries are surrounded by tall trees, and windmills and pylons can be glimpsed in the surrounding fields. However, these photographs are presented along with the dates they were taken. They are not intended to confuse. As a photo-essay, they present a typology of war memorials and reveal the potential for a comparative study of national identity as expressed through these dominant architectural forms.

In the photo essay, we can see that the photographic language is complex. The photographs carry with them a soft focus quality and low contrast, a feature of the Box Brownie. Enhanced in the darkroom, the photographs look like they were taken many years ago, referencing a pastime. However, there are implicit contradictions; the images contain visual clues (and the dates appear in the titles) that locate the photograph in the present time, post battlefield landscapes have in part recovered as vegetation is established and there is evidence if we look closely that the photographs were taken in the 21st century. We look at these 'creative documentary' photographs through the presentational form of the circle, as if through a microscope or a telescope. This quasi-scientific pictorial device removes us one step further, distancing us from the scene as if looking back in time. We do not see two images, a past and present side by side, here rephotography is embedded in one image.

These black and white photographs can be described by the term ‘analogue’ – they are not digital but printed photochemically in a darkroom, ‘a space of night and death where loss is encountered and resurrection possible’ (Teichmann, 2011, p. 85). In documentary photography, as Grainge (1999) explains, the ‘visual pastness’ of ‘black and white’ has cultural significance that shapes historical meaning and identity. He refers to Sontag for whom ‘monochrome [gave] an image a sense of age, historical distance, and aura’, and Barthes (1981, p. 81) who described how the original truth of black and white was obscured by the artifice of colour. The photographs taken for this project play on the monochromatic, to query assumptions made by the viewer that black and white photographs belong to a past era. In contemporary photography, the worlds of ‘documentary photography’ and ‘fine art photography’ have become conflated. The approach here is one of the ‘creative document’.



Quebec Cemetery, Cherisy, France, Box brownie. 2018. Liz Nicol.

Photographs display ‘an event’, a moment in the past to be read in the here and now of the viewer, a superimposition of reality and the past ‘that-has-been’ (Barthes, in Büchler, 1999, p. 39). They present us with liminal images, ‘hovering’ between fiction and reality (Fan & Zhu, 2017), the past and present, and ‘like ghosts [they] have an undecidable, “in-between” status, haunting between material and immaterial, real and virtual’ (Roberts, 2013, p. 386).

Reineman draws upon both Prosser and Lacan to suggest that we recognise loss through photographs, which are ‘not signs of presence but evidence of absence’ (Prosser, 2005, p. 1, cited in Reineman, 2011, p. 1242). A moment, which has passed but is eternalised by the instantaneous closing of the camera shutter. A loss, which is brought into consciousness every time the photograph is viewed (Lacan, 1973, p. 55, cited in Reineman, 2011, p. 1242). Laqueur describes photographs as ‘archetypically memorial’, and just as memory and imagination erase time, photographic images, have become ‘the medium for thrusting the past into the present’ (Laqueur, 2015, p. 439). Blanchot (1982, cited in Teichmann, 2011, p. 96) follows Barthes to

explain that our encounters with photographs cause us to acknowledge future separations and loss. The photograph promises proximity but instead, presents the irredeemable distance to that which has been lost. (Teichmann, 2011, p. 97)

Photography and the trace, the referent and the index

The mythology of the photographic trace persists through repeated reference to nineteenth-century commentators. In a letter to Mary Russell Mitford in 1843, Elizabeth Barrett explained her reaction to a postmortem daguerreotype, saying, 'It is not merely the likeness which is precious – but the association and the sense of nearness involved in the thing . . . the fact of the very shadow of the person lying there fixed forever!' (Ruby, 1995, p. 49). By the end of the nineteenth-century photography was satisfying a 'new popular desire to gather, hold and keep impressions generated by human presence in the world, to trade and distribute them, and give them a purpose in the culture of modern living' (Büchler, 1999, p. 14–15).

In his essay exploring the ontology of the photographic image, Bazin (1960) suggests that photography's realism is a consequence of its indexical nature, that is, where physical traces of the subject or object photographed adhere to the resulting image. Kaplan notes how Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, follows Bazin's thoughts, when he says 'the power of the photographic image and our fascination with it stems from the fact that it is "literally an emanation of the referent"' (Barthes, 1981, in Kaplan, 2010, p. 47). Keller presents the notion of a photographic afterlife, as a 'living on through the image' (Keller, 2016, p. 49) while, for Ruby (1995, p. 60) 'photographs promise a materialist realization of eternity.' Green-Lewis draws upon accounts of the announcement of Louis Daguerre's invention of a process of creating a durable image to argue that 'the process [. . .] of fixing the image signalled the beginning of a world in which there would be no passing away, or rather, no unmarked passing' (Green-Lewis, 2001, pp. 561–562). Photographs, as significant objects, especially in personal and intimate commemoration and memorialisation practices, do fulfil the second of these potentials. Yet, at the same time they represent loss exactly as a consequence of photography's 'fixing for ever' a moment in time which immediately becomes the past (Fox Talbot, 1839 in Green-Lewis, 2001, p. 562).

