

**With a bespoke
collection, how can
museums tell
engaging stories to
a Key Stage 3
audience?**

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Research Issue

Engaging adolescents in museum programmes and exhibitions is not a new concept. Learning within museum environments is a way of personalising a visit, and allowing the young people to uncover another hidden layer within their collection. However, what I want to explore is how museums are using their collection content in innovative ways, telling stories from limited resource material and making a real connection with their user.

Here at the National Railway Museum we have a hugely un – represented demographic of Key stage 3 students as what we have previously put together for ‘school groups’ has been for the far more accessible Key stage 2 curriculum through science, history, English and drama. I think we have previously taken the easy way out and have chosen subjects that are an obvious link to the curriculum, instead of taking on a more imaginative look at how we can exploit our collection.

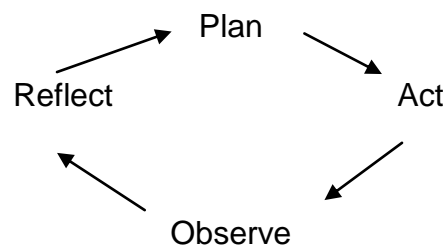
Exploring my question, ‘With a limited collection, how can museums tell engaging stories to an adolescent audience?’ I aim to try and find some usable and practical solutions that we can implement here within our learning programme development team as “One of the core functions of a museum is to research and provide information about the objects in their collections” (www.van.ac.uk)

Action Research

For my action research I will be undertaking a look into **‘With a bespoke collection, how can museums tell engaging stories to a Key Stage 3 audience?’**. The key features of how this will impact internally for me and my department will ultimately, invigorate, inspire and push forward ideas and confidence for achieving this goal of a new and exciting programme. If this is done effectively we will achieve a new programme that tells the personal story directly resonating with the emotion responses of an adolescent audience.

The process of Action Research is one of personal and practical investigation. The outcome of this will hopefully go live into a real programme for schools. So the process of investigation is very important when gathering research and ultimately, getting it right.

Action research “is a disciplined process of inquiry conducted *by* and *for* those taking the action. The primary reason for engaging in action research is to assist the “actor” in improving and/or refining his or her actions.” (Sagor, R. 2000) This observation and improvement process takes a circular route, enabling the cycle to be ever evolving and developing when needed. This also allows the researcher an open access point to join the research through any window of opportunity.



Through these four stages the researcher should come through the cycle of their action research surmounting on an answer, improvement of change and will have arrived at a theorized conclusion.

Plan – This stage will identify the issue and a form the basis for the investigation.

Act – Within this stage a firm plan will be developed and thought out, structuring the research process.

Observe – During this stage, observation, testing and questioning will take place, collecting and analyzing your findings to form a conclusion.

Reflect – This will see the culmination of the Action Research, has the researcher reached an accountable and usable conclusion? This is when the research data can be used to inform the next stages of delivery and will/won't answer their initial question for the research. (Sagor, R.2000)

Action Research allows the teacher the ability to reflect and ultimately, critique what they have created and for why. (McNiff, J) With an open ended approach, the researcher can come at their work from anywhere that they deem appropriate, allowing a natural flow of investigation.

By doing Action Research, I am assessing 'how' and 'why' we connect with adolescent audiences through our museum content. Using past exhibition 'traditional' interpretation of collections as a stimulus to take me forward. This is particularly important to me as I feel we do not creatively utilise and exploit our archives to their best, but by exploiting them how does this benefit us?

I will be fairly unrestricted with my Action Research parameters as I have already established good school links and teachers I can consult with. I do however; have an active programme still to develop that this research will feed into to inform concrete delivery. The launch date, Key stage 3 focus and theme of First World War ambulance trains has been pre – determined by a Heritage Lottery Fund bid that has been awarded to develop a specific programme for this age range and abilities. The implications I can for see are:

- Teaching staff may not reply to my questionnaires
- May not be able to trial content within schools
- May get a low uptake of schools to trial
- Resounding result could be that our content is not suitable for Key Stage 3 students.

Current research analysis

Key Stage 3

Students between the ages of 11 – 14 years are what constitute to Key Stage 3 students. These students will study a range of compulsory subjects before selecting their preferred ones to study at GCSE level. Many of whom will visit a museum will do so with the rest of their year group or be linked to a specific group. For example, History, R.E or Gifted and Talented students. High schools are reluctant to identify smaller groups of Key Stage 3 students for bespoke school outings as this is not seen as cost effective or essential learning,

Reflecting on 'Key stage 3 – the wasted years', Ofsted highlight Key Stage 3 as being one that should be focused on but is not always given priority within schools. "Too frequently, teaching in MFL, history and geography at Key Stage 3 does not lead to good levels of achievement" (Ofsted, 2015) The publication does allude that topics such as history do not hold students interest or are taught in a way that is disinteresting and disengaging to this particular Key Stage. This disengagement from the subject could be down to lack of differentiation of learning styles and denseness of content that teachers have to convey (Watkin, N & Ahrenfelt, J. 2006) Subjects such as history, at this stage of their learning journeys is very analytical, date orientated and linear in content, making it a love or hate subject to that type of learner.

I do think that there is a genuine link with young people transitioning into adolescence at this time too, as the hormonal, physiological and physical changes vary between students and therefore, have direct impact on their studies. So the challenge is real and categorically difficult to capture every mind through these years, but using an outside resource such as a museum could enhance that learning experience and re – imagine tough subjects.

Museum collections

Museums and their collections are not exclusively for the use of the elite and higher social classes as first alluded to in the early 19th century, but are accessible for all, or should be made that way. 'Working – class politics' museums are not, but are now able to transform opinions and should be used to that benefit (Wallach- Scott, J. 1999) The difficulty with that is dependent on the museum requisitions, their current collections, curatorial staff, vision for learning and expertise of education staff. Being a national museum doesn't mean we have extensive experience over different themes– we have experience around a specific theme instead (or many do).

Making collections relevant to any audience is the responsibility of all staff, not just education. They need the valuable input from all other departments to perceive the potential of how different collections can work and be interpreted. Having a narrow field of interest does attract particular followers that often feel *they* own and

understand elements of the collection the best. Undoing this for open access is integral to engaging everyone in the stories of the collections. A good way of engaging schools both primary and secondary, is concrete links to the curriculum through a variety of topics. Regardless of the niche theme of the museum collections, efforts should be made to re – interpret what we have to influence a audiences learning.

Museums as an educational tool have become ever more the demand, but it is not enough to merely create a space for young people within a new environment, but to develop a connection with it. Slowly but surely, gone are the days of a dusty box of artifacts presented to a school group for discussion and handling, but why?



