

## **Developing a series of video clips to support the teaching of the First World War**

**Kieran Taylor** is a PhD Candidate at The University of Stirling and a registered History teacher

This article discusses the development of a series of forthcoming educational videos. These have been designed to support the teaching of the First World War in Scottish schools. The videos have been developed to support pupils at National and Higher phases. They have been funded by the Economic and Social History Society of Scotland (ESHSS) as part of their Education Outreach Fund as a response to the COVID 19 pandemic. They make use of locations and objects related to the history of the First World War in Scotland and use primary sources such as images and videos deposited in digital archives. In discussing the creation of video resources the article examines the wider pedagogy around the use and effect of the video clip in history teaching. It also provides a professional reflection on some of the practicalities and challenges associated with the production of video resources by teachers as well as the current debates around the teaching of the First World War.

### **ESHSS Educational Outreach Fund**

In June 2020 the ESHSS announced funding for the production of ‘exciting’ educational resources to assist secondary school pupils studying Scottish history. This project was borne from discussion around how the ESHSS might contribute toward supporting school pupils during the COVID 19 Lockdown by commissioning early career researchers to deliver innovative educational resources.

The ESHSS, working with the Scottish Association of Teachers of History (SATH), encouraged proposals on the following topics:

- Scotland and the Atlantic Slave Trade
- Scotland and the Suffragettes
- The Scottish Wars of Independence
- Migration and Empire in Scotland, 1830-1939
- Scotland’s role and experience of the First World War
- The earliest Scots – up to and including their battles with the Romans
- Scotland in the time of James I-VI

The ESHSS thus sought contributions from researchers with an interest in Scottish history who would use their knowledge to develop innovative educational materials. The Education Outreach Fund initiative is part of the ESHSS’ wider mission to engage the public with historical research carried out by Scottish researchers.<sup>17</sup> The initial proposal made to the ESHSS Scotland was to produce ten

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<sup>17</sup> Edinburgh University Press, Journals, “Scottish Historical Review Education Outreach Fund,” June 2020. Accessed from <https://eupublishing.com/doi/story/10.3366/news.2020.05.26.500344> November 23, 2020.

video clips of five minutes each. These were designed to cover the key issues covered in the National 5 and Higher course specifications for the Scotland and the Great War topics.

### Teaching the First World War

Prior to discussing production of the videos it is necessary to examine some of the key debates relating to teaching the First World War and Remembrance. This serves to contextualise the place of the First World War in Scottish education. It has long been argued that the Great War is an obscure and confusing topic for many learners.<sup>18</sup> The protracted nature of the conflict, the futility of the human sacrifice exacted and the complexity of the responses that the subject itself evokes have made the First World War a difficult subject to convey. The passing of the centenary of the First World War has brought renewed focus on the teaching of the Great War in the educational systems of Great Britain. There has been significant national debate about how the First World War is taught. The received account of a War in which 'lions were led by donkeys' has been the source of sharp criticism.<sup>19</sup> Former Education Secretary Michael Gove has described popular representations of the War such as *Oh, What a lovely War!* (1963) and *Blackadder Goes Forth* (1989) as representative of an 'unpatriotic defeatism.'<sup>20</sup> To some the War and its outcomes have been misrepresented within the history curriculum.

The narrative of the Western Front as a 'story of the destruction of an army' who were 'machine-gunned, gassed and finally buried' was a representation which emerged during the 1960s.<sup>21</sup> This representation popularised by Alan Clark's *The Donkeys* fit with the War poetry of Owen, Sassoon and Brooke which featured on the English curricula. Important historical documentaries, such as the BBC's *The Great War* series echoed these sentiments, as oral histories of veterans who experienced the lived reality of trench warfare were critical of the War.<sup>22</sup> The collective memory of the War has been codified as a futile conflict.

The Donkeys narrative, however, has been critiqued. Its primary observations are regarded as one-dimensional as its evidence rests too heavily on the experience of veterans of the Western Front. Historians such as Philpott allege that this 'over simplified' account was the product of the 1960s British 'counterculture.'<sup>23</sup> Military historians such as Strachan, Wilson, Prior and Sheffield have expanded understandings of conflict on the Western Front and pushed back at the received historiography particularly in relation to criticisms of Haig's tactics and the Chateau Generals. In focusing on the experience of the British army these historians have charted the military's adaptation toward the reality of mass industrialised conflict.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Catriona Pennell, "Learning Lessons from War? Inclusions and Exclusions in Teaching First World War History in English Secondary Schools," *History and Memory*, 28 no. 1 (2016), 42.