The photograph's indexical quality presents an internal contradiction between its display of loss and its ability to reduce the sense of loss. This paradox is explained by Prosser who notes that we 'treat photographs as if they had a kind of presence' (2005, p. 1), but then goes on to explain that '[they] are not signs of presence but evidence of absence.' Following Sontag (1977) he proposes that photographs are *memento mori*, reminders of death. Teichmann (2011, p. 96) turned to Blanchot (1982) to explain how the reality of 'things in the world' (including ourselves) and photographs of them, cannot exist at the same time. As the image emerges in the darkroom 'the thing, the figure, the other, falls away, absent as the image emerges in its place.'

Photography, memorialisation, remembrance and the passing of time

'It is in the nature of most commemorative efforts to claim that the memorial and its message are eternal and unchanging. The memorial is meant to stand as a statement about the past which will forever be apprehended in the way its creators intended.' (Bennett Farmer, 1995, p. 42)

The similarity in form of many of the over 100,000 memorials in the UK that have been created after 1918, have become an aide-memoire in a 'cultural vocabulary of remembrance' (Marshall, 2004, p. 39). For those who mourned the soldiers of the Great War, they were created as a consequence of 'the lack of a grave at which to mourn' (Graham, 2012). In 1915 it was decided that the bodies of soldiers would not be repatriated. As a consequence, during the war makeshift memorials were created in the UK to commemorate those who had died overseas. In many cases, these were reconstructed after the war as permanent structures, but they were an inadequate substitute for an individual grave and headstone for many people who travelled to the battlefields to visit the site where a loved one had died or was buried, or, if the body was lost, one of 'the missing' whose name was inscribed into a stone monument to 'stand for the bodies that had been torn from their names' (Laqueur, 2015, p. 476) near to the site of the monument. Kodak's affordable and portable cameras made it possible for ordinary people to photograph graves and memorials to capture the names of the dead that are 'filled with a person' (Barthes, [translated 1974] cited in Laqueur, 2015, p. 367) and to retain some material and visual evidence, or trace, of being close to an otherwise distant or absent body. This was, as Bensen and Silberman (1986, p. 262) explain, a way of recording and verifying their presence at a site in a way other souvenirs could not.



Plougstreert Memorial to the Missing, Belgium. Box Brownie. 2018. Liz Nicol.

For Bazin, photographic images are 'lives halted at a set moment in their duration' (1960, p. 8) and the photograph, a 'frozen instant' (Cholodenko, 2005, p. 9, and Laqueur, 2015, p. 439) that is limited in terms of the space and the 'little or no time' that it contains (Fawns, 2014, p. 4). Gibson asserts that 'the photographic image always points backward in time' (2004, p. 290). She describes photographs as melancholy objects as a consequence of their 'past-ness and unrepeatability' (Sontag, 1979, in Gibson, 2004, p. 286) and their being 'without a future' (Barthes, 1981, in Gibson, 2004, p. 286). Yet, time

appears to be standing still in these photographs of memorials and monuments. It is only through deep looking that the viewer notices elements in the image, tall trees, or pylons, that indicate the passing of time. As Kracauer (1927 (1993), p. 424) explains, time is not part of the photograph, it cannot depict duration.

Memorialisation, materiality, representation and presence

Bate (2010) argues that, 'In domestic culture, photography conventionally has a place as a time machine, a device for remembering' (p. 243). However, Moriarty (2003, pp. 30–47) argues that personal photographs are significant elements within the material culture of remembrance of WW1 along with other materials, such as monumental war memorials of stone and bronze. So although photographs assert the reality of loss (Prosser, 2005, p. 2) they also function as 'objects' by materialising, locating, and compensating for feelings of absence and loss (Gibson, 2004, p. 289). In their research concerned with the factors influencing the selection of design and site of public memorials, Petersson and Wingren argue that 'materiality, representation and presence [are] crucial parts of the continuing link between the living and the dead' (2011, p. 55). Photographs, too, can be memory objects, 'material things, [that] through their resemblance with or proximity to the deceased, may bring about a social encounter with the presence of the absent' Petersson and Wingren (2011, p. 60).

Public and private mourning, remembrance, commemoration and memorialisation

Memorials and commemorative monuments occupy both public and private, deeply personal, sites of memory (Heathorn, 2005, p. 116). Photographs too have a role in the processes of public and private mourning. A single photograph can be a public document and also can be a deeply private, intimate and hidden form of remembering. Callister (2007) writes about the integral part played by the medium of photography in representing loss and death during and after the Great War. She examines the role of photography in processes of memorialisation in New Zealand through family photograph albums and considers the impact of the burial 'far from home' of soldiers from New Zealand, explaining that as a consequence their photographs were invested with emotion, and in the absence of their bodies 'facilitated the return of the dead in both private and public settings' (p. 663). The distance, in terms of miles, from the bodies of their loved ones, appears to have been felt by those in the UK in just the same way even though it was easier for many of them to visit memorials and graves.