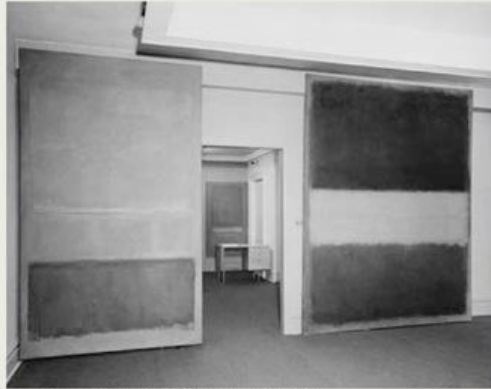
Handling box

Handling boxes do have their place and standing within learning, however, what the objects are and the questioning that goes with them are far more important to curriculum learning as the audience are accustomed to verbalizing but are presented with a non – verbal 'art form' in theory (Cheney, G. 1989) Is a handling box enough? I don't think so.

It has taken time to make the jump from a 'visual house of artifacts' to a centre for learning, this has been a social and cultural change – people have come to value and understand the potential of museums as educational tools more. The development of the 'construction of culture' (Hall, S. 2003) within museums comes from the definition and classification of knowledge that allows them to be understood by their audience. Ultimately, asking the question; are they accessible? However, museums are still in the process of executing their learning programmes well and recognizing where they do fit within the curriculum. Getting it right is key to any underpinning of current learning from an adolescent audience, what does it need to make it a valued experience for all?

Many make the common association with Culture and the Arts, and Culture and museums but where do we see Museums and the Arts? What I aim to challenge with my action research is how this simple shift in collaboration with a collection and the arts might aid to engage an adolescent audience with their learning. Much is to be

said of physical art being present within museums and the aesthetic beauty of that, however, what do learners take from viewing art without relevant and personal interpretation that strikes a chord with them?



Installation at Sidney Janis Gallery, New York 1955

ROOM 2

As his work appeared in a growing number of exhibitions throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, Rothko took increasing pains to control how it was displayed. At Sidney Janis Gallery in New York in 1955, for example, he created a very dense hang, with two large canvases on either side of a doorway, crowding the space. Rothko was keen to establish an intimate rapport between his work and the viewer which, to some degree, mirrored his own relationship to his work during the process of its making. 'To paint a small picture is to place yourself outside your experience', he once said. 'However, you paint the larger picture, you are in it. It isn't something you command.'

In the late 1950s, Rothko began darkening his palette to counter the perception that his work was decorative. *Four Darks in Red* 1958 belongs to a group of works which immediately precedes the Seagram commission. The composition of this painting is consistent with Rothko's signature style of stacking vertical fields of colour in layers on a monochrome background. However, the colour is more subdued – a range of reds, maroons and blacks that clearly relates to the murals' chromatic spectrum. Importantly, it was his most colourful work that Rothko described as 'tragic' while he resisted descriptions of his later, darker works in those terms.

Everything that an audience views must make a connection with them somewhere, even if that does generate a negative response. Through this action research I hope to make a meaningful connection through our First World War collection with a specifically hard to engage set of learners which will hopefully generate a positive outcome.

Research plan

To aim to answer my question, I plan to carry out the following research:

- Curatorial research brief on what we have in our First World War collection
- Review and reflect on current learning programme
- Questionnaires for teaching staff about how and what they think our museum can provide and how their students like to learn
- Review the answers to these to determine ways to proceed
- Look into trends of learning through the arts – which art form is most suited to this Key Stage?
- Select items from collection
- Trial collection content with school – take a member of curatorial staff with us
- Review feedback to this from both students and teachers
- Feedback to learning, curatorial and exhibition teams to determine how this action research has aided our final exhibition and learning programme design.

I have given approximate timescales to allow all involved enough time to incorporate the consultations, questionnaires and trialling into their schedules. Schools have been consulted with in advance to secure the dates for trialling, just to make sure it does go ahead and is accounted for in the academic calendar.

I feel I have given myself adequate time to analyse the various stages of my action research, and for that to inform my choices of collection items from the archive prior to trialling with Key Stage 3 students. The final week of my schedule falls within half term, so this allows me a strict final date and time to reflect without the pressure of any school delivery.

All research gathered has the option to be anonymous, allowing the young person and teaching staff to speak freely. As in previous cases of school consultation, teachers have often told us (the museum) what we wanted to hear as opposed to what we need to hear – honest feedback! This way it leaves the gates open for some extremely beneficial critique on some un – used collection sources.

Action Research schedule

		JAN				FEB		
		4	11	18	25	1	8	15
Curatorial research brief								
Review current learning programme offer	HMC							
Circulate questionnaires to teaching staff	HMC							
Review answers from teacher questionnaires	HMC							
Research current programmes with theatre as a tool	HMC							
Select items from collection	HMC & AK							
Trial with schools	HMC & AK							
Review feedback from trialling	HMC							
Feedback to learning, curatorial and exhibition teams	HMC							

Methodologies

Qualitative data gathering will provide a significant element of my action feedback data, asking the best questions to secure the most usable answers is crucial to being able to interpret anything from my research. So keeping what I ask within my questionnaires needs to be:

- Concise
- Applicable
- Open

Action research has to be “making enquiry an integral part of the professional lives of teacher” (Klein, S.2012) To this extent it also has to be something that hasn’t been answered and is a personal investigation by the teacher. It aids to inform practice from personal reflection, feedback and analysis, giving a firm basis to proceed with change or not to. Choosing not to alter or amend practice from the results of action research shows a systematic contradiction to partaking in the action research. It is solely for the continual development of the teacher and their practice.

Data can be collected in many way; Questionnaires, reports, briefs, 1-2-1 interviews, vox – pops, photographs, journals, exhibitions, workshops and trialling. A variety of different methods always creates a good selection of research for evaluation, allowing the teacher a broad look at their findings. A broad band of data collection methods allows for a thorough investigation as following one pathway of research could give a bias message. Having a few methods of data collection also allows for different and preferred learning styles, adding to the accessibility of doing it with a specific target audience.

For my action research I will be using teacher questionnaires, observations and student discussions to understand their motivations, interests and any contributing factors that may lead to disengagement with content and stories. This data will inform my thinking and development of the next stages of the programme. Qualitative methods such as this are for collecting opinions therefore the preferred approach for my research. Collecting numerical data by quantitative data would not reveal the information that I need.

Once I have collected my data, I will be able to look for specific themes, interests and styles of engagement. We want to make the new learning programme engage with a higher level thinker, making Key Stage 3 students be in control of their decisions whilst participating in our activities, unlike being a passive visitor – we want something from them in return. From this research I can then disseminate information to curatorial and exhibition teams as well as my own to identify a plan of development to make our learning programme an accessible and engaging one for this un- represented demographic.

Data and Analysis

Curatorial research brief

From the research brief (Appendix 1) that was sent to our in house specialist on ambulance trains, she came back with an interesting response: We have no physical objects, just first-hand accounts, journals and images. As part of the exhibition itself, we do have a de – commissioned ambulance train that IS NOT from the First World War to be used as an installation piece. However, we now have the challenge of creating a learning programme within the museum from a minimal number of tangible sources, and how that engages with the learner is essentially our problem.

