'Lest we forget'*: A veteran and son's warfare tourism experience

P. Fallon[a] and P. Robinson[b]

[a]Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK; [b]University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton, UK

P.Fallon@shu.ac.uk, p.robinson@wlv.ac.uk

Abstract

'Warfare tourism' represents an increasingly significant dimension of contemporary tourism. This paper provides a fresh perspective on participation in 'warfare tourism' by investigating the behaviour and experiences of a living veteran and his son returning to two theatres of war in which the veteran had served in the Royal Navy during World War Two. Active interviews with the two family members were used to gather rich data regarding the two extended trips, which had been funded by 'Heroes Return', to Australia in 2012 and Sri Lanka in 2013. The findings indicate that some of the facets of visiting the fallen at other dark tourism sites, such as empathetic identification and personal connection, are also very relevant to trips shared between the living. However, with the living these contribute to a powerful co-created experience in which 'closer' bonds between the travellers can be developed. Furthermore, whilst the experiences at times represented 'bittersweet' nostalgia for the veteran, they also provided the son with the opportunity to 'look through his father's eyes' from both a past and current perspective. Given that there will be war veterans as long as conflicts exist, the results have valuable messages for all those dealing with veterans in the future.

*The phrase 'lest we forget' was originally penned by Rudyard Kipling in his 1897 'Recessional' poem, and is sometimes added as a post script to Laurence Binyon's 'For the Fallen'. 'For the Fallen' was written during the first months of World War One, and published in The Times newspaper on 21st September 1914. The lines 'Lest we forget' and also 'We shall remember them' (from 'For the Fallen') are sometimes seen on war memorials and used in commemorative material on war remembrance days, especially in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

Introduction

In the highly emotional opening scene of Steven Spielberg's multi-Oscar winning film 'Saving Private Ryan', the eponymous hero returns to Normandy, France, where he fought as a US soldier during one of the key campaigns of the World War Two (1939-45) approximately fifty years earlier. With later generations of his family, he now visits the cemetery where many of his colleagues who died in combat are buried. The scene represents a bitter-sweet moment right at the start of the film, and triggers the veteran's memory, sending it back in time to the harrowing Normandy landings of 1944.

Whilst the storyline in the film may not be completely true, the battle it covers and the phenomenon of combat veterans and/or their families visiting sites related to the conflicts in which the veterans have fought are both very real. Such visits represent a growth area for tourism activity, and consequently they are receiving increasing interest from a range of sources, including academia (*e.g.* for research purposes and school visits) and the public (such as national governments) and private sectors (*e.g.* specialist tour operators). Moreover, the film 'Saving Private Ryan' itself is also acknowledged as a driver for such activity in terms of encouraging veterans to re-visit their wartime experiences (Hughes, 1998; Wallace, 1998). The increased profile of what has become known as 'battlefield' or 'warfare' tourism' is hardly surprising at the moment due to the recent 100th anniversary of the commencement of World War One (1914-18). In 2013 the UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, announced that £5 million (approximately US $7.5m) was being made available to help fund the conservation, repair and interpretation of memorials, cemeteries and burial sites, thereby acknowledging not only the increasing public interest in, but also the conditions of, existing World War One sites in the UK (War Memorials Trust, 2013). However, upkeep of and visits to such sites are not restricted to conflicts from the relatively distant past. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC, which pays tribute to those US service-men and -women who served in the Vietnam War (1962-73), is one of the US capital's most visited attractions. In the UK, the Armed Forces Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire represents an expansive site dedicated to all members of the Armed Forces (both regular and reserve) who were killed on duty, or as a result of terrorist action, since the end of World War Two, including fifty conflicts ranging from Northern Ireland (1969-2007) to Afghanistan (2001 to the present day) (http://www.thenma.org.uk/).

These sites and related activities, such as remembrance days, are recognised as an increasingly significant dimension of contemporary tourism (Dunkley, Morgan & Westwood, 2011; Hyde & Harman, 2011; Slade, 2003; Stone, 2006; and Winter, 2009), and therefore one deserving of further academic research (Dunkley et al, 2011). Two research areas already identified in the related literature but lacking in-depth consideration are the social dimension of visitation (Hyde & Harman, 2011) and the experiences of veterans (Dunkley et al, 2011). Firstly, despite the acknowledgement of the benefits of sharing the visit experience (Hyde & Harman,

2011), little is known about the nature of the shared experience and the perspectives offered by different participants, especially of within family groups which include living veterans. One of the reasons for this gap may be that wartime events can represent an almost 'taboo' subject for some veterans and their families to discuss (Hughes, 1998; Scurfield, 1992; Wallace, 1998). Indeed, this may also partly explain why there has been little attempt so far to investigate the return experiences of veterans going back to theatres of war in which they served - this represents the second research gap. To date, whilst the majority of related literature e.g. Dunkley et al (2011), Hyde & Harman (2011), Slade (2003) and Winter (2009) distinguishes between visitors with and without personal connections to the site, it has essentially ignored veterans with direct wartime experience.

However, it is generally acknowledged that one of the main reasons why people return to a place is to share it with others who have not been before themselves (Gitelson & Crompton, 1984), and also that experiences which are co-created between family members offer rich opportunities for self-development, for example in terms of enhancing family bonds (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Hughes, 1998; Wallace, 1998). These two notions underpin this study.