Gibson describes the role of photographs in remembrance, commemoration and mourning as 'external referents' that are necessary if the 'memory images' of the deceased are to be retained (2004, p. 291). Photographs are the interface between public and private processes of memorialisation. Roper (2011) discusses nostalgia as an emotional experience. In this context, mourning can be the response to the loss of a time or a place or an experience. Fear of forgetting encourages us to accept the limits of representation of photographs and to use them in activities associated with nostalgia and remembering (Fawns, 2014, p. 6). Photographs share the spatial aspect and temporal dimensions of nostalgia as a 'longed for' past to which we cannot return (Roper, 2011, p. 23). In his discussion of the sentiments associated with thoughts of home and family that were experienced by servicemen during the Great War, he

explains how the nostalgic images on commercially produced staged postcard photographs of soldiers writing home brought those separated by war together (2011, p. 22).

Rephotography

Rephotography alerts the viewer to the sacrifice and deprivation of loss through a visual comparison of a location at different times. In this way, it foregrounds change, change that is almost imperceptible in the landscapes of military cemetery. Photographs are both sites of loss (of the moment in time represented in the image) and sites that reawaken and or perpetuate the experience of loss. Rephotography stages temporal suspensions between 'a present that will soon be past whose return photography secures' (Phelan, 2002, p. 989). Rephotography accords equal significance to time past and time present. It presents both in a single image and draws attention to change by emphasising a process of overwriting as time passes. Kalin (2013, pp. 170–172) claims that as a consequence it lends itself to social practices of remembering and influences how and what we remember by allowing us to actively construct and inhabit memories.

Rephotography is, for Mark Klett, whose practice informed aspects of the creative photographic work for this project, a practice of exploration of geography and place through perception of the passage of time. Klett and his colleagues returned and rephotographed sites previously photographed by Timothy O'Sullivan, the official photographer for US Geographical Surveys between 1867 and 1874, in order to draw attention to the way the landscapes have changed and developed. His images for the Rephotographic Survey Project (1977–1979) document change, yet the process he uses to create photographs of the landscape make it possible for the viewer to recognise and understand the influences of experience and memory that 'counters the traditional construct of a landscape as a framed pictorial entity that can be viewed in a single glance'. (Kumar, 2014, p. 137)

Rephotography is a 'mnemonic and social practice for remembering personal and public pasts. [It is] concerned with the ontological differences and similarities between past, present and future' (Kalin, 2013, p. 175). Kalin argues that rephotography offers an alternative to Barthes' assertion that photographs block memory, because it allows for the presentation of the ontological montage, of often incompatible things of memory, to co-exist within the frame of an image (2013, p. 175). Barthes' claim is extended by Marshall (2004, p. 38) to the context of war memorials and monuments. She cites Young (1993) who described monuments as 'barriers to remembering' and suggests that we become more forgetful by allowing monuments to do our memory-work. Bennett-Farmer proposes that the materiality of these now commemorative sites contributes to their functioning as visual narratives of the past (1995, p. 28); however, a tension persists between their presentation of historical facts, the context in which their story is told, and the commemorative message (1995, p. 32).

The creative photographic work presents the viewer with glimpses of change in the landscape of the Western Front, changes that indicate the passing of time, yet are located within the landscape. The military cemeteries appear unchanged and timeless, 'belonging neither to the present nor to the past but to an arrested moment that exists only in the English imagination' (Keegan, 1997, p. 335). Paul Gough describes the war-torn landscape of Belgium and France, the Balkans, Macedonia and Dardenelles, that confronted visitors in the years after the war as 'memoriescapes' (p. 280).

Outwardly there was nothing to see; the landscape [...] was an imaginary one. It was a place of projection and association, a space full of history, yet void of obvious topography, where physical markers had been obliterated but the land overwritten with an invisible emotional geography. (1993 in Gough, 2010, p. 276)

Flowers and trees: remembrance, commemoration and memorialisation

The photographs taken at the Western Front are generally unpeopled, yet there is evidence of the presence of people in tokens and messages, photographs and flowers left behind. The photographic practice explores the symbolism of flowers and war, through flowers and plant material gathered at sites of remembrance, cemeteries and battlefields. These specimens, including the forget-me-not below, were brought home to the darkroom and recorded as Objectographs.¹



Forget-me-not, the Somme, Objectograph, 2017. Liz Nicol.