<sup>19</sup> Alan Clark, *The Donkeys*, (London: Pimlico, 1961).

<sup>20</sup> Ann Marie Einhaus, Catriona Pennell, "The First World War in the Classroom: Teaching and the Construction of Cultural Memory," (AHRC, 2014), 29.

<sup>21</sup> Clark, *Donkeys*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> Emma Hanna, *The Great War on the Small Screen: Representing the First World War in Contemporary Britain*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 83.

<sup>23</sup> William Phillpot, "Revisiting the Great War's Military history a century after the Great War," *French Journal of British Studies*, 20 no. 1 (2015), 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

Over emphasis on the Western Front, however, has obscured the War's global theatres and its many colonial conscripts. Increasingly diverse narratives of the War and the contributions made by inhabitants of former colonies are being researched, taught and remembered. The centenary of the War saw new memorials to the contributions made by African Caribbean and South Asian members of the armed forces dedicated in England.<sup>25</sup> In Scotland too, *Colourful Heritage* an organisation set up to promote awareness of South Asian history in Scotland have done much to inform students of the contribution made by the 1.7 million personnel of the Indian Army towards the Great War.<sup>26</sup> Raising awareness of these diverse contributions has renewed enthusiasm in the teaching of the First World War and encouraged many to think differently about it.

The home front has been the focus historiographical attention by historians such as Marwick, Winter, Lawrence and Pedersen.<sup>27</sup> Their research has expanded understandings of the War's lasting effects on British society. The war is thus identified as a catalyst for political, economic and social change in Britain. This has been reflected in the history curriculum as discussion of the home front entails examination of the suffrage movement, industrial unrest and the Fourth Reform Act.

Debate over how the First World War should be taught exists alongside a greater and more political dispute concerning Remembrance in schools. David Aldridge has argued that the place of Remembrance in schools should be challenged.<sup>28</sup> In Aldridge's opinion the overt patriotism associated with Remembrance encourages gratitude toward past military sacrifice rather than education regarding the many 'horrors' of conflict.<sup>29</sup> Danilova and Dollan support Aldridge. They note, in their study of Scottish Remembrance resources, that they served to instil a 'war normalising' logic.<sup>30</sup> Danilova and Dollan argue that Remembrance is a 'political education practice' which should be remade by emphasizing critical thinking when conflict is discussed.<sup>31</sup> The continuing commemoration of the First World War in schools, therefore requires re-examination.

It has been assumed that the historiographical trend in British schools has favoured Clark's interpretation of the War.<sup>32</sup> The *Blackadder* school, as it has been termed, has encouraged young people to perceive the War as an Imperialistic

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<sup>25</sup> "First ever memorial to African and Caribbean Service Personnel unveiled in Brixton," *Caribbean Times*, June, 27, 2017, <http://www.timescaribbeanonline.com/first-ever-memorial-african-caribbean-service-personnel-unveiled-brixton/> Last Accessed November 24, 2020; "Senseless and cowardly": UK's first Sikh soldier statue vandalised," *ITV*, November 10, 2018, <https://www.itv.com/news/central/2018-11-10/uks-first-statue-of-sikh-soldier-vandalised> Last Accessed November 24, 2020.

<sup>26</sup> *Colourful Heritage, The British Indian Army in World War I*, (Colourful Heritage, Glasgow Museums, 2020).

<sup>27</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War*, (London: Bodley Head, 1965); Jay Winter, *The Great War and the British People*, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1986); Jon Lawrence, "Forging a Peaceable Kingdom War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain," *The Journal of Modern History*, 75 no. 3 (2003); Susan Pedersen, "Gender, Welfare and Citizenship during the Great War," *The American Historical Review*, 95 no. 4, (1990).