The 'Heroes Return' Project

Heroes Return is a UK project funded by the National Lottery, enabling current veterans to make commemorative trips to the places where they served their country during World War Two (http://www.heroesreturn.org). Since its inception in 2009, more than 50,000 veterans have made this 'pilgrimage', and a total of £27m (US $42m) has been awarded for travel and accommodation costs for not only veterans themselves (or their widow/er) but also notably their spouse and/or carer. At the time of this study, whilst the majority (almost two thirds) of these trips have been to Northern and Western Europe, there have been a substantial amount to other theatres, including more than 13,000 to the Mediterranean and North Africa, and almost 8,000 to a region commonly known during the War as the 'Far East' (which covered what we know as East Asia, South East Asia, and South Asia) and beyond.

The programme has enabled emotional reunions for British veterans with/at combat sites, including the afore-mentioned beaches of Normandy, the battlefields of Arnhem (in Holland), remembrance sites in the 'Far East', and attendance at events and commemorative trips across the UK (http://www.heroesreturn.org). Therefore, funded trips have covered a multitude of dimensions of World War Two, and acknowledge the various stages of the six-year conflict from 1939 to 1945, the varied geographical theatres of the War, all branches of the armed forces *i.e.* the army, navy and air force, and a wide variety of wartime experiences (not just directly combat-related, but also imprisonment and escape, military intelligence work, hospitalisation/rehabilitation, and sea convoys). Amidst all this variety, a cornerstone

of the project is the sharing of the reunion experience between veterans and their travelling companions, who include family members.

'Heroes Return' is a highly successful project, indeed it has recently been further extended to enable veterans to apply for funding to make second trips. A fundamental requirement of the project is the availability of veterans who are willing and able to make the return, and their existence would seem to be supported by increasing longevity of life (with reasonable health and mobility). However, as time rolls on and we move further into the 21st Century, there will be an ongoing decline in the numbers of veterans who are able to participate given that the War ended 70 years ago. The success of the project itself also reflects a more general recent renewal of interest in visitation to memorials, battlefields and remembrance ceremonies (Winter, 2006). A contributory factor to both this more increased general interest and the popularity of the project may be what could be classified as the 'Saving Private Ryan Effect'. For example, the film has triggered an increase in tourism to Normandy by veterans and their families since its release in 1998 by raising not only awareness of the existence of memorials and cemeteries but also highlighting their accessibility (Hughes, 1998). Indeed, Bentham (2006) acknowledges that the film's release resulted in an estimated increase in tourism in Normandy of 40%.

The success of a project such as 'Heroes Return' is also interesting given potential reticence amongst some veterans to share their wartime experiences with their families and/or for their family to question them on those experiences (Hughes, 1998; Scurfield, 1992; Wallace, 1998). Such reticence is understandable as reliving wartime experiences may be potentially extremely painful (Scurfield, 1992). It is here that a further dimension of the 'Saving Private Ryan Effect' has been evident, in this case as a catalyst for veterans to share their experiences with their nearest and dearest. For example, Hughes (1998) comments:

> "The power of one film to create such a strong and lasting emotional reaction in people is something US tour operator Sue Ryder-Scott puts down to a *fin de siecle* search for values, and a realisation that the survivors of the war will not be around much longer. The film has encouraged veterans to break their silences and start telling their own stories. People are saying: 'My father stayed quiet for all those years and I didn't have a clue.' "

Therefore, 'Heroes Return' represents a potentially very powerful and emotion-laden mechanism for veterans to formally share their wartime experiences and memories with their families.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to provide insights into the behaviour and experiences of a 'veteran family', in this case a veteran and his son, returning on

Heroes Return'-funded trips to theatres of war in which the father served in the Royal Navy during the latter stages of World War Two. Given the nature of the 'Heroes Return' project – in which veterans and family members, either as spouses or in the role of carers, travel together – it offers an opportunity for rich and multi-faceted joint and individual experiences to be created and co-created by stakeholders as part of the tourism experience network (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). Involving veterans in the study enables the roles of personal meaning and emotional involvement, especially in terms of sharing memories for the first time (Hughes, 1998; Scurfield, 1992; Wallace, 1998), to be investigated.

The main research method is the active interview; the veteran and his son were interviewed on two separate occasions following a funded first trip to Australia in 2012 and a funded second trip to Sri Lanka in 2013. To further contextualise the findings from the interviews, commentaries available at the Heroes Return website (visit http://heroesreturn.org/) – from the '*Memories of War: Heroes Return 2 veterans tell their stories*' commentary and the related blog – will also be referred to. In addition to the academic literature, this will enable a more triangulated analysis to be provided.

Literature Review

The ''warfare tourism' experience

This phenomenon of combat veterans returning to former battlefields and related war cemeteries has been recognised more recently in the academic literature as a category of what has become broadly known as 'dark tourism' (Dunkley et al, 2011; Stone, 2006; Winter, 2009). Whilst understanding of dark tourism is still in its relatively early stages (Biran, Poria & Oren, 2011; Stone & Sharpley, 2008), it is generally recognised as a multi-dimensional concept comprising a wide range of sites and motivations for their visitation (Biran et al, 2011; Stone, 2012). Different authors use different terms to describe and/or categorise battlefields and related war cemeteries and memorials, such as those represented in the opening scene of 'Saving Private Ryan'. For example, Stone's (2006) 'dark conflict sites' delineates them explicitly from other forms of dark tourism such as 'fun factories' and also shrines (which can include war memorials). Seaton (2000) and Baldwin & Sharpley (2009) more specifically use the term 'battlefield tourism', which reflects that most studies of this type have focused on sites of battles and related cemeteries and memorials. However, as per Stone's delineation, battles and cemeteries/memorials do not necessarily accompany each other; for example, 'visits' can take place during the actual battle, as was the case with Waterloo in 1815 (and even more recently in Syria in 2014). More latterly, Dunkley et al (2011) propose that 'warfare tourism' includes a broader spectrum of combat- and war-related sites, events and activities, including battlefields, battlefield tours, battle re-enactments, war cemeteries, war