War is most often associated with 'unsentimental' masculinity, and as Elias notes, when historians consider flowers in relation to the Great War they tend to associate grieving women with the laying of floral tributes. However, her work, which examined the associations between war and flowers in visual culture through the collection of the Australian War Memorial (AWM),² presents an alternative to gendered interpretation of flowers and war that follow traditional associations of flowers with femininity, emotion and domesticity. She explains that war is a context in which 'men and flowers have an

intimate relationship [through flowers' ability to] mediate the complexity of human relationships and emotions' (Elias, 2008, p. 247).

Floral tributes were a feature of public commemoration during the war and for many years after it ended. During the war, it was common practice for urban and rural communities to erect a commemorative shrine in a public place. They were a place where flowers could be laid. Often the shrines took the form of a cross inscribed with the names of the dead and their construction was influenced by the involvement of the church. In July 1918 a temporary war shrine was erected in Hyde Park to provide a place for people to leave flowers as a symbol of 'the Empire's tribute to the graves of the dead' (Lloyd, 1998, p. 61). Floral tributes in the form of wreaths and bunches were laid at the Cenotaph by individuals and organisations; these included 'a small garden of flowers planted in a box from a community in Nottinghamshire which bore more than sixty names of the fallen' (The Daily Express, 13 November 1920, in Lloyd, 1998, p. 73). Gregory (1994) describes how women in 1921 brought handpicked flowers to the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey and to the Cenotaph, as a spontaneous act of remembrance. He also describes the processions of children who laid flowers at their town or village war memorials during memorial services (pp. 27–30).

Elias (2007) suggests that artificial flowers are immune to decay and therefore symbolise everlasting memory, whereas fresh flowers, and even more so, dead flowers, 'are stark reminders of the bodies of unreturned soldiers.' She goes on to speculate that the discussion in 1919 within the British Board of Works about the practicalities of maintaining the Cenotaph, including a suggestion to prohibit the laying of flowers at the memorial (70,000 bunches according to the Daily Express on 5 August 1918), that needed 'almost daily attention' (Gregory, 1994, p. 8), was due to a 'sense the decayed flowers would corrupt the symbolism of beautiful memory' (Elias, 2007).

The photograph, sites of memory and landscapes of commemoration

The conjunction of death and the photographed is in fact the very principle of photographic certitude: the photograph is a cemetery. A small funerary monument, the photograph is a grave for the living dead. It tells their history – a history of ghosts and shadows – and it does so because it is this history. (Cadava, 1998, cited in Keller, 2016)

Sites of commemoration are physically defined. Walls found that around two thirds of war memorials sit within what he refers to as 'a corona of sacred space' (2011, p. 141). They are often sited at entrances or thresholds close to or marking a break in a boundary, and as such are liminal places, associated with movement, or the transition from one space to another (2011, p. 136), passage landscapes that 'bridge the gap between the space of life and the space of death' (Pettersson & Wingren, 2011, p. 55), 'places set apart from the quotidian' (Marshall, 2004, p. 41).

Robinson (in Robinson & Koontz, 1996, no pagination) explains, 'the walls of the cemetery create a special enclosure conducive to active imagining' (no pagination). Bennett-Farmer (1995, p. 35–36) explains how these physical locations of memory are also socially defined as they are variously used for official, community and individual activities of mourning and commemoration. Sites of commemoration, such as battlefields and other preserved landscapes of war have both a political and historical significance as

a focus of national commemoration and have meaning and 'emotional association' for the individuals who were directly involved. The War Memorials Trust (www.warmemorials.org) states its aim is 'to educate the public and to foster patriotism and good citizenship by remembering those who have fallen in war by preserving and maintaining war memorials' and as such, is a near perfect example of the explicit political and social defining of sites of memory, while Ruby states that 'mourning fallen heroes is an essential social ritual for the continuation of any society' (1995, p. 114).

Laqueur (2000, p. 5) draws upon the work of Ulrich Baer to explain how in particular contexts, viewing the site, or the landscape of trauma, and viewing its representation, are conflated as 'a sort of religious experience.' Popular literature, prose and poetry ascribed meaning to loss and bereavement and to the battlefields as sacred places through 'the language of pilgrimage.' Examples include reference to the visiting bereaved as 'pilgrim[s] of sorrow.', while Ypres was described as 'one of the "High Altars of Sacrifice"' (Hammerton, 1918, in Lloyd, 1998, pp. 25–26). In 1926, an article in the politically influenced quarterly journal *Round Table* explained: 'It is hallowed ground, this country of the graves' (Lloyd, 1998, p. 34). This expression was closely linked to John Oxenham's words, 'Tread softly here, go reverently and slow', that was inscribed into the dedication stone at the Canadian Newfoundland Park Cemetery in the Somme battlefield.