<sup>28</sup> David Aldridge, "How War Ought to be Remembered in Schools?" *Impact: Philosophical Perspectives on Education Policy*, no. 21 (2014), 5.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Nataliya Danilova, Emma Dolan, "The Politics and Pedagogy of War Remembrance," *Childhood*, 27 no. 3 (2020), 12.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Badsey, "The Great War Since the Great War," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 22 no. 1 (2002), 43.

conflict which provides a moral lesson in being wary of jingoism and the call to arms.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, recent studies by Einhaus and Pennel into the teaching of the First World War in England have found that teachers incorporate a variety of perspectives when discussing the War.<sup>34</sup> The authors noted that across England the complexity, nuance and diversity of the War is being conveyed to students.<sup>35</sup> While the studies discussed in this literature review offer an overview of the teaching of the First World War in both England and to a lesser Scotland, further study is needed to provide a fuller picture of the War's place in the curricula of all the devolved nations.

### **The First World War in the Scottish Curriculum**

The teaching of the First World War currently in Scotland is not statutory, however, it is likely all pupils will encounter the subject at some point in secondary school within history, English or Religious and Moral Education. In Smith's survey of history syllabi across Scottish schools he found that five of twenty-one schools surveyed taught the First World War as part of the Broad General Education curriculum.<sup>36</sup> The First World War, is of course, an option which can be covered within certificated history classes at the National or Higher phase too.

Despite the global ramifications of the First World War, the subject is examined as part of the Scottish component of certificated history classes rather than as part of the British or European components. The primary focus of the course examines Scot's role on the Western Front as well as the impact of the War on Scottish society, politics and the economy.<sup>37</sup> While this may seem parochial, considering the relationship of the First World War to international relations in the twentieth century, historians are in agreement about the lasting and irrevocable impact that the Great War had on Scotland.<sup>38</sup> The Era of the Great War's themes reflect primarily on the home front and encourage learners to consider how conflict influenced social and political change.

### **Video Clips and the Scottish Curriculum**

The videos have been developed to support learners at the National and Higher phases. While there is no shortage of video resources for the history curriculum available online, few are relevant to the Scottish component of the curriculum. Those videos relating to the Scottish context that do exist are often not designed for a classroom context. The video series hopes to contribute to the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>34</sup> Ann Marie Einhaus, Catriona Pennel, "The First World War in the Classroom: Teaching and the Construction of Cultural Memory," (AHRC, 2014), 69.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Smith, "Curriculum coherence and teachers' decision making in Scottish high school history syllabi," *The Curriculum Journal*, 30 no. 4 (2018).

<sup>37</sup> Scottish Qualifications Authority, *Higher History Course Specification*, (SQA, 2019), 55; Scottish Qualifications Authority, *National 5 History Course Specification*, (SQA, 2019), 8.

<sup>38</sup> David Goldie, "Scotland, Britishness and the First World War," in *Beyond Scotland: New Contexts for Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature*, ed. Gerrard Carruthers, David Goldie, Alastair Renfrew, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004); Richard J. Finlay, "The Rise and Fall of Popular Imperialism in Scotland," *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 113 no. 1 (1997); Cameron McKay, "Ex-Servicemen and Crime in Interwar Scotland," (University of Stirling, Dissertation Thesis: 2019). While historians agree that the War's impact was central to many of the changes which Scottish society experienced academics take divergent views on the specific implications of the War for Scotland. Nevertheless the War is regarded as influencing amongst other things; support for Union and Home Rule, the polarisation of local politics, the break-up of the family and a rise in crime.

available educational resources designed to support the teaching of National and Higher courses.

While there is a relative dearth of high-quality video resources on Scottish history, there is an abundance of visual material relevant to the First World War deposited in Scottish archives and online. The production of a video resource on the subject of the Great War therefore hopes to distil the vast array of available primary sources for the benefit of teachers and students for future use.

### **Proposal**

The aim for the resource was that the produced video clips could be utilised by either a teacher within a classroom setting or by students at home as an aid to revision. It was intended that the series of videos would cover the entirety of the themes which compose the Impact of the Great War topic.<sup>39</sup>

The format of the videos would have a presenter deliver each clip from a different location relevant or discuss an object pertinent to the theme covered. Each video would additionally incorporate a relevant piece of source material. Source material was taken from available collections at the National Library of Scotland's Moving Image Archive, as well as the Imperial War Museum, Glasgow City Archives and SCRAN. Each video aimed to include a one-page fact file related to the theme, the fact file would give a summary of the key information discussed in the video and provide extracts and references to any primary source material featured. In addition to this to ensure that the videos were a valuable study aid, a related exam style question would be included. As would references to relevant historiography and further reading to benefit students studying at the Higher phase.<sup>40</sup> References to historiography serve to challenge more able pupils, while incorporating primary sources into the video offer the teacher prompts to ask higher order questions.