memorials, war museums and also 'war experiences'. 'Warfare tourism' therefore represents a more inclusive term, and one which is consistent with the 'Heroes Return' recognition of war zones (not just on land but also sea and air battles) and associated activities and experiences, including escape from prisoner of war camps, radar operation and military intelligence work (http://www.heroesreturn.org).

Biran et al. (2011, p.823) advise that the "conceptualization of dark tourism encompasses tourist attractions that are most often considered and classified as heritage sites". This conceptualization is beneficial due to its emphasis on the experiential nature of the phenomenon and the need to consider individual tourists' perceptions (Biran et al., 2011). Numerous motivations for visiting dark tourism sites have been proposed in both the conceptual and empirical literature. Dann's (1998) identification of nostalgia, and Ashworth's (2002 and 2004) consideration of pilgrimage, the search for self-identity, empathetic identification, and increase in social responsibility would seem of particular relevance in terms of 'warfare tourism'. Other frameworks, especially those which acknowledge the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of the visitors, also shed valuable light. For example, Ashworth (2004, p.363) refers to the potentially different motivations of victims and perpetrators at the sites of former atrocities such as Auschwitz (Nazi concentration camp in Poland during World War Two). He also refers to "those not directly identifying with either victims or perpetrators … [who] may argue that they have an interest in memorialisation to prevent the occurrence of a similar atrocity, in which they might be involved".

Biran et al's (2011) study emphasises the importance of acknowledging personal meaning within an experiential approach to dark tourism, identifying the need to distinguish between 'ordinary' leisure tourists and tourists with a personal connection to the site. They found that visitors to Auschwitz with a personal connection had a significantly stronger interest in emotional experience and connection to their heritage than those without, who were significantly more interested in a knowledge-enriching experience. They likened these two groups to Prentice & Anderson's (2007) delineation of 'identity reinforcers' and 'knowledge seekers' respectively.

A number of authors have looked specifically at motivations for visiting 'warfare tourism' sites, with the main focus on battlefields. Prideaux (2007) identifies remembering comrades (as epitomised in 'Saving Private Ryan'), remembering loved ones who died in the battle, reflecting on the actions of unknown fallen, and either gloating on the victory or lamenting the defeat. Dunkley et al's (2011) empirical work with UK tourists to World War One former battlefields and cemeteries emphasises the influence of personal connection, albeit indirect, on the meaning and experience of their visit. They found that participants who were personally connected *i.e.* through a previous generation of their family who had fought and/or died at the site, considered their trip as a form of pilgrimage. For example, one tourist felt "drawn to the WW1 battlefields because he needed to see for himself [and therefore personally validate] the sites where his grandfather and great uncle had

fought" (p. 866). Whilst 'Susan', was "nostalgically drawn to these bygone times [as times of high levels of social unity], to the point where she becomes almost evangelical in her desire to bring her son and grandson on such a tour in a bid to encourage remembrance amongst future generations and to preserve collective group memory" (pp. 863-864). Therefore, visits to the sites have significant 'shared' aspect about them for visitors, in the former case with those who have fought and died there, and in the latter with existing younger generations – and there is a suggestion that a 'baton' is being handed down the generations via the visit.

Hyde and Harman's (2011) quantitative study of visitors to Gallipoli (World War One battlefield site on the Turkish peninsula) indicates that, in addition to more profound, emotional experiences (Slade, 2003), sites can also represents an opportunity for sharing an enjoyable time with travelling companions as well as fellow visitors. This indicates that warfare site visits are potentially multi-motivated – a feature common to other forms of leisure tourism, and that plans and activities may result from compromise between group members (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999).

'Warfare tourism' as a co-created experience

Binkhorst & Den Dekker (2009, p. 312) propose that tourism represents "the greatest and ever growing source of experiences with which people construct their own unique narratives". The co-creation experience results from the interaction of an individual at a specific place and time and within the context of a specific act and environment (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Chronis (2005, 2012) provides a number of examples of co-creation within the specific context of battlefields in his studies of Gettysburg (a key battle in the American Civil War of 1861-65). For example, he (2005, p.394) demonstrates that the story of the battle represents a type of 'puzzle' which visitors create for themselves:

> "You try to kind of piece it together and as time went on I had a better, even better understanding than from just reading a book. You say "Wow!" . . . Where did they come from? How come they didn't come from that end? You usually ask such questions".

In some cases, the visitor becomes connected to the past, and even experiences something akin to 'being there' (2012, p.2006):

> "We got off on the first stop and the guide asked for volunteers, of which I was one, and he lined five of us and showed us how the soldiers lined up to prepare for battle and how they did their manoeuvring and how the lines actually fired … with the noise and the smoke and the soldiers actually becoming deaf from the firing."