Pilgrims and battlefield tourists

'They are not missing, they are here.' (Field Marshall Plummer. Menin Gate inauguration speech. 24 July 1927)

In 1914 Fabian Ware arranged for the Graves Registration Unit to photograph all war graves in order that relatives could have an image and directions to the burial site. An initial 2,000 negatives, each showing four grave markers had been taken by August 1915 (Gough, 2010, p. 277). Lloyd (1998, p. 5) suggests that 'Implicit in the act of making a pilgrimage was an instinctive spiritualism which expressed itself in the belief that it was possible to get closer to the spirit and even the spirits of the dead by visiting sites associated with the war.' He describes how wartime discussions that considered the prospect of visits to overseas graves and to the sites where loved ones had died, anticipated such pilgrimages would enable the bereaved 'to complete the process of mourning' (1998, p. 26). Cemeteries were created alongside the battlefields of the Western Front and behind the lines on both sides early on in the war. These were damaged by the fighting. After the conflict ended many of these temporary graves were relocated to the new official military cemeteries.

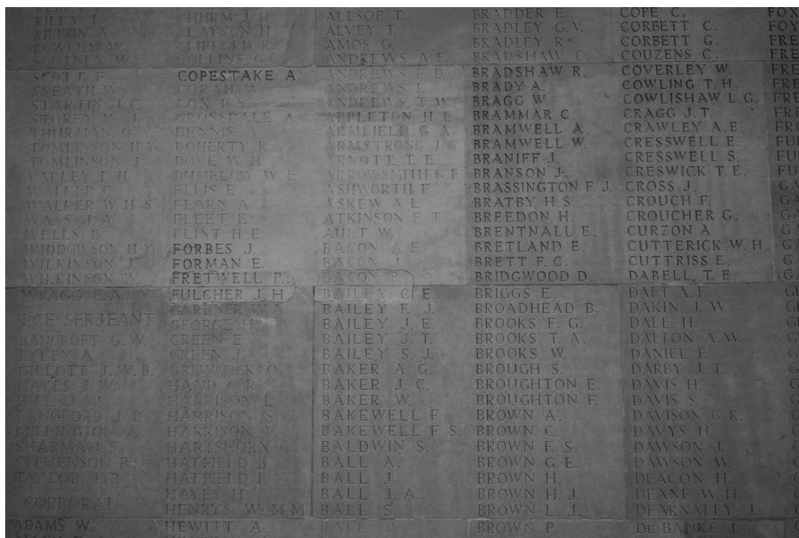
Following the Great War many visits to war graves were undertaken by bereaved relatives who wished to visit the site of their loved one's remains, with few exceptions the British government did not repatriate the bodies of dead servicemen until 1982 (Graham, 2012, Heathorn, 2005, p. 1114). In the many cases where bodies had not been found, relatives felt a need to visit the place where their loved ones fought and died. 'The process of mourning involves thinking and feeling about the dead person. This is difficult without any knowledge of the body of the dead person. ... The difficulty of grieving for someone reported "missing, believed killed" or "lost at sea" is well known; A death without a body seen by anyone seems unreal' (Lewis, 1983, p. 218, cited in Ruby, 1995, p. 181).

Robinson (in Robinson & Koontz, 1996, no pagination) observed many visitors to municipal cemeteries, which led him to conclude that 'by going to the gravesite, a special bond is formed or reaffirmed. Whatever takes place through this visit evidently does not or cannot happen elsewhere.' Bereaved relatives of fallen soldiers most closely identified themselves and were most closely identified as pilgrims. However, Lloyd (1998) draws upon the work of Mosse (1979) to explain that many travellers considered the battlefields and memorials as sacred places. The organisers of mass public pilgrimages, such as those arranged by the British Legion in 1928, when 11,000 people participated, 'believed they expressed the identity of the nation' and therefore determined that the tone of the visits 'should be understated and dominated by respect for the dead' (Lloyd, 1998, p. 10).

Newspapers fed a national interest and encouraged participation in pilgrimages, reporting often detailed accounts of visits to battlefields and memorials by members of large and small charitable and other organisations. The Ypres Times of 1 April 1923 included photographs of men and women standing amongst ruined buildings during an Ypres League Pilgrimage to the battlefields (Historische Kranten, The Ypres Times 1921–1936), and a contributor to The [London] Morning Post predicted that pilgrimages to the battlefields and memorials would continue into the future when 'the sons and grandsons of the men who fought in the Great War will likely visit on certain dates marked with a white stone, the battlefields where England and the Empire were saved' (6 August 1928, cited in Lloyd, p. 33).