Our lead curator on this has consulted with many external experts to determine copyright of images and donations for educational and exhibition usage. As the ambulance train itself isn't a conservation piece like many of our other loco's within the museum, all we have as part of our 'collection' are the first – hand accounts, journals and photo's. The inside of the ambulance train will be used as part of the educational programme, but will also be open to public viewing. All of the internal refurbishments will be with replica furniture and accessories from extremely accurate draft drawings. Being a railway museum, we are fortunate to have intricate engineer's drawings of ambulance trains.

Such images and documents might be the only things that we can take into schools for trialling of content, so consulting with schools and just seeing how the students react to this will be very interesting.

Current learning offer

Currently, we have 11 FREE, interactive and hands – on school workshops suitable for Key stages 1 – 3. The workshops cover topics such as: History, STEM, drama and English. However, the majority of our current offer is aimed at Key Stage 2, with only 2 workshops being suitable for Key Stage 3 students.

Not much of what we currently offer enables the learner to become a higher level thinker, to use questioning or to elaborate on a themed exploration – we run factually correct sessions. There is nothing wrong with this, and to a certain extent these workshops are perfect for engaging younger students who have little knowledge on how science translates to locomotives. However, keeping the engagement of a Key Stage 3 student who might have already become disengaged with STEM through these same methods is tremendously difficult and unrealistic.

I think the reason that KeyStage 3 workshops have left undeveloped has been due to lack of expertise in this field, having the right staffing with the relevant experience is essential for this to succeed and work well. So, having someone to dedicate their planning and research collaboration has been the start of what the museum as a whole can build on. This and the consultations with schools will make for a very well informed piece within the museum.

Teaching staff questionnaires

The teaching staff questionnaires went out to approximately 40 local primary and secondary (Yorkshire & Humber) school staff from Science, English, History and drama departments. 37 of the questionnaires came back to reveal what they thought we could provide as a learning package to their students, when they used us and what for.

With the questionnaire, was a direct invite for the forthcoming trials that we were intending to run. This gave the schools the acknowledgement that their comments were valid and we do take on board what they had to say.

Many of the schools have been for a visit with us during British Science week or have participated in the rotary club challenge held here at the museum. However, few local schools have accessed our free workshops as they have just visited as part of a school trip. If they have participated in one of our workshops they brought a specific group as they thought that was the only link into the curriculum.

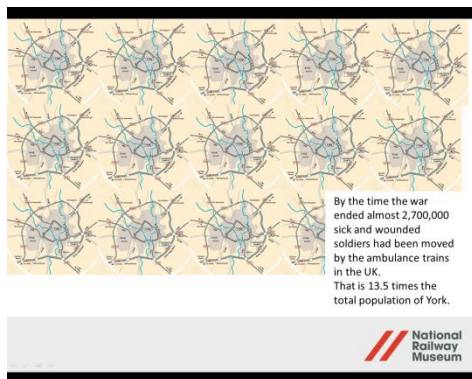
What was interesting is that the teaching staff didn't see the links across the sessions to STEM and cross – curricular learning. This was partly because many didn't use our website to book, preferring instead to just come via a staff recommendation for a 'science trip'. Some teachers also said that the lack of a direct 'learning officer' was part of the stumbling block for access.

Key Stage 3 were very keen to bring out a year group at a time, as many high schools policies dissuade teachers from booking a specific trip for a specific group of students – they're aiming to be fully inclusive with whatever they provide.

Through emails rather than specific questionnaires, teachers thought an introduction to what ambulance trains were would be a good way 'in'. Many who teach history teach specific themes well so unless you have a passion for First World War ambulance trains you will naturally leave that out of your teaching repertoire.

Further to these conversations, students and staff identified other mediums that they have accessed history, literacy and science through before: Mad Science shows and Shakespeare TIE. The theatre element was particularly interesting as with our recent residency with York Theatre Royal we were looking into that as a new element of engagement.

With the help of the curatorial team, we put together a short PowerPoint (see appendix 3 for notes) to take into schools that gave both students and teachers a brief overview of ambulance trains and their use. I also installed some personal recognition to York (see below)



Theatre as a tool

From our partnership with York Theatre Royal that we've had in residence over the last year, we've already done extensive research on what works with a school aged audience and what doesn't in terms of theatre interpretation. We've explored site specific theatre, technically challenged theatre (AV/ projection/ headsets), promenade theatre and traditional theatre set up and delivery. This has happened only because we have had the theatre in residence and their expertise has helped us write, deliver and train our internal team.

The reason we're working into the programme a theatre element just seemed a natural progression and link to engage the students. We want to explore more the use and delivery of technology within the performance with this age group. Teachers also fed back that by the time that young people started in Key Stage 3, students had already become disengaged with STEM as there wasn't an interesting hook. Its'

fair to say that some teachers that I consulted with would have had us redesign our whole programme to enable their school facilitation, but the majority were realistic on what we could develop to **support** what they taught back at school. We are very much curriculum inspired not curriculum led with what we create, and I enjoy having limits that are quite broad and interesting.

As part of my action research into this element, I went to the Slung Low theatre production '59 minutes to save Christmas' to see how an immersive theatre experience would pair to a 'sit down and watch show'.

59 Minutes to save Christmas was an enjoyable and site specific piece set within a theatre. The piece was designed for younger children than what we aim to engage in our programme, but the use of their immersive kit (headphones and an audio scape) was what I was researching.

Surprisingly, for such a young audience (but with parents) the challenge of giving a young person a headset with a start button wasn't as challenging as I thought it would be. The audio worked really well, particularly the backing track and sound effects; they complimented the live interaction wonderfully.

The content and performers really engaged you with the story and moved you through the theatre at pace and with excitement as to what might be happening next.

The down side of the kit was that there had to be an extra member of staff to follow people around with replacement headsets and receivers in case of problems and the children could change channels so missed out on bits of content. However, the technical support was on hand to quietly assist the headphone wearer and this didn't distract from the piece.

Having something like this within our museum programme would be very different from what we provide already to schools, but very much a 'hook' for the Key Stage 3 audience. There is a possibility that this could also be used for a 'lates' programme or a family audience if we wanted to broaden the programme.

I do think this will bring alive the first-hand accounts and allow them to identify with the student themselves as when wearing the headsets for the Slung Low production, it felt a very light hearted but personal journey.

Our next step is to shortlist content of what tells a powerful story and have the theatre writers create a draft excerpt from a personal perspective. See appendix 3.

Items selected from collection (based on school feedback)

Based on the feedback from school, and the realisation of what our collection holds, we decided to take into schools a selection of; images, stories, postcards,

newspaper cuttings and diary entries. See appendix 4. As we didn't have anything that young people could handle, we had to create interpretation and questions that brought out discussion from these sources.

We decided not to ask the students to create anything or have to write anything down (except our bullet point evaluations at the end) as we wanted to see if these sources inspired conversation and active thinking and questioning.

The selection was much wider than what I have included, but this is just a sample of the range of documents we took into schools. All had a context or brief description on the reverse side and a few teasing questions to draw out conversation from the students.

Results of trialling with schools

The trialling of content took place with 6 secondary schools from York and the North Yorkshire region. The aim of the trialling was to explore some of the sources and stories we have collected in relation to Ambulance Trains with the target audience for the schools programme (KS3 pupils), to inform decisions about the content and focus of the learning programme activities.