Furthermore, Binkhorst & Den Dekker (2009) argue that a wider 'tourism experience network' than the dyad between producer/supplier and consumer is needed in order

to acknowledge the wider, diverse and dynamic range of stakeholders who contribute to the co-creation of experiences within the context of tourism and at different stages of the consumption process. For example, before the holiday, travellers take advice from not only intermediaries but also family and friends who have visited the destination previously. During the stay, they interact not only with local service providers, attractions (including museums and heritage sites) and residents but also with travelling companions and fellow travellers (as per Hyde and Harman, 2011). Finally, during and/or after their return they share their photographs, videos, thoughts and experiences with friends, family and the wider public. This 'tourism experience network' emphasises the potentially significant role of travelling companions within holiday experiences. This social dimension is a common theme within the tourism literature, especially as most tourists do not make their trips alone, as also acknowledged by 'Heroes Return'. Wang (1999, p.364) specifically recognises tourists' search "for the authenticity of, and between, themselves" as part of their holiday narrative. For example, right from the very outset people decide first with whom they go on holiday and what kind of experience they want, and then consider possible destinations (Obrador, 2012). In particular, family vacations are an "opportunity for productive and beneficial family bonding" (Carr, 2011, p.21) – they provide opportunity for family members to learn more about each other, to get closer, and to get to know each other 'in a nice way' (Wallop, 2011; Obrador, 2012). Most consideration of family holidays and the opportunities they represent for bonding and intimacy has been given to parents and young children e.g. Carr (2011) and Obrador (2012). However, family holidays are not restricted to these groups, and indeed they are becoming more multi-generational; in the UK, there has been a recent increase in the number of grandparents accompanying parents and children – a phenomenon which has become known as 'gramping'.

To date, there has been limited formal explicit investigation of the social and/or family dimension of either dark tourism in general or 'warfare' sites in particular, despite the potential for, *inter alia*: co-creating experiences - not necessarily restricted to the specific site but also of a more general leisure nature; sharing knowledge and/or paying respects with the next generation; showing/sharing places and sites of personal significance to other family members. However, and as already referred to, there has been some acknowledgement within existing studies. For example Dunkley et al (2011) note one participant's "almost evangelical" determination to "encourage remembrance" with two generations of her family, whilst Hyde and Harman's (2011) highlight that dark conflict site experiences are co-created with travelling companions and other visitors at the site, therefore resembling more of a traditional leisure holiday.

The nostalgic 'gaze' within warfare tourism

Dann (1998) identified nostalgia as one of the main motivations for visiting dark tourism sites, and it would seem an especially relevant concept within which to consider the return of veterans to places where they previously served their country. The different definitions and explanations of nostalgia highlight that it represents a multi-faceted concept. Davis (1979) and Kim (2005) refer to its pleasurable aspect; for example, Kim (2005, p. 85) defines it "as a sentimental yearning for the past that invokes a positive evaluation of it in contrast to the present". However, Baker and Kennedy's (1994, p. 170) description as "a sentimental or bittersweet yearning for an experience, product, or service from the past" acknowledges the potential pain in revisiting the past events of one's life.

Nostalgia takes different forms, and consequently the past does not necessarily need to have been personally experienced. These forms include: 'real' nostalgia (re-connection with personal earlier lives); 'simulated' nostalgia (which refers to indirectly experienced past, for example via visual media such as films and heritage sites; and 'collective' nostalgia (representing commonly shared past, passed on for example through memories and stories) (Baker and Kennedy, 1994; Russell, 2008). As such, it is possible for two individuals to have a nostalgic experience related to the same event even though only one of them has prior direct experience of it. Furthermore, whilst nostalgia is a key motivator for older travellers (Russell, 2008), it is not restricted to this group and individuals can feel nostalgic at any age (Holbrook & Schindler, 1994).

Memories represent a common vehicle for the sharing of nostalgia. Halbwachs (1980) proposes that all individual memories are in some way 'collective', in that they are dependent upon others for their existence because the experience is recalled from a social perspective, and often for social purposes. As such, memories can also be dynamic *i.e.* subject to change as they are collaboratively recollected and reconstructed, and sometimes contested as details are disputed and re-negotiated (Reese & Fivush, 2008). Memories can also be powerful, especially in terms of creating bonds. For example, Healey (1991, p.226) describes them as a "way of linking with and expressing our relationship with emotionally significant others", whilst Halbwachs (1980, p. 46) posits that "the events of our life most immediate to our self are also engraved in the memory of those groups closest to us".

Interestingly within the context of dark tourism, Ashworth (2004) also suggests that 'collective amnesia', or the opposite of 'collective nostalgia' can exist, for example amongst the perpetrators of an atrocity as a denial strategy of its existence, indicating that some memories may be blocked out. Given the 'bittersweet' nature of nostalgia (Baker and Kennedy, 1994), it would be inappropriate to assume that the sharing of experiences and memories are always desirable and/or achieved in the 'nice way' suggested by Obrador (2012). A blog set up by Michael Skinner Research

(2012) entitled 'The Silence of War Veterans' identifies some of the complex reasons behind the reticence to share their memories, including: a lack of capacity to share sensory as well as emotional feelings to someone who has not lived through the experience (suggesting that a 'gap' exists between the military and civilian worlds); the pain of re-telling (especially if the veteran has been 'broken' in some way by his/her experience), and the pain of listening; concern that the listener might perceive the recounting of a story intended to discourage the future take-up of arms as 'lacking' in heroism; specific instructions not to disclose what has happened; and humility. Additionally, Balkoski (2013), in his opus on the experiences of US soldiers in Europe in World War Two, notes that servicemen were not necessarily fully informed of the work they were engaged in at the time, instead hoping that that the meaning would be made clear later. As such, personal experiences may take on a different meaning when considered at a later date and within their wider context (Halbwachs, 1980), and this wider context may be helpful in terms of reconciliation of personal acts, events and situations.