### *Example 1*

This video focuses on the theme of voluntary recruitment and is shot outside the City Chambers in Glasgow. The initial piece to camera is interlaced with footage from a video reel from Scotland's Moving Image archive showing the march of volunteers from Glasgow Corporation's Tramway's Department outside the City Chambers who had joined the Highland Light Infantry.<sup>41</sup> Stills of propaganda posters are additionally shown and explained.<sup>42</sup> An explanation of the variety of reasons why Scots volunteered to join the army are delineated. Reference is made to relevant written primary source material such as a newspaper article on voluntary recruitment.<sup>43</sup> At the end of the video a list of bullet

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<sup>39</sup> Scottish Qualifications Authority, *Higher History Course Specification*, (SQA, 2019), 55; Scottish Qualifications Authority, *National 5 History Course Specification*, (SQA, 2019), 8. Both the National 5 and Higher qualifications cover four key issues as part of the Era of the Great War and the Impact of the Great War topics; Scots on the Western Front, the impact of the war on society, politics and the economy.

<sup>40</sup> Catriona, M. M. Macdonald and Elaine, M. McFarland, *Scotland and the Great War*, (Edinburgh: Tuckwell Press, 1999).

<sup>41</sup> National Library of Scotland Moving Image Collection, Film 3320, "Response of Glasgow Tramway Men to the Country's Call to Arms", September 7, 1914. Accessed from <https://movingimage.nls.uk/film/3220> May 15 2020

<sup>42</sup> Imperial War Museum Archive, "Who can beat this Plucky Four?", Poster, 1915, PST 13632.

<sup>43</sup> "Glasgow Tramwaymen's Battalion", *The Scotsman*, September 8, 1914, 7.

points on the primary reasons for recruitment are provided along with a series of relevant statistics for learners.

### *Example 2*

This video examines radicalism and civil unrest in Scotland. The opening shot shows the statue of, the political radical and Rent Strike organiser, Mary Barbour at Govan Cross in Glasgow and in some of the streets associated with the Rent Strike in Partick and Shettleston. Barbour's role in the Rent Strikes is discussed and this is related to the wider Red Clydeside phenomenon and the politicisation of the working class and growth in support for the ILP. Stills from the Rent Strikes are included as are references to John Wheatley, James Maxton and John MacClean. Extracts from left wing weekly *Forward's* coverage of the strike are read as are snippets from Willie Gallacher's *Revolt on the Clydeside*.<sup>44</sup> Additional newsreel footage of later political protests in Scotland regarding housing are used to illustrate that radicalism was an ongoing feature of Scottish politics after the War.<sup>45</sup> At the end of the video a summary of the most important information is provided in bullet points.

### **Video Features and Differentiation**

As Watkins and Wilkins observe, video is a valuable technology for teachers in supporting learners who struggle to access the curriculum.<sup>46</sup> Video allows students to see and hear sometimes hard to explain subjects, actions and ideas. The design of the series aims to enhance differentiation in the classroom. The brief nature of the videos, between five to six minutes, serve to discourage learners from losing interest. Furthermore, ideas are explained in plain English and where appropriate definitions of potentially unfamiliar vocabulary are given on screen.

As the discussed examples make apparent the videos are designed to benefit learning and teaching in their structure and approach. For instance, the locations have specifically been chosen because of their association with the First World War and Scotland. In focusing on well-known or culturally important sites such as George Square or the National War memorial at Edinburgh Castle the aim is to build on learners' familiarity and create an association between students' sense of geography and the subject covered.

Other features of the videos such as the provision of a bullet point summary at the end additionally serve to give the teacher or student the opportunity to pause the video to take notes. The inclusion of fact files which provide written primary source material equally offer students time to engage with primary sources discussed on screen. The provision of clear references to primary sources and historiography give further opportunity for scholarship.