The schools involved:

- Canon Lee School
- Joseph Rowntree School
- Tadcaster Grammar School
- Sherburn High School
- York High School
- Malton School
- Queen Ethelburga's School

We worked with approximately 560 students in total, both at the schools and out on the museum floor.

Findings:

Students generally responded well to the content and to the ideas of Ambulance Trains, which were a **new concept to many of them**. Some of the students were less engaged with the content, but generally they became more engaged when they started to look at some of the sources in more detail with higher levels of interpretation connected to them, especially when they talked to each other in small groups or on a one-to-one basis. Crucially these students engaged best with the sources which helped them to understand what it was really like to be on the Ambulance Trains, and with stories they weren't expecting (for instance; that fans were installed in some carriages for gassing cases and the technical drawings

showing padded cells for 'mental' cases). Alternatively, when the students were given examples of suggested written exhibition content (original text, no interpretation) many of them struggled to read the sources. Often, when they had some of it started off for them they became more used to the handwriting and then found it easier to decipher. Sources with a hard-to-read first sentence were often not read, even where the rest was clear. Many of the pupils made an initial judgement that they could not read the source, but then realised they could if they really concentrated. This is a concern for the exhibition, as students will not persevere where they find the source initially challenging. The suggestion would be that there **needs to be something in the trail to encourage students to persevere**. Interestingly, in some cases students chose these resources as the most interesting, because they told personal stories about real life experiences.

When asked what they had learnt about Ambulance Trains the most common answers were:

- Ambulance Trains existed, and were really large (especially when compared with modern trains)
- Ambulance Trains transported hundreds of men at a time and millions in total
- The staff to patient ratio was surprising (high numbers of casualties to low staff)
- The fact that injured German PoWs were transported on the trains alongside other injured soldiers was very surprising

These stories should therefore be at the heart of the learning offer, being some of the **core facts students engaged with**.

Students struggled to draw conclusions about the First World War based on this information, as it is a quite complex and sophisticated thought process. Where they were able to do this one of the most common conclusions about the First World War, based on what they'd learnt, was that **more soldiers had survived the fighting than they had realised**. This is significant, because in many accounts of the First World War, particularly accounts of the Battle of the Somme, students will be taught statistics like, of the 200 who went over the top, only 30 came back, but many of the men who didn't make it back to the trenches, were instead evacuated to hospitals.

Students were particularly interested in the sources which told them a story about the experiences or showed them something surprising. For instance, they really responded to the photo of people queuing to see the exhibition in Huddersfield, and the photo of the men loading soldiers onto the Ambulance Train without a platform. They were mostly interested in the ones with people in, or that represented the experience (detailed drawings which told them what the trains were really like, or the propaganda images designed to improve morale at home).

Overall, I feel the full research cycle worked quite well for me to draw conclusions against. We knew we had the content to trial the sessions with the students, the

trailing we did only strengthened/ weakened our argument for some of the pieces to be used. I did however; find pinning down the teachers quite hard and the process was repeated and chased a few times before we had the desired response from them. Initially, some teachers completed the questionnaires on site after their visit, however, others had theirs emailed to them – this is where I found was the issue. On one hand, to give them the time to reflect was very important to me, on the other, being under pressure to write something constructive can be quite challenging and lacking in definition.

I'm unsure of the right answer to determine a fluid approach for this, but I would like to try a focus group to bring ideas out and to encourage a dialogue in the future.

Evaluation of this Action Research project

The First World War ambulance train programme will be run completely differently to anything we have provided for schools before. We are aiming to have many components that make up a full days visit to the museum.

- An full introduction
- An explainer led logistics game (explainers are our in house teaching staff that deliver on the gallery)
- A self-guided learning trail around the ambulance train exhibition
- An immersive theatre performance - students will wear headsets and be directed around 3 separate carriages to listen to live action and audio and some via the headsets and projection.
- Online resources to download – both pre and post visit.

From the action research I carried out, I feel this did inform our initial judgements and strengthen the learning element content. As the learning offer are constructed by different departments the research I completed will be discussed with the exhibition team for them to take forward the important components of what students engaged with. To make the learning and exhibition spaces cohesive to a Key Stage 3 audience is an objective for both teams.

This research until delivery (JULY 2016) will undoubtedly be on-going as from this small element that I undertook, I aim to trial all of the components sufficiently with our schools before launch. I feel this action research has benefitted my knowledge and understanding of what we offer, have offered and have potential to offer new audiences through the museum. I have come to understand the importance of action research through self-evaluation and reasoning – because we've always done it this way, doesn't mean that it is right. So, by carrying out small action research projects

throughout larger projects they act to evaluate your practise and that of long standing practises- aiding to understand particular pathways or to justify routes of enquiry.

I feel that my action research project was quite broad and could have spanned many months, but to scale it back and use one element of observation done well I can now see the immense benefit it will have on the rest of the project planning. I also got to know on a personal scale, the teachers and students that would be coming to participate in the full offer in July/ September. This allowed me to probe on what they'd enjoy and be interested in; I think we did whet their appetites through the unusual and untold story of ambulance trains. Both students and teachers fed back to me about how involving the workshops and content were and how well valued they felt to be consulted with for their thoughts.

I would undertake action research again as it did help me unpick, observe and analyse the demographic I intend to inform and the content I intend to incorporate into the learning offer.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1:

Research brief: First World War Ambulance Trains

Background

The Public Programmes team are developing an engaging and exciting new offer for young people and families focussing on First World War ambulance trains. The offer will be interactive, participatory, and will inspire visitors. The research and development for this offer will also feed into future exhibitions and displays.

The offer will focus on big, bold, exciting stories about the trains and the personal link young people can engage with.

Brief

We would like your help in finding the objects and stories which will form the basis of this offer, in particular the following:

1. The top five objects which represent a clear view of ambulance trains
2. Objects which together can tell a story of engineering and development – for example the story of supply and demand through the rail service
3. Any stand out figures that have come up through this time.
4. The problems that faced ambulance trains.
5. Personal stories
6. What happened next?

For each point, we are looking for one or more of the following:

1. Objects from our collection
2. Objects from other collections or companies
3. Stories
4. Ideas and concepts supported by images

First World War Ambulance Trains

Image:

Who owns this object? (if applicable):

Brief description:

How does this object or story help us to engage young people and families with First World War ambulance trains?

Appendix 2

Dear.....

The Ministry Of Defence has given the National Railway Museum a First World War Ambulance Train. This is being redeveloped into an exciting and innovative new display and exhibition in the Great Hall. This will help us to tell the story of the contributions these trains made to the war effort, and the people on board the trains. It is especially exciting as many of the people who worked on the trains were conscientious objectors, giving us the chance to explore some of the less familiar stories of the First World War, as well as local people's stories.