Methods

> "In order to understand the tourism phenomena and furthermore to develop tourism, the main source for input is hidden in each human being who eventually becomes a tourist or who, from one of his/her experience environments, comes into contact with tourism" (Binkhorst & Den Dekker (2009, p. 313).

This proposal regarding investigation of the human aspects of tourist experiences in general is supported within the dark tourism literature. Dunkley et al (2011, p.866) propose that "[d]espite a growing literature on [dark] tourism, there remains much scope for further empirical research, especially qualitative in-depth study of motivations and experiences." Furthermore, investigations into dark tourists' motivations specifically require "a compassionate and sympathetic approach" (Dunkley et al, 2011). It was therefore logical to adopt an interpretive approach for the study in order to gain insight into the essence of participants' – both individual and shared - motivations, behaviours and experiences.

Semi-structured interviews were originally considered for the primary data collection. The interview participants were Bob and Steve, and the sampling was purposive. Bob is a 90-year old (at time of writing) pensioner, living in Wolverhampton (UK), who had served in the Royal Navy in both the European and, at the end of the war in Europe, Pacific theatres of the Second World War. Bob had mainly participated in mine-laying operations, and had seen active service in locations as diverse as the Arctic and the Pacific; therefore, he had been 'fighting' not only German and Japanese opposition but also, and especially in the case of the Arctic convoys, severe weather and sea conditions. For example, he had broken his jaw when his vessel was thrown by a large wave, which resulted in hospitalisation in Melbourne, Australia (indeed, this hospitalisation and a subsequent train journey to Sydney

formed a significant component to the funded return journey with his Steve). Steve is Bob's son; he is thirty years Bob's junior, and works as a senior lecturer at the University of Wolverhampton. Given both Steve's profession and acquaintanceship with the research team, he was not only understanding and supportive of the study but also sufficiently comfortable to ask his father's consent to participate in the research. Bob and Steve had applied for and received two separate lots of Heroes Return-funding, and had travelled to Australia in August 2012 and to Sri Lanka in August 2013, with his son Steve acting as his carer on both occasions.

Active Interviews

After initial discussion with Steve regarding the most sensitive, and at the same time, effective means of interviewing his 89-year old father on this subject matter, a more conversational interpretive technique was eventually chosen. Following the principle established by Dunkley et al (2011) in terms of recognising the need for more creative and inclusive conversations, active interviews were identified as an ideal technique for data collection. Active interviews represent a process in which researchers and interviewees contribute more equally to the discussion and thereby enable both to co-create meaning (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). They have been used in similar research contexts; for example, Caton & Santos (2007) used active interviews to investigate tourists' experiences of the Route 66 heritage site in the USA.

In the case of the current study, these active interviews enabled a more informal dialogue to take place between the participants *i.e.* the two interviewees and the researcher/interviewer. The interviewer (one of the authors was chosen to carry out both interviews) was also able to contribute to the discussion in a more empathetic manner in the interviews as his own father and two uncles had also served in the Navy during the same conflict. He was therefore familiar with Navy terms and behaviours; for example he was able to share in a dialogue regarding the Royal Navy's daily tot of rum ritual, and this helped to increase the open-ness and flow of the conversation. The more participative nature of the method was further beneficial during the second interview as it enabled the interviewer to refer to, and remind the interviewees of, comments and stories they had provided in the first conversation. Bob was advised in advance that each individual interview would last approximately one hour and agreed to meet at his home in Wolverhampton. Whilst this was mainly for Bob's convenience, the setting also provided 'added value' to the discussion as Bob was able to refer to photographs which he had kept from his Navy days (some of which were hanging on his wall and others which Steve collected from Bob's personal belongings). In total, both interviews lasted approximately two-and-a-half hours; the first one lasted 80 minutes, and the second just over 70 minutes. Both were recorded and fully transcribed shortly after being held.

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The data analysis comprised two stages, following the technique adopted by Caton & Santos (2007). Firstly, both Steve and the interviewer read each of the transcripts in order to check their accuracy and gain a deeper understanding of each interview, or "grasp the heart of what had been meaningful" (Caton & Santos, 2007, p.376). This process enabled some refinements to be made - some slight misunderstandings were corrected and some extra details were added, thereby helping to overcome some of the shortcomings of the relatively short interviews. Secondly, the individual interviews were considered side-by-side to identify themes and patterns in the discussion. This task was made easier given that, as already stated, during the second interview, the interviewer had been able to remind the interviewees of, comments and stories they had provided in the first conversation. As a further frame of reference, and to help triangulate the study, the research team also drew on material from Blow, Brown, Hassall, Hughes, Kennedy, McNiven & Robinson's '*Memories of War: Heroes Return 2 veterans tell their stories*' article and related blog - both available on the 'Heroes Return' website at http://heroesreturn.org/. Both of these sources are independent of the primary data collected from Bob and Steve; they represent a freely available mechanism for anyone involved in 'Heroes Return' to share their experiences, photos and videos. Consequently, and whilst not containing any discussion directly related to return trips to Australia and Sri Lanka, these additional sources helped identify themes to inform the analysis; for example, they provided support for the 'bitter-sweet memories' theme referred to in the findings.