Anonymity, loss of identity, equality of sacrifice

Laqueur points to the significance of the inscribed names: 'It is not about the bodies but about the names of the dead, which, like bodies, evoke, commemorate, beckon, stand, and speak for the dead, singly and collectively' (Laqueur, 2015, p. 367). As a consequence of the Great War 'for the first time in British military history, the names of the dead were registered and the location of their graves identified' (Laqueur, 2000, p. 152). 'A Soldier of the Great War known unto God' was inscribed into the headstone when a body could not be identified. When bodies could not be found, the names were inscribed into monuments located close to the battlefield in which the soldier fought and was presumed to have died. The practice of naming the dead alphabetically on war memorials acknowledged an equality of sacrifice, however, for communities 'at home' in the UK. The memorial would need to be acceptable to all in a community in order to gain approval for its funding. Moriarty (2003, p. 33–34) and Sherman, 1996, p. 189) explain that although community war memorials (in the UK and France) may have acquired significance as a substitute grave for those relatives who could not travel to a military cemetery, or for the many relatives of the missing for whom there was no grave, these memorials are 'a collective solution to individual loss' (Moriarty, in Braybon, 2003, p. 34). The grave of the Unknown Warrior 'stood in' for each of the missing soldiers, sailors and airmen, and also for a burial ceremony for the bereaved whose loved ones' bodies had not been identified or recovered (Lloyd, 1998, p. 81).



Theipval Memorial to the Missing, digital photograph, 2018. Liz Nicol.

Monuments to the missing were photographed during the course of this research. These have the names of the missing inscribed in stone, made tangible and permanent. The photographs draw attention to the representation of loss: of time, place and memory, and the memorialisation of ‘the missing’ and absent bodies. As part of the larger project and in contrast to the analogue photographs of the Box Brownie camera, it was important to use a high definition digital camera to photograph the names of the missing, to record the names in detail because in reality, these names were decaying, some monuments seeming to have been forgotten. For the photographer, there were parallels between digital photography and the missing. Working with digital files, there is no physical trace until the image is printed. This seems to echo the very nature of the missing, for whom by definition there are no physical remains, nothing to signify the person, until the name was written on a list or engraved in stone.

During wartime, soldiers developed familial bonds with comrades and within regiments. These bonds are made visible in the layout of graves within the military cemeteries where soldiers are grouped according to their regiment and/or nationality. Each soldier’s affiliation with a regiment is identified on their gravestone by a carving of the regimental badge. Wall’s 2011 study of 5000 war memorials in churchyards, churches and cemeteries in Devon identified a tension between the soldiers’ identities as belonging to both a military family and to their family at home, within a parish or community, through the practice of adding the names and biographies of war dead to existing headstones, and/or inscribed upon memorials placed within the parish church or the memorial hall. Walls suggests the practice of adding the names of dead soldiers who were ‘missing’ or whose bodies lay in cemeteries overseas to family headstones, allowed bereaved families to reclaim the identities of their dead. He notes the practice was ‘the most prolifically–utilised public commemorative form throughout the twentieth century. The name materialized the dead where the body could not be; it provided the bereaved with a burial site for their absent loved ones’ (Walls, 2010, cited in Walls, 2011, p. 140).

National identity, commemoration and remembrance

Maggie Andrews (2014) draws attention to the ‘significant economic, social and political investment in Britain at both local and national level’ into the centenary of the first world war. She suggests that while commemoration and remembrance of war contributes to a sense of nationhood, ‘this emotional and financial investment [...] comes at a time when national identity is shifting, fragile and uncertain’ (Andrews, 2014, pp. 104–105). Andrews goes on to explain that images and the media are factors integral to the construction of a national narrative. ‘Citizenship requires people to have an intimate relationship with memories of war they did not live through’ (2014, p. 106). As Teski and Climo (1995, cited in Berliner, 2005) explain, “Vicarious memories’ occur when someone “remembers” events that have not been personally experienced by her/him.’ Regional and local public acts of remembrance developed from the ceremony of Armistice Day, ‘which had a key role in the shaping of national identity’ and individuals and social groups are able to find or construct an identity within, or an identification with, a common visualised memory.

At the close of the Great War, land for military cemeteries was bequeathed by the governments of France and Belgium to their Allies ‘in perpetuity’. National identity is apparent in the symbolism of these landscapes (Morris, 1997, p. 412, cited in Iles, 2008, p. 213). The creative photographic work draws upon this symbolism.



Oak Sapling, the Somme, Objectograph, 2017. Liz Nicol.

The oak tree symbolises physical and moral vigour (Impelluso, 2003, p. 62). Following an eighteenth-century tradition of planting oak trees to mark the burial place of patriots, the German landscape designer Willy Lange designed *Heldenhaine* or 'Heroes Groves' of oak for German cemeteries in which the fallen soldiers of the First World War 'could possess a "living oak" [Lebenseiche] through which they could continue their life even after death, and take pleasure in the sun and the stars, in the song of birds and the scent of flowers, and in the joy and suffering of the fatherland' (Mosse, 1979, p. 14). The South Africa National Memorial at Delville Wood, Longueval, is situated in a parkland of oak trees grown from acorns from a centuries-old South African oak. The wood was replanted to symbolise bravery and sacrifice following its complete destruction during July 1915. The bodies of soldiers who died and were buried or lost at this site were left undisturbed after the war. This national memorial presents a significantly different approach to commemoration to the cemeteries containing thousands of individual re-burials in ordered rows of graves.