We are still at the really early stages of developing the learning offer, but at the moment the idea is to develop an immersive theatre piece, which will really put the young people in the middle of it (it will not be sitting and watching a performance, the pupils will be actively involved). We are also developing resources for use in the carriage and exhibition, and a digital game. These will help pupils to explore one of 4 main themes. Our intention is to create really exciting, innovative and engaging learning offers, which encourage pupils to consider different stories, sources and interpretations, and to analyse and reflect on their learning. We are working with the York Theatre Royal and the University of York to develop this.

We are hoping to work with schools across the next year to develop and refine these resources. We want to give as many pupils as possible the chance to explore these significant stories. We would love the chance to trial some of these ideas and get their input to ensure that this is as fun and engaging as possible. Do you think that this is something that you might be interested in getting involved in? We are happy to be flexible and do this in a way that works for you.

We would really value your feedback, attached is a brief description of the four themes. I would be very grateful if you could complete it and send it back to me as soon as possible with your thoughts and ideas on the trialling process.

Many Thanks

Hayley

First World War Learning Programme

THEME	ACTIVITY	RATING
Wartime Stations	<p>Exploring first-hand accounts and propaganda about the 'glamour' of ambulance trains and the reality at the time within the wartime stations.</p> <p>Students will use theatre and investigation to question images of soldiers leaving/ arriving back to the stations and what its effects were on the soldiers, staff and bystanders welcoming troops home.</p> <p>Curriculum links: History (local), Drama, English</p>	<p>This is probably more suitable for younger students in year 7 and below.</p>
Building Ambulance Trains	<p>An interactive board and logistics game taking groups through the rigorous and stressful task of building an ambulance train. Can teams fight against time restraints, lack of fuel or loss of supplies to get their train to the front in time?</p> <p>Curriculum links: History (local), Science, Maths, D&T</p>	<p>This could be suitable for older students but will also depend on the practicalities of the task. It would need to be more hands on whereby students are up and moving about and are building/creating an end product.</p>
Travelling on an Ambulance Train	<p>Self – led activity that leads students through the ambulance carriage installation posing questions that will provoke discussion and debate against issues not morally affecting them today.</p> <p>Curriculum links: History, English, Science, PHSE</p>	<p>This is probably more suitable for younger students in year 7 and below. For older students they are likely to become disengaged.</p>
Working on Ambulance Trains	<p>Students will aim to create a debate formed around the viewpoints and opinions of patriotic soldier's vs conscientious objectors. They will get to handle first hand objects and design their own, ready to choose their side within the debate – should I fight or do I have a choice to say 'no'?</p> <p>Curriculum links: History, Drama, English, Art, PHSE</p>	<p>This is probably more suitable for younger students in year 7 and below. For older students they are likely to become disengaged. Debates are difficult to sustain for any decent length of time, particularly with older groups and group sizes.</p> <p>However, handling first hand object could be interesting if structured appropriately.</p>

We are also aiming to produce pre/ post visit resources e.g Handling boxes, an augmented app and downloadable materials, is this something that will be useful when preparing/ after visiting the museum?

Comments

Yes this could be useful if it works – apps can be temperamental!!!It also needs to be interesting visual to students.

Is a **day** committed to the First World War appropriate for your students/ yourself to immerse themselves into?

Comments

Yes depending on a mixture of different activities which are targeted at appropriate age groups. It needs to be interactive/fun/interesting and less feeling like school to engage students and encourage positive participation.

You also need to find a way to connect students with trains and the era, as many would find it difficult to relate to this.

What do your students do for their leisure time?

Many students attend their local mosque on a evening, play video games or spend time with their friends/ family. There are few that go to outside activities, so to have a programme that would challenge their thoughts of this period would be brilliant.

I/ we have already accessed the learning programme at the National Railway Museum?

YES – only to look at briefly – seems targeted at primary schools.Wouldn't naturally see this as a link to my teaching as a resource.

Many thanks for completing this First World War analysis, please do feel free to add any other personal objectives in addition.

Comments

Appendix 3

Immersive Theatre Brief

Summary of the project:

NRM are preparing for an exciting new project to include a permanent exhibition and learning programme in 2016 based on a First World War Ambulance Train. An ambulance carriage is being recreated to form an innovative new permanent display and exhibition to be installed in the museum Great Hall. It will explore the story of the contributions these trains made to the war effort and the experiences the people on board. This project is especially exciting as it presents us with the opportunity to explore some of the more unusual and untold stories of the First World War.

The main themes of the carriage and exhibition are the wartime station, build of the carriages and experiences of people on board (see attached messaging hierarchy).

Learning offer

A new learning offer aimed at KS3 pupils will be created as part of this Heritage Lottery Funded Project. The learning offer will draw from the above exhibition themes.

The First World War learning programme aims to deliver a creative activity programme for schools that will link to the exhibition themes. It will create a rounded offer for visiting schools and enable pupils to explore curriculum based themes of warfare and technology; propaganda; reliability of historical sources; interpretation through drama; and people and places.

Activities will be aimed at KS3 students in line with the HLF grant but also offer an element of content to a broader family audience.

There will be a focus of activity during the school summer holidays 2016 for the public and the schools programme will launch during the autumn term 2016.

There are currently five components that will make up the learning programme:

- an immersive theatre piece
- an explainer-led activity
- self led activity to explore the carriage and exhibition
- pre and post visit resources.

Our intention is to create a really exciting, innovative and engaging learning offer which encourages pupils to consider different stories, sources and interpretations, and to analyse and reflect on their learning.

Main aim:

- i. To develop a programme of activities for schools to explore the significance of the Railway Industry and ambulance trains during the First World War in a fun and exciting way.

Additional aims:

- ii. To highlight the unique design which made the ambulance trains so practically significant during the First World War
- iii. For pupils to understand the experiences of the people who worked on the trains.
- iv. To highlight the significance of the railways during the First World War and to convey the scale and impact of the ambulance trains on a local, national and international level
- v. To explore the development and logistical requirements of running ambulance trains over the course of the First World War
- vi. To present a clear narrative with comparisons with today.

Role of the Immersive Theatre component:

The immersive theatre component will assist in achieving the aims and objectives of the project. In particular this component should cover some of the introduction, background and context to the ambulance train (why were they created, how were they made, what were the intentions, how were they supposed to look) and the propaganda presented to the public at the time. It will do this by exploring the stories of the people who worked on the trains, the men who built them, the orderlies, nurses and medical officers, as well as the soldiers who travelled on them.

It should then enable the audience to explore more about the realities and practicalities and experiences on the carriage. This should complement and enhance the other learning programme components and the exhibition and carriage experience.

Theatre piece aims

The piece should provide students with the opportunity to explore and engage in the some of the more complex aspects of the themes and stimulate questioning and interaction within the storylines. It should present the context and aims behind the Ambulance Trains and well as the realities of the peoples' experiences in a fun and engaging way.

Objectives

To present the stories of the workers and the context of the ambulance trains in a fun and engaging way using theatrical techniques.