Findings and Discussion

The discussions in both interviews emphasised that Bob's war experiences, and his memories of them, included a range of events and places which were combat and non-combat related, reflecting the service he saw at sea as a navy minelayer, the times when his vessel was docked for supplies or repair work (*e.g.* resulting from enemy attack, the weather and heavy usage) and also his periods of leave. This emphasises the constraints on members of some of the armed forces, especially the navy and air force, in terms of returning to the places where they saw active duty; for example, John (in Blow et al, 2011) comments:

> "Obviously most veterans funded through Heroes Return 2 go back to the places where they fought, but as we can't go back to the middle of the ocean we decided to go to the museum dedicated to the Battle of the Atlantic."

However, veterans recognise the importance of making the return "trip to remember our time in the war and the men that were lost (John, in Blow et al, 2011), with Bob wanting to respect those he served with because "when you are a sailor you stick to your mates". In addition to confirming the pilgrim-like status of returning veterans, these comments also reflect the perceptions of unity shared by previous generations during wartime referred to in Dunkley et al's (2011) study. Furthermore, they also

indicate that the bond developed during the conflict can act as a driver for future acts of remembrance (Prideaux, 2007). Not only does this emphasise that military service creates 'ties that bind' those who saw active service together, but it emphasises the importance of developing sites at which veterans can not only pay their respects to fallen comrades, but also show gratitude for their own survival and possibly reconcile the two acts. William articulates this as a profound desire (from the Heroes Return blog at http://heroesreturn.org/):

> "I think most people would ask why on earth I would want to go back to where I had such a traumatic experience. There are the war graves, where some of the 775 out of the 1,000 who didn't survive are buried, and I would appreciate the opportunity to reflect on their sacrifice ... Visiting the graves would also provide an opportunity to thank Almighty God for his grace, mercy, love and preservation which brought me safely back to the UK. I know I can continually do this but on the site would be very appropriate."

Further acknowledging these 'traumatic experiences', in Bob's role as a mine-layer he and his comrades were vulnerable to a constant range of threats, for example from 'kamikaze' suicide bombers in the Pacific to severe weather and limited protection from other vessels in the Arctic. Consequently, there were a number of 'close shaves' for him. For example, on one occasion:

> "The ship was in a terrible state – the engines were shot. You can't make it back to the UK, but if you get across the Atlantic, there's a dry dock at Hamilton. The skipper put it to us. We had a call at the Cape Verde Islands to refuel. [Steve adds: "The islands were neutral during the War"]. If we'd have been here 12 hours before, a U-boat [German submarine] would have had us. We should have had it! We couldn't have done anything about it! We just about made it to dry dock."

The discussion sometimes drifted between the various theatres in which he served, and his memories are a mixture of good and bad.

> "The Russian trips you remember most [because of the severity of the conditions]. Even on the Arctic convoys you get ... I mean I remember once we couldn't lay the minefield because it was too rough. We had to find a bit of lee and lay to, and that's when I was telling him [Steve] about the Lights, you know the Aurora Borealis. I've never seen anything like them in my life. I saw them two or three times but this one time it was fantastic [Bob's face literally lights up at this point] we had to lay to and they came over and it was great – that's a good memory."

Such bitter-sweet memories are shared with other funded veterans. For example, another sailor, Arthur, comments (in Blow et al, 2011):

> 'I have such fond memories of Ischia [island off the coast of Italy]. It's very moving to go back there and see those children [whom he initially met in 1944] growing up and doing so well. There's only two of us left now from the ship, but I know that all the lads would be so happy to see how the island is thriving. It was an honour to serve and I saw so many wonderful places, but it is the memories of Ischia and the great friends I made there that will be with me forever'."

Further happier memories are created by looking back on the places and times where Bob was on leave, notably Sydney, Bermuda and Malta (especially in what was known as 'The Gut' area of Malta), with Bob noting that "when you did get back [on leave], you went hell for leather – you never knew if you were coming back". This led Steve to question his father on the contradictory nature of his experiences: "It must have been strange going from one minute being blown out of the water and then paradise", with Bob responding:

> "It was for some – it depends how you took the Navy. If you went along with them, it was great. There were no hostilities out in Bermuda, so we knew we were safe. We were there [Bermuda] for about a month. We lived ashore. The Navy had bought an old colonial house and had turned it into a kind of rest home for 'doolally' sailors [both Bob and Steve laugh, and Steve explains that this is a reference to servicemen who had 'lost their mind']. It was lovely, on a coral beach. We lodged there for about six weeks. That was one of the best times, happy times. It was a lovely break because we'd had nothing in West Africa – we were glad we go back to sea from there."

Bob and Steve's enjoyment of this part of the discussion, and Steve's contribution indicate that these memories are 'collective' and have helped form a bond between father and son (Halbwachs, 1980; Healey, 1991), despite the fact that it is only Bob that has experienced this personally.

