

# Symposium on WW1 and children: myths, images and engagement

**Thursday 23 October, 2 - 6:30pm**  
**Cotswold B, St John's Campus, University of Worcester**

The centenary of the outbreak of the First World War has led to a proliferation of: television programmes, publications, museum exhibitions and heritage events. Yet, despite the government decision to fund school children to visit the battlefields, there is a concern that perhaps many of the WWI commemoration activities have not enthralled many young people. This symposium aims to bring together academics working on the history and literature of children and WWI with practitioners who work with young people in a variety of settings and students interested in volunteering to work with schools or community groups.



2:00      **Welcome**

2:10      **Women at the Front and Class Enemies Reconciled: Anachronism in First World War Children's Novels in the Last Four Decades**

Jane Rosen, Imperial War Museum [jrosen@iwm.org.uk](mailto:jrosen@iwm.org.uk)

This paper examines the contention that recent children's books have described the First World War from a modern day perspective, detailing events and characters that were highly unlikely to have existed at the time, and certainly not as a matter of course, thus making the unusual and rare the norm. Using texts by Theresa Breslin, Marcus Sedgwick, Linda Newbery and Marjorie Darke it considers the portrayals of gender equality, sexuality and above all attitudes to class and contends that these are more in tune with current sensibilities than those of the First World War generation. It looks not only at the possible reasons for these anachronistic elements but the effect that they may have on the understanding of the reader, not just of the period in which the fiction it set but of the society in which the reader lives. It questions whether this will influence the historical questions the reader may ask as well as the questions they may raise about their own position in present day society.

Jane Rosen is a Librarian at the Imperial War Museum, London where she recently served as historical advisor for the exhibition "Once Upon a Wartime: Classic War Stories for Children".

Her research interests include radical and working class children's literature and she has produced work on the publications of the Socialist Sunday School Movement and the Proletarian Schools and Colleges at the beginning of the twentieth century. She is also working on a bibliography of working class and radical children's literature in the twentieth century.



## **2:50 Empire and Elementary School Curricula on the Home Front, 1914-1918**

Jody Crutchley, University of Worcester [j.crutchley@worc.ac.uk](mailto:j.crutchley@worc.ac.uk)

By the outbreak of the Great War, the content of public elementary school curricula had begun to reflect the perceived needs of Britain and the Empire especially as these needs changed in the face of new imperial and colonial challenges. This paper will therefore use a range of primary sources to understand what working-class boys and girls were being taught about the War and Britain's position in the World through their contemporary school curriculum subjects.

Jody Crutchley is a PhD researcher at the University of Worcester studying the impact of the empire on British elementary curricula between 1902 and 1930. In summer 2014 she worked on Radio 4's drama series Home Front.

## **3:25 Commemorating the Centenary of WWI in Primary Schools**

Julia Letts, Community and Oral Historian in the West Midlands [julia.letts@virgin.net](mailto:julia.letts@virgin.net)

Julia Letts first got involved in oral history when producing a series of millennium programmes for the BBC. For the past decade she has worked as a freelance producer and trainer, working with a wide variety of people, from small community groups to national heritage organisations. She has worked in over 20 Worcestershire schools, bringing the curriculum alive by creating projects in subjects as diverse as art, RE, history and PHSE. Her projects always involve interaction with local people, community engagement, interviewing and oral history. She has worked with script writers and drama directors to create very successful school plays out of 'real life' material.

She has a personal interest in WW1 and this is at the heart of a WW1 day she has created with local children's author John Townsend. She will talk about how she has engaged with schools over WW1, the challenges, creating age-appropriate material and the children's responses to the day.

## **4:00 Tea Break**

## **4:30 The Silenced War: fiction for children across World War One**

Prof Jean Webb, Director of the International Forum for Research in Children's Literature, University of Worcester [j.webb@worc.ac.uk](mailto:j.webb@worc.ac.uk)

Fiction written for children across the period of World War One does not reflect the war itself, but produces an Arcadian model of childhood. For example, the first heroic story of Captain W.E. Johns *Biggles* set in World War One by was not published until 1932. This paper will be a reflection on writing for children during and about World War One.

Prof Jean Webb is Director of the International Forum for Research in Children's Literature, University of Worcester. She has published widely and lectured internationally on various aspects of children's literature.

## **5:10 Intergenerational Remembrance**

Charlie Bagot-Jewitt, Eastern Area Officer at Marine Society and Sea Cadets [charlesbagotjewitt@btinternet.com](mailto:charlesbagotjewitt@btinternet.com)

Charlie Bagot Jewitt was for six years Chief Executive Officer of the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, overseeing its successful growth to attract one third of a million visitors a year and win a significant Heritage Lottery Fund Grant for its future development. He is joint editor with Maggie Andrews and Nigel Hunt of *Lest We Forget: Remembrance and Commemoration* (History Press 2011). He will draw upon this experience and his work since 2013 as Eastern Area Officer at Marine Society and Sea Cadets to discuss inter-generational remembrance.

## **6:00 Panel Discussion**

There is no charge for this event which is part of the Institute of Humanities & Creative Arts' Worcester Week; to book a place please contact John Powell: [john.powell@worc.ac.uk](mailto:john.powell@worc.ac.uk)