- Help pupils to understand what an ambulance train was, and how and why they were made (iv, ii)
- To introduce pupils to the roles of the Railway Men and the design and making of the trains (i, iv, v)
- Pupils to be aware of the associated propaganda and have explored some of the complexities (iv, ii, vi)
- Introduce pupils to the characters/roles on the train (nurse, CO, Medical Officers, railway workers, rail industry leaders, the public visiting the exhibitions, soldiers) (iii)
- Engage in interactive activities to facilitate the above objectives (i)
- Encourage higher level thinking and creative engagement with content
- Include an element of pupil-made resources

Specification of need:

- Create a piece of immersive theatre pitched at 11-14 year olds, but can also be deliverable to a wider audience
- To be developed with YTR and NRM staff to be delivered by the NRM explainers as part of NRM core programme
- To be delivered within NRM museum space (Learning Platform and/or museum floor), see attached spaces document
- To meet the aims and objectives as set by NRM, in line with the HLF bid
- To be based upon and incorporate primary documents as researched and supplied by NRM
- To be an accurate representation of the historical themes
- Not represent a real person specifically, but instead embody the stories and experiences told in the documents
- Complement and support the other elements of First World War learning programme
- To be exciting, fun and engaging and where possible question and challenge perceptions
- Brief to be fully worked up with YTR and NRM and completed by September 2015, to send to the writers as appropriate.

Practical considerations:

- This must be no more than 1 hour in length
- Schools are likely to bring full year groups to this offer, therefore consideration to the practical programming for NRM the suggestion of delivery to a maximum group size up to 45
- It must include taking part as well as watching
- High volume audience – schools are likely to book multiple class groups at once (the learning platform theatre space has capacity for 140 pupils at a time)
- Any delivery on the museum floor will need to consider the involvement of other NRM departments e.g. conservation, curatorial and Visitor Experience and other relevant NRM departments
- Roles need to be non-gender specific due to delivery by male and female explainers and timetabling requires flexibility – the use of pre-recorded pieces for projection etc. could be used to enable the right ‘voices’ to be heard
- Due to programming logistics it must be deliverable by all 12 explainers and the training needs and lead in times factored in during content development
- Consideration to the number of explainers/staff required for delivery as this will restrict the frequency on how often we can offer this.
- It must adhere to all health and safety and conservation restrictions
- It cannot incorporate the ambulance carriage or exhibition due to capacity restrictions
- It can use the museum floor, but individual trains and carriages cannot be guaranteed

- Set up and take down of sets and props needs to be simple and straight forward and options for set up on the museum floor would require exploration

Audience:

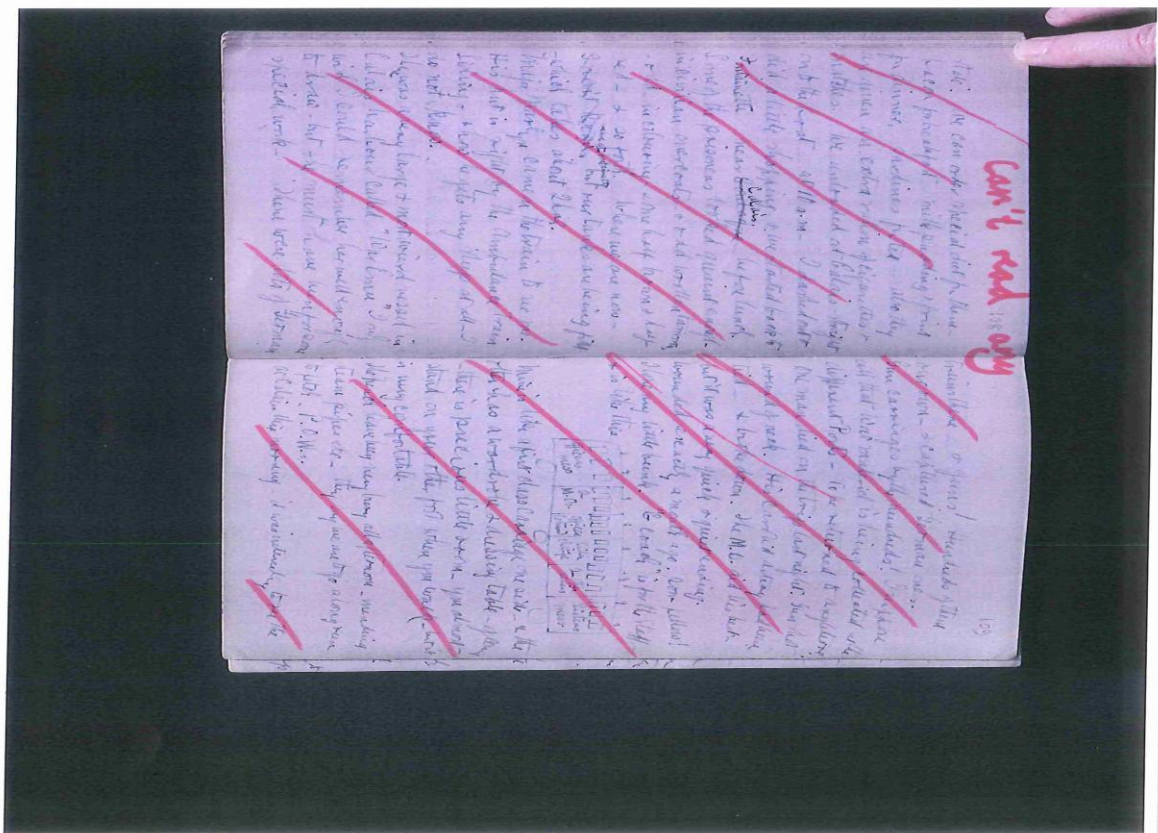
- Targeted at KS3
- Needs to be adaptable/ deliverable to family audiences. May be possible to adapt the language and approach to make it relevant to both or use individual pieces for delivery to the public.

External considerations:

- Having talked to schools and got their initial feedback on these plans the initial impression is very positive.
- Schools are excited by the idea of using theatre to engage with the subject
- They are interested in telling some lesser-known stories.
- They want to know more about the role of local men
- They are looking for something really engaging and interesting with limited panel reading and instead active engagement in the topic with unique activities.
- This project is funded by Heritage Lottery Fund. We must also consider their needs and concerns.
- Here is a requirement in the bid for 'pupils creating activities for peers'. We therefore need the theatre piece to be pupil-driven, so that they have direct impact on the learning and outcomes