For Bob, other aspects of his wartime experiences were especially unforgettable, emphasising both the youth of veterans when they first went to these destinations for the first time and their limited knowledge and experience of such places, potentially not only adding further to the traumatic experience but also broadening their outlook:

> Steve: "One thing that I thought was interesting about what you remembered from the first time. You told me that a lot of the locals used to chew something ..."
>
> Bob: "Ooooo... Just outside of Colombo [Sri Lanka], 'twas out of bounds, there six of us went down to where you couldn't go. I've never seen anything like it in my life. It was terrible, they were like zombies. From here to here [points to his face and down to his chest] they had this purple and red stain. They were like zombies! [Steve explains "Betel nut - the stain, it's like a social drug] "They start on it as kids and stay on it all their lives. That's the one thing I did remember - it's never left me! Well, I don't know if it's disgusting or if you have to feel sorry for them."

This cameo shows that Bob and Steve had shared some of Bob's experiences prior to the actual trip. Although some of this co-creation had taken place in the course of planning their trips *i.e.* in the pre-travel stage (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009), this was an incident which Bob had recounted to Steve even earlier this and which was etched into Steve's memory (Halbwachs, 1980). Consequently, when Steve arranged a taxi trip and "went on the trip on the Friday, we asked the driver and he knew what we meant. He told us it was the betel nut – which is like a drug". The trip they were taking – a more leisurely journey to and around Colombo – also indicates that there were also leisure dimensions to these return trips; indeed, Steve confided

that one of his many motivations for the trip include the opportunity for some exotic travel (*c.f.* Hyde and Harman, 2011).

A further anecdote emphasises that some of the memories had been shared well before their trip, and also indicates that individual participant's memories can be contested on different occasions in which they are shared (Reese & Fivush, 2008):

> Steve: "I remember one thing you said to me a few years ago when you first went in there [on the Arctic convoys] and you said you had been on night watch, and it was a really bad storm and you broke down and cried."

> Bob: "No, that wasn't the Arctic. The only time I'd really felt down. We'd been at sea a fortnight longer than we should have been. The food was heart attack – we had to boil the water, sieve the flour. We were on the way back from to Capetown. We'd run into a beautiful storm. I got the middle watch 12-4am, and the next feller had come to relieve me. I got down below in the mess, the ship was up and down like a yoyo and I was soaked to the skin freezing. I thought 'What the bloody hell is it all about... I am 19 years old in the middle of the Atlantic going up and down like a yoyo'. Tears came in to my eyes, just that once.... and I was really..... chock-a-block. Next morning, there was calm and we were back into Freetown. Just the once in the whole Navy career that I felt really down."

For Bob, returning to places and reminiscing were important motivations for the trip – "I tried to reminisce, but the memory plays tricks when you are getting on a bit. It's been a long time! I enjoy reminiscing ... but some of the memories are painful." Therefore re-connecting with his previous life experiences as part of a real nostalgic experience was an important part of the return experience, and also a bittersweet one (Baker and Kennedy, 1994). Of his trip to Australia, he enjoyed Sydney (especially the harbour) where he had spent most time during the War, but was noticeably disappointed that he couldn't relate to anything about Melbourne. Steve commented:

> "Sydney harbour, as a natural harbour, he could recognise all the little islands going out to Manly, there was a lot more that was the same, places they couldn't build on the harbour."

And Bob added: "It was [Sydney] a bit vague but you could pin-point places. We had a bit of a fracas, we got kicked out [now laughing] and that looked like the pub where it happened." In particular, Bob enjoyed reminiscing on individual mates and incidents they were involved in together *i.e.* fond memories already identified by another sailor, Arthur, in the previous quote above (in Blow et al, 2011). At the end of the War, Bob was "not sad that the war was over, but sad. I have to confess I loved the navy! All my memories are pretty good - I wouldn't have minded staying in."

For Steve, his father's nostalgic moments were an important part of his enjoyment of the trip, and he enjoyed co-creating and sharing in these moments – "I went almost trying to look through his eyes. I guess that's a latent nostalgia – I am a nostalgic

guy anyway". So Steve was looking for empathy with his father, and especially to try to link with Bob by putting himself in his father's situation (*c.f.* Healey, 1991):

> "You could see it in his face; I tried to imagine what it would be to see something after 65 years. His face lit up sometimes - it was brilliant! I found myself imagining what it would be like as an 18 year old – completely different from the UK. I had the image [of Australia] that Dad told me about, fairly isolated. I was looking for the bits he might remember. I was looking for places that were old and unspoilt." (From first interview)

> "It's absolutely brilliant. Apart from spending the time with him anyway, it's quite easy for me to put myself in his situation 60-70 years ago and just try to look at him see if he's reacting and whether all of a sudden his face changes and he remembers something. And he's really happy to talk about." (From second interview)

Admittedly, in another part of the interviews, Bob confides that: "I don't talk to anyone really about my experience - only to Steve, and that's when he asks or if summat happens that brings that memory back I'll tell him, but normally I don't talk about it". This indicates that the trip in itself may not have acted directly as a facilitator for father and son to share the veteran's experiences of war (c.f. Hughes, 1998; Wallace, 1998) as there was already a pre-existing strong bond. However, it is clear that the two funded trips have strengthened the pre-existing bonds between father and son:

> Steve: "We've got closer in the last few years - it's been predominantly the trips, but we've always been pretty close."

> Bob: "When we go away, everything goes pat and there's no trouble. I am a pretty easy going feller. We stay in the same room".

Furthermore, and even at Bob's venerable age of 89 at the time of the interview, they are looking forward to more holidays, and if possible even Heroes Return-funded trips together (and a fitting note to end the discussion here):

> Steve: "That (Arctic convoys) would be the next one if we get any more money."