Contemporary and centenary memorials

It is uncommon now for a new military cemetery to be built, although re-burials of recovered bodies do still occur. Changes to the monuments are small, almost imperceptible, yet individually significant as names of soldiers whose bodies are newly found and identified are removed from the memorials to the missing, leaving blank spaces in their place, and new graves and headstones join existing ones in the military cemeteries.

The Wilfred Owen Memorial, opened in 2011, was designed by British artist Simon Patterson in collaboration with French architect Jean-Cristophe Denise on the site of the house in which the poet and other soldiers of his company sheltered on the night before his death on 4 November 1918. Whereas the designs of memorials and military cemetery architecture built during the 1920s and 1930s epitomise the solemnity of public commemoration and mourning, this structure is as much art installation as memorial. The intention of its



The Wilfred Owen Memorial, Ors, Nord-Pas-de-Calais. Box Brownie. 2017. Liz Nicol.

commissioners was to provide (and capitalise upon financially) a place – a contemporary shrine – for pilgrims and tourists for whom Wilfred Owen is a symbol of humanity in the Great War.

The International Memorial of Notre Dame de Lorette was designed by the architect Phillipe Prost and inaugurated in 2014 as part of the centennial commemorations of the Great War. Prost explained that he chose the figure of a ring, upon which the names are engraved as ‘a sort of human chain’ to symbolise unity and eternity. It is striking in its difference from the majority of memorials that commemorate the Great War as it does not separate the 579,606 names of those who died into groups of friends and enemies, or by rank or nationality, but instead simply lists them in alphabetical order.



Names engraved on ‘The Ring of Remembrance’, Notre Dame de Lorette.

Digital photograph, 2018. Liz Nicol

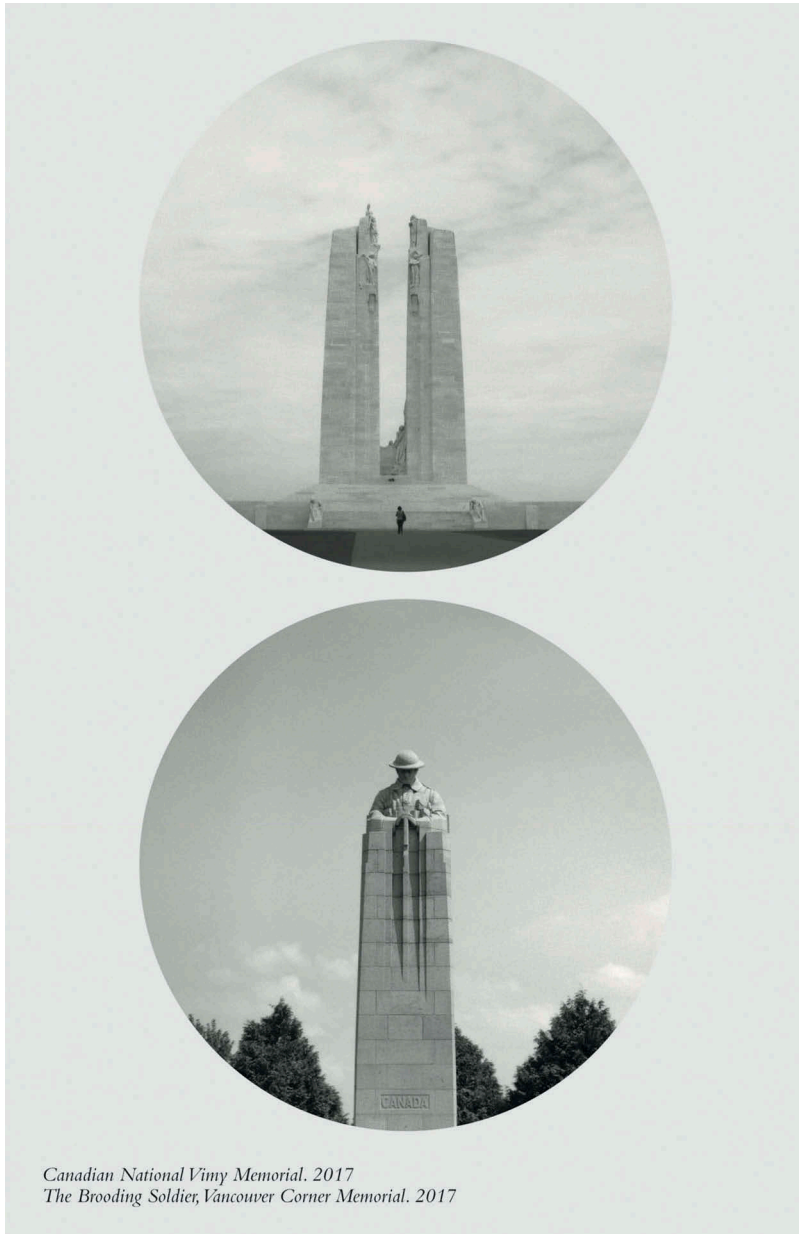
The photographic essay: keep your Kodak Busy