Appendix 4

Sample images of source packs for students



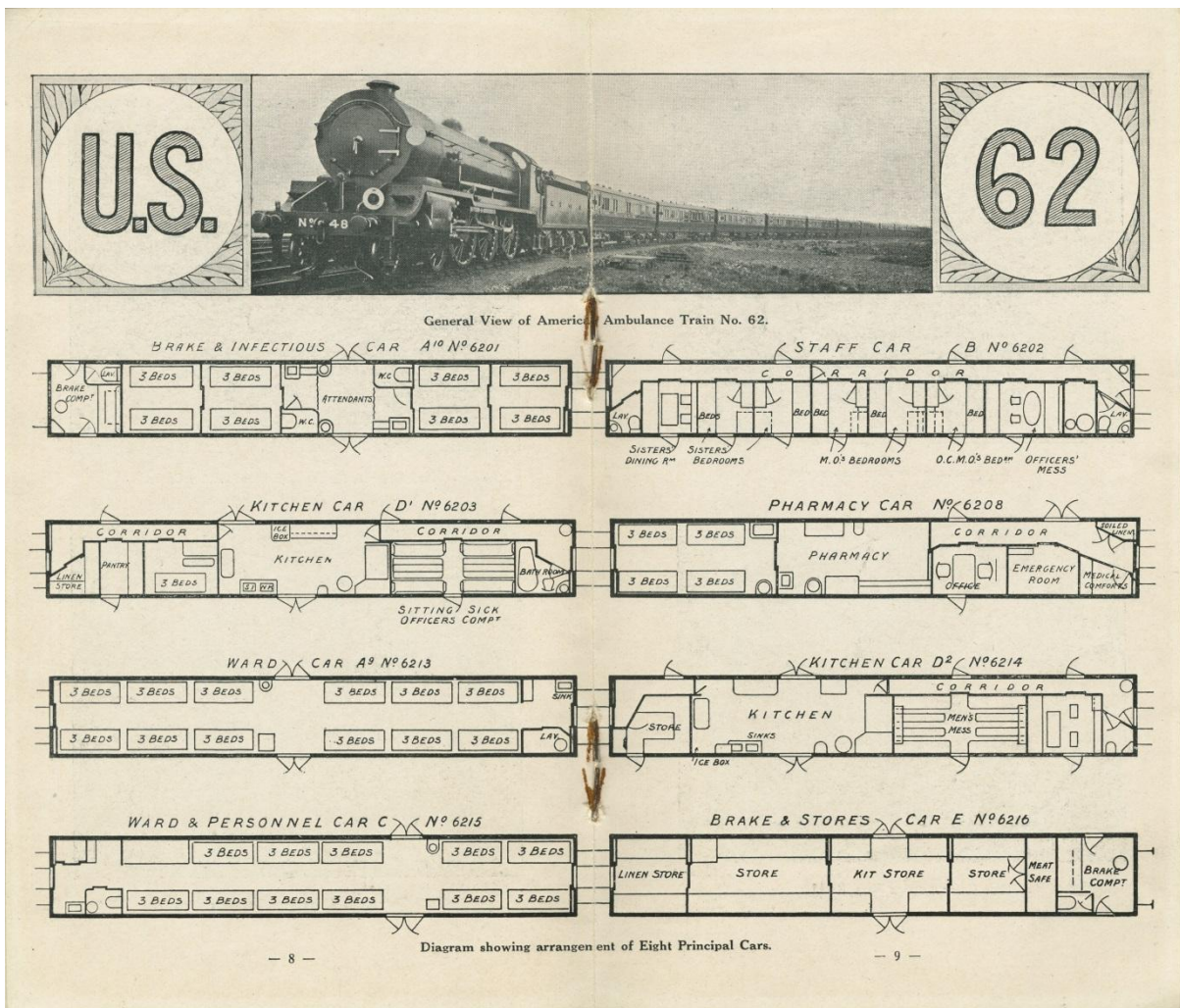
**Meadow Hall.—Miss Elsie Bridham,
Railway Porter.**

Why should not "Elsie's" portrait appear in the *Journal*? (Why not?—ED.). It is certain had she been of the opposite sex she would have



Miss Elsie Bridham.

been in "Khaki," not in "Navy." If permitted she would climb signal posts, or take her turn at shunting, for "Elsie" is never happier than when she is proving that her strength is equal to that of the male employees at the station.



No. 9673

GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY.

JUNE 24 1916.

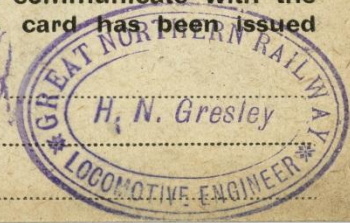
To J. H. Cox

LOCOMOTIVE. Department.
PETERBORO. Station.

You are hereby informed that your services are required in connection with the working of the Railway until further notice. You will not, therefore, at present be required to join the Army, but should you receive a notice calling you up, you should report to the Recruiting Officer who has sent you the notice, and show him this card, give him any particulars he may require and ask him to communicate with the Railway Company if he has any doubts. This card has been issued with the approval of the War Office.

Signature of Authorised Officer H. N. Gresley

Address of Authorised Officer DONCASTER






Summary notes for trialling with schools

What are ambulance trains?

Branded title slide saying who we are with an image of an Ambulance Train and a clear title

Over the course of the First World War, millions of sick and injured men were transported to hospitals across Europe, the UK and beyond on purpose-built ambulance trains.

Ambulance Train photo

The mass casualties of the First World War called for evacuation of the injured on a scale never seen before; this evacuation simply could not have happened without ambulance trains.

Map/Picture of evacuation

These trains included fully-equipped wards, pharmacies and kitchens, and could be up to a third of a mile long.

Interior picture

Home ambulance trains were used within the UK, moving injured soldiers from ports to 'receiving stations' where they would be moved by road to local hospitals.

Map of UK routes

Continental ambulance trains were used on the front to move the wounded from hospitals and clearing stations to ports, ready for shipment to the UK.

Map of continental routes

How were ambulance trains built?

The demand for ambulance trains was huge. Railway companies had to adapt their knowledge of building 'ordinary' railway carriages to meet the new demands of the war.

One railway company built a complete ambulance train for the navy in 30 hours, working around the clock.

Many men working on the railways in the UK were unable to enlist to fight in the war because their jobs were 'reserved occupations'.

Badge for Railway Workers. Possible Questioning – what do we mean by a Reserved Occupation?

Who travelled on ambulance trains?

Each train carried hundreds of men, who were cared for by the medical officers, orderlies and nurses who lived on board.

Photo of the staff by their train

By the time the war ended almost 2,700,000 sick and wounded soldiers had been moved by the ambulance trains in the UK.

Picture showing the number of people this is – stick figures zooming out?

Following the opening days of the Battle of the Somme in 1916, 47,000 soldiers were moved in one week alone.

Highlight from the above stick figures the number from the Somme

The troops on board included British soldiers from the UK and commonwealth countries fighting in the war as well as German prisoners of war.

Image of people in different uniforms?

Who worked on ambulance trains?

Ambulance trains were staffed by doctors (Medical Officers), nurses and orderlies.

Photo of staff

Each train was usually staffed by 4 nurses: 1 sister who supervised the whole train, 2 nurses who looked after the more seriously injured and 1 nurse who looked after the minor cases.

Each ambulance train could include up to 500 patients, so the staff often worked around the clock caring for them.

What problems did they face?

Staff running ambulance trains faced many challenges for example;

Crowded trains, infection, shellfire, derailment, delays and many more.

What happened to railway stations during the war?

New ambulance trains were displayed as exhibitions at stations before they started work which crowds of the general public went to see.

Photo of the queues for the exhibitions

Many major stations became receiving stations where injured troops would arrive by ambulance train before being taken to local hospitals by road.