> Bob: "I'm thinking of your sea-sickness though."

> Steve: "I'll be alright. To be honest, as his son, I know what he went through – well, I don't know what he went through but the convoys was a big part of it, and I've seen enough programmes on the telly to know how awful it was. I'd put up with a bit of sea-sickness for that."

Conclusions

This study provides further insights into the concept known as 'warfare tourism' (Dunkley et al, 2011). Despite its recognition as a significant and growing dimension of contemporary tourism, research to date has been mainly focused on visits to battlefields and related memorials/cemeteries. The purpose of the study was to specifically investigate the behaviour and experiences of a 'veteran family' returning to two theatres of war in which the veteran had served in the Royal Navy during

World War Two. Both the investigation of veterans returning to their war experiences and potential for co-creation within the experience (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009) represent relatively untouched areas of research within this context.

Active interviews were used to gather rich data *via* conversations between the interviewer, a veteran and his son; the participants were interviewed on two separate occasions following a funded first trip to Australia in 2012 and a funded second trip to Sri Lanka in 2013. Consequently, both trips represent extended periods of time which the participants shared together, further differentiating this study from related ones. In addition, commentaries from other World War Two veterans available from the 'Heroes Return' website were used to further contextualise the primary data which was collected. Given the participants in the study, the findings mainly provide fresh and different perspectives - rather than providing completely new insights - on warfare tourism experiences. These perspectives have different implications for different stakeholders of the phenomenon. These insights are admittedly based on a limited exploratory research project, and further research – for example, with veterans who have seen active and non-active service in other theatres of war and wars/conflicts, with veterans who fund their own return, with a more diverse set of travel companions, and within the context of shorter trips and/or more specific sites – is required to develop the subject area further.

There were a variety of reasons for Bob and Steve engaging in warfare tourism, and these overlap with general tourism motivations, as well as motivations for both 'dark' as well as 'battlefield' tourism. These motivations, and the subsequent experiences on the trips, are inter-related and complex. Overall, the two trips represented opportunities for Bob and Steve to: share time together and become 'closer', both generally and in terms of Bob's wartime experiences; individually reminisce (Dann, 1998; Prideaux, 2007) and share 'collective' memory (Halbwachs, 1980); and also take some leisure time in a different environment (Hyde & Harman, 2011). This is very similar to the idea of families sharing what is commonly known as 'quality time' together (Carr, 2011; Obrador, 2012; Wallop, 2011) – the trips provided the opportunity for two family members to learn more about each other, to get closer, and to do so "in a nice way". They therefore emphasise the significance of 'personal connection' (Dunkley et al, 2011), in this case between family members travelling together rather than to visit a fallen relative.

There was some discussion within both interviews about potentially more painful memories, such as the loss of colleagues, but overall the trips were relatively happy experiences. Whilst this may partly be explained by the contexts chosen for the two return trips *i.e.* non-combat zones, there did not appear to be any reticence to discuss some painful memories - indeed, some of these had already been shared between Bob and Steve before the trips actually took place. Steve even commented that "he's [Bob] really happy to talk about it". However, Bob indicates that he is selective in whom he talks to (and, although not mentioned here, possibly also what he says), which suggests that the experience may have been different with another

companion. Notwithstanding the potential difficulty for navy veterans to formally visit former combat sites, the study also highlights that not all service time is spent in combat situations. In this case, and possibly influenced by the length of the trips (which both lasted two weeks), the veteran reflected more widely on his wartime experiences (including the Russian convoys, which relates to a completely different theatre of war), distinguished between combat and non-combat situations and on the 'happy memories' he had of his times in the Navy.

It should also be noted that the interviewer was careful in terms of probing with regards to the veteran's wartime experience; the interviews were agreed on the basis of discussing the 'Heroes Return' funded trips for a published piece of work, rather than his combat experiences *per se*, and the interviewer was careful to honour this. Future researchers should carefully consider the scope of their investigation when agreeing interviews with veterans, and also their methods. In this case, active interviews were a very effective means of collecting data, emphasising the unique, personal insights and anecdotes which veterans (and their 'nearest and dearest') can offer. Furthermore, in this case, they were very effective in demonstrating how memories can be both individual and collective (Halbwachs, 1980), and also contestable and dynamic (Reese & Fivush, 2008).

Considering the perspectives of two participants across two trips also highlighted how Bob and Steve co-created their experiences before, during and after each trip (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009) and also from one trip to the other. For Bob, nostalgia represented an important part of the experience (Dann, 1998), especially in terms of remembering his old mates. For Steve, nostalgia (or 'latent nostalgia' as Steve calls it) was one of the main reasons for travelling - "I went almost trying to look through his eyes" - and he purposely wanted to see his father's reaction and to try to empathise with him, indicating that empathetic identification (Ashworth, 2002 and 2004) can be with the living as well as with those who have fallen. For Steve, this desire had built up over time and the development of their relationship, further suggesting that the nature of existing bonds - and level of comfortability - between fellow travellers influences the nature and extent of co-creation on such trips.

Finally, the study provides further evidence of the benefits, admittedly mainly personal, of providing veterans with somewhere or somehow they can reflect on their experiences, share their memories and remember their colleagues - and that, as long as they can get there, they are not necessarily limited by constraints such as age. Notwithstanding the potentially contentious nature of some conflicts, given that as long as there are conflicts there will be veterans, this represents an important message for society.

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