This photographer’s journey travels through the memorials of World War One. Taking photographs at these sites was challenging both visually and emotionally. The very basic nature of the Kodak Box Brownie negated any technical complexities or distractions, resulting in a process of making photographs that was simple yet direct and intense.

These ‘creative documentary’ photographs are presented here in essay format. Designed for the page, they are placed in pairs and sequenced to highlight key architectural elements of the memorials and war cemeteries. The sequence creates a visual flow to engage the viewer to look closely, to examine each photograph and its relation to the other photographs, to look again. There is no attempt to textually explain what is visually evoked by these photographs, nor should there be. The photographs are open to be read by the viewer who will bring to the series their own experiences and knowledge of the subject.

The sequence begins with the depiction of the architect’s vertical canvas, where monuments sit reaching for the sky or the heavens, with the enormity of scale that reminds us of our own insignificance. The cross, a common symbol of Christianity is introduced and repeated in the series, a religious icon shared by many

nationalities but not all of the Commonwealth countries that fought in the war³. Classical structures – arch upon arch – create public and private spaces for remembrance that house the names of the missing. Figurative sculptures are introduced that remind us of the acts of war, then we return to the battlefield and the horizontal axis of the *terra firma*; rows and rows of graves that stand in the place of the war dead. The sequence concludes with elements that reflect a more overt sense of national identity; the flag sets the scene with the legendary





Neuve-chapelle Indian Memorial. 2018
Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing CWGC. 2017



Bligny-Chambrecy Italian Military Cemetery. 2018
The Douaumont National Necropolis And Ossuary. 2018



Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme. 2016
Ericourt German Military Cemetery. 2016



Le Bois du Puits, Polish Memorial. 2018
Saint-Hillaire-le-Grande, Russian Cemetery. 2018



Menin Gate Memorial. 2017

Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme. 2016



*Delville Wood South African National Memorial. 2016
Bligny-Chambrey Italian Military Cemetery. 2018*



Chateau-Thierry American Memorial. 2018
La Targette Czechoslovakia Cemetery and Memorial. 2017



Notre Dame de Lorette. 2017
Delville Wood South African National Memorial. 2016



Welsh National Memorial Park. 2017
Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial. 2016

Welsh Dragon, as does the bronze Caribou the emblem of the Newfoundland Regiment.

Conclusion

We have found that the role of photography and photographs continues to be as significant to processes of memorialisation and commemoration as it was during the Great War and throughout the years of pilgrimage and battlefield tourism that followed.

During the war, thousands of photographs of young men in uniform were taken in the 'traditional' style of portrait studios, in anticipation of going overseas. Many of these personal images entered the public domain in newspaper and cinema memorials to the dead. Soldiers took cameras with them to the battlefields and photographs from home were sent overseas through the Army Postal Service. In the years following the war, the bereaved took photographs of the graves of their loved ones, while tourists snapped images of the devastation of the battlefields. Now, the pilgrims who take photographs of themselves at the graves and memorials are the descendants of those who fought and died. New memorials are built to reflect changing values of society, tourists are catered for by visitor centers and through interpretative and educational material and their desire for commemorative souvenirs can be satisfied at the ubiquitous gift shop.

This research contributed to an interdisciplinary study through its offering of a different experience of photography in relation to remembrance, commemoration, and memorialisation and the Great War, to its more usual and familiar illustrative and documentary role. In this research, the process of taking photographs and creating prints is both explorative and consciously embodied, through use of unfamiliar equipment, the experience of being present at sites of memory of Great War and the iterative process of reflection and evaluation in the darkroom. The research evolved through discussion of the different experiences of photographs and photography from the perspectives of both researchers, one of whom focussed upon a review and analysis of the literature concerning photography and photographs and their relationship to loss, remembrance, commemoration and mourning, and the other who explored these themes through the visual language of photography. Together, these research processes explored how photography and photographs facilitate and mediate the experience of memorialisation, commemoration and remembrance, the role of photographs as vehicles for mourning and remembering and how, in addition to their role as documents of the processes of memorialisation, commemoration and remembrance, photographs are also sites of memory.

Notes

1. Objectographs are the result of a photographic process devised by Liz Nicol through which an image is created by placing an object on an illuminated sheet of glass. The equipment used to make the objectographs is old and obsolete and lies somewhere between a camera and an enlarger.

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¹ Deceased 28.8.2017

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