Photo of disembarking from train

In order to support the war effort, and provide these men with some refreshment and comfort during their journey, groups of women began running 'free buffets' in the stations. They served tea and other refreshments but also wrote home to let troops' relatives know that they were still alive and did minor nursing work such as changing bandages.

Photo of buffet

These were funded by donations and staffed by volunteers.

York station had its own free buffet which opened on 15th November 1915 and was staffed by 260 volunteers, who served an average of 18,000 troops every week.

Compare with the number of people who go through the station in a week now.

What we are trying to achieve

NRM have a FWW Ambulance Train, which we will be completing an exhibition of in time for the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. We are making a really fun and innovative new learning offer to go with this, which is going to include an immersive theatre piece and a digital game. Today you are going to be helping us with what information to include. If you are interested in being part of this afterwards please see me/Miss.....

Task outline in slide

Final task outline in slide

Appendix 5

Immersive theatre script - Draft

MINK VAN

Injured Soldier V/O. Jack, seventeen, eighteen.

We see his face projected on the screen, intercut with other images. He talks, usually lucidly, but the morphine makes him drift sometimes and lose track of time. The letter he's writing is in his head rather than on paper. At certain moments, the whole space goes black to represent him drifting in and out of consciousness and time passing.

It begins in darkness.

Jack: Dear Mother and Father. I am writing to tell you that I am now back on my way to dear old England on an ambulance train. I have been injured but the nurse said I will be all right, so that is the main thing and you mustn't worry. It's not been so bad really."

Lights up and video.

Well, I can't tell them the truth, can I? What good would that do? Mother wrote to say she'd been to visit an ambulance train at an exhibition. She said how lovely and clean it was and how it put her mind at rest to know that I'd be looked after so well by kind nurses if anything happened. Well, they're looking after us as best they can, but lovely and clean it is not. There's dirty water all over the floor and you can hardly breathe for cigarette smoke. I've only seen a nurse once, when she washed my face. Apart from that it's the orderlies and the Medical Officer who came and looked at my label. He didn't even say anything to me. To be fair, a chap at the end of the carriage started screaming. He must have been in worse shape than me, so the Medical Officer had to go and see to him. It doesn't matter. I'm better off here than I was before.

Image and space go dark. Sounds of battle.

I don't really remember what happened to me. One minute I was running and Alfie was next to me. Then there was the noise and the pain and dirt in my mouth and then nothing at all until I opened my eyes again.

Lights up, image returns.

I didn't know where I was, except I could feel rain on my face, so I knew it was outside. It took me a moment to work out that I was lying on a stretcher. There were so many voices all around me. Talking, shouting and someone crying. I don't know what happened to Alfie. Then I heard someone say the ambulance train was coming and I knew where I was. I got hurt once before and they put a label on me and took me back to England.

I started thinking about where it hurt and it was my foot, but I could wiggle my toes just fine. So I knew it was still there and that's the main thing.

Next thing the orderlies come and lift up the stretcher. When we get to the train, it's high above us, so they lift me up even further and it would have felt like I was flying except they were bumping me around so much. There was also a lot of bad language which surprised me a bit because I know a lot of these orderlies are Quakers. You don't expect bad language from Quakers, but this bloody war does funny things to people. It hurt quite a lot when they were getting me on to the train, but at least I was still all in one piece, so I was better off than lots of others. There were some terrible sights. Poor devils. I kept wondering whether Alfie was one of them, but you couldn't tell who was who with all the mud and blood on their faces.

Space and image go dark. Distant sound of Nurse Bradshaw's voice telling him he's going to be all right. Lights up and image returns.

I'm up on the middle cot with one man underneath me and another one on top, but I've not heard anything from them yet. Last time it was just my arm and I was in the sitting up carriage. That was quite lively really, but here it seems the men are either sleeping or quiet and smoking. I expect it's the morphine they give us. The fellow across from me talks quite a bit, but he's an Indian chap and I can't understand a word he's saying. He seems friendly enough though.

I heard someone say there are German prisoners of war on the train with us, but it doesn't bother me. They were just doing their duty like we were and we're all in the same boat now, aren't we? I used to have a boat when I was a kid. Not a real one. A toy one. It was painted red. Red with white sails. Me and Alfie used to pretend we were sailing on it to France. Alfie's my brother.

Space and image go dark. Distant sound of Jack and Alfie as children playing with their boat. Lights up and image returns.

A little while ago, the nurse came back. I asked her about my foot. To be honest, I felt a bit ashamed because there are lots of men in much worse shape than me, but you want to know, don't you? I told her I could wiggle my toes, so I suppose it's all right. She said, not to worry and I'll be playing football again before I know it. The

thing is Alfie's the footballer, not me, but it was nice of her to say it. She looked ever so tired. I expect she sees all sorts of awful things in her job.

Space and image go dark. We hear Jack's voice, composing another letter in his head.

Dear Mother and Father. When I get to the station in England, I'll ask the ladies there to make sure you get this letter just like last time. As soon as I know what hospital they're taking me to, I'll write and you can visit. I might even get some leave before they send me back to the Front. Don't worry. It'll be over one day. Everything's going to be all right. Your loving son, Jack. P.S. Alfie sends his love too.

Silence. The van door is opened from the outside and light floods in.

Appendix 6

Blog post

Title – Discovering First World War through our archive

This week, staff from the National Railway Museum learning team have had a fantastic time working with local schools on our First World War learning programme.

We were very kindly invited into Tadcaster Grammar School and Sherburn High School to work with their Year 9 students (aged 13-14) on some of our fantastic archive materials related to the First World War ambulance trains. The students warmly welcomed us and were a credit to their schools.



They were enthusiastic about the documents we showed them and were eager to find out more. They completed an activity to find out how many staff worked on board an ambulance train, in comparison to patients, and studied primary documents to build their knowledge and understanding of the trains and the experiences of those on board. They engaged really well with the documents we showed them, offering insightful comments and thoughts on the stories of the men and women who served on the ambulance trains.

The pupils were especially interested in the fact that many of the trains carried men of all different nationalities, including injured German Prisoners of War. They were intrigued to hear that we have not been able to find any records of this causing

conflict on the train, and were able to draw conclusions from this about the soldiers and their attitudes to the 'enemy'. They were also fascinated by the fans which sat above each bed. An addition later in the war, they were used to disperse gas from gas attack victims, because the build-up of gas on the clothes caused the medical staff to be exposed to it too.



The students offered lots of wonderful insights into the sources and their feedback will be used to shape our First World War learning programme, which will sit alongside our Ambulance Train exhibition. We are developing this learning programme in partnership with York Theatre Royal, and will be creating resources which showcase our fantastic archive collection. Students from both schools will also continue to be involved in this process.

Thank you again to the Year 9 pupils from Tadcaster Grammar School and Sherburn High School for their efforts and hard work, and of course to their teachers for hosting us, especially Amanda Crossley. The First World War Ambulance Train project is being kindly funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, Yorventure and the friends of the National Railway Museum.