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<sup>44</sup> "Fifteen Thousand Glasgow Tenants on Strike," *Forward*, November, 30, 1915; Willie Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde: An Autobiography*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1949).

<sup>45</sup> British Pathé Archive, Film 356.21, "Rent Strike. Mr. David Kirkwood - the Scottish Socialist, M.P. - addresses Mass Meeting of Tenants on the Clydebanks," September 25, 1924. Accessed from <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/rent-strike/query/rent+strikes> November 11, 2020.

<sup>46</sup> Jon Watkins, Michael Wilkins, "Using YouTube in the EFL Classroom," *Language Education in Asia*, 2, no 1, (2011), 113.

Thus, short videos are extremely valuable in the history classroom. They serve to both enhance and consolidate learning.<sup>47</sup> They are a useful motivator and can be a source of inspiration, as the teacher elicits what students identify on screen. Visual primary sources such as reel footage, propaganda posters and photographs provide vivid insight into what War was like and give students a ‘feel’ for the time period.<sup>48</sup> For many learners seeing historical material on screen brings the past to life.

### **Reflection on Producing Video Resources**

Video clips form a core part of learners’ educational diet in the twenty first century. As a history teacher I use them frequently to provide learners with stimulus prior to introducing or discussing a topic. Prior to embarking on this project I had some limited experience of producing short educational videos for classes and recording podcasts. This venture, however, presented me with new considerations. In taking responsibility for the video series I would have to act as writer, presenter and director. As noted earlier there are relatively few video clips designed specifically for the Scottish curriculum, I thus set out to use my experience as a teacher and a historian of the First World War to contribute to the production of a high quality resource that would benefit others.

In the initial proposal made to the EHSS I had noted my intention to work with a colleague who runs a video production company. Working with a videographer ensured that my main focus would be the content of the videos, sourcing archived material and the production of the fact files. Through storyboarding initial ideas we were able to produce a clear overview of how we wanted the videos to look and sound. Thus, the format adopted would be documentary style with myself serving as the presenter. Piece to camera would be interlaced with archive footage and images relevant to the topic. Music would be played in the background of each video to ensure that the archive footage did not appear flat.

While I had made the initial proposal without the videographer, their input following receiving the grant was important in influencing a number of changes made. For example, the initial plan to produce ten videos covering most aspects of the course content had to be reviewed because of the laborious process of recording and editing recorded material. Thus, it was agreed that a smaller number of four videos would be made. This led me to narrow my focus to some aspects of the home front notably recruitment, radicalism, the role of women and remembrance.

Other challenges encountered in making this video related to use of archive footage and images. In selecting this material I had to ensure that this was copyright free. Requesting use of permissions was done on a case by case basis. This has been time-consuming and has made the inclusion of archive footage challenging. This of course has been disappointing and has had the result of affecting or changing aspects of the videos, as material initially selected cannot be

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<sup>47</sup> Chauncey Montey-Sano, Susan De La Paz, Mark Felton, *Writing About History Teaching*, (Columbia, New York, Teachers College Press, 2014), 10.

<sup>48</sup> Ashley Wiersma, “A Study of Teaching Methods of High School History Teachers,” *The Social Studies*, 99, no 3. (2008), 112.

used. Nevertheless, archivists at the various repositories contacted have been helpful in identifying copyright free footage and negotiating access to this.

In addition to this, the on-going COVID 19 restrictions have hindered the recording and editing process. Travel restrictions and limitations on meeting have had a significant impact on shooting or accessing archives. This has held up the production of the videos meaning so far that only one of the four videos has been able to be shot.

## Conclusions

This article has detailed a forthcoming series of video resources designed to support National and Higher students studying the First World War. It has outlined some of the key debates in education regarding the First World War and has illustrated that the Scots' curriculum examines the Great War through the subject of the home front and the impact of the War upon wider Scottish society.

The value and role of the video clip in history teaching has been highlighted, as has the process of designing and producing a video resource. The author hopes that the professional reflection discussed in this article details the associated challenges in producing video resources for the history curriculum. In particular, the challenge of securing use of archive footage is emphasized.

Video resources are an excellent method of engaging learners within history. It is hoped that the series of videos as part of the ESHSS' Education Outreach grant, when completed, will contribute to teaching and learning about the First World War in Scottish schools